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Christian Socialism: A Critique

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Research + Scholarship SYMPOSIUM



Christian Socialism: A Critique

Robert Owen said in 1816, “Society may be formed so as to exist without crime, without poverty, with health greatly improved, with little, if any misery, and with intelligence and happiness increased a hundredfold; and no obstacle whatsoever intervenes at this moment except ignorance.” 200 years later, however, no such system exists. A society in which every need is met, every resource fully available, every talent fully utilized for good, may be considered the ideological pinnacle of human civilization, but the question of how to create such a utopia remains unanswered.

Many modern intellectuals favor socialism or its more extreme descendant; communism, in their search for perfect government. Likewise, many Christian young people and scholars have a fascination with the concept of Christian Socialism, synthesizing the ideals of communism with Biblical statements about the ideal Christian life found in the gospels. Some scholars assert that the socialist ideal is the ultimate fulfillment of Jesus’ command to love and serve one another – the Kingdom of Heaven here on earth. So such a society should promote the provision for all that a loving God would logically offer to the creation made in His image. Yet the socialist and communist worldviews rest on flawed assumptions regarding the nature of man and thus consistently leave the masses unsatisfied and deprived.

‘Christian Socialism,’ has experienced a dramatic revival in recent years, resurrecting the ‘social gospel’ of Walter Rauschenbusch, through the writings of Jim Wallis among others, however the Biblical portrait of mankind is diametrically opposed to the theories upon which Socialism stands. While the surface of this movement may appear consistent with the precepts taught by Christ, deeper examination of its theological, philosophical, and historical inconsistencies quickly reveals a pit of fallacy - a flawed foundation upon which adherents would build an unstable future. Half a decade ago, the Christian Anti-Communist Crusade and other scholars codified many of the objections to Christian Socialism, but this research has since faded into obscurity as they were discounted as reactionary. However given the cultural atmosphere and resurgence of the movement today, these writings deserve significant reexamination.