

The Consequences of Ideas  
Lesson 22: A Call to Christian Conscience

What sort of religion would one have if one adopted all the language of biblical Christianity and promoted Christian good works but abandoned the need for spiritual regeneration?

### I. Introduction

- a. In this series thus far we have focused on the philosophical ideas of men and how those ideas have shaped beliefs and caused movements in Western culture which are propelling us to the **end** of the age.
- b. While ideas have consequences, it is not the ideas of men that are the first cause of where we are going, but rather, it is the sovereign plan of God being worked out through human agency; that is the **first cause**.
- c. Ultimately, the meaning of history and the meaning of our individual lives is rooted in the **decree** of God from the beginning and what we observe is merely that decree as it is brought into material reality through human experience. *Eph 1:4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: KJV*
- d. There is a continuous **thread** through human history that ties all believers of all ages to the plan and purpose of God. Therefore, every individual believer has a part to play. *Eph 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. KJV*
- e. Though we may not realize it, we are not acting randomly nor are we disconnected in any way from the testimony that God is writing through the lives of His saints. We are a manifestation of what God is **actively doing**. *Prov 3:5-6 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. KJV*
- f. Historically, Christians have etched a testimony of **Christ** into the fabric of every culture and into every nation in which they have dwelt and that heritage is the story of God in human history. *Col 1:26-27 Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: KJV*

### II. Our Christian Heritage

- a. All Christians share a two-thousand year-old heritage of service in the Name of Jesus Christ. We serve Christ with our lives, not to gain His approbation but as a reflection of **His life in us**. *Rom 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. KJV*
- b. The example and legacy of our forbearers in the faith should challenge us to continue on the paths of compassion, justice, generosity, and righteousness that the name of Christ would be **exalted**. *Heb 12:1-2 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; KJV*
- c. The history of the Church attests that we are heirs of this tradition of proclaiming God's word, seeking **justice** in our societies, resisting tyranny, and reaching out with compassion to the poor, oppressed and suffering.
- d. While the Christian community has not always been perfect in its witness and institutions that ought not to deter us from claiming the heritage that is rightfully ours: We are **light to the world**.
- e. That light has been manifest by those Christians who defended **innocent life** by rescuing discarded babies from trash heaps in Roman cities and who publicly denounced the Empire's sanctioning of infanticide.
- f. That light has shone through those believers who sacrificed their lives by remaining in Roman cities to tend the sick and dying during the plagues, and who died bravely in the coliseums rather than **deny** their Lord.
- g. That light has shone through times of depravation and war. When the barbarian tribes overran Europe, it was Christian monasteries that **preserved** not only the Bible but also the literature and art of Western culture.
- h. It was Christians who combated the evil of slavery: Papal edicts decried the practice of slavery and threatened to excommunicate anyone involved in the **slave trade**.
- i. Evangelical Christians in England, led by John Wesley and William Wilberforce, put an end to the slave trade in that country by their tireless political and cultural **activism**.
- j. Christians under Wilberforce's **leadership** also formed hundreds of societies for helping the poor, the imprisoned, and child laborers chained to machines in the early years of industrialization of Western Europe.
- k. 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.
- l. While this heritage of Christianity exemplifies Christ in the world; it is not to be confused with the **Social Gospel** movement that has emerged and proliferated through the twentieth Century.

### III. The Social Gospel

- a. The Social Gospel is a movement initiated by a group of liberal Protestant **progressives** in response to the social problems raised by the rapid industrialization, urbanization, and increasing immigration of the enlightenment age.
- b. The social gospel differentiated itself from orthodox Christianity by suggesting that what the Gospel message really represents is social salvation, where the Christianization of society is the **goal**.
- c. Under the social gospel, salvation is not about individual salvation or spiritual **regeneration**, but rather, the transformation of the society.

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- d. The ministers and activists of the social gospel based their appeals on **liberal** theology, which emphasized the immanence of God (God is everywhere) and the doctrine of Incarnation (humanity of Christ).
- e. Immanentism makes atonement **unnecessary** because in saying God is within everyone there is no real separation between God and humanity. Sin is no barrier.
- f. Separation from God is but an imagined problem that developing the **new** consciousness will solve. Salvation comes from within and below. As a result, the Gospel morphs into a social gospel.
- g. Thus they primarily valued **good works** over creeds, and they usually showed more interest in social science than in theology.
- h. They believed that laissez-faire capitalism's understanding of labor as a commodity and its sole reliance on mechanisms of supply and demand to determine wages and allocate resources was **un-Christian**.
- i. The social gospel advocates supported the labor movement and called for the active intervention of the State in economic matters and championed the promotion of the **welfare state**.
- j. They differed from secular activists in that their ultimate vision was not just a more equitable balance of power within society, but a Christianized **society**.
- k. This Christianized society would be one in which cooperation, mutual respect, and compassion **replaced** greed, competition, and conflict among social and economic classes.
- l. Despite all of their efforts to reach the working class and to cooperate with the **labor** movement, the social gospel failed to reach far beyond its middle-class liberal Protestant milieu.
- m. Many of the ideas and reforms of the social gospel movement appear to have an intent that is **consistent** with biblical Christianity, but the absence of an individual, personal, regeneration experience in its theology reveals its tragic error. *Gal 1:6-9 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!*  
*NIV*
- n. Ultimately, the primary effect of the social gospel was and is to prepare the ground for American **acceptance** of the satanic lie of progressivism as social policy.

#### IV. Our Responsibility to The Name of Christ

- a. Despite the perversion of the Gospel of Christ inherent in the social gospel movement, there remains a legitimate role for genuine Christian involvement in the affairs of this life particularly in matters of **conscience**.
- b. Like those who have gone before us in the faith, Christians today are called to proclaim the Gospel of **costly grace**, and to protect the intrinsic dignity of the human person and to stand for the common good.
- c. In being true to our own calling as the body of Christ and to the call we have as individuals for discipleship, the church can make a profound contribution to the public good by **standing** for godly principles.
- d. Not only can we make a contribution, but we **must** take a stand for the principles of Scripture that are under tremendous assault on many fronts in our current culture.
- e. For far too long in our generation the church has **failed** to actively represent Christ in opposing the forces of evil in matters that directly affect our witness to the world.
- f. The doctrinal **integrity** of the Church is being threatened and cultural forces are posing a vigorous challenge to the message and mission of the Church.
- g. Therefore, we must bind ourselves together in a renewed covenant to our mandate and mission. Four specific issues require our **immediate response**.
  - 1. Bearing witness for the **Truth**
  - 2. The **sanctity** of human life
  - 3. The sanctity of **marriage**
  - 4. Protecting our religious **liberty**

#### V. Application

- a. From what is happening in our world today do you see a need for you personally to covenant with other believers to stand for the four issues identified above? (See **ManhattanDeclaration.org** for details)
- b. One way that individual believers might take this active stand is to covenant specifically to advance the cause of Christian conscience in this generation.
- c. The Manhattan Declaration is a covenant between believers addressing the issues outlined above and by signing this declaration the signer covenants his faithful efforts to respond to these threats to our faith and practice.
- d. This activism is not about destroying the enemies of our faith or attacking specific political parties, but about being a witness to our faith regardless of the outcome or regardless of the personal consequence to ourselves.
- e. What would keep you (personally) from actively doing something in this matter?
- f. What will you covenant to do?