

The Social Gospel

Most denominations today are consumed with the social gospel. Within the last 100 years, the emphasis in the work of many denominations has shifted from a spiritual focus to a physical one. Following the lead of humanists (cf. Humanist Manifesto I) many churches (including churches of Christ) have financed large entertainment complexes, complete with recreational, athletic and banquet facilities. They have become increasingly involved in 'this-world' issues – political, environmental, racial, economic, labor and others. **This is the social gospel.**

When did this massive shift in the work and purpose of the church take place?

Perhaps the following quote provides the answer: *The Humanist Manifesto I* (1933) :

“Today man’s larger understanding of the universe, his scientific achievements, and deeper appreciation of brotherhood, have created a situation which requires a new statement of the means and purposes of religion. Such a vital, fearless, and frank religion capable of furnishing adequate social goals and personal satisfactions may appear to many people as a complete break with the past. While this age does owe a vast debt to the traditional religions, it is none the less obvious that any religion that can hope to be a synthesizing and dynamic force for today must be shaped for the needs of this age. To establish such a religion is a major necessity of the present. It is a responsibility which rests upon this generation.” **The social gospel was no accident.**

Let’s look at some of the things that were being done in churches of Christ back in the 1960s.

Churches of Christ – 1966

1. Cows for Korea – Campbell, California
2. Church Kitchens – Cookeville, Tennessee
3. Baseball Equipment – Ft. Myers, Florida
4. Boy Scout Troops – Nashville, Tennessee
5. Holy Hootenanny – Oklahoma City, Okla.
6. Swimming Pool – Memphis, Tennessee
7. Fishing Lakes – Memphis, Tennessee
8. House of the Carpenter – Boston, Mass
9. Summer Camp – Chattanooga, Tennessee
10. World Fair – Flushing, NY
11. Recreation Hall – Cookeville, Tennessee
12. Halloween Parties – Ft. Myers, Florida
13. Fish Suppers – Chattanooga, Tennessee
14. Family Counseling Service – Lubbock, Texas
15. Home for Unwed Mothers – Lubbock, Texas
16. King and Queen Banquet – Miami, Florida

17. Good Friday Service – Walnut Ridge, Ark
18. Christmas Party – Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
19. School – Inglewood, California
20. Gymnasium – Madison, Tennessee

These are “baby steps” compared to what is going on today among our brethren. As the old saying goes, “Let the Camel get his head in the tent and pretty soon he will be in hump and all.”

Just look at what people are looking for in a “church” today.

Today when you invite people to your services they will ask the question, “What kind of entertainment do you have for our young people?” Here is a list of the things that many are looking for:

Good “Singles Program” — Meet and date good moral people.

Great “Youth Group” — daycare - mom’s day out - teen program (entertainment for the kids)

“Contemporary” Type Church — “up-beat music” - “soul inspiring messages” - service not too long - refreshments - must feel the presence of the Lord.

Service-Oriented Church — money management - aerobic classes - weight loss - computer classes - tax preparation, estate planning

A Church That Is “Just Plain Fun” — many activities - games - food-contests - movies - great entertainment for the family – wholesome time together.

One That Will “Accept Me Just As I Am” — don’t ask any questions about beliefs, habits, sexual orientation, lifestyle - take me as I am and let me stay the way I am.”

In other words, it is the old saying, “Don’t ask, don’t tell.” However, we can add some truth to this little saying. “Don’t ask, don’t tell, let them go to hell.”

There is no question that the “Social Gospel” caught on even in churches of Christ.

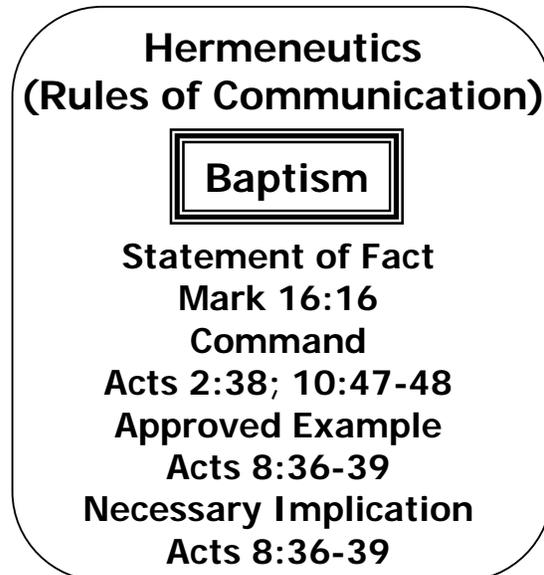
THE USUAL DEFENSES – There was a time when many would make the argument in defense of the social gospel that “we have Bible authority for what we are doing.” ‘Fellowship halls,’ or ‘family life centers,’ were justified with an appeal to the Biblical term ‘fellowship’ (from the Greek word *koinonia*). However, most folks today haven’t even thought about whether or not we have Scriptural authority for these “socials.”

“What Do You Mean, ‘we must have Scriptural Authority’?”

Scriptural authority is established by the rules of Hermeneutics. (The word “hermeneutics” means, “the branch of knowledge that deals with interpretation, especially of the Bible or literary texts” (Oxford Dictionary). The facts of the

matter are these: The rules that are used for biblical interpretation are the same rules of communication that we use in everyday living. These rules consist of statement of fact, command, approved example and necessary implication or conclusion.

First of all, let's look at biblical examples of how these rules are used in studying the Scriptures.



Statement of Fact - Mark 16:16 “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”

Command - Acts 2:38 “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Acts 10:47-48 “Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Spirit as well as we? ⁴⁸And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord...”

Approved Example - Acts 8:36-39 “And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? ³⁷And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. ³⁸And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. ³⁹And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.”

(The above also includes Necessary Implication or Conclusion.)

When you read the above passages in Acts 8:36-39 there is nothing mentioned about baptism. How did the eunuch know that he needed to be baptized? Philip must have told him when He preached Christ unto him. Thus a necessary implication or conclusion. Also, as I have already pointed out, we use these same rules every day without even thinking about them.

If a number of people have gathered together to have a hamburger fry and I walk into the room and say, “someone go to the store and get some buns,” Joe

says, "I'll go." He walks up to the convenient store and get some hamburger buns pays cash for them and returns. This constitutes a general command and a necessary implication or conclusion. How so? I said "go get some buns." Since no one was specified, Joe volunteered. He walked to the Convenient store and bought hamburger buns. He concluded that since we are cooking hamburgers that we needed hamburger buns. He paid cash. Here we have a General Command and a Necessary Conclusion!"

Now then I walk into the room and say, "Jim, take my car and go to Publix and get some Wonder hamburger buns. Take this check and pay for them." If this command is obeyed we now have Specific Authority. I have specified every aspect of the command. Who (Jim), How (take my car) Where (go to Publix) What will he buy (Wonder Hamburger Buns) How will he pay for them? ("take this check and pay for them").

In the Scriptures we read, I Thessalonians 5:21 "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." Colossians 3:17 "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him." Whatever we do in word (teaching) or deed (example) do all in the name of the Lord Jesus."

The word "name" in the passage is translated from the Greek word "onómati" and is defined as a "name" (literally or figuratively) [authority, character]:" (Strong's). So whatever we do in word or deed, we must do all by the authority of the Lord Jesus.

What God Authorizes  **We May Provide For**

<u>Action</u>	Options - Choices
Assembling Hebrews 10:25	Building, Seats, Lights Carpet, Air Cond.
Singing Ephesians 5:19	Song Books, Song Leader, Pitch Pipe
Recreation (Scripture - ?)	Building, Equip., etc.
Social Meals (Scripture - ?)	Kitchen, Dishes, Fellowship Halls, etc.

The point is this. Before we can have any options or choices we must first have Scriptural authorization for the ACTION. And unless I have missed something along in my studies, there are no Scriptures authorizing the last two actions.

THE USUAL DEFENSES ‘Fellowship halls,’ or ‘family life centers,’ are justified with an appeal to the Biblical term ‘fellowship’ (from the Greek word *koinonia*).

The basic meaning of the term is ‘sharing,’ and in modern religious circles it has come to denote almost exclusively a physical sharing. However, an examination of the passages where it is used will show that it is used **exclusively of a spiritual sharing**.

Let’s look at the word with its derivations.

***koinwnia* — Fellowship**

Acts 2:42 “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

Galatians 2:9 “And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.”

Other words used to translate different forms of the Greek word.

***koinwnia* — Communion** — I Corinthians 10:16 “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?”

Distribution — II Corinthians 9:13 “Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men.”

***koinwnia* — Contribution** — Romans 15:26 “For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.”

Communication — Philemon 6 “That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.”

To Communicate — Hebrews 13:16 “But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.” Used 20 times.

***koinwnew* — Communicate** — Galatians 6:6 “Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.”

Distribute — Romans 12:13 “Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.”

Partaker — II John 10-11 “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: ¹¹For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”

***koinwnos* — Partaker** — I Corinthians 10:18 “Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?”

Partner — II Corinthians 8:23 “Whether any do inquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellowhelper concerning you: . . .”

Fellowship — I Corinthians 10:20 “But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.

<i>koinwnia</i>	<i>koinwnew</i>	
Fellowship	Communicate	
Communion	Distribute	
Distribution	Be Partaker	Used 8 times
Contribution	<i>koinwnos</i>	
Communication	Partaker	
To Communicate	Partner	
Used 20 times	Fellowship	
	Companion	Used 10 times
<i>koinwnikos</i> — Willing to communicate		Used 1 time

These are some forms of the Greek word *Koinwnia*, and the English words that are used to translate them. You will observe that some form of the word is used 39 times in the New Testament. (Smith's Greek-English Concordance).

Reasons Why The Church Came Together

- 1. For Edification** — Hebrews 10:24-25 “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: ²⁵Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”
- 2. For Worship** — Acts 20:7 “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.”
- 3. To Hear the Word of God Preached** — Acts 11:26 “...And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.”
- 4. To Discuss Church Problems** — Acts 15:2 “When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.”
- 5. To Discuss Foreign Efforts In Evangelism** — Acts 14:26-27 “And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. ²⁷And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.”
- 6. Determine How to Best Do Benevolent Work** — Acts 6:1-3 “And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. ²Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. ³Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.”
- 7. For A Prayer Service** — Acts 4:31 “And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spake the word of God with boldness.”
- 8. For Discipline** — I Corinthians 5:4-5 “In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus

Christ, ⁵To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”

Does Anyone Know Of Any Other Reason They Came Together Scripture Please!

We can emulate all eight of the above things and know we are right with God. . However, unless we have other Scriptures why the church came together; there can be no other reasons for the church to come together. If they do, it will not be by the authority of Christ.

Show Me Where I'm Wrong! Someone says. Nice try. It behooves those who practice a thing to show from the Scriptures that **what they are doing is right**. I have given Scriptures for the reasons we come together. As long as we only do those things for which we can give Scriptural authority, we can be right and have fellowship with God (in the Scriptural sense.) However, brethren who do things without Scriptural authority and divide the church will answer to God for it in the Day of Judgment.

Look at what John had to say about the matter.

I John 1:6-7 “If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: ⁷But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

Brethren if you don't have Scriptural authority for what you are doing, you are “walking in darkness” and therefore are not in fellowship with God.

What else did John say? I John 1:9 “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Brethren wouldn't it be wise to do what John said and get forgiveness for destroying the church of our Lord? Please do so before it is too late.