



## The Burning Bush—Online article archive

### *A brief response to the Manhattan Declaration*

By Rev. Andy Foster

The Free Presbyterian Church has through its history opposed ecumenism and apostasy and has vociferously stood for the historic Scriptural position of being *separated unto the gospel of God*, Romans 1:1. It is the God-given duty of every faithful gospel minister and of the Church of Christ to sound a note of alarm against every instance of departure from God and His word. I am happy to join our voice with those who take that stand against all that the *Manhattan Declaration* represents.

On November 20th, 2009 a number of individuals released a joint statement called the *Manhattan Declaration: A Call of Christian conscience*. What made this statement particularly noteworthy and positively alarming from a Biblical perspective, is that it is a document that had brought together as signatories, various individuals prominent in the evangelical, Anglican, Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox communities.

Of particular concern to Bible-believers is that many leading evangelicals have signed on to this document. Just some of the evangelicals that are signatories are listed below:

Leith Anderson, President of National Association of Evangelicals; Dr. Mark Bailey, President, Dallas Theological Seminary; Dr. Robert C. Cannada, Jr., Chancellor, Reformed Theological Seminary; Chuck Colson; Chuck Swindoll, Insight for Living; Jim Daly, President, Focus on the Family; Dr. James Dobson, Focus on the Family; Dr. William Edgar, Professor, Westminster Theological Seminary; Dr. Michael Easley, President Emeritus, Moody Bible Institute; Rev. Jonathan Falwell; Dr. J. I. Packer; Dr. R. Albert Mohler, Jr., President, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; Dr. Cornelius Plantinga, Calvin Theological Seminary; Rev. Michael L. Beresford, Managing Director of Church relations, Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. Others could be added to the list. A full list is published online with the document itself at <http://www.manhattandeclaration.org>.

It is immediately obvious that men with far-reaching influence in evangelical circles have thrown their weight behind this venture. Some who have previously enjoyed a reputation as conservative evangelicals have lent their support to this joint-effort with apostasy.

The *Manhattan Declaration* is a thoroughly deceitful document that follows on in the tradition of the *Evangelicals and Catholics together* documents of recent years. It is obviously thoroughly ecumenical in nature and perspective, and particularly because it involves high-ranking evangelicals, must be recognized as a dangerous departure from Biblical truth and practice.

There are a number of simple observations to be considered in response to this document:

1. **THE MANHATTAN DECLARATION LABELS APOSTATE RELIGION “CHRISTIAN”.** Its opening line uses the blanket term “Christians” to describe all who subscribe to the document and makes each an heir of “the 2000 year old tradition of proclaiming God’s word”; again, “As Orthodox, Catholic and evangelical Christians....We together in obedience to the one true God”; and, “we are Christians...[and] fellow believers”. In other words, each of the signatories regard all of the others involved as Biblical Christians, supporting and declaring “God’s word”. The evangelicals involved are happy to apply this language to the various representatives of the Roman Catholic Church, Anglicans, and leaders of the Orthodox Church—the eastern counterpart of the Church of Rome. All signatories therefore claim to have a common Christianity.

Yet the fact remains, that in the light of Scripture, the Church of Rome, the Anglican communion and the Orthodox Church represent apostate religion, even antichristianity. The evangelicals among the signatories to this



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document make no distinction whatever between the plain doctrines of the gospel revealed in Scripture, which they claim to believe, and the hideous perversions of truth propagated by the RCC, the Orthodox Church and apostate Anglicanism. These men have lent their support to Rome's blasphemous doctrines of the sacrifice of the Mass, purgatory, priest-craft, penance and a host of other errors such as its outright rejection of the central gospel truth of justification by faith in Christ alone. The idolatrous errors of the Orthodox church and apostate Anglicanism have similarly been embraced and endorsed by them as "Christian" and in agreement with Scripture. This is a scandalous and dangerous deception! These so-called evangelicals are blatantly acting as liars in this matter. In the light of Scripture, the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church and apostate Anglicanism are decidedly not Christian.

2. **THE MANHATTAN DECLARATION ADVOCATES AN AGENDA OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AT THE EXPENSE OF THE GOSPEL.** The *Manhattan Declaration* deals with: the sanctity of human life; marriage; and religious liberty. These issues, while important, are not of primary significance for the Church of Christ. They are to be seen ever in subjection to the doctrines of the gospel. 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. Yet the evangelical signatories of the *Manhattan Declaration* have deliberately compromised the greater issue of the gospel in order to secure unity with apostate religion on these lesser issues.

The fact is, a right understanding of these social matters can only be had from the perspective of a right view of the gospel. It is only in the light of the gospel that we can grasp the Divinely-revealed truth about human life, marriage and religious liberty or any other area of human experience. The very real issues of our society are the product of sin and there is only one real remedy for sin—the gospel of Jesus Christ revealed in Scripture. A false gospel can provide no remedy for man's miserable condition but rather makes him worse! By having as signatories those who deny the gospel—as the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church and much of modern Anglicanism does—this document cannot address the issues evangelicals claim it does. By joining themselves to this venture, evangelicals destroy the cause they are seeking to advance because they sell out the gospel to sign on to the *Manhattan Declaration*.

3. **THE BIBLE-BELIEVER'S RESPONSE.** A bible believer is one who obeys the Bible! In obedience to Scripture therefore, the Bible-believing Christian must repudiate the spirit and content of the *Manhattan Declaration*. It is a slander on the gospel of Jesus Christ and a support for the false gospels of apostate Protestantism, popery and Eastern orthodoxy. Abandoning the truth of the gospel of Christ in order to form a united front with the enemies of Christ on various social issues must be recognized as a wicked betrayal of the Saviour. The evangelical signatories and supporters of this document and its philosophy, must therefore be regarded as disobedient to the commands of God and as such fellowship is to be broken with them by any who would seek to walk with the Lord. For any professing believer to unite with apostasy and error in any cause is wrong! The word of God is clear on this matter:

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” (2 Cor 6:14-18 AV)

We are further called to separate ourselves from even professing Christians who are deceived by apostasy and



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ally themselves with it. IF the clear command of God is for His people to “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them,” Eph 5:11; THEN the evangelicals in view here are acting disobediently. They are expressing agreement, support and common cause with darkness! Here is a double error: they have failed to speak against apostasy and have in fact associated with it in common cause. By standing on the side of the enemies of Christ they act as His enemies too and cannot be supported by our fellowship. By supporting those who support apostasy I make myself a supporter of it! There are only two camps acknowledged by God: *light & darkness*; *Christ & Belial*; etc. Men are in one or the other! There is no neutral ground with God. Separation from disobedient brethren is commanded by God. “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.” 2 Thess 3:6. This is the duty of every ordinary believer! When Paul was commenting on the disciplinary action taken in Corinth to remove the offending brother from their fellowship he wrote of “this punishment, which was inflicted of many,” 2 Cor 2:6. Grass-roots believers must disassociate themselves from the disobedient actions of the evangelical signatories to this document. That means they must withdraw support for their ministries and close out all influence by these men while they persist in this betrayal of the gospel.

The reason for separation in this instance is different. It is designed as a rebuke to the erring brother and is a sanction against him by the church to recover him from his error. It is instructive in nature. “And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother,” 2 Thess 3:14-15. Reproof, admonition and instruction can only be given from a separated position!

Repentance from the error leads to restoration of fellowship—I Cor 5:1-5, II Cor 2:6-8. This is the aim in practicing Biblical separation from offending brethren. The object is to bring them back to the truth they profess to believe so that fellowship may be restored between them and the Lord and with His people. A true child of God will be rebuked by Scripture and turn from disobedience. Only in this way can these evangelicals prove that they are not in fact false professors and wolves in sheep’s clothing! Some evangelical signatories have a long track record in defying God’s word and the rebukes that have been given and can be considered as nothing less than “false apostles, deceitful workers” the agents of the devil who foment rebellion against God’s word.

By not acting as God requires in this instance we are acting disobediently ourselves and encouraging a brother in his sin. The effect is catastrophic in the church! This ‘domino effect’ where compromise with apostasy overcomes rank after rank in the church, either through direct involvement or a failure to act against it, very quickly reduces the church of Christ to ruins. Disobedience replaces obedience, and the moral authority to speak and act against sin is lost!

The spiritual rot that the *Manhattan Declaration* represents is widespread in the visible church. Can anything be done? Yes! There must be an immediate going outside the camp of compromise unto Christ to stand unashamedly on His side, Hebrews 13:13. Vigorous protest against departure and disobedience must be made and God’s people again face with the challenge Moses gave so long ago, “Who is on the LORD’S side?...” (Exodus 32:26 AV) God’s people must again evidence the conviction to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” (Jude 1:3 AV) Only when the Church adheres to the truth of Scripture she is most useful to mankind and can minister to both the spiritual and temporal needs of society.

#### 4. **OUR MOTIVE IN RESPONDING IN THIS WAY.**

The primary motive in Biblical separation is Christian love—love for an offending brother and above all, love for Christ. It is not unloving to separate from sin, it is the highest expression of Christian love. Often a believer



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who practices Biblical separation from sin is called unloving and divisive. Paul makes it clear that it is those who advance unbiblical dogma and practice that cause the division by introducing error into the church, Rom 16:17. It is not about being divisive, but about being lovingly faithful to Christ that lies at the basis of the separation that God demands.

The practice of biblical separation is primarily positive even though it is often portrayed negatively. “Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach,” Heb 13:13. What we separate from is ever to be motivated by the One we are separating to. A desire to be with Christ, in fellowship and communion with Him is what drives biblical separation. Where men have separated themselves from Christ to be in fellowship with those who are His enemies, in order to be with Christ we must separate from them. We cannot, must not allow anything to spoil our fellowship with the Saviour. On occasion hard choices have to be made in order to be with Him:

“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man’s foes [shall be] they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.” Matt 10:32-38

Separation from brethren is simply to act upon the Biblical principle that I will allow nothing/nobody to get between me and the Saviour. The Saviour does not endorse the *Manhattan Declaration* because it makes His gospel equal with the perversions of truth peddled by the Roman Catholic Church, the (Eastern) Orthodox Church and the Anglican Church. I have no business endorsing it either! Fellowship with Christ ought to be more valuable to us than worldly fame or popularity; more valuable than the cost that has to be paid to be separated unto the gospel.

The Christian’s response to the *Manhattan Declaration*, and every similar issue, comes down to this: How badly do I want the company of the Saviour? How much do I love Him? God’s word has spoken clearly on this matter—what will you do about it?