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**Social Justice, Part 1**  
by Bill Lockwood

We hear much today in religious circles about “social justice.” Some church websites openly promote the concept, such as the one sponsored by National Council of Churches or another advertising the United Methodist Church. In part because of this, the phrase is bandied about in the news media as a ‘religious doctrine.’ Even the president refers to “social justice.”

What exactly *is* “social justice?” According to one authority, “social justice” refers to the idea of “creating an egalitarian society” based upon principles of equality. This involves “economic egalitarianism through progressive taxation, income redistribution, or even property redistribution.” That fits with the NCC website that calls for “Tax and budget policies that reduce disparities between rich and poor.” “Egalitarianism” refers to the “Equality of outcomes.” From this vantage one can easily see that, like “Liberation Theology” which has no “theology” in it, “social justice” simply refers to a reworking of society by equally distributing all goods and monies. To call this a “religious doctrine” is to hijack the term “religion” for the purposes of socialism. As F.A. Hayek pointed out, “social justice” is a “mirage.”

*First*, social justice focuses solely on earthly outcomes. Social engineers of various denominations spend all of their time wringing their hands about “saving the environment,” “fair wages for work,” “equal opportunities in housing,” “free access to medical care,” etc. Almost *nothing* is ever spoken about the soul. What a contrast to our Lord, who said, “fear not him that is able to destroy the body, but fear HIM who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell” (Matthew 10:28).

*Second*, social justice focuses upon *results*, not the *process*. What does this mean? Walter Williams, a syndicated columnist, uses the illustration of a game of poker. He asks, ‘Can we tell whether a poker game is fair by having information only about the game’s outcome?’ Obviously not. What is the standard for judging fairness? *The only way we can have any hope of ascertaining fairness is to examine the **process** of the game, not the outcome.* Just so, because there are differences in income or property in society does *not* tell us that some play unfairly. One of the great truths of the Bible is that there are differences among people—different talents and abilities. In the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14f) Jesus shows that God gave to one “five talents,” to another “two,” and to another “one.” To focus on the *results* here is to indict God for “unequal” distribution.

*Third*, social justice destroys “charity.” God commands us to “freewill” giving, which is charity (2 Corinthians 9:8, et. al.). But the term “justice” in “social justice” means that it is “JUST” for our wealth to be re-distributed. We **owe** the fruit of our labor to society according to “social justice” thinkers. It is “unjust” or “wrong” for us to keep the profits from our labor. According to William Godwin, one of the original theorists for “social justice,” individuals in society are “**entitled to our wealth**” and for us to give this up to government for redistribution is done out

of “debt”—not a gracious gift. When Paul wrote to the Corinthian church thanking them for this “unspeakable *gift*” (2 Corinthians 9:15), he was wrong! It is not a gift at all, but a payment of a debt! No such thing as charity in “social justice.”