



Fairness & the Christian #2

by Ronald L. Dart

I'm sorry, but when I hear anyone in government talk about "fairness", I cringe; because the odds are they're talking about taking something away from one person, and handing it to another. Now understand, if you pay taxes in any form, the government is taking your money. I think you can read on the gas pump how much you are paying per gallon in taxes, can't you? And if you pay income tax, all you've got to do is drag out your last 1040, or whatever it is, and look on there and see how much income tax you are paying. So you know *all too well* the government is taking your money, and you have a pretty good idea exactly how much. (Although I'll say, I'm not sure everyone realizes this: When you get your income tax refund, that is not government money you're getting. It's your money you are getting *back*, that they have held for you all your long.)

Now, it's legitimate for the government to take money from *all of us* and use it for *all of us*. It's legitimate to tax gasoline and diesel fuel to build roads, if that's what you're doing; because we all want those roads. We like those big interstate highways where we can go visit Aunt Sarah. And in order to have those highways, we've got to pay for them somehow; *all of us* need to pay for them.

Now, it's legitimate to tax all of us to pay for a military that can protect our national interest. It's legitimate to tax all of us to pay for police protection, so when somebody's burgling your house or trying to break in your house in the middle of the night and you call, someone will come out there and arrest him. So, I'm all for that. And it may take an entity like government to regulate how we can have water, electricity, cable, and the like; even though we have to pay for those things in terms of a monthly bill of usage.

My question is this: Is it legitimate for the government to take *your* money and give it to *me*? Is that truly fair? The logical question that follows on the heels of that question is this: Well, doesn't the government have an obligation to help the poor? Now, more important to what I'm driving at, in a way, is: Is helping the poor a Christian value? Well, of course. My question is: How does government figure into that picture?

In the last program [*Fairness & the Christian #1*], I talked about two opposing views of government. One is collectivism, the other is individualism. (By the way, if you get in touch and ask for a free CD of this program—and we'll give you an address and a phone number later so you can—you'll get that program *and* this one free of charge this week.) Now, here's what these two terms mean:

Collectivism: the ownership and control of the means of production and distribution by the people collectively; socialism

Webster's New World Encyclopedia - "Collectivism"

In other words, the ownership of everything and the control of the means of production, the control of distribution—all of us, together, own it. It is otherwise called "Socialism". Individualism, though, is:

3. the doctrine that individual freedom in economic enterprise should not be restricted by governmental or social regulation; [...]
4. the doctrine that the state exists for the individual and not the individual for the state

Webster's New World Encyclopedia - "Individualism"

Now, where do you fall on that spectrum of your belief in this kind of thing? Does the state exist for you, or do you exist for the state? At the extreme, these are the directions that, whenever you hear people on television talking about “Left” and “Right” in political terms... Leftist means toward collectivism; a person on the Right leans toward individualism. The United States has never been a country given to either one of these extreme positions, but I would say that it's fair to say that the United States has leaned more toward the individualist position than to the collective.

Now, I can hear someone saying, “Now, wait. Wait. Didn't the first Christians live in a collectivist society?” Well, yes and no. The question arises from the story in Acts 2 of the days following that day of Pentecost; when the Holy Spirit fell on the disciples in power, and they baptized *3000 people in one day*. Here's how the story goes. After the big event of that day (Acts 2, verse 42):

Acts 2

AKJV

⁴² And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine [*teaching*] and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

What he is describing here is what I'd call the “College of the Apostles”—*every single day* these people went to class with the apostles. They sat and listened and listened and listened and absorbed the gospel—the story. They had fellowship together. They ate meals together. They prayed together.

Acts 2

AKJV

⁴³ And fear [*awe*] came on every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

⁴⁴ And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

⁴⁵ And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.

⁴⁶ And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart[.]

So, fair enough; this is a kind of collectivism, isn't it—where everybody shares everything? But it differs *radically* from what the Left is urging upon us in this century. A little later, in this same account in Acts, an incident occurred which underlines what I'm talking about it. You'll find it in Acts 4, and I'm going to start in verse 33.

Acts 4

AKJV

³³ And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was on them all.

³⁴ Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,

³⁵ And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made to every man according as he had need.

Now, you have to kind of understand that all these disciples—a lot of these people who were baptized on the day of Pentecost—had come from a *long way off*. If you go back and read Acts 2, you'll find out how many “four corners” of the Roman Empire these people had come from. They were away from home; and if they were going to stay there in the college of the apostles, that had to be supported. So, the people who were more local did so.

Acts 4

AKJV

³⁶ And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus,

³⁷ Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Now, have you figured it out yet? Have you tumbled to what is the *fundamental* difference between this kind of collectivism and that of, say, Communism, Marxism, or Socialism? It's right there for anyone to see; just read on and the truth comes right on to the surface. Acts 5, verse 1:

Acts 5

AKJV

¹ But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession,

² And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Now, you read in the account and you'll see that they laid it there as though it was the *whole* price for what they had sold.

Acts 5

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³ But Peter said, Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price of the land?

Listen carefully to what Peter says.

Acts 5

AKJV

⁴ While it remained, was it not your own? and after it was sold, was it not in your own power? why have you conceived this thing in your heart? you have not lied unto men, but unto God.

Now, when I asked if the early Christians lived in a collectivist society, I said the answer was yes and no. The society in which they lived was Jewish and Roman and was in *no way* collectivist, but the disciples formed a society within a society, and they *voluntarily* made it collectivist. Now, let me make it plain: The *only* valid form of collectivism is strictly voluntary. Otherwise, it is coercive, utterly without moral value, demeaning and destructive of freedom, and often destructive of the very people it's designed to help. Worst of all, I think, it leaves the poor worse off than they were before. They become permanent victims—wards of the state—who vote for the *very people* who locked them up.

Now, what happens when you take all the wonderful Christian values of the care of the sick, the care of the poor, giving to people in need, and *force* people to do these things? Somewhere along the way it occurred to me that the modern Leftist may be trying to turn us into a country with Christian values, but with no Christ. The fundamental Christian value is that we *give freely*; not that we force others to give, or that we only give what we are forced to give or required to give. I kind of think, in a way, this is why conservatives in the United States give more to charity than those of the leftist persuasion. The Leftist

is happy to help the poor...as long as everybody else does. And they will make the statement (I've heard them make the statement), "I'd like to pay *more* taxes." Of course, I don't know what's keeping you from doing it. Isn't there a place you can check on your form that you want to give more money to the government? You can check the box and fill in the amount, and you can actually give more money to the United States Treasury than you owe in taxes. So if you want to pay more taxes, pay them. But that's not the point. The Leftist wants *everybody* to pay those taxes.

I make it a point to read George Will on a regular basis. I get quite an education from the man; he's very widely read and a very interesting writer. In a column he titled *Candidate on a High Horse*—April 15th, 2008—he had this to say.

The emblematic book of the new liberalism was "*The Affluent Society*" by Harvard economist John Kenneth Galbraith. He argued that the power of advertising to manipulate the bovine public is so powerful that the law of supply and demand has been vitiated.

George Will - Candidate on a High Horse

Think about that just for a minute, would you. We actually live in a society, in an economy, that is governed a lot by supply and demand. When supply starts getting curtailed, prices go up because the demands stays the same. And so, consequently, that's why we face some of the great surges of inflation and deflation that have followed over history.

Now Galbraith says, basically, you and I are so stupid that the advertisers can advertise and manufacture in the American herd whatever demand they want to supply. So they can run a bunch of ads out there saying that we should all buy hybrid cars, and we all rush out like a bunch of cows and buy hybrid cars. He said "the manipulable masses are easily given a 'false consciousness'" and, because of this, four things follow.

Consider now that Galbraith thinks that us people out here who are part of the masses have a "false consciousness"—a false way of looking at the world. Here are the four things that follow:

First, the consent of the governed, when their behavior is governed by their false consciousnesses, is unimportant.

George Will - Candidate on a High Horse

Now, I don't care what you put in between; to say the consent of the governed is unimportant, you have taken a *huge* giant step away from the founding principles to this country.

Second, the public requires the supervision of a progressive elite which, somehow emancipated from false consciousness, can engineer true consciousness. Third, because consciousness is a reflection of social conditions, true consciousness is engineered by progressive social reforms.

George Will - Candidate on a High Horse

Now, the word "engineer" has found its way in here twice, and that's disturbing. But...

Fourth, because people in the grip of false consciousness cannot be expected to demand or even consent to such reforms, those reforms usually must be imposed [...]

George Will - Candidate on a High Horse

Now, this concept of a false consciousness is more important than you can imagine. This philosophy places you and me among the manipulated masses, and argues that we don't have a mind of our own—that we have been duped; that we are manipulated by the government, by the advertising media, by big corporation, big drugs, big autos, big oil, you name it. And because of this, our consent to govern is *unimportant*, because we can't understand the issues. Do you think you can agree with that—that the government no longer needs our consent because we're just not smart enough to figure it out, or we're manipulated, we've been duped, we've been lied to 'til we don't know what's right anymore?

I'll grant you, we've been lied to a lot; but this leads naturally to Galbraith's second idea: "the public requires the supervision of a progressive elite which, somehow emancipated from false consciousness, can engineer true consciousness." Now, I don't think this is an unfair characterization of the elite, Ivy-League-educated Left. I think they *do* think that way. It underlined something I noticed during the 1990s: There is an elite in this country who believe that the goals they are striving for are *so noble* that almost *anything* they do or say is *justified* in achieving those goals. Thus, one can lie in the service of the truth—the ends justifying the means we use to get there. Watch for that, would you? Listen carefully to what people are saying to you in political speeches and whatever else. There are people out there who think that their goals are *so noble* that it's okay for them to lie to you, because what they're trying to do for you, ultimately, is better for you.

Now, it's crucial that we remember that there *are people who think this way*; and you don't have to listen to a lot of political speech to spot them, *if you are watching for it*. But wait, how is the elite going to engineer this true consciousness? Well (quoting Will again), "because consciousness is a reflection of social conditions, true consciousness is engineered by progressive social reforms." What kind of social reforms? Well, income distribution for one—taking *your* money away from you and giving it to *me*.

Now, here is Dart's Law of Social Reform: All social reforms involve coercion of one form or another... Which George Will really included in his fourth citation here. He said:

Fourth, because people in the grip of false consciousness cannot be expected to demand or even consent to such reforms, those reforms usually must be imposed, for example, by judicial fiats.

George Will - Candidate on a High Horse

When I take this remarkably clear idea and lay it alongside the political speech I hear these days, it makes my blood run cold; because these people think that all of us out here are in the grip of a false consciousness. We have a false worldview. We live in a dream world, as it were. We don't know what's really going on. And because of that, we can't be expected to demand, we cannot expect to *consent*, to such reforms. Consequently, those reforms must be *imposed* on us. For some speech-makers (perhaps most of them), they envision an America totally different from that of the Founding Fathers. They talk about rights that take away other rights. For example, how long can a free press endure when the governing elite decide that the free press is fostering a false consciousness? And what if the consciousness being fostered by the press and the media itself *is false*? You know, I can't help it...it came to my mind from Simon Peter, at this point—his second letter. He wrote this—chapter 2, verse 17. Of a certain category of men, he said:

2 Peter 2

NIV '84

¹⁷ These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them.

¹⁸ For their mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error.

¹⁹ They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.

What's distressing to me about political debate in this country is that the debaters—Left and Right—look upon us as a mass of ignorant rubes and they talk right over our heads. The words they use, for example, have specialized meanings to their constituencies. We don't need to know what they mean, we don't need to know where they are going; because we have a false consciousness and we're unable to evaluate either the means or the destination that these people are beginning to go to. But they understand *one another* well enough. They think *we* don't get it; and, because of the vocabulary they're using, because of the code words that they use, we miss the point. What they are advocating is what they perceive to be, though, *for our own good*. How *noble*. These are the *cognoscenti*—the knowing ones, the people who know. As for you and me, they think we need them to tell us what is right and what things *really mean*.

Now, you don't have to be especially perceptive to realize, though, that their vision for the country involves a *massive* loss of individual freedom. Taxes are only one manifestation of it. And if you're paying attention at all, George Will's summary rings true: "because people in the grip of false consciousness cannot be expected to demand or even consent to such reforms, those reforms usually must be imposed, for example, by judicial fiat." This is why the Supreme Court is *so important*. It is *their* job to interpret and protect the Bill of Rights, which in turn protects our freedom. These freedoms get in the way of some people's vision of the country.

Sometimes I wonder how many people really believe in the words of the Declaration of Independence:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

United States Declaration of Independence - July 4, 1776

You see, the progressive Left in this country want to make us all better people. They want to eradicate selfishness and greed and all those nasty things. The problem is this (and listen carefully): If you don't have the right to be selfish, you have no rights at all. Now, we shouldn't be selfish, of course not; but how do we come to this unselfish state? What is it that might cause us to lay aside self-interest?

A book appeared in 1997 that has helped shape the discussion of many people on the political Left. The book, by Rabbi Michael Lerner, is titled *The Politics of Meaning: Restoring Hope and Possibility in an Age of Cynicism*. Reading excerpts from the book, coupled with the title, I think provides some insight into the thinking of many political candidates (among them, one Barack Obama). The emphasis, for example, in his book and his speech on hope and on possibility—if they're not derived directly from Lerner, they certainly were drawn from the same well. Obama's themes—"Yes, we can!" and "We are the ones we've been waiting"—are firmly rooted in the "politics of meaning". And if one is planning to vote for this gentleman, they owe it to themselves to read this book. The first real inkling I got as to where Obama is going came in his Wisconsin speech, where he outlined a series of social reforms (there's that word) that march in step with the politics of meaning. You know, the only real difference

between Senators Obama and Clinton is that he is charismatic and she is not. Both of them are practitioners of the politics of meaning.

Well, what is the politics of meaning? It is a collectivist approach to government, but it differ starkly from Christian collectivism in that they want to impose it by law and judicial fiat—as opposed to, for example, encouraging Christian collectivism as a faction of free men, entered into voluntarily. Collectivism, as those on the Left see it, will involve government of the masses by our betters. Now, don't worry; we're a long way from that. The masses (and that includes you and me, by the way) are smarter than they think we are. But we need to be very careful about the people we allow to be appointed to the federal courts. There is a reason why the Left in this country seem to prefer government by the courts over government by the people.

All that said, I find *all* the political movements in this country wanting. Personally, I am neither a Republican, a Democrat, or a Libertarian. I am a *Christian*, and my worldview is dominated by the Bible. I'm instructed in the Bible about how to treat people. There's a letter from James in the New Testament; the second chapter, verse one, he says:

James 2

NIV '84

¹ My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism.

² Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in.

³ If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet,"

⁴ have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

Oh, James is very emphatic about that. Now, here's what you need to learn from this. James says:

James 2

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⁹ But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers.

¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.

¹¹ For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." [...]

¹² Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom[....]

And there's that word again. Now, if I'm not to show favoritism, that's a good thing. But doesn't that mean I'm supposed to treat everyone the same? How could I possibly be doing that if I take away from the well-to-do man his ring and his fine clothes and give them to the poor guy? I'm not treating them equally; I'm showing favoritism to the poor. The law that gives freedom argues that man should benefit from his labor, and then it teaches him to give *freely* to others. If I require, or I force, the guy to give up his ring and his finest clothes to the poor guy, I've taken away from him the freedom to be generous and to make *his own* gift to the poor man.

When we coerce charity, it is no longer charity. The bald truth is that there are those who would use government to put *an end* to charity. But someone will argue, "Some government programs to help the poor are essential." Well, yeah, it's true. There are programs like this. And I always wanted to know: Well, what happened to the poor people before these were introduced? I asked an old couple that: What happened to old people when there was no Social Security? They said *families* took care of them. In some cases, local communities took steps to help the aged and infirm. And the people close to these people did it *voluntarily*.

You know, my worry is that too many of us—black, white, Hispanic, and Asian—may be willing to go back to the plantation and be looked at by our betters. The road to freedom has been long and hard. Don't give it up.

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