

SOCIAL WORK BY THE CHURCH AND ITS DEACONS

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The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is not a social Gospel but it does have social implications. The Gospel is the “Good News” for the lost soul that Jesus can save a sinner from the judgment of God and the penalty of sin — eternal death and hell.

However, when the sinner is reconciled to God through the redemption bought by His Son, Jesus Christ, on the cross, he is transformed, and receives a new nature. He, as a new creature in Christ, wants to be like the Good Samaritan and help people (Luke 10). He concerns himself in letting his light so shine before men that they will see his good works. He shows social interest in helping his fellow man like Jesus did. Jesus first called for repentance in Mark 1:15: “The Kingdom of God is at hand— repent and believe the Gospel.” Jesus preached and taught the Scriptures giving their true interpretation, in contrast to the misleading interpretations and applications of the Pharisees. He showed His social concerns by changing the water into wine and feeding the 5,000 as well as visiting and healing the sick. There is no physical healing in the atonement as such. Only spiritual, but God heals because of His mercy and we pray in faith.

Reconciliation is first spiritual. A sinner is reconciled to his God through the blood of the cross. A sinner is an enemy of God until he makes his peace with God, or better said, God makes peace for the sinner through His own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ and His death on the cross.

Reconciliation is a Bible doctrine — not a social action, as alluded to in the Presbyterian U.S.A. Church’s 1967 Confession. Resolving the problems and woes of an inner city is not biblical reconciliation, but only social action. It is to be commended, but don’t confuse biblical reconciliation and social action. God is in Christ Jesus reconciling sinners to Himself. This is God’s and the Church’s first emphasis, but good works are often neglected. This should not be so. Paul, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, says God’s people should be zealous of good works and abound in them (Titus 2:14 and 2 Cor. 9:8).

Evangelical, fundamental churches through the ages have had social works. Paul raised up offerings to help the poor in Jerusalem. Hospitals and orphanages have been established around the world. Dr. Lambie and Dr. Hasmon of the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions established hospitals in Bethlehem, Israel, and in Changer, Arabia. Evelyn Moulton, missionary in Brazil, worked with orphans. God’s people supported and prayed for these social works connected with the gospel ministry. Similar good works could be multiplied by the thousands around the world for centuries.

Although these social good works are separated in the main by vast distances from the local churches and denominations that support them, in some cases and places these social works are locally connected to the church that oversees them. God has placed deacons in the churches

to supervise and extend social works or benevolences in the areas of a local church's activities. This work is found in Acts chapter six, and explains the social work to the widows and most likely orphans as well. The local church of Jerusalem had social work going on, and it was put in the hands of the deacons including Stephen and Philip. This was done so that the Apostles and elders would have more time for prayer and the sermon ministries of the Word of God.

In Brazil in a local church, money was given every month to the deacons so as they visited, money would be available to buy medicine for the needy who didn't have money to do so. The deacons received a spiritual blessing in their own souls as they visited and ministered spiritually and physically to the people.

In Guatemala, in one church, money is given to the pastor to minister to the needy, but it was stated that this was to be in conjunction with the deacons. It is better if they head it up and work with the pastor through a board of deacons.

In some churches, the deacons don't work at this important ministry that God has ordained. They neglect visiting and praying for the sick. They don't do visitation evangelism. They don't visit the widows and orphans as true religion requires by James under the direction of the Holy Spirit. James 1:27 says: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

Deacons that have this God-given call and name, are exhorted to serve and do good works as servants of the Lord, thus fulfilling their task for the Glory of the Lord. There is no social gospel, but there is social service which is pleasing to our God.