

American Presbyterianism and the Cold War

By Frank J. Smith

The Cold War—a time when the threat of nuclear holocaust hung over the world. For more than four decades, Communism and freedom, embodied by the superpowers of the USSR and the USA, vied for the hearts of men—and sometimes fought it out, via client states, in faraway mountains and jungles.

The Cold War was the premier diplomatic reality of the post-World War II world, but its effect went far beyond foreign policy. Its specter, like a mushroom cloud, hung over Western society, including America. Think of the 1950s, a decade characterized by commercialism and entertainment: bobby socks and coonskin caps, Elvis, Coca-Cola, refrigerators, television, tail-fins on cool cars. Nevertheless, one could not escape the overriding anxiety of the nuclear age and the fear that the air-raid sirens would go off and we would all have to “duck and cover.” Even the beach party had nuclear overtones: the bikini, after all, was named after Bikini Atoll, site of nuclear tests in 1946.

The Cold War affected every aspect of society, including the religious realm. And behind the military and political struggle was an ideological battle, between godless Marxism on the one hand, and, on the other hand, Western values rooted in Christian principles. Surely there would be no question, then, as to which side found the universal support of the Church.

However, in reality, the picture is far more complex than what might appear at first blush. For during the Cold War, many Protestant denominations and churchmen adopted a position of moral equivalence toward the superpowers—or, in some cases, even favored the leftist regimes. Foundational to such behavior was a commitment to a social gospel that often found expression in socialism and pacifism.

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An overview of American Protestantism, then, reveals a spectrum of beliefs and attitudes—from those who favored a Communist approach and criticized American foreign and military policy, to those who embraced a typical American patriotic position, to those who critiqued both Russian and American officials for being in opposition to genuine freedom.

While American Protestantism as a whole interacted with the reality of the Cold War, we will be using the Presbyterian experience as a kind of foil off of which to play, in order to illustrate the spectrum of beliefs at work within American Protestantism. There are several reasons to justify such an approach. First, given the overwhelming amount of material, narrowing the focus helps us to grab hold of the topic. Secondly, the widest spectrum of views is represented among Presbyterians, both within denominations and across denominational lines. Thirdly, there is a direct correlation within Presbyterianism between ecclesiastical reform movements and separations, on the one hand, and issues of war and peace on the other. Fourthly, many of the key players in American foreign policy in the twentieth century have been Presbyterian. And fifthly, the formal declaration of the Cold War occurred on a Presbyterian college campus—a campus in the heartland of America, in the “Show Me” state of Missouri.

THE IRON CURTAIN

Fulton, Missouri, had never seen such excitement. The small college town was playing host to the President of the United States, Harry S. Truman, and to the former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Winston Churchill.

With bold strokes, Churchill delivered his famous “Iron Curtain” speech to a packed Westminster College gymnasium, March 5, 1946. In some ways, this marked the formal beginning of the Cold War.



Frenchman's Flat, Nevada—Atomic Cannon Test, fireball ascending, 05/23/1953. Courtesy of The National Archives and Records Administration

But an article on American Presbyterianism and the Cold War has its justification not only because of that dramatic event at a Presbyterian school. People in the Reformed tradition have always had an influential role in America, and this is certainly true with regard to matters of war and peace. Woodrow Wilson was the son, nephew, and grandson of Presbyterian ministers. Dwight Eisenhower was a member of National Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C. At least three Secretaries of State in the twentieth century were Presbyterian and were willing to bring their faith to bear on the problems of diplomacy. William Jennings Bryan is well-known for his non-interventionism and belief in arbitration to settle disputes. John Foster Dulles was active in church work. And when reporters asked Dean Rusk what he had learned in the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, he said, "I learned something about the answer to the first question in the Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Confession of 1647." What was that?, they wanted to know. "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever."¹

But beyond significant monologues and high government officials, the Presbyterian denominations of this country have helped to shape (as well as to reflect) public opinion. This article will focus on various expressions within Presbyterianism, especially in the post-Vietnam era.

In doing so, we will regard theology rather than political ideology as the foundational consideration. This is not the approach that has always been taken by historians, even when taking religion into account with

regard to the Cold War. For example, one scholar wrote that the British and the Americans

sought to construct a 'Western' doctrine with which to counter the growing appeal of communism. In an era in which religious faith still mattered, Marxist atheism was seen as a potential focus for undermining the popular appeal of communist doctrine. This was particularly important in relation to the masses of poor, for whom communism naturally held a significant attraction, as these were equally the people for whom religion was a comfort and a consolation.

Marxist atheism provided a window of vulnerability, the Achilles' heel of communism from the West's religio-political perspective. It was hardly surprising, therefore, that Christianity was appropriated by Western propagandists and policy-makers for their anti-communist arsenal. The construction of an entirely new doctrine with which to counter the appeal of communism proved unfeasible. However, anti-communist rhetoric emphasised freedom of religion and Christian ideals, which, combined with its emphasis on democracy and freedom, enabled

1. Much of this information can be found in James H. Smylie, *American Presbyterians: A Pictorial History* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Historical Society, 1985) 203ff. The quote by Dean Rusk is cited in Donald W. Shriver, Jr., *The Seeds of Peace*, a sermon at the Princeton University Chapel, September 27, 1981 (Union Papers No. 1, June 1982) 10. We would also note that Condoleezza Rice, President George W. Bush's Secretary of State in his second term of office, is the daughter of a Presbyterian minister.

anti-communism to assume a doctrinal status with a claim to moral superiority owing to its spiritual component as opposed to the base materialism of communism.²

While we appreciate the possibility that politicians may have sought to prostitute the church for propagandistic advantage, our own perspective leads us to concentrate on the theological and religious factors which led Presbyterians of diverse persuasion to go in different directions on the political questions of the day, including, the Cold War.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Presbyterians historically have followed the thinking of John Calvin, the Protestant Reformer of Geneva, so it is appropriate to discuss some relevant aspects of Calvinistic political theory.

The rise of the nation-state gave impetus to the Reformation's new look at civil affairs. Biblical concepts such as the right to defend one's own country against foreign invasion and the notion of a limited government gained ground in a continent whose Holy Roman Empire was coming apart.

One of the hallmarks of Calvinism's political thinking is the doctrine of the right of rebellion. In the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Calvin maintained that one must not submit to any human ruler when such submission means to engage in sin, for one must obey God rather than man. Furthermore, even though tyranny is preferable to anarchy, the lower magistrate may properly lead the people in revolt against a despot; Calvin gave specific examples of assassination of wicked leaders in the Old Testament to bolster his views. However, no private citizen may agitate on his own for rebellion.³

This idea of interpreting Scriptural injunctions regarding submission to "the powers that be" in a

conditional way, is bound up with the belief that all human authority is derivative and that all government is limited in scope. Reformed theology developed the notion of Church and State as interdependent but separate, each having its own sphere of duty, both responsible to God, and neither encroaching on the prerogatives of the other.

Another revolutionary concept was expressed by Samuel Rutherford, participant in the Westminster Assembly. Published as a treatise against despotic rulers, Rutherford's *Lex, Rex* stated that the Word of God limits civil government and prescribes its nature, laws, and structure.⁴

Many historians have noted the correlation between the spread of Calvinism and the rise of freedom in the Old World and in America. The Genevan Reformation had its effect upon multitudes who rejected arbitrary government. The War for American Independence succeeded in large measure because of the Scotch-Irish troops who shouted "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!"; the Presbyterian elders who were officers in Washington's army; and the Presbyterian preachers, such as John Witherspoon, who cried, "Death to tyranny!"⁵

While Reformed theology thus spawned "revolution," it was never of the Marxist variety. Calvinists effected change to bring about a Bible-based society, one in which the State recognizes its dependence upon God and its limited nature. In no instance did the Reformers call for a class-less society, or oppose private property. Calvin and his followers stood with Luther in the sixteenth century against the Anabaptists and their communal system. The seventeenth century Puritans likewise steadfastly opposed any such "Radical Reformation."

In the nineteenth century, orthodoxy confronted many different forms of infidelity. The rise of Deism and Unitarianism helped create a climate that led to abolitionism, feminism, and communism. Noteworthy Southern Presbyterian theologian Robert Lewis Dabney was perhaps the most astute in challenging radicalism. This Virginian wrote extensively in defense of traditional values and of his beloved homeland, the South. He critiqued public education; the centralizing trend of the federal government since the "revolution" effected by the War Between the States; and Erastian tendencies in ecclesiastical affairs, as evidence of erosion of liberties and guarantee of more to come.⁶

Presbyterians historically have held that civil government is limited in nature; that revolution when led by divinely-appointed officials can be good, for the purpose of delivery from oppression; and that civil government, while not properly invading the realm of the conscience,

2. Dianne Kirby, "An Introduction," in Dianne Kirby, ed., *Religion and the Cold War* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003) 2.

3. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book IV, Chapter 20 (reprint, trans. by Henry Beveridge; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979).

4. Samuel Rutherford, *Lex, Rex; or The Law and the Prince ...* (reprint; Harrisonburg, Va.: Sprinkle Publications, 1982).

5. See C. Gregg Singer, *John Calvin: His Roots and Fruits* (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1967).

6. Robert L. Dabney, *A Defense of Virginia, [and through her, of the South,] in Recent and Pending Contests Against the Sectional Party* (reprint; Harrisonburg, Va.: Sprinkle Publications, 1977); *Discussions*, Vol. 4: *Secular*, ed. by C.R. Vaughan (reprint; Harrisonburg, Va.: Sprinkle Publications, 1979).

exists to uphold God's just rule in society. Those adhering to the Reformed faith have argued against egalitarianism and against the redistribution of wealth. On the contrary, Calvinism helped to set free the market system from the Medievalism of the Europe dominated by Roman Catholicism.

I. THE RISE OF THE SOCIAL GOSPEL

Protestations by Dabney and others notwithstanding to the contrary, radical currents, starting in the nineteenth century and continuing into the twentieth, were sweeping away much that had been held dear. The maelstrom caused much confusion and produced many inconsistencies.

William Jennings Bryan was the embodiment of these incongruities. Though "The Great Commoner" was regarded highly enough to be appointed Vice Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (PCUSA, or Northern Presbyterian Church) in 1923, he was only nominally committed to Calvinism, having imbibed of the notion that doctrinal distinctiveness was not that all relevant any more. Furthermore, his evangelicalism was wedded to a socialistic impulse. Even the gospel he preached often contained more in it about man's "perfectibility" than about the grace of God in Christ.⁷

People committed to a "social gospel"—that is, a message more concerned with societal matters and institutional change than with individual conversion—formed the Federal Council of Churches (FCC) in 1908. Comprised of several Protestant denominations, the FCC furthered the aims of churchmen desirous of enacting a new social order which would be collectivistic in nature.⁸

These ecclesiastics tended to be pacifist. Specifically, they deplored World War I. Nevertheless, they viewed that "war to end all wars" as providing an opportunity for restructuring the world along the lines of their social thinking. A war to make the world safe for democracy held appeal for those churchmen committed to the democratic ideal.⁹

The influence of the FCC must not be underestimated. Many prominent people were involved directly in the organization at a time when there were serious proposals for church union across traditional lines. The appeal was to forget about doctrine, since doctrine divides; let everyone think about Jesus, and all will be well.

Following the First World War, the PCUSA General Assembly issued several pacifist-sounding statements. The Assembly commended Presidents Harding and

Hoover for their work in international agreements; advocated United States participation in the Permanent Court of International Justice at The Hague; opposed the forcing of students into military education (as being against the cultivation of peace); argued for the legitimacy of conscientious objector status; and urged the church as a whole to study and pursue peace.¹⁰

The 1924 Assembly stated:

The Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. pledges all its energies to the outlawing of war and to the hastening of the day when nations shall learn war no more. We refuse to believe that the wholesale slaughter of human beings upon the battlefield is morally necessary any more to man's highest development than is killing by individuals. We see in war's cruelties, made more terrible by modern invention, not only a menace to civilization but also a definite challenge to the followers of the Prince of Peace.....

We solemnly assert that the teachings of Christ furnish the only basis and hope of permanent peace and earnestly appeal to all branches of the Christian Church to unite in bringing mankind to an acceptance of Him in order to establish a universal brotherhood founded on righteousness, justice and peace (*Minutes of the General Assembly* {1924} 112–13).

The 1927 Assembly declared:

Resolved, That this Assembly take note of the fact that the chief denial of our Christian faith lies in the hostile attitudes of nations and races and in their preparedness and continued preparation for war. We recognize

7. Any standard biography of Bryan would illustrate the inconsistency.

8. C. Gregg Singer, *The Unholy Alliance* (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House, 1975), is probably the best source to document these facts.

9. *Ibid.* See also Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, *An Appeal to the 150,000 Churches of America*, a paper issued in 1921 in connection with the Washington Disarmament Conference; and the FCC's *Working Towards a Warless World*, a 1921 pamphlet.

10. Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, *Minutes of the General Assembly* (Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly), for the following years: 1922 (pp. 70–75); 1926 (p. 253); 1928 (pp. 56–57); 1930 (pp. 67, 72, 134); 1932 (pp. 83–84), 1935 (p. 104). See also the *Minutes* for 1934 with regard to commending the President for his arms embargo to Paraguay and Bolivia in light of their war (p. 204); and for 1935, in which a left-wing social agenda is linked with an endorsement of the U.S. membership in the International Labor Organization (pp. 100–01). Hereafter, PCUSA *Minutes*, year, volume.

that the same Christian principles of love, service and mutual trust that we profess and seek to practice in individual relationships, are equally applicable to the relationships of nations and peoples (*Minutes of the General Assembly* {1927} 246–67).

II. A GENERATION OF UNREST (1920–1945)

The pacifistic and socialistic trends in the Presbyterian Church had their origin in left-wing theology. The beginnings of such deviations from orthodoxy can be traced at least as far back as the late nineteenth century. The most notable example was the 1893 trial of Charles Augustus Briggs, professor at Union Theological Seminary in New York, for his rejection of the inspiration of Scripture. Though Briggs was convicted and forced to leave the Presbyterian ministry, he continued through

his influential position at Union to mold the minds of many of the Church's young ministers.

The fundamentalist-Modernist struggle caused great turmoil in the Northern Presbyterian Church. After Harry Emerson Fosdick, who had preached a sermon entitled "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?," was forced from his Presbyterian pulpit in Manhattan, a multitude of ministers signed the Auburn Affirmation of 1923. This document asserted that the traditional understanding of Scripture (inerrant, infallible, inspired) was in error; and that the traditional views regarding Christ (His virgin birth, miracles, bodily resurrection, and second coming) were only "theories," belief in which was purportedly not necessary for officership in the denomination. Over 1300 people attached their names to this Affirmation.¹¹

The conservatives failed to press charges against the signers of this document. This failure resulted in these liberals going on the attack. By 1929, they had effectively reorganized Princeton Theological Seminary so that it was no longer a thoroughgoing traditional school; two of the new trustees elected by the General Assembly were signers of the Auburn Affirmation.

In 1936, the General Assembly completed the process of purging the Church's most consistently Reformed element by upholding convictions of church officers for their continuing on the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions, in competition with the official Board of Foreign Missions. (Those who formed the Independent Board did so because of the toleration of Pearl Buck and other Modernists by the denominational board.)¹²

Among those essentially booted out of the Northern Presbyterian Church was J. Gresham Machen, former Princeton Seminary professor and intellectual champion of American fundamentalists. He spearheaded the founding of a new denomination, now known as the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.¹³

Machen opposed all unwarranted forms of government intrusion into the lives of the citizenry. He wrote against the peacetime draft before the United States entrance into World War I. He campaigned against the Lusk Laws in New York State, as well as laws in Nebraska and Oregon designed to bring all education under state control. He appeared before a Senate committee in 1926 to testify against the establishment of a federal Department of Education ("If you give the bureaucrats the children, you might as well give them everything else as well"). He stood against proposals regulating child labor. He perceived dangers of statism in the New Deal.¹⁴

Machen was an avid mountain climber, and he used

11. See Henry W. Coray, *J. Gresham Machen: A Silhouette* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1981) 75ff.

12. Coray, *Machen*; Ned B. Stonehouse, *J. Gresham Machen: A Biographical Memoir* (Philadelphia: Westminster Theological Seminary, 1977); Paul Woolley, *The Significance of J. Gresham Machen Today* (Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1977).

13. *Pressing Toward the Mark: Essays Commemorating Fifty Years of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church*, ed. by Charles G. Dennison and Richard C. Gamble (Philadelphia: The Committee for the Historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1986), is one of several books which deal with this denomination. D. Clair Davis' contribution, "Machen and Liberalism," maintains: "Obviously Machen knew of liberalism's social and political face, perhaps as important to its supporters as its theology. While some attention could be given to Machen's conservative political stance and its emphasis on limited government, predisposing him against liberalism in general, it would be a mistake to think it was all that important to Machen. Rather it is the theological issues that must be considered" (247). The OPC through the years apparently has not taken any positions on the Cold War as such, out of respect for the doctrine of the "spirituality of the Church" (that the Body of Christ should deal only with ecclesiastical matters), as well as out of a concern to attack left-wing ideology in its theological aspect. Nevertheless, many members of the OPC have been active members of the John Birch Society. Also, see a 1987 issue of *Journey* magazine, a publication of Grace Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Lynchburg, Va., in which the editor, Richard Knodel, Jr., wrote in critique of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization: "... how Christians can be 'salt and light' within the U.S.S.R. without being either for or against socialism is one monumental task. It's pure 'fuzzie-wuzzie.' But this is the kind of pabulum coming forth from *mainline evangelicalism*. And *this* is the planetary system which is presently exerting such a gravitational pull upon the Calvinistic system! We don't need it. Covenant theology is vastly superior! With it we needn't be so muddle-headed in the face of the Leviathan 'statism' of our day. Jesus is our Christ. And salt is more than the mystical darkness of a Russian Orthodox cathedral" (Vol. II, No. 4, July–August 1987, p. 3).

14. See the references in note 14 above.

that interest as a way of making points about the rise of totalitarianism domestically and abroad.

Can the love of the mountains be conveyed to those who have it not? I am not sure. Perhaps if a man is not born with that love it is almost as hopeless to try to bring it to him as it would be to explain what color is to a blind man or to try to make President [Franklin] Roosevelt to understand the Constitution of the United States. . . .

... I for my part refuse to acquiesce in this relativism which refuses to take stock of the times in which we are living. It does seem to me that there can never be any true advance, and above all there can never be any true prayer, unless a man does pause occasionally, as on some mountain vantage ground, to *try*, at least, to evaluate the age in which he is living. And when I do that, I cannot for the life of me see how any man with even the slightest knowledge of history can help recognizing the fact that we are living in a time of sad decadence—a decadence only thinly disguised by the material achievements of our age, which already are beginning to pall on us like a new toy. When Mussolini makes war deliberately and openly upon democracy and freedom, and is much admired for doing so even in countries like ours; when an ignorant ruffian is dictator of Germany, until recently the most highly educated country in the world—when we contemplate these things I do not see how we can possibly help seeing that something is radically wrong. Just read the latest utterances of our own General Johnson, his cheap and vulgar abuse of a recent appointee of our President, the cheap tirades in which he develops his view that economics are bunk—and then compare that kind of thing with the state papers of a Jefferson or a Washington—and you will inevitably come to the conclusion that we are living in a time when decadence has set in on a gigantic scale.

What will be the end of that European civilization, of which I had a survey from my mountain vantage ground—of that European civilization and its daughter in America? Will Luther prove to have lived in vain? Will all the dreams of liberty issue into some vast industrial machine? Will even nature itself be reduced to standard, as in our country the sweetness of the woods and hills is being destroyed, as I have seen them destroyed in Maine, by the uniformities and artificialities and officialdom of our national parks? Will the so-called “Child Labor Amendment” and other similar measures be adopted, to the destruction of all the decencies and privacies of the home? Will some dreadful second law

of thermodynamics apply in the spiritual as in the material realm? Will all things in church and state be reduced to one dead level, coming at last to an equilibrium in which all liberty and all high aspirations will be gone? Will that be the end of all humanity’s hopes? I can see no escape from that conclusion the signs of the times; too inexorable seems to me to be the march of events. No, I can see only one alternative. The alternative is that there is a God—a God who in His own good time will bring forward great men again to do His will, great men to resist the tyranny of experts and lead humanity out again into the realms of light and freedom, great men, above all, who will be the messengers of His grace. There is, far above any earthly mountain peak of vision, a God high and lifted up who, though He is infinitely exalted, yet cares for His children among men.¹⁵

Organizationally, Northern Presbyterianism thus experienced a great divide in 1936. Although there was still a reservoir of conservative belief in the PCUSA, the denomination had turned a corner. The tolerationists who preferred appeasement to rocking the boat were solidly in charge. This policy led to increasing influence by Modernists, who were basically committed to radical politics and theology.

The appeasement of left-wing churchmen translated into a pacifistic trend with regard to international affairs. The 1937 General Assembly declared that “Christ’s ideal for the world is that of home in which God is the Father of all, and all the members of the human race are brethren.” That same Assembly also received the results of voting by the presbyteries on deleting from the Westminster Confession of Faith the words which permitted the civil magistrate to wage war “upon just and necessary occasions.” This amendment received the affirmative votes of 183 out of 279 presbyteries, three short of the requisite two-thirds majority. Another attempt in 1938–39 likewise obtained a majority vote of the presbyteries but not the necessary number for ratification.¹⁶

Meanwhile the rise of totalitarian regimes abroad caused great consternation to liberal churchmen. The

15. J. Gresham Machen, *Mountains and Why We Love Them*, paper read before a group of ministers in Philadelphia, November 27, 1933. The General Johnson to whom Machen referred was Hugh Samuel Johnson, a U.S. Army brigadier general who was tapped by President Roosevelt to head the National Recovery Administration.

16. Robert F. Smylie, “A Presbyterian Witness on War and Peace: An Historical Interpretation,” *Journal of Presbyterian History*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (Winter 1981) 500–01. Even Lefferts A. Loetscher made the connection between left-wing politics and the tolerationism in the church: “This spirit of postwar pacifism, already so widespread in the

'Dull, Duller, Dulles'

Born into a family of diplomats who were committed to American expansionism, John Foster Dulles (1888–1959) put his mark on American foreign policy in the twentieth century. From proposals for restructuring international relations in the 1930s, to meeting the challenges of World War II, to dealing with various diplomatic headaches while Eisenhower's Secretary of State, to being a key player in the Cold War, Dulles was an indefatigable warrior for his vision of how the world should work.

Democrats dug at his dour demeanor: "Dull, Duller, Dulles," they derided. But it was not merely a matter of demeanor which characterized Dulles (and which caused the caricature): behind the seriousness—which was wedded to a penchant for detail—was a certain type of liberal piety, a 'do-goodism' which constituted what might be called a secularized faith.

In 1937, Dulles attended a conference at Oxford University organized by the Universal Council for Life and Work, a predecessor body of the World Council of Churches. Entitled "Church, Community, and State," this conference marked a turning point in Dulles' life, where "he 'began to understand the profound significance of the spiritual values that my mother and father had taught.'" But, of course, Dulles' Christianity was not one driven by traditional theological understanding, but rather one that emulated "universalist ideals of brotherhood and equality" (Richard H. Immerman, *John Foster Dulles: Piety, Pragmatism, and Power in U.S. Foreign Policy* [Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1999] 14–15). An historian has commented that "Dulles' faith was more an idealised commitment to the betterment of humankind in this world than a conscious acceptance of a transcendental reality. His religious orientation was neither exclusively Christian nor was he interested in missionary ventures to 'Christianize' the world. He never seemed to believe in the necessity to pay homage to a higher being, his devotion being directed rather to the 'universal brotherhood of man.' Yet he always couched his humanistic creed, as expounded in numerous public speeches, in Christian terminology" (Martin Erdmann, *Building the Kingdom of God on Earth: The Churches' Contribution to Marshal Public Support for World Order and Peace, 1919–1945* [Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2005] 119).

However, Dulles recognized man's innate depravity, expressed in selfishness which leads to war. One biographer believes that Dulles' "explanation for the endemic conflict among nations was an idiosyncratic amalgam of Protestantism, Bergsonianism, and Wilsonianism." ("Wilsonianism"

is a reference to President Wilson's idealism, including the principle of self-determination; Henri Bergson was a Sorbonne philosopher with whom Dulles studied, who advocated a fluid approach regarding reality; and the reference to Protestantism has to do with an affirmation of human sinfulness. (Immerman, 13, 18)). The resultant mixture of realism and idealism was a heady brew which led him, on the one hand, to nuclear brinkmanship with the Soviet Union during the Cold War, and to a search for lasting peace on the other.

Some might regard Dulles as being a "traditionalist" in terms of his views of man's depravity and the necessity of the assertion of political and military power. Nevertheless, we cannot get away from the fact that Dulles, even under the influence of neo-orthodoxy, was still heterodox in his views. He had not abandoned his basic liberal theological commitment, which had come to expression in his defense of New York Presbytery in its protection of heretics who rejected such doctrines as the atonement and the virgin birth of Christ. Furthermore, there is no question but that liberalism continued to dominate the ecclesiastical scene, the efforts of Reinhold Niebuhr and other neo-orthodox thinkers notwithstanding to the contrary. Therefore, while we appreciate that it is important to pay attention to nuanced theological differences, at the end of the day the Niebuhrian school (of which Dulles was an adherent) did not have much practical effect on the leftward drift of mainline denominations—a leftist tilt which tended toward accommodation with Communist regimes rather than brinkmanship. Indeed, isn't that the very reason why the "later" Dulles was regarded with suspicion by many of his ecclesiastical colleagues? ■



President Eisenhower and John Foster Dulles (r) in 1956 (from *The National Archives and Records Administration*)

strong pacifism which almost became church doctrine clashed with the realities in Europe and the Far East.

When war finally came, the PCUSA stood in favor of the war effort. But behind that support was the determination by many in the church that this “necessary evil” would serve as an instrument for societal change domestically and overseas. As one commentator has put it, “The emphasis [in General Assembly pronouncements] is not on the justness of the war but on the justness of the peace.” And, “By concentrating on the aims of the war, and on the nature of a just peace, Presbyterians sought to assure United States commitment to the restructuring of a just world order” (Smylie, “Presbyterian Witness,” 502–03).

The Federal Council of Churches’ Commission on a Just and Durable Peace, chaired by John Foster Dulles, early in 1943 issued a series of political propositions, known as the “Six Pillars of Peace.” The FCC’s commission in this statement demonstrated its commitment to an international collectivism.¹⁷

III. THE POST-WORLD WAR II CHALLENGE A. LEFT-WING PRESBYTERIANISM

The Federal Council of Churches continued to advocate socialism and collectivism after World War II. The FCC painted a rosy picture of Soviet intentions, portraying the Russians as being paranoid aggressors because of the militarism of Germany and Japan (Singer, *Unholy Alliance*, 140ff.).

John Foster Dulles reported to the Council’s executive committee that the charter of the United Nations was a wondrous document for the promotion of human liberty. That committee then adopted a statement urging that the United States ratify the UN charter (Singer, 138).

Another prominent theme by the FCC was the necessity for international control of the atomic bomb. As historian C. Gregg Singer noted, it is possible that “the Council was interested not so much in the international control of the bomb per se, as in giving Russia a position equal to that of the United States in the determination of this and other related issues” (Singer, 139–40).

This ecumenical organization had to face renewed charges in the late 1940s that it was riddled with Communist sympathizers and even agents. The resulting loss of credibility for the FCC led its supporters to dissolve it in 1950. However, replacing it was the National Council of Churches of Christ (NCC), with the same personnel and programs continuing unabated (Singer, 180ff.).

The FCC and NCC had many Presbyterians in places of leadership and responsibility. Statements by Northern

Presbyterian General Assemblies mirrored the sentiments expressed by the Federal and National Councils.

At least three major topics relating to war and peace appear in PCUSA General Assembly minutes in the late 1940s and 1950s. First, there was ardent support for the United Nations (Smylie, “Presbyterian Witness,” 503).

Second, the Korean War is referred to cryptically in 1951 as “the crisis in world affairs.” The perils of a global war and a surrender of our civilization to the totalitarianism of Communism were contrasted. The Assembly seemed to be more concerned about the domestic dangers: 1. self-righteousness which “can make us a positive danger to the peace of the world if it encourages a preventative war of a holy crusade”; 2. a police state resulting from fear and hysteria; 3. putting sole trust in armaments for combating Communism, with the dangers of exhausting resources, encouraging a military state, and a dangerous arms race; 4. making friends of tyrannical governments just because they are anti-Communist; 5. the lack of fundamental integrity in the life of the nation (Smylie, 503–04).

Third, the Assembly began to call for the reduction and elimination of weapons of mass destruction.¹⁸

This commitment to the ultimate goal of general and complete disarmament came to expression in a variety of ways in the 1960s and 1970s. The original call to eliminate mass destruction weaponry was reiterated in 1960, 1963, and 1971. The Assembly declared itself to be in favor of the end of nuclear weapons testing, including a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in 1963, 1964, 1967, 1971, and 1978. Nuclear non-proliferation, Amy Carter’s profound concern, found support at the 1963, 1967, and 1971 Assemblies. The SALT II Treaty was supported by the 1978

country and in the Church, operated strongly against any party—in this case the extreme conservatives—which sought to force a struggle over any issue. Against the background prevailing in postwar America, the vivid, even bloody, military figures of speech sometimes used by conservative speakers and writers were singularly unattractive to most Americans of the day” (*The Broadening Church: A Study of Theological Issues in the Presbyterian Church since 1869* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1954] 120–21).

17. Singer, *Unholy Alliance*, 136ff. The second pillar reads as follows: “The peace must make provision for bringing within the scope of international agreement those economic and financial acts of national governments which have widespread international repercussions.” The language may seem innocuous, until one realizes that those “economic and financial acts” included all kinds of New Deal and similar legislation.

18. The key year was 1956, in which there were calls for both elimination of weapons of mass destruction, and strong support of the United Nations; cited in *Peacemaking: The Believers’ Calling* (New York: The General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, 1980) 27–28.

Fiery Fundamentalist

Born in a Presbyterian manse in Ypsilanti, Michigan, Carl McIntire (1906–2002) was caught up in the Modernist-fundamentalist controversy which embroiled the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Along with J. Gresham Machen and others, he was suspended from the ministry for his militant defense of orthodoxy—a judgment confirmed by the 1936 PCUSA General Assembly. That same year, he was a founding minister of the Presbyterian Church of America (later known as the Orthodox Presbyterian Church). A year later, he was a key player in the formation of the Bible Presbyterian Church (BPC). In 1938, a civil court decision forced him and his followers out of the Presbyterian church building where he had ministered in Collingswood, New Jersey. He subsequently conducted services under a tent; eventually a large church building, capable of seating 1000 people, was built for his Bible Presbyterian congregation.

Dr. McIntire was tireless in his denunciation of leftist theology and ideology, particularly in the “mainline” Protestant churches. He also never shrank from fighting for freedom—as exemplified in his battle with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) over WXUR radio station in Media, Pennsylvania, over the so-called “Fairness Doctrine.” After losing that battle, McIntire, for about half a day, operated a pirate radio station from a converted WWII mine sweeper off the coast of New Jersey, until technical difficulties forced it off the air.

In December 1973, he appeared, uninvited, at the first General Assembly of the National Presbyterian Church

(later called the Presbyterian Church in America), where G. Aiken Taylor felt compelled to introduce him: upon introduction, he dramatically stood up in the balcony and waved to the Assembly. Later, in the Press Room, in front of a local television station news crew, he announced the “first First Amendment March on Washington, D.C.,” for freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and freedom of radio and TV (This present author was present in the Press Room when Dr. McIntire made his announcement).

Carl McIntire faced ridicule for his militant stances. However, his one-man protests at ecumenical gatherings earned him grudging respect and even affection from liberal participants: in 1991, several of the delegates came up and said to him, “Hey, Carl, how ya’ doing?” (Randall Balmer, “Fundamentalist with Flair,” *Christian Today* (May 21, 2002), accessed on-line [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl_McIntire]).

Perhaps most significantly, the president of Fuller Theological Seminary paid him a posthumous compliment. Richard Mouw admitted that when McIntire would attack churchmen from the Eastern Bloc at ecumenical meetings (such as the World Council of Churches) as being agents of Communist regimes, he thought that the firebrand was overreaching. However, now that archives in Russia have been opened, he acknowledged that McIntire was right all along. Mouw wrote: “To my knowledge, no one in the world of ecumenical Protestantism ever apologized to McIntire for the cavalier manner in which they dismissed his charges. I, for one, believe we owed him an apology.... You were right, Dr. McIntire!” (Richard J. Mouw, *Christian Today* on-line, May 21, 2002). ■



Carl McIntire

and 1979 gatherings. The United States should halt all biological and chemical warfare programs, according to the 1971 and 1978 Assemblies. It should also reduce military expenditures and reorder its priorities (1971, 1979, and 1980). It should work to keep the seabed and outer space free from nuclear weapons (1971). The U.S. government

should take even unilateral actions that may help stop the arms race (1971, 1978). The United Nations should be strengthened in its role as peacekeeper and in its efforts at arms control and reduction (1956, 1963, 1967, 1978).¹⁹

It was not only the Northern Presbyterians who took positions on international affairs. The Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS, or Southern Presbyterian Church), as a result of being increasingly enamored with social issues after 1940, also became involved with issues of international relations. This interest grew at the General Assembly level in the 1950s and 1960s.

19. Ibid. Amy Carter is the daughter of former President Jimmy Carter. During the October 28, 1980 Presidential debate, Jimmy Carter said that he had asked his then-thirteen year old daughter what the most important issue was, to which she responded, “nuclear weaponry—and the control of nuclear arms.”

In 1960, that denomination “confessed” its involvement in the destruction of human life in war, and declared that “Christians the world over should work with every means at their disposal to prevent war. They must pray for the ultimate world-wide abolition of nuclear weapons, and, indeed, of all means of warfare involving mass destruction.” While cautioning that unilateral disarmament would constitute abdication of responsibility, it stated that Christians should do all in their power to work for a warless world, enforced by an international police force, and based upon “a just international order.”²⁰

The 1969 Assembly, one of the most radical up to that date, called for ratification of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty; urged the United States government to consider the possible destabilizing nature of an anti-ballistic system; and urged the government to “participate fully in international conversations regarding multilateral de-escalation of the arms race.”²¹

The patterns of arguing for a “just peace” based upon the change of societal structure thus manifested themselves in both the Northern and Southern mainline Presbyterian denominations.

B. CONSERVATIVE PRESBYTERIANISM

The name perhaps most associated in Presbyterianism with anti-Communism is that of Carl McIntire. This pastor from Collingswood, New Jersey, was among those defrocked by the PCUSA in 1936. He was among those who seceded from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in 1937 who subsequently founded the Bible Presbyterian Synod. This small denomination suffered a split in the mid-1950s, with Dr. McIntire spearheading the group known as the Bible Presbyterian Church (Collingswood Synod).

McIntire founded the American Council of Christian Churches (ACCC) and the International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC) as direct challenges to the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches (WCC). This fiery preacher often himself led protests at meetings of these two left-wing organizations, especially because of their ties with Communism.

McIntire carried on his fight against Communism through such institutions such as *Christian Beacon* magazine, Faith Theological Seminary in Elkins Park (Philadelphia), Pennsylvania, and the Twentieth Century Reformation Hour radio broadcast. His refusal to adhere to the so-called “Fairness Doctrine” led to the revocation of his radio license to operate WXUR in Media, Pennsylvania, in the early 1970s after a protracted battle with the Federal Communications Commission.

Some of the specific views to which he objected being broadcast on his station were defenses of the National and World Councils of Churches.

Most of McIntire’s attacks on Communism offered very little by way of analysis of Marxist ideology. His polemic consisted mostly of citation of the millions slaughtered by the Reds, and instances of Communist aggressions.

Probably more effective in its critique of Protestant denominations’ entanglement with Marxist doctrine and support of liberal political causes was the *Presbyterian Journal*. The Rev. Dr. G. Aiken Taylor, who became editor in 1959 and held that post for almost twenty-five years, very sharply skewered leftist churchmen in their advocacy of radical causes.

IV. THE VIETNAM EXPERIENCE A. LEFT-WING PRESBYTERIANISM

The conflict in Southeast Asia marked a shift by the mainline Presbyterian churches in that they bore witness against the United States involvement in that effort.

The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (UPCUSA) first addressed the issue at the 1966 Assembly. Warning that “No nation is righteous before God; therefore, we ought not to suppose our cause completely just or our motives completely pure,” that Assembly went on record that U. S. presence in Vietnam only exacerbated the situation in that country.²²

The church’s highest judicatory in 1967 felt that the Vietnam War was the most urgent moral issue before the church. It wrestled with the dilemma that one could not responsibly withdraw unilaterally, yet continued involvement meant running the risk of World War III and nuclear holocaust. The Assembly warned against

20. George A. Chauncey and Y. Jacqueline Rhoades, ed., *Social Pronouncements of the Presbyterian Church in the United States: Excerpts from Statements Adopted by the General Assembly, 1960–1969* (Richmond, Va.?: Board of Christian Education, n.d.) 36–38.

21. *Ibid.*, 27–28. The 1964 Assembly declared, “[The threat of mankind’s extermination by nuclear weapons] is in itself a moral issue transcending anything the world has ever known. The Church cannot now transfer to others the responsibility for providing a new instrument for the world’s salvation. As nuclear warfare threatens total death, the Church is called in desperate urgency to declare the nature of life and how to achieve its fulfillment” (*ibid.*, 32).

22. Smylie, “Presbyterian Witness,” 504–05. [Note: The Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. merged with the United Presbyterian Church of North America in 1958, forming the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America; the enlarged denomination was still referred to as the “Northern” Church.]

engaging in acts of inhumanity just because the enemy was perpetrating them (Smylie, "Presbyterian Witness," 504–05).

The next year, the Assembly declared:

This war has revealed once again the brute facts about human nature: the universality of sin expressed in our pretensions to be righteous by our own acts and ideologies, and our desperate need to be forgiven and redeemed.... It is a fresh reminder of our complicity along with all men in the crucifixion of Christ (504–05).

The invasion of Cambodia caused the General Assembly in 1970 to call for an end to the war. Asserting that there was no honor or moral victory to be obtained by continuing the fighting, the body demanded: "Put an end to the strife and bloodshed. Leave Vietnam promptly." "There will be no inner peace not public tranquility until it is done" (504–05).

In 1971, the Assembly claimed that Vietnamization was simply an excuse for continued brutalization of the Southeast Asians. The war allegedly did not fit the just war criteria since there had been a disregard of Asian lives, the warfare was worse than whatever bloodbath might follow surrender, justice mandated the full participation of the Vietnamese in a political settlement, and indiscriminate (or even diabolical) weapons were part of the military policy (504–05).

The 1972 Assembly stated that only dishonor came to the United States for its continued pursuit of the war. "To be obsessed by the fear of defeat keeps us as a people from contrition and from the power of new moral birth and makes us liable to both the judgement of God and history" (504–05).

The Vietnam War was the occasion for the UPCUSA to affirm the right of conscientious objectors to dissent from the war. Every Assembly from 1966 to 1969 spoke of the necessity of people to be free to follow their own consciences. "Freedom of conscience is a fundamental right superior to the claims of the state when conscience and law conflict" (Smylie, 509–11).

23. "The Poetry of War," *A.D.* (October 1972) 78.

24. Russell C. Black (Connecticut Farms Presbyterian Church, Union, N.J.), "Vietnam, the Church, the Future," *A.D.* (January 1973) 75–77.

25. Ernest T. Campbell, "An Open Letter to Billy Graham," *A.D.* (March 1973) 6–8. The noted evangelist's response was printed in the same issue ("Billy Graham Answers His Critics"), in which he stated that he was called to be a New Testament evangelist, not an Old Testament prophet; and that protocol dictated that his conversations with U.S. Presidents must remain confidential.

26. James A. Gittings, "What We Learned in North Vietnam," *A.D.*

... with the democratization of moral responsibility, and the liberation of conscience, which are basic to the Gospel, implicit in the Reformation, and explicit in the American heritage, the just war concept must now be understood as a guide to the thinking of individuals.

The individual Christian therefore is called upon to decide and to act within his own immediate circumstances, free in his conscience formed under the judgment of God and the Gospel as he seeks to balance the demands of peace with the demands of justice in a broken world. Whatever the judgment made by the Church or the state, we affirm the sanctity and necessity of the individual conscientious decision.... (509–11).

The official church press contributed its share of articles to the discussion. But except for some letters-to-the-editor, the official magazine, *A.D.*, presented basically only one side of the debate.

For example, the October 1972 issue contained an entry entitled "The Poetry of War," which featured a poem by a South Vietnamese some of whose relatives were killed by American bombings or shootings.²³ The Rev. Mr. Russell C. Black contributed "Vietnam, the Church, the Future" for the January 1973 edition, which article asserted: "It is necessary that the churches be open and receptive to the possibility that often, in our support of or opposition to our involvement in Vietnam, we have been more chauvinistic, more militaristic, and more anti-Communist than Christian."²⁴ Ernest T. Campbell took Billy Graham to task for his alleged failure to speak prophetically to the President:

What are we to conclude from your silence...? Those of us who pastor local congregations know with what heaviness of heart our people celebrated Christmas. How could it be otherwise when, by presidential command, bombing missions were resumed over North Vietnam when peace negotiations hit a snag in Vietnam? Christmas bells and B-52 raids are a hard mix to assimilate.²⁵

After the conflict, some church leaders traveled to North Vietnam, and *A.D.* editor James A. Gittings was one of them. Although he did state that Hanoi's promises of moderation towards the South Vietnamese had to be taken with a grain of salt, he all but conceded the inevitability of defeat. Under a picture of a bombed-out North Vietnamese hospital, he described the "immorality" of B-52s laying waste a large residential section.²⁶

The Presbyterian Church in the U.S. (PCUS) General

Missionary Kid and Magazine Editor

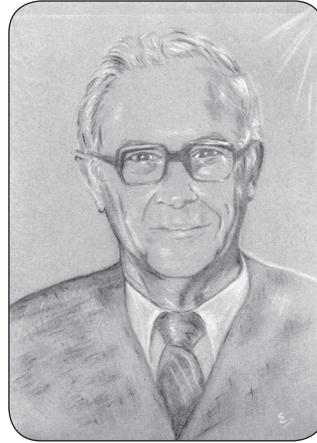
Born in Brazil, G. Aiken Taylor (1920–1984) brought a flair for publicity and a nose for news to the premier conservative publication among Southern Presbyterians in the twentieth century. Founded by Dr. L. Nelson Bell (medical missionary to China, whose daughter would later marry Billy Graham), the *Southern Presbyterian Journal* was dedicated to preserving the historic testimony of the Southern church. When Dr. Taylor became Editor in 1958, the name was changed to *Presbyterian Journal*—reflective of a broader emphasis which sought to reach out to folks across the nation, and not merely in Dixie.

The “MK” used his post to expose the liberalism in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. (PCUS). In 1973, the time came for ecclesiastical separation, as the denomination now known as the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) was formed. Without Aiken Taylor and the *Journal*, the movement would not have enjoyed the success which it did.

In 1983, after a quarter of a century as a journalist, Dr.

Taylor’s talents were used elsewhere. He became President of Biblical Theological Seminary in Hatfield, Pennsylvania, but died, unexpectedly, within a few months.

Dr. Taylor celebrated the catholicity of the church, as seen by his great interest in interchurch relations and the promotion of what became the North American Presbyterian and Reformed



Council (NAPARC). He also was seen as being to the left of the PCA spectrum, as witnessed by his openness to the charismatic movement. But he was steadfastly opposed to Communism and the leftist ideology that spawned it, both inside and outside the visible church. ■

G. Aiken Taylor
Sketch circa 1980

Assembly in 1967 adopted a list of questions it felt necessary to pose first to the Church before it could begin to address the government. Among these questions were the following: “Does our nation need restraining by other nations as much as others need restraining by us?” “What is God telling us through those Christian brethren at home and abroad who are critical of American policy in Vietnam?” “Is it ever Christian to support the lesser of two evils?” “Is there a worse evil than defeat?” “Are we truly reconciled to the One who is not the enemy of our enemies since he is not even the enemy of his own enemies?” (Chauncey and Rhoades, *Social Pronouncements*, 33–36).

The next year, the Southern Assembly resolved to:

Commend the President of the United States on his efforts to negotiate a peaceful settlement of the conflict in Viet Nam.

Petition the President of the United States to make use of the resources of any and all international organizations (such as the United Nations) in our search for a just peace.

Encourage the President of the United States to reaffirm the intention of the United States Government to demonstrate compassion by planning to aid in the rehabilitation of both North and South Viet Nam at the

conclusions of a settlement of the conflict (Chauncey and Rhoades, 36).

As in the past, statements and concerns of the National Council of Churches paralleled those of the mainline Presbyterian churches. In the mid- and late-1960s it was issuing statements questioning American participation in the war, and commending those who felt led out of “Christian conviction” to join in anti-war protests and rallies.²⁷

B. CONSERVATIVE PRESBYTERIANISM

Carl McIntire was one of those who stood staunchly in favor of the United States fighting Communism in Southeast Asia. He personally campaigned in all 50 states for a firm resolve on the part of the U.S. government to settle for nothing less than victory in Vietnam.

The *Presbyterian Journal* during the Vietnam War

(April 1975) 32–35; “Comment” (February 1975) 63. Other appropriate articles include the following: Archie Crouch, “Transition to Peace: The Church in Vietnam” (March 1973) 44–45; Bruno Kroger, “U.S. religious leaders make peace journey” (March 1973) 62; “Former Pentagon boss calls for amnesty” (May 1974) 60–61; W. Evan Golder, “Grass roots in California consider amnesty” (June 1974) 63; Thomas Orrin Bentz, “Amnesty Strained” (November 1974) 55, in which the author said, “I am an ordained draft evader. I probably should be in jail, as probably should Richard Nixon.”

27. For example, International Affairs Commission, General Committee Meetings, Minutes, March 18–19, 1966; “Policy Statement on

Choctaw Indian Chief

Born in Oklahoma, James Lyons (1929–) came to faith in Jesus Christ through the ministry of the Southern Presbyterian Church—meaning that breaking ties with that denomination when the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) was formed in 1973 was particularly poignant.

A Choctaw Indian chief, Lyons served with the Thunderbird Division—in the forward observer party for 105 Howitzers—in the Korean War. After wrestling with alcoholism for a number of years, he was ultimately delivered from that sin.

He attended Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, Georgia, and pastored in Gadsden, Alabama; Knoxville, Tennessee; and Swannanoa, North Carolina. It was during his stint in the Tar Heel State that he came to prominence as a major player in the Continuing Presbyterian Church movement, which led to the formation of the PCA. He eventually became a missionary evangelist with Mission to the World (MTW), the world missions agency of the PCA, and traveled all over the globe in support of missionaries.

As a result of his travels, he also became involved in portraying the plight of refugees from Communism—the “boat people” of Southeast Asia—after the fall of the Republic of Vietnam in 1975.

Jimmy Lyons is indubitably one of the most colorful figures of twentieth-century conservative Presbyterianism, and it was a dull PCA General Assembly which did not exult in one or more instances of his sense of humor. At the Sixth General Assembly (1978) in Grand Rapids, when the moderator was asking him to indicate his position on the question before the court, he kept on saying, “I can’t tell you that, sir.” When the moderator insisted, “If you don’t tell me if you’re for or against the motion, I won’t recognize you!” Pastor

Lyons replied, “With malice toward none, I wish to call for the question on the whole she-bang!” At the Eighth General Assembly (1980), while there was a pause to change the tape which was recording the proceedings, he went to a microphone and said, “Mr. Moderator, point of personal privilege—I’d just like the Assembly to know that, come October, I’m going to be a grandfather!” And in 1999, he complained about the high cost of hotel rooms at the General Assembly: at a hundred dollars a night, he said, he doesn’t sleep, he sits up and watches it!

After retirement in 1994, Jimmy and his bride of many years lived for a time in the world’s only golden, air-conditioned teepee—in Calvin, Oklahoma (“How Reformed can you get?”). They now reside in Alabaster, Alabama, a Birmingham suburb. ■



Jimmy Lyons, Third General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America, 1975

often carried news and editorials dealing with it. Left-wing churchmen many times were the objects of Dr. Taylor’s attacks.

Perhaps the best editorial summarizing the *Journal’s* position appeared in the February 7, 1973, issue. The author praised the previous President who resolved to stop Communism, even though it cost much in terms of popularity, and the then-current President who never wavered in his purpose, as well as the hundreds of thousands of young Americans who did their patriotic duty by serving in Vietnam. He took to task those who helped

Viet Nam,” adopted by the General Board on December 3, 1965; “Resolution on Viet-Nam,” adopted by the General Board, February 24, 1966; Office Memorandum, to Advisory Committee on Peace from Lauris B. Whitman, “A Proposed Commission of Investigation of Charges of American Involvement in ‘War Crimes’ in Vietnam.” Other related

to prolong the “suffering, destruction and death for a decade” by corrupting and subverting the war effort. Especially singled out for attention were the Presbyterians who helped to lead the “peace movement”:

That Louisville seminary professor who, before anyone else, was marching and picketing government buildings.

The Louisville seminary president, whose remarks before the 1972 General Assembly were probably the most intemperate in the history of General Assemblies.

That ex-moderator, who led a contingency of peaceniks to Paris for the purpose of negotiating with the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong.

The Council on Church and Society, and particularly the office of Church and Society, which kept up a steady drumfire of agitation in support of peace-at-any-price.

The authors of Presbyterian literature who helped divide and disunite public sentiment.

The four executives who just two weeks before the end issued a condemnation of the President.

The host of clerics who misused their pulpits to contribute to the difficulties of securing peace.²⁸

The editorial ended with an expression of the desire for a hastening of the formation of “a true Presbyterian and Reformed Church with a nationally significant witness for the health of the land.” The significance of that statement must be seen in light of the fact that the *Presbyterian Journal* was one of four organizations which had in August 1971, called for separation from the Southern Presbyterian Church in order to form a Continuing Presbyterian Church.

One of the other organizations which had issued that call for a new church was the Presbyterian Evangelistic Fellowship (PEF), which had founded the Executive Commission on Overseas Evangelism (ECOE, pronounced “echo”) to send Presbyterian missionaries to the foreign field. As in the 1930s in the Northern Church, denominational bureaucrats took a dim view of this rival to the official program, and the 1971 Southern General Assembly voted to condemn ECOE.²⁹

PEF’s annual conference coincided with the announcement that there would be a Continuing Church. One of the evenings at the conference was given over to the presentation of the work of ECOE. The Rev. Mr. Jimmy Lyons, a Choctaw Indian chief originally from Oklahoma, was chosen to defend ECOE’s formation and policies. In a rousing speech to an enthusiastic audience, Lyons explained why the PEF Board had felt compelled to form an independent sending agency at that time. The latter part of his address was unabashedly patriotic as he lashed out at Assembly pronouncements and actions which not only violated Scripture and common sense, but which, he said, approached absurdity and treason. He noted the “pseudo-pious, pompous, ponderous profundity” which churchmen had employed in favor of the Black Manifesto. He attacked the use of benevolence funds to send church officials to Paris to talk to the Communist Vietnamese and to issue statements which would have passed the censors in Moscow, Havana, Hanoi, or Peking without a word being cut out. Lyons exclaimed,

No doubt many of these so-called Protestant church leaders would say, “Well, we’re merely exercising the right to express our opinion”—well, I’m merely expressing mine. But it is more than opinion that this action and many others like it are part of the total denominational program. It is *not* the program of the Church of the living Christ, it is a bony relic dug from an accursed grave, it is the hand of Judas—I shall not touch it nor support it.

The preacher affirmed that we are to love our enemies, but “Love was never meant to be perverted into support for the work of Satan and anti-Christ.” Lyons roared,

Yes, I’m alarmed—and if you’re not alarmed I wonder what it’s going to take to make you that way. Yes, I’m alarmed—but more than alarmed, I am filled with implacable resolve. Hear this well, Presbyterian: Thou shalt not crucify American on the iron spear of the Bolshevik and claim the sanction of Christ! Thou shalt not crucify the Bride of the Lamb on the twisted witch’s claw of peace when there is no peace and claim to stand in apostolic succession! Thou shalt not strip the Church of the seamless robe of Christ to clothe her in the mantle of Caesar!³⁰

documents include: “Policy Statement on China,” approved by the General Board, February 22, 1966; Staff Report to Advisory Committee on Peace, “The Use of Existing NCC Resources,” March 28, 1966; “Policy Statement on Southern Africa,” approved by the General Board, February 23, 1966; “Proposals for Planning a More Effective and More Ecumenical Program at the Church Center for the United Nations,” c. 1966; and Ad Hoc Committee on Cuba, Latin America Department, Division of Ministry, “Report and Recommendations on the Church in Cuba.” See also Singer, *Unholy Alliance*, 250ff.

28. G. Aiken Taylor, “In the Wake of the Cease Fire,” *Presbyterian Journal*, XXXI 41 (February 7, 1973). Other articles of interest include the following: G. Aiken Taylor, “The Churches and Vietnam,” XXXIV 3 (May 21, 1975) 7–9, 18–19, in which the author demonstrated that “the religious establishment too often sided with the aggressor”; Taylor, “A ‘Brave New World’ in Laos?,” XXXV 13 (July 28, 1976) 12, in which the author vowed, “If *Church and Society* [official publication of mainline Presbyterian denominations] should ever publish anything critical of Communism, we pledge to report on that too”; Taylor, “Vietnam Misinformation,” XXXIV 41 (February 11, 1976); Archibald Pipe, “Amnesty or What?,” XXXIV 16 (August 20, 1975); G. Aiken Taylor, “Focus in Indochina,” XXXVII 46 (March 14, 1979) 12–13, 22; Chung Van Hai, “Escape to Freedom,” XXXVIII (December 12, 1979) 9–11.

29. For a detailed account of this, see Frank J. Smith, *The History of the Presbyterian Church in America: The Silver Anniversary Edition* (Lawrenceville, Ga.: Presbyterian Scholars Press, 1999) 50–58.

30. This material dealing with Jimmy Lyons may be found in *ibid.*,

Out of the Continuing Presbyterian Church movement was born the denomination now known as the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), the largest evangelical Presbyterian denomination in the country. As shall be shown, the PCA figured significantly in the debate in American Presbyterianism on the Cold War. But what is important to note at this point is that the dissension over Cold War politics, including involvement in the Vietnam War, played a significant role in the ecclesiastical separation from the Southern Presbyterian Church in 1973.³¹

V. THE NEW ERA OF DÉTENTE A. LEFT-WING PRESBYTERIANISM

Issues of war and peace continued to occupy the attention of liberal Presbyterian Churches, both North and

52–56. Ralph Didier documented his struggles in leaving the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. in 1973, as well as the radicalism in that denomination which prompted him to make that break, in *Hang On To Your Heritage* (Orange, Calif.: Covenant Press, 1977).

31. See Rick L. Nutt, *Toward Peacemaking: Presbyterians in the South and National Security, 1945–1983* (Tuscaloosa and London: The University of Alabama Press, 1994): “Observers of current Protestantism in the United States describe the secularization or politicization of the mainline denominations, by which they mean the establishing of groups within churches centered around specific issues—often political in nature. The groups may caucus for or against the right to choose abortion, or the place of homosexuals in the life of the church and nation, or another such concern. The SPPF [Southern Presbyterian Peace Fellowship] and the Continuing Church adherents manifested that development within the PCUS regarding national security questions. The two groups were diametrically opposed, and both stood some distance from the broad middle of the denomination” (50). He also wrote: “The Vietnam War did not cause the PCUS, either in its General Assemblies or its membership, to join the historic peace churches in their pacifism. It was, however, a turning point in the denomination’s official stand with regard to national security and U.S. foreign policy. The correspondence and debates noted above reveal that this was no transformation within a left-liberal leadership of the church but one that touched many members. The fissure of the church over the war was one factor that contributed to the decision of many in the Continuing Church Movement to separate themselves from the PCUS and form the Presbyterian Church in America. That action removed the most vocal and fervent opposition to peace and justice ministries from the church. The development of peace ministry in the church accelerated and expanded in the years that followed the Vietnam War” (91f).

32. However, according to the Archivist of the Historical Foundation of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America, neither of those denominations took positions on the Cold War or nuclear weaponry. Susan Knight Gore, email (August 19, 2010).

33. “Chronology of Major Developments Related to the Process of Churchwide Study and Policy Development on Peacemaking and Resistance Initiated by ACCS Following Referral of Six Overtures by the 1983 General Assembly,” 1.

South, even after the end of American involvement in Southeast Asia.³² One of the first major developments was the adoption by the 1975 United Presbyterian General Assembly of a recommendation from the Assembly Committee on Hunger, Population and World Peace that the Advisory Council on Church and Society (ACCS) “undertake ‘A Study on Peacemaking and Foreign Policy’ to include ‘Practical suggestions for our churches and members to help them participate in a new world vision and era of peacemaking.’”³³

The most significant statement was the document, *Peacemaking: The Believers’ Calling*, which ACCS submitted to the 1980 UPCUSA General Assembly for approval. The Introduction recognized that the 1975 Assembly had called for a reassessment of “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.” The major factors making for a changed situation included the following: “the United States’ defeat in Southeast Asia and the loss of prestige and power in the changing world situation”; “the unwillingness of the emerging nations to accept the continued domination of the developed nations”; “the increasing insecurity over the perilous nuclear weapons stalemate in which any miscalculation could annihilate humanity”; “concern for the hungry oppressed of the world” (*Peacemaking: The Believers’ Calling*, 1).

In the first section, “Call to Peacemaking—An Affirmation of Policy and Direction,” the paper contended that this is a new *kairos*, a special season comparable to the advent of Jesus Christ, in which God’s people are being summoned to faith and obedience with regard to military peace and social and economic justice.

Ominous clouds hang over human history. There are frightening risks in the continuing arms race and looming conflicts over diminishing energy resources as centers of power struggle for control. Our fear for safety has led us to trust in the false security of arms; our sin of war has led us to take life; and now we are in danger of taking our own lives as well. Furthermore, economic systems fail to allow a quarter of the world’s population full participation in their societies, creating recurrent patterns of starvation and famine in Asia and Africa as in the 1970s (*Peacemaking: The Believers’ Calling*, 4).

The document declared that “The church is faithful to Christ when it is engaged in peacemaking.” This shalom is said to be not only absence of warfare, but also economic and political justice for the human family.

American Protestantism and Peacemaking

These Presbyterian peacemaking efforts should be seen in a broader ecumenical context, in which numerous of the “mainline” denominations, along with other faith groups, were taking similar stands.

For example, the General Board of the American Baptist Churches in 1981 said: “The rapid advances in military technology and the significant increases in arms production and sales are creating less security for all of God’s people on earth. With the development of strategic nuclear weapons with first-strike capabilities, the assumption that mutually assured destruction will deter war has been supplanted by a dangerous new doctrine of limited nuclear war as a legitimate foreign policy option.” The next year, the General Board declared: “We believe that the use of nuclear weapons cannot serve the cause of righteousness and will lead to the destruction of the world.”

The American Lutheran Church (ALC) declared that “any use of weapons of mass destruction is immoral on the basis of the criteria for waging a just war. Weapons for nuclear, biological, or chemical warfare raise particularly serious questions.” It also stated that “goal of U.S. policy must be the *elimination* of nuclear weapons from the earth.”

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in 1979 called upon President Carter and the U.S. Congress “to question the role of the United States as the world’s largest producer and exporter of arms and to intensify their efforts to reverse the dangerous and burdensome arms race”; “to pursue with urgency a comprehensive ban on nuclear testing and effective limitations on the development, production, and sale of arms”; and “to seek seriously the development of peaceful ways to resolve conflicts between nations and to plan expeditiously for conversion to a healthy economy based on production for non-military purposes.” Two years later, the denominational General Assembly voiced its “deep conviction that this most heinous obscenity of the continuing nuclear armaments research, development, and production be brought to an immediate end,” and “call[ed] upon the leaders of the nations to stop this madness and get on with those things that make for peace.”

The Episcopal Church’s House of Bishops in 1982 deplored the fact that the U.S. had never renounced the notion of a nuclear “first-strike”. The *episkopoi* opined: “We believe it to

be the responsibility of the United States to take the bold initiative in nuclear disarmament, and to keep on taking it. The United States is the first to possess a nuclear weapon. The United States is the only nation to have used that weapon in war. If it comes to pass that these weapons, which the United States continues to refine and aim and stockpile, are used in war again, it is difficult to believe that any history a surviving neutral nation might record would fail to fix blame on the United States.”

The Lutheran Church in America in 1982 declared its support “for a multilateral, verifiable freeze of the testing, production, stockpiling, and deployment of nuclear weapons and delivery systems as a step toward the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons and to work actively to achieve such a goal.”

The Reformed Church in America’s General Synod in 1980 stated: “The nuclear arms race is first and foremost a false religion. It is, to be sure, also bad politics, bad economics, bad science, and bad war.”

The United Church of Christ in 1979 lamented that “Billions are being spent for arms, while people’s basic needs, such as food, housing, health care and education are underfunded.” Two years later, the General Synod affirmed “a commitment to nuclear disarmament through negotiation with all existing and developing nuclear powers”, and stated its “forthright desire for nuclear disarmament even if this process much begin with unilateral initiative on the part of the United States.”

The United Methodist Church’s General Conference in 1980 said: “If humanity is to move out of this period of futility and constant peril, the search for new weapons systems must be halted through comprehensive international agreements.... The vast stockpiles of nuclear bombs and conventional weapons must be dismantled under international supervision, and the resources being used for arms diverted to programs designed to affirm life rather than destroy it.”

Even the Southern Baptist Convention, in 1978, urged multilateral arms control and also called upon all nations “shift funds from nuclear weapons systems to basic human needs, such as education, medicine, and relief from hunger.” In 1982, the Convention affirmed “the historic Baptist commitment to peace with justice as a goal in personal, social, and international relationships” (These examples are cited in John Donaghy, ed., *To Proclaim Peace: Religious Communities Speak Out on the Arms Race* (Nyack, N.Y.: Fellowship Publications, 2nd revised edition, 1983)).■

“Our insensitivity to today’s patterns of injustice, inequality, and oppression—indeed, our participation in them—denies the gospel. Christ alone is our peace....

Our structures of military might, economic relations, political institutions, and cultural patterns fail to meet the needs of our time” (*Peacemaking*, 5).

Furthermore, “The church is obedient to Christ when it nurtures and equips God’s people as peacemakers.” Specific guidelines were given to assist congregations to develop worship services which emphasized peacemaking, and to study “foreign policy subjects in light of biblical and theological considerations” (5–6, 8–10, 29–41).

Finally, “The church bears witness to Christ when it nourishes the moral life of the nations for the sake of peace in our world.” Church people are “to work with all people who strive for peace and justice and to serve as signposts for God’s love in a broken world. To deny our calling is a disservice to the church and the world. To affirm our calling is to act in ‘faith, hope, and love’” (6–7).

Although not adopted but merely received by the Assembly, the third section, “Background Analysis,” gives accurate indication of the thinking behind the report. The first major factor is “The New Global Reality,” in which the United States can no longer assume itself protected from international complexities; nor that it can choose “its involvements in the affairs of the world according to its own sense of interest”; not that “its cherished values of freedom, opportunity, and political justice [are] inspirational to the peoples of the world.” The paper stated:

Many have begun to sense that the traditional American definition of progress and trust in continual economic growth may be inappropriate. We cannot expand our economic system or raise our standard of living without suffering the consequences of using up the earth’s nonrenewable resources. Heedless productive styles have already revealed destructive ecological potentials. The economy of the United States experiences inflation, dollar decline, soaring interest rates, trade imbalance, chronic high unemployment, and energy deficits. The nation has been unable to resolve these conditions because it does not comprehend that their resolution depends upon more equitable distribution of world resources (*Peacemaking*, 11–12).

The statement attacked traditional ideas of foreign policy and security as rooted in the notion of the nation-state. Such an entity in the “new global reality ... is no longer the only actor in foreign policy.”

More and more people have begun to realize that the main problems of the world will not yield to military solutions, and that whatever new solutions can be found must be global. Believing there must be a better way than now prevails, numerous citizens are finding the

grace to abandon obsolete attitudes that now work against peacemaking.

Robert McNamara, former Secretary of Defense and a Presbyterian elder, is quoted:

... The whole of human history has recognized the principle that the rich and powerful have a moral obligation to assist the poor and weak. That is what the sense of community is all about—any community: the community of the family, the community of the nation, the community of nations itself.

McNamara is also quoted as saying, “to the extent to which [military] expenditure reduces the resources available for other essential sectors and social services—and fuels a futile and reactive arms race—excessive military spending can erode security rather than enhance it” (*Peacemaking*, 14–15).

The report maintained, under “Theological and Ethical Bases for Peacemaking,” that peacemaking “involves the love of neighbor flowing from the love of God rather than the simple absence of armed conflict.” “We pursue peace not because we are afraid of the new global reality but because God wills it.” Believers are not to engage in the idolatrous service of lesser gods, such as false confidence “in culture, race, economic system, power or nation.” Swordmaking and plowmaking are two distinct activities; the church is called to plowmaking, not because it is “successful” but because “believers are called to be peacemakers in the presence of enemies” (*Peacemaking*, 16–21).

Under the category “Theological and Ethical Bases for Policymaking” the statement claimed, “Christians view the realm of international affairs ... as an arena characterized by struggle for national advantage, motivated by deep fears and passions, but one in which healing is not only necessary but possible.” Three criteria which governed United States foreign policy in the past—national interest, national security, and power—are found to be inadequate in an interdependent world. “Instead of concentrating exclusively on interest, security, and power, Christians should move, and urge the nation to move, to consideration of justice, freedom, and compassionate order... [I]nstead of being protectionist in international attitudes, we and the nations can learn to facilitate movements, aspirations, and accomplishments throughout the world, bringing about new conditions that promise a more just and peaceful world” (*Peacemaking*, 21–25).

God is said to manifest “a special concern for the

oppressed, often in ways that must have seemed disadvantageous to the interests of the chosen people.” The nation must abandon its de facto commitment to counterrevolution, and adopt “a policy that critically evaluates revolutionary movements and makes hard judgments as to their potential” (*Peacemaking*, 25–27).

The various suggestions for implementing the document help to demonstrate the seriousness of the denomination in this version of “peacemaking.” Taking up an offering on World Communion Sunday for peacemaking facilitated the raising of an awareness of this concern throughout the entire church at every level. Moneys collected were split three ways: 25 per cent remained with the congregation for it to develop its own peacemaking program; 25 per cent was sent to the middle judicatories (presbyteries and synods) for the same purpose; and 50 per cent went to the national level. The fund thus generated not only aided the General Assembly offices, but served as a stimulus for presbyteries and synods to do something with the money that has accumulated.³⁴

The Southern Presbyterian Church echoed its Northern counterpart by adopting the first part of the statement (“An Affirmation of Policy and Direction”) in 1981.³⁵ For years these two denominations had cooperated on matters of peace. Their merger in 1983 produced the Presbyterian Church (United States of America), or PC(USA).

That same year the re-united General Assembly was faced with several overtures from various presbyteries, asking for advice on “Resistance to Military Policy Through Withholding of Taxes”; “Developing a Theological Position on Peace and Urging a Study of the Implications of the Just War Doctrine”; and “A Study of the Issue of Just War as an Element of Faith.” The Assembly referred these overtures to the Advisory Council on Church and Society as well as the Council on Theology and Culture for study. The referral requested that the task force “include in its work the study of non-violence as a means for social change” (“Chronology of Major Developments,” 1).

In response, a series of essays entitled, *The Peacemaking Struggle: Militarism and Resistance*, was prepared. Twenty essayists wrote on such topics as Peacemaking, The Enemy, The Present Situation, Biblical Perspectives, Acts of Resistance, Ethics and Nuclear Weapons, and Ethics and Tactics of Resistance. The essays denounced nuclear warfare as being unthinkable; warned that the U.S. since World War II had begun to look like a “national security state”; and opened the door for resistance, including civil disobedience, for those who “conscientiously” object to U.S. policy.³⁶

A quote from Walter E. Wiest’s contribution is in order here:

There is minority obstructionism within the structures themselves: powerful chairpersons of congressional committees bottling up proposed legislation, small groups of senators filibustering, special interests exerting influence in legal ways (lobbying, campaigning, financing). These are, of course, part of democratic due process since they are within the law, but are they so much different from or better than acts of disobedience to law done in the interest of justice and common good? Furthermore, in the larger area of public political action and debate much happens that would not be appropriate in law courts or even Congress. It is not clear why limited and partly symbolic acts of obstruction should not be so much harder to justify than, say, protest acts involving both trespass and the use of economic coercion.³⁷

That book spawned what was called a study paper, *Presbyterians and Peacemaking: Are We Now Called to Resistance?*, also edited by Dana Wilbanks and Ronald Stone. The Foreword tried to make clear that this document was only a study paper to stimulate thinking.³⁸

This “study paper” asserts:

Christians may find it necessary on occasion to resist government policies as a decision of faith in the Lord of history.... 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, 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.

In the current situation, the policies against which Christians may be called to resist are most clearly those that involve the possession and manufacture of nuclear

34. Interview with Robert A. Smylie, November 2, 1987.

35. Cited in Robert Heyer, ed., *Nuclear Disarmament: Key Statements of Popes, Bishops, and Churches* (New York/Ramsey [N.J.]: Paulist Press, 1982) 269ff.

36. Ronald H. Stone and Dana W. Wilbanks, ed., *The Peacemaking Struggle: Militarism and Resistance* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1985).

37. Walter E. Wiest, “A Christian Ethic of Resistance in a War-Making Society,” in *The Peacemaking Struggle: Militarism and Resistance*, 240.

38. Dana W. Wilbanks and Ronald H. Stone, *Presbyterians and Peacemaking: Are We Now Called to Resistance?* (New York: Advisory Council on Church and Society, 1985) i–iii.

weapons. If the use of nuclear weapons is inherently immoral, then the development of policies which intend their use can fairly be considered immoral also. Nuclear deterrence as well as the use of nuclear weapons would then require Christian resistance. Christian responsibility would be directed toward creating the circumstances in which nuclear weapons could never be used, asserting that the power to end history is reserved to God alone (*Presbyterians and Peacemaking*, 46–47).

Forms of Resistance proposed included the sanctuary movement, tax resistance, non-investment and disinvestment, withdrawal from jobs which involve the workers in “militarism,” non-cooperation with the military service, demonstrations and protests, involvement with peace organizations, and other means (*Presbyterians and Peacemaking*, 48–56).

A Study Guide was prepared to assist congregations work through the materials in the original book (*The Peacemaking Struggle ...*) and the study paper. The Study Guide contained suggestions for questions to ask, and worship programs around the theme of peace.³⁹

Responses to these study guide questions and other comments were tabulated by the denominational headquarters. A summary of these responses noted that the respondents were quite concerned about the threat of nuclear war. They gave the Soviet Union low marks for its committee to a “just peace,” but did not give very

high grades to the United States. The great division in responses occurred on the questions of resistance. While there was almost universal concurrence in the belief that the individual should have the right of following his conscience in such matters, the respondents split almost down the middle on whether “the biblical mandate for Christians today is primarily to obedience to governing powers,” or “Christian faithfulness today primarily requires concern about resistance.”⁴⁰

Resistance to the pursuit of this latest peacemaking effort by the PC(USA) was led by Presbyterians for Democracy and Religious Freedom, a group with ties to the Institute for Religion and Democracy (IRD).⁴¹ The latter group led the charge against the National and World Councils of Churches for their support of Marxian revolution; their fight caught the attention of *60 Minutes* and *Reader's Digest*, which ran stories on the connections between the ecumenical bodies and Communism.⁴²

The Presbyterian organization prepared a series of essays, *Peacemaking? or Resistance? Presbyterian Perspectives*, which took to task the denominational study for its one-sidedness, its naïveté, its acceptance of “moral equivalence” (the theory that the Soviet Union and the United States are essentially just as bad, or just as good, as the other), its question-begging, and its refusal to take seriously the brutality of international Communism in the past nor its threat for the future.⁴³

An appendix contained a letter written to the PC(USA) Stated Clerk, Rev. James E. Andrews, by sixteen prominent Presbyterians, protesting the opposition of their denomination to modernization of United States military forces, and the positions taken in the study paper on peacemaking and resistance. Among the co-signers was Robert C. “Bud” McFarlane, Ronald Reagan’s National Security Adviser who later got caught up in the Iran-Contra affair (Dorman, 70–73).

Another appendix gives an example of an overture to be directed to General Assembly, asking for the withdrawal of the study paper in question and repudiation of its recommendations “as incompatible with the call of Christ to all people to be responsible and law-abiding members of society.”⁴⁴

At least six presbyteries did overture the Assembly in 1987 to withdraw the study. But the Advisory Council on Church and Society argued forcefully against that, pointing out that the study was the fruit of a long process of study and discussion, and that a task force was to report by December 1987 to the Advisory Council with its final recommendations—then and only then would anyone know exactly what the

39. Brent Coffin, *Study Guide for Presbyterians and Peacemaking: Are We Now Called to Resistance?* (New York: Advisory Council on Church and Society, 1985). Another booklet prepared by the Advisory Council, *Supplemental Readings*, featured selections from such sources as “Last Testament,” a short story about a community in Northern California after a fictitious nuclear attack; and George F. Kennan’s *The Nuclear Delusion: Soviet-American Relations in the Atomic Age*.

40. “Presbyterians and Peacemaking: Are We Now Called to Resistance? An Analysis of Responses from Across the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)”

41. Presbyterians for Democracy and Religious Freedom was a “special organization” which operated within the PC(USA) in compliance with its guidelines for such groups. The denomination eventually abolished the provision in its book of order that formally recognized such groups.

42. See Joseph A. Harriss, “The Gospel According to Marx,” *Reader's Digest* (February 1993).

43. Ted M. Dorman, ed., *Peacemaking? or Resistance? Presbyterian Perspectives* (Nashville, Tenn.: Presbyterians for Democracy and Religious Freedom, 1986).

44. Dorman, 66–69. This organization’s statement of belief made clear that while it was opposed to totalitarianism of either the Left or the Right (“Totalitarianism is ... a form of idolatry and a principal worldly foe of Christianity and democracy”), it was Marxism-Leninism (Communism) which primarily shaped the chief exponents of totalitarianism at that time (*ibid.*, 74).

proposals would be on which the 1988 Assembly would be voting.⁴⁵

The path to peace, however, was anything but peaceful within the denomination. Sixteen overtures (plus an additional two overtures that were “late” and thus not dealt with), along with a communication from the Presbyterian Council for Chaplains and Military Personnel, and three commissioners’ resolutions, asked for either a delay in adoption of the report, or a new report reflecting a more balanced or mainstream position, or simply not adopting the report. For example, one overture from western Pennsylvania, which had been adopted by the presbytery the year before, stated:

Whereas, said study paper poses several forms of resistance described as being potentially suitable for adoption by the General Assembly and implementation by churches and church members; and

Whereas, said forms of resistance would involve church members in (1) extending sanctuary beyond illegal aliens to those church members in need of protection as a result of engaging in illegal acts discussed in the study paper, (2) non-payment of income taxes, (3) disinvestment in companies engaged in military defense activities, (4) resignation from occupations with defense related companies, (5) withdrawal from military service or refusal to cooperate therewith, (6) decertification of the chaplaincy as an acceptable form of ministry, and (7) supporting or engaging in various acts of civil disobedience; and

Whereas, many of these measures would involve church members, and perhaps the sessions advocating them, in criminal activities; and

Whereas, should such measure receive wide support they could lead to unrest and anarchy in these United States; and

Whereas, this Presbytery has always been a staunch supporter of the military chaplaincy and recognizes the need for ministers in the military; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Presbytery of Shenango respectfully overture the 199th General Assembly (1987) to withdraw this study paper.⁴⁶

The Presbytery of National Capital, in its overture, noted that only two authors had penned the study “Presbyterians and Peacemaking: Are We Now Called to Resistance?”, and argued that the call for “civil ‘resistance’

or defiance to the policies of the United States regarding national defense and foreign policy” could risk “conflict and hostility, suffering and vulnerability, both within the Presbyterian Church and between it and our society.” Therefore, the Presbytery asked for a “broader, balanced inquiry into the responsibilities, unity, and directions of the Presbyterian Church in seeking to reconcile Christian obligations and national and international objectives” (PCUSA 200th GA, 974).

The Presbytery of Asheville stated that “not all members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) can comply with a call for resistance to the laws of our country and some find the present study’s forms of resistance offensive.” The Presbytery avowed “the need for peace, not only in our world but also within our congregations,” as it asked the General Assembly to “expand its study of the issue by appointing a special committee composed of men and women representing varying theological and political points of view to conduct a research project on ‘The Role and Function of the Church in Resistance,’ and giving full respect to the historical positions which conscientious Christians have held to over the centuries” (978).

The Presbytery of Atlanta noted that, according to a 1985 National Presbyterian Panel study, there was strong opposition to withholding taxes (86 percent against to 7 percent in favor); and asked that a “comparable document” be written “by recognized Presbyterian scholars, setting forth the sociological and theological rationale for the classic mainstream Presbyterian position on this issue, held by the overwhelming majority of Presbyterians, with comparable actions proposals and implications for General Assembly policy; and to delay the presentation of policy recommendation to the General Assembly on this issue, until the two documents can be jointly studied throughout the church” (981).

The Presbytery of Memphis stated that the denominational documents “concerning peacemaking have created reactions of dissent and approval, anger and joy, fear, and praise. We believe portions of the ‘Resistance’ documents present a slanted view of peacemaking issues and are divisive within the church.” Accordingly, the Presbytery asked the General Assembly “not to use the ‘Resistance’ documents prepared by the Advisory Council on Church and Society as the sole basis for building a comprehensive peacemaking policy” (982).

The Presbytery of Central Florida called on the

45. Advice and Counsel Memorandum from The Advisory Council on Church and Society, n.d.

46. PCUSA, *Minutes of the 200th General Assembly (1988)* 1.972.

General Assembly to reject the types of resistance listed in the report (PCUSA 200th GA, 984).

The Presbytery of South Louisiana expressed the following beliefs:

1. That the study does not recognize that we live in a nuclear age and it is not possible for the United States (even in concert with the U.S.S.R.) to turn back the clock and eliminate nuclear technology;
2. That the abandonment of nuclear weapons on a unilateral basis by the United States will have incalculable results throughout the world in ways beyond the power of this study to anticipate;
3. That it would be a gross neglect of our duty to deny chaplains to men and women who are in the military service;
4. That it is impractical to believe that our government would permit the tax withholding in escrow suggested in this study if it were attempted on a scale large enough to be effective;
5. That this study has not incorporated ideas from the conservative membership of our denomination, even though polls by the 1985 Presbyterian Panel reveal that a large majority of Presbyterians do not support the proposed diversion of federal income taxes;
6. That only a small minority of Presbyterians would adopt the stance of resistance advocated in the study paper even if approved by General Assembly;
7. That a majority of Presbyterians would be embarrassed by such action to the extent that many would leave the denomination or withdraw their support; and
8. That peacemaking begins at home: The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) needs to search diligently for a consensus within our church lest the proposed program do great harm to our denomination without achieving its goals.

South Louisiana therefore asked “that leaders representing divergent views of the wider church in our denomination prepare their recommendations for a Christian response to the threat of nuclear war and related evils, emphasizing ideas that will tend to heal, reconcile, and unite our denomination, so that our actions may be effective and a credible witness to the Lordship of Jesus Christ” (PCUSA 200th GA, 991).

Other presbyteries recording their opposition to the study paper were Utah, St. Andrew (north Mississippi), Mississippi, Southwest Florida, Florida, Middle Tennessee, Concord (central North Carolina), and Shepards and Lapsley (central Alabama) (PCUSA 200th GA, 994f, 998, 1013, 1016, 1032, 1033, 1035, 1045f, 1046).

Those efforts did have some effect on the paper, “Christian Obedience in a Nuclear Age,” as it was adopted by the General Assembly only after amendment (75, 82). For example, the following statement was added: “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” (76). The Assembly also took care to note that it had not “reviewed or considered” the background paper (81f.). Nevertheless, the Assembly took radical positions, based at least in part on the notion that matters had changed:

the writers of our older confessions of faith and the framers of the just war doctrine could not possibly have imagined the situation in which we find ourselves today. Albert Einstein’s words still ring true: ‘The unleashed power of the atom has changed everything save our way of thinking, and thus we drift toward unparalleled catastrophe.’ Since 1945 a number of governments, chiefly the United States and the Soviet Union, have developed, accumulated, mounted, and aimed weapons which, if fired, could bring human history to an end in an incalculable and unimaginable holocaust. The entire ecosystem would experience havoc and it is a matter of grim debate among scientists what forms of life might survive on the planet. Acknowledging these facts is so painful that most people succumb to some form of ‘nuclear numbing,’ and try to live as though nothing has changed. Governments also become numb to the human consequences of these weapons, speaking of them in antiseptic and often misleading terms, planning to fight ‘limited nuclear wars,’ and continuing a seemingly unending race for more devastating, more accurate, more invulnerable, ‘smarter,’ and ‘cleaner’ weapons (76).

Given “the extraordinary and unprecedented nature of the current situation, cooperation with and obedience

to duly constituted human authority should not always be automatic.” The Assembly also stated that because it “does not believe resistance is normative, it is the judgment of the General Assembly that in a country like the United States, where the rule of law is in effect, actions of resistance should be nonviolent. When such actions involve breaking a law, the procedural elements of civil disobedience should be followed.” The church court averred: “From a stance of obedience to God, the General Assembly can encourage and enable Presbyterians in the extraordinary use of ordinary means for seeking transformation of the social order. From a stance of obedience to God, the General Assembly can also choose to affirm Presbyterians in acts of resistance, as it has done in the case of sanctuary workers, conscientious objectors to military service, and civil rights workers” (PCUSA 200th GA, 78–80).

The year 1988 was the apogee of discussion on this matter. Since the 1988 General Assembly had taken action on the controversial paper, several presbyteries—Norfolk, Hanover (eastern Virginia), Sheppards and Lapsley, Middle Tennessee, Los Ranchos (California)—withdrew (late) overtures that had been referred to the 1989 General Assembly. Those overtures had sought a withdrawal of the paper, or postponement of action, or the withdrawal of a corporate support of resistance.⁴⁷

War and Peace Issues

Meanwhile, the PC(USA) General Assembly continued to make other statements on war and peace issues. In 1984, it adopted a resolution on arms control and disarmament. This resolution focused only on the failure of the United States, not the Soviet Union, in carrying out fruitful arms control agreements. The Assembly resolved that it “reaffirms the commitment of its predecessors to seek a bilateral nuclear freeze; and seeks a multilateral nuclear freeze as immediate steps in the process toward reversing the arms race, reducing the risk of war, and eliminating the psychic, social, and economic burden that has been borne by all people of the world.”⁴⁸

The next Assembly (1985) commended to all nations, “as practical politics, the search for cooperation and peace.” It further commended the United States and the Soviet Union for reopening the nuclear arms reduction talks in Geneva, and called upon all nuclear states to “negotiate immediately a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty as a step toward an end of the nuclear arms race, and, as evidence of good faith, to join in a moratorium of all nuclear testing by August 6, 1985—the 40th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima.” Synods and

presbyteries were requested to observe special times of prayer for this matter, and to consider sending their own resolutions likewise to government officials. Congregations were asked to emphasize prayers on ending the arms race on Sundays closest to August 6th and 9th.⁴⁹

The 1986 Assembly adopted a resolution on the militarization of space. This resolution called on the United States and the Soviet Union “to cease research, development, and testing plans for space-based ballistic missile defense systems, and to enter into bilateral and multilateral negotiations in order to ban the testing and deployment of weapons in space and to develop cooperatively peaceful uses of outer space.” One of the “whereases” claimed that the “Strategic Defense Initiative invites us to place our hope and seek our security not in the sovereign power of God, but in graven images.”⁵⁰

The 1987 Assembly dealt with chemical warfare. The PC(USA) resolved to call upon the United States Congress “to withhold authorization of the production of binary weapons” and upon the United States government “to end any further development of binary chemical weapons.” It also called upon “the other chemical weapons states to forego any use of chemical weapons in conflict situations and to cooperate fully in the banning of chemical weapons, their use, their development and production.” This paper mentioned the introduction of chemical weapons into the arsenals of Europe in World War I and the “significant” fact that many of the casualties due to them in that conflict were Russian. It also took note of the fact that Italy used such weaponry in its conquest of Ethiopia, as did Japan apparently in China, and that the United States discussed their use against Japan in World War II. It also stated that there was “public debate about the real or alleged use of chemical weapons in recent conflict situations, notably in the Iran-Iraq war.” However, the paper did not point out their use in Cambodia (Kampuchea).⁵¹

In 1988, the General Assembly, among other action, approved a paragraph that took aim at those involved in the Iran-Contra affair:

47. PCUSA, *Minutes of the 201st General Assembly* (1989) 1.581, 583, 585.

48. “Resolution on Arms Control and Disarmament Adopted by the 196th General Assembly (1984) – Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)”

49. “Resolution on the Arms Race Adopted by the 197th General Assembly (1985) – Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)”

50. “Resolution on the Militarization of Space Adopted by the 198th General Assembly (1986) – Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)”

51. “Resolution on Comprehensive Ban on Chemical Weapons Adopted by the 199th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)”

Previous General Assemblies of the Presbyterian Church have described their perception of ways in which public officials have sought to deceive the people of the United States. It is now known that some public officials probably broke the laws and may have violated the Constitution of the United States, conspired to carry on a private foreign policy in the name of the United States, misled superiors, perjured themselves, and subverted friendly governments in service to a countervision of Central American reality. That countervision seeks to enlist all the noble symbols in its cause: democracy, freedom, peace, and security (PCUSA, *Minutes of the 200th General Assembly*, 1.72).

The 1990 General Assembly handled a variety of matters, including a Renewed Call to Disarmament, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and International Literacy and International Economic Justice (PCUSA, *Minutes of the 201st General Assembly*, 1.78–82).

In 1991, the General Assembly adopted an amended version of an overture from the Presbytery of Heartland (Kansas City area) which called on the Social Justice and Peacemaking Ministry Unit and other appropriate ministry units

to continue to explore and implement events and programs which enable Presbyterians and the governing bodies of the church to make extraordinary use of ordinary means afforded to us as citizens to transform the social and economic policies of the nation and the states toward just peace at home and in the world community in light of and in response to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The goals of this transformation shall include: (1) a national defense strategy that includes a comprehensive nuclear weapons test ban; drastic mutual reductions in nuclear weapons; a ban on the development, production, and stockpiling of chemical weapons; and a treaty prohibiting the use of weapons in outer space; (b) policies which stress the common security of all nations with which we share the earth; (c) concern for those individuals and communities affected economically by a reduction of military spending; (d) significantly increased resources allocated to meeting critical human and community needs, such as: education, housing, employment, health care, drug prevention and rehabilitation, hunger, AIDS, protection

of the environment, rehabilitation of the highway and transportation systems of the nation, and reduction of the national debt.⁵²

The Assembly also approved an overture from the Presbytery of Boston that encouraged the observance of a National Peace Day to coincide with the dropping of the first atomic bomb; the overture noted that “August 6, Hiroshima Day, also the date set aside for observance of the Feast of the Transfiguration, has become by custom a day when people opposed to the use of nuclear weapons gather in remembrance of that terrible moment in history when weapons of mass destruction were first unleashed” (*Minutes of the 202nd GA*, 754f). Also garnering approval was an overture from the Presbytery of Cascades, which celebrated the “working of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the peoples of Eastern Europe, providing hope for the ending of the Cold War and the discontinuation of the arms race”; conjoined the toppling of the Berlin Wall with “the peaceful restoration of the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the establishment and commemoration of a Martin Luther King, Jr., Day”; and confessed that “the reallocation of our economic resources away from the manufacture of arms is absolutely essential to atone for the squandering of our increasingly scarce world resources and to nullify the effects of hunger, homelessness, and endless other sufferings.” The overture encouraged “a letter-writing campaign appealing to government leaders, corporations, the news media, and other people of influence, to move with all speed to reduce the production and proliferation of nuclear weapons and to convert resources to uses which will benefit mankind” (*Minutes of the 202nd GA*, 107, 769f).

Similar themes regarding peacemaking and its interrelatedness to broader goals of societal change can be found in the 1991 minutes of the General Assembly.⁵³ In 1992, the General Assembly noted that over the previous year, per Assembly action, the “Commitment to Peacemaking” now included the confronting of “racism and all other forms of prejudice” and “making peace with the earth (concern about environmental justice).”⁵⁴ In 1993, the report on Peacemaking contained references to the START II and Chemical Weapons Treaty and the fact that eighty-eight presbyteries had called for the termination of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) and its successor programs and that the same number of presbyteries had endorsed the Comprehensive Test Ban (CTB).⁵⁵ The same General Assembly, with regard to the reunification of North and South Korea, adopted the view that “Despite the changed international

52. PCUSA, *Minutes of the 202nd General Assembly* (1990) 1.107.

53. PCUSA, *Minutes of the 203rd General Assembly* (1991) 1.725ff.

54. PCUSA, *Minutes of the 204th General Assembly* (1992) 1.642f.

55. PCUSA, *Minutes of the 205th General Assembly* (1993) 1.59.

environment, the United States government has continued to pursue an outdated cold war policy” (PCUSA *Minutes*, 205th GA, 893f).

The 1994 General Assembly also took up the matter of the tensions on the Korean peninsula, including the nuclear crisis precipitated by North Korea’s refusal to submit to inspections of its nuclear program and exacerbated by the possibility of United States military force which could result in “unimaginable genocide” for the 70 million Koreans.⁵⁶

The 1995 General Assembly approved a resolution which recognized that 1995 was “the fiftieth anniversary of the peacemaking emphasis; and that congregations, presbyteries, and synods have responded with great vigor to the peacemaking emphasis.”⁵⁷ The same Assembly approved an overture from the Presbytery of the Western Reserve (Cleveland area), which called for the elimination of nuclear weapons, since “the whole world continues to live under the threat of nuclear weapons” (*Minutes of the 207th GA*, 107, 769f., 92f, 711f). In 1996, the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (AC-SWP) reminded the General Assembly of the denomination’s long-standing commitment to peacemaking, and urged various proposals towards limiting weapons. The Committee opined: “A two-tier strategic and ‘moral’ system exists that the nuclear powers are seeking to preserve. Those who have nuclear weapons can keep and continue to develop them. An even more select group (the United States and its allies) reserves the right to use nuclear weapons. Use by Russia or China, however, probably would be considered unacceptable on the grounds that they lack the moral authority the democracies claim.” This resolution concluded: “The challenge is still before us. The risk of escalating conflict continues. The cost in human life of contained wars is not acceptable in the church or the world. The diversion of human and capital resources for military purposes in an age of desperate human need continues.”⁵⁸

It is abundantly clear that the emphasis among liberal Presbyterians on “peacemaking” did not cease after the end of the Cold War. Further, “peacemaking” was employed in order to foster a broader agenda of social transformation—i.e., socialism.

B. CONSERVATIVE PRESBYTERIANISM

Not all conservative Presbyterian bodies took positions on the Cold War. For example, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) generally shied away from taking stances on political matters. And no statement was made by the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church

(ARP), a church largely centered in the South, especially the Carolinas.⁵⁹ But other conservative churches did make their thoughts known.

1. PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

The Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) first took a stand on a Cold War matter in 1977. Rev. Frank K. Chapo of Johnson City, Tennessee, an Hungarian who described himself as “one who had to flee on foot from the Communists,” introduced a personal resolution which called upon the President and the Congress “to reconsider their decision to withdraw our ground forces from South Korea, and to continue to maintain our military presence there.” Furthermore, the resolution which had noted the brutality and anti-Christian nature of North Korea, asked the Moderator of the General Assembly to convey copies of this resolution to the President and the Congress, “and to our sister churches in South Korea with assurance that we stand with them as brothers against any enemies of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”⁶⁰

Opposition to this resolution was expressed by commissioners committed to the doctrine of the “spirituality of the church”—that is, the belief that the Body of Christ should handle nothing which is not distinctly ecclesiastical in nature. This historic dogma has especially characterized the Southern branch of Presbyterianism, and it served as the basis for the separation of the Southern Church in 1861.⁶¹

Two further resolutions were received by this General Assembly, but time considerations mandated postponement of them until the 1978 Assembly. The first called on the President and Congress to honor commitments to countries threatened by “nations seeking to enslave them and destroy their freedom to worship God and believe and proclaim the truth, as well as freedom to pursue knowledge and live in peace without fear.” The

56. PCUSA, *Minutes of the 206th General Assembly* (1994) 1:579f.

57. PCUSA, *Minutes of the 207th General Assembly* (1995) 1:334.

58. PCUSA, *Minutes of the 208th General Assembly* (1996) 1:491–94.

59. On the OPC see the previous footnote 13 on page 64. Regarding the ARP, Dr. Ron Beard, a long-time denominational official, wrote that even though there were discussions through the years representing various viewpoints, “The General Synod has not approached the matter on any official basis, and has produced no statements nor points of agreement on the matter.” Ron Beard, email (July 17, 2010).

60. *Minutes of the Fifth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America* (Montgomery, Ala.: Committee for Christian Education and Publications, 1977) 62, 69.

61. There may also have been some disagreement over the actual policy itself, including a questioning of the propriety (in terms of the U.S. Constitution) of forcing draftees to serve overseas and not directly in defense of national territory.

A Little Old Lady Who Exposed Communist Infiltration

Born in 1902, Matsu (Mattie Sue) Crawford graduated with honors from Winthrop College, Rock Hill, South Carolina. With her minister husband, she was a Southern Presbyterian missionary. In 1940, after a decade of service in Japan, World War II forced their return to the States. Vernon Allen Crawford's first pastorate was Vineville Presbyterian Church in Macon, Georgia. His first Sunday in the pulpit there was December 7, 1941.

In 1949, Pastor Crawford became Executive Secretary for Augusta-Macon Presbytery, and the Crawfords moved to Milledgeville, home to the Georgia State College for Women. In 1952, Mrs. Crawford was asked to teach fifth grade at the laboratory school connected with college; she quickly discerned the efforts to indoctrinate schoolchildren with "progressive" ideas. In an article in the *Presbyterian Outlook* entitled "Confused Children for a Confused Age," she asked "if perhaps modern art were not an instrument in the hands of those who would try their hand at bending the minds of children in the classroom, confusing them for a purpose not conducive to fostering our American ways of life." She also in that article related her experience with a modernist art teacher who had been brought into her classroom, and noted that "Picasso had once said, 'I am a Communist, and my Art is Communist.'" When the college president tried to fire her (ostensibly because she did not have a master's degree), she appealed to the Chancellor of the University System of Georgia, who investigated the matter, entered a "maladministration" verdict, fired the president who had been in his post almost two decades, and restored Mrs. Crawford to the classroom (Crawford, *My Head is Bloody But Unbowed*, 4, 8-11).

That incident is emblematic of the feisty character of this diminutive Southern lady, who was always gracious yet never shy to express her views. When this present author was interviewing her in the 1980s about the formation of

the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) out of the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS), she wryly observed that the PCUS was like a Cadillac—a beautiful car, but somebody forgot to put gas in the tank. She also said that there were "two great organizations in the world—the Vatican and the Board of Women's Work of the Southern Presbyterian Church."

She was a remarkable and accomplished person—a novelist, an award-winning poetess, and a "character" as well as being a masterful checkers player—this present author can personally attest to those last two items (he never did beat her at checkers, despite several attempts—when she was an octogenarian!).

Matsu Crawford died on February 14, 2006, just a fortnight shy of her one-hundred-fourth birthday. Her obituary stated, "An author of seven books and hundreds of poems, she never lost her zest for life or her passion for God's work in the world. She remained vigilant in prayer for her nation and her family to the end" (Asheville [N.C.] *Citizen-Times*, February 18, 2006 [accessed on-line]). ■



Matsu (Mattie Sue) Crawford

other wanted the Assembly to go on record "as being unalterably opposed to godless communism," and to urge the church's members to write the President and Congressmen "urging them to do all within the power of our Republic to insure that South Korea and other free nations not fall under communist rule." The 1978 meeting answered these resolutions thus:

Whereas, it is incumbent upon the higher court of the Church to speak to the constituency of the Church on moral issues; and

Whereas, it is incumbent upon the members of the Church to speak out on such issues as individual Christians; and

Whereas, the insidious evil of atheistic communism is militant on every front;

Therefore, be it resolved, that this General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America record its unalterable opposition to atheistic communism and that the Churches urge their members to register their

opposition by writing the President of these United States and their Congressmen, urging them to exert every possible effort to resist the further encroachment of this Godless ideology.⁶²

In 1978, PCA missionary-at-large Jimmy Lyons, whose travels had taken him to Southeast Asia, also developed a slide presentation on refugees in that part of the world. He also wrote a book, *Safe in the Harbor?*, which highlighted the plight of those who had fled the Communist takeover. Commenting on the scene in Thailand, he observed:

In addition to the Mountain people from Laos, and the Cambodians, there is the third group of refugees ... and these are often the most pitiful. From Vietnam 10,000 men, women, and children are held in refugee centers awaiting resettlement in some third country. These are the "Boat People." They made their escape from Vietnam three to four hundred miles across the Gulf of Thailand. They come across in anything that will float ... in boats ... and sampans ... where there's standing room only. And across that Gulf they become the prey of pirates. They are repeatedly robbed ... they arrive with nothing at all.

One group told of pirates taking all their valuables. Then, transferring all of the women onto their own vessels where they were gang raped. When they were finished with them they returned them to their boat, and then rammed them. As the vessel sank and the people tried to swim ... they opened fire with rifles and automatic weapons. It was like shooting fish in a barrel.

No one knows the toll. They can only estimate how many left in desperate tries to escape the Communist oppressors only to find their grave at the bottom of the Gulf of Thailand. Still ... they come. It is the holocaust of the 70's.⁶³

Although not overtly political (apart from a few expressions of thanksgiving for how God has blessed America), these efforts served as reminders of concern on the part of PCA people for those fleeing Communist oppression.

Another private contribution to the literature was Matsu Crawford's *My Head is Bloody but Unbowed*. An octogenarian at the time, Mrs. Crawford wrote of her personal experiences, from the 1940s to the 1980s, with left-wing churchmen seeking to subvert the message of the Church to Marxism, and of others naively

being led to do the same. She documented Communist-led activity in schools and churches and religious institutions.⁶⁴

For example, on May 16, 1970, she attended a group meeting at Rock Hill, South Carolina, which was "discussing 'best ways to "penetrate and infiltrate" local churches, since the local church is the target for this year's concentration.' It was expressed that Methodist and Episcopalian churches were the easiest in which to get a foothold. Presbyterian and Lutheran were more difficult." That same year, she assisted John W. Foard, Fifth Circuit Solicitor in Columbia, South Carolina, in gathering evidence of Communist activity on the campus of the University of South Carolina. She quoted him as saying:

The trail led in many directions. You were right in your hunch about the 'Red Umbrella.' In a church in North Asheville, representatives gathered from the Black Panthers, Weathermen, Women's Liberation Movement, American Civil Liberties (lawyers), and Students for Democratic Society. It was as you suspected—under the 'Red Umbrella' of the Ecumenical Institute. There they discussed activities for the Fall (1970)—things which would anger and disturb communities. One of the specifics was the burning of junior high school buildings.... Those at the meeting who were making plans for the burning, said to the lawyers present, 'It's your business to keep us out of jail, see that you do it' (Matsu Crawford, 31, 46).

Nuclear War

The PCA addressed the question of the ethics of nuclear war in 1987. An *Ad Interim* Committee on Christian Responsibility in a Nuclear Age originally authorized four years earlier presented its report which was

62. *Minutes of the Sixth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America* (Decatur, Ga.: Committee for Christian Education and Publications, 1978) 44–45, 110. Pastor Gene Case of Woodville, Mississippi, a staunch advocate of historic Southern Presbyterianism and the doctrine of the spirituality of the church, requested that his negative vote be recorded. It is also noteworthy that PCA minister Ralph Didier's independent congregation, Covenant Presbyterian Church of Orange, California, expressed concern about the introduction into church business of secular issues such as troop withdrawals from Korea, especially when those issues are "of a partisan political nature" (*ibid.*, 41).

63. Jimmy Lyons, *Safe in the Harbor?* (Manassas, Va.: Reformation Educational Foundation, 1979) 12–13.

64. Matsu Crawford, *My Head is Bloody but Unbowed* (Manassas, Va.: Reformation Educational Foundation, 1983).

overwhelmingly adopted. In this report, the PCA put “This Age in Theological Perspective”:

The momentous events of August 1945, for all their bearing on the subsequent affairs of men and nations, did not radically alter the course of this age. The truly decisive events are rather the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, and his session at God’s right hand. These events, together with the next in the series, namely, the return of the Son of Man from heaven in power and glory, give us as Christians our fundamental perspective on the present. The “nuclear age,” with its undeniably profound challenges, nevertheless falls within the inter-adventual period; our thinking about it is governed by the even more profound perspective of the history of redemption.

The report drew the conclusion that “war will continue to be a liability until the return of Jesus Christ,” but also said, “It would be wrong, however, to conclude that no mitigation of the effects of the fall is possible in the sphere of international relations. Just as Christians may work to limit the suffering caused by natural disasters, so they may work to limit the suffering caused by unjust and unnecessary wars.”⁶⁵

This report reaffirmed the Westminster Confession teaching that the civil magistrate may wage war “upon just and necessary occasion”: “Inasmuch as the state has been ordained by God to protect human life, to secure human rights, and to promote human values, its use of the sword must be consistent with these ends, and always proportionate with them.” Appeal was made to Old Testament theocratic warfare in order to draw three principles applicatory to today’s nations. First, “for all its evident non-pacifism, the Old Testament does not foster the spirit of militarism which glorifies war and cultivates the martial arts as the supreme cultural achievement.” Second, the solidarity of human societies means that there can be no absolute distinction between combatant and non-combatant: “Wars are between nations; kings in making war put their people as well as their armies at risk.” Third, “all nations should recognize the limitations of military prowess” (*Minutes Fifteenth PCA*, 520–23).

Putting “Nuclear Weapons in Moral Perspective,” the report said:

Nuclear weapons obviously pose an enormous threat to human life; the duty to preserve the life of ourselves

and others requires careful inquiry into the best strategy consistent with morality for preventing their use. To qualify, a strategy must intend nothing intrinsically sinful, and promise a lesser amount of harm than any available alternative. The major proposals may be categorized as strategies of disarmament, deterrence, or defense (523–24).

With regard to disarmament, a distinction is made between a position that sees nuclear disarmament as a moral imperative, and one which holds that the best way to prevent the use of nuclear weapons is to work for their eventual elimination. While recognizing the “ideal of noncombatant immunity,” the report states,

In an extreme case, as a last resort, it might be necessary to subject enemy civilians to direct attack, if there were no other way to prevent the annihilation of [a] country justly at war against a totalitarian aggressor. In view of the biblical view of the solidarity of human societies, this extreme measure cannot be ruled out absolutely as a matter of principle. However, this position ought to be held with the greatest caution and reserve, inasmuch as the general principle of noncombatant immunity from direct attack provides an important limitation in the conduct of warfare that is designed to prevent unnecessary taking of human life (524).

The report continued:

Other things being equal, nuclear disarmament is desirable as a means of reducing the risk of nuclear war; but it is not in itself a moral absolute. One must consider not only how to avert a nuclear holocaust, but also how to present the loss of freedom of entire peoples. Given the dilemma of possible escalation to an all-out nuclear war, on the one hand, and the near certainty of enslavement to a totalitarian power, on the other, it is not clear that the nonuse of nuclear weapons is an absolute moral obligation. The degree of risk must be weighed against the degree of threat; it is not certain that any use of nuclear weapons would lead inevitably to a holocaust that would destroy the earth.

These considerations apply to “first strike” as well as to retaliatory use of nuclear weapons. An absolute commitment to a policy of “no first use” of nuclear weapons no matter what the circumstances may be, in its effect a form of unilateral disarmament, entailing surrender to an aggressor equipped with superior conventional forces. “First strike pacifism,” in distinction

65. *Minutes of the Fifteenth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America* (Decatur, Ga.: Committee for Christian Education and Publications, 1987) 518–19.

from nuclear pacifism as such, is an untenable ethical position; if it is morally wrong to strike first because of the risk of escalation, it is morally wrong to strike second for the same reason (*Minutes Fifteenth PCA*, 525).

Multilateral agreements, though desirable in one way, are difficult to achieve or verify and enforce, especially when nations are ideologically at war. “The current ‘arms race’ between the United States and the Soviet Union is due to radically opposed sociopolitical theories and goals which can only be reconciled by conversion or capitulation. In such a situation the most that can be hoped for is arms reduction out of mutual self-interest” (525).

With regard to deterrence, the report noted that with regard to the strategic use of nuclear weapons, one must distinguish between “countervalue” (strikes against cities, “threatening massive retaliation to the industrial base, cultural achievements, and civilian population of an enemy nation”) and “counterforce” (against military installations, “threatening sufficient collateral harm to civilians and society to deter an enemy from a nuclear first strike”). The report stated:

The law of retaliation is severely strained in its application to the use of nuclear weapons. The thought of killing masses of helpless people who are themselves at the mercy of their own governments is abhorrent. Only if there were no other way to prevent an even worse catastrophe could nuclear retaliation even be justified. This implies a conditional acceptance of the strategy of deterrence in the absence of any viable alternative (525–26).

In such a situation, counterforce strategy is relatively better because there is a “greater respect for the preservation of civilian life.” Its disadvantage is that it may be perceived as preemptive, this increasing the risk of a first strike in a crisis. “There seems to be no way to negate this liability inasmuch as counterforce strategy contains an inherent ambiguity in that *defensive* weapons are deployed for their *deterrent* effect” (526).

Anti-nuclear defense is by far the best policy, since it does not concede a first strike against one’s own people and since it does not threaten mass destruction of a people put at risk by an aggressive power. “The enormous cost of an anti-nuclear defense may simply be the price of the just protection of liberty in our time” (526).

The report concluded with an appeal for the Church to engage in intercession and evangelism.

The primary task of the church in this age is the preaching of the gospel to all nations; since God controls the circumstances that are conducive to the fulfillment of this mandate, he bids us to pray especially for those who have been ordained to maintain piety, justice, and peace. The church in its intercession for peace appeals to God’s mercy and patience to give further opportunity for evangelism.... We pray that the world may be spared either the enslavement of the killing of the masses of people who should be the objects of evangelism, in which the church offers, on the authority of Christ, peace with God, reconciliation between people, and the hope of world redemption (*Minutes Fifteenth PCA*, 526–27).

An appendix discussed the effect of nuclear weapons, but some at the Assembly thought that this material was technically flawed (527–28).

A minority report by the Rev. Mr. Robert A. Milliken argued that the Church must speak prophetically to the matter of nuclear warfare. Milliken contended that the majority report “does not deal with the fact that none of the nations with nuclear weapons today makes decisions about war on the basis of the Just War Theory; they do it on the basis of ‘national self-interest,’ period. This is closer to the older ‘crusade’ or ‘holy war’ concept except that it is now secularized” (530).

Milliken quoted favorably from Roman Catholic ethicist Thomas Merton, Martin Luther King, Jr. (with regard to knowing when to submit and when to resist the powers that be), and Albert Einstein in making the case for a world-wide *shalom* which transcends nationalism in favor of human life as an absolute ideal. Milliken accused the Committee of engaging in double-speak and of failing to prove its case. He concluded:

The church of Christ has a peacemaking vocation from the very voice of Christ himself. Its content is unfolded in the great vision of redemption set forth in the Bible from beginning to end. Secularism has a peacemaking vision also, but it is different from God’s *shalom*. Secularism says that the way to achieve peace is to threaten to make war; the gospel says that it is to be achieved through a faithful witness to a *shalom* created through the self-denial of the cross—the one threatens destruction to the enemy, the other reaches out to him in reconciling love. The church faces a choice: which vision will it give its witness to? which vision will it give its life for? which cost will it choose to inflict on the world? the suffering of the cross or the suffering of modern technical ingenuity? (536).

The General Assembly refused even to receive the minority report as information (though the report is printed in an appendix to the minutes). It did, however, receive a dissent which lamented the fact that although the Committee gave substantive pastoral advice it did not go far enough in instructing Christians how to fulfill their “godly responsibility as the citizens of the Peaceable Kingdom”; and a protest issued on the grounds that the Assembly had violated the principle of *Sola Scriptura* and the doctrine of the spirituality of the Church. The Assembly answered the protest by asserting that the paper it had adopted is “a ‘reliable summary of biblical principles’ both ‘expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence’ deduced from Scripture . . .” (101–02).

This same Assembly received a report on Church/State relations and sent it to the presbyteries for their consideration. This report opened the possibility for Christians to engage in acts of civil disobedience as a means of protest against unjust governments, the specific example being that of opposition to abortion. This suggestion of civil disobedience was raised at about the same time as the PC(USA) was raising the possibility of “resistance” (including civil disobedience) regarding nuclear weapons (*Minutes Fifteenth PCA*, 459–63).

2. REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES

A much smaller denomination, the Reformed Presbyterian Church in the United States (RPCUS), which was formed in 1983 by people who had left the PCA, also weighed in on Cold War matters. The RPCUS is dedicated to a strict confessionalism, and is noted for its advocacy of “theonomy” (the belief that the Old Testament civil law in its entirety was given to be applied to every society in every age).⁶⁶

The major figure for the group is the Rev. Dr. Joseph C. Morecraft, III, who ran unsuccessfully in November 1986 on the Republican ticket for the late Larry McDonald’s Congressional seat. McDonald was a friend of Morecraft and his Chalcedon Presbyterian Church. After the Congressman was shot down while on board Korean Air Lines flight 007, Dr. Morecraft was asked to

preach the sermon at the memorial service. He began the sermon by declaring:

If, when you think of Larry McDonald, you think only of anti-communism, you have misunderstood Larry McDonald. The all-consuming calling and goal of his life was to preserve and reinstate the United States Constitution AND the distinctly Biblical heritage that gave it birth and filled it with meaning. He lived and died defending it against any who conspired to overturn, either inside or outside our nation.

Larry understood that the preservation and advancement of the way of life of that heritage, and the rule of law of that Constitution are absolutely essential to liberty and justice for all. For a nation to guarantee for itself security, liberty and prosperity under God’s blessing, the civil government of that nation must restrict itself to the faithful administration of the function God has assigned it in the Bible as reflected in our Constitution; the administration of justice—not of health, education and welfare, but the punishment of the lawless for the protection of the lawful.⁶⁷

Morecraft preached against the sins of our own culture: “We are enraged at the murder of 269 people by the Soviets, but we are not equally outraged at the murder of 15 million unborn babies by Americans.” Toward the end of the sermon, Dr. Morecraft warned:

Citizens of the United States: Repent of your sins that have brought us to this moment. Quit looking to the civil government for salvation and sustenance. Turn from your apathy and involve yourself in the battle for the survival of the United States. Repent of your debt-oriented living. Repent of setting as the priority of your life—comfort and affluence. Be willing to give all you are and all you have to Christ and for the advance of his kingdom.

Morecraft concluded by reading the famous quote from A.A. Hodge, nineteenth century Princeton Seminary professor:

... in the name of the Christian church, I charge you that its sacred franchise, religious liberty, cannot be retained by men who in civil matters deny their allegiance to the King. In the name of your own soul and its salvation; in the name of the adorable victim of that bloody and agonizing sacrifice whence you draw all your hopes of salvation; by Gethsemane and Calvary; I charge you, citizens of the United States, afloat on your wide wild

66. Most who identify themselves as “theonomists” would maintain that the penalties contained in the “case laws” must be enforced today.

67. Joseph C. Morecraft, III, “The Meaning of the Life and Death of Larry McDonald,” sermon delivered September 15, 1983; found in *The Counsel of Chalcedon*, V 8 (October 1983) 4.

sea of politics, There is another king, one Jesus and the safety of the state can be secured only in the way of humble and whole-hearted loyalty to His person and obedience to His law (Morecraft, "Larry McDonald," 7).

The general consensus of the ministers of the RPCUS, as expressed by the official magazine, *The Counsel of Chalcedon*, was that this Georgia politician was assassinated by the Russians. Dr. Morecraft said in a 1987 interview that the Soviet downing of the Korean airliner accomplished at least four goals: 1. it put a damper on the victory celebrations to which Representative McDonald and other politicians (such as Senator Jesse Helms) were heading; 2. it made points with the North Koreans; 3. it effectively removed the most influential anti-Communist in Congress; 4. it was an overt act of terrorism designed to intimidate the West. Morecraft expressed the belief that the airplane had actually not crashed in the Sea of Japan, but had been forced down on the island of Sakhalin.⁶⁸

Pastor Morecraft believes that any international involvement must be based explicitly on the Bible. Among the principles he enunciated were the following: explicit prohibition of feeding one's enemies, that is, loving those who hate God and who are actively opposing you with a different moral order; the law of the by-stander, so that a strong government has the moral obligation to assist weak nations which are the subjects of aggression; no foreign aid by the civil government even to friendly nations; a major tactic of warfare in the Scriptures is that of assassination of wicked leaders; and dealing with terrorists by wiping out the entire community (as the ancient Israelites did to the Amalekites).⁶⁹

He stated that "the government of the United States has devolved into the beast of the Book of Revelation," since the beast is that government which requires a different moral order and therefore becomes the enemy of the people of God. "Our enemy is in Moscow and Washington, D.C. (along with some other places)" (Morecraft, interview, December 28, 1987).

The RPCUS leadership maintained that we are at war with international Communism, and that the "Cold War" was more than ideological—it involved brutal acts of murder, terrorism, and aggression. One of the "hot spots" of this continuing war was Central America.

During his campaign for Congress, Joe Morecraft went to El Salvador and he met in Miami with four of the seven-member Nicaraguan Democratic Force, the leaders of the largest Contra organization. His evaluation was that many of the Freedom Fighters were

evangelical Christians who were attempting to institute a Bible-based government. This is in contrast to the Sandinista regime, which was based on liberation theology.⁷⁰

Significantly, the RPCUS leadership also gave approval to acts of disobedience with regard to "sits-ins" at abortion clinics.⁷¹

Some may be tempted to dismiss the RPCUS as representing only a fringe element of American Presbyterianism. But even though it is relatively small in numbers, its influence has been considerable. *The Counsel of Chalcedon* was widely read, and Joe Morecraft has had many opportunities to speak across the country. Furthermore, the Christian Reconstruction movement which it champions has been widespread in both Reformed and charismatic churches, and the people who got involved in it often looked to Morecraft and his associates for leadership.⁷²

68. In *The Counsel of Chalcedon*, VII 2, see the editorial, "Remember KAL 007: The Dangers of Not Facing up to Unpleasant Realities," 2-3; and Jesse Helms, "KAL Flight 007—A Personal Remembrance," 4-5; along with an interview with Carolyn Price, District Aide to the late Congressman, conducted by Gene Mikell, "An Interrupted Journey—Completed!," 6-9. Joe Morecraft stated in a telephone interview (December 28, 1987) that his belief that the flight had actually made an emergency landing on Soviet territory was based on the fact that he was in the Congressman's office that evening and all night long the Defense Department was assuring the staff that the plane was safely down, whereas about five or six o' clock in the morning the State Department started to call and say that the aircraft had indeed crashed. Also, the only wreckage spotted was what would be compatible with damage from the missile, but not nearly enough if the entire Boeing 747 was destroyed. Dr. Morecraft also noted that a former KGB agent who had defected visited the widow, Kathy McDonald, about a week after the incident and expressed his condolences; he stated that the KGB had an agent whose sole responsibility had been to keep track of Larry McDonald. Pastor Morecraft stated that President Reagan has demonstrated that he was not really a conservative after all: he had spent less than Jimmy Carter on defense; was signing pacts with "our enemies," the Russians; was imposing a treaty which was snatching defeat from victory in Nicaragua; and was saying that Marxism was no longer a global threat.

There is a voluminous amount of material on the doomed KAL 007 flight. One of the best on-line sources is <http://www.rescue007.org/>.

69. Morecraft, interview, December 28, 1987.

70. "On the Campaign Trail with Joe Morecraft," *The Counsel of Chalcedon* VIII 7 (September 1986) 10, shows photos of the candidate posing both with Ronald Reagan and with the Contra leaders in Miami.

71. The Session of Chalcedon Presbyterian Church adopted a statement specifically giving its blessing to civil disobedience in relation to closing down abortion clinics. See two articles in *The Counsel of Chalcedon* VIII 7 (September 1986): "First Pro-Life Rescue Mission Staged August 9," 6-7; and Mike Hirsh, "Pro-Life Activity Does Work!," 8-9.

72. For other relevant articles in *The Counsel of Chalcedon*, see the

3. AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The American Presbyterian Church is a tiny denomination which was formed out of Carl McIntire's Bible Presbyterian Church.⁷³ The late Louis F. DeBoer was for many years editor of the American Presbyterian Press and the author of papers entitled *The Pilgrim*. Pastor DeBoer argued that one must be careful to know when to resist tyranny and when to submit to it as a sign of God's punishment for sin. He developed a theory of resistance in his writings as he dealt with the history of the Protestant Reformation, the American Revolution, the War Between the States, and contemporary attempts by the government to control everything especially by means of taxation.⁷⁴

4. REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA

The Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA) has a long history in America. The "Covenanters" suffered much in the "Killing Times" in Scotland in the late seventeenth century, as they refused to abandon the "crown rights of King Jesus," including his absolute rule over His Church. Historically, the RPCNA has been characterized by political non-involvement in terms of not voting, etc., because of the lack of a Christian amendment to the U.S. Constitution; and also political involvement in terms of speaking prophetically to the government (such as in favor of abolitionism).

following: "A Christian Response to the Militarization of the Caribbean," VI 11 (January 1985) 15–19; Francis Nigel Lee, "Biblical Christianity Vs. Unscriptural Pacifism," VI 12 (February 1985) 17–19; Joseph C. Morecraft, "The Decline and Recovery of America," VII 6 (August 1985) 4–8; Peter J. Leithart, "Book Review: *Day of the Cobra*," VII 7 (September 1985) 30–32; Kimberly S. Anderson, "Russian Reformation Foundation: On the Front Line for Russian Believers," VIII 1 (March 1986) 11; "Third Memorial for Larry McDonald Held August 31 in Atlanta," VIII 8 (October 1986) 5; "Christian Reconstruction in Latin America: A Letter from Joe Morecraft, III," IX 8 (October 1987) 16–18; Joe Morecraft, III, "Reagan's Bay of Pigs? A Christian Looks at the Nicaraguan Peace Plan," *ibid.*, 19–23; Robert Miller, "Book Review: *Witness* (Whittaker Chambers)," IX 10 (December 1987) 3, 22–23; James B. Jordan, "Movie Review: *Red Dawn*," VI 8 (October 1984) 23–24.

73. The American Presbyterian Church has three congregations; however, through its American Presbyterian Press, its influence has extended far beyond its actual size.

74. Louis F. DeBoer, *Tyranny: A Biblical Strategy of Resistance* (Uxbridge, Mass.: N.p., n.d.); *Liberty or Death: Resistance Series* (Uxbridge, Mass.: N.p., n.d.).

75. Quoted in *Presbyterian Journal* (April 10, 1985) 10. See *Christian Statesman* CXXX 6 (November–December 1987) for some Covenanter reflecting on the Vietnam War.

In 1982, the RPCNA took an unusual stand for a conservative denomination. It said:

1. acknowledging our submission to God and His Word we affirm the Kingship of Jesus Christ over all men and nations
2. acknowledging it is the task of the Church to be a prophetic voice to the world in which we live
3. acknowledging that in a world filled with hatred and violence, the Church is called to the role of peacemaker
4. acknowledging that our failure to declare the whole counsel of God has contributed to the threat of nuclear war
5. acknowledging that the proliferation and possible use of nuclear arms is a demonstration not only of man's contempt of man but of man's contempt of God and His creation
6. acknowledging that murder is forbidden by God and that the use of nuclear arms involves the massive, indiscriminate killing of human beings
7. acknowledging that the nations that forget God shall surely come to death

We call upon all men and nations to repent of their arrogance and independence of God, to trust in Him that they might do that which is honoring to Him and be blessed by Him.

We call upon you:

- a. to acknowledge your position as a servant of God, called to do justice, to protect human life and;
- b. to do all in your power to work to eliminate the use of all nuclear weapons by all nations.⁷⁵

The RPCNA has had a long heritage of advocating the acknowledgement of Christ's mediatorial kingship, and of testifying against the United States of America for its failure to profess in its Constitution that its ultimate allegiance is to King Jesus. Indeed, for most of its history, the RPCNA has prohibited participation in the political process because of the nation's professed religious neutrality (though that stance was modified in the 1960s). Like the liberal Presbyterians, the RPCNA, as reflected

*The Pen is Mightier Than the Sword
The Presbyterian Publisher Who
Helped End the Cold War*

Dr. Edwin P. Elliott, Jr. (1947–2009) hailed from a long line of Presbyterians. His father, Edwin P. Elliott, Sr., was one of the first ministers in Vanguard Presbytery, the first presbytery of the Continuing Presbyterian Church movement (which became the PCA in 1973). One of the unique aspects of their ministry was that they became a father-son team in 1978, as the younger Elliott went from a pastorate in Water Valley, Mississippi, to the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Manassas, Virginia, which his father had founded six years earlier.

In the 1980s, the congregation became disenchanted with the PCA presbytery, and it withdrew from the denomination. The Elliotts also left the PCA, and founded Hanover Presbytery. The Reformed Presbyterian Church (Hanover Presbytery) continues to this day, testifying to a simple, minimalist church polity.[†]

From the back side of the church building, adjacent to the old Southern Railway tracks, Edwin, Jr., ran a typesetting business. The noise of the clanging bell at the grade crossing and the horn of locomotives accompanied by the roar of their engines could sometimes make conversation problematic in the print shop. But such distractions did not deter the wide-ranging interests or tremendous influence of the publisher. Because of him, the venerable *Christian Observer* magazine, founded in 1813, found new life in 1987 after being out of business for fourteen years. This publication, which has always served the Presbyterian and Reformed world, has the distinction of being the oldest ecclesiastical magazine in the country. Dr. Elliott's assistance enabled *Presbyterian & Reformed News*, an independent newspaper covering the PCA, to go to press. His publishing agency, Reformation Educational Foundation, had many books in its stable—including the first history of the PCA, and Matsu Crawford's *My Head is Bloody But Unbowed*, which had exposed Communist infiltration in churches.

Edwin Elliott's influence extended far beyond merely the Calvinistic community. He was a significant player in

conservative circles, and served on the local Republican Party. Many pro-life organizations could thank him for not only his generous printing prices, but also his uncanny insight into human psychology and political strategy. Indeed, Mother Teresa thanked him in person for his labor.

One of his finest moments came in regard to the overthrow of the Communist regime in Romania. This tale of intrigue began because of Edwin's long-standing association with the Magyar (Hungarian) Reformed Church, which boasts a global membership of two million.

László Tőkés was a parish minister in Timișoara, Romania, where many ethnic Hungarians live. In December 1989, Tőkés, due to his opposition to the Communist government, was being forced by the Securitate (Romanian secret police) to take a pastorate in a rural area. But his parishioners would

not allow him to be forced out, and a riot ensued. However, in a closed society with no freedom of the press, how could the word get out to the world—and how would the rest of Romania know what was happening? One of the keys was the production of press releases from a fax machine—a machine which Edwin Elliott had helped to spirit into the country. Soon, the news from Timișoara, being broadcast on stations such as Voice of America and Radio Free Europe, spread like wildfire throughout Romania. Within about a week, the dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu and his wife Elena were arrested and very quickly executed.

It is all well and good to preach against tyranny. But Edwin Elliott, Jr., was not only a man of words but a man of action—and his actions helped to start a revolution in Romania, part of a movement that had rippled throughout all of the Communist bloc, which in turn led to the end of the Cold War (The author's recollections in this account were confirmed by Bob Williams, the current editor of the *Christian Observer*, and by Francis, Edwin's brother; photograph courtesy of the *Christian Observer*). ■

[†]For a brief period, Hanover Presbytery was affiliated with the Reformed Presbyterian Church in the United States (RPCUS), which was known during this time as the Reformed Presbyterian Church in the Americas.).



in this statement on nuclear war, concluded that both the United States and the USSR are under God's judgment for their idolatry. However, unlike the liberals, the RPCNA made that judgment of "moral equivalence" on a traditional theological foundation. Or, perhaps we could say it this way: conservatives such as those in the PCA emphasized the realpolitik of supporting the United States as being relatively better than the Soviet Union, while the RPCNA critiqued all nations for their shortcomings—that is, their theological failings with respect to the Lordship of Christ.

Another factor in the RPCNA's 1982 stance is a long-standing commitment to peace among the nations, reflected in positions taken as far back as the late nineteenth century, and continuing throughout the twentieth century. In 1896, the Synod declared:

We notice with gratitude the growing sentiment among the English-speaking race in favor of settling international disputes without appealing to war with its awful waste of human life and treasure, and its fearful entailment of sorrow, lamentation and woe. During the past year grave questions loomed up, that in some quarters excited for a time a war spirit, but the better sentiment of the country speedily made itself felt, and the peace of our nation not only remains unbroken, but the result has been that renewed efforts, both among ourselves and in England, have been put forth looking to the establishment of a court of international arbitration for the adjustment of all difficulties that may arise between the two countries in the future. We hail this as a happy precursor of that predicted time, when "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."⁷⁶

In the years leading up to the First World War, the

76. Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, *Minutes of the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of N.A. Session LXVII. Cincinnati, Ohio, May 27–June 2, 1896*. (New York: J. W. Pratt & Son, 1896) 30.

77. Writing of 1930s and 1940s churchmen such as H. Reinhold Niebuhr and John Foster Dulles, Heather Warren says: "The way [these] Christian realists combined their theology with politics set a precedent for later movements in American Protestantism, the civil rights movement in the 1950s and '60s, and the Religious Right in the 1970s and '80s." See her *Theologians of a New World Order: Reinhold Niebuhr and the Christian Realists, 1920–1948* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) 131.

78. It is worthy of note that the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, even while retaining a *capella* exclusive psalmody as a worship practice, was the first Presbyterian denomination in this country to endorse the ordination of women (as deacons, in 1888); and that it advocated abolitionism and disciplined slaveholders.

Synod pleaded for peace. In the 1920s and throughout the 1930s, the denomination adopted the agenda of the ecumenical movement. One could even say that it had become a "peace church." This came in a context of the church flirting with liberalism, and struggling with how to reconcile its historic commitment to the gospel and Christ's mediatorial kingship, on the one hand, with a social gospel on the other.

VI. SUMMARY ANALYSIS

As has been demonstrated, American Presbyterianism did not speak with a unified voice on matters relating to the Cold War. The various Presbyterian denominations diverged greatly on these issues. Comparing and contrasting their positions will be helpful in determining why this is the case.

First, the similarities between liberal and conservative Presbyterian bodies are noteworthy. Both sides spoke to the issues. Both demonstrated a willingness to address the government directly on certain matters. Both spoke prophetically against the country for its sins. Both were willing to advocate civil disobedience against the wicked practices of the State, although in the case of left-wing churches the issue was the arms race while for conservative churches it was abortion.⁷⁷

But almost totally different visions of what constitutes righteousness led the two camps into basically different directions. Although the RPCNA's statement makes generalization tricky, the left-wing churches employed a Biblical hermeneutic which merely concentrated on certain moral principles, while the conservative churches sought to deal seriously with the whole counsel of God and not ignore Scripture passages which indicate that "peace" may not always be possible in a fallen world.⁷⁸

The question of the applicability of the "law of Christ" to international relations brought varying responses. The liberals most emphatically employed Jesus' words about turning the other cheek in the quest for peace. On the other hand, Dr. G. Aiken Taylor rejected such a notion, believing it to be naïve and extremely dangerous. Joseph Morecraft and other Christian Reconstructionists took a more sophisticated approach to the matter. First, they maintained that the instruction about turning one's cheek certainly must not be viewed as a contradiction of the sixth commandment ("Thou shalt not kill"), which commandment requires self-preservation; therefore, Jesus' words must not be construed in such a way as to mandate a bully beating up on someone, whether that bully is an individual or a whole nation. Secondly, they countered that the "law of Christ"

includes the statutes and ordinances of the Old Testament, as well as the entire New Testament. One must therefore take seriously the commands which speak of necessary defense against and opposition to tyranny.⁷⁹

Differences emerged regarding attitude towards Communism and the Soviet Union. The left-wing denominations sought to separate the atheistic Communist Party from the “religious” people and even from the government, which was not seen as being so bad in and of itself. On the other hand, the conservative groups perceived Russia and its Communism as a godless threat to the Church and to freedom in general.⁸⁰

The liberal Presbyterians sought “Christian unity” with the Russian Orthodox Church. The conservatives showed a desire to evangelize Russia, believing that only the gospel, including the doctrine of justification by faith alone, is sufficient to effect profound change in that land.⁸¹

There were eschatological differences between the liberals and conservatives. Left-wing material spoke of the specter of annihilation by means of a nuclear holocaust (ironically, paralleling certain forms of Dispensationalism with a belief that Armageddon will be accompanied by nuclear explosions). Conservative Presbyterians, whether pre-, a-, or post-millennial, agreed that human history will end at Christ’s Second Coming, an event totally in God’s hands.⁸²

Several issues divided Presbyterians with regard to political philosophy. A study of left-wing Presbyterian statements revealed that they advocated socialistic solutions to society’s ills. Conservative bodies operated more or less out of a context in which limited government means non-interference by the State in the means of production and the economy in general.

The liberals’ socialistic tendencies dulled their senses to some of the worst of the Soviet system—not just the brutality, but the Statism of it. Coupled with that trend was the liberal belief in a dichotomy between commitment to God and commitment to any system. The liberals felt that there is no totally right system of government, either ecclesiastical or civil. Thus, there is no totally wrong system of government, either—everything is a mixture of shades of gray. What was missing is the commitment to *sola Scriptura* with regard to government.

Internationalism played a large role in the thinking of the liberal Presbyterians, who allege that the nation-state is obsolete. The United Nations therefore became crucial on this scheme for the preservation of world peace. Such a peace could come, of course, only if it was a “just peace,” by which liberals meant a redistribution

of the wealth. Conservative Presbyterians, on the other hand, deplored the U.N. as not only fostering Communism, terrorism, and radicalism, but also as a joining with the enemies of the United States and of freedom.⁸³

With regard to war and peace, the liberals stated

79. See G. Aiken Taylor, “Of Wolves, Sheep and the Ship of State,” *Presbyterian Journal* 37 no. 8 (June 21, 1978) 12: “With Christian people pressuring government to ‘beat swords into plowshares’ as the way to persuade ungodly nations to behave in a godly way, the future civil tranquility of this country may well depend on officers and crew for the ship of state who realize that you don’t pacify a pack of wolves by letting them into sheepfold”; and “Dangerous Men in Government,” XXXIV 46 (March 17, 1976) 10, with specific reference to Sen. Mark Hatfield (R-Ore.): “The most dangerous men may well be those who, on the basis of a Christian profession, wear blinders which keep them from recognizing that the world is made up of people among whom ‘there is non righteous, no not one,’ and who sincerely believe ‘turn the other cheek’ is God’s rule for national policy as well as for a Christian’s witness.” Also, Morecraft, telephone interview.

80. Smylie, interview. See *Church and Society* magazine, LXXIV 2 (November/December 1983).

81. Of particular note was the fascinating effort of the Russian Reformation Foundation (RRF) led by former Defense Department linguist Jack Anderson and his wife Kim. The RRF had as its goal the translation and distribution of classic Reformed works, such as Calvin’s Institutes and the Westminster Confession of Faith, into Russian—something which had never been done. See “Russian Reformation Foundation Reaches a Milestone: First Chapter of Westminster Confession Translated into Russian for the First Time,” *The Counsel of Chalcedon* IX 6 (August 1987) 4–5; and “Russian Reformation Foundation: On the Front Line for Russian Believers,” *The Highroad for ALL* IX 4 (Fall 1987) 1, 6. [*The Highroad* was the publication of the Alliance of Loyal Laity, an unofficial group within the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church.] The RRF was a mission of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Manassas, Virginia, a congregation which at one time was affiliated with the RPCUS, but is now the flagship congregation of the Reformed Presbyterian Church—Hanover Presbytery.

82. For an example of left-wing eschatological perspective, see Ronald H. Stone, “The Justifiable War Tradition,” Stone and Wilbanks, *The Peacemaking Struggle*, 195: “If a government over a long period of time is threatening the survival of humanity on the planet, it begins to lose its legitimacy... If [governments’] constituted regular practices are to plan to destroy all human life under certain circumstances, they need to be changed.” Another perspective in the same volume was offered by Donald E. Gowan and Ulrich W. Mauer, “Shalom and Eirene,” 123–33.

An official position is found in *Peacemaking: The Believers’ Calling*, 23, with a reference to the arms race “where mutual capacity for annihilation threatens the world.” But see especially Wilbanks and Stone, *Presbyterians and Peacemaking*, 10ff.

83. See Gary DeMar, *God and Government: A Biblical and Historical Study*, I (Atlanta: American Vision Press, 1982) 21, for a typical description of the United Nations as being a form of “centralism” forbidden by God. Dr. DeMar at the time of the writing of this book was a member of Chalcedon Presbyterian Church.

See John C. Bennett and Harvey Seifer, *U. S. Foreign Policy and Christian Ethics* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977) for typical thinking among liberal Presbyterians on foreign policy matters.

that war is “evil.” It may be a “necessary evil”—the least odious of choices—but it is still morally wrong. Pacifism was viewed as a legitimate Christian position. Conscientious objector status was sought for those with scruples against war in general or a given conflict in particular. Tax resistance and civil disobedience measures were explored as legitimate ways to end the “arms race.” Many in this camp rejected the just war theory, but many appealed to it in order to oppose nuclear warfare.

Conservative Presbyterians overwhelmingly rejected pacifism as a valid Biblical view and approved of warfare as long as it fell within the just war guidelines. The Christian Reconstructionists, while not rejecting the just war criteria in terms of tactics, did repudiate the notions of “balance of power”: treaties are not to be made with those nations which are (ideologically) at war with you.

Nuclear weapons were considered “immoral” and intrinsically evil by liberal Presbyterians. The conservatives did not accept that notion, but did caution that they can certainly be used in a diabolical fashion.

This article has already pointed out that there have been historical connections between left-wing theologians and radical politics.⁸⁴ We are not alone in noting the conjunction of a left-ward direction and a resultant commitment to “peace”: writing of the Southern Presbyterian Church, and of “the story of Protestantism in the United States in transition,” historian Rick L. Nutt observed that

84. The phenomenon of political and theological parallelism was not confined to Presbyterianism. For example, among Lutherans, during the Cold and Vietnam Wars, “secular, political concerns generally aligned with theological controversies” (David E. Settje, *Lutherans and the Longest War: Adrift on a Sea of Doubt about the Cold and Vietnam Wars, 1964–1975* [Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2007] 52). Settje also noted that a “blast” signed by 96 students at Concordia Lutheran Seminary against J.A.O. Preus, President of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS), for his pro-Vietnam War stance, “came during a battle between Preus and the seminary over biblical criticism. This friction eventually led students to walk out of the seminary and Preus and his backers to fire the seminary president and other faculty members. This letter came in the midst of a major theological quarrel that later splintered the denomination; it is noteworthy that they disagreed on the Vietnam War as well and saw it as another battleground” (140). The Missouri Synod experience thus paralleled that in the PCUS, where there was ecclesiastical division between conservatives who supported the Vietnam War and saw it as a manifestation of the Cold War, and the liberals who controlled the Southern Presbyterian General Assembly—leftists both in terms of Vietnam and in terms of theology. However, unlike the LCMS situation, where the conservatives won the day and the liberals were forced out, it was the conservatives who felt compelled to leave the PCUS.

the stance of the PCUS regarding national security issues (war, peace, and foreign policy decisions and actions) underwent a dramatic metamorphosis after World War II, specifically beginning with the nation’s involvement in the Indochinese, or Vietnam, War. Before that time the denomination consistently supported the United States in its military endeavors and role in world affairs. The church became involved in peace and social justice ministries in direct opposition to its tradition of social conservatism.

That change in the denomination’s attitudes resulted from its movement away from the stringent Calvinism of its Old School heritage and from the matrix of external social forces (namely, the civil rights movement and the Vietnam War) which caused a reevaluation of its ministry. Internal theological and intellectual movement worked in concert with forces outside the denomination to effect virtually seismic changes within it. In the process, the PCUS became less distinctively southern and ever more a part of the mainstream of what is usually called liberal Protestantism in the United States (Nutt, *Toward Peacemaking*, 1).

In this regard, it is important to understand that the ties are definitely theological, and that the very documents calling liberal Presbyterians to “peacemaking” contained deviations from historic, traditional Presbyterian theology.

The sovereignty of God was spoken of by the liberals, but the question must be asked if they meant the same thing by sovereignty as did John Calvin and the Reformers. The use of this term in these twentieth century documents appears to be a reference to a general kind benevolence by God rather than to His predestination and His foreordaining “whatsoever things come to pass.”

The peacemaking endeavors were founded explicitly upon the concept of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Although everyone who used this twin concept may not intend universal salvation, these terms have historically been identified with universalism.

“Reconciliation” also was used as a basis for peacemaking. But again, one must ask if the traditional terminology has the traditional meaning. There is no evidence in any of the documents which we reviewed that propitiation was made the foundation of man’s peace with God nor his peace with others.

Quite explicitly, the meaning of the atonement was changed from the historic Presbyterian view (limited

or definite atonement) to an Arminian view (Christ is said to have died for the whole world).⁸⁵

The peacemaking materials came quite definitely in a package with other ideas. The “just peace” concept found a ready home in “liberation theology,” which seeks “salvation” in this life, primarily through a redistribution of wealth.

The notion of *kairos* was utilized by liberals to assert that this is a significantly new era. Although it is possible on an historic postmillennial base to believe that a great transformation can transpire, it is through the spread of the gospel that such would occur. The liberals’ idea of the golden age was that of world peace itself.⁸⁶

The United Nations in all of this was regarded almost like a new messiah. It is easy to demonstrate that salvific terms often appeared in reference to that organization.⁸⁷

The documents referred to “sin,” but this was usually defined in an institutional rather than personal way. Furthermore, the existence of a personal Devil was explicitly rejected, while nuclear arms were called “demonic” (Wilbanks and Stone, *Presbyterians and Peacemaking*, 16–17).

Another deviation is the continued repudiation of Puritan worship, with its ideal of the “regulative principle of worship” (whatever is commanded in Scripture is required, whatever is not commanded is forbidden). The materials which were to be used for worship services contained many examples of elaborate liturgies which go against the “simplicity” of worship which, according to the Westminster Standards, is to characterize the true Church.

What was perhaps striking in the debate within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is that the opposition did not concentrate its attack on these fundamental theological issues. Most of the essays in the book by Presbyterians for Democracy and Religious Freedom (PDRF) focused only on what might be called pragmatic matters. It is true that Ted M. Dorman’s contribution did affirm the necessity of justification by faith alone as the basis for peace—peace which “has nothing to do with earthly circumstances,” and which benefits most especially the redeemed people of God in distinction from the world. Further, Dorman wrote, “But to make this political gospel the central element of Christian faith is to succumb to the 20th-century heresy that all of humanity’s problems are political or economic in nature, and that changing societal structures is therefore more important than changing human hearts (which may or may not need changing, depending upon which class of human hearts the political evangelist is talking about).” However, even this essay did not directly go for the jugular in pointing

out deviations from the Reformed faith itself (Dorman, *Peacemaking? Or Resistance?*). This raises the possibility that the “conservatives” in the PC(USA) did not feel confident in contending earnestly for historic Reformed theology in a denomination which had accepted ministers who denied Christ’s deity, virgin birth, miracles, substitutionary atonement, resurrection from the dead, and second coming.

Various examples of non sequiturs and other logical inconsistencies in the liberals’ argumentation can be pointed out. The publication by PDRF did an effective job of doing so (Sutterlin, 20). Other problems included the purported belief in “limited government” while at the same time advocating collectivism; and a passionate advocacy of “democracy” while maintaining that totalitarian governments are not that bad.

These matters manifest a tension in the liberals’ position. Perhaps the most telling example of a dualism in the system is the view that power and love are contradictory. In the liberals’ theology, “love” is an absolute, and “power” is an antithesis. Of course, this raises the question of whether God is merely an abstraction, since He is absolute love, and presumably without power.⁸⁸

85. For example, *Peacemaking: The Believers’ Calling*, 5.

86. *Ibid.*, 16: “As Christians we must decide what we are called to be and do in the light of new awareness. We are not doomed to be imprisoned in fear, insecurity, greed, pride, and cynicism that reflect the past. Our Christian faith can free us from such chains. A truly new age and quality of life for all peoples on this globe are possible. Such a new age we believe to be the will of God now. We have the opportunity to serve God in its creation.”

87. See James S. Sutterlin, “The United Nations and the Christian Commitment to Peace,” *Church & Society* LXXVI 2 (November/December 1985): “Peace among nations in possession of this terrible destructive capacity has become the inescapable condition of the survival of civilization and of the human species itself. Peace must represent a point of unison between all faiths and ideologies” (18); “In speaking at an ecumenical service at the beginning of the last session of the United Nations General Assembly, Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar said, ‘Whatever be our conviction, we meet on this common point: that human dignity has to be upheld, that justice has to be promoted, that the glory of the human enterprise has to be enhanced and that, therefore, human relations have to be based on peace.’ ‘Peace,’ he stated, ‘is creativity joined to benevolence.’ In this fortieth anniversary year of the United Nations, it is well to recognize that a strong United Nations is needed to ensure this peace and the global justice which is its only sure foundation” (20).

88. This is not to say that the conclusion that God is without power is drawn by the liberals; indeed, *Peacemaking: The Believers’ Calling* speaks of God’s “grace and power” (22); and also asserts that under new rubrics for international affairs, “The concept of power can be reinterpreted as the ability to get others to do what is best for both of us, not because others fear our clout but because we respect one another’s intentions. Perhaps power can be separated from too close identification with interest and security and thought of as

In the 1980s—toward the end of the Cold War—the PC(USA) was subject to the swirl of controversy because of the discussion on the “militarism” of the United States, the “demonism” of nuclear bombs, and the “Christian necessity” to declare nuclear war unacceptable and active resistance to such a policy as a valid option (if not a requirement of “Christian faith and obedience”) even if it included acts of civil disobedience. Those directing denominational policy were faced with having to assess whether or not it was the time to push for these further radical measures. Was it worth the risk of losing even more church members—the great “silent majority” that became increasingly disenchanted with the ever-leftward tilt of their denomination? On the other hand, people of a more conservative bent wondered if the movement in that direction was part of a deliberate attempt to be rid finally of those who objected to making the denomination into a “peace church.”⁸⁹

There was a concerted effort in the 1980s to translate the pious declarations of the PC(USA) General Assembly into attitude-changes and actions at the local level. Much opposition was encountered, but many more people got involved in this peacemaking program than ever would have in the past.

All of this raised interesting questions about national security and national defense. The tendency of many people, including policy makers, was to reject the denomination’s advice and increasingly to treat its pronouncements with skepticism. However, a church which at that point had about three million members was a force to be reckoned with in our society. The church almost renounced the doctrine of the just war on the eve of World War II. Its idealistic perspective on relations with the Soviet Union, which echoed

empowerment—as the capacity to enable others to become what they in their best intentions would choose to become. Power in this sense could not be purchased and stockpiled, but would have to be used for creative political purposes” (25).

89. Dorman, *Peacemaking? Or Resistance?*, specifically noted the fears of many conservatives within the PC(USA), and expressed concern that that denomination would be deliberately taken out of the “mainstream” of American Christianity and become a “peace church” of a very radical sort.

90. Mark Tooley, “Left-Leaning Church Elites Ambivalent about Berlin Wall Anniversary” (November 13, 2009), accessed at <http://www.theird.org/Page.aspx?pid=1257>. For an exposé of how the Soviets infiltrated Western institutions, see Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB* (New York: Basic Books, 2000); Chapter 28, entitled “The Penetration and Persecution of the Soviet Churches,” gives evidence of KGB influence over the Russian Orthodox Church and the sway it held in the World Council of Churches.

Neville Chamberlain’s appeasement policies toward Nazi Germany, could have proven to be disastrous if taken to heart.

Liberal Presbyterianism reflected liberal Protestantism’s religious commitment to pacifist policies and leftist agendas—a commitment that continued even after the fall of the Berlin Wall. In 2009, Mark Tooley of the Institute of Religion & Democracy (IRD) wrote:

Twenty years ago, when the Berlin Wall fell, I remember wondering how left-wing church officials would react after having spent decades apologizing for communism in the Eastern Bloc. There was even an affiliate of the Soviet-front group, the World Peace Council, co-located with the National Council of Churches and other denominational agencies at the “God Box” in New York City. Would these church officials learn any lessons from their embarrassing silence about communist repression in East Europe and the old Soviet Union?

Apparently not! Groups like the World Council of Churches (WCC) and, to a lesser extent, the National Council of Churches, continue to be cozy with and make excuses for the few remaining communist dictatorships. During the recent 20th commemoration of the Berlin Wall’s collapse, the WCC’s chief rhapsodized about it as though the WCC could somehow claim credit for ending the Cold War.... Note ... how the United Methodist Council of Bishops reacted as they literally were in session at Lake Junaluska while the wall fell. They seemed more concerned about the U.S. exploiting the situation, or about capitalism replacing communism, rather than celebrating!

The truth is, groups like the WCC and the elites of their member denominations (like many United Methodist bishops) were and remain blind to repression by utopian and anti-Christian ideologies, no matter how repressive. They will only criticize the U.S. and Israel. They will NEVER criticize Marxist or Islamist regimes. It’s a gross double standard that has been stunningly consistent for the Religious Left over 40 years.⁹⁰

This IRD article quite properly notes the ongoing leftist fascination with socialism and its fellow travelers. However, it also illustrates the crossover in conservative circles from the Cold War in which Communism was the great enemy, to the new world in which Islam is the threat. One could argue that the Protestant anticommunism

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The Theological Climate of the Early Nineteenth Century and the Founding of a Polemical Seminary at Princeton. Continued from Page 30.

institution faces is not whether or not their institution is built on polemic, this seems an unavoidable conclusion, but whether or not their polemic will survive. Put another way: ‘How long will a seminary maintain the theological distinctives it was founded to preserve?’ The answer to this question hinges on the success or failure of its polemic.

The theological seminary falls under continuous pressure during its tenure from two opposing mindsets (though recognizably over-simplified): *preservation* or *progress*. The seminary at Princeton, as in most other theological institutions, found its origin in the concern to *preserve* that which it had inherited. No one did this better or longer than did Old Princeton. Yet inevitably, within the first few years of its existence, Alexander and Miller faced charges of opposing *progress* (Alexander, 426–428). This charge not only reoccurred throughout Old Princeton’s existence but remains today the constant charge of virtually all theological innovators. Like Old Princeton, our confessional seminaries should strive to preserve their standards. This certainly should not hinder the search for progress in theological understanding within these boundaries of orthodoxy, but like the Princetonians, theological “progress” of confessional standards should be received with great hesitance, caution, and collective wisdom.

Ultimately, not even Old Princeton could resist “progress” and in 1929, fell to a reorganized Princeton that had moved toward a “broad and warm evangelicalism” and away from the bondage of “a highly rational orthodoxy and extreme literalism” of Westminster Calvinism (Loetscher, *Broadening Church*, 147). The emphasis of a seminary, or lack thereof, on polemic theology seems to suggest which of these mindsets it embraces. Perhaps this helpfully serves as an evaluative criterion of our theological institutions.

Though in the end Old Princeton succumbed to the pressures of denominational “progress,” its polemic survived and thrived against these pressures for over a century and, as a result, Old School Calvinism likewise thrived. How was Princeton able to succeed against such pressures? They succeeded not simply by founding the seminary on polemic but by establishing it in the same. In its early years, Miller and Alexander laid this foundation and Charles Hodge, with his creation of the *Biblical Repertory* in 1825, solidified it for the next hundred years. But the development of Princeton’s polemic in these early stages must be reserved for another occasion. ■

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of an earlier generation has today morphed into a pro-interventionist perspective—a neo-conservatism that champions nation-building rather than simply the stopping of aggression. Ironically, that approach entails its own version of internationalism—sometimes even backed up by UN resolutions. But that discussion is beyond the scope of this article, and awaits a fuller consideration on another day.

What is obvious is that, during the Cold War, within American Presbyterianism another war was raging, a war that was fought over the nature of the Kingdom of God and of His righteousness. The battle lines were drawn between those who believed in historic Christianity in terms of its content, and those who rejected that content; between those who regarded personal conversion as the foundation of a just society, and those who emphasized institutional changes to the virtual exclusion of heart regeneration; between those who used terms in their traditional meaning, and those who felt free to use old terms but give them new meanings; between those who believed in a limited government, and those whose belief in limited government had to do with obedience to a “militaristic” State and not to the extent of State authority. And, although the Cold War itself may be a fading memory of the past, this Presbyterian war, both within and across denominational lines, goes on. ■

John Owen on the Study of Theology. Continued from Page 195.

CONCLUSIONS

John Owen’s so-called *Biblical Theology* was not intended to serve so much as a biblical theology as a manual for the definition, methods, and study of theology. This work bears the character of a Protestant Scholastic Prolegomena to theology, with the necessary presuppositions of theology set forth in detail from the biblical data in historical sequence. While this historical sequence makes it plausible to refer to this work as a biblical theology, yet the subject matter is closely limited to the topics treated in Protestant Prolegomena in Owen’s time. If the purpose of this book were understood more widely, it might attract a different audience. His primary contributions lie in the fact that he sought to shape theological studies by redefining the nature and task of theology, but especially in the fact that by rooting Prolegomena in a distinctly Trinitarian foundation, he more closely bridged the gap between theory and piety than some of his contemporaries did. If he is read in light of Scripture and modified by subsequent developments in Church history, then Owen’s teaching