

How Socialism Very Nearly Destroyed the Early American Christians

Many years before socialism brought about the collapse of the Soviet Empire and devastated the nation of Venezuela, the inadequacies of socialism were demonstrated right here on American soil. The Pilgrims who landed at Cape Cod in the fall of 1620 at first attempted a communal type of living but disbanded it when it became obvious their community could not survive with such a system (Hyatt, *Pilgrims and Patriots*, 36-38).

The Pilgrims Experience the Pain of Socialism

The Pilgrims' journey to America was funded by a group of venture capitalists who provided the ship and supplies for their journey to the New World. In return, the Pilgrims agreed to live communally with everyone, receiving the same recompense for their work, and with everything above their basic necessities going into a common fund to be used to pay their creditors.

William Bradford, who served as governor of Plymouth for many years, told of the challenges of this socialist system. Young men, he said, resented getting paid the same as older men when they did so much more of the work. As a result, they tended to slouch and slack since they knew they would receive the same no matter how hard they worked.

The older men felt they deserved more honor and recompense because of their age and resented getting paid the same as the youngsters in their midst. Because everyone received the same no matter how much they worked, the women often refused go to the fields to work, complaining of sickness and headaches. To have compelled them to go, Bradford said, would have been

considered tyranny and oppression.

This socialist system discouraged work and innovation and created an atmosphere where strife flourished. When it became obvious that lack and perhaps starvation would be their lot, Bradford and the leaders of the colony decided to make a change. After much prayer and discussion, they decided to dispense with that part of the agreement with their creditors that required them to live communally until their debt was paid.

They Experience the Gain of Free Enterprise

According to Bradford, they then divided the land around them, allotting to each family a certain portion that would be theirs to work and use for their own needs. Bradford said there was an immediate change. The young men began to work much harder because they now knew they would eat the fruit of their own labors.

There were no more complaints from the older men for the same reason. And now the women were seen going into the fields to work, taking the children with them, because they knew they and their family would personally benefit.

Instead of lacking food, each family now grew more food and corn than they needed, and they began to trade with one another for furnishings, clothes and other goods. They also had enough excess to trade with the Indians for furs and other items. In short, the colony began to prosper when they got rid of their socialist form of government and implemented a free, entrepreneurial system.

Of their experience with socialism, Bradford wrote;

This community [socialism] was found to breed much confusion and discontent and retard much employment that would have been to their benefit and comfort ... and showed the vanity of that conceit of Plato's, and applauded by some of later

times, that the taking away of property and bringing in community into a commonwealth would make them happy and flourishing; as if they were wiser than God (Hyatt, Pilgrims and Patriots, 38).

Christianity and Capitalism

Bradford believed that socialism did not work because it ran counter to God's will for humanity in a fallen world. Because of mankind's fallen state, he cannot be expected to labor for no reward. In Scripture, God rewards individuals for their labor and good works. Capitalism works because it is compatible with the reality of human nature and the world in which we live.

For capitalism to fully succeed, however, it must function in a strong Christian milieu. Otherwise, the strong and powerful will tread underfoot the weak and poor. Capitalism worked for the Pilgrims because they were a compassionate people who looked after those in their midst when they were sick, injured or unable to work.

True Christianity brings a compassion that helps the weak and poor, apart from initiative-destroying government programs. This is what happened in the early church and is what happened with the Pilgrims, who wanted to emulate that church.

Socialism Deifies the State

Modern socialism is rooted in Marxism, where faith in God is replaced by faith in government. The state is deified and becomes the all in all for the society. The people are taught to look to the government to solve every problem and meet every need. This in turn requires a ruling elite, like the old Soviet *politburo*, that controls every facet of society, which is why Walter Williams, professor of economics at George Mason University, says, "Socialism is just another form of tyranny."

In Marxist/socialist thinking, faith in God is seen as an enemy to the state. That is why, during the 20th century, millions of Christians were imprisoned and put to death in socialist/communist regimes such as China, Cambodia, Cuba and the Soviet Union. The god of socialism is a jealous god and will tolerate no rivals.

Socialism has a terrible track record, which makes it amazing that so many of the younger generation are buying into it. Noting that socialism has been kept alive in the secluded environs of university campuses, Thomas Sowell opined, "Socialism in general has a record of failure so blatant that only an intellectual could ignore or evade it."

The Christian Responsibility

I will never forget visiting Eastern Europe shortly after the fall of the Soviet Empire. I was struck by the grey, drab environment. Even the buildings seemed so plain, flat and lackluster. It was obvious that the Marxist system had robbed the people of life, energy and creativity. I am reminded here of the words of Winston Churchill, "Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it."

As Christians, our responsibility is to call people to Christ and help them live out their Christianity in the real world. Living out our Christianity means a life of responsibility, not looking for government handouts but working and prospering in a way that we can give a hand-up to those in need. We desire the best for the greatest number of people, which is why we must reject the contemporary vision of a government-mandated socialist system in America.

This article is derived from Dr. Eddie Hyatt's book, Pilgrims and Patriots, available from Amazon and his website at . Dr. Hyatt is an author, historian and Bible teacher. His passion is to reconnect America's severed Christian roots and he does this by conducting "America Reawakening" events, which is a

PowerPoint presentation that documents how America was birthed out of prayer and spiritual awakening. He can be reached at dreddiehyatt@.