

Issues That Divide Us

- Authority
- The Social Gospel
- Ministries/Rel. Organizations
- Sponsoring Church
- Unlimited Benevolence



Authority Presuppositions

- The N.T. is the word of God spoken through Jesus and revealed by the Spirit to the apostles.
- The N.T. has complete authority over the doctrine and actions of the church and our lives.
- We must limit our service to God to what is revealed in the N.T. (i.e., when God says nothing, He means “no”)
- All things must be authorized by **command, statement, approved example, or inescapable conclusion.**

The Social Gospel

The Social Gospel Defined

"A movement in American Protestant Christianity initiated at the end of the 19th Century and reaching its zenith in the first part of the 20th Century and dedicated to the purpose of *bringing the social order into conformity with the teachings of Jesus Christ.*" (***Webster's New International Dictionary***)

The Social Summarized

Rubel Shelly: “The call to follow Jesus’ example of self-emptying service is the justification for every kind of help program that churches wish to pursue. Counseling, day care, literacy, food and housing, drug and alcohol treatment programs—all are ways of caring for and nurturing people...The church must be a do-good agency...The church should be an agent to **bring about a better world, a world more congenial to all of God’s creatures.**” (*The Second Incarnation*, pp. 166, 169).

The Social Gospel's Approach

Emphasizes This

Physical

Social Ills of Man

Social Reformation

Here & Now

Over This

Spiritual

Sins of Man

Spiritual Regeneration

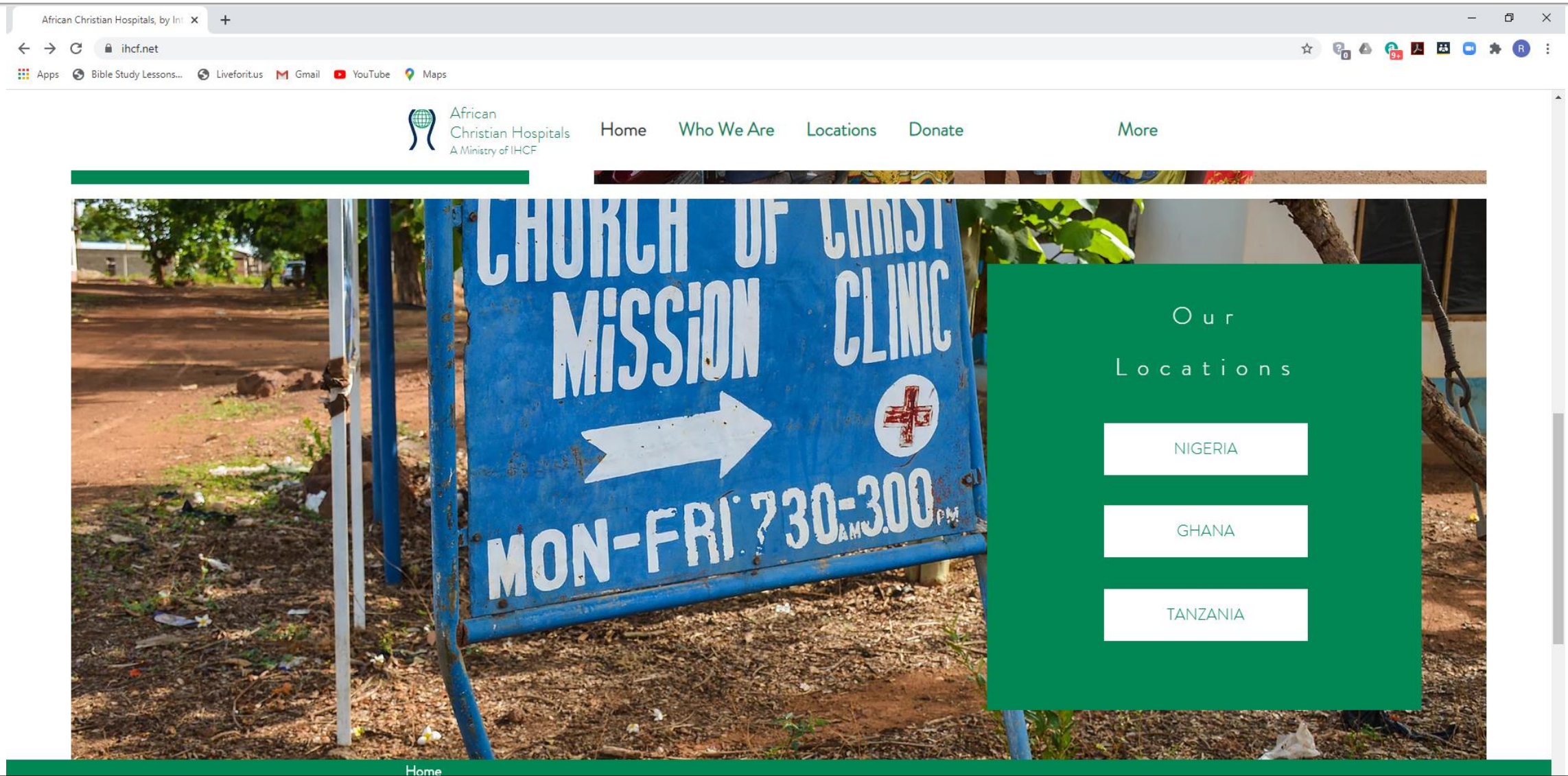
Hereafter

The Social Gospel and churches of Christ

Social Gospel Among Churches of Christ...

- Was originally adopted and *adapted*.
- Introduced general benevolence as evangelism.

Church of Christ Hospitals and Clinics



Social Gospel Among Churches of Christ...

- Was originally adopted and *adapted*.
- Introduced general benevolence as evangelism.
- Grew to include secular education and development.
 - Churches opened schools, began to teach self-help, life classes, etc.
 - **FaithWorks:** "FaithWorks of Abilene offers three 13-week career development training sessions each year for the under employed and/or non-employed. Students study a 10-week job skills curriculum and are also equipped with individual and small group counseling, professional clothing, mentoring, computer training and a weekly Bible class. Students are able to research their preferred career choice and are also placed in an internship with Abilene businesses." (<http://www.highlandchurch.org>)

Social Gospel Among Churches of Christ...

- Caused local churches to change their **facilities**
- Caused a change in local church **personnel**
- Caused the local church's **facilities** and **programs** to become a major focus of members' lives.
 - The place to play ball, socialize, party, go for weight loss programs, learn to sew, etc.
 - The means to fulfill one's benevolent responsibilities
 - The means to evangelize (i.e., through church events—recruiting, not converting)

Biblical Problems with the Social Gospel

The Social Gospel...

**Perverts the Nature of the
Kingdom**

The Social Gospel:

God's Kingdom is a Social/Political Institution

- **Samuel Batten:** "The kingdom of God is a great social synthesis which includes the whole life of man, spiritual, moral, mental and physical; its field of manifestation is man's personal, family, social, political and industrial relations...For this reason also all those programs of the Church which contemplate anything less than the making of a new Christian social order fall below the program of the kingdom. The conception of the kingdom of God fairly commits the church to the task of seeking a Christian type of human society." (*The South Mobilizing for Social Service*; "Social Service and the Church"; Samuel Batten, D.D.; 1913; p. 515).

The Social Gospel is wrong because:

Christ's Kingdom is Spiritual

- It is “not of this world” – **John 18:36** – “Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm.”
- It has a spiritual focus – **Rom. 14:17** – “for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”

The Social Gospel...

Perverts the Great Commission

Great Commission Addresses Physical Needs

- **Phillip Eichman:** “Unfortunately, we can no longer heal by laying our hands upon the sick as Jesus and others at that time were able to do. We can, however, still pattern our ministry after that of Jesus. Medical missions is one way that we, as the church, can combine a ministry of both healing and teaching. Mission programs often emphasize evangelism, which seeks to reach the spiritual needs of individuals primarily through teaching. This is, of course, **a part of the Great Commission—to go and “make disciples of all nations.”** The approach of medical missions, or perhaps a more descriptive term, medical evangelism, **is broader**, seeking to reach both the **spiritual and physical** needs of those who are served.” (*Medical Missions Among The Churches of Christ*; www.ovc.edu/missions/medical/medbook.htm)

The Great Commission Is Spiritual

- Where is ministering to
the whole man, the
social reform, medical
clinics, etc.?**

The Social Gospel...

**Perverts the Purpose of Jesus'
Ministry and Miracles**

The Social Gospel:

Christ's Work was Social and Physical

Gaston Cogdell: “Surely that same divine love which led Christ to die for us while we were yet sinners (Rom. 5:8), and to feed the hungry multitudes, **most of whom followed him mainly for the loaves and fishes**, and to heal the sick and diseases **just because they needed healing**, will lead His body **the church to do what it can to alleviate human suffering**, and to **meet human needs wherever and whenever possible**, even of those who are unsaved, recognizing always that the ultimate goal of all such efforts is the saving of the souls of those who are aided.” (*The Cogdell-Turner Discussion*, p. 91)

The Social Gospel is wrong because:

Perverts the Purpose of Jesus' Ministry/Miracles

- Jesus came to seek and save the lost – Lk. 19:10
- Jesus' salvation will cause suffering and hardship – Mt. 10:34-36; 2 Tim. 3:10-11
- Jesus' miracles were done as **signs**, or **to prove**, that He is the Christ
 - Feeding the 5000 proved this – Jn. 6:14
 - Jesus claimed his miracles prove He is the Messiah – Jn. 10:24-25
 - John said Jesus' miracles were to prove He is the Messiah – Jn. 20:30-31

The Social Gospel...

Perverts the true Gospel's Appeal

Appeals to the Flesh

- **Marvin Phillips:** “I am interested in submarines and skateboards if they are effective in leading souls to Christ...Bus evangelism is **psychology**. If we are to get riders, we must **motivate them** by the **sizzle**. Sure, **they come for the wrong reason**, but so did all those on Pentecost in Acts 2.” (“Do We Still Believe It?,” *The Southside Reminder*, May 11, 1983, 7:37:2)
- The S.G. advocates churches using “bait-and-switch” evangelistic tactics.
- Churches are to draw people by *fleshly incentives*, causing people to come *for the wrong reasons*, so the church can *expose the gospel to them later*.

The Social Gospel is wrong because:

The Gospel has a Spiritual Appeal

- Jesus rebuked and refused to feed those who came to him for the wrong reason – Jn. 6:26-27
- The Gospel's evangelistic weapons are spiritual.
 - Only God can draw one to Jesus through the gospel – Jn. 6:44-45
 - The weapons supplied Christians are not carnal – 2 Cor. 10:3-5
 - Paul's ministry offered only one incentive—Jesus Christ crucified – 1 Cor. 2:2

The Social Gospel...

Perverts Biblical Fellowship

Defends Food and Fun as Fellowship

- Bulletin of a church of Christ: "We are told to have **fellowship of the righteous** (Psalm 55:14; John 13:34; Romans 15:1). This coming Sunday evening after services we are all encouraged to have **fellowship of the righteous**. Bring your freezer of ice cream and join us on the back parking lot. It is a wonderful opportunity for the whole congregation to **fellowship together**. I hope to see each of you there." (via Mark Roberts, "Striving For Unity," *Abundant Life*, May, 1998, 31:5:6).

The Social Gospel is wrong because:

Biblical Fellowship Connected to the Local Church...

- Is not recreation, social meals, ice cream suppers, etc.
- Is not based on a command for churches to provide “fellowship” (sharing).
- Is learned by specific examples of it work described as fellowship, such as...
 - Coming together to share in being edified by the word, giving, partaking of the Lord’s Supper, and prayer – Acts 2:42
 - Sharing together in helping needy saints – 2 Cor. 8:3-4
 - Sharing together in supporting the preaching of the gospel – Phil. 4:15

Conclusion

- I am for helping the needy, ending social injustice, people having better jobs, and for brethren getting together for recreation/social activities.
- I am opposed to the Social Gospel because it...
 - Perverts the nature of Christ's kingdom.
 - Perverts the Great Commission
 - Perverts the ministry and miracles of Jesus
 - Perverts the spiritual appeal of the Gospel
 - Perverts N.T. fellowship