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Influential Evangelicals Withdraw from Christian-Muslim Statement - posted by rbanks, on: 2008/7/20 23:46

By Lillian Kwon
Christian Post Reporter
Sat, Feb. 09 2008 06:40 AM EST

Administrators from one of the most influential evangelical colleges in the country removed their names from a controversial letter addressed to Muslim leaders that some say compromises the Christian faith.

Wheaton College president Duane Litfin, provost Stanton Jones and chaplain Stephen Kellough decided to back away from the letter that they had originally endorsed along with nearly 300 Christian leaders in November in response to an October statement ("A Common Word Between Us and You") from 138 Muslim scholars and clerics who called for interfaith cooperation for world peace.

"I signed the statement because I am committed to the business of peace-making and neighbor-love," Litfin stated on Friday in *The Record*, the student publication of Wheaton College. "I did not savor the document's unnuanced apology section, but swallowed that in order to be a part of reaching out a hand to these Muslim leaders who had courageously taken the initiative. Though the statement was not written in the way I would have written it, it seemed to me that I could sign it without compromising any of my Christian convictions."

The Christian-endorsed statement—which included such signatories as Rick Warren of Saddleback Church, Billy Hybels of Willow Creek Community Church, and Leith Anderson of the National Association of Evangelicals—urged for interfaith dialogue that would build relations and reshape the Christian and Islam communities. Christian leaders also asked for forgiveness of sins committed against Muslims in the Crusades and excesses of the war on terrorism in the letter.

Titled "Loving God and Neighbor Together: A Christian Response to a Common Word Between Us and You," the statement emphasized the "absolutely central" commonality between both religions: love of God and love of neighbor.

The response drew sharp criticism from highly respected theologians R. Albert Mohler, Jr., president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and John Piper, pastor at Bethlehem Baptist Church, and other Christian leaders.

Piper called the Christian document a "profound disappointment" in the way it was worded and was surprised that even some of his friends lent their support to the letter.

"What's missing from this document is a clear statement about what Christianity really is and how we can come together to talk with Muslims from our unique, distinctive, biblical standpoint," Piper said in a public statement last month.

He rejected the letter's emphasis on the common ground of the love of God, arguing that the love of God for Christians is starkly different from that of Islam.

"The love of God is ... uniquely expressed through Jesus Christ as the propitiation for our sins because he died on the cross and rose again. All those things, Islam radically rejects," Piper stressed.

"So they do not believe in the love of God we believe in."

The Rev. Canon Dr. Patrick Sookhdeo, the director of the Institute for the Study of Islam and Christianity and a British Anglican, applauded the effort of the Muslim leaders in reaching out to Christian leaders to try to find common ground but he called the Christian response a "betrayal" and "sellout" of the Christian faith.

Following such criticism, Wheaton's Litfin realized he "moved too quickly" to sign the statement in his eagerness to support its strengths, including peace-making.

Recognizing that the statement could have been written differently to avoid vagueness of the Christian faith, Litfin said he could not support a statement that speaks as if Quran's Allah and the God of Christians are the same.

"I needed to back away," he said regarding his retraction.

At the same time, he said he does not criticize others "who do not share these qualms."

Noting that he was not pressured to withdraw his name from the statement, Litfin said, "It was simply a matter of conscience, combined with the fact that I had put the College on the line in a way I was no longer comfortable in defending."

Other signers of the Christian letter showed no qualms about their endorsement.

"I still agree. I don't have reservations," said Roy Oksnevad, director of Muslim Ministries at Wheaton College's Billy Graham Center, according to The Record.

Re: Influential Evangelicals Withdraw from Christian-Muslim Statement - posted by iansmith (), on: 2008/7/21 9:49

Islam is a perverted form of Christianity in much the same way that Mormonism and the Jehovah's Witnesses are. They dismiss the divinity of Jesus and place people under a law similar to that of the Old Testament law of the Hebrews. However, this is Satanic deception!

Jesus Christ is the answer for the Muslims! The Muslims claim that Jesus was the messiah, they claim that he did perform miracles, and they even agree that he was born of the virgin Mary. However they deny that he was God, they deny that he was crucified, and they deny that he was resurrected.

We make a huge mistake giving any ground to the Muslim faith with inter-faith dialogue like this -of course we are going to agree on many things, because Islam really started as a perverted form of Christianity, they used the bible as source material for their religion, and they are very similar to many other history distortions of the true Christian faith -there is going to be some overlap... however they deny the most important part of Christianity, which is the saving power of the blood of Jesus Christ.

To Islam, God is a far off deity totally unconcerned with the lives of the people on the earth -no matter how faithful a person is to the Islamic law, they will fail, because we know as Christians that the law was created to show many his sin, to make him aware of how sinful and dirty he is... however Islam does not have grace, it does not have mercy or forgiveness -it does not have the love of God. God is totally unconcerned. The only way that the Muslim faith gives a person to know that they are saved, the only way that they will have assurance that they will go to paradise, is by pursuing Jihad -holy war. Therefore, Islam taken to its logical conclusion creates people who are willing to kill others for their own benefit.

Christianity on the other hand offers assurance through the Holy Spirit, we have the love of God through Jesus Christ. Christianity taken to its logical conclusion would have each one of us taking up his cross -marching towards our own execution of self -not with a rocket launcher over our shoulder, but with a wooden beam... not with a belt of C4 around our midsection, but with flesh torn by whips and scourges... this is the difference between Christianity and Islam.

Re: - posted by rbanks, on: 2008/7/21 10:06

Hey iansmith,

Very good post and I fully agree!

I very much disagree with the unity that many are trying to achieve with other religions at the expense of the pure gospel of Jesus Christ.

What is your take on the name Allah and some in the christian community who are saying that we as Christians should be able to use it because it means the same as God in English.

I totally disagree and how can someone truly saved by the blood of Jesus and understanding the price of His redemption could embrace any part of a religion that promotes hate and selfishness.

Re: - posted by iansmith (), on: 2008/7/21 10:22

There have been Christians in Persia for 2000 years, and when the Gospel moved into Asia minor it was translated into local languages, including Arabic! Christians in places such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran and Turkey have been referring to God in Arabic as Allah for 1800-1900 years, Islam has only been around for about 1400 years. Therefore Christians in Asia Minor had been referring to God as Allah for at least 400 years before the Muslims incorporated it into their faith.

Since Islam is really a perverted form of Christianity, it is very likely that they simply adopted the terminology of the Christians in the region at that time as their own... just as certain cults will borrow terms from Evangelical Christianity and give them additional meaning.

The modern Arabic translations of the bible still use Allah as a name for God -so in a way, this is only a debate in the West, and mostly one among people who are not informed of the historic origins of the Islamic faith.

Re: - posted by rbanks, on: 2008/7/21 10:45

Quote:

iansmith wrote:

The modern Arabic translations of the bible still use Allah as a name for God -so in a way, this is only a debate in the West, and mostly one among people who are not informed of the historic origins of the Islamic faith.

Thank you for this information!

The question I have would be, did the true and living God every use this name for Himself.

Does not the Lord Jesus bring his culture to any region no matter what their former customs were.

In other words any customs that people are use to doing, the pure gospel of Jesus Christ is to transcend those customs and bring in it's own culture.

Jesus called God the Father and told us to call God our Father.

The only name under heaven whereby we must be saved is the name of Jesus.

Re: Waking up is hard to do - posted by JoanM, on: 2008/7/21 11:28

The *October statement*, ("A Common Word Between Us and You") from 138 Muslim scholars and clerics who called for interfaith cooperation for world peace, was written by Muslims leaders that are serious about their religious beliefs. Establishing the "Rule of religious law" (theirs) within (!!!) the rule of law in many other countries is high on their list of objectives right now.

May Christian leaders Wake Up. These Muslims that are serious about their religious beliefs are the very ones that have advanced continuously against Israel. The newspapers in other parts of the world are full of the history of their devices. They are the very same ones that propose this. They are not stupid in their ways as the world judges stupid. Peace and co-operation are only sought when they see themselves as weak or see an avenue to advance.

A good starting point for education here is the book *Understanding the Koran* by Meehan Elahi.

Mat 10:16 Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

There are **two parts** to how we are directed to be in this verse.

Am I being too rough here?

Re: There are no American Christian leaders.[at least that are known.], on: 2008/7/21 12:21

I believe that Islam is more a perverted form of Judaism, than it is of Christianity. Mohammad is more akin to Elijah, the warrior prophet, than He is to the meek and lowly Jesus, and His disciples.

Sharia Law is most cruel, and unbending, and demands punishment where transgression is committed. Stoning is common, women are oppressed into Law.

As Elijah put to death the prophets of Baal, so Mohammad dictated a like decree on all who will not bow to Allah. This is in effect as we speak. Islam means submission, and is ruled by Force. This is also what the Pharisee's believed about Yahweh, and tested Jesus at the sentencing of the woman caught in Adultery.

As Elijah was carried to Heaven in the Tornado, so Mohammad flew on his White Horse to Paradise... I believe that Allah is nothing less than Baal himself...Baalzebub..the Prince of Demons. He remembered Ishmael and Esau, as he never forgot Elijah's boldness in the great beheading of his prophet priests. He yet seeks revenge, and ultimately this is against his Creator; Jaweh Jeshua, the Lord, maker of men and angels.

Islam has taken long strides to pervert christianity though, even to the acknowledgement that Jesus of Nazareth is a mighty prophet! Of course, this was contrived to allow room for the worship of their Master, Allah, as he masquerades himself as the Maker and Lord...Jesus of Nazareth, and His Father and Spirit.

We all stand on the ground that Islam is a thoroughly Pagan and murderous religion. It is Satanic, in the line of its master. Jesus said of him..."He was a murderer from the beginning."

Let us not count on our so called leaders to stand up. We need the Word, both alive and written, to guide us, and I hope a few real Shepherds who will declare it as it is.

Let us never forget that those enslaved by Islam, are just as ourselves. They, mostly are innocent, and the kingdom of Heaven must be declared to them, as it was, and is to us. God loves the people, and those inside of the prison gates; the chained ones! I love them. We love them. Will we lay our lives down for them? In the end, I think that we will.