'CHRIST'S WORLD OR NO WORLD'
REV. FRANK HARTLEY AND THE 'BATTLE FOR PEACE'

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‘Why can’t you live up to your name … Reverend and praise God instead of the Soviet [sic],’ wrote ‘Miss Patriotic’ of Newport, forgetting, in her anger, that a question needs a question mark. The public actions of the Reverend Frank Hartley – Victorian Methodist Minister, ‘Peace Parson’, politico-clerical activist and Joint-Secretary of the Australian Peace Council (APC) – during the immediate post-war period and throughout the 1950s and 1960s seemed to typically provoke such hostility. His bloody-mindedness was another source of anger, with one irate parishioner taking great exception to what he understood to be his minister’s ‘muddled thinking’ on issues of peace and international politics and subsequent refusal to face up to an ‘honest’ discussion on these matters:

There is something wrong with a man's belief when he will not subject it to discussion, but relies on respect for his scholarship, and thinks an emphatic denial is sufficient for anything that does not suit him, and is ... indignant and sometimes very rude when the matter is pursued farther. Denial is no argument.

If Hartley’s style alienated some members of his flock, or those outside the Church, he was unrepentant. It was his Christian duty, he felt, to listen to the dictation of his conscience and speak out accordingly. As a result, his strident left-wing views, based on the notion of an ‘objective truth’, placed him, in the minds of many, on the wrong side of the Cold War divide.

This article will critically analyse the Manichaean worldview of the Reverend Frank Hartley and explain how it logically lent itself to his swimming against the tide of mainstream Australian opinion during the Cold War era. It will examine how a dogmatic conviction as to the righteousness of his cause – typified by his belief in the existence of an objective Christian ‘truth’ with regard to the Cold War – inhibited his understanding of the international situation and the USSR alike, and led to the development of a siege mentality, further reinforcing his identification with and championing of left-wing causes.

The narrow field of past scholarship, which has generally portrayed Hartley as a persecuted idealist or duped fellow-traveller, has not adequately dealt with these issues. Marion Hartley’s The Truth Shall Prevail, a biography of

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1 Letter from ‘Miss Patriotic’ to Frank Hartley, Undated, Hartley Papers, Acc. No. 80/163; 83/108, Box 21, File 9 Melbourne University Archives (hereafter MUA), Melbourne.
2 Letter from an unidentified angry parishioner to Frank Hartley, 16 September 1948, Hartley Papers, Acc. No. 80/163; 83/108, Box 22, File 3 MUA, Melbourne.
her late husband, provides a valuable narrative account of him as an individual and activist. As one would expect, however, it constructs an extremely favourable portrayal of his philosophical and ideological interpretation of the world during this period and, not surprisingly, demonstrates an uncritical acceptance of the political values he espoused. Critical attempts to ascertain and assess the unshakable foundations of his faith in the ‘Socialist’ East are missing. It must be pointed out, however, that The Truth Shall Prevail is not intended to provide an analytical historical study. It is an apologia - a favourable memorial to a cherished individual - not an academic study and thus it is quite black and white in its approach to Hartley’s life and work. Historical gaps remain that need to be filled.

As John Murphy, in his book Harvest of Fear, has identified and Richard Trembath, in his article “‘No line is followed’: Peace Parsons and Australian Opposition to the Korean War (1950-53),” has discussed further, Hartley, as one of the ‘Peace Parsons’, constructed a worldview ‘in which the globe was divided into two implacably opposed camps, a mirror image of the conservative worldview, but with different personnel acting as heroes and villains’. Murphy’s observation that the dominant conservative culture produced by the Cold War ‘helped to establish alienation and dissent as illicit sentiments’ and thus served to marginalise ‘expressions of alienation from the dominant political and cultural orthodoxy’ is very relevant to the experience and subsequent activism of Frank Hartley.

What is debatable, however, with regard to the source of Hartley’s activism, is Murphy’s further assertion (echoed by Trembath) that this marginalisation served to drive many dissenters to practising what he labelled the ‘bad faith of fellow travelling’.

Thus many non-communist peace activists were drawn inevitably into the magnetic field between the two camps and, implicitly or explicitly, endorsed or mutely accepted the CPA’s [Communist Party

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4 John Murphy, Harvest of Fear (St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1993).
5 Glenn Richard Trembath, “‘No Line is Followed’: Peace Parsons and Australian Opposition to the Korean War (1950-53),” in God, the Devil and a Millennium of Christian Culture, ed. Ellen Warne and Charles Zika (Melbourne: History Department of the University of Melbourne, 2005).
7 Trembath paraphrasing Murphy, Harvest of Fear, 56-60 in Trembath, ‘Peace Parsons and Australian Opposition to the Korean War (1950-53),’ 174.
8 Murphy, Harvest of Fear, 54.
9 Ibid., 58.
of Australia’s] view that support for Soviet foreign policy was the path to peace.\textsuperscript{10}

Such an explanation may be reasonably applied to broader trends that characterised non-communist activism at the time, but it is not complex enough to explain sufficiently the \textit{individual} reasons why Hartley chose to involve himself in various struggles during the early years of the Cold War. Rather than being a passive victim of circumstance, forced to the margins of the political spectrum and subsequently bound in an unholy alliance to the CPA, Hartley made a proactive decision to cooperate with those who occupied the extreme left of Australian politics. In order to fully understand what it was that led Hartley to adopt the controversial stances he did, it is necessary to consider the internal philosophical, personal, ideological and theological factors that have not, until now, been explored in enough detail by previous scholarship.

Trembath, in his recent study of the ‘Peace Parsons’ (Hartley, Father Farnham Maynard, the Reverend Alfred Dieckie and the Reverend Victor James) and their opposition to the Korean War,\textsuperscript{11} makes a number of comments regarding the agency of these ‘Peace Parsons’ that require further elaboration. The author clearly identifies the purpose of his article to be the provision of an analysis of the \textit{public} activities of Hartley and his cohort during the period of the Korean War (1950-53) in order to understand the extent of the contemporary barriers faced by the broader peace movement.\textsuperscript{12} He also claims, however, that such a study would also lead to an understanding of ‘the ideological limitations which the peace activists placed upon themselves’.\textsuperscript{13} While the individuals concerned may well have placed ‘ideological limitations’ upon themselves, Trembath’s inference that the source of such a restricted way of thinking was the ‘Peace Parsons’ close (\textit{public}) association with the CPA does not sufficiently allow for the many complex factors and pre-existing ideological and theological understandings that led to such ‘limitations’. The narrow time frame examined, his concentration on public activities, and his treatment of the clergy involved in the APC (such as Hartley) as a collective entity (where all involved are assumed to be like-minded), limits the scope of his study as it only allows for the drawing of generalised conclusions from their public actions. Such an approach is better for achieving the stated aim of understanding the barriers facing the peace movement than developing a more holistic understanding of the individual ideologies of the clerical activists themselves. Likewise, the ‘disingenuous’ label, applied by Trembath to ‘Peace Parson’ claims of coincidence regarding the similarity between the CPA’s line and their own on the issue of the Korean War, needs further careful qualification and lucid elaboration.\textsuperscript{14} Such a label leaves the relationship between the CPA and

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 58.
\textsuperscript{11} Trembath, ‘Peace Parsons and Australian Opposition to the Korean War (1950-53)’.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 169.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 169.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 175.
individual ‘Peace Parsons’ open to misinterpretation by the uninformed reader, as it suggests a level of subservience or acquiescence to the CPA line. Further explanation is required for the reasons Hartley, as an individual, came to see the position taken by the CPA as most congruous to his own. Further, the use of this label highlights the historical need to separate the ‘Peace Parsons’ from the APC, and the ‘Peace Parsons’ from each other. It may well have been ‘disingenuous’ for the ‘Peace Parsons’ to claim that it was coincidental that APC policy so closely followed the CPA’s: this is, however, a distinction that Trembath has not made – the insincerity he alleges relates to the relationship between the CPA’s line and the collective ideology (and, by association, the individual ideologies) of the ‘Peace Parsons’ themselves. This article does not necessarily seek to refute the general conclusions reached by Trembath, but rather to expand on them. It seeks to prise the individual away from the collective identity of the APC and the phenomenon of the ‘Peace Parson’, and, in the process, provide a more focused, complex and therefore more rounded account of the activism of the Reverend Frank Hartley.

Hartley’s commitment to the ‘truth’, or at least, the truth as he saw it, was a feature of his worldview that sat uncomfortably alongside his equally fervent commitment to domestic and international reconciliation; reconciliation between people, cultures, religions, political systems and societies. On the one hand, Christ had been a reconciler; thus it was his duty to preach inclusiveness and work to promote reconciliation. On the other hand he believed, without question, in the objectivity of ‘truth’. Hartley believed it was his Christian duty to discover the truth, which, once revealed, was to be acted upon. Thus, truth would always be on his side; as he endeavoured to support the political position that best represented Christ’s will, it followed that the position he eventually adopted would be righteous and beyond reproach. This was a conviction reinforced by experiences - as a political pilgrim to the ‘Socialist’ East; as an avid reader of left-wing political literature; as a member of the World Peace Council (WPC) - that had ‘revealed’ the ‘truth’. As a result, his belief in reconciliation was undermined by his reluctance to accommodate perspectives that did not fit with his ‘objective’ interpretation of the world. All views were welcome, as long as they were aligned with his side’s view.

The truth was discoverable and the truth was divine. In Hartley’s mind, it was the responsibility of the Christian Church to ‘seek the truth and pursue it’. In the draft of a motion he was to put before the 1960 Victorian and Tasmanian Methodist Conference, he argued: ‘We cannot expect the Spirit of Truth to visit us if we are not diligent seekers after the truth – The Church should be the most consistent peace organization in the world’.15 Hartley saw what he thought was the firm support of the Russian Orthodox Church behind the international and Soviet peace movements (the narrow margin between a ‘supportive stance’ taken by the Russian Orthodox Church and outright

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15 Frank Hartley’s draft of a Notice of Motion to 1960 Conference of the Methodist Church of Victoria and Tasmania, Hartley Papers, Acc. No. 80/163; 83/108, Box 1, File 1, MUA, Melbourne.
subservience to the Soviet State was something that Hartley was unaware of, or at the very least, chose to ignore)\textsuperscript{16} and wanted the same in his own country. The Church could be a ‘mighty force for peace’ and had a duty to seek the truth, using it to promote peaceful coexistence between competing systems, to examine critically the Government’s actions, to resist the arms race in Australia and oppose the intensification of the Cold War.\textsuperscript{17} Citing the World Council of Churches’ 1948 report on the Church and international disorders, Hartley argued (in a 1953 notice of motion): ‘War, as a method of settling disputes, is incompatible with the teaching and example of our Lord Jesus Christ’.\textsuperscript{18} Thus, following Hartley’s argument, those who opposed his stance on world peace were working against Christ’s will. This is a theme he evidently was not afraid to invoke; it emerged again later in a letter dated 31 August 1960 that informed his Conference colleagues of his intention to move a motion on the issue of disarmament and the ill-fated test-ban treaty which, at the time, was being discussed by the superpowers: ‘We can hardly talk about Stewardship of time, talents and possessions while we allow this wicked waste of God’s resources to go on. The Christian Church should demand that the first practical steps to disarmament take place immediately’.\textsuperscript{19} In an earlier draft of his argument, he maintained that the Church could not preach a stewardship campaign and support an armament campaign. To do so would be to ‘take the truth of God and make it a lie’.\textsuperscript{20} This was to become his consistent position in his unceasing efforts to persuade his colleagues. Fellow ministers, thus, had a Christian duty to support his proposed motion:

That this Conference welcomes the Soviet Treaty on General and Complete Disarmament presented to the United Nations … We call on the Australian Government to make known to the Australian People the points in those proposals which can be agreed on immediately, and institute action which will make disarmament a practical possibility.\textsuperscript{21}

Hartley also supplied ministers with a copy of the Soviet proposals for disarmament and asserted that \textit{all} who desired peace and international cooperation would read them; those who did not were, by implication, in

\textsuperscript{16} For a thorough account of the oppression inflicted upon the Russian Orthodox Church by various Soviet regimes and the control exerted over it by the Soviet State, see Nathaniel Davis, \textit{A Long Walk to Church: A Contemporary History of Russia Orthodoxy} (Colorado: Westview Press, 2003). For an account of State infiltration of the Russian Church, see Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, \textit{The Mitrokhin Archive: The KGB in Europe and the West} (London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1999), 634-61 \textit{passim}.

\textsuperscript{17} Frank Hartley’s draft of a Notice of Motion to 1960 Conference of the Methodist Church of Victoria and Tasmania.

\textsuperscript{18} Frank Hartley’s Notice of Motion to the 1953 Conference of the Methodist Church of Victoria and Tasmania, Hartley Papers, Acc. No. 80/163; 83/108, Box 1, File 3, MUA, Melbourne.

\textsuperscript{19} Hartley to members of the Conference of the Methodist Church of Victoria and Tasmania, 31 August 1960, Hartley Papers, Acc. No. 80/163; 83/108, Box 1, File 3, MUA, Melbourne.

\textsuperscript{20} Frank Hartley’s draft of a Notice of Motion to 1960 Conference of the Methodist Church of Victoria and Tasmania.

\textsuperscript{21} Hartley to members of the Conference of the Methodist Church of Victoria and Tasmania, 31 August 1960.
favour of the opposite. In his mind it was irrelevant that the proposal came from the Soviet Union as the situation was desperate. The Soviet plan offered total disarmament, he told the 1960 Conference, whereas the US plan was vague and failed to mention the vested interests which lay behind any moves towards war between the superpowers. Hartley implored his colleagues to understand the situation as he did; as Christian ministers, the choice should be as simple:

From the Christian point of view we see in the Soviet Plan – which she is prepared to sign tomorrow – an embodiment of the dream … which has been embodied in the teaching of Micah and Isaiah when the nations of the world – beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning tools.

NATION SHALL NOT LIFT UP SWORD AGAINST NATION – NEITHER SHALL THEY LEARN WAR ANY MORE.

There is no doubt whatsoever what plan the Christian Church should support if we take the teaching of the scripture seriously.

The post-war ideological struggle was similarly seen by Hartley in plain terms: it was easy to identify which side naturally lent itself to promoting Christ’s message of reconciliation and working with one’s enemies, and which side’s intentions ran contrary to all Christ stood for. Laying down the reasons for his choice in a pamphlet entitled ‘Why I Joined the Peace Movement’, Hartley spoke of his conscience being awoken by a speech of the British Methodist Donald Soper:

There followed weeks of sleepless nights as I struggled with the implications of that truth. Selfish ambition… that had to go. Fear of public opinion… that had to go. Fear of persecution… that had to go. Nothing mattered now but to live by truth and take the consequences. The words of my master came ringing down the years, ‘Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free’. Now I was free. Now I was awake. Nothing could hold me now. I began to speak out against the rottenness of war in which all moral values are trampled down. I found others who were speaking out.

He had had his ‘road to Damascus experience’. He had witnessed the truth; now it was his and the Church’s responsibility to share this vision with the masses. Just as he had chosen to side himself with the forces of peace and progress on the basis of Christian responsibility, so too should the Church; to work for peace was natural – one’s loyalty to Christ demanded it. Salvation was

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22 Ibid.
23 Hartley’s notes for a speech to be made to a Conference of the Methodist Church of Victoria and Tasmania, c. 1960, Hartley Papers, Acc. No. 80/163; 83/108, Box 1, File 1, MUA, Melbourne.
achievable only when one accepted Jesus Christ as one’s Lord and Saviour. Thus, if the will of Christ could be plainly linked to one side of the post-war ideological conflict, to that of progressive forces, there could be no middle ground. One either accepted Christ (thus endeavoured to serve his will and work for peace) or one rejected him and his authority.

Upon his return from an overseas trip in 1951 (where he attended a meeting of the WPC in Vienna and visited a number of communist countries on his way home)25 Hartley gave a speech to a Peace Council meeting in Sydney that exemplified his conviction as to the righteousness of its cause:

We are in the movement of history, we are in the vanguard of truth and justice and love, we are on the side of the angels – and I am not giving expression to a theological conviction because I do not believe any such beings exist – but we are on the side of the angels, we are on the side of right and truth. We have nothing to apologise for or be ashamed of. We only have to remain true and be in this moment and go forward.26

This extraordinary statement helps illustrate the way he saw the struggle he felt himself and his allies to be involved in. People were either on the side of light or dark, peace or war, Christ or the Devil. Ideological opponents were not to be accommodated; they were to be converted. Undoubtedly influenced by his conviction that there were strong parallels between the work of the APC (and by extension, the WPC) and that of true Christianity, Hartley advised his fellow peace workers to show ‘discipline of the spirit’ in their attempts to bear witness to or proselytise those on the wrong side of the ideological divide:

A good discipline for the spirit of peace workers if you cannot sleep at night is to lie awake thinking among your contacts the most violently anti-Peace person and go to see them the next morning before the spirit departs from you and talk to them about peace … you will be amazed how the apparently impossible person that you ward yourself off from is approachable if you have the will to approach them, the patience to explain and do not lose your temper.27

In the early 1950s, Hartley was driven by a sense of urgency in world affairs; amid the evident chaos, he saw the WPC as providing a rare voice that spoke up against the madness, offering an alternative vision to that of the

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25 Hartley remained a member of the (Soviet funded) World Peace Council until his death in 1971, serving for many years on the Presidential Committee of the WPC.


27 Ibid.
‘warmongers’, who he believed offered nothing but death and destruction in their relentless pursuit of war profits and imperial gains. He spoke in 1951 of a deep admiration for the work of the WPC and believed that allegations (which were correct) that it had been established by the Soviet Union in order to further Soviet foreign policy were misleading and inaccurate. Granted, it had the perception of being a ‘left-wing show’, but this was not something that it had to apologise for. The WPC had never tried to be narrow in its approach, rather people had kept away because of its undeserved reputation. After all, he assured his audience, it did not stand for exclusiveness:

We do not seek to divide people, but to unite people around the question of peace, and so therefore we will cooperate with this person and with that person as far as they will go if their policy is in the lines of peace.28

These assertions, however, rested uncomfortably with his claim (made in the same speech) that WPC resolutions represented examples of objectiveness and truth. Those who really wanted peace would automatically support the resolutions of the WPC.29 It followed that those who expressed a dissenting voice, for example, those that argued that the quickest way to peace on the Korean peninsula was for the North to cease hostilities against the South, were not really pushing for world peace. People had a right to a different perspective on world affairs, as long as they agreed with the WPC’s perspective.

Hartley’s faith and confidence in the motives and potential of the international peace movement were such that he felt in a position to state, without resorting to hyperbole, that it represented ‘the greatest movement on earth’.30 Whether the Christian Church was considered in the calculations on which he based this conclusion we do not know, but he saw this mantle as justified on the grounds that, where other movements had failed, the international peace movement had ‘bridged the gap between the East and the West, between the bigotry of religious code, between the bigotry of colour’.31 Not only had it achieved that, but also it was ‘going to break down the barriers between man and man and class and class and creed and creed’.32 His optimism was further demonstrated when he asserted:

I say with dogmatic assurance that the Peace Council is a force in the world that is feared by the warmongers, feared, and that it is strong enough to make the difference. In Italy it is recognised by the Government as the sixth Great Power of the world and I consider that it is higher by any scale than that because I think it is stronger than the United Nations at the present moment.33

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28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
When we consider these claims, Hartley’s dogmatism becomes ever more apparent. His trip in 1951 to his first WPC meeting seems to have provided him with a tremendous ideological and idealistic boost. He returned even more determined and convinced of his cause, having met and discussed peace issues with likeminded people from around the globe, having been exposed to what he understood to be highly successful examples of the communist ‘experiment’ in various societies. He returned highly idealistic, optimistic at what he perceived to be the successes and victories of the peace movement, and thoroughly convinced of the righteousness of his stance. It is in this context that we must view the extravagant nature of some of the claims he made on his return to Australia. His devout faith in the motives, methods and arguments put forward by the international peace movement (and its communist backers) formed the basis for an uncritical acceptance of the righteousness of its (and his) cause and, subsequently, a rigidly partisan approach to international affairs.

Leaving Czechoslovakia for Russia in 1951, Hartley was farewelled at the airport by influential Czech theologian Joseph Hromadka, who predicted that Hartley would be impressed by what he saw: ‘One thing will strike you and that is the higher morality of the people compared to the Western world particularly in the relationship of the sexes. Their attitude is very healthy’. Writing about his experiences later, Hartley noted that his own observations had confirmed this. Given his own consistent stance as a Methodist minister on issues of morality in Australia, it is not surprising that such experiences left a deep impression on him and helped convince him of the righteousness of those he was allying himself with.

Hartley’s support for the USSR, and generally uncritical acceptance of Soviet analyses of the Cold War, can also be traced to this sense of righteousness born of his own analysis and subsequent understanding of life under communism. He was deeply impressed by the communist ‘experiment’; a sentiment compounded by his various pilgrimages to countries of the ‘Socialist’

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34 Hartley had admired the work of Joseph Hromadka, Professor of Theology at Comenius University, before they had met, for what he had understood to be the other’s courage and dedication to the task of establishing a working relationship between communism and Christianity in Czechoslovakia after the Communist coup of 1948.


36 Ibid.

37 Hartley’s concern that individual moral standards were slipping in the West was an important factor in his admiration of the USSR. While such concerns demonstrated an alignment with traditional Australian Protestant anxieties regarding matters of individual morality, they were atypically coupled with an equally fervent advocacy of the social gospel, placing him, in this regard, well outside the mainstream of Australian Protestantism. For further detail regarding Australian Protestantism’s traditional obsession with individual morality see Roger Thompson, Religion in Australia: A History, 2nd ed. (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2002), 44-47, 57, 84-86, 100-103; Ian Breward, A History of the Australian Churches (St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1993), 141-142, 145.

The marginal place afforded to the social gospel and Christian-socialism within Australian Protestantism is examined in Thompson, Religion in Australia, 41-42, 72-75, 104-105; and Breward, A History of the Australian Churches, 23, 97-98.
East. Trying to convince his fellow ministers, at a State Methodist conference in the early 1950s, that communism did not represent a threat to Christian ethical standards, Hartley pointed to what he saw as an integral feature of Russian communism, a ‘high ethical standard of conduct and one in which self is submerged in the cause. The type of ethical standards produce [sic] can hardly be a menace to Christian ethical standards’. Russian communism, he argued without apparent irony, paid special attention to the types of personal conduct that led to moral decay. Ethics and socialism went hand in hand; so much so that he unequivocally declared that, as socialism was more highly developed in Russia than anywhere else in the world, ‘Russia’s general ethical standard is much higher than ours’. Instead of condemning communist Russia as a threat to ethical standards, Christian Australia needed to face the ‘tremendous challenge [it posed] to our nominal Christianity that we should out do communists in their unselfish activity and live more in the spirit of our blessed Master’.

Much of Hartley’s polemic came from such travel experiences, which in turn influenced his faith in literature that put across the Soviet perspective on international issues. In line with the observations of both Paul Hollander and Malcolm Muggeridge, his international experiences mirrored those of the classic ‘political pilgrim’. His uncritical acceptance of the vision presented to him regarding the success of the communist ‘experiment’ in various societies heavily influenced his view of international affairs and added to his conviction that his understanding of the world, closely aligned to that of the WPC and the USSR, merely represented a facsimile of the truth. In his 1951 speech to Sydney peace workers he believed he was simply stating facts when he claimed that Russia had a ‘higher type of society’, where people gladly worked longer and

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39 Hartley’s draft of an amendment to a motion which emphasised the threat of communism to Christian faith and ethical standards to be put at a Conference of the Methodist Church of Victoria and Tasmania, Undated, Hartley Papers, Acc. No. 80/163; 83/108, Box 1, File 3, MUA, Melbourne.
40 This was a perception that was shared by many of his contemporaries; none other than the (politically conservative) Reverend Billy Graham understood the USSR to be a country less obsessed with sex than the United States and saw this as something to be admired, Billy Graham, Just As I Am: The Autobiography of Billy Graham (New York: Harper Collins, 1997), 379.
41 Hartley’s draft of an amendment to a motion which emphasised the threat of communism to Christian faith and ethical standards.
42 Ibid.
43 Hartley’s pursuit of the truth saw him read vast reams of (partisan) material relevant to international issues of the day (for an account of his reading habits see Hartley, The Truth Shall Prevail, 78. Also, for a cross-section of the mostly pro-Soviet material Hartley drew upon see Hartley Papers, Acc. No. 80/163; 83/108, Box 7, File 4, MUA, Melbourne. While it would be unfair to assume that Hartley believed every word he read, the virtual absence in the Hartley Papers of material providing a pro-Western perspective certainly leaves him open to a charge of conducting his research on a narrow ideological basis.
45 As Hollander has identified, countries such as the USSR and China were well practised in their deception of sympathetic visitors in order to score points in the propaganda war with the West.
harder than Australian workers without any sign of discontentment, driven only
by their ‘mass heroism’ and ‘genuine love for Stalin’. 46

Hartley appears to have been conscious of existing contemporary critiques
of religious life behind the Iron Curtain. Often, however, he sought to
rationalise them away, or, alternatively, demonstrated an unwillingness to
discuss them in great depth, often letting inconsistencies or contradictions slide
or fade into the background of the bigger picture of socialist utopianism he was
attempting to relate. Responding, upon his return from Russia in 1951, to a
question about the freedom of the Christian Church under Stalin he asserted
that, without a doubt, there was freedom of religion in Russia. He qualified his
response by adding that the type of ‘freedom’ it enjoyed, however, was a
product of the ‘historical situation’: ‘The Church in Russia is not the sort of
Church I would like to belong to. It is a church that takes no part in the
political life of the country, although its members do’. 47 While acknowledging
the weak position of the Church in Russia he added that the Baptists were
perfectly happy about the Church-State relationship. 48 Despite the Baptists’
happiness, the broader Church’s lack of a political voice appears to have, at
least initially, troubled Hartley:

If I was in Russia I would not be able to do what I did during the
Referendum campaign. I attacked the government from the pulpit. I
would not have been able to do that in Russia, and as a matter of fact
I put in a good shot for the Council of Church Affairs when I said
‘Of course it is a fundamental Marxian principle that truth cannot be
isolated, that you cannot divorce religion from your politics’. Which
he had to admit was a fundamental Marxian principle. And I said,
‘You approve of what I did in Australia, yes, but you would not let
me do it in Russia’. He said, ‘I cannot conceive of a situation arising
in Russia where you would have to do it’. 49

This rationalisation appears to have largely sated Hartley’s desire to not have
his image of Soviet society tarnished. While he acknowledged that his hosts’
approval for his work as an outspoken Western minister was contradictory, he
seems to have been disinclined to pursue this matter further. Certainly he never
wrote any pamphlets or campaigned for a freer Russian Church. His reluctance
to answer the question that logically arose as to how religion could be free if
controls were placed on what the Church could or could not say, demonstrated
an uncritical approach to its situation. Instead, the blame for the Church’s
weakness lay solely with the organisation itself. The Church’s opposition to the
revolution had led to the violent anti-God movement of earlier times. The ‘fact’
that the anti-God movement had died out and that the Church was now

46 ‘Address by Rev. Frank Hartley to Peace Council Meeting, Federation House, 166 Phillip Street, Sydney,
23/11/51’.
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
growing\textsuperscript{50} - irrespective of the fact that, in 1951, it was actually again in a State-sponsored decline\textsuperscript{51} - was evidence of the State’s benevolence. The State’s regulation of it now was justified by its reactionary sins of the past. ‘The Government’, Hartley assured his listeners, ‘does not intend to ever allow the church or any other organisation to be the centre of attack upon the Government’.\textsuperscript{52} Besides, he reasoned, he had been informed that the political voice of the church was not needed like it was in Australia, as:

> every member of Russian society … takes part in the politics of his country through his trade union organisation and wherever he may be he is allowed through his organisation to criticise the Government, to criticise Government policy and to criticise different members – they are open to recall.\textsuperscript{53}

While the clergy could not take an anti-Government stance in the pulpit, he had been told, democracy could still function; Christians, through their trade union activity, could still ‘be bringing Christian witness to bear on the Government’.\textsuperscript{54} While the Church’s lack of a political voice was ‘not completely satisfactory’, he told his audience, he still believed that this was of its own making, as ‘the Church in Russia deserved what it got historically’.\textsuperscript{55}

This passage demonstrates Hartley’s consistent unwillingness to criticise the Soviet regime and his preparedness to accept without question ‘facts’ presented to him on his political pilgrimages. That he earnestly believed that Soviet citizens, through their trade unions, were in a position to freely and plainly criticise Stalin’s regime reveals a level of naivety and blind acceptance of the ‘evidence’ he would have been presented with. While expressing dissatisfaction with the position of the Church, he still managed to unequivocally declare that religion was free. Likewise, his failure to address the question of why, if the Government was unafraid of criticism, trade unions were allowed to speak out while the Church was not, demonstrated reluctance to dispassionately analyse a society he wanted to believe in. Whether or not Hartley had suspicions as to the true situation of the church in Russia in 1951, he seems to have desperately wanted to believe that the situation of the Church could be rationalised away, that the position of the Church was ‘judgment of history against error’.\textsuperscript{56} By brushing aside such issues, he managed to leave the integrity of his idealism intact, to retain his conviction that the communist ‘experiment’ was bounding along unabated, that communist societies were a force for good, and thus did not need to be questioned.

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{52} See Davis, \textit{A Long Walk to Church}, 26-28.
\textsuperscript{53} ‘Address by Rev. Frank Hartley to Peace Council Meeting, Federation House, 166 Phillip Street, Sydney, 23/11/51’.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
Speaking in Vienna at the 1951 World Council of Peace, Hartley claimed that during the first two years of its existence, particularly after the outbreak of the Korean War, the Australian peace movement ‘had been made the butt of attacks which were nothing but fascism, pure and simple’. 57 If those who generally shared his outlook were on ‘the side of the angels’, then logically it followed that those who did not, were not. Perhaps not surprisingly, given the aversion of the Menzies government and the popular media towards the peace movement and others on the radical left, Hartley seems to have developed somewhat of a siege mentality, further isolating himself from mainstream perspectives and opinions expressed through the popular press. At the time of the Communist Party Dissolution Bill, Hartley saw progressive forces everywhere with their backs against the wall: ‘At a time when it is imperative that every man should seek and judge the truth for himself, to seek the truth becomes a sin, to act upon it a crime’. 58 The situation of those in the peace movement was comparative, in his mind, to those of history’s other great agitators, such as John Wesley, Socrates, the ‘men of Eureka’ and, most notably, to Jesus Christ himself. 59 The persecution of ‘champions of progress’ was nothing new, they would face a ‘new inquisition’ if the jackboots of reaction were not halted: ‘If the Bill goes through, we will be subjected to all kinds of inquisition on our religious beliefs and political affiliations, and the horror of the Spanish Inquisition will lie ahead of us here’. 60 Hartley saw himself as a participant in a mighty struggle; of being pitted against the forces of darkness, ‘warmongers’ with nefarious intentions, who were wrestling with the vanguard of light led valiantly by the WPC and the USSR (and, at a local level, the APC).

It is in light of this that we must assess Hartley’s claim (along with his fellow ‘Peace Parsons’), reported by Trembath and discussed at the start of this article, that any similarity between his and the CPA’s line on the Korean War was purely coincidental. Such a claim, at least with regard to Hartley, cannot be labelled disingenuous on the basis of his close association with those on the extreme left of Australian politics alone. Hartley was not one to supinely endorse or ‘mutely accept’ CPA policy. His association and agreement with the CPA and other like-minded allies (allies whom he believed for the most part shared his goals regarding world peace and a socially just society) was not based on subservience, but on a dogmatic belief that such an association best represented the will of Christ. In his mind, he would have had nothing to hide. Such an interpretation of the world was the product of a blinding faith in the righteousness of his cause, his belief that an objective Christian ‘truth’ could be discovered. His was a conviction born of the irrefutable association he had developed in his own mind between the goals of the ‘forces of progress’ – whether domestic or international – and his own mission as a servant of Christ.

57 Summary of Hartley’s speech to a meeting chaired by Jessie Street, part of the 1951 WPC Congress held in Vienna, November 1951, Hartley Papers, Acc. No. 80/163; 83/108, Box 2, File 3, MUA, Melbourne.
58 Speech given by Hartley to the People’s Assembly for Human Rights, 1950, Hartley Papers, Acc. No. 80/163; 83/108, Box 20, File 3, MUA, Melbourne.
59 Speech given by Hartley reported in ‘The People Speak Their Mind’, Liberty, October 1950.
60 Ibid.
Such servitude carried with it grave responsibilities; in the face of society’s judgement, such a servant could not equivocate on the matter of whom he could or could not associate with. To do nothing was to contravene the will of Christ; it was a moral imperative that all Christians and the Church that represented them should resist those fascist forces that were leading the world down the path to war. To do otherwise was ‘evading a tremendous responsibility in extremely difficult times’.61 In Hartley’s view there was no question as to what role he, his fellow ‘Peace Parsons’, the Church or other ‘right-minded’ citizens should play. Stark choices were on offer; it was ‘Christ’s world or no world’.62

So they are dividing the world in two. So they are closing all roads but two. So you must have fellow-travellers on one road or the other. On which road will you walk? Who are your fellow-travellers?63

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61 Hartley to the Editor of the Spectator responding to a letter from the Reverend E. Keith Ditterich, 16 January 1952, Hartley Papers, Acc. No. 80/163; 83/108, Box 20, File 9, MUA, Melbourne.
62 Draft of a speech or sermon written by Hartley entitled ‘The Middle Wall of Partition’, Undated, Hartley Papers, Acc. No. 80/163; 83/108, Box 20, File 8, MUA, Melbourne.
63 Pamphlet written by Hartley entitled ‘Who Are the Fellow Travellers?’ Undated, Hartley Papers, Acc. No. 80/163; 83/108, Box 20, File 8, MUA, Melbourne.