

**Dear Reader:**

**This report from the Committee to Study War and Peace is being sent to CRC congregations and classes for review. All responses to this report must be in the form of an Overture or Communication to Synod 2006. Such documents must be processed through a church council and classis before it is received by synod.**

**If you have any questions regarding proper procedures, please contact:**

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## I. Background

In February 2003, the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America sent a letter to the congregations urging prayer, study, and reflection concerning issues of war and peace (Appendix A). In May 2003, The Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America received, reviewed, and forwarded to Synod 2003 a war and peace report that was prepared for it by an ad hoc committee (Appendix B). The report presented the Board of Trustees and synod with a summary of issues that required more in-depth study. Synod adopted the recommendations of the Board of Trustees (Appendix C) and appointed a committee (Appendix D) to study the issues raised by the war and peace report and recommend guidelines and advice for the church. Synod asked the committee to give special attention to the following:

- 1) The just war theory as an adequate paradigm for Christians to judge a government's use of military force. This exploration recognizes that the state has been given the power of the sword.
- 2) The changed international environment and its implications for the CRC's position regarding the use of military power.
- 3) The use of military force in preemptive and preventive warfare and how these relate to the principles of just war such as just cause, last resort, and competent authority.
- 4) The continued proliferation of nuclear weapons as legitimate instruments of war in light of synod's declarations in 1982.
- 5) The underlying theology and principles of peacemaking and peacekeeping to inform the conscience and praxis of the church.

*(Acts of Synod 2003, pp. 638-39)*

These considerations form the mandate for this committee and for the report that follows.

## II. Executive summary

The body of the report, including its recommendations, will substantiate our committee's response to the five issues identified by Synod 2003:

A. We affirm that the criteria developed over centuries for assessing justifiable warfare are necessary for evaluating a government's decision to engage in war. However, because of changes in the international context, more needs to be said about the limited conditions under which war might be justified, and this issue needs to be placed more firmly in the context of our call by God to be peacemakers.

B. Since World War II, the framework of international relations has changed dramatically with (1) an ever increasing interdependence among states and peoples, (2) the emergence of many states without adequate governments, and (3) the development of many new nonstate actors who have either a positive or a negative impact on peace and conflict in the world. This context requires renewed attention to the importance of just governance, the peaceful ordering of society, and our role as Christians in this global context.

C. In recent years, preemptive and preventive military strategies have been confused. The just-war criteria enable us to make clear distinctions between the two. Preemptive military action is justified, under limited circumstances, when the threat of attack is imminent. However, preventive warfare, initiating military action against a country or government that poses no near-term and intended military threat, amounts to little more than illegitimate aggression by the country that initiates that military action.

D. We reaffirm the declarations of Synod 1982 that nuclear weapons should not be considered legitimate means of warfare, and we once again call on all current nuclear powers to halt the production and proliferation of nuclear weapons and reduce the stockpiles now accumulated.

E. Our report seeks to articulate the urgency of establishing and maintaining peace as a proper purpose of just governing and as part of the calling of the people of God in Christ throughout the world. Warfare, if and when justified as a last resort, can only have as its aim the overcoming of injustice that violates peace and the establishment or recovery of a just and peaceful public order. We urge the church to understand more fully the calling of Christians to be peacemakers. As agents of *shalom*, Christians seek to establish and uphold structures of just government and work for peace. We include in our report, therefore, an account of the biblical grounding of the Reformed understanding of God's calling to be actively engaged in the task of peacemaking within and among nations.

### III. Prologue

*Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the [children] of God" (Matt. 5:9). The apostle Paul urged Roman Christians, "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone" (Rom. 12:18).*

What does it mean for Christians to be peacemakers today in the context of conflict around the world, international terrorism, and both conventional and nonconventional war? This is the important question we need to ask even as we reconsider the long tradition of Reformed Christian commitment to the just-war framework of moral reasoning. Contemporary discussions of the circumstances in which a country might legitimately use military force often show an ignorance of just-war requirements and may ignore altogether the Christian calling to be peacemakers.

Some Christians who say they take a just-war position mean simply that they support their country's current military engagement because they believe the cause is right. On the other hand, Christians who are worried about growing militarism counter by criticizing those who find it easy to justify warfare. Among Christians who urge nonmilitary approaches to the resolution of every international conflict, some consider all warfare to be unjust and at odds with the call to peacemaking. Rather than accept an oversimplified polarization as an adequate presentation of the alternatives, we believe Christians should reevaluate contemporary issues of war and peace within a well-grounded biblical-historical framework.

The first thing we need to remember is that the church—the people of God in Jesus Christ—is a community that transcends all national and state bound-

aries. The calling of all believers to serve the Lord together is the proper context in which we should evaluate our own country's responsibilities for peace and war.

The Bible charges us to consider how to live at peace with others (Rom. 12:18) precisely because we find ourselves at odds with them and often come into conflict. Biblically speaking, we know that this disturbance of right relations and the resulting violence is due to sin—our disobedience to God—leading to the disregard of our neighbors and even to hating and killing our brothers and sisters. One of God's gracious gifts to us is just governance. Because of sin, the task of government includes retributive and restorative justice, punishing offenders, breaking the cycle of violence, and restoring order in human society.

Of course, God's gift of government is not the only word of grace from God. Jesus came to deal with sin at its root and to establish God's kingdom of justice and peace forever—the perfect government. In the service of God's kingdom, we are called to support and contribute to the development of just government at all levels. Governments, like every human institution, can do evil and perpetrate injustice. That is why caution; criticism; constitutional means of accountability; positive proposals for change, and, at times, civil disobedience are called for in order to encourage governments to fulfill their God-given task.

Consider the biblical record. In giving the law to Israel, God authorized Moses to govern the people through various means, including the just resolution of disputes (Ex. 18). At his father-in-law's advice, Moses then established ranks of lower judges. The cases they handled had to do with more than punishment. Emerging under the scope of God's law were different offices of government to uphold justice.

God gave a whole body of rules governing Israel's relations between God and neighbor. These legislative codes include the Decalogue (Ex. 20:2-17 and Deut. 5:6-21), the code of the covenant (Ex. 20:22-23, 33), the laws in Deuteronomy (Deut. 12-26), the law of holiness (Lev. 17-26), and the priestly code (Lev. 1-17). Among the laws were those dealing with personal injury (Ex. 21:12-36), social and sexual matters (Ex. 22:16-24), property protection (Ex. 22:1-15), money lending (Ex. 22:25-27), the sabbatical year (Ex. 21: 2-6, Ex. 23:10-11), and the Jubilee Year (Lev. 25: 8-17, 23-55).

The Bible's wisdom literature and prophets also address the responsibilities of kings and other authorities, calling them to uphold justice, that is, to practice just government, which involved more than punishing offenders. This is what Job recalls as his greatest glory: to take his seat in the public square as a governing official. The people stood in awe when he "made the widow's heart sing," served as "eyes to the blind and feet to the lame," and also broke "the fangs of the wicked" (Job 29). Part of Israel's redemptive history was to be placed under God's good law and under governing officials whose calling was to practice just government.

When God delivered Israel from Egypt, Moses recognized the victory as God's; it was not due to Israel's military strength (Ex. 15). In giving the Promised Land to Israel, God did not authorize a crusade of self-aggrandizing conquest. Israel gained the land not by its own power and strength but by God's strength and authority. Israel's military role in God's cleansing of the land came at God's command and was a tool in God's judgment on nations

whose sins demanded punishment. God did not authorize the children of Israel to make holy war on their own terms whenever they chose to do so.

Israel was admonished not to take pleasure in military power; this is especially evident in the biblical record concerning horses and chariots. The horse and chariot gave an army a huge military advantage, and they were used by the thousands against Israel. In Deuteronomy 20:1, God says, "When you go to war against your enemies and see horses and chariots and an army greater than yours do not be afraid of them." It is evident that Israel then lacked these military instruments. From a military standpoint, it was ludicrous not to have them, but there were no chariots in Israel until David acquired one hundred of them (2 Sam. 8:4), rejecting the dictum God gave to Joshua in Joshua 11:1-9. Solomon then acquired thousands of chariots and traded them with the surrounding nations (1 Kings 10:26-29). Micah 1:8-16 climaxes with verse 13, where God calls Israel's militarization by means of the horse and chariot "the beginning of sin to the daughter of Zion."

The horse and chariot are the biblical symbol for military might (Ps. 20:7). The only use for a horse in the ancient Near East was to pull a chariot; it was not a beast of burden, such as a donkey or an ox. In Scripture, it is Yahweh's horses and chariots that are victorious (2 Kings 6:15-17). God's eschatological word concerning horses and chariots and his vision of peace is stated by the prophet Zechariah when he says, "On that day HOLY TO THE LORD will be inscribed on the bells of horses" (Zech. 14:20).

God's covenant with Israel established, among other things, an order of just government that was designed to allow all to live in peace and to fulfill their diverse responsibilities before God. The laws of the covenant included penalties for those who violated their neighbors in one way or another. The prophets made clear that Israel's kings and other officials who were responsible to uphold justice stood under God's judgment if they failed to protect the people from those who preyed on them. When Israel's own sins became too much for God and the land to bear, God brought judgment on Israel, using other nations to cleanse the land of Israel's sins. To understand Israel's role as a nation with its own government, we must see Israel's history as the unfolding of covenant history, illumined by subsequent revelations in redemptive history, and culminating in the revelation of God's purposes in Jesus Christ.

Jesus came preaching the gospel of God's kingdom and, after his resurrection, announced that all authority in heaven and on earth belongs to him. He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. In anticipation of the fulfillment of his reign, Christ has called us, his disciples, to love our neighbors as ourselves while loving God above all. Our righteousness is to reflect God's, who sends rain and sunshine on the just and unjust alike. We have no authority to try to separate the wheat from the tares and should love even our enemies, leaving judgment in God's hand.

Governments, moreover, have no authority to try to bring about God's final judgment of the world. Neither Jesus nor any of the apostles calls for Christians to try to reestablish Israel as a political entity in the land of promise. Nor has Jesus given his followers a commission to try to create a territorial polity for Christians based on some kind of new land grant from God. No, Christians are to go into *all the world* to preach the gospel of the kingdom, the good news that the risen Jesus Christ is King and Lord of all creation.

Yet, as the New Testament authors reiterate, there continues to be an important role for governing authorities to encourage those who do good and to punish the evildoer under the all-encompassing kingship of Jesus Christ. As Paul explains in Romans 13, government's responsibility to exercise retribution is a God-ordained responsibility, different from the expression of human vengeance that Paul rejects in Romans 12. Clearly, government's use of force has a limited and restricted role in the larger context of its responsibility to govern justly and to maintain a just peace.

In the light of this revelation, the early generations of Christians had to think carefully about the meaning of their responsibility to submit to and participate in governments under which they found themselves. In diverse political settings, they began to articulate criteria of just governing that would meet New Testament demands. Among the criteria articulated over the following centuries, they recognized circumstances in which governments should, responsibly, punish lawbreakers and use force to protect those subject to them. Those criteria governing the use of force laid the foundation for what today we recognize as legally authorized and restrained police and military forces. Government's authority to use force and to threaten to use force, when done properly, is one element of just government that, of course, entails many other kinds of responsibility as well.

Just governing for the common public good is essential to peace. Peace is not simply an absence of war; it is the condition of a justly governed society in which people can fulfill their many callings before God free of the daily or hourly fear of violence and chaos.

A just government may consider going to war only as a last resort to restrain aggression and restore peaceful order. Such warfare can be justified only in limited circumstances and may be pursued only in carefully restrained ways that will, among other things, aim to protect noncombatants. These and many other criteria are part of the moral reasoning of just war. Just-war criteria hold governments accountable. This kind of reasoning has also led to cooperative efforts among states to develop international organizations and international laws to prevent and resolve conflicts, to restrain violence, and to maintain peace. From a Christian point of view, in other words, police and military forces are not tools for a government to use whenever it wants to get its way in the world, but only as the means of upholding justice, establishing right order, and advancing peace.

Much talk in the United States today about the use of force presupposes that God has called the United States to a unique, even messianic, role in history to promote freedom and restrain evil throughout the world. America is presumed to be the last defense against earthly chaos, the ultimate bastion against terrorism, and the leading authority to protect the world from evil. These assumptions imply that military force is justified primarily by reference to the ends being sought rather than by normative standards that bind and restrain any use of force. Making proper judgments about the justifiability of warfare, however, requires a wider and deeper assessment of government's responsibility to uphold a just peace. Calling Christians to this critical task also demands careful scrutiny of the government's assumptions and actions arising from these assumptions that may be at odds with the gospel of the kingdom.

For all these reasons, a reexamination of the Christian Reformed Church's past statements on justifiable warfare needs to be undertaken with the utmost care to understand how biblical revelation illumines the historical path along which we are walking in North America and the world today.

#### IV. Just governing and the calling to make peace

Past synodical statements on issues of war recognized a larger context in which the church's discussions must take place. That larger context is the responsibility of the members of the church of Christ to be peacemakers in this world and to insist that the state fulfill its proper function in the world as an instrument from God to establish order, justice, and peace.

In closing, Synod would urge upon all to pray for righteousness and peace in national and international affairs; to study the revealed Word for an understanding of the will of God for the guidance of the life of citizens and their government; to obey all lawfully constituted authorities for God's sake; and, if a serious conflict of duty should occur, to obey God rather than men.

*(Acts of Synod 1939, p. 249)*

CRC members are exhorted to be peacemakers:

We who claim his [Christ's] name must live peaceably ourselves, furnishing to the world conspicuous examples of peace-loving, harmonious living, and must also privately and publicly denounce war and strive to prevent it by prayer, by redressing the grievances of oppressed people, by prophetic calls to peace, by urging the faithful exercise of diplomacy, by entering the political arena ourselves, and by strong appeals to all in high places to resolve tensions by peaceful means. Christians must be reconcilers.

*(Acts of Synod 1977, p. 558)*

The exhortation to work for peace is recognized briefly in past synodical statements, but they were not developed as a focus for Christian action. Actually, the synods of the Christian Reformed Church have said much more about war than about peace. They have not discussed the role of the church as the bearer of Christ's peace and as witness to the biblical vision of a new earth in which wars will cease. Our church has not addressed adequately the responsibilities of citizens and governments to set our own nations and the international community on a path that maintains just government, prevents war, and builds lasting peace. This committee desires to bring this larger context to the fore. If the Christian Reformed Church is to obediently play the role to which God calls us in the United States and Canada, we must do all we can to make our calling as peacemakers a central element of our worship, our evangelism and outreach activities, and our congregational life.

We begin with a brief review of the doctrinal foundations of Reformed teaching. While the historic forms of unity, to which the CRC adheres, call on Christians to cooperate with just and lawful authorities, they do not directly address issues related to participation in warfare. The Belgic Confession, for example, states that God "has placed the sword in the hands of the government, to punish evil people and protect the good," in order that "human lawlessness may be restrained" (Article 36). It does not offer any specific explanation of how this relates to questions of justified warfare.

Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 105 interprets the sixth commandment as a command "not to belittle, insult, hate, or kill my neighbor," and adds that "prevention of murder is also why government is armed with the sword." The



sixth commandment is a far-reaching command, but does it directly apply to a discussion on war? It may not explicitly do that, but it does deny us the right to take the law into our own hands and gives a responsibility to the state to prevent murder. The Catechism reminds us that there are more ways to commit murder than by causing death to a person's body. It calls us to remember the words of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:21-22).

The two passages cited in support of the answer to Heidelberg Catechism Q. 107 clearly call us to our responsibility toward our neighbors. "Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all" (Rom. 12:9, 10, 18 NRSV). Additionally, "My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in the spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:1-2 NRSV). This commandment encourages us to preserve and cherish life.

CRC doctrinal standards recognize the God-given authority of governments, which Christians are called to obey, and the centrality of the commandment for Christians to show love, even to one's enemies. However, past doctrinal statements do not provide clear guidance on two key points relating to this report: (1) the legitimacy of government's use of force to resolve disputes and (2) our duty as citizens under a government as part of the body of Christ in the world.

While our historic Reformed creeds did not develop a position on the role of government in the use of force or the calling to work for peace, our contemporary testimony, built on these foundations, does address these matters. Synod 1986 gave final approval to *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* as "a testimony of faith for our times, but subordinate to our creeds and confessions." That testimony includes the following statements related to issues of war and peace:

Article 53

Since God establishes the powers that rule,  
we are called to respect them,  
unless they trample his Word.  
We are to obey God in politics,  
pray for our rulers,  
and help governments to know his will for public life.  
Knowing that God's people  
live under many forms of government,  
we are thankful for the freedoms  
enjoyed by citizens of many lands;  
we grieve with those who live under oppression,  
and we work for their liberty  
to live without fear.

Article 54

We call on governments to do public justice  
and to protect the freedoms and rights  
of individuals, groups, and institutions,  
so that each may freely do  
the tasks God gives.  
We urge governments to ensure the well-being of all citizens  
by protecting children from abuse and pornography,  
by guarding the elderly and poor,

and by promoting the freedom to speak, to work, to worship, and to associate.

#### Article 55

Following the Prince of Peace,  
we are called to be peacemakers,  
and to promote harmony and order.  
We call on our governments to work for peace;  
we deplore the arms race  
and the horrors that we risk.  
We call on all nations to limit their weapons  
to those needed in the defense of justice and freedom.  
We pledge to walk in ways of peace,  
confessing that our world belongs to God;  
he is our sure defense.

### V. The church as the bearer of shalom

*“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The Zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this” (Isaiah 9: 6-7).*

#### A. Peace in creation, fall, redemption, and restoration

For the Reformed Christian, the entire redemptive-historical record in the Scriptures points to God’s desire for his creation and the image-bearing crown of that creation to live in peace, shalom. Shalom includes justice, salvation, wholeness, integrity, and health. Shalom is human beings living at peace in right relationships: with God, with self, with others, and with nature. As Nicholas Wolterstorff articulates in *Until Justice and Peace Embrace*, shalom is more than right relationships. It is joy and flourishing in those relationships. A nation, for example, may be at peace with its neighbors but miserable in poverty and therefore fall short of shalom. Justice, the enjoyment of God-given rights, is indispensable to shalom. Shalom is an ethical community wounded when justice is absent. Shalom is also a responsible community where God’s laws for his creation are obeyed. Shalom goes beyond these to include delight in the unfolding of God’s creation.

Shalom, in Scripture, is both God’s purpose in the world and our human calling. While the full enjoyment of shalom will be the gift of God in the fullness of time, partial expression of it in our life on earth now is also a divine gift for which we work. We are workers in God’s cause of shalom—his peacemakers.

Christians believe that Christ came into the world as the Prince of Peace. We believe that Christ himself is our peace (Eph. 2:14). The Old Testament prophets told that the coming Messiah would be the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6), that the kingdom established would reconcile people with God and with the elements of the world (Hos. 2:20-22), and that humans would live at peace with God and one another (Isa. 54:13). Peace is an eschatological gift of the risen Christ (John 20:19). Being a peacemaker is also our mandate as part of the body of Christ in the world. We struggle to be agents of justice and shalom in a

world where injustice and conflict continually rupture Christ's gift of shalom. Recall the promises of Psalm 85:

I will listen to what God the LORD will say;  
he promises peace to his people, his saints—  
but let them not return to folly.  
Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him,  
that his glory may dwell in our land.  
Love and faithfulness meet together;  
righteousness and peace kiss each other. (vv. 8-10)

Shalom is grounded in God's steadfast love, faithfulness, and righteousness. Shalom, peace, is from beginning to end, the gift of Yahweh. It extends to all relationships—intrapersonal, interpersonal, cultural, economic, social, and international. Peace is the antithesis of disruption and alienation: "All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives" (John 14:25-27).

The church of Jesus Christ should, by the power of the Holy Spirit, be God's lead witness to, and a bearer of, shalom. The church is called to proclaim to the world the acts of God in history, including acts of judgment as well as acts of forgiveness and reconciliation. The church's testimony is of a God reconciling the world to himself, so that peace and justice may flourish.

#### *B. The vocation of peacemaking in relation to governments*

In the broad sense of maintaining peace with God, with neighbors, and with the rest of creation, every human institution and relationship bears some responsibility. Yet, governmental institutions bear particular responsibility for public peace by enacting and upholding appropriate laws and policies. However, without the means of stopping cycles of violence and restraining those who would breach just laws, governments cannot establish and uphold peace. Just governing demands that governments control the use of force and exercise it to restrain unjust acts so that society can flourish. Public peace and order cannot be established primarily by the use of force. The responsibility to uphold an ordered peace in the public square is not only a matter of restraining and punishing those who break the law, it is also a matter of trying to reconcile those who have experienced injustice and conflict.

Public peace also has to do with encouraging and protecting those who do good (Rom. 13:3-4). In the broadest terms, this responsibility of government to encourage the good is a matter of distributive justice rather than retributive or restorative justice. Public peace is encouraged, for example, when public authorities implement fair and effective public health policies; support parents in the education of their children; and protect the free association, free speech, and religious practices of all citizens. A peaceful society is supported by laws that enable the poor to find assistance, to get jobs, and to overcome educational and other deficiencies that hold them back.

One of the most important responsibilities Christians have as peacemakers, therefore, is to support just government at all levels: local, national, and international.

C. *The Christian calling: prophet, priest, and king*

As representatives of the Prince of Peace, Christians are to serve as agents of peace as part of their calling to be prophets, priests, and kings. As prophets, Christians are called to speak out openly when governments act unjustly or foment conflict. In the tradition of biblical prophets, Christians are called to speak truth to powers that misuse their position and take advantage of other people, thereby creating grievances and great inequities between those who hold wealth and power and those who suffer poverty and live without dignity, conditions that can lead to conflict among peoples. Active engagement, for example, in the promotion of respect for human rights by all institutions of society can contribute to conflict prevention. Exercise of the prophetic role of individual Christians and churches as institutions within communities is one way to be agents of peace in society.

Following in the footsteps of Christ who came as High Priest to reconcile people with their Creator, Christians are called to be agents of reconciliation. We may be called to take up the cross by accepting great personal costs in order to restore broken relationships. Responding to threats of conflict and breakdowns in peaceful relations at all levels, Christians are called to be active agents for God and his redemptive purposes. As citizens, we should work to strengthen government's work of conflict resolution and the reconciliation of victim and offender in crime and warfare. Throughout history there are examples of both individual and corporate actions in conflict resolution that reflect and extend the work of Christ in completing his mission of reconciliation.

Christ included peacemaking in the constitution of the kingdom he outlined at the beginning of his ministry on earth. Following in the steps of Christ the King, Christians are called to an active role as citizens, especially in regimes where their governing role is acknowledged, to build peace with justice. Christian citizens can band together to help create an environment that fosters just government, while calling on governing bodies to build peace and to refrain from militarism and warmongering. When governments are weak, or deliberately reject their calling to be peacemakers, Christian citizens may need to act independently or even in protest against their own governments to work for peace.

Christians should work within their political communities, insofar as they are able, for laws and structures that establish and uphold justice and peace as the central purpose of the commonwealth. The task that God has given to those who govern is to enact laws that build the human community and promote a political community that honors human dignity, protects freedom, and provides security for all. Christians will therefore participate actively in all aspects of citizenship: voting in elections, formulating policy, reminding those who govern of their responsibilities, standing for election or political appointment when qualified, serving in the armed forces and law enforcement, and taking up vocations that assist the government in the execution of its duties. Christians should engage in honest, open dialogue with the governments that serve us, always keeping a vision of God's shalom in our minds. We should insist that government enact laws that protect the life of communities as well as individuals, so that all can worship freely and engage in political discussion and action, so that families are protected, and so that the professions and the educational disciplines can openly debate and search for truth.

Citizens are also called to promote just government at the international level, both by influencing their own government's policies and by promoting effective cooperation among states. Christians who work for peace at home and internationally need to work together, and with others, by means of civic nongovernmental organizations, to master complex issues of law and governing.

*D. The growth of peace work—a gift from God*

It is important to take note of the historical development of the field of peacemaking as a gift from God. Since the time of previous CRC documents on war and peace, “working for peace” has become a distinct field of expertise and professional practice. (See [http://kroc.nd.edu/ocpapers/abs\\_21\\_4.htm](http://kroc.nd.edu/ocpapers/abs_21_4.htm) for a concise summary on research in this area.) Expertise in peace work<sup>1</sup> has been developing on many fronts, such as early-warning systems, conflict prevention, mediation and conflict resolution, peace and conflict analysis, and peace building in postconflict contexts. Both governments and nongovernmental organizations can actively engage in the work for peace. Specific initiatives to foster peace can be undertaken and funded by governments and international development agencies. Peace and conflict analysis can be incorporated in the planning of development projects in order to reduce situations that could create conflict and maximize situations that contribute to peace. In July 2005, an international agenda for conflict prevention was adopted by governmental and citizen groups across national and continental boundaries, to help shift the focus from war to conflict prevention.

Christians as individuals and groups are making significant contributions to the field of peace work. In a recent initiative, Christians from a wide variety of denominational backgrounds and with considerable experience in fields related to peace and conflict have come together to propose and develop a concept of just peacemaking. Of particular interest in this connection is the synthesis of key elements of just-war theory and pacifism in a practical program of peace initiatives. Of particular interest in this connection is a practical program of peace initiatives drawing on just-war theory and pacifism. For example, *Just Peacemaking: Ten Practices for Abolishing War*, a collection of essays edited by Fuller Seminary ethicist Glen Stassen, offers many instructive examples of practical steps for peace that can be undertaken by individuals and congregations.

Unfortunately, the resources now devoted to these newer peace initiatives are insignificant in comparison to the massive investment in preparation for war. Estimated global military spending totals approximately \$1 trillion and the world's military superpowers continue to augment their capacity to wage war. Around the globe, spending on arms exceeds development aid by a factor of 20. The United States military budget request for 2006, for example, is \$419 billion, and this is expected to surpass \$500 billion by the end of the decade, a

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<sup>1</sup>This report will use the term *peace work* as a broad term to convey the fact that this is an area of active engagement. This term is broad enough to cover a wide range of activities. The definitions of terms are constantly under revision as this interdisciplinary discourse matures. The international community has some definitions that differ from those in other disciplines and literature. The terms include some that refer to work and actions taken to prevent conflict, some that refer to work done to restrain opposing sides in conflict, and some that refer to postconflict work.

figure approximately 13 percent higher than the average military budget during the Cold War. Canada's military spending is at a much lower level, and it declined 14 percent in the 1990s, but during the same period, its overseas development assistance declined by 30 percent. In the last budget, Canada made a significant reinvestment in its military—much greater than the rate of increase in international assistance, which includes conflict prevention. Part of the Christian contribution to peacemaking is a plea to the governments of the world's major economic and military powers to devote a higher percentage of tax revenues and human resources toward peacemaking. (See Appendix E.)

The cost of war should not be expressed only in fiscal terms. It must also be seen in the human costs of war. There are the visible and publicly known costs, and, then, there are those that are not so visible. These costs are difficult to measure, but they are very real. The loss of the life of a military member in combat or combat-related operations is a numerical measure that fails to account for the pain to spouses, parents, and extended family members. Those who suffer the physical wounds of war are often not visible in the civilian community. Many are housed in medical-treatment facilities and in programs for the handicapped and disabled. There can never be adequate compensation for those who have lost their lives and those whose wounds have permanently altered their lives. Then there are the wounds to the mind, soul, and spirit—wounds such as the lingering fears of latent disease from being in the toxic environment of Agent Orange or the psychic numbing that results in Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Still more difficult to discern is the moral injury that comes from the taking of life or losing a friend to the bone breaking metal fragments of war's weapons. No one comes home from war unscarred. The cost is staggering. (See Appendix E.)

Even training for war has both a fiscal and a human cost. Military training over the years has been designed to make the battlefield more lethal. This increased lethality brings costs to the military training establishment. Training with live ammunition is better training than training with simulators or blank ammunition, but it increases the cost. Training for Military Operations in Urban Terrain (MOUT) requires elaborate costly pop-up targets in cityscape environments to insure survivability of both the military person and the innocent civilian population. Military training also has a human cost because it is designed to break down learned civilian behaviors and attitudes and replace them with military behaviors and skills. This includes training to take the life of another human being. The government has an obligation to train men and women with the skills to survive in the crucible of armed conflict. The irony is that this means the military person becomes a more lethal instrument of war—a more effective battlefield killer. Anyone who has gone through military training knows the power of that transforming training environment.

Given these costs, the Christian Reformed Church can make a contribution to building peace by encouraging its members individually and collectively to engage in positive activities that promote peace and reduce the threats and risks of armed conflict around the world. Much of this will mean engaging our own governments to more fully exercise its mandate to actively work for peace, but it may also include activities that operate alongside governments, either to create political space for peace initiatives or to step into gaps when governments do not live up to their calling in this regard. This committee calls the Christian Reformed Church to examine what it is doing through its

agencies to encourage efforts to promote peace, reconcile communities, and advance the cause of justice in our nation and world. (See Appendix F.)

#### E. Examination of past statements

In the context of peace as our first calling, it is appropriate to reexamine the record of the Christian Reformed Church on the legitimacy of resorting to war, adopted by synod in 1939, 1977, 1982, and 1985. Reformed church polity gives these documents no special authority of their own: they derive their force from their faithfulness to Scripture and creed. Nevertheless, they serve to mark a historical path on which we continue to walk—the path of faithful obedience to the revelation of God’s will as we face some of the most difficult and damaging consequences of human rebellion. The Christian obligation to be peacemakers and workers for peace must always be uppermost in our minds. The wisdom of earlier church committees and synods helps us to see more clearly how we can live out this vocation when war and armed conflict rupture the peace and order that God wills for our political communities.

The period between 1914 and 1945 was profoundly marked by two world wars. World War I (1914-1918) was the first total war. Whole societies were mobilized in order to supply national and international armies with soldiers and weapons. While the 1920s and 1930s were fairly peaceful in Europe, important conflicts took place in Asia, particularly in China. Most significant was the civil war between the Kuomintang and the communists, the Japanese occupation of Manchuria from 1931, and, from 1937, the Sino-Japanese War.

In 1939, when the Christian Reformed Church synod first put forward a “testimony regarding the Christian’s attitude toward war and peace,” Hitler had already swept across Poland. The United States, even while maintaining neutrality, edged closer to entering another European war. The political debate in the United States was set in the context of an isolationist political inclination, a fear of a worldwide conflagration in both Europe and Asia, and a widespread movement that condemned all wars as inherently prone to the horrors that attended the First World War.

The 1939 report resoundingly condemned “militarism as an attitude of mind which glorifies war as war” (*Acts of Synod 1939*, p. 241), while warning with equal vehemence against “the evils of present-day pacifism” (p. 241). The integrity of the church’s witness for justice was endangered, synod argued, by the “insidious propaganda” (p. 243) of those who “condemn every war, and hence, refuse to bear arms under any conditions” (p. 242). This position is untenable the report insists: “he who denies the right and duty of the government to wage war on just occasions is not in harmony but in conflict with the Word of God. His conscience is seriously in error” (p. 247).

To be sure, adds the report, the duty to obey government is neither absolute nor unconditional: If faced with a choice, we must obey God rather than men. However, this leaves room for “only one kind of conscientious objector” (p. 247) to a government’s call to take up arms—that of a Christian who “is absolutely certain in light of the principles of the Word of God that his country is fighting for a wrong cause” (p. 249). However, “as a general rule the orders of the government are to be obeyed” (p. 246), and “in a sinful and imperfect world, it may even be necessary to submit to an unjust law” (p. 246). Synod said that a Christian who cannot be certain that his government is waging war justly ought therefore to do as ordered. What are the conditions that define the

justified use of military force? Surprisingly, the 1939 report has scarcely anything to offer in response to this question.

By the time synod again turned to questions of war and peace in its 1977 report, the world had changed profoundly. The United Nations had been established, along with many other multilateral and international economic and security organizations (such as the IMF, the World Bank, World Health Organization, NATO, and the Warsaw Pact)—all in response to the catastrophic consequences of the two world wars. Europe had recovered at last from the devastation wrought by World War II, while European economic and political dominance had been greatly diminished both by the rise of American power and the process of decolonization in Asia and Africa. In some cases, control was not passed peacefully from colonizer to colonized, and some colonies endured long and bloody wars of liberation. This process had consequences on the number of wars fought, as well as the types of wars that were fought. During the first half of the century, most colonial wars were fought to maintain control over the colonial territory. After World War II, the number of wars of independence increased sharply. Decolonization was almost complete by the mid-1970s, with the independence of Angola and Mozambique. One war that came out of this tumultuous era developed into a great contest in the Cold War between East and West—the war in Vietnam.

As a result of the change in the types of wars after World War II, the location of wars and conflicts also changed. Before 1945, Europe was the most war-prone continent. Many of the wars in other places had European involvement because of colonization. After 1945, this changed drastically. Most of the wars were now fought in the less developed nations in Asia and Africa. There were two main reasons for this development: first, decolonization and the wars of independence that took place in Africa and Asia and, second, the Cold War from 1945 to 1989. The emergence of the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, as nuclear protagonists deterred both sides from engaging in direct armed conflict in Europe. The doctrine of mutually assured destruction was the centerpiece of the superpowers' defense strategy and was believed by many to have deterred another major war in Europe. The tension between East and West was considerable. The Cold War, however, was only cold in Europe as the superpowers intervened in other places with more conventional means. The United States, its allies, and China participated in the Korean War (1950-1953). In the war in Vietnam, the Soviet Union and China provided substantial military support from the north. The USSR and the United States assisted states in the Middle East and in Africa.

In this context, the church undertook to offer guidelines for reflection on questions of war and peace that would adapt historic doctrines to present circumstances. "All wars are the result of sin," the 1977 report begins. Moreover, "when Jesus said, 'Love your enemies,' he taught that there are no exceptions to God's command to 'love your neighbor as yourself.'" There can be no unqualified obligation of obedience to governing authorities. "The Christian should obey the state when it orders him to act within the framework of righteousness. Conversely, he should disobey every order of the state to perform acts contrary to the will of God, and he may not obey such demands of government as require him to sin" (p. 569).

How this should be applied to questions of war is difficult to articulate. The complexity of international realities, the limitations of our knowledge of other



nations' needs and problems, and the constant temptation to pursue personal and national interest lead people to different and at times strongly held judgments and morally articulated political positions. The opening pages of the report include a heartfelt plea for mutual understanding despite disagreement:

In the face of these difficulties it is not possible for the church to arrive at a neat set of morally binding rules for her members relative to war. At best she can offer guidelines that mark out boundaries, point out directions and dangers, and stimulate the mind to thoughtful, honest evaluation of the issues at hand. Such guidelines can do no more than assist the church and her members in translating into practicality and in implementing the principles of Holy Scripture. Moreover, the church cannot expect that any set of guidelines, however carefully drawn and conscientiously employed, will necessarily result in a unanimous evaluation of any given war.

In his unrelenting opposition to all war, the committed pacifist may not despise and reject a fellow-Christian whose conscience persuades him of the legitimacy of his nation's armed response to aggression. Nor should the Christian whose conscientious patriotism readies him to take up arms against aggression scorn and condemn the Christian pacifist whose conscience forbids him to engage in or encourage any act of violence.

*(Acts of Synod 1977, p. 570)*

The Bible in a number of places approves passive resistance, and, although this report concludes that war is sometimes necessary, and participation therein justified, we do not hesitate to point out that Christian pacifism has a long and respected history. The difficulties inherent in the problem of war and Christian participation therein, together with the imperfect moral state and limited wisdom of every Christian, summon all members of the church to mutual understanding and tolerance of the conscientious convictions of one another.

In fact, long before 1977, the historic peace churches had led the effort to legalize conscientious objection to military service. Although the 1977 report of synod did not summarize the history and outcome of that effort, the paragraphs just quoted suggest an appreciation and approval of the public-legal right of conscientious objection.

Against this background, Synod 1977 put forward a number of "guidelines for making ethical decisions about war." These guidelines offer questions that governments must address, according to the church's long-established criteria, in order to justify the use of military power and resort to war.

If the nation has or is about to become involved in war or in any military action against another nation, Christians, as morally responsible citizens of the nation and of God's kingdom, should evaluate their nation's involvement by diligently seeking the answers to the following, drawing on the counsel of fellow-members with special qualifications as well as pastors and the assemblies of the church:

- a. Is our nation the unjust aggressor?
- b. Is our nation intentionally involved for economic advantage?
- c. Is our nation intentionally involved for imperialistic ends, such as the acquisition of land, natural resources, or political power in international relations?
- d. Has our nation in good faith observed all relevant treaties and other international agreements?
- e. Has our nation exhausted all peaceful means to resolve the matters in dispute?
- f. Is the evil or aggression represented by the opposing force of such overwhelming magnitude and gravity as to warrant the horrors and brutality of military opposition to it?

- g. Has the decision to engage in war been taken legally by a legitimate government?
- h. Are the means of warfare employed or likely to be employed by our nation in fair proportion to the evil or aggression of the opposing forces? Is our nation resolved to employ minimum necessary force?
- i. In the course of the war has our nation been proposing and encouraging negotiations for peace or has it spurned such moves by the opposing forces or by neutral or international organizations?

(Acts of Synod 1977, pp. 571-72)

These questions convey the heart of the predominant moral position of the Christian Reformed Church with regard to war: that just governing requires the establishment and maintenance of a just peace and only under rare and unusual circumstances are governments obliged to use military force to oppose violent injustice in order to restore peace.

Subsequent synodical reports—that of 1982, “Guidelines for Justifiable Warfare,” and that of 1985 concerning the church’s response to conscientious refusal to pay taxes for war—update and refine the position that was set forth in 1977.

One specific application of just-war criteria to modern warfare in 1982 deserves to be highlighted: the unparalleled destructive power of modern nuclear weaponry calls into question the very possibility of a just war today. Although “there can be no objection *a priori* to the existence of a military establishment or to the manufacture and strategic disposition of weapons calculated to deter the lawless” (p. 104), the means employed in warfare must always be suitable to the goal of “achievement of a righteous and stable political order within which concrete human values are preserved and a well-ordered human society can flourish” (p. 104). In this context, the report concludes: “Although a just war is in principle thinkable, and in the past was concretely possible, it is at least questionable whether, in view of the destructive power of modern weapons, it can any longer become actual” (pp. 104-5).

## VI. The current environment

Since synod last addressed issues of war and peace, the world superpowers have continued to pursue their interests on the world stage. In 1979, Soviet forces intervened in Afghanistan to secure continued communist rule in that country. Their occupation lasted for ten years. The United States provided considerable support for the noncommunist Mujahedin forces. The Cold War reinforced the ideological dimensions of several local conflicts that may have contributed to prolonging these wars, but there are also cases when the superpowers acted as a restraining force that prevented further escalation.

The end of the Cold War had little effect on the number of wars being waged, although the statistics on armed conflict around the world vary greatly depending on the definition of *armed conflict*.<sup>2</sup> War once again returned to the

<sup>2</sup>According to the definitions of the Uppsala Conflict Data project, in the period 1946-2002 there were 226 armed conflicts. In December 2002, the conservative National Defense Council Foundation reported 53 countries struggling with conflict during 2002, six fewer than in 2001. The Stockholm Institute of Peace Research (SIPRI), the Peace Research Institute of Oslo (PRIO), and the research of Johann Galtung and Kenneth Boulding, are working to make data more consistent as well as to develop more reliable mechanisms for assessing those data. The Internet will provide any curious seeker a map of the world’s conflicts and data to highlight the geography of war.

European continent. The disintegration of Yugoslavia followed by the wars in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina brought war and genocide to Europe. Some of the new states such as Georgia and Armenia have experienced continued unrest since their independence. The republic of Chechnya is involved in a war with the Russian army. Old conflicts, such as those in the Middle East, that the world hoped would be easier to solve after superpower tensions eased, now seem intractable. In Africa, the 1990s saw war break out again in South Africa, Algeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Sudan, and Rwanda.

The characteristics of warfare did change significantly with the end of the Cold War. These are important for governments when they consider various choices about how to respond to armed conflict. Perhaps the most crucial for this report is the increased threat to civilians. The lines between military and civilians are blurred in contemporary warfare. That makes a big difference for the application of just-war criteria.

The international environment more broadly considered is also significantly different from the context in which synod earlier considered questions of war and peace in 1939, 1977, and 1982. The following differences deserve particular attention:

1. Increasing interdependence exists in an age of globalization, characterized by instantaneous global communications; dramatic increases in the flow of goods, services, and finances across state boundaries; and increased global engagement by nonstate actors such as businesses, arms dealers, criminal elements, humanitarian agencies, international social movements, and religious organizations.
2. The historical development of human rights and humanitarian law has added new components to international relations. They are significant because they inject components of universal respect for the rights of persons as well as states, public accountability for actions taken by states, and a foundation for citizen engagement in matters of war and peace.
3. The gap has widened between nations and companies that have great wealth and power on the one hand and peoples who struggle in abject poverty with little hope for improvement on the other. Over the last thirty years, repeated international commitments have been made to help the poorest peoples, but few of these commitments have been kept. There may be signs of potential change in this regard given the increased attention by wealthier nations to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted by all members of the United Nations in 2000.
4. International governing bodies play an increasingly important role in international affairs. These have developed to manage interstate relation-

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Since the end of the Cold War, we have been faced with a world scene that shows a high but relatively stable number of major and intermediate conflicts across the globe and an ever-rising number of minor armed disputes. The categories that were used to consider conflicts in the past fail to account for many contemporary conflicts, and these categories are less salient in explaining the moral nature of these conflicts. Most recent wars have flared up within the boundaries of developing countries and can be characterized as intranational in scope. Yet, because they spread regionally, they often become international conflicts. These conflicts are characterized by the use of small arms rather than large weapons systems.

ships in a wide and growing range of areas, such as security, trade, diplomacy, health, and environmental preservation.

5. A wide range of nonstate actors outside of the government sector have a growing impact on peace and security. At least three types of actors fall into this category: international criminal organizations,<sup>3</sup> international corporations,<sup>4</sup> and international civil society organizations.<sup>5</sup>
6. The unprecedented military power, economic resources, and political influence of the United States have significant implications for international relations. The end of the Cold War brought a shift from a bipolar division of military-political power to a context where the United States can dominate militarily even if it still requires alliances of various kinds in order to achieve its military, political, and economic goals. While the power of the United States allows it to shape events and pursue its international goals, it also makes American citizens vulnerable to attacks by those who oppose its agenda and choose to use violent means to resist American power and influence. At the same time, growing attention is being paid to the emergence of new powers that are gaining global as well as regional significance in matters of peace and conflict. Thus, many analysts point out that the United States cannot achieve its international goals without taking into account emerging regional economic and political-military powers, such as China and the European Union.

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<sup>3</sup>These include international criminal organizations, such as terrorist organizations, smuggling rings, drug dealers, arms brokers, gangs, and money-laundering operations. In some situations illegal forces can gain control over an area or over groups of people and commit atrocities against innocent people. There is a growing awareness of the threat from extremist organizations that are willing to launch attacks against civilians to advance their cause. While motivations include a wide range of ideological and religious convictions, a common tactic is the deliberate targeting of civilians as part of the strategies to incite division and hatred. Terrorism of this kind is an example of the private use of force (*duellum*) that violates just-war standards and undermines the order that is necessary for peace and justice. In some cases, the resort by groups with grievances to unconventional methods is an expression of asymmetrical warfare against forces that have sophisticated, targeted weapons capabilities.

<sup>4</sup>These include international corporations, operating across the globe with minimal regard for borders. Many have larger budgets than small nation-states and use their power and influence to shape public policy at both national and international levels. In some cases, private corporations hire their own security forces; in other cases, agreements with governments include the use of national militaries to secure their operations.

<sup>5</sup>These include international civil society organizations. These are also increasing in number; in range of activities; and in influence on public policy, including issues of peace and security. Humanitarian organizations, including many Christian relief and development organizations, provide international assistance to those in need. Human rights organizations operate internationally to promote and protect the rights of civilians. Advocacy for international causes is the focus of a growing range of international social movements and environmental organizations. International mission activity by churches is also growing, with its own impact on peace or conflict. There is recognition that civil society organizations have a significant impact on factors that contribute to peace or conflict. Many such organizations are engaging in more deliberate consideration of what they impact. In some cases, steps are taken to maximize the impact of peace building and reduce anything that might contribute to conflict. Governing this sector can also be a challenge for states with limited resources.

7. The existence of national governments that either cannot or deliberately choose not to maintain a reasonable standard of justice and order within their boundaries presents a challenge to the international community. In many cases, civilians, who are not protected by their own state, appeal to the international community for assistance. With growing international links, conflicts spread across borders and affect regional stability very quickly, making internal conflicts a matter of international peace and security.
8. The proliferation of weapons continues around the world, including small arms as well as weapons of mass destruction. Such proliferation is at odds with the goal of fostering peace and threatens untold numbers of people with potential destruction. Just governing includes a responsibility to limit arms production and the proliferation of arms that threaten the lives of the innocent.<sup>6</sup>

## VII. The just-war tradition

*Princes must be armed not only to restrain the misdeeds of private individuals by judicial punishment, but also to defend by war the dominions entrusted to their safekeeping, if at any time they are under enemy attack . . . everything else ought to be tried before recourse is had to arms.*  
(John Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, 4.20.11, 12)

The position taken by John Calvin in the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* is supported by references to the Roman Stoic philosopher Cicero and the early church's greatest theologian, Augustine. A just war, Augustine wrote, is one that is undertaken at the command of a legitimate authority and in whose prosecution soldiers "serve peace and the common well-being" (*Contra Faustus*, 22). Yet, wars are "evils so great, so horrid, and so savage" that a wise man will undertake even a just war in a spirit of sorrow and lament (*City of God*, 19.7).

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<sup>6</sup>Since synod spoke on nuclear weapons in 1982, both Pakistan and India have tested and deployed nuclear weapons. In 2002, these countries reached the brink of war, raising fears of a nuclear exchange that might kill millions. Other countries, such as North Korea and Israel, are believed to have obtained nuclear weapons as well, while additional states are developing their own weapons programs. With more countries possessing nuclear weapons, there is increased uncertainty in regard to the doctrines and procedures that will determine their possible use. The unspoken rules that governed the U.S.-Soviet Cold War competition and provided some stability are no longer operative. Further proliferation of chemical and biological agents adds to the uncertainty and fear.

Preventing proliferation is difficult and again raises a host of moral issues. The utility of economic sanctions to limit proliferation must be measured against the harm such sanctions impose on the weakest members of society, while the use of force offers no guarantees in preventing proliferation. Some argue for regime change in the most egregious cases, such as North Korea. While this may at times seem like the most viable option, regime change requires the establishment of just government afterward, a long-term effort requiring the cooperation of the international community and much political will.

Positive steps to prevent proliferation consistent with just government include security arrangements that reduce the justification for weapons of mass destruction. International structures such as the Nonproliferation Treaty need to be strengthened or reformulated as well, along with concerted international action against states and businesses that violate their international obligations. Cases such as Libya demonstrate that proliferation can be reversed if concerted international action is taken.

“The just-war tradition” is the name for a diverse body of literature that reflects centuries-long efforts to articulate appropriate moral criteria for judging whether and when governments may justifiably go to war and how they should prosecute warfare by just means. This tradition highlights and seeks to articulate the moral obligations of citizens and rulers in relation to the use of force in restraining injustice. The just-war tradition begins with the assumption that God has given those who govern the authority to use force, when necessary, as part of their responsibility for good governing. It also emphasizes the important distinction between the routine task of maintaining domestic order through systems of law enforcement and punishment, and the resort to warfare, which may be justified only in very limited circumstances when all other means of upholding peace and justice have been exhausted.

Some Christian pacifists believe that participation in any form of violence—even that involved in domestic law enforcement—is prohibited to those who seek to conduct their lives “inside the perfection of Christ” (Schleitheim Confession, 1525). If the threat of force is indeed necessary to maintain order, they argue, Christians should be exempted from any active involvement in order to follow a higher way. Other Christian pacifists acknowledge the legitimacy of the use of force by Christians in law enforcement but not in military action. What unites these strands of pacifism, and distinguishes them from the just-war tradition, is their conviction that warfare is always wrong for a Christian. (Writings from scholars in this tradition are listed in Appendix G.)

It should be emphasized that, when it comes to particular situations of conflict, the areas of agreement between just-war defenders and pacifists are often larger than their disagreements. Both sides in this long-standing discussion acknowledge the legitimate authority of government to employ means of force when necessary, while differing over exactly when it is necessary. Both sides agree that governments must seek peace and root out injustice. Both sides also condemn every resort to warfare that is driven by greed or glory and not by the pursuit of a just order.

Ethicists and theologians in the Reformed tradition have embraced the just-war tradition and have insisted on the importance of governments taking seriously the criteria developed within that tradition as necessary moral guides for the use of force to restrain evil. Their voices have sounded a needed warning against the danger that superficial deference to, and misinterpretation of, just-war requirements may serve only to rationalize nationalist ambitions.

How, we want to ask, does just and good statecraft seek to restrain violence, and when does it countenance the application of military power as a last resort in order to do justice? What can we, as Christians, do to give voice to the victims of unjust violence? How can we overcome the tendency to complacency and silence that is too often the church’s response to the complex tangle of problems involved in a nation’s decision to conduct military operations?

It is not our purpose here to offer an exhaustive or critical commentary on the elements that have been most prominent in historical or contemporary defenses of justifiable warfare. Let us note, however, that the requirements of justified warfare have customarily been summarized under two broad headings: right resort to war, or *jus ad bellum*, and right conduct of warfare, or *jus in bello*. Under the first heading, seven distinct criteria have been articulated that must be met before the resort to military force is justifiable. These

are: (1) a just cause for war, (2) declaration of war by a legitimate authority, (3) right intention in waging war, (4) proportionality of ends to means employed, (5) exhaustion of all reasonable nonmilitary means (“last resort”), (6) reasonable hope of success in achieving the stated intent by military means, and (7) the upholding throughout hostilities of the ultimate aim of peace. Under the second heading, defenders of the just-war tradition have called for limiting the ways in which military operations may legitimately be conducted by emphasizing (1) the principles of proportionality of means to ends and (2) noncombatant immunity or protection. (See Appendix H for a summary of these criteria.)

These rules for just resort to war and just conduct in war can be traced back to Saint Augustine of Hippo in the early Christian era, who drew in turn on the reflections of Roman pagan philosophers as well as the Scriptures and the early church fathers. From the beginning, this tradition has emphasized that military force is acceptable only when it is authorized by legitimate authorities for the ends of just government. Augustine develops his moral arguments regarding the use of force, for example, in a political theory that conceives of a good society as one formed by just order and at peace both within itself and beyond its borders. Indeed, for Augustine, the ruler’s right to rule is conditioned on his moral responsibility to secure and protect order and justice in his own political community and just and peaceful relationships with other communities. In the medieval era, Thomas Aquinas argued that three conditions must be present before a war can be considered just: sovereign authority, just cause, and right intention. Each of these conditions is related to a political good—right authority is related to the political good of order, just cause is related to the political good of justice, and right intention is related to the political good of peace.

The doctrine of justified war was further refined and passed to prominent Scholastics, such as Francisco de Vitoria (1486-1546), Francisco Suarez (1548-1617), Samuel Pufendorf (1632-1704), Christian Wolff (1679-1754), and Emerich de Vattel (1714-1767). Protestant reformers Martin Luther and John Calvin embraced this tradition, and its requirements were carefully articulated by the theologically trained jurist, Hugo Grotius (1583-1646). Among the writers of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries who have sought to reaffirm and apply this approach to modern warfare, valuable contributions have been made by Paul Ramsey, James Turner Johnson, George Weigel, Michael Walzer, Ralph Potter, Bryan Hehir, Arthur Holmes, and Lisa Cahill. (Works by these writers are listed in the recommended readings in Appendix G.)

Among the questions that Synod 2003 asked this committee to consider is “whether just war theory is an adequate paradigm” for Christians today. Among committee members, as among members of the church, there is disagreement over the answer to this important question. We are agreed that just-war criteria must remain essential in assessing the just and unjust use of force. Their importance lies in three contributions to our political and moral reflections. First, they call attention to the moral grounds for arriving at judgments regarding a government’s use of force and set limits for legitimate efforts to restrain injustice. Second, the tradition provides concrete guidance not only to governmental authorities but also to military commanders concerning what they may do and what they must not do, when involved in a military conflict that falls within these limits. Third, the tradition provides

moral guidance for citizens in deciding whether to support, or to participate in, the state's use of military force. Because the criteria for justified war pertain to one aspect of the larger responsibility of just governing, however, their application must always be grounded in a broader context of just government.

While reaffirming the continuing relevance of these criteria, we must not expect easy solutions to complex issues of modern warfare. The just-war tradition provides an essential basis for moral discourse and public decision-making, but it seldom generates obvious or unambiguous answers. Difficult questions surround the construction and potential use of modern weapons, the use of military power in peacekeeping operations, and the legitimacy of war to prevent future terrorist attacks. Moral theorists beginning from the same assumptions and applying the same criteria have come to sharply divergent conclusions, based on differing assessments of recent events and their context.

The applicability of just-war criteria today is complicated by three important shifts in the realities of peace and war during the past century. The first of these is the prevalence of civil wars in which there has been no declaration of war by one nation to restrain wrongs committed by another. In circumstances where an oppressed minority takes arms against an oppressive government, it is difficult to identify any "sovereign authority" responsible for the common good. In defining what sovereign authority means, the just-war tradition appeals to an earlier classic moral concept of sovereignty. This moral concept stands in sharp contrast to a point of view popular today, often associated with the Peace of Westphalia, that defines sovereignty in terms of territorial control, making no distinction between legitimate and illegitimate rule.<sup>7</sup> This is the concept that grounds the United Nations' definition of sovereignty. A government that brings military force to bear in order to perpetuate a situation of grave injustice cannot claim to be waging a just war, nor is every armed rebellion contrary to the principles of justice on which just-war criteria rest. To resolve some of these questions, there is an urgent need for more effective international mechanisms capable of confronting governments that misuse their power to exploit rather than to benefit their citizens.

Current proposals for reform of United Nations' policies and structures should receive serious assessment and critique by knowledgeable Christian observers and politicians. Increasingly, an international discussion is moving toward consensus that human freedom is more than just the absence of tyranny. Rather, human freedom is the presence of possibilities for human development, the respect of human rights, and the expectation of security for all. This concept requires a serious rethinking of the responsibility of individual states to protect civilians and the acceptance of mutual accountability among states to do so. One example is the Responsibility to Protect framework

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<sup>7</sup>The work by Dan Philpott suggests that there is a greater "moral concept of sovereignty" in the original Westphalian settlement than previous scholarship suggested. (Daniel Philpott, *Revolutions in Sovereignty*, Princeton University Press, 2001) Operationally, contemporary thinking about sovereignty as stated in the United Nations system does little to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate issues of sovereignty. However, the definition of sovereignty is changing. The modern incidents of regime change have heightened the awareness of this problem as it raises moral issues in government and the international community's desire to protect the vulnerable and those whose human rights were threatened.



discussed in Appendix I. These proposals imply some form of universally accepted human rights norms and the willingness and ability to enforce these norms through appropriate international institutions. In the light of our call to be peacemakers, it is imperative that the church, individual Christians, and their elected leaders engage in and contribute to these debates as well as to related issues of international decision-making procedures and peacekeeping operations. (See Appendix I.)

A second change that affects the applicability of just-war criteria is the growing destructiveness of war and its extension, in some situations, to encompass entire societies. The horrors of war are not new, of course. In the U.S. Civil War, Napoleon's wars of conquest, and even in some conflicts of the ancient world, staggering numbers of dead and wounded left no family untouched. In the wars of the twentieth century, however, war became mechanized and industrialized, with devastating results. The unprecedented power of military weapons and the difficulty of distinguishing between combatants and noncombatants in many circumstances have compounded the difficulties of honoring the limits of *jus in bello*. Political mobilization in support of war, conducted more effectively with the aid of modern broadcast media, often leads to the demonizing of enemies and subsequent pressure for victory by any available means.

There is also a third change in the circumstances of conflict that has far-reaching implications for the application of just-war standards: the achievement of unprecedented advances in peacemaking. During the twentieth century, numerous conflicts that appeared almost certain to break into open warfare were instead resolved through the concerted nonviolent action of ordinary citizens. The leaders of these movements include several world-renowned figures: Mohandas Gandhi (1869-1948) in the struggle for Indian independence, Nelson Mandela (1918- ) and Desmond Tutu (1931- ) who courageously advocated nonviolence even while violence and injustice raged around them in South Africa's transition from *apartheid* to a multiracial democracy, and Martin Luther King in the civil rights struggle in the United States. Less familiar is the story of Abdul Ghaffar Khan (1890-1988) in British India, who led an army of one hundred thousand Muslims committed to nonviolence in the struggle for independence.

Other recent nonviolent movements have been led by nameless but courageous leaders such as the nuns who blocked advancing tanks in the last days of a military dictatorship in the Philippines, the thousands of men and women who banged pots and pans each evening in protest against the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile, and the Danish citizens who refused to cooperate with Nazi occupiers but spirited the entire Jewish population of Denmark away to safety in Sweden and elsewhere. The iron grip of Communist oligarchies across the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe was broken primarily by determined bands of unionists, religious leaders, and other citizens who would neither relent in their demands for open borders and free speech nor resort to violence in pursuit of their aims.

In light of the requirement that war must be a last resort, these developments show us that war can often be averted by determined and coordinated nonviolent action and other peacemaking efforts. Even if we hold open the possibility that in certain circumstances resort to war may be justified, we must explore far more vigorously than we have in the past both old and new

modes of resolving conflicts and healing social divisions as demonstrated by some popular movements for justice and human rights.

The just-war tradition dominant in Reformed churches differs sharply from the pacifism of the historic peace churches, and yet we can only admire the steadfast commitment with which Mennonites, Brethren, and Quakers have worked in conflict-ridden situations around the globe, at great personal risk, to bring reconciliation and healing to war-torn lands and peoples. Is it possible to reject war in principle and embrace pacifism while upholding a Calvinist understanding of government as an agent not merely for restraint of evil but for upholding good order? The committee heard and took into account the arguments of those who answered this question in the affirmative. The corrosive effects of sin on every human heart and every social institution, they maintain, provide reasons for limiting governmental use of force to domestic law enforcement and that training armies and waging wars violates Jesus' command to overcome evil with good. Others defend, on Reformed grounds, a conditional pacifist stance: war may once have been permissible, they acknowledge, but the interdependence of the world's nations and peoples and the destructive potential of modern weapons now require us to forswear military force and to create alternative institutions to combat oppression and injustice. To the objection that renouncing war amounts to tolerating grave injustice, opponents of war point to the demonstrated futility of military solutions to most global threats to peace and justice and to the gospel's promise that when we act in faithful obedience we advance the coming of shalom.

Contrary to this argument, the Christian Reformed Church has historically upheld the possibility of justified war. Against those who condemn the just-war tradition as offering no more than a thin veneer over brass-knuckled political realism, we insist on the moral seriousness of this tradition and its indispensable role in any assessment of war today. However, the circumstances of war in the contemporary world are changing so rapidly—and the failures of the church's past attempts to restrain unjust warfare are so apparent—that we need to respond to the challenge of working for peace in a humble and respectful spirit. The deeper issue at stake here is that of the legitimacy of government under the authority of Jesus Christ. Condemnation of unjust war must go hand in hand with respect for governmental authorities as instruments of God's gracious rule, not as Satan's minions. Therefore, members of the Christian Reformed Church who are pacifists or strong proponents for nonviolent action should respect the judgment of those who, out of obedience to God, serve as governing officials and participate in the conduct of war, even if their pacifist convictions lead them to plead with the soldier and the politician that "there is a better way, a way of nonviolence and reconciliation." Just as the Christian Reformed Church upholds the public-legal right of conscientious objectors not to fight in war, so the church should respect and make room for those with pacifist convictions. This call for respect is in keeping with past synodical decisions and our Reformed history.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>This posture is consistent with the statements of Synod 1977 as quoted in our review of synodical decisions. It also acknowledges the voices of a strand of lesser known scholars in the Reformed tradition. Among the scholars who have built a case for pacifism on Calvinist premises, for example, are C. J. Cadoux (*Christian Pacifism Examined*, 1940) and Geoffrey Nuttall (*Christian Pacifism Through History*, 1958), members of the Congregational church in

### VIII. North American security strategies and international policies

Canada and the United States share many things in common, including a commitment to democracy, a long undefended border, and economic cooperation with each other and Mexico through the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

Canada and the United States also have separate cultures and histories. They face different types of threats and have different roles in the world. As a result, Canada and the United States have security and foreign policies that are quite distinct. In light of the changed international environment, the Christian commitment to justice and peace work, and the just-war tradition, the following sections reflect on contemporary directions in the security and international policies of the United States and Canada.

#### A. *The United States*

As discussed earlier, the United States is in a unique position in the world in terms of its power and resources. This gives the United States a special responsibility in the world to promote good government and justice. It also demands that American Christians adopt an attitude of humility and prayerfulness, knowing that dominant power is all too easy to misuse in the pursuit of glory or greed.

In articulating the broad outlines of American strategy in the world, the 2002 *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (NSS) embraces many worthy objectives. These include promoting human dignity, diffusing regional tensions, reducing the threats from weapons of mass destruction, and expanding levels of development around the world. Nevertheless, viewed in light of our calling to be peacemakers and the requirements of the just-war tradition, the document also invites a critical assessment. In the introduction to the document, for example, President George W. Bush makes the following statement:

The gravest danger our Nation faces lies at the crossroads of radicalism and technology. Our enemies have openly declared that they are seeking weapons of mass destruction, and evidence indicates that they are doing so with determination. The United States will not allow these efforts to succeed. We will build defenses against ballistic missiles and other means of delivery. We will cooperate with other nations to deny, contain, and curtail our enemies' efforts to acquire dangerous technologies. And, as a matter of common sense and self-defense,

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England. James Barr, a leader of the evangelical wing of the Scottish Reformed churches, as a member of Parliament campaigned for temperance, abolition of capital punishment, and renunciation of war. Another Scot, George McLeod, founder of the Iona Community, embraced pacifism after serving in the First World War. McLeod served as president of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, an ecumenical pacifist organization founded in 1917. A leader of the affiliated organization in the United States was A. J. Muste, a pastor in the Reformed Church of America who became a prominent voice for Christian pacifism and social justice. Reformed pacifists seldom persuaded church bodies to renounce warfare altogether in their official statements, but they remained an important part of the conversation. One scholar observes that "all the Reformed churches I have examined on this matter . . . while respecting the convictions of [their] pacifist members, nevertheless reluctantly concluded that in time of war the government course must be followed." (Alan F. P. Sell, "Some Reformed Approaches to the Peace Question," in *The Fragmentation of the Church and Its Unity in Peacemaking*, ed. Jeffrey Gros and John D. Rempel [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001], 123. This essay reviews the contributions of many of the figures just mentioned.)

America will act against such emerging threats before they are fully formed.  
(NSS, September 2002)

Defenders of the just-war tradition are troubled by the assertion that “America will act against such emerging threats before they are fully formed.” While many just-war advocates recognize the legitimacy of preemptive warfare in certain circumstances that meet just-war requirements, they make a key distinction between *preemptive* and *preventive* war. Preemptive warfare is a response to an opponent who has massed forces or advanced other means for an imminent attack. Preventive war, on the other hand, consists in initiating military action against an adversary who, it is believed, may pose a serious threat at some future date. The implicit argument of the NSS is that it is better to fight now, preventatively, rather than later, when the opponent’s strength will be greater. Such preventive warfare, however, contravenes the *jus ad bellum* requirements of just cause and last resort.

Thus, in practice, current American policy makes no systematic distinction between preemptive and preventive war, important in the context of terrorism because terrorist activity tends to blur distinctions that are significant in a just-war framework. If a strategy of preemption has validity in the current environment, it lies in planning for strikes against members of radical organizations planning terrorist attacks—organizations that have made it clear that the goal is to kill civilians and who have done so in the past. Preemptive strikes against such organizations may involve military action against states whose governments support terrorism, if such actions could meet the criteria for just war, and possibly also against such organizations in states that lack effective control over their territory. However, strengthening international policing and nonlethal security mechanisms is a preferred approach and in many cases is proving to be as effective with less destruction than large-scale military interventions. We agree as a committee, however, that the preventive-war doctrine as stated in the U.S. National Security Strategy is morally unacceptable and that any use of preemptive military force requires a moral and military justification based on an urgent, imminent attack.

A second element of the National Security Strategy that raises concern is the doctrine of dissuasion. The document asserts, “Our forces will be strong enough to dissuade potential adversaries from pursuing a military buildup in hopes of surpassing, or equaling, the power of the United States.” This policy of dissuasion implies the necessity of perpetual American military hegemony requiring continuous increases in defense spending and weaponry, thus diverting public funds from urgent needs in the areas of economic development and peace initiatives.

Both the policy of preventive war and the strategy of dissuasion suggest a quest on the part of the American government for absolute security. Providing security for citizens is one of the state’s most important roles. Nevertheless, overreliance on military power for security is counterproductive. When one nation increases its military power in order to assure its own security, other states feel threatened and respond by building up their own armed forces and weapons inventories. The quest for absolute security is likely to lead to an excessive readiness to resort to force, ignoring or skirting just-war principles. Slowly, the standards shift from fighting in response to armed aggression to attacking a state that authorities believe one day might attack them. Most

importantly, the quest for absolute security can be a form of idolatry. True security comes not from many horses but from God.

Just governing entails more than military security for a nation's citizens. Security also involves securing the human rights articulated in the internationally accepted documents. Denial of basic human rights threatens the security of persons because denial is usually accompanied by threats and punishments should a citizen claim the opportunity to exercise those rights. The denial of the right to exercise one's faith usually results in prohibitions and persecution. The same could be said of other rights.

In a similar vein, the requirements of just governing and the just-war tradition suggest that, whenever possible, security objectives should be achieved using cooperative international policing rather than military forces. Police forces are trained to use restraint and avoid violence if possible. In the effort to defeat terrorism, police forces are less likely to promote a culture of violence and less likely than military forces to generate a backlash that, in fact, aids terrorists.

American nuclear policy also is significant. The end of the Cold War brought a decreased likelihood of a massive nuclear exchange between the United States and Russia. Nevertheless, the Defense Department's 2001 Nuclear Posture Review made it clear that nuclear weapons would continue to play an important role in American military strategy. Moreover, some strategists in the U.S. Department of Defense advocate selective upgrading of U.S. nuclear capabilities. At the same time, the United States made a foreign-policy decision to withdraw from an active role in nonproliferation treaty discussions and indeed, withdrew from certain treaties, undermining international confidence in the existing nuclear weapon control treaties. Both actions increase fears of renewal of a nuclear arms race.

In particular, new designs have been proposed for smaller weapons that can penetrate deep within the earth to destroy buried targets while releasing comparatively little radiation into the air. Weapons designers have plausibly argued that the use of such weapons, if employed for tasks such as destroying chemical weapons storage facilities, could result in less destruction to surrounding areas and fewer casualties than conventional weapons. Nevertheless, this committee recommends that the United States government refrain from developing or deploying new nuclear weapons. In addition, the United States should conduct negotiations with other nuclear powers to further reduce nuclear arsenals, with the ultimate goal of nuclear disarmament as called for under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

We reaffirm synod's 1982 decision to call upon the nations of the world "to establish a framework of mutual agreement to scrap these [nuclear] weapons." If the firewall between conventional and nuclear weapons is breached and nuclear weapons are used, the results are unpredictable and could be catastrophic. Furthermore, the development of new nuclear warheads by one country encourages other states to take similar steps. The United States should use this time of military superiority to advocate reductions in nuclear weapons, not to the development of new warheads.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>As this report was being prepared for distribution, the Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff issued a draft of a revised "Doctrine for Joint Nuclear Operations" setting out conditions under which the United States will consider using nuclear weapons in response to

Another significant and related element of the U.S. Department of Defense policy is the place of conscientious objection in relation to just-war requirements. An important part of our responsibility as Christians reflecting on the morality of war is to ensure that government policies respect the ethical conclusions that citizens make as a result of deliberate moral consideration. It is impossible, of course, for any government to give individual Christians a veto power over all decisions to resort to war. But it is possible—and in the modern era it has become customary—for governments to give formal recognition to the principled refusal of individuals to participate in warfare.

The issue of selective conscientious objection, first referenced in the review of the decision of Synod 1939, needs to be revisited. There is a sharp conflict between the position of the Christian Reformed Church and the policies of the federal government of the United States. Past synods have been unsympathetic to principled pacifism, regarding it as inconsistent with Reformed views concerning the authority of government and the depravity of human nature. Synodical positions lend support to those individuals who find, after careful scriptural study and prayer, that a particular war is unjust. Selective conscientious objection has been honored as a legitimate stance for a Reformed Christian to defend. However, selective objection to a particular war is not, for example, an acceptable ground for an honorable discharge from military service, under the Department of Defense Directive on Conscientious Objectors, nor was it ever accepted as a reason for exemption from conscription during the period when the United States had a military draft.

The CRC should advocate a change in the policies of the United States' defense department to make provisions in policy for selective conscientious objection to current wars, especially in an all-volunteer force. Such selective conscientious objection, articulated with reference to the requirements of the just-war tradition, is a legitimate basis for honorable discharge from military service. Current policies protect the conscience only of those who, after volunteering for military service, are converted to a position of principled pacifism. The situations of those who cannot in good conscience participate in the nation's current military operations but who believe that military force is justified under other circumstances deserve equal respect.

Finally, the situation of the United States as the major world military power in the context of emerging international and regional economic and political powers creates an international context with unprecedented opportunities to strengthen effective and just systems of international responsibility. Thus,

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nuclear or conventional military threats or anticipated future threats. This new United States military doctrine is a reaffirmation and extension of the longstanding nuclear first-strike policy, with a new emphasis on preemptive use of nuclear force. Its effect, we find, is to deemphasize international agreements for disarmament and nonproliferation and to emphasize instead the readiness of the United States to employ its nuclear arsenal not merely for deterrence but for military purposes. Military strategists argue that the threat of a preemptive nuclear strike is an element in a deterrent policy; but this contradicts the position taken in the U.S. National Security Strategy (NSS) that deterrence is not viable against modern threats. We can only conclude, given the language of the NSS, that the new doctrine is an extension of the Preventive War policy articulated in that document to encompass the use of nuclear weapons. This development lends urgency to our recommendations regarding the necessity for nuclear disarmament.

American security strategies can utilize American influence, in cooperation with other countries, to build, renew, and strengthen international law and institutions to uphold norms that will foster international cooperation in solving problems such as terrorism, violence, and poverty. Just as in the past the building of international institutions was vital for the pursuit of common goals, so, too, today creativity and innovation are called for to revitalize the institutions of international cooperation.

The United States should cooperate with other nations to rebuild or revitalize international institutions because national military power is often ineffective and even counterproductive when others see it as illegitimate. International institutions, properly constructed, can legitimize the contribution of forces from different countries to joint peacemaking and peacekeeping operations. Similarly, these institutions can help provide an independent assessment of whether just-war criteria have been met before coercive measures are employed to right injustices. Moreover, there are numerous international problems that no state is willing to deal with if its direct interests are not threatened. Oftentimes wars, famines, and other disasters in seemingly faraway places are ignored by the outside world. International institutions, provided with adequate resources, in conjunction with states, churches, and other nongovernmental organizations, are often much better suited to deal with these types of problems.

### *B. Canada*

Core ethical principles about peace and war transcend borders. The Canadian members of the Christian Reformed Church and the government of Canada live out their principles in a context driven by a different set of factors. The Canadian context provides different challenges and opportunities to be agents of God's peace.

Canadian foreign policy balances several factors: (1) close economic and historical links with the United States across the longest unguarded border in history; (2) a strong commitment to multilateralism; (3) an economy built on trade; (4) distinctness of Quebec within Canada; (5) widespread respect for a diversity of peoples and cultures coming from all over the globe; (6) a desired destination for refugees; and (7) deep-rooted perceptions that Canada has a legacy as an honest broker and peace builder.

Integration and coherence among diplomacy, defense, development, and trade form the basis for a new Canadian governmental International Policy Statement, released in April 2005. Within a framework of human security and the international rule of law, rather than state security and state sovereignty, it tries to balance multilateralism with realism about being a neighbor to the United States. Of particular interest for this report is a strong focus in the policy statement on improving government in weak, fragile, and failing states. Afghanistan, Haiti, and Sudan are held up as examples for an integrated approach to security and development. While there is an expressed commitment to human rights and human development, security and prosperity seem to be the driving forces behind the new policy.

Canada's National Security Policy, entitled "Securing an Open Society," adopted in April 2004 has three objectives: (1) protecting Canadians at home and abroad, (2) ensuring that Canada is not a base for threats to our allies, and (3) contributing to international security.

The policy created a new Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, which integrates policing—civilian protection such as public health with military measures such as intelligence and antiterrorism activities. Reflective of a Canadian approach, the department has an advisory council of experts in public safety and a cross-cultural roundtable of representatives from minority groups and religious organizations. It established the position of a national security advisor to the prime minister, who works in the prime minister's office. Improved security focuses on marine and aviation security, border security through a "smart borders" initiative, and changes to the refugee determination system.

Internationally, Canada continues to promote treaties for nonproliferation of weapons as well as defusing conflicts as preferred modes to prevent war. In addition to the renewal and expansion of Canada's armed forces with a more focused mandate, new initiatives will attempt to use Canada's experience with "unity in diversity" to help weak, failed, and failing states in both good governing and capacity building for counterterrorism.

The fine balance between competing factors is illustrated by conflicting trends. The national security policy, for example, includes greater integration with United States security policies. At the same time, Canada leads a strong international movement to adopt and implement the principles of Responsibility to Protect, now supported in UN reform proposals. Canada decided not to join the war in Iraq, resisting intense pressure from the United States, but it is providing ongoing military leadership in Afghanistan and aid to Afghanistan and Iraq that makes these two the largest recipients of Canadian aid in history. In the context of increased integration of military forces and security policy with the United States, Canada rejected participation in ballistic missile defense because of strong public resistance to it.

For the Christian Reformed Church, it is important to understand that the level and nature of engagement by faith communities in foreign policy formation is much different in Canada than in the United States. Churches with a long tradition of social justice have had considerable influence on Canadian foreign policy, especially decisions relating to peace, war, and human rights. There are ongoing policy dialogues on thematic and geographic issues. Present at these discussions are representatives of faith-based Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), churches such as those represented by KAIROS (an ecumenical social justice coalition of churches), and the Canadian Council of Churches. Both include the CRC in their membership. Church leaders are included on peace initiatives. Project Ploughshares, supported by the Canadian Council of Churches to specialize in peace advocacy, is frequently included in official government delegations to disarmament conferences, engages in regular dialogue with government officials, and does contract work in peace-building activities. The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, of which the CRC is also a member, has focused more on religious persecution but also engages in regular consultations on human rights issues and peace building.

While there is broad support for much of the new security agenda, antiterrorism legislation adopted soon after 9-11 remains contentious and is under parliamentary review; churches engaged in refugee work are concerned about many of the military security-driven policy changes. A public enquiry into the deportation and subsequent torture of a Syrian-Canadian, Maher Arar, under



antiterrorism agreements with the United States, is raising serious questions about both police and intelligence activities. Public opinion is sharply divided about deeper integration with the United States, which results in foreign policy that seems inconsistent at times.

There is considerable debate within the faith communities about the degree of integration or independence that should exist among military defense, humanitarian work, and peace-building activities. Security sector reform, with a focus on police training that includes human rights, is a Canadian niche that contributes to the good governing focus of this report. Greater ambiguity exists about the line between peace work and war making in the area of capacity building for counterterrorism. Increased resources for development and peace building are partly a result of advocacy by faith-based organizations, who continue to push for Canada to do more in this area.

### **IX. A learning curriculum for the church**

The Christian calling to work for peace is of growing importance in modern society, and peace work is a challenging task. Preparation is necessary for this task, as it is for other aspects of Christian living. The church has a vital role to play in equipping its members to be Christ's agents of peace in the world today, as well as looking ahead and praying for the perfect peace that only Christ can bring.

This is an underdeveloped area of Christian ministry within the CRC, especially for a church that proclaims that every area of life is under Christ's rule. Some pastors informed the committee that they do not feel well-prepared to preach on the subjects of justice and peace as they apply to current historical realities, beyond general references and general prayers. This has resulted in relatively few sermons delivered on the Christian calling to work for justice and peace, even though these subjects are a prominent theme throughout the Scriptures. Although there are some well-researched books on the subject, there are few educational materials for the average church member. Worship resources, especially those that reflect a Reformed approach, are very limited. Church agency staff members who need training in peace work draw on other traditions, which are appreciated but may not fully reflect a Reformed understanding of the God-given, positive role of just governance.

There is opportunity for the Reformed branch of the Christian church to make a greater contribution to this important area of Christian living. Interest is present within the denomination, particularly among the younger generation. Our young people more readily see themselves as global citizens; they expect to spend time outside their own national borders, and they may choose careers and employment that provide opportunities to actively contribute to peace work in their areas of expertise and influence. Christian thinking in this field is essential to equip them for service to God and to their fellow human beings.

The committee suggests that a useful starting point would be the development of a learning agenda to be shared by churches; Calvin Theological Seminary; other institutions of higher learning; Christian day schools; and service agencies of the church such as CRWRC, The Back to God Hour, and mission agencies. Given modern technology and the Internet, the church is more able to engage and enter into conversation on important topics than ever before. Therefore, we request that Synod consider establishing a process to continue and encourage conversations in the CRC.

A. *Establish a Reformed Virtual Institute of Peace*

1. Make resources available and accessible to engage church members in life-long learning, which is possible today with modern communications technology. Creating and managing a Reformed Virtual Institute of Peace as a web site would make material available quickly and efficiently. Selecting the best resource materials and linking information sources would make continuing discussion more realistically possible.
2. Some Reformed scholars have reflected on the issues of justice and peace. The committee urges the church to enlist these leaders to guide discussion within the church and to inform us of our capacity to exercise Christian citizenship at all levels of society. We also urge church members to inform themselves by reading helpful material written by Reformed thinkers and others in the Christian church and then to explore avenues for action as agents of peace in our political communities locally, nationally, and internationally.
3. The broader Reformed community could assist those responsible for planning church school curricula and for selecting topics for Bible study and adult education sessions to highlight the responsibility of Christians to be agents of reconciliation and peace. Identifying and producing a series of educational materials could prepare Reformed Christians to understand and influence the forces that build and sustain peace in the contemporary world and to refrain from actions that can contribute to conflict. Possibilities of such cooperation should be included in our ecumenical discussions.
4. Our Reformed community includes devout and dedicated people working in think tanks, in research agencies, in government, in the military, and in academia, who address these issues as a part of their professional life. The church needs to identify these people and recognize their expertise, but, more importantly, we need to give these people platforms and forums in the Christian community to raise issues, debate analyses, propose solutions, and publicly voice alternatives to the use of military power. Conflict prevention is served by addressing issues that lead to conflict before they develop into threats to good government, justice, and peace.
5. The church needs to approach organizations of government, peace institutes, and other agencies and organizations to identify what resources they possess and then use these resources to help educate our membership.
6. Making peace a core concern of the church, essential to our missions of evangelism and the establishment of justice, will result in helping us as individuals and our nations to push the use of military force to a last-resort consideration. Taking the road toward peace may be a more arduous path, but it may lead to a more enduring outcome.
7. The establishment of a Reformed Virtual Institute of Peace, drawing on the resources of our institutions of higher learning, would greatly facilitate, enhance, and institutionalize our efforts to equip the saints for the work of peace. The committee has identified as possible lead agencies for this service Calvin College in the United States and Kings University College in Canada; others may also express an interest. We recommend that synod request Calvin College to take the lead role to initiate this project.

8. As part of a Reformed Virtual Institute of Peace, Calvin College, and other interested parties could plan and conduct a biannual symposium on interdisciplinary approaches to peace and peace work.
9. Discuss with the Reformed Church in America and the Reformed Ecumenical Council the possibility of their partnering with the Christian Reformed Church in this venture to establish a Reformed Virtual Institute of Peace.

*B. A pressing pastoral concern*

1. The pressures of military service are so demanding that pastoral attention needs to be brought to these issues. Most pastors do not experience military life and have little contact with people serving in the military; hence they may not have an appreciation for the human cost. We addressed this briefly in the report, but these issues deserve more attention and pastoral care.
2. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is a prevalent mental and physical condition for veterans of war and military service. Statistics on divorce demonstrate the negative effect of military deployments on families. Nightmares, dreams, horrible war memories, and guilt at the taking of an enemy's life or a comrade's life in a "friendly fire" incident are postwar realities for military personnel.
3. The committee identified a need to develop materials to assist pastors in counseling members of their congregations who are entering military service, who are returning to civilian status after military service, and who have served in previous wars, as well as spouses of deployed military members.
4. Refugee resettlements and our experience with the Lost Boys of Sudan highlight the need for pastoral concern for the civilian victims of war.
5. Synod should request that CRC Publications partner with the institutions of higher learning to produce these materials and place them on the CRC Virtual Institute of Peace web site.

*C. Open discussions and dialogue with other Christian communities on issues of peace*

1. The Christian Reformed Church needs open discussions with other faith communities who have thought about conflict resolution, prevention of violent conflicts, reconciliation, and peace building. A review of the documents of other faith communities suggests the need for additional paradigms for the churches' thinking about war, peace, and justice.
2. Many religious traditions see a need to move beyond the disagreements between pacifism and the just-war tradition to a new paradigm. Many emphasize a nonviolence that works aggressively for peace with justice in the context of shalom. This aggressive nonviolence demands a deep analysis of the nature and functions of the state and of the church's relationship to government.
3. The CRC is part of those discussions, but our participation must become more transparent and accessible to the membership.

## X. Recommendations

- A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. Carl Kammeraad, chairman, and Rev. Herman Keizer, Jr., reporter.
- B. That synod urge the Christian Reformed Church, through assemblies, congregations, and agencies to affirm the centrality of the gospel's call to Christians to be agents of peace and to encourage members to take specific and intentional steps to fulfill this calling, including the following:
1. That synod acknowledge that previous synodical statements focused more on questions of war than on our calling to be agents of peace.
  2. That synod publicly express appreciation for branches of the Christian church that have made peace with justice a strong vocation and seek to work more closely with them to enhance a collective impact and learn from one another.
  3. That synod urge our congregations and assemblies to make our calling to be agents of peace a matter of focused attention, including both prayers for peace and specific action strategies that deepen our understanding of the implications of our Christian calling and its applications in all areas of life.
  4. That synod urge our congregations and assemblies to set aside time for prayerful reflection on our responsibility as peacemakers and bearers of shalom.
  5. That synod urge our congregations and assemblies to pray for guidance for the leaders of nations to establish just governance, maintain peace, and strengthen systems for international cooperation and conflict prevention.
  6. That synod urge our congregations and assemblies to pray for the safety and well-being of those who serve in military forces and for those who bear witness to peace by participating in nongovernmental missions of peace and reconciliation in conflict-ridden areas.
  7. That synod urge our congregations and assemblies to participate actively in building cultures of peace at all levels of society where we individually and collectively have influence; for example, participating in government and the political process, supporting nonviolent conflict resolution, strengthening respect for human rights, and protesting against increasing militarization and other tendencies that threaten peace and justice.
- C. That synod acknowledge the pressing pastoral concern (see section IX, B above) and direct the Board of Trustees to encourage CRC Publications to partner with pastoral care experts to produce materials to assist pastors in ministering to members and their families who are entering the military as well as to veterans in their congregations.
- D. That synod acknowledge the historical development of the field of peace-making as a gift from God and urge the agencies of the Christian Reformed Church, such as Chaplaincy Ministries, CRWRC, CR World Missions, the Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action, CRC Publications, CR Home Missions, and The Back to God Hour to initiate or expand peace-related programs

and inform the Board of Trustees and the congregations of the CRC of these initiatives.

*E.* That synod encourage congregations to urge their members to exercise responsible citizenship by calling upon the governments of the United States and Canada to give higher priority to their calling to be agents of peace through good governing. This could include the following:

1. Give priority to developing the institutions of just government that contribute to conflict prevention, nonviolent conflict resolution, and peace work, so that these processes have greater influence in the national and international decision-making processes related to specific conflicts.
2. Develop national and international security frameworks based on concepts of human collective security.
3. Increase national budget allocations to achieve a better balance between the resources dedicated to peace work and the resources dedicated to military defense.
4. Develop military strategies, tactics, doctrines, and training to emphasize the role of the military to be defenders of peace and security; thus acting as an agent of good government.
5. Reduce existing high levels of arms and take steps to control the international trading in arms, both large and small.
6. Prevent an arms race in outer space.

*F.* That synod acknowledge the need for international cooperation in our world and urge the agencies and members of the CRC to promote and actively engage in international initiatives for building peace with justice.

*G.* That synod approve the following ethical statements and direct the executive director to communicate these ethical concerns to the U.S. government:

1. Moral clarity demands a careful distinction between preemptive warfare and preventive warfare.
2. Preventive war is inconsistent with the moral standards outlined in the just-war criteria.
3. Preemptive war needs to be justified under the accepted ethical principles of the just-war tradition.

*H.* That synod instruct the executive director to communicate to the U.S. government:

1. Our opposition to developing or deploying new nuclear weapons.
2. Our support for conducting negotiations with other nations to further reduce nuclear arsenals, with the ultimate goal of complete nuclear disarmament as called for under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and the recommendations of synod's report of 1982.

I. That synod instruct the executive director to petition the President of the United States as well as the Department of Defense to change the conscientious objector policy to include selective conscientious objection when opposition to a particular conflict is justified by the criteria of the just-war tradition.

J. That synod direct the executive director, in cooperation with other Christian denominations, to encourage the Canadian government to raise the priority of the peace-building components of its foreign policy.

K. That synod urge the Board of Trustees to encourage the Christian Reformed churches in Canada, through its appropriate agencies and committees, to participate more actively in policy development and programs for peace building, including participation in Project Ploughshares and other interchurch policy dialogues on peace and war issues.

L. That synod petition Calvin College to take the lead in creating a Reformed Virtual Institute of Peace in collaboration with other Reformed institutions of higher education in the United States, Canada, and elsewhere. The Institute will:

1. Establish and manage a web-based guide to resources for learning about peace and justice issues.
2. Plan and conduct a biennial symposium on interdisciplinary approaches to justice and peace.
3. Examine the underlying non-Christian ideologies that motivate governments to resort to and justify war, such as civil religion and messianic nationalism.
4. Assist denominational offices, agencies, and institutions associated with the CRC in exchanging information and collaborating on strategies for peace-making

M. That synod dismiss the committee with thanks.

Committee to Study War and Peace

Peter Borgdorff (ex officio)

Paul Bolt

Elaine Botha

Sylvan E. Gerritsma

David Hoekema

Carl Kammeraad, chairman

Herman Keizer, Jr., reporter

James Skillen

Kathy Vandergrift

Peter Vander Meulen

## Appendix A Historical Background

In the winter of 2003, tensions in the world were high and the expansion of the military response to international terrorism seemed immanent. The initial response to the terrorists' attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City

and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., was to attack the terrorists' training camps and command and control centers in Afghanistan. This response raised the moral question of the appropriateness of military force as the proper response to terrorism. Did the international community have other moral options, and did this course of action meet the standards of international law and the criteria of the just-war tradition? While these discussions were going on, the prospect for widening the military response to the country of Iraq became a real and immediate possibility.

Suddenly, the daily conversation of citizens in Canada and the United States focused on the morality and legality of a war with Iraq. The just-war criteria for justifying war were discussed in daily conversations. Pacifists were making the case for not going to war, and others were questioning the morality of the doctrine of preemptive or preventive war as articulated by the Bush Administration in the National Security Strategy published in 2002. Debates were taking place in homes, in the media, and in the halls of government on the role of the international community in any war with Iraq, the success or failure of the United Nations arms inspections, the possibility of unilateral action by the United States, the diplomatic construction of a coalition of those willing to participate with the United States, and on the urgency of the need to remove the Iraqi regime from power.

Within the body politic and within church bodies, people were divided on whether or not going to war with Iraq was the right and just thing to do. In the Christian Reformed Church, some were completely in favor of going to war, others were completely opposed, and others were not willing to decide because they had too many questions that remained unanswered. Following a spontaneous meeting in London, Ontario, of about one hundred concerned Christian Reformed members from the United States and Canada, denominational executives mandated that an ad hoc war and peace working group, facilitated by the coordinator of the Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action, draft a resolution for the Board of Trustees (BOT), with recommendations for action by the Board members.

The ad hoc working group reported to the denominational executives and recommended that the Board of Trustees agree to publish a pastoral letter to the congregations of the Christian Reformed Church and that the ad hoc working group continue its work of drafting a report for the trustees to send to Synod 2003. These recommendations were sent to the BOT for consideration and action. The BOT approved the pastoral letter, below, that was signed by the chairman of the Board of Trustees on February 28, 2003.

At the May meeting of the Board of Trustees, the BOT members discussed the ad hoc working group's written report and the recommendations to Synod 2003. The Board of Trustees reviewed the report, suggesting changes and a reformulation of the recommendations. The written report was sent to synod as Appendix D to the Board of Trustees Report (see Appendix B). The BOT approved the following motion:

A motion carries that the BOT recommend that synod appoint a study committee to explore and reflect on the issues raised in the war and peace report and recommend guidelines and advice for the church. Special attention should be given to the following:

A. The changed international environment and its implications for the CRC's position regarding the use of military power.

- B. The use of military force in preemptive and preventative warfare and how these relate to the principles of just war such as just cause, last resort, and competent authority.
- C. The continued proliferation of nuclear weapons as legitimate instruments of war-fighting in light of synod's declarations in 1982.
- D. The underlining theology and principles of peacemaking and peacekeeping to inform the conscience and praxis of the church.

(BOT Minute 2737)

The synod of the Christian Reformed Church received the War and Peace Report from the Board of Trustees, amended the recommendations, and appointed a study committee. The recommendations became the mandate for the committee (see Appendix C). Synod approved the membership of the committee (see Appendix D).

### **Addendum to Appendix A Pastoral Letter to CRC Churches**

February 28, 2003

Dear Congregations,

Because we live in a critical moment of history, we, the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church, urge the church to continue to pray, study, and reflect on what our denomination has said over the years concerning war and peace. We ask the church to do this particularly in the light of the reality of the war on terror and (as we write this) the distinct possibility of a war with Iraq. Continue to pray for the leaders of our countries and of the world as they exercise their responsibility to govern for justice and peace.

The rising tide of anarchy and terror with which many countries have lived for years has reached our shores. Many of us now, for the first time, know the names and faces of victims. Many of us in North America are angry and afraid; afraid for ourselves, our society, and the world.

As we watch countries prepare for war, some of us hear a call to support our governments in this action; others hear a call to question and resist. Some of us—our sons, daughters, husbands and wives—have been called to active military duty. The church is called to pray and pastorally care for our members in the military as well as those who object to and work against this war.

Decisions on war and peace are always grave and usually complex. Because of this, the synod of the Christian Reformed Church has spoken several times and at length on matters of war and peace (Synods 1939, 1977, 1982 and 1985). This material is available at .

We urge all CRC congregations to engage in prayer, reflection, and thoughtful discussion and to assist members as they discern their own consciences and God's will in the matter of the war on terror and the war in Iraq.

We affirm that as citizens of Christ's kingdom and of nations we have a right and responsibility to participate in critical national discussions on war and peace. These decisions are not merely individual political decisions. They are moral decisions because they involve life, death and justice. We are also aware that as synod affirmed in 1977:



Weighty moral decisions are made responsibly before the face of God only if the prayers and counsel of the covenant fellowship are sincerely sought and lovingly offered.

*(Acts of Synod 1977, p. 46)*

It is in this spirit that we lovingly and urgently call the church to reflect on our commonly held principles as enunciated by Synod 1977:

If the nation has or is about to become involved in war or in any military action against another nation, Christians, as morally responsible citizens of the nation and of God's kingdom should evaluate their nation's involvement by diligently seeking answers to the following, drawing on the counsel of fellow members with special qualifications as well as pastors and the assemblies of the church:

- a. Is our nation the unjust aggressor?
- b. Is our nation intentionally involved for economic advantage?
- c. Is our nation intentionally involved for imperialistic ends, such as the acquisition of land, natural resources, or political power in international relations?
- d. Has our nation in good faith observed all relevant treaties and other international agreements?
- e. Has our nation exhausted all peaceful means to resolve the matters in dispute?
- f. Is the evil or aggression represented by the opposing force of such overwhelming magnitude and gravity as to warrant the horrors and brutality of military opposition to it?
- g. Has the decision to engage in war been taken legally by a legitimate government?
- h. Are the means of warfare employed or likely to be employed by our nation in fair proportion to the evil or aggression of the opposing forces? Is our nation resolved to employ minimum necessary force?
- i. In the course of the war has our nation been proposing and encouraging negotiations for peace or has it spurned such moves by the opposing forces or by neutral or international organizations?

*(Acts of Synod 1977, pp. 46-48)*

We urge you to continue to pray, think and talk broadly, deeply, and in love on these matters as citizens of Christ's kingdom, members of His church, and those called to be salt and light in this sin-damaged world. We ask you to do this together in the power of the Prince of Peace, because:

We who claim his name must live peaceably ourselves, furnishing to the world conspicuous examples of peace loving, harmonious living, and must also privately and publicly denounce war and strive to prevent it by prayer, by redressing the grievances of oppressed peoples, by prophetic calls to peace, by urging the faithful exercise of diplomacy, by entering the political arena ourselves, and by strong appeals to all in high places to resolve tensions by peaceful means. Christians must be reconcilers.

*(Acts of Synod 1977, p. 588)*

We do live in a critical moment, yet our world belongs to God and our hope is in Him. With this sure knowledge we encourage you to pray, to reflect, and to work with joy and confidence for justice and for peace.

For the Board of Trustees of the CRC

Edward Vandever, chairman

## **Appendix B**

### **A Committee's Report on War and Peace**

#### **I. Introduction**

The Cold War with its bipolar balance of power relationships has ended. That result is both a blessing and a bane for the world because a common "strategic culture" no longer exists. In its place, we have a proliferation of highly lethal and indiscriminate weapons coupled with a major change in U.S. military and security doctrines. This is a radically new situation and has major implications for the Christian church.

An important corollary to this is the all-important question of power and the use and purpose of national power. This question is in serious need of informed conversation, and for us as Christians that conversation is urgent. The questions and the answers on the exercise of political, economic, and military power are increasingly divergent. The questions of the use of power—the efficacy, morality, and purpose of national power—are not being answered with one voice. Article after article in the U.S., the Canadian, and the international presses demonstrate that this divergence has sharpened since the events of September 11, 2001, and the American-led war on Iraq.

We are a community of those who follow Christ. We are part of a world that belongs to God—part of a fallen world, ourselves broken. This world has been redeemed—bought with Christ's blood, and we who acknowledge the claim of Christ as Lord have a special passion for a special task, the task of reconciliation and peacemaking. What is Christ asking of us, gospel witnesses and reconcilers, in our time of war, terror, and great opportunities for peacemaking?

In light of significant changes in the global context, Christians are asking how they can best fulfill God's mandate to be agents of peace, as well as how they should respond to current moral questions about the use of military force. They are turning to their churches and fellow believers for guidance.

This document, then, is principally a framework for a continuation of our denominational discussion on just war as well as an opportunity to elaborate on our previous commitments to peacemaking. It is a fairly narrow document that focuses on specific changes in the international environment, including how power—especially military power—is being used in our world. An honest and open discussion of the responsible use of power to kill or protect, to destroy or to build, is a discussion we must have if we are to become a community of reconcilers and peacemakers.

#### **II. The church on war and peace**

The Christian church has not always been in agreement regarding the permissibility of war. Pacifist, crusader, and just-war perspectives have all surfaced in the course of history. The latter perspective (just war) has prevailed throughout most of history and throughout the largest portion of the Christian church.

The Christian Reformed Church, in an attempt to articulate its own position regarding war and peace, has clearly taught that "all wars are the result of sin, and though God may use wars in his judgment on nations, it is his purpose to make all wars to cease" (*Acts of Synod 1977*, p. 569). In the same context, CRC members were reminded that "in all circumstances the Christian believer must

live by the law of love enunciated by the sovereign Lawgiver and Judge and exemplified in his Son" (*Acts of Synod 1977*, p. 569).

New circumstances require a new address to old issues and questions. The CRC has addressed issues of war and peace with substantial studies in 1939, 1977, and 1982. Our present world situation requires that we remember, reaffirm, and review the essence of what was said in the past before we undertake a new study of these issues.

We affirm that

we who claim his name must live peaceably ourselves, furnishing to the world conspicuous examples of peace-loving, harmonious living, and must also privately and publicly denounce war and strive to prevent it by prayer, by redressing the grievances of oppressed people, by prophetic calls to peace, by urging the faithful exercise of diplomacy, by entering the political arena ourselves, and by strong appeals to all in high places to resolve tensions by peaceful means. Christians must be reconcilers.

(*Acts of Synod 1977*, p. 558)

We acknowledge that

because of the uniquely Christian love of peace and mission of reconciliation, Christians know that all national truculence, all inclination—surely all eagerness—to fight, all crusading spirit, every proud display of weaponry and glorying in military might, is thoroughly immoral and contrary both to the letter and spirit of everything our Lord teaches.

(*Acts of Synod 1977*, p. 562)

We are reminded that

If the nation has or is about to become involved in war or in any military action against another nation, Christians, as morally responsible citizens of the nation and of God's kingdom, should evaluate their nation's involvement by diligently seeking the answers to the following, drawing on the counsel of fellow-members with special qualifications as well as pastors and the assemblies of the church:

- a. Is our nation the unjust aggressor?
- b. Is our nation intentionally involved for economic advantage?
- c. Is our nation intentionally involved for imperialistic ends, such as the acquisition of land, natural resources, or political power in international relations?
- d. Has our nation in good faith observed all relevant treaties and other international agreements?
- e. Has our nation exhausted all peaceful means to resolve the matters in dispute?
- f. Is the evil or aggression represented by the opposing force of such overwhelming magnitude and gravity as to warrant the horrors and brutality of military opposition to it?
- g. Has the decision to engage in war been taken legally by a legitimate government?
- h. Are the means of warfare employed or likely to be employed by our nation in fair proportion to the evil or aggression of the opposing forces? Is our nation resolved to employ minimum necessary force?
- i. In the course of the war has our nation been proposing and encouraging negotiations for peace or has it spurned such moves by the opposing forces or by neutral or international organizations.

(*Acts of Synod 1977*, p. 46)

And we are challenged to further action because

whether to prevent the outbreak of war, to hasten the cessation of hostilities, or to encourage support of or resistance to a given war, the assemblies of the church, by

means of public testimony or petitions addressed to the governments concerned, must give clear and courageous witness to the teachings of the Scriptures.

(Acts of Synod 1977, p. 47)

### III. Summary of key questions

- A. What has changed in the international environment to cause us to rethink our statements and guidelines on war and our obligation to build peace?
- B. As the preeminent military power in the world today, is present U.S. security policy, especially with its apparent changes in the definition of preemptive war and justification for intervention, consistent with the CRC's understanding of just war?
- C. What has changed in U.S. nuclear-use policy, and are these changes consistent with our understanding of the proper conduct of a justified war?
- D. How should the members, institutions, and agencies of the CRC be more engaged as followers of Christ and citizens of nations in actively witnessing to and building capacity for peace and reconciliation in our world and among ourselves?
- E. How can the CRC reflect on these issues from the perspective of the global church and God's global kingdom?

### IV. What has changed?

Much has changed in the international environment since synod last spoke on war and peace in 1982. The following discussion highlights a number of recent changes that warrant consideration in the context of revisiting existing denominational positions on war and peace.

The end of the cold war meant a shift in the global balance of power from a bipolar arrangement to the emergence of the United States as the sole super-power. At the same time, regional and international multilateral bodies have grown in importance and impact. Bodies such as the European Union, the African Union, and the International Criminal Court offer possibilities for diplomacy, conflict resolution, and peacekeeping that did not exist before.

Another piece of this changing global reality is the acceptance of a new role for nations and limitations on national sovereignty. Termed *humanitarian intervention*, this approach seeks to limit state sovereignty when the state proves itself incapable of preventing human catastrophe, and it formed the basis for the U.S.-led war in Kosovo in 1998.

Other significant changes in the international environment are a direct result of the events of September 11, 2001. This terrorist attack occasioned a thorough reassessment of threats specifically to U.S. security and the potential responses to those threats.

The United States of America issued its National Security Strategy in September 2002. It is the present administration's articulation and definition of the threats to the national security of the United States and its strategy to meet those threats.

There are at least five changes in the world that underlie the rethinking of security needs and policy:

1. The emergence of the United States as the single world superpower.
2. The increase in terrorism directed at civilian populations in the West.
3. The increasing prevalence of what are called “weak, failed, and rogue states.”
4. The increasing importance and power of nonstate actors in international affairs.
5. The continued rise of radicalism and fanaticism that views the West as both corrupt and corrupting.

The CRC spoke last on war and peace in 1982, and more substantively in 1977, just after the end of the Vietnam War. None of the five issues numbered above were even within our field of vision, much less considered relevant to our conversations and deliberations at that time.

*A. The rise of the single superpower*

The rise of the United States as the sole superpower has created an unipolar world. In the bipolar world, there was considerable continuity and predictability as the two superpowers and their allies mapped their relationships and balanced their power. In the bipolar world, the threat was clearer, and the strategy of containment had been orchestrated and rehearsed so that each side knew the rules of international politics and the limits of the use of military force. (We should note that many residents of the developing world did not see this bipolar world as either stable or healthy. Many states were pawns subject to the will and whims of one or the other superpower.)

The role the United States will play as the sole superpower is in the process of definition and, as noted above, this has created the need for a discussion by the Christian community on the responsible use of power. The question is how, and to what end, the United States will exercise its political, economic, and military power and use its place in the world.

President George W. Bush states his view in the introduction to the National Security Strategy:

Today, the United States enjoys a position of unparalleled military strength and great economic and political influence. In keeping with our heritage and principles, we do not use our strength to press for unilateral advantage. We seek instead to create a balance of power that favors human freedom: conditions in which all nations and all societies can choose for themselves the rewards and challenges of political and economic liberty. By making the world safer, we allow the people of the world to make their own lives better. We will defend this just peace against threats from terrorists and tyrants. We will preserve the peace by building good relations among the great powers. We will extend the peace by encouraging free and open societies on every continent.

(National Security Strategy, September 2002)

In acting unilaterally, is the United States undermining the very balance of power it seeks to advance? The United States is not seeking to achieve a military balance of power as in the Cold War; so what is the balance of power it seeks to establish? Power can be used for good or ill, yet the pitfalls of unchecked power are well documented.

*What are we called to do and be as citizens of the United States and Canada who hold ultimate allegiance to Jesus as Lord?*

### B. *Increase in terrorism*

Although the attacks on U.S. embassies, military installations, and finally the World Trade Center and the Pentagon focused North American minds on their own vulnerability to terrorists, U.S. (and other countries) political leadership views terrorism as a global and increasingly pervasive, dangerous problem:

The United States is fighting a war against terrorists of global reach. The enemy is not a single political regime or person or religion or ideology. The enemy is terrorism—premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against innocents.

(National Security Strategy, September 2002)

*Terror, terrorism, and terrorists* are labels that we need to use with care. They can function as useful terms with which to construct helpful discussions, or they can be used as slurs and epithets to vilify and demonize those struggling for causes with which we do not agree or that seem to threaten our interests—much as the term *communist* came to be used in the West during the Cold War.

The U.S. Department of State publishes a list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations. In August of 2002, thirty-four organizations were on that list.

However, terror goes beyond the definitions in the National Security Strategy. Terror is having your farm seized in Zimbabwe. Terror is on the face of a young mother waiting to be stoned as an adulteress in Nigeria or on the faces of the Lost Boys of Sudan. The new religious laws in western Europe bring terror and fear to the religious minorities in France, Germany, and Austria. These terrors may not pose a threat to the security of the United States, but they threaten human dignity and the rights of human beings to live in a tranquil world.

The Christian Reformed Church works in many nations where terror occurs: Sierra Leone, Liberia, the Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Indonesia, the Philippines, Haiti, India, Russia, and more. Whether terrorism is the policy, or the result of a policy, the CRC works to build God's kingdom of justice and peace.

### C. *Failed or rogue states, national sovereignty, and military intervention*

Weak or failed states present a unique challenge to the world. They are often repressive or disintegrating regimes that abuse and oppress rather than protect and care for their own citizens. The list of these states include Haiti, Sudan, Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Congo, Bosnia, Kosovo, and more.

We must also be aware that such labels mask the root causes of such failures that in some cases may well be the result of past superpower actions and international economic forces. Nevertheless, labels such as these are used in the U.S. National Security Strategy analysis.

When boundaries change quickly, and new nations are formed, or when the traditional functions of states are not visible, then inevitably we have to rethink the meaning of nationhood. We are in the middle of an international debate on the meaning of national sovereignty.

James Turner Johnson contrasts two positions on national sovereignty. One is based on an interpretation of The Peace of Westphalia that defines sovereignty "as a particular territory and by a recognized government in control of it and its inhabitants."

The other, an older idea, sees sovereignty as:

an essentially moral construct; persons in sovereign authority are responsible for the good of their political community, for the “common weal.” This implies establishing an order that serves justice and achieves peace, along with the obligation to other political communities to support order, justice and peace in and among them. Failure to discharge these obligations removes the rights of sovereignty.

([www.fpri.org/enotes/americanwar.20021204.johnson](http://www.fpri.org/enotes/americanwar.20021204.johnson))

Awareness of human rights and humanitarian issues have grown around the world, but the mechanisms to which people can appeal for protection are limited and weak. International intervention for humanitarian protection has been controversial when it has happened as well as when it has not happened. Somalia, Bosnia, and Kosovo are examples of controversial interventions while Rwanda and Liberia are examples of controversial noninterventions.

In addition, the international response to appeals for assistance by peoples caught in armed conflict lacks consistency. The strategic importance of a country to the world’s major powers seems to be a bigger factor in determining the level of response than the number of people involved, respect for human life, or protection against egregious violations of basic human rights.

Questions are being asked in international policy circles concerning the need to reexamine old paradigms based on national interests and national security and to consider concepts such as human security that would give a higher priority to the protection of persons than to the protection of national interests.<sup>1</sup>

*We must ask ourselves: What are the root causes for failed or rogue states, and how can we best respond as church mission organizations, governments, and citizens? Can we help prevent war through insisting on a human security paradigm rather than a national security paradigm?*

#### *D. Increasing importance of nonstate actors*

The nonstate actors are groups who are not associated with any particular nation-state but function in our world in powerful ways—sometimes for good and sometimes for ill.

One type of threatening nonstate actor is the terrorist organization that holds no territory yet commands allegiance and uses force to achieve its goals.

In addition to groups espousing violence, there are many other groups that are acting in powerful ways for better and for worse in today’s world. The globalization of our world has increased the number and power of nonstate actors. Nonstate actors also must include international corporations—industrial and business giants that wield tremendous power and influence in the globalization of economic life in our world.

Finally, there are also positive nonstate actors emerging in today’s world. The international human rights movement or the International Criminal Court are examples of these increasingly powerful agents of change.

<sup>1</sup> The report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, released in December 2001, invites public debate on the concept of the responsibility to protect as a principled basis for developing alternative policies and processes for humanitarian intervention. It gives priority to human security, in keeping with the principle of respect for all human life, and addresses difficult moral questions, such as just criteria for intervention to protect people who should make such decisions as well as the process for making such decisions.

*In an international system of relations based primarily on nation-states and multilateral institutions, how do we deal with these entities? How do we make nonstate actors accountable? Are we equipped with appropriate international institutions where contacts and discussions can take place between and among both states and nonstates?*

*E. Increase in radicalism and fanaticism*

A new threat lies with extremists who are not only in possession of powerful weapons but are also motivated by a powerful and coherent philosophy and theology. Paul Berman, author of *The Philosopher of Islamic Terror*, describes radical Islam this way:

people believe that, in the entire world, they alone are preserving Islam from extinction. They feel they are benefiting the world, even if they are committing random massacres. . . . The terrorists speak insanely of deep things. The anti-terrorists had better speak sanely of equally deep things. . . . But who will speak of the sacred and the secular? . . . Who will defend liberal principles in spite of liberal society's every failure? President George Bush in his speech to Congress a few days after the Sept. 11 attacks announced that he was going to wage a war of ideas. He has done no such thing. . . . Philosophers and religious leaders will have to do this on their own. Are they doing so? Armies are in motion, but are the philosophers and religious leaders, the liberal thinkers, likewise in motion?

([www.nytimes.com/2003/03/23/magazine/23GURU.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/23/magazine/23GURU.html))

*What does Reformed Christianity have to contribute to this conversation?*

These new international realities are influencing the shape of the National Security Strategy of the United States and are the climate within which peace and security are sought.

*The Christian Reformed Church in North America, a binational church with ministries and partners all over the world, has a unique and important role to play in this conversation. We are citizens of the kingdom but also citizens of nations. As such we are responsible for their policies.*

**V. Changes in U.S. security policy that raise questions in just-war thinking**

The apparent inability of the United States to stop or contain aggression, plus the ability by others to produce, disperse, and use weapons of mass destruction, adds a sense of urgency and immediacy to the discussion of peace and security. In the introduction to the U.S. National Security Strategy, President Bush states the following:

The gravest danger our Nation faces lies at the crossroads of radicalism and technology. Our enemies have openly declared that they are seeking weapons of mass destruction, and evidence indicates that they are doing so with determination. The United States will not allow these efforts to succeed. We will build defenses against ballistic missiles and other means of delivery. We will cooperate with other nations to deny, contain, and curtail our enemies' efforts to acquire dangerous technologies. And, as a matter of common sense and self-defense, America will act against such emerging threats before they are fully formed (National Security Strategy, September 2002).

In this paragraph, the phrase that is troublesome for those who defend the just-war tradition is: "*America will act against such emerging threats before they are fully formed.*" The discussion about preemptive strike has been lively but not consistent. It raises moral questions about last resort and the two criteria of a clear and present danger necessary for a just war. Some just-war moral commentators deem preemptive force always to be wrong, whereas another



significant group says that it is a morally defensible position and has clearly defined criteria. This latter group usually makes a distinction between *preemptive* and *preventive* war. An excellent articulation of this position is the following:

From Jeffery Record in an article published in the *U.S. Army War College Quarterly* (spring 2003) entitled, "The Bush Doctrine and War with Iraq,"

Preemption is an "add-on" tailored to deal with the new, non-deterrable threat. But the question does arise as to whether "preemption" best characterizes the new policy. The Pentagon's official definition of preemption is "an attack initiated on the basis of incontrovertible evidence that an enemy attack is imminent." In contrast, preventive war is "a war initiated in the belief that military conflict, while not imminent, is inevitable, and that to delay would involve great risk." Harvard's Graham Allison has captured the logic of preventive war: "I may some day have a war with you, and right now I'm strong and you're not. So I'm going to have the war now." Allison went on to point out that this logic was very much behind the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, "and in candid moments some Japanese scholars say—off the record—that [Japan's] big mistake was waiting too long."

The difference between preemption and preventive war is important. As defined above, preemptive attack is justifiable if it meets Secretary of State Daniel Webster's strict criteria, enunciated in 1837 and still the legal standard, that the threat be "instant, overwhelming, leaving no choice of means and no moment for deliberation." Preemptive war has legal sanction. Preventive war, on the other hand, has none, because the threat is neither certain nor imminent. This makes preventive war indistinguishable from outright aggression, which may explain why the Bush Administration insists that its strategy is preemptive, although some Cabinet officials have used the terms interchangeably (p. 6).

A preemptive strike strategy has always been a component in American war planning. Preemptive strike strategy was true for the Cold War where first strike capability was a part of our mutually assured destruction-deterrent strategy. The indicators for using first strike were very clear, and both super-powers knew what the "triggers" would be. The current situation on the Korean peninsula has reminded the American people that in 1994 the Clinton administration had plans to preemptively strike North Korea. Once again the danger was clear and present and the criteria well established. In these cases, the guiding principle was that a "clear and present danger" was justification for such a strike. Hence, "just cause and last resort" seemed clear.

Prior to the beginning of the war in Iraq, many saw that regime as a clear danger but did not see it as a present danger. Hence, the preemptive criteria did not seem to be met. The present U.S. administration also stated that Saddam was not an imminent threat though a potentially dangerous one. Many of the nations of the world also questioned the need for a quick military response. Much of the conversation centered on this one issue.

Preventive war is not the only issue raised by this National Security Strategy. The definition of a terror event as an act of war opens the door to the use of military force. An alternative view would classify terrorist acts as crimes against humanity and not acts of war. Thus, the appropriate response would be a criminal-justice response rather than a war response.

*A discussion of terror as a private use of force (duellum) would be an appropriate discussion for us as a church.*

The doctrine of "overwhelming force" in the conduct of war coupled with the aversion to U.S. casualties opens many questions about proportionality

and discrimination in the conduct of America's wars. The problem of collateral damage and the acquisition of targets is also a worthy topic of discussion, even with the givens of smart-guided munitions and weapons. Overwhelming force has also given rise to a review of the nuclear weapons policy of the U.S. government. (See below, section VI.)

The existence of so many unstable states and regions raises the question of the use of military force in humanitarian crises, internal political strife, ethnic cleansing, and other acts by leaders of "sovereign" states. When is it appropriate to intervene in states that are violating human security by systematically violating the human rights of their citizens?

*What do we as a Christian community have to say in this new moral climate about the use of force and the changing definition of the last resort criteria? The current definitions and conversation have been divisive, and many within the CRC look for guidance. There are serious and practical implications to this discussion, particularly for those who serve in the military, are contemplating doing so, or who wish to object within the just-war tradition to particular wars rather than to all war.<sup>2</sup>*

## **VI. What has changed in U.S. nuclear policy?**

The Congress of the United States directed the Bush administration to conduct a comprehensive Nuclear Posture Review ([www.fas.org/sgp/news/2002/01/npr-foreword.html](http://www.fas.org/sgp/news/2002/01/npr-foreword.html)). That Review was forwarded to Congress on December 31, 2001. In his forward, the Secretary of Defense states the following:

this Nuclear Posture Review puts in motion a major change in our approach to the role of nuclear offensive forces in our deterrent strategy and presents the blueprint for transforming our strategic posture.

In the Cold War, the United States faced a single, ideologically hostile nuclear superpower. This provided considerable continuity and predictability in the competition of the two global alliance systems that allowed both to prepare for a relatively limited number of very threatening possible conflict scenarios. The successful functioning of nuclear deterrence came to be viewed as predictable, ensured by a "balance of terror." The balance could be maintained as both sides negotiated the reduction of their nuclear force structures.

The new features of the international system, particularly the types of new threats, are dramatically different from the old bipolar balance of terror world. The new threat is not predictable; instead, the new era is one of uncertainty and surprise. The new threat comes from unanticipated challenges, a range of opponents with varying goals and military capabilities and a spectrum of potential contingencies that radically change the stakes for the United States and its allies. Of particular concern is the emergence of hostile regional powers armed with missiles and nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons of mass destruction. The United States sees these weapons of mass destruction increasingly in the hands of leaders who have few institutional and moral constraints and extreme antipathy against the United States and the West.

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<sup>2</sup> The United States Department of Defense Conscientious Objector Policy does not recognize conscientious objection to a particular war, but only recognizes the conscientious objection of those from the pacifist tradition. The director of CRC Chaplaincy Ministries has petitioned for a policy change, which would recognize those who object to particular conflicts.

The U.S. defense preparations must now focus on a wide spectrum of potential opponents, contingencies, and threat capabilities. The U.S. political establishment believes nuclear weapons will continue to be essential, particularly for assuring allies and friends of U.S. security commitments, for dissuading arms competition, for deterring hostile leaders who are willing to accept great risk and cost to further their ends, and for holding at risk highly threatening targets that cannot be addressed by other means.

The new triad comprises a more diverse set of nuclear and nonnuclear, offensive and defensive capabilities. The introduction to the report defined this new triad:

This report establishes a New Triad, composed of:

- Offensive strike systems (both nuclear and nonnuclear);
- Defenses (both active and passive); and
- A revitalized defense infrastructure that will provide new capabilities in a timely fashion to meet emerging threats.

This New Triad is bound together by enhanced command and control (C2) and intelligence systems.

*The new policy shows a determination to use nuclear weapons not only as a deterrent but also to place them in the operational force in a new expanded way. We need to think clearly about nuclear capability in the context of preventive war. The United States intends to keep and modernize its nuclear force.*

The Nuclear Posture Review, at least those unclassified portions, makes no mention of the U.S. commitment under Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to take concrete steps toward eliminating its nuclear arsenal—a commitment that was reaffirmed at the 2000 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty review. The United States and 186 countries came to a global consensus on nuclear disarmament, declaring it the “only absolute guarantee against the use of threat of use of nuclear weapons.” Does the United States still support that policy, or has this latest policy review moved the United States to abandon this policy?

Synod 1982 said regarding this subject that:

10. The church recognizes that there exists in thermonuclear weapons and missiles a destructive power too frightful to contemplate and too sinister to tolerate. Considering the extreme difficulty, if not the impossibility, of limiting nuclear weapons if war should break out, the church enjoins upon the nations of the world their duty to establish a framework of mutual agreement to scrap these weapons, and to do so without delay under international surveillance.
11. The church recognizes that the decision to do this will not be taken if men and nations are not prompted thereto by the Spirit of God. It therefore calls upon all its members to pray for the initiation, continuation, and success of disarmament discussions, and indeed for the establishment of peace with justice.

*(Acts of Synod 1982, p. 105)*

*What should the CRC say now to these changes in U.S. nuclear posture?*

## **VII. Helping to build peace and reconciliation in God's world**

Following the Prince of Peace, we are called to be peacemakers, and to promote harmony and order. We call on our governments to work for peace; we deplore the arms race and the horrors that we risk. We call on all nations to limit their weapons to those needed in the defense of justice and freedom. We pledge to walk in ways of peace, confessing that our world belongs to God; he is our sure defense.

*(Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony, 55)*

These principles have significant implications for international governance and the role of both national and international institutions in matters of peace, security, and protection of human rights.

We recognize with sorrow that there are situations that call for military action to bring about justice, and we have addressed such situations in the preceding discussion. Yet, our synodical statements and *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* also remind us that our ongoing purpose is to create conditions of true and lasting peace. For us as followers of the Prince of Peace, what does that mean?

In the political arena, it can mean resisting war and supporting creative alternatives. Nonmilitary measures of resolving conflict continue to expand and sharpen in expertise and effectiveness. The CRC and its members can contribute from their Reformed heritage to the task of shaping public dialog about international peace and security. We need to make sure our involvement in civil society promotes peace in every way.

Members of the Christian Reformed Church do have such involvement. They come in contact with and have influence on issues of international peace and security through a wide variety of roles: Missionaries, aid workers, public servants, and members of our military forces face these issues and their consequences as a core part of their vocations. Business people, active citizens, members of international organizations, and consumers (e.g., conflict diamonds) also have the opportunity for positive or negative influence, and, in keeping with previous synodical decisions, many seek the advice and counsel of their church in these matters.

When a situation of crisis occurs, the church has the moral authority to speak to the principles that should be guiding decision-makers.

Part of the ongoing commitment to peace involves addressing root causes of conflict and war. Poverty, oppression, and exploitation all contribute to insecurity and vulnerability and create situations where violence is perceived to be the only way to make change. Bringing security and justice to people frees them to realize their God-given potential. The truth sets us free. Love casts out terror. Christian witness can help mitigate situations of despair and make the soil less fruitful for conflict while acknowledging that there will still be other causes, other reasons, for war that cannot be remedied in this way.

Every day we have opportunities to contribute to a culture of peace and the way of reconciliation. Through the way we teach children to handle conflict at school, through our involvement with the criminal justice system, and through the way we deal with conflict in our churches or the ministries we run, we can bear witness to the God of love. In our day-to-day lives, we are to help people be reconciled to God and to each other. In the CRC community, there are individuals and agencies on the forefront of promoting this tangible way of peace.

Starting with those already leading us in this area,<sup>3</sup> the CRC needs to elaborate on and affirm what it means to “live peaceably ourselves, furnishing to the world conspicuous examples of peace-loving, harmonious living” (*Acts of Synod 1977*, p. 558). Waging peace does not come naturally, and people need

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<sup>3</sup> CRWRC has programs in the area of peacemaking and reconciliation and a Peace-building Framework to guide its work. There are also two Coordinating Council for Church in Society (CCCiS) taskforces on restorative justice, as well as the experience of pastor-church relations from which to draw.

guidance, new skills, and a model for faith-based peace witness. The agencies and institutions of the CRC should play a strong role here in helping the denomination as a whole to renew and better live out our commitment to be agents of peace with justice in the world.

### **VIII. Recommendation**

The Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America recommends that synod appoint a study committee to explore and reflect on the issues raised in the war and peace report and recommend guidelines and advice for the church. Special attention should be given to the following:

- A. The changed international environment and its implications for the CRC's position regarding the use of military power.
- B. The use of military force in preemptive and preventative warfare and how these relate to the principles of just war such as just cause, last resort, and competent authority.
- C. The continued proliferation of nuclear weapons as legitimate instruments of war in light of synod's declarations in 1982.
- D. The underlying theology and principles of peacemaking and peacekeeping to inform the conscience and praxis of the church.

## **Appendix C**

### **Synod's Mandate to the Committee**

**(From the *Acts of Synod 2003*, pp. 638-39)**

#### 2. War and Peace

##### a. Background

At its May meeting, the Board of Trustees received and reviewed the War and Peace Report (BOT Supplement, Appendix D). The report presents a summary of issues that need to be studied in more depth.

##### b. Recommendation

That synod appoint a study committee to explore and reflect on the issues raised in the War and Peace Report (see BOT Supplement, Appendix D) and recommend guidelines and advice for the church. Special attention should be given to the following:

- 1) The just war theory as an adequate paradigm for Christians to judge a government's use of military force. This exploration recognizes that the state has been given the power of the sword.
- 2) The changed international environment and its implications for the CRC's position regarding the use of military power.
- 3) The use of military force in preemptive and preventative warfare and how these relate to the principles of just war such as just cause, last resort, and competent authority.
- 4) The continued proliferation of nuclear weapons as legitimate instruments of war in light of synod's declarations in 1982.
- 5) The underlying theology and principles of peacemaking and peacekeeping to inform the conscience and praxis of the church.

## Appendix D

### Membership of the Committee to Study War and Peace

Dr. Paul Bolt, faculty member at the U.S. Air Force Academy

Dr. Peter Borgdorff, executive director of ministries of the CRC (ex-officio)

Dr. Elaine Botha, faculty member at Redeemer College, Ancaster, Ontario

Mr. Syl Gerritsma, a small business owner in St Catharines, Ontario

Dr. David Hoekema, faculty member of Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Rev. Carl Kammeraad, pastor at Seymour CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan and chaplain, U.S. Air Force Reserves

Rev. Herman Keizer, Jr., director of Chaplaincy Ministries for the CRC and retired U.S. Army chaplain

Dr. James Skillen, president and director of the Center for Public Justice

Ms. Kathy Vandergrift, director of Public Policy for World Vision, Canada

Mr. Peter Vander Meulen, coordinator, Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action for the CRC (ex-officio)

Rev. Rick Williams, pastor at Pullman CRC, Chicago, Illinois (asked to be excused and left the committee)

## Appendix E

### Stories, Facts, and Figures on the Cost of War

(Compiled in August 2005 by the Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action)

#### I. General

Since 1990, conflict has killed about 3.6 million people. Ninety percent who die or are injured are civilians.

—Source: UNDP, *Human Development Report 2003*

In 2002, there were a total of thirty-seven armed conflicts in twenty-nine countries. One fourth of the countries in Africa and the Middle East and one fifth of the countries in Asia are in conflict.

—Source: *Project Ploughshares, Armed Conflicts Report 2003*

Number of armed conflicts in 2003: thirty-six (in twenty-eight countries)

—Source: *Project Ploughshares: Swords and Ploughshares 2004*

#### II. Children

The estimated number of children killed in conflicts since 1990 is 1.6 million. The estimated rise in the under-five mortality rate during a “typical” five-year war is 13 percent.

—Source: UNICEF

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*Nanfa was only six years old when the rebels attacked her town. She fled into the bush. That first night, she curled up between a rock and a tree to sleep. She was missing for a week. When Nanfa finally found her parents, her mother asked, “How could you go to sleep next to a rock? Weren’t you afraid?” Nanfa said, “You always taught us to pray before going to bed, so that night I prayed, ‘Papa God, here I am.’”*

—From CRWRC/CRWM Sierra Leone Campaign, story related by missionaries Paul and Mary Kortenhoven

*“They gave me pills that made me crazy. When the craziness got in my head, I beat people on their heads and hurt them until they bled. When the craziness got out of my head I felt guilty. If I remembered the person I went to them and apologized. If they did not accept my apology, I felt bad.”*

*—13-year old former child soldier from Liberia, Human Rights Watch interview, Liberia, April 1994*

There are an estimated three hundred thousand child soldiers worldwide.

*— Source: Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict*

*For the Ecumenical Commission for Justice and Peace (ECJP), a CRWRC partner in Nigeria, it has become evident in the last few years that the role of youth in the great picture of justice and peace in Nigeria is vital. Any sort of uprising or conflict is always swarmed with young people (high school age to 30s), who only provoke the situation, birthing violence.*

*In light of this realization, the Ecumenical Commission for Justice and Peace has begun two projects: (1)The Youth Development Centre—complete with a net café and recreational centre where youth also learn biblical principles and become equipped with tools for promoting justice and peace. (2)The Youth Peace Club, which is starting in three of the local secondary schools.*

*Recently my coworker Daniel and I went to the schools where we introduced the Peace Club, inviting students to join. We hope to encourage the students to be leaders of integrity and peace in one of the most conflict-prone areas of Nigeria. They will learn to recognize some of the warning signals of conflict and acquire skills in conflict resolution, mediation, and communication. In one school alone we had 250 students sign up!*

*—From CRWRC Nigeria intern, Naomi Schalm*

### **III. Women**

As many as 257,000 Sierra Leonean women and girls may have been raped during the civil war. Sexual violence was used to terrorize, punish, and subdue the civilian population.

*— Source: Human Rights Watch, We'll Kill You if You Cry: Sexual Violence in the Sierra Leone Conflict, 2003*

Up to 80 percent of displaced people worldwide are women and children.

*— Source: UNIFEM*

A country is more likely to become a source of trafficking victims after sudden political change, economic collapse, civil unrest, internal armed conflict, or natural disaster. Because of the economic damage caused by such upheavals, people—particularly women and children—may be one of the region's few marketable resources. Conflict and other forms of instability compound the vulnerabilities that already exist for women.

*— Source: UNIFEM*

Women's bodies, deliberately infected with HIV / AIDS or carrying a child conceived in rape, have been used as means to undermine, disgrace, and threaten the perceived enemy. In Rwanda, at least 250,000 — perhaps as many as 500,000—women were raped during the 1994 genocide.

— Source: *Human Rights Watch, Shattered Lives, 1996*

#### IV. Poverty and development

Twelve percent of the countries ranked in the top half of the UN Human Development Index (HDI) 2002 experienced armed conflicts during the ten-year period 1993-2002; forty-three percent of the countries in the bottom half of the HDI listing were at war during the same period. Forty-eight percent of the countries in the bottom third of the ranking were at war in the past decade.

— Source: *Project Ploughshares, Armed Conflict Report 2003*

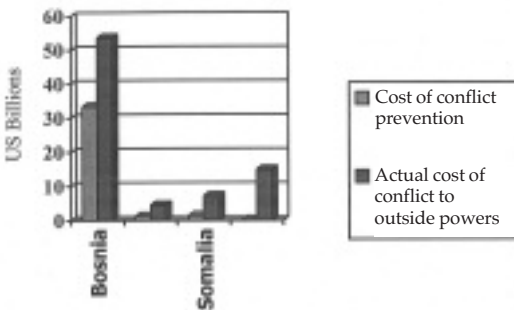
After the typical civil war, incomes are about fifteen percent lower than they would have been.

— Source: *Paul Collier, Breaking the Conflict Trap*

It is estimated that twenty-two of the thirty-four countries that are furthest away from achieving the Millennium Development Goals are affected by current or recent conflicts.

— Source: *UNDP*

#### V. Cost of conflict vs. prevention



The total cost of peacekeeping and postconflict relief in Bosnia, Rwanda, Somalia, and Macedonia was US\$80.5 billion. If preventative measures had been taken, there would have been a savings of US\$36.5 billion.

— Source: *Carnegie Commission for the Prevention of Deadly Conflicts, The Costs of Conflict*

Worldwide military spending in 2002 was US\$842.7 billion.

The UN budget for peacekeeping in 2002 was US\$2.6 billion.

— Source: *Project Ploughshares: Swords and Ploughshares 2004*

The United States level of military spending accounts for roughly 40 percent of the world's total military spending.

— Source: *Project Ploughshares: Canadian Military Spending, March 2003*



## Appendix F

### The Christian Reformed Church and Peace Work

(Written by Peter Vander Meulen, Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action)

The Christian Reformed Church has been more deeply engaged in peace and reconciliation work than many of its members know. Although we are not among the historical peace churches, our agencies and institutions—particularly those working overseas—have been increasingly involved in direct programs to heal the trauma of war (particularly with women and children), to resolve ongoing conflicts, and to build and strengthen peace in communities and regions. In the past, this has been done largely in cooperation with Mennonite organizations or with those agencies and groups having expertise in this area, but increasingly we are developing our own denominational capacity for peace work.

The leadership in our denomination's peace-building efforts has come from CRWRC and from staff members such as Susan Van Lopik. Because conflict and war are two of the largest producers of hunger, poverty, and human misery, it is an inescapable barrier for any organization that takes antihunger and poverty results seriously. CRWRC invests international staff time and significant resources in programs of peace and justice and has seen good results.

War and conflict also destroys the fabric of community, church, school, and family. When Christians engage in it unjustly, the name of Christ is shamed and the gospel is sullied. Thus, our mission agency, Christian Reformed World Missions, has also had to wrestle with this awful reality on many of its fields.

The CRC denominational Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action, charged with education and advocacy efforts to get at root causes of hunger and poverty, understands that peace and conflict avoidance is a prerequisite for any God-pleasing human security and development. This office also has worked in several areas of conflict resolution and peace building as well as in advocacy with our own governments to promote the work of peace and justice.

In Canada, the Committee for Contact with the Government, from time to time presents to the Canadian government analysis and positions on issues of conflict, peace, and human security.

There are also nondenominational but closely related organizations that have done excellent analytical and educational work on peace and governing. The Center for Public Justice in the United States under the leadership of Jim Skillen and Citizens for Public Justice led by Harry Kitts in Canada are two such organizations.

Below are some very specific examples of the peace work of the Christian Reformed Church taking place circa 2005 with our local partners.

#### *Kenya: Deacons Work for Peace and Security*

Sinyerere parish is home to seven local churches of the Reformed Church of East Africa. Each local church has a full council of deacons. The parish elects its full deacons council of two deacons each making a total of fourteen. In addition to their more traditional deaconal work, the parish deacons council works in peacemaking.

The Sinyerere community experiences attacks by cattle rustlers from Pokot and Baringo districts. The aggressors steal animals and rape women. They kill those who resist and abduct girls. The reasons behind the frequent and coordi-

nated attacks are historical and sociological. Pokot culture allows men to go out and steal animals so that they can pay a wedding dowry. Morans (a different people group), however, use these attacks as rights of passage to manhood.

Attacks between March and April 2005 have left six people in the Sinyerere-kapsara division dead. As a result of insecurity in the area, 4200 people were displaced and 30 cattle were stolen. As tension rose, the displaced sought refuge in schools, health centers, and churches. The deacons had a hard time dealing with this emergency because it was the "hungry season."

A peace initiative was started in the parish following various attacks by cattle rustlers. Parish deacons started peace-prayer meetings in the parish. They invited the local administration, other denominations, and the area member of parliament for talks. Together with their parish minister, they formed a liaison with the National Council of Churches of Kenya and several peace and reconciliation seminars were organized by the deacons. Continued dialogue with the government resulted in the beefing up of security in the area.

At present, the government has begun a disarmament process. As of summer 2005, the area is peaceful, but deacons are asking for continued prayer and reconciliation efforts so that there may be lasting peace and security in the area.

#### *Kenya: Peace Work in Mount Elgon*

This area is located on the border between Kenya and Uganda, and communities here suffer from attacks every year. Conflict is always between the occupants of the highlands and the lowland communities disputing land ownership.

From December 2004 to April 2005, eighteen people were killed, forty cattle stolen and twenty houses set on fire. During the attacks, nine women were raped, among them a seven-year-old girl. The attackers used sophisticated firearms they had purchased from a neighboring country.

Deacons from the Elgon West parish of the Reformed Church of East Africa formed a group called the Amani Women's Group—meaning Women for Peace. The group is led by women deacons but membership includes both genders.

When conflict erupted in the district's troubled area, the deacons started prayer meetings, and joined hands with the National Council of Churches of Kenya's rural women's peace link. During their initial meetings, the deacons promoted dialogue among families, churches, communities, government, and society as a whole. They approached the local administration who strengthened security in the area.

#### *Kenya Summary*

The government's disarmament response brought initial calm to the areas. The peace dialogues, meetings, and seminars enabled the communities to go back to their daily farming and trading activities with some confidence that peace could continue to grow.

The Reformed church's step of collaborating with NCKK (National Council of Churches of Kenya) to address insecurity in the conflict areas has been hailed by other churches who are also joining hands to promote peaceful coexistence as a response to the call of RCEA deacons for prayers for peace. The support of church leaders in the two areas that preach peace and harmonious coexistence is a strong foundation for deacons' work in peace and security.

### *Nigeria: Church Leaders Risk Themselves to Bring Peace*

Nigeria has witnessed a very powerful reconciliation between two warring factions of two groups of Christian Reformed Churches in the middle belt of Nigeria. The two groups of people are close neighbors and had been coexisting peacefully, even intermarrying before the crisis broke out.

The reasons for the crises center on boundary and chieftaincy disputes. The crisis became violent and led to the destruction of homes, properties, schools, hospitals, and churches. Worse, the loss of human life was unimaginable. The church had split along the same tribal lines with one group calling itself the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria (CRCN) and the other the Reformed Church of Christ in Nigeria (RCCN).

The conflict became a national concern, and the Reformed Ecumenical Council along with the CRCNA's Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action supported an initiative that began work on the conflict. In addition, the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee and World Missions supported this effort with staff time and financing.

The initiative started by identifying all the stakeholders in the conflict and brought them to the table for discussion using an external and experienced mediator. The whole process lasted for almost three years before something good came out of it.

A key to the success is the commitment of a local committee of young church leaders who worked hard and risked much to bring peace. The Peace, Justice and Reconciliation Committee (PJRC) mobilized, motivated, organized, cajoled, and persuaded people to gather and talk. This, along with the expert facilitation of Hizkias Assefa, paid for by the CRCNA, resulted in real progress toward peace and a formal peace agreement.

To mark the climax of the peace, the two churches have celebrated their coming together as one body, which has further strengthened the process.

### *Senegal: Women Have Power to Shame and Change Those Using Small Arms*

CRWRC is collaborating with MALAO, an indigenous organization working against the use of small arms in Africa. The efforts are initiated by women, and they operate mostly in the Casamance area of Senegal. One of the exciting initiatives of this group of women was their work with the young men in the forest, urging them to give up their weapons and return to a life of peace.

### *Sierra Leone: Life after a Living Hell*

As a result of the war, many atrocities were committed against ordinary people, leaving them traumatized, bitter, and crying for justice. In most cases, the offender had been someone they knew and who had interacted with them in the past. In addition, during this period, there had been enmity among people of the same family or community who have identified with or sympathized with different factions in the fight. The damage of war does not end when the open hostilities end. The hurt, trauma, and pain in peoples' hearts and minds continues to fester. Bitterness, malice, and desire for revenge were vividly evidenced in various ways, including verbal abuse, aggression, and death threats.

Consequently, there was a strong need for both government institutions and NGOs to work with people who needed lasting peace in their communities. The need to forgive and live with one another irrespective of what might

have transpired among community members during the war is paramount to lasting peace in Sierra Leone.

The goal of the CRWRC/CRWM trauma counseling and peace-building program (Mending Hearts) is to promote peace through training of animators in the skills to lead community workshops. Each workshop starts with an official opening ceremony to which community elders and dignitaries are invited, leading to raising awareness and sensitizing others in the community about peace. Another important feature of all workshops is time for devotions and sharing during which each participant can talk about his or her life.

Many women have received help to forgive those who committed crimes against them and have experienced at least a measure of spiritual healing in order to move on in their lives.

#### *Indonesia: Christians and Muslims for Peace*

The conflict in Poso, Indonesia, started in 1998. Since the Malino Peace Accord that was signed on December 20, 2001, there has been relative calm. The conflict began with a local political power struggle involving Muslim and Christian communities whose religious symbols were used as rallying points for the conflict. In April and May 2000, the fighting escalated and a frontal conflict between Muslims and Christians was ignited in a much larger area as well as in the city of Poso. In November 2001, there was another major attack of Muslims against five Christian villages. Two of the villages were completely destroyed. The fifth attempt at a peace agreement, the Malino Peace Accord, stands as yet another resolve of both Christian and Muslim leaders to work for peace.

The human result of the conflict is that there are around ninety thousand internally displaced people (IDP), from both sides, who are living in public buildings and small cabins. The Muslims who lived in areas where they were a minority fled to areas where Muslims were a majority. The Christians who lived in areas where they were a minority fled to areas where Christians were a majority. Some of the IDPs have been living in this condition for almost two years. Their houses were either destroyed or burned down, and rice fields and gardens left behind were damaged.

Many of the IDPs and the remaining village residents experience fear, hatred, and profound loss. Because of this, it is difficult for them to trust and to get together with people from outside their group. These feelings are tightly linked to the tremendous losses they have experienced, such as the loss of houses, places of worship, businesses, personal belongings, family ties, and friendships. There is a genuine need to heal trauma and build trust.

Peace building and trauma healing should be done by both sides. Both Muslim and Christian leadership and organizations must prepare people to live in peace and to heal. For this reason, Yayasan Sejati and the Central Sulawesi Christian Church (GKC) Crisis Center are conducting a joint action in peace-building and trauma healing. Yayasan Sejati has broad access to Muslims, while the Crisis Center has broad access to the Christian population. These two organizations have been working with the people since the conflict arose in the area. In doing this project, both institutions agree to form a commission comprised of members from each institution to implement a joint program using participatory methodology.

The goals of this interfaith project are to help communities cope with loss, bring displaced persons back to their villages, work with these communities so

that returning persons are accepted again as neighbors, and help these communities find lasting peace.

*Philippines: Interfaith Coming Together*

The CRC peace-building program in Mindanao is very similar to the program in Indonesia. One of the most important aspects of this program is the ability of the local organizing group to bring together both Christian and Muslim community members to build trust and rebuild communities together.

*India: Educate Early and Often*

In India, CRWRC funded a small pilot program to develop peace education materials for elementary schools. A recent evaluation visit to the program revealed the extent to which this program has achieved important goals. First, the materials are moving into production at a national level as a result of interest in the program from many schools across India. Second, children are able to give testimony of how things have changed in their communities as a result of the lessons they have learned and shared with their parents. In one community, Dalits (untouchables) were invited to join community meetings because children challenged their parents' behavior in shutting out the Dalit community members.

## Appendix G

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## Appendix H Just-War Criteria

(Created by Herman Keizer, Jr.)

### I. Jus ad bellum: Criteria defining the right to resort to force

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Explanation</i>	<i>Classic Statement</i>
<b>Just Cause</b>	The protection and preservation of value	Defense of the innocent against armed attack. Retaking persons, property, or other values wrongly taken. Punishment of evil.
<b>Right Authority</b>	The person or body authorizing the use of force must be the duly authorized representation of a sovereign political entity. The authorization to use force implies the ability to control and cease that use—that is, a well-constituted and efficient chain of command.	Reservation of the right to employ force to persons or communities with no political superior.
<b>Right Intention</b>	The intent must be in accord with the just cause and not territorial aggrandizement, intimidation, or coercion.	Evils to be avoided in war, including hatred of the enemy, implacable animosity, lust for vengeance, desire to dominate.
<b>Proportionality of Ends</b>	The overall good achieved by the use of force must be greater than the harm done. The levels and means of using force must be appropriate to the just ends sought.	
<b>Last Resort</b>	Determination at the time of the decision to employ force that no other means will achieve the justified ends sought. Interacts with other jus ad bellum criteria to determine level, type, and duration of force employed	
<b>Reasonable Hope of Success</b>	Prudential calculation of the likelihood that the means used will bring the justified ends sought. Interacts with other jus ad bellum criteria to determine level, type, and duration of force employed.	
<b>The Aim of Peace</b>	Establishment of international stability, security, and peaceful interaction. May include nation building, disarmament, other measures to promote peace.	

### II. Jus in bello: Criteria defining the employment of force

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Explanation</i>	<i>Classic Statement</i>
<b>Proportionality of Means</b>	Means causing gratuitous or otherwise unnecessary harm are to be avoided. Prohibition of torture, means evil in themselves—Mala in Se.	Attempts to limit weapons, days of fighting persons who should fight.
<b>Noncombatant Protection / Immunity</b>	Definition of noncombatant, avoidance of direct, intentional harm to noncombatants, efforts to protect them	List of classes of persons (clergy, merchants, peasants on the land, other people in activities not related to the prosecution of war) to be spared the harm of war.

## **Appendix I**

### **The Responsibility to Protect**

**(Written by Kathy Vandergrift)**

#### **I. Alternative paradigms re national security**

In response to changes in the global context and inadequacies in existing paradigms, some policymakers, diplomats, and conflict analysts are engaged in formulating new frameworks for addressing current realities. Christian organizations and churches are also considering the merits of alternative paradigms that might begin to bridge the gap between just-war thinking and pacifism. Both have deep theological roots, have made significant contributions in the public realm, but have also been found by many to be inadequate to deal with current realities.

Changes to the global context driving the search for alternative paradigms include:

- Increasing global interdependence in an age of globalization, characterized by instantaneous global communications; dramatic increases in the global flow of goods, services, and finances across state boundaries; and increased global engagement by nonstate actors, such as businesses, arms dealers, criminal elements, humanitarian agencies, and international social movements. Of particular interest for this report is also the global reach of the Christian church and increased engagement with persons of other faith commitments, such as Islam, Buddhism, and religious expressions of indigenous cultures.
- The historical development of human rights and humanitarian law as components of international relations. These were not given serious consideration, for example, in earlier reports by the CRC on war. They are significant because they inject components of universal respect for the rights of persons as well as states, public accountability for actions taken by states, and a foundation for citizen engagement in matters of war and peace.
- The changing nature of armed conflict and the increasing range of factors that foster, sustain, or exacerbate conflicts. Of thirty-eight major armed conflicts mapped by conflict analysts, over thirty are intrastate or cross-border conflicts rather than more traditional wars between states. Almost all of them include significant nonstate actors who cannot be ignored. In many cases, contributing factors are weak states unable or unwilling to protect their citizenry as much as aggressor states. In almost all cases, the lines between civilians and military actors are increasingly blurred, with increased threats to the security and rights of civilians.

#### **II. Human security and common security as alternatives to national security paradigms**

Alternative paradigms have a number of common features that are worthy of consideration by Christians in search of ways to exercise their calling to be peacemakers.

These features include:

- Security of persons that is at the center rather than security for states. Some common security paradigms put protection of creation/environment at the center as well.

- Security issues are broader than traditional war, including contemporary threats of a criminal nature, e.g., terrorism and crimes against humanity and, in broader frameworks, health, environmental, and economic threats to security.
- Security definitions range from freedom from fear to include freedom from fear and freedom from want.

While national sovereignty is recognized, the purpose is refocused on responsibilities toward citizens rather than national interests, and the limits of national sovereignty receive more attention, either as checks on abuse of power or because of inability of nation-states to control some of the factors that pose threats to security.

These core concepts seem consistent with many Reformed teachings, such as God as the only sovereign authority; respect for the dignity, rights, and mutual responsibilities of all persons as image-bearers of God; recognition of the power of sin and evil to distort created good; recognition of the essential but limited role of governance; and acceptance of responsibility to use power for good balanced with need for checks to prevent misuse of power and exercise mutual accountability at all levels.

A closer look at one alternative paradigm may help to test the relative merits of investing energy in this direction in the search for peace. In response to the armed conflicts in Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Rwanda, the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty was appointed with the support of several countries. Canada played a significant role in support for the commission and, along with its allies in the Human Security Network, continues to advance the concept of Responsibility to Protect, which is also the title of the commission's report. Churches in Canada, including the Canadian branch of the Christian Reformed Church, are actively engaged in discussions about the merits and usefulness of this approach.

### **III. Responsibility to protect**

The core principle of this responsibility is that state sovereignty implies responsibility, and the primary responsibility for the protection of its peoples lies with the state itself. Where a population is suffering serious harm as a result of internal war, insurgency, repression, or state failure, and the state in question is unwilling or unable to halt or avert it, the principle of nonintervention yields to the international responsibility to protect.

The core elements of this responsibility to protect are (1) responsibility to prevent armed conflict by addressing direct causes and root causes of conflicts that put populations at risk; (2) responsibility to react with appropriate measures in situations of compelling human need, with nonmilitary measures and, in extreme cases with military intervention; and (3) responsibility to rebuild after conflict with assistance for reconciliation and reconstruction that addresses the causes of the harm the intervention was designed to halt.

The priorities of this responsibility to protect are (1) preventive options, which are the most important and should be exhausted before considering intervention, including more commitment and more resources; and (2) less intrusive coercive measures, which should be used before more intrusive measures.



The principles for exceptional use of military intervention include (1) meeting a high just-cause threshold, such as large scale loss of life or ethnic cleansing; (2) precautionary principles such as right intention, last resort, proportional means, and reasonable prospects; (3) right authority in international institutions; and (4) operational principles, such as clear rules of engagement, incrementalism in use of force, and adherence to international humanitarian law.

At the moment, supporters of the Responsibility to Protect initiative are building international support for this approach through policy dialogue on the framework and practical application of aspects of it through diplomacy and programs. One goal is to introduce it as a resolution for discussion and debate in the General Assembly, within the context of current reform initiatives within the United Nations.

The Responsibility to Protect framework makes a contribution to international policy development by first approaching war from the perspective of the people needing protection, rather than starting from the point of view of the aggressors, and including both intrastate as well as interstate conflicts. Second, it puts the focus on responsibilities and mutual accountability under universal norms through international institutions, rather than on power and control through political alliances. Third, it reorients notions of national sovereignty to address the reality of weak states and superpowers. Finally, it takes conflict prevention seriously. While the concept was developed to function within the constraints of the current Security Council, recent moves toward substantive UN reform might increase the potential for implementation and international confidence that it would be applied fairly. Critics point out the need for strengthened international institutions to make it effective, and some argue for stronger role for human rights within the framework.