

The Sin of Socialism



A Sermon Preached by Derek Gentle
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The Sin of Socialism

The Bible presents a complete view of the world – and a correct view for the world. Thus, it is our responsibility to think Christianly about every part of life.

In 1976, Francis Schaeffer wrote, *How Then Shall We Live?* He anticipated five crises and their effects on people who have no absolutes. They are:

1. *Economic Breakdown*
2. *War or Serious Threat of War*
3. *The Chaos of Violence*
4. *The Radical Redistribution of Wealth around the World*
5. *A Growing Shortage of Food and Other Natural Resources*

He predicted in the face of the chaos of violence, “...People will give up their liberties when faced with the threat of terrorism.” Regarding economic breakdown he observed, “History indicates that at a certain point of economic breakdown people cease being concerned with individual liberties and are ready to accept regimentation.” Schaeffer explained how freedom has always come from the base of a Christian, biblical worldview. That is the only foundation that can support liberty. Then he gave a dire prediction:

As the memory of the Christian base grows ever dimmer, freedom will disintegrate... And the drift will tend to be the same, no matter what political party is voted in. When the principles are gone, there remains only expediency at any price.¹

Is that how people will actually react? Is that how people are responding now? Is what history records? From Genesis 47:13-25:

13. *But there was no food in that entire region, for the famine was very severe. The land of Egypt and the land of Canaan were exhausted by the famine.*
14. *Joseph collected all the money to be found in the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan in exchange for the grain they were purchasing, and he brought the money to Pharaoh's house.*
15. *When the money from the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan was gone, all the Egyptians came to Joseph and said, “Give us food. Why should we die here in front of you? The money is gone!”*

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16. *But Joseph said, "Give me your livestock. Since the money is gone, I will give you food in exchange for your livestock."*
17. *So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and he gave them food in exchange for the horses, the herds of sheep, the herds of cattle, and the donkeys. That year he provided them with food in exchange for all their livestock.*
18. *When that year was over, they came the next year and said to him, "We cannot hide from our lord that the money is gone and that all our livestock belongs to our lord. There is nothing left for our lord except our bodies and our land.*
19. *Why should we perish here in front of you—both us and our land? Buy us and our land in exchange for food. Then we with our land will become Pharaoh's slaves. Give us seed so that we can live and not die, and so that the land won't become desolate."*
20. *In this way, Joseph acquired all the land in Egypt for Pharaoh, because every Egyptian sold his field since the famine was so severe for them. The land became Pharaoh's,*
21. *and Joseph moved the people to the cities from one end of Egypt to the other.*
22. *The only land he didn't acquire was that of the priests, for it was their allotment from Pharaoh. They lived off the allotment Pharaoh had given them; therefore they did not sell their land.*
23. *Then Joseph said to the people, "Understand today that I have acquired you and your land for Pharaoh. Here is seed for you. Sow it in the land.*
24. *At harvest, you are to give a fifth of it to Pharaoh, and four-fifths will be yours as seed for the field and as food for yourselves, your households, and your dependents."*
25. *And they said, "You have saved our lives. We have found favor in our lord's eyes and will be Pharaoh's slaves."*

You will notice from this reading:

- There was a crisis: a severe famine
- People traded away their assets, their land and, finally, their freedom for food
- The people said without grief or regret, "We... will be Pharaoh's slaves"

Joseph was a good man, a very godly person. However, the people were idolaters and Joseph represented the interests of Pharaoh. The thing I ask you to notice is not Joseph, but how the people responded to the crisis.

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Rasmussen Reports did a survey and discovered that just 53% of Americans believe capitalism is better than socialism. In fact 20% favor socialism (1 in 5 Americans!), and 27% are not sure which economic system is better. Of those under age thirty, 37% favor capitalism and 33% – a full one-third – favor socialism.²

So this message is dedicated to that 27% of Americans who didn't pay attention in civics class.

Here are some of the major tenets of socialism:

- *Nationalization: Government owns and controls all industry, natural resources, and lending institutions*
- *Abolition of Private Property*
- *Central Planning – Government determines what goods will be made and how much to charge for them*
 - ◊ *Capitalism produces luxuries instead of needs*
- *Class Struggle – with the government representing the interests of the worker class*
 - ◊ *Capitalism accumulates in the hands of the few, both wealth and power over the poor*
 - ◊ *The working man is exploited and enslaved*
 - ◊ *The rich get richer and the poor get poorer*
- *Equality of Income*
 - ◊ *“From each according to his ability to each according to his means” – Karl Marx*

There are different kinds of socialism. These variations within socialism include:

- *Communism – socialism established by violent revolution if necessary*
- *International Socialism*
- *National Socialism (Fascism): Government does not own everything, but controls everything*
- *Liberation Theology / Black Liberation Theology*
- *Fabianism: Moving to socialism by increments without revolution, through infiltration and deceit*
- *European Socialism: Emphasizes redistributing wealth for social justice and equality*

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Six Reasons Why Socialism is Wrong



Abolishing Property Rights is Contrary to Scripture

Numerous people have tried to advance the idea that the book of Acts records a form of “Christian socialism.” The related passage does record tremendous generosity and sacrificial giving. It does not record anyone in the church ever having their goods and property taken from them to be given to someone else – and let there be no mistake, that is what socialism advocates. However, Acts 5:1-4, the very passage these poor interpreters of Scripture use to advance the socialistic ideal actually supports the right to private property:

1. *“But a man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a piece of property.*
2. *However, he kept back part of the proceeds with his wife’s knowledge, and brought a portion of it and laid it at the apostles’ feet.*
3. *Then Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the proceeds from the field?*
4. *Wasn’t it yours while you possessed it? And after it was sold, wasn’t it at your disposal? Why is it that you planned this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God!”*

The issue wasn’t a matter of keeping back part of the proceeds from the sale, but rather of lying about how much of the proceeds they gave to the poor!

Nationalizing public property would not make more effective use of it. Arthur Shenfield writes, “Contrast our attitudes of private property with our treatment of public property. Every army quartermaster, every state school administrator, every bureaucratic office controller, knows...”³

I heard a contractor tell of providing pickup trucks to his employees. However, these workers drove them and treated them in ways they wouldn’t have with own trucks, and quickly tore them up. So, the next time around, he gave them an allowance toward buying their own trucks. Sure, trucks could have been purchased at a fleet rate for a lower price. It would have been more efficient, but people did not respect the property they did not own.

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Socialists believe Capitalism causes greed. They believe that a new economic system will control this selfish attitude. But this is an “outside-in” solution for an “inside-out” problem. Jesus said the heart of the matter was the matter of the heart... “From the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, sexual immoralities, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies.” (Matthew 15:19).

There is a distinction to be made between selfishness and self-interest. Self-interest involves our sense of responsibility to make a living and to take care of our families. In April, 1623 the Pilgrims had family gardens, but a combined corn field. They knew they needed to produce twice the corn they had the year before, so they added a new incentive, family plots for corn in addition to the combined, communal corn field. The result? “It made all hands very industrious... The women now went willingly into the field and took their little ones with them to set corn, which before would allege weakness and inability, whom to have compelled would have thought great tyranny and oppression.”⁴ Honestly, if there was ever a group of people in this land who could have made socialism work, it was the pilgrims. If they can’t do it, you can’t!

Actually, the free market does more to control greed than socialism ever could. “The mechanism of the market actually neutralizes greed as individuals are forced to find ways of serving the needs of those with whom they wish to exchange.”⁵

Greed results from the fall and existed before the economic system. So it could not have been caused by the economic system. And if it isn’t caused by the system, it can’t be fixed by the system.

Instead, righteousness must percolate up; it cannot be imposed down. (Odd, how the supporters of socialism used to busy themselves telling us how you “can’t legislate morality” – and now tell us a new economic system will transform human nature!) John Adams, the second president of the United States, said, “Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”

Another reason the socialist thinks the government should own all property is the danger of monopolies. Now, monopolies do represent an evil; we can agree on that. However, is government ownership the cure for monopolies or the cause?

⁴ Peter Marshall and David Manuel, *The Light and the Glory*, Fleming H. Revell, 1977, page 141

⁵ James P. Gills & Ronald H. Nash, *A Biblical Economics Manifesto* Creation House Press, 2002, page 49

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In 1909 Upton Sinclair explained that, “The Federal inspection of meat was, historically, established at the packers’ request. It is maintained and paid for by the people of the United States for the benefit of the packers.” Why was that? Regulations kept away smaller competitors, who couldn’t afford the extra costs the regulations brought.

Another example is how in the thirties, “The owners of big chain movie houses wrote the codes in such a way that independents were nearly run out of business, even though 13,571 of the 18,321 movie theaters in America were independently owned.”⁶

Monopolies are the result of too much government, not free markets.

The fact is, socialism is the ultimate monopoly! Or as Benito Mussolini put it, “Everything for the state, nothing outside the state, nothing above the state.”



Socialism Demeans Human Dignity

Two passages exemplify the teaching of Scripture concerning the dignity of humankind:

Genesis 1:26 “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth.’”

Psalms 8:4-6 “What is man that You remember him, the son of man that You look after him? You made him little less than God and crowned him with glory and honor. You made him lord over the works of Your hands; You put everything under his feet”

Mankind is the crown of God’s creation. Despite all the empty promises, that is not how the socialist leader treats people:

Only capitalism “operates on the basis of respect for free, independent, responsible persons. All other systems in varying degrees treat men as less than this. Socialist systems above all treat men as pawns to be moved about the authorities, or as children to be given what the rulers decide is good for them, or as serfs or slaves.”⁷

⁶ Jonah Goldberg, *Liberal Fascism*, Doubleday, 2007. Pages 290-293

⁷ Arthur Shefeld, “Capitalism Under the Tests of Ethics,” *Imprimis*, December, 1981. Cited in *A Biblical Economics Manifesto* by James P. Gills & Ronald H. Nash, Creation House Press, 2002, page 52

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*Socialism of course did promise to reconstruct humanity, but the message was always mixed. It promised to subordinate the individual to society while liberating him to be fully himself... Was the new Socialist Man to be a self-centered achiever or group-centered worker bee?*⁸

Well, a group-centered worker bee, of course! Pounded into “group think” and not allowed to think or feel or to act for himself!

But there were some others who had a different idea. How they expressed their view of man came out a little differently:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. – That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, – That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government...

You recognize the words of the *Declaration of Independence*. But its writers would not recognize what we have done with the *Declaration*!



I believe it was Ben Franklin who was asked if the declaration guaranteed everyone happiness. He replied that it was about the pursuit of happiness, but that she would have to catch it herself.

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Central Planning is Oppressive

Central Planning Doesn't Work

In socialism, the aim of government is for the masses, not *by* them. But it is impossible for that few people to be that all-knowing— to have that much knowledge about that many tiny parts of an economy, to have foresight into the future like that—to be able to plan for that many people. For example, with a socialist economy there is no market. So the central planners never have a clear idea to know what to charge for items. In fact, before the Soviet Union fell, the Soviets sent spies to our country to find out how much we were charging for various items!

Socialism asks:

*Would it not be more rational (and humane) to invest more of our resources in such things as health care and education and less in providing 17 brands of breakfast cereal or dream cars with Moroccan leather upholstery?*⁹

History answers:

- By the time of the Soviet Union's collapse at the end of 1991, nearly every kind of food was rationed.
- Despite imports and Government subsidies, consumers still had to wait in long lines for food, especially fruits, vegetables, and livestock products.
- A cartoon published in a Soviet newspaper shows a store clerk facing a customer in an empty aisle under a "Meat Department" sign. The clerk is saying, "The people complained about the empty shelves, so we removed them."¹⁰

Wendy's Hamburgers once ran an television commercial mocking the socialist system's inability to meet the needs of the consumer. It depicted a Russian Fashion Show. The fashion show announcer calls out, "Day wear..." and the "model" comes out in a drab, gray dress. Then the announcer calls out, "Evening wear" and the model comes out in the same drab, gray dress... with a flashlight. Finally, the fashion show announcer calls out, "Swim Wear" and out comes the model in the same drab, gray dress and a beach ball (with red stars!).¹¹

⁹ Bruce Douglass, "Socialism and Sin." This article appeared in the *Christian Century*, December 1, 1976, pp. 1072-1076. Copyright by The Christian Century Foundation www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=1825

¹⁰ Kenneth Gray, "The Soviet Food complex in a Time of Change," Oct-Dec, 1989 issue of National Food Review http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m3284/is_n4_v12/ai_8274317/pg_8/?tag=content;col1

¹¹ www.youtube.com/watch?v=5CaMUfxVJVQ

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As we have already mentioned, Karl Marx summarized the socialist ideal with the phrase: “From each according to his abilities; to each according to his need.” But who determines your needs? The state does! That’s what central planning is all about.

*“Capitalism [is] a system of voluntary relationships... on the basis of peaceful exchange... Socialism... entails the introduction of coercion into an economic exchange in order to facilitate the goals of powerful elitists who function as the central planners.”*¹²

Jeffrey Folks grew up in Yugoslavia under a socialist government. He knows socialism personally. He describes how that way of life must be introduced into a new place:

*...Those who come to power, even with good intentions, discover that for all men to be made equal, some men must be made poor, and most men will not agree to be made poor in the absence of force. So force must be applied, assets must be seized, censorship must be imposed, dissidents must be jailed, enemies must be destroyed. Men must be made equal by any means necessary, and soon enough those means include intimidation, imprisonment, and execution.*¹³

Richard Sheldon raises the question, “Is socialism good even in theory?” That’s what we often hear, “It is good in theory; too bad no one can make it work in practice.” Sheldon writes:

*Socialism has been mortally discredited on economic grounds... But for many people it has not been discredited on moral grounds. You can tell this by how often people say that while socialism doesn't work in practice, it is good in theory. Strange notion – that a theory which doesn't work in the world can somehow still be good. Where else is it to be judged? One would think that a theory whose consistent realization requires gulags and secret police would be morally disqualified even if it "worked."*¹⁴

Some may object that socialism can come in milder forms. But, even if socialism smiles at you... even if the totalitarian promises to be your pal... any step in the direction of socialism is a step toward chains and tyranny. Socialism’s central planners are asking us to disregard the warnings of Scripture against too much trust in human leadership:

- Psalm 118:9 “It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in nobles.”
- Psalm 146:3 “Do not trust in nobles, in man, who cannot save.”

¹² James P. Gills & Ronald H. Nash, **A Biblical Economics Manifesto**, Creation House Press, 2002, pages 20-21, 23

¹³ Jeffrey Folks, My Socialist Past [in Yugoslavia], **American Thinker**

www.americanthinker.com/2009/03/my_socialist_past.html

¹⁴ Sheldon Richman, *Is Socialism Good in Theory?* www.tysknews.com/Depts/gov_philosophy/socialism_in_theory.htm



Socialism Produces a Dreary Uniformity

Two passages in Proverbs describe the dreary, stifling spirit imposed on a people by the wrong kinds of government:

- Proverbs 28:12 “When the righteous triumph, there is great glory, but when the wicked rise, men hide themselves.”
- Proverbs 29:2 “When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, but when a wicked man rules, people groan.”

Mussolini was the one who coined the word, “Totalitarian” – and he meant it as a good thing. As he said (and I repeat), “Everything for the state, nothing outside the state, nothing above the state.” The state would manage every part of life. The state would tell people how to think and how to feel and what to believe, and where to work. It was as Brian Anderson described it as, “A complete view of life” – one “that brooked no pluralistic opposition.”¹⁵ This is a dreary way to live. Jeffrey Folks describes it from his own experience:

Anyone who has lived inside the demoralized, unproductive, gray prison of a communist state, as I did in the mid-1980s, knows to what depths of impoverishment the egalitarian fantasies of socialism inevitably lead. They lead to decades of frustrated poverty and lifetimes of untreated illness culminating in early death. I remember the columns of death notices for men and women in their forties and fifties that appeared in the local newspaper. Gradually I came to understand that the condition of life under communism, so filled with repression, suspicion, and hopelessness, dragged one down into an early grave. Gradually I saw that within the communist state everyone—everyone except the leadership of course—subsists in a cage of gnawing bitterness and permanent defeatism.¹⁵⁶

Years ago, Louis Grizzard described in some of his memorable columns of a trip he took to Russia in the days of the old Soviet Union. It was some sort of exchange trip to promote understanding and peace. He told of eating an ice cream cone with a cardboard cone. He described how dreary the place was. He finally described how when the planeload of guests left to come home to the United States, that as soon as they felt the wheels leave the tarmac, the entire planeload of people burst into spontaneous applause!

¹⁵ “The Fascist Revolution: Toward a General Theory of Fascism” by Brian C. Anderson www.firstthings.com/article.php3?id_article=2606

¹⁶ Jeffrey Folks, My Socialist Past [in Yugoslavia], *American Thinker* www.americanthinker.com/2009/03/my_socialist_past.html

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Aren't you glad people in our country don't have the experience Grizzard did in Russia? Well, if the socialists have their way, that *will* be us! Folks warns:

*What happened under communism elsewhere will happen here: the public will lose its will to resist the immense power of government and will finally lapse into demoralized passivity.*¹⁵



The Redistribution of Wealth is Using the Government to Steal

The Bible describes a woman marked by a commitment to excellence and moral virtue. The passage is found in Proverbs 31:15-31. Here is a part of how she is described:

15. *She rises while it is still night and provides food for her household and portions for her servants.*
16. *She evaluates a field and buys it; she plants a vineyard with her earnings...*
17. *She sees that her profits are good, and her lamp never goes out at night.*
18. *Her hands reach out to the poor, and she extends her hands to the needy...*
19. *She makes and sells linen garments; she delivers belts to the merchants...*
20. *She watches over the activities of her household and is never idle...*
21. *Give her the reward of her labor...*

Look at how this woman is described in regard to her business dealings. She is up early and works late. She appraises land and makes real estate deals. She develops a business plan and works it. She is into several different kinds of business. And she makes profits – the capitalist pig! She doesn't have to have a government program to be generous; she is alert to those in need and has her own outreach program to them. And the Bible says, "Give her the reward of her labor." Give *her* the reward of her labor.

Socialism says, "No, take the reward of her labor and give it to someone else." Someone who dropped out of high school... who doesn't get up early or work late... who doesn't develop a business plan... who doesn't work long hours... who may be doing nothing but sitting on the porch waiting for their government check! And *that* is wrong!

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Socialism finds its motivation in class envy. But the Bible considers this attitude sinful and unhealthy. Proverbs 14:30 says, “A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh, but envy makes the bones rot” (ESV).

Psalm 49:16 warns of another danger, not of envy, but of fearing the success of others — “Do not be afraid when a man gets rich, when the wealth of his house increases.” R.C. Sproul, Jr. tells of an economic conference at which a man from India complained that the rich were buying up too much of the land in his country. The response in the room was to feel a quiet outrage at this oppression by the rich... until someone asked if these lands had been willingly placed on the market. Had it been freely put up for sale? When the reply was yes, that placed the matter in a new light.¹⁸

Here’s a big part of the whole problem: class envy. First, a desire to take what belongs to others for one’s self, and then, if one cannot obtain it for one’s self, the desire to ruin it for the other person!

Adrian Rogers has said:

*When half of the people get the idea that they do not have to work because the other half is going to take care of them, and when the other half gets the idea that it does no good to work because somebody else is going to get what they work for, that my dear friend, is about the end of any nation.*¹⁹

And where will this take us? Alexander Fraser Tytler points out how this approach to government and economic system will produce the end result of tyranny:

*“A democracy cannot exist as a permanent form of government. It can only exist until the majority discovers it can vote itself largess out of the public treasury. After that, the majority always votes for the candidate promising the most benefits with the result the democracy collapses because of the loose fiscal policy ensuing, always to be followed by a dictatorship, then a monarchy.”*²⁰

¹⁸ R. C. Sproul, Jr., *Biblical Economics: A Commonsense Guide to Our Daily Bread*, 1985, 1994, 2002, 2008, 2008 printing by Tolle Legge Press, page 65

¹⁹ Adrian Rogers, Cited by David Dykes <http://fromthepasture.blogspot.com/2009/01/wise-words-from-great-friend.html>

²⁰ Page 12A of *The Daily Oklahoman*, December 9, 1951

www.newspaperarchive.com/FreePdfViewer.aspx?img=65090381&firstvisit=true&terms=Tytler
and www.lorencollins.net/tytler.html



Socialism is an Enemy of the Christian Faith

Socialism defies God. In socialism, God has been replaced by the state. Socialism says, “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.” But it is not a fraternity in Christ; it is not the “brethren” of the Bible. It is the attempt to create heaven on earth without God. One specific example is how socialism says everything and everyone belongs to the state... while the Bible says “The earth and everything in it, the world and its inhabitants, belong to the LORD” (Psalm 24:1).

Some anonymous wag has written the *Twenty-third Psalm of Socialism*. I usually find the reworking of Scripture to be irreverent. But that is exactly what socialism is, an irreverent attempt to replace God.

"The government is my shepherd:

"I need not work.

"It alloweth me to lie down on a good job;

"It leadeth me beside still factories;

"It destroyeth my initiative.

"It leadeth me in a path of a parasite for politic's sake;

"Yea though I walk through the valley of laziness and deficit-spending,

I will fear no evil, for the government is with me.

"It prepareth an economic Utopia for me, by appropriating the earnings of my own grandchildren.

"It filleth my head with false security;

"My inefficiency runneth over.

"Surely the government should care for me all the days of my life, And I shall dwell in a fool's paradise forever."

Karl Marx held that “Religion is the opiate of the people” – an unhealthy addiction to fairy tale-like beliefs. And most all of his followers hold to the same kind of thinking. If examples were to be cited, the response would be, “Well, that’s just one or two people” or “That’s just small percentage.” But as you study this subject, person after person in the movement is clearly anti-religious. The movement of socialism is particularly anti-Christian. Communist countries persecute Christians and suppress the church.

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In the socialistic countries of Europe the churches are empty and the Christian community is weak. Is this weakness the result of socialism or was this weak and tepid voice for truth that which allowed socialism to come in?

With increased taxes, the loss of charitable deductions, and the loss of religious freedom socialism in our nation would greatly impair the missions movement in our country. That reason alone—for the Christian with the world on his heart—is enough to vigorously oppose it.

But, couldn't you have a form of Christian socialism?

There is a clear give-away—one that should make us suspect this idea right from the start: Why is the term *Christian socialism* instead of *socialistic Christianity*? Is it not because the word, *Christian*, tells you only what kind of socialist they are — as opposed to the word, *socialist*, telling you what kind of Christian they are. Which are they most? And if the Bible offers a complete view of the world, why would the appellation, *Christian*, need any modification at all? The truth is, most of those who would use such a term are not the kind of “Christian” that Bible-believing people would expect. These “Christian socialists” use the language of redemption, but with different meanings for the words.

Gills and Nash write of the “Christian socialist”:

*One of the great ironies of “Christian” socialism is that its proponents, in effect, demand that the state get out its weapons and force people to fulfill the demands of Christian love.*²¹

Socialism is a Sin!

The bargain socialism asks us to strike is to trade away our freedoms for security. Socialism will micromanage our lives and interfere in our homes and our faith. It will take the fruit of the hard work of those who bothered to educate themselves, to risk their money, and to work long hours and give it to the lazy. It will corrupt people and remove incentives to work and creativity. And, instead of producing wealth, it will take wealth away. We will find, that like Esau, we will have sold our birthright for a bowl of soup!

So, what am I asking you to do? Come forward and surrender to the FBI? I am asking you to rise up! Speak up; call your representatives and tell them enough is enough! Use your influence in your party to stand rightly on this issue. Act now; your freedom is at stake!

