

The Bible Opposes Socialism

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The Bible's civil code does not authorize socialism

The Bible's civil code (in the Older Testament) does not authorize rulers to redistribute wealth. While helping the poor is commanded, none of the laws regarding helping the poor are backed by a civil sanction.

For instance, the law about leaving gleanings from the harvest for the poor and the sojourner (Leviticus 23:22; cf. 19:9) is not accompanied by a penalty to be enforced by the state if the law is violated. (The main penalties the state is permitted to enforce for *certain* sins include restitution [e.g. Exodus 22:1-4], flogging [e.g. Deuteronomy 25:1-3], and execution [e.g. Leviticus 24:16]).

Of course, while the state is not to punish the sin of neglecting the poor, God nevertheless does. Whenever we neglect the poor, we risk God's judgment in this life (cf. Deuteronomy 28:15), and we must answer to Him for it on judgment day (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Socialism violates the Bible's commands against partiality

Since socialism confiscates the wealth of—and thereby punishes—the rich in order to enrich the poor, socialism breaks the Bible's commands against partiality:

“nor shall you be partial to a poor man in his lawsuit.” (Exodus 23:3)

“You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor.” (Leviticus 19:15)

Note how in the last verse, partiality to the poor is contrasted with *righteous* judging. Socialism is thus an unrighteous, wicked system.

Socialism is a form of public slavery

Because of its spendthrift nature, the socialist state tends toward heavy taxation and borrowing. This results in enslavement of virtually the entire nation. When the elders of Israel rejected God for a king like that of the pagan nations, Samuel warned of several acts of tyranny by their future king, including ten percent taxation:

“He will take the tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants.” (1 Samuel 8:15)

“He will take the tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves.” (1 Samuel 8:17)

Note how verse 17 ends—“and you shall be his slaves.” Ten percent taxation or more is, or contributes to, national enslavement. Such enslavement socialism, with its excessively high taxes needed for wealth redistribution and “welfare” programs, fosters. (Ten percent taxation is actually modest by today’s socialist standards.)

Moreover, socialism enslaves the nation by the excessive borrowing needed for its programs. Proverbs 22:7 says, “The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is the slave of the lender.” In socialism, the state acts as the lender, and coerces the people into becoming enslaved borrowers.

Thus, socialism is a form of public slavery, where the people, in the words of Eric Holmberg, act as “the slave-labor force for some grand federal plantation.” (Eric Holmberg in *Vorthos Forum*, “Government-Sanctioned Theft—the IRS,” YouTube Retrieved April 29, 2009, from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1UsuHlhWil8&feature=channel_page)

Socialism is a form of covetousness

Covetousness is foundational to socialism, since socialism is premised on politicians and the poor coveting the wealth of the rich. But covetousness violates the 10th commandment:

“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s.” (Exodus 20:17)

Note that the commandment forbids coveting “*anything* that is your neighbor’s.” This rules out the justification by socialists that “the rich don’t need all their money—taking some of their wealth for redistribution won’t hurt anybody!”

One of the qualifications for being a ruler is to hate covetousness:

“Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, *hating covetousness*; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens:” (Exodus 18:21, KJV) (emphasis mine)

This verse, as Daniel F.N. Ritchie writes, disqualifies from office those with socialist leanings, since civil rulers require “the characteristic of ‘hating covetousness,’ and socialism “is the politics of covetousness.” Daniel F. N. Ritchie, [*A Conquered Kingdom*](#):

[Biblical Civil Government](#) (Saintfield, Northern Ireland: Reformed Worldview Books, 2008), 628.

The New Testament does not sanction socialism

As we discussed, the Bible's civil code in the Older Testament does not sanction socialism. Neither do we see any alteration to this rule in the New Testament.

There is not a whole lot in the New Testament about the duties of civil government. It seems that if we were to find a biblical basis for socialism, Romans 13:1-7—with its emphasis on the general duties of civil government—would be the place to look.

And what is the state's duty? Is it to rob from the rich and give to the poor? No. *It is to terrorize and kill evildoers.* (Not to terrorize and destroy the free market, as socialism does.)

The state's duty to terrorize evildoers is found in verse 3a: "For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad." The state's duty to kill evildoers is found in verse 4b: "he [the ruler] does not bear the sword in vain."

(Obviously not every evil act can be considered a capital crime—the Bible is our sole authority for determining what should be capitally punished, cf. Matthew 5:17-20, 15:4.)

These duties are why we pay taxes (Romans 13:6). Thus as far as Romans 13:1-7 is concerned, taxes are intended to subsidize terror and destruction of the wicked—not to subsidize socialism.

Socialism is idolatrous

Socialism tends to exceed taxation rates of ten percent or more because of the expenses of wealth redistribution. But no institution has the right to claim a higher tax than God. God requires a tithe (ten percent) of all income. When the state attempts a higher tax than God, the state deifies itself, and is an idolatrous state.

Socialism is symptomatic of a lack of faith in God

When a nation lacks faith in God, it looks to civil government for its source of security, including economic security. This is why socialism is so popular and appealing, despite that it repeatedly leads to tyranny and economic instability.

For example, when the Israelites lacked faith in God, they yearned to return to the enslavement of Egypt's socialistic programs:

“They set out from Elim, and all the congregation of the people of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had departed from the land of Egypt. And the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, and the people of Israel said to them, ‘Would that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, *when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full*, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.’” (Exodus 16:1-3) (cf. Exodus 14:10-12; Exodus 17:1-3; Numbers 14:1-4) (emphasis mine)

Socialism opposes “The Golden Rule”

The free market system (capitalism) is based on a voluntary, willful means of exchange between both parties. But socialism is based on a coerced means of exchange, backed by the threat of violence—contrary to what we call “The Golden Rule”:

“And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.” (Luke 6:31)

In his sermon “[Terrorism and God](#),” Joe Morecraft observes,

“[The free market] can be summed up in the phrase, ‘do unto others as you would have them do unto you.’ That’s the basis of free enterprise. ‘You do something good for me, and I’ll do something good for you.’ And in this kind of economy, both parties in the exchange benefit.

“But in a statist economy, in a socialist economy, where the federal and state governments control businesses and the marketplace, we have a violent means of exchange, because in that situation, here’s what’s being said: ‘Unless you do something good for me, I’ll do something bad for you. I will get the state to force you to do what I want.’ And so violence is bred in our very socialist economy itself.”

(Joe Morecraft III, SermonAudio.com, *Terrorism and God* (April 23, 1995). Retrieved June 16, 2010, from <http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=1229081635472>.) (The portion of the sermon cited begins at the 40:45 mark.)

The Book of Acts does not support socialism

Many support socialism because of Acts 2:44, 45:

“And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.”

However, this is *voluntary* benevolence—not coercion, which socialism requires of the state. Thus contrary to socialism, the apostles did not squeeze money out of well-off Christians with threats of imprisonment or death.

Moreover, Acts 2:44, 45 involves the church—not the state. We cannot determine state policy by examples of what the church did.

To do so would violate the biblical basis for separation of church and state (2 Chronicles 19:11). (Separation between church and state is different than separation between God and state. While the church does not rule over the state, the state must acknowledge God and His law [Ps. 2:10-12; Eph. 1:20-22; Rom. 13:1-4].)

If the socialist insists on basing socialism on a text meant for the church, then logical consistency demands that he also bases socialism on *all texts* meant for the church. This would undermine socialism, though, since the Apostle Peter affirmed Ananias and Sapphira's private property rights.

When Peter confronted Ananias for his dishonesty regarding the proceeds of a piece of property that he sold, Peter acknowledged Ananias' right to that property, saying:

“While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal?” (Acts 5:4a)

Not only this, but if fully consistent, the socialist must also insist that it the duty of the state to engage in such things as administering the sacraments, and handling church discipline (e.g., excommunication).

This, of course, is extreme, but nevertheless the logical outworking of using the Bible to justify socialism. Indeed, socialism itself is extreme. It leads to economic instability at best, genocide at worse (consider Stalin, Lenin, and Mao).

(All verses, unless otherwise noted, are from the English Standard Version, accessed from <http://www.biblegateway.com/>)