

My dear Radio Friend,

June 8, 1967

"At risk to national security." This is the phrase I talked about on the air, and in consequence of it, reaction of disapproval has caused consternation.

I am reproducing an editorial from the San Antonio Express with the caption "Presbyterians' New Creed Needlessly Invites Disloyalty."

The Communist publication The Worker, New York City, headed its story, "Presbyterian Assembly Urges End of Bombing." The Communists reported that the first effort to amend the new confession to remove "at risk to national security" was a failure. This is a phrase concerning which we are going to hear a great deal from many quarters in the days that are before us.

Both Time and Newsweek in their report brought up the matter. Fellow Americans serving in security positions in Washington, D. C., are deeply distressed. Some have even withdrawn from the Presbyterian Church. The Washington Evening Star carried the headline "Peril to Security Jobs Seen in Presbyterian Confession." A later story, however, announced that the Pentagon had cleared the Presbyterian Confession, but when the details were examined, it was found that a subordinate official had written a letter in response to an inquiry from the office of the General Assembly and brought the reply, "From the plain meaning of the language of the confession, we find nothing to suggest that disloyalty to the United States is encouraged."

The plain meaning of the language of the confession, however, not only justifies but encourages the taking of "risk to national security."

The actual statement in the confession, reads, "The church, in its own life, is called to practice the forgiveness of enemies and to commend to the nations as

Presbyterians' New Creed Needlessly Invites Disloyalty

Among the most violent movements in history are those whose professions include the promotion of brotherly love. Church history is rife with controversy clothed in piety. And the history is still being written.

Therefore, United Presbyterians would do well to think over their newly changed creed that obliges them to pursue peace "even at the risk to national security."

The new creed adopted for the 3.3 million American Presbyterians calls upon the church to "practice forgiveness of enemies and to commend to the nations as practical politics the search for cooperation and peace. This requires the pursuit of fresh and responsible relations across every line of conflict, even at the risk to national security, to reduce areas of strife and to broaden international understanding."

In practice, the creed is an institutionalized statement. Its impact upon the individual would depend upon the moral and political leanings of the individual.

However, it is unwise for a church to embrace as an important statement

of its aims and purposes even an academic justification for national disloyalty. "Even at the risk to national security" may have a broad meaning but it also has a very narrow one: Danger to or destruction of the nation by whatever means.

Were it not for the fact that some clerics are in the lead of so-called "civil disobedience" programs, the further loosening of moral and legal restraint would be less shocking. "Civil disobedience" and disregard for the nation's security are just too much.

The Pentagon has certified the creed as noninjurious and most of the 187 local presbyteries have approved it. The Pentagon's legal officers found nothing in the creed to encourage disloyalty. Again, it is a matter of individuals. If pursuing peace "even at risk to national security" doesn't invite those who differ with national policy to subvert it, we beg the Presbyterians to clarify the point for us.

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