

Harold Lindsell, *Free Enterprise, A Judeo-Christian Defense* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 1982). Pp 180. Reviewed by Pastor James E. Huff.

Harold Lindsell points out that free enterprise is “a concept dating back to Old Testament days” and that it is based

on the intrinsic right of citizens to the ownership, control, and use of private property. . . . Marx and socialism (of any variety) must invalidate the Mosaic Law. Once they do away with the Decalogue and its God they can seize property at will and claim the propriety of what they have done solely on the basis of their own dictum. . . . This dictum of socialism is clearly and intentionally incompatible with the Judeo-Christian world and life view.

He divides the book into four major sections following a very useful introduction. The sections are “The Right to Private Property,” “Economics,” “Freedom and Human Rights,” and “Socialist Ethics and Morality.”

In the introduction the author speaks of two forms of socialism, communism and utopian socialism. He says that the latter may start from certain Christian presuppositions. It is the former with which he primarily deals. Lindsell points out that nowhere in the world does this latter form find itself in control of any government. In his dealing with the nature of man and thus his sin nature, he notes there is no place for the concept of sin in the Marxist system, but that Marxism allows there is something “wrong” with man and that is he must be made a “new man” by Marxism. As the author traces man’s drift away from his religious foundation to secularism (particularly in western culture whose foundation is the “Judeo-Christian faith”), he points out that we find ourselves now with a free enterprise system which has abandoned its biblical foundation. Accompanying this “drift,” our culture is increasingly dominated by egalitarianism; and this is found in churches and denominations throughout Western culture. He cites examples of this in both liberal and “evangelical” circles (*Sojourners* magazine led by Jim Wallis) and within Roman Catholicism. As a result of this drift, free enterprise is attacked and socialism is embraced.

In chapter two, “The Right to Private Property,” Lindsell writes of a professor of political science at Boston University who, in advocating socialism, wrote, “Let’s hasten to say: I don’t mean the ‘socialism’ of [the former] Soviet Russia or any other repressive regime claiming to be socialist. Rather, a genuine socialism which not only distributes the wealth but maintains [sic] liberty.” The professor apparently fails to see the oxymoronic nature of his statement. Lindsell points out that socialism, i.e., communism, is atheistic. Thus, its source of authority is contrary to the source of authority for a free enterprise system which finds its source in God’s revelation to man, i.e., the Bible. Socialism, while proclaiming ownership of private property is wrong, fails to see that “giving” ownership of that property to government (the proletariat) is theft.

In chapter three, “Economics,” he points out that in all countries there is the exchange of goods and services. The question is, should there be a profit in this exchange? If there is no profit, a socialist system cannot sustain itself. Its collapse is thus inevitable. Once again we see what happens when a free enterprise system divorces itself from a biblical foundation. We then

move into an unbiblical socialist system. Lindsell writes, “When the Judeo-Christian value system is eliminated from free enterprise it will produce and has produced a rising tide of antagonism against it in favor of socialism, which makes promises it cannot possibly fulfill.”

In chapter four, “Freedom and Human Rights,” the contrast between free enterprise and socialism is further demonstrated. As freedom and free enterprise are integrally related, so, too, is lack of freedom integrally related to socialism. Socialism leads to slavery. Lindsell writes that within a socialist system there is a loss of economic freedom, religious freedom, freedom of the mind, personal freedom, and political freedom. The author says,

People who hold to the Judeo-Christian tradition and those who may hold to that tradition [socialism] without an understanding of its soteriological aspects must make their choice: human freedom and free enterprise or slavery and state ownership of the means of production. Which will it be?

The book closes with a look at “Socialist Ethics and Morality.” The ethics and morality of socialism is strongly opposed to the underlying principles of the Christian faith. As Lindsell says, “Socialism is not amoral; it is immoral. Its very nature, that is, its basic philosophy, makes it that way.”

This reviewer strongly recommends this book for a good biblical defense of free enterprise versus socialism.