

# Catholic Agenda Embedded in the Manhattan Declaration

By Richard Bennett

## Roman Catholic Dual Purpose Behind the Manhattan Declaration

On November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009, more than 150 people portraying themselves as Christian leaders of Orthodox, Catholic, and Evangelical backgrounds declared their unity because of moral issues. The signers who are uniting themselves together in the Manhattan Declaration (MD) identify themselves under the signed statement, “We are Orthodox, Catholic, and evangelical Christians who have united at this hour to reaffirm fundamental truths about justice and the common good....”<sup>1</sup> The Website of MD states that the purpose of the document is “simply to speak with one voice on the most pressing moral issues of our day...[MD is] simply a statement of solidarity about only the social issues it addresses.”<sup>2</sup> And the document itself may not appear to have any objective other than quoted. However, under the Website section entitled, “Message to all signers of the Manhattan Declaration,” the clearly stated purpose is a call for a political movement. This shows that, in fact, the Manhattan Declaration is only the latest step in the downgrade into implementing Catholic social doctrine. There is yet another purpose; one primarily stated in Vatican Council II and post-Vatican Council II documents. Through the use of social issues, the Roman Catholic Church seeks to draw true Evangelical Bible-believers into itself so that there can be no opposition by them on the fundamental issues of the authority of the Bible alone and the Gospel.

In order to soften up the Evangelicals in their separation from the Catholics on biblical doctrinal issues, particularly the authority of the Bible alone and the Gospel, the Catholic *modus operandi* calls for using social issues on which both Evangelicals and Catholics agree as preliminary common ground. The major social issues selected by MD are acceptable, but what gives away the underlying Catholic far left political agenda is some of the vocabulary used. This vocabulary has a general meaning, to be sure, but in the context of Roman Catholic social doctrine, it means something quite specific. As Evangelicals are drawn together with Catholics on social issues – like the social issues mentioned in this document – the ensuing ecumenical dialogue “serves to transform modes of thought and behavior and the daily life of their [Evangelical] communities [churches]. In this way, it [ecumenical dialogue] aims at preparing the way for their unity of faith in the bosom of a Church one and visible: thus ‘little by little’...all Christians will be gathered”<sup>3</sup> into the Roman Catholic Church with its dual authority base, false gospel, and accompanying far left agenda. The Roman Catholic Church’s primary goal is to make enforceable its claim that it is the only true church of Jesus Christ and its pope, the claimed “Vicar of Christ,” has the right to judge everybody, as he did during the Middle Ages. In order to accomplish this, the Papacy must do away with the supreme authority of the Bible and the Gospel and it must silence all who stand against it in this endeavor. This is the Roman Catholic context in which the Manhattan Declaration is set.

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<sup>1</sup> Main Website, second paragraph; <http://www.manhattandeclaration.org/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.manhattandeclaration.org/faqs> 1/14/2010 Q. 4

<sup>3</sup> Doc. No. 42, “Reflections and Suggestions Concerning Ecumenical Dialogue”, S.P.U.C., Aug.15, 1970 in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, Austin Flannery, Gen Ed., 1981 Edition; II, Para. 2 (d).

### **Ambiguous Preamble**

The Preamble of the Manhattan Declaration itself lacks a stated purpose. Instead, it proclaims that Christians are “heirs of a 2,000-year tradition” ambiguously defined as “proclaiming God’s word, seeking justice in our societies, resisting tyranny, and reaching out with compassion to the poor, oppressed and suffering.” The statement certainly does not mean a 2,000-year tradition of proclaiming the truth of God’s Word seen in Scripture – because both the Catholic Church and Orthodoxy deny the sole authority of Scripture as well as the Gospel.<sup>4</sup> Equally important, the Preamble does not identify who is meant by the general term “Christians.” That is given only far down in the second section of MD. These two signal factors alone ought to make any Evangelical wary.

### **Named Drafters of MD**

The named drafters of MD are Robert George, an ardent Roman Catholic taking the place of the now deceased Richard John Neuhaus; Timothy George, Dean of Beeson Divinity School, and Chuck Colson of Prison Fellowship Ministries and now of Center for Christian Worldview. In order to achieve the solidarity among the parties of which the Website spoke, clearly all the compromises have been made by Timothy George as the Evangelical representative. This is required by the Roman Catholic drafter and those behind him. Indeed, it was to that end that Timothy George was invited by the organizers of the project to be the drafter from the Evangelical side. He is a leader whose “public witness on behalf of justice, human rights, and the common good”<sup>5</sup> is in line with the Roman Catholic political and ecumenical purposes. “Justice, human rights, and the common good” are all buzz words for Roman Catholic far left doctrine as spelled out in the “Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the [Roman Catholic] Church.”

### **Timothy George’s Major Compromises**

Timothy George’s first compromise was to agree to the authority base of the document. That base is not the Bible alone; but instead, it is hard-core Roman Catholic tradition and Scripture.<sup>6</sup> This corrupted authority base makes it possible to settle on ambiguous terminology which does not align doctrinally with the Bible, particularly regarding the Gospel.

Equally important is the total compromise by Timothy George on the Gospel. Although the Preamble states that “Christians today are called to proclaim the Gospel of costly grace,” there is a vagueness of expression and confusion regarding the meaning of “costly grace.” Man’s position as a sinner under the vengeful wrath of Holy God is not explained. On the authority of the Bible alone, salvation by God’s grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, is not explained. Yet MD’s bland expression, the “Gospel of costly grace,” is the closest the Declaration gets to the Gospel. Obviously, MD’s flexible phrase is meant to cover up the lack of “solidarity” among the signers—because there can be no solidarity of unbelievers with those who have been saved by grace alone, through faith alone, and in Christ alone.

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<sup>4</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church* Para 1129, “The Church affirms that for believers the sacraments of the New Covenant are *necessary for salvation*. ‘Sacramental grace’ is the grace of the Holy Spirit, given by Christ and proper to each sacrament.” Also “What Do Orthodox Christians Believe?” Lamp: 1996 9 Serbian Orthodox Church

<sup>5</sup> MD website, faqs, Q. 2. 1/14/2010

<sup>6</sup> *Catechism*, Para. 82

In another section MD states, “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.”<sup>7</sup> This is a sop to Evangelical Christians, but one which, if they actually did their duty, requires them to confront the Roman Catholic and Orthodox signers with the supreme authority of the Bible and with the Gospel. Both Catholic and Orthodox churches officially deny the Gospel and in its place actively teach and practice a false gospel. Only those who actually are saved and “in Christ,” those who actually believe the Gospel, are charged with proclaiming it.<sup>8</sup>

### **Roman Church History Whitewashed**

Another major compromise, to which Timothy George bowed, regards the history of Evangelical Christians and the Roman Catholic Church. The historical facts of the Roman Catholic Church’s centuries of Inquisition against millions of Bible-believers and others cannot be air-brushed away with a brief statement that institutions have made mistakes, as MD tries to do. Neither can the drafters, by claiming to speak exclusively as individuals, exonerate themselves from this outrage. The most important part of the Preamble’s summary on Christian history is what it fails to say.

The Preamble presents a few bits of history to support its claim to the heritage of Christian “tradition” but remains silent on the two most significant events of European history. The first is the six hundred year reign of terror by the Roman Catholic Papacy enforced by its murderous Inquisition. The second and equally important event is the Reformation of the sixteenth century – due to the recovery of the Bible and the Gospel in the hands of ordinary people. These two signal omissions were necessary because even to allude to either of them would destroy the supposed solidarity that MD purports to express.

For example, the Preamble states, “It was Christians who combated the evil of slavery: Papal edicts in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries decried the practice of slavery and first excommunicated anyone involved in the slave trade....” However, by the start of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, three hundred years of enforced Papal edicts had already been enslaving Europe by robbing, torturing, and murdering millions of Bible believers and others throughout the Holy Roman Empire. The Inquisition was the Papal tool by which people were terrorized and forced into professing faith in the Roman Catholic false gospel and accompanying practices. It would be another three hundred years before the Inquisition was finally halted at the end of the eighteenth century. It is an outrage, and an utter disgrace, that Timothy George in particular, and Robert George as an educated man, allowed such whitewashing of the Roman Catholic Church’s bloody history be touted here.

Beginning in 1203, with “ethnic cleansing” of the Bible-believing Albigenses in France, the Papacy instituted its murderous system of Inquisition. In 1572, the Papacy, under edict from Pope Pius V before his death, was instrumental in the St. Bartholomew’s Day massacre, in which as many as 70,000 French Huguenots were “ethnically cleansed” from France. In the seventeenth century, the Papacy was heavily invested in “ethnic cleansing” of the Bible-believing Vaudois, or “people of the valleys” of the Cottian Alps. During World War II, the Roman Catholic state of Croatia, with the approval of the Papacy, wrecked “ethnic cleansing” on the Serbian Orthodox and others. The Papacy, too, was instrumental in preparing the way for the

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<sup>7</sup> MD, Section entitled “Declaration”

<sup>8</sup> Ephesians Ch 1, 2:1-9.

Holocaust of World War II, and it stood silently by while millions of Jews were murdered.<sup>9</sup> The Papacy has not changed in spite of its new tactic of calling Evangelicals “separated brethren” rather than heretics.<sup>10</sup>

Further down in the same paragraph, the Preamble states, “In Europe, Christians...successfully fought to establish the rule of law and balance of governmental powers, which made modern democracy possible.” Certainly the Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches cannot be included in this statement. Rather, it was the Protestants of the Reformation—who had the Gospel and the Bible—that successfully dismantled the Holy Roman Empire in which the Pope, being head of the church of the civil state, could enforce his anti-biblical doctrine by means of civil law. In its place, the Protestants of the Reformation instituted the rule of law, and in America they powerfully shaped the Constitution which was an entirely new kind of government, a representative republic based on the rule of law, the basis of which was the Bible. Without the Reformation of the sixteenth century, the American Experiment of a new kind of civil government, in which having neither a state church nor a ruler claiming both temporal and spiritual authority, as the Pope does, could not have taken place. Many immigrants from Europe, England, and Scotland fled to the American colonies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, because of the terrors that the Roman Catholic Church continued to perpetrate on their homelands. For Catholics, including Robert George, to claim a 2,000-year tradition of “seeking justice in our societies, [and] resisting tyranny” is simply a blatant lie.

Thus the drafters of the opening statement of the preamble to MD, by refusing to define there who is meant by “Christians,” are able to present insignificant bits of Catholic information that promote an outright falsehood regarding any Catholic claim for a history of “seeking justice” and “resisting tyranny.” The history of Orthodoxy’s oppression, while in no way matching that of Papal Rome, has fully opposed other forms of Christianity amounting to persecution of true believers in Orthodox nations. It is incredible that anyone who understands that Catholics and Orthodox are included in the Declaration’s definition of “Christian” could endorse this opening statement.

### **Robert George Obligated to Roman Catholic Social Doctrine**

Robert George is morally obligated under the dictates of the Papacy to evangelize people, particularly Evangelicals and Orthodox, into the Roman Catholic Church by means of propagating its social doctrine. His duty as a Roman Catholic is laid out as follows, “The Pope as the ‘supreme teaching authority’ of the Roman Catholic Church has decreed the following for its lay people.

“In the tasks of evangelization, that is to say, of teaching, catechesis and formation that the Church's social doctrine inspires, it is addressed to every Christian [i.e., Catholic]...By fulfilling these responsibilities, the lay faithful put the Church's social teaching into action and thus fulfill the Church’s secular mission.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> John Cornwell, *Hitler’s Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII* (Viking Penguin, 1999)

<sup>10</sup> The wording of Papal Rome’s tactical change are given in her official documents “Reflections and Suggestions Concerning Ecumenical Dialogue” in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, Austin Flannery, O.P., editor (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Co., 1981)

<sup>11</sup> Compendium Sect. 83

The Papacy has put real teeth into its dictates on this issue: “Insofar as it is part of the Church’s moral teaching, the Church’s social doctrine has the same dignity and authority as her moral teaching. It is authentic Magisterium, which obligates the faithful to adhere to it.”<sup>12</sup> The duty of all lay Catholics to evangelize by teaching and implementing Roman Catholic social doctrine everywhere in secular society is obligatory on pain of excommunication. This means that the Papacy has a dependable “fifth column” in every nation where Catholics are found. Robert George, by his profession as a Roman Catholic and by his drafting of MD, shows that he is part of the Pope’s fifth column, whether or not he acknowledges it.

### **Political Objective of MD**

The Website makes it very clear that MD has a political objective. Under the Website section entitled, “Message to all signers of the Manhattan Declaration,” that purpose is stated; namely, “We are seeking to build a movement – hundreds of thousands of Catholic, Evangelical, and Eastern Orthodox Christians who will stand together alongside other men and women of goodwill in defense of foundational principles of justice and the common good.”<sup>13</sup>

It is here that Christians are defined as Catholic, Evangelical, and Eastern Orthodox. Thus, true Evangelical Christians are to be yoked together with Catholics and Eastern Orthodox, neither of which is Christian. Furthermore, this newly formed “Christian” group is then to be yoked together with “other men and women of goodwill,” presumably meaning atheists, pagans, animists, and such as Buddhists and Hindus. This is exactly the world group that the “Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the [Roman Catholic] Church” targets as those who are to move the Catholic far leftist agenda forward into global implementation. Quite overtly the movement is to propagate the Roman Catholic social agenda, which comes to light by the words “justice and the common good.” 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.’”<sup>14</sup> 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

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<sup>12</sup> Compendium, Sect. 80. Emphasis is in original.

<sup>13</sup> [Manhattandeclaration.org/for\\_signers\\_whats\\_next](http://Manhattandeclaration.org/for_signers_whats_next) 1/14/2010

<sup>14</sup> National Conference of Catholic Bishops, [www.osjspm.org/rights\\_and\\_duties.aspx](http://www.osjspm.org/rights_and_duties.aspx) 2/10/2010

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 MD, is 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.<sup>15</sup>

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.<sup>16</sup> It is this that Pope Benedict called for in his encyclical, “Caritas in Veritate” of June 29, 2009,<sup>17</sup> and for which the official Papal Compendium also calls.<sup>18</sup> How many of the Evangelicals who have signed MD 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 U. S. Constitution—have here been formed into a deceptive tool to be used against them. When Evangelical Christians sign MD, 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 MD 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 laid a trap for unsuspecting Evangelicals in particular.

### **The Ecumenical Purpose**

It is no coincidence that the ecumenical agenda of the Pope appears in the Manhattan Declaration. This Declaration is as important as the proclamation that launched the “Evangelicals and Catholics Together” (ECT) movement in 1994. The words at that time were, “This statement cannot speak officially for our communities [churches]. It does intend to speak responsibly from our communities and to our communities.”<sup>19</sup> On this occasion, however, the leaders claim Christian unity “as individuals, not on behalf of our organizations, but speaking to and from our communities.”<sup>20</sup> Again, the same words are not a coincidence; rather, they are evidence of the same purpose, namely, both Catholics and Evangelicals are to be accepted as “Christian.” Part of the reason for the terminology change from “speaking from our communities” is that the Catholic Church has officially stated that Evangelical churches are not

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<sup>15</sup> Compendium Sect. 178 Emphasis not in original.

<sup>16</sup> Compendium, Sect. 167

<sup>17</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/.../encyclicals/.../hf\\_ben-xvi\\_enc\\_20090629\\_caritas-in-veritate\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/.../encyclicals/.../hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate_en.html)

<sup>18</sup> “Charity in Truth”, Sect. 67

<sup>19</sup> “Evangelicals & Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium”, *First Things* 1994, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> MD, First sentence

“churches” in the proper sense.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, while denying recognition to the Evangelical churches, the Roman Church uses this document to make a not-so-subtle display of its institutional power in order to ecumenize the Evangelical Christians and the Orthodox. When the two cardinals, seven archbishops, and five bishops of the Roman Catholic Church signed MD, they did so as representatives of the Roman Catholic Church and the Papacy. This was done by using their full titles, rather than only their given names and the denominations from which they come; as for example, the cardinals sign as “His Eminence Adam Cardinal Maida, Archbishop Emeritus, Roman Catholic Diocese of Detroit, MI” and “His Eminence Justin Cardinal Rigali Archbishop, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Philadelphia, PA.” The same can be said of most of the original signatories to the document. This means that although the signers claim to be speaking “as individuals, not on behalf of our organizations...” clearly they are using their titles to identify their status and power in the religious world. The list of signatories is meant to impress ordinary people so that on the basis of who’s who – or identity politics – they will also sign. Herein the Roman Catholic false ecumenism has accomplished a larger step in drawing Bible believers “little by little...” into thinking that the Roman Catholic Church is not so different from their own Evangelical churches.

One basic tactic of MD is to leave out of the Declaration the things on which the parties do not agree. This tactic is part of a “divide and conquer strategy.” It was enunciated in 1994 in *Evangelicals and Catholics Together (ECT)*, which sought to identify Roman Catholics as Christians. According to ECT, Roman Catholics were to be identified as Christians on the things about which they agreed with Evangelicals rather than on the authority of the Bible alone as regarding the major defining doctrinal issues that anyone who claims to be “in Christ” must believe. About these major doctrinal issues there is as yet no agreement.

The legacy of ECT fifteen years later is that in MD the defining issues regarding the identity of Christians is not addressed *per se*. Nevertheless, the drafters of MD were careful about how and when they would make it clear that Roman Catholics and Orthodox were to be included as Christians. To that end, the Preamble to MD simply makes statements about “Christians” and their heritage according to tradition, most of which could be accepted by the hasty, biblically ignorant, or naive Evangelical reader. But in the final paragraph of the section entitled, “Declaration,” after speaking about Catholics, Orthodox, and Evangelical Christians, the drafters flatly state, “We are Christians who have joined together across historic lines of ecclesial differences...” No argument has been made regarding the issue of whether historic “ecclesial differences” had been solved. Rather, the compromise of calling Roman Catholics and Orthodox “Christians” is stated as if it is a huge accomplishment, which it is for the Roman Catholic Church, but to the shame and disgrace of the Evangelicals who have compromised themselves.

MD itself must be read in the context of its Website if one is to comprehend what one is about to sign. The Declaration itself is fairly innocuous as a statement and of little political significance – except to the Roman Catholic Church with its far left agenda, particularly for the

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<sup>21</sup> Pope Benedict’s 2007 decree stated, Q. “Why do the texts of the Council and those of the Magisterium since the Council not use the title of “Church” with regard to those Christian Communities born out of the Reformation of the sixteenth century?” A. “...These ecclesial Communities which, specifically because of the absence of the sacramental priesthood, have not preserved the genuine and integral substance of the Eucharistic Mystery cannot, according to Catholic doctrine, be called “Churches” in the proper sense.” In “Responses to Some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects of the Doctrine on the Church.”

[www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20070629\\_responsa-quaestiones\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20070629_responsa-quaestiones_en.html)

U.S. In recognizing and signing onto MD, Evangelicals are sanctioning the Roman Catholic system and Orthodoxy as “Christian.” This is something they should have refused to do. Regarding the embedded Roman Catholic social agenda, however, many Evangelicals have simply been deceived by this cunning document.

The Scripture emphatically states, “*God will not be deceived and He will not be mocked for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*”<sup>22</sup> True Christians therefore must make a stand, the Lord God will not be mocked, His glory and His Gospel of grace are at stake! ♦

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<sup>22</sup> Galatians 6:7