

The Quarterly Journal



THE NEWSLETTER PUBLICATION OF PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH

VOL. 32, NO. 3

JULY-SEPTEMBER 2012

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The Social Gospel

Imposing a Cultural Mandate into the Great Commission

by Gary E. Gilley

One of the issues God's people have always faced is their role in society. In the Old Testament, the Lord chose Abraham to be the father of a called-out race of people. Years later, the Lord established the nation of Israel under the Mosaic Covenant. Detailed laws and regulations were given to Israel at the time. These included governance, dealing with poverty, helping widows and orphans, and correcting injustices. These matters were addressed almost exclusively within the context of the nation of Israel, with minor concern for surrounding nations.

The Old Covenant was in force until the dawning of the Church Age in Acts 2. The Church, God's chosen people in this age, comprises regenerate people of all nationalities. It is not a nation in an official sense and has not been given laws by which a governmental structure could function.

Still, most recognize that Christians live as citizens not only of heaven but

also of earth and thus have responsibilities here and now. The nature of those responsibilities and their administration have been debated for almost 2000 years. Over time, the consensus has swung from disinterest in societal problems to making their solution the Church's primary objective.

Most recently, a focus on the social agenda has gained popularity in most evangelical circles and is rapidly attaining equal status with the proclamation of the Gospel message. A two-pronged gospel has arisen, composed of the Great Commission and the so-called Cultural Mandate.

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