

e-concepts

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Should the Church Practice Socialism?

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Acts 2:44-45

And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.

The Church Did Not Practice Socialism

Some claim this is socialism. Since they had all things in common, sold their property and possessions and distributed them to everyone in need, the church should participate in a socialist (and ultimately communist) view of the economy.

First, let's define a socialist view of the economy. Socialism is where the government (by various means and categories) taxes those with more wealth and distributes it to where it (the government) determines there to be a need.

So the government determines what it means to be wealthy, takes money from them, determines what a need is, and distributes the money of those it considers wealthy to what it considers a need. **This takes all morality out of giving.** For example, if you are hungry and I give you a sandwich, I am expressing generosity, and you are appreciative.

If, on the other hand, some agency steals my sandwich and gives it to you, I am resentful, and you will look for them to give you another one. Instead of generosity and appreciation, we now have resentment and laziness. Socialism destroys the motivation for work and achievement on the part of the giver and receiver.

The Church Participates In Giving to One Another

What is described in Acts 2 is believers getting together to voluntarily meet a need. There were many Jews in Jerusalem from all around the Mediterranean because of the festivals of Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Pentecost. Thousands of them became believers in the early days of the church. Before they returned to their hometowns, they wanted to stay awhile and hear the apostles' teaching.

So the believers in Jerusalem *began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need*, so these new believers could stay to learn from the apostles. It was apparently a good investment, since it resulted in churches being established all over the Roman Empire. There was no socialism here, just believers giving to other believers in need.

From Acts 2, we can observe several things about the church:

There was teaching (consistent with the apostles' teaching). There was fellowship. There was breaking of bread (probably a meal with a time of Communion). There was prayer. There was a voluntary sharing (not a mandatory collection and distribution) of possessions to meet needs. The church gathered *day by day...from house to house*. The apostles also honored the temple as the Old Testament central sanctuary until it was destroyed in A.D. 70. But they never replaced it with a sanctuary for the church.

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