

# **Eating the Apple: Capitalism as the Fall, Socialism as God's Design for Heaven**

***Reimagining Scripture, Sin, and Economy  
Beyond Greed***

## **Introduction**

The story of Adam and Eve eating the forbidden fruit is often told as a tale of temptation and weakness. Yet it can also be read as a narrative about desire, ownership, and the refusal to trust in divine design. The fruit becomes more than food; it symbolizes property, possession, and the will to claim what was never meant to belong to one alone. Capitalism follows this same pattern. It is not only an economic system but also a repetition of the first act of disobedience: grasping, hoarding, and elevating private gain above the needs of the community.

Scripture offers a counter-vision that points toward collective care rather than individual accumulation. The Book of Acts describes an early Christian community where believers “had everything in common” and no one was left in need. The Qur’an similarly warns against wealth circulating only among the rich while the poor are abandoned. These passages do not describe markets or competition; they describe mercy, fairness, and

abundance shared without exclusion. They suggest that socialism, rather than capitalism, comes closer to embodying God's design for human society.

This essay argues that capitalism reenacts the Fall by repeating humanity's earliest sin of greed and disobedience, while socialism reflects the divine hope for justice and shared abundance. Through a dialogue between biblical narrative, Islamic teaching, and modern critiques of capitalism, the economy is reimagined not simply as a technical domain but as a theological and moral one.

## **Section 1: The Fall as the First Act of Capitalism**

The account of the Fall in Genesis has long been interpreted as a moral lesson about temptation and disobedience. Yet the act of eating the fruit can also be understood as the first instance of claiming ownership over what was never meant to be possessed. By reaching for the fruit, Adam and Eve shifted creation from a gift to be received into an object to be taken. This transformation mirrors the logic of capitalism, which thrives on the desire to claim, accumulate, and control. The fruit becomes an early symbol of property and consumption, the very foundations of a system that elevates private desire over divine order.

Modern critiques of capitalism shed light on this biblical narrative. Walter Benjamin described capitalism as a religion structured by guilt and endless debt, in which humanity is trapped in a cycle of consumption without

redemption. Similarly, Karl Marx viewed capitalism as a form of alienation, separating human beings from their labor, their community, and even their own nature. Both accounts echo the sense of estrangement described in Genesis: after eating the fruit, Adam and Eve are cast out of Eden, estranged from the harmony of divine creation.

The Fall therefore becomes more than an origin myth; it becomes an allegory of economic life. Capitalism, in this reading, is not merely a recent historical development but a continuation of humanity's earliest sin. By placing self-interest and accumulation at the center of social life, capitalism reenacts the act of taking the fruit. It repeats the refusal to trust in divine sufficiency, turning creation into a field of competition rather than communion.

## **Section 2: Socialism in Scripture and Early Communities**

If the Fall can be read as the origin of capitalism, scripture also provides glimpses of an alternative order that resists greed and accumulation. The Book of Acts describes the earliest Christian community as one in which “all the believers were together and had everything in common” (Acts 4:32). Property was shared, resources were distributed according to need, and the result was striking: “there were no needy persons among them” (Acts 4:34). This radical form of common life stands in sharp contrast to the culture of accumulation, suggesting that the first Christian experiment was in fact a socialist community grounded in faith.

The Qur'an conveys a similar vision. Wealth is not to remain in the hands of the few but must circulate through society: "so that wealth does not merely circulate among the rich" (Qur'an 59:7). This principle recognizes the social nature of wealth and the dangers of hoarding. Other verses emphasize that true righteousness is shown in giving wealth to relatives, orphans, and the poor (Qur'an 2:177). The logic is clear: material resources are entrusted by God not for selfish possession but for justice and care.

Islamic tradition reinforces this orientation. Imam Ali, in the *Nahj al-Balagha*, warns rulers against hoarding and insists on protecting the most vulnerable. Early Islamic communities placed a strong emphasis on *zakat* and *khums*, forms of redistribution that undermined excessive concentration of wealth. These practices reflected the conviction that divine order requires balance, fairness, and solidarity.

Taken together, these texts reveal an economic ethic grounded in sharing and responsibility. Far from being peripheral, the socialist impulse runs through the heart of Abrahamic religion. It reflects a vision of society where divine mercy is embodied in human community, and where heaven's abundance is anticipated on earth through justice and equality.

## **Section 3: Capitalism as Sin, Socialism as Mercy**

Capitalism has often been defended as a system of freedom and opportunity, yet its moral foundations are far less stable. At its core, capitalism thrives on greed, accumulation, and exploitation, qualities

consistently condemned in both scripture and tradition. The pursuit of profit above all else mirrors the logic of idolatry: it replaces God with the worship of wealth. The New Testament warns that one cannot serve both God and money (Matthew 6:24), while the Qur'an repeatedly associates hoarding and exploitation with corruption and disbelief (Qur'an 9:34–35). Within this framework, capitalism can be understood not simply as an economic order but as a structure of sin.

Marx described the alienation inherent in capitalism, in which workers are estranged from their labor, from one another, and from the natural world. This alienation echoes the exile of Adam and Eve from Eden, where disobedience resulted in estrangement from God and creation alike. Capitalism perpetuates this estrangement by organizing society around competition, scarcity, and hierarchy. Instead of reflecting divine abundance, it institutionalizes separation and inequality.

In contrast, socialism may be understood as an embodiment of mercy. The redistribution of resources, the prioritization of the poor, and the recognition of collective responsibility resonate deeply with religious ethics. Liberation theologians such as Gustavo Gutiérrez have argued that sin is not only individual but structural, embedded in systems that exploit and exclude. Socialism seeks to dismantle these structures and to align society with the divine imperative of justice. Within Islamic thought, similar principles can be seen in the emphasis on zakat and the defense of the oppressed (mustazafin).

By framing capitalism as sin and socialism as mercy, the contrast becomes stark. One system entrenches disobedience through greed and inequality, while the other reflects divine compassion through justice and shared life.

## **Section 4: Prophetic Voices Against Greed**

Across religious traditions, prophets consistently confronted systems of exploitation and greed. The Hebrew Bible contains repeated denunciations of economic injustice: Amos condemns those who “sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals” (Amos 2:6), while Isaiah warns against those who “join house to house” and “add field to field” until nothing is left for the poor (Isaiah 5:8). These voices framed greed not as a private vice but as a social corruption that destroys the fabric of community. Prophets called for repentance not only in worship but in the just distribution of resources.

Within the Islamic tradition, similar prophetic voices can be found. Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq emphasized the social obligations of wealth, teaching that hoarded riches separate believers from divine mercy. Imam Ali, in his sermons collected in the *Nahj al-Balagha*, insisted that rulers must protect the poor and that justice requires breaking cycles of oppression. These teachings align with the Qur’anic command that wealth must circulate rather than remain concentrated in the hands of the few. The prophetic voice within Islam thus echoes the biblical call to confront inequality.

Modern religious leaders have continued this legacy. Ali Shariati, a prominent Iranian thinker, argued that Islam must stand on the side of the

oppressed and articulated a vision of faith that aligns closely with socialism. Pope Francis, in *Fratelli Tutti*, condemned neoliberal capitalism for reducing human beings to consumers and for placing profit above dignity. Both draw on prophetic traditions to confront the idols of wealth and power.

The consistency of these voices across time and tradition underscores a central truth: prophecy is inseparable from the demand for justice. To follow the prophetic path is to reject greed and to stand with the poor. Capitalism, by legitimizing accumulation and exclusion, stands opposed to this prophetic inheritance, while socialism resonates with it.

## **Section 5: Heaven as a Socialist Vision**

Religious traditions describe heaven not only as a realm of spiritual fulfillment but also as a place where material deprivation is absent. The Qur'an presents paradise as a space of abundance where food, drink, and shelter are freely given, and no one suffers hunger or exclusion (Qur'an 76:12–14). Similarly, Christian scripture envisions the kingdom of God as a community where the poor are lifted up and justice is established. These depictions reveal a vision of divine order grounded in sufficiency and equality, not in competition or scarcity.

Capitalism, by contrast, produces artificial scarcity even in contexts of abundance. Resources exist, but their distribution is distorted by systems of profit and accumulation. This structure mirrors the Fall, where disobedience turned God's gift of creation into an object of grasping and

control. Socialism, in reimagining economic life around common ownership and shared flourishing, can be seen as the closest earthly analogue to the divine order described in visions of paradise. It seeks to approximate heaven by refusing to allow deprivation within a world of plenty.

Philosophical critiques of capitalism reinforce this perspective. Slavoj Žižek has argued that capitalism feeds on endless desire, keeping humanity locked in cycles of consumption that never produce satisfaction. Socialism, by contrast, is oriented toward “enoughness,” the recognition that true freedom emerges not from accumulation but from shared sufficiency. Religious imagery of paradise aligns with this recognition, portraying heaven as a space where desire is fulfilled not through competition but through harmony and balance.

To imagine heaven as socialist is not to claim that a perfect society can be constructed on earth, but to recognize that divine justice provides a model for human aspiration. The economy, in this light, becomes a field where humanity either repeats the Fall through greed or anticipates heaven through justice and mercy.

## **Conclusion**

The story of the Fall is not only a tale of disobedience but also a mirror for humanity’s ongoing choices. In taking the fruit, Adam and Eve transformed creation from a gift into a possession, an act that set the pattern for greed and domination. Capitalism continues this legacy by elevating

accumulation above justice, hoarding above mercy, and private interest above divine trust. Its logic is not neutral but theological, echoing the first sin of ownership in Eden.

Scripture and tradition point to another path. The early Christians who held all things in common, the Qur'an's call for wealth to circulate, and the teachings of Imam Ali all describe a vision of life grounded in justice and shared abundance. Modern voices in liberation theology and critiques of neoliberalism show that inequality is not random but built into economic systems, and that mercy requires transformation at the level of structure. Socialism, understood in this light, is not only an ideology but a way of living as if heaven's justice were already breaking into the world.

Capitalism repeats the grasping of Eden. Socialism gestures toward the restored garden. To defend capitalism is to cling to the fruit, to repeat the first act of disobedience. To embrace socialism is to let it go, to repent of greed, and to choose a community where none are excluded. If Eden was lost through possession, it will be found again through sharing, and the gates of heaven will not open until everyone can walk through together.

## Sources Consulted

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**Acts 4:32–35** (early Christians held all things in common, no one lacked).

**Matthew 6:19–21** (“Do not store up treasures on earth...”).

**Luke 18:22** (“Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven.”).

**Qur’an 59:7** (“So that wealth does not merely circulate among the rich.”).

**Qur’an 16:71** (on wealth distribution and God’s will).

**Qur’an 2:177** (righteousness includes giving wealth to kin, orphans, and the poor).

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