



A look at socialism from one man's biblical perspective

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“The greatest obstacle to discovery is not ignorance — it is the illusion of knowledge.”

— **Daniel J. Boorstin, historian, educator, author and Librarian of Congress from 1975-87**

Respected historian, educator, and longtime Librarian of Congress, Daniel J. Boorstin, made the above statement about “illusory knowledge” in an interview with the *Washington Post* in 1984. The illusion of knowledge is, arguably, at this time in our history, an obstacle concerning an idea of great contention among us as Americans these days: the nature of “socialism.”

Statistics show 70 percent of millennials and 64 percent of Gen Z-ers answered that they’d be somewhat or extremely likely to vote for a socialist candidate in a YouGov poll [axios.com]. We would be hard-pressed to identify a word more illusory to us than the term “socialism” right now.

As a baseline, I chose a definition of socialism based on the well-known Soviet model from the CATO Institute: “The Soviet socialist system was a system of political repression that disregarded human freedom ... It required utmost control ... over people’s lives — it demanded conformity, not autonomy, as a centralized bureaucratic force ... Thus Soviet officials sought to stamp out any source of possible opposition to state authority ... ”

The steel gray days of the Cold War are conjured up immediately.

Such a totalitarian tone should raise red flags among those of us who live, work, and breathe within a Western/Judeo-Christian context. To some, Jesus’ teachings seem to fit socialism. They read verses such as, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:31) and “... go and sell that you have, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven: and come and follow Me” (Mt 19:21) and project them outward. But was Jesus really advocating a form of 1st-century collectivism? He advocated extreme voluntary generosity, but all from within a first-century Judaism, individualistic point-of-view. Unlike true socialism, which is compulsory, to follow Jesus was and is voluntary. The distinguishing feature of Marxist socialism is political force. If it’s voluntary, it’s not socialism.

So, was Jesus a socialist? Though Christians have tried to make it so, the answer must be “no.” There was no centralized human bureaucratic force involved in his ministry. He preached free will and sought to control no one’s life. He taught salvation as an individual decision, not a

matter of civic endowment. The Kingdom of God is not political, it's spiritual; is not compulsory, it's voluntary. "Some people think that socialism is sharing. It's caring. It's compassion ... But Jesus never once advocated the tools that socialism uses to do those things. He never advocated for the concentration of power" [Lawrence Reed, President Emeritus, FEF].

We live in tumultuous times. Orwellian times. Previously trusted sources of information are suspect. Neighbors are called upon by civic authorities to turn their neighbors in for not obeying public health guidelines. In his essay "Politics and the English Language," Orwell observed that "political language is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind" [New Oxford Review]. In other words, political language is used to hide ugly truth. We need to understand that Karl Marx used the terms "socialist" and "communist" all but interchangeably. We need to be informed about the dark realities of historic socialism: the oppression that went on behind the Berlin Wall, the horrors of the Gulag, the bread lines in Moscow, the killing fields of Cambodia, Mao's Cultural Revolution ... the hundreds of millions killed worldwide by communist regimes.

But finally, and most importantly, we need to know where Marxism stands on the existence of God. In his Introduction to "Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right Religion," Marx writes: "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people."

Marx would replace God with "the state"... worship the state as god. As for me and my house, I can tell you this: It would take a lot of opium to get me to worship "the state." I'm an American. And I don't "do religion." I rest gratefully in my relationship with God.