

Kingdom of God

Sept. 11, 2013

Over 2000 years of church history, 3 general views: [on board]

#1. The K of G is the visible church in the world; therefore the Kingdom is here NOW

#2. The K of G is the Mil. Kingdom – the visible reign of Christ on earth.

#3. The k of G is the eternal state of perfection under the future reign of God after the GWT judgment.

must go deeper. 7 different emphases in K of G teaching through the ages.

Each one falls under a given view. [put all 7 on board]

From Worst to First

#1 The Kingdom of God is a Social Kingdom of man on earth

#2 The Kingdom of God is a Moral Kingdom among men on earth

#3 The Kingdom of God is the visible Church on earth

#4 The Kingdom of God is a Spiritual Kingdom within the hearts of men

#5 The Kingdom of God is God's reign in Heaven

#6 The Kingdom of God was in the past, Israel's kingdom in OT

#7 The Kingdom of God is the future Messianic or Millennial Kingdom of Christ

Emphasis #1 The Kingdom of God is a Social Kingdom that gave rise to the Social Gospel

Overview:

K of G is the progressive, social organization and improvement of mankind

Falls under #1 above

Purpose of “the church”? Establish a Christian social order where bad men do good

EX: Work of kingdom is feeding the hungry. Feed the hungry and you will be saved. The Church exists to feed the hungry.

Peaked 1900-1920, revived in the 50s and 60's, making a strong comeback today as much of mega-church evangelicalism and modern missions embraces

Dr. McClain: “Most one-sided, warped and excessive of the seven.”

I - Gandhi could be called the greatest “Christian” of his era, though he never renounced demonic and degrading religion of Hinduism/caste system

I – Mother Teresa

Slithered into politics and the church, can hardly distinguish the two

Tidbit: “religion is an opium dose for the people” coined by a proponent

Worldview: Christianity a means to an end - development of mankind

So Early proponents saw Socialism and communism as steps FWD, Even Democracy as God and man struggling together for the social redemption of mankind.

The Message: We will solve our problems. Social Gospel

Definition of the Social Gospel:

Protestant Christian liberal movement prominent in the early 20th century that attempted to apply biblical teachings to problems associated with industrialization.

- Injustice from economic inequality and Poverty
- Alcoholism
- Crime
- racial tensions
- slums
- bad hygiene
- child labor
- inadequate labor unions
- poor schools
- danger of war

Basic Theological Underpinnings:

Our task is to put the Lord's Prayer into operation (Matthew 6:10):

"Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Presbyterians described its goals in 1910: The great ends of the church are the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind; the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God; the maintenance of divine worship; the preservation of truth; the promotion of social righteousness; and the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world.

***** Premise?** As quality of life improves thru public health, enforced education, reduction of poverty, the quality of moral lives will improve.

Driving Force? Basic view of man & Eschatology

AMILL: living NOW in a (symbolic thousand-year) time in which Christ is ruling from heaven, Satan is bound, and we are God's workers appointed to bring about a kingdom on earth worthy of Christ.

POST MILL: no Second Coming until humankind rid itself of social evils by human effort. We must restore the planet to its Eden-like state before Christ returns from heaven to usher in the eternal state/eternal kingdom

Historical Development

Late 1800's Christians became disgusted by poverty and slums and sought to address these problems using religion.

Leading theologian - Walter Rauschenbusch, a Baptist pastor.

- Rallied against the "selfishness of capitalism"
- promoted a form of Christian Socialism that endorsed creation of labor unions and cooperative economics.

Contrast: D.L. Moody: concentrating on social aid distracts people from the Gospel.

In 1892, Rauschenbusch, other leading writers and advocates, formed Brotherhood of the Kingdom. Their work defined the theology of the Social Gospel movement and gave it public prominence.

- *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (1907)
- *Christianizing the Social Order* (1912)
- Most important: *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (1917)

"a permanent addition to our spiritual outlook and that its arrival constitutes a state in the development of the Christian religion"

Rauschenbusch introduced this shift in thinking: Gospel is too individualistic. "Our gospel has not evoked faith in the will and power of God to redeem the permanent institutions of human society from their inherited guilt of oppression and extortion."

What lies beneath? His kingdom of God theology

the "the kingdom of God," of which Jesus Christ reportedly "always spoke"^[15] has been gradually replaced by that of the Church. Time to return to the doctrine of "the kingdom of God."

Result? Minimization of the Church. Really paved the way for the emergent church movement. B/T/W in 2010 survey, 50% who claim to belong to a religious tradition seldom or never attend religious services

Congregationalist Minister Charles Sheldon wrote novels incorporating Social Gospel themes. Charles Sheldon coined the motto: "What would Jesus do?"

Sheldon was a committed Christian Socialist. His novels inspired R.'s theology

Practical Result – Social Welfare:

Opened settlement houses to help poor and immigrants improve their lives

Offered daycare, education, and health care to needy people in slum neighborhoods

YMCA created to help rural youth adjust to the city without losing their religion, but by the 1890s became a powerful instrument of the Social Gospel.

Nearly all denomination shifted to focus on the physical needs of the body

the African Methodist Episcopal church (AME) and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion church (AMEZ) had active programs in support of the Social Gospel.

Social Gospel and Labor

the Social Gospel had a profound effect upon the American Federation of Labor (AFL).

The AFL began a movement called Labor Forward, which was a pro-Christian group who “preached unionization like a revival.”

Resistance: In Philly, met early resistance. They brought in revivalist Billy Sunday, firmly anti-union, who believed “that the organized shops destroyed individual freedom.”^[23]

The Progressives

prior to World War I, the Social Gospel was the religious wing of the progressive movement

goals: combating injustice, suffering and poverty in society. HUB: Denver, CO

Methodist Pastor Thomas Uzzel led the Methodist People's Tabernacle from 1885 to 1910. His legacy?

- free dispensary for medical emergencies
- employment bureau for job seekers
- a summer camp for children
- night schools for extended learning
- English language classes.

Baptist minister Jim Goodhart:

- employment bureau
- food and lodging for tramps and hobos
- Became city chaplain and director of public welfare of Denver in 1918.

Reformed Jews and Catholics got in on the act in Denver.

President Woodrow Wilson emerged out of this movement as most presidents claiming to be Christian have

William Jennings Bryan carried social gospel ideology into three presidential campaigns.

Social gospel themes were evident in the **New Deal of 1930's**

With WW II, reality of human sinfulness slapped the movement down.

It went underground and fell out of favor in mainline churches among the people, BUT influence continued in Protestant seminaries and among clergy

Came to life again when a young black man arrived on the campus of Boston University to study theology. He found the Social Gospel tradition alive and well. Martin Luther King, Jr. used the theology of the Social Gospel to build the foundations of his own arguments for the civil rights of blacks. King assassinated as he was turning his focus to economic justice

After 1980 it weakened again as a major force inside mainstream churches; indeed those churches were losing strength and people.

Historian Paul Boyer sums up: "many Christians came to believe that through reform efforts, through reform legislation dealing with child labor, with slums and tenement houses and unsafe working conditions, human beings really could build the Kingdom of God on earth."

Roman Catholic Development:

Liberation theology^[1] is a political movement in Roman Catholic theology which interprets the teachings of Jesus Christ in relation to a liberation from unjust economic, political, or social conditions.

proponents^[who?] as "an interpretation of Christian faith through the poor's suffering, their struggle and hope ..."

detractors: Christianized Marxism.^[3]

began as a movement within the Catholic Church in Latin America in the 1950s–1960s as a moral reaction to the poverty caused by social injustice in that region.

Severely admonished by the Vatican in 1984 and 1986; too focused on institutional vs individual sin AND for identifying Catholic Church hierarchy in South America as the ones oppressing the people!

Offshoot: Christian socialism, form of religious socialism based on the teachings of Jesus.

capitalism is idolatrous, rooted in greed and cause of inequality

major movement in the United Kingdom in 1960s; Christian Socialist Movement.^[2]

Footnote: Two noted early proponents of the Social Gospel:

- Frederick James Furnivall (co-creator of the *Oxford English Dictionary*)
- Francis Bellamy (a Baptist minister and the author of Pledge of Allegiance).

5 tenets of faith in the Social Gospel:

1. Man is good and will do right if given right social environment
 - a. gun control laws and excessive govt
 - b. works hand in glove w/ modern psychology and psychiatry movement
 - c. belief in social progress
2. Exclusive emphasis on the immanence of God and loss of the transcendence of God; led to a stripping away of the supernatural
 - a. God became = to social consciousness of humanity
 - b. God no longer a personal, exalted, supreme Being but rather an impersonal and abstract concept down on our level
3. Socialism is the best political system.
4. Approach the Bible w/ a highly critical attitude called higher criticism,
 - a. subjective acceptance of only those parts that fit a system of man's innate goodness
 - b. editing out what doesn't "feel right"
 - c. over-emphasis on warped view of Kingdom of God
5. Live out our motto: "universal fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man"
 - a. Free Masonry
 - b. Universalism
 - c. Peace at all costs
 - d. God is Love. All about peace and open relationships b/c He exists to make us happy

Legacy of the Social Gospel

lasting impact on the policies of most mainline denominations in US and many well known ministries like Salvation Army and YMCA

Huge impact on gov't policies, directly or indirectly

Huge impact on Emergent church movement

Huge impact on missiology

Helped the Push toward ecumenism, downgrade of doctrine, celebration of good works, deeds not creeds

Various groups under the name of Christ began programs for social reform.
Looked around and saw others doing the same thing. Hello ecumenical movement

1908 Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America formed and adopted "the social creed of the churches."

- Abolition of child labor
- Better working conditions for women
- One day off a week
- Right of every worker to a living wage
- Emphasis on leadership to the people led to women's suffrage
- emphasis on morality led to prohibition.

The 21st century

still influential in mainline Protestant denominations

- African Methodist Episcopal Church
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
- Presbyterian Church USA
- United Church of Christ
- Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
- United Methodist Church
- growing in the Episcopal Church as well
- service and relief agencies associated with Protestant denominations and the Catholic Church.

Evangelical left or Progressive Evangelicals

Politically or theologically LEFT, or both.

Evangelical: Incarnation, atonement, and resurrection, and Bible as a primary authority

Non-evangelical: support progressive or left wing political policies.

- opposed to capital punishment
- support gun control
- support welfare programs
- pacifists
- Theologically, support modern biblical criticism
- Supportive or ambivalent on Homosexual rights/gay marriage

Where are they? mainline denominations and spreading to children of conservative evangelicals!

Two men, both professing to be evangelicals, have led the way.

George W. Bush: White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives.

government funding for local churches, synagogues, mosques, and other religious ministries that were providing a social service to their community.

"people of faith" at least as effective as secular organizations

One of his foremost achievements

Obama stated before his election that he would continue these.

Rick Warren

mega-selling author of *The Purpose-Driven Church* and *The Purpose-Driven Life*

taken the social gospel to where it's never been before: worldwide, into the thinking and planning of world leaders.

Warren credits business management genius Peter Drucker with the basic concept that he is executing.

Drucker believed that the social problems of poverty, disease, hunger, and ignorance were beyond the capability of governments or multinational corporations to solve.

To Drucker, the most hopeful solution would be found in the nonprofit sector of society, especially churches, with their hosts of volunteers dedicated to alleviating the social ills of those in their community.

Warren, acknowledging the late Drucker as his mentor for 20 years, certainly learned his lessons. His two *Purpose-Driven* books, translated into 57 languages and selling a combined 30 million copies, reveal the game plan for what Drucker had envisioned.

Warren had local churches implement this vision from his books through his enormously popular 40 Days of Purpose and 40 Days of Community programs.

To date, 500,000 churches in 162 nations have become part of his network.

They form the basis for his Global P.E.A.C.E. Plan.

www.thepeaceplan.com.

On video, he identifies 5 "giants" of humanity's ills:

1. spiritual emptiness
2. self-centered leadership
3. poverty
4. disease
5. illiteracy

he hopes to eradicate or at least attack these by ...

- (P)lanting churches
- (E)quipping leaders
- (A)ssisting the poor
- (C)aring for the sick
- (E)ducating the next generation

Warren seeks to mobilize the church to slay the world's giants

He reasons that since there are 2.3 billion Christians worldwide, they could potentially form what President Bush has termed a vast "army of compassion"

That's the *Christian version*

Then there's the revised Inclusive version

drawn praise from political and religious leaders and celebrities worldwide.

At the 2008 World Economic Forum, he declared, "The future of the world is not secularism, but religious pluralism...."

"We cannot solve these problems without involving people of faith and their religious institutions. It isn't going to happen any other way. On this planet there are about ...

- 20 million Jews
- 600 million Buddhists
- 800 million Hindus
- over 1 billion Muslims
- and 2.3 billion Christians.

If you take people of faith out of the equation, you have ruled out five-sixths of the world."

Working with people of all faiths Warren revised the "P" of "planting evangelical churches" to "(P)romoting reconciliation"

"E" of "equipping [church] leaders" to "(E)quipping ethical leaders."

A.C.E. were good to go.

In his practical shift to pluralism, he says we Christians should work with any influential religious leader to “attack the five giants.”

He since added #6: Global warming.

a secular leader affirms what he's doing: "I get it, Rick. Houses of worship are the distribution centers for all we need to do."

Warren has joined the advisory board of Faith Foundation, established by former British prime minister and recent Roman Catholic convert Tony Blair.

Goal? further understanding and cooperation among the six leading faiths:

Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, and Jewish.

One fly in the soup? Those pesky *Exclusive* religions

a World Economic Forum panelist:

"There are some religious leaders in different religious faiths who, in seeking to affirm their own faith and its authenticity and legitimacy...deny other people their faith with its legitimacy and authenticity. I don't think we can keep going like this without...spawning the kind of hatred we are all here to try and solve. I think it's up to us to hold the clergy's feet to the fire of whatever faith. That we insist that we affirm what is beautiful in our own traditions while at the same time refusing to denigrate other faith traditions by suggesting that they are illegitimate, or consigned to some kind of evil end."