

Christianity vs Socialism



There is a battle raging in our country between two opposing systems of government: Socialism and Capitalism. Socialists believe it means a mere belief in the accumulation of money. Capitalism in that narrow sense is non-Christian. True “Capitalism” is better defined as Free and Capitalism.

Socialism is the belief that property, business, and social endeavors should be owned or controlled collectively through the government. A partial socialist system has already been implemented in America. The government takes private income and redistributes it back to the public in cradle-to-grave services that traditionally were the responsibility of the family or individual.

Capitalism is the belief that property, business, and social endeavors should be owned and controlled by private individuals. Because America was founded upon Christianity, the nation adopted Capitalistic principles taught in the Bible: self-determination, personal responsibility, and private ownership. “Capitalism” is an insufficient title because some people mistake Enterprise, Limited Government, or Libertarianism. Why Socialism?

1. Socialism claims to be more efficient. We can be more efficient working collectively than working as individuals. For example, since the government appears more efficient in road building, why not put all business activity under the control of government?

2. Socialism claims to be more charitable. The economic liberty of Capitalism is considered selfish because it does not promote collective sharing. Socialism is viewed as the best system for helping the under-privileged since the government can best equalize opportunity. The government must take from the rich and give to the poor because the well-off would never do this on their own.

Some represent Socialism as being more Christian – as if Jesus would favor Socialism since He was interested in helping the poor. In practice, Christianity has been a major opponent of Socialism. Jesus never taught that the way to help the poor was by giving the Roman Empire power to redistribute wealth or to control all social endeavors.

Why Capitalism?

1. Capitalism is more efficient. The history of 20th-century socialism/communism has proven that government-run economies, businesses, and social programs are wasteful, inefficient, and non-innovative. The reason is obvious: people become lazy when they can earn a salary by the power to tax. In Capitalism, individuals must earn a living by producing goods and services for which people are willing to pay. By contrast, Socialism creates an elite group of leaders who monopolize education, retirement, health care, etc. Through taxation, everyone is forced to pay for inefficient bureaucratic services. Capitalism operates on the principle of respecting individual freedom. The individual consumer is granted the power to judge the product.

There are many unprincipled people who would rather make an income by government fiat than by the pressure of the market requiring them to produce products people really want. Capitalism promotes real work. Socialism favors unproductive work, non-working bureaucracy, and government monopoly.

2. Capitalism is more charitable. Capitalism, in a Christian context, does support government charity. The Bible teaches both private charity (Exodus 23:11) and an annual 3% tax for the poor (Deuteronomy 14:28). Nobody would object to such a system. However, Socialism is a completely different arrangement, whereby the state collects private dollars and redistributes them back to the public in many areas of life. The state provides child care, education, health care, retirement, etc. Control is in the hands of a bureaucratic class.

Socialists claim their motive is charity; conservatives suspect their motive is bureaucratic control. For example, in the 1940s, Social Security was established to help people retire comfortably. The state could have required everyone to set aside 5% for retirement or required family to support family. Instead the Socialists determined that the state should collect and redistribute retirement dollars. Since there are adequate private means of retirement, Socialism appears to be primarily motivated by a subconscious desire for government control.

In every society there is a class of people who are uncharitable in that they seek to gain authoritarian power over others – as if they know how to best help everyone. A ruling class wants the citizenship to look to an elite class for resources. There is always a naïve segment of society that is more than willing to relinquish personal responsibility to authoritarians in return for the promise of security and an easy life.

Socialism actually leaves less money for the poor. Evil is parasitic in that it lives off the good. There are worthy poor who must be helped, but there are also many unworthy poor and bureaucrats who are funded by attaching themselves to government programs for the worthy poor. Because of bureaucratic graft and vote buying, private and local charity does a much better job at distributing funds to the needy.

3. The socialist system empowers evil. Corrupt people, who would naturally be disciplined by the free market, can make a living off of the government’s power to tax the working class. This creates both a non-working, bureaucratic class and a class of government dependants.

Certainly there are evil business owners, but the successful business owner is subject to market competition and must, therefore, continue to provide worthy products or services. In Socialism, the government is a *de facto* monopoly. Once government becomes inefficient, it is almost impossible to reverse the power of the state, even in a democracy.

When mankind fell into sin, God decreed that man should work by the sweat of his brow to produce wealth (Genesis 3; 2 Thessalonians 3:10). Ever since that day there have been people who have sought a life of ease by requiring others to pay their salaries or benefits through the power of taxation.

God also established a system of merit, whereby a man must reap what he sows (Galatians 6). “**Laziness casts into a deep sleep, and an idle man will suffer hunger** (Proverbs 19:15).” Yet there are those who want to skirt this principle by having the entire society bear the cost for their needless pursuits or dissolute lives. It is neither necessary nor helpful for everyone to be economically equal (Matthew 25:15).

In Luke 15, Jesus described the prodigal son who wasted his wealth on riotous living. When the prodigal was reduced to feeding swine, he repented and returned to work for his father. In Socialism, these natural disciplines of the market are set aside. The prodigal wouldn’t have to work for his father; he could instead collect unemployment, SSI, food stamps, or welfare.

Which is Right—Capitalism or Socialism?

Human knowledge is limited; therefore, on the basis of pragmatic benefits, people will never be able to agree on which system is better. Fortunately, God defines the right economic system in the Scriptures. The basic principles of socialism are rejected since the Bible specifically limits the scope and responsibilities of the state. Non-charitable forms of pure capitalism are also rejected.

Philosophers usually frame the argument between Capitalism and Socialism as a conflict between the

needs of the individual vs. the needs of society. The Christian social system is in a completely different category because it operates on a different model which defines the proper balance between the rights of the individual and the rights of society.

The Biblical model is that God created four separate institutions.

1. The Church
2. The Family
3. The State
4. The Individual

Each institution has God-given, limited duties and responsibilities. Romans chapter 13 is the key Scripture about the limited role of government.

For it [government] is an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.
(Romans 13:4)

The government has a mandate from God to prosecute evil, raise an army, create a police force, build jails, and arrest cheaters in the free market. The U.S. Constitution reads that the government is to “promote the general welfare” of the people. From a Biblical point of view, this is not a blank check for the government to do everything.

The family has a mandate from God to take care of food, clothing, housing, retirement, and even education (1 Timothy 5, Ephesians 6). It is no surprise that the Communists sought to erase the institution of the family, for it threatened the absolute power of government.

The Christian conservative view of limited government, individualism, self-reliance, and personal liberty is not simply based upon utilitarian principles, but is grounded upon Biblical instruction.

Whenever the state ignores God’s law and takes upon itself the responsibilities of the family, the church, or the individual, it is a recipe for national disaster.

“Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.”
(Romans 13:1)

As America becomes less Christian, there is an ever-growing group of secular citizens who want the government to overreach its God-given boundaries. The liberal left despises Biblical Christianity (what they call the “Religious Right”) because Christian beliefs stand in the way of their big government, socialist agenda.

Ancient Israel Wanted More Government

“No, but there shall be a king over us. . . that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles.” (1 Samuel 8:20)

The Bible records ancient Israel’s fatal decision to abandon theocratic democracy and replace it with an authoritarian dictatorship. The system God originally set up over Israel was a twelve-tribe confederacy governed by the rule of God’s law as administered by elected elders.

The people demanded a larger government to take over the duties that originally belonged to the citizenship. In their laziness, they no longer wanted to take personal responsibility. In their faithlessness, they no longer trusted God but instead craved a powerful government to allay their fears.

God was not pleased and said to the prophet Samuel, “***They have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them.***” God then told them what they would suffer under totalitarianism.

This will be the procedure of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and place them for himself in his chariots and among his horsemen and they will run before his chariots. He will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and of fifties, and some to do his plowing and to reap his harvest and to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots.

He will also take your daughters for perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and your vineyards and your olive groves and give them to his servants. He will take a tenth of your seed and of your vineyards and give to his officers and to his servants...

and you will become his servant then you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the Lord will not answer you in that day.
(1 Samuel 8:11-18)

The Socialist might say, “Look at all the great jobs the king would create.” However, the text assumes that the king’s job creation agenda was a negative program because (1) the government takes private wealth to create these jobs, and (2) empowered government generally serves the interest of bureaucrats, not the citizenship.

America has not set up a king, but the lesson of ancient Israel applies to all government overreach. People often relinquish personal responsibilities and want government to “fight their battles.” This phrase applies to more than just military battles. People may look to government to fight their health care battles, education battles, job battles, or retirement battles. The error is in looking to government to fulfill the responsibilities that God has given to the family or individual. Out of fear and sloth, the ungodly of ancient Israel desired a layer of burdensome bureaucracy that a godly people would never need.

When a people depart from God, one of the first consequences is an inexplicable longing for larger government. While Christianity moves a people toward freedom, secular atheism and man-made religions always move a people toward Totalitarianism. The reason is obvious: without God there is a subconscious need for some other source of power and security. Government takes the place of God; and the things for which the Christian looks to God, the unbeliever looks to the state. As the Christian wants more of God, the unbeliever wants more of the state. Ultimately, a people’s theology determines the role and function of the state.

The Beast

In the book of Daniel, the pagan king Nebuchadnezzar sees the empires of man as a glorious statue (Daniel 2). Daniel, the prophet of God, sees the empires of man as devouring beasts (Daniel 7). Here the contrast is established between

man’s view of government and God’s view of government. When mankind consolidates power in the state, it always results in oppression and evil. “Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolute” (Lord Acton).

Christians favor limited government because the Beast must always be constrained. If the Beast is fed, it grows bigger and bigger until it cannot be controlled any longer.

In the book of the Revelation, the world, in its apostasy from God, ends up with the ultimate Socialist system. “No one will be able to buy or sell” without the permission of the state (Revelation 13:17). The state persecutes the church and wields unlimited power in the name of Humanism.

Why do so many people today, especially within secular academia, have a growing infatuation with Statism? Because it is an obsession on a spiritual level. Once a people abandon God, government becomes the substitute.

The ultimate issue is not political, but personal and spiritual. Each person must choose his source of truth and authority. Each person must choose his trust and security. The Biblical message is that true hope and deliverance is ultimately found in Jesus Christ.

Vain is the help of man. ***(Psalm 60:11)***

Do not trust in princes, in mortal man, in whom there is no salvation. ***(Psalm 146:3)***

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