

Pirating in a Works Gospel and Other Falsehoods from Roman Catholicism

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Manhattan Declaration Betrayal – Part 3

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Bible Text: Romans 3:19-28; Titus 2:11-14

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We continue this morning in the third installment in the discussion of the Manhattan Declaration. Previously, we had discussed some basic foundational issues necessary to understand and to frame the discussion properly.

The Manhattan Declaration brings together Catholics and Evangelicals to stand against abortion, gay marriage, and attacks upon religious liberty. But in so doing, the identity of Bible Christianity and of Christ's true Church is confused, and the enemies of the cross are given aid and comfort by true believers.

Our culture has corrupted the true meaning of the terms Christian and Church, so that they have become cultural and political categories. True Christians trust in Christ's gospel for their eternal salvation. All true believers make up Christ's body, the Church. That Church appears in local congregations as called out believers who assemble together.

But carnal men long for temporal organization, and power and structure. This desire, first witnessed at Babel, has corrupted the concept of church, so that now we call churches those institutions which men have constructed. There is no scriptural warrant for the structures and organizations we have today, such as denominations, the Roman Catholic system, or the various state churches which have grown up since the time of Constantine.

The Roman Catholic system preaches a false gospel that substitutes ritual and good works for the true righteousness that only comes from Christ. That system also usurps the offices of Christ and promotes the rank idolatry of the blasphemous mass and idol worship.

Every Roman mass, every baptism performed by Rome, every confession that is urged upon its members, is a false gospel, is the proclamation of a false gospel that God says is accursed. This is so because they are beseeched by Romanism to put their trust for their salvation in those rituals, those masses, those baptisms and those confessions. And such persons as popes and bishops and priests who deny the imputed righteousness of Christ in

exchange for a false righteousness according to the keeping of the law, the Scriptures say, are the enemies of the cross of Christ.

Therefore, it should always be asked whether it is proper to join with those whom God says are cursed, and do so in the name of the Lord Jesus.

And then the last time we spoke on this subject, we talked about some of the falsehoods found in the Manhattan Declaration. The declaration brings together what it calls Orthodox, Catholic and Evangelical Christians, as what it calls the Church, to stand against various modern social evils. The language that saturates that document includes non Christians and anti Christian religious systems and institutions -- such as the Roman Catholic system -- as if they are Christians and as if they are Christ's Church. But a true Christian trusts Christ's gospel and true churches are congregations of true Christians.

To embrace this sociological, ecumenical and quasi political usage of the words Christian and Church is to contribute to the confusion as to their true meaning, and to give support and comfort to their preaching of a false gospel that cannot save.

For the Roman Catholic system is not a true church and its false gospel does not save. Yet the Manhattan Declaration falsely declares the Roman Catholic system part of Christ's Church, and its adherents true Christians. Thus, at its core, the declaration embraces and promotes a lie, for it calls non Christians, Christians.

True Christians ought not to sign on to such lies, because God demands that we deal always in the truth.

Indeed, dozens of leaders of the Roman Catholic system are included as Christians, but because they preach a false gospel, God's Word declares them to be accursed as enemies of the cross of Christ.

Even in Christ's day, religious folk hated to be told that, no matter how much they thought themselves to be God's true people, they were not right with God. Just because a person has an outward show of good works and of piety and of religiosity doesn't make him a Christian.

It is good to stand against injustice and oppression wherever we find it, but the Lord's Table reminds us that at Calvary, Christ wrought our salvation in the midst of and in spite of the lies, the mob rule, the injustice, the torture and the murder.

And for that we can be truly grateful, that those things that are so overwhelming to us as mere men, those evils that are taking over our world before our very eyes, are as nothing against the power of the mighty Jesus to save!

So today I want to make three additional points about the Manhattan Declaration, and I hope that next time I speak on this, that I will conclude with a discussion of Scriptural

responses for believers when we see false gospels proclaimed, and when we see believers gather around and join together with those who preach a false gospel.

There is, first of all, in the Manhattan Declaration, a great hypocrisy that is embraced with regard to the subject of freedom of conscience. Freedom of conscience is something that the Manhattan Declaration speaks to and claims to support.

Now, I will give you two quotes from the Manhattan Declaration with regard to this subject of liberty and freedom of conscience. In part of the preamble it says, "In Europe, Christians challenged the divine claims of kings and successfully fought to establish the rule of law and balance of governmental powers, which made modern democracy possible."

And then later on in the document, in a section that describes their stand against violations of freedom of conscience, they say this: "Christians confess that God alone is Lord of the conscience. Immunity from religious coercion is the cornerstone of an unconstrained conscience. No one should be compelled to embrace any religion against his will, nor should persons of faith be forbidden to worship God according to the dictates of conscience or to express freely and publicly their deeply held religious convictions. What is true for individuals applies to religious communities as well."

And, of course, they then proceed from that to the fact that they don't believe that people who are called Christians should be forced to provide abortion services or to acknowledge gay marriage and the like, because it would be a forcing of their conscience; it would be to cause them to obey man rather than God.

But, of course, the great elephant in the room in all of this is that the Roman Catholic system has a thousand year history of violence against the consciences of men, and of forcing people by threat of torture, and even upon pain of death, to conversion, and to their assent to doctrines to which they could not in good conscience embrace!

There is an attempt by this document to paper over that grotesque history of abuse of freedom of conscience that the Roman system is heir to. They would snatch the Christian reformed tradition and heritage of developing a system and pattern of respect for religious liberty and for freedom of conscience, to snatch that heritage and clothe these Romanists with that heritage, to which they have no right or claim. For the Roman Catholic system long was a proponent of the use of state power to impose religious and spiritual conformity. And if you read the old encyclicals and so forth of the popes, you will see that the pope claimed power not only over the church so called, but also over the affairs of the state. The means by which he could do so was that the king or the emperor was a member of his church, and therefore he could constrain his actions all the way to the point of finding people guilty of heretical doctrine (often times of doctrines which were clearly taught in the Scripture which the Roman system viewed as heretical), and then handing them over to the state for execution. This happened many, many, many, many times, especially during what we call the Middle Ages.

And this desire to use the power of the state, to use physical force to impose religious views, and to impose matters of faith on people, is completely contrary to the tenor and teaching of Christ and of the apostles in the Scriptures.

And yet it grew up out of a desire for what is called the unity of the Church. How can we have one Church? How can the Church be unified unless everyone has some general agreement on important doctrinal issues? And how can there be general agreement when people will disagree?

And it is not good enough to cast them out of the church, for they will go start another church, and then we won't have unity. So we have got to use this force and power of the State to create conformity, so that we will be one powerful, strong so called church.

And so this quest for unity and for the purity of the church, and the confusion of the church with the state, i.e., the interests of the so called church with the interests of the state, becomes the great motive for the use of compulsion. And soon they were burning people at the stake for denying the blasphemous doctrines of the mass and of transubstantiation. They were burning people at the stake for refusing to submit to the power and authority of the pope.

And they used torture, they used what we now call waterboarding, or the water cure. Some people have said that it was a parody on forced baptism, meant to drive out all the evil from the subject. They used murder on a large scale to wipe out dissent and to enforce conformity, often by burning at the stake. They massacred many, many tens of thousands of Albigenians and of Hussites and of Huguenots, the last two at least being groups of people we know were true Christians. And they were put to death on the orders of Rome for the sake of forcing their conscience, to abide by the false teachings of the Roman Catholic system.

And this is also the case in some of the Crusades that were launched, in which the use of the sword was taken up against Muslims or pagans or heathen in their own lands. I'm not talking about defending western lands, but about actually sending forces, troops of forces into foreign lands, and putting to the sword those of different faiths, false faiths and pagans, in the interests of advancing the so called cause of Christ, and of his so called church, and of their so called Christianity!

And even today, 800 to 1000 years later, those acts of cruelty and barbarity in the name of Christianity are brought up as an affront, as an indignity, as a cause of offence in an area of the world where people hold grudges for centuries, and requite slights and evils against them many, many years later. And certainly the Inquisition forced people to profess faith they did not believe, especially for those poor Jews who lived in Spain and in other places.

And so there is an evil in this document in the whitewash that it attempts, especially as entered into by the Evangelical signers who ought to know better. They ought not to go along with an attempt to cloak the vast Roman Catholic system (that is falsely described

as part of the Church, as Christianity down through the years), to cloak that system in all its barbarity and evil with the mantel of a history of standing up for freedom of conscience, for liberty and for the separation of the ecclesiastical and the Church, and the separation of the faith of people from the power of the state. These ideas were developed so much by our Baptist forbearers, who opposed the hierarchical system in the Church, and sought to advance religious liberty not only in the state, but also amongst the people of God in their churches as well.

And then the second point that I want to make about the Manhattan Declaration is the subtle way in which it begins to promote Roman Catholic social and political doctrine, and how it is spirited into the Manhattan Declaration, the use of certain catch phrases and code words.

It is possible that many of the people who signed it did so oblivious to the double meanings or the true meanings of these words. But one of the authors, one of the George brothers who helped write this, is a very prominent proponent of Roman Catholic social justice and political theory. And he has very carefully used these words, which have special meanings that are repugnant to people who believe in liberty, to people who believe in limited government, and hopefully to Protestants and to true Christians as well.

They have used these words and have brought them into this document, and gotten a whole bunch of people to sign on to it. But these doctrines of the Roman Catholic system, these political and sociological and economic doctrines, are opposed to and have for many years been opposed to the free market, and opposed to notions of limited government, to keeping the sphere of government to the smallest possible area, and to extending to people economic liberty and the right to do with their property as they see fit.

Some people will call it a left wing social and political theology that the Catholic Church embraces. It is a little more complicated than that. For the Catholic Church has always stood against Communism, a system in which all religion is outlawed and in which there is no private property.

And the Roman Catholic system cannot be called truly Socialist in the sense that all the means of production are owned by the state or by the society at large. This is also the same reason why it is not accurate to say that Mr. Obama is a Communist or a Socialist, because he does not publicly advocate the abolition of private property, or that the government should own everything (although he does want to socialize certain aspects of the economy).

But rather the description of the Roman Catholic economic and political system might be seen as very much akin to the extremely liberal welfare state system which we see growing up around us. It can also be seen as consistent with a Fascist system. And a Fascist system is a system in which there is private ownership, but the government restricts and controls by law and regulation the way in which the property may be used, and forces property owners to act in ways they wouldn't otherwise act for the good of the

state or for the good of the people, as it were. So they don't go so far as to socialize the property, but they construct all sorts of regulations and laws around it that restrict the use of the property, and do so for political and social purposes, by not allowing the owner of the property to use his property for his own benefit and for his own industry.

So you see that this system, which we see growing up in our own country and across the world, is different from Communism, and it is different from Socialism. It is the new Big Brother, the new Totalitarianism that slowly creeps up and strangles the liberty of the people. The liberties are stripped one by one from the people, for the common good. We see this in action at local government levels, don't we, where some do-gooders come along and want to pass another ordinance against smoking in restaurants or against, you know, this or that, or limiting what kind of signs you can put up and so forth.

You see, they are not Communists. They are not even Socialists. But they do have a whiff of the spirit of Totalitarianism in what they do, because they strip away your property rights by law, and do it supposedly for the common good.

Now as to this phrase "the common good" -- we might think it means for the good of everybody, or it might also be used to mean a good that is held in common like the air we breathe. But in Roman Catholic teaching, it has a particular, special meaning. That phrase "the common good" is used eight times in the Manhattan Declaration, eight times it is shoe horned in, usually in sentences next to the word "justice," which also has a special meaning in Roman Catholic political and economical and social theology.

One entry on the internet describes Catholic social teaching in this way.

"The common good is a concept central to the Catholic social teaching tradition beginning with the foundational document *Rerum Novarum*, a papal encyclical by Pope Leo XIII, issued in 1891 to combat the excesses of both laissez-faire capitalism on the one hand and communism on the other. In this letter, Pope Leo guarantees the right to private property while insisting on the role of the state to require a living wage. The means of production were considered by the pope to be both private property requiring state protection, and a dimension of the common good requiring state regulation."

So, you see, Pope Leo XIII has in his *Rerum Novarum* encyclical the incipient seeds of Fascism, because the property is still owned by the owner, but yet it is regulated by the state for the common good.

This view of the common good and of social and political and economic theory that the Roman Catholic system has embraced goes back to Saint Thomas Aquinas, who developed an elaborate political, social, and economic theory that, in turn, drew from the writings of the Greeks, Aristotle in particular. And his writing and the positions that the papacy has taken since 1891 are shot through with all sorts of inconsistencies and misunderstandings of the way markets actually work, or the way economic value is determined, or the way people in freedom exchange goods and services.

It seeks to use the old procrustean system of determining value and imposing it from without, mostly called the “labor theory” of value, that a thing is worth the labor that is put into it. And, of course, this is a false view of value. Value in the economy is determined by what a man will exchange for something else, so that things can have different values depending on the use they are to be put to, depending on the desire of the person that purchases them. You might like cherry pies and be willing to pay five dollars each. The next man down the street might hate them, and you couldn’t give him one! So what is the value of a cherry pie? It depends on who is engaged in the transaction, doesn’t it?

But if you have the system of Roman Catholic doctrine on these subjects, you introduce all sorts of mistakes into your economic analysis and in your political system.

And so they have pushed constantly since the late 1800s for all sorts of social economic regulations at the state level. They have pushed for minimum wages. They have pushed against child labor. They have pushed for trade unionism having more power. They have pushed for national health care. They have pushed for welfare. They have pushed for all sorts of things that they want the state to impose on property owners for the common good.

John Robbins wrote a book called *Ecclesiastical Megalomania*, in which he details with hundreds of quotations from papal encyclicals and so forth, this political, economic and social theory of the Roman Catholic system; it is social liberalism, and he documents how all the pernicious so-called improvements made by the New Deal and the Great Society were the official social justice teachings of the Roman Catholic system since the late 1800s.

In fact, one of the chief movers behind these social justice issues -- where the government legislates and orders regulations that are improper against business for the benefit of the “common good” -- one of them was a prominent Roman Catholic bishop who joined as part of the New Deal cabinet under Roosevelt to see that these things were implemented.

If you read this book by John Robbins, your eyes will be opened about why so many Catholic politicians are so liberal, and so left wing, and so big government. It’s because the pope and the papacy has determined that these policies are good and proper and just. Therefore he advocates using the force of the state to impose them on everybody, just like the Romanists did in the Middle Ages when they used the force of the state to impose their religious and doctrinal teachings on people who didn’t want to agree with them.

There is an article that I came across published in *Politico* a few weeks ago that highlights the impact of the Roman Catholic’s false anti-freedom political and economic doctrine in the health care debate. And it goes like this -- I will just read a few extracts:

“If the House agrees to abortion limits, Richard Dorflinger, an associate director of the US Conference on Catholic Bishops says, ‘Clerics will work to move the upper chamber,’” that is, to approve the Obama health care plan.

“The Roman Catholic bishops signaled Thursday that if agreement is reached with House leaders on anti-abortion language, the church would work to get the votes needed to protect the provisions in the Senate [that is the health care plan], and thereby advance the shared goal with Democrats of health care reform.”

Then he says this: “With a large network of Catholic hospitals and the church’s gospel of social justice, the bishops have long called for expanded health coverage. As Kathy Sally, Director of Domestic Policy for the Conference said last fall, ‘The bishops see it as a moral imperative and a national priority.’”

You see how quick the Roman Catholic system is to take their moral imperatives and transform them into compulsory laws, whereby the state imposes on people the moral imperatives that the Roman system embraces. And so now they have embraced universal health care for everybody as a moral imperative. Well, then we have got to pass a law forcing people to buy and to sell and to make available this health care, haven’t we!

And then it says this. “In the November House debate, the bishops moved forcibly to squelch Republican efforts to derail the Stupack Amendment.”

Now the Stupack Amendment was the amendment that would make the health care plan acceptable to the Roman Catholic system and what they did was—and this is a shameful thing—they used fighting against abortion as a tool to force through this iniquitous health care plan! In other words, against other people who wanted to derail the whole thing—as well they might, for it is unlawful and improper—the Roman Catholic bishops actually used their position on abortion and lobbied their position on abortion to make sure that this socialized health care system was adopted!

It is a remarkable thing, that people haven’t noticed, that the Roman Catholic system’s position on abortion, as much as conservative evangelical Christians might agree with it, is wedded to this iniquitous view of big government that will take away our liberty. The actual fight by the Roman Catholic system to stop abortion is arm in arm with their fight to impose socialized medicine on the people of this country.

Pro life action was used as a means to ensure that this health care proposal that destroys freedom and that moves towards socialism would be brought forward in this country.

Richard Bennett, a converted priest from the Roman Catholic system, now a Christian, has a very interesting analysis of the social and political theology aspects of the Manhattan Declaration that I would like to read to you here.

He writes this:

“Quite overtly, the movement is to propagate the Roman Catholic social agenda, which comes to light by the words ‘justice’ and ‘the common good.’”

He is speaking of what is in the Manhattan Declaration:

Justice in Roman Catholic social doctrine is specifically defined. It now includes “economic” justice, which is a buzz word for the call for “redistribution of wealth from richer countries to poorer ones.” The U.S. Catholic Bishops’ 1995 Pastoral letter, “Economic Justice for All,” states, “In Catholic teaching, human rights include not only civil and political rights but also economic rights...all people have a right to life, food, clothing, shelter, rest, medical care, education, and employment.”

However, in Scripture, God does not speak in terms of rights. The Biblical mandate safeguards against injustice and grants men responsibility both in owning private property and in making their own economic decisions. It allows men the freedom to act with the dignity of beings created in God’s image. It also allows men the freedom to fail in their endeavors. The importance of true economics is that it does not primarily offer riches and extravagance, but rather its primary offer is one of freedom and personal responsibility to exercise one’s role before God in His universe.

Such responsibility puts him face to face with God’s law, or his own law, and his own inevitable failure to live up to either. It gives him a chance to move beyond what he can see and control, and to seek for real truth. It is here that the supreme authority of the Bible and the Gospel bring to him the truth that he needs. The Bible alone teaches him truthfully of God’s sovereignty and shows him his need for a Savior. He then can understand that his dependence ought to be on God through Jesus Christ.

Conversely, the thrust behind “economic rights,” – i.e., the “redistribution of wealth,” for which the Roman Catholic social agenda calls—seeks to transfer an individual’s responsibility before God and, therefore, his dependence on God, to a demoralizing dependence on the civil state or on the Roman Church. These two institutions then become either a god or the unauthorized intermediary for the true God.

The term “the common good,” mentioned eight times in the Manhattan Declaration, is also a Roman Catholic social agenda buzz phrase. Thus, the official papal Compendium states:

“The Church’s social teaching moreover calls for recognition of the social function of any form of private ownership that clearly refers to its necessary relation to the common good.... The universal destination of goods entails obligations on how goods are to be used by their legitimate owners.... From this there arises the duty on the part of owners not to let the goods in their possession go idle and to channel them to productive activity, even entrusting them to others who are desirous and capable of putting them to use in production.”

That is the end of the quote from the Roman Catholic compendium, the papal compendium.

Do you see what that means? It means that while you might own something, the Roman Catholic system claims that you have a moral duty to let other people use it for their benefit without regard to your benefit.

And, interestingly enough, I had a long debate with a Communist who is an Atheist just a few months ago, who took the very position that the Roman system takes -- that if a person has a factory or a building or a field that he is not using to its utmost efficiency, he has a duty to allow the people to take control of it and to use it for their benefit to make a profit off of it!

Richard Bennett then concludes:

What very few realize is that this concept of “the common good” in Roman Catholic teachings involves enforcement by the civil governments in which every person is required to participate. It is this that Pope Benedict called for in his encyclical, “Caritas in Veritate” of June 29, 2009, and for which the official Papal Compendium also calls.

How many of the Evangelicals who have signed the Manhattan Declaration have understood that what appears to be a conservative, Bible-based concern over “justice and the common good”—words that in America unmistakably hearken back to the Preamble to the US Constitution—have here been formed into a deceptive tool to be used against them? When Evangelical Christians sign the Manhattan Declaration, the Roman Catholic social agenda—with its enforced moral obligations—is being advanced.

That agenda stands diametrically opposed to the Bible, to the U.S. Constitution, and to the Bill of Rights. When fully formed, the larger political-religious global institution envisioned by the Papacy will be fully coercive, as it has been in every totalitarian regime. Thus, when the Manhattan Declaration speaks of how Roman Catholicism has stood for freedom when it does not, and never has, it is clear that Robert George and his Roman Catholic advisors have specifically laid a trap for unsuspecting Evangelicals in particular.

And then we come to the third point that I want to make about this declaration, the most important point. And that is the compromise of the gospel.

Now last time we spoke on the general problem of embracing false Christians, embracing false churches and embracing people that the Bible says are the enemies of Christ’s cause and calling them Christians. And one of the problems with signing on to that lie, is the

implication that the readers will naturally draw from such a profession: that there is agreement here amongst these people about the core doctrines of Christianity and of the Church, and that there is an acceptability granted by the signers of this document, an acceptability of the gospel that is preached by these persons and by these institutions; when, in fact, the gospel that is preached is confused, as some of them are preaching a true gospel, some are preaching a false gospel.

And so in general, by signing this document that assents to the lie of calling people Christians who are not, the signers imply the acceptability of the false gospel that is preached by those false Christians who are signatories to this document.

Now the response to that has been to say, “Oh, no, this is just a political document. This is just co-belligerency on these important political and moral issues. Signing this document doesn’t implicate the gospel. It doesn’t require that we agree with each other on the gospel.”

The problem of course, is that you might say, technically, that might be true according to the language of the document; but nevertheless it is going to make that implication to the people who are outside the document looking at it, and seeing that it presents a united front amongst people who are not Christians with Christians and, therefore, there will be an assumption that we all agree. We do all sign this document, and we all agree about the most important thing about Christianity, which is the gospel.

And so, denying that it implicates the gospel ignores the way that folks will read it and the conclusions that they will draw.

This is the point we made last time. But beyond such general concerns, there is the plain text which cannot be ignored. We didn’t get into this last time.

For the Manhattan Declaration *does* declare that the whole basis of the position of the signers is driven by the gospel. The Manhattan Declaration declares that their whole basis for signing this, for pursuing this, for fighting for these religious liberties and against these injurious notions of abortion and same sex marriage, the whole purpose and reason behind going forward with this agenda, is driven by the gospel. The document says that in black and white.

Listen, for example to what it says in the preamble: “Christians are called today 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.”

Do you see here where they are saying that we are called to proclaim the gospel of costly grace? We are called to do these things by the gospel.

So they state right out front in the document that their motive for pursuing this agenda is their duty under the gospel, their call to the gospel.

Now what is this gospel of costly grace that they refer to? We talked about that several weeks ago. The writers of the Manhattan Declaration refer with approval to the notion of the gospel of costly grace, which is taken from the writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He was a Neo-Orthodox theologian who nevertheless bravely stood against Hitler and the Nazis, and was put to death because of it. He was greatly vexed by the German church's refusal to stand against Hitler's barbarism. He concluded that German Christians had been sold a gospel of cheap grace which required no sacrifice of discipleship to Christ. His view was that true grace is costly because it demands a heavy burden of following after Christ.

While there is no doubt a cost to following the Savior, his grace is completely free to his people. When that grace operates in a converted believer, his values are all changed, so that the perceived cost is, as Paul put it, refused up against the glorious knowledge of Christ! Grace was costly to our Lord Jesus. He paid all the cost at Calvary.

The gospel of costly grace cannot be urged upon true Believers, because if you are truly saved by the grace of God and you have truly embraced Christ's gospel, you will not see the cost of discipleship as a cost at all, for God will change your values around. You will rather see the cost as all Christ's, and any duty that you have towards the Lord Jesus will be responded to or provided with great alacrity and rejoicing and joy. And all the things that would have been costly to you as a lost man, are now made easy by the grace of God.

So there is a flaw in preaching the gospel of costly grace, because you are saying to a sinner that following after Christ for them is costly because they are not regenerate and they are not willing to bear that cost. And if they were truly regenerate, they would be willing to bear the cost, for it will be as nothing against the glory revealed in Christ!

But let's read that statement again: "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 Manhattan Declaration signers put their names to this, stating that their motivation is to be true to the gospel. Our compulsion, they say, to take these stands is our view of the gospel of costly grace.

They don't mean by that the cost to Jesus. By grace's "cost," they mean their works in obeying Christ. But, you see, what they said here, if you understand the terminology, is that we are compelled by the good works that the gospel requires us to perform to carry forward with this political agenda.

When you put it that way, you can see the stark way in which the Manhattan Declaration proclaims not the true gospel, but the very false gospel that its supporters claim it doesn't

implicate at all. The gospel drives us, they proclaim. But our description of that gospel in this very document is this, that it requires us to do these good works.

Well, that *is* a false gospel! That is a false gospel, isn't it? It is a horrible position! It completely upends the true gospel. It fits right in with the works righteousness gospel of the Roman Catholic system, whose American leaders are the chief signatories to this document.

I submit to you that any time a Christian, a true Christian, talks about the gospel requiring us to perform good works, that that is a very dangerous way to speak, especially when one is speaking to an audience of people who are unregenerate, when one is speaking to a religious system that embraces and promotes a false gospel of good works.

It is very dangerous to speak such confusion with those who already preach a false gospel. It is very dangerous to speak that way, rather than to make the truth clear, which is that good works necessarily flow from a converted heart that has been changed by Christ's gospel.

This Manhattan Declaration implies that good works *are* the gospel -- that they *are* the gospel. Listen to this quote which confirms this view:

“We as Christians embrace our obligation to speak and act in defense of these truths. We pledge to each other, and to our fellow believers, that no power on earth, be it cultural or political, will intimidate us into silence or acquiescence. It is our duty to proclaim the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in its fullness both in season and out of season. May God help us not to fail in that duty.”

Now, what are we to conclude from this statement? You see, they are saying that the social and political statement they are making here is a proclamation of the gospel, and nobody is going to stop them from doing it.

But it is not a proclamation of the gospel. It is a proclamation perhaps of God's law. But it is not a proclamation of the gospel. And yet the statement here made is that we will perform our duty to proclaim the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in its fullness. And that is what we are doing in this declaration and in the actions which we promise to take in this declaration.

So, you see, they have said that Christ's gospel is the performance of good and necessary social and political works. And we are going to go forward with them and no one is going to stop us.

But this is not, of course, the true gospel. It completely excludes and replaces Christ's gospel!

And then, finally, another quote at the very end of the declaration, where the writers say this: “Going back to the earliest days of the church, Christians have refused to compromise their proclamation of the gospel.”

They are using that as an analogy to what they are doing. They are not going to be stopped from making this political statement. They are not going to be stopped from acting out this political statement. They think that is the same as the apostles refusing to be stopped proclaiming the gospel. These people that wrote this actually believe that this political action, these political statements, *are* the proclamation of Christ’s gospel!

Michael Horton, who is famous for his participation in the Whitehorse Inn program, has this very revealing statement to make of the Manhattan Declaration:

This declaration continues this tendency to define “the gospel” as something other than the specific announcement of the forgiveness of sins and declaration of righteousness solely by Christ’s merits. The document recites a host of Christian contributions to Western culture, adding, “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 so forth.

The declaration concludes, “It is our duty to proclaim the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...” In an interview, Mr. Colson repeatedly referred to this document as a defense of the gospel and the duty of defending these truths as our common proclamation of the gospel as Roman Catholics, Orthodox, and evangelicals.

Having participated in conversations with Mr. Colson over this issue, I can assure readers that this is not an oversight. He shares with Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI the conviction that defending the unborn is a form of proclaiming the gospel. Although these impressive figures point to general revelation, natural law, and creation in order to justify the inherent dignity of life, marriage, and liberty, they insist on making this interchangeable with the gospel.

Now this points up a problem with this declaration, that is that they have confused law and gospel. You see, what they are doing is proclaiming what they view to be God’s law with regard to abortion and marriage and religious liberty. They are proclaiming the law, in other words, and they are calling it the gospel.

The law doesn’t save us, does it? No man can keep the law. Righteousness cannot come by the law. The law doesn’t save the world. Proclaiming the law won’t save the world, which is the purpose of the gospel, to save men’s souls. It might make it better if we

would obey the law, but we can't. We can't obey it without the transformation of the true gospel.

It is an amazing thing to me that these men, these Evangelicals that signed this document with Roman Catholics, have not seen this blatant confusion of the law with the gospel, and of the implicit embrace in this document of the Roman Catholic system's teaching of the gospel as the keeping of the law; which is basically what their gospel consists of.

The Manhattan Declaration preaches the law as the gospel, and it shoves the real gospel out of the way and out of view. The practical effect of all this is to pronounce and embrace law works as salvation.

This is, of course, the meaning of the old social gospel that we used to all speak out against. People would go out and they would preach clean water and redistribution of property and all that kind of stuff, and that would be their gospel, that would be the salvation of the third world countries.

Well, this Manhattan Declaration has, perhaps, substituted more noble and less objectionable proposals for improving society, but nevertheless they have stated very clearly in this document that these improvements and these pursuits are the preaching and the proclamation of the gospel. And by implication they will therefore be the salvation of the nation.

You know, I have personal experience -- and some others in this congregation have as well -- with the devout, conservative Roman Catholic people, friends of ours who believe in their hearts that their obedience to this conservative sounding law position regarding abortion or regarding same sex marriage or whatever -- they believe personally that their obedience to these things is their very salvation, that their very salvation depends upon it, and that they are pursuing these admittedly good objectives as necessary for their salvation and to ensure their salvation.

They call being faithful in these law matters of public morality and decency, they call them acts of charity, or having a spirit of charity. And, of course, we know that that term is a Romanist term of art leading on into the production of merit towards everlasting life. And these people actually believe this. They actually will uphold their hard work against abortion or against gay marriage or the like as emblems of their redemption, of their salvation, as the method by which they know that they are pleasing to God, and that he will receive them one day when they pass away.

And many conservative Christians might say, "We want the 'church's' voice to be heard. We have to all get together as the Christian community so that we won't be impotent in these matters, so that we will be able to flex our muscle and bring about change in our country. And you know, it is only as we join together that we can have the heft necessary to be effective in the pursuit of these ideals."

But we ought to remember that that thinking is the very road that was traveled to develop the Roman Catholic system that enslaved and corrupted and opposed and suppressed the truth. The whole purpose of getting together, of consolidation, of creating a united front, is what causes these destructive institutions to grow until they finally take over and oppress the people. It is the reason that we have the bane of the denominational systems that at the same time divide true Christians and propagate false teachings and apostasy. It is the same reason behind the felt need for big government.

We have all got to get together to use our power and our force for good, and to use the force of law to create all these goods. It is the same reason behind the building of the tower of Babel. We have got to all join together so we can have some power, so we can have some influence, so we can have some heft.

I think that three statements I will read really put the finger on the problem here as far as the Church, as far as the true Church, as far as true Christians are concerned being sucked into going along with this ecumenical document.

Number one: do we really want to have our voice be heard about these political matters as a church and as Christians more than we want our voice to be heard about the truth about Christ's gospel?

And then there is this statement by Alistair Begg who refused to sign the declaration: "The necessary co-belligerence, as far as I am concerned, can never be rooted in a gospel other than that which has been given to us."

And then, finally, from my friend Andy Foster, a minister in Canada: "The truth of the gospel has greater value and significance than any or all of these social issues, and it is certainly not the Church's mandate to abandon gospel truth in order to pursue an agenda of social justice."

The glorious gospel of salvation is not the proclamation of the law which would improve the lives of men. Rather, it is the glorious pronouncement of God's grace, of salvation for sinners by grace through faith.

We read this morning in Romans three those glorious verses beginning at verse 19:

Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith

in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.¹

If only the signers of the Manhattan Declaration could realize that they are promoting a false gospel of salvation by the rule of the law, and they have shoved aside the necessary thing that goes before -- salvation, forgiveness, righteousness by faith in the work and blood of the Lord Jesus!

And here is a Manhattan Declaration that we could all sign, Titus two beginning at verse 11:

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.²

You see the purifying and the redemption comes first. Only then can he produce a people that will be zealous unto good works.

You know, salvation is not of our own works, but it is Christ. What did the writer of Ephesians say in chapter two and verse 10? It is Christ working in us. We are the workmanship of Christ. He is working on us and through us to produce a good thing in each of his people.

And, finally, Romans four:

Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.³

The Manhattan Declaration does a disservice to our understanding of the centrality of the gospel to right and godly living. These things flowed in former days in our country and in the West, they flowed from a society and people who were drenched with a saving gospel, a gospel of free grace, a gospel of salvation by the imputation of Christ's righteousness, the gospel of salvation by the imputation of our sin laid upon Jesus, the

¹ Romans 3:19-28.

² Titus 2:11-14.

³ Romans 4:4-5.

sacrifice. There was a society that was drenched in that true gospel and the people's lives were, therefore, transformed by the true salvation of Christ.

The Manhattan Declaration wants to recapture the glory days of a Christian society, of the gospel's salutary influence on our society. But they want to recapture it without the gospel, without the true gospel. They want to substitute a top down work of the flesh. They want to substitute a works righteousness gospel, and think they can produce the same salutary effect in society.

You know, 1000 years of false gospel in the Roman Catholic system and in Roman Catholic dominated Europe didn't transform western civilization. But a few hundred years of Bible Christianity and the true gospel did, and produced a great outflowing of political and economic and social change for the better. And this is the thing that the Manhattan Declaration signers and writers are oblivious to. It wasn't a generic Christianity, a generic church that had that great legacy, but rather the preaching and influence of Christ's true gospel, that wrought those great changes that they long so much to recapture and to extend.

There is a real hope for believers for a society that matches, that even exceeds, the desires and wonderings of the signers of the Manhattan Declaration: that is New Jerusalem, isn't it, where all are under the grace of the gospel, a place the Scriptures tell us "where in dwelleth righteousness."⁴

He is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world, our Lord Jesus is! And the meaning of that is very simple: that one day through his death, through his cleansing work of atonement upon his people, and through the violence of his sword in the end against the wicked, he will perfectly take away all unrighteousness, all sin. Sin and sorrow and sighing will be no more!

But how can any man be fit for such a glorious rule as our Lord Jesus contemplates in the New Jerusalem? How can any man be fit? Had Christ established his rule without Calvary, none would be fit to dwell there, only unfallen angels. All his people would be destroyed in the judgment, in the purging of the iniquity and sin that he will bring about.

But Christ was determined that his people, his loved ones should be happy in his kingdom, not destroyed by it. And so he has taken away our sin at Calvary. And only those trusting in Christ's gospel, cleansed by the blood of the lamb, will be happy in that glorious place.

Do you know what I thought about the tornadoes yesterday? I thought about the sorrow and the destruction, the lives lost down in Yazoo City. And I thought about how all that death is the result of man's sin, Adam's sin at the fall in the garden, the consequences of judgment upon the creation which God had promised and which his holiness and righteousness demanded that he carry out. It continues to this day, all of the sorrow and destruction of the weather, the wickedness of men, of disease, of death itself. And it

⁴ 2 Peter 3:13.

struck me all of a sudden that at Calvary, our Lord Jesus was doing the work necessary to roll back and abolish all that curse and all those sorrows for his people.

There is a sense in which the destruction of violent weather, the destruction of disease, the destruction wrought by wicked men cannot be taken away until the sin is resolved and is removed in God's people by Christ's death at Calvary. His atoning work on the cross is preparing the way whereby God may be just and may be holy and may be righteous and may, therefore, restore the perfection of the creation to what it was before it was marred by the judgment for our sin.

And so he will finally remove all death and sorrow and pain because they are the judgment for sin; and once sin is abolished, especially in the persons of his own people, why then the consequences will therefore also be abolished! So, too, the happy perfection of Christ's creation will then and only then be restored.

So, you see, around the Lord's Table we have, to put it very bluntly, the only real source of hope against the depravities of violent weather, against the depravities of wicked men, against the depravity of our own failings, of our own sin. Only in the Lord's Table, in the work that it represents, only in the work of Christ at Calvary, is there a solution, a taking away of guilt, by which the new creation is authorized to be established, and God's people are authorized to enjoy it as clean and righteous before God for Jesus' sake -- for all eternity!

Let's give thanks for the Lord's Table, giving thanks, first, for the bread. It reminds us of the body that is broken for us. I would like to ask Bro. Whitten if he would give thanks for the bread.

The Scriptures tell us that on the night he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took bread and he broke it and he blessed 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 points us to the blood of the Lord Jesus, shed for rebels and for sinners and, thank God, shed for you and me!

Oh God our Father, we rejoice that you have loved us so much. And we see the demonstration of it in the signs before us on the table, how you spared not your own Son, but delivered him up for us all. Help us to know the love that you have for us that is indescribable, unlimited, that you spared not the Lord Jesus. You will not withhold from us any other good thing -- that you conceived of so daring and so costly a salvation as your glorious gospel, that you delivered up your Son that you were well pleased by to be our sin bearer, our offering, our sacrifice; that we might lay our hands upon his head and cry out, "Judge our sins not in ourselves, but on this Lamb which was slain!"

We thank you for the blood that he poured out for us at Calvary, and how that blood makes a perfect atonement for our sin, how he has paid the ransom in that blood and satisfied all the debt of divine justice that we owe; that we might be set at liberty, set at

liberty because Christ was cast down and destroyed for us at Calvary, yet he is risen again.

The debt has been paid, the judgment expunged, the judgment satisfied, the prisoner let loose! We thank you that our Lord Jesus raised in power and glory proves the sacrifice is over, and he has forever perfected them that are sanctified by it.

We thank you that we come before you not as guilty sinners anymore, but as clothed in righteous and beautiful garments of the Lord Jesus, and therefore bold to come before your presence by his blood.

We thank you that we can come before you, guilty wretches that we were, in our own folly and lostness, yet now we come before you, and there is not a stain of guilt left against us. No remembrance against us of our sins for Jesus' sake!

Bless us as we partake of this fruit of the cup, and as we go forth this week that we might remember what the Lord has done for us. We remember the great gift you gave us when you gave us a Lamb for our sacrifice. No other Lamb would do but the blessed Lord Jesus.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

The Scriptures tell us that 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."

And 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 214 in the black book, *The Crowning Day*:

Our Lord is now rejected,
And by the world disowned,
By the many still neglected,
And by the few enthroned,
But soon He'll come in glory,
The hour is drawing nigh,
For the crowning day is coming by and by!

Let's stand and sing this.