
DEDICATION

to Mary Jane Patterson and William K. Du Val

This issue of *Church & Society Magazine* is dedicated to two servants of the church, Mary Jane Patterson and William K. Du Val, both of whom retired from the Social Justice and Peacemaking Ministry Unit staff in December 1989. We in the church have a variety of creative ways of saying “well done, good and faithful servants,” of course, but as we in the Unit reflected on the remarkable careers of these two particular people, nothing seemed more appropriate than this particular dedication. Their lives, individually and as members of the staff, are intertwined with a variety of the subjects covered by *Church & Society* over the years. And an issue addressing the social teachings of the Presbyterian Church—illuminating the pattern of social concern and basic principles of public responsibility expressed in General Assembly statements—is a most compatible environment in which to lift up our appreciation of Mary Jane and Bill.



Mary Jane Patterson's responsibility at retirement was Director of the Washington Office of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), a position to which she was named in 1988. She was Associate Director of the United Presbyterian Church's Washington Office from 1971 until becoming its Director in 1976. Her impact on that office, and on the life of the denomination, cannot be quantified—but noting that she fulfilled positions of leadership there for twenty-five of the office's forty-four years gives some clue to the heritage she leaves behind. Mary Jane is now President

of the World Conference on Religion and Peace, U.S.A., and continues to live in Washington, D.C.

A native of Ohio, Mary Jane received concurrent B.A. and B.S. degrees in accounting and philosophy, and a subsequent M.S.W. degree, from Ohio State University. Ordained a Presbyterian elder in 1960, she was appointed a career missionary by COEMAR, the Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations, in 1966, and served in Nairobi, Kenya, as a community developer and a consultant on social work for the Presbyterian Church of East Africa. In 1968 she participated in the "Crisis in the Nation" program of the National Council of Churches, working in both Chicago and Los Angeles, and in 1969 joined the staff of the Protestant Community Services of the Los Angeles Council of Churches, where she was community organizing specialist and ombudsman.

William K. Du Val was Coordinator of World Service and Director of the Jinishian Memorial Program at his retirement, and his years of experience have left their stamp on the church's work in that area. As a member of the staff of the Program Agency, United Presbyterian Church, prior to reunion and restructure, his responsibilities included serving as first Director of that denomination's Hunger Program and, from 1977 to 1987, Director for World Relief, Emergency and Resettlement Services, as well as Director of Jinishian. During the period 1962-68, he was COEMAR's regional Secretary for Africa and Europe.

Bill, who was ordained to the ministry in 1955, has had a variety of international experiences and demonstrated a deep ecumenical commitment. Born in New Jersey, he was an ambulance driver for the American Field Service with the British 14th Army in Burma, a marketing assistant with Caltex (India), Ltd., in Bombay and New Delhi, and on the staff of the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches (Evanston, Illinois, 1954). He was Administrative Secretary to the Division of Inter-Church Aid and Service to Refugees of the World Council of Churches in Geneva from 1956 to 1962. Bill, an alumnus of Williams College and Union Theological Seminary, New York City, lives in Montclair, New Jersey.

There is no way that the life, commitment, contribution, and spirit of these two remarkable colleagues can be encapsulated here. Nonetheless, as we dedicate this issue of *Church & Society* to Mary Jane Patterson and William K. Du Val, we do so with gratitude for their faithful witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ and their inspiration to so many of us. *Well done, good and faithful servants.*

Belle Miller McMaster
Director, Social Justice and
Peacemaking Ministry Unit

INTRODUCTION TO THIS ISSUE

Dieter T. Hessel

Whenever a General Assembly speaks, the gathered commissioners are trying to respond faithfully to particular problems and crises. Our Confessions acknowledge this: “The church, guided by the Spirit, humbled by its own complicity and instructed by all attainable knowledge, seeks to discern the will of God and learn how to obey in these concrete situations.” (*Confession of 1967*, 9.43) Today we reaffirm in A Brief Statement of Faith that “the Holy Spirit, everywhere the giver and renewer of life . . . sets us free to accept ourselves and to love God and neighbor In a broken and fearful world the Spirit gives us courage . . . to unmask idolatries in church and culture, to hear the voices of peoples long silenced, and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace.”

So the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) expects the General Assembly—and synods, presbyteries, and sessions as well—to exercise the responsibility to speak to both church and society concerning all dimensions of life. Such statements are intended to help “the people of God to work for the transformation of society,” counteracting a pernicious “human tendency to idolatry and tyranny.” (G-2.05)

Social teachings emerge contextually as the church’s most representative governing body responds to historical events and public needs. Social teachings remain of continuing interest for the ethical clarity with which they illumine persistent national and international problems.

An interpretation of the record such as the one that follows only begins to show the wide range of General Assembly social concerns and

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particular moments of insightful, faithful witness. We can glimpse the ethical significance of the communion of saints. All who struggle for justice, peace, and freedom are linked with a great cloud of witnesses who have gone before. "Not having received what was promised," they count on us to continue the pilgrimage toward the city of God. (Heb. 11:13-16) "All these, though they were commended for their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better so that they would not, apart from us, be made perfect." (Heb. 11:39-40)

This November/December 1990 issue of *Church & Society Magazine* is a revised, updated, and expanded version of "Social Teachings of the Presbyterian Church," the magazine's issue of November/December 1984, in part republishing much that appeared in the earlier issue and, in addition, incorporating new and emerging emphases of the past six years of General Assembly social policy witness. James Hudnut-Beumler authored this issue of *Church & Society*, as he had the 1984 version.

This interpretation of the breadth of the denomination's witness over the years may serve as an educational tool for church members and committees, and as instructive background reading for pastors, elders, and deacons. Not only is it meant as an aid to significant moral discourse in the church; it may also facilitate the task of interpreting the church's social teachings to the larger society, in the media, among public officials, and wherever there is interfaith dialog and action.



INTRODUCTION

CONSCIENCE AND JUSTICE

James D. Hudnut-Beumler

Nearly eighty years ago, the German theologian Ernst Troeltsch published the first edition of his now famous *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*. One of his key insights was that the church has always taught its members something about how they should relate to the world around them. At times, Christian churches have counseled celibacy, at times marriage; sometimes they have advocated total pacifism and at other times the duty of Christians to obey as good citizen-soldiers the orders of their princes. Troeltsch's insight goes right to the heart of the relation between church and society, for it reminds us that even the church that says "we discuss only spiritual matters and leave political questions to the consciences of individual Christians" is engaged in social teaching.

In light of Troeltsch's perspective, the questions for contemporary Presbyterians that emerge from a study of the social teachings of the General Assembly are: What have we taught about social responsibility? To what degree is this body of teaching ethically coherent? To what extent is this teaching expressive of a Christian witness?

When we look for basic "social teachings of the Presbyterian Church," there are a number of places where we might begin our search. We could review the Book of Confessions and the Book of Order of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). We could examine Christian education resources of the denomination to see what kind of social values were reflected and taught to church-school children, youth, and adults. We could read thousands of sermon manuscripts to achieve a sense of the range of social problems addressed, and how they were addressed, from

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the pulpit. We could even ask a representative sample of Presbyterians what the church had taught them about social responsibility and what they were doing about public issues. Each approach would be instructive, but our inquiry here will focus on a body of reports adopted and actions taken by the General Assemblies of the past sixty years.

We need to pause to note that a General Assembly is the most inclusive governing body of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). It is empowered to “develop overall objectives for mission and a comprehensive strategy to guide the church at every level of its life; . . . to administer national and worldwide ministries of witness, service, growth, and development” (*Book of Order*, 13.0103), as well as to decide matters of the interpretation of faith and polity. In this sense the General Assembly *does* represent the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in a way no other entity can and thus speaks to the church and the world as an official voice of the denomination.

The teachings of Presbyterian General Assemblies have been known by a variety of names—social pronouncements, deliverances, and (since the 1970s) social policy statements and resolutions—but all have a common intent: to provide understanding and direction, consistent with Christian faith, for response to problems and issues encountered in society. The social teachings of the General Assembly have been initiated in a variety of ways as well. On some matters where the issue is clear-cut or urgent, as in the case of imprisoned Christians facing execution in a foreign country, a General Assembly may act directly and quickly on a resolution proposed by a presbytery overture, a commissioner resolution, or one of its committees. In other instances, the Assembly will draw on past comprehensive statements to approve a resolution proposed by one of its agencies or by a presbytery or commissioners regarding some new development—Israel’s 1982 invasion of Lebanon, the 1989 repression in Tiananmen Square, or the recent explosion of peace and democracy in Central and Eastern Europe.

In the process leading to major teaching and policy on issues of complex and recurring nature, General Assemblies have usually assigned the task of studying the issues and recommending appropriate action for a later Assembly to a special committee or to the entity formed specifically for such work. Since the reunion of the Presbyterian Church U.S. and the United Presbyterian Church U.S.A. in 1983, that has meant the Committee on Social Witness Policy (CSWP). This body is empowered to initiate studies on its own, but most of its work has been shaped by assignments from the denomination’s annual General Assembly, which in turn has issues placed before it by the presbyteries through which every local congregation is represented.

On the most sensitive or difficult issues, therefore, the basic work of preparing material by which a later General Assembly can shape a social teaching occurs in the continuing work of the Committee on Social Witness Policy in between meetings. A typical study team or task force appointed by CSWP contains experts on the technical aspects of the problem—theologians, biblical scholars, clergy persons and lay people—all representing ethnically, racially, and theologically diverse segments of the church. These study groups not only seek input from the membership of the church but also from those who are most intimately affected by the problem being addressed. For example, when the issue was Mexican migration to the United States, the joint UPC/PCUS study team sought advice from both sides of the Mexico-United States border. These committees and task forces have increasingly sought to hear from the victims of social conditions along with ecumenical partners, persons with specialized expertise, and decision makers who are insiders or powerful.

Gathering facts, probing for biblical insights, exploring theological ramifications, and finding appropriate specific actions to recommend to the church and to society take time. Often two or more years elapse between the time a General Assembly calls for a study and the time CSWP or a special committee presents a report and recommendations to a succeeding Assembly for debate and decision. The lapse of time between a study's commissioning and its completion serves a stabilizing function, and allows for some churchwide participation, in General Assembly social policymaking.

Why do General Assemblies act on public affairs matters at all?

One might expect that the positions of General Assemblies would regularly change on the most controversial of issues. While this has occasionally happened, its infrequency indicates an enduring character to the Reformed theological view of the world, and it allows us to see the work of particular General Assemblies as contributing authentically to the social teachings of the church. While every Assembly speaks only for itself to the church and to the world, both reuniting streams have understood that when the Assembly takes a position, it remains the denomination's position until "altered, supplanted, or rescinded" (*Book of Order*, "Articles of Agreement," 1.9). Thus, even in the midst of

changing commissioners and changing leadership, there emerges a picture of continuity in the church's social thought and advocacy.

But why do General Assemblies act on public affairs matters at all? And further, why have the Presbyterian General Assemblies taken stands on social issues different from those taken by some other Christian leaders such as Pope John Paul II and the Rev. Jerry Falwell? The answer to the first question is that the Presbyterian Church is a part of the Reformed branch of the Christian faith that traces its theological origins back to John Calvin. The kind of reformation that Calvin sought was a reformation of religious and civil life that acknowledges God as sovereign over all of life and sees Christian vocation as essentially a call to serve God in the public order. Concern that God's will "be done, on earth as it is in heaven" meant for Calvin and his Reformed and Presbyterian followers that the social order must be transformed to correspond to the will of Christ.

***Seeking the divine will in all things is
the church's basis for involvement in
public affairs and issues.***

Presbyterians are not the only Christian social transformers, but when Presbyterians have been at their best they have applied their motto *ecclesia reformata semper reformanda* (a church reformed, always needing to reform) to the totality of human existence and experience. They have concerned themselves with all the good and evil that takes place in the world, not confining themselves or their church's comment and action to spiritual matters alone. This search for God's will can mean that Presbyterians gathered together in a General Assembly may not agree with the opinion held by a majority of church members, for it is a basic principle of Presbyterian polity that presbyters gathered to wrestle and decide "are not simply to reflect the will of the people, but rather to seek together to find and represent the will of Christ" (*Book of Order*, G-4.0301,d). Seeking the divine will in all things, therefore, is the church's basis for involvement in public affairs and issues.

Presbyterians are not the only Christians who adopt social policy statements—and it does not take much effort to notice that other Christian groups and individuals sometimes take stands different from those favored by Presbyterian General Assemblies. The reason for such dif-

ferences among people of faith can arise from any of a number of factors that enter into Christian ethical decision making: the social location of those who view the situation, the theological beliefs and traditions of the decider, the analysis of the facts of the case, the style of biblical interpretation employed in relating biblical teachings to contemporary problems, the means that are deemed fit by the decider to be used in addressing the problem, the process for reaching a decision, and so on. A disjuncture among groups in any one of these areas may result in very different final stands on a particular ethical dilemma.

One way of understanding how Christians, and Presbyterians in particular, arrive at a position on a social/moral issue is to use the factors listed above as a model for ethical decision making. At the risk of oversimplification, when a church or a group of Christians is confronted by the events of the world, four bases must be touched in the course of making a complete ethical decision about what to do and say in the situation. The four bases are:

- an examination of the biblical/theological vision expressed in Scripture and tradition;
- an analysis of the human/social situation—gaining familiarity with the issues and persons and powers involved;
- the formation of middle-range principles that approximate the religious vision and that apply in this particular situation (for example, a principle that mediates between the biblical injunction “thou shall not kill” and the situation of a person put at risk of his or her own life in war);
- the choice of specific policy options and programs of action.*

These bases are not, however, touched sequentially. Ethical decision making can begin at any base. Sometimes the violation of human rights will be so heinous that the church will engage the issue first, situationally, by gathering a few facts and rushing to the support of specific policy choices expressed in a resolution that tacitly draws in theology and social principles along the way. Sometimes the church will be presented with a specific policy choice: Should we support or oppose a particular plan for National Health Insurance? The church, represented by its General Assembly, then turns to its past teaching and historical and contemporary theology, and in that light analyzes the present facts as it makes its decisions.

In the course of preparing any particular action for General Assem-

*See Dieter T. Hessel, “A Whole Ministry of (Social) Education,” *Religious Education*, 78, 4 (Fall 1983), pp. 554 ff, for an overview of these four aspects of ethical decision making.

bly adoption, the preparers may touch on each base repeatedly and in any order. In reality, people making ethical decisions think in nonlinear fashion. They do the work leading to a decision in several areas simultaneously, and the discoveries of one area often affect others.

Of the four bases, here we are most interested in the principles that can be applied in specific cases. These middle-range principles—formed as they are in the interrelation of theological truth and social realities—represent the core of the church's social teaching and are also useful in relating the church's beliefs to new situations.

Members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) need to discover and consider what their church's most inclusive body has taught. To do this is to celebrate the Reformed faith in contemporary terms and to appropriate a valuable body of social thought as the church faces new social realities. The pages that follow are designed to surface church social teachings in many (but not all) areas of contemporary public interest. They focus not only on what the church has said but also on the ways that the church has engaged the issues and has drawn on its referential bases in developing its social teachings. At the end of each section, an attempt is made to gather together the **key principles** of social teaching that the church has affirmed through General Assembly actions and that form the ethical framework for future public witness and ministry.

Citations given in this issue are coded as follows:

ORIGINATING CHURCH

PCUS = Presbyterian Church in the United States (1861-1983)

PUSA = Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (1789-1958)

UPNA = United Presbyterian Church of North America (1858-1958)

UPC = United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (1958-1983)

PCUSA = Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (1983-)

THE YEAR and PAGE NUMBER of that set of General Assembly *Minutes*.

The full text of each statement cited can be found in the appropriate General Assembly *Minutes* or obtained from the Office of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, KY 40202-1396.

PART ONE

THE RIGHTS AND DIGNITY OF PERSONS

THE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT OF CONSCIENCE

If there is one social principle that is the basis for Presbyterian social teachings as a whole, it is the right of individual conscience. To quite a spectrum of ethical issues—birth control, abortion, sexuality, homosexuality, divorce, alcohol, military service, and others—the General Assemblies have said, “People have the right to make their own moral choices and should be assured the freedom within a society to exercise that right.”

Long before the right of private judgment had a social incarnation in the teachings of the church, conscience had great significance as a theological principle. In the years following the American Revolution, the Presbyterian church on American soil began to wrestle with the theological principles it wished to embody as it organized its life in the new nation. Two of the eight “Preliminary Principles of Church Order” upheld the right of conscience. The first, echoing the Westminster Confession, read:

(1) God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of [persons] which are in anything contrary to [God’s] Word, or beside it, in matters of faith or worship.

Therefore we consider the rights of private judgment, in all matters that respect religion, as universal and inalienable: We do not even wish to see any religious constitution aided by the civil power, further than may be necessary for protection and security, and at the same time, be equal and common to all others. (*Book of Order*, G.-1.0301)

The first paragraph of that principle was pure Calvinism: Christians must always follow the sovereign God and are not bound to temporal authorities that stand in the way of faithful obedience to God’s Word.

The second paragraph was the theological conclusion reached by Presbyterians in fitting their Christian faith to the new American situation. Presbyterians, although an influential group, were nowhere in the thirteen new states the beneficiaries of legal establishment. Their claim that they did “not even wish to see any religious constitution aided by the civil power” can be seen to be a plea for impartiality in the privileges accorded to the various denominations at the time. Even so, this eighteenth century theological application was to become the cornerstone of church teachings, not only on church/state relations but also on many moral issues where a difference of opinion existed between and within religious groups as to what was the “right thing to do.”

The fifth principle of this 1788 document took the point of respect for another’s conscience further:

(5) While under the conviction of the above principle we think it necessary to make effectual provision that all who are admitted as teachers be sound in the faith, we also believe that there are truths and forms with respect to which [persons] of good characters and principles may differ. And in all these we think it the duty both of private Christians and societies to exercise mutual forbearance toward each other. (*Book of Order*, G.-1.0305)

The fourth principle concerned the “inseparable connection between faith and practice, truth and duty,” thus making Presbyterians cultural transformers—people who believe in changing society to accord with their faith. The honest championing of “God alone” as Lord of the conscience meant, however, that the transforming impulse had to be pursued with respect for the consciences of others. Living according to this model has not always been easy. Persons persuaded that they have an exclusive hold on the truth naturally desire to use all the means within their power to effect corresponding social changes. At times Presbyterians have been among those who have sought to ensure moral behavior through Sunday blue laws, prohibition of alcohol, compulsory school Bible reading, and limiting access to contraceptives.

Christians are called to transform the social structures in accord with the will of God. There are legitimate differences of opinion as to the content of God’s will.

These twin beliefs—that Christians are called to transform the social structures in accord with the will of God, and that there are legitimate

differences of opinion as to the content of God's will—have continued to play an important role in shaping Presbyterian social thought and action. When combined, these two affirmations have, over time, resulted in a praxis—a way of acting and reflecting—that favors (1) moral education or moral suasion as a principal method of arriving at social change in areas of personal morality, and (2) a “pro-choice” social climate—not limited to the present abortion discussion—where persons are truly free to take personal responsibility in acting upon their moral decisions.

The first major use of the “rights of conscience” approach to a social issue occurred in the context of slavery. The General Assembly of 1818, faced with abolitionist demands that the church take a stand against slavery, equivocated and called slavery “a gross violation of the most precious and sacred rights of human nature,” but also declared:

We, at the same time, exhort others to forbear harsh censures, and uncharitable reflections on their brethren, who unhappily live among slaves, whom they cannot immediately set free; but who, at the same time, are really using all their influence, and all their endeavors, to bring them into a state of freedom as soon as a door for it can be safely opened.

The 1818 Assembly's position was a model of church committee compromise.

The Assemblies of the next eighteen years avoided the issue of slavery by allowing it to remain one of the matters on which people of good Christian character could and did disagree. This unfortunate use of the principle of the right of conscience contributed to the tragedy of church complicity in the continuation of slavery. Eventually it was overcome by the use of another distinction: What one does with one's own life is largely a matter of individual conscience; what one does to other persons is a matter of public concern. The groundwork was being laid for a distinction between public and private morality and the process by which standards for each kind of morality were to be set and enforced.

For many years, before the right to individual conscience began to be applied to issues of personal morality, these same issues were viewed through the lenses of “spiritual malaise” and “moral affront to public decency.” The issue of beverage alcohol provides an insight into the moral reasoning of the churches up through the early decades of the twentieth century. The churches became involved in supporting legislative prohibitions of certain “immoral” activities because they identified personal behavior with social consequences. Total abstinence was the only correct choice, in the view of the church, because the use of alcoholic beverages invariably resulted in the social ills of neglected families, industrial and farm accidents, decreased productivity, and lazy-

ness as well as the personal tragedy of alcohol addiction. The alcoholic was an affront to God, a threat to social order and a menace to others. General Assembly after General Assembly, north and south, decried alcohol consumption and “humbly petitioned” the government for impediments to liquor sales and purchases. Likewise, General Assemblies petitioned for public recognition and respect of the Lord’s Day and against prostitution or “sex delinquency,” “salacious publications,” and “frivolous entertainments” such as motion pictures. The Presbyterian churches, in seeming contradiction to their belief in avoiding “political questions,” constantly sought political support for their positions on “moral questions.”

Two things occurred to change the shape of the churches’ social teachings. Chronologically first was a reassertion during World War I of the social implications of the right of individual conscience. The second development was an increase in American society’s toleration of what had formerly been identified as vices.

World War I, although supported by most church and civic groups, produced an American nationalism that carried over into the 1920s and 1930s. This development, along with the “Red Scare” of the early 1920s, left a bad taste in the mouths of many American Christians, and fledgling peace movements began within most mainline American denominations. In the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., increased concern to protect the civil rights of persons conscientiously opposed to settling conflicts through warfare led to a remarkable series of pronouncements based on the church’s theological belief in the right of conscience. A resolution from the 1930 Assembly demonstrates this social dimension of the right of conscience:

Whereas, the General Assembly has repeatedly declared the Church’s aversion to the settlement of international differences by war or by the appeal to arms, and its belief in the substitution thereof of peaceful processes of conference and adjudication, and

Whereas, the standards of the Church declare that God alone is Lord of the conscience, and

Whereas, the Church has always taught that it is the duty of [persons] to obey the conscience in the fear of God and the fidelity to [God’s] word, and

Whereas, men and women should stand on the same basis of principle, enjoying equal rights and having equal duties in the Church and State.

Therefore, be it Resolved, that the Assembly declares its belief that the right and duty of citizenship should not be conditioned upon the test of the ability or willingness, contrary to conscience, to bear arms or to take part as a combatant of war. (PUSA, 1930, p. 67)

More than half a century later, the Presbyterian Church does not teach a single response to war that all members must accept. Since the 1969 General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church, we have affirmed that:

God is Lord of conscience, not only of a participant in war for moral reasons, or of the objector to all war on pacifist grounds, but also of those who conclude that a particular conflict is morally unconscionable and indefensible. (UPC, 1969, p. 696)

Such application to social situations of the right to make conscientious decisions is of far-reaching public policy significance.

The second major transformation taking place in the church and society arose from changes in the way issues of sexuality, family life, substance abuse, and health were viewed. In the years following World War II, American society was saturated by the results of research into the nature of alcoholism, sexual behavior, and personality. The news from the social scientists forced a general reexamination of long-held analyses of the causes and effects of social problems. The remarkable rise in the post-war divorce rate, for example, led Presbyterian denominations to reconsider teachings on marriage and divorce. The Yale studies on alcohol and alcoholism established that alcoholism is a disease, not a malicious vice. These studies also disturbed the cherished myth that any and all drinking resulted in social collapse. Again the churches were led to a reappraisal of their posture.

An even more compelling reason churches were drawn into the debates over acceptable forms of moral behavior was that a large proportion of Presbyterian members were personally affected. The fact that Presbyterians were getting divorced and asking to be remarried with the church's blessing meant that the church had to address the problems with a livelier sense of moral dilemma. The fact that more adult Presbyterians consumed beverage alcohol than refrained from drinking made it difficult for the churches to keep saying "no Christian can morally drink." The fact that Presbyterian families and congregations have gay and lesbian members has also led the church in recent years to moderate its traditional hostility toward homosexuality and to advocate the civil rights of homosexual persons.

In the same period American society was becoming more tolerant and the churches' memberships reflected that shift. As the standpoint of the commissioners to General Assemblies changed, that affected their analysis of the human social situation and also the specific policy options that seemed appropriate to advocate in their milieu. Societal toleration and the principle of Christian liberty—represented in the two Preliminary

Principles cited above—converged in the minds of Assembly commissioners and church leaders and came to characterize the social teachings that they endorsed.

The principle that has been affirmed repeatedly in the last twenty-five years of General Assembly social teachings is that the right of all persons to make free, responsible decisions on matters affecting their daily lives and relationship to God should also be the basis of social policy. A sampling of General Assembly statements illustrates the use of the principle:

The God whose creative grace makes possible the blessing of children through marriage likewise vests man and woman with moral responsibility in the exercise of the procreative function . . . it will follow that access to information about birth control is the right of all married couples, and the provision of this information the duty of a responsible society. (PCUS, 1960, p. 43)

Believing that the law should provide for the optimal condition of physical and mental health, and should allow for the optimal exercise of private moral judgment and choices in matters related to the sexual sphere of life; and recognizing that religious convictions held by individuals should not be imposed by law on the secular society; the General Assembly . . . calls for the repeal of laws hampering access to contraceptive help and equipment . . . calls upon judicatories and churches to support and give leadership in movements toward the elimination of laws governing the private sexual behavior of consenting adults. (UPC, 1970, pp. 469, 891)

God has given each of us the freedom and obligation to make responsible personal decisions about whether, where, when, and under what circumstances drinking is appropriate for us. (PCUS, 1970, p. 123)

The General Assembly affirms the right of older persons to stipulate that technology shall not be used to prolong biological functions when there is no medical hope of restoration to meaningful existence. (UPC, 1973, p. 546)

The Presbyterian Church exists within a very pluralistic environment. Its own members hold a variety of views. It is exactly this plurality of beliefs which leads us to the conviction that decisions regarding abortion must remain with the individual, to be made on the basis of conscience and personal religious principles, and free from governmental interference. (PCUSA, 1983, p. 369)

The General Assembly calls “for the elimination . . . of laws governing the private sexual behavior between consenting adults [and for the passage] of laws forbidding discrimination based on sexual orientation in employment, housing, and public accommodation.” (PCUSA, 1987, p. 776) [See also UPC, 1978]

The General Assembly petitions the Congress and the Executive Branch of the federal government to amend the legislation and regulations governing

Selective Service to accord the right of conscientious objection not only to those who object to all wars but also to those who object to particular wars on "just war" grounds. (PCUSA, 1988, p. 446)

This reasoning appears to put the church on record in favor of drinking, abortion, homosexual acts, euthanasia, and promiscuous sexuality. . . .

The chief complaint against this reasoning is that it appears to put the church on record in favor of drinking, abortion, homosexual acts, euthanasia, and promiscuous sexuality. A careful reading of General Assembly statements provides an answer to these critics. The church teaches that decisions in these areas do involve questions of moral right and wrong. On the issue of divorce, for example, the 1980 PCUS Assembly recognized that "Christians, who are also sinners, do divorce," and thus did not minimize the gravity of a broken marriage. But that Assembly went on to state that, rather than being a judging community, "the church is to be a community of forgiveness, and it should mediate forgiveness in the brokenness of divorce among its members." (PCUS, 1980, p. 182) Two decades earlier, the UPC Assembly went on record in favor of honoring personal choice in the use or non-use of alcohol while making its moral concern clear: "the 173rd General Assembly unequivocally condemns immoderate drinking as an irresponsible act." (UPC, 1961, p. 452) That position has not changed in the intervening years. In fact, the 1986 Assembly found that "any drinking in high-risk situations (e.g., during pregnancy or before driving an automobile) should be vigorously discouraged, as should all illegal drinking." (PCUSA, 1986, p. 452) On the controversial issue of abortion, the church has repeatedly acted to emphasize that its position "does not condone abortions of convenience" and affirms the sanctity of life, but at the same time "affirms the importance of individual moral choices prayerfully made and affirms the exceptional conditions justifying abortions." (PCUS, 1980, p. 222)

In addition to stressing that decisions on these issues do have a moral dimension, the Assemblies have endorsed efforts to provide moral education so that individuals may be led to make more informed ethical decisions. In deciding that "the proper concern of the church is not with alcohol itself but with persons," the 1970 PCUS Assembly decided that a faithful ministry to persons included educating them in responsible decision making and about using alcohol and the problems related to alcohol

abuse. The 1976 UPC Assembly approved an educational booklet entitled *Problem Pregnancies: Toward a Responsible Decision* for study and distribution to all congregations. In viewing the dilemma of teenage pregnancy, the church found a need for greater education about human sexuality and contraception, declaring, "The church is called to exercise social responsibility by advocating more effective contraceptives for males as well as females, and to educate our own membership that family planning must be the concern and responsibility of both sexual partners." (PCUSA, 1983, p. 368)

From the examples cited, it should be apparent that the Assemblies believe there are moral considerations at stake in the decision to drink or not to drink, to have an abortion or not to have an abortion, to use artificial means of birth control, to divorce, to prolong life by technological means, to engage in sexual activity outside of marriage, to claim that conscience does not permit service in the military.

The Assemblies' position statements usually go into a great amount of detail about what the church sees as guidelines involved in making a decision about a particular issue. Moreover, the church can often be heard to say through these statements that considerations such as quality of life, intent, socio-economic circumstances of the parties affected, and the culture in which the decision is made may play a crucial role in the individual's final decision.

Since the 1960s, Presbyterian Assemblies have become more aware that socio-economic disadvantage can make free moral choice inaccessible. For example, Vietnam-era GIs from backgrounds of poverty often lacked prior knowledge of legal provisions for conscientious objection, so to exercise conscientious opposition they could only desert. This reality led the church to include concern for the rights of deserters in its special ministry with the Vietnam generation.

A similar pattern of socio-economic disadvantage can be seen regarding the freedom to terminate problem pregnancies. Laws that severely restrict or prohibit publicly funded contraceptive or abortion services actually jeopardize the exercise of responsible freedom by poor women. Thus, the church emphasizes that justice to the disadvantaged is at stake in public policies affecting access to a full range of medical services.

In the mid-1980s a spate of bombings at medical and counseling centers that offered information about, or performed, abortion services caught the 1987 Assembly's attention. Violence directed at these centers was held to be particularly shameful, in part because it sought to stop women in the free exercise of their consciences by placing their lives at risk anytime they entered such a facility. (PCUSA, 1987, p. 581)

The church has backed away from teachings that say "this is always

and in all situations the right thing to do," preferring to offer formative guidance rather than prescriptions or proscriptions. The church has also steadfastly resisted attempts to take these decisions away from the individual and turn them over to the state or other authority. Thus, the position of the Assemblies that abortion should not be "restricted by law except that it be performed under the direction and control of a properly licensed physician" (UPC, 1970, p. 891) or that the state has no valid right to prohibit the private sexual activities of consenting adult homosexual men and women (UPC, 1978, p. 266) are consistent with the "rights of conscience" philosophy of the church.

The individual's right of conscience in matters of personal morality has often been attacked in overtures to the General Assembly and letters to denominational publications. Thanks to a Reformed understanding of responsible liberty, the individual's right of conscience has held up as a social teaching of the church in the face of pressure. Assemblies have consistently refused to abandon it in favor of a more restrictive morality that views every individual act as part of a greater public order (and thus the object of social regulation).

The potential to obey necessarily involves the potential to disobey.

A recent tone to be sounded in Presbyterian social teaching comes in response to the findings of sociologist Robert Bellah and other contemporary social critics that Americans have become too individualistic, too reliant on the dictates of their own isolated consciences, and alienated from one another and from traditions that could help inform their lives and moral choices. In the book *Habits of the Heart* Bellah and his colleagues pointed to the important role unions, political parties, schools, and religious groups could play in the formation of healthy, moral individuals. Both the criticism and the proposed solution resonated with the 1988 Assembly when it declared, "The church has a duty not only to respect conscience but to help form it. Conscience is an individual matter, but it is not properly informed by unbridled individualism or in isolation. Conscience cannot be mandated by the General Assembly or by any other governing body of our church, but the insight of the church through the ages cannot be ignored." (PCUSA, 1988, p. 454)

If people are going to be truly faithful, then they must be free to be able to respond to God's grace in obedience. But the potential to obey necessarily involves the potential to disobey. The freedom necessary to

follow Christ may be abused, but the Presbyterian churches in recent years have not seen fit to try to restrict that freedom.

Instead, following the Apostle Paul's teaching about moral maturity in Romans 14, Presbyterians have taught the responsibility of people to act for the good of all in light of conscientious contextual inquiry, but not to expect that public regulation of personal morality will assure goodness. This does not mean, however, that the Assemblies have endorsed loose morality. Rather, they have sought to be clear about the distinction between personal responsibility and public law in achieving morality.

If we are to distill thousands of pages of General Assembly documents down to a few middle-range principles that apply the theological principle of the right of conscience to questions of social policy, six of these principles or social teachings stand out clearly:

- **There are moral decisions that are best made by the persons they most intimately affect. These include decisions involving an individual's own body, health, sexuality, and participation in war.**
- **Responsible personhood requires a society in which persons have free access to the information and means to effect their personal moral choices.**
- **The role of church and state in relation to the personal mores of individuals is properly one of ethical guidance and education, not coercion.**
- **The church affirms that not all moral choices are equal, that such choices have grave ramifications, but that the circumstances and conditions of the individual are often of such a determinative character as to necessitate a full measure of freedom consistent with Christian responsibility.**
- **Persons stand accountable before God, the Lord of the conscience, for their moral decisions.**
- **No action of a church body can bind the conscience of any Presbyterian.**

HUMAN RIGHTS

The Presbyterian Church has taught that individuals have rights of conscience in areas of social concern, but what happens when individuals and groups conflict in the exercise of their rights? The church is concerned with guaranteeing the rights of all human beings concretely.

Tragic and systematic abuse of people at the hands of their governments has commanded the attention of Presbyterian General Assemblies with ever-increasing regularity, as this sampling of human rights actions over the years shows:

- The UPC Assemblies of 1952-1958 repeatedly registered their protest over the persecution of Protestant Evangelicals in officially Roman Catholic Colombia.
- Since 1960, the South African government's policy of apartheid has been strenuously opposed by the church's Assemblies.
- In the Vietnam war years, the Assemblies protested both the treatment of South Vietnam's political prisoners and the treatment of children of American-Asian origin, as well as repression of dissenting groups in the U.S. Since the fall of Saigon in 1975, the Assemblies have often spoken out against the human rights abuses endemic to the region, most recently about the suffering of Cambodian and Laotian refugees in Thai border camps. (PCUSA, 1987, p. 779)
- In the late 1960s and early 1970s, General Assemblies reacted to suppression of public criticism and conscientious dissent within the U.S. by demanding that civil liberties be upheld and that "law and order not serve as mere protection for vested interests over against the rights and needs of those who are exploited and oppressed in our society." (PCUS, 1972, p. 102)
- Throughout the 1970s and 1980s and now in the 1990s, the General Assemblies have appealed to Japanese political and business leaders to stop treating Koreans living in Japan as an "inferior race" and have deplored the oppression of South Koreans in their own country by their own government.
- The 1972 UPC Assembly endorsed a statement to the Soviet Union concerning the position of Soviet Jewry, which included these words: "We appeal to the Soviet authorities—let them live as Jews, or let them leave to be Jews. We are deeply disturbed by the reports of growing acts of harassment, intimidation

tion, arbitrary arrests, and confinement of Jews and dissenters to mental institutions. We appeal to the Soviet Government to end this policy of wanton oppression and fear." (UPC, 1972, p. 114)

- The Assemblies of recent years have stood staunchly opposed to the toleration of death squads in El Salvador, and also have cautioned our own government that in working to deport persons seeking first asylum, it may be violating the human rights of those persons who come to seek freedom and sanctuary from reprisals. They have also commended those Presbyterian congregations which, at risk to themselves, "declared their churches as places of sanctuary for Salvadoran and Guatemalan refugees and thus by their action have chosen to affirm the sanctity of human life over conformity with government policies." (PCUSA, 1984, p. 335)
- The first General Assembly of the reunited church requested that "the Ayatollah Khomeini stop the practice of imprisonment without trial . . . that all methods of torture be stopped." (PCUSA, 1983, p. 824)
- The 1987 Assembly directed the Moderator "to urge the President of South Korea to immediately stop the political oppression and terrorism, physical tortures, media distortions, and political imprisonments, to immediately release all the political prisoners unconditionally, to restore and free Kim Dae Jung and others with all their political and civil rights, and to guarantee the political and religious freedoms for all sectors of Korean people." (PCUSA, 1987, p. 865)
- The Assembly meeting in 1990 rejoiced in the transformation taking place in Central and Eastern Europe but called its sister churches "to struggle against racism and resurgent anti-Semitism in their respective societies" and to exercise vigilance "against those forces that seek to destroy the basis for religious toleration."

The General Assembly actions even in this short list indicate how the church is drawn into the issue of human rights: events take place with adverse consequences to particular human beings; the church becomes concerned; the church responds in solidarity with the oppressed. The challenge/response nature of church involvement with the issue of human rights may seem to negate the four aspects of the ethical decision-making model offered in the introduction. But although the church does seem to be primarily reacting to outside events, the church's response is guided by biblical faith and values. Moreover, the General Assemblies, faced with the recurrent phenomena of human rights abuses over time, have also been moved to pull together general human rights concern and middle-range principles of human rights into theologically focused social teaching on human rights.

The Confession of 1967, written after the United Nations' Universal



Declaration of Human Rights (1949) but before the acceleration of religious and secular human rights advocacy in the 1970s, contributed the concept of “Universal Family” to the human rights dialog:

God has created the peoples of the earth to be one universal family. In reconciling love God overcomes the barriers between sisters and brothers and breaks down every form of discrimination based on racial or ethnic difference, real or imaginary. The church is called to bring all to receive and uphold one another as persons in all relationships of life: in employment, housing, education, leisure, marriage, family, church, and the exercise of political rights. (*Confession of 1967*, 9.44, rendered inclusively)

Obviously, the Confession’s authors had racism in America uppermost in their minds when drafting those words. Yet C-67 marked the first time any Presbyterian body had confessionally affirmed that all men and women have certain God-given rights. Now the church was heard to proclaim that the children of God—all human beings as members of God’s universal family—have the right to marry, to have and be part of a family, to exercise religious and political beliefs, and to have access to shelter, education and work.

In 1974 these “human family rights” were being clearly challenged by the actions of our own and others’ governments that, in effect, said, “Human rights are dependent on the national interest and the state’s domestic tranquility.” This challenge harkens back to the question that started this chapter: “Do some rights have precedence over others?” The UPC Assembly of that year answered that challenge by siding with the

rights of the common people over and against the rights of the rich and powerful:

It is important that the church express its concern for human beings and the preservation of personal values essential to a humane life-style. The attempt by a totalitarian state to sacrifice liberties for the sake of attaining economic growth, military security, or domestic tranquility cannot go unchallenged.

American Christians, who live under the mandates of the gospel and who share the rights and privileges of constitutional government and the freedoms attached thereto, must speak out to defend human rights everywhere, particularly when their taxes and their leaders support oppression and tyranny, denying those principles which this nation affirms and seeks to uphold. (UPC, 1974, p. 595)

In the late 1970s the PCUS produced a statement entitled "Declaration of Human Rights." Its theological ethic, based on the creation story in Genesis, comes through loud and clear:

We . . . affirm

Human beings are created in the image of God. John Calvin said, "Scripture helps us in the best way when it teaches that we are not to consider that persons have merit of themselves but look upon the image of God in all persons, to which we owe all honor and love." Human rights are not grounded in a "yet-to-be-defined" human nature, nor in a charter granted by the state, but in God's own claim upon us.

Every person is of intrinsic worth before God. Because human beings are created in the image of God as fully revealed in Jesus Christ, God has laid claim upon us and clothed us with worth and dignity. Human rights to life, freedom, community, and self-determination are grounded in, and made possible by, the very terms of the promise by which God binds human beings to the Divine Being. Human beings are called (destined) to reflect God's own image. For this reason God is exerting pressure on institutions, politics, and people in the name of that dignity which, in exemplary fashion, was bestowed by God upon the slaves which were brought out of Egypt, and fully revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As a community of believers we make common cause with persons of good will everywhere who recognize and promote human dignity and solidarity, whenever we can do so in faithfulness to God revealed in Jesus Christ. (PCUS, 1978, p. 187)

The 1978 "Declaration of Human Rights" demonstrates well the interplay between biblical, classical, and contemporary theology present in the best social policy statements of the General Assembly. In the section above, the Assembly began its social teaching by affirming its belief in an element of the biblical witness that could not be challenged: "God created them, male and female, . . . in God's own image." (Gen. 1:27) The teaching moves on to illumine the meaning of humanity's being created in God's image by turning to Calvin's Reformed theology. The

appeal to Calvin communicates several things. First, our Reformed Presbyterian “roots” are important to us. Secondly, over and against those who would use Calvin to assert that the sovereignty of God necessitates a low view of human worth, we read Calvin as saying that God’s greatness requires the utmost care and respect for human beings whom God chose to bear the divine image. Each person—and not just humanity in general—is of intrinsic worth before God and has rights that are grounded in the human/divine relationship. The Declaration argues further that the spirit of “God is exerting pressure on institutions, politics, and people in the name” of those human rights and dignities. The claim that God acts on behalf of the oppressed is backed by reference to the Bible’s account of God’s intervention to deliver the Hebrew slaves from Egypt. It also forms the theological basis of the contemporary confession that follows, “because God is working for human rights and calls us to do so, we stand ready also to exert pressure on institutions, politics, and people.” Moreover, the church declares the extent and terms of its human rights activity: “As a community of believers we make common cause with persons of good will everywhere who recognize and promote human dignity and solidarity”

The social teaching of the church is more than general statements of theology concerning social situations. A whole social teaching of the church provides guidance for specific situations and it articulates middle-range social principles that guide our response to emergent problems and crises. And so the Declaration, in seeking to illumine a middle ground between Christian faith and particular actions of the PCUS in support of human rights, also provides a list of the rights that are derived from the Creator:

The right of freedom to exist: “no human agency has the right to own, manipulate, brainwash, torture, physically eliminate, experiment with, or deny the existence of any human being.”

The right to basic subsistence: “adequate work, food, clothing, and shelter.”

The right of freedom of conscience: “liberty of thought, conscience, and religion.”

The right to participation in community.

The right to meaningful existence. (PCUS, 1978, p. 187)

In the 1980s the tenor of the Reagan Administration’s human rights policies put the church’s social teaching to the test. Were American Christians, like their national government, to be most concerned with the human rights violations of communist regimes? The response of the 1983 Assembly to that question came in two parts. First, the church was

concerned for all who suffered. But second, in contrast to the administration's thinking, there was something doubly disturbing about the human rights abuses of friendly governments—those we presumably had influence with—that made silence about such abuse morally unconscionable:

The church's concern for human rights, for their protection and defense, extends to all who suffer—whatever the reason, wherever the violation. We believe, however, that our church has a responsibility to address those situations in which the practices and policies of the United States or of American-based interests have a direct impact on what is happening and in which, therefore, the responsibilities weigh heavily on us because of our own involvement.

Most often this occurs when the United States through its military and economic-aid practices strengthens or supports regimes in power where the human rights violations are endemic, arguing that strategic (i.e. military) or economic interests are at stake. In this respect, we have seen in recent years a downgrading of concern for human rights as a major consideration in the determination of U.S. foreign policy. We see this in the continued failure of the United States to ratify the two major Human Rights Covenants and the Genocide Convention [of the United Nations].

We find that we are using double standards, holding "enemies" to standards we do not apply to ourselves or our friends. We play semantic games arguing that human rights violations by authoritarian regimes (right-wing) are less odious than those by totalitarian (left-wing) regimes. (PCUSA, 1983, p. 349)

The Assemblies have not been content merely to call the attention of governments and the powers-that-be to the principles of human dignity that the church affirms. Instead, the continual restatement of these previously articulated principles in the context of particular struggles for human rights suggests that the Assemblies consider each denial of dignity a matter of concern in itself. This interaction between universal principles of rights and concrete instances of life gives the teaching of the church on human rights a sense of contemporaneity.

For example, the right to live freely and the right to meaningful participation in community belong to all, including those imprisoned in the U.S. This understanding of human rights has led both Presbyterian streams to oppose capital punishment, which is "an expression of vengeance which contradicts the justice of God on the cross." (PCUS, 1978, p. 200) And it has resulted in specific advocacy of constitutional protection for unconvicted defendants and provisions of meaningful community life for convicted offenders. (UPC, 1972, p. 426)

With the contemporary rise in the use of drugs and drug-related crimes, many Americans have responded instinctively with the idea that all such offenders should be locked up in prison permanently. Hope in

human rehabilitation has diminished and talk of “throw-away kids” and a “lost generation” witness to societal despair. Yet the church’s social teaching has remained firm: human beings involved in crime are still human beings and merit consideration as such. To talk of throwing away people is to strip them of dignity and to treat them as less than human. Thus the 1988 General Assembly urged Presbyterians to “advocate a social order where compassion and justice characterize efforts toward those in the criminal justice system. We reaffirm the actions that previous General Assemblies have identified as necessary to bring justice and compassion into the fabric of the prison system, including the abolition of prisons as they now exist, changing a prison system that is based on the concept of punishment to one that encourages the restoration of the offender to the community, and the development of alternatives to incarceration.” (PCUSA, 1988, p. 1028)

Also of great moral concern to the church are those citizens who are unable to contend for their own rights in contemporary society. The 1990 Assembly highlighted one such segment of society subject to human rights abuses—the elderly, those with Down’s Syndrome and the mentally ill—and committed itself to helping to end this form of hidden oppression within our own society.

The church's teaching on human rights is well grounded in “A Brief Statement of Faith,” approved by the 1990 General Assembly and sent to the denomination's presbyteries for vote:

In sovereign love God created the world good and makes everyone equally in God's image, male and female, of every race and people, to live as one community. (lines 29-32)

We can summarize the social teaching of the Presbyterian Church on human rights in these principles:

- **God has created a universal family of human beings in the divine image. Anyone who excludes, dominates, or patronizes other members of the human family offers no acceptable worship of God but rather resists the divine purpose for humankind.**
- **Human rights derived from the Creator include the rights to existence, sustenance, work, conscience, and participation in family and society.**
- **These human rights to justice and dignity are prior to interests of nations and economic entities or the desires for national security and domestic tranquility.**

RACE AND RACIAL JUSTICE

Racism is the single greatest tragedy or anomaly of our national life, and was the most obvious source of division among Presbyterians in the Civil War era. No other issue has so prominently engaged the General Assemblies as that of race and racism. Even as the church has sought to end racial discrimination and prejudice in society, it has also been forced to confront racial discrimination within the body of Christ.

Beginning with the 1946 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., which declared, "This General Assembly renounces the principle of segregation in race relations as undemocratic and unChristian" (PUSA, 1946, p. 211), the church has affirmed the struggle for racial justice and supported specific measures to establish racial equality in society and in the church. For a period of more than a decade, culminating in the Confession of 1967, the United Presbyterian Church supported the full agenda of the civil rights movement: the rights of peaceable assembly, guarantees of voting rights, enforcement of desegregation in public accommodations, education, and housing, and provisions for equal employment opportunity. Then in 1963, noting a disparity between its social pronouncements and the church's own actions, the General Assembly was the first mainline denomination to create a Commission on Religion and Race to "design a comprehensive strategy for the UPC's approach to race relations." (UPC, 1963, p. 141) The Commission was not a mere advisory group; it was expected to guide the denomination's response. In 1968 the Assembly adopted a churchwide affirmative action plan submitted by the Commission, and it reconstituted the Commission into a permanent Council on Church and Race.

The complete story of Presbyterians and racial issues is a long and involved one and the events through the first half of the 1960s are well chronicled by Andrew Murray in *Presbyterians and the Negro* (a book in the Presbyterian Historical Society series). Since then the Presbyterian Church has continued both to promote the growing power of people of color and to respond constructively with policies of racial justice.

The 1978 PCUS "Declaration of Human Rights" began with the words:

In confronting this issue the PCUS must first confess unfaithfulness. As a denomination the PCUS began its history in the context of a war that was fought primarily over the question of slavery. In this situation, and others, through acquiescence or self-serving rationalization, the church, as a sinful individual and corporate structure, often has legitimized an unjust social order from which has been derived socio-economic advantage. Our institutionalized life as a church has, in no few instances, often uncritically assimilated the standards and world views of the society at large. (PCUS, 1978, p. 187)

This "confession of unfaithfulness" made by the 1978 southern Assembly could well apply to both former churches. It shows the link that the church has perceived between race and human rights. More importantly, it admits the role played by the church in the greatest single tragedy in the life of a nation dedicated to equality and freedom: the fact that, on account of racial discrimination, the fruits of these ideals have been repeatedly denied to nonwhite Americans.

Presbyterian social teachings on race over the last forty years developed in three distinct periods of emphasis covering, roughly, the years 1950-1964, 1964-1970, and 1970 to the present. In each of these periods the church approached the issue of racial justice in a different way, building on past teachings and adding new ones.

1950-1964: A Nonsegregated Church and a Nonsegregated Society

The keynote of early General Assembly attempts at addressing the issue of race in America was Christian "brotherhood." Even the small and generally socially conservative United Presbyterian Church in North America (UPNA) departed from its practice of only addressing "moral welfare" questions such as temperance or "biblically mandated" concerns such as hunger to sound the note of brotherhood. It stressed the role of inter-Christian virtues such as charity, forbearance, love, and celebration of a common faith as a way out of racial misunderstanding and prejudice. It was the other part of what became the UPC, the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., however, which joined with the National Council of Churches of Christ in 1946 and again in 1950 to declare the goal of a "nonsegregated church and nonsegregated society." (PUSA, 1950, p. 239) The thrust of the churches' teaching in these years was that if people would practice the faith they proclaimed, then discrimination would fall away and equality would reign.

There was, perhaps, a naive optimism in early social deliverances on race relations about how easily a centuries-old pattern of racial discrimination could be shed. Still, the full recognition that the church was

deeply involved in racism led to a commitment to equal opportunity. The 1951 PUSA Assembly declared, "Particularly must the church demonstrate in every phase of its life and work the reality of brotherhood in which no person or group is penalized by virtue of minority status." (PUSA, 1951, p. 257) The following year the Assembly asked its members to press their legislators for civil rights legislation, and in 1953 the PCUS acted to affirm its opposition to the exploitation of racial prejudice for political purposes.

To prevent racial injustice from being viewed as only a southern phenomenon, the 1956 PUSA General Assembly called on its members to "stop pointing the finger of accusation at areas of high tension or conflict" and to work to break the pattern of discrimination wherever they were located. In the southern context, meanwhile, the PCUS reminded its members of the inability of law by itself to guarantee justice. Noting the inability of court decisions alone to effect racial justice, the 1959 General Assembly called on the church to become an agent of racial reconciliation.

By the early 1960s the logic of equal opportunity was beginning to take hold in American society. The idea that no one should be legally disadvantaged because of his or her color—determined at birth—genuinely made sense. And so the General Assemblies of the early 1960s continued to call for civil rights legislation, vowing "neither to rest nor become silent until all citizens of our country have equal access to the rights, responsibilities, and privileges of citizenship, and all Christians can find full participation in the work and worship of Christ's church." (UPC, 1960, p. 354)

The social teaching of this first period is memorable for its well-grounded theological arguments that affirm the provision of equal standing under the law for all persons, regardless of race, and for identifying both church and society as places that need to break down the barriers of segregation. When the legal barriers began to fall, it soon became apparent that social barriers of custom, prejudice, and institutional discrimination loomed large as factors preventing the attainment of true racial justice. The goal of nonsegregation in church and society would be carried forward into a new period of Christian social engagement, and the churches' racial justice agenda would also be broadened to include other ends and objectives.

1964-1970: Affirmative Action Is Required

The primary goal of the civil rights movement of the 1950s and the early 1960s was in no way radical. Leaders such as Martin Luther King

Jr., Roy Wilkins, and Ralph David Abernathy worked to achieve equal protection and treatment under the law for African Americans—in short, the elimination of Jim Crow. While the church had stressed brotherhood and relational goals that went beyond this level, the church's political objective was the same as that of the civil rights movement: equal treatment and opportunity to live within society without imposed disabilities, to compete in society on terms common to all members.

When real discrimination persisted in spite of court decisions striking down legal barriers to the free exercise of civil rights by Black persons, a larger racial justice agenda emerged. Recognition that a societal goal of equal opportunity is not enough dates from the 1964 UPC awareness that genuine racial equality would be costly because it required "affirmative action." If there is any one General Assembly statement on racial justice that deserves a rereading and reaffirmation it is the 1964 pronouncement on Racial Freedom and Justice. In it the General Assembly set forth a comprehensive racial justice agenda that still has not been implemented in society.

Today in our society God is laying upon all Christians, many privileged and affluent, a responsibility to join others to right the wrongs that our society has imposed upon the Negro for three centuries. This responsibility "to set at liberty those who are oppressed" applies primarily, but not exclusively, to the fellowship of the church itself. It extends, however, to all of the church's manifold dealings with institutions, customs, patterns, procedures, politics and people. Specifically, it means that the church must repudiate the old clichés about doing everything "without regard to race" and take upon itself the burden of doing "everything" with "due regard to race." (UPC, 1964, p. 311)

The 1964 Assembly recognized two significant realities that argued for this new position. First, "The forces throughout our country and the world that are moving toward a full recognition of the rights and full humanity of all . . . cannot be turned back without a spiritual defeat of catastrophic proportions. . . . We have passed the point of no return." Second, "The denial of any [one's] humanity will not end with the simple removal of all overt forms of segregation and discrimination," because, "If every vestige of overt discrimination and segregation were removed tomorrow, the vast majority of Negroes would still be denied access to most of the rights and privileges the white majority take for granted." And anticipating the cry of "reverse discrimination," the Assembly went on to add that affirmative action "does not imply discrimination against whites. It does involve a frank recognition that in many situations in our society white persons have maintained a special privileged status by erecting barriers based on race . . . in voting, education, housing, public

accommodations, service contracts, employment, church membership, social relations—virtually every public and private area of human activity and relationship.”

This new social teaching coincided with the emergence of a new generation of Black thinkers, leaders, and activists who began to think about restoring power to African Americans. H. Rap Brown, Bobby Seale, Huey Newton, Eldridge Cleaver, and Malcolm X—all presented a new angry face to white America. One young Black theologian, James Cone, himself influenced deeply by the Reformed theology of Karl Barth, presented the demands of Black Power religiously: “We are not talking about reconciliation; what we are talking about is reparations!”*

The General Assemblies of the years 1964-1970 tended to agree with Cone. Rejecting a false reconciliation as “cheap grace,” the 1968 PCUS Assembly took notice of two summers of urban rioting and advised its members:

Almost two centuries ago, Thomas Jefferson wrote: “no wonder the oppressed should rebel, and they will continue to rebel and raise disturbance until their civil rights are fully restored to them and all partial distinctions, exclusions and incapacities are restored.” So it is today. The Negro rebellion arises from the Negro condition . . . The Christian response to the Negro riots must be justice—full and undiluted. (PCUS, 1968, p. 99)

Structural racism requires structural solutions. Justice requires that compensatory consideration be given to African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, and other disenfranchised minorities. This is a position that the Presbyterian Church has consistently advocated.

1970 to the Present: The Church as Embodiment of Racial Justice and Witness to Society

Whether Black Power ran out of steam, whether the Nixon Administration succeeded in turning Americans against anti-poverty programs, busing, affirmative action hiring and contracting practices, and a whole host of other attempts to reach equality through compensatory social programs, or whether institutional racism simply won the day, the fact remains that the last twenty years have seen very little commitment to attaining true racial justice in this country. Whether the United Presbyterian Church was “trivialized”** as John Fry wrote, or whether the Pres-

*See James H. Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power*. New York: Seabury Press, 1969.

** Fry’s thesis is presented in his book, *The Trivialization of the United Presbyterian Church*. New York: Harper and Row, 1975.

byterian churches simply reorganized in ways that recognized new social realities, the fact is that after 1970 the most important social teachings the Presbyterians have had to offer on racial justice are manifested in their institutional life together.

To see what the General Assemblies have taught since 1970 on racial justice, we have to go beyond our usual method of analyzing social policy statements. General Assemblies have produced only a modest body of new statements on race, but they have produced a great number of actions that offer social teaching.

ITEM: Each church's General Assembly created a COCAR (Council/Commission on Church and Race) and retained those entities through reorganizations, giving them the responsibility not just to be a racial/ethnic caucus but to be bodies with direct access to the General Assemblies, and charged these bodies with recommending appropriate actions on racial justice issues to the General Assemblies.

ITEM: The time and labor spent in each church's reorganization on matters of affirmative action in church leadership and employment was tremendous. The pages of General Assembly *Minutes* contain carefully worked out strategies designed to embody the goals of racial inclusiveness in church employment.

ITEM: Many constitutional changes were adopted in the 1970s to incorporate the idea of racial inclusiveness as a necessary part of nomination and election of church officers at all levels.

ITEM: *The Plan for Reunion* added to each governing body's requirements that they have a Committee on Representation to assure that women and racial minorities were elected and appointed in fair proportion to all bodies and their boards, committees, and commissions.

ITEM: Committees on Ministry at the presbytery level were made responsible for affirmative action applicable to the work of pastor nominating committees of local congregations.

Clearly the racial justice focus of the Presbyterian churches in these years has been on the internal life of the church. In trying to arrive at racial justice within the small system of a denomination, the churches have provided a prophetic witness that seeks to model a more just society. But providing a nonracist institutional model through the church has not been entirely successful. In 1981 the UPC General Assembly adopted a paper, "The United Presbyterian Church's Witness in Racial Justice and Racial Ethnic Ministries," which analyzed past activities for racial justice, yet does its groundbreaking work in identifying the continuing

problem of cultural imperialism within the well-meaning predominantly white denomination:

Despite the well-intentioned and nonracist attitudes of individuals, our religious and societal institutions, structures, and systems can and do perpetuate racial injustice. The point to be made is that irrespective of motives, often the final impact of our institutional styles of organization and management serve to exclude racial/ethnic groups from full and just participation. Too often our professed desires for authentic community and justice are sacrificed for the sake of institutional efficiency, good organizational management, and institutional success. "Business as usual" perpetuates "racism as usual." (UPC, 1981, p. 201)

In other words, the institutionalization of the racial agenda of the church in the 1970s had the built-in pitfall of sublimating justice objectives to standards of management. The human result, said the report, was this:

With regard to attempts to overcome racial injustice, the church has failed to accept the perceptions, expectations, and evaluations of racial/ethnic groups in determining the adequacy, appropriateness, success, or failure of those attempts. Concurrently, the church has failed to recognize or accept the gifts that racial/ethnic peoples have to bring to its being and mission. (UPC, 1981, p. 201)

These criticisms of trying to work for the goal of racial justice primarily through changing the structures of institutional church life led not to an abandonment of that one tactic, but to the overdue assertion of the 1983 PCUSA Assembly that the time had come to broaden the agenda once again. That Assembly endorsed a "Comprehensive Strategy for Racial Justice in the 1980s" which put forward the new goal of a Presbyterian Church "participating in and providing a preview of God's Kingdom through its *work in each and every dimension of racial justice*, through its inclusion of all members and entities in such work, and through its creative *use of a variety of activities and tactics* to achieve justice." (PCUSA, 1983, p. 460; emphasis added)

The strategy that was adopted included a complete list of obstacles to overcome in achieving the comprehensive goal but, nonetheless, discerned four fronts on which the church should be working for racial justice: racial justice perspective, witness in church life, witness in society, and leadership development.

Through the rest of the 1980s and into the 1990s the Presbyterian Church has pursued what can be seen as a two-tracked approach to racial justice. It has continued to reform its own institutions in an effort to make them more sensitive to persons and issues of race and ethnicity. It has also

reinvigorated its efforts at being a witness for racial justice in social structures outside the church. This development has happened chiefly for two reasons. First, the value of a racially inclusive church in a non-inclusive society seemed dubious unless the church was willing to make its position on the still-segregated society known. Presbyterians are theologically committed to social transformation. Therefore, a mere witness by example was inappropriate to this church, even if it might be appropriate to other faith groups. Second, in the 1980s the very gains of the civil rights movement seemed to be in jeopardy. And thus the effort of the churches—so crucial to the success of that movement—was required lest the clock of racial progress be turned back. The Presbyterian church began once again to do its part to actively promote public policies, laws, and attitudes to advance the cause of racial justice in all of society.

In the last ten years every Assembly has taken action on behalf of progress in the areas of racial equality and justice. As a resurgence of racial hatred and violence began in the 1980s, the 1980 UPC Assembly called the church to “pursue with renewed vigor racial justice as a critical dimension of faithful Christian discipleship.” (UPC, 1980, p. 73) The Assemblies of 1981 and 1982 also attacked the white racism that manifested itself in anti-Semitism and Japanese-American persecution during World War II. (PCUS, 1981, p. 111; UPC, 1982, p. 422) In 1987 the General Assembly denounced the Christian Identity Movement, a racial hate group that justifies itself in religious terms. The same Assembly opposed the growing “English as the official language” movement as a form of unjust discrimination. (PCUSA, 1987, p. 855) The Assemblies’ positive energies of these same years have been directed toward ameliorating the effects of institutional racism by: increasing the church’s own purchases from businesses owned by racial and ethnic minorities (PCUSA, 1984, p. 503); endorsing affirmative action policies in employment in both the public and private sectors (PCUSA, 1985, p. 53; 1986, p. 640); and by promoting non-discriminatory housing policies. The 1988 Assembly called upon the church and society to:

Renounce the discriminatory practices that so imprison us and others in racially “apartheid” residential communities and repent of our failure as property owners, real estate agents, neighbors, and mortgage leaders, to promote the principle and practice of fair housing.

Adopt new laws and fund effective enforcement mechanisms to guarantee homeseekers’ rights against housing discrimination, racial harassment, and discrimination against person with disabilities.

Recognize the linkage between school integration-segregation and housing integration-segregation, i.e., the presence of racially isolated schools in a community is a deterrent to the exercise of fair housing choice; local communities should be expected by federal and state governments to assure

interracial equity and access to schools and municipal-community services as a means of furthering the openness of their housing markets.

Increase the availability of affordable housing for people of all races and conditions, including persons with disabilities, particularly by assuring its distribution throughout metropolitan areas, by providing incentives to open up, and by putting sanctions on exclusionary communities. (PCUSA, 1988, p. 357)

In 1984 and 1985 the Assemblies called for renewed independence of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and supported the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1985. (PCUSA, 1984, p. 698; 1985, p. 551) The Assembly of 1990 followed these actions by actively promoting the Civil Rights Act of 1990, an act designed to restore to minority groups and women protections that had been invalidated by federal courts—largely for technical reasons—despite wide public support for these guarantees of civil liberty.

The contemporary Presbyterian Church, after discovering how deeply entrenched racism is, has reaffirmed all of its historic goals for racial justice, convinced that no single approach to racial justice in isolation from the others will assure its attainment. We can summarize the church's contemporary social teaching in this area as follows:

- **Racism and racial discrimination are persistent realities in our society and in our church and are sin in the eyes of God.**
- **We, as Christians, are called by Jesus Christ to be reconciled with our neighbors in order to render justice. For this reason, we embrace all efforts that will restore the dignity and abilities of persons who because of their race have been placed at a historic disadvantage in church and society alike.**
- **The church is a living witness to the possibility for racial justice in God's Kingdom. We are called, therefore, not only to practice true reconciliation through equal opportunity and affirmative action in our church life but to demand it also of the society in which we live.**

THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN

In no other area has the church's social teaching changed so much in the last sixty years as in the area of women's rights and status in church and society. In these six decades the church's teaching on the status of women has moved from a position of regarding women as an inferior part of humanity to one of championing the cause of liberation.

In some respects the change in the status of women in the churches and in the denominations' public witness parallels the changes in the status of African Americans. Unlike the issue of race, however (and like the continuing resistance to the ordination of gay and lesbian Presbyterians), women have had to contend not only with *de facto* discrimination but also with discrimination by church law. The Presbyterian churches never had a "no Negroes may be ordained" rule, but such rules did apply to women. Not until 1930 were women ordained as elders in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., and not until 1956 were presbyteries permitted to ordain women to the pastoral office. Presbyterian Church U.S. ordination of women as elders and pastors finally began to occur in 1962. The fact that women were barred from ordination in the Form of Government for so long in these churches reflects a deeply held theological belief.

One cannot, therefore, simply look at the public policy stands of the General Assemblies on women's issues and say that those stands represent the social teachings of the Presbyterian Church on the status of women. It is impossible to discuss the *social* teachings of the church on women and their status without reference to how the *church* treats women in its belief and practice. To speak of the status of women in church and society, it is necessary to observe progress in three spheres of church activity: ecclesiastical practice, theological belief, and corporate social witness.

We have already noted that the Presbyterian churches have had—along with most other Christian churches—an ecclesiology that assigns women second-class status because of a theology that assumes women to be inferior. The theological inferiority of women was based on a particular kind of biblical interpretation that took the specific commands of the Bible at a premium value and assigned ethical principles a sec-

ondary value. Thus, "women should not speak in church" (1 Cor. 14:34) was much more determinative for the life of the church than an idea such as "in Christ there is neither male nor female." (Gal. 3:28) It would take a new way of reading the Bible to break the church out of its moralistic and paternalistic, even sexist, habits and ways of thinking. That is happening now, and we can trace the shift in the dominant interpretive style through both "push" and "pull" factors.

Contemporary theology and biblical criticism "pull" the church toward rereading the Scriptures "for the big picture." Meanwhile, Christian social concern that the Bible not be used to justify anti-Semitism, racial prejudice, selfish laissez-faire capitalism, and the continued oppression of women "pushes" the church to find more appropriate ways to relate the Bible to current social reality than biblical literalism allows. Modern biblical scholarship allowed the specific prohibitions of women's activities within the early church to be seen as time-bound accommodations to the cultural ethos and social customs of the ancient Near East and the Hellenic Roman Empire. Moreover, as scholars pointed out, the treatment of women by Jesus in his actions and teachings indicates a level of respect for women and their rights unparalleled in the rest of the Bible. Paul, too, recognized the ministries exercised by Phoebe and Mary and Prisca. (Romans 16) Phoebe, referred to in Greek as a deacon, had long been explained away as only a helper. Now the way was open to see Phoebe exactly as she was called.

The theological revolution as it pertained to women did not end with an announcement that "the Bible now says that women are able to do anything men can in the church." Indeed, theology has turned back to the Bible and begun asking afresh, "How does what we read and the way we read it affect our relationships with God and between men and women?" The issue of language has been crucial to the continued development of a gender-conscious, gender-inclusive Christian theology. And it has also been important for the church's self-understanding and, in turn, its social proclamation.

Language is important. This is a social teaching of the church in and of itself. Language is determinative, for it reveals what and how we think. Language about God reveals our conception of the divine. Language about the people of God indicates the respect we hold for various members and parts of the human family. The UPC Assembly of 1975 and the PCUS Assembly of 1980 declared:

Our liturgical use of language about God needs enrichment. In the recent past only a few biblical images of God have been employed along with an over-dependence upon the masculine pronoun. The Bible offers many more ways to speak about God. We need to make strenuous efforts in incorporating this

wide range of imagery. Terms that unmask old stereotypes wait to be used. Addressing God as Sustainer, Redeemer, Helper, Fortress, Savior, Leader, Guide, Guardian, Shield, Creator . . . , etc., may provide immediate assistance. New hymns, new prayers, new affirmations of faith, and liturgical-credal elements can be written and should be an order of high priority in view of the fact that language significantly influences the perceptions of those who use it. (UPC, 1975, p. 528; PCUS, 1980, p. 172)

Language and thought about the human family lead us back to the issue of church order. In 1960 the UPC began to use gender-inclusive language, selectively, in its *Minutes* and *Book of Order*. This was the beginning of Presbyterian awareness of the role language plays in affecting the way people think about women. The 1972 General Assembly directed all agencies, boards, and councils of the United Presbyterian Church to use the Christian names of their constituents in their work so as to acknowledge married women's identities apart from their husbands. The inclusive language issue also gained acceptance in the southern church, and by the mid-1970s sexist language was significantly reduced in each Assembly's proceedings.

Inclusiveness in language was paralleled by attempts at inclusiveness in church practices. As the use of inclusive language grew in acceptance, so too did the principle of fair representation. The 1971 UPC Assembly took the lead in guaranteeing representation and articulated "basic principles for the church's action on the status of women," making appeals to its church-related institutions to work toward equal representation on all boards. That same Assembly sent to its presbyteries for approval two overtures that provided for election to church offices in all judicatories "giving attention to a fair representation of both the male and female constituency" of the respective congregation, presbytery, commission, synod, Assembly, and so on. The presbyteries concurred and fair representation became the law of the church.

Throughout the 1970s, because of advocacy for the cause of women, the Presbyterian churches began to incorporate language into their forms of government that not only opened the door for women to be leaders but also sought to guarantee that women would in fact make it through that figurative door. The churches came to believe that they could conceive of no situation wherein a congregation would not find among its number women capable of exercising the ministry of church leadership. The United Presbyterian Church's 1979 Overture L mandating the election of "women and men," the PCUS's standard of a minimum of one-third women on any permanent committee of the General Assembly, and the Committees on Representation provided for in the Plan for Reunion for every governing body in the church above the level of sessions—all are

expressions of support for women's equality in the Presbyterian Church. The church is saying, "it is not enough to say women *can* be elected elders and deacons, but women *must* be elected elders and deacons." Support for women's equality in the Presbyterian church, then, is not merely an endorsement of the principle of gender equality or approval of the end result of equality. Rather, it is support for programs of action that will result in the desired end of equal representation and leadership.

Justice for Women in Society

When we turn to what the church has taught about women in society since acknowledging their equality before God and within the church, we discover that the church has taught not only social equality and the need for equality of opportunity, but also the need for efforts to remedy present patterns of inequality.

Serious General Assembly concern with the status of women in society began when the 1967 UPC Assembly directed that a study be prepared on "Women in Society and the Church." A subsequent study was approved by the 1969 Assembly and a Task Force on Women was created that evolved into the Council on Women and the Church, an ongoing body that advocated women's issues in the church until it was replaced by a full-fledged Women's Ministry Unit in the PCUSA's current design for mission. In 1972, the PCUS adopted its paper, "Women in Church and Society," in which that Assembly declared its "conviction" that "God calls upon the church to act in society to end discrimination on the basis of sex and to challenge anything that interferes with women's full development and wholeness." (PCUS, 1972, p. 178) The Assembly then outlined an agenda for women's rights in the coming decade:

The General Assembly . . . urges its members to work in society to promote the equal status of women, specifically:

- a) To end discrimination in employment opportunities, benefits and pay for women.
- b) To affirm new life-styles for children which allow boys and girls to express their essential humanity, and which encourage them to consider vocational prospects unrestricted by sex bias.
- c) To provide suitable child care facilities for parents who work outside the home.
- d) To call on their state legislatures, if they have not already done so, to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment. (PCUS, 1972, pp. 177-179)

When the PCUS threw its weight behind the Equal Rights Amendment it joined the UPC in supporting a cause that would receive more

attention in the form of General Assembly resolutions over the next twelve years than any other single issue during that period. The social witness of the Presbyterian churches has not relied on the passage of E.R.A. as a necessary Constitutional guarantee of legal equality. The Assemblies have also endorsed means by which to arrive at full social equality for women. The 1975 UPC Assembly took on sexism in the military. The 1976 PCUS Assembly expressed its admiration of the goals of the U.N. International Decade for Women. In 1979 two resolutions were passed that called for an end to sexual and domestic violence and declared the unacceptability of sexual harassment in any form.

The 1980s realized the fruits of increased women's issues advocacy that had developed through the 1970s. The 1981 PCUS Assembly re-committed itself to seeking women's equality. The 1982 UPC Assembly considered the special problems faced by women immigrants and the adverse effects of federal budget cuts on American women, while also opposing the "Family Protection Act" and its more than thirty regressive measures that would have eliminated federally funded legal aid for divorce and custody cases, denied funds for textbooks that portrayed women in other than the traditional family role, jeopardized the health, reproductive, and privacy rights of women by eliminating funding of contraceptive and abortion services, and limited support of legal services in areas of discrimination. (UPC, 1982, p. 110) The 1983 Assembly, the first meeting of the reunited Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), affirmed the urgency of the issue of the lack of economic justice for women, requested an exploration into "female sexual slavery" and violence against women, deplored all forms of exploitation, and upheld its firm support of greater reproductive freedom for women.

***It is not enough to declare equality.
Support necessitates action.***

In the 1984 General Assembly, three of the thirteen social policy resolutions were concerned with the role of women in society. One reaffirmed support for the Equal Rights Amendment and for the principle of legal equality. Another resolution voiced support for the goals of the United Nations Decade for Women, a program supported by previous General Assemblies of both churches since its inception in the International Women's Year of 1975. This renewed support is important because it again signals the church's teaching that it is not enough to declare equality. Support for the still-unattained goals of the U.N. Dec-

ade for Women—complete integration of women into the development process, elimination of all forms of inequality between women and men, and broad participation in all efforts to strengthen peace and security throughout the world—necessitates action.

The third of the 1984 resolutions addressed “The Feminization of Poverty” or the pauperization of women and their families, with particular reference to the sharply increasing number of female-headed households and older women living alone who are entering the ranks of the poor. Some of the startling realities the Assembly of that year considered: (a) women still earn on average only 60 cents for every dollar men earn (for Black and Hispanic women, this figure is below 50 cents); (b) one out of three families depends on a woman for sole support, and one-third of these families live below the poverty level because women’s work is low paid or income support is woefully inadequate; (c) older women are the fastest growing poverty group in the U.S.A.; and (d) the poverty rate for children under age six was 25 percent in 1983. Therefore, the Assembly voted to support the concept of Earnings Sharing Proposals and the goals of Economic Equity for homemakers, widows, and divorced women. The Assembly also reaffirmed its endorsement of the legislative agenda named the Economic Equity Act, and it advocated more adequate services for children in the areas of health care, child care, and education. (PCUSA, 1984, pp. 326-28)

As the decade progressed the concern for women’s status outside the church became of increasing concern for the General Assemblies. The 1985 Assembly saw an ever-widening gap between conditions within and without the church:

For the modest gains women have made within the church, there have been significant losses for them in society. Cuts in Federal programs in the early 1980s have resulted in the increased feminization of poverty. Poverty has become overwhelmingly a women’s issue. Two out of three older Americans living below the poverty line are women. The National Advisory Council on Economic Opportunity in Washington, D.C. predicts that if this rate continues, by the year 2000 virtually all the people living in poverty will be women or families headed by women. The issue of economic justice for women is thus raised to the forefront of Christian concerns for the decade to come. (PCUSA, 1985, p. 570)

Assembly advocacy of women’s concerns took on a more global dimension later in the decade of the 1980s. The 1986 Assembly voted to approve a report on sexual exploitation that stressed the international nature of some of the most dehumanizing forms of exploitation: prostitution oriented toward wealthy foreign visitors, “sex tourism,” and practices of the U.S. government and foreign nations related to U.S. military



bases located in the Third World that contributed to the systematic exploitation of women. Its charge to American Presbyterians was to see the problem and work to solve it in global and domestic contexts:

The General Assembly:

Urges all ministers and local congregations to identify and study the problems of sexual exploitation that exist in their own communities, as well as in other countries, which contribute to sexual exploitation through prostitution, tourism, military presence, and the activities of transnational corporations, and seek to effect change through their own circles of influence.

Urges all Presbyterians to seek ways to bring about changes within the military establishment which will eliminate practices that economically and sexually exploit women and children near military bases and installations. (PCUSA, 1986, p. 645)

In 1987 the General Assembly urged the ratification of the United Nations Convention against Sexism. (PCUSA, 1987, p. 583) The following year the General Assembly approved a major study paper and an interim policy statement on pornography subtitled "Far From the Song of Songs." In its recommendations the report balanced the need to oppose pornography with the needs to avoid censorship and mislabeling all sexually explicit materials as pornographic. Its policy directives were the demonstration of continued faith in the use of education, collective moral disapproval, and appeals to conscience. The General Assembly urged Presbyterians to oppose pornography with these actions:

Refrain from supporting economically all motion pictures offensive to that individual's personal and moral convictions, and refrain from supporting economically companies that sponsor TV or radio programs or advertise in media in ways offensive to that individual's personal moral convictions;

File objections with the management or refuse to patronize those businesses which they personally feel contribute to the moral decay of our homes and families; and

Write personally to those against whom the above action has been taken, informing them of the action and the reason for it.

The General Assembly also voted to call "on our churches to minister both to those who have become victimizers and those who are or who have been victimized by violence, pornography, and sexual abuse, affirming the love of God and the new life in Jesus Christ that is for all persons." (PCUSA, 1988, p. 646)

The emphasis on economic justice for women, along with related concerns about female sexual slavery, sexual harassment, domestic violence, and comparable-worth legislation, are all issues that elicit the involvement of secular feminists as well as Presbyterians. These are priority concerns in a world that continues to foster patterns that strip

persons of sexual, relational, and vocational dignity, in contrast to the church's covenant to preserve the full human dignity of each child of God, male and female. In its involvement the church recognizes that the attainment of justice for women is the concern of all Christians and persons of goodwill. Moreover, women's equality will not be achieved in a society and a church where equality is sought only by women. Thus COWAC (Council on Women and the Church), COWC (Committee on Women's Concerns), and the Women's Ministry Unit have included men in their recent work and welcome a community of women and men working together in faithfulness as equals.

How then shall we summarize the social teaching of the church on the status of women in church and society? Three points seem to flow out of the actions of the General Assemblies over the years as guiding principles of Christian teaching with reference to women:

- **The church must confess its role in providing a religious justification for the historic subordination and unequal treatment of women. The time has come to end patriarchal language and practice. There is no valid reason for discrimination against women in church or society.**
- **The church pledges itself to the restoration of the rights and dignity of women everywhere and in all activities, taking upon itself the responsibility to assure the equal treatment and fair representation of women in all facets of church life.**
- **The church advocates those means that will bring about social and economic equality for women and transform unhealthy patterns of oppression by men and social structures in sexual, economic, political, and ecclesiastical relations.**

PART TWO

WHEN CONSCIENCE IS AT ISSUE: THE POLITICAL WITNESS OF AMERICAN PRESBYTERIANS

In the first chapter the principle that “God alone is Lord of the conscience” was identified as the distinctive source of many of the individual and collective rights Presbyterians have advocated and contended for over the years. In this chapter the focus shifts to a different stream of church social teaching based on the same principle. Affirming that God is Lord of the conscience has consequences for what kind of society the church wishes to promote and for how it sees its role in that society. Here we consider the witness of the Presbyterian Church to American political life in six areas of social teaching: church and state, democratic values in times of crisis, dissent and civil disobedience, the church’s prophetic function, the preservation of truth, and the role of negotiation in resolving conflicts.



CHURCH AND STATE

How should the church be related to the state? Should there be a kind of tacit support for religion on the part of government? May a government withhold tax exemption from churches that oppose its policies? These questions and many others usually addressed under the rubric of "church-state relations" are not merely theoretical queries for a church in the American political context. No other set of questions has as great a potential impact on church life and witness as these, for the relation of church and state determines whether the church will be officially persecuted, as in Imperial Rome, domesticated to state needs, as in Hitler's Germany, or allowed to exist in some kind of creative tension with the civil authority of a society.

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution stipulated that legislatures should "make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." It is possible for varied church/state relationships to exist under that formula, which is subtler than Jefferson's suggestion of "a wall of separation." Articulating a vision of what that relation should be has engaged the social teaching efforts of many General Assemblies. Their concern has been to carve out a place in modern society for the church to maintain an independent voice of reason, a place where freedom of worship may take place, and a platform from which to engage the rest of society in moral dialog. The development of this line of social teaching is, in part, the story of the development of the church itself.

When the PCUS General Assembly of 1964 declared, "we have no right to claim that ours is and always has been a Christian nation," it joined its northern Presbyterian counterpart in acknowledging a new way of looking at the requirements of religious freedom in the United States. The UPC Assembly of 1963 had adopted a major report on "Relations between Church and State," which emphasized:

The church has no theological ground for laying any claim upon the state for special favors. The church must regard its special status or favored position as a hindrance to the fulfilling of its mission. (UPC, 1963, p. 194)

Moreover, the same 1963 Assembly made clear its view that, while the

state should respect the religious beliefs of individuals, the state has no role in sponsoring religious observances of any kind—much less giving “due and proper recognition” of an “avowed faith” at every public occasion.

These affirmations represented a substantial departure from the consensus of Catholic and evangelical Christians during most of the history of the country. Generally, since the English landing at Jamestown, Americans expected that no one would be forced to subscribe to a particular brand of Christian beliefs, but that everyone would choose one from the denominational menu. To be sure, persons of the Jewish faith represented a problem, and there were frictions between Protestants and Roman Catholics. But a “Christian America” was the dominant hope, expectation, or even presupposition of nearly all Americans.

To see how deeply steeped the American ethos was in this image as a “nation with the soul of a church,” one need go no further back in Presbyterian history than the 1947 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., which declared:

This Assembly respectfully requests our government constantly to be mindful of its avowed faith in Almighty God as the fountainhead of our rights and on every public occasion to give due and proper recognition of this faith. (PUSA, 1947, p. 110)

What happened to the nation, and indeed to the church, to make Presbyterian leadership change its mind in those years between 1947 and 1963? First came the conflict with Roman Catholicism. The growing power of the Roman Catholic Church in mainstream American political life in the 1950s raised for many Protestant Americans a fear of supporting someone else’s religion. This fear was particularly acute in the fight over public aid to parochial schools. Protestants, for the first time in the nation’s history, were facing the possibility of having someone else’s faith get in their way or dilute public support for their children’s education.

A second factor prompting a change in Presbyterian church/state philosophy was a series of Supreme Court decisions in First Amendment cases including *McCullum v. Board of Education* and *Zorach v. Clausen*. Again, as we have noted elsewhere, when the society at large changes, so often will the social teachings of the church, for its analysis of the human-social situation—a basic component in shaping a social teaching—also changes. Controversy over parochial aid, school Bible reading and prayer, congressional initiatives, and state and federal court decisions all pushed the Presbyterian churches to reexamine the question, “What do we believe concerning the relation of church and state?”

A third factor emerged to pose the question of church/state philosophy: rapid growth of the church itself. Religion throughout the 1950s and early

1960s found itself in a golden age. Never had the absolute numbers of church members been higher. Never before had the percentage of Americans belonging to a church been as high. But numbers of churchgoers and Sunday service attendance figures did not, as it turned out, translate into a great and righteous society. Sociologist Yoshio Fukuyama has commented in this connection that the impact of religion on the American conscience is paradoxical—it supports both shallow spiritual complacency and a potent sensitivity to injustice. The Special Committee on National Purpose reported to the 1961 UPC General Assembly:

It is precisely at the moment of largest adherence to religious loyalties and religious institutions in its history that the nation's life is marked by a disintegration in moral and ethical behavior. The "return to religion" in our day has produced no moral fruitage. On the contrary, while the curve of religious interest has been rising, that of moral health has been falling. Not "too little religion," but double-minded religion, its divorce from practice, is our sickness. This fact is a judgment upon the churches and the religion they have been content to foster. (UPC, 1961, p. 111)

Presbyterians had to reemphasize that not only did the risen Lord require that the gospel be "preached even unto the ends of the earth," but also that believers learn Jesus' commandments and be concerned with the quality of their obedience. The same God who gives the Great Commission says, "I despise your burnt offerings . . . Let justice roll down like mighty waters."

Faith is too important for the church to assign any part of its observance to the state.

Theologically, a rediscovery was underway that led to endorsement of the proposition that faith is too important for the church to assign any part of its observance to the state. Calvin had maintained that when the will of God and the magistrate (or state) diverge, the believer must follow God. The terrible example of Nazi and Soviet cooptation of the churches had also spoken to the American churches' consciousness. Out of a close call due to McCarthyism in the early 1950s—when Christianity and allegiance to a narrow American nationalism were identified as being one and the same—the church's thinkers and leaders began to see Christian reasons to avoid identifying the will of God with any one national way of life. The thoughts of those Presbyterian leaders echoed the Barmen Declaration's statements that:

We reject the false doctrine, as though the State, over and beyond its special commission, should and could become the single and totalitarian order of human life, thus fulfilling the Church's vocation as well.

We reject the false doctrine, as though the Church, over and beyond its special commission, should and could appropriate the characteristics, the tasks, and the dignity of the State, thus itself becoming an organ of the State.

Following this theological lead, the 1963 report on relations between church and state discarded the concept of Christianizing politics and nation in favor of relating critically and constructively to a world and state that God has reconciled. Taking its lead from God's work of reconciliation:

The church must call the state to a level of self-criticism which it cannot reach alone The church must be itself if the state is to be a state. American Presbyterians believe that the church must be relevant . . . [knowing Jesus' commands concretely and knowing our state and its problems critically]. In light of these considerations, we find a solid footing for relations with the state. The church must seek out those points at which the state, as it functions, is incompatible with the reconciliation of the world to God in Christ and challenge it to cease such activity Further, it must at the same time seek this same fact of reconciliation of the world to God in Christ and encourage it to continue and improve. A church seeking to be itself constantly challenges the state to be a true and authentic state. (UPC, 1963, p. 183-84)

There are good Presbyterian reasons to hold church and state at arm's length... the church has a prophetic political vocation to perform within American society.

The grassroots reception of the 1963 UPC and 1964 PCUS statements on church/state relations—coming on the heels of the unpopular Supreme Court decisions outlawing school prayer and Bible reading—was cool. The General Assemblies, it seemed, had sold out on public recognition of Christian faith, just as the Supreme Court of the land seemed to turn its back on the traditional values its members were sworn to uphold. Then, as now, twenty-five years later, people who opposed movements toward social and economic justice, and who worried about America's loss of power in the world, rallied behind patriotic Christianized religion. Now, as then, the Presbyterian General Assemblies have continued to urge that there are good Presbyterian reasons to hold church and state at arm's

length, while maintaining that the church has a prophetic political vocation to perform within American society.

It has been within the last decade that, given the reassertion of religion's role in political life by Protestant evangelical and fundamentalist groups such as the Moral Majority, church/state concerns have again emerged as a topic of interest to the Presbyterian General Assemblies. In 1984, the General Assembly adopted a resolution opposing the establishment of diplomatic relations between the U.S. government and the Vatican. Even though its protest proved fruitless in the end, the church was on record as having opposed the establishment of any form of official representation between the federal government and any religious entity. (PCUSA, 1984, p. 350) In these years church/state issues have also been raised in the context of laws respecting clergy confidentiality, and the General Assembly took on the issue as a matter of conscience, declaring that was a spiritual and professional duty of clergy to hold in confidence matters revealed to them in their counseling, caring, and confessional ministries, and that "being called to testify in a court of law does not negate this sacred obligation, the law of God being prior to the laws of human courts." (PCUSA, 1987, p. 339) Most recently, in 1988, the General Assembly adopted a major policy statement on religious liberty, entitled "God Alone Is Lord of the Conscience." Among its recommendations, the 1988 report strongly opposed a Constitutional amendment to return prayer to the public schools, or any other attempts to achieve governmental sponsorship of religious practice.

When the various statements of the General Assemblies on church-state relations over the last thirty years are examined, several consistent social teachings emerge. The first of these is that *the state should not impose religion or force it upon its citizens*. Whether the people are opposed to enforced religion or not is beside the point. The issue, as the churches saw it, is that publicly mandated religion is rarely if ever authentic or good religion. Furthermore, a civil religion acceptable to all Americans or even all Christians is in the church's view unacceptable; a religion of the least common denominator of faith is antithetical to true faith, which consists in believing the truth as it is revealed to and interpreted by a believing community. This principle motivated the guidance offered by the 1963 UPC Assembly on religion in the public school:

All persons should recognize the administration of religious training and observance as the domain of church and family.

Since the association of seasonal activities with religious holidays tends to pervert their religious significance, such association should be discouraged.

Religious observances should never be held in a public school.

The second principle of church/state relations Presbyterians repeatedly affirm is one directed at giving the individual's conscience room to operate within the culture. It can be summarized in this way: *Voluntarism in the public practice of religious beliefs is consistent with the law of the land and with Christian faith.* The church teaches that people must be free to express their beliefs and to practice them in public as well as privately. ("One who acknowledges me not before others, I will not acknowledge before the Father.") The church also maintains that the law must not prohibit the free expression of religion in any place, including the school, so long as coercion of others is not involved. The church therefore has supported these positions as flowing from this principle:

Religious leaders should be free to speak in the public schools so long as their speaking does not "constitute religious indoctrination." (UPC, 1963, p. 186)

Presbyterians [should] not be misled by allegations that their children do not now have the right to pray in public schools. (UPC, 1982, p. 303)

Churches have a right of autonomy protected by the Free Exercise clause of the First Amendment. Each worshipping community has the right to govern itself and order its life and activity free of government intervention.

The right to choose one's own religion, and to change that choice, is the most fundamental religious liberty. This right must be vigorously protected from governmental intrusion or physical coercion, either by those seeking to convert or those seeking to prevent conversion. This right should also be protected from fraud, but courts cannot evaluate claims of religious faith.

Pastors and officials of the church, as well as lay members, have the right and responsibility to stand for and hold public office when they feel called to do so.

We oppose attempts by government to limit or deny religious participation in public life by statute or regulation, including Internal Revenue Service regulations on the amount or percentage of money used to influence legislation, and prohibition of church intervention in political campaigns. We will join with others, as occasion permits, to seek repeal of such regulations and statutes, or a definitive ruling by the Supreme Court on their constitutionality. (PCUSA, 1988, p. 548)

The Assemblies' consistent hope for an open exchange of religious views in a democratic and religiously free society was well expressed in the 1983 Assembly's policy statement on "Reformed Faith and Politics" in these words:

In the Reformed view no action of the state should enshrine a particular religious view in law or constitution. On the other hand, no action of the state should preclude the open discussion of issues and advocacy of views by people moved by religious concern to gain public acceptance of policies rooted in a Christian understanding of justice for society and for persons. (PCUSA, 1983, p. 778)

The third principle is this: *An effective witness to Jesus Christ requires an unencumbered church.* The church should not be obligated to the state. The church is called to let nothing interfere with its mission of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ and serving God. Obligations to the state for “favors” can get in the way of this primary obligation. It is in this spirit that the 1988 Assembly carefully crafted church policy on tax exemption, freely giving up any special treatment not justified by the First Amendment or neutral principles of law:

The state may not tax the central exercise of religion or property essential to the core functions of religion. We hold that the application of the restrictions in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code to the speech of the church and its leaders are an unconstitutional limitation on a central exercise of religion.

We affirm the legitimacy of taxing unrelated business income and property used to generate such income.

Special tax exemptions or burdens for the property and income of ministers or other church employees are inappropriate. They should be phased out over a period long enough to accommodate the reliance of many churches on existing exemptions.

Payments to government for specific services billed separately to all property owners are not “taxes” and may legitimately be required of religious organizations at the same rate as for other property owners. (PCUSA, 1988, p. 548)

The fourth principle amounts to a new golden rule of “do unto others’ religion as you would have them do unto yours”: *No one religion, in fairness to others, should seek to enforce its own moral standards upon others who do not share those standards or the beliefs upon which they are based.* This principle has been an important factor in the Presbyterian position on blue laws, censorship, the availability of contraception and abortion, and so-called “deprogramming,” as these statements show:

The church bears sole responsibility for securing from its members a voluntary observance of the Lord’s Day. The church should not seek the coercive power of the state in order to facilitate Christian observance of the Lord’s Day. (UPC, 1963, p. 189)

United Presbyterians defend the right of a religious community to forbid its own members from exposing themselves to particular material . . . but oppose the use of civil authority to censor on religious grounds privately promulgated material offensive on the same grounds to any religious groups, including their own. (UPC, 1963, p. 192)

Government payments on behalf of individuals, under programs such as Medicare, Medicaid, and scholarship assistance, should without exception be available to clients and students at church-sponsored agencies and institutions

on exactly the same terms as if those patients or clients were receiving their services from secular entities.

We oppose judicial and legislative efforts to interfere with freely chosen and maintained religious commitments by legal adults, whether based on attempts to define legally undesirable "cult" religion, the use of conservator and guardian procedures, or reversal through legally authorized deprogramming. (PCUSA, 1988, p. 548)

The fifth and final principle is: *People's religion or religious beliefs should not penalize them in relation to society, nor should it put them in a position of undue favor.* This proposition has had several important applications in General Assembly support for the policy of providing human resources and welfare services to children, whether or not they go to public schools, and the teaching that candidates should not be evaluated solely on the basis of their religious affiliation. This principle also stands behind the General Assemblies' several attempts to remove clergy exemptions from military duty and from the payment of taxes on certain kinds of income.

To summarize the key social teachings on church and state:

- **The state should not impose religion or force it upon citizens.**
- **Voluntarism in the public practice of religious beliefs is consistent with the law of the land and with Christian faith.**
- **An effective witness to Jesus Christ requires an unencumbered church. The church should not be obligated to the state.**
- **No one religion, in fairness to others, should seek to enforce its own moral standards upon others who do not share those standards or the beliefs upon which they are based.**
- **People's religious beliefs should not penalize them in relation to society, nor should it put them in a position of undue favor.**



DEMOCRATIC VALUES IN TIMES OF CRISIS

There have been times of crisis in our nation's history when the American people, gripped by eventful news but trapped in confusion, have been forced to make major choices. During the second half of the twentieth century we have lived through several of these times—McCarthyism, school desegregation, Watergate, the Vietnam war, the assassination of leaders, campus unrest, the Iranian hostage crisis, to name a few.

When the church has addressed the all-consuming concerns of such times, it has done so by offering guidance for responsible judgment in the crisis. The church's best responses to national crises have been fully contextual; they have come to grips with the facts being reported in the news media and discussed in people's living rooms. At the same time, a social teaching has emerged out of a series of these episodes, emphasizing the kind of values that the American people must maintain during periods of confusion. The Presbyterian churches have spoken most helpfully when they have perceived the full tragic dimensions of a crisis and have spoken relevantly to those time-bound occasions in terms of transcendent values.

The greatest of these statements, many think, was "A Letter to Presbyterians." The letter was issued by the General Council of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. in October 1953 (and endorsed seven months later by the General Assembly) to provide a word of reasoned guidance in the midst of the "witch hunts" for communists led by Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin. "McCarthyism" gripped the country and, in its zeal to root out communists from positions of influence in all areas of life—politics, the movies, music, publishing, the press, academia, medicine—had trampled over constitutional guarantees of due process. The reputations of many Americans were damaged and even the innocent were often impugned; innuendo and circumstantial evidence replaced fact and proof as the currency of justice. Although many Americans were uncomfortable with McCarthy's methods, most were adamantly opposed to communism and could not reconcile the need to oppose communism with the desire to uphold traditional American freedoms. The loss of some cherished freedoms was seen by many to be a fair price for combating communist totalitarianism.

The letter was written largely by John A. Mackay, president of Princeton Seminary, then also the chairman of the General Council, and it came to be known as the Mackay Letter. Dr. Mackay had been inspired to draft the letter by a sermon, "The Light from Beacon Hill," preached in the seminary's Miller Chapel by Professor Paul Lehman. Mackay wanted to address both communism and McCarthyism through the categories of faith. In the process, he offered five foundational Christian social principles on the values of democracy.

A social principle emanates from a theological one: religious toleration and religious liberty beget social toleration and liberty.

The first of these principles rises out of Mackay's analysis of the events of the preceding three-and-a-half years. "Treason and dissent are being confused," says the letter. "The shrine of conscience and private judgment, which God alone has a right to enter, is being invaded. Un-American [note the ironic use of the term] attitudes toward ideas and books are becoming current. Attacks are being made upon citizens of integrity and social passion that are utterly alien to our democratic tradition." The letter probes further: "They are particularly alien to the Protestant religious tradition that has been a main source of the freedoms that the people of the United States enjoy." Thus we are told that a social principle emanates from a theological one: religious toleration and religious liberty beget social toleration and liberty. Therefore, Christians who proclaim how much they cherish religious liberty must also work for the preservation of other forms of toleration. The straightforward teaching of the letter is this: *Dissent is not treason, and in a free society they must never be confused.*

The second principle that the letter put forward reads, "*The Christian Church has a prophetic function to fulfill in every society and in every age.*" While this teaching has been touched on before, the way that the Mackay Letter articulated the proper relationship between the church and government is sufficiently clear and forceful to bear notice:

While it is not the role of the Christian Church to present blueprints for the organization of society and the conduct of government, the Church owes it to its own members and to [people] in general, to draw attention to violations of those spiritual bases of human relationship which have been established by God. It has the obligation also to proclaim those principles, and to instill that

spirit, which are essential for social health, and which form the indispensable foundations of sound and stable policies in the affairs of state.

This was perhaps the most concise argument for the prophetic function of the church ever offered in the Presbyterian church. It also went to the heart of the chief criticism of the prophetic role. To the complaint that the prophetic mode of address is unconstructive and negative, the letter replied that it was not the role of the church to be constructive, to offer blueprints, but to assure the faithfulness of the government; just as it was not the biblical prophet's role to be king but, instead, to hold the king accountable to God.

Under the heading, "The majesty of truth must be preserved at all times and at all costs," the letter put forward its third great principle of democracy: *when it comes to truth, the end never justifies the means*. Mackay found it particularly tragic that though communism was committed to a "philosophy of lying," "democracy, in fighting communism, is in danger of succumbing through fear and in the name of expediency, to the selfsame philosophy." Expediency is never to be deemed an adequate justification for falsehood or for withholding the truth. The long-term ramifications of such actions are too great. "People will become accustomed to going through life with no regard for rules or sanctities."

The fourth message delivered in the letter was a reminder that "*God's sovereign rule is the controlling factor in history*." The importance of this affirmation relates to the ongoing debate about how much national defense makes for a secure nation. The letter spoke of the ultimate futility of such a debate, saying, "That we have the obligation to make our nation as secure as possible, no one can dispute. But there is no absolute security in human affairs, nor is security the ultimate human obligation." The ultimate human obligation, in true Calvinist form, is to act "in accordance with the will of God."

Dissent is not treason and is, instead, a necessary part of life in a free society.

The fifth social teaching inherent in the Letter to Presbyterians was that *negotiation is the preferred way for persons committed to Christian values and democratic processes to solve differences—even with people and nations who do not share those values and commitments*. "We must take the risk and even the initiative," reads the letter, "of seeking, face to face, encounter with our enemies. We should meet them officially, whatever

their ignominious record, and regardless of the suffering they have caused us.” There is a great temptation to assume a position of moral superiority in human conflict and therefore to refuse to negotiate. But Mackay found that the Bible taught that this kind of positioning is inadequate and out of harmony with God’s will, for “direct personal conference has been God’s way with [humanity] from the beginning. ‘Come now, and let us reason together’ was the word of God to Israel through the prophet Isaiah.”

In the following years, Presbyterian General Assemblies would again repeat the themes enunciated in the Letter to Presbyterians. In the course of other crises, commissioners, ministers and elders together, would again perform “a distinct service of precisely the sort [for] which a free people looks.”

DISSENT AND CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

The principle that dissent is not treason and is, instead, a necessary part of life in a free society was stressed repeatedly by the General Assemblies throughout the social upheaval of the 1960s. When students and clergy joined in demonstrations and freedom rides to protest racial segregation, the UPC General Assembly upheld their right to demonstrate peacefully. The Assembly stated its belief that the demonstrations, “while in some cases conflicting with local laws or customs, seem to be consistent with our Christian heritage, the Federal Constitution, and the moral consensus of our nation.” Moreover, while urging demonstrators to “recognize the dangers to the civil order,” the Assembly laid down a principle of support for those who, for the sake of conscience, participate in responsible, nonviolent acts of demonstration. (UPC, 1960, p. 355)

The PCUS further codified the Presbyterian churches’ approval of acts of dissent in its 1965 statement on civil disobedience, which it defined as “the open, nonviolent and conscientious refusal to obey a law or laws, as a means of appeal to a higher authority, combined with the willing acceptance of the penalty,” and affirmed that:

The church exists to unite [human beings] by God’s grace with themselves, with God, and with their fellows—to make them whole. Therefore, it should give the support of Christian compassion to any member who, following his [or her] conscience in obedience to the Word, engages in civil disobedience. (PCUS, 1965, p. 160)

UPC Assemblies of 1966 and 1967 affirmed the rights and responsibilities of student dissent and public protest as the Vietnam war intensified and, in response to quickened awareness of poverty, racism, and urban blight, endorsed “democratic, indigenous community organizations that enhance the processes by which people, and especially poor people, can

effectively participate in the solution of problems in housing, employment, and education.”

The clearest support for civil disobedience in recent Presbyterian history was enunciated by the General Assembly of the UPC in 1969 in the context of the Vietnam war. That Assembly supported young men who conscientiously refused to participate in the war. It further recommended that the federal government provide a legally available option of selective conscientious objection to war in addition to the legal protection made available to those who oppose all wars. The Assembly stated:

While granting the authority of the state, with its legitimate powers, we also acknowledge the freedom of the individual conscience under God which may lead a person, when he [or she] judges that the pretensions and injustices of the civil authorities endanger human welfare, to reject, ignore, or oppose the authority of the state. (UPC, 1969, p. 696)

Meanwhile, the PCUS Assemblies of the period experienced annual struggles between supporters of “law and order” and the majority who welcome constructive dissent. In 1969 the Assembly issued a strong statement recognizing the roles of dissent and civility in society:

This General Assembly affirms its belief in the right of and necessity for conscientious dissent among all members of society, and its further belief that dissent is constructive and salutary when it does not deny the rights of others nor imperil those very institutions and structures it seeks to reform; and calls upon students and faculties to refrain from force or the threat of force in exercising that very right of dissent without which democracy would be a mockery and earnestly implores that they deny their support, both active and passive, to those who would resort to such force. (PCUS, 1969, p. 110)

In the 1980s a new issue arose that called on this aspect of the church’s social teaching. People of faith were disturbed that their government was playing callous games with the lives of Central American refugees, defining some as “political refugees” when they came from communist countries and others as “economic refugees” because they had fled oppression in countries friendly to the United States government. Most of these refugees told stories of torture and murder directed at themselves, families, or friends. Still, the State Department refused to grant political asylum to many who obviously deserved it and sought to deport these refugees as illegal immigrants to their countries of origin. The refugees returned against their will faced uncertain futures and sometimes death.

Overnight, a network of Protestant and Catholic Christians sprung up to frustrate the Department of State’s plan and save the lives of innocent Central Americans. Modeling their movement on the medieval practice of allowing no warriors to pursue or capture human beings in the church

sanctuary, they became known as the sanctuary movement. Throughout the 1980s the General Assemblies applauded these North American Christians' attempts to put faith into action. The nature of the Assembly's support of this particular kind of faithful disobedience is indicated by this resolution adopted in 1984:

Therefore, the 196th General Assembly (1984):

Continues to oppose as both illegal and immoral the policy of the current Administration to deny safe haven to Central American refugees in the United States.

Expresses deep concern about the attacks by the current Administration on church workers who in ministering with refugees from Central America are trying to prevent them from being sent back to their countries of origin where they face great personal danger.

Expresses its firm support and encouragement for those individuals and churches who, from the base of their Christian convictions or for humanitarian reasons, have risked imprisonment in order to save the lives of refugees from Central America by helping them to avoid being sent back to the countries they have fled. (PCUSA, 1984, p. 736)

THE CHURCH'S PROPHETIC FUNCTION

When has the church played the role of prophet? In addition to its role in opposing McCarthyism, and playing a significant role in the civil rights and sanctuary movements, the church has had other high moments of calling the nation to moral responsibility.

In 1970, in an emotional and conflict-ridden meeting, the UPC General Assembly adopted a firm position against continuing the war in Vietnam. The statement, "Not Lightly, but Under Grave Restraint," began with quotations from the Bible to establish the theological framework for the controversial position that would follow:

Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin
Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, says the Lord God; so turn and live. (Ezek. 18:30-32)

Do everything possible on your part to live at peace with all [people]. (Rom. 12:18) . . . his spirit fills us with power and love and self-control. (2 Tim. 1:7)

The statement then spoke out of the anguish felt by commissioners as Christians and as Americans: "Like the biblical Israelites we feel the sharp tension between God's reconciling power and the momentum of national pride." (UPC, 1970, p. 883) But it went on to choose the side of peace rather than a peace conditional upon the preservation of honor.

The General Assembly's position, which had been equivocal—we think the war is wrong, but there are problems with either escalation or withdrawal—was now unmistakable:

The 182nd General Assembly (1970) of the United Presbyterian Church:

1. Declares its opposition to the continuation of military combat by the Armed Forces of the United States of America in Southeast Asia, particularly because the Congress has not declared a state of war with the government of North Vietnam.
2. Urges that, in the absence of a declaration of a state of war . . . , all military combat by U.S. Armed Forces in Southeast Asia be terminated. (UPC, 1970, p. 886)

There was more to the statement, but the Assembly had arrived at the point of prophetic certainty: this is wrong and we will oppose it.

Again, in 1971 and 1972, as the controversy over busing to achieve racial integration in the schools heated up, the Assemblies spoke in a prophetic way to resist policies that would scuttle public education in order to maintain segregated schools. The 1971 PCUS General Assembly declared itself “disturbed” by the creation of private academies to circumvent public school desegregation orders. The Assembly noted that there was a real danger that such academies would allow communities to avoid their responsibility to provide a quality education for all their children, regardless of race. The church added muscle to this position by calling it “inappropriate” for Presbyterian churches to allow their buildings to be used as sites for these “white-flight” schools. (PCUS, 1971, p. 95)

The 1972 UPC General Assembly tried to defuse the cross-district busing controversy by stating the case for quality education for all persons and then urged “members of local churches to exert influence in the public realm to attain quality, integrated education for all, which may in certain instances include transportation of students across boundaries of present school districts.” (UPC, 1972, p. 1021)

THE PRESERVATION OF TRUTH

What the Mackay Letter called the “majesty of truth” has been a rallying point for later General Assembly actions. If truth is essential to freedom, the free flow of information is essential to guaranteeing the truth. It was with this idea that the 1973 PCUS General Assembly expressed its concern over the excessive levels of secrecy practiced by some governmental agencies. This kind of concern, together with the fact that even the Congress had trouble gaining access to necessary information from the federal bureaucracy, led to the passage of the

Freedom of Information Act.

The corollary to freedom of information is the individual's right to privacy. The church has seen that one of the key elements of totalitarian repression is when the government has too much information and the people too little information for the good of society or for the maintenance of anything approaching objective truth. The repressive aspects of unwarranted government intrusion into the lives of its citizens, and the possibilities for an increase in the number and scope of invasions of privacy with the advent of the computer age, led the 1973 UPC General Assembly to adopt the Report of the Task Force on Privacy, which concluded:

Today, in light of our theological and legal heritage, privacy must be safeguarded more specifically. This right needs to be developed in American law at a pace commensurate with the potential invasions of privacy made possible by changing technology and organizational practice. Nothing less than the quality of freedom is at stake in the effort to preserve areas of personal and associational privacy. (UPC, 1973, p. 535)

In the Letter to Presbyterians, the church was teaching that in a free society expediency and efficiency could never justify untruthfulness or the withholding of truth. Similarly the 1973 statement on privacy attacked the argument that indiscriminate information collection and sharing were justified by the standards of government expediency or business efficiency.

The following year, the UPC and the PCUS both addressed the developing scandal of Watergate. The UPC framed its teaching along the lines indicated by the title of its statement, "Political Expedience and the Moral Crisis." The parallels between "Political Expedience" and the Mackay Letter are striking, as demonstrated in this excerpt from the statement:

America, at an historical moment of great wealth and power, finds itself in a crisis of moral integrity and direction. The extent of political expediency in national life has been shocking, almost unbelievable to the American people.

The very values of success, money, prestige, and power upon which America has depended are now exposed as the means by which the presidency and the inner councils of the national administration have been abused and corrupted. The very values that have been so pre-eminent are now the scourge of the American conscience. (UPC, 1974, pp. 619-20)

Again in Watergate, as in the McCarthy years, the national government or leadership had lost its moral base and had failed to uphold truth, freedom, fair play, due process, and other cardinal virtues of American democracy at its finest. Moreover, the nation had allowed, perhaps even

encouraged, its leadership to lose touch with those same virtues. Yet the church, once more, as in the Mackay Letter, sounded a note of hopefulness in affirming:

It is the responsibility of the church to call ourselves and our nation to a vision and practice of righteousness. We speak out not in anger but in sadness. We speak out not in presumption but with humility . . . we invite our people and all people of goodwill to join us in a self examination of our individual, corporate and national lives, to the end that we may change our ways and move toward moral integrity. (UPC, 1974, p. 621)

Life does not have to be corrupt; God desires that we live in integrity with one another and in our national life.

That note of repentance from the church, given the recriminations that abounded that spring, is poignant. It also represents a facet of church social teaching at its best. For here the church did not point the finger at an "other," but rather confessed that this is our problem . . . a social problem that all must help to solve. The church also recognized the depth of a tragedy while asserting the positive side of its faith: life does not have to be corrupt; God desires that we live in integrity with one another and in our national life. A starting point for moral integrity is the preservation of truthfulness.

With truthfulness again so disdained by men close to the President in the Iran-Contra scandal of the mid-1980s, the General Assembly of 1987 once again expressed its dismay that the members of the Administration thought so little of democratic process that they sought to accomplish their objectives by deceit. It urged a full investigation, not only of the violations of the law but also of the underlying policy that led to those actions, "namely the evident but officially denied commitment to overthrow an elected government in violation of treaty obligations of the United Nations and the Organization of American States." (PCUSA, 1987, p. 338)

NEGOTIATIONS TO RESOLVE CONFLICTS

As General Assemblies have endorsed negotiations in inter- and intra-national conflicts, they have implicitly taught that conflict itself is necessary. Through conflict, injustice is brought to light and people make a difficult transition to a situation of either increased or decreased

social justice. Therefore, the church that seeks God's purpose should not oppose conflict per se, for that would be to close the door to the possibility of greater justice in human affairs. While conflict can be healthy, the church has been careful to argue that there are some ways of being in conflict that are evil or inappropriate.

A key theme over decades of General Assembly pronouncements is the churches' opposition to the politics of hatred. The church historically has stood against movements that utilize prejudice or hate to attain social goals.

The PCUS Assembly of 1947 began its history of civil rights involvement by issuing a statement directed at the kind of activities carried on by the Ku Klux Klan. The Assembly condemned all organizations and individuals whose aim was to hinder "any minorities in the exercise of their civil rights or to deny such rights on the basis of race, creed, class or color."

In the course of the 1960 Presidential election, both Assemblies confronted the religious bigotry that sought to deny John F. Kennedy's right even to be considered as a candidate on the basis of his Roman Catholic faith. The PCUS Assembly refused a request from one of its presbyteries that it take a stand against Protestants voting for "any Catholic" for public office. The UPC General Assembly, on the other hand, noted that it believed "that it is an act of irresponsible citizenship to support or oppose a candidate solely because of his religious affiliation." (UPC, 1960, p. 359)

After George Wallace was shot in an assassination attempt, the northern General Assembly declared:

Murder cannot be permitted to become an expected risk in even the bitterest of campaigns for public office in America. Therefore, we call upon United Presbyterians and all Americans to reaffirm nonviolent modes of political activity and to make every effort to end violence as a means of political expression. We also, following God's will, deplore the killing of anyone, anywhere, for any reason. (UPC, 1972, p. 485)

The 1984 Assembly called upon the Congress to enact limitations on Political Action Committees (PACs) and on large campaign contributions in general, and to call for full disclosure of campaign financing. The Assembly even asked for disclosure of political contributions by all bodies related to PACs, including gifts to "independent" campaigns and public ballot measures. All of these practices were seen to contribute to office-holder conflicts of interest and to the quiet manipulation of political power for private interest. (PCUSA, 1984, p. 352)

In all of these actions, the church was teaching that while conflict was both good and necessary, there were some methods—assassination, ter-

rorism, kidnapping, intimidation, illicit manipulation of legal processes—that are intolerable ways of addressing conflicts. These methods, moreover, stand in the way of the true resolution of the matters and issues that divide people. By seeking to avoid a face-to-face confrontation with the other party, hate groups seek to submerge conflict. Any path but honest negotiation, in the church's view, amounts to a reversion to barbarism.

The key themes introduced by the Mackay Letter still speak to the democratic values Americans need to embrace in the midst of crises:

- **Dissent is not treason: it is rather a necessary part of life in a free society that seeks to improve itself.**
- **The church has a prophetic function to fulfill in every age and in every nation. The church must speak its conscience and urge the nation to faithfulness.**
- **Truth must be preserved at all costs: freedom depends on the free flow of information between government and the people and among people. At the same time the right of individual privacy is essential to the maintenance of an open society.**
- **Conflict provides the opportunity to realize a greater good when the political process and political actors respect the rights and dignity of people and groups involved in conflict. There can be no substitute for honest negotiations to resolve conflicts over public policy.**
- **God is sovereign over history and stands in judgment of persons, events, and movements. No human security or defense is ultimately secure. We put our trust not in weapons but in God. We will not therefore sacrifice the rights of a free people for the false promise of national security.**

PART THREE

ECONOMIC AND ECOLOGICAL STEWARDSHIP

All good things come from God. So all confessions of faith recognized by Presbyterians affirm. So too do most worship services offered by Christians. Prayers of thanksgiving and the collection of an offering are not empty gestures but acts of worship designed to ritually mark out our indebtedness to, and dependence upon, the God who creates and sustains the world in which we live, and move, and have our beings. Yet there is perhaps no other area (with the possible exception of U.S.-Soviet relations) where Presbyterian social teachings have been as controversial as in the area of economics.

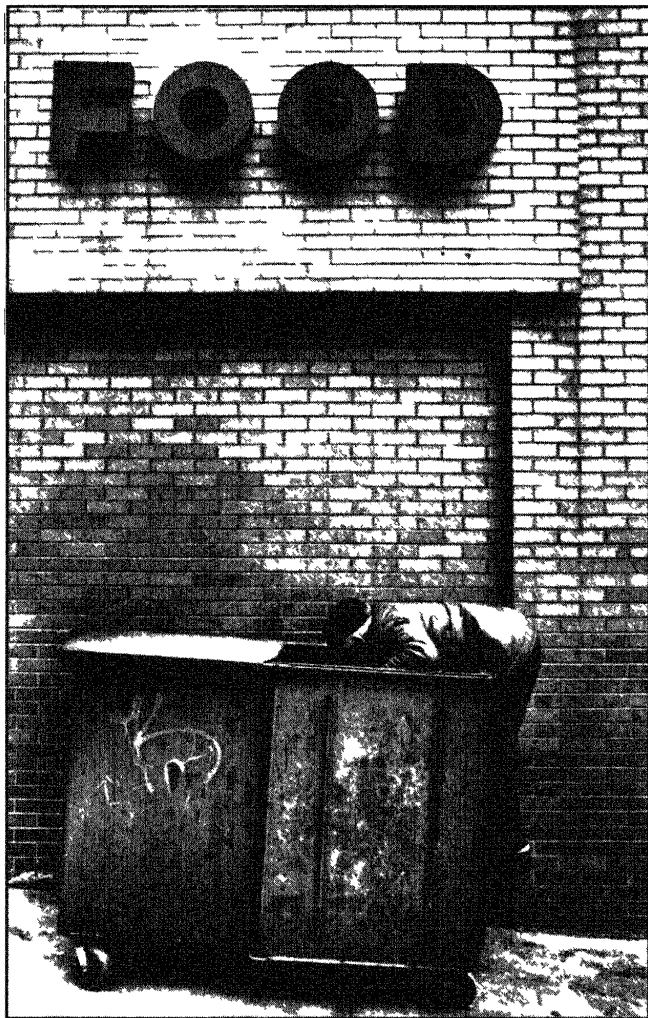
The word "economics" derives from the Greek work for household, *oikos*. Jesus' teachings were full of household imagery and economic allusions. Masters and servants, unjust stewards, poor widows, and vineyard owners who pay all laborers equally—all populate the sayings the Gospels attribute to him. Jesus often used these images to draw attention to the moral distance between the household of God and the economic behavior of human beings. Yet the household of God was the model Jesus held out for his followers. Loving treatment of the poor, hungry, and outcasts, and going the second mile are all themes of the Gospels and are essentially religious counsels about economic relations. Why then should Presbyterian social teachings on economics be controversial?

In part, the answer lies in the very fact of our living in the household. When we discuss employers and employees, "haves and have-nots," hungry nations and wealthy countries, we are discussing ourselves and talking about issues with which we have constant, direct contact. Yet that is not all, for people do not lose all ability to be altruistic by mere virtue of being close to an issue.

Part of the resistance to the church's economic social teachings has also to do with the fact that "... we rebel against God; we hide from our Creator. Ignoring God's commandments, we violate the image of God in others and ourselves, accept lies as truth, exploit neighbor and nature, and threaten death to the planet entrusted to our care." (A Brief Statement of Faith, lines 33-38) Most of us live our daily lives as though God were not the giver of life and thus have a difficult time believing that the household of humanity

can be conformed more to God's household: an economy in which shalom—peace with justice—reigns.

The singular task of the church is to keep before believers the task of reorienting their lives, relations, and societies to the will of God as best they can discern it. And so the social teaching of the Presbyterian church has often dealt with economic issues in theological ways. Here we consider the church's teachings on how God's creatures are called to share fairly in the fruits of creation in four general areas: hunger, the domestic economy, energy and the environment, and health care.



HUNGER

In 1979 the General Assemblies of the UPC and the PCUS, meeting jointly in Kansas City, issued a Common Affirmation on Global Hunger, including the following declaration:

We are convinced that our response to the crisis of world hunger can be greatly strengthened by our joint efforts on behalf of a common nationwide hunger action program within our Presbyterian family in the United States. (PCUS, 1979, p. 189; UPC, 1979, p. 583)

Thus was inaugurated the merging of two impressive, previously separate Presbyterian hunger efforts into the common Presbyterian Hunger Program with an annual budget in excess of four million dollars; projects in the areas of international and domestic hunger relief, food-related development assistance, public policy advocacy, education and interpretation, and lifestyle change; a detailed set of funding criteria; several full-time staff; a governing board; and relationships with several dozen other groups and institutions seeking an end to global hunger.

How did this complex project come about? Where in biblical thought or Reformed tradition does God command a multi-million-dollar hunger program? Nowhere, directly, but the Bible and the Reformed tradition do call Christians to help feed hungry people. For centuries people have been moved by the words of Jesus when he revealed the terms of the great judgment:

"... for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink . . ." Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord when did we see you hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give you drink?" And the King will answer them, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these, you did it to me." . . . then he will say to those at his left hand, "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels . . ., as you did it not to the least of these, you did it not to me." (Matt. 25:31-46)

In many ways the growth and development of the churches' involvement in the area of hunger provide a paradigm of how the church's social teachings build on the teachings of the prophets and of Jesus.

Beginning with the believer's responsibility to feed the hungry and

clothe the naked, the church has throughout the ages encouraged the corporate and individual charity of its members. In the late Roman period the Christian church was looked to as the guardian of the poor and as the sanctuary for those displaced by the social upheavals of the era. Then, medieval monasticism institutionalized charitable works supported by parish almoners and numerous male and female religious orders. In nineteenth century America many Protestant home mission societies concerned themselves with a list of activities drawn straight from the Sermon on the Mount and Matthew 25.

If feeding the poor and hungry has characterized the history of the Christian church, the way in which it has been done and the extent of the church's involvement have been subject to change. In the Presbyterian churches, the key shift in attitude came during the years of the Great Depression. In the words of the 1937 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.:

We believe that the time has come when the Church should address itself, not merely to the relief of poverty, but to its prevention and cure. (PUSA, 1937, p. 220)

This new approach on the part of the church to get to the root causes of hunger reflected a change in thinking about political economy in American society at large, featuring an optimism about using human skills and creativity to solve age-old problems. This hopefulness had a Christian manifestation, as this passage from the same General Assembly shows:

We believe that if our economic system worked as it should, there would be an opportunity for all to make a living, and that conditions of dire poverty would exist, if at all, in very limited areas and for limited periods of time. We have such confidence in the natural resources with which God has blessed our land and in the technological skills of our industrial managers and workers that we dare to propose to churchmen everywhere the ideal of a community without poverty. (PUSA, 1937, p.220)

The fundamental shift taking place in the church's social teaching in the 1930s was to combine theological ideals with secular plans for redistribution of wealth. This afforded a new way of going about obeying Christ's commands to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, and give drink to the thirsty.

Change in the churches' approach to hunger, particularly after World War II, was also the result of a different perception of the United States' role in the world. The United States emerged from the Second World War as the most powerful nation on earth, with material wealth second to none and a sense of having "saved the world." This sense of "America the good, America the powerful" pervaded the church as well as the nation. The

churches at this time began teaching about the responsibilities of power. One of these responsibilities was to feed the hungry of the world. The 1946 PCUS Assembly voted to “earnestly petition the Federal Authorities to assure the immediate equitable distribution of the surplus food stocks among those peoples now faced with the most amazing destitution known in human history.” (PCUS, 1946, p. 163)

The same kind of teaching was going on in the two northern branches of Presbyterianism. The 1951 UPNA Assembly addressed its members:

No matter in what situation the world finds itself, the “inasmuch” of our Lord Jesus Christ will always remain an unchangeable standard for determining our possession of his spirit. No plea of inflation, heavy war debt or fear for our own resources can discharge the duty we have as one of the most fortunate and wealthiest nations in the world, to help feed the millions who starve in other lands today. (UPNA, 1951, p. 1225)

The Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. was even more pointed in its teaching, saying in 1956, “To the shallow expression, ‘we never had it so good,’ the Christian must reply, ‘we never had such heavy demands upon the Christian conscience.’” (PUSA, 1956, p. 231)

The church began to emphasize food production statistics that showed that enough food was being produced worldwide so that it was possible to feed all people. Feeding the masses in the age of abundance became the new goal of the churches. Justice as an ideal became, in a new way, justice as a matter of redistributing resources.

The actions taken by the Assemblies of the subsequent years were in service of this goal. They voted to support U.N. food programs, called for U.S. foreign aid to be based solely on humanitarian need and to consist primarily of technical assistance, and endorsed moral appeals to produce and export surplus food to hungry nations and people. By the mid 1960s, however, it was becoming clear that inequities in the “age of abundance” were not disappearing and that hunger was actually growing. Frustration in the church over the wealthy nations’ inability and/or unwillingness to feed hungry people led to a great outpouring of feeling in the 1969 PCUS Assembly:

Hunger is the world’s most deadly curable disease. We permit 15,000 people—10,000 of them children—to starve to death every day. Unlike cancer, however, their sickness has a known cause and a known cure: food.

The General Assembly declares that world hunger is so real and grave that this problem is a top priority concern of the Presbyterian Church and that all possible resources of the . . . Church, for at least the next five years, must be focused on ways and means of dealing with the problem. (PCUS, 1969, p. 100)

Hunger is such a powerful social concern because it is also so clearly

a theological concern. People who starve to death are people for whom Christ died. The relief of hunger is so essential to faithfulness as to require new means—in this case, the creation in 1969 by the PCUS of a Hunger Program, the first hunger program in any denomination in the United States.

Meanwhile, the UPC began to deepen its analysis of the causes of poverty and hunger and to develop extensive mission programs with special regional committee structures financed by the mechanism of the annual Lenten offering, One Great Hour of Sharing. Initially this large fund supported world relief activities using church networks to alleviate disaster and famine as well as to resettle refugees. As the 1970s began the church encountered the justice demands of the Black Power and LaRaza movements. This pushed the UPC also to allocate part of this offering to a strategy of Self-Development of People, which supports economic empowerment projects in communities of the poor. Then, after several years of prodding by United Presbyterian Women to make hunger action a major mission priority, the 1975 UPC Assembly created a hunger program financed with about two million dollars of One Great Hour of Sharing funds annually. This program was most notable for delineating and implementing five emphases of hunger action that together address the problem systemically. These five emphases became the common agenda of the merged hunger programs in 1979. They are:

1. *Direct Food Relief*—so that immediate needs might be met.
2. *Development Assistance*—so that people might be enabled to feed themselves with the full dignity that being a child of God requires.
3. *Influencing Public Policy*—so that the channels of power and distribution might be directed toward the elimination of hunger, rather than its perpetuation.
4. *Lifestyle Integrity*—so that Presbyterians might see ways in which they can live up to their Christian commitment to feed those who hunger.
5. *Education and Interpretation*—so that Presbyterians might learn about hunger and relate its reality to the lived experience of their own lives and faith. (PCUS, 1977, p. 181)

The action of the 1979 Assemblies to join and expand their hunger programs was the result of considerable institutional experience in dealing with famine situations and with federal food programs. Moreover, their adopting action shows that the Presbyterian Hunger Program is a theologically focused practical response—a meeting of the events of the time and

timeless principles of faith:

We affirm that such a program priority is more than simply a response to the crisis itself, ominous as that may be. Rather, it is rooted in and grows out of our biblical faith:

- That God our Creator has made the world for everyone, and desires that all shall have daily bread.
- That God's prophets through the ages have pronounced judgment upon those who exploit and neglect the poor and hungry.
- That Jesus Christ our savior identified with the world's poor and came to announce good news to them.
- That Christ's Spirit is at work in the church, calling us to embody our savior's compassion and struggle for justice on the earth. (PCUS, 1979, p. 189; UPC, 1979, p. 383)

Most recently the General Assemblies' attentions have been drawn to the vast increases in domestic hunger in the 1980s and to periodic catastrophic famines in the developing world. When the federal government sought to balance its budget by forcing hungry people out of tax-supported nutrition programs the General Assembly responded:

The 196th General Assembly (1984):

Calls upon its congregations to investigate the extent and causes of hunger within their own communities, to renew their efforts to meet the immediate human needs, and to work for legislative and other systemic changes that will help to remove the reasons for hunger.

Calls upon the President and the Congress to renew their commitment to promote the welfare of all citizens through funding federal nutrition programs at levels adequate to meet the need and to reverse the trend of decreasing financial support for such programs.

Calls upon the President and the Congress to create a national nutrition monitoring system in order to determine the extent of need and design appropriate programs. (PCUSA, 1984, p. 328)

A year later, the 1985 Assembly considered the world food system and asked why there was starvation in Africa at the same time there was a domestic oversupply of food. It also suggested that concentration of agriculture in the hands of a smaller and smaller number of owners might be counter to the human interest in sustainable food and fiber agriculture. The Assembly proposed that the President and the Congress of the United States make available the national food reserves, as well as the transportation and logistics capabilities of the government, in order to provide emergency relief to those in need in Africa; to do so without distinction between "friend" and "foe"; and to call on the international community to be part of this effort.

The 1985 Assembly also called upon the United States government to

encourage and participate in an internationally coordinated plan, both for relief and for addressing the deeper cause of hunger—a plan in whose formulation African leaders must be equal partners with the rest of the international community, and which should include the development of fair international trade policies. (PCUSA, 1985, p. 377) In this way the church advocated policies consistent with its teaching. It showed concern for, and charity toward, those who were hungry in the present but also insisted that the root causes of hunger be addressed.

Basic social teachings on hunger may be summarized this way:

- **The right to food is a God-given right: it is a Christian duty to feed those who hunger, wherever they are.**
- **Of those to whom more is given, more is required. Americans, who are blessed with an abundance of food, have a special moral obligation to combat hunger.**
- **In combating hunger, God's justice requires us to move away from structures of dependence toward just systems where people can feed themselves and develop economically in communally healthy ways.**
- **An appropriate Christian response to hunger at home and abroad requires both direct food relief and continued action to deal with systemic causes of poverty, population increase, malnutrition, and famine.**



ECONOMIC JUSTICE

We have already seen, in reviewing Presbyterian social teachings on human rights, racial justice, justice for women, and hunger, and shall later see in sections on energy and the environment and on international affairs, that economic injustice is a root cause or basic pattern in perpetuating oppression, inequality, and deprivation. A decent job and income are human rights, as are a safe workplace and environment. Wage equity is critical to equal status for women. Hunger often occurs because people have little access to agricultural land, or they lack money to buy food. These dynamics very much concern a church that teaches, as matters of just public policy and human relations, that everyone needs and should be enabled to obtain an adequate minimum income or opportunity to earn one, and that all deserve proper nutrition, adequate health care, and decent housing.

This philosophy of economic justice has characterized Presbyterian social teachings since mid-century, and it was quite a shift of focus from the traditional Protestant simple blessing of work as “vocation” and “calling.” Even so, that emphasis did continue in Presbyterian economic thinking, as in these examples from PCUS Assemblies:

Churches should undertake the responsibility of impressing men, women and young people of the value and significance of daily work as Christian vocation. (PCUS, 1953, p. 92)

The means for such [industrial] relationships could manifest themselves in many ways, but in every case should speak to labor that a job is a vocational trust from God, and in the same manner should speak to management that the manipulation of men and women and materials for economic gain is a trust from God (PCUS, 1959, p. 160)

The northern branch of the church also addressed economic relations up until the 1930s almost exclusively in terms of the goodness of God’s providence, the need for charity, and above all the obligation to work. It was concern about scarce work that forced the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. into truly thinking about economic justice per se and into offering social teachings concerning economic issues. In the context of the Great

Depression the church began to explore the question: Why are the contributions of all persons to a society not valued justly . . . or sometimes not even wanted?

Half a century later, during the worst recession since the 1930s, and as the industrial economy experienced major restructuring, the reunited Presbyterian Church (PCUSA, 1983, pp. 441-445) began to respond to the crisis of "economic dislocation" with fresh teaching and action focused on the needs of persons and communities facing permanent loss of high-wage jobs and constant pressure to settle for lower wages in existing jobs. As had the first wave of automation (see the 1967 UPC study report on "The Church, the Christian, and Work"), the new economic crisis pushed the church to distinguish between vocation and employment, to foster "an understanding of human work that is not dependent upon being employed," and to show the love of God for displaced workers through a ministry of personal compassion and community empowerment. To support displaced workers and to help stabilize communities, the Assembly said:

No industrial society, regardless of its ideological basis, has ever before faced the problems now confronting us. In this situation the church must seek new expressions of pastoral ministries in neighborhoods and communities to support and nurture those affected by economic dislocation, . . . assist the development of local and regional organizing efforts to undergird the legitimate aspirations of unemployed persons for the dignity of work and the stabilization of community life, and seek a lifestyle for its members based on mutual sharing of needs and benefits, modeled on the gathered community of the Lord's Supper, and a renewed diakonia. (PCUSA, 1983, p. 443)

In such a way the church has begun to pay more attention to the systemic causes of joblessness and homelessness while working with those most affected. Still, the primary exposure most persons have to economic affairs happens in the workplace and in the marketplace, and the church has had much to say about both.

Since the adoption of a "social creed" by the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. in 1912, Assemblies have advocated much-needed changes in industrial relations, working conditions, wages and insurance, and in protection of the most exploited workers—children and migrants. Taking into account the business-conservatism of many Presbyterian constituents before, during, and after the Great Depression, we can appreciate the importance of the Assemblies' general support for the goals and rights of organized labor, even though the church may have approached the subject with an idealized image of industrial cooperation. After World War II the PUSA viewed the Taft-Hartley Act as a positive step, and it consistently opposed right-to-work laws because these gave industry unchecked,

paternalistic power over organized workers who were forced into “compulsory open shops.”

The 1948 PUSA Assembly went on record for protecting wage earners, recommended increased experimentation with an annual wage and private pensions, and advocated the extension of old-age protection under Social Security to the millions of workers—including its own ministers—not yet covered by the act. In 1952 the same church’s Assembly urged a “greater emphasis upon free collective bargaining in labor/management relations.” The Assembly also suggested that Presbyterians “participate more actively in management organizations and labor unions as an expression of Christian vocation.”

This concern for workers was extended to migrant farm laborers when the 1963 UPC General Assembly adopted a policy statement on ministry to migrant workers, which read in part: “ ‘Following the crops’ is not a satisfactory way of life. The supply of migratory workers should be reduced to a minimum by the elimination of the economic and social misfortunes that cause people to migrate.” The Assembly went on to propose that fair wages be legislated for migrant workers and that some job guarantees be provided, even at the cost of higher food prices.

In Presbyterian social teachings on economic life, there is a presumption in favor of an equal sharing of economic benefits and burdens, and there is a clear test of how well any economic system or policy is working: namely, how does it treat the poor? How well does it help “the least” meet basic human needs for food, shelter, health care, work, and community? In other words, Presbyterian thought on economic life demands a minimal sufficiency for all and a caring stewardship on the part of the rich and powerful to act with justice toward the poor.

The UPC, in its 1963 statement on migratory farm labor, illustrates these principles by emphasizing that justice toward the disadvantaged requires that those with the greatest economic power, including growers and consumers, support workers’ rights to adequate income, safe working conditions, and collective bargaining procedures to maintain some balance of power between owner-managers and workers. The goal of this General Assembly statement is a more equitable distribution of total agricultural income, as well as protection of worker health and safety and provision of basic social services.

These goals have persisted as features of Presbyterian social teaching down to the present day. The 1981 UPC Assembly thus acted to support southern woodcutters’ rights to organize and bargain collectively for fairer treatment, recognizing that “the conditions under which woodcutters work are often difficult, dangerous, and makeshift and that woodcutters are frequently subject to arbitrary and inequitable treatment when they sell the

wood they cut.” (UPC, 1981, p. 257) Likewise, the 1985 Assembly expressed its disapproval of the use of the concept of “sharecropping” to exclude farm workers from the protection of child labor, minimum wage, and workers’ compensation laws as guaranteed by the Fair Labor Standards Act. (PCUSA, 1985, p. 550) Presbyterian labor policy at its base amounts to this: everyone’s working contribution should be honored and fairly compensated, and anyone who works should be covered by adequate health and welfare benefits.

Yet there was a critical analytic flaw in viewing economic justice as applying primarily to fairness between employer and employee, namely, not recognizing the scarcity of good work as the economy continued to leave about one quarter of Americans unemployed or underemployed. And so, from just recompense for work, the church’s concern broadened into other economic areas: what about those who through no fault of their own—because of educational disadvantage, racial discrimination, economic dislocation, or structural unemployment—could not work? What about the aged, or the infirm person, or the single woman with children? What is our Christian economic responsibility to these people? How much is enough? Unemployment, full employment, tax reform, welfare reform, national income maintenance—responses to all of these problems rest on the church’s belief that the economy should treat persons fairly.

The range of issues that the church has addressed through this fairness perspective on work are manifold:

On Poverty

In 1956 the UPC General Assembly called on:

... churches to recognize their obligations and to ensure a continuing ministry to all persons regardless of their ability to pay for it, and work for public policies in such areas as housing, health, education, police protection, and public welfare programs, as instruments through which God can work in redeeming his creation. (UPC, 1956, p. 232)

In 1965 both Assemblies decried poverty. The UPC Assembly called upon its members to “repudiate all assumptions and attitudes that confuse respectability” with righteousness and preclude real identification with the poor.” (UPC, 1965, p.391) Meanwhile, the PCUS went on to cite the role that poverty played as a “powerful accessory to our social ills.” The southern Assembly noted that “as wealth is not the solution to every problem, so poverty is not the sole and basic cause of every problem.” And then the Assembly added a big “but”—“the alleviation of poverty would bring many of these other problems nearer solution.” (PCUS, 1965, p. 162)

On Unemployment

In 1964 the General Assembly of the UPC confronted the plight of those who "can't work":

Unemployment is not only an economic and social but moral and religious issue. It damages human beings. It challenges Christian compassion and stewardship. Prolonged unemployment wastes the skills, the talents and the dignity of those without work. It infects their children with hopelessness and despair. (UPC, 1964, p.303)

Both 1976 Assemblies called on public officials and church members to support legislation "directed toward the provisions of job opportunities for every American." (UPC, 1976, p. 154; PCUS, 1976, p. 87)

On Housing

A great responsibility of the church is for the maintenance of Christian family life. Therefore housing shortages, overcrowded slum conditions, dilapidated dwellings, which create group tensions, the degradation of persons, and the deterioration of family life demand Christian concern. (PUSA, 1954, p. 201)

In 1989 the General Assembly extended its concern to those having difficulty finding affordable housing in the United States, including a growing number of homeless persons. The Assembly based its call for solutions to the housing crisis on its understanding of the biblical witness:

Scripture bears witness to God's solidarity with the poor. The presence of unmitigated poverty is a testimony to the failure of human community according to God's plan. The rightness of our claim to be God's people must be judged, here as elsewhere, by our commitment to overcome those economic, social, and political forces which deny poor and disadvantaged people a home. To fail is to become the rich man of Luke 16, who failed in his responsibility for Lazarus outside the gate. (PCUSA, 1989, p. 517)

The 1989 Assembly also based its position on an analysis of recent political and economic changes:

The supply of available housing has decreased relative to the need for housing, particularly for renters. The vacancy rate for homeowners, who constitute approximately two-thirds of all U.S. households, is relatively stable (between 1 and 2 percent), but for renters the vacancy rate in 1983 was 5.9 percent, down from 7.1 percent in 1980. In many urban areas, vacancies are considerably fewer. Contributing to this decrease in available rentals are changes in land use, arson, abandonment, condominium conversion, gentrification (when higher-income people revitalize and restore low-income urban neighborhoods), and demolition. Low-income housing units are hard hit by this loss of stock each

year. Estimates are that from 200,000 to 1,000,000 fewer low-income units are available each year.

Finally, its social policy on housing and homelessness was based on a theological reflection on the distance between present society and what faith requires:

Christians must ask: "Why has decent and affordable housing not yet been recognized as a basic human right by everyone in the United States?" It is clear that in matters of housing, we are far from being a moral people, far from being a just people.

Thus the public policies that the General Assembly of 1989 directed its Social Justice and Peacemaking Unit to advocate were direct outgrowths of its social teaching. Such policies would:

- fund acquisition and construction of housing by community development corporations and other not-for-profit groups;
- develop new public and public/private initiatives that will increase the availability and affordability of housing for low- and moderate-income people, with a focus on long-term solutions;
- prevent the displacement of low-income tenants from subsidized housing;
- stop the demolition and sale of public housing and fund full operating subsidies and capital grants for modernization and rehabilitation of public housing;
- provide energy assistance for low-income people;
- eliminate discriminatory practices because of age, sex, or race; and
- call for the full funding of legislation for emergency food and shelter efforts, rehabilitation of buildings for shelters, and transitional housing for families with children. (PCUSA, 1989, p. 517)

On Federal Spending and Taxing

General Assemblies have spoken on behalf of a federal economic policy that is humane and sensitive to the needs of persons, taxes on the basis of equity, and while supporting private initiative, does not allow private interest to trample the poor, disenfranchised, or unemployed. Typical stands of the past include pleas not to solve inflation through increased unemployment, advocacy of maintaining a high level of spending for human services, and government programs of job training and job creation. The Assemblies have also periodically addressed the issue of taxation and its injustices:

A survey of biblical references to taxation illustrates the fact that inequitable

taxation and taxpayer resistance are not new. The people of God have long struggled with taxes as an issue of social justice. As the struggle continues, the church must confront the social injustice evident in our tax structures in a manner that is consistent with our biblical and confessional traditions. [Progressive] reform of existing tax structures and specific taxes must be our goal. (UPC, 1973, p. 528)

And the 1990 Assembly addressed the issue in this way:

Whereas, numerous studies have shown that investing in people—beginning with early prenatal care, and continuing with adequate health care, education, nutrition, and family support, when needed—will not only create a more humane and harmonious community but also reduce future budget deficits by lowering taxpayer expenditures for hospital care, welfare, prisons, and so forth, and by increasing tax revenues as a result of the higher incomes of healthier, better adjusted and educated persons;

Therefore, the 202nd General Assembly (1990):

Directs the Stated Clerk to send a copy of this overture and a letter to the President of the United States, and to every member of Congress, urging them to place the highest priority on developing a legislative program (a) to more adequately meet social and economic needs, and (b) to reduce the federal deficit. To the extent this cannot be done by reducing military or other spending, requesting them to approve legislation (a) to increase taxes and (b) to make the tax structure more equitable and progressive. (PCUSA, 1990)



On Welfare Reform

The Assemblies have advocated major reforms of the welfare system including a guaranteed annual income, assistance to one- and two-parent households, income primarily in money, strong incentives to work together with job training, and raising assistance levels genuinely to meet basic needs. In their separate income policy statements of 1971, moreover, the two Assemblies made clear their shared view that, in the words of the UPC Assembly:

Since God has created life and the material resources to sustain life, [human beings] do not have the right to deny life by withholding the means of existence to some. It is not something for [people] to give in expectation of gratitude or to grant or withhold as an economic inducement. Neither is it to be rationed out to those who deserve it, as though humankind could be divided into those who do and those who do not deserve what God has given freely and lovingly. (UPC, 1971, p. 652)

Welfare reform policies again became a popular topic in the 1980s, and the Assemblies of 1984 and 1987 were clear in their attempts to turn aside the vindictive, unfeeling nature of many “workfare” proposals in favor of lasting job training and economic empowerment programs. In the words of the 1987 Assembly:

The General Assembly urges members, prebyteries, and synods to monitor plans for welfare reform on the state and national levels, paying particular attention to welfare-to-work proposals, urging that:

- Welfare-to-work programs be voluntary rather than mandatory;
- Employment training be for jobs that will pay a living wage;
- The focus be on job creation where jobs at a living wage do not exist, whether through self-development or through public service jobs;
- Adequate child care and transportation be provided to people in training programs; and
- Continued health benefits for parents and children be made available to persons as they reenter the work force. (PCUSA, 1987, p. 581)

Presbyterian thought and action concerning economic justice has developed in three movements. First, building on social gospel thinking, the church of the 1930s and 1940s enunciated visionary measures for a just economic order. But the vision was to be achieved by a familiar method of voluntary and cooperative individual effort. Second, as the realities of poverty and unemployment gained the church’s attention in the 1950s and 1960s, the Assemblies called for federal legislative initiatives to achieve realistic goals of public employment, job training, housing subsidy, and income support. This shift of concern and strategy was a logical result of

awakening to the sociological realities of organized power and institutional responsibility.

On Corporate Responsibility

Finally, in the 1970s, Presbyterian Assemblies and councils began to formulate policy for effective use of the church's own corporate resources in the struggle for justice. This led the United Presbyterian Church of the early 1970s to support the United Farm Workers in boycotting grapes, wine, and lettuce. A boycott was deemed appropriate in that case and again in 1979 for products of J.P. Stevens and the Nestlé Corporation as there was no effective legislative or shareholders' strategy to reach the same goal.

As an investor as well as a purchaser, the church can at least "put the power of its dollar on the side of the right." (PCUS, 1968, p. 100) The 1971 Assembly affirmed "ethical criteria and guidelines for church investors in pursuit of peace, racial justice, economic and social justice, and in the establishment of environmental responsibility," growing out of the Confession of 1967. (UPC, 1971, p. 598) Implementation of these guidelines by the Committee on Mission Responsibility Through Investment brought the Presbyterian Church as a power-conscious body into direct and continuing institutional engagement with corporations, and into important disagreements among church agencies, in the search to be effective agents of change and to live with integrity. Currently this investment strategy features some important decisions about divestment of stocks in large weapons-making corporations and in businesses active in South Africa. The 1984 General Assembly expressed its understanding of the place of divestment in the church's life in this way:

It has been the Reformed tradition's bias toward pragmatic involvement in the world that allowed for church investments in the first place and then for the attempt at responsible investment. The theology of mission extends the concept of stewardship into society and insists that the full influence and impact of church investment be seen in the larger social context, with motivation beyond financial gain, important as that is.

The means of administering the investment activity of the church is known as trusteeship. Trusteeship within the church reflects both the particular purposes of the Christian community and the fiduciary responsibilities, legal requirements, and specific terms of trust that govern trustees.

In this context, divestment of holdings in a particular firm or class of firms is both part of the normal management of funds and potentially an occasion for Christian witness to God's call for justice and the renewal of society. (PCUSA, 1984, p. 193)

In addition to the above issues within the U.S. economy, the church has become increasingly concerned with international economic justice and a constructive overseas role for "mixed" (public and private) economic enterprise. This concern emerged after World War II and the sudden realization of the United States' role as a world economic power. Very quickly the General Assemblies began raising the question of how we were responsible for the material welfare of persons in other lands. The church became quite vocal about foreign aid objectives, support for programs of international sharing of agricultural techniques, trade policies and international development.

In recent years, these several areas of concern have been grouped into a category called international economic justice, and the General Assemblies have recommended specific actions toward this end, including lowering trade barriers to the products of developing nations, stabilization of world commodity prices at just levels, automatic mechanisms to transfer some resources from the rich to the poor nations, easing the debt burden for developing nations, and a reorientation of development strategies away from urban growth to strategies that enhance traditional societies and cultures. In a statement on international economic justice policy the PCUS offered a general economic ethic that emphasized:

Economic activity and material well being are in principle good . . . Economic activity is inherently social; and when understood and practiced properly, promotes the common good. . . . Economic activity as we know it, however, is distorted by human sinfulness. . . . God wills justice in the ordering of economic life; and God calls and empowers us to struggle for justice against the powerful human tendency to injustice Justice in biblical perspective requires particular attention to the needs of the poor. Whatever else justice may involve, it means at least that none shall, against his or her will, be deprived of the means to acquire the basic necessities of life as long as there are resources to provide them. (PCUS, 1980, p. 196)

This 1980 statement anticipated a major study document on "Christian Faith and Economic Justice" approved by the PCUSA 1984 Assembly. That document draws together several important threads of a biblical/theological perspective on economics and specifies the following requirements of an ethic of justice in economics: equal respect and concern for all, special concern for the poor and oppressed, response to basic human needs, respect for human freedom, contributions to the well-being of the community, and the fulfillment of our obligations to future generations. The study document, coupled with the 1983 report on "The Church and Transnational Corporations," illumines the massive transformations taking place in the global economy and underscores the need to develop ethical guidelines for economic conduct across national boundaries.

In sum, the following principles of economic justice are part of the church's social teachings:

- **Work is good and each contribution to the welfare of God's world for the benefit of humankind deserves to be recognized and compensated fairly. However, each person has a right to a just share of his or her society's economic produce, including the means of life—adequate food, clothing, shelter and education—regardless of that person's ability to work or the availability of good jobs.**
- **Each person has a right and a responsibility to contribute to the general welfare to the best of his or her ability. Every economic system has the obligation to provide opportunities for its members to do useful work or to receive sufficient income support.**
- **Participation in the economy is vital to human dignity and human self-worth. A just political economy does not accept significant unemployment nor disregard the health of its workers.**
- **Workers—as well as owners and managers—have a right to share in the profit of productive labor and need opportunities to bargain collectively for justice, as well as to have safe working conditions. Even well-intentioned paternalism robs persons of their dignity and must be opposed.**
- **The church's investments, divestments, and purchases should be utilized to express mission responsibility, with the goal of being faithful and effective in the quest for corporate social accountability and economic justice.**

ENERGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The two issues that concern us here—energy and the environment—first came into their own as chronic crises in the 1970s. The environment became an important public concern in 1969-1975, producing teach-ins, ecology buttons, an Earth Day, and the beginnings of new environmental protection legislation. Likewise, the “energy crisis” of 1974-1975 created new concern about conservation, alternatives to traditional sources of power, and a spate of legislative acts aimed at energy independence for the United States. Both of these times of peak social awareness also produced ethical reflection from the church.

The first word from either Presbyterian Church on the environment was a 1970 statement entitled “The Environmental Tragedy” that was received by the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church. The statement, as is appropriate to a first venture into ethical teaching about a subject, drew on the four bases of ethical decision making outlined in the Introduction: an interpretation of the biblical vision and theological tradition, an analysis of the situation, a statement of social principles, and a statement of policy choices.

Biblically

The biblical injunction to [humanity] to “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth” (Gen. 1:28-29) cannot be interpreted as a license to destroy. It is a commission to care for the whole creation.

Theologically

Many factors have contributed to our developing environmental tragedy . . . one is the assumption that [humanity] could exploit nature and its resources without risk to it [itself]. One commentator has indicted our Christian heritage for contributing to this attitude. We need, therefore, to reexamine seriously our present value system as one that has justified [humanity’s] unquestioned superiority over and exploitation of nature.

Analytically

The equating of technological advance with inevitable progress has often masked the recognition that modern technological enterprises are set within an economic system that encourages individual components to serve their own limited interests rather than those of the general welfare. It is not enough to find a technological answer to the problem . . . given the self-interest of . . . producers and consumers.

Setting forward social principles for ethical choices

Stewardship involves saying both yes and no to potentialities and opportunities open to [humanity]. There is no inevitable necessity that requires any particular technological development. Consequences must be weighed. Criteria of physical health and social benefit, as determined by competent and informed persons and groups, must provide a primary frame of reference for shaping what is to be done and what is to be left undone.

Recommending specific actions

. . . the church must (a) educate its own constituency; (b) insist upon value setting which results in environmental goals for the international community, nation, state, city, and neighborhood; (c) insist that priorities within these goals be selected; (d) participate actively in the formation of goals and selection of priorities at every level.

“The Environmental Tragedy” did not become official General Assembly policy. The 1970 Assembly, bogged down in its discussion of some of the other issues in the Church and Society report for that year, found time running out and a commissioner moved that the balance of the report be “received for information.” This meant that many of the 1970 issues returned to the 1971 Assembly for a full hearing and for General Assembly action, including the issue of the environment. Unlike other issues, however, the content of the paper on the environment changed and deepened in the year between Assembly meetings.

The 1971 paper, “Christian Responsibility for Environmental Renewal,” was twice as long as its predecessor. It also was more to the point and still reads well nearly twenty years after it was written. Three affirmations from this reworked statement stand out as crucial to the social teaching of the church:

1. There must be economic justice for persons within the limits imposed by the need for a sustainable environment.
2. People and all other living things are to be valued above the rights of property and its development.

3. Technology is to be regarded as servant and not as master.

On the first point, the statement distinguished the church's position from that of other environmentalist groups and did so most poignantly:

The environmental crisis has three major dimensions: destruction, deprivation and disamenities. Outright destruction of plants and animals, life support systems, and natural resources continues throughout the country and the world. Conservation groups have concentrated on curtailing outright destruction. Now attention is also being given to the disamenities of a developed society: crowding, noise, foul air and water, ugly construction, wasted land.

Far less attention has been focused, as yet, on environmental deprivation. For the poor, the environmental issue is hunger, rats, slumlords, junkies, and lack of public services. Middle-class adherents of the "eco-movement" need to recognize this physical deprivation as the most urgent environmental problem for the poor. There will be no healthy environments without policies of distributive justice. Those who already consume more than they need must not remain preoccupied with disamenities for which most of the world would gladly trade their misery. (UPC, 1971, p. 577)

The 1971 Assembly found, again, that economic structures tend to reward people and institutions for following their self-interests in the most limited sense. But now it took the position that not all rights within a society are equal, and particularly that the right to a safe environment takes precedence over any "rights" to economic gain. Along with the attempt to demythologize the economic order with reference to environmental issues, the statement stressed the need to view technology as instrument and not master that must invariably be obeyed. "Christian Responsibility for Environmental Renewal" set for the church the task of breaking false idols, not by rejecting either the economic order or technology but by assigning them their proper role in life. The statement also laid down a principle for balancing progress with preservation:

The burden of proof must fall upon those who advocate new processes and projects. They must show how the techniques they advocate will enhance life and will not damage ecosystems. All of us must learn how to respect and cooperate with "the natural" instead of ruthlessly trying to conquer it, only to find ourselves defeated. (UPC, 1971, p. 580)

By drawing on the theological principles of stewardship, servanthood, priority of life over property, and the "ecology of God" that establishes shalom, the writers of "Christian Responsibility for Environmental Renewal" brought to the 1971 Assembly a statement that enriched the church's social teaching. With the statement's adoption, the church committed itself to an eco-justice perspective that would have far-reaching implications for its treatment of energy, science, and technology, and

even health resources, in the years to come.

The "energy crunch" also produced timely comment by the church when, in 1974, the UPC General Assembly adopted "Christian Responsibility in the Energy Crunch." From the title on, the statement was deliberate in its stylistic and philosophical links to the 1971 statement on environmental renewal. This summary paragraph from the 1974 *Minutes* gives a flavor of the church's earliest foray into energy ethics:

There are no imminent technological solutions to the shortage of critical resources. And even if there were, should we use available technology to continue our energy-wasting way of life? Do we not have a much more urgent obligation to curtail our consumption of energy and to share energy resources with the rest of the world? Not only deprived people, but also a polluted nature would benefit from such a basic reorientation of lifestyles and social policy. (UPC, 1974, p. 607)

In this balanced statement, concern for the present is tempered by concern for the future. Social justice and the need for public information on the energy industry are both stressed. Perhaps most importantly, though, the General Assembly urged "Presbyterians to study and reflect on the biblical themes of justice and stewardship." (UPC, 1974, p. 610) Christians began renewed explorations into the relation of faith to energy and the environment. The other major impetus to such reflection was, of course, that the energy shortage settled in as an abiding reality of American life.

Upon the suggestion at several levels of national government that Americans would consider using military intervention to safeguard the continued flow of oil from the Middle East, both the UPC and the PCUS General Assemblies cried "foul!" If previous social teaching on energy could be reduced to "We all should cut down on our energy usage so that there will be enough to go around," the new, post-1975 position was closer to, "While energy is necessary to our way of life, there are limits which it is immoral to exceed in the pursuit of energy." Although war was the specific evil that was not justifiable by the maintenance of American standards of living (or luxury), the church was beginning to look at the whole matter of what was justified to maintain a high standard of living and to turn the question around: "Is such a 'high' standard of living justifiable given the trade-offs that appear necessary?"

In 1979 the commissioners of both Assemblies went to the heart of the question of social justice and energy use in issuing a joint energy ethics letter, including the following:

Concern for the future cannot allow us to withhold care for "the least" who live now. We have no right to choose who lives and who dies in order to serve current economic ideologies or a privileged posterity. We have no right to

squander the world's energy resources for short-term benefit. We are called to live simply and share liberally, while advocating the common good of all.

The church especially should evaluate all energy policy choices in terms of their impact on the poor and powerless, as well as their impact on future generations, and insist that governments and institutions observe this basic principle of justice. The needs of the poor have priority over the comfort of the rich. (UPC, 1979, p. 274; PCUS, 1979, p. 191)

A pattern was being repeated. The church starts speaking where its people are. Most Presbyterians, including most commissioners to a General Assembly, have an above-average standard of living and at least a fair share of the good gifts the American economy has to offer. The first statements made by a church body almost invariably reflect the social position of that body's members. Both "The Environmental Tragedy" and the 1974 energy statement were social teachings from the vantage point of Christians in a largely white, middle- to upper-middle-class American setting. Despite the church's social location, however, the Assemblies have attempted after deeper reflection to position themselves on the side of the poor and dispossessed. This is a reflection of a belief that might be rendered as "God's side of the story includes others besides people like me."

The church starts speaking where its people are.

The 1971 statement on "Christian Responsibility for Environmental Renewal" and the 1979 commissioners' letter were deeper statements in theological content and in world view than their antecedents. The emphasis had shifted from "this is how we see it" to "this is how we are called by God to see the issues in light of divine concern for all, particularly powerless persons and an abused environment."

One of the discernible patterns of development in Presbyterian social teaching has been that the Assemblies have increasingly addressed the dynamic of power—first in economics, then in race, now in energy—power held by some, denied to others. In fact, power became the metaphor for addressing the energy issue again in the 1981 joint PCUS/UPC energy statement:

Energy is much more than economic and technical decisions about alternative systems. It is also a symbol of power. Energy has for some time been closely associated in the minds of most Americans with economic growth, the fruits of modern technology, and the existing arrangement of economic and political power.

To Presbyterians the present energy situation should symbolize judgment on the misuse of power and hope for a new era of energy responsibility. It should also be the occasion for speaking truth about energy and power to those who make decisions. (UPC, 1981, p. 293; PCUS, 1981, p. 413)

This energy statement went on to introduce an "Ethic of Ecological Justice" that was based on commitments to *justice* in the form of fairness or equitability, *sustainable sufficiency* as the best way to achieve a balance in "the long-range capacity of an energy system to supply basic needs at a reasonable cost to society and the environment," and *participation* as a standard of mutual responsibility and decision making in human relations. Once again, a deepening ethical grasp was taking place as the General Assembly spoke to energy and environmental issues.

What is the process by which this deepening ethical grasp occurs so that successive Assemblies find new ground to break on social issues? The Assemblies have a special relationship to the scholars and thinkers of the church. The Assemblies themselves do not actually research issues; they ratify, amend, or reject the thoughts and recommendations brought to them. Presbyterian social teaching is what its name implies, then, when a General Assembly adopts as its own, with or without modifications, the ethical insights brought to it through its agencies and councils. The sources of these ethical insights are often pastors, concerned expert members, public officials, professors, or seasoned staff. A brief examination of the cadre of thinkers on the issues of energy and the environment can help uncover where the Assemblies' new ideas and perspectives come from, and can also suggest something of the relationship between the social ethicists of the church and the church's official social teachings.

***If the harmony of shalom is our goal,
how are we to arrive at it?***

When the 1971 statement on "Christian Responsibility for Environmental Renewal" picked up the Hebrew concept of shalom as applying to the environment as well as to its usual meaning of peace, it was piggybacking on the insights offered earlier in the year by Jack Stotts in an informal paper entitled "Environment and Theology." Stotts had written:

Shalom is a particular environmental state. It is a state of existence where the claims and needs of all that is are satisfied, where there is a relationship of communion between and among God and [humanity] and nature, where there is a balancing of all claims and needs. (*Issues*, No. 1, p. 9, United Presbyterian Church Board of Christian Education.)

The contribution of this biblical ideal was crucial to the theological integrity of the General Assembly's 1971 statement, which related God's environmental intention—or the “ecology of God”—to the Christian duty to seek that intention. Likewise the writings of Professors Norman Faramelli and William Gibson resulted in a 1976 General Assembly study paper entitled “Economic Justice within Environmental Limits” and in the eco-justice perspective that has guided subsequent church social teachings on lifestyle change. If the harmony of shalom is our goal, how are we to arrive at it? In short, by balancing resources and needs to try to achieve the most just mix attainable. To summarize the General Assemblies' teachings on energy/ecology issues, one could amplify the title of the 1976 study paper to say, “We seek economic justice for human beings within the limits imposed by the need for environmental health.”

Other Presbyterian ethicists also have been responsible for bringing ideas and ethical insights into the work of General Assembly drafting committees. The 1979 commissioners' letter on energy bears a striking thematic resemblance to Dieter Hessel's Friendship Press book of the same year entitled *Energy Ethics: A Christian Response*. Positively defining the appropriate limits within which to seek energy and environmental justice was the subject of Robert Stivers' book, *The Sustainable Society* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976). It was also the subject of the background analysis for the 1981 Joint UPC/PCUS Energy Statement in which Stivers offered the concept of “sustainable sufficiency” as the new working goal for Presbyterian social action efforts on behalf of eco-justice. Meanwhile the PCUS, through the staff work of Gaspar Langella, was preparing, and later produced, a study booklet for the denomination entitled *The Energy Question: An Exploration into Meaning and Values*.

Even when we turn to the latest Presbyterian words on environmental/energy issues, we find that a resolution on acid rain from the 1984 Assembly was the direct descendent of a statement from the January 1984 Toronto consultation of Canadian and U.S. religious bodies involving some of the same Presbyterian ethicists. Likewise, the 1990 Assembly's major policy report, “Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice,” was drafted by a task force including Robert Stivers, William Gibson, and Dieter Hessel. The important thing about the statements, though, is not their authorship but that, even when faced with the difficult problems of acid rain, global warming, and nuclear and hazardous wastes, the church relies on its previous ethical position of seeking to harmonize human and ecological needs.

In 1990 the issues that the church had been addressing for twenty years from an eco-justice perspective were once again in the forefront of public attention. *Time* and *Newsweek* each featured several cover stories on

environmental topics in the year before that Assembly meeting. Those covers posed the question of what to do with the mountains of garbage building up, how to dispose of hazardous chemical, nuclear, and medical wastes, greenhouse gases, depletion of the ozone layer, global warming, expansion of the Sahara Desert, and the tension between development and preservation of the world's tropical rain forests. As in 1970, there was another Earth Day celebration.

What did the church have to say to all of this? More of the same as past Presbyterian social teaching on the subject? Yes, but in a way that demonstrated that the eco-justice perspective has lasting power to fit timeless truths about God's will for creation to the newly revealed social facts about the environment for all humanity. Although some of the problems addressed in 1990 were not even anticipated in 1970—global warming, for instance—the church's social teaching offered consistent guidance as to what the biblical, theological, and ethical approach would be in response to the news that greenhouse gas overproduction might well bring on a climatic catastrophe. Underneath the important new technical issues brought to the Assembly's attention were the familiar religious problems of humanity acting in ignorance and trying to exert dominion over creation without regard for God's many other creatures.

The policy statement, "Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice," which begins with a two-page "Call to Restore Creation," breaks some new ground in terms of the issues it addresses and the policies it advocates. In looking at the problem of water quality it advances the beliefs that the burden of proof that water quality is not degraded should be placed on those who introduce potentially harmful substances to the environment, and that the concept of groundwater basin should be used to provide the legal basis for understanding water supply and quality jurisdictions. These social policy positions were ultimately derived from the Assembly's theological affirmation concerning sustainability:

Earthkeeping today means insisting on sustainability—the ongoing capacity of natural and social systems to thrive together—which requires human beings to practice wise, humble, responsible stewardship, after the model of servanthood that we have in Jesus. (PCUSA, 1990)

Likewise, when the Assembly recommended wildlife and wildlands policies that would respect the life of animal and plant communities as well as human communities, it based its ecosystems preservationist position on the affirmation of sustainability. It also based the position on its collective conviction that "The Creator-Redeemer calls faithful people to become engaged with God in keeping and healing the creation, human and nonhuman."



When the 1990 Assembly engaged the issues of hazardous wastes, ozone depletion, and greenhouse gas production, it recognized that many of the problems were produced by advanced industrial economies. It foresaw that less-developed regions, wanting the material progress of those advanced economies, might well be tempted to accept pollution in exchange for progress. Preventing such expansion of hazardous practices is of paramount ecological importance. Yet the Assembly cautioned that people in the United States must reduce their polluting practices at the same time as enabling less-well-off peoples to enjoy the fruits of creation. This might mean that the ethically responsible course was to reduce the

standard of living in this and other countries while increasing it on other parts of the globe. Several of the statement's theological affirmations ground this caution:

Justice today requires participation, the inclusion of all members of the human family in obtaining and enjoying the Creator's gifts for sustenance.

Justice also means sufficiency, a standard upholding the claim of all to have enough to be met through equitable sharing and organized efforts to achieve that end.

Community in our time requires the nurture of solidarity, leading to steadfastness in standing with companions, victims, and allies, and to the realization of the church's potential as a community of support for adventurous faithfulness. (PCUSA, 1990)

Once again the General Assembly advocates eco-justice by balancing needs and claims, and working toward a responsible energy/environmental system of "sustainable sufficiency for all." So, here perhaps more than in other areas, the social teachings of the church have been built on top of one another. This makes it simple to restate the guiding principles of Presbyterian social teaching on energy and the environment:

- **The God who created human beings also created the rest of the earth and its creatures. We have despoiled and abused our environment and denied the stewardship of God's creation. Yet God still calls us to a renewal of the shalom we have lost through our disobedience.**
- **The Creator-Deliverer acts in the ecological/social crisis of our time to demonstrate that same divine love that was manifested in the cross of Christ. We as a covenant people are called to increase our stewardship, in relation both to nature and to political economy, to a level commensurate with the peril and the promise with which God confronts us in this crisis.**
- **As stewards we seek a political economy that works to protect both the environment and the poor of the world and that is directed toward the goal of sufficient and sustainable sustenance of all people and creatures.**
- **As stewards we accept the responsibility of using political processes to check the abuses of power that would otherwise continue to victimize the earth and the poor, and we insist that the costs of restoring the polluted environment and structuring sustainable practices and institutions be distributed equitably throughout our society.**

HEALTH CARE

Contemporary American society is in the midst of a health care crisis. Consider the following:

- American medical schools and capabilities in advanced medical procedures are the envy of the world, but our infant and maternal mortality rates are the worst in the industrialized world.
- At many hospitals today, those without insurance are turned away.
- Emergency rooms are clogged with patients whose ailments could have been addressed with preventive medicine, or at a lower-cost clinic, if such were available.
- Epidemics of crack-cocaine use and sex-for-crack combine with intravenous drug use to spread the deadly AIDS disease in some of the most impoverished communities in the United States.
- To be mentally ill in this country today often means to be homeless.
- Health care has consumed a greater proportion of the gross national product each year since the late 1960s.
- A university-related hospital in a ghetto has run a deficit of \$12 million that threatens to bankrupt the university itself because the state will not pay its share of Medicaid costs.

Health is a precondition to enjoying those things we have identified in this chapter as the fruits of creation. It is not surprising then that one of the issues the church has revisited often in the past thirty years is the just provision of health care services. Perhaps it is also a sign of the times that the church's social teaching has become increasingly sophisticated and introspective as the actual social condition has become more and more perplexing. Still, the church has valuable things to say to the health care crisis of our time.

We find ourselves today a long way away from those days in the late 1950s when polio, tuberculosis, rubella, smallpox, and diphtheria had just been conquered by low-technology public health inoculation programs

and the introduction of antibiotic drugs. A similar cure for cancer seemed less than a decade away. In 1960, with the assurance that physical disease was all but vanquished, mental and emotional health were the topics of concern to the church. The church's first word on health, "The Relation of Christian Faith to Health," placed much of the blame for ill health on the church itself:

Too often it seems that the Church has a low tolerance point for those who are exceptions to the kinds of health and social adjustment which typify the majority of her members. To the extent that the Church becomes simply another social institution demanding conformity or excluding the person who is "different," she is increasing the ill-health of the culture rather than helping to overcome it. (UPC, 1960, p. 310)

In 1961 the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church became one of the earliest religious advocates for what would become Medicare. It directed attention to the health problems of retired older persons and endorsed a number of creative approaches, including extended prepayment insurance benefits under private auspices, expanded Social Security legislation, federal assistance to the states for more adequate care for older persons in need, and improved privately sponsored facilities and services. The Assembly also called upon doctors and health professionals "to co-operate in developing the means by which these approaches can be used to improve the health of America's older citizens to enhance standards of care and doctor-patient relationships, and to assure uniform provision for care in all the states on a non-discriminatory basis." (UPC, 1961, p. 450) That last concept, "care for all on a non-discriminatory basis," has become a cornerstone of the church's social teaching on health care. Access and fairness are principles that have been featured in every subsequent Presbyterian statement on the subject.

In 1971 the United States was a culture with the mentality of a wealthy nation that could conquer social problems as easily as it had landed a man on the moon. The UPC General Assembly of that year lamented, "Our society is giving highest priority to the production and consumption of goods and to profit making and the defense of wealth to the neglect of basic human needs including health." (UPC, 1971, p. 585) It proposed that such a rich nation should have a national health care policy on these terms:

[That] there be developed a national policy leading to a comprehensive system of health care which shall: Be accountable to the general public; make all services and benefits available to all persons in the United States; and, be administered by a single national health agency with power to enforce standards to provide the highest quality health care possible. (UPC, 1971, p. 585)

The Assembly recommended that the comprehensive health care program it proposed include at least these elements:

Aid in growth and development, nutrition, prevention of illness, periodic diagnostic evaluation, treatment of disease, extended and home nursing care, rehabilitation, long-term care for chronic disorders, and the appropriate social and economic provisions to make these feasible in the life of a person and that person's household. (UPC, 1971, p. 585)

Looking critically at the 1971 Presbyterian version of National Health Insurance, we can see that the vision of health care that the church held forth was blind to limits. For instance, it articulated the principle that all persons should, upon need, have their diseases treated. But when should treatment stop? What economic and social and human costs were too much to bear to treat disease? Was there a time to accept, not treat, a terminal disease? The Assembly offered no guidance on these questions.

The 1976 PCUS policy statement on health care reflected the beginning of an awareness of limits. Its real contribution to the church's social teaching, however, was its articulation of a theological principle for the rational and equitable distribution of health care:

The value of life gives persons the derivative right to acquire the therapy or care [needed] that they might enjoy the quality of life health makes possible. Because the right to acquire adequate health care springs out of our worth as living human beings, rather than out of any particular merit or achievement belonging to some but not to others, adequate health care should be defined equally for all people. (PCUS, 1976, p. 203)

Jimmy Carter was President and talking about "malaise" in 1978, the year when one can first sense real frustration on the part of an Assembly over the failure of American society to move ahead on health care justice. That year the UPC Assembly expressed "its concern that due to inflationary pressures on the patient, malpractice litigation, and competitive medical practice, we are in a crisis in our health care delivery system that affects all socio-economic levels of our society. (UPC, 1978, p. 68) Five years later the 1983 Assembly of the reunited church issued a policy statement, "The Provisions of Health Care: Obedience to Divine Purpose," cataloging many of the same concerns. (PCUSA, 1983, p. 366)

Another five years passed without improvement, and the 1988 Assembly addressed the problem again, offering both general principles for action and a specific three-point plan to arrive at a more just health care situation in this country. The major policy statement was entitled "Life Abundant: Values, Choices, and Health Care. The Responsibility and Role of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)." Notice that the role of the church figures prominently in the title of the statement. One of its findings was

that the church itself as employer contributes to a health care problem by providing health coverage to its non-clergy church employees only rarely. In its specific plan of action the Assembly urged the Congress to enact legislation to assure universal access to health care by:

Requiring all employers, public and private, to provide insurance or direct coverage for all employees and their dependents for health care that meets or exceeds the National Health Standard;

Amending all current governmental and publicly subsidized health care programs to meet or exceed the National Health Standard;

Providing subsidized health care coverage meeting the National Health Standard for all person not otherwise covered by [the two provisions indicated] above. (PCUSA, 1988, p. 517)

The church would, of course, be one of those employers covered by the first of these three points. But if the church was to advocate justice, then what other choice was there? Other portions of the 1988 statement offered an outstanding set of middle-range principles for advocating health care policies consistent with the faith of the church. Our summary of what the church teaches on health care quotes directly from those principles, for they offer not only a well-rounded summation of the church's teaching to that point, but also perhaps the wisdom necessary to help guide our society through its present crisis:

- **Society and its constituent public, private, and voluntary organizations have a duty—a moral obligation—to promote a healthful environment and to assure the availability of health-giving resources to all people.**
- **Each person has a moral obligation—a private and public duty—to value and care for his or her own health and the health of the community. We are stewards of God's creation. For most of us there is ample room to adopt more healthful lifestyles.**
- **Every person must have affordable, quality health services. Access should not be limited by income, ethnicity, or geography.**
- **The worship of physical perfection, no less than of worldly wealth, is idolatry. Mortality is an inevitable part of our creation and is the constant backdrop to our efforts to postpone death and overcome disease.**
- **A society is justified in placing limits beyond basics on its health care expenditures, balancing them against other needs such as housing, education, employment, and the elimination of poverty. No principle of justice entitles a patient to every conceivable form of beneficial treatment.**

PART FOUR

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: AN ETHIC OF JUST PEACE

The Presbyterian Church's social teachings on international relations have undergone a process of reassessment and development over the course of the last fifteen years. The denomination, as other religious bodies, has been historically concerned with the issues of justice among nations, the prevention of war, and the protection of noncombatants. Still, in the past decade and a half since the fall of Saigon in 1975 the Presbyterian Church has struggled with the meaning of Christian faith and morality in the context of a nation that has great military and economic power, possesses an arsenal of weapons of mass destruction, and relates in a myriad of just, unjust, and questionable ways to other nations across the face of the globe.

Presbyterian General Assemblies have been involved in a nearly continuous effort to examine their basic beliefs about world systems of trade and security, about the rights of racial/ethnic minorities, about the justice of war, and about the possibilities for peace in a conflict-filled world. What has emerged from this self-conscious reexamination, it can be argued, is a consistent ethic of just peace. While peace is the condition that we seek in every situation, we understand that true peace requires justice—fairness between all parties in a conflict. How this proposition is applied in particular conflicts will become clear in the latter portion of this chapter when some recent international situations are considered. For now, the question is, "How was this position derived from the materials—the biblical, theological, historical, and practical understandings—out of which Presbyterians craft their social teachings?" What follows here is a short history of recent Presbyterian thought on the things that make for peace with justice.

PEACEMAKING: WHAT DO WE BELIEVE?

The contemporary renewal of Presbyterian social teaching on international affairs began when the United Presbyterian General Assembly of 1975 requested the Advisory Council on Church and Society (ACCS) to reassess the “concept of peacemaking and the direction of our country’s foreign policy in the light of our biblical and confessional faith and a markedly changed situation in the world today.” (UPC, 1980, p. 200) Thus the 1975 Assembly advanced a biblical concept—“peacemaking”—as the vessel for Presbyterian teaching on war, peace, international justice, and foreign policy. It was the Advisory Council’s job to bring the vessel back filled with the appropriate contents for a Presbyterian peacemaking witness. The situation of the world in 1975 contributed to the shape of the request. The prolog of the 1980 report that resulted from the reassessment, “Peacemaking: The Believers’ Calling,” notes that the Assembly’s request was:

- born in part from the United States’ defeat in Southeast Asia and the loss of prestige and power in the changing world situation;
- born in part from the unwillingness of the emerging nations to accept the continued domination of the developed nations;
- born in part from the increasing insecurity over the perilous nuclear weapons stalemate in which any miscalculation could annihilate humanity;
- born in part from concern for the hungry and oppressed of the world. (UPC, 1980, p. 200)

The challenge was to produce a report that not only said something to the concerns raised in 1975, but that also said something of lasting value to the church about its faith and mission in relation to the continuing issues of international responsibility, the arms race, and the material welfare of all members of God’s human family. Therefore, the Special Committee on Peacemaking convened by ACCS made its goal different from that of most Presbyterian social policymaking bodies. As summed up by these words from the introduction:

The report does not contain extensive analysis of specific social policy issues nor does it recommend specific positional stances in relation to them. It instead

asks the General Assembly to focus for the church a fundamental dimension of biblical faithfulness in a moment of great peril and to call the church to a new seriousness in obedience. (UPC, 1980, p. 200)

Peacemaking, from the very beginning of the report, is taught not as an extra course of social action that Christians may—or may not—pursue, but rather as a “fundamental dimension of biblical faithfulness.” In other words, “peacemaking is the believers’ calling.”

“Peacemaking: The Believers’ Calling” is not, however, a total departure from past social teachings of the church:

We United Presbyterians have had our peace pronouncements and advocacy programs, and we have been on the right track. But they have been inadequate as a response to the world’s peril, our nation’s policies and God’s promise. (UPC, 1980, p. 200)

The aim of the peacemaking document was twofold: to affirm the church’s previous foreign policy concerns and to nurture the members of the church to be peacemakers while nourishing the moral life of the nation for the sake of peace in the world.

That Assembly had the rare opportunity to say, “Yes, this is what we do in fact believe.”

The report itself approaches a complete paradigm of social teaching as described in the introduction to this overview. It begins with a call to future action as a church with an awareness of what has been good and helpful in the past life of the church. It then proceeds to lay out a set of recommendations to be implemented by the church in a renewed commitment to making peace. The report shares with interested readers the reasoning that goes into the “Call to Peacemaking.” Featured in this background material are (1) an analysis of the human/social situation (“The New Global Reality”), (2) the biblical/theological bases for peacemaking as a necessary endeavor of the church, and (3) a set of middle-range axioms, namely, appropriate “Theological and Ethical Bases for Policymaking.” Finally, the report is rounded out with two appendixes, one summarizing existing General Assembly positions (again placing the present teaching in context with the stream of tradition) and the other an “Outline of Potential Program Activities” (to help bridge the distance between social teaching and social action).

In sum, the Peacemaking report presented to the 1980 United Presbyterian Assembly was an integrated piece of social teaching. That Assembly, meeting in Detroit, had the rare opportunity to say, "Yes, this is what we do in fact believe." Moreover, although this document was composed on the basis of General Assembly material solely from the UPC, the PCUS Assembly of the following year passed the document as its own. Southern leadership and commissioners acted to say, in effect, "Yes, indeed, this is what we believe also and what we have tried to teach."

The report itself conveys four primary social teachings:

One: The oneness of humanity and the interrelatedness of people and their conditions.

This theme is sounded repeatedly in the "Call to Peacemaking." It is identified as "the New Global Reality" but also as the result of God's grace. Here the church teaches that interdependence is a fact of life: not simply a way of viewing the world but the way the world is. The fact of interrelatedness has both tragic and hopeful elements:

There is a new sense of the oneness of the world in our time. Humankind's initial forays into space have created a new perspective, a dramatic sense of the earth—the whole earth—as home. The era of satellite communication systems and the migration of millions of people from continent to continent have produced a new awareness of conditions of life everywhere on the globe.

It is not possible, in such a time, to avoid awareness of the economic disparities and political oppression besetting the human family. It is not possible to escape the knowledge of human suffering, and it is not possible to ignore the incongruous juxtaposition of affluence and arms on the one hand, and poverty and oppression on the other. The futility of nuclear war on a small planet as a solution to human problems is apparent. (UPC, 1980, p. 202)

The essential oneness of humanity means that people are responsible for distant as well as near neighbors. The interrelatedness of persons means that no person, group, corporation, or nation can pursue its own interest in isolation. Particularly, the rich nations and groups must face the extent to which their wealth is gained at the expense of the poor. The question of peace in our time is fundamentally related to reciprocity and equity among the world's people. The church begins its teaching on peace, therefore, by emphasizing the closeness—and the needed reconciliation—of rich and poor, of races, of cultures, of nations, and of superpowers.

This leads to the next major affirmation:

Two: Peace consists not in securing an absence of war but in attaining justice.

The peace movement in the United States is not strictly a religious

movement. Indeed, many of those who seek an end to the nation's long bout with nuclear madness act out of the simple human will to survive. We have become accustomed to seeing television news clips of elementary school children drawing pictures or producing plays "for peace" or "for the freeze," who, when asked, "Why are you doing this?," respond, "Because I don't want to die." But fear alone is not an adequate basis for attaining peace:

The dangerous signs of the times raised up around us may prompt many to seek peace because of fear. While fear may lead to the timid avoidance of conflict resulting in the acceptance of injustice, faith enables Christians to perceive God's will and find the courage to grasp the opportunity of new situations. (UPC, 1980, p. 207)

The church teaches that peace requires justice on two grounds. First, the church has long recognized that evil cannot be overcome without conflict, and that so long as injustice remains the prospects for mutuality and harmony are dim. Secondly, the church speaks in confession when it bids its members not to seek "too easy a peace," for its members' perceived self-interests too often lie on the side of maintaining the status quo. To deny others the means to justice in the name of preserving peace is to cry "'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace" (Jer. 6:14) and to come under prophetic judgment.

If justice is to be the measure of peace, then the church draws out a corollary teaching that self-interest is not an adequate basis for conducting relations with other people. This has far-reaching implications:

The criterion of justice compels the continual reexamination of personal and national policies and actions. The first question changes from "What is its consequence for us?" to "What are the consequences of this set of actions upon others and upon our relationship to others?" Justice does not require the abject negation of self-interest, but it does require that the legitimacy of that interest be weighed in relationship to the claims of others. (UPC, 1980, p. 211)

All of this—peace as more than nonwar, justice as the measure of peace, and Christian love of others as the necessary corrective to personal and national selfishness—finds its expression in these words from the "Call to Peacemaking":

We know that there can be no national security without global security and no global security without political and economic justice. As God's people, we will not cry "Peace, peace" without the fullness of God's shalom. As God's people, we will seek the security of the whole human family—all for whom Christ died. As God's people, we will celebrate the dignity of each of God's children. (UPC, 1980, p. 202)

Three: The church in obedience to Christ is recommissioned to become the special agent of peacemaking.

The “Call to Peacemaking” affirms that (a) “The church is faithful to Christ when it is engaged in peacemaking” and (b) “The church is obedient to Christ when it nurtures and equips God’s people as peacemakers.”

Thus the church teaches peacemaking in all its dimensions as a Christian responsibility. The church is not only to lead individual Christians into faithful obedience to Christ through peacemaking but is also to work at peacemaking as a body.

This point—that the church is an agent of peacemaking—builds on the Sermon on the Mount, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Matt. 5:9), and notes that Jesus the Christ was also given the title of the Prince of Peace. When the “Call to Peacemaking” speaks of the need for the church to nurture God’s people as peacemakers, it recalls the reliance of the church on the gifts and guidance of the Holy Spirit as described in Eph. 4:6. The cosmic dominion of God expressed in the Psalms is juxtaposed against the false dominions of nations and armies in our time. The prophets’ assurance that God wills shalom undergirds the church’s duty of peacemaking. And Paul’s appeal to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 12) to participate in the body of Christ is a precedent for corporate church involvement in peacemaking.

Four: The church bears witness to Christ when it nourishes the moral life of the nation for world peace.

This is a teaching of the church to the church. It says, “We have a Christian mission to promote peace in the life and policies of our nation.” Implicit in that statement is a claim by the church that it has something to offer the nation—something that the nation does not get from another source. In order to discover what the church’s unique message to the nation might be, however, it is necessary to recognize the normal operating criteria for national policy.

The background paper for “Peacemaking: The Believers’ Calling” delineates three criteria as normative in American foreign policy: national interest—“based on the premise that each nation-state should formulate its actions according to that which best serves its self-interest, broadly defined”; national security; and power—“expressed in the ability to damage those who do not follow our bidding, either through direct military intervention or the allotment of our material resources.” The paper concludes that “these criteria for foreign policy were arguably adequate in other times,” but now “a new and different set of criteria is recommended

[by the church] for guiding the formation of future policy, both because of Christian morality and because of the situational factors characterizing 'the new global reality.'"

The church is aware that the old ways of organizing national policies on defense and foreign affairs are not only antiquated but also an affront to Christian morality. Attention to Christian ethics requires that the nation be addressed with a new message. The content of this "message to the nation" can be pieced together from the Peacemaking report:

The gospel brings freedom from false security, chauvinism, and paranoia and empowers a new global vision of the human order that God intends.

Peacemaking entails far more than a narrow focus on military might in defense of "national security" and "vital interests."

Christians understand that only God is absolute. No political order has an absolute claim on people, nor does any political order so entirely lack aspects of God's purpose as to make its complete annihilation all that is called for. All nations are judged by the standards of divine justice.

The interpretation of love drives us to affirm a bias in favor of the poor, an openness toward the enemy, negotiation for resolution of conflicts, the avoidance of war, and the protection of the weak.

Working to build up the moral life of the nation for the sake of peace is a matter of obedience to Christ. If national leaders discount the church's witness to peace as unrealistic or others supporting peace do not share the church's concern for peace with justice, the church is still obligated to preach and practice its understanding of peacemaking: "At this critical moment in history, peacemaking is the central activity of all believers individually and corporately. It is at the heart of our life in Christ and a compelling responsibility of the church." (UPC, 1980, p. 202)



PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (USA)

CHALLENGES TO PEACEMAKING: REALISM, PACIFISM, AND RESISTANCE

The 1980 Peacemaking report purposely avoided specific policy issues in favor of forging theological and moral consensus within the church that (1) Presbyterians believe in peacemaking, and (2) the whole church is called to do something about this area of its belief. Soon after the "Call to Peacemaking" was printed and sent to local churches for their endorsement, the attention of some of those in the church was directed back to specific policy issues. They agreed that peacemaking was the believers' calling, but asked further questions: "How shall we make for peace?" "What shall we say about the morality of nuclear deterrence?" "Can any war in the modern age be called just?" "What about rebellions of oppressed people against their oppressors?"

In the early 1980s the peacemaking witness of the Presbyterian Church was challenged from several ethical vantage points to grow in depth and specificity. Realists urged the church in its social teaching to deal with the actual hard cases of international relations, recognizing that pure causes and actors rarely present themselves for church support in actual conflicts. Pacifists urged Presbyterians to eschew their long-standing association with just war doctrines. Others within the church, precisely on just war grounds, argued that if the church meant to take peacemaking seriously, it must take active resistance to warmaking seriously. In the crucible of these contending views, Presbyterian thought on peace with justice was refined in the 1980s.

The Realist challenge was a challenge from within. Presbyterian social policy belongs to a stream of ethical reasoning called Christian Realism. This stream was made prominent during the early days of the cold war when the theologian Reinhold Niebuhr helped advise the U.S. Department of State on how to contain communism. Although sometimes employed for ends, means, and causes that would discredit its name, Christian Realism has endured as a dominant way of thinking about foreign policy questions in churches of the Reformed tradition. There are several reasons. First is its frank recognition of sin in human activity. The "rediscovery of sin" in the mid-twentieth century by the Neo-Orthodox theologians worked something of a sea change in Protestant Christian thought about

the world of human affairs. The liberal theology of the turn of the century had taught that people, when freed from ignorance and oppressive institutions, would bring in the Kingdom of God with the "Brotherhood of Man."

In 1950 a picture of Niebuhr appeared on the cover of *Time* Magazine. Under the picture appeared the caption, "Man's Story Is Not a Success Story." Treblinka, Dachau, Auschwitz, Hiroshima, Dresden, and Nagasaki all validated Niebuhr's thesis, as would the later killing fields of Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge. This was the second reason Christian Realism remained influential: it fit the sad facts of twentieth century history far more closely than more optimistic assessments.

Finally, Reformed theology had always recognized the problem of sin, and having tied its theological viewpoint from Calvin forward to biblical revelation, it had no choice but to recognize that the Bible often spoke most eloquently of human disobedience, tragedy, and the cruelty of human beings toward each other.

Christian Realism was pessimistic in its assessment of human ability and perfectibility —and activist in its orientation toward change. It laid blame for human problems at the foot of human beings themselves. It was a central premise of Christian Realism that, however impossible it was to take a perfectly moral action, it was still the Christian's responsibility to pursue the most moral course available.

The legacy of Christian Realism was clear in the Presbyterian social teachings of the 1980s and beyond. The recognition of our own complicity in major social problems, the realization that best intentions have often gone badly awry, and the appreciation of the limited nature of resources are all characteristic of contemporary Presbyterian social policy statements. But so too are the claims that we can and must do better, that God calls humanity to greater justice within the world, and that economic and political institutions have a role to play in creating that greater justice. All of these affirmations, full of humility and hope, are axiomatic to Presbyterian social ethics.

The value of the Realist challenge is that it has forced Presbyterians to respond to the full complexity of international justice situations. Our point of entry into Latin American affairs might well be a Christian concern with human rights abuses occurring along the border of the United States and Mexico. The idealistic thing to say in such situations is that "the rights of human beings must be respected." But the Realist argues that merely saying what is true will not make it so. The systemic causes of human rights abuse in this particular situation must be addressed for there to be progress.

Thus Presbyterian policy toward Latin America is not simply a human rights policy but also a just peace strategy. Therefore, when the 1981 General Assembly declared its concern with the plight of Mexican

immigrants in the United States, it also adopted specific public policy recommendations to implement economic justice in concrete ways. The policy formation process had identified economic difficulties that were unlikely to be overcome by putting up walls at the borders. The problems:

- We in the United States needed the labor of those in Mexico.
- Those persons from Mexico willing to work in the U.S. farm economy did not take jobs that U.S. citizens would take.
- We needed, at peril to our own souls, to deal with Mexican nationals as human beings and not to exploit them because they were illegal aliens.
- So often they had been exploited—given poor wages, forced into enduring long separations from their families, subjected to beatings and intimidation, all because they had no legal recourse but to accept this foul treatment.

The 1981 General Assembly then proposed a variety of very specific actions designed to remove burdens from the Mexican workers and place them instead on those Americans who benefited from immigrant labor. These actions included sanctions against employers who used illegal immigrants and guest worker programs. Some of these ideas actually were adopted by Congress and signed into law by the President in the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. But there was an unforeseen consequence: employers began to discriminate against Hispanic Americans and legal immigrants. Meanwhile, undocumented persons continued to need food, shelter, and clothing and continued to be abused by unjust employers. The 1990 General Assembly argued in a Realist vein when it called for an end to employer sanctions and for more humane treatment of undocumented immigrants. Belonging to a tradition that embraces Christian Realism means sometimes having to say you were wrong, that even the best intended policies might have to be reversed.

Another key challenge to the church's peacemaking witness has come from pacifism. In the 1980s, pacifists within the church believed that now was perhaps the time to reject the just war doctrines with which Reformed Christianity had long been associated. They asked whether, given the arms race, militarism, and the United States' involvement in clearly unjust wars in the Third World, American Christians were called to cease and desist from any cooperation with the American war machine. They argued in overtures to the General Assembly that one of the ways the church had supported the warmaking of the nation was through its theology. By allowing that some wars could be "just," Presbyterians had, they maintained, been co-opted into the support of clearly unjust wars such as Vietnam and the Contra insurgency in Nicaragua. Observing that the just

war tradition had often been abused, they made a case for resistance, saying “no more” to warmaking, “no more” to the endless use of national resources to prepare for war, and “no more” to the fomenting of so-called “low intensity conflicts” in the Third World in the name of ill-defined foreign policy objectives.

The pacifist cause, as attractive as it is for many Christians, has not made much headway in Presbyterian social policy circles because of its refusal to acknowledge that there might be cases in which people might justly rise up against further oppression or resist unjust aggression with armed might. A much more serious challenge to the church’s peacemaking policy has come from within the just war tradition. Presbyterians committed to peacemaking have argued that the nation’s use of armed force in regional conflicts, its arming of Third World countries, and its wasteful use of resources for nuclear and conventional arms all amount to warmaking activities that could not satisfy any legitimate reading of the just war tradition, which holds that before war could be morally waged, all six of the following conditions have to be met:

1. All other means to the morally just solution of a conflict must be exhausted before resort to arms can be regarded as legitimate.
2. War can be just only if employed to defend a stable order or morally preferable cause against threats of destruction or the rise of injustice.
3. Such a war must be carried out with the right attitudes.
4. A just war must be explicitly declared by a legitimate authority.
5. A just war may be conducted only by military means that promise a reasonable attainment of the moral and political objectives being sought.
6. The just war theory has also entailed selective immunity for certain parts of the population, particularly for noncombatants. *

As Presbyterians examined current military policies in the light of these just war criteria, they found these policies morally defective. Particularly problematic was continued reliance by the U.S. and the Soviet Union upon nuclear deterrence which, just as the use of chemical and biological weapons, could not be used and satisfy the sixth criterion, immunity for noncombatants. Nor could most uses of force in the world be justified on the basis of the criterion of proportionality (implicit in the fifth criterion

*Quoted in Ronald H. Stone, “The Justifiable War Tradition,” in Ronald H. Stone and Dana W. Wilbanks, *The Peacemaking Struggle: Militarism and Resistance*. (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985), p. 191.

cited above), in which the means used must not produce results worse than the problem they are directed at resolving. Given these concerns, Presbyterians have been faced with the moral problem of how and when to resist unjust situations leading to unjustifiable wars.

There are times when the law of God requires one thing and the civil power demands another. In those instances the Christian has no choice.

Resistance to evil is a long-standing principle of Reformed theology. Calvin and the classical confessions of the Reformed tradition taught that, although the law of God most often reinforces obedience to lawful authority, there are times when the law of God requires one thing and the civil power, be it king, magistrate, or federal government, demands another. In those instances the Christian has no choice but to follow his or her understanding of what God requires. This is in sharp contrast with Lutheran views of authority and obedience. Luther and his followers absolved obedient subjects and citizens from personal moral responsibility for their actions in war and peace as long as they followed the orders of a legitimate authority. Even if that authority gave an unjust order to slaughter innocents in war, Luther would have the Christian obey and hold the authority alone accountable before God for the carnage. Calvin and subsequent Reformed and Presbyterian thinkers have rejected this interposition of human authorities between believers and their God. Every human being is fully responsible to God for *all* of his or her actions.

The socially critical side of this Calvinist social teaching is that it never fully commits the church to unqualified support of the state. This teaching can become a problem for Presbyterians—also patriotic citizens—who when confronted with this social teaching often experience a crisis of divided loyalties. There is, of course, no conflict between supporting the state and following Christ as long as the state is just. But when the state is unjust, what happens then? One of the Presbyterian Church's confessions, the Barmen Declaration, indicates the position the church should take:

We reject the false doctrine, as though there were areas of our life in which we would not belong to Jesus Christ, but to other lords—areas in which we would not need justification and sanctification through him.

We reject the false doctrine, as though the Church were permitted to abandon the form of its message and order to its own pleasure or to changes in

prevailing ideological and political convictions.

We reject the false doctrine, as though the State, over and beyond its special commission, should and could become the single and totalitarian order of human life, thus fulfilling the Church's vocation as well. (*Book of Confessions*, 8.15, 8.18, 8.23)

The Barmen Declaration serves to remind Christians that there are times when actions of the state put their allegiance to Christ to the test. Other confessions in the Presbyterian tradition make the same point. The new Brief Statement of Faith reminds Presbyterians that Jesus himself faced the charge of sedition. The question that the faithful must face in every age is, "Is it now the time to resist, or to obey?"

Two Presbyterians who asked the resistance question were Christian ethicists Dana W. Wilbanks and Ronald H. Stone. They entitled their essay, "Presbyterians and Peacemaking: Are We Now Called to Resistance?" They wrote in response to the overtures that had asked the General Assembly to part ways with the just war doctrine. They also wrote to ask how best to promote peacemaking, given the church's commitment and the failure of past church efforts to stop the arms race, or to stop the supply of weapons to the Third World, or the tendency of the United States government to engage in low-intensity conflicts through surrogates. In the authors' own view, they wrote to stimulate discussion within the church:

Before any of us can be very confident about what we believe the church's corporate stance should be, we need to struggle together with this question. It is only as we engage each other in many parts of Christ's church in the United States and around the world that we shall know what God is calling us to do.*

And stimulate discussion they did. The paper drew the fire of numerous conservative groups, within and outside of the church, which said, "How dare people calling themselves Christians even consider resisting a nation so great, so free, so just, as the United States?" The authors of the study had, however, not proposed resistance to all aspects of the American state. Rather, they had suggested that there was a time when particular policies should be resisted:

Christians may find it necessary on occasion to resist government policies as a decision of faith in the Lord of history. This requires a careful evaluation of present circumstances in light of a theological vision of peace and the ethics of just peace. If government policies do not serve the ends of a just peace but are serving forces of destruction, they may be regarded as demonic and, hence,

*Ronald H. Stone and Dana W. Wilbanks, *Presbyterians and Peacemaking: Are We Now Called to Resistance?* Advisory Council on Church and Society, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 1985, p. 57.

illegitimate. Christians, then, may be called to a stance of resistance against these policies, though the basic structure of government may still be supported and obeyed as legitimate. (p. 46)

Presbyterians and Peacemaking: Are We Now Called to Resistance? was not an official policy statement of the Presbyterian Church. It did, however, stake out important ethical territory for the General Assembly to officially wrestle with and address. The Assembly focused on the concerns raised in the ethicists' study paper when it debated, revised, and adopted the 1988 policy statement, "Christian Obedience in a Nuclear Age."

"Christian Obedience in a Nuclear Age," which resulted from a task force chaired by former seminary presidents Arnold B. Come and Albert C. Winn, opened with a frank recognition that the nuclear age itself poses problems that require a full reexamination of the church's traditional stands on obedience, resistance, realism, and the promotion of peace with justice. Forty years after he spoke them, Albert Einstein's words still rang true for the Assembly: "The unleashed power of the atom has changed everything save our way of thinking, and we thus drift toward unparalleled catastrophe." In the process of rethinking its social teachings in the light of atomic realities, the 1988 Assembly did recognize the appropriate role obedience continued to play:

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has a long-standing tradition of Christian obedience in response to the loving action of God, which obedience is revealed in Scripture, taught in the Reformed tradition, and explicated in many past pronouncements of General Assemblies. Both Christian individuals and the church have responsibility to the God of peace and justice as known in Jesus Christ and responsibilities to society and government for the maintenance of the highest possible degree of peace and justice.

As citizens of the U.S.A., we can be grateful for the setting in which we are called to exercise Christian responsibility: a government based on such original covenants as the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, including the Bill of Rights. Those covenants seek to guarantee freedom from the exercise of absolute and arbitrary authority and power and to establish a rule of law.

One of the legitimate functions of civil government, according to the Reformed tradition, is the defense of its citizens through the maintenance of the necessary military and police forces. Military forces have served to defend the nation and to preserve the safety, harmony, freedom, and peace of its citizens. There is a long Presbyterian tradition of individuals serving in the armed forces. Many Presbyterians have decided that obedience to God leads them to participate in the military and to work from within for policies that will reduce the nuclear threat and promote justice. (PCUSA, 1988, p. 446)

Obedience to legitimate civil government is thus still what the church teaches. Realists would be gratified to see as well that the role of force in maintaining lawful order against worse uses of force and oppression is

recognized by the church. However, the church also teaches that obedience has its limits, even when the government is legitimate:

Under certain circumstances, however, noncooperation with, or disobedience to, duly constituted authorities has been deemed an appropriate Christian response. Few would criticize the disobedience of early Christians to Roman Emperors, of the American colonists to the British crown, of the Confessing Synod in Germany to Adolf Hitler, of many pastors and church leaders around the world today to oppressive governments of the right and the left. The critical questions for American Presbyterians today are whether the current response will be individual or corporate. (PCUSA, 1988, p. 446)

The General Assembly also went to the heart of the issue in the challenges to the just war tradition, i.e., that even talking about “just wars” tends to distort what the church really teaches. There is something perverse about saying that just war is what you teach about international relations, as though the natural condition where there is more than one nation is war. And yet the just war criteria themselves were, the Assembly believed, important to retain:

Several overtures asked whether or not the criteria of the just war doctrine are applicable to war in the nuclear age. We believe that they are. It is precisely on the basis of the just war doctrine that participation in nuclear war must be condemned. Such criteria as “proportionality” (that the costs in life and property of engaging in war are in reasonable proportion to the good that is to be achieved) or “discrimination” (that civilian, noncombatant targets are to be spared) cannot be met when nuclear weapons are used. The just war criteria are particularly useful in moral discourse beyond and outside the church, for they have become embedded in international law. (PCUSA, 1988, p. 446)

Note that the Assembly found nuclear weapons unconscionable precisely on just war grounds. It also rejected the excuses made for nuclear deterrence. With the end of the cold war in sight, the Assembly declared:

The awful and deepening deprivation of millions in much of the world, with its many interconnections to pervasive militarization, is another mark of the present age. To speak of “forty years of peace” achieved by the nuclear stand-off seems a travesty to people in the Third World. Millions have died in armed conflict and governmental repression in their countries since World War II. Deaths, mostly of children, from malnutrition amount to the total of a Hiroshima-type bomb every three days. (PCUSA, 1988, p. 446)

Clearly, nuclear weapons had not guaranteed peace. Indeed, the Assembly argued, they were purchased at the price of peace with justice:

Diversion of resources to supply arms in [developing] countries and continuation of the enormous world expenditures for military wares robs the resources needed to address the problems of millions suffering oppression, hunger,

malnutrition, and displacement. The issues of deep-seated economic injustice must not be obscured in our urgent concern about the threat of nuclear devastation. (PCUSA, 1988, p. 446)

Elimination of nuclear weapons was thus seen as a primary task for Christians and their churches in the nuclear age. Although the Assembly saw that "sudden and unilateral change in any 'stable' relationship could in fact be dangerous," it also believed that that fact could not justify the policy of nuclear deterrence nor its continuance. Yet even if all nuclear weapons were eliminated, the world would still be a long way away from God's shalom, the intended state of the entire human race. "Shalom," the 1988 Assembly declared, "means life in a community of compassionate order marked by social and economic justice." Peace without justice was no peace. Even if one could force people not to fight, one could not get them to voluntarily accept an unjust set of social arrangements.

The 1988 General Assembly still had a paradox to resolve. It had continued to embrace the just war standards, but the just war criteria are essentially negative. They tell human beings and their governments what not to do. The church, on the other hand, advocates shalom, a positive principle of peace. What the Assembly did to reconcile these teachings was to subsume the just war prohibitions under a shalom policy, which it called a just peace ethic. It said to its members, in effect, "What we must seek is peace with justice, everywhere and in every place. While we seek just peace, there are some things we can never morally allow. These include disproportionate uses of force, wars of aggression and revenge, and so on."

How is this new just peace ethic to be pursued? The 1988 Assembly offered several ways to work for shalom. One way it called the "extraordinary use of ordinary means," which it defined as follows:

What is envisioned by the extraordinary use of ordinary means is not the formation of a Christian political party, nor the endorsement of parties or candidates by the denomination. Rather it would involve continuing efforts by the General Assembly to fashion policies of just peace and advocate them in the public order, enhanced focus by General Assembly agencies and governing bodies on peacemaking strategies and resources concentrated on public policy transformation, and strenuous political involvement by all Presbyterians as individuals. (PCUSA, 1988, p. 446)

Another possible response to violations of the just peace ethic that the Assembly endorsed was the route of resistance or, as the Assembly termed it, "noncooperation and disobedience." It declared:

There is a long history of Presbyterian resistance to the state in the name of obedience to God. It is grounded in the recognition that the biblical presump-

tion of obedience to duly constituted human authority acknowledges clear exceptions to the general rule. When the human authority becomes tyrannical or genocidal, thoroughly unjust, dangerously irrational, or incompetent; when the human authority demands worship, requires idolatry, or forbids the preaching of the gospel, obedience to God calls forth resistance to human authority. (PCUSA, 1988, p. 446)

Possible actions of noncooperation and disobedience included the refusal to serve in the military, providing sanctuary to illegal aliens, and tax resistance. The Assembly cautioned that tax resistance in particular should not be undertaken without careful forethought as to its consequences, but still maintained that when "on the basis of informed conscience Christians conclude that obedience to God forbids the willing payment of a specific tax, the church must respect their actions as honorable expressions of Christian conscience." The Assembly ended its social teaching on Christian obedience where much of Reformed theology begins, with the importance of following God before all others and on the primary role of the individual conscience, informed by Scripture, in providing guidance as to what God requires.

Viewing the social teaching of the Presbyterian Church on international relations as consisting of a just peace ethic has other implications besides the obvious semantic difference of appearing to be for peace rather than war. These implications include a broader focus on the justice of international arrangements than simply the scenes of particular armed conflicts. In 1989, the year after the adoption of "Christian Obedience in a Nuclear Age," the General Assembly adopted a resolution on the Third World debt dilemma subtitled "Searching for a Moral Response to Vulnerable People and Systems." Nowhere in the world was there actual armed conflict being waged over debt owed by Third World countries to First World banks and multilateral institutions. Yet the absence of war did not mean that a just peace prevailed in First and Third World relations. In its teaching about the global debt crisis the General Assembly's words spoke eloquently of the church's interest in the human meaning of international debt:

Why should the church speak about the global debt crisis? Not because it is particularly interested in matters of high finance or because faith provides solutions to highly complex issues that others have not considered. The church addresses the Third World debt dilemma because the way it is being resolved determines whether people will live and how they will die. (PCUSA, 1989, p.523)

Much as was the case in 1988 when the General Assembly was drawn into discussing technical aspects of nuclear and conventional deterrence,

the church was forced to delve into technical issues concerning postponing debt, debt for equity swaps, debt relief, and voluntary versus imposed solutions to problems of malfunctioning global economy. Yet once again, the 1989 Assembly concluded that while technical issues were numerous, "the major stumbling blocks have much more to do with deciding what kind of world we want to live in, what we understand justice and fairness to be, and how the political will can be generated to foster a just vision of global society." These issues, far from being the exclusive preserve of international finance experts, could only be resolved through resort to principles of value: principles about which religious faith has much to say.

Thus while the church could not speak definitively about technical solutions to the complexities of the debt issue, it was in a position to articulate a moral standard by which to measure the many public and private debt restriction initiatives that would be proposed in the coming years. The Assembly, offering six principles by which to judge debt crisis solutions, did so in the context of church teaching about the international debt crisis, and they can be seen to represent the church's social teaching on what makes for just peace in international political/economic relations more generally. Note in the following principles the emphases on human rights, fair trade policies, the responsibilities of rich persons for poor persons, and the insistence upon not forcing political choices on people through economic means, or maintaining economic advantage by perpetuating asymmetric economic power relationships:

1. The poor should not bear the burden of the needed economic adjustment. The living standards of those least responsible for incurring the debt, who have benefited least from it, and who are the most vulnerable to current solutions, should not be cut to pay interest to the banks.
2. International commercial banks should be expected to absorb significant losses since, in their search for lending opportunities, they often supported risky projects in less developed countries.
3. The United States should not seek to ease its own economic problems by shifting the burden to poor countries through the manipulation of currency exchange rates or protectionist trade policies.
4. Debt relief ought not require overly stringent conditions so that a nation cannot make its own decisions. Rather, the goal of all concerned should be to seek policies that foster economic and political self-determination.
5. New economic assistance and loans should be extended to less developed countries that will act to protect human rights, reduce the export of capital by corporations and national elites, minimize military expenditures, and promote economic development that will meet the basic needs of the poor.
6. Solutions to the present debt crisis should contribute to the establishment of a more just international economic system in the future. (PCUSA, 1989, p. 532)

By 1990 a just peace ethic could be seen to be firmly in place as a General Assembly focus. This ethic, the result of fifteen years of denominational efforts to foster international peace with justice, was also consistent with past church witness. To recapitulate, these are the primary social teachings of the Presbyterian Church on international affairs, peacemaking, and the ethic of just peace:

- **Humanity is one, and people's conditions are globally interrelated. "Reconciliation among nations becomes peculiarly urgent as countries develop nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, diverting their human resources and power from constructive uses and risking the annihilation of the world." (*Confession of 1967*, 9.45)**
- **Peace consists not in the absence of war but in attaining justice. Peacemaking involves the responsible use of power to create conditions of justice, freedom, and reconciliation.**
- **The church, in obedience to Christ, must become the agent of peacemaking, working with others for justice, freedom, and peace.**
- **The church bears witness to Christ when it nourishes the moral life of the nation for the sake of peace in our world. The church urges "that the nations pursue fresh and responsible relations across every line of conflict, even at risk to national security, to reduce areas of strife and to broaden international understanding." (*Confession of 1967*, 9.45)**
- **Practice of a just peace ethic involves resistance to the powers of self-interest in the world, whether these powers be collective or personal. A critical moral task is to move ourselves and our nation from self-interest toward the needs and interests of others, especially the powerless.**
- **Human beings must seek peace with justice, everywhere and in every place. While they seek just peace, they are called to employ force in the promotion of justice only as a last resort, and only within the constraints of just war criteria. Nuclear weapons can never satisfy these criteria.**

One test of the church's just peace ethic is whether its members observe it in their lives together. Another measure is whether what the church teaches about peacemaking in general is also taught in the context of particular issues and conflicts. The church's social teaching on several of these topics of continuing concern is summarized below.

UNITED STATES-SOVIET RELATIONS

When one looks at the social pronouncements of the General Assemblies on U.S.-U.S.S.R. relations over the years, two of the peacemaking emphases emerge as crucial. The first is the idea that peacemaking requires relational work—through negotiations, through summit conferences, and through programs of mutual understanding that help the people of the respective countries understand their counterparts even when their governments pursue a course of enmity. Early on, the Presbyterian Church declared:

As a nation, we must be prepared to spend years, if necessary, seeking equitable solutions to the multitude of problems dividing Russia and the Western World. We condemn all impassioned pressures for a resort to violence and war in the realization that the magnitude of our present crisis is largely the result of war. (PUSA, 1948, p. 202)

Thus the church emphasized the necessity of negotiation over violence and the exercise of good will, not military power, in the search for peace.

At the same time that the 1948 Assembly was emphasizing that peacemaking was the route to go in relations with the Soviets, it was living out another of the social principles: the role of the church as a peacemaking advocate to the nation. The church advocates the way of the Prince of Peace over the powers of war and darkness. These themes have continued to be joined together as recently as the 1983 and 1984 Assemblies of the reunited church, both of which called for a U.S.-U.S.S.R. summit meeting. The 1982 UPC Assembly even addressed these themes in succession when it called first upon Presbyterians to reexamine their “own perceptions and attitudes regarding the people of the Soviet Union, acknowledging that easy acquiescence in popular rhetoric and stereotyped perceptions can result in the sins of bearing false witness and self-righteousness.” (UPC, 1982, p. 292)

In the next paragraph, the Assembly called upon governmental officials in both countries:

. . . to refrain from the rhetoric of implacable opposition and enmity through which each casts the other in the role of an unchanging and unchangeable threat to basic existence and security and to abandon the pattern in which each interprets every problem or tension anywhere in the world as a demonically inspired work of the other. (UPC, 1982, p. 292)

As the relationship between the two superpowers began to thaw in the years 1985-1990, the Assemblies sought to promote what it saw as change in the right direction by commending the efforts of the leadership of the Soviet Union and the United States. Typical of its statements of

this period is this resolution upon the reopening the nuclear arms reduction talks in Geneva in 1985: "The General Assembly urges both governments to do everything within their power to bring these talks to a successful conclusion, including verifiable, unilateral steps toward increased arms control with challenges to the other to join in such actions. Such actions might include a halt in the production or deployment of weapons systems for a fixed period of time." (PCUSA, 1985, p. 76)

Interestingly enough, this was how the peace initiative finally worked, each side taking unilateral steps toward one another. The policies that had been suggested by the churches seeking a just peace, which were overwhelmed by the cold war in superpower relations, suddenly became those policies that worked.

HALTING THE ARMS RACE

The 1958 UPC Assembly called for a halt to the arms race, "not with the assurance that our civilization will thus be saved but in order that we may be obedient to God who calls us to pray and work for peace." Subsequent General Assemblies vigorously supported the goal of disarmament and mutual arms control with appropriate treaties and adequate inspection procedures. The Assemblies also opposed particular U.S. government policies of arms buildup such as "massive retaliation" (UPC, 1954, p. 185), "atmospheric testing of nuclear weapons" (UPC, 1964, p. 318), "antiballistic missile systems" (PCUS, 1969, p. 101), multiple warhead missiles, biological and chemical weapons programs, and all nuclear testing (UPC, 1972, p. 640; PCUSA, 1987, p. 407), the B-1 bomber (UPC, 1977, p. 177), and the "MX missile system" (UPC, 1980, p. 60).

Both Presbyterian Assemblies endorsed the "Call to Halt the Nuclear Arms Race: A Proposal for a Mutual U.S.-Soviet Nuclear Weapons Freeze," as a result of which the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program enlisted many endorsements of the freeze by sessions, presbyteries, and synods. Commitment to halt the arms race led to a 1982 UPC statement on "Confronting Idolatry," which emphasized that security will not be achieved by "disproportionate reliance on the development, multiplication, and redundancy of armaments," nor will the nation's social security be advanced by distorted federal budget outlays for military preparedness. Particularly, the testing, production, and deployment of nuclear weapons is idolatrous, declared the Assembly:

We are concerned with the evil inherent in nuclear weapons of mass destruction which, even if the validity of traditional just war analysis is accepted, can in no way be justified. Such weapons violate the canons of proportionality and blur all distinction between combatants and noncombatants. Since the

use of these weapons constitutes a human action that would result in the destruction of all humanity, the act in itself would be both blasphemous and idolatrous in the ultimate sense, a human abrogation of final judgment that belongs only to God. As their actual use can therefore have no justification we must question whether their very existence is morally acceptable

What deep form of disobedience is it that causes us to express our idolatry of national security in terms that echo the prohibition of the Second Commandment (against graven images)? We are called to reflect on the vast offerings we devote annually on the altars of our [nation's] strategic triad of air, land, and sea-based missiles.*

If armed might does not bring real security, how can peace be established? Numerous General Assembly statements on international affairs have lifted up four elements of a just and durable peace, toward which nations generally and the U.S. particularly should reduce militarism and work for disarmament, enhance world community by working through multilateral and global organizations, seek economic equity and social well-being, and respect the dignity, integrity and wholeness of all persons.**

APARTHEID IN SOUTH AFRICA

Turning to the issue of apartheid in South Africa, we quickly see that the principles of peacemaking are again present. But in contrast to its teaching on U.S.-Soviet relations, the General Assemblies have emphasized two of the principles to a much greater degree in their treatment of apartheid.

In no fewer than twenty-five resolutions since 1960, Presbyterian General Assemblies have uniformly declared their moral outrage at apartheid and their positive conviction that humanity is one. Treating Black, colored and Asian South Africans as different in kind from whites has been repeatedly attacked as a moral and theological absurdity—the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in 1982 and again in 1989 declared the pseudo-religious ideology and policy of apartheid to be heresy—reflecting a demonic view of human life and worth. The 1960 UPC Assembly set the tone for subsequent General Assembly teaching by not only expressing its horror over apartheid but also praying “that the churches of South Africa be faithful instruments of God’s grace for

**A Study and Action Guide on the Nuclear Arms Race and the “Call to Halt the Nuclear Arms Race,”* Second Edition, April, 1983, Section IV.

**See Robert F. Smylie, “A Presbyterian Witness on War and Peace: An Historical Interpretation,” *Journal of Presbyterian History* (Winter 1981), pp. 498 ff.

reconciliation among all [people].” (UPC, 1960, p. 352) The Assembly thus was again emphasizing that to be faithful the church (read, all churches) must lead its members to peacemaking. The special twist was that an American church was both defending the South African churches’ *right* to speak out and stating the South African churches’ *obligation* to speak out against apartheid.

In the years that followed, the General Assemblies expanded on these two themes of humanity’s oneness and the church’s responsibility for peacemaking, most often using the language of “reconciliation” derived from the Confession of 1967. Affirming that humanity is one and people’s conditions throughout the world are interrelated, the General Assemblies put pressure on American corporations and the U.S. government to stop collaboration with the white minority rulers, holding that South Africa’s apartheid regime could not survive without U.S. economic and political assistance. (UPC, 1965, p. 404)

***There is no real stability or security
without justice for all the people of
South Africa.***

By 1977, the General Assemblies of both churches were issuing regular calls for the U.S. to place its diplomatic, economic, and political weight behind full political, legal, and social rights for the black majority in South Africa. When government and industry leaders maintained that U.S. interests were best served, and in fact justified, by support for the white “authoritarian” government in South Africa, the General Assemblies turned to the principle of there being no peace without justice to argue that there is no real stability or security without justice for all the people of South Africa. (UPC, 1981, p. 251) Later the principle of the church’s peacemaking duty figured in the General Assemblies’ support of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches’ declaration that “apartheid is sin” and censure of any church in WARC that continued to support apartheid. (PCUS, 1982, p. 126) Again, the Assemblies emphasized the need of the church to nourish the moral life of the nation when it voiced solidarity with the South African Council of Churches after the South African regime cracked down on the Council’s activities. (PCUSA, 1983, p. 445)

In the latter 1980s the Presbyterian church agonized over the issue of divestment. It too had had a policy of constructive engagement, but needed to delineate its policy from that of the Reagan Administration’s

sham policy by the same name. It also had come to the point in 1985 where it realized that trying to play by the rules of the corporations, using stockholder resolutions and other strategies, had not worked. "Have these fifteen years of largely unproductive effort based on the stockholding link between church and corporation then been wrong?," the 1985 Assembly asked itself. Its conclusion: "Such a judgment would be inappropriate and inconsistent with the basic Reformed commitment to engage the forces and structures of the world directly in the ongoing struggle for justice and reconciliation." The application of just peace principles to the church's investments to promote the cause of justice in South Africa worked this way:

Real change is not easily or quickly won in any human situation; so patient and persistent effort in a particular strategy of engagement over considerable time can be a sign of constancy rather than of complacency. The Presbyterian commitment to work within unjust structures for change does not require the church to ignore brick walls when it hits them, however. Persistent effort from within has been largely ineffective. (PCUSA, 1985, p. 209)

Now the Assembly called for a shift from shareholder action to divestment as a "strategy to seek change in corporate and public policy toward South Africa." What the policy tried emphatically not to do was to "cleanse ourselves" of complicity with the evil of apartheid. "Such purity is not possible," the Assembly concluded, adding its theological understanding of the world, where "all institutions are flawed by sin, corporations and churches included, and involvement in American society makes complicity with U.S. governmental support for apartheid inescapable."

The biggest remaining question was whether divestment should be total or selective. The Assembly, having noted that "a rigorous philosophical logic might argue for total divestment," went on to argue that "the goal of the Presbyterian Church, however, is not logical consistency in strategy; it is faithful and effective participation in the struggle to end apartheid. The General Assembly declares its conviction that a selective divestment policy and strategy, proceeding in a deliberately phased progression, will serve that end more effectively than a one-time comprehensive divestment action."

Lest ends and means be mixed up, the Assembly policy statement also made it clear that "while the focus of this policy statement is on economic strategy, the issue for the church is not just a problem of economics and politics, but of a suffering people who daily experience the added burden of hopelessness and despair. Beyond immediate economic and political goals, the true policy goal for the church is and

always must be the dismantling of the apartheid system.” (PCUSA, 1985, p. 209)

CENTRAL AMERICA

In Central America, the overwhelming concern of U.S. governments has been to maintain security through friendly regimes and to “keep another Cuba from happening.” In contrast, the church has concerned itself with the condition of people and has posed the question, “How does the drive for security affect common people?” The church has lived out contextually its role in nourishing the moral life of the nation by questioning any “security” that is built on the misery of others, and by becoming institutionally involved with political refugees and others seeking sanctuary from the chaos of the region. The distinction between militarized order and just peace was repeated in the comprehensive 1983 Central America report:

Our nation is providing support for the powers of death in Central America. This has occurred because we have often been motivated by concern for national security more than by concern for justice. (PCUSA, 1983, p. 738)

The church contends that the real cause of unrest in Central America is not communist subversion but poverty, oppression, and injustice:

The demands for freedom and social change will continue as long as these conditions exist. The attempt to stifle these demands by reliance on arms and military strength has resulted in the spread of violence, destruction, oppression, and human suffering.

Moreover, this peacemaker’s perspective is nothing new, for the 1961 UPC Assembly had previously expressed its “opposition to attempts to resolve the complex problems of Latin America by external military means.” (UPC, 1961, p. 441)

The means that the church has advocated in the interim years revolve around the principles of negotiation and self-determination. In 1980 and 1981 the UPC Assemblies supported the rights of self-determination free of outside (U.S., Cuban, or Soviet) intervention for the Nicaraguan people. On the subject of El Salvador, the 1980, 1981, and 1982 Assemblies not only advocated self-determination but also the need for a “political solution” to the country’s problems. The Central America report of 1983, collaboratively prepared by the UPC and the PCUS, and approved by the reunited Assembly, likewise recommended working toward “negotiated rather than military solutions to regional conflicts in Central America.” This Assembly, as did those in 1982 and 1984, reached across the line of military conflict to practice reconciliation by

supporting congregations that have declared public sanctuary for refugees from El Salvador and Guatemala.

In each of the years from 1985 to 1990, the General Assembly spoke with fervor and eloquence about the requirements of a just peace process involving all countries of the region. Our examination of General Assembly teaching on Central America illustrates disavowal of the idea that peace with justice necessitates military and terrorist solutions to disorder and conflict. In fact, the 1990 resolution on Central America condemned as counterproductive and immoral outside aid for armed violence and U.S. support for low-intensity conflict there. This posture is not a prescription for the continuance of the status quo or for the perpetuation of oppression, nor is it a condemnation of poor peoples' insurrection as a last resort to resist tyranny. It does condemn the use of force to maintain unjust order, and it espouses an end to military intervention to "solve" problems between groups in poor countries.

THE MIDDLE EAST

The Middle East has been an area of deep concern to General Assemblies ever since the 1948 PUSA Assembly declared, "We believe that a solution to the problem will be achieved only by a return to the principle of faithful devotion to the welfare, needs, and rights of both the Jewish and Arab peoples. (PUSA, 1948, p. 203) The application of just peace principles has from that date onward meant that the church has refused to be drawn into the moral trap of seeing only one side of the issue.

The statement of the 1974 UPC General Assembly still speaks to the tragedy of the Middle Eastern situation in 1990:

The negotiation of concrete terms for the settlement of the Middle East conflict is the responsibility of the Middle Eastern parties themselves, with appropriate support and assistance from the international community.

The right and power of Palestinian people to self-determination by political expression should be recognized by the parties in the Middle East and by the international community.

Boundaries of all states in the area should be mutually defined and accepted.

Israel should assure full political rights and the right to effective participation in public life to all Israeli Arabs . . . The Arab countries should assure and foster full participation by minority religious, ethnic, and national communities in political, social, and economic life.

The Arab oil-producing countries with accumulating financial reserves should commit themselves to increase assistance for the long-term development of the entire Middle East region through cooperative efforts directed toward the economic growth, political stability, and alleviation of social ills seeking multilateral steps to limit arms supplies to all countries of the area

consistent with the building of a substantive detente. (UPC, 1974, p. 568)

In 1976 the PCUS Assembly condemned the exploitation of religious faith by the conflicting parties to the Lebanese and Arab-Israeli conflicts, declaring itself "unalterably opposed to religious wars." The Assembly added, "We condemn the frequent use of religion to conceal the economic, political, or class struggles. We believe that God's discipleship does not include a mandate to kill." (PCUS, 1976, p. 218)

Just peace has also guided more recent Presbyterian resolutions on the Middle East. The 1983 Assembly of the PCUSA called for balanced reporting of the media on Middle East events and once again called upon the U.S. to enforce its stated position against the establishment of Israeli settlements on the West Bank, this time by "denying all forms of aid to Israel as long as that nation persists in creating new West Bank settlements." (PCUSA, 1983, p. 796) Later Assemblies stressed the need for the U.S. to talk with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PCUSA, 1984, p. 335; 1986, p. 877; 1987, p. 870). The events of the Palestinian uprising beginning in November 1987 caused the 1988 General Assembly to issue a call to Israel to cease the systematic violation of the human rights of Palestinians in the occupied territories:

Specifically, we call for an end to the policies and/or practices of administrative detention, collective punishment, the torture of prisoners and suspects, and the deportation of dissidents;

[We call upon Israel to] end the policies and/or practices of beatings and of food and fuel embargoes in the attempt to subjugate and break the will of the Palestinian population, thus ending resistance to Israeli control of the occupied territories. (PCUSA, 1988, p. 365)

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Space does not permit a review of Assembly statements on other conflicted regions (e.g., the Presbyterian response to events in South Korea and Northern Ireland are very much in keeping with the categories attendant to just peace). Yet we see that the principles of peace with justice do indeed describe the way that the Presbyterian Church approaches international conflict. We also see that the elements of peace-making and just peace an Assembly stresses in any given statement on any particular regional conflict reflect what the church thinks most needs to be said and heard situationally. Still, whatever the means of peace-making—negotiations, political solutions, policies of economic justice, and steps to break the cycle of violence and death—the Presbyterian commitment to peace with justice comes through. And so it should be for a church that proclaims "the Prince of Peace" as savior of the world.

AFTERWORD

Through its social teachings the Presbyterian Church offers a social ethic that would attune mission activity and public policy to the liberality of the gospel and to a responsible civil process. To develop this social ethic the church seeks to form the structures of consciousness as much as to reform the structures of society.

What the Assemblies have said, of course, should “not be regarded as universal rules or as some sort of twentieth century decalogue. Yet no conscientious Presbyterian should ignore the guidance of the General Assembly as representative of the whole Church,” said the Church/State Report. (UPC, 1963, p. 184) Presbyterian social teachings and this summary of them should be viewed critically. But critical analysis needs to be balanced by sensitivity to the prophetic honesty, moral reasoning, and practical relevance of these social teachings.

A church in the Reformed tradition knows that humanizing change in established systems is necessary for the fulfillment of God’s purpose, and that such change occurs in large part through responsible public discourse and political activity. Therefore the church does not hesitate to call to account the powers of government, industry, technology, business, behavioral sciences, the professions, and the arts, reminding those powers that they are not autonomous, that their power is often corrupted and wasted, and that new social needs and expectations call for constructive initiatives. The church often has functioned as society’s conscience, voicing a compassionate and practical understanding of justice as the worldly distribution of love.

Calvinists characteristically acknowledge that the recovery of a living faith impels the church to *resist* social evils and to *cooperate* with government insofar as it works for peace, justice, and the general welfare. Christians work with those who exercise power and those who struggle for power in ways that are responsive to human need. But Christians fight against pretensions and injustices that arise when power endangers human welfare. Christians pray that their own lives and the ministry of the church may manifest the loving justice of God rather than a love of cultural, political, and economic idols.

The church also recognizes that each new social objective and governmental arrangement can only be provisional—i.e., both situational and tainted by sin. No proximate goals, political parties, or particular policies are to be identified with God's transcendent purposes. The expression of conscience will always have a place in the life of the church. But too will the quest for justice. The church affirms that societies and people can move toward shalom by mature political activity to attain a larger measure of justice and partially reconciled community. Faithful Christians do not resign themselves to despair when social hopes are frustrated or temporarily defeated by the principalities and powers of this world. Rather, Christians continue to participate in the social policy struggle with the sure knowledge that God's reign is already present as ferment in the world, stirring new hope and movements for freedom and fulfillment.

D.T.H.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

This issue of *Church & Society* is intended to guide Presbyterians in discovering the social teaching the church offers, so that you may respond in faith and help to guide public policies responsibly. This overview is no substitute, however, for getting to know the social teachings themselves, or for engaging the public realm as Christians and as a denomination. There are several ways to further these important goals:

- If you are interested in a particular area of the church's teaching, you might use the reference notes in this volume to find your way back into the General Assembly *Minutes* and read at length everything the church has had to say on the subject.
- If you are concerned about a subject that a General Assembly has not yet addressed, you might use the reasoning and wisdom contained in the church's treatment of related topics to help inform your own witness as you seek to respond to current social needs in areas such as substance abuse, animal rights, and foreign economic competition.
- A study group in a congregation or a presbytery might spend a few weeks focusing on a particular that the church has addressed, in order to learn more about how the church has sought to apply its understanding of the Bible, theology, and its traditions to important issues of contemporary life. This could be done by studying in detail one of the following recent General Assembly reports or statements that are good models of church social teaching:

Adventure and Hope in Central America (PCUSA, 1983) 1983 *Minutes*, pp. 738 ff.

Alcohol Use and Abuse: The Social and Health Effects (PCUSA, 1986)+
All the Livelong Day: Women and Work (PCUSA, 1988) DMS OGA-88-106*

Christian Faith and Economic Justice (PCUSA, 1984) DMS OGA-88-036*

Christian Obedience in a Nuclear Age (PCUSA, 1988) DMS OGA-88-101*

Common Affirmation on Global Hunger (UPC, 1979; PCUS, 1979) 1979 *Minutes*: UPC, pp. 383 ff; PCUS, pp. 480-481.

A Comprehensive Strategy for Racial Justice in the 1980s (PCUSA, 1983) 1983 *Minutes*, pp. 459 ff.

Covenant and Creation: Theological Reflections on Contraception and Abortion (PCUSA, 1983) DMS OGA-88-109*
 Declaration of Human Rights (PCUS, 1978) 1978 *Minutes*, pp. 186 ff.
 The Divestment Strategy: Principles and Criteria (PCUSA, 1984)++
 Life Abundant: Values, Choices, and Health Care (PCUSA, 1988) DMS OGA-88-103*
 On Southern Africa (PCUS, 1981; UPC, 1981) - 1981 *Minutes*: PCUS, pp. 137 ff; UPC, pp. 247 ff.
 Reformed Faith and Politics (PCUSA, 1983) PPH 11013601**
 Religious Liberty: God Alone Is Lord of the Conscience (PCUSA, 1988) OGA-88-107***
 Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice (PCUSA, 1990) OGA -90-002 (not yet available)
 Transnational Corporations (PCUSA, 1983) DMS 258-89-801+++

Sources of documents

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- ** Presbyterian Publishing House (PPH): write PPH, Louisville.
- *** Office of the General Assembly (OGA): write OGA, Louisville.
- + Write Office of Human Services, Louisville, or call 502-569-5787.
- ++ in "Divestment for South Africa—An Investment in Hope." Write MRTI, Louisville.
- +++ Write MRTI, Louisville.

Past issues of *Church & Society Magazine* can also serve as a useful resource for studying the social teachings of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The July/August issue each year publishes the social justice actions of that year's General Assembly. For example, the full text of the 1988 Assembly's action on "Christian Obedience in a Nuclear Age" was presented in the issue of July/August 1988. In-depth explorations of individual subjects fill the pages of the magazine at other times. For example, there have been recent issues on Reformed Faith and Religious Liberty (May/June 1986), The Church and Transnational Corporations (March/April 1984), Health for All: A Presbyterian Perspective (September/October 1986), and While the Earth Remains: Papers of the Presbyterian Eco-Justice Task Force (March/April 1990).

A complete listing of *Church & Society* titles since 1970 is on pp. 122-128 of the September/October 1989 eightieth anniversary issue (DMS 258-89-605) and is also available from the magazine's office in Louisville.

J.D.H.-B.



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