



PIRACY REINCARNATED

ONCE UPON A TIME there lived a pirate by the name of Laffoote. As pirates come and go, there was much to be said in his favor. He adored his wife and children and he felt a deep compassion for the lame, the halt, and the blind – indeed, his heart went out to everyone in distress. What's more, he helped others so much he rarely had anything left over for himself.

Laffoote, however, had one quirk in his moral make-up: He satisfied his deep, charitable instincts for others not with his own produce but with the fruits of the labor of others; that is, he acquired what he gave away not by willing but by unwilling exchange. He and his hoodlums, with guns and swords, would pounce upon hapless and honest traders and take their all.

True, the “beneficiaries” of Laffoote’s generosity thought him a great and lovable man. But the victims, the ones from whom he looted, had thoughts about him

quite to the contrary. These folks held to the proposition that all individuals had a moral right to the fruits of their own labor and, thus, they resented the pirate’s methods. They went so far as to believe that Laffoote should gratify his generous impulses with his own, not with their, produce.

The victims had an additional thought: Predation as a way of life did not make social sense. If all were parasites, who would serve as hosts? They reasoned that if all were producers, there would be more good done, even to the poor, than if all were predators.

No Pope or priest or monk, no prophet or seer, no rabbi or pastor, ever felt cleaner at heart than did Laffoote. He saw nothing wrong with his way of life. Was not piracy his speciality, his chosen profession, his means of getting ahead?

The victims did not share Laffoote’s self-assessment. They

did not think him clean at heart in the slightest. They insisted that no sin was greater than to feather one's own nest at the unwilling expense of others. Each human being, they argued, was as much a child of God as any other and for one to advance self at another's expense was to thwart God's will.

From these disparate ways of thinking there developed a moral schism of the first magnitude. Laffoote saw nothing wrong with his code. The victims thought his code not only uneconomic but evil and concluded that their society must be cleansed of piracy. Being more numerous than Laffoote and his gang, they organized, captured, and condemned him to hang by the neck till dead!

Poor Laffoote! There he stood on the trap door, noose around his neck, in bewildered pride and with a deep sense of moral rectitude. How to get even? Not much chance in this earthly life! That was near its end. There ought to be a way, thought he, to do good without getting hanged for it. Wasn't there a way to practice his code — taking from some and giving to others — that would result in acclaim rather than hanging? Then, in his last moments, Laffoote experienced a brilliant, intuitive flash: Why not legalize piracy? That would make it re-

spectable. He could conscript his armed forces from the very people who were now hanging him and even they would think him a benefactor. He would call them his "constabulary" and they would call him their "Leader." The more Peters he would rob to help the poor Pauls the more honor would be heaped upon him. Why hadn't he thought of this before? But, alas, it was too late!

Ah! But was it too late? What about reincarnation? He had once heard someone speak of it. If only he could come back to earth in another form, he could put his new plan into effect. Such was the pirate's last thought before the trap door was sprung.

Laffoote did not return to earth in bodily form. But the spirit of Laffoote did return and fastened itself in the minds of mankind — Americans as well as others — in a most effective manner. From the farms, from the factories and executive offices, from the pulpits — from rich and poor alike — emerges the spirit of Laffoote, the pirate. The more his "brilliant" idea is imitated, the more are honors, esteem, titles, uniforms, and medals conferred on the imitators. The spirit of Laffoote rides unbelievably high. Its proper name is *socialism* but which, when practiced by Russians, we call "communism."

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THE MORAL ANTAGONISM OF Capitalism and Socialism

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CAPITALISM and socialism have, traditionally, been considered exclusively as opposing economic-political systems. It is therefore in terms of economic and political tenets that the battle between them has been fought. Certainly each system does embody a mutually exclusive theory of the proper function of government and the legitimate operation of an economy — but if one examines their tenets, one will discover at the root of their specific and practical doctrines, a more basic and divisive clash between them.

It is in their opposing concepts of the nature of man and of his proper relationship to other men — in that which each side holds to be the good, the right, the moral — that the heart of the conflict between capitalism and socialism exists.

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What is capitalism? Economically, it is a system in which the instruments of production are owned by private individuals who operate them for their personal profit. Goods and services are exchanged by free trade on a free market, a market which is regulated, not by bureaucratic edict, not by what those who claim to represent the majority decide is good for the people, but by the law of supply and demand — which means: by each man's voluntary decision as to what products he is willing to produce, to buy, and to sell, and at what price, within the context of the market with which he deals.

The motive power of capitalism, the propelling force which makes it work, is men's desire and effort to use their productive capacity for the purpose of creating wealth. The end which capitalism serves is the achievement of profit — a private, personal, selfish profit