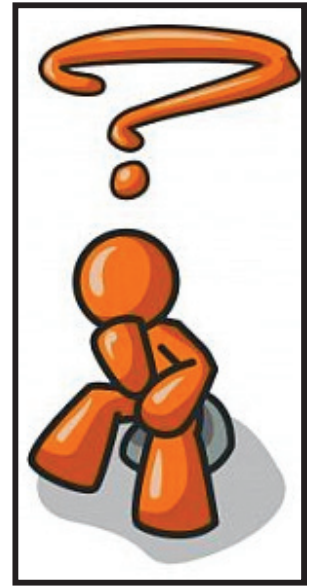


What About...Socialism...in the Church

BY DR. DAVID A. DEWITT

Twice I received a widely circulated email [which you probably also received], of an economics teacher who did an experiment in his class. He had a class of very liberal students who believed in the Communist agenda — **“From each according to his ability, to each according to his need,”** a slogan popularized by Karl Marx in 1875. In other words, the wealth of society should be equally distributed by the government. So the teacher said he would put that idea into practice. Every test score would be averaged and that grade would be given to everyone, so the poorer students could benefit from the better students. The better students would supply grades **“from each according to his ability”** to the poorer students **“to each according to his need.”** As you know, or could guess, each test score average became lower and lower. The average went from B to C to F because the students realized it did not matter how much they studied, they would get the same grade anyway. When there was no individual achievement, no one was motivated.



Many circulating the email are conservative evangelicals who want less government, less socialism, and more individual accountability in their country. They want the government to stimulate the private sector (or just leave it alone) rather than just grow bigger government. They don't want a tax-and-spend government with a socialist agenda.

But here is what is interesting to me. What many of these same evangelicals reject in their government, they embrace in their churches. They belong to churches where individualism is criticized and community is promoted. Their churches grow themselves, their staff, and volunteer staff bigger, while discouraging independent ministry that is not under the auspices of the church. So the idea of more ministry is more church (government) jobs. And rather than encourage the mature growing believer, they collect a tax (I mean a tithe) from the believer so they can supply more church (government) jobs, and distribute to the needy (instead of leaving it to the individual). They do not help mature people, but they do use mature people **“from each according to his ability”** to minister to the unrepentant sinners **“to each according to his need.”**

With the focus on unrepentant sinners (sometimes called “seekers”), holiness is replaced with toler-

ance, leaving nothing to encourage older believers to abstain from divorce, cohabitation, “casual blasphemy,” or whatever else is tolerated. As with the kids' test scores in the socialist classroom above, standards sink lower and lower. Personal spiritual gifts don't really matter (much), since we have professional pastors and a volunteer staff working for the church who do everything. Actually, the pastors need to do almost everything because they need to prove they are successful at what they were hired to do. So the members or parishioners are told to give their talent to the church, and let the church distribute it. **“From each according to his ability”** and distribute **“to each according to his need.”** Ecclesiastical Socialism.

But Christ and the apostles described a church where *we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love* (Ephesians 4:14-16, emphasis mine). Christ and the apostles never taught an **Ecclesiastical Socialism.**