

This is a conceit, of course, to be taken neither too literally nor too seriously. Post-modernists would call it a 'construct,' and they might think ill of it. It hardly accords, in any case, with the real distribution of religious attachments among Canadians even in Skelton's day, much less in our own. But I nonetheless want in my remarks to make use of the Presbyterian-Methodist distinction in order to raise a concern about the emerging conduct – and even more the proliferating public discourse – of our foreign policy and the role that we seem, as a political community, to think we should play in the world.

For reasons that I hope to make clear, the concern I have in mind applies more to our involvements overseas than to our relations with the United States (although recent American foreign policy has certainly helped to complicate – not to say compromise – the operations of Canadians as well as others abroad). The problem that I detect – and I think it *is* a 'problem' – has multiple origins, and I will try (albeit very briefly) to speculate on at least a few of them. At the end of my remarks, in outrageously gratuitous style, I will identify a few of the practical "do's" and "don't's" that might conceivably be drawn from my analysis. Many of you, almost certainly, will think the discussion a trifle old-fashioned, and wanting in creative imagination. But my basic premise is that the conduct of foreign policy is – or ought to be – a practical, utilitarian activity. Defining its objectives and articulating the values that purportedly underlie them can be a satisfying undertaking. If we are not too honest with ourselves, the process can make us feel good. But that is the easy part – the 'general ideas' part. Figuring out when, and how, the policy itself can be made to work is the hard part. And no one should think for a second that defending foreign policy initiatives by linking them to good intentions will ever be justification enough. In public policy, efficacy is measured by effectiveness. Other measures can be politically convenient, but they usually amount to self-serving blather.



I indicated a moment ago that I did not regard our relations with the United States as an area of significant concern in the context of the problem that I am attempting to address. Perhaps I should explain myself. Just two weeks ago, after all, the Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence noted in the Executive Summary of its most recent