

The Bride Of Christ On Welfare

by Tom Eldredge



Does the Lord Jesus Christ approve when His bride, the Church, allows the government to meet the material needs of its members, or is the Church being disobedient and adulterous?

The goal of this article is to introduce future patriarchs to ideas once understood and mastered by those who loved righteousness, those who laid the foundations for the freedoms we are so rapidly losing in our day. I believe that if we do not in some way come to grips with the issues raised in this article, our children will live as slaves. May our Lord Jesus Christ give us the grace to study these challenging areas and the courage to turn our hearts more fully towards Him, our Husband-Provider, and to our children.

Meeting Needs God's Way

God's answer to human need is love demonstrated in ministry (discipling) and personal care (giving). The family should care for its own; the extended family of the church should care for those in its midst without family support; and then the church should help those outside the church, as it has opportunity (1 Tim. 5:4,8,16; Gal. 6:10). The giving of material provisions alone, without discipleship, only promotes dependence. God has the only program that truly meets human needs because it recognizes that such needs are never merely physical in nature; they are always spiritual as well.

The goal of God's ministry is a glorious, contented bride for His son. The Apostle Paul instructed the Thessalonians "that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing (1 Thess. 4:11,12). He restated the same theme in 2 Thessalonians 3:12. The absolute minimum obligation of the Church is to take care of its own, and in meeting these needs to "be not weary in well doing" (Gal. 6:9).

Jesus allowed his life to be personally affected by the needs of the downtrodden. His bride should too. Notice the passage He selected from the Book of Isaiah (chapter 61) on the opening day of His ministry: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Lk 4:18). The apostle Paul reminded us, "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19). If the lost will come to Christ, all of their needs will be met. The Church has the answer!

The Church Accepts Government's "Charity" Role

However, the Church today tolerates and even encourages the government's taking an active role in providing for the needs of families within reach of the local churches. Just answer these questions and see if you don't agree. How are the troubling needs of our communities routinely being met? How are the elderly, the infirm, and "widows indeed" (1 Tim. 5:3) being cared for? Do churches tolerate members accepting food stamps or welfare? Are elderly Christians supported by Social Security? How are the needs of single parents being met? Do church leaders suggest to a member that they apply for unemployment after the loss of a job?

Many Christians believe that the Church and government are working together today in a way that is quite acceptable. After all, because of the many government "entitlement" programs, there is no reason for anyone to be going without the basic necessities in America today. Furthermore, they believe that this is freeing up the Church to focus on more important ministries, like the spreading of the gospel to foreign lands.

But is this true? Although many churches appear to be immune to the problems that exist right within their own communities, local government officials are acutely affected by them. There is government money available to solve almost every financial need imaginable, but domestic conflicts generally top the list of calls responded to by local police. Please consider: when the Church cannot bring itself to provide financial help for those in need within its own community, does it not also foreclose its opportunity for other ministry?

I can share from my perspective as a township supervisor that the presence of Bible-believing local churches in the community is deemed to be irrelevant to most people, and this trend is increasingly reflected in adverse zoning restrictions on churches. From my perspective, the fact that many Bible-believing churches are content with their ministries and cannot even perceive local needs let alone respond to them reveals the depth of the spiritual blindness and bankruptcy of a church which thinks it has need of nothing, but is actually wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind and naked (see Rev. 3:14-19). How must this grieve the heart of the Church's Husband.

There are others who seem to believe that the government's sensitivity to these needs actually demonstrates the success of the Church in teaching kindness and charity to our culture and to our government. This brings us to the question of what constitutes charitable ministry.

The apostle Paul's two letters to the Thessalonians referenced above reveal his keen sense of concern that believers walk "honestly" toward them that are without. Many Christians have given tacit approval to our culture's brand of "charity", even allowing it to reach members within our congregations. Is this walking "honestly"? Is there anything dishonest about accepting the

government's "charity"? This is a critically important question. The church's response to the government's offer of provision reveals an ignorance of and disregard for the importance of maintaining an "honest" walk before the world. Underlying this ignorance is an ignorance of true righteousness, God's law, and the nature of justice.

One of the areas of study I am burdened to stir young patriachs to explore is the foundation of law and justice and how these concepts relate to love. Our God is a just God, and His law is holy and spiritual (Romans 7:12,14). We must be exercised in it if we are to be salt with savor enough to preserve our heritage of freedom for our children: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou has forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children" (Hosea 4:6).

In preparation for our look at some of the foundational principles of law and justice, let us take a closer look at man's way of meeting needs.

The Government as Provider

Since the War on Poverty began in the Sixties, whenever someone has experienced a financial need, the needy person has been typically directed towards some government agency. Generally, the government has simply selected from one or more of its social welfare programs and handed out financial assistance. More recently, however, seeing that this type of open-handed assistance is becoming expensive fast, the government is realizing that it needs to take the next step and train the unfortunates. So they are placing more emphasis on education directed towards specific socially desirable "outcomes."

We need to ask ourselves some questions about the government's plan for meeting human needs. Where will the needy person learn to go to have his needs met? In the end, whose disciple will the needy person become? If he becomes a disciple of the government, will he understand or find freedom? What will the government's disciple learn about law and justice? Will he learn that government loves people? Will he learn how to love?

Please consider a few principles with me. Love (charity) is more than good intentions; true charity must be shaped by the character and will of God. Before there can be charity, there must be justice and a system of law that can produce justice. God is the source of all of these, and if we truly know and understand Him we will know and understand these concepts.

It is not surprising to see that our culture has a distorted understanding of love, justice, and law, since it is running away from God. Unfortunately, I believe that the Church has also become comfortable with the government's form of charity and has lost its commitment to walk honestly before them that are without. We men need to go back and sharpen our understanding of

justice and law before we will be able to speak clearly about demonstrating the love of God in charitable works. To understand the relationship of the church and the government to charity we need to understand the foundation of law and the proper role of civil government.

Law Should Protect Life, Liberty and Property

The basis for law is simple; it is based upon the dominion mandate given to man in Genesis 1:28. God ordained that man have liberty to take dominion over the natural resources of the creation to sustain and develop his life and the lives of his dependents for the glory of God. As the enlightened Frenchman Frederick Bastiat observed in his 1850 classic entitled *The Law*:

We hold from God the gift which includes all others. This gift is life—physical, intellectual, and moral life. But life cannot maintain itself alone. The Creator of life has entrusted us with the responsibility of preserving, developing, and perfecting it. In order that we may accomplish this, He has provided us with a collection of marvelous faculties. And He has put us in the midst of a variety of natural resources. By the application of our faculties to these natural resources we convert them into products, and use them. This process is necessary in order that life may run its appointed course. Life, faculties, production—in other words, individuality, liberty, property—this is man. And in spite of the cunning of artful political leaders, these three gifts from God precede all human legislation, and are superior to it.

Life, liberty, and property do not exist because men have made laws. On the contrary, it was the fact that life, liberty, and property existed beforehand that caused men to make laws in the first place.

The Scripture tells us that God wrote the law on man's heart (Romans 2:15). This law is sometimes referred to as the law of nature. Legislators throughout the ages, however, in their fallen state cannot establish God's righteous laws, and throughout all of human history men have suffered at the hands of government. Even though God actually gave Moses His law, it too was ignored and distorted by men. Bastiat continues:

What, then, is law? It is the collective organization of the individual right to lawful defense.

Each of us has a natural right—from God—to defend his person, his liberty, and his property. These are the three basic requirements of life, and the preservation of any one of them is completely dependent upon the preservation of the other two. For what are our faculties but the extension of our individuality? and what is property but an extension of our faculties?

If every person has the right to defend—even by force—his person, his liberty, and his property, then it follows that a group of men have the right to organize and support a common force to protect these rights constantly. Thus the principle of collective right—its reason for existing, its lawfulness—is based on individual right. And the common force that protects this collective right cannot logically have any other purpose or any other mission than that for which it acts as a substitute. Thus, since an individual cannot lawfully use force against the person, liberty or property of another individual, then the common force—for the same reason—cannot lawfully be used to destroy the person, liberty or property of individuals or groups.

Such a perversion of force would be, in both cases, contrary to our premise. Force has been given to us to defend our own individual rights. Who will dare to say that force has been given to us to destroy the equal rights of our brothers? Since no individual acting separately can lawfully use force to destroy the rights of others, does it not logically follow that the same principle also applies to the common force that is nothing more than the organized combination of the individual forces?

If this is true, then nothing can be more evident than this: The Law is the organization of a common force for individual forces. And this common force is to do only what the individual forces have a natural and lawful right to do: to protect persons, liberties, and properties; to maintain the right of each, and to cause justice to reign over us.

So what happens if a government takes the common force, or political power behind the law, and establishes programs which take the property or fruits of the labor of one individual, and in the name of “law” gives that property to another? That great student of the American Declaration of Independence and Constitution, Frederick Bastiat cried out to his countrymen, wandering among the ruins of the French Revolution:

The law perverted! And the police powers of the state perverted along with it! The law, I say not only turned from its proper purpose, but made to follow an entirely contrary purpose! The law become the weapon of every kind of greed! Instead of checking crime, the law itself is guilty of the evils it is supposed to punish! If this is true, it is a serious fact, and a moral duty requires me to call the attention of my fellow-citizens to it.

The Common Law

At the time of the founding of our country, the common use of the word “Law” referred to the common law, or the law of the land. It had been meticulously refined over hundreds of years as people integrated principles which they were learning from the Bible into the natural laws which were written in their

hearts and the laws handed down to them from the past. Americans inherited this foundation of law from England, a land unusually blessed in its time by the light revealed to its people during the Protestant Reformation. Our forefathers then further refined the common law to reflect their new appreciation of religious freedom, and the American version of the common law became the law of the land preserved for us in the Constitution of the United States of America. Our nation's law was rooted in the biblical understanding of life, liberty, and property.

The story of how America lost her common law heritage is beyond the scope of this article, but we should be aware that many of our founding fathers loved justice dearly, and were willing to die to preserve the proper functions of government. The following is from an article written by Richard J Maybury entitled, "How We Lost Our Common Law Heritage":

The great British statesman Edmund Burke said of early America, "In no country, perhaps, in the world, is law so general a study." He observed that "all who read, and most do read, endeavor to obtain some smattering in that science. I have been told by an eminent bookseller, that in no branch of his business ... were so many books as those on law exported to the colonies."

A British general trying to govern America in the 1700's complained that Americans were impossible to buffalo; they were all lawyers.

Our nation's understanding of justice shaped by our common law heritage continued for a number of years. One of the U. S. Supreme Court justices expressed the view of property and government which held sway from the early days of our republic:

It can never be admitted as a just attribute of sovereignty in a government, to take the property of one citizen and bestow it upon another. The exercise of such power is incompatible with the nature and object of all government and is destructive of the great end and aim for which government is instituted and subversive of the fundamental principles upon which all free governments are organized. (White v White, 5 Barb. 474, 484-5)

Socialism: Satan's Law

Eventually America forgot the purpose of law and began to use it in a manner that was the very opposite of what was intended by our forefathers. The new use of the law is embodied in the word "socialism."

Webster's New World Dictionary defines socialism as "the theory of the ownership and operation of the means of production and distribution by

society rather than by private individuals, with all members of society sharing in the work and products." Could such a nice sounding theory be from the pit of hell?

In all of Satan's designs there is destruction of God's good purposes, leading to death. Under socialism "society"—actually government officials—take liberties and property from individuals and redistribute them in a way that will most expediently serve the aim of their remaining in power. Therefore, at the root of socialism is the theft of the life that God gave man at creation. God's law says: "Thou shalt not steal." The individual has no right to take his neighbor's liberty or property, nor has he the right to hire someone to do his stealing for him. It naturally follows that he has no right to elect someone to do his stealing for him, and yet this legal plunder has been institutionalized in America under the color of law.

Winston Churchill said, "Socialism is a philosophy of failure, a creed of ignorance, and a gospel of envy. Its inherent virtue is the sharing of misery." I appreciate Churchill's recognition of socialism's religious undertones.

Less than a hundred years ago, "socialism" was an ugly word to almost every American. How did our forefathers discern this evil, and why are Americans so blind to it today? How is it that now even the Church lives comfortably with it? Does this generation of Christians even understand socialism? Have we become blinded by the benefits we receive from it? How can we discern these things? These are some good questions for further study, but for now, let us consider how this relates to the spiritual condition of the church.

Every social welfare program has at its root deceit and theft. The perfect example of this is the Social Security system, which was one of our nation's first grand experiments in socialism. In fact, the nexus for almost every social welfare program offered in the USA today is the citizen's voluntary application for benefits under the Social Security system. When a person files an "Application For Social Security Number" he is requesting the government to set up an account for him so that he can participate in the social welfare programs available to those who carry the number. Contrary to what we have been led to believe, a Social Security number is not required to get a job. Technically, the number is completely optional, but socialism has become such a universally accepted way of life in America, that life has become difficult without a Social Security number, and people are sometimes discriminated against because they do not have one. Americans who never apply for a number are simply not entitled to receive benefits, and they are not required to make contributions to the Social Security system. Those who have applied for the number are not legally permitted to "un-apply." It is a trap designed to bring every American into the tax-hungry welfare system and to bring them to the level of poverty acceptable to the government.

Our Parents on Welfare

Many of our churches are led by senior citizens who years ago were tricked into trusting in Uncle Sam's beautifully adorned social welfare program and the lie that their "contributions" would be invested like insurance premiums. As a result, many seniors are now fully dependent on their master, the federal government. Larry Burkett and others have pointed out that within three years, most people on Social Security today have received back all that they put in during their lifetimes. After that, they are living on welfare, paid for by today's wage earners. While their generation will benefit from the spoils of socialism, future generations will only share the poverty that this financial pyramid scheme produces.

When church leaders send needy persons to the government to get help or support under one of its social welfare programs, they are encouraging the government to steal, and making the needy person a partner in the theft. Furthermore they are encouraging that needy person to become a disciple of the government instead of our Lord Jesus Christ. The message is, the government can meet your needs; Christ, through His bride, cannot.

The new disciple of government then learns that the government (not God) is his provider and the source of his rights, including a legal right to his neighbor's property if he needs it. He learns to value "fairness" (forced equality) rather than justice. Finally, he also learns that love can be coerced. What kind of future will the family have if we continue to send people to the government for help?

Because many elders in local churches have accepted the concept of Social Security, they have accepted the government's role in taking care of the needy. Could it be that for comfort, ease, and independence, the leaders of the church have abandoned the biblical teachings concerning the household of faith, familial responsibility, and the need for discipleship in the life of the needy person? If so, has not the church lost its vision for the ministry that Christ called it to?

But the decision to accept socialism will even take a greater toll than this. This satanic system cannot sustain itself for very long. Eventually, as a nation embarks on this road, its confiscatory "taxation" impoverishes the productive members of its society, and every potential source of revenue is plundered. Finally, it resorts to uncontrolled borrowing from its children and grandchildren, enslaving them to satisfy its insatiable "needs". Though worship may be comfortable in the padded pews of many churches, our children will have little say about the level of taxation they will have to pay. They are already enslaved, victims of taxation without representation and of their elders' insatiable covetousness for ease, comfort, and independence. Their parents and grandparents have already laid an unbearable burden upon them from which there is no escape.

With the Church's quiet acquiescence, adult America has institutionalized

theft in its laws. On what basis can we call on our children to respect one another's property and liberty? Is it any wonder that violent crime among our nation's youth is skyrocketing? When they realize what has been done to them, what respect will they have for their elders?

Where do we go from here? Are we following in our parents' path? How have we become entangled in this snare, and what steps can we take to get out? In future articles, I hope to share possible answers to these and other questions that the Lord has led me to in my own journey.

Resources for further study on the Church and providing welfare

The Oracles of God, delivered to Moses.

The Constitution of the United States of America and its Bill of Rights.

The Law, Frederick Bastiat, The Foundation for Economic Education, Inc., 30 S. Broadway, Irvington-on-Hudson, NY 10533, phone (800) 452-3518.

The Freeman, a periodical from FEE, above.

The Common Law of the United States of America, by Jerry Henson, Lighthouse Color Press, PO Box 15742, Del City, OK 73155.

The History of American Constitutional or Common Law with Commentary Concerning Equity and Merchant Law, Published and Distributed by Delta Spectrum Research, 5608 S. 107th E. Ave. Tulsa, OK 74146, (918) 459-3788.

The Informed Jury Association, Call Don Doig, Kathy Ballard, or Larry Dodge at (406) 793-5550.

God, Man, And Law: The Biblical Principles, by Herb Titus, IBLP, Box One, Oak Brook, Illinois 60522-3001.

How We Lost our Common Law Heritage, by Richard J. Maybury. Should be available through A. J. Teel, University of Colorado, Boulder.

The Alpha Strategy, John A. Pugsley, Stratford Press, Los Angeles, CA. An excellent introduction to economics, legal plunder, and how to preserve your wealth in times of crisis.
