

Denominational Doctrines – Part 3

The Social Gospel

Introduction:

- A. The “Social Gospel” influence is evident in almost all denominations today.
 - 1. It arose in the last quarter of the 1800's under the influence of major university divinity schools.
 - 2. It shifted the emphasis from “personal sin and salvation” to “social sins and salvation”
 - 3. It viewed the coming of the kingdom of God as when the “gospel” produced a utopian society.
 - 4. It believed the role of church and “clergy” as facilitating their view of the kingdom.
 - 5. It emphasized improving man’s life here rather than preparing man for life hereafter.
 - 6. It influenced churches to minister to the “whole man” rather to man’s spiritual needs.
 - 7. It caused many “fundamentalists” to unwittingly adopt socially oriented programs.
- B. In this lesson we will notice:
 - 1. The evidence of the social gospel influence upon the churches of today.
 - 2. The subtle differences between the “social gospel” concept and the gospel of Christ.

Discussion:

I. The Social Gospel Influence upon Churches Today.

- A. The rapid growth “multi-purpose” facilities in the late 1900's.
- B. The greater involvement of churches in political and social issues.
- C. The increase in the number of “ministries” and “ministers” listed by churches.
- D. The introduction of cultural and entertainment events into the churches’ calendars.
- E. The involvement of “the clergy” in social and political activism – leading demonstrations.
- F. The “Salvation Army” is a great of the social gospel carried to its logical conclusion.

II. The Subtle Differences Between the “Social Gospel” and the Gospel of Christ.

- A. The emphasis of the gospel of Christ is personal and the social gospel is societal.
 - 1. John dealt with Herod’s personal sin, not the ills of his government (Matt. 14)
 - 2. Jesus came to seek and save the lost, not to settle all problems of society (cf. Lk. 19:10; 12:14).
 - 3. The gospel assumes that sin is individually based, the social gospel that it socially based.
- B. The gospel treats the problem (personal sin), the social gospel treats the symptom – society’s problems.
 - 1. Society is improved as individuals are improved, not vise versa.
 - 2. Personal sin is minimized and social ills (sins) are magnified by social gospel.
 - 3. Personal sins are seen as socially based, rather than the opposite.
- C. The gospel of Christ and the Social gospel have two different views of the church.
 - 1. Institution ministering to spiritual needs rather than social and temporal needs (1 Tim. 3:15; Eph. 4:11-16).
 - a. Provides opportunities to worship God and study His word.
 - b. Provides means to preach the gospel to the lost and the saved.
 - 2. Institution with very limited role in benevolence rather than general welfare (Destitute saints).
- D. The gospel of Christ forbids the church’s involvement in social activities (1 Cor. 11:22, 34).
- E. The gospel of Christ ministers to the spirit of man, the social gospel attempts to minister to whole man.

Conclusion:

- A. As individuals, Christians are pilgrims in the present world and must be interested in the temporal.
 - 1. There are various temporal and social agencies through which he may work.
 - 2. There is only one spiritual or religious agency and that is the church.
- B. The church was neither designed nor equipped for all temporal needs or man – it is spiritual.