

Handout 3.1

Session Three: Theology Matters Handout #1

From A Moment of Truth (Kairos Palestine)

View of God and Humanity

“We believe in a good and just God, who loves each one of his creatures. We believe that every human being is created in God’s image and likeness and that every one’s dignity is derived from the dignity of the Almighty One. We believe that this dignity is one and the same in each and all of us. This means for us, here and now, in this land in particular, that God created us not so that we might engage in strife and conflict but rather that we might come and know and love one another, and together build up the land in love and mutual respect.”

View of Jesus

“Our Lord Jesus Christ came, proclaiming that the Kingdom of God was near. He provoked a revolution in the life and faith of all humanity. He came with “a new teaching” (Mk 1:27), casting a new light on the Old Testament, on themes such as the promises, the election, the people of God and the land.”

View of Scripture and its Use

“...it is unacceptable to transform the Word of God into letters of stone that pervert the love of God and His providence in the life of both peoples and individuals. This is precisely the error in fundamentalist Biblical interpretation that brings us death and destruction when the word of God is petrified and transmitted from generation to generation as a dead letter. This dead letter is used as a weapon in our present history in order to deprive us of our rights in our own land.”

“Furthermore, we know that certain theologians in the West try to attach a biblical and theological legitimacy to the infringement of our rights....The ‘good news’ in the Gospel itself has become ‘a harbinger of death’ for us.
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“Therefore, we declare that any use of the Bible to legitimize or support political options and positions that are based upon injustice, imposed by one person on another, or by one people on another, transform religion into human ideology and strip the Word of God of its holiness, its universality and truth.”

“... as Christian Palestinians we suffer from the wrong interpretation of some theologians. Faced with this, our task is to safeguard the Word of God as a source of life and not of death, so that ‘the good news’ remains what it is, ‘good news’ for us and for all.”

View of the Holy Land

"We believe that our land has a universal mission. In this universality, the meaning of the promises, of the land, of the election, of the people of God open up to include all of humanity, starting from all the peoples of this land. In light of the teachings of the Holy Bible, the promise of the land has never been a political program, but rather the prelude to complete universal salvation. It was the initiation of the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God on earth."

"Our land is God's land, as is the case with all countries in the world. It is holy inasmuch as God is present in it, for God alone is holy and sanctifier. It is the duty of those of us who live here, to respect the will of God for this land. It is our duty to liberate it from the evil of injustice and war. It is God's land and therefore it must be a land of reconciliation, peace and love." (Psalm 24:1, "The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it.")

From A Call to Action: U.S Response to Kairos Palestine (Kairos USA)

A Church Confession

"As individuals and as church institutions, we have supported a system of control, inequality and oppression through misreading of our Holy Scriptures, flawed theology and distortions of history. We have allowed to go unchallenged theological and political ideas that have made us complicit in the oppression of the Palestinian people."

"We have forgotten the difference between a theology that supports the policies and institutional structures of oppression and a theology that, in response to history and human affairs, stands boldly with the widow, the orphan, the poor and the dispossessed."

Theology and U.S. policy

"How the meaning of land is expressed, understood and promulgated matters because it is clear that it affects U.S. policy toward Israel and the Palestinians in distressing and destructive ways. The notion of the "special relationship" between the United States and Israel, celebrated by U.S. presidents for decades, has crossed party lines and transcended political eras. Our government's policy toward Israel has at times reflected our own religiously-tinged identity as a privileged society blessed by God. The notion, for example, that the Jewish people have a special claim on Jerusalem and a superior right to the territory of historic Palestine over the other inhabitants of the land bears a resemblance to

our historic American notion of “Manifest Destiny”—our nation as the “shining city on a hill.” As Americans and as Christians, we must carefully examine how our own deeply-rooted sense of privilege may affect our commitment to justice and equality in this and other human rights causes across the globe.”