

Revolutionaries, Socialism and Christianity

Religion is the opium of the people
-Karl Marx

Is socialism compatible with Christianity? Do the "moral" ends revolutionaries frequently use justify their means? These are questions that really need to be addressed in a serious manner. At first glance, there does seem to be strong evidence that Christianity would support socialism and the revolutionaries who promote something along the lines of a "better life." Jesus certainly made other people's lives better by healing cripples, curing diseases, expelling demons and bringing hope. The Acts of the Apostles are full of examples of the early Christians forming communes and sharing their possessions with the less fortunate. Most of the Epistles are directed at such communes. So we see, perhaps, the first and finest example of the socialist ideal being practiced by early Christians. Furthermore, the appeal of good work ethics, social harmony and material equality of socialism seems to match the Christian virtues of sacrifice, charity, justice and more: "He said to them in reply, 'Whoever has two tunics should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise.'" (Luke 3:11)

Yet, of all the communistic and socialistic governments that have been founded throughout the world in the last 100 years, *not one* tolerated Christianity. Despite the official rhetoric against "capitalism," the only common enemy of state that all such countries have shared is Christianity (China allows a few areas for capitalism to exist to subsidize the expenditures of the rest of the country, which is probably why it is the only socialist state that is stable.) Several such countries officially made Christianity a capital offense, much like the pagan Romans did. Did not Jesus himself say, "If I do not perform my Father's works, do not believe me;" (John 10:37)? If socialism, in its most unfettered expression (national government) criminalizes Christianity in performance, why should I believe they have Christian goals?

A) Definitions: It is essential to have an understanding of what words mean to have any discussion. It is no use for an American to argue with an Englishman over whether or not "touchdowns" are allowed in "football." Despite us having the same language, the sport of "football" in the U.K. is what is called "soccer" in the U.S. Both could argue the legality of "touchdowns" all day long and never get anywhere, yet both would be right.

1) Socialism:

Two things I ask of you, do not deny them to me before I die:
Put falsehood and lying far from me, give me neither poverty nor riches;
provide me only with the food I need;
Lest, being full, I deny you, saying, "Who is the LORD?"
Or, being in want, I steal, and profane the name of my God.
-Proverbs 30:7-9

Like many words in today's society, socialism is overloaded with different meanings. Some are mutually exclusive of each other while others are so vague as to be utterly worthless in serious discussion. Yet there is a common thread to nearly all of them, and that is the belief in the common ownership of whatever is the topic of the day. Being commonly owned, all members of the community are to have *equal* access. From here, the logical conclusion is to promote efforts of equal distribution.

This means to either prevent or relocate material excesses so as to either prevent or eliminate insufficient material shortages of something else. It need not be economic (social injustice is a key topic today), but some "cause" based on equality, often advertised as "justice" or "humanity," is always the heart of socialism.

For this paper, I will refer to "idealized socialism" as the recognition of a humanitarian need and the desire to correct it, but with the means to do so still undecided. When I write "socialism," it will be referring to the political reality as experienced by every socialist country this world has seen, characterized by the state:

- 1) demanding complete obedience of its citizens in exchange for the following rights
- 2) deciding what the needs and wants of its citizens are
- 3) controlling production of the needs and wants
- 4) controlling distribution of the goods to meet the needs and wants (which is technically

Communism, see **Topic A.2)**

- 5) justifying these rights in the name of equality or equal access

A socialist, therefore, seeks to promote a socialist state, whether he understands what the rights of a socialist state are or not.

While idealized socialists may publicly seem separate from revolutionaries, they certainly take advantage of revolutionaries. Idealized socialism is unnecessary in a society where people are content: forcing equality on people satisfied with the *status quo* will be met with righteous resistance. It takes a revolutionary to ignite a passion for change. I will not debate whether revolutionaries are the dogs of socialists, or if socialists are merely opportunists taking advantage of revolutionaries. The idealized socialist needs the revolutionary to make his goals possible.

2) Communism:

There is no difference between socialism and communism, except in the means of achieving the same ultimate end: communism proposes to enslave men by force, socialism - by vote. It is merely the difference between murder and suicide.

-Ayn Rand

This is probably the most common form of socialism. When social injustice was first being discussed, the dividing line between the communist and socialist philosophies was that a true socialist state only attempted to control production (waste would be avoided so the resources could go to addressing a need), while communism took this one logical step further and also assumed the responsibility to control distribution as well. For this paper, I am assuming that for socialism to exist as a government (as small as a state or province, as large as the world), that it must likewise be communistic. This is because resources, as supplied by nature, are not equally distributed and no philosophy or "good intention" will change this. It does no good, and it actually defeats the socialistic goal, to control the coal mined in West Virginia so that the people in Montana won't freeze in the coming winter if the coal can't get to Montana or if it is too expensive to purchase. I will still address this reality as [idealized] socialism throughout this paper to match the current themes of our times. Since the catastrophic failure of the USSR, no one promotes communism anymore; instead they choose to rename their poison.

3) Revolutionaries:

A man named Ananias, however, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property. He retained for himself, *with his wife's knowledge*, some of the purchase price, took the remainder, and put it at the feet of the apostles. But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart so that *you lied to the holy Spirit* and retained part of the price of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain yours? *And when it was sold, was it not still under your control?* Why did you contrive this deed? You have *lied not to human beings, but to God.*" When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last, and great fear came upon all who heard of it. The young men came and wrapped him up, then carried him out and buried him.

After an interval of about three hours, his wife came in, unaware of what had happened. Peter said to her, "Tell me, *did you sell the land for this amount?*" She answered, "*Yes, for that amount.*" Then Peter said to her, "Why did you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord? Listen, the footsteps of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out." At once, she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. When the young men entered they found her dead, so they carried her out and buried her beside her husband.

-Acts 5:1-10 (italics mine)

Revolutionaries are those who want to make a change, especially to a social structure. While there are certainly revolutionaries that do so by legal and moral means (and I will give some examples in this work), it seems that the majority are quite illegal and immoral. One *can* be a revolutionary and a Christian, but one must be *extremely* careful as it is very tempting to cross the moral line. While this document will point out much that is wrong with the revolutionaries of today's world, it is my hope that those who do want to make a difference can use this paper as moral compass.

Idealized socialism, by its very nature (attempting to correct a wrong), can only be made real through revolutionaries who are willing to make changes. And without going any further, we already see one major difference between the revolutionaries among the early Christians and those of today. The early Christian revolutionaries were *volunteers* doing *volunteer* work. They did not try to make a law *compelling* others to provide, they simply took it upon themselves to do it. The scripture shown above makes it clear that it was not the withholding of money from the early Church that was fatal to the couple, but how they thought they could benefit politically and economically from the deceitful "charity." Many revolutionaries of today should remember this example.

4) Christianity: Christianity is a belief in the teachings and lessons of Jesus Christ. Like idealized socialism, this term has taken on many different meanings. While I have a Catholic background, I will endeavor to focus on issues that traditional Christians can agree on. My means of interpreting the Bible will be based on how 1st century Christians would have interpreted it.

B) Ten Commandments: Central to the Jewish and Christian belief is the Ten Commandments as given to Moses for the people. The Ten Commandments are found not once, but twice in the Old Testament (Exodus 20:2-17 and Deuteronomy 5:6-17), which should give an idea of their importance. It appears to me that typical revolutionaries violate *seven of the ten* in achieving their goals.

1) 1st Commandment:

"I am the Lord thy God: Thou shalt not have strange gods before me"

To seek a better life is normal and morally acceptable. To find a mentor, seek assistance or receive charity is often prudent and sometimes even necessary. Infants are 100% dependent on adults, and children only slowly grow their way to independence. But one crosses a line whenever one believes he does not need God to endorse his goals or to help achieve them. This has a fancy name, and it is "secular messianism" (Earthly savior). We have then replaced dependence on God with dependence on a person, object or idea. This is idolatry. One can only escape this trap by trusting in God, and that may mean not getting everything one wants.

For nearly 300 years, I'm sure many people thought the only way Christianity would be decriminalized would be through some political movement or hostile revolt. In the end, decriminalization happened because Caesar Constantine saw that the Christians were doing a better job of caring for the poor of Rome through Christian poverty than Rome was doing through Rome's wealth.

2) 2nd Commandment:

"Thou shall not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain"

While verbal blasphemy is the obvious example here, there is more to it than this. Jews and Christians who join a group whose ideals and teachings are in conflict with the Jewish/Christian ideals and teachings are committing blasphemy as well. I admit that in politics, a certain amount of pragmatism is necessary as no political party will parrot scripture perfectly. But the Christian teachings are flexible to a large extent and governed by the virtue of prudence. Truth can be looked at from different angles and new understandings can be found, but they cannot be taken out of original context or ignored. The teachings are balanced, and removing one destroys the balance of the others.

Some politicians and political groups are more Christian-friendly than others, and some are simply and expressly against Christianity and its ideals. The fact that the goals made by the revolutionaries appeal to the common person's idea of love, kindness and justice can be tempting to Jews and Christians, especially to the young and naive. But one cannot pick and choose which parts of the teachings of Jesus are suitable: if any are excluded then they all are excluded.

3) 4th Commandment:

"Honor thy father and thy mother"

In Jewish and early Christian beliefs, this was not limited to biological parents, but to *any* parental figure as well [police, supervisors, officials and essentially *all* figures of authority were as they served in that capacity]. Disrespect and disobedience was not allowed. "Let every person be subordinate to the higher authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been established by God." (Romans 13:1) This does not say that one cannot disagree or challenge authority figures, but that it must be done in a respectful and lawful manner. Those that started the American Revolution spent much time seeking peaceful ways of correcting the injustices in the colonies, and initially had every intention of remaining the King's subjects. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., likewise tried respectful means of correcting obvious problems of his time, and continued to do so even when he had to resort to organized protests. Both the country's founding fathers and Dr. King had and kept the moral high

ground when violence eventually broke out.

4) 5th Commandment

"Thou shalt not kill"

This is, admittedly, a controversial commandment as it is normally translated into English. It is beyond the scope of this work to go into detail, but it is translated as "murder" in some Bibles. Given the context of the Old Testament and the actual Greek word used in Matthew 5:21, it is clear that "murder" is the better choice of words. The difference between the words, of course, lies in the legality of the death. In the western world, and even in most undeveloped countries, there are limits as to how and under what conditions the state (in terms of capital punishment, but also including police and military operations) can take a life. This commandment also includes willful endangerment of life and limb, even if no damage ultimately comes of it. Even the most moral of revolutionaries must sometimes resort to violence, but there is still a marked difference between those who eagerly rush to do so in aggression and those who reluctantly do so as the last resort of defense.

5) 7th Commandment:

"Thou shall not steal"

This short commandment is simply loaded with meaning, perhaps more so than any other commandment. Stealing is not necessarily taking goods illegally, but more accurately causing the loss of something valuable to the victim. Included here is damage to property (including graffiti), cheating, financial fraud and knowingly accepting stolen goods. Officials who look the other way or otherwise encourage such behavior are likewise guilty of this.

6) 8th Commandment:

"Thou shall not bear false witness against thy neighbor"

This is a big one for most revolutionaries and socialists, and is the most insidious of all commandment violations (i.e.-a slow corruption that frequently goes unnoticed until it is too late to stop it, like a cancer). This deceit takes many forms with revolutionaries and socialists, but it generally follows the pattern of a double lie by first telling some social-economic group that they are "oppressed" and then following it with a vague promise of improvement that never meets expectations (**Topic C**), and is often followed by a third lie when others are blamed as the cause of the expectations not being met.

If one cannot present facts and use them in their proper context to explain what things really mean, then one is guilty of deceit. To belittle or ignore those who present legitimate arguments for an issue is another form of false witness: it's a deliberate denial of the truth.

7) 10th Commandment:

"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods"

Do you know that Negroes are 10 percent of the population of St. Louis and are responsible for 58% of its crimes? We've got to face that. And

we've got to do something about our moral standards. We know that there are many things wrong in the white world, but there are many things wrong in the black world, too. We can't keep on blaming the white man. There are things we must do for ourselves.
-Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., 1961.

While the 7th Commandment prohibits *causing* the loss of another's possessions, this one makes even the *desire* to do so a sin. Envy is sinful. Christians see this commandment in action in the New Testament more than any other commandment except to love God and one's neighbor. Saint Paul points out Jesus as an example of being indifferent to the wealth of others: "Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross." (Philippians 2:6-8) and of himself: "Do we not have the right to eat and drink? Do we not have the right to take along a Christian wife, as do the rest of the apostles, and the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas? Or is it only myself and Barnabas who do not have the right not to work? If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we still more? Yet we have not used this right. On the contrary, we endure everything so as not to place an obstacle to the gospel of Christ." (1 Corinthians 9:4-6, 12) But perhaps the most startling example is when Saint Peter, who was just told he would die from crucifixion, asks about the fate of Saint John: "Jesus said to him, 'What if I want him to remain until I come? What concern is it of yours? You follow me.'" (John 21:22)

There is no sin in wanting a better life, or wanting what others may have. It *is* a sin to plot against God's will to attain them, or to somehow think one is entitled to something God clearly did not intend one to have. For a Christian, Heavenly things are more important than Earthly ones: "What profit would there be for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? Or what can one give in exchange for his life?" (Matthew 16:26)

It is this commandment where the biggest gap between early Christians and today's political movements can often be found. The poor in the time of early Christians were not elevated above poverty by Christians: "The poor you will always have with you; but you will not always have me." (Matthew 24:11) The poor were cared for by the Christians who were better off than they (oftentimes, only slightly better off). But revolutionaries typically don't give of themselves to elevate those lower than they are; they only seek to bring down those that are higher. Socialists would have everyone equal, no matter how wretched "equal" is.

Dr. King did not seek to tear down the establishment, nor did he want anything that wasn't his. He merely wanted the establishment to abide by its own laws, specifically to allow everyone the opportunity to vote. To him, the vote was the key to stopping all the other injustices caused by the "establishment." He freely admitted to problems that were solely within the black community, and pointed out that the black man could not blame the white man for them. He wasn't going to *elevate* the black over the white in legal matters, he was giving the black something they *already had* a right to.

C) The Double Deceit: Oppression certainly does exist in this world, but revolutionaries tend to "cherry pick" crises. A "fact" is presented as proof of oppression and is ever after held as sacred. Any attempt to discuss it is shouted down in rage or mockery. Facts that could mitigate or even discredit this cherished idea are censored. Revolutionaries almost always have ceded the moral high ground simply by refusing to at least acknowledge another's rational point of view. If their cause truly is just, then there is no argument made by logic or morality that can threaten it. Dr. King was able to go point for point against those who initially were against him. His logic won a great many of them over as they came to see the errors in their own assumptions. Dr. King made people look at *themselves*. In contrast,

most revolutionaries and socialists seek to have people look at "oppressors" (real or imagined), and this distraction is what leads to the second deceit.

The second deceit, only telling half truths or convenient parts of the truth, is easier to show than describe. Suppose a student who wants to go to college to pursue a certain career feels "oppressed" because his favorite college denied him admittance or, even worse, accepted him but he doesn't have the money to go. Such a student is easy prey to the first lie: either the establishment is "holding him back" or the world only belongs to the "privileged." He forgets to look at himself, fails to take heart in heroes like Abraham Lincoln who, rather than let the "privilege" of others keep him from school, decided to teach himself. The student fails to understand that no one ever became "great" because things were "fair" for them; they became great because of the unfairness they overcame. He also fails to consider that perhaps his calling in life can be done without college.

So, by looking at the "oppressors," he only sees injustice. The revolutionaries claim that he can go to school for free because they will bring down the "oppressors." The student then assumes he can now go to the school he wants and become whatever he fancies. The student does not think about the fundamental aspect of socialism and how it will affect his education options.

Socialism is, as said before, about creating balance. If the state decides that there are enough college-educated people in the country at the time he graduates high school, then no matter how smart he is, there will be no college for him to go to. For him to do so would make him a part of the excess that socialism is fundamentally opposed to. More likely, however, he will go to some college, but it would be the college the *state* thought most useful to have him in. He would also have to take the studies the state decided were most needed. Perhaps he might be able to put in a request, but then someone somewhere still has to approve him over others. And wasn't the problem of getting this someone's approval the whole reason this student looked to socialism in the first place? Except now, if he is turned down, he has no other options available to him as the state will have already decided to put him somewhere else.

Even if the state decided that it was in its best interest to have all its citizens college-educated, would the colleges still maintain their honored status of "higher learning," or simply be an extension of the basic education system already in place? Can one truly be proud of going to college if it is guaranteed to him already? Would this not make college only special in the way that a birthday or getting a driver's license is special: great when it happens but old news shortly afterwards?

D) Equality:

The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out at dawn to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with them for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. Going out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and he said to them, 'You too go into my vineyard, and I will give you what is just.' So they went off. [And] he went out again around noon, and around three o'clock, and did likewise. Going out about five o'clock, he found others standing around, and said to them, 'Why do you stand here idle all day?' They answered, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You too go into my vineyard.' When it was evening the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Summon the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and ending with the first.' When those who had started about five

o'clock came, each received the usual daily wage. So when the first came, they thought that they would receive more, but each of them also got the usual wage. And on receiving it they grumbled against the landowner, saying, 'These last ones worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us, who bore the day's burden and the heat.' He said to one of them in reply, 'My friend, I am not cheating you. Did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what is yours and go. What if I wish to give this last one the same as you? [Or] am I not free to do as I wish with my own money? Are you envious because I am generous?' Thus, the last will be first, and the first will be last.

-Matthew 20:1-16

This is perhaps the only parable that *is* fully in line with socialism. But realize that a very notable part of this parable is not the harmony that socialism will bring, but rather the resentment.

In the subsistence society that was common in ancient times, one either owned his own land, worked for one who did own land, or starved. To receive a half day's wage did not mean one simply couldn't go to the movies that weekend; it meant the family only ate half the food they were expecting to eat that night. To work for only an hour's wage would have meant deciding who got to eat at all (probably the worker while the wife and kids starved, as the worker would have to be strong enough for work the next day). The basis of this parable is not about social justice; it is about mercy.

Social equality, as this parable teaches, is just as much about people getting what they need to survive as it is about equal pay. Ideal socialism is compatible to both ideas. But what it *means* to have this equality is often glossed over if not ignored altogether by socialists. Equal pay looks great when one only works an hour, fairly good when one works three hours, not so great when one works six hours and horrible when one works eight or more hours.

In a socialist society, one will *not* be able to "get ahead" by working extra hours for more money, or to save on expenses by not having kids. Socialism does not allow "getting ahead" as this would create the imbalance known as the "privileged." Those who fake an injury so as to get light duty will get the same pay as those told to stay extra hours to make up for the loss of the injured. And this assumes we will still receive pay as we know it. More likely, basic needs will be met through rationing. A couple who raises a massive brood of children will be given larger living spaces and more food and supplies, regardless of how much work either parent actually performs, than the single man who will probably have to be the one to make up for time lost through the "maternity leave" of the others.

I'm not going to argue *against* the morality of such sacrifices being made, as "dying to oneself" is a very Christian idea. But I *do* object to the socialist promises of "free food," "free housing," "free education," "free abortions," "free euthanasia" and other such promises. If the socialist agenda is so honorable, then why do they refuse to discuss the true costs of these "free" services? Christianity has always been honest about the sufferings needed to make a difference: "Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.'" (Matthew 16:24) Not only that, this passage makes it clear that one is free to follow Jesus or not. There is no such choice with socialism (**Topic A.1**)

Ronald Reagan once said, "Socialism only works in two places: Heaven where they don't need it and hell where they already have it." But the realities of Earth are much different and one should

carefully consider this before concluding one's future lies in socialism, especially when other systems of government not only exist but have proven to be beneficial to the people as a whole.

E) Interchangeability:

As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit. Now the body is not a single part, but many. If a foot should say, "Because I am not a hand I do not belong to the body," it does not for this reason belong any less to the body. Or if an ear should say, "Because I am not an eye I do not belong to the body," it does not for this reason belong any less to the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God placed the parts, each one of them, in the body as he intended. If they were all one part, where would the body be? But as it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I do not need you," nor again the head to the feet, "I do not need you." Indeed, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are all the more necessary, and those parts of the body that we consider less honorable we surround with greater honor, and our less presentable parts are treated with greater propriety, whereas our more presentable parts do not need this. But God has so constructed the body as to give greater honor to a part that is without it, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the parts may have the same concern for one another. If [one] part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy.

-1 Corinthians 12:12-26

In a manner similar to the parable given in **Topic D**, no serious idealized socialist would disagree with the message that we are all valuable parts of one body or that we are to perform our duty as such with pride. Both Christians and idealized socialists would say we need to humble ourselves to the greater good. The difference is that Christians live it as they preach it, while socialists prefer to avoid discussing these sacrifices until they come into power.

A Christian will humble himself and fill the part God calls him to do. While this seems like forced servitude, it is not. God has a hand in our creation, and we are at peace when we follow this calling: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you." (Jeremiah 1:5) In God's plan, we do not have to worry about upsetting the balance by being true to ourselves, as God already saw to that with our conception. We can best balance our world by being what we were meant to be, *no matter how humble or exalted it may be*. I see no reason to defend the logical flip side of this argument: denying this call leads to misery. "Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven" (John Milton, *Paradise Lost*) is so prevalent a theme in contemporary music, literature and movies that our culture has *de facto* accepted the truth of it. Our heroes are no longer virtuous, but either skilled malcontents or lucky imbeciles. It's the villains who are hard working, patient, intelligent, disciplined, talented and dedicated to their cause. Our culture glorifies the evil, and either mocks or is suspicious of the virtuous.

But while obedience to God's calling is in the best interest of the *individual*, obedience to

socialism is in the best interest of the *state*. In other words, while Christian unity means diversity, socialist unity means interchangeability. As the state is (yet) unable to manipulate our talents and interests during our fetal development, they must make do with what they have. If there is an excess of piano players but a need for brick layers, then piano players will be laying bricks. If trained doctors are in excess but there is a need for ditch diggers, then doctors will be digging ditches. This applies to everything life can possibly encompass: amount of food to be eaten, collection of clothes in the closet, size of living place, type of private transportation (if any exists), etc. This is what is meant by interchangeability: one is expected to work whatever job the state needs done at the time, regardless of skills. To allow one to perform a choice job based solely on his talents would, of course, create the "privileged" class that socialism is so fundamentally opposed to.

We should also remember that the state's needs can even dictate our existence. Only China mandates abortions, but every developed country offers and encourages this service. Many socialist countries also offer voluntary euthanasia. Assisted suicide laws are increasingly common in socialist leaning democracies (including the U.S.), or becoming more lax in those that already have them. Coordinated world wide efforts to encourage the elderly to not to be a burden on their progeny have begun. There is no rational reason to believe that this won't eventually become mandatory at some point as well. The socialist goal of eliminating excess will logically lead to the removal of those incapable of being productive (elderly, infirm and lame) just as it already removes the obstacles to productivity caused by being pregnant and giving birth. It is only because of lingering traces of Christian morality that mandatory euthanasia is not already widespread among socialist nations.

F) Entitlement:

Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones, when taking their lamps, brought no oil with them, but the wise brought flasks of oil with their lamps. Since the bridegroom was long delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep. At midnight, there was a cry, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!' Then all those virgins got up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise ones replied, 'No, for there may not be enough for us and you. Go instead to the merchants and buy some for yourselves.' While they went off to buy it, the bridegroom came and those who were ready went into the wedding feast with him. Then the door was locked. Afterwards the other virgins came and said, 'Lord, Lord, open the door for us!' But he said in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, I do not know you.'

-Matthew 25:1-12

It surprises me how few people know this parable. I've no doubt that most Christians have come across it one way or another at some point in their lives. I suppose it's one of those that are easy to forget. After all, what is there for the modern spiritualist (much less the skeptic) to relate to? We don't see, like the ancient Jews did, the honor that being a virgin is. Instead, we look at a professed virgin as being peculiar at best. In a society that believes mutilation of one's body to mimic another gender is acceptable, to be a virgin is to be an outcast. Also, our culture wouldn't call certain virgins in the parable "wise," they would be described as "selfish." How dare they not share? Better to be disgraced with friends than to use them for social stepping stones! Likewise, it is cruel to call the others "foolish," this will undermine their self-esteem! They are clearly disadvantaged, and therefore

deserving of society's help. Forget about duty. The bridegroom is an elitist, after all. It would serve him right to be disgraced by having no virgins at his party. Our culture can see through this story so easily: the "wise" virgins are simply greedy opportunists that took glee in the misery of others while whoring themselves out to the privileged. What was Jesus even thinking? Certainly we know better than to believe this story! It is best left forgotten, as it might interfere with my political prejudices. Actually, perhaps I shouldn't be surprised why so few remember it.

Well, I don't know for certain what any one individual may or may not believe about this parable, but it is there regardless, standing out strong and tall against all that the modern world is telling us about privilege. We are all called to do our duty. In the end, those who do their duty will be exalted, those who don't will be disgraced: "In fact, when we were with you, we instructed you that if anyone was unwilling to work, neither should that one eat." (2 Thessalonians 3:10) This goes against the basic tenet of socialism that we all are entitled to the same benefits regardless of our situation.

Now, there certainly is injustice in the world, and there are certainly people hard on their luck. But how can any official body (i.e., government) know which people truly deserve help and which ones deserve what they have? I would find it difficult to believe that even a mayor of a small town knows all his constituents well enough to make this decision, much less a career politician in Washington, D.C. While the Acts of the Apostles show many acts of charity, and the Epistles discuss even more, *none* of these examples were done remotely. The examples of charity were all done in small communities, face-to-face.

G) Additional Thoughts: While these are not necessarily a part of revolutionaries or idealized socialism, they are points I think are still appropriate to the topic.

1) **Guilt of Ancestors:**

According to the grace of God given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building upon it. But each one must be careful how he builds upon it, for no one can lay a foundation other than the one that is there, namely, Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw, the work of each will come to light, for the Day will disclose it. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire [itself] will test the quality of each one's work. If the work stands that someone built upon the foundation, that person will receive a wage. But if someone's work is burned up, that one will suffer loss; the person will be saved, but only as through fire.

-1 Corinthians 3:10-15

While the Old Testament is full of examples of a people paying the price for the transgressions of their ancestors, beginning with the Original Sin of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3), one must remember that the Ancient Jews had no concept of Heaven or Hell as Christians understand them. To them, the reward or punishment based on one's own actions was to be enjoyed or suffered by one's progeny. The concept of an eternal reward in Heaven based on one's own choices was one of the most astounding revelations of God's plan that Jesus made. Contrary to those who proclaim the "oppression" of the Church, this is perhaps the most liberating Christian concept possible for Earthly life: "I mean not your own conscience, but the others. For why should my freedom be determined by someone else's conscience?" (1 Corinthians 10:29)

We are certainly living in the world that our ancestors made through their choices. The comforts and problems of today's world were caused by decisions and actions of those that came before us. We should enjoy the good and fix the bad, but it should be done out of humbleness, not guilt. When we humble ourselves, we focus on what's best for future generations. When we do things out of guilt, we focus on people who are long past Earthly cares.

2) Biting the Hand That Feeds You:

Then the Pharisees went off and plotted how they might entrap him in speech. They sent their disciples to him, with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are a truthful man and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. And you are not concerned with anyone's opinion, for you do not regard a person's status. Tell us, then, what is your opinion: Is it lawful to pay the census tax to Caesar or not?" Knowing their malice, Jesus said, "Why are you testing me, you *hypocrites*? Show me the coin that pays the census tax." Then they handed him the Roman coin. He said to them, "Whose image is this and whose inscription?" They replied, "Caesar's." At that he said to them, "Then *repay* to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God." When they heard this they were amazed, and leaving him they went away.

-Matthew 22:15-22, with an almost identical account in Mark 12:13-17
(italics mine)

While many are familiar with this story, there is an important lesson here that is often overlooked. This does not necessarily invalidate other interpretations, as much of the credibility of the Christian religion lies in how adaptable its teachings are.

First of all, the Pharisees (who are the main challengers in this account) represented the majority of the Israelites while the Herodians represented the dynasty of King Herod. The Pharisees would have opposed the tax, while the Herodians would have favored the tax (the Romans recognized King Herod and Rome provided stability to the kingdom). This is important to know when one looks at the part where Jesus calls them hypocrites.

The question the Pharisees asked cannot be hypocritical *prima facie*: the question as stated would have had Jesus choosing between the Pharisees' point of view or the Herodians' point of view. The question was, however, clearly a trap as Jesus was at the same time asked to choose between making the people happy at the risk of upsetting the Romans, or keeping the Romans content at the risk of making the people upset. But setting a trap makes one devious, not hypocritical. What was the hypocrisy?

We need to take a closer look at the story again, and notice how readily the Pharisees provided the coin (remember, the Herodians were basically there to watch the show; it was the Pharisees that were actively involved). The Pharisees frequently carried these coins. Also note the word "repay." Now it becomes clear: the Pharisees were all too willing to use the coins when it benefited them while at the same time proclaiming the coins as evil. This violates the 8th Commandment (**Topic B.6**) about bearing false witness.

One cannot proclaim something as evil while taking advantage of its benefits. The founding

fathers of the United States created a government and assumed full governmental responsibilities (including making their own money) when they declared independence from England. Compare this to the Capital Hill Occupied Protest in Seattle which willingly gave up territory (notably Cal Anderson Park) to the police so they could focus on disbanding the very same police force without "distraction" (there is a great article by *The Seattle Times* on 28 June 2020 that goes into this in detail).

3) Self-Examination:

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread, and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes. Therefore *whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will have to answer for the body and blood of the Lord. A person should examine himself, and so eat the bread and drink the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are ill and infirm, and a considerable number are dying. If we discerned ourselves, we would not be under judgment; but since we are judged by [the] Lord, we are being disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.*
-1 Corinthians 11:23-32 (italic mine)

This scripture has Saint Paul admonishing gluttony and drunkenness during masses in the early Church in Corinth, but there are still lessons to be learned that rise above the particular disrespect shown there. To partake of the Eucharist was, along with Baptism, a defining ritual of Christianity. Baptism began one's journey to salvation; the Eucharist was spiritual food to sustain one along the journey. Just as Baptism is the new Passover in the New Covenant, the Eucharist is the new manna. It is in Saint Paul's exhortation to examine oneself before taking the Eucharist that we see the perfect and highest example of something uniquely Christian: the combining of the ritual with the philosophical. After all, it would have been simpler for him to simply demand a fast before coming to mass. But to demand self-examination elevated his reproach to include any and all activity that detracted from the celebration, not just gluttony and drunkenness.

Self-examination is very difficult because it forces one to look honestly at one's own deepest, darkest thoughts and secrets. One must take ownership of one's own shortcomings. We must decide if our longings are really what we want, or if it's the world tempting us to excess. A would-be student must consider if a less expensive school will be just as good as his "dream" school, or that perhaps he was not meant for college at all. A would-be rights activist must consider if the people he voted into office are the real reason for the "outrages" before he takes to the street, or if there is even a legitimate right to protest in the first place. A poor person needs to consider different ways of earning more money, or that perhaps he actually makes enough money for the lifestyle he is comfortable with.

It is only after being brutally honest with oneself (using Christian values as a basis) that one can be in position to decide if social change is indeed a moral option. It must be a logical and definable injustice that is not tied to personal greed, pride and/or peer pressure. "Examine yourselves to see whether you are living in faith. Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless, of

course, you fail the test." (2 Corinthians 13:5). The fathers of our country understood that and Dr. King understood that. Considering how emotionally charged most revolutionaries are and how important "free" entitlements are for "buying" votes for socialists, it should be no surprise that socialism, or the revolutionaries that promote it, are so anti-Christian. They have no power over a student who will work menial jobs for a college degree, a right's activist who has faith in the ballot box, or a poor person who refuses to own things that won't make him happy.

But is this observation just me being a "brainwashed" servant of the elite or a legitimate interpretation of the Bible? You have to answer that for yourself. But consider this: suppose, by some absurdity, that a revolutionary who failed to do a proper self-examination actually made the perfect society. That revolutionary, because he still doesn't understand what it is *he* really wants and needs, will still have unmet expectations. As long as expectations are unmet, he will remain in conflict with society.

I have seen this my entire life: people who blame everyone but themselves for their own unhappiness. "Professional students" who constantly change majors because the "teachers are idiots." Workers who move from one part of the plant to another because they can't stand the "jerks" at the last work station. People who *voluntarily* slave 60 or more hours a week at jobs to finance large houses, fancy cars, boats, and even horses they never have time to enjoy. Self-examination is *not* a set of chains designed by the Church to keep one down; it is the key to freedom from the empty promises of the world.

H) The Missing Piece:

Can you be righteous unless you be just in rendering to things their due esteem?

-Thomas Traherne

I have spent a long time discussing some of the more common problems socialism has with Christianity, and real-world examples supporting my theories. But I have also admitted that at least some forms of idealized socialism could not only be compatible with Christianity, but actually even encouraged by the Church. While I have addressed some issues in detail, there is so much more that I didn't say. As I read over what I have said so far, I still sense that something is missing. I have been addressing *symptoms* of problems instead of the *cause* of these problems. This is what really makes the difference between the failed socialism we see and the success stories of the saints.

In a single word, the difference is sin. Sin is deliberately being opposed to God's will. Inequality is not *a* sin, although it is a magnet *for* sin. Addressing only inequality (which is all atheistic socialism can hope to accomplish) means the cause is ignored and will continue. The favorite target of socialism is poverty, but poverty is not the problem. Saint Paul tells us: "I know indeed how to live in humble circumstances; I know also how to live with abundance. In every circumstance and in all things I have learned the secret of being well fed and of going hungry, of living in abundance and of being in need." (Philippians 4:12) The crime, the hunger, the despair, the diseases and other problems that surround poverty are the results of sin, not the result of poverty itself. Poverty merely inhibits easy (but temporary) escape from the problems. Many poor communities still exist in the world that consider themselves to have a good standard of living: they trust their neighbors, they know the skills needed to survive and have a lot of free time to spend on their modest but satisfying pastimes. In contrast, many wealthy people work so much that they never enjoy the things their money has bought. They must constantly watch their backs against co-workers seeking to take their place on the social ladder, are

vulnerable to identity theft, have debts to worry about and more. Wealth does not stop sin; it only gives it newer and bigger opportunities.

As socialism is inherently and aggressively atheist, it denies the existence of sin. And perhaps the greatest sin socialism commits is denying people their "human dignity." This is ironic because revolutionaries nearly always have some "humanitarian" goal. But there is no equivalent of "humanity" in nature; it is survival of those best capable of surviving. This bankrupted humanity is the reason why socialist projects are so often characterized by a "build and forget" mentality. Does one part of town have fewer schools per capita than another? Build a school, create a budget based on nationwide statistics and then move on to the next social "improvement." Five years later, everyone acts surprised that the students do so poorly there. So they create a bigger budget and move on again. Jesus tells us: "When an unclean spirit goes out of someone, it roams through arid regions searching for rest but, finding none, it says, 'I shall return to my home from which I came.'" But upon returning, it finds it swept clean and put in order. then it goes and brings back seven other spirits more wicked than itself who move in and dwell there, and the last condition of that person is worse than the first." (Luke 11:24-26) It is not enough to simply "fix" something; it must also be looked after, guarded and maintained, or else it will be worse than before.

The founding fathers of the United States certainly did not extend "human dignity" to slaves, but human dignity was still the underlying theme of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Federalist Papers. While the southern states allowed slavery, the seeds of its destruction were planted when these same states agreed to join the new country. Human dignity and slavery are incompatible; it was just a matter of time for this incompatibility to reach a crisis point. While the causes of the Civil War are complex, it is not by accident or coincidence that the slave states sought to leave the Union -- their economic reality was incompatible with the country's fundamental values. Furthermore, there is no doubt that the moral high ground Abraham Lincoln held concerning human dignity motivated much of the Union effort to fight a terrible war from which the North really had nothing to gain. The U.S. certainly does have some blood on its hands, but its core belief in human dignity ultimately resulted in all its citizens being free.

One problem with using history as an example is that people seem to think that it happened in the "uneducated" past. But we can see in our own times the insidious effect of "equality" enslaving us. It was really not that long ago that awareness of college girl sports was promoted in the name of "equality" for women. More awareness of the sports meant more fans, which meant more money for the colleges and presumably more scholarships available to talented and intelligent women. Just a few years afterward, when some star female athletes were starting to become household names, many of the same revolutionaries moved on to letting men play in these same college girl sports. In the name of "equality," men who thought they were women were allowed to compete with the gender they thought they belonged to. From a human dignity perspective, this is a tragedy for the biological women. Now they must compete for scholarships against biological men and they stand no chance of setting records to inspire the next generation of female athletes. But this also denies the human dignity of the biological men. They are not competing at the level they were biologically intended for. Their achievements are meaningless and their legacy is to encourage biological cheating in sports. Fortunately, sanity is returning to female sports, but similar examples can be found in every area of human life now.

Conclusions: Society, being a human institution, is far from perfect and always needs reform to at least some degree. It is sad to see things go to waste, especially when there are others in need. But it is all too easy to focus on the result and not the means. When we become so "tunnel-visioned" to the result, the goal becomes an idol. The means must always include God through His teachings, and we

must trust in His desired outcome over ours. Catholics regard it as a particularly heinous form of idolatry to do otherwise (refer to Catechism of the Catholic Church #676). There is a proper way to make a change, and an improper way. The proper way requires an honest appraisal of self and society, what can be done about it and the best way to make it happen (which sometimes means accepting the *status quo*). Above all, human dignity must be respected for all, not just a select and fortunate few.

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