



Newsletter – June 2009

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Blessed are the Peace makers

Those who know Henry says that he is a model citizen, a good father, and an ideal employee.

He is obedient and diligent and never loses his cool. He does not get involved in anything even mildly controversial in his place of work. He assiduously avoids taking any positions on any issues and steers clear of any controversy. He even avoids expressing his opinions and preferences on anything unless pressed, and only at the last minute, and he will then go with the majority. He says he prefers to “avoid taking any firm stands as much as possible, and, will walk away from confrontation as soon as possible.” He likes to tell the story of “Han Xin” (韓信) to anyone who would hear him out.

When Han Xin was a slender young student in Military Theory he went out for a walk on day with a sheathed sword in his waist band. A swarthy village bully who was slightly drunk confronted him and challenged him to a fight. When Han Xin repeatedly refused, the bully barred the way and demanded, “If you wish to get past me you got to either cut my head off or crawl past between my legs”. Han Xin thought for a moment., then stooped and crawled between the bully's legs. This greatly amused the crowd that had gathered round.

Later in his life Han Xin the General played a major role in the establishment of the Han Dynasty in China.

Henry use this story to justify his life policy of avoiding issues and confrontations. He claims that Christians should always keep the peace.

He conveniently ignored the fact that although Han Xin refused to kill a village drunk over a trivial issue, he had the courage of his convictions to join up with Liu Bang (劉邦) and lead an army and successfully fought against the Emperor of Chu (楚)



Many of us Christians are like Henry. We misunderstand our responsibilities as a Christian and our role in society. Instead of standing firmly on the side of right, we just want to be the "do-gooder", the Mr. Nice Guy. We want to be friends with everybody and to be enemies to none. We are too anxious to please, to comply, to appease the vociferous just to keep the peace. We turn our face away, we try to ignore the unjust, the unchristian situations we see around us. We avoid questioning the right or wrong of a rule or a law imposed on us or the people around us.

A true peace maker will try to change unjust rules and right unfair or wrong situations. A keeper of peace only want to avoid trouble, to avoid rocking the boat, to obsequiously comply and go along. Keepers of peace make it possible for gross injustices, for the police state to exist and thrive. By refusing to take a stand for "right", we become the enemies of Justice, Freedom, and everything that is Christian. We become enemies of all Christians.

Christ said....."Blessed are the peace makers, for they shall be called the sons of God.

As for those who only want to keep peace, perhaps they should be called the sons of Pilate.

Peace keepers are prepared to bend over backwards to keep the peace, to make accommodations. They would not want to confront the High Priests or the lynch mob. Like Pilate, peace keepers are unwilling to discriminate between right and wrong, and are prepared to sacrifice justice eg to send an innocent man to death, for the expediency of keeping the peace.

It is time we ask ourselves if we are genuine Peace makers or just keepers of the peace in the genre of Pontius Pilate.

(this article was first published by the CFSM in October 1987, ie about 22 years ago)

In the context of the recent AWARE saga, I have decided to dig it out of our archives to remind ourselves this.



As Christians, as citizens no one can deny us the right to play a role in the social and political life of the Nation , , as the leaven in the bread. We have a role to make our Country, this world, a better place . That is what we mean when we pray "Your kingdom come, they will be done on earth as it is I heaven."

I agree that in a multi-racial, multi-religious society like Singapore the institutional Church should not play a political role . However, Christians as citizens, have a political role, indeed a responsibility, to participate fully in the political life of the Nation.

.....by mark