

Will “New” Socialism Work?

*“He shall judge thy
people with
righteousness, and
thy poor with
judgment. He shall
judge the poor of
the people, he shall
save the children of
the needy, and shall
break in pieces the
oppressor.”
—Psalm 72:2,4*

ONE OF THE WAVES OF political thinking gaining more traction in the United States is that which is described as “democratic socialism.” Briefly, democratic socialism is a philosophy that advocates democracy alongside some form of planned socialist economy. It further claims that capitalism alone

is inherently incompatible with democratic values of liberty and equality. Adherents of democratic socialism support reformist politics as well as the use of the many news and social media outlets available as methods of promoting their ideas to the general public. While it is true that many social programs exist in this country today which were formed decades ago, the push by numerous political voices toward a much greater socialistic agenda is quite recent.

The Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) is the largest socialist organization in the United States

today. Although it has been around since 1982, it has been mostly on the fringes of the political spectrum until recently. Since the end of 2017, however, its membership has nearly doubled, and its number of local chapters has more than quadrupled. The DSA has also become much younger. In December 2017 the median age of its members was 33, compared to 68 in 2013, just four years earlier.

In 2017, fifteen candidates in thirteen states were elected to office who were members of the DSA. In the November 2018 mid-term elections, two DSA members, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Rashida Tlaib, were elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. In February of this year, Representative Ocasio-Cortez co-sponsored a congressional resolution promoting what is called the “Green New Deal,” a series of far-reaching government programs being proposed which aim to address economic inequality and climate change.

MAN’S LONG PURSUIT

The chronicle of civilization is the story of man’s perennial struggle for life, freedom, plenty, and happiness, and the myriad ways in which he has sought to gain this elusive end. From the time of his fall from God’s favor in Eden, he has tried one arrangement after another in his attempt to find the one that would truly and completely satisfy his soul’s desires and rid the world of the bane of war, hunger and want, sickness and disease, envy and injustice.

Though socialism as generally known today has a relatively brief history, efforts at mutual assistance among individuals for the purpose of gaining security

and the necessities of life has been around for thousands of years, identified primarily through the family arrangement. In addition to the fact that this was ordained by God, it would seem to be a normal development. Surely, it would be thought, the natural love and ties between the various members of a family could be counted on to insure fair dealing and the promotion of their joint interests. Sadly, however, this arrangement often fell short of its intended purpose.

We recall, for example, that Jacob agreed to work for Laban, his uncle and prospective father-in-law, for seven years to gain the lovely Rachel for his wife. However, at the end of that time Laban tricked Jacob into accepting Leah, the elder sister, as his wife. Jacob was then required to labor another seven years to pay for his beloved Rachel. He also complained that Laban had changed his wages ten times during the twenty years he had worked for him.—Gen. 29:16-28; 31:4-7

Beginning with the sad account of the slaying of Abel by his own brother Cain, we find history replete with accounts of jealousies, struggles, rivalries, and even murders within families, in the pursuit of life's necessities, power, position, or, paradoxically, peace. In the ages-long struggle for land, life, or liberty, blood ties have often proved to be very frail. Indeed, we are daily reminded that one of the bitterest and most hate-filled struggles between peoples the world has ever witnessed is presently going on between the nation of Israel and her Arab neighbors. Yet, all of them are descendants of a common and highly revered ancestor, Abraham.

As time moved on and world population increased, families grew into tribes, and tribes into nations. The strongest, most ruthless, or most intelligent among them became the rulers, whether of tiny feudal states or of mighty kingdoms. Throughout the centuries, regardless of whatever arrangement or form of rule was accepted by, or imposed upon, the people, there was always that unfortunate and troublesome gap between the position of the affluent and powerful few on the one hand and the poorer and mostly defenseless masses on the other. For the latter, in varying degrees, there was always more or less of hunger, misery, disease, and suffering. To these, security, health, and prosperity never came to pass, and was merely a distant dream.

Thus, for century after long century things have gone along ever since man was placed on planet Earth. Sometimes conditions were better, sometimes worse, but for most of mankind there was little hope or expectation of material improvement.

THE “TIME OF THE END”

With the approach of the biblical “time of the end,” two new factors appeared on the world scene. (Dan. 12:4,9) One was the industrial revolution, which began to steer the population away from rural areas into the urban centers, under the lure of better wages and steadier employment. However, too often the reality did not match, or even approach, the promise. Having given up the relative security of the agrarian way of life, many found themselves working long hours in hard labor for low wages, endeavoring to keep their families alive while often subsisting in poverty.

The other factor that arrived along with the movement toward an industrial society was the general increase of knowledge, which simultaneously brought to the masses an awareness of their lowly condition along with a hope of escape, thereby stirring them to action. Thus, the stage was set for the introduction of the labor union, which was an effort to improve the condition of the workers and to gain for them a more equitable share of the fruits of their labors.

During the nineteenth century, perhaps the foremost advocate of social change was Karl Marx, the German philosopher and expositor of the concept of socialism. He argued that property and wealth gradually come into the hands of the privileged few at the expense of the workers. In collaboration with Friedrich Engels, Marx produced a powerful pamphlet entitled *The Communist Manifesto* in 1848. It urged upon the working masses a permanent struggle to bring about by peaceful means the abolition of property distinctions and the common ownership of all products and the instruments of production. Marx's announced goal was the achieving of a classless society in which all would share equally in the world's goods. The well-known closing words of this ringing battle cry were, "The proletarians [workers] have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Working men of all countries, unite!"

This would appear to have been a fair and reasonable objective. However, for some the proposed program was not sufficiently dynamic. The desired goal and the attainment of its benefits seemed too far removed in time. In the early twentieth century

Vladimir Lenin and his associates began to advocate physical seizure of power, with stern suppression of all opposition. The eventual goal was to create a worldwide communist state based on the socialist principles of public ownership of property, with universal sharing of the products of labor by a classless society.

In the course of time the implementation of this doctrine led to one of the cruelest bloodbaths in history, when the czarist regime of Russia was overthrown by the Communist Revolution of 1917, which rallied the people with the promise of justice, plenty, and equality for all. Thus, Russia under Communist rule came into being. This regime lasted for more than seventy years, until 1991, when Russian president Mikhail Gorbachev instituted reforms and began moving the country toward a social democracy. The influence of Communist Russia, however, provided the pattern of government for other impoverished nations, some of which even today are governed under various forms of socialist/communist ideology.

HAS SOCIALISM WORKED?

No one would presume to argue that the world prior to the introduction of socialism and communism was ideal. Wars, poverty, injustice, hunger, disease and suffering were all common, and in many cases, rampant. Even in our own nation these conditions still meet the eye and assault the consciousness all too often. We ask, however, what conditions do we find in the past and present-day socialist states? How well have they fulfilled the promises made to the expectant millions who

so eagerly and hopefully hailed their rise to authority?

In the matters of health care and education, socialist countries have sometimes performed well. In some nations, medical services have been good, certain diseases well contained, and education at no or little cost has been available. In a few cases, people get generous handouts from the cradle to the grave, and pensions for retired workers are provided.

However, in many socialist countries of the past and present, consumer goods have generally been of low quality, and often chronically scarce. Housing shortages have been common, and agricultural production has been deficient, as the collectivized farmer has lost much of his incentive to produce. In some cases, production has been low because farm prices are kept down by the authorities, thus further depriving the farmer of a reason to work harder. In the factories the work ethic has been eroded by the absence of rewards for outstanding production. In other countries which have implemented socialist policies, income tax rates are so steep as to discourage incentive. Ownership of property or business thus becomes less desirable, and again production declines.

It is in the area of human rights and freedom that the disparity between a majority of socialist states and the other governmental forms has been most evident. This becomes particularly apparent when it is remembered that equality for all people in a classless society was one of the chief inducements held out to the people to adopt socialism. Yet, in most socialist and communist countries of today, there are still the masters and the underlings, the privi-

leged few and the struggling hordes, the wealthy and the poor, the persecutors and the persecuted.

In these cases, while the average person may often struggle to get low quality goods at high prices, those in authority may procure high quality luxuries at relatively low cost. Additionally, the privileged few have access to the highest quality medical care, while the general public most often must accept inferior service. In some socialist countries the higher officials have second homes for vacations, and many send their children to special schools, which are neither available nor affordable to the general population.

In the matter of freedom of speech, a right so dearly cherished in many countries, the socialist and communist regimes have been particularly lacking. In some cases, although freedom of speech is guaranteed to the people in their nation's constitution, it has been extremely unwise for one to exercise this right. Critics of the government have often faced loss of jobs, eviction from their homes, ostracism, deportation, imprisonment, and in some cases, death. In such environments, the media are also under the control of the state, and all information is shaded accordingly.

In the more extreme socialist and communist countries the rule has been authoritarian. Prisons have held thousands of dissidents. Democracy has been nonexistent, equality a myth, and freedom a vanished hope. The late Oxford University senior research fellow, Leszek Kolakowski, was an outspoken critic of socialism, and was effectively exiled from his native Poland in 1968. He is quoted as saying, "In Eastern Europe we expropriated the owners,

and we created one of the most monstrous and oppressive social systems in world history.” If Karl Marx could see the results of man’s attempts in the area of socialism, we wonder what thoughts would pass through his mind today.

ALL PRESENT SYSTEMS WILL FAIL

We believe that the experiments of socialism and communism, however well-intentioned, will fail, and indeed, many have already failed. The present ideas now gaining popularity in this country of a move toward a more socialistic form of democracy will also fail, we believe, to fulfill man’s innermost longings for peace, plenty, justice, and happiness, even as previously tried systems have failed.

Why is this? It is because man, in his present fallen and sinful condition, is imperfect and selfish. Selfish man tends to think and work based primarily on self-interest. If he is deprived of the reward of his own efforts, he will not extend himself. Further, if one can get something without working for it, or by working very little, he is not likely to exert himself greatly in the general interest of his fellow-man. In short, no system that could ever be devised by sinful men for other sinful men could ever bring peace, plenty, and happiness to the inhabitants of this earth.

BIBLE PROVIDES HOPE

Is this to say that the outlook for man is hopeless? Can he never look forward to a time when there will be no more starvation, sickness, wars, or injustice? By no means, we answer! The theme of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation proclaims God’s loving purpose to bring not only peace, justice, and

plenty to the whole world of mankind, but also the opportunity for all people, both the living and the dead, to gain everlasting life in a perfect paradise here on earth.

The almighty God of heaven has patiently permitted this world to pursue its many ideas and forms of government, all for a specific purpose and for a definite time. The purpose is to reveal to sinful man his inability to bring about a happy, peaceful world by his own imperfect ways, and to demonstrate for all time the sure but awful results of disobedience to God's righteous laws. Paul describes God's purpose, that "the unspeakable sinfulness of sin might be plainly shown."—Rom. 7:13, *Weymouth New Testament*

This time is drawing to a climax. "I have long time holden my peace," says God through the prophet. "I have been still, and refrained myself: now will I cry like a travailing woman; I will destroy and devour at once." (Isa. 42:14) The time during which God has permitted evil to reign and during which he has held his peace is called in the Scriptures "this present evil world," of which Satan is the ruler. (Gal. 1:4; II Cor. 4:4) It will end in a great Time of Trouble, in which the selfish, iniquitous institutions of this world will be destroyed.—Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:21; Luke 21:25,26

This will open the way for the establishment of a "new earth," in which Christ's thousand-year kingdom of righteousness will bless "all the kindreds of the earth." (II Pet. 3:13; Rev. 20:4; Acts 3:25; Gen. 22:18) It is then that the world will receive the benefit of the perfect ransom price that was paid on their behalf by Christ Jesus almost two

thousand years ago.—Matt. 20:28; John 3:16; I Tim. 2:3-6; I John 2:2; 4:10

The period of Christ's kingdom reign is called the "times of restitution of all things" by the Apostle Peter. (Acts 3:20,21) During that time, God will write his perfect law in the hearts of the people. (Jer. 31:33,34) All who prove willing and obedient and who demonstrate love for the Lord and for their fellow-man will gain everlasting life.

In that glorious kingdom, Jesus will be the highly exalted "King of kings, and Lord of lords." (Rev. 19:16; 17:14) The Apostle Paul wrote: "God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, ... And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."—Phil. 2:9-11

JUSTICE, RIGHTEOUSNESS AND PEACE

It will be a just, righteous and peaceful kingdom, and it will be worldwide. We quote, in part, the psalmist David, speaking prophetically of Christ's kingdom rule: "He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment. ... He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. ... In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. ... Yea, all kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him ... Men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed."—Ps. 72:2-17

Sin and selfishness of every kind will be abolished. Justice will be accorded every person. There will be

plenty for all. Every man will learn to love his neighbor. Even death will be destroyed, and God will dwell with men, and he will be their God. (Rev. 21:1-4) How the suffering inhabitants of the world will rejoice in their newfound happiness, peace, and plenty. They will bask in the sunshine of the Heavenly Father's smile and the overwhelming love of their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Eagerly, with love-filled hearts, neighbor will reach out to neighbor. Joyfully, all will sing praises to the loving God of the universe and his glorious Son!

All that man has been vainly striving to recapture during more than six thousand years of human history had been freely given to Adam and the entire human race in the Garden of Eden. Through disobedience to the divine will, man lost it. However, by the matchless grace of our Heavenly Father, and through the redeeming blood of Jesus, it will once more be freely given to all who love their Lord and follow his ways with their whole heart. "The Spirit and bride," in Christ's kingdom, will say, "Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."—Rev. 22:17 ■

Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.

The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

—Isaiah 9:6,7