Capitalism and Its Critics

Kerby Anderson provides a biblical perspective on capitalism, defending it against economic and moral criticisms.

Nearly two decades ago, I did a Probe radio program on capitalism and socialism. Since then, I have also written other booklets on socialism, which provide an answer to the claims of candidates from the Democratic Socialists of America. But there is also a need to set forth why capitalism and the free market need to be defended and supported.

Even back then, I was able to quote from a Rasmussen poll that indicated that a mere majority of Americans said that capitalism was better than socialism.{1} That majority quickly became a minority, especially among young people. A poll just a few years later of millennials found a majority (58 percent) would prefer to live in a socialist nation than a capitalist nation. And only a small percentage (42 percent) favored capitalism. Of course, many of them probably didn't even know how to define socialism (which is a problem today).

A recent Cato Institute poll of the GenZ population found that a majority of them (53%) view socialism favorably.{2} The poll also found that more than a third (39%) would be more likely to vote for a Democratic Socialist candidate.

Part of the problem with this shift to socialism is the fact that many young people do not understand what they are supporting. Socialism sounds fair to them. And capitalism sounds evil since they have seen numerous depictions of evil, greedy capitalists in the movies and television. Think of the last time you saw a successful businessman portrayed in the media.

Another obvious issue is the fact that younger Americans are less likely to associate socialism with Soviet-style repression. Instead, they are told (incorrectly) that

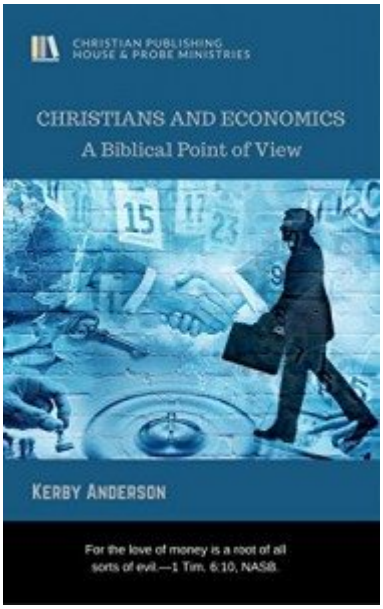
socialism is functioning well in Europe.

Also, young adults don't have "skin in the game" and thus do not think of the implications of an economic system on their future earnings. If they are in the economy, they are frustrated with the issue of affordability and naively think an economic transformation is the answer to their frustrations.

I am reminded of the famous phrase: "If you're not a liberal when you're 25, you have no heart. If you're not a conservative by the time you're 35, you have no brain." Arthur Brooks is someone I have interviewed many times, and he has proposed a variation: "A man who is not a socialist at 20 has no heart; a man who is still a socialist at 40 either has no head or pays no taxes."{3}

Capitalism Versus Socialism

How should we define capitalism and socialism? Here are some brief definitions of these two economic systems. You can find more information in my book on Christians and economics.{4}



Capitalism is an economic system in which there is private property, and the means of production are privately owned. In capitalism, there is a limited role for government. Socialism is an economic system in which there is public or state ownership of the means of production and the primary focus is on providing an equality of outcomes. In socialism, the state

is all-important and involved in central planning.

Many leaders of the Democratic Socialists argue that capitalism is doomed to fail because it leads to wealth inequality. Actor Mark Ruffalo concluded, “Capitalism today is failing us, killing us, and robbing from our children’s future.”

Steve Forbes disagrees. “Capitalism has done just the opposite! Deaths from famines are down 99% in the last 60 years. Standard of living, 10 times better than it was 50 years ago around the world.”{5}

He isn’t the only person saying that. Most people know Bono as a musician with the group U2. But here is what he said at the World Economic Forum: “Capitalism is not immoral—it’s amoral. It requires our instruction. Capitalism has taken more people out of poverty than any other ism.”{6}

Steve Forbes also argued: “Capitalism, free enterprise, free markets, whatever you call it is a moral system because success comes from meeting the needs and wants of others.” He further explained that capitalism is humane: “You may not love your neighbor, but you sure want to sell to your neighbor. It gets people working on a common objective, even if they don’t realize it.”

Another benefit of capitalism is technological innovation. Citizens are free to invent and are encouraged to do so because they can receive the financial benefits of their ideas and inventions.

This results in new products and technologies. It also results in higher-quality technologies. In a free market, the best way to get consumers to buy your product or service is to produce it more cheaply with higher quality. This, of course, also lowers consumer prices.

Economic Criticisms of Capitalism

People often reject the idea of capitalism because they believe one of the *economic* criticisms of capitalism. Here are two of these criticisms.

The first economic criticism is that capitalism leads to monopolies. These develop for two reasons: too little government, and too much government. Monopolies have occurred in the past because government has not been willing to exercise its God-given authority. Government finally stepped in and broke up the big trusts that were not allowing the free enterprise system to function correctly.

But in recent decades, the reason for monopolies has often been too *much* government. Many of the largest monopolies today are government-sanctioned monopolies that prevent true competition from taking place. Companies call for legislation that gives them a competitive advantage over other companies. The solution is for government to allow a freer market where competition can take place.

Let me add that many people often call markets with limited competition “monopolies” when the term is not appropriate. For example, the major car companies may seem like monopolies or oligopolies until you realize that in the market of consumer durables the true market is the entire western world.

The second criticism of capitalism is that it leads to pollution. In a capitalistic system, pollutants are considered externalities. The producer may incur costs that are external to the firm so often there is no incentive to clean up the pollution. Instead, it is dumped into areas held in common such as the air or water.

The solution in this case is governmental regulation. But this need not be a justification for building a massive bureaucracy. We need to find creative ways to direct self-

interest so that people work towards the common good.

The “capitalism leads to pollution” argument has failed. Instead, we find that as countries get richer there is more incentive and financial means to clean up pollution. This is called a Kuznets curve.{7} There are, of course, exceptions (especially with countries with inept governments and poor system of property rights). But the general rule is that as incomes go up, people focus on pollution.

Here’s what we find: when capitalism is wisely controlled, it generates significant economic prosperity and economic freedom for its citizens.

Moral Criticisms of Capitalism

Another reason people often reject the idea of capitalism is because they believe it is*immoral*.

One of the moral arguments against capitalism involves the issue of greed. And this is why many Christians feel ambivalent towards the free enterprise system. After all, some critics of capitalism contend that this economic system makes people greedy.

To answer this question we need to resolve the following question: Does capitalism make people greedy or do we already have greedy people who use the economic freedom of the capitalistic system to achieve their -ends? In light of the biblical description of human nature, the latter seems more likely.

Because people are sinful and selfish, some are going to use the capitalist system to feed their greed. But that is not so much a criticism of capitalism as it is a realization of the human condition. The goal of capitalism is not to change people but to protect us from human sinfulness.

Capitalism is a system in which bad people can do the least harm, and good people have the freedom to do good works. Capitalism works well if you have completely moral individuals. But it also functions adequately when you have selfish and greedy people.

Important to this discussion is the realization that there is a difference between self-interest and selfishness. All people have self-interests that can operate in ways that are not selfish. For example, it is in my self-interest to get a job and earn an income so that I can support my family. I can do that in ways that are not selfish.

Capitalism was founded on the observation that all of us have self-interest. Rather than trying to change that, economists saw that self-interest could be the motor of the capitalist system.

By contrast, other economic systems like socialism ignore the biblical definitions of human nature. Thus, they allow economic power to be centralized and concentrate power in the hands of a few greedy people. Those who complain of the influence major corporations have on our lives should consider the socialist alternative of how a few governmental bureaucrats control every aspect of their lives.

Greed certainly occurs in the capitalist system. But it does not surface just in this economic system. It is part of our sinfulness. Capitalism may have its flaws as an economic system, but it can be controlled to give us a great deal of economic prosperity and economic freedom.

Biblical Perspective

Many Christians are surprised to learn that the Bible does address economic issues, even if it does not endorse any economic system. But we can use biblical principles to evaluate an economic system.

We begin with a biblical view of human nature. The Bible has what we could call a balanced view of human nature. Human beings are created in God's image (Genesis 1:27-28) and have a noble side influenced by rationality, compassion, and even altruism. But there is also a flaw in human beings. The Bible teaches that all are sinful (Romans 3:23) and that the heart of man is deceitful above all things (Jeremiah 17:9).

An economic system that allows for human flourishing must also protect against economic abuse. As we have already discussed, capitalism provides that opportunity.

Capitalism is also based upon the foundation of private property. First, the Bible teaches that everything belongs to the Lord (Psalm 24:1 – "The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it"). Second, we have been given dominion over the creation (Genesis 1:26-28). And the Bible does grant private property rights to individuals (Exodus 22). In fact, one of the Ten Commandments is about stealing, which implies property rights.

As Christians, we can also add our moral perspective to the economy. We read in Deuteronomy 8:18 to "Remember that it is the Lord your God who gives you the power to get wealth, in fulfillment of the covenant that He made on oath with your fathers."

And we should enjoy the fruits of our labor. "There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good" (Ecclesiastes 2:24). We should also "work heartily as for the Lord rather than for men" (Colossians 3:23).

Capitalism also promotes the work ethic. That is implied in the title of Max Weber's book, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. It is also an important aspect of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*.

Many of the Proverbs (10:4, 13:4, 14:23) contrast the

difference between hard work and diligence versus idleness and sloth. In the New Testament, there is a strong emphasis on honest work (Ephesians 4:28) and self-reliance. There is also a warning in 2 Thessalonians 3:10 that "If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat."

As Christians we should support a free market and reject the current attempts to implement a socialist economy in this country.

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The Great Reset

The Great Reset means different things to different people. Kerby Anderson provides an overview and a biblical perspective.

Is the idea of "The Great Reset" merely a conspiracy theory? That seems unlikely, given the fact that if you type in those three words in a search engine you will find more than 900 million hits. But the phrase "great reset" apparently means different things to different people, so getting a clear definition is important.



In 2020, the founder of the World Economic Forum co-authored and published a book called *COVID-19: The Great Reset*.{1} This organization is composed of political, economic, and cultural elites who meet regularly in Davos, Switzerland. The two authors of this book see the current situation in the world as a means of dealing with the "weaknesses of capitalism" supposedly exposed during the pandemic.

But to understand the history of "The Great Reset" you need to go back to the beginning of the World Economic Forum. Klaus Schwab introduced the idea of "stakeholder capitalism."{2} This is a term sometimes used by progressives to reset the management goals in corporations from shareholders to stakeholders.

The actual term "Great Reset" can be found in a book by that title written by urban studies scholar Richard Florida.{3} He argued that the 2008 economic crash was the latest in a series of great resets that included the Great Depression of the 1930s. A few years later, the book and its ideas became the basis for wanting to "push the reset button" on the world economies.

As you might expect, the pandemic and lockdowns have provided a context in which a reset could take place. The goal would be to make the world greener, more digital, and fairer. Given what the world has been through these last few years, the proponents hope to change the economies of nations, so that they benefit not only shareholders but employees, consumers, communities, and the environment.

Some of the comments proponents have made about "The Great Reset" have become fodder for various conspiracy theories. But it is probably fair to say that the phrase "The Great Reset" means different things to different people. Environmental groups want to reset how we use resources and focus on sustainability. Business leaders want banks and corporations to use an ESG index (environmental, social, and governance index). Globalists want to reset the economy and move us toward a different view of capitalism.

Critics talk about some of the other factors associated with "The Great Reset." That would include such things as the promotion of uncontrolled immigration along with significant money printing that results in such problems as open borders and uncontrolled inflation.

In this article we look at this important issue from an economic, political, and biblical perspective. As you will see, Christians need to pay attention to this issue in the news.

The Great Reset of Capitalism

The primary focus from the World Economic Forum has been on the attempt to move our current economic system into "stakeholder capitalism." Some critics have renamed it "corporate socialism" or even "communist capitalism."

The plan is to change the behavior of corporations to no longer benefit shareholders but to focus on stakeholders. This

would be done by requiring businesses and corporations to take a more central role when a crisis, like the recent pandemic, adversely affects society.

Climate change is another "crisis" that corporations need to address. Put simply, corporations need to be involved in social justice issues. That is why we are seeing major corporations getting more involved in political issues and expressing their opinions on issues ranging from transgenderism to voter integrity laws. One effective tactic being used is to rate businesses and corporations with an ESG index (environmental, social, and governance index).

The ESG index can be used to force businesses to comply with a woke agenda or else be squeezed out of the market. Some have suggested that the ESG index is essentially a social credit score being applied to businesses and corporations.

Andy Kessler, writing in the *Wall Street* Journal, argues that ESG is a loser and that you pay higher expenses for a fund with similar stocks but worse performance.{4} In fact, he encourages investors to buy stocks of companies with great prospects over the next decade at reasonable prices.

Aren't the companies and countries with a high ESG score better investments? A professor at the University of Colorado evaluated the system in the *Harvard Business Review* and made four key points about ESG.{5}

First, ESG funds have underperformed. Second, companies that tout their ESG credentials have worse compliance records for labor and environmental rules. Third, ESG scores of companies that signed the UN Principles of Investment, didn't improve after they signed, and their financial returns were lower for those who signed. His final point was even more significant. He concluded that often companies publicly embrace ESG as a cover for poor business performance. In other words, when earnings are bad, the company cites its ESG score.

Klaus Schwab believes that companies should try and optimize for more than short-term profits and focus on achieving the goals set forth by the UN for sustainable development. That may sound like a good idea until you look at the economic data behind it.

Why Now?

Why has there been such a push for significant changes in this decade? Activists wanting to make changes in society and our economy see the pandemic and governmental response as a political opportunity. It is the familiar phrase, “Never let a crisis go to waste.”

Most social and political change occurs gradually. The crisis of the pandemic forced big government and big pharma to move at a much faster rate. Public acceptance of larger governmental control became a paradigm shift that allowed political leaders and even corporate leaders to move faster than the incremental pace of the past. The pandemic threw open the window for change. The only question is how much of “The Great Reset” will be put in place before it closes.

The pandemic is the external reason for pushing “The Great Reset” but there is also an internal reason. An entire generation of college students learning woke ideology in the universities are now filling positions in various companies. Many commentators naively suggested that once coddled college students enter the “real world,” they will drop their woke ideas and face the reality of making a living in the business world and the free market.

Instead, those woke students brought their ideas into corporate boardrooms and embraced attempts to reset capitalism and corporations. Their professors taught them that capitalism is evil, and that America is riven with racism, sexism, homophobia, and xenophobia. It is time, they believe, to join

arms with activists and reformers and bring about “The Great Reset.” We might add that the American consumer hasn’t been so accepting of these ideas, which is why we sometimes hear the phrase “go woke, go broke.”

The push for a “Great Reset” is also taking place during what many commentators refer to as the fourth industrial revolution. The first industrial revolution was a mechanical revolution. The second and third revolutions were electrical and digital revolutions. This fourth industrial revolution brings together diverse technologies like artificial intelligence, robotics, nanotechnology, and biotechnology. It also includes philosophical ideas like transhumanism.

In previous programs, I have discussed the impact of surveillance on our privacy. We warned about the influence of Big Tech and Big Data. And we have also talked about the merging of humans and machines. Each new technological development brings progress and benefits, but they also bring legitimate concerns about how these technologies can be abused in the wrong hands.

How then will this be accomplished?

Administrative State

It may be difficult to imagine how the great reset programs could be implemented in the US. Only a few members of Congress would support these ideas. As we have discussed above, many of these ideas have been implemented in woke corporations. But these programs could also be implemented by the administrative state or what some have called “the deep state.”

Two books document the deep state. Michael Glennon (Tufts University law professor) wrote about *National Security and Double Government*.{6} This dual-state system, he explained, began under President Bush but was continued under President Obama.

Mike Lofgren (former congressional aide) wrote about *The Deep State: The Fall of the Constitution and the Rise of a Shadow Government*.{7} He argued that there is "the visible government situated around the Mall in Washington, and then there is another, more shadowy, more indefinable government that is not explained in Civics 101 or observable to tourists at the White House or the Capitol." He explained that it wasn't a "secret, conspiratorial cabal" but rather "the state within a state is hiding mostly in plain sight."

The reason we have an executive bureaucracy is to benefit from the research and experience of public servants who have devoted their lives to understanding the social and political implications of federal policies. This has always been a necessary function, but especially with the last few presidents. The experts in the bureaucracy can provide context and prevent presidents and their cabinets from making huge mistakes.

But there is another side to the federal bureaucracy. We may suppose that bureaucrats are there to implement the policies of the President and administration. Political appointees to the cabinet always say that they "serve at the pleasure of the president."

That may be true for them. But a career civil servant has a different perspective and expects to be in government much longer than the four or eight years a president holds office. We may think of the bureaucracy as like a military unit (where every order is routinely obeyed). But the bureaucracy is often more like a university faculty (where you are part of a team but also have many of your own ideas about what should be done). Often the federal bureaucracy slows down the implementation of the president's policies or even chooses to ignore them.

As I discussed in a previous program on *The Liberal Mind*, even with the best of bureaucrats, the "road to serfdom" can be

paved with good intentions. Fredrick Hayek wrote his book with that title because he was concerned that most government officials and bureaucrats write laws, rules, and regulations with good intention. They desire to make the world a better place and may believe that the best way to achieve that is to implement many of the great reset policies. That is why we need to pay attention to the "deep state" and administration policies.

Biblical Perspective

What is a biblical perspective on the great reset? It would be easy to merely link all these ideas to end-time prophecy. It is easy to see how these emerging technologies and the concept of the "great reset" could be used by the Antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2, Revelation 13). Computer technology and enhanced surveillance would allow this future leader to control the world. But it is important to consider how we should respond in our current world to these proposals.

We are seeing many examples of leftist authoritarianism today and need to be alert and involved. James 4:7 says we have a responsibility to resist evil, and Paul tells us to fight the good fight (2 Timothy 4:7). Jesus teaches that we are to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matthew 5:13-16).

Christians can agree with the goals of addressing economic inequality and the need to care for the environment. We are to defend the poor and oppressed (Psalm 82:3) and to be good stewards of God's creation (Genesis 1:27-28). But we should also be concerned about the authoritarian impulses we see not only in government but in major corporations.

First, we should separate the message from the messenger. The World Economic Forum and its participants are sometimes naıve and they even propose disturbing solutions to very real

problems in our society. We can agree with their attempts to deal with poverty and economic inequality, but we must reject some of the ways in which they want to reset the world and bring about change.

Second, we should apply the Bible and a biblical worldview to each issue. For example, a biblical view of justice usually differs from many of the secular, progressive ways of working for justice that also includes such things as the promotion of sexual and gender identities.

Third, we should apply a biblical perspective to technology. The Bible does not condemn technology but often reminds us that tools and technology can be used for both good and evil. The technology that built the ark (Genesis 6) also was later used to construct the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11). A wise and discerning Christian should evaluate the benefits and drawbacks of each technology.

Christians will need discernment (Proverbs 18:15) in judging the ideas associated with the "great reset." The phrase can mean different things to different people. Many of the ideas associated with it are bad for our country and us. But we can join hands with those who desire to make a better world and want to do it in ways that don't contradict the Bible.

Additional Resources

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The Liberal Mind

Kerby Anderson tries to understand the liberal mind from a biblical perspective. What are the assumptions the liberals make? How do those assumptions square with the Bible?

As we begin this discussion, I want to make a clear distinction between the terms "liberal" and "leftist." We often use the terms interchangeably but there is an important difference.



Dennis Prager wrote about this and even described those differences in a PragerU video.{1} His argument is that traditional liberalism has far more in common with conservatism than it does with leftism. Here are some examples he uses to make his point.

Liberals and leftists have a different view of race. The traditional liberal position on race is that the color of one's skin is insignificant. By contrast, leftists argue that the notion that race is insignificant is itself racist. Liberals were committed to racial integration and would have rejected the idea of separate black dormitories and separate black graduations on university campuses.

Nationalism is another difference. Dennis Prager says that liberals always deeply believed in the nation-state. Leftists, on the other hand, oppose nationalism and promote class solidarity.

Superman comics illustrate the point. When the writers of Superman were liberal, Superman was not only an American but also one who fought for “Truth, justice, and the American way.” The left-wing writers of Superman comics had Superman announce a few years ago that he was going to speak before the United Nations and inform them that he was renouncing his American citizenship.

Perhaps the best example is free speech. American liberals agree with the statement: “I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend your right to say it.” Leftists today are leading a nationwide suppression of free speech everywhere from the college campuses to the Big Tech companies.

Capitalism and the free enterprise system would be yet another example. Dennis Prager says, “Liberals have always been pro capitalism,” though they often wanted government “to play a bigger role” in the economy. Leftists oppose capitalism and are eagerly promoting socialism.

Liberals have had a love of Western civilization and taught it at most universities. They were promoters of the liberal arts and fine arts. In fact, one of the most revered liberals in American history was President Franklin Roosevelt who talked about the need to protect Western Civilization and even Christian civilization.

Today Western Civilization classes are rarely if ever taught in the university. That’s because leftists don’t believe Western Civilization is superior to any other civilization. Leftists label people who attempt to defend western values as racist and accuse them of promoting white supremacy. And attempts to promote religious liberty are dismissed as thinly disguised attacks on the LGBT community.

In conclusion, liberals and leftists are very different.

Ethics and a Belief in Right and Wrong

The philosophical foundation for most liberal perspectives is secularism. If you don't believe in God and the Bible, then you certainly don't believe in biblical absolutes or even moral absolutes. Dostoyevsky put it this way: "If God is dead, then everything is permitted."

Even atheists admit that a view of God affects human behavior. Richard Dawkins recently expressed his fear that the removal of religion would be a bad idea for society because it would give people "license to do really bad things."

He likens the idea of God to surveillance, or as he puts it, the "divine spy camera in the sky."{2} People generally tend to do the right thing when someone is watching them. They tend to do bad things when no one is watching. He goes go on to add that the "Great Spy Camera theory" isn't a good reason for him to believe in God.

It is also worth mentioning that more and more young people aren't making decisions about right and wrong based on logic but instead based on feelings. I began to notice this decades ago. College students making a statement or challenging a conclusion used to say "I think" as they started a sentence." Then I started to see more and more of them say "I feel" at the start of a sentence. They wouldn't use reason to discuss an issue. Instead, they would use emotion and talk about how they felt about a particular issue.

The liberal mind also has a very different foundation for discussing right and wrong. Dennis Prager recently admitted that he had been wrong. All of his life, he has said that the left's moral compass is broken. But he has concluded that "in order to have a broken moral compass, you need to have a moral compass to begin with. But the left doesn't have one."{3}

He doesn't mean that conclusion as an attack. It is merely an

observation that the left doesn’t really think in terms of good and evil. We assume that other people think that way because we think that way. But that is not how most of the people on the left perceive the world.

Karl Marx is a good example. He divided the world by economic class (the worker and the owner). One group was exploiting the other group. Good and evil aren’t really relevant when you are thinking in terms of class struggle. Friedrich Nietzsche, for example, operated “beyond good and evil.”

To the Marxists, “there is no such thing as a universal good or universal evil.” Those of us who perceive the world from a Judeo-Christian worldview see ethics as relevant to the moral standard, not the person or their social status.

A biblical view of ethics and morality begins with the reality that God exists and that He has revealed to us moral principles we are to apply to our lives and society. Those absolute moral principles are tied to God’s character and thus unchanging.

A Naïve View of Human Nature

In this article we are talking about the liberal mind, while often making a distinction between liberals and the left. When it comes to the proper view of human nature, both groups have a naïve and inaccurate view.

You can discover this for yourself by asking a simple question: Do you believe people are basically good? You will get an affirmative answer from most people in America because we live in a civilized society. We don’t have to deal with the level of corruption or terror that is a daily life in so many other countries in the world.

But if you press the question, you will begin to see how liberals have difficulty explaining the holocaust and Muslim

terrorism. Because the liberal mind starts with the assumption that people are basically good. After all, that is what so many secular philosophers and psychologists have been saying for centuries. Two world wars and other wars during the 20th century should have caused most people to reject the idea that people are basically good.

The Bible teaches just the opposite. Romans 3:23 reminds us that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?" This statement about the deceitfulness of our heart may seem extreme until we realize that Jesus also taught that "out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander" (Matthew 15:19).

This naïve view of human nature should concern all of us. Young people, two generations after Auschwitz, believe people are basically good. One reason is biblical illiteracy. Another reason is historical illiteracy. A recent survey found two thirds of young people did not know six million died in the Holocaust and nearly half could not name one of the Nazi death camps.{4}

This naïve view of human nature may also explain another phenomenon we have discussed before. One of the untruths described in the book, *The Coddling of the American Mind*, is the belief that the battle for truth is "us versus them."{5} If you think that people are basically good and you have to confront someone who disagrees with you, then they must be a bad person. They aren't just wrong. They are evil.

Tribalism has been with us for centuries. That is nothing new about people joining and defending a tribe. But that has become more intense because of the rhetoric on university campuses and the comments spreading through social media. We don't have to live this way, but the forces in society are making the divisions in society worse by the day.

A biblical perspective starts with the teaching that all are created in God's image (Genesis 1:27) and thus have value and dignity. But all of us have a sin nature (Romans 5:12). We should interact with others who disagree with us with humility (Ephesians 4:2) and grace (Colossians 4:6).

Big Government

We will now look at why liberals and the left promote big government. The simple answer relates to our discussion above about human nature. If you believe that people are basically good, then it is easy to assume that political leaders and bureaucrats will want to do the best for the citizens.

Christians agree that government is necessary and that it is one of the institutions ordained by God (Romans 13:1-7). There is a role for government to set the rules of governing and to resolve internal disputes through a legal system. Government is not God. But for people who don't believe in God, then the state often becomes God.

Friedrich Hayek wrote about this drive toward big government and the bureaucratic state in his classic book, *The Road to Serfdom*. He argued in his book that "the most important change which extensive government control produces is a psychological change, an alteration in the character of the people."{6}

The character of citizens is changed because they yield their will and decision-making to a more powerful government. They may have done so willingly in order to have a welfare state. Or they may have done so unwillingly because a dictator has taken control of the reins of power. Either way, Hayek argues, their character has been altered because the control over every detail of economic life is ultimately control of life itself.

Friedrich Hayek wrote *The Road to Serfdom* to warn us that sometimes the road can be paved with good intentions. Most

government officials and bureaucrats write laws, rules, and regulations with every good intention. They desire to make the world a better place by preventing catastrophe and by encouraging positive actions from their citizens. But in their desire to control and direct every aspect of life, they take us down the road to serfdom.

He argued that people who enter into government and run powerful bureaucracies are often people who enjoy running not only the bureaucracy but also the lives of its citizens. In making uniform rules from a distance, they deprive the local communities of the freedom to apply their own knowledge and wisdom to their unique situations. A government seeking to be a benevolent god, usually morphs into a malevolent tyrant.

The liberal mind is all too willing to allow political leaders and bureaucrats to make decisions for the public. But that willingness is based on two flawed assumptions. First, human beings are not God and thus government leaders will certainly make flawed decisions that negatively affect the affairs of its citizens. Second, liberals do not believe we have a sin nature (Romans 3:23), and that includes government leaders. Even the best of them will not always be wise, compassionate, and altruistic. This is why the founders of this country established checks and balances in government to limit the impact of sinful behavior.

Tolerance?

If there is one attitude that you would think would be synonymous with the liberal mind, it would be tolerance. That may have been true in the past. Liberalism championed the idea of free thought and free speech. That is no longer the case.

Liberals have been developing a zero-tolerance culture. In some ways, that has been a positive change. We no longer tolerate racism. We no longer tolerate sexism. Certain

statements, certain jokes, and certain attitudes have been deemed off-limits.

The problem is that the politically correct culture of the left moved the lines quickly to begin to attack just about any view or value contrary to the liberal mind. Stray at all from the accepted limits of leftist thinking and you will earn labels like racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic.

Quickly the zero-tolerance culture became the cancel culture. It is not enough to merely label an opponent with a smear, the left demands that an "enemy" lose their social standing and even their job and livelihood for deviating from what is acceptable thought. A mendacious social media mob will make sure that you pay a heavy penalty for contradicting the fundamental truths of the liberal mind.

One phenomenon that promotes this intolerance is the use of smears and negative labels. For example, patriotism and pride in your country is called xenophobia. Acknowledging the innate differences between males and females is labelled sexist. Promoting the idea that we are all of one race (the human race) and that all lives matter is called racist. Questioning whether we should redefine traditional marriage is deemed homophobic. Arguing that very young children should not undergo sex assignment surgery is called transphobia. Pointing out that most terrorist attacks come from Muslim terrorists is labelled Islamophobic.

Should Christians be tolerant? The answer is yes, we should be tolerant, but that word has been redefined in society to argue that we should accept every person's behavior. The Bible does not permit that. That is why I like to use the word civility. Essentially, that is the Golden Rule: "Do to others whatever you would have them do to you" (Matthew 7:12).

Civility requires humility. A civil person acknowledges that he or she does not possess all wisdom and knowledge. That

means we should listen to others and consider the possibility that they might be right, and we could be wrong. Philippians 2:3 says, “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself.” We can disagree with other without being disagreeable. Proverbs 15:1 reminds us that “A gentle answer turns away wrath.”

This is an important principle as we try to understand the liberal mind and work to build bridges to others in our society.

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Biblical Archaeology

Kerby Anderson provides an update on recent archaeological finds that corroborate the historicity of the Bible.

One of the most important proofs for the historical accuracy of the Bible can be found in archaeology. Ancient history and archaeology should confirm the accuracy of this record. That is what we find when comparing these finds with the written record of Scripture.



My focus will be to summarize a few of the past archaeological finds that confirm the Bible and then provide an update on some of the newest archaeological discoveries made in just the last few years that are very significant. On the Probe website, we have an excellent summary done twenty years ago of archaeology and the Old Testament (probe.org/archaeology-and-the-old-testament/) and archaeology and the New Testament (probe.org/archaeology-and-the-new-testament/).

Archaeology not only has confirmed the historical record found in the Bible, but it also provides additional details not found in the original writings of the biblical authors. Archaeology also helps explain Bible passages by providing context of the surrounding culture as well as the social and political circumstances.

We must also admit the limitations of archaeology. Although these archaeological finds can establish the historical accuracy of the record, they cannot prove the divine inspiration of the Bible. Also, we must admit that even when

we have an archaeological find, it still must be interpreted. Those interpretations are obviously affected by the worldview perspective and even bias of the historians and archaeologists.

Even granting the skeptical bias that can be found in this field, it is still amazing that many archaeologists acknowledge the biblical confirmation that has come from significant archaeological finds.

Dr. William Albright observed, “There can be no doubt that archaeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of Old Testament tradition.”{1}

Archaeologist Nelson Glueck and president of Hebrew Union College concluded, “It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a Biblical reference. Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or exact detail historical statements in the Bible. And, by the same token, proper evaluation of Biblical description has often led to amazing discoveries.”{2}

Millar Burrows, Professor of Archaeology at Yale University, remarked that “On the whole, however, archaeological work has unquestionably strengthened confidence in the reliability of the Scriptural record. More than one archaeologist has found his respect for the Bible increased by the experience of excavation in Palestine.”{3}

Old Testament Archaeology

There are so many significant archaeological finds that confirm the historical accuracy of the Old Testament. Perhaps the most famous and most significant find is the Dead Sea scrolls. A young shepherd boy found the first of them in a cave in 1947. Eventually over 800 fragments were found. This includes a complete scroll of the book of Isaiah.

Many of these scrolls are from before the time of Jesus Christ. That is important because it provided a way to check the accuracy of the transmission of the Old Testament. The earliest copies of the Old Testament that we had before this discovery were a thousand years later. When we compare the Dead Sea scrolls to these later manuscripts, we can see that there were very few variations (mostly due to changes in spelling or grammar). The transmission through the scribe was very accurate.

Another significant find was archaeological documentation of King David. Archaeologists working at one site uncovered an inscription that means “house of David” that dates to the ninth century BC.

Another important archaeological find was the Hittite nation. The Hittites are mentioned nearly 50 times in the Old Testament, but there was no solid archaeological evidence they existed until the 20th century. Some argued that the Bible must be wrong since it mentions this nation but archaeological evidence was lacking.

The Hittites were a major force against the Jews. Israel needed to conquer them in order to enter the Promised Land (Joshua 11:3-4). King David had Uriah the Hittite killed because of his adultery with his wife, Bathsheba (2 Kings 11:3-21). Fortunately, archaeologists did uncover abundant evidence of the Hittites in Turkey. They found a temple, sculptures, a storeroom with 10,000 clay tablets. Later they even uncovered the Hittite capital city of Hattusha.

Archaeologists with the Israel Antiquities Authority digging at Tel Lachish found an ancient toilet that confirms Old Testament history. To understand its significance, we need to look at the record of King Hezekiah. We read in 2 Kings that he removed the Asherah poles from the high places and smashed the sacred stones that were used in the Canaanite cultic worship.

Archaeologists discovered large rooms that appear to be a shrine where four-horned altars were destroyed. They also found a seat carved in stone with the hole in it that was used as a toilet. It was mostly likely placed there as a form of desecration for the whole room.{4} This correlates with the biblical description in 2 Kings 10:27 that Jehu and his followers "demolished the pillar of Baal, and demolished the house of Baal, and made it a latrine to this day."

New Testament Archaeology

Jesus spent much of his time in Capernaum by the Sea of Galilee. It is mentioned 16 times in the New Testament. Archaeologists have uncovered evidence of the fishing industry there (anchors, fishhooks), which would have been used by many of the disciples. The houses were one-story buildings, with roofs of wooden beams or branches. This explains how men carried a man to the roof and let him down in front of Jesus (Mark 2:1-4). Jesus taught in the synagogue in Capernaum (Mark 1:21-22, Luke 4:31-36). The remains of a synagogue built in the 4th century sits atop the black basalt foundations of this synagogue that existed at the time of Jesus.

In Jerusalem are many archaeological discoveries from the time of Jesus. That includes the remains of the temple as well as the pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-15) and the pool of Siloam (John 9:1-7).

Archaeology (as well as history) verifies the existence of many political leaders mentioned in the New Testament. A Denarius coin shows a portrait of Tiberius Caesar. This is also significant because Jesus asked the people whose likeness was on the coin (Mark 12:17). The name Pontius Pilate was found in an inscription at Caesarea Maritima.

Sometimes archaeology can shed light on what seems like a sharp disagreement in the Bible. In Paul's letter to the

Galatians, he recounts what he said to Peter who stopped eating meals with gentile Christians. He argued that Peter lived like a Gentile even though he was a Jew.

The answer lies in the fact that Paul was a devout Pharisee, who took kosher food laws and purity very seriously. Peter, though Jewish, was not a Pharisee and grew up in Bethsaida on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. Archaeological excavations uncovered some non-kosher evidence. Some were eating wild boar and catfish, which were considered unclean and not to be eaten by Jew following the Torah.{5}

Archaeological finds at Corinth include the city's *bema* seat, where Paul stood trial (Acts 18:12-17) and an inscription with the name Erastus, a city administrator who was an associate of Paul (Acts 19:22; 2 Timothy 4:20; Romans 16:23).

Critics have challenged the historical record of Luke because of alleged inaccuracies. Classical scholar Colin Hemer documents that Luke is a very accurate historian.{6} He identifies 84 facts in the Book of Acts that have been confirmed by historical and archaeological research. This includes nautical details, names of gods, designation of magistrates, and proper names and titles.

These are just a few of the archaeological discoveries in the past that have confirmed the Old Testament and the New Testament. In the next section we will look at some of the most recent archaeological discoveries.

Recent Archaeological Discoveries

Within the last few years, there have been major archaeological discoveries that further confirm biblical history. An article in *Christianity Today* provides a list of the top ten archaeological discoveries.{7} Here are just a few of these important discoveries.

The Israel Antiquities Authority announced the discovery of a limestone column on which the world “Jerusalem” was spelled out in Aramaic. This is the oldest inscription of this nature found so far. You might expect that there would be lots of such inscriptions, but that turn out to be very rare.

The inscription was found in an ancient potter’s village that must have served pilgrims making their way to the Temple in Jerusalem. A potter’s field calls to mind the one bought by the priests (Matthew 27:7) with the money Judas returned.

The Jewish tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant were located for a time in Shiloh. Excavation there produced a clay pomegranate. In the Bible, the pomegranate was a common temple decoration (1 Kings 7:18; 2 Kings 25:17). Small pomegranates embroidered with blue, purple, and scarlet yarns hung from the hems of the priestly robes (Exodus 28:33). This discovery affirms the sacredness of Shiloh.

Scientists and archaeologists believe they made have found the site of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. They found evidence that a “high-heat” explosive event north of the Dead Sea wiped out all civilization in the affected area. It killed all the people within a 25-kilometer circular area. The fertile soil would have been stripped of nutrients by the high heat. Waves of briny salt would have washed over the surrounding area and spread through hot winds.

The scientists suggest that a cosmic airburst event from a meteor was the reason for the disappearance from the site. It apparently took 600 years for the region to recover before it could once again be inhabited. This fits with the description in Genesis 19, which says that burning sulfur rained down on Sodom and Gomorrah and killed all the people and all the vegetation of the land.

Archaeologist Dr. Stephen Collins says that there was a violent conflagration that ended occupation at the site. There

is “melted pottery, scorched foundation stones, and several feet of ash and destruction debris churned into a dark gray matrix as if in a Cuisinart.” He and another author in a joint paper conclude that all of this provides “signs of a highly destructive and thermal event that one might expect from what is described in Genesis 19.”{8}

Recent Archaeological Discoveries

Above we looked at a few of the most recent archaeological discoveries that confirm the historical accuracy of the Bible. Most of them were found in an article in *Christianity Today*. Here are a few more significant discoveries.

An inscribed piece of limestone discovered in a tomb along the west bank of the Nile was revealed to be a Semitic abecedary (alphabet in ABC order). It dates back to the time of Moses and fits with the statement that “Moses wrote down everything the Lord had said” (Exodus 24:4). It turns out he wasn’t the only one writing in a Semitic script in Egypt at that time.

When ISIS terrorists captured Mosul, they blew up the tomb of the prophet Jonah. This uncovered the remains of a palace of the Assyrian King Esarhaddon. Previous archaeological teams stopped digging in certain sites in Iraq for fear of destroying them. That was a case of the traditional tomb of Jonah, until ISIS started digging beneath it to find artifacts to sell. As one article put it, “ISIS Accidentally Corroborates the Bible.”{9} The tunnels they dug revealed a previously untouched Assyrian palace in the ancient city of Ninevah. Inscriptions found in the old city of Nineveh give an order of Assyrian kings that matches perfectly with the biblical order.

Extra careful processing of dirt from an archaeological dig in the southwest corner of the Temple Mount provided a *beka* weight. This was used (Exodus 38:6) to measure the silver in

the half-shekel temple tax that was collected from each member of the Jewish community.

Another seal impression seems to be (a letter is missing) the name “Isaiah the prophet.” It was found near the Temple Mount near another seal impression that says “King Hezekiah of Judah” that was uncovered two years earlier. Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah are mentioned in the same verse 17 times. This clay seal gives the impression that Isaiah had access to the king’s palace as his adviser.

A ring with the name “Pontius Pilate” on it was excavated decades ago but only could be read recently due to advanced photographic techniques. Of course, this is not the first time that his name has surfaced in archaeology, but it is still a significant find. The ring is not fancy enough to have been worn by Pilate. It was probably worn by someone authorized to act on his authority and would use it to seal official communications.

This is an exciting time for archaeological investigation. New finds provide even more evidence of the historical accuracy of the Old Testament and the New Testament. Archaeology has provided abundant confirmation of the Bible.

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Gender Medicine Policies

Kerby Anderson reveals some of the dirty secrets in true-gender-denying treatments of trans-identifying children and teens.

If you have been listening to my commentaries for any amount of time, you are aware of the significant concerns over the way transgenderism has been promoted by physicians, hospitals, and the government. So, it's not surprising that the federal government issued a report critical of some of the practices with this title: "Wolves in White Coats: How Doctors and Hospitals Pushed and Profited from the Fraud of Gender Medicine."

Most government reports usually have a title that is ambiguous and benign. When I interviewed one of the authors of the report on my radio program, I began with a discussion of the title. The title was a warning to the reader that they were going to learn about the many fraudulent practices implemented by physicians and hospitals.

One example is the deceptive use of diagnostic coding for

reimbursement. They would use medical codes like “endocrine disorder” or “precocious puberty” to mask what they were doing to young people and get payment for gender transitions. Once patients underwent such transitions, they represented “lifelong revenue streams” for these groups.

Another part of the 64-page report is the section which provides “first-hand accounts from patients and parents” who were subjected to this “gender medicine.” This provides a human face to procedures that were promoted by much of the medical establishment along with federal acceptance from the Biden Administration.

During the radio interview, we also mentioned the Cass Report out of the UK from Dr. Hillary Cass that two years ago raised significant concerns about gender identity services for children and young people in the National Health Service. These two reports show that sanity and common sense are finally returning to this issue. I’m Kerby Anderson, and that’s my point of view.

www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/hhs-wolves-in-white-coats.pdf

This blog post originally appeared at

https://pointofview.net/viewpoints/gender-medicine-policies/
on Aug. 31, 2026.

Socialist Surge

Kerby Anderson exposes the faulty thinking behind the pro-socialism messaging that is making alarming inroads in the U.S.



News articles proclaim, “socialism is on the march.” The writers focus on the several Democratic Socialist candidates who are winning Democratic primaries. We already have socialist mayors in New York City and Seattle, Washington. Soon, we will have one in Washington, D.C.

American voters seem to be changing their minds about socialism. A 1942 Roper/Fortune survey found that 40 percent described socialism as a bad thing and 25 percent a good thing. The latest Gallup poll found that 43 percent of Americans believe socialism would be a good thing.{1} Also, two thirds (62%) of adults under 30 had a favorable view of socialism. For many young people, the term is associated with social safety nets and healthcare access rather than government control of the means of production.

Why the Interest in Socialism?

Socialist candidates have run for office in the past and rarely won. Why are these candidates winning in these midterm elections? Jim Geraghty has a suggestion that comes from a book he was reading by Mark Manson.{2}

The book talked about the strategy used by perennial presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche. His youth movement attracted many disaffected and agitated college students. Their tactic was simple. Tell these young people that the problems they faced weren’t due to their parents or even the government. They explained that “it’s the system’s fault.” If they could just overthrow the system, everything would be okay. “No more war. No more suffering, No more injustice.”

Does this sound like what we are hearing from these candidates and the young people voting for them? Your problems are the fault of “the system.” This movement of young people are yearning for a vision of a better future. They want control

over their lives but have been told that you need to overthrow "the system" to usher in utopia.

Of course, the system they want to overthrow is our constitutional republic and our free market economy. Granted, there are political and economic changes that need to be made, but overthrowing the current system for a socialist fantasy isn't the answer. It will make their problems worse, not better.

Any student of history should be able to see that defunding the police, opening the border, abolishing jails and prisons, and having government take over the means of production will be a disaster. Unfortunately, too many young people haven't studied history and have been seduced by the siren song of socialism.

In this article we look at the sad history of socialism, its failed economic claims, and even the question of whether the Bible teaches socialism.

Socialism and Tyranny

Socialism is more than an economic theory. Socialism is an all-encompassing view of the world. In his acceptance speech, Zohran Mamdani proclaimed, "We will prove that there is no problem too large for government to solve, and no concern too small for it to care about." One historian compared it to the famous statement by Benito Mussolini: "All within the state, nothing outside the state, nothing against the state."

Socialism is based on Marxist principles. The first is the abolition of private property. This is one of the foundational tenets of the *Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx: "The theory of Communism may be summed up in one sentence: Abolish all private property." Many candidates state matter-of-factly that one of their goals is to "seize the means of production" in America.

The second principle is the end of religion. Karl Marx explained, “My object is to dethrone God and destroy capitalism.” He added, “The first requisite for the happiness of the people is the abolition of religion.” And a third is taxation. Karl Marx wrote, “A heavy or progressive or graduated income tax is necessary for the proper development of Communism.” Every socialist candidate proclaims they will raise taxes on the rich. They will have to levy very heavy taxes on everyone to pay for all the promises made in their campaigns.

Ben Shapiro warns, “Socialism is bad because socialism is tyranny. It’s not an aspect of tyranny. Socialism itself is tyranny.” As one commentator put it, “Socialism is based on oppression. Oppression is not a bug of socialism. It’s a feature.”{3}

This can best be illustrated by the list Dinesh D’Souza details in his book about the many countries have tried socialism and all failed.{4} The first socialist experiment was the Soviet Union, then came lots of countries in eastern Europe (Poland, Yugoslavia, Albania, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, and East Germany). Add to that, countries in Asia (Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, -North Korea, and China) and countries in South America (Cuba, Nicaragua, Bolivia, and Venezuela) and Africa (Angola, Ghana, Tanzania, Benin, Mali, Mozambique, Zambia, and Zimbabwe). By his count, there are 25 failed experiments in socialism.

Many years ago, I did a week of Probe radio programs on Friedrich Hayek’s book *The Road to Serfdom*.{5} It is perhaps the best critique of socialism that very few have read. As the title of his book implies, the road to socialism may have good intentions, but it always leads to serfdom and tyranny.

Failed Economic Claims of Socialists

Margaret Thatcher famously observed, “The problem with socialism is that you eventually run out of other people’s money.” Democratic socialists are already running out of other people’s money. They make economic claims that fall apart when given scrutiny. Here are just a few of the failing claims of politicians who propose socialist solutions to significant social and economic problems.

First, the economy is not a fixed pie. In a recent podcast, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez claimed, “Capitalism . . . is the absolute pursuit of profit at all human, environmental and social cost. That is not a redeemable system.” She added that, “No one ever makes a billion dollars. You take a billion.” In other words, there is a fixed supply of wealth. If you have more wealth, you are taking it from others.

One YouTube channel (Secular Talk) developed AOC’s argument by saying that Jeff Bezos “made his wealth by making a lot of people poor.” He argues that “because we have a finite amount of money.” We do not have a finite amount of money. We do not have a finite amount of wealth. Entrepreneurs increase the amount of wealth by producing products and services that increase wealth in a society. Moreover, this wealth and value are increased by voluntary interaction in a free market.

Second, Sweden is not a model for socialism. Above, we listed the 25 failed experiments in socialism. The typical response from socialists is that these economic disasters were not implemented correctly. If you ask them about Cuba or Venezuela, they will instead point to democratic socialism in Sweden or other similar countries.

In a short video, Anders Hagstrom points out that the policies that Bernie Sanders and AOC want go far beyond what you find in the Nordic countries.{6} Moreover, these countries have tiny populations of less than 10 million. In the past, they

were successful and then had huge economic problems because they adopted socialist redistributive policies.

Now Sweden has come back to a free market. Sweden's market-oriented reforms have transformed it into an investment hub. The wealthy are flocking back to Sweden, and they're taking their capital with them. Swedish per capita GDP is the envy of the European Union, and the country has become a hub of tech and telecom innovation. One commentator concluded, "The Democratic Socialists Need a New Model."{7}

Does the Bible Teach Socialism?

Progressive and socialist candidates argue that the Bible teaches socialism. Some even argue that Jesus was a socialist. That is not surprising since many people "want Jesus on their team." Environmentalists argue that Jesus wouldn't drive an SUV. Gay activists maintain that Jesus said nothing about homosexuality. What does the Bible say?

If you have ever taught through the book of Acts, you know the question of socialism will likely surface. In Acts 4, we find a statement that the believers in Jerusalem "had all things in common." It also says that those who possessed land or houses sold them and brought the proceeds to the apostles' feet. They distributed these gifts to anyone in need. This looks like socialism to many who are already predisposed to believe it should be the economic system of choice.

First, we need to realize that this practice was only done in Jerusalem. As you read through the rest of the book of Acts and read the letters of Paul and Peter, you see that most believers in other parts of the Roman world had private property and possessions. Paul calls upon them to give voluntarily to the work of ministry.

Second, the word voluntary applies not only to Christians in other parts of the world, but it also was a voluntary act by

the believers in Jerusalem to give sacrificially to each other in the midst of persecution. This one passage in the book of Acts is not a mandate for socialism.

If you keep reading in the book of Acts, you can also see that the believers in Jerusalem owned the property before they voluntarily gave the proceeds to the apostles. The next chapter (Acts 5) clearly teaches that. When Peter confronted Ananias, he clearly stated that "While it remained, was it not your own? After it was sold, was it not in your own control?"

Owning property contradicts one of the fundamental principles of socialism. In the Communist Manifesto, "the abolition of property" is a major item in the plan for moving from capitalism to socialism and eventually to communism.

By contrast, the Ten Commandments assume private property. The eighth commandment forbidding stealing and the tenth commandment about coveting both assume that people have private property rights.

In fact, we can use biblical principles to evaluate economic systems like capitalism and socialism. Although the Bible does not endorse a particular system, it does have key principles about human nature, private property rights, and the role of government. These can be used to evaluate economic systems.

Socialism Is Not Biblical

Although the Bible doesn't endorse any economic systems, it does provide us with principles to judge economic systems. For example, the Bible clearly teaches that we are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27-28) and are made a little lower than the angels (Psalm 8:5). We can find noble characteristics in human beings such as empathy and altruism. We can make rational choices about goods and services in an economy.

But we also know that there is a flaw in human beings. The

Bible teaches that all are sinful (Romans 3:23) and that the heart of man is deceitful above all things (Jeremiah 17:9). People can be greedy and ambitious. We need an economic system that protects us from anyone who might have too much power. In my Probe radio program on capitalism and socialism, I document that a free market is a system in which "bad people can do least harm, and good people have the freedom to do good works."{8}

Socialism also derives its philosophical foundation from Marxism. That philosophy is a direct attack on private property rights. God has given us dominion over the creation (Genesis 1:28). In the Old Testament, we see the book of Exodus establishing the rights of property owners. In fact, removing landmarks that protect property is clearly forbidden (Deuteronomy 19:14; 27:17, Proverbs 22:28).

Government should protect citizens and their rights in society. We are to obey government (Romans 13:1-7) and submit to civil authority (1 Peter 2:13-17). But we should not implement a government and economic structure that fails to protect those rights from leaders with an authoritarian impulse.

How to Respond

As we have mentioned, many young people are enamored with socialism. How can we respond? I would recommend you ask young people how much they like having other people telling them what to do. In a socialist economy, the leaders are constantly telling you and the economy what to do. Usually, they have never thought about how oppressive a socialist economy might be.

You might also ask them how effective committees are in planning. A small group of bureaucrats would be making most of their economic decisions. Ask them if they have ever tried to get anything done with a committee. Now expand that to the

millions of economic decisions that committee of bureaucrats needs to make.

And you might ask them to do the math. It is easy to argue for free college tuition when you aren't paying for it. It is easy to let the government pay for everything until you realize you are the government.

If you would like more information, please check these additional articles on socialism and capitalism:

- A Biblical Point of View on Socialism
- Capitalism and Socialism
- Socialism and Society
- Poverty and Wealth
- Can the Just Succeed?
- Wealth and Poverty

Notes

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6. Anders Hagstrom, "When you are forced to argue socialism with a liberal," www.facebook.com/watch/?v=234493017230024.
7. Noah Rothman, Democratic Socialists Need a New Model," www.nationalreview.com/corner/the-democratic-socialists-need-a-new-model/

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A Biblical Point of View on Socialism – Kerby Anderson Booklet



Socialism is more popular today than anyone would have predicted a few years ago. A significant number of socialist characters can be found in Congress. Universities have many professors who are promoting socialism. And more young people

than ever believe socialism is superior to capitalism.

The Promise of Socialism

Why is socialism so appealing to so many Americans? Young people are drawn to the siren song of Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. Part of the reason is that it appeals to their sense of
fairness. Another reason is that it promises lots of free stuff. Before we address those issues, it's worth mentioning why socialism and communism appealed to so many in the 19th century.

When Karl Marx first proposed the concepts of socialism and communism, he enjoyed an intellectual advantage. He could talk about the problems with capitalism the modern world was going through as they were adapting to the difficult process of industrialization. He could contrast the reality of capitalism with the utopian ideal of socialism.

Utopian visions will always win out over the harsh reality of the world. But we now have the terrible record of socialism. Unfortunately, socialism's death toll never quite gets factored into any equation. The late columnist Joseph Sobran said, "It makes no difference that socialism's actual record is terribly bloody; socialism is forever judged by its promises and supposed possibilities, while capitalism is judged by its worst cases."{1}

Dinesh D'Souza reminds us that many countries have tried socialism and all failed. The first socialist experiment was the Soviet Union, then came lots of countries in eastern Europe (Poland, Yugoslavia, Albania, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, and East Germany). Add to that countries in Asia (Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, North Korea, and China) and countries in South America (Cuba, Nicaragua, Bolivia, and Venezuela) and Africa (Angola, Ghana, Tanzania, Benin, Mali, Mozambique, Zambia, and Zimbabwe). By his count, there are 25

failed experiments in socialism.{2}

The typical answer to these failures is that each of these wasn't done correctly. The failure of these socialist experiments was a failure of implementation. But this time, they say, we will get it right. Believing in socialism apparently means never having to say you're sorry.

On the other side are all the promises of socialism that are so appealing to young people. Free college tuition and student loan forgiveness are examples. The millennial generation (Generation Y) and the iGen generation (Generation Z) have lots of student debt. They see the need but forget that someone would have to pay for this new massive entitlement. And they rarely stop and think about why someone who didn't go to college and took a blue-collar job should pay for their university education. These may be the most educated generations in history, but they don't seem to spend too much time reflecting on what they supposedly learned in economics.

The cost of some of these policies is enormous. Just covering the cost of tuition at public colleges and universities is estimated at $70 billion a year. One study of the cost of government-run health care (called "Medicare for All") was estimated to cost $32 trillion during the first ten years. Some estimate the cost of the "Green New Deal" to be $93 trillion. We can certainly debate how accurate some of those estimates are, but we can't ignore that these programs would be very expensive once implemented.

A Different Kind of Socialism

Proponents of socialism not only argue that it was not implemented correctly in the past but also argue that what they are proposing is "democratic socialism." They usually point to the Scandinavian countries as examples.

In one of his videos, Anders Hagstrom asks, "What does

socialism mean to him?" He says that conversations about socialism often go like this: "A liberal says we should be socialist. A conservative points to Venezuela, and says socialism doesn't work. A liberal says, What about Sweden and Norway? The conservative then points out that those countries aren't actually socialist."{3}

He says that even if we accept the comment by liberals, there is a problem. "Nordic countries have tiny populations of less than 10 million. And copying and pasting their policies to a country of 330 million isn't going to work." These Nordic countries were successful before they adopted the redistributive policies they have now. Here's a reality check: if Sweden were to join the US as a state, Sweden would be poorer than all but 12 states.

Hagstrom also explains that the policies of true socialists like Senator Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez go far beyond what the Nordic countries have. For example, Bernie Sanders wants a planned economy. None of the Nordic states have this. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez wants to abolish profit. None of the Nordic countries have done that. And both of them want a universal minimum wage.

None of the Nordic states have that.

There's another problem with the argument. These countries aren't socialist. John Stossel, in one of his videos, interviewed a prominent Swedish historian.{4} Johan Norberg makes it clear that "Sweden is not socialist—because the government doesn't own the means of production. To see that, you have to go to Venezuela or Cuba or North Korea." He does admit that the country did have something that resembled socialism a few decades ago. The government heavily taxed the citizens and spent heavily. That was not a good period in Swedish history, especially for the economy.

One example he uses is Astrid Lindgren, author of the popular

children's books, *Pippi Longstocking*. Because her books were popular and sold well, she experienced something Americans cannot even imagine. She had to pay a tax of 102 percent on any new book she sold.

Yet even with the high Swedish taxes, there was simply not enough money to fund Sweden's huge welfare state. Norberg explains that "People couldn't get the pension that they thought they depended on for the future." At this point, the Swedish people had enough and began to reduce the size and scope of the government.

John Stossel says, "They cut public spending, privatized the national rail network, abolished certain government monopolies, eliminated inheritance taxes and sold state-owned businesses like the maker of Absolut Vodka." While it is true that Sweden does have a larger welfare state than the US and higher taxes than the US, there are many other areas where Sweden is actually more free market.

Nevertheless, the argument persists that these Scandinavian countries demonstrate the success of socialism. That is one reason why Dinesh D'Souza dedicated an entire chapter in his book on the subject of socialist experiments, Venezuela, and the Scandinavian illusion, in order to answer the arguments and rebuttals used to advance the idea of democratic socialism.{5}

Doesn't the Bible Teach Socialism?

If you have ever been teaching through the book of Acts, you know when this question will surface. In Acts 4, we find a statement that the believers in Jerusalem "had all things in common." It also says that those who possessed land or houses sold them and brought the proceeds to the apostles' feet. They distributed these gifts to anyone in need. This looks like socialism to many who are already predisposed to believe it should be the economic system of choice.

First, we need to realize that this practice was only done in Jerusalem. As you read through the rest of the book of Acts and read the letters of Paul and Peter, you see that most believers in other parts of the Roman world had private property and possessions. Paul calls upon them to give voluntarily to the work of ministry.

Second, the word voluntary applies not only to Christians in other parts of the world, but it also was a voluntary act by the believers in Jerusalem to give sacrificially to each other in the midst of persecution. This one passage in the book of Acts is not a mandate for socialism.

If you keep reading in the book of Acts, you can also see that the believers in Jerusalem owned the property before they voluntarily gave the proceeds to the apostles. The next chapter (Acts 5) clearly teaches that. When Peter confronted Ananias, he clearly stated that “While it remained, was it not your own? After it was sold, was it not in your own control?”

Owning property contradicts one of the fundamental principles of socialism. In the Communist Manifesto, “the abolition of property” is a major item in the plan for moving from capitalism to socialism and eventually to communism.

By contrast, the Ten Commandments assume private property. The eighth commandment forbidding stealing and the tenth commandment about coveting both assume that people have private property rights.

In fact, we can use biblical principles to evaluate economic systems like capitalism and socialism. Although the Bible does not endorse a particular system, it does have key principles about human nature, private property rights, and the role of government. These can be used to evaluate economic systems.

Socialism and Equality

One of the moral arguments for socialism is that it creates a society with more social and economic equality. Proponents want us to consider the fairness argument when applied to a free market. How fair is it that basketball star Lebron James makes more than $37 million when a social worker starting out only makes about $30,000? Even more extreme is the estimate that Jeff Bezos makes more than $320 million a day while the average Amazon salary is around $35,000 a year.

Of course, this is what happens in a free society where people with different skills, different abilities, and different motivations are allowed to participate in a free market. You will get inequality, but you also have a free society where people can use their gifts to pursue their calling and still receive a good income.

We don't have to guess what will happen in a socialist economy because we have lots of historical examples. In a desire to bring equality, socialism doesn't bring people up out of poverty. Instead, it
drives them into poverty. Consider two test cases (Germany and Korea).

After World War II, Germany was divided into two countries: West Germany was capitalist, while East Germany was socialist. Throughout the time they were divided, there was a striking difference between the two countries. When the two countries were reunified, the GDP of East Germany was a third of the GDP of West Germany. In fact, even the poorest parts of West Germany (Schleswig-Holstein) were more than twice as wealthy as the richest region of East Germany (Saxony).

An even better example is North and South Korea, because it has lasted longer and continues to this day. South Korea is now more than 20 times richer than North Korea. Of course, people in South Korea are also freer than North Korea. They

are also taller and live about 12 years longer than people in North Korea.{6}

By contrast, capitalism provides every person a chance to influence the society. In his book, *United States of Socialism*, Dinesh D'Souza doesn't ignore the issue of justice but actually embraces it. Capitalism, he says, "far more than socialism, reflects the will of the people and expresses democratic consent." A consumer is like a voter. As a citizen, we get to vote in an election every two to four years. But a consumer gets to vote every day with his or her dollar bills. That money represents the time and effort put in to get those dollar bills.

Citizens participate in a system of representative democracy (where their views are filtered through politicians who represent them). But a consumer votes in a system of direct democracy. You can choose Coke or New Coke or Pepsi or Dr. Pepper. You choose Fox over MSNBC and prefer an iPhone to another cell phone. You exercise your preferences by paying for it yourself.

The free market provides you a level of popular participation and democratic consent that politics can never provide. You get to vote every day with your dollars and send economic signals to people and companies providing goods and services. Essentially, capitalism, like democracy, is a clear form of social justice.

These are just a few arguments used to promote socialism. If we are to win the war of ideas, we need to understand how to respond to these arguments and make a convincing case for the free market. This booklet, and the previous one on *A Biblical View on Capitalism and Socialism*, are resources to use in that battle over these economic ideas.

Additional Resources

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Worldviews Through History – Compared to a Christian View

Kerby Anderson provides a summary of how mankind has viewed the world from the Romans until today. This summary provides us a perspective against which to compare and contrast a Christian, biblical worldview based on New Testament principles.

Roman Worldview

On the Probe Web site we often talk about worldviews. I want to explain how the worldviews we talk about developed through history. We will be using as our foundation an excellent book written by Professor Glenn Sunshine whom I have met and also had the privilege of interviewing. His book is *Why You Think the Way You Do: The Story of Western Worldviews from Rome to Home.*{1}



Glenn Sunshine is a member of the church that Jonathan Edwards attended when he was at Yale. Professor Sunshine gave a lecture about Jonathan Edward's worldview at a conference they held, and Chuck Colson invited him to teach with the Centurions program. He gave a talk about "How We Got Here" and then later turned it into *Why You Think the Way You Do*.

Since we will be talking about worldview, it would be good to begin with Glenn Sunshine's definition. "A worldview is the framework you use to interpret the world and your place in it."{2} You do not need to be a philosopher to have a worldview. All of us have a worldview.

Although Glenn Sunshine begins with the worldview of the Roman world, he quickly takes us back to neo-Platonism. It was the religion and philosophy based upon Plato's ideas. Neo-

Platonism was the belief that the fundamental ground of reality is non-physical. Instead it is found in the world of ideas (and is known as *idealism*). These ideas cast shadows that cast other shadows until they arrive at the physical world.

According to this worldview, the whole universe exists as a hierarchy. The spiritual is superior to the physical. This provides a scale of values for the world, but also provides a scale for humanity. In other words, those who are superior should rule over those who are inferior because they have demonstrated their ability to rule or conquer.

This view of hierarchy led to the idea of the father having superiority over all members of the family. It led to the idea that men are superior to women. It led to the idea that the emperor should rule and be worshipped. And it led to the idea that slaves are inferior to free people and nothing more than "living tools."{3}

This explains not only the success of Rome but also its ugly underside. Essentially there are two pictures of Rome: "the glittering empire and the rotten core."{4}

In Rome, human life did not have much value. While it is true that Romans abandoned human sacrifice, they engaged in other practices equally abhorrent. "They picked up the Etruscan practice of having people fight to the death in games in honor of the dead."{5}

Slavery provided the economic foundation for the empire. Abortion and infanticide were regularly practiced. "Roman families would usually keep as many healthy sons as they had and only one daughter; the rest were simply discarded."{6} And Roman law required that a father kill any visibly deformed child.

Transformation of the Pagan World

How did Christianity transform the pagan world? In AD 303, the Roman emperor Diocletian began a severe persecution of Christians. But because Christians were faithful and even willing to go to their deaths for their beliefs, their credibility increased. Eventually they were accepted and allowed to exercise their faith. Constantine even legalized the Christian faith by AD 313.

Once that took place, Christian ideas were allowed to percolate through society. One of the most important ideas was that human beings are created in the image of God. This idea has a profound impact. First, it meant that people are fundamentally equal to each other. No longer were there grounds for saying that some people are superior to others. In fact, "Christians were the first people in history to oppose slavery systematically."{7}

Christians (who believed that all are created in the image of God) treated the sick differently. They believed that even those who were deathly ill still deserved care. Dionysius of Alexandria reported that Christians (often at great risk to their own lives) "visited the sick fearlessly and ministered to them continually."{8} They would rescue babies abandoned in an act of infanticide. They would oppose abortion.

In economics, we can also see the influence of Christianity. The idea that God created the universe and then rested showed that God worked. That would mean that human beings (made in the image of God) are expected to work as well. God gave Adam and Eve intellectual work (in naming the animals) and physical work (in tending the Garden). Contrast this with the Roman world where physical work was seen as something that only slaves would do. Christians saw labor as something that was intrinsically valuable.

Labor is good; drudgery is bad. Drudgery is a result of the

Fall (Genesis 3). So Christians were the first to develop technology to remove drudgery from work. Other civilizations had technology, but the West uniquely applied such things as water power to make work more valuable and worthwhile by eliminating the drudgery and repetitive nature of certain tasks.

Property rights were also well-developed during this period. "The medieval world under the influence of Christianity has a much stronger emphasis on property rights than other cultures had."{9}

These ideas come from a biblical worldview and began to be developed during the Middle Ages. This led to a complete transformation of western society and set it on a trajectory to our modern world.

Christianity and Politics

Glenn Sunshine points out that in the West, the dynamic between church and state is unique. Christianity was originally a persecuted minority religion. Even when Christianity was declared a legal religion, the church did not depend upon the state. So the question of the relationship between church and state has been an open question.

During the Middle Ages, two men helped shape political thinking. The first was Augustine, who described two realms: the City of God and the City of Man. He argued that human government is the result of sin. He believed that it is based upon selfishness. Government itself is corruption. In the absence of government, anarchy reigns. So government is a necessary evil.

The City of God is different in that it is not based upon force or coercion. It is based upon love, charity, and repentance. That doesn't mean that the City of Man and the City of God cannot work together. But overall, Augustine had a

more pessimistic view of government.

Aristotle had a different view of government. As people in the Middle Ages began to rediscover Aristotle, they began to develop a different view of government. They saw government as a necessary institution that God has placed in the world. It had positive and legitimate functions.

Aristotle believed that government had a more positive role in society. But the Christian theologians had to also deal with the problem of original sin. They wanted to find a way to prevent original sin from corrupting the government. The tension between these two views is what drives the discussion of western political theory.

Sunshine notes that "another check on civil government involved the idea of rights."{10} We normally associate the idea of rights, especially inalienable rights, with eighteenth century political theorists. However, John Locke's idea that we have inalienable right to life, liberty, and property is already found in the writings of medieval theologians. The basis for this is a belief that all are created in the image of God. Therefore, all of us have a number of natural rights that the state cannot remove. Natural law was the idea that God wove moral laws into the fabric of the universe.

There also was the belief that there should be limitations on the jurisdiction of civil government and church government. One example is the Magna Carta, that stated that the English church was to be free and its liberties unimpaired by the crown.

The Renaissance and Enlightenment

What about the transformation into the modern world? In the early modern period, starting with the Renaissance in the fifteenth century to the seventeenth century, there are a whole series of events that shook the worldview consensus that

developed in the Middle Ages.

Previously there were certain beliefs about truth: (1) that truth was absolute, (2) that truth is knowable to the human mind, and (3) that truth is necessary for society (a society could not be based upon a lie). The best good guide for truth would be the great civilizations of the past that lasted for so long and thus must have been based upon truth.

The idea was to go to the past to find truth. During the Renaissance scholars were very successful in collecting manuscripts and finding ancient sources. Unfortunately, they found so many sources that they discovered there was not a coherent perspective. The ancient writers disagreed with each other. In a sense, the Renaissance was a victim of its own success. There was too much information. The more ancient sources they found, the less likely they would find agreement in the perspectives. Once it became obvious that this grand synthesis was not possible, the entire purpose of intellectual activity was thrown into question.

Then there were the wars of the Reformation in which various factions fought over who was the true follower of the prince of peace. The devastation of the religious wars left many people wondering if there really was religious certainty. No longer was the question “is Christianity true” but rather “which Christianity is true?” Now you had a multiplicity of options that left people confused. This also generated questions about the role of religion in society.

Then you also had the discovery of the New World and whole people groups that had never heard the gospel. Some began to ask questions like: Is it fair of God to send them all to hell because they had never heard of Christianity? Or, in light of biblical history, where did they come from? How do these people fit with the story of Noah? These discoveries called into question biblical morality and biblical history.

Also, people started using a new way of looking at knowledge. They began to use the scientific method to evaluate everything. This begins a significant shift in how we understand the world. There is a movement away from certainty toward probability. There is also a movement away from studying ancient authors toward scientific experimentation.

In the modern world, therefore, truth is not found in the past but in the present and future. With this is also questioning of biblical authority.

The Modern World and Christianity

Let me conclude by talking about our modern world and how Christians should respond. Sunshine concludes his book with chapters on "Modernity and Its Discontents" and "The Decay of Modernity." Essentially the modern world has left humans with a loss of truth, certainty, and meaning in life. "Materialism provides a ready answer to the question of the meaning and purpose of life: there is none."{11} From a Darwinian perspective, our only purpose is to pass our genes on to the next generation.

This rejection of spirituality and meaning has ushered in various other worldviews as alternatives. These would be such worldviews as postmodernism, neo-paganism, and the New Age Movement. Sunshine argues that in many ways we have been catapulted back to Rome.

Like Rome we value toleration as the supreme virtue. Rome believed that toleration was important because it kept the empire together. If you go beyond the lines of toleration, you are persecuted. This is similar to the mindset today. The highest value in a postmodern world is toleration. Toleration so defined means that we will embrace any and all lifestyles people may choose.

The Romans lived in an oversexed society.{12} So do we. Rome

practiced abortion. So does our society. Rome was antinatal and made a deliberate attempt to prevent pregnancy. They focused on sexual enjoyment and did not want to bother with kids. In our modern world, birthrates in most of the western democracies are plummeting.

Western civilization is a product of ancient Roman civilization plus Christianity. Sunshine argues that once you removed Christianity, modern society reverted back to Roman society and a recovery of the ancient pagan worldview.

So how should Christians live in this world? Of course, we should live out a biblical worldview. Every generation is called to live faithfully to the gospel, and our generation is no exception.

This is especially important today since we are facing a society that is not willing to accept biblical ideas. In many ways, we face a challenge similar to the early church, though not as daunting. From history we can see that the early church did live faithfully and transformed the Roman world. Christians produced a totally new civilization: western culture. By living faithfully before the watching world, we will increase our credibility and earn the respect from those who are around us by living in accordance with biblical principles.

Notes

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George Washington and Religion

Kerby Anderson presents a compelling argument for the view that George Washington was a devoted Christian rather than a deist. He points to Washington's insistence on the importance of services for his soldiers, his personal church attendance, his prayer life and his commitment to the spiritual upbringing of his godchildren.

Background



What was George Washington's view of religion and in particular of Christianity? The historical perspective used to be that Washington was a Christian and orthodox in most of his beliefs. But the modern view has been that he was a either a lukewarm Anglican or more likely a Deist.

I want to look at some new research that argues for the traditional view and against the modern view of George Washington's religion. One book is *Washington's God: Religion, Liberty, and the Father of our Country*.{1} It is written by Michael Novak (American Enterprise Institute and winner of the Templeton Award) and Jana Novak. Another book, written by

Peter Lillback with Jerry Newcombe, is *George Washington's Sacred Fire*.{2}

George Washington was born into a Virginia family of moderate wealth and was exposed to various religious activities: lessons in religion, regular prayer, Sunday school attendance, and reverence for God. His mother had a daily ritual of retiring with a book of religious readings.

By the time he was a teenager, Washington had already assumed serious responsibilities as a professional surveyor and then as a major in the Virginia militia. His adventures in the wild lands gave him invaluable lessons about the military, Indians, and the British. Years later in a speech to the Delaware chiefs, Washington said, "You do well to wish to learn our arts and ways of life, and above all, the religion of Jesus Christ. These will make you a greater and happier people than you are."{3}

He studied the Bible as well as the writings of ancient heroes. The busts and portraits at Mount Vernon demonstrate this. There are busts of Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Charles XII of Sweden, and Frederick II of Prussia. In the dining room are portraits of the Virgin Mary and St. John.

Washington's own stepgranddaughter "Nelly" Custis saw him as a religious man. She wrote this to one of Washington's early biographers:

> It was his custom to retire to his library at nine or ten o'clock, where he remained an hour before he went to his chamber. He always rose before the sun, and remained in his library until called to breakfast. I never witnessed his private devotions. I never inquired about them. I should have thought it the greatest heresy to doubt his firm belief in Christianity. His life, his writings, prove that he was a Christian. He was not one of those who act or pray, "that they may be seen of men." He communed with his God in

secret.{4}

In what follows we will look at the evidence for George Washington's faith as it surfaced in his letters and actions as general and president.

Deism vs. Christianity

Pick up a book about George Washington written during the nineteenth century, and you will probably see that he is described as being a Christian. However, if you pick up a book written in the last seventy years, it will describe him as a Deist. Why the change?

The turning point seems to be a study by historian Paul F. Boller, Jr. entitled *George Washington and Religion*. His conclusion can be summarized in a single sentence: To the "unbiased observer" George Washington appears as a Deist, not a devout Christian.{5} Most historians since Boller accepted this idea and were less likely to assert that Washington was a Christian.

What do we mean by "Deism"? Deism is the belief that God is merely a watchmaker God who started the universe but is not involved in the affairs of humans and human history. One definition of Deism is that "There is no special providence; no miracles or other divine interventions intrude upon the lawful natural order."{6}

Was George Washington a Deist? He was not. It is worth noting that even historian Paul Boller admitted that religion was important to Washington as a leader. Boller writes, "he saw to it that divine services were performed by the chaplains as regularly as possible on the Sabbath for the soldiers under his command."{7} We might reasonably ask, Why would chaplains be important to a Deist?

Boller even admits there are testimonials of Washington's

church attendance. This is important since many historians even go further than Boller and assert that Washington did not even attend church as a mature adult.

Michael Novak admits that some of the names Washington often used for God *sound* Deist, but that does not mean that he was a Deist. In fact, his prayers for God's action were just the opposite of what you might hear from a Deist. Washington believed God favored the cause of liberty and should be beseeched to "interpose" his action on behalf of the Americans. He called for public thanksgiving for the many ways in which Americans experienced God's hand in key events in our history.

Washington used more than eighty terms to refer to God, among them: Almighty God, Creator, Divine Goodness, Father of all mercies, and Lord of Hosts. The most common term he used in his writings and speeches was "Providence." When he did so, he used the masculine personal pronoun "he." Washington never refers directly to God as an "it," as he does occasionally with Providence. God is personal.[8]

If we look at the history of the eighteenth century, there were many with orthodox religious beliefs who sometimes used the philosophical language of the enlightenment. Washington was a Christian, even though he often used terms for God associated with Deists.

A Religious Nation Goes to War

There has been some dispute about how religious America was during the Revolutionary War. There was a shortage of churches and clergy (especially along the paths of westward migration). But we should also remember that this War of Independence followed the First Great Awakening.

At the first meeting of the Continental Congress in Philadelphia (September 1774), the first motion from the floor

was for prayer to seek guidance from God. But there was resistance, not because of the prayer, but because of the theological disagreements among the members (Anabaptist, Quakers, Congregationalists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians). Sam Adams settled the dispute by saying he was no bigot and could pray along with any minister as long as he was a patriot.{9} I have in my office a picture of a painting showing George Washington praying with men like Patrick Henry, John Jay, and Richard Henry Lee.

At the second meeting, they proposed that Washington be appointed commander in chief of the Continental Army. He did not think he was equal to the command but accepted it. He wrote his wife, "I shall rely, therefore, confidently on that Providence, which has heretofore preserved and been bountiful to me, not doubting but that I shall return safe to you in the fall."{10} At the time, Washington was the only man on the continent in uniform since no Continental Army yet existed. To the British, he was the supreme traitor, in open rebellion to the King. His neck was at risk, and the American independence depended on him.

One event that George Washington believed showed God's providence was the Battle of Long Island in 1776. Washington and his men were trapped on Brooklyn Heights, Long Island. The British were poised to crush the American army the next day and that would have been the end of the rebellion. Washington planned a bold move and began evacuating his troops under the cover of darkness using everything from fishing vessels to rowboats. But there was not enough time to accomplish the task. When morning came, the fog of night remained and only lifted in time for the British to see the last American boat crossing the East River beyond the reach of their guns. You can read more about this miraculous event in Michael Novak's book, *On Two Wings: Humble Faith and Common Sense at the American Founding*.{11}

Washington also required chaplains for the Continental Army,

and personally took time for prayer. He forbade his troops under pain of death from uttering blasphemies, even profanity. He called upon them to conduct themselves as Christian soldiers because the people demanded it.{12}

Washington's actions during the Revolutionary War demonstrate his Christian character.

First in War and First in Peace

In his eulogy for George Washington, Henry Lee said he was "First in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen." We could also say the Washington demonstrated Christian character both in war and in peace.

While fulfilling his duties as general, he came to be known as a "nursing father." This is a biblical phrase (Num. 11:12, Is. 49:23 KJV) that appears in many of the tributes to Washington after his death. He brought together very diverse groups to fight the Revolutionary War by bridging ethnic and social divisions. This ranged from the regiment from Marblehead, Massachusetts (that included men of mixed race, blacks, and Indians), to the Virginian and southern aristocrats to the yeomen in hunting shirts from western Virginia.

One of his orders stated that "All chaplains are to perform divine service tomorrow, and on every succeeding Sunday. . . . The commander in chief expects an exact compliance with this order, and that it be observed in future as an invariable rule of practice—and every neglect will be consider not only a breach of orders, but a disregard to decency, virtue and religion."{13}

Washington grew even more explicit as the war dragged on: "While we are zealously performing the duties of good citizens and soldiers we certainly ought not to be inattentive to the higher duties of religion. To the distinguished character of patriot, it should be our highest glory to add the more

distinguished character of a Christian."{14}

Washington lost a great deal of money during the war by paying for things out of his own pocket and by refusing a salary. He happily returned to Mount Vernon and spent happy years with his wife. But the constitutional convention in 1787 brought him to elective office. He was elected as president by unanimous vote in 1789.

In his inaugural address, Washington said, "No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invisible hand, which conducts the affairs of men more than the people of the United States. Every step, by which they have advanced to the character of an independent nation, seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency."

He issued a thanksgiving proclamation in 1789 in which he asserted "the duty of all nations" in regard to God. His thanksgiving proclamation of 1795 proclaims there are signs of "Divine beneficence" in the world. And in his farewell address, he reminded Americans that "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, Religion and Morality are indispensable supports."

Washington demonstrated Christian character in war and in peace.

Washington as Christian: Pro and Con

Let's summarize the arguments historians make about Washington's religious faith. Those who believe that George Washington was a Deist and not a Christian usually make the following observations.

First, Washington never took communion at Sunday services. Second, he refused to declare his specific beliefs in public. Third, he rarely used the name of Jesus Christ in private correspondence and in public utterances. Finally, while he

believed in God and had an awareness of Providence in his life, it all seems more like a Greek or Roman view of fate.

Michael Novak's response to these observations is helpful. "All these objections have a grain of truth in them. Still, they are consistent with Washington's being a serious Christian who believed that he had a public vocation that required some tact regarding his private confessional life."{15} Novak adds:

> It is not at all unusual for public men in pluralistic American life to maintain a notable reserve about their private convictions. They do not burden the public with declarations of their deepest beliefs, whose general force they trust their actions will sufficiently reveal. In the public forum, they happily give to Caesar what is Caesar's and in the private forum, to God what is God's.{16}

What are some of the reasons to believe Washington was a Christian? First, he religiously observed the Sabbath as a day of rest and frequently attended church services on that day. Second, many report that Washington reserved time for private prayer. Third, Washington saved many of the dozens of sermons sent to him by clergymen, and read some of them aloud to his wife.

Fourth, Washington hung paintings of the Virgin Mary and St. John in places of honor in his dining room in Mount Vernon. Fifth, the chaplains who served under him during the long years of the Revolutionary War believed Washington was a Christian. Sixth, Washington (unlike Thomas Jefferson) was never accused by the press or his opponents of not being a Christian.

It is also worth noting that, unlike Jefferson, Washington agreed to be a godparent for at least eight children. This was far from a casual commitment since it required the godparents to agree to help insure that a child was raised in the

Christian faith. Washington not only agreed to be a godparent, but presented his godsons and goddaughters with Bibles and prayer books.

George Washington was not a Deist who believed in a "watchmaker God." He was a Christian and demonstrated that Christian character throughout his life.

Notes

1. Michael Novak and Jana Novak, *Washington's God: Religion, Liberty, and the Father of our Country* (NY: Basic Books, 2006).
2. Peter Lillback, with Jerry Newcombe, *George Washington's Sacred Fire* (Bryn Mawr, PA: Providence Forum Press, 2006.
3. Novak, *Washington's God*, 93.
4. Ibid., 136.
5. Lillback, *Sacred Fire*, 28.
6. Novak, *Washington's God*, 110.
7. Lillback, *Sacred Fire*, 28.
8. Ibid., 577.
9. Novak, *Washington's God*, 123.
10. Ibid, 64.
11. Michael Novak, *On Two Wings: Humble Faith and Common Sense at the American Founding* (San Francisco: Encounter, 2002).
12. Novak, *Washington's God*, 30-31.
13. Ibid., 90.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid., 219.
16. Ibid., 219-220.

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A Biblical View on Critical Race Theory – Kerby Anderson Booklet

Critical race theory has been in the news. What is it, and why are so many people either defending it or opposing it? How is it being introduced in the schools, businesses, and the government?

Critical race theory is a descendant of a philosophical tradition known as critical theory. It began at the University of Frankfurt's Institute for Social Research, which came to be known as the "Frankfurt School." The Frankfurt scholars fled to Columbia University's Teachers College in New York in 1934 to escape the Nazis.

Critical theory traces all social injustice to inequities in power that are based unfairly on class, race, gender, or sexual orientation. In classical Marxism, the focus was on class with the assumption that the working class would rise up against the capitalist oppressors. That never really happened the way Karl Marx predicted. Instead, these cultural Marxists proposed a conflict that would develop based on race and some of the other factors just mentioned.

Assumptions and Euphemisms

Critical race theory is based on several assumptions. First, there is no absolute truth. There are only competing narratives. Second, the economy is a zero-sum game. The gain of one race is at the expense of another race. Third, individuals are either an oppressor or a victim. Fourth, America is systemically racist and must be dismantled.

There is a great deal of rhetoric and euphemisms that are deployed by practitioners of critical race theory. This

includes such words and phrases as “equity” and “social justice” and “diversity and inclusion” and “culturally responsive teaching.” A word like *equity* might seem like a synonym for equality, but that is not the case. Proponents use the concept of equity to argue for suspending private property rights (UCLA professor Cheryl Harris) and for setting up a federal Department of Antiracism (Boston University professor Ibram X. Kendi) that would have power to nullify, veto, or abolish any law that does not provide racial equity.

Because critical race theory has its roots in cultural Marxism, proponents define people based on their group and practice identity politics. They also look at the intersection of victim groups and thus talk about intersectionality.

You are either in power or out of power. If you are in power, you are automatically discredited. If you are underprivileged, you are immune from criticism. This also means that the claims of critical race theory are unfalsifiable. It becomes impervious to counter-evidence and thus cannot be rationally defended.

This is no small issue because the underprivileged can make demands, but do not need to make rational arguments. The assumption is that the whole system (including facts, counter-arguments, and even basic rationality) is rigged against the oppressed. This is why you often hear proponents of critical race theory making statements without appealing to evidence and why they reject anyone trying to present evidence that might dispute their dogmatic statements.

In a recent article by James Lindsay, he argues that “For Racial Healing, Reject Critical Race Theory.” He starts with a thought experiment that shows how unpractical and confusing this theory becomes in everyday life.

He says we should imagine we own a small shop (perhaps a tailor shop) where you have to assist each customer

individually. You are the sole proprietor and can only serve one customer at a time. Now imagine two people enter your store at exactly the same time. One is white, and the other is black. Which customer do you help first?

If you choose to serve the black person first, critical race theory would argue that you did so because you don’t trust the black person to be in your shop unattended while you help the other customer. That means you are acting according to racist stereotypes and chose poorly.

If you choose to serve the white person instead, then you are also demonstrating your racist bias. Choosing to help the white person shows that you favor white people and consider them first-class citizens. Once again, you have chosen poorly.

Perhaps you can see the dilemma created by the philosophy of critical race theory. It is a classic “heads I win, tails you lose.” There is no right choice in this example. No matter what you do, you will always be wrong and thus be condemned as being racist. This illustration provides one more reason why critical race theory will not promote racial healing.

Into the Schools and Government

How is critical race theory making its way into the schools? Often it is introduced by activists in the local school district. But sometimes it even comes from government action.

Stanley Kurtz has been warning that the Civics Secures Democracy Act (being considered by Congress) could be used by activists and educators to promote critical race theory. The Department of Education proposed a regulation that directs grant money to prioritize applications that “support the development of culturally responsive teaching and learning.” As we have seen, phrases like “equity” and “culturally responsive” are key buzzwords for critical race theory.

Christopher Rufo has been documenting how critical race theory

is already arriving in the schools. A California elementary school forced first-graders to deconstruct their racial and sexual identities, and then rank themselves according to their power and privilege. A middle school in Missouri forced teachers to locate themselves on an "oppression matrix," based on the idea that white, Christian males were members of an oppressor class. Although he is just one investigative journalist, he has already put together a database of more than 1,000 stories.

He has also documented how critical race theory made its way into government. The FBI has been holding workshops on intersectionality. The Department of Homeland Security was telling white employees that they have been "socialized into oppressor roles." That is why President Donald Trump issued an executive order banning critical race theory training. President Joe Biden rescinded that order on his first day in office.

Speaking out against critical race theory can be costly. Until recently, Lt. Col. Matthew Lohmeier served in the newly created Space Force. He was relieved from his post because he wrote a book denouncing critical race theory and Marxism in the US military. He said it wasn't his intent to engage in partisan politics. But he wrote the book because of the Marxist ideology that he saw being taught.

A Liberal Critique

Some of the criticism of critical race theory has been coming from people who would not be described as religious conservatives. Andrew Sullivan is one of these commentators sounding a warning that this perspective is "Removing the Bedrock of Liberalism."

He acknowledges that even trying to accurately define critical race theory is difficult because of the "sheer volume of jargon words" that may be intended to "sow confusion." He also

asks himself through his commentary whether he is accurately portraying the theory and concludes that he is not exaggerating its attack on liberal modernity. Proponents of Critical Race Theory admit that they question the very foundations of liberal society.

One example can be found in the book, *Understanding Critical Race Theory*. It was written four years ago and is hardly the most controversial book on the subject. That book explains that "critical race theory questions the very foundations of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law."

He also notes that critical race theory denies any claim to truth since "claims to truth are merely claims to power." Secular liberals and Christians may disagree about many things, but at least they agree that truth exists and can be objectively discerned. He also critiques the idea that nothing has changed.
In other words, "slavery, segregation, mass incarceration are just different- words for the same experience of oppression." He adds that critical race theory can also be defined by what it is not. "It is not an open-ended inquiry into buried history."

He also explains that critical race theory is the cuckoo in the academic nest. It used to be one school of thought. Over time, though, it has thrown out its competitors and does not allow open debate.

Response to the Criticism

Educators and parents who criticize critical race theory will quickly encounter push-back and accusations. These usually come in different forms.

One reaction from proponents is that anyone criticizing

critical race theory is ignorant and doesn't understand it. A Texas state board of education member wrote that critics "have no idea what critical race theory is, what it does, who the founders are. They've never read a book, much less a paragraph on it." From there she goes on to use language inappropriate for an intelligent discussion.

Many commentators have even begun to argue that critical race theory has become the latest conservative "boogeyman." They believe right-wing politics is out of ideas (not true) and thus needs an enemy to attack. Many of the people speaking out are familiar with critical race theory and understand its potential for dividing America.

In several cases, parents have been able to find the syllabus for school courses and put them online. They find that the goal is to "develop awareness about social justice and diversity issues" and learn – about "the intersectionality of gender, race, class, and sexuality." Required textbooks usually include Ibram X. Kendi's *How to be an Antiracist* and Robin DiAngelo's *White Fragility*. Instead, we are being told (as one commentator put it) to "pay no attention to the curriculum behind the curtain."

Another reaction is to suggest that anyone opposing critical race theory wants to whitewash the past sins of America and perpetuate systemic racism in the future. One commentator assumed that critics didn't want to talk about racial disparities because they want to normalize the behavior and allow current patterns of behavior to continue. We should talk about slavery and America's racist past. But that doesn't mean we have to accept the idea that this country is more racist today and riven with systemic racism in every institution.

Professor John McWhorter believes we should "assume that when politicos and parents decry critical race theory, what they refer to is the idea of oppression and white perfidy treated as the main meal of an entire school's curriculum." He adds

that young children should not be taught they are guilty if white and oppressed if black. And they should not be taught that "the American story is mainly (note I write mainly rather than only, but mainly is just as awful here) one of oppression and racism."

A third reaction is to assure us that critical race theory is merely a philosophical tool and does not pose any threat to the social and political structures. That is not true. As one commentator put it, "No longer simply an academic matter, critical race theory has become a tool of political power." It is moving through our public institutions and "driving the vast machinery of the state and society."

One of the standard sources (*Understanding Critical Race Theory*) mentioned earlier "questions the very foundations of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law." It then goes on to argue that "radical measures are in order" because society is so racist. When it was written, the authors may not have meant "radical" to involve riots, protests, and burning cities. But we have seen the natural result of arguing that America is systemically racist, full of white privilege, and in need of a social revolution to overturn the existing order.

While we can applaud the boldness of some, there is still a great deal of fear keeping many Americans from speaking out. A recent Gallup poll found that 77 percent of conservatives are afraid to share their political beliefs publicly. They rightly fear they will lose their jobs or get mobbed by social media. So they remain quiet.

Biblical Perspective

One of the foundational principles of critical race theory (along with postmodernism and other modern philosophical traditions) is a complete rejection of absolute truth. The

Bible teaches that truth exists and can be discerned (Proverbs 30:5, John 8:32, 2 Timothy 3:16).

We should acknowledge that different groups of people might perceive Scripture differently, but that does not mean that one race has special access to biblical truth. The argument that our race (e.g., “whiteness”) colors our interpretation suggests that we can all learn from each other in the body of Christ. But the real impediment to proper biblical interpretation is our sin (John 3:19-20). Paul teaches (1 Corinthians 2) that spiritual truth can best be discovered through the revelatory power of the Holy
Spirit.

The proponents of cri-tical race theory often reject rational arguments that contradict their dogma statements about race and society. By contrast, the Bible emphasizes the mind and rational discussion.
Paul calls for Christians to “destroy arguments and every proud obstacle raised up against the knowledge of God” because we are to “take every thought captive to obey Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:4-5). When a secular philosophy is being promoted in society, it is our responsibility to provide an honest critique of it. Our goal should be to think biblically and to “take every thought captive.”

Critical race theory also creates division between races that is contrary to Scripture. Paul addressed the divisions in his day that could have created division within the church. He explains how Christ has
pulled down the wall of division between Jews and Gentiles (Ephesians 2:14). He went further and taught that there is “neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). There should be unity for believers and not division.

Proponents of critical race theory also propose a type of

"guilt" on anyone who is identified as an oppressor merely because of their racial background. And people of this race will never really be forgiven because they will always be part of that race. By contrast, the Bible teaches that we are guilty because we are sinful (Romans 3:23, 6:23), not because of our racial status. Also, we cannot earn salvation by good works because salvation is a gift of grace (Ephesians 2:8-9). We are redeemed through Jesus Christ (Romans 3:22-24).

Additional Resources

Kerby Anderson, *A Biblical View on Racism*, 2020.

Doug Groothuis, "America, Critical Theory, and Social Crisis," Centennial Institute, September 2020. America, Critical Theory, and Social Crisis – Centennial Institute

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