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Theological Liberalism in America



Here in the capital we are all acutely knowledgeable that the charts that project runaway national debt and national economic insolvency are not only accurate, but disturbingly and frighteningly alarming, to say the least. And we all know that the major contributor to the crisis is the sacred cow of entitlement programs. America's entitlement program policies are now hugely coming to roost on the doorsteps of the U.S. Treasury. Given this crisis, what wisdom can we glean from God's Word that could aid us in solving the problem? May God use this Bible study in that regard.



Ralph Drollinger

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WEEKLY BIBLE STUDIES

- White House Senior Staff: Thursdays 7am, OMB Conference Room, hot breakfast served.*
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- Senate Members: Tuesdays 8am, rotating offices, hot breakfast served.*
- House Members: Thursdays 7:45 am, The Capitol Hill Club, hot breakfast served.*

The views expressed in each Bible study are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect the position of any individual Bible Study Sponsor.



John Thune

U.S. Senator, South Dakota



The Members Bible Study provided to Congressmen and Senators in Washington, D.C., is where “iron sharpens iron,” and where the truth in Scriptures is a powerful tool that helps people change their lives, said U.S. Senator John Thune, South Dakota.

“Ralph and Danielle are there to instruct, admonish, encourage, exhort, and inspire elected officials to lead their lives and conduct themselves in a way that brings glory to God, to remind us of what is important, what our priorities should be, and what we should be treasuring,” Senator Thune said.

“In a profession which relies so heavily on gaining the approval of men, it’s important for elected officials to be reminded that, ultimately, they must answer to God for their actions and the decisions they make” he said.

“Ralph is committed to going deep in his Bible studies to help elected officials understand the Scriptures and how the Word of God applies to what we do here,” Senator Thune said. “This is a unique environment and one in which we need to have people of faith applying that faith in a real way.”

I. INTRODUCTION

Undoubtedly the motives for building a national social safety net some decades ago were both sincere and well-meaning. The astute, wise lawmaker, however, must first ask himself if such pragmatism can be justified biblically. Is there a biblical basis for the institution of government to create such large entitlement programs? What does God’s Word say in regard to the extent of governmental responsibility for the welfare of its citizens?

In 1 Timothy 5 and elsewhere in the New Testament (NT) (cf. Acts 6:1–6; Romans 15:25–26; Galatians 2:10; 2 Thessalonians 3:6–12; James 1:27; 1 John 3:17) the Bible is explicitly clear about whose responsibility it is to form a safety net for members of society: there is a pecking order, or hierarchy of responsibility, revealed in Scripture.

The responsibility for taking care of society’s poor and bereft first lies with the institution of marriage. God’s design is for the husband to provide for his own household (cf. 1 Timothy 5:8). If for whatever reason he is unable, the responsibility for provision, secondarily, falls to the children and/or grandchildren within the institution of the family. This is clear also from a close read of 1 Timothy 5. The third tier of responsibility for caring for the poor and bereft lies with the institution of the church, which is also clear from 1 Timothy 5.

Interestingly, and importantly, nowhere in Scripture is the institution of the state in view as it pertains to societal responsibility for the needs of the less fortunate. Nowhere to be found in the NT is an explicit command for the institution of the state to assume such a function. States

one of America’s leading conservative systematic theologians, Wayne Grudem, in his survey of all biblical passages pertinent to this subject: “I am surprised to discover that few people seem to realize that these verses say nothing about civil government overcoming individual citizens’ poverty!”¹ Summarily, herein then is God’s biblically revealed pattern for the most effective and efficient, sustainable safety net for society. I should quickly, and in all objectivity, add that Scripture does not prohibit government from directly aiding the poor, but to the degree any of God’s five ordained institutions wanders from its scripturally explicit responsibilities is the degree the institution will become inefficient and increasingly unable to fulfill its God-explicit responsibilities.

At the conclusion of this study, I will list five biblically based ways civil government (apart from direct entitlement programs) should aggressively aid its people (albeit indirectly) to overcome poverty.

Hopefully, in light of the fact that America is in the midst of a tsunami of national debt, we will find ourselves teachable. What does the Bible say about entitlement programs?

Make no mistake. Do not be theologically naïve! America’s bankrupting entitlement policies stem from previous, pervasive bad theology: the bad theology of Theological Liberalism. Few people today, it seems, tend to make the connection between political thought and its underlying historical, theological influence! How one views God tends to determine one’s worldview. Accordingly, the ideological war within American



culture today cannot be completely understood without first comprehending the theology underlying it.

As it pertains to the entitlement mindset today of many liberal political leaders, the foundational theological influence is that of the Social Gospel. The Social Gospel or “Liberal Christianity” or “Theological Liberalism” became rooted in American culture more than a century ago as an outcome of the Modernist-Fundamentalist Controversy, an epic theological battle in the American Protestant church (of which more will be said later). American liberal political ideology is rooted in this Modernist theology mindset more so than it is borrowed from another similar political ideology, i.e., socialism or communism. Political liberalism was homegrown in our own Sunday school classrooms more so than it is imported from abroad.

What happened back then, theologically, continues to have a tremendous effect on today politically.

There is a definite, ongoing connection between the two! This one-hundred-year-old theological battle forever shaped the differences between the two major camps of American political thought. At the risk of sounding partisan, it is to say this: on the Hill today, the vast majority of political conservatives who name the name of Christ are not affected by Social Gospel theology, whereas the vast majority of political liberals who name the name of Christ are influenced by liberal Protestant theology, aka the Social Gospel Movement. Among the 535 members of Congress and the Senate, I can count the exceptions to this axiom on one hand. The

Social Gospel and what it has historically stood for is the seedbed of the liberal political agenda today—and the basis of entitlement programs historically fostered by and in American government. This theological reality is at the root of why D.C. is so divided today. In essence, a theological war is going on; two opposing world views that continually butt heads as those differences manifest in contrasting policy formation. Herein are dueling worldviews.

Since this is such an important ongoing influence, it stands to reason that it is critically important for public servants to possess a working knowledge of the Social Gospel and understand why it is such *bad* theology. By using the word *bad*, I mean it is a perversion, or a corruption of what the Bible actually teaches. The Social Gospel is in no way biblically based, nor justifiable.

The Social Gospel Movement, which infiltrated and captured many mainline Protestant denomination seminaries and subsequently their pulpits, resulted from the confluence of five aberrant theologies. “Cashing in” on this convergence were four notable individuals. But first:

It is important to underscore that when put to the test of Scripture, the Social Gospel is not biblical Christianity.

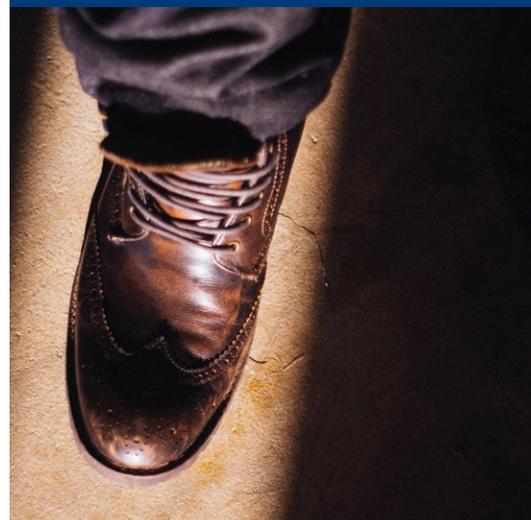
Social Gospellers are the ones who have departed from the pervasive theology that stemmed from the Reformation. And, it was historical Protestant Reformation theology that was foundational to American cultural formation.

Before moving on in this study, it is im-

 VERSE OF THE WEEK

Proverbs 16:25

“There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.”



Whenever an individual or society veers from the owner’s handbook, the way therein always proves detrimental.





Benjamin Franklin



“I am for doing good to the poor, but I differ in opinion of the means. I think the best way of doing good to the poor, is not making them easy in poverty, but leading or driving them out of it. In my youth I traveled much, and I observed in different countries, that the more public provisions were made for the poor, the less they provided for themselves, and of course became poorer. And, on the contrary, the less was done for them, the more they did for themselves, and became richer.”

— Benjamin Franklin, signer of the Declaration of Independence, diplomat, printer, scientist, signer of the Constitution, governor of Pennsylvania.

Benjamin Franklin, *On the Price of Corn and Management of the Poor*, November 1766.

portant to identify terms and how they were used in the theological history of America. Prior to the invasion and onslaught of liberal Protestantism, American Protestantism was commonly and synonymously referred to as American Fundamentalism. That was the only brand, the singular brand of Protestantism; there was no competing form of Protestantism. With that in mind, notice the following quote from leading liberal theologian Kirsopp Lake during the time of the introduction of his brand. It is quite revealing and damaging to his theological revisionist cause:

It is a mistake, often made by educated persons who happen to have but little knowledge of historical theology, to suppose that Fundamentalism is a new and strange form of thought. It is nothing of the kind; it is the ... survival of a theology which was once universally held by all Christians ... The Fundamentalist may be wrong; I think that he is. But it is we who have departed from the tradition, not he, and I am sorry for the fate of anyone who tries to argue with a Fundamentalist on the basis of authority. The Bible and the corpus theologicum of the Church is on the Fundamentalist side.²

If Lake is right in his analysis, and I believe that he is, then it follows that if liberal political ideology does indeed stem from liberal Protestant theology, then liberal political ideology too (specifically entitlement programs) is lacking in a basis—i.e., any basis of biblical authority.

II. THE FORMATIVE CONFLUENCES OF SOCIAL GOSPEL THEOLOGY

What follows are sound bites (for the sake of the brevity—this study is already lengthy) explaining what laid the groundwork for the Social Gospel Movement. Keep in mind that it was acceding politicians to Social Gospel thinking who birthed the national entitlement programs. Again, the Modernism movement (a synonym for Theological Liberalism) captured many fundamentalist seminaries, denominations and churches, congregants and politicians. And it was the Modernist politicians who enacted the entitlement programs that now threaten our nation’s future financial solvency.

Even though liberal theology is alive and well here on the Hill—it is dying in the local community. Why? In that its theology deems evangelism unnecessary, few are the new adherents in the pews. Many liberal churches are merging, selling off properties to survive as congregations shrink to extinction. There are very few up-and-coming young liberal Protestants in America today.

In summary, as it relates to Treasury-crippling entitlement programs, it is really bad theology that has shaped this really bad policy.

The following five heretical influences drastically weakened the bark of the American church and the Social Gospel bore its way in and hatched lethal eggs, which today have infected and threaten to destroy a once towering giant.

A. REASON AND RATIONALISM

Harvard Divinity School was once a bastion of conservative, reformed theology. When Henry Ware was elected its president in 1805, he soon thereafter



denied the biblical doctrine of the Trinity and became a Unitarian. Around the same time, a pastor of national influence, William Ellery Channing, who ministered at Federal Street Church in Boston, also abandoned the Puritan Trinitarian orthodox understanding of the atonement, opting for Unitarianism. (Unitarians not only reject the Trinity but stand for broad freedom and tolerance in religious beliefs.) Interestingly, these theological departures within fundamental evangelicalism generally paralleled the growth of transcendentalism (the belief that knowledge of reality is derived from intuitive sources rather than from objective propositional truth) in the secular world. Transcendentalism was fueled in part by the beliefs of Ralph Waldo Emerson. By the 1830s what was resulting was a palpably heightened view of the preeminence of man's reasoning (over and above the objective source of truth being garnered from God's Word) in both the church and the secular world. In both arenas, man's reason was now trumping God's revelation. (Dr. "Well-I-Think" over and above "*Thus saith the Lord.*") The takeaway point here is this: Human reason, rather than Scripture, was becoming the authority for all of faith and practice, including political thought.

B. UNIVERSALISM

"If it is God's will for all to be saved, then all will be saved" summarizes this belief system. Such a faulty presupposition, in opposition to Scripture, has tremendous implications. Originating in London around 1779, the Universalists in America held their first convention in Philadelphia in 1790. This helped pave the way for Nathaniel Taylor's New Haven Theology which denied the imputation of Adamic sin, with a governmental

view of the atonement (the belief that God could simply forgive everyone's sin because He is omnipotent). In short, Universalism's "gospel" denied any need for repentance from sin and instead emphasized that "personal redemption for mankind" is achieved via the reformation of man's environment. The confluence of Universalism was being birthed in American thought. Such represented a drastic pendulum swing away from the gospel of Scripture, which repeatedly emphasized (and emphasizes) the necessity of personal repentance from sin and belief by faith in Christ and His redemptive work on the cross. In a nutshell, Universalism teaches that man is basically good. The tremendous implication is this: if one's theology dictates that man is inherently good, then his failings are to be explained by his surrounding environment and social injustices. Therein is what needs fixing. Obviously this resulting worldview permeates much political ideology today. Historically speaking, here is where such thinking is derived.

C. PROGRESSIVE ORTHODOXY

Horace Bushnell went a step further than New Haven and Universalism Theology. He believed in the moral influence theory of atonement (an incomplete understanding of Christ's atonement). Bushnell defined atonement this way: Christ's death was not propitiatory (the satisfaction of each individual's violation of God's standard and attribute of perfection), only exemplary, i.e., God indicating to mankind how much He loves us and therefore how much we should love others. In this "christianity," Jesus is no longer salvific. He is what theological liberals today call "the historical Jesus," i.e., exclusively a good-behavior role model. The takeaway point is this: here-

John Adams



"Each individual of the society has a right to be protected by it in the enjoyment of his life, liberty, and property, according to standing laws. He is obliged, consequently, to contribute his share to the expense of this protection; and to give his personal service, or an equivalent, when necessary. But no part of the property of any individual can, with justice, be taken from him, or applied to public uses, without his own consent, or that of the representative body of the people. In fine, the people of this commonwealth are not controllable by any other laws than those to which their constitutional representative body have given their consent."

— John Adams, second president of the United States, signer of the Declaration of Independence, judge, diplomat, one of two signers of the Bill of Rights

John Adams, *Thoughts on Government*, 1776.



James Madison



“As a man is said to have a right to his property, he may be equally said to have a property in his rights. Where an excess of power prevails, property of no sort is duly respected. No man is safe in his opinions, his person, his faculties, or his possessions.”

— James Madison, signer of the Constitution, author of *The Federalist Papers*, framer of the Bill of Rights, secretary of state, fourth president of the United States

James Madison, *National Gazette Essay*, March 27, 1792.

in is the human formation of “another Jesus” which Paul sternly warned against in Galatians 1:8–9.

“But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!”

The Social Gospel, then, is another religion!

D. NEOORTHODOXY

Kant and Schleiermacher add yet another aberrant confluence of sweeping theological error: neoorthodoxy. This “new” orthodoxy in essence represents full-blown subjectivism—truth is “what it means to me.” Gone was the propositional authority of the revealed truth of Scripture. Neoorthodoxy promoted (and today promotes) pietistic awe: true religion is based on one’s inner, subjective experience. Perhaps a good illustration of the prevalence of present-day neoorthodoxy is this: “Bible studies” where individuals state, “This is what this passage means to me” in the place of an objective study of authorial intent. Accordingly, the Bible gets its authority from my faith, versus the other way around. The applicable takeaway point? Truth is derived from how I feel about things: my feelings are my authority, not God’s Word.

E. HIGHER CRITICISM

The last major aberrant theological wave to encroach upon the American church prior to the Social Gospellers coming on the scene was a theologically intellectual movement that cast doubt on the authenticity of the source documents

that comprise the Scriptures themselves. Baur, Strauss, and Wellhausen were the major proponents of this assault. Baur, in his intellectual pride, asserted that neither Paul, Peter, nor John wrote the NT books attributed to their names. Strauss proposed that the Gospel accounts were a myth. Wellhausen chose to discount the miracles of the Bible. All three popularized a critical approach to Scripture, casting doubt in the minds of believers. The result: Man became the overt judge of Scripture, versus Scripture being the judge of man.

The summation of these four confluences gave rise to the formation and distillation of Social Gospel ideology. What follows are sound-bite descriptors of the men who significantly contributed to the codification of the Social Gospel movement in American culture:

III. FOUR PURVEYORS OF THE SOCIAL GOSPEL

Simultaneous to these widening cracks in historic reformed theology, which was the pervasive theology of our Founding Fathers and the germinating basis of American culture, was the Industrial Revolution and the stratification of societal classes. The capitalist system itself was soon viewed by the following influential individuals and others as the embodiment of sin. As a result, there needed to be social, versus individual, application of “Christianity” to American life. By contrast, what propels reformed, fundamental, evangelical Christianity, both then and now, is the atonement of sin in the life of the individual.

Note the different target here: it is the sin of the system that effectuates and propels the Social Gospel movement.



In Social Gospel thinking, it then follows that the primary mission of the church should be the deliverance of the poor: all those individuals who were being oppressed by the free market. Accordingly, this is where the name “Social Gospel” stems from: it is an attempt to refocus Christianity on the economic deliverance and equality of the individual, versus the conversion of his or her soul. This is no less than a theological and missional redirect—a rewriting—of historic Christianity. It is therefore not Christianity whatsoever; it is another religion. The leaders of the Social Gospel movement in American Christianity were as follows:

A. RITSCHL

The kingdom of God from the perspective of this European influence meant an ethical kingdom. Ritschl said Christianity was all about ethics and morals. With a low view of the effects of sin on the judicial standing of man before his Creator, he viewed Christ in a way less than the Christ revealed in the Gospels, a good person who provided a role model for all to follow in loving one another with tolerance. This is in place of a redemptive Christ who saves man from his sin (again, cf. Galatians 1:8–9).

B. GLADDEN

Historically, Gladden is considered the founder of the Social Gospel movement. “The fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man” is a term stemming from his pen and codifying his beliefs and actions. Gladden, too, rejected the judicial aspects of salvation in Christ. In his adaptation of Christianity to a social/ethical emphasis, he viewed capitalism as unchristian when penning his books, *Working People and Their Employees* and

Social Salvation. He emphasized the sin of society, believing in shared ownership, versus the sin of the individual soul.

C. SHELDON

Coining the phrase “What Would Jesus Do?” meant something quite different than its modern-day counterpart (Promise Keepers: What Would Jesus Do Now?). Conversely, Jesus was only a role model to emulate. Sheldon marketed the Social Gospel into a national movement of social reform throughout America. He was influential in popularizing its message.

D. RAUSCHENBUSCH

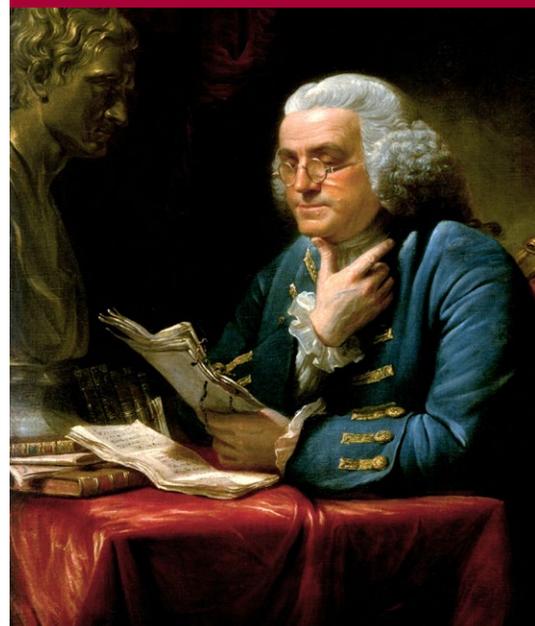
A liberal pastor of a poor church, he became horrified by the living conditions of the socially oppressed. His book titles reflect this: *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, *Christianizing the Social Order*, and *A Theology of the Social Gospel*. All these influences and influencers reveal a radical change underway in the meaning of historic reformation Christianity in America. The summary point: government could, should, and would aid in the manifestation of this new religion’s way of thinking.

IV. TWO COMPETING THEOLOGIES AND TWO POLITICAL PHILOSOPHIES

As the true-to-its-history Christian church fought back against the Social Gospellers in the early 1900s, efforts for the most part proved inalterable. The bug had penetrated the bark. Now into the meat of the tree, rapid reproduction was occurring in all strata of society.

Many denominations, seminaries, mission agencies, and publishers had been

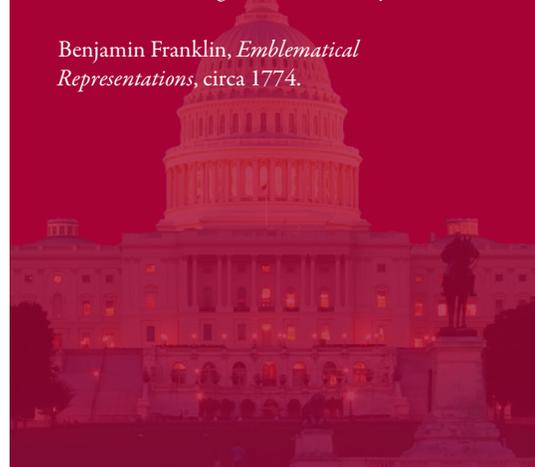
Benjamin Franklin



“The ordaining of laws in favor of one part of the nation, to the prejudice and oppression of another, is certainly the most erroneous and mistaken policy. An equal dispensation of protection, rights, privileges, and advantages, is what every part is entitled to, and ought to enjoy.”

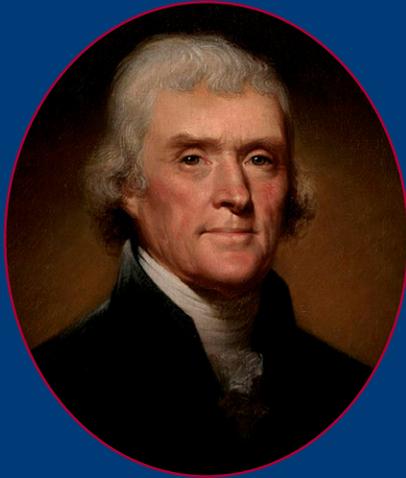
— Benjamin Franklin, signer of the Declaration of Independence, diplomat, printer, scientist, signer of the Constitution, governor of Pennsylvania

Benjamin Franklin, *Emblematical Representations*, circa 1774.





Thomas Jefferson



“To take from one, because it is thought his own industry and that of his fathers has acquired too much, in order to spare to others, who, or whose fathers, have not exercised equal industry and skill, is to violate arbitrarily the first principle of association, the guarantee to everyone the free exercise of his industry and the fruits acquired by it.”

— Thomas Jefferson, third president of the United States, signer of the Declaration of Independence, diplomat, governor of Virginia, secretary of state

Thomas Jefferson, letter to Joseph Milligan, April 6, 1816.

devastatingly impacted. Denominations like the Northern Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, and Lutherans had been infected and forever affected. (Granted, today there are non-Social Gospel aspects of each which survived or were reformed under respective banners.) As the battle for theological purity waged on, the competition became fierce: the Modernist-Fundamentalist Controversy was a huge theological war. And as the Modernists repeatedly won out, taking control of much of the aforementioned, the Fundamentalists looked to rebirth and rebuild institutions that embodied a biblically accurate, personally salvific faith characteristic of historic reformation Christianity.

In the world of political parties, the theological liberals were both causal and reflected in political liberalism, and the theological conservatives were both causal and reflected in political conservatism. To this day, both of the contrasting theologies dominantly shape the policies of their respective party. So to a large degree, the liberal versus conservative theological competition of the past continues to this day through the out workings and manifestations of respective political parties. The war rages on—no longer so much in the seminary (as those battles have long been decided), but in the capital.

**V. THE ONE RESULT:
POSSIBLE CONFUSION
IN THE CAPITAL**

Both theological adherents continue to hold the title “Christian,” which is confusing because Modernism has a different understanding of Jesus, which therefore classifies it as a different religion. But in a theologically ignorant capital, most people lack the discernment to as-

certain the difference.

Seminary professor J. Gresham Machen is helpful on this point. Princeton Theological Seminary was an outstanding Presbyterian seminary possessing a high view of Scripture until the denomination went liberal. It was only a matter of time until the great orthodox professors of the institution would be forced to depart, Machen being one. They founded Westminster Seminary in response. In reflection of the competition, Machen would state that *these were two altogether different religions* and that the clash was as profound and as grim, as comparatively speaking, “Christianity and Confucianism.” The liberal *Christian Century* magazine editor Charles Clayton Morrison would say, “Two worlds have clashed ... the world of Tradition and the world of Modernism. One is scholastic, static, authoritarian, individualistic; the other is vital, dynamic, free and social.” This is a pretty good sound-bite encapsulation of the competing theologies.

I believe the biggest deception on the Hill today is this: the religion of the Social Gospel proffers itself as being “Christian” when it isn’t even close to being biblical.

According to the Bible, one must trust in the salvific Lord Jesus Christ to be saved and call himself a true Christian. If one believes Jesus is only an exemplary figure, then one is not a genuine believer. When someone states, “My pastor taught me the Social Gospel,” what should that tell you? Don’t be confused or theologically ignorant!

VI. THREE CONCLUSIVE DETERMINATIONS



A. SOCIAL GOSPEL THEOLOGY IS AT THE HEART OF OUR NATION'S FINANCIAL WOES

The King James Bible says, “*For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he*” (Proverbs 23:7). It follows that the way a legislator understands God via his or her theology, or lack thereof, will determine his ideology in both personal and policy formation. To reason this another way, “Right actions begin with right thinking, and right thinking begins with thinking right about God” (Radmacher).

If the Social Gospel is unfounded in Scripture, such thinking and ideology should be soundly rejected. Why? Whenever an individual or society veers from the owner’s handbook, the way therein always proves detrimental. Proverbs 16:25 says, “*There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.*” The fiscal tsunami that is about to hit and topple the Treasury can be aptly understood in this way.

Again, this is not to suggest that government not care for or help the poor, but it is to suggest how government best cares for and helps the poor. God’s Word is clear on how a nation and its political leaders should construct a social safety net for society.

B. HOW GOVERNMENT BEST HELPS THE POOR

1. Individuals

Biblically speaking, the institution of government need provide individual, accessible private property rights to all citizens (Genesis 1:26; cf. Exodus 20:15, 17). The compelling studies of Hernan-

do de Soto Polar relative to overcoming poverty in Peru serve to profoundly underscore this truth. For one to possess accessible rights to own personal property is a determinative factor in breaking the poverty cycle of individuals and nations. America should not change its rich heritage in this area of policy. Property rights curb poverty.

2. The Institution of Marriage

In 1978 Diana Pearce published *The Feminization of Poverty* in which she postulated that “female-headed households in particular formed a larger and larger percentage of the poor in America.” Insightfully, this trend is attributable to and parallels the sweeping changes that occurred nationwide relative to family law, specifically no-fault divorce. No-fault divorce laws, unlike business or criminal law, possess no penalty for the one responsible for the failure of the marriage contract. What results are mothers with children dependent on entitlement programs. Why? Our divorce laws are not based in the biblical precepts of justice (cf. 1 Peter 2:13–14), rather on pragmatism. Such changes will curb poverty.

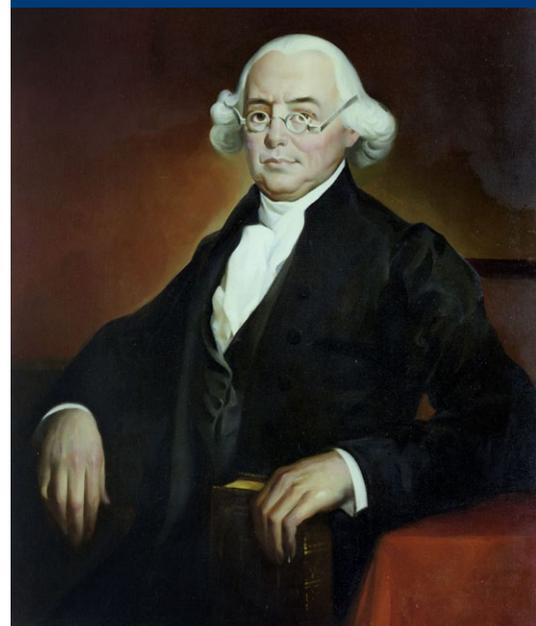
3. The Institution of the Family

Akin to foster care programs, government could incentivize and reward families who open their doors to the poor. Some families in our church have done this with no governmental incentives. Such will curb poverty.

4. The Institution of Commerce

Government needs to incentivize the institution of commerce in order to create jobs. When businesses are growing and prospering, they demand, train, and hire

James Wilson



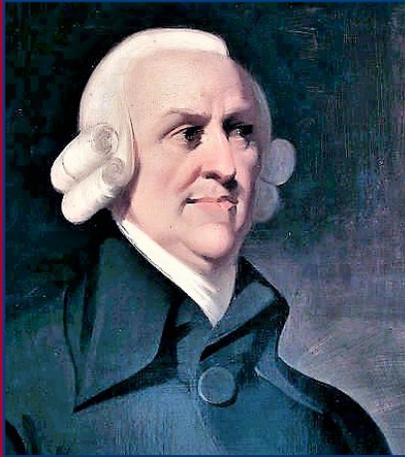
“Declared that American government was created ‘to acquire a new security for the possession or the recovery of those rights to ... which we were previously entitled by the immediate gift or by the unerring law of our all-wise and all-beneficent Creator; including the right of property, and that every government which has not this in view as its principal object is not a government of the legitimate kind.’”

— James Wilson, signer of the Declaration of Independence, twice elected to the Continental Congress, a major force in drafting the United States Constitution, a leading legal theorist, founder of the first organized legal training in America, one of the six original justices appointed by George Washington to the Supreme Court of the United States

James Wilson, “Of the Natural Rights of Individuals,” *The Works of the Honorable James Wilson*, ed. Bird Wilson, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Bronson and Chauncey, 1804), 454, 466.



Adam Smith



Adam Smith, famous economist of the Founding Era, foresaw the tendencies of governments to impinge the rights of private property, forewarning:

“As soon as the land of any country has all become private property, the landlords [e.g., the governments], like all other men, love to reap where they never sowed, and demand a rent even for its natural produce.”

— Adam Smith, Scottish economist whose work laid the foundation for classical free market economic theory, friend to Benjamin Franklin

Smith’s work influenced the thinking of many Founding Fathers. His book *The Wealth of Nations* was a precursor to the modern academic discipline of economics. In this and other works, he expounded upon how rational self-interest and competition can lead to economic prosperity.

Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*: Vol. I, Chapter 6.

employees. It is only the institution of commerce in a free market society that can economize a culture, and it is up to the government to stimulate enterprise in all ways possible. Such will curb poverty.

5. The Institution of the Church

Government needs to continue to provide religious freedom so churches can flourish and multiply, thereby creating church members who become the salt and light of society (Matthew 5:13–15), citizens who live in obedience to 1 Timothy 5 (see the introduction), men and women who take the initiative to provide for the poor both by themselves and through their initiation of not-for-profit ministries such as the Union Rescue Mission. It is the institution of the church that best cares for and rehabilitates people because of the compassion and power of the transforming gospel of the truly salvific Jesus. Many people are poor because they have not been liberated from various besetting sins and addictions: something the power of the cross of Christ can accomplish. Such will curb poverty.

These are the five indirect means by which government is to play its main role relative to helping the poor. Sustain and enact these biblically based policies and poverty will decrease.

C. HOW GOVERNMENT LEAST HELPS THE POOR

Again, nowhere in Scripture does God assign government specific responsibility to provide entitlements for its citizenry, whereas Scripture does as-

sign specific entitlement responsibilities to various individuals and other institutions (as previously seen in this study). Again, one could argue that since Scripture does not prohibit government from directly aiding the poor, that such is biblically permissible. But to the degree any institution engages in responsibilities outside its biblically explicit God-ordained role(s) is the same degree to which it becomes inefficient and wasteful. First Peter 2:14 states the specific role of government is “for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.”

The misunderstandings and supposed scriptural justifications for enormous government-based entitlement programs stem not from Christianity but from another misguided religion that markets itself using the same name. Outside the explicit ordinances of the Scriptures, it follows that direct governmental provisions of entitlements lead not to self-sufficiency but rather the ruin of both the individual recipient and the nation’s Treasury. Government entitlement programs have no basis in Scripture.

May God grant you, our nation’s leaders, great wisdom to transition our policies to biblically informed positions relative to best helping the poor and bereft—people you and I love and people God loves.

VII. FINAL THOUGHT

Unfortunately, there is another deleterious result that continues to this day in America in regard to the incursive Social Gospel movement that took root over one hundred years ago. In order for the Social Gospel movement to effectuate change in American culture, it was mandatory for it to infiltrate gov-

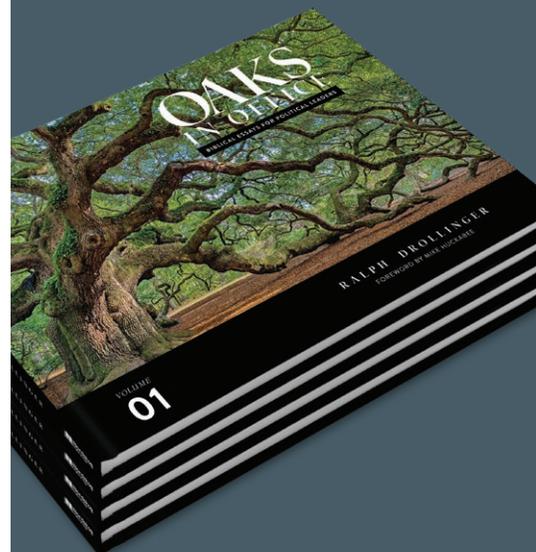


ernment leadership and influence policy. This study attributes the germination of government entitlement programs as evidence of this very thing: the Social Gospel was and remains the seedbed of political liberalism. They remain intrinsically intertwined today.

Rather than remaining in the political arena like they had been since the country's foundation, where they could fight against Theological Liberalism and for the hearts and souls of political leaders through gospeling and discipling, unfortunately Fundamentalists and Evangelicals retreated from the political arena for fear they would be perceived as theological liberals themselves. Nothing

could have been more deleterious to the future of America.

Rather than stand their ground and continue to win and disciple public servants for Christ, imparting to them a Christian worldview on such things as God's means of creating a social safety net, they abandoned this critically important sphere of influence—this vitally important missional affinity group! As a result, theological and political liberalism blossomed. It follows that the biblical remedy, the best way to change America's downward spiral, is for evangelicals to once again make disciples in the political arena. **cm**



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1. Wayne Grudem, *Politics According to the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 283.
2. *The Religion of Yesterday and Tomorrow*, p. 61-62; Kirsopp Lake.

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