



Government and Economics: Resource Development

OCTOBER 7, 2013

Why is it that America has in very short order economically outpaced all the other countries of the world? Buddhism-based countries for example have been around for twenty-six hundred years and Islam-based countries have existed for over one thousand years. America has only been around for a few hundred years, and it is by far the most prosperous nation in history! The reason for this momentous growth is Christianity.

Unlike other religions, Christianity combines rational thinking and human dignity. Hinduism teaches its adherents to empty their minds of rational thought. Islam on the other hand, rejects God's incarnation through Christ, depriving its adherents of a role model of God's characteristic humaneness.

The economic greatness of America is grounded in Christianity's theological basis of both. These two underpinning presuppositions are in essence what catapulted America into world leadership in very, very short order. This week I would like to examine the role of government in maintaining that.

Weekly Bible Study During Session

Wednesday Mornings 8:00 AM Sharp. Capitol Building Family Room H324
Hot Breakfast Served.

Robert Aderholt, Alabama
Michele Bachmann, Minnesota
Spencer Bachus, Alabama
Marsba Blackburn, Tennessee
Jim Bridenstine, Oklahoma
Paul Broun, Georgia
John Campbell, California
Tony Cardenas, California
John Carter, Texas
Bill Cassidy, Louisiana
Howard Coble, North Carolina
Michael Conaway, Texas
Kevin Cramer, North Dakota
Rick Crawford, Arkansas
Steven Daines, Montana
Jeff Denham, California
John Duncan Jr., Tennessee
Mary Fallin (Gov.), Oklahoma
John Fleming, Louisiana
Bill Flores, Texas
Randy Forbes, Virginia
Trent Franks, Arizona
Scott Garrett, New Jersey
Louie Gohmert, Texas
Tom Graves, Georgia
Tim Griffin, Arkansas
Ralph Hall, Texas
Gregg Harper, Mississippi
George Holding, North Carolina
Bill Huizenga, Michigan
Randy Hultgren, Illinois
Bill Johnson, Ohio
Jim Jordan, Ohio
Steve King, Iowa
John Kline, Minnesota
Doug LaMalfa, California
Doug Lamborn, Colorado
James Lankford, Oklahoma
Cynthia Lummis, Wyoming
Mike McIntyre, North Carolina
Mark Meadows, North Carolina
Gary Miller, California
Jeff Miller, Florida
Randy Neugebauer, Texas
Allen Nunnelee, Mississippi
Steve Pearce, New Mexico
Mike Pence (Gov.), Indiana
Robert Pittenger, North Carolina
Mike Pompeo, Kansas
Bill Posey, Florida
Tom Price, Georgia
Reid Ribble, Wisconsin
Cathy McMorris Rogers, Washington
Austin Scott, Georgia
Tim Scott, South Carolina
Lamar Smith, Texas
Steve Southerland, Florida
Steve Stockman, Texas
Marlin Stutzman, Indiana
Glenn Thompson, Pennsylvania
Scott Tipton, Colorado
Tim Walberg, Michigan
Randy Weber, Texas
Daniel Webster, Florida
Lynn Westmorland, Georgia
Roger Williams, Texas
Joe Wilson, South Carolina
Rob Wittman, Virginia
Steve Womack, Arkansas
Rob Woodall, Georgia
Ted Yoho, Florida



I. INTRODUCTION

The preamble to this week's study is intended to provide a sound bite summary as to why Christianity both allows and enables America's economic prosperity. It follows however, that as our nation increasingly jettisons its biblical bases, the manifest aspects of rational thinking and human dignity will diminish also over time, thereby disabling the sustainability of our country's economic greatness. The discerning eye can already see illustrations of this pernicious phenomenon all around us. Allan Bloom's classic book, *The Closing of the American Mind* is an excellent work chronicling the demise of rational thinking in America, especially on our university campuses. Vishal Mangalwadi's book, *The Book That Made Your World*, (a Christian intellectual from India evaluating America's greatness from abroad) also chronicles irrationality via the fatalist mentality of Hinduism. The result of this mentality is that Hindu countries have been stymied in historic poverty. And no one needs to read a book to understand the lack of human dignity rooted in the culture of Islam. As a result, Muslim economies are largely built on western developed oil exportation.

RELIGION AND A NATION'S ECONOMIC PROSPERITY ARE INTRINSICALLY INTERTWINED

Christianity has been the DNA of Western Civilization – but will it continue to be in the future? A nation's adherence to (or in America's case, disconnection from) a religious belief system greatly determines its destiny.

Given this backdrop, the study that follows is intended to provide you, our nation's policymakers, with a cogent biblical basis as to why Government should promote the economic prosperity of its nation; this premise of promotion, we will discover, is also based on biblical revelation. Importantly though, as stated in the preamble and this introduction, and the reason I began this study

where I did, is that the ultimate success of *governmental* promotion of economic development is largely predetermined by the existence or nonexistence – the cultural embedding or lack thereof – of rational thinking and human dignity in its populace. This is something that only Christianity, not Government, can provide and is a critical distinction to make up front prior to embarking on our study.

II. RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT IS GOOD

Scripture does not support the idea that material prosperity is *a priori* evil, or even neutral. For leaders to reason that government should restrain material prosperity because material prosperity is evil is counter to Scripture, as arrested by the following texts. As a matter of fact, Paul in the Pastoral Epistles, we will see later, labels such teaching as overtly heretical.

To support the idea that the material world is not inherently evil, first notice in Genesis, when God blessed His creation of man in the Garden, what He distinctly said in 1:28....

And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

This passage implies that God expects mankind to discover, develop and produce goods from the earth for his own betterment. Created by God and accountable to Him, this passage represents man's standard operating procedure.

Granted there are sinful temptations that can accompany the discovery, creation and manufacture of goods and services. Grudem in *Politics According To The Bible* notes this and lists some of them in saying the following....

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...pride, envy, selfishness, lack of love for one's neighbor, and laziness from having excessive possessions. The greatest temptation is setting our hearts on material things rather than the God who gives them: "You cannot serve God and money" (Matthew 6:24). But these temptations to sin must not cause us to think that material goods are evil in themselves, and surely it is not evil but good for a nation to continually increase its production of goods and services, for that is what God intended human beings to do on the earth....

The following passages indicate resource development, adding value to raw goods, is a good thing. This fact must first be established before considering the following point: Government should encourage individuals to develop privately-owned resources. (I.e. why should Government do that if material is viewed as evil?)

A. BLESSING EQUALS PROSPERITY

God repeatedly gives promises of material blessing in response to those who trust in Him and are obedient to Him. It stands to reason that if the material world were evil, God would not grant material things as gifts to His people. Deuteronomy 8:7-10 states in regard to God blessing the descendants of Abraham....

For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing forth in valleys and hills; ⁸ a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; ⁹ a land where you will eat food without scarcity, in which you will not lack anything; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper. ¹⁰ "When you have eaten and are satisfied, you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you.

Believing that the spiritual world is good and the material world is evil is a false dualism that is not supported by Scripture. To the contrary, what Scripture teaches is a different distinction between good and evil: obedience to God's revelation is good and disobedience to it is evil. Further discounting the former idea is Genesis 1:31. Note the context of this passage is right after God had created the material world....

And God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good.

If God says the material world He created is good and not evil, who are we to make pronouncements to the contrary?

B. FUTURE PROSPERITY

In the future, right after what Scripture repeatedly calls *The Day Of The Lord*, in which God avenges the sin of man and blesses the faithfulness of the saints in the end times, the material productivity of the world will greatly increase: There will be abundant material output associated with the Second Coming of Christ. Note this in Joel 3:18....

And in that day The mountains will drip with sweet wine, And the hills will flow with milk, And all the brooks of Judah will flow with water; And a spring will go out from the house of the LORD To water the valley of Shittim.

It follows: if God thinks material prosperity is evil, then why does He bless the faithful with so much of it in the future?

C. THE POOR AND PROSPERITY

Throughout Scripture poverty is not seen as a good thing, but something that needs to change for the better. This idea in itself reveals that God sees material possessions as a good thing. Notice 1John 3:17 in this regard....



But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?

This passage serves to underscore the point being made; God's love is communicated in part by the dissemination of **the world's goods** to those who are lacking in material possessions. God desires all people to live with adequate material possessions.

D. JESUS THE CARPENTER

In Mark 6:3 we are reminded that Jesus added value to raw goods and resources: Wood.

"Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?" And they took offense at Him.

E. PAUL THE TENTMAKER

In Acts 18:3 we are reminded that Paul added value to raw goods and resources: Fabric.

and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working, for by trade they were tent-makers.

In 2Thessalonians 3:7-8 Paul states that others need to be those who add value to the resources of the earth in some way....

For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, ⁸ nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you;

Laboring to achieve value-added material possessions is inferred as a normative way of life in God's eyes in all of these passages. Prior to the fall,

labor has always been God's means for man to gain the benefit of the earth's natural resources (cf. Gen 2:15). God could have just given man value added product from His creation, but he made man with a desire to be industrious and to **labor** in order to gain material benefit. It follows that for one to be lazy or to lack diligence is to violate God's standard operating procedure.

F. GOD'S PRONOUNCEMENT

As previously mentioned, characteristic of false teachers in the NT is their asceticism.

ASCETICISM IS THE FALSE BELIEF THAT SELF-DENIAL IS THE MARK OF TRUE SPIRITUALITY

Again, pitting the material world against the spiritual world is a false dichotomy for ascertaining spirituality. In 1Timothy 4:4 we find Paul negating this heretical teaching. He states summarily to the point of resource development being a good thing....

For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude;

Someone who lives on less is not necessarily more spiritual than another who lives with more material possessions. The question of spiritual maturity has to do not with possession or lack thereof, but rather with the intent of one's heart for the material things one possesses: Do you idolize them? Or do you use them for God's stated purposes? Are you a hoard or a steward?

G. SUMMARY OF POINT

As determined by the aforementioned passages, it is good and not necessarily greedy in God's eyes for individuals to labor to develop natural resources into value added product. God desires industrious individuals, His stewards, to labor and then use those resources for His purposes. Having



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substantively in omnibus fashion established that biblical premise, it follows that God would desire His institution of Government to foster and encourage all citizens in such a quest. And He does.

III. GOVERNMENT SHOULD ENCOURAGE INDIVIDUALS TO DEVELOP PRIVATELY OWNED RESOURCES

Governments should not only foster and encourage but incentivize their citizenry to create economic growth for themselves; as we have just seen, there is nothing inherently evil about this! To do so is to enrich, diversify and stabilize a nation *and* its civil administration. Romans 13:4 is the crux passage in the NT that supports these premises....

for it [Government] is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.

On its face, this passage does not take a lot of explaining to be properly understood. It says Government exists in part **for [your] good**. That is to say *it is to serve its citizenry* – to do **good** for them. This scriptural idea is appropriately woven into the contract of our Constitution, wherein our exegetically sensitive Christian Forefathers wrote that our Government exists to “promote the general welfare” of the nation. The historic way in which our Government has served its people **for good** is through identifying the worth of and incentivizing the unique contribution of each of the other four God-ordained institutions (a concept developed at length in other Bible studies); each provide a unique contribution to the nation that the others cannot. Notice one illustration of this in each of the following four other institutions (stating what follows is not to imply that our Government does everything correctly to incentivize each of the

following, in fact some policies serve as disincentives to each that follow:

A. THE INSTITUTION OF COMMERCE

Government has historically provided tax write-offs to businesses that reinvest their wealth to build their businesses larger, thereby creating more jobs for others. Building a business is a business expense that is tax-deductible – what a wonderful incentive!

B. THE INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE

Government has historically provided tax incentives for marriages to have more children. Our daughter and her husband will give birth to our fifth grandchild in December – just in time to pick up their federal child tax deduction and the California state tax credit! Let’s up the incentives and double the size of the nation – that will stimulate the economy!

C. THE INSTITUTION OF FAMILY

Recently, due to **Congressman Trent Franks’** (Arizona) legislation, Government is giving tax deductions to those who support the education of children. This ends up saving the Government money by not having to educate children in expensive public schools. This is brilliant thinking!

D. THE INSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH

Government has historically provided tax incentives for people who give to religious institutions. That is great thinking and policy because like the other institutions, Government cannot accomplish nearly as efficiently what each of the other institutions does best. In this case the Church builds character in the citizenry, whereas the Government is not in the character business, (“no kidding” remarked my editor at this point in my copy) rather it exists to punish evil.

E. SUMMARY OF POINT



Our Government has acknowledged the value each of these institutions provides to the nation and has profoundly and wonderfully *served* them by way of the incentivization of each to do what they do best.

WHAT HAS RESULTED IS A HUGE CULTURAL SYNERGY OF GOOD AND RAPID NATIONAL ADVANCEMENT UNPARALLELED IN WORLD HISTORY

As a lawmaker, these are examples of great laws that align with the teaching of Romans 13:4 and should be preserved: They wonderfully manifest the biblical teaching that Government **is a servant of God to you for good**. Herein illustrated by our own Government is the biblical idea that government should incentivize the overall development of a nation. You and I can praise God that we live in a country that is, at least in this area, biblically spot-on! May the institutional incentives from Government only increase in the years ahead!

IV. PRIVATELY OWNED RESOURCES ENABLE INDIVIDUALS TO MEET THEIR OWN NEEDS

When a country's leadership understands the profundity of what Romans 13:4 teaches concerning how it should operate to best serve its citizenry, it ends up working to empower citizens to meet their own needs, versus encouraging them to rely on their Government to do that for them. President John F. Kennedy best capsulizes this guiding biblical principle when he penned....

“ASK NOT WHAT YOUR COUNTRY CAN DO FOR YOU, BUT WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR YOUR COUNTRY”

When Government postures and disciplines itself to serve its citizens so that they can create private wealth, it creates a culture of self-reliant individuals versus one that is dependent on government handouts. God knows nothing of the model of a large government wherein people increasingly end

up looking to it rather than Him for their needs. *It is important to note that this conservative principle of individual self-reliance stems from the teachings of Romans 13:4.* This is an informative and inviolate biblical principle concerning a Government's proper understanding of economics – herein is how God wants Governments to view their job!

V. PRIVATELY OWNED RESOURCES ENABLE INDIVIDUALS TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE POOR

The result of the aforementioned as it relates to meeting the needs of the less fortunate, i.e. those who have been badly stained by a fallen world, is that there is a more effective, personal and successful way of meeting their needs and fostering their self reliance. This biblical model, again stemming from the profound theology and implications of Romans 13:4, is that individuals, not Governments, become the primary resource for satisfactorily and abundantly helping to create a societal safety net. Via the instruction to Governments in Romans 13:4, Government plays a more efficient and effective role when it smartly empowers the private sector to meet the needs of the less fortunate.

VI. SUMMARY

Herein is the Christian world view and the passages that pertain to a Governments' understanding of economics. Herein are God's answers and God's ways for Government to best develop abundant resources for the whole of a culture. Herein is God's blueprint for national property and creating an effective societal safety net. Herein is how best a Government fosters resource development through policies of incentives.