

General Topics :: "Confessing Christ in a World of Violence"

"Confessing Christ in a World of Violence", on: 2004/12/3 14:30

The following is a cut and paste from Soujourners. I do NOT mean to start trouble, I have prayerfully considered posting it. This site is part of my Christian community and fellowship, albeit cyber, and whilst I read this confession, I found myself saying "amen" and "amen". I examined the reasons why I would be hesitant to post this, and they were that I wouldn't want to anger people, and that's lukewarm. If you get angry, you get angry. Search your heart as to the genesis of this anger.

"Our world is wracked with violence and war. But Jesus said: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God" (Matt. 5:9). Innocent people, at home and abroad, are increasingly threatened by terrorist attacks. But Jesus said: "Love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you" (Matt. 5:44). These words, which have never been easy, seem all the more difficult today.

Nevertheless, a time comes when silence is betrayal. How many churches have heard sermons on these texts since the terrorist atrocities of September 11? Where is the serious debate about what it means to confess Christ in a world of violence? Does Christian "realism" mean resigning ourselves to an endless future of "pre-emptive wars"? Does it mean turning a blind eye to torture and massive civilian casualties? Does it mean acting out of fear and resentment rather than intelligence and restraint?

Faithfully confessing Christ is the church's task, and never more so than when its confession is co-opted by militarism and nationalism.

- A "theology of war," emanating from the highest circles of American government, is seeping into our churches as well.
- The language of "righteous empire" is employed with growing frequency.
- The roles of God, church, and nation are confused by talk of an American "mission" and "divine appointment" to "rid the world of evil."

The security issues before our nation allow no easy solutions. No one has a monopoly on the truth. But a policy that rejects the wisdom of international consultation should not be baptized by religiosity. The danger today is political idolatry exacerbated by the politics of fear.

In this time of crisis, we need a new confession of Christ.

1. Jesus Christ, as attested in Holy Scripture, knows no national boundaries. Those who confess his name are found throughout the earth. Our allegiance to Christ takes priority over national identity. Whenever Christianity compromises with empire, the gospel of Christ is discredited.

We reject the false teaching that any nation-state can ever be described with the words, "the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it." These words, used in scripture, apply only to Christ. No political or religious leader has the right to twist them in the service of war.

2. Christ commits Christians to a strong presumption against war. The wanton destructiveness of modern warfare strengthens this obligation. Standing in the shadow of the Cross, Christians have a responsibility to count the cost, speak out for the victims, and explore every alternative before a nation goes to war. We are committed to international cooperation rather than unilateral policies.

We reject the false teaching that a war on terrorism takes precedence over ethical and legal norms. Some things ought never be done - torture, the deliberate bombing of civilians, the use of indiscriminate weapons of mass destruction - regardless of the consequences.

3. Christ commands us to see not only the splinter in our adversary's eye, but also the beam in our own. The distinction between good and evil does not run between one nation and another, or one group and another. It runs straight through every human heart.

We reject the false teaching that America is a "Christian nation," representing only virtue, while its adversaries are nothing but vicious. We reject the belief that America has nothing to repent of, even as we reject that it represents most of the world's evil. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23).

4. Christ shows us that enemy-love is the heart of the gospel. While we were yet enemies, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8, 10). We are to show love to our enemies even as we believe God in Christ has shown love to us and the whole world. Enemy-love does not mean capitulating to hostile agendas or domination. It does mean refusing to demonize any human being created in God's image.

We reject the false teaching that any human being can be defined as outside the law's protection. We reject the demonization of perceived enemies, which only paves the way to abuse; and we reject the mistreatment of prisoners, regardless of supposed benefits to their captors.

5. Christ teaches us that humility is the virtue befitting forgiven sinners. It tempers all political disagreements, and it allows that our own political perceptions, in a complex world, may be wrong.

We reject the false teaching that those who are not for the United States politically are against it or that those who fundamentally question American policies must be with the "evil-doers." Such crude distinctions, especially when used by Christians, are expressions of the Manichaean heresy, in which the world is divided into forces of absolute good and absolute evil.

The Lord Jesus Christ is either authoritative for Christians, or he is not. His Lordship cannot be set aside by any earthly power. His words may not be distorted for propagandistic purposes. No nation-state may usurp the place of God.

We believe that acknowledging these truths is indispensable for followers of Christ. We urge them to remember these principles in making their decisions as citizens. Peacemaking is central to our vocation in a troubled world where Christ is Lord. "

(http://www.sojo.net/index.cfm?action=action.election&item=confession_signers)

Re: "Confessing Christ in a World of Violence" - posted by KeithLaMothe, on: 2004/12/3 19:17

One question:

What Biblical basis do the authors of this confession have for being "committed to international cooperation"?

They apparently don't trust the U.S. government very much. Good, neither do I. But I also don't place much trust in other national governments or (much less) international "governments" like the U.N. Why should such a view of international cooperation be in a confession of the Christian faith? Particularly when approximately 46 nations cooperated (as of March 2003) in the war on Iraq? Does that pass the "international cooperation" test, or is that still considered "unilateral action"?

I do appreciate your willingness to tackle this highly sensitive issue, Neil, but I want to make sure you aren't falling in with any group willing to compromise on the Truth for the sake of being anti-U.S. or pro-U.N. (just as I'd be very concerned that a Christian not fall in with any group willing to compromise the Truth for the sake of being pro-U.S. or anti-U.N.). I'm not certain what motivated the confession's view of "international cooperation," which is partly why I'm asking, but from what I've seen the objections that the War on Iraq was "unilateral action", or that involving more nations would have really made a difference, are a bunch of hoo-ha.

Re: Its a thorny issue to be sure., on: 2004/12/3 22:57

And I assure you that I (really) don't want (and pray) that a thread of this nature doesn't devolve into abad thing.

I like Sojourner mag, just got acquainted with it a few days ago. That said, what I have a problem with, is that it FEELS like the when you start preaching social gospel, salvation gospel suffers, and when you start (and stay) preaching salvation on gospel, social gospel is given short shrift. So, when I was reading Sojourner, I see little on the Word, or Scripture based commentary, etc etc.

Keith, personally , I don't have a lot of problem with the UN. I kinda regard them as the bothersome uncle with body odor you see once a year at Christmas. You roll your eyes when you see this relative, but then you remember the crate of rare books he let you rip thru in his antique shop, or the sometime wise nugget of advice he gave you. What I'm speaking of is the vote for the State of Israel and the fact that we have SOME kind of international body, and international stage, no matter how flawed, and flawed it is.

The first memory I ever have of the UN is Adlai Stevenson confronting the Soviets with the evidence during the missile crisis of 1962. Point being it serves some purpose on a global level. Scripturally, I'm certain that cooperation with one's neighbors is a Christian value. Probably something buried in Proverbs. (lol)

Do I trust them? no.

DO I think they are the one world government of the beast? no. They don't have it together , their teeth aren't sharp enough.

Didja go to the original page? Whats conspicuous is who DIDNT sign this document, and who DID. Its a disheartening divide. on both sides of the fence.

I've only been saved three years, but God has given me a mind, and a spirit to discern, and something isnt right in the current picture and the national religious rubric.

I'm gonna say something thats on my heart, a lot of my background was first in military intelligence, then it was in the financial trading world, and the way I was taught that if you are taking a loss, you get out of it, at once, without delay, before the loss gets bigger and more injurious. Now as a born-again Spirit filled follower of Jesus, I've been taught that once you discern sin, you flee from it, at once, without delay. Because once you start fellowshiping with sin, you're in the greatest of danger, and I think thats where we are at today as a church in America. And I say that with love and meekness.

Humbly, Neil

ps Keith, I will look for Scriptural basis for international cooperation....lol, I said cooperation, not governance...I'm laughing because I can feel what you might be thinking....N.