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Over the centuries in times of social, political, and religious turmoil, members of the Church have come together to develop confessional statements to address the issues of the times. These statements have endeavored to identify contemporary errors and heresies, to proclaim a more true understanding of the faith, and to express repentance for and complicity in current realities. In keeping with this tradition, and desiring to wrestle for ourselves with crucial issues of our time and our faith, we humbly offer the following confessional statement, by which we hope to stimulate discussion and action within the Church.

We have come together because of our experience of dis-ease with the current state of affairs in the Church and Nation. As people of faith drawing on Scripture and conscience along with reason and tradition, we seek to identify the nature and causes of this disease, to gain a vision of what spiritual health might look like, and to seek remedies. The question we ultimately seek to address is, "What does it mean to live faithfully as the Church in our American context? What is the Church called to be: to stand for, to stand against, and to stand on?"

The Church is called above all to stand on the Truth of Christ, which is the unconditional love of God for all people as revealed in Jesus Christ, and for the Reign of God which is the realization of that Truth in the world. Further, the Church is called to be the Incarnation of that Truth, and to stand against the lies of all principalities and powers which would claim the prerogatives of God for themselves -- to give life and death, to judge good and evil, friend and enemy based on their own self-interests (II Cor 5; Romans 5). Rather, the Church is called to exercise and advocate a special concern for the poor, the weak, and the vulnerable whom the principalities are wont to neglect and oppress. (Deut. 15; Is. 58) The Church is called to be a global spiritual community which pledges allegiance to no national or political structures or economic system, but which seeks to transform those structures through its witness to the Reign of God (Eph. 2, Rom. 12). The Church is also called to stand against materialist, utilitarian exploitation of the earth and its resources, which God proclaimed "Good" for its own sake (Gen. 1).

This Church of which we speak is not to be identified with any particular institutional expression of it; it is a spiritual reality which finds expression among us only in partial and flawed forms which, as human institutions, need to be reformed and refined in the crucible of God's activity in the world (II Cor. 4; Rom. 12).

As American Christians, we experience dis-ease with our nation's increasingly imperial stance and actions in the world. Because of sin, all world powers become corrupt and hubristic, i.e., they begin identifying their own purposes and benefits with the Good, the Righteous, the Just, even with the will of God, and claim the right to execute judgment in the earth in accordance with their self-interest. This is the nature of empires.

Because all imperial powers inevitably act in opposition to the Truth of God's unconditional love for all people as revealed in Jesus Christ, they all contain within them the seeds of their own destruction; they fragment into warring factions and face endless resistance from those they oppress, until at last they collapse from within or are overcome from without. This is the message of the prophets (Ps.33; Hosea 10). The United States is only the most recent example of a long line of such imperial powers.

The US, which consumes a proportion of the earth's resources nearly ten times greater than its relative population, and which boasts a military budget equaling the rest of the world combined, is currently asserting its absolute right to impose its will, by any means necessary, on any other nation or people whom it believes to be a present or potential threat to its self-interest. Furthermore, within the US itself, there is an ever-increasing disparity of wealth and opportunity between the most well-off and the least well-off. This disparity is being perpetuated and exacerbated by the actions of monied interests influencing policies at all levels of government. In addition, these policies are being created and implemented with little regard for their long-term impact on the environment we all share.

An abbreviated litany of the kinds of such actions of which we speak:

- ◆ pre-emptive war and the claim of the right to wage it;
- ◆ violation of international treaties and domestic laws regarding the conduct of war, treatment of prisoners, rights of citizens; the use of kidnapping and torture;
- ◆ tax, fiscal, and trade policies which favor the wealthy, reduce programs, services, and benefits for the poor, and degrade the rights and opportunities of workers at home and abroad;
- ◆ refusal to participate in international agreements on the environment, or to change policies and practices which perpetuate ongoing degradation of the environment;
- ◆ deteriorating opportunities to access quality education and health care, especially for the poor and increasingly for the middle class;
- ◆ increasingly restrictive and punitive laws and policies towards immigrants;
- ◆ refusal to take responsibility for an ever-increasing national debt which will be a devastating burden on future generations.

We also experience dis-ease due to the lack of a vigorous, prophetic stance on the part of the Church in response to these actions. As the Body of Christ, the agent of his ongoing life and work in the world, the true Church will renounce the use of violence -- especially pre-emptive violence -- as a means to peace, freedom, justice and prosperity. (Hosea 10, Matt. 26) This Church will rather suffer injury and be willing to sacrifice, and to love all -- even enemies -- for the sake of Christ's Truth and the Reign of God (Lk.6, Rom. 12). It will speak and act on behalf of the poor, the suffering, and the vulnerable, and will hold political authorities accountable on their behalf (Deut. 15; Ps. 72; Isaiah 10; Isaiah 32). It will pledge allegiance to no human boundaries, but rather proclaim and live towards one human community of all God's people (Colossians 3). And, recognizing our interdependence with all of creation, it will champion reverential care for and restoration of the earth, modeling faithful stewardship of our earthly home over against the current unchecked exploitation feeding the idolatrous consumerism of our society (Matt. 6, Luke 6).

We reiterate and confess our own complicity in the above litany of sins, and our failure to faithfully and imaginatively engage in resistance to them. We feel trapped by our participation in social and economic structures which embody and perpetuate unjust conditions, and we call upon our brothers and sisters in the worldwide Church to help us consider what repentance and new life might mean for us. We do so with fear and trembling, praying for the Spirit to give us insight and courage in this regard.

Despite the issues and problems we have named, we believe that there may still be the possibility for correction -- for repentance -- and that we as a nation and Church might yet heed the prophet's call to "do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God" (Ezekiel 18, Micah 6). We hereby dedicate ourselves to this call, asking God's aid and forgiveness in our halting, half-hearted efforts, trusting that God's Reign is among us, acting as seed, yeast, salt, and light in the midst of this beautiful yet troubled world. And we call upon our brothers and sisters in the Church to join us in further exploration of what this might concretely mean as we seek to live faithfully in response to the Truth of Christ.

## You are invited to sign The Colorado Confession

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