

November 23, 2009

A Short Statement in Response to the Manhattan Declaration

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The Manhattan Declaration is an ungodly manifesto, contemptuous of the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is an ecumenical treatise, complete with a Romish gospel and shot through and through with popish error. Those evangelicals who have authored this document and who have led the way in signing it show themselves to be in rebellion to God. It is, in their case, a brazen manifesto of treason against the Lord Jesus Christ. And they are not friends but rather are enemies of Christian liberty in that they disobey and provoke the Author of liberty with their spiritual fornication, even wresting His word and corrupting His blood-bought church. It is the biblical duty of all faithful Christian pastors to stand against the evangelical authors of the Manhattan Declaration and all evangelicals who sign it or promote it in any way. Such betrayers of Christ and His church must be separated from and called to account by all faithful Christian ministers and people.

December 3, 2009

Where Is the True Evangelical Fire?

by Pastor Ralph Ovadal, Pilgrims Covenant Church, Monroe, Wisconsin

“There, in front of all those cameras and lights, Christian leaders lovingly, winsomely and firmly took a stand,” he said. “I will never forget the picture. I stood between Archbishop Wuerl of Washington and Cardinal Rigali, Archbishop of Philadelphia. I looked over at Tony Perkins of the Family Research Council, Jim Daly of Focus on the Family, and Ron Sider, president of Evangelicals for Social Action. It was a fore-taste of what we’re all going to see in heaven.” —Chuck Colson speaking on his “BreakPoint” radio commentary of the Manhattan Declaration press conference

**“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke,
exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.” 2 Timothy 4:2**

The release of the Manhattan Declaration has sparked much controversy and conversation. The document attacks the very biblical foundations of the Christian faith, including, in practical application, the doctrine of justification. The evangelical signers—my focus in this article are the ministers and leaders—can deny that all they like and indulge in all the sophisms which many have. But the truth is, the document declares that the gospel of the Roman Catholic Church, which is also the gospel of her estranged sister the Orthodox Church, is “the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” The Manhattan Declaration also states over and over that the signers are all “Christians” and bears the false testimony that all the signers are members of “the church.” Further, as I wrote in a statement our church released to the public and the press on November 23, it is “shot through and through with popish error.” Those familiar with Romanist social doctrine, as well as her incessant affixing of the term “gospel” to various social and moral causes, will pick up on that without much trouble. I have spoken in depth on these things when addressing the Manhattan Declaration in a sermon and on our “Heart of the Matter” program—not that I could not think of more things to address! The document is a veritable wellspring of error and deception, obvious and subtle.

But what has motivated me to write a few lines for those interested to read them are the responses to the Manhattan Declaration from Christian leaders on “our side.” What I mean is that much of it seems

so tepid, so lukewarm, so lacking in evangelical fire, and utterly devoid of a call for repentance. After all, the evangelical signers of the MD have yoked with false brethren, open idolaters, even Roman Catholic archbishops, bishops, priests, and Orthodox clergy in a brazen assault upon the blood and righteousness of Christ, as well as the purity of the church which He “hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). In this, the MD evangelicals have not only shown utter contempt for Christ, the gospel of grace, and the true church; but they have also cruelly confirmed to Romanists and the Orthodox everywhere that they are “children of God by faith in Christ Jesus” and members of the “household of faith” when in reality they are “without Christ . . . having no hope, and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12). And then, with their “good words and fair speeches” (Rom. 16:18), the MD evangelicals have gone on to defend what they have done, adding deceit to deceit. If this does not qualify them as the sort of “grievous wolves” (Acts 20:29) the Apostle Paul warned of—and by the way showed no quarter to—then what does it take to qualify? When our Lord warned us of “ravening wolves” wearing “sheep’s clothing” (Mt. 17:15), He taught us to discern them by “their fruit” (Mt. 7:16). The Manhattan Declaration speaks for itself in that regard!

Now, when writing to the Galatians, Paul rebuked those brethren calling them “foolish Galatians” and demanding to know “who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?” (Gal. 3:1). “Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2) had been clearly set forth before the Galatians by the faithful preaching of the gospel. And those whom the Lord had saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ Jesus alone had received the earnest of the Spirit, who had powerfully manifested His presence among them. But now the Galatians were accommodating, fellowshiping with, and even giving audience to those Judaizing teachers with their gospel of works, such of whom Paul declared, “Let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:8-9).

I believe it is proper to state that the Roman Catholic religion, with its “infallible Vicar of Christ,” its priestcraft and sacramental salvation, its open idolatry and gross superstition, is even worse than that of the Judaizers! Yet the professed evangelicals who signed the Manhattan Declaration have declared to the whole world, and the unbelievers with whom they have yoked, that the Romish gospel is “the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” It follows then, at the very minimum, to ask them, “Who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?”

But, as I just pointed out, those MD evangelicals are doing even more than giving ear and fellowship to false teachers. By leading the way in signing the document, they are acting as false teachers justifying and teaching a false gospel. This gives us pause to ask if they even have, by faith, seen “Jesus Christ, and him crucified”? But they declare it to be so; they protest that they hold to the free grace of God in the salvation of sinners; they call themselves evangelicals; and most come from what are considered to be at least “conservative” evangelical churches. So then they ought to be held accountable as such, even as we urge them to “examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reborn?” (2 Cor. 13:5).

And that brings me back to the proper response which a minister, or Christian leader, should make to the Manhattan Declaration. This could not be more important, given our responsibility as summed up in Acts 20:28 relative to false teachers: “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”

Now, it is a self-evident truth that the tenor and substance of our words are critical with regard to such an open assault upon the righteousness of God and the purity of His church. If our response to those who “pervert the right ways of the Lord” (Acts 13:10) is limited to a low-key explanation of why we demurred to sign the Manhattan Declaration and expressing that we are “troubled” by parts or all of it, then I believe we have fallen far short and even desensitized others to the grievous error and danger—even wickedness—of what the Manhattan Declaration evangelicals have done. I would ask those Christian min-

isters and leaders who take such an approach if they would respond in a like manner if they had just been grievously slandered and their own wives had just been solicited for prostitution by the MD evangelicals. It is a fit analogy but which even falls far short, as analogies do by nature, when considering the outrage which has been committed against the Lord Jesus and His bride, the church.

Our good Shepherd and Bishop of our souls did not so lightly deal with those who sought to lead His sheep into grievous heresy. The Apostles and first pastors of the New Testament church surely did not content themselves with mildly pointing out soul-damning error and respectfully distancing themselves from church-corrupting wolves. Certainly, the word of God does not teach ministers of the Lord’s church to confront such men and women by, well, not confronting them but rather only making an essential, polite distinction between error and truth. It seems to me that to do so is to be half faithful, so to speak. When men rise up from within the evangelical church and publicly declare and support a false gospel and call the antichristian church Christian, they must be confronted, rebuked, and called to repentance by faithful ministers and those who hold positions of influence among the church. I will dare to say that there is no greater danger to the church and no greater affront to the glory and honor of our Lord Jesus Christ than gospel-perverting teachers within her.

In the case at hand, it should be without controversy that elders, including ministers, have a responsibility to frame the issue properly with language that conveys the magnitude and danger of the sin. Concerning the Cretians who were “teaching things which they ought not” (Titus 1:11), Paul instructs Titus, “Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith” (Titus 1:13). Certainly, the gross error the MD evangelicals have passed off as truth and the contempt they have shown for Christ Jesus has been committed before the whole world. So they ought to be sharply rebuked by faithful ministers, and that before the whole church. “Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear” (1 Tim. 5:20). Christians, especially the shepherds of Christ’s flock, are commanded to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 1:3). The meaning of “contend” in the context is “to struggle” against those within the church who pervert the faith of the gospel. This is a critical moment in the history of the church. This is a time for both ministers and their people to consider if their response to the Manhattan Declaration evangelicals would qualify as “striving together for the faith of the gospel” (Phil. 1:27).

But the point that I am making is so obvious that it seems almost an insult to the discerning Christian reader to belabor it. The command and example of the Scriptures ordain that the MD evangelicals must be confronted, what they have done must be condemned, and they must be called to repent of this grievous, very public sin against the Lord Jesus Christ. The love of Christ constrains us to that course of action. And anything less than that will advance the cause of infidelity and the antichristian church. If I am wrong in what I have written, I genuinely invite those who think so to please show me by the Scriptures my error.

A Rebuke of the Manhattan Declaration Signers

November 22, 2009 Sermon

www.sermonaudio.com/pcc or tinyurl.com/manhattanrebuke

Manhattan Declaration: Manifesto of Treason

November 27, 2009 Heart of the Matter Special

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