

# The Roman Catholic System: A False Church Preaching a False Gospel

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*Manhattan Declaration Betrayal – Part I*

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**Bible Text:** Matthew 7:15; Galatians 1:6-9

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In Luke's gospel, the 17<sup>th</sup> chapter at verse 20 we read of this little run-in that Christ had with the Pharisees:

And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.<sup>1</sup>

Man's desire has often been, from the disciples time forward and also amongst the enemies of Christ, to particularize the kingdom of God and then later on to particularize Christ's Church, and even to particularize Christianity, so that they may be things that may be seen with the eyes, and measured, and quantified; so that people might take comfort and refuge in them as earthly institutions, rather than as Christ designated them in His day and time -- as being those things of the heart, that rule of Christ in the heart of his people, in the lives of his people, that would not be manifest by an earthly rule.

"My kingdom is not of this world,"<sup>2</sup> he told Pilate, the governor of Israel.

Paul said, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal,"<sup>3</sup> but they are spiritual.

There is no Christ-authorized great institution called the kingdom of God or great physical monstrosity called the Church; and there is no notion in the Scripture—according to Christ's commandment—of this idea of "Christendom," the idea that his rule in this time in the Church age takes on a mortal, a real, a visible, an institutional, a human-driven and human-conceived conception.

But, you see, we are not satisfied to await Christ's return and his setting up of his rule and his defeating all of his foes in physical reality. We are not satisfied, so often, to await that return. We want it now.

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 17:20-21.

<sup>2</sup> John 18:36.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Corinthians 10:4.

We are like the disciples, “Will you bring in the kingdom now?” they asked, you remember, after Christ’s resurrection. They were not satisfied with the preaching of the gospels, with the assembling of believers at the local level to thank and praise the Lord, to partake of the Lord’s table, to celebrate the Lord’s supper and to go forth and preach the gospel.

No, they wanted to see the establishment of something substantial, something real, something physical, something that they could rest in and rely upon, something to maintain the order and to propel the progress of Christianity as they put it. They wanted to establish an institution of men with assets, with power, with political influence all, of course, in the name of Christ.

But, of course, Christ will not be sitting in the chief seats in these institutions; rather those seats will be taken by men who will claim to act on behalf of and in the name of Christ. And these men and their institutions will assume the representation of Christ, not merely as ambassadors of Christ, as Paul described himself, but taking on more and more real power in the affairs of this world.

And it is out of this desire, that we have the building of great denominations to perpetuate -- and which claim to be -- the Church, and which claim to pronounce the true Bible doctrine, which claim to be able to police doctrinal purity in Christ’s Church.

We also have out of this desire, the rise and the building of the great Roman Catholic system, built on the papacy and all the hierarchy that goes below it.

We have also -- out of this desire for a physical manifestation and established thing of this world -- we have the building of great state churches where the Church is actually wedded to the state, and the state actually declares and establishes this or that denomination as the official church.

We have the rise of the notion of Christendom as being a kingdom of this world of Christianity, and Christianity takes on the flavor not of what the Bible would say Christianity is. It takes on the flavor of a societal structure, of an institution organized and directed and perpetuated by the will of man. And the Church becomes a set of interlocking and, in our fondest hopes, cooperating physical institutions with buildings and with corporations and with bank accounts and with boards of directors or episcopacies or papacies or denominational presidencies or whatever the case might be.

And, you see, these views of what is Christianity and what is the Church are divorced from what the Scriptures teach; and they are unbiblical, and they are an abuse of the language of the Bible, because a Christian is a person who is a believer in Christ’s true gospel and a follower of Christ in his gospel. That is what a believer is.

It says that the believers in Antioch were first called Christians. That was the place where they were called Christians and that means that the term Christian applies to true

believers in the gospel of Christ; and the Church is the called out assembly of all the believers who are Christ's body. The Scriptures say that Christ's body is the Church and his body is all the believers united with him in the cross and in the resurrection by the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

And so, by definition, the Church is not something that we can gather into a place and a time, although Christ will gather his Church in glory, won't he? We will all be in one place and you will be able to see the universal Church. It will be a physical and seeable Church.

But the other use of the term church, of course, in the Scriptures refers to those little assemblies of such believers who are called out to assemble, to assemble for the purpose of worship, for the purpose of praise and for the purpose of exhorting one another.

And, sure enough, the Scriptures do describe that little organization of those little congregations. It describes those local assemblies. In 1 Timothy chapter two you will see a description of the qualifications for the officers of those assemblies. There are elders, and there are deacons. And there are no other higher offices created. Sure, there were apostles in the old time. But those were people who were eye witnesses of the majesty of Christ and they have died out, haven't they?

But there are no other higher offices created than that of elder and that of deacon in the local church. And the idea of a visible Church that extends beyond the local assembly is a fiction created by men without Scriptural authority. These are the institutions of men. It doesn't necessarily mean that they are all bad as institutions of men may go, just that there is no direction or warrant in the Scriptures for them. And, therefore, they should not be accorded any particular authority or respect above the Scriptures.

All things must be judged by the Scriptures and not by the assemblies and creations of men.

But, you see, the subtle thing that happens is that these institutions that are not based on Scripture, that are conveniences at the beginning and slowly grow into something more monstrous than that -- you see, they assume or they take unto themselves the authority to determine Scripture, to interpret Scripture. And finally you get to this place, like the Roman Catholic system, where they judge Scripture and not the other way around and if there is a clear and unambiguous contradiction of their doctrine that they proclaim to be the true doctrine against Scripture, why then you must not be understanding the Scripture right! You need to listen to their interpretation of the Scripture.

And so they come to be the judges of Scripture and not the other way around. And, likewise, the use of the word Christian -- where people will call themselves Christians, and how dare that you should judge their claim to be a Christian against God's Word?

You see, the word comes to mean what we say it means rather than what the Scriptures mean by it. And these sociological and even quasi-political meanings of these terms

Christian and Church come to dominate our thinking. And even Christianity has been broadened, hasn't it, from the meaning that the Scriptures use -- which is a person who is a believer in Christ and his gospel. Now, you see, we have the notion you can be born a Christian just like you can be born a Muslim or a Buddhist. It is just whatever culture and society you happen to be brought up in.

And, of course, we have that strain of Christianity that we might call Covenant Christianity in which a person can be brought into Christianity as it were, or into the Church, merely by accident of their birth and by somebody sprinkling some water over them when they are an infant. You can be born into a Christian nation and then consider yourself a Christian.

Well, what is a Christian nation? How can a nation as an entity, as a corporate structure, believe the gospel? It can't. Only individuals can be Christians. Christians can make up, by and large, any institution they have a mind to. But to then call that a Christian institution is to misuse the term because it applies only to those who believe the gospel and follow after Christ.

You see, the baptizing of someone as a Christian is a most pernicious notion, and yet almost all of western Europe and all of the West at one time fell under this notion, that a man was a Christian because he was baptized a Christian -- why he was given a Christian name. He was christened as it were. And think about the irony of that, that there is in that process of making a Christian out of an infant by baptism, there is no choice given to the infant and there is no faith expressed by the infant. It is just imposed on him, like circumcision was imposed on the little children in Israel. They were made members of Israel and of the covenant of Israel when they were circumcised as little infants. And that is, of course, contrary to what the Scriptures teach us about how a man becomes a Christian, how he becomes a follower of Christ.

What did the apostle John say: that it is not by blood, nor by the will of the flesh, nor by the will of man, but of God? When God works an act of conversion in the heart of an unsaved person, be he a child or an adult, be he born in a so-called Christian nation or pagan, be he so-called baptized into the Church or be he a non-church going unbeliever. When God works a work of conviction and conversion in the heart of a man, it causes him to believe Christ's gospel. That is when he becomes a Christian. And there is no other way into the category of Christian than that!

So, you see, we have allowed the term Christian (and Christianity) to be so polluted in our culture and society that it is almost completely disassociated from its true Scriptural meaning and so, too, the word Church.

You see, they have been largely politicized and made secular, almost since the time of Constantine when he claims to have seen a vision, "In this sign conquer."

You know, that wasn't of the Lord, because the Lord Jesus never wanted his people to conquer in his name for the purpose of the gospel using the arm of the flesh, using the

sword. This idea of converting people by the sword or of winning the cause of Christ's gospel by means of force and violence is antithetical to the teaching of Christ and to his commandments and to the teachings of the apostles. And yet we have embraced, or the world or so-called Christendom has embraced, the use of the sword and of force to win the cause of Christ since Constantine.

And Constantine would have them go to battle in the name of Christ and slay his opponents with the edge of the sword in the name of Christ. These are all awful, wicked notions contrary to the teachings of the Scriptures. And yet all the members of the nation, all the members of the army were supposedly transformed into Christians by the conversion of the Caesar, and at the point of a sword.

And what happens when you allow a church to be wedded to the state, when you allow there to be an official church, a sanctioned church, a church that has the special blessing of the state attached to it against all other churches, all other denominations, why then you end up with the inevitable compromise of the doctrine of the church.

There is no better example of this than in the Anglican Church, where they have to have a church that all men of the nation can be members of, but the men of the nation disagree on certain theological points, so we bring that compromise into the church, so that it can be a politically acceptable church to the greatest number of people.

And, you see, this deadly rot is incorporated into your institution that you are calling a church so that, for example, the Anglican Church accommodates the wide spectrum of people from those who believe the gospel to those who do not believe the gospel, who preach a false gospel. And they have had in their very bosom this preaching of an anti-gospel since the middle or late 1500s in their country and in their church. And it has sown a rotten seed and yielded a bitter fruit, has it not?

And then, of course, the other thing besides the compromise in the doctrine of this so-called Church that is introduced by connecting it to the state, there comes the fact that you then pack these so-called churches with false believers, unbelievers, which you call Christians because they are a member of this grand church. And so the process ends up by stripping away the original meaning of the word Christian, the original meaning of the word Church, and giving them these sociological and quasi-political meanings and contexts.

And the result is that the vast array of human institutions called churches, filled with people called Christians, are neither actual churches, nor are they filled with actual Christians. And so the terms become, in our society, greatly muddled and almost meaningless.

They are not actual assemblies of called out believers, of Christians who trust in the Lord Jesus. They are assemblies of something other than that. And the people in them are not, by and large, those who believe in Christ's gospel. They are people who believe in something else or in nothing else.

So you see that by this process, which is no doubt of the devil himself, you have the condition that I call backflow. You know, we all have these backflow valves to keep the sewage from flowing backwards into the water supply. And every year we have to pay a fee to get inspected to make sure that it is working, because you don't want corrupt water coming in and mixing with the water that you drink.

Well, by this process, you see, you have brought into the concept of church all this corruption and falseness, and you have brought into this mass of people who call themselves Christians, a huge pile of unbelievers or people who believe in another gospel or follow another Christ.

And so what the Church teaches, what these so-called churches teach, pollute our understanding of real churches, and what they teach pollutes our understanding and society's understanding of real Christianity and of who real Christians are.

And I say all that to get to the point of beginning to discuss this week and next week, probably, this thing called the Manhattan Declaration.

Now, you may have seen where a group of people who call themselves Christians, representing institutions widely across the spectrum which call themselves churches, have all come together to make what their supporters claim is mostly a political statement against abortion and against gay marriage and in favor of religious liberty. But, in fact, what they have done by doing that, is they have undermined and exalted, once again, this cultural and political and sociological definition of Church and of Christian, and thereby have continued the process of muddying the waters concerning who Christ's true church is, and who the true Christians are, and what are their purposes or their characteristics.

And the one true characteristic, you see, that makes the person a Christian or that makes an assembly a church, a called out group of Christians, the one true characteristic of what real Christians and real churches are made of is ignored, isn't it? And what is that?

It is faith in Christ's gospel, the content of Christ's gospel, what it takes for a man to be reconciled to God, how one enters into everlasting life, faith and belief in the gospel of the Lord Jesus.

You see, rather than say we agree on Christ's gospel, therefore we are Christians, therefore our institutions are churches, you see, they have gone the other way around. Because we are churches and because we all claim to be Christians, we don't need to talk about what the gospel is. In fact, we can all disagree on the gospel. That is ok. We are still churches and we are still Christians and we still love each other and we are still in fellowship with each other.

So, you see, they have inverted, they have taken hold of the world's carnal description and pollution and corruption of the Church and of Christianity and they have embraced it as their own and they have perpetuated it.

And shame on those people who are true Christians who joined in with that effort!

But listen to what they describe themselves as in the Manhattan Declaration, which was released in November of 2009. They say:

“Like those who have gone before us in the faith, Christians today are called to proclaim the Gospel of costly grace, to protect the intrinsic dignity of the human person and to stand for the common good. In being true to its own calling, the call to discipleship, the church through service to others can make a profound contribution to the public good. We, as Orthodox, Catholic, and Evangelical Christians, have gathered, beginning in New York on September 28, 2009, to make the following declaration, which we sign as individuals, not on behalf of our organizations, but speaking to and from our communities.”

Now we will defer until next Lord’s Day, hopefully, a detailed analysis of what is said in the Manhattan Declaration; but notice that they have swept up all of these institutions that modern society calls churches, and they have swept up all sorts of disparate groups of faith, of people who claim to be Christians. They have called the Orthodox Christian Church a church, they have called the evangelicals amongst themselves Christians, they have called Roman Catholics amongst themselves as true Christians, and their churches as Christ’s true Church.

And the question is: Are all of these people really Christians, and are all of the institutions that they hail from, real, true Christian Churches? Is the Roman Catholic system a true Church? May its adherents and members be automatically classified as true Bible believing Christians? This is the question that we have to answer before we can continue into the subject of what the Manhattan Declaration actually says and what it accomplishes.

Now notice the starting assumption. Just because the word Christian and the word Church are used, just because those words are used, that does not create any assumption whatsoever that those are actually true Christian churches and that those are actually true Christian believers. Why is that? Because of what we have just finished explaining: those words have been corrupted. They have been polluted. They have been secularized. They have been made into sociological and quasi-political categories.

And so just because a man slaps a label on himself or on his institution or on his building or on his denomination, doesn’t make it so. It doesn’t make it so at all. And so these words, as we have shown, are mostly used contrary to the Scriptures in our society. And so there can be no assumption of true Christianity attached to anybody or to anything.

To know whether a man is a brother in Christ, to know whether a man is a Bible Christian, to know whether a congregation, an assembly is part of Christ’s Church, we have to enquire as to what gospel is being preached, what gospel is being believed. It is

the only way to know. It is the only way to ascertain whether a person is a true Christian, whether a person's assembly is a true, called out assembly of Christ's Church.

We can't be taking anyone's word for it anymore, because the labels have been misappropriated; and so we have to have a review of the gospel and what its claims are and a comparison of that gospel along side the claims made by these so-called churches and so-called Christians, to find out whether they are, in fact, Christian and whether they are, in fact churches.

And, in fact, the gospel claims and a review of the gospel itself will show that the Roman Catholic system is anti-Christian because it despises and opposes the true gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it preaches a false gospel. It preaches a substitute gospel, a different gospel.

And we have been laying the groundwork for this through the last several months, especially in three little sermons on the subject of the perfect gift of the gospel and how the Roman Catholic system has stolen away the goodness of the gospel, and how its priesthood has usurped the priesthood of the Lord Jesus in the offering one time for all of atonement for the sake of his people.

Man is lost in sin and rebellion, and the punishment from an offended God is eternal. But Christ brings salvation and eternal life to as many as believe on him. There can be no gift greater than Christ's gospel of redemption and everlasting joy. And that great gift is received by simply trusting in the Lord Jesus.

How often he asserted the simplicity of it all.

"Whosoever believeth in me shall have everlasting life," he said again and again to his disciples in his ministry in this world.

To believe in Christ is to know who he really is: the Lord of glory, God manifest in the flesh, Emmanuel, God with us, the gospel writers said.

To believe the promise of salvation that he announced is to rely upon the means he has used to accomplish his promise of salvation. No matter how deep the theological teachings of the rest of the Scriptures, they cannot and they do not undermine the stark simplicity and beauty of the gospel of salvation from the very lips of Christ himself.

"Whosoever believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

Indeed, the theology of Paul, the hope of the prophets of old, the symbols of the old sacrificial system, all explain the means by which Christ's simple promise of salvation by faith in him is accomplished. None of the work of redemption is shifted onto us. Christ finished all the work at Calvary.



Now, we look at the most clear statement of what is the gospel of Christ. And, of course, it is found in 1 Corinthians 15, the first couple of verses in which the apostle Paul describes explicitly what is the gospel of the Lord Jesus.

He said, “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you.”<sup>4</sup>

If only N. T. Wright would read that and believe it, because he has another definition of the gospel that he thinks is better than the one Paul gives!

“...which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.”<sup>5</sup>

You see, it is the content of this gospel that is preached that Paul is about to explain, about to describe, that is what we believe when we believe Christ’s gospel. And it is the basis upon which that faith which we put in it -- the truth of that gospel that we have trusted in -- that is what saves us.

What does he say, then?

“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received...”<sup>6</sup>

That means that he got this gospel. He didn’t just make it up, but he received it. He received it from Christ himself, he tells us in other places.

.... how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also.<sup>7</sup>

So, you see, the gospel has these propositions of truth that we believe, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. He was dead and he was buried. He rose again and he was seen.

Now, some people deny the gospel at various of these points. They deny that he rose from the dead. They deny the testimony of the witnesses. But the most insidious denial of the gospel is to deny the first part: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.

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<sup>4</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:1.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:1-2.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:3.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:3-8.

What does this mean? It doesn't just mean that he died as predicted by the Scriptures. It means he died in the way and manner as described by the Scriptures. And how is that described?

You can search the Old Testament top to bottom, and you will never find a place where Christ's death is portrayed as anything other than as a substitution in the judgment for the sin of his people. You will not find the *Christus victor* theory. You will not find the example theory. You will not find any of the other so-called theories of the atonement. But you will find all through the Old Testament the theory, the type, the shadow, the image of Christ as the Lamb slain in place of his people to bear all the judgment, to shift all the blame, all the guilt off on to that substitute Lamb!

That is what Paul means when he says Christ died for our sins according to the Scripture, as fulfillment of that type by which the Lamb died in the place of Isaac, the lamb provided by God himself; and fulfilled the type by which the Passover Lamb died in the place of the people of Israel and the blood that was displayed, satisfied God in his divine justice and he passed over the house; to satisfy, to fulfill the type of the sacrificial lamb upon whose head the hands of the sinner were placed, and God agreed to judge that lamb and not the sinner on the altar.

This is what the gospel means. This is what the Scriptures mean by the gospel – and it is required that we believe and trust in the fact that the Lord Jesus made a perfect sacrifice and was the substitute for his people at Calvary, and in him was judged all our sins, and we are let go for Jesus' sake.

You see, this is Christ's gospel. And those who trust in Christ's gospel are Christians and no one else. No one else can claim to be Christian. No other congregation or church can claim to be a church that is not a collection, a called out assembly of people who believe Christ's gospel and who trust it and rely upon it. Those assemblies of such Christians are the local churches, and none else.

And so then we come to the next point which is the way in which the Roman Catholic system has overthrown Christ's gospel, has substituted another gospel of works.

To lost and doomed sinners, Christ's simple gospel promise of salvation and eternal life to every one who trusts in him, is the perfect gift. The doctrines of imputation and substitution and justification by faith do not detract from Christ's Gospel's simplicity. Rather, they adorn it and explain the power and method behind Christ's simple offer of everlasting life to whoever trusts in him.

But the Roman Catholic false gospel takes away all the power and the beauty and the satisfaction and the simplicity of Christ's gospel. That false gospel teaches that faith in Christ is but the door to the Church, past which are all a lifetime of works and of rituals and of submission to the unscriptural demands of the Roman system.

The Roman false gospel teaches that Christ's sacrifice was not enough, but that baptisms and blasphemous celebrations of the mass and penance and good works must be added on top of Christ. Under the false Roman gospel, a man can trust in Jesus as Jesus required and still go to hell in the end. The perfect gift of full forgiveness and eternal life received at the point of faith has been spirited away by the teachings of popes and so called priests. Indeed, the perfect gift of salvation has been snatched away, and Christ's righteousness and blood are hoarded from sinners in the so-called treasury of merit, to be doled out little by little by church functionaries upon the fulfillment of their demands by the sinner.

Indeed, the Roman Catholic system is the Grinch that stole away the perfect gift and left behind only the empty box with the pretty wrappings. And their priests claim to offer daily a bloodless sacrifice which never completely justifies the sinner. They never rest. But praise God! Our high priest has sat down, for his sacrifice forever makes us perfect!

Now, in case you wonder, or have forgotten the truth of these assertions, let's read just a little bit from the Catholic Catechism.

"Moved by the Holy Spirit and by charity," this is paragraph 2010, "we can then merit for ourselves and for others the graces needed for our sanctification, for the increase of grace and charity, and for the attainment of eternal life."

Nothing can be clearer than that bold statement from the Catholic Catechism.

And then from the 1967 document titled *Indulgentiarum Doctrina* we read this:

"The 'treasury of the Church' is the infinite value, which can never be exhausted, which Christ's merits have before God... This treasury includes as well the prayers and good works of the Blessed Virgin Mary. They are truly immense, unfathomable, and even pristine in their value before God. In the treasury, too, are the prayers and good works of all the saints, all those who have followed in the footsteps of Christ the Lord and by his grace have made their lives holy and carried out what the Father entrusted to them. In this way they attained their own salvation and at the same time cooperated in saving their brothers in the unity of the mystical body."

You see how they have substituted this so-called banking institution, which they have created, that doles out all this merit and all this righteousness and goodness at the discretion of the Church, and they have snatched away the pure perfect teaching of Paul's gospel, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. If we believe that and trust it, then we are saved, then we are believers. Then we can truly be called believers in the Lord Jesus.

The Roman Catholic system has driven out and has denied that first cardinal part of Paul's Gospel. They do not believe and they do not teach that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; that is, that he died for us as a substitute, that he paid the

penalty for our transgressions, and we are set free and go free from that judgment because of what Christ did, and by faith in him.

So, you see, they do not preach the true gospel, but rather a false one.

R C Sproul had this to say about this preaching of the false gospel by the Roman Catholic system:

“At the moment that the Roman Catholic Church condemned the biblical doctrine of justification by faith alone, she denied the gospel and ceased to be a legitimate church, regardless of all the rest of her affirmations of Christian orthodoxy. To embrace her as an authentic church while she continues to repudiate the biblical doctrine of salvation is a fatal attribution. We are living in a time when theological conflict is considered politically incorrect. But to declare peace when there is no peace is to betray the heart and the soul of the gospel.”

Not only so, but the Roman Catholic system of priesthood usurps Christ’s office as our one and only mediatorial priest. We spoke of this quite extensively some time ago. Hebrews 8:3-4 states that a priest must have something to offer, and that Christ must also have such an offering different from that of Aaron, since the law already assigned those animal sacrifices to those earthly priests.

As believers, the Scriptures proclaim we are all priests unto God, and our assigned offerings are praise, thanksgiving, worship, obedience and acts of charity toward the brethren. Those offerings are well pleasing unto the Lord.

But Christ also must have an offering. Hebrews teaches that his offering was better than Aaron’s, that he presented it not in earthly tabernacles, but in the heavenly place. Christ is a priest of a better covenant with better promises. His sacrifice was his own body offered up at Calvary to save his people. And he presented that offering in glory for us as our great high priest.

Eight times Hebrews stresses that Christ’s sacrifice was offered only once and that it forever purged our sins and made the saints perfect.

The argument is that since it was perfect and accomplished the everlasting redemption of Christ’s people, there is no need, nor even possibility, that it might be repeated.

The examples of Korah and Uzziah show the danger of usurping the duties of God’s ordained priests. This is the great evil of the Roman Catholic system and the Anglican system, that they either offer no legitimate offering or, worse, that they claim to repeat Christ’s offering for sin. Indeed, the Roman system claims that the offering of the mass is a propitiatory sacrifice for sin, which is utter blasphemy. Only Christ was authorized by God to present to him the unique offering for sin, God’s Lamb slain at Calvary.

Now, lest you wonder whether the Roman system actually teaches this about their mass, listen to what the Council of Trent says:

“In the mass a true and proper sacrifice is offered to God. The sacrifice of the mass is a propitiatory sacrifice. It ought to be offered for the living and the dead for sins, pains, satisfactions and other necessities.”

So you see that they have taken the Lord’s table and turned it into a blasphemous, false sacrifice that seeks to usurp and to supplement the one time sacrifice of the Savior at Calvary.

Contrariwise to this false view of the Lord’s table, we have the proper view expressed most particularly well by the writers of the Westminster Confession of Faith. In chapter XXIX at paragraph two they describe it this way:

“In this sacrament [the Lord’s table], Christ is not offered up to his Father, nor any real sacrifice made at all, for remission of sins of the quick or dead; but only a commemoration of that one offering up of himself, by himself upon the cross once for all, and a spiritual oblation of all possible praise unto God for the same; so that the popish sacrifice of the mass, as they call it, is most abominably injurious to Christ’s one only sacrifice, the only propitiation for all the sins of his elect.”

So, you see, the Roman Catholic system is not Christian, because it does not preach Christ’s gospel. Or, rather, it preaches a false gospel of its own manufacture. And that means the Roman Catholic system cannot be a church because it is not a called out assembly of believers. It is a called out assembly of unbelievers, those who do not believe in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. And rather, it usurps Christ and his true Church.

Some of the things that one comes across when one looks to see what are the claims made by the Roman Catholic system! They claim in the office of the pope that he takes on the names characterized of the three persons of the trinity. Consider, he claims to be the holy father. And yet this is a unique name for God the Father. He claims to be the head of the church, but Christ says he is the only Lord and head of the Church. He claims to be the vicar of Christ, and yet this is the office of the Holy Ghost to come as the Comforter, to come and speak in Christ’s name to Christ’s people.

He takes on the very name of God, the pope does. In the New York Catechism the pope is called, “the arbiter of the world, the supreme judge of heaven and earth, the judge of all, being judged by no one, God himself on earth.”

So, you see that the Roman Catholic system usurps the very positions and titles of the trinity of God.

But then, of course, it usurps, does it not, the intermediation of Christ. We have already

gone through that, that they offer this elaborate ritual of sacrifices that can never take away sin. They deny to the people the truth of the gospel of the efficacy of the one time offering for sin that Christ made. They elevate Mary to such a high level in the mediation that they actually claim that she is the co-mediator, that she mediates for us before Christ and before God the Father.

And then, of course, they usurp the authority of the Bible by imposing their own vain traditions of men in place of God's holy Word. And they have overcome and set aside the teachings of God and the teachings of the Scriptures by elevating the teachings of men. They have made vain, they have made of none effect, as Christ warned, the teachings of the Scriptures by their own vain traditions.

And then they have usurped the office of Christ as the one who remits our sins, by whom we obtain forgiveness, by their inserting a priest in between to hear confession and to have the presumptuousness to claim to remit sins, to forgive sins when only the Lord Jesus can do so.

So there are many ways in which the Roman Catholic system has usurped and overthrown the true Church of the Lord Jesus and has substituted a false church, an anti-church, if you will.

There are some interesting statements made by saints of olden times about this subject that are very appropriate for our review.

J. C. Ryle, the conservative Anglican bishop of Liverpool, had this to say in his essay on idolatry.

You know how often in the New Testament believers are warned against idolatry. They are warned against worshipping and bowing down before anything other than God himself, before the Lord Jesus Christ. And you would think to yourself, "Why would they warn against idolatry? None of us are going to go out and bow to a carved image, are we?"

And yet such a blasphemous thing has taken place. And Ryle has this to say in summary:

"Romanism in perfection is a gigantic system of church-worship, sacrament-worship, Mary-worship, saint-worship, image-worship, relic-worship, and priest-worship, that it is, in one word, a huge organized idolatry."

Old William Tyndale, one of the early translators of the Scriptures and a martyr for the Lord Jesus, had this to say in his exposition on 1 John:

"The bishop of Rome, that is the pope, made a law of his own to rule his church by and put Christ out of the way. All the bishops must swear unto the bishop of Rome and all of the curates unto the bishops. But all

foreswear Christ and his doctrine. Now though the bishop of Rome and his sects give Christ these names, yet in that they rob him of the effect and take the significations of his names unto themselves and make of him but a hypocrite as they themselves be. They be the right antichrists and deny both the Father and the Son for they deny the witness that the Father bore unto his Son and deprive the Son of all the power and glory that his Father gave unto him.”

Do you see what he is saying there? He is saying that the pope and his minions may not be the antichrist, but they are certainly anti-Christ because they have usurped Christ’s position and his titles and his authorities. They have taken unto themselves supposedly his power, and they have pushed him aside from being seated on the throne. Now they are seated on the throne and all men must do obeisance to them!

And then John Wesley wrote this in his notes on 2 Thessalonians 2:3 which describe the rise of that final antichrist, the man of sin:

“The falling away described is from the pure faith of the gospel and it must come first. This began even in the apostolic age. But the man of sin, the son of perdition eminently so called, is not come yet. However, in many respects, the pope has an indisputable claim to those titles. He is in an emphatical sense the man of sin as he increases all manner of sin above measure. And he is too properly styled the son of perdition as he has caused the death of numberless multitudes both of his opposers and followers, destroyed innumerable souls and will himself perish everlastingly. He is that opposeth himself to the emperor, once his rightful sovereign and that exalteth himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, commanding angels and putting kings under his feet, both of whom are called gods in Scripture, claiming the highest power, the highest honor, suffering himself not once only to be styled as God or vice God. Indeed, no less is implied in his ordinary title, most holy Lord or most holy Father, so that he sitteth enthroned in the temple of God, declaring himself that he is God, claiming the prerogatives which belong to God alone.”

So you see that in a right view or right analysis of the claims of the papacy, of the claims of the Roman system, not only does she deny the true gospel and preach a false one, but she also usurps so many of the claims and offices and prerogatives of the Lord Jesus and of God the Father.

The Westminster Confession puts it this way:

“There is no other head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ, nor can the pope of Rome in any sense be head thereof, but is that antichrist, that man of sin and son of perdition that exalts himself in the church against Christ and all that is called God’s.”

Finally, the words of Thomas Cranmer just before he was burnt at the stake by the papacy:

“As for the pope, I refuse him as Christ’s enemy and antichrist with all his false doctrines.”

This is the true position of the Roman Catholic system, not that it is the final manifestation of the antichrist, but that it has taken to itself anti-Christian gospel, anti-Christian powers, and anti-Christian titles, usurping the position and the throne of the Lord Jesus in his true Church.

You know, the Lord Jesus warned of this very sort of thing in his great Sermon on the Mount when he talked about wolves in sheep’s clothing, that is, those who would come, in Matthew seven at verse 15:

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?<sup>8</sup>

You know, it is a hard thing in these days to preach the truth about the Roman Catholic system, because they all look so religious and so spiritual, and they are clothed in such beautiful garments, and they have such a show of piety and of sincerity. And yet the objective truth of what they preach, the false gospel they proclaim, the liberties they take with Christ’s authority and power, the usurpation that they carry on, the way in which their whole system is an elaborate process to damn the souls of the poor deluded people who trust in them and follow after them, means that they really are wolves even though they look like sheep, even though they look as gentle as lambs. They are ravening wolves to tear and to destroy the people of this world.

And no better example, I think, of this, no better window into the soul of these kindly appearing, spiritual appearing, religious appearing people is to be found, than to read some extracts from Pope John Paul II’s last will and testament. He wrote this. He put a title in the top, *totus tuus* which means in Latin, “Completely in your hands.”

Now whose hands he leaves himself in will soon be seen, that they are not Christ’s hands. They are not God the Father’s hands. Remember, Christ committed his spirit into the hands of his Father. The people of the Lord Jesus often times consider that their souls and their bodies are entrusted into the arms of the blessed Savior!

But listen to what this so-called man of God, this so called spiritual leader of the Church had to say about whose hands he leaves his body and his soul entrusted to:

“Watch, therefore, for ye do not know on what day the Lord is coming.”<sup>9</sup>  
These words remind me of the last call which will happen at the moment

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<sup>8</sup> Matthew 7:15-16.



the Lord wishes. I desire to follow him and I desire that everything making up part of my earthly life should prepare me for this moment. I do not know when the moment will come, but like everything else, like everything else, I place it, too, in the hands of the mother of my master, *totus tuus*, completely in your hands, Mary.

“In the same maternal hands I leave everything and everyone with whom my life and vocation have linked me. In these hands I leave, above all, the Church as well as my nation and all of humanity.

“After my death I ask for masses and prayers.

“Today I wish to add only this: that each of us must bear in mind the prospect of death and must be ready to present himself before the Lord and judge who is at the same time Redeemer and Father. I, too, continually take this into consideration, entrusting that decisive moment to the mother of Christ and of the Church, to the mother of my hope.

“Once again, I wish to entrust myself totally to the Lord’s grace. He himself will decide when and how I must end my earthly life and pastoral ministry. In life and in death, *totus tuus*, in Mary immaculate. All the more deeply I now feel that I am totally in the hands of God and I remain continually at the disposal of my Lord entrusting myself to him in his immaculate mother, *totus tuus*.”

“Victory when it comes will be a victory through Mary,” he was often heard to declare. That is the real Pope John Paul II.

What worse, more tragic example does one need of how the Roman Catholic system has overthrown the power and the position and the love of Christ for his people, and has transferred it to other persons, to other entities who cannot save and who cannot exercise that mighty power on behalf of the one who trusts in them!

You see, his trust is not in Christ. It is more in the blessed virgin Mary.

You know, Paul had this to say about these false gospels in Galatians one at verse six. He said:

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said

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<sup>9</sup> Matthew 24:42.

before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.<sup>10</sup>

You see, what Paul is saying here is that it doesn't matter how glorious the person is, how exalted, how bright and shining, how spiritual they may be, whether they maybe claimed to be apostles, maybe they claim to be prophets, maybe they claim even to be angels from glory itself. None of that matters. The only thing that matters is: Does their gospel line up with what you have received in the Scriptures, what I preached to you? If not, whether they be angel or apostle or prophet, they are cursed of God if they preach any other gospel.

You see, this is the opposite of the way we do things. We look at things and we say, "Well, it must be true because a beautiful, powerful important, respected person with a rich history behind him and a powerful institution said it. It must be true!"

Oh, you see, Paul puts it the other way. He says, no matter how beautiful and glorious and respectable and persuasive is a false gospel taught, nevertheless it is a false gospel and it is cursed by God. It may appear to be blessed by men. It may appear to have the stamp of approval of great denominations and great institutions and many, many millions and even billions of people, but God says there is a curse on it if it is a false gospel.

God's Word calls the pope and his archbishops and his bishops and his priests and anybody who preaches Roman Catholic false doctrines, he calls them all accursed! It doesn't matter how noble they look or how gentle they look or how spiritual they look or how pious they look. God says his curse is upon them!

For, you see, every mass that is celebrated is a proclamation of a false gospel. It says, "Trust in this ritual for your salvation, for the taking away of your sins, for the propitiation of the wrath of God. Trust in this blasphemous mass. Trust in the works of penance and the keeping of the mass for the forgiveness of your sins from day to day. Trust in the baptism, the efficacy of the baptism for justification. Trust in all the works and the rituals of this church."

Every time they have a mass, it is a preaching of the false gospel. Every time they have a baptism, a christening, that is a proclamation of a false gospel. Every time they advocate or urge a person to go to a confession, they are preaching a false gospel. And God's curse is upon every last rite that they deliver to poor men dying in their beds. For, you see, it is a proclamation of a false gospel, and God's curse is on it.

Finally, we come to this fact: that Paul in Philippians three, which we read this morning, describes these false gospels by comparing them to the true gospel and to the life that he lived in repudiation of all the works of the flesh for righteousness.

You remember it says at the top, "Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Galatians 1:6-9.

The concision, of course, is the Judaizers who would add God's laws to the work of Christ as necessary for salvation. And then he goes on to describe what a great Judaizer he was before he came to Christ, and how he was perfect in all his ways.

And then he repudiates that. What does he say? That he count all that but loss!

In verse nine, he cries out that he might be found:

... not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.<sup>12</sup>

But here is the point, down at the bottom at verse 17:

“Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.”<sup>13</sup>

That means all this not walking in the flesh, not depending upon our own righteousness, but looking to Christ, looking to him, and looking to him, and looking to him again for all of our hope and all of our salvation, for all of our righteousness received from him alone by faith, and denying all the works of righteousness in ourselves, laying them all aside that we might renounce them all before God and claim only the righteousness of Christ! This is the example that we are to follow!

And then he says this in verse 18, “For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ.”<sup>14</sup>

You see, people who walk not in the way Paul walked, repudiating their own conduct as a basis of righteousness and relying only on Christ's righteousness, only his obedience and glories, and seeking to walk after him in faith and obedience; those who walk otherwise, those who teach otherwise, are the enemies of the cross of Christ.

You see, they have set aside the value of the cross of Christ and have substituted the value of their own work and of their own goodness, of their own rituals. And it says in the next verse that these people mind earthly things.

You see, they are carnally minded. They think that their salvation rests in the things and the actions that they do, in the plans they keep, in the rituals they perform, in the false teaching of a false gospel that they embrace. And Paul says these men are enemies of the cross of Christ. They mind earthly things.

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<sup>11</sup> Philippians 3:2.

<sup>12</sup> Philippians 3:9-10.

<sup>13</sup> Philippians 3:17.

<sup>14</sup> Philippians 3:18.

You see, the Roman Catholic system is a system of law works and law righteousness, a carnal system of man's design that is used to manipulate all of mankind, used to subjugate it to this Roman Catholic system, used to strip many, many riches and wonders and glories into the hands of the Roman Catholic hierarchy, an institution used to submit and subvert the souls and the bodies of men to the power of this false church and false gospel.

Its proponents and leaders are the enemies of the cross of Christ and God's curse is upon them.

And this conclusion about true Christianity and about the true Church must inform our analysis when we look at the Manhattan Declaration and its claim that all these institutions are Christ's Church and all these people, whether they preach a true gospel or a false gospel, are preaching the gospel of Christ and are fellow believers and fellow Christians.

So you see, it is no favor to cover up the true nature of the Roman Catholic system. It is no favor to them to lie to them, to smile and to treat them as if they are fellow believers, as if they are fellow Christians. There is no value in doing that, or pretending that their system is a real church. All that does is perpetuate the deception and the falsehood and, in fact, makes us a part of, approving the preaching of a false gospel.

How easy it is to be brought to this view of the Roman Catholic system. How easy it is for lost men to be trapped in it, to be brought to it, you see, because it has so much power and so much glory and so much majesty, such a rich history, so many people behind it, with so pious and godly acting and sounding leaders as you will find in that system -- all the kind of things that draw men, all the kind of carnal and physical attractions that we so easily fall for. It is like Babel of old. We can build a tower to reach unto the God of heaven itself.

We all love to be attracted to a beautiful, powerful, permanent, historical, respectable institution of man and to confuse it for the true Church of the living God.

In 2 Corinthians chapter four at verse three there is this telling text of Scripture.

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> 2 Corinthians 4:3-7.

You see, there is no excellency in Christ's true Church that the world will recognize. It is not a beautiful thing. It is not a powerful thing. It is not a grandiose thing. It doesn't have well respected leaders and large masses of people and great political power and influence. And yet the God of this world has used all of those things to blind people, to cause them to seek after a false gospel and to crowd into false churches.

And yet where the Church is, where the gospel is truly preached, it is a thing of simplicity. It is a thing of humility. It is a thing of compassion and love. But most important of all, all the glory stays with the Lord. None of it should come to his people. And as soon as you start trying to build a faith or a church or an institution which directs glory towards men, you know you are off on the wrong road.

Paul says that there is no excellency in any of us, but only in the gospel of Christ, only in the power of God. You see, the glorious light is not the glorious light of the things of this world, not of the institutions of this world, the trappings of institutions of men. But it is the light of the gospel that comes into dead, dark, cold hearts and livens them up and draws them unto the Savior!

The Lord's table reminds us of the perfect sacrifice of the Savior. You see, this is no ritual that saves. How horrible that the devil has corrupted even the Lord's last meal, the Lord's last supper that he left us, turned it into a saving ritual.

No, no. The Lord Jesus has left it only as a remembrance, only as a celebration of the only act that can save any man: the death of Christ at Calvary!

It is only a remembrance that expresses our thanksgiving for what the Lord Jesus has done for us. That is why we do it in simplicity. That is why we do it in quiet. We do it in humility, because nothing can eclipse the glory of what it represents, that death that Christ died for us, by which he forever saves his people from their sins, by which all and once and for all we are made perfect through the Lord Jesus and the death that he offered.

The old hymn writer described that death this way:

Jesus my Savior died, nailed to the tree.  
Cruelly crucified, stricken for me.  
Darkness there shut him in,  
God judged him for my sin.  
Jesus my soul to win, died there for me.

Jesus my Savior rose out of the grave.  
Captive he led my foes, my soul to save.  
Jesus in heaven now,  
Glory upon his brow,  
Called to men below, sinners to save!

Let's give thanks for the Lord's table and for the true gospel that it represents, by which we are justified when we trust in the Lord Jesus.

I would like to ask Brother Whitten if he would give thanks for the bread that reminds us of the body that is broken for us.

And the Scriptures tell us that on the night he was betrayed he took bread and he blessed it and he broke it and he said, "Take and eat. This is my body which is broken for you. This do in remembrance of me."

Let's give thanks for the cup that reminds us of the blood poured out for us, an atonement by our Savior.

*Oh God our Father, we rejoice and come into your presence with thanksgiving and singing for so great a redemption as you wrought for us in Christ, when you sent him to die on dark Calvary in the place of his people; that he offered up himself one time for all a perfect sacrifice, and that he has presented it before the heavenly throne and pleads that sacrifice for his people for all time.*

*We thank you for that blood that he poured out, that blood of the new covenant by which it made possible that you could be just and the justifier of those who trust in Jesus, by which our sins could be laid aside and forgotten, never recalled against us anymore for they have already been judged in Jesus.*

*We thank you for that precious blood that washes away all our guiltiness and shame. We thank you that the blood shall never lose its power. It avails for us forever, and it never loses its power! And we thank you that we have not to repeat that offering, not to mimic it in any way, not to offer up bread and wine in the place of Christ or make pretence or suggestions of such, nor to worship and bow down to it, but only to remember and celebrate that blood which the Lord Jesus shed for us all those years ago on the cross, and to rejoice in it, to know that our sins are taken away forever by that blood.*

*Thank you that we can rest in the work of Christ, that all the work is done and his yoke is easy and his burden is light. Help us to rest in Christ and not to break his sabbath. Help us not to ever fall into the trap of substituting our own works for the perfect work of Christ; and bless us as we go this week, that we will remember the body and blood of Christ that was shed for us. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.*

The Scriptures tell us after they had supped, he took the cup and he blessed it and he said, "Drink ye all of it. This cup is the new covenant in my blood for the remission of sins. Do it as often as ye do it in remembrance of me."

The Scriptures tell us that as often as we eat this bread and drink this cup we do preach the Lord's death till he comes.

Let's stand and sing number 100 in the black book:

“Not all the blood of beasts  
on Jewish altars slain  
could grant the guilty conscience peace  
or wash away its stain.

“But Christ the heavenly Lamb  
took all our sins away!”