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responsibility in life, that is, to seek and save the lost (Matthew 28:18f). It is true that a Godly person may live longer, and be happier, yet it is not the purpose of the church (as an entity), to preach the social gospel. The church was not designed to be or ever intended to be a glorified health spa that includes gymnasiums, fellowship halls, etc. Where in the first century did the church engage in fun, food, and frolic? Christ's church engaged one another in the preaching and teaching of the pure and simple gospel of Jesus Christ!

### **How Did it all Begin?**

The social gospel is a term used by American Historians to describe a socio-religious movement that came to America following the Civil War. It reached its climax in the days just prior to World War I. America was emerging from a rural society and changing into an industrial country. It was moving so fast that little time was given to the social problems that were fast materializing. In the 1870s and 80s they realized they were faced with great social problems. The industrial revolution raised problems in business and political ethics. The employer-employee relationship was strained, and the labor movement was to emerge. Poverty was everywhere and slums and drunkenness as well as prostitution and crime were on the increase as never before. Because of this, churches across the country decided it was their place to involve themselves in the social problems of the country. But one important thing was forgotten during all of this involvement and that was the very fact that the New Testament did not ever authorize a church to preach a social gospel. Can you find where it did? It can't be done. What you do find the church that Jesus built doing was preaching the Word of the Lord to the lost (Acts 2:44-47). They met daily in the Temple, ate together in their homes, and made sure that all the believers were taken care of. Who was taken care of? The believers, those that heard Peter's sermon, were pricked in their heart, repented and were baptized for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38).

### **The Social Gospel Failed in Denominationalism**

I want you to carefully consider something for a moment. Let's just suppose that your neighbor utterly failed in a business, and you are thinking of going into that very same business. Wouldn't you check very carefully into his methods, marketing, and other operational procedures so that you would not make the same mistakes when you started your own business? Sure you would!

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This is what has happened in the area of the social gospel in denominationalism. Denominationalism has utterly failed in the saving of souls by the social gospel. Yet many churches today, including churches of Christ, are following right along in their footsteps. The social gospel failed to make people more spiritual. When you feed people, entertain them, and have social functions for them, you may create an atmosphere for good friends to know one another better, and that is good. But, it takes the gospel to save people. Romans 1:16 says: *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek."* There is nothing wrong with hamburgers and ice cream, but when the church becomes engaged in such social practices, they are prostituting the mission of the church which Jesus designed and built. The Lord's church is neither a glorified soup line nor is it a country club to entertain its members.

Many people in churches of Christ today have seen the social gospel creep into their midst over the past 40 to 50 years. Even though they know that these practices are wrong, as far as the church is concerned, they have continued to accept these worldly practices. I would encourage every religious person to wake up and look at what the church is doing where you attend. Do as the Bereans and *"search the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so"* (Acts 17:11). If things are being practiced that are not in accordance with New Testament authorization, then seek to find the church that is practicing only those things which are authorized in the New Testament! May God grant all of us the wisdom to recognize error, turn from that error, and serve Him in all purity.

**"WHAT MUST I DO  
TO BE SAVED?"**

*ACTS 16:30*

**LEARN THE GOSPEL**

John 6:45; Romans 10:17

**BELIEVE IN CHRIST**

Hebrews 11:6; John 3:16

**CONFESS CHRIST**

Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10

**REPENT OF SIN**

Acts 3:19; 17:30

**BE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST**

Mark 16:16; Romans 6:3-6

**REMAIN STEADFAST**

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10

**"THE ASSEMBLING OF  
OURSELVES TOGETHER"**

*HEBREWS 10:24-25*

**SUNDAY**

Worship @ 10:00 a.m.

Studies @ 11:45 a.m.

**WEDNESDAY**

Studies & Worship @ 7:00 p.m.

**THURSDAY**

Ladies' Study @ 6:00 p.m.

75 Sherrod Boulevard  
Belén, New Mexico

**Seekers Welcome.  
Members Expected.**

**"IF A MAN IS OVERTAKEN IN  
ANY TRESPASS...  
RESTORE SUCH A ONE"**

*GALATIANS 6:1*

**CONFESS TRESPASSES**

James 5:16; 1<sup>st</sup> John 1:9

**REPENT OF SIN**

Acts 8:22

**PRAY FOR FORGIVENESS**

Acts 8:22

**REMAIN STEADFAST**

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10

**"A WORD FITLY SPOKEN IS  
LIKE APPLES OF GOLD IN  
SETTINGS OF SILVER"**

*PROVERBS 25:11*

"The truth is often not very complicated. What gets complex is evading the truth."

– Thomas Sowell

# "WHOLE COUNSEL"

*ACTS 20:27*

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## WHAT IS THE SOCIAL GOSPEL?

Richie Thetford

Have you ever asked yourself "what is the social gospel?" Most individuals that have been raised in the Lord's church have come to know and understand what the social gospel is. There are many, many individuals in churches of Christ around the country today that are actively engaged in a social gospel religion. The social gospel is being preached in many churches today and is based on the "whole-man" concept. This means that man is made up of body, soul, and spirit and thus must have physical, mental, social and spiritual training. While it is true that man needs education, we deny that the church is designed by the Lord to so operate.

### The Purpose of the Church

The purpose of the Lord's church (collectively) is to teach the Word of God. To understand this better we can look to the home. The design of the home is for domestic purposes, it is the purpose of the home to provide the material and physical needs of man. However, the church has a different purpose for being in existence and that is to provide for the spiritual mindedness of man. The church has never had as its design to train in psychological, mental, and physical training of man. Jesus had a mission when He came to earth and that was to seek and save the lost. He built His church (Matthew 16:18) and taught that those that would come into the church would have the same – Continued on page 2 –

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