

# THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled. (2 Corinthians 10:3-6)

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## The Pope's Utopian Dream of a Worldwide Socialist Order

By Brad K. Gsell

*Editor's note: This article with the two additions first appeared in the Winter 2021 issue of Redeeming the Time magazine. Brad Gsell is an ordained minister in the Faith Presbytery, Bible Presbyterian Church and serves as President of both the International Council of Christian Churches and The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions.*

On October 3, 2020, Pope Francis released an encyclical letter called "*Frateli Tutti: On Fraternity and Social Friendship*." On the surface, a reminder for us to "love one another" seems like something from which we could all benefit.

### Christian Compassion

Although we strongly reject the many false teachings of Rome, the Bible teaches that the furtherance of Christian love and compassion is sorely needed in our world and is a core duty of all believers. The Pope refers extensively to the Good Samaritan in *Luke* 10:30-37. Indeed, Christ teaches us in this passage that we are to show genuine compassion for even those who are of different beliefs, cultures, and so forth. Sometimes we only find time and means to help those in our own churches, and immediate circles, and these should be a priority. In *Galatians* 6:10, Paul tells us: "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." But we should notice clearly that Paul did not limit it to those in the church. He says to "do good unto *all* men" (emphasis ours).<sup>1</sup>

### The Pope Rightly Attacks Relativism and Utilitarianism

On page 1 of this issue of *Redeeming the Time* (see Editor's note above – Editor), we have an article about the dangers of living in a "post-truth" society. Francis likewise warns against recent trends to deny that there is objective truth:

The solution is not relativism. Under the guise of tolerance, relativism ultimately leaves the interpretation of moral values to those in power, to be defined as they see fit. "In the absence of objective truths or sound principles other than the satisfaction of our own desires and immediate needs ... we should not think that political efforts or the force of law will be sufficient.... When the culture itself is corrupt, and objective truth and universally valid principles are no longer upheld, then laws can only be seen as arbitrary impositions or obstacles to be avoided."<sup>2</sup>

Later, he writes:

What is now happening and drawing us into a perverse and barren way of thinking, is the reduction of ethics and politics to physics. Good and evil no longer exist in themselves; there is only a calculus of benefits and burdens. As a result of the displacement of moral reasoning, the law is no longer seen as reflecting a fundamental notion of justice but as mirroring notions currently in vogue. Breakdown ensues: everything is "leveled down" by a superficial bartered consensus. In the end, the law of the strongest prevails.

<sup>1</sup> *Editor's note. Though the author emphasizes all, Paul's emphasis is especially, though not limited to the household of faith.*

<sup>2</sup> Pope Francis, "Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*" (May 24, 2015), 123; AAS 107 (2015), 896.

### **The Pope's Unbiblical Vision**

Lest one should be comforted by the Pope's words, it soon becomes clear that his teaching on compassion, objective truth, immutable moral values, and so forth, is far different than what is taught in the Word of God. The Pope inserts the government as the instrument of provision in a grand utopian, socialist scheme. Instead of individuals being free to work hard and enjoy the fruit of their labor, the Pope believes that government should be the great leveler in taking from one set of citizens to give to others, which it deems more worthy.

In contradistinction to the Pope, the Scriptures teach responsible capitalism. The very premise of the Eighth Commandment, "Thou shalt not steal" (*Exodus* 20:15), is that a man has a right to own property, and no one has the right to take it away from him.

The Psalmist tells us: "For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee" (*Psalms* 128:2).

This is not a call to selfishness. Paul tells the Ephesians that a man should "labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth" (*Ephesians* 4:28). The *individual* is to care for his family, but then be full of compassion and mercy in helping others. This is *not* the role of government. Indeed, throughout history, Christians have given sacrificially to provide food, clothing, shelter, fresh water, hospitals, and so forth, to relieve suffering and misery. And we need to be doing that today.

Although the Pope condemns "relativism," and in another place "syncretism," nonetheless he promotes a universalism which finds God in the other religions, in the beliefs of all humans, and he downplays the exclusiveness of Christian doctrine.

### **Religious Universalism**

Pope Francis sees a world where all beliefs and convictions are on equal footing. He writes:

Let us dream, then, as a single human family, as fellow travelers sharing the same flesh, as children of the same earth which is our common home, each of us bringing the richness of his or her beliefs and convictions, each of us with his or her own voice, brothers and sisters all.

We certainly denounce colonialism and a "might makes right" mentality, yet it must be recognized that some beliefs and convictions bring unspeakable destruction and misery, whereas others cause men to

flourish. If we are to truly denounce relativism and promote bedrock moral truths, we cannot hold this position.

Speaking of his namesake, the Pope describes Francis of Assisi's visit to Sultan Malik-el-Kamil in Egypt in 1219. Prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this visit was usually seen as a failure, which led to the continuation of the crusades. However, in more recent times, the facts have been reinterpreted to promote Christian-Muslim dialogue. The Pope writes:

Francis [of Assisi] did not wage a war of words aimed at imposing doctrines; he simply spread the love of God. He understood that "God is love and those who abide in love abide in God" (1 John 4:16). In this way, he became a father to all and inspired the vision of a fraternal society.

The Pope then segues forward 800 years to 2019. He writes that in preparing this encyclical letter, he "felt particularly encouraged by the Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, with whom I met in Abu Dhabi," as an inspiration.

Mere discussion to improve secular goals is not what is being talked about. To remove all doubt, the Pope writes:

Dialogue between the followers of different religions does not take place simply for the sake of diplomacy, consideration or tolerance. In the words of the Bishops of India, "the goal of dialogue is to establish friendship, peace and harmony, and to share spiritual and moral values and experiences in a spirit of truth and love."<sup>3</sup>

Later, he writes:

From our faith experience and from the wisdom accumulated over centuries, but also from lessons learned from our many weaknesses and failures, we, the believers of the different religions, know that our witness to God benefits our societies.

Still later:

The Church esteems the ways in which God works in other religions, and "rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions. She has a high regard for their manner of life and conduct, their

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<sup>3</sup> Catholic Bishops' Conference Of India, "Response of the Church in India to the Present-day Challenges" (March 9, 2016).

precepts and doctrines which...often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men and women.”<sup>4</sup>

He next speaks of the goal for a one world church:

It is also urgent to continue to bear witness to the journey of encounter between the different Christian confessions. We cannot forget Christ’s desire “that they may all be one” (*cf.* John 17:21). Hearing his call, we recognize with sorrow that the process of globalization still lacks the prophetic and spiritual contribution of unity among Christians. This notwithstanding, “even as we make this journey towards full communion, we already have the duty to offer common witness to the love of God for all people by working together in the service of humanity.”<sup>5</sup>

It should be remembered that *John* 17:21 is preceded by verse 6: “I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.” In verse 17, Christ says: “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” The unity spoken of in this chapter is only between those whom God gave to the Son, who have kept His Word. There is no application here to the apostate Roman Catholic Church, Eastern Orthodox Church, or churches in the World Council of Churches.

### **Human Dignity**

In developing his theme, Pope Francis places great emphasis on “human dignity.” Indeed, having been created in God’s image, man is higher than all other living things on the earth in the sight of God. *Psalms* 8:4-8 says: “What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.” Although it is usually applied to Christ specifically as the Son of Man, it applies generally to all humankind.

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<sup>4</sup> Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, “Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions,” *Nostra Aetate*, 2.

<sup>5</sup> “Common Declaration of Pope Francis and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew,” Jerusalem (May 25, 2014), *L’Osservatore Romano*, May 26-27, 2014, 6.

All mankind fell into sin in the fall of Adam. We all fall “short of the glory of God” (*Romans* 3:23). As Christians, we are to eschew any sinful action that may harm others. We are to love mercy. We are to be gentle, good, kind, and full of good works. However, in a sinful world, there is much misery caused by evil actions, both on the part of individuals and governments. In line with Christian compassion, there also is the matter of individual responsibility.

The Apostle Paul speaks of this in *2 Thessalonians* 3:10-12: “For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.”

Yet, Pope Francis says:

Every human being has the right to live with dignity and to develop integrally; this fundamental right cannot be denied by any country. People have this right even if they are unproductive, or were born with or developed limitations.

Of course, we must have compassion on those with disabilities of all kinds, but someone who chooses not to work, when he or she is able, is not to be the object of our charity.

Francis believes that no matter what a man’s actions may be, society is obligated to make sure that his needs are met. He mistakenly claims: “This led them [early Christians] to realize that if one person lacks what is necessary to live with dignity, it is because another person is detaining it.” If you have worked hard to provide for your family and another person has not, the Pope believes he has a “right” to what you have. This is not what the Bible teaches.

He continues:

The path to social unity always entails acknowledging the possibility that others have, at least in part, a legitimate point of view, something worthwhile to contribute, even if they were in error or acted badly. “We should never confine others to what they may have said or done, but value them for the promise that they embody,”<sup>6</sup> a promise that always brings with it a spark of new hope.

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<sup>6</sup> Pope Francis, “Message for the 2020 World Day of Peace” (December 8, 2019), *L’Osservatore Romano*, December 13, 2019, 8.

Here, a man's actions are totally divorced from his "right" to "dignity." Even the death penalty is condemned by the Pope because it supposedly violates this so-called "right to human dignity."

The Bible teaches, in bold contrast, that true "human dignity" is to be found only by faith in Christ, and obedience to His Word.

### **Attack on Capitalism<sup>7</sup>**

The Pope is quick to criticize capitalism. He sees men and women directly responsible to God working to enjoy the fruit of their labor as inherently "selfish" and "individualistic." He views capitalistic societies as having little compassion on the poor and building a "dog eat dog" world where the "disenfranchised" are left behind.

He writes: "If a society is governed primarily by the criteria of market freedom and efficiency, there is no place for such persons, and fraternity will remain just another vague ideal."

Later, he states: "What we need in fact are states and civil institutions that are present and active, that look beyond the free and efficient working of certain economic, political or ideological systems, and are primarily concerned with individuals and the common good."

In a comment directed at free nations in the Western world, he writes: "Words like freedom, democracy or fraternity prove meaningless, for the fact is that 'only when our economic and social system no longer produces even a single victim, a single person cast aside, will we be able to celebrate the feast of universal fraternity.'"<sup>8</sup>

### **Attack on Private Property Rights**

In keeping with his anti-capitalism, the Pope more specifically assails the right to private property. He states:

For my part, I would observe that "the Christian tradition has never recognized the right to private property as absolute or inviolable, and has stressed the social purpose of all forms of private property."<sup>9</sup>

The principle of the common use of created goods is the "first principle of the whole ethical and social order"<sup>10</sup>; it is a natural and inherent right that takes priority over others.<sup>11</sup> All other rights having to do with the goods necessary for the integral fulfilment of persons, including that of private property or any other type of property, should—in the words of Saint Paul VI—"in no way hinder [this right], but should actively facilitate its implementation."<sup>12</sup> The right to private property can only be considered a secondary natural right, derived from the principle of the universal destination of created goods. This has concrete consequences that ought to be reflected in the workings of society. Yet it often happens that secondary rights displace primary and overriding rights, in practice making them irrelevant.

Later, he writes: "The right to private property is always accompanied by the primary and prior principle of the subordination of all private property to the universal destination of the earth's goods, and thus the right of all to their use."<sup>13</sup>

### **Socialism and Communism**

The Pope is not just decrying the abuses of capitalism but is indeed promoting socialism and even communism. We have known since Francis was elected Pope that he was an advocate of the so-called Liberation Theology, which has caused untold misery across the planet, as once thriving economies have been overthrown and replaced with failed utopian, socialist ideals.

He writes:

A truly human and fraternal society will be capable of ensuring in an efficient and stable way that each of its members is accompanied at every stage of life. Not only by providing for their basic needs, but by enabling them to give the best of themselves, even though their performance may be less than optimum, their pace slow or their efficiency limited.

<sup>7</sup> Editor's note: For a full treatment on Rome's political and economic thought see John W. Robbins' Ecclesiastical Megalomania: The Economic and Political Thought of The Roman Catholic Church.

<sup>8</sup> Pope Francis, "Message for the 'Economy of Francesco' Event" (May 1, 2019), *L'Osservatore Romano*, May 12, 2019, 8.

<sup>9</sup> Pope Francis, "Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*" (May 24, 2015), 93; AAS 107 (2015), 884.

<sup>10</sup> Pope John Paul II, "Encyclical Letter *Laborem Exercens*" (September 14, 1981), 19: AAS 73 (1981), 626.

<sup>11</sup> Compare Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, "Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church," 172.

<sup>12</sup> Pope Paul VI, "Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio*" (March 26, 1967): AAS 59 (1967), 268.

<sup>13</sup> Pope Francis, compare "Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*" (May 24, 2015), 93: AAS 107 (2015), 884-885; "Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*" (November 24, 2013), 189-190: AAS 105 (2013), 1099-1100.

This aligns quite well with the phrase popularized by Karl Marx in 1855 (although in existence in various forms before that time): “From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs.”<sup>14</sup> We have seen the utter tragedy this dogma, not accounting for man’s fallen, sinful nature, has inflicted in many places in the world.

Elsewhere, Francis writes:

Today there is a tendency to claim ever broader individual—I am tempted to say individualistic—rights. Underlying this is a conception of the human person as detached from all social and anthropological contexts.... Unless the rights of each individual are harmoniously ordered to the greater good, those rights will end up being considered limitless and consequently will become a source of conflicts and violence.<sup>15</sup>

While admitting that his goals may appear to be “naïve and utopian,” he states that he is “envisaging a new humanity. We can aspire to a world that provides land, housing and work for all.”

He makes no apology for his belief that the raw power of the State must be employed for his socialist scheme, despite the teaching of the Scriptures to the contrary. He writes:

For whereas individuals can help others in need, when they join together in initiating social processes of fraternity and justice for all, they enter the “field of charity at its most vast, namely political charity.”<sup>16</sup> This entails working for a social and political order whose soul is social charity.<sup>17</sup> Once more, I appeal for a renewed appreciation of politics as “a lofty vocation and one of the highest forms of charity, inasmuch as it seeks the common good.”<sup>18</sup>

Pope Francis looks to Mary to accomplish his goals: “In the power of the risen Lord, she [Mary] wants to give birth to a new world, where all of us are brothers and sisters, where there is room for all those whom

our societies discard, where justice and peace are resplendent.”

### **A World Without Borders**

The Pope goes on a major offensive against national borders and most limitations on immigration. He states: “We are obliged to respect the right of all individuals to find a place that meets their basic needs and those of their families, and where they can find personal fulfilment.”

The United States and other countries have long had a generous immigration policy, particularly for those fleeing from persecution. Millions have come to the United States, and through God’s help, hard work, and determination, have made a comfortable living for their families, and have given to others in need. U.S. citizens have been among the most generous anywhere in helping people here and around the world.

However, with the coming of the massive welfare state, our country now has a published national debt of \$27.6 trillion. This number will be out of date by the time you read this, and many economists believe this number is very much lower than the actual figure. Many come to the United States out of fear for their lives, religious persecution, and so forth. But many come just because they know their circumstances will be vastly better due to government largesse. Meanwhile, the government breaks the Law of God by forcibly stealing from its citizens and going hopelessly into debt to pay for this.

The Pope makes no real recognition of this. Instead, he becomes very condescending, saying that any concern about huge waves of immigrants is caused by people’s unjustified “doubts and fears,” which cause them to be “xenophobic,” “intolerant,” and “racist.”<sup>19</sup>

Elsewhere, he states: “Then too, ‘in some host countries, migration causes fear and alarm, often fomented and exploited for political purposes.’”<sup>20</sup>

Even though Vatican City is surrounded by high walls, the Pope condemns “walls on the land, in order to prevent this encounter with other cultures, with other people. And those who raise walls will end up as slaves within the very walls they have built. They are

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<sup>14</sup> “Critique of the Gotha Programme,” *Marx/Engels Selected Works*, Vol. 3, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970), 13-30.

<sup>15</sup> Pope Francis, “Address to the European Parliament,” Strasbourg (November 25, 2014): AAS 106 (2014), 997.

<sup>16</sup> Pope Pius XI, “Address to the Italian Catholic Federation of University Students” (December 18, 1927): *L’Osservatore Romano*, December 23, 1927, 3.

<sup>17</sup> Pope Pius XI, compare “Encyclical Letter *Quadragesimo Anno*” (May 15, 1931): AAS 23 (1931), 206-207.

<sup>18</sup> Pope Francis, “Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*” (November 24, 2013), 205: AAS 105 (2013), 1106.

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<sup>19</sup> Pope Francis, “Message for the 2019 World Day of Migrants and Refugees” (May 27, 2019): *L’Osservatore Romano*, May 27-28, 2019, 8.

<sup>20</sup> Pope Francis, “Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit*” (March 25, 2019), 92.

left without horizons, for they lack this interchange with others.”<sup>21</sup>

National borders, sovereignty and property are impermissible: “We can then say that each country also belongs to the foreigner, inasmuch as a territory’s goods must not be denied to a needy person coming from elsewhere.”

He further states:

No one, then, can remain excluded because of his or her place of birth, much less because of privileges enjoyed by others who were born in lands of greater opportunity. The limits and borders of individual states cannot stand in the way of this. As it is unacceptable that some have fewer rights by virtue of being women, it is likewise unacceptable that the mere place of one’s birth or residence should result in his or her possessing fewer opportunities for a developed and dignified life.

The recipient countries, according to the Pope, are responsible for:

providing suitable and dignified housing; guaranteeing personal security and access to basic services; ensuring adequate consular assistance and the right to retain personal identity documents; equitable access to the justice system; the possibility of opening bank accounts and the guarantee of the minimum needed to survive; freedom of movement and the possibility of employment; protecting minors and ensuring their regular access to education; providing for programmes of temporary guardianship or shelter; guaranteeing religious freedom; promoting integration into society; supporting the reuniting of families; and preparing local communities for the process of integration.<sup>22</sup>

He continues that in certain circumstances debt freely incurred by a nation should not be collected, because this debt “should not end up compromising their very existence and growth.” Nothing is stated as to what adverse consequences the failure to receive promised payment will cause creditors.

## **One World Government**

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<sup>21</sup> Pope Francis, “Dialogue with Students and Teachers of the San Carlo College in Milan” (April 6, 2019): *L’Osservatore Romano*, April 8-9, 2019, 6.

<sup>22</sup> Pope Francis, compare “Message for the 2018 World Day of Migrants and Refugees” (January 14, 2018): AAS 109 (2017), 918-923.

Pope Francis sees a one world government and a one world religion as what is needed to bring about his unobtainable utopian dream. Throughout this encyclical letter he criticizes national pride and unity. He writes:

Instances of a myopic, extremist, resentful and aggressive nationalism are on the rise. In some countries, a concept of popular and national unity influenced by various ideologies is creating new forms of selfishness and a loss of the social sense under the guise of defending national interests....

Nowadays, what do certain words like democracy, freedom, justice or unity really mean? They have been bent and shaped to serve as tools for domination, as meaningless tags that can be used to justify any action.

The Pope has over the last few years used such language in attacking the United States, and the Trump Administration. Of course we have seen dangerous examples of national unity for nefarious purposes whipped up by evil leaders in Germany, Japan, Russia, China, and a host of other countries. But nowhere does the Bible teach that proper national sovereignty is evil. Indeed, if one is seeking to move to one world control, any signs of legitimate national pride and sovereignty are considered evil.

In his attack on national sovereignty, the Pontiff writes, “It is essential to devise stronger and more efficiently organized international institutions, with functionaries who are appointed fairly by agreement among national governments, and empowered to impose sanctions.”<sup>23</sup> He urges “the possibility of some form of world authority regulated by law,” and refers to a statement by Pope Benedict XVI.<sup>24</sup> This organization would need to be “equipped with the power to provide for the global common good.”

He quotes Pope Benedict XVI directly: “In this regard, I would also note the need for a reform of ‘the United Nations Organization, and likewise of economic institutions and international finance, so that the concept of the family of nations can acquire real teeth.’”<sup>25</sup>

The World Council of Churches (WCC), rather than issuing a warning about the Pope’s Encyclical Letter,

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<sup>23</sup> Pope Francis, “Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si*” (May 24, 2015), 93; AAS 107 (2015), 916-917.

<sup>24</sup> Compare Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate*” (June 29, 2009), 67: AAS 101 (2009), 700-701.

<sup>25</sup> Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate*” (June 29, 2009), 700.

lauded it in a statement by WCC Interim General Secretary Rev. Prof. Dr. Ioan Sauca, on the official WCC website. He states:

The encyclical shows important intersections with the World Council of Churches' diverse areas of work and a great concordance with its vision. The theme of the 11<sup>th</sup> WCC Assembly, which will take place in 2022 in Karlsruhe, Germany, is "Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity."<sup>26</sup>

### **Why is this important?**

The bankrupt and unbiblical socialist agenda of a host of clerics, such as Jeremiah Wright (Barack Obama's pastor), James Cone, Leonardo Boff, Gustavo Gutiérrez—and the present Pope in particular—must be opposed by God's people, as it threatens God's design for how we, and all men everywhere are to live.

Brazilian churchman Boff, who is a close friend of the present Pope, has come out in glowing praise of "*Fratelli Tutti*." In the statement, Boff calls for "de-westernization," and that the Pope's vision is the "path to be travelled by all."<sup>27</sup>

Times have changed. This is the same Leonardo Boff who was censured in 1984 by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (then prefect of the Roman Catholic Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith; later to become Pope Benedict XVI) for his devotion to Liberation Theology and Marxist principles. Boff eventually left the priesthood and called Benedict "a religious terrorist."<sup>28</sup>

There are many citizens and politicians who are greatly influenced by the Pope, and the mainline Protestant churches, in establishing social policy. This also gives ammunition to many who hate Christianity yet quote out of context many of the verses used by these Liberation Theologians for their selfish ends.

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<sup>26</sup> Ioan Sauca, "On Fratelli tutti Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca , interim General secretary of the World Council of Churches," <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/on-fratelli-tutti-rev-prof-dr-ioan-sauca-interim-general-secretary-of-the-world-council-of-churches>, October 22, 2020.

<sup>27</sup> Leonardo Boff, "Liberation theologian Boff, on 'Landmark' 'Fratelli tutti': 'The Pope has done his part. It is up to us not to let the dream stay just a dream.'" October 7, 2020, <https://novenanews.com/boff-fratelli-tutti-pope-done-his-part-up-to-us/>.

<sup>28</sup> Interview to the *Comunità Italiana*: "Um Cardeal como J. Ratzinger, [...], comete terrorismo religioso...." (November 2001).

The increasing move over the last half century toward the so-called "Liberation Theology" in these churches is carrying over into our national thought and disastrous social policy, which will destroy our nation. Instead of bringing increased "human dignity" and helping the poor, it will destroy freedom, enslave the souls of men and multiply poverty.

Each Christian must come in submission and humility before God in having a heart full of love and charity to those in need. Our belief in the free enterprise system must never compromise that, or it is a grievous sin against God. But, we shall never support a bloated federal government, which thinks it knows best what to do with what God has given us, and how we should live our lives. In the end, it is not governments, but each individual, who is responsible before God. *Second Corinthians* 5:10 tells us: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

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### *Acts 2-5 and Socialism*

Some well-meaning Christians have pointed to *Acts* 2:42-47 and 4:32-37 to argue that socialism is a Biblical requirement: "And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need" (*Acts* 2:44-45).

It must be recognized that this was a *voluntary* arrangement to meet a specific need, and from all appearances was temporary. Those passages have a number of imperfect Greek verbs, indicating that the selling of property happened on occasion, not the complete selling of everything one owned forever. There further is no mention of equality, only that funds were distributed according to actual need.

*Acts* 5 details the sin of Ananias and Sapphira. Their sin was not that they didn't donate everything, it was that they lied about it. Peter makes this clear in verse 4: "Whiles it [the property] remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." Peter in no way condemns private property. There are many instances in the New Testament where Christian gave for a specific need,

with no indication of everyone drawing out of a common pot. The Scriptures advocate free enterprise repeatedly, from beginning to end. The account of this voluntary arrangement, as a historical event, can in no way be seen as an abrogation of the Biblical teaching of private property rights.

Voluntary socialism<sup>29</sup> is, of course, permissible, and in some cases required. There certainly must be socialism within the family structure. It is the duty of the family to work together for the mutual benefit of each member. Particularly children, who are unable to take care of their own needs, must rightly depend on the labor, love, patience, protection, and provision of their parents. The marriage vows are in fact a voluntary form of socialism, where each one, in love, promises to take care of the other spouse “till death do us part.” Paul declares in *1 Timothy* 5:8: “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” Paul does not call on provision from the commune, but rather for parents to fulfil their God-given responsibilities.

However, throughout human history, socialistic schemes have usually interfered with the individual’s direct relationship to God, and has *increased* poverty and misery, rather than eradicating it. “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want,” must never be replaced with “The Government is my shepherd ...” or “other people are my shepherd....”

A number of well-meaning religious groups throughout history have attempted to establish permanent voluntary communes based on socialism. Nearly all of these have ended on the scrap heap of history—in very short order. Utopianism will never work due to the wickedness and sin in the heart of all men.

In discussing *Acts* 4:32-37, John Calvin states:

For neither doth Luke in this place prescribe a law to all men which they must of necessity follow, while that he reckoneth up what they did in whom a certain singular efficacy and power of the Holy

Spirit of God did show itself; neither doth he speak generally of all men, that it can be gathered that they were not counted Christians which did not sell all that they had.<sup>30</sup>

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## The Mayflower Pilgrims and Socialism

Some like to justify socialism by pointing to the Pilgrims, who set up a system with no private property, and everything went into the common treasury. But this was an utter failure. Governor William Bradford wrote concerning this:

The experience that was had in this common course and condition, tried sundry years and that amongst godly and sober men, may well evince the vanity of that conceit...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....

Rather, this arrangement

was found to breed much confusion and discontent and retard much employment that would have been to their benefit and comfort.... Let none object this is men’s corruption, and nothing to the course itself. I answer, seeing all men have this corruption in them, God in His wisdom saw another course fitter for them.

Communism was abandoned, with capitalism instituted in its place. Bradford wrote concerning this new system:

So every family was assigned a parcel of land, according to the proportion of their number.... This was very successful. It made all hands very industrious, so that much more corn was planted than otherwise would have been by any means the Governor or any other could devise, and saved him a great deal of trouble, and gave far better satisfaction.

The women now went willing into the field, and took their little ones with them to plant corn, while before they would allege weakness and inability, and to have compelled them would have been thought great tyranny and oppression.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Editor’s note: Socialism is not defined, but in its ordinary meaning, “voluntary” would not be a proper modifier of it, for in socialist states, socialism is not voluntary but coerced. Rather, the early believers took their own property and sold it to give to those who in the body who had need. Giving voluntarily is not socialism.

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<sup>30</sup> John Calvin, “Commentary Upon the Acts of the Apostles,” *Calvin’s Commentaries*, Vol. XVIII (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), 193.

<sup>31</sup> William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation: 1620-1647* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), 120.