

# WE DARE NOT SPEAK ITS NAME

Progressive Religion and Politics: The Ten Commandments in a Time of War

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We bring to our readers this important and powerful statement emanating from the progressive antiwar clergy in the US.

So when do we use the word? When do we actually say it? When do we, as clergy, take up the ministry of Ezekiel, and warn our people of that which is coming (Ezekiel 33:1-9)?

So far we have refused to say the word. So far we have not been so bold as to take up Ezekiel's ministry. Perhaps we are afraid that even if we sounded the alarm our people wouldn't listen nor would they understand (Isaiah 6).

And so, because of our silence, our people are assaulted by fears and suspicions drifting into sleep, moving step by inevitable step into the abyss traveled by all other empires before ours (Revelation 18).

The signs are clearly all around us. The mission and purpose of the United States is now that of a permanent war economy patrolling the globe and exterminating the infidels (1 Samuel 8).

The office of the president, with the acquiescence of the Congress, is fast becoming the office of a supreme leader who can change law through "signing statements" and extinguish law through an assumption of war powers.

We have become a nation that practices torture.

We have become a nation that targets and kills civilians.

We have become a nation that disappears people.

We imprison people without trial.

We monitor what we say, who we say it to, when we say it, where we say it.

All of this in the name of freedom and all of this disguised as justice. All of this covered with the silence and blessing of the clergy who will not blow the trumpet.

The signs are clearly all around us. We have students spying on their professors. We have government agencies spying on us. We have our computer transactions monitored. We have our children accosted by military recruiters at school, through the mail, through the media,

at the mall. Meanwhile the price of war rises into the multiple billions even as spending cuts slice through the poor and the working class. But, from the pulpit, we dare not speak its name: this name that has become the reality of our time.

Within the Church there is an irreconcilable divergence emerging (1 John 2:18-19). At its extremes we see the birth of Patriot Pastors in Ohio even as liberal churches become targets for IRS investigations.

We see Justice Sundays and the growth of theocratic nationalism even as more are jailed because of their faith-based resistance to the further production of war. From the pulpits of the nation the Sermon on the Mount, christian identification with the poor, the declaration to love our enemies are all replaced with strategies of church growth or manipulations to infiltrate political parties. Congregations insist that clergy dare not speak its name.

Congregations insist that clergy stay embedded in their role as chaplain and golf partner. They insist that clergy provide comfort and offer therapeutic guidance. And clergy, with paycheck in hand, and a desire for career advancement in heart, oblige their congregations with false words of “peace, peace” (Jeremiah 8). But when does it get said? When do we clergy preach I Samuel 8, Isaiah 6, Jeremiah 8, Ezekiel 33, 1 John 2, Revelation 18?

When do we prepare our people for the next act of terrorism and the next seizure of power?

When do we clergy declare that allegiance to a military security state committed to permanent war is idolatry?

When do we cease our support for the regime that sends troops out to oppress, dominate and die while it chants the empty slogan “support our troops?”

When, in other words, will clergy name the disease that is our present reality? When do we speak of it from the pulpit? What are we waiting for? What other signs do we need? Are we waiting for the inevitable arrests of dissidents? Are we waiting for the next invasion, and then the next? Are we waiting for further heresy trials, further church harassment, further cultural friction? Are we waiting until the waters of the coming economic flood finally bubble up under our own chins?

When do we dare blow the trumpet and warn our people?

When do we dare cast aside the comforts of popularity, prosperity, and privilege so that we finally speak its name?

And having spoken it from the pulpit, from the Bible study, from out of each pastoral visit we make, having spoken the Word then perhaps we can lead our people in doing that which only the Church can do: casting out the demon while repenting for the sin of this republic now turned empire. Just like Jesus encountering the man in the tombs, we must begin this exorcism by naming its name: some might call it militarism but I think it is better understood as fascism (Mark 5).

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