

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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"The Sermon In The Buggy"

He was a religious man, unashamed of his convictions. As Treasurer of a mighty nation he was a man of great authority, holding a prominent position in the Queen's court. Yet he had taken leave of his official duties, and journeyed far in order to worship God as he believed he should.

Nor was his worship an empty ceremonial matter, forgotten as soon as he shook hands with the preacher and walked out of the door. As he traveled homeward he read the words of God's prophet, Isaiah, and pondered their meaning.

"He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: (Isa. 53:)

Having no knowledge of Jesus, the fulfillment of this prophecy, nor of the New Testament (Covenant) he could not fully appreciate such passages. A "veil was upon the hearts of those who would not receive Christ (2 Cor. 3:12-f.) but in this man's case it seems he simply lacked opportunity to see and make proper application. This emphasizes the honesty and sincerity of the man. He was anxious and ready to know, and receive truth.

He knocked, and the door opened; he sought, and he was given opportunity to find. An angel sent an evangelist to the road the nobleman traveled, and the Holy Spirit brought him beside the chariot. But neither the angel nor the Spirit operated directly or miraculously upon the truth seeker. In keeping with God's plan in this Christian age, he had to hear truth, believe it, and obey. (Jn. 6:44-45 Rom- 10,13-17) So the preacher got into the chariot and "began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus." On previous occasions, when this preacher had "preached Jesus" he preached "the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name (authority, rft) of Jesus Christ, and baptized those who "gladly received his word." (Acts 8:5-12) There is no reason to believe his preaching tactics had changed. He evidently told the nobleman of the coming of Jesus Christ, his personal ministry, death, burial, and resurrection -- showing the fulfillment of prophecy in that He died for the remission of our sins.

"As they went on their way, they came unto a certain waters and the eunuch said, 'See, here is water; what doth hinder m to be baptized?' Upon being assured that if he believed that Jesus is the Son of God he could, the chariot was stopped, and the two of them "went down both into the water, and the nobleman was baptized. When they were come up out of the water the preacher was taken away, and the nobleman "went on his way, rejoicing."

This remarkable account of conversion is found in Acts 8:26-40. It teaches us that a sincere religious person is not necessarily acceptable before God, but that one with such an attitude is suited to become a Christian. It shows us the limitations of Old Testament passages, but their use and application to New Testament truth. It tells you how to be saved.

- Robert F. Turner

The Social Gospel Among Churches Of Christ

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary defines the "social gospel" as "a movement in American Protestant Christianity, esp. in the first part of the 20th century to bring the social order into conformity with Christian principles."

The purpose of the social gospel is the improvement of living conditions and social problems. Its method is the application of "Christian principles" to social problems. The main thrust of the Social Gospel, therefore, is to alleviate the social inequities of the world. The "Church" becomes the instrument by which and through which the thrust or emphasis is made.

When the primary purpose of the gospel of Christ is diverted from the saving of the soul to the betterment of the physical man on earth, a social gospel has been created. Churches that believe, support, practice and proclaim it become nothing more than social institutions.

In the latter part of the 1800s this country was beset with many social problems. The influence of the common man on religion was reflected in the growing social consciousness of religious leaders. They began to offer solutions to the social injustices of that day. By making social injustice the main topic and purpose of the gospel of Christ, the social gospel was born in this country, and has continued to grow.

Today denominational leaders are concerned over the social and moral effects of unequal distribution of wealth; bleak and revolting

slums (which prompts essays on "the dignity of man"); unemployment and oppression of racial minorities, etc. Churches have been involved in Urban Renewal and Housing, fair labor laws, and all types of social welfare agencies - some of which are subsidized by the government. Churches are adding trained counselors and other specialists to their staffs to perform a variety of functions in which religion and social work are combined.

These social programs of churches reflect the "whole man" concept. They see the necessity of meeting the whole needs of the whole man. It is a fusion where religion is interpreted broadly enough to embrace the individual's physical, psychological and social rehabilitation along with the spiritual.

While the Social Gospel has been popular among denominations for many years, only since World War II has it found any appreciable acceptance among churches of Christ.

Brethren who are rather liberal and loose in their approach to the Bible have learned that the social gospel and social programs will draw more people than the pure gospel of Christ. To gain numbers (and keep them), appeal is made to the flesh. Through this method it is hoped the spiritual man will be strengthened (as if games, food and frolic can strengthen the inward man). One cannot substitute carnal and fleshly means for the Word and expect real spiritual strength to follow. A congregation can grow in number, but not in the "strength of his might."

Churches of Christ are now putting elaborate kitchens and gymnasiums in their buildings. Church sponsored youth camps, retreats, and encampments are commonplace.

Schools, colleges and hospitals have been built and supported from congregational treasuries. Day-care centers, hobby classes, talent shows, nursing homes, homes for unwed mothers, boy scout troops, bowling teams, basketball teams, softball teams, track meets, skating parties and various social welfare programs are being supported by local churches under direction of their respective elders.

Seminars are conducted on such subjects as "The Problem of Aging"; "Family Relations and Child Development" (to teach children about themselves and how to reach out to others); "Marriage Enrichment" for couples, etc. Many in these churches have come to look on the church as an institution responsible for the social welfare needs of man. It is evident that a great percentage of churches of Christ (especially city churches) have accepted the "whole man" theory - that the church is responsible for the social, mental and physical development of the individual (a theory borrowed from secular education psychology).

Because of all these social projects, churches and colleges operated by brethren, are offering courses to equip men and women for these various ministries on the congregational level. Churches of Christ now have "Youth Ministers" (hired mainly to see that the young people's social needs are met). "Medical Missionaries" and "Counselors" who do not primarily deal with matters pertaining to religious faith and practice, but with a variety

of psychological and social adjustment problems, are also receiving church support.

Not one of these programs, or all combined, will save one soul! How many young people in these churches would remain if all these programs were removed and these churches went back to just being New Testament churches?

Where are the Scriptures which authorize churches involving themselves in recreational pursuits and setting themselves up as social services agencies?

Brethren generally opposed the social gospel concept forty years ago. There are those who opposed it then, but have completely embraced it now without saying as much as "excuse me." Was N. B. Hardeman wrong in 1942 when he said, "It is not the work of the church to furnish entertainment for the members. I have never read anything in the Bible that indicated to me that such was the part of the work of the church. I am wholly ignorant of any scripture that even points in that direction." Was B.C. Goodpasture in error in 1948, when he wrote in the Gospel Advocate, "For the church to turn aside from its divine work to furnish amusement and recreation is to pervert its mission. It is to degrade its mission. Amusement and recreation should stem from the home rather than the church." If brethren were in error in opposing the social gospel then, all need to repent and embrace it now. But if they taught the truth then, it remains truth today, and those of the contrary part need to repent and turn to that truth.

The church was purchased for a higher purpose than the pampering of the body. Its purpose is eternal (Eph. 3:10, 11), having to do with the culture of the soul. To direct it into social gospel channels is to denominationalize it; to drain it of its strength; and to destroy its uniqueness. The physical (recreation), mental and social development of the child is the work of the home - not the church!

I agree with Roy H. Lanier, Jr. when he wrote, "if any man can come forward with Bible teaching for churches to get into the recreation business, I would welcome him with open arms. If men and churches cannot find such Bible teaching, I strongly plead that they get back into scriptural work for which they have explicit Bible teaching."

- Harold Fite, via Guardian of Truth, 03/17/83

About Your Attendance

Preachers should never have to preach on attendance. It should be obvious that when a Christian does not care to attend all the services, his interest is elsewhere. It is foolish to assert that we have a passage which pronounces anathema on those who don't come on Sunday and Wednesday nights. We don't need one. All we need show is that interest and attendance are connected and that a person who is truly interested will attend. Now you can try to explain that away all you want and when you are finished it will still say the same thing: a person who is able yet does not attend the services is not interested in what is going on at the services.

Bring your excuses, pronounce your justifications, and rationalize all you want. And when you are done, the parable of the sower will still affirm the same thing: prepared soil is the only kind which results in good fruit.

– Dee Bowman

- > "The door to heaven is on earth! Have you found it?"
 - > "To go to heaven, one must turn to the right and go straight!"
 - > "You have to travel the straight and narrow road if you want to move in the best circles!"
 - > "True religion is the best armor in the world, but the worst cloak!"
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"I Will Confess My Transgressions To The Lord!"* (Text: Psa. 32:1-5); Sunday evening: *"You Prepare A Table Before Me!"* (Psa. 23:5).

GOSPEL MEETING 2016: Our Gospel Meeting is scheduled for July 24-29, with Josh Thornhill, of Wildersville, preaching.