

A Word to Church Leaders *and those who listen to them* (including journalists and politicians)

“A time comes when silence is betrayal.” Martin Luther King Jr.

There are many reasons why Christian leaders are silent (or worse) on the matter of the horrendous, escalating persecution being suffered by their fellow believers. Not the least of which is the difficulty this subject poses for the peddlers of prosperity and those who like their Christianity “lite” with perpetual celebration and no strings attached. However, the most problematic reason—and I say “problematic” as it has such serious political consequences—is the *faith* many Christian leaders put in the failed strategy of “Quiet Diplomacy.”

In their rush to jump on the political bandwagon, or make a name for themselves as political players, many influential Christian leaders and denominational heads have found themselves on a particular political path, the cost of which is a vow of silence. Though the signpost says “to dialogue”, the route goes by way of a covenantal agreement in which the Christians must promise not to criticize the persecutors. Only those with great *faith* in politics can agree to such a demand.

Instead of speaking truth into power while trusting in the Lord (as did the prophets of old), Christian leaders who opt for Quiet Diplomacy will appease hostile powers at the expense of the persecuted trusting (or hoping) that their diplomacy and the political process will combine to deliver the desired end.

What these Christian leaders fail to see is that while they are busy congratulating themselves for the coup of scoring dialogue with corrupt, lying dictators, religious “royalty”, proscribed terrorists and other persecutors, those persecutors are also busy congratulating themselves for the coup of scoring a vow of silence from influential Christian leaders.

What these Christian leaders fail to understand is that silence is merely the entry fee, the cost of a seat at the table. The price for continuing dialogue goes up over time:

- from *withholding criticism*,
- to being obliged to *deliver propaganda* and *engage in public relations* on behalf of persecutors (which explains why so many influential Christian leaders have become avid apologists for Islam or for Communist dictatorships),
- to ultimately being obliged to *function as informants* so that “troublemakers” (i.e. anyone voicing a conflicting narrative) might be reined in (i.e. silenced).

Notwithstanding the fine intentions and noble goals of its Christian protagonists, Quiet Diplomacy simply does not work and invariably makes difficult situations worse. I believe it is a non-solution and an inappropriate response built on misplaced faith and flawed theology. Though we are called to be “as wise as serpents and as innocent as doves”, recognizing that we are “as sheep in the midst of wolves” (Matthew 10:16), nothing justifies an abandonment of truth or a betrayal of the persecuted.

Christian leaders who engage in Quiet Diplomacy (often through “Interfaith” initiatives) do so at virtually no cost to themselves. To the contrary, many reap great gains from their expeditions into the halls of power and photo opportunities with world leaders, religious “royalty” and recognized terrorists. When it comes to Quiet Diplomacy, the price is paid by others: the cost to the persecuted is enormous.