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 GOVERNMENT & ECONOMICS SERIES | PART 3

# Resource Development



**W**HY IS IT THAT AMERICA HAS IN VERY short order economically outpaced all the other countries of the world? Countries where Buddhism is the predominate religion, for example, have been around for twenty-six hundred years, and Islam-based nations 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 and, in particular, graciousness.

The economic greatness of America is grounded in Christianity’s theological basis of both; it has shaped the way we think.<sup>1</sup> These two underpinning presuppositions are, in essence, what catapulted America into world leadership in

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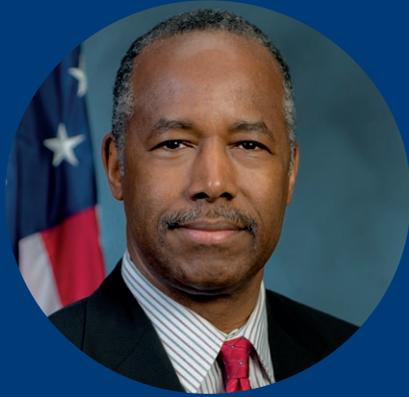
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*The views expressed in each Bible study are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect the position of any individual Bible Study Sponsor.*



★ PUBLIC SERVANT QUOTE

Ben Carson



“All of my policies are biblically based and that puts me at odds automatically. Jesus accepted people. He brought them in and he changed their hearts. We have to think the same way but we have to be uncompromising on principle.”

— DR BEN CARSON

*Dr. Ben Carson, U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development speaking on how he had been fortified and supported by the weekly Capitol Ministries Cabinet Bible study he sponsors and attends.*

very, very short order. This week in our Government and Economics Bible study series, I would like to examine the role of government in maintaining that.

Read on, my friend!

Ralph Drollinger

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. (Witness most recently the reaction to the Justice Brett Kavanaugh confirmation wherein both rational thinking and human dignity were greatly lacking.) To the degree these virtues are lost in our culture is the same degree we disable the sustainability of our country’s moral fabric, which is directly connected to and undergirds its economic greatness. Said another way, our economic engine is based on rational thinking as to what is empirically right and wrong, as well as characteristic respect for others, such as not stealing property, not stealing ideas, and not damaging personal dignity.

As illustrated by the Kavanaugh hearings, as the cultural jettisoning of Christianity increases, the discerning eye can ascertain the rise of perniciousness, which “implies irreparable harm done through evil or insidious corrupting or undermining,” according to *Merriam-Webster*. What is intended to be, and was at one time, a Senate procedure governed by an overriding pursuit for truth was instead eclipsed by ulterior and lesser motives.

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*, (as 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 or not built singularly on western-developed oil exportation. All of these cameos serve to illustrate that:

**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, increasing disconnection from) a religious belief system greatly determines its destiny. As much as the secularist attempts to discount this presupposition, it is nonetheless resolutely true.

Given this backdrop, this Bible study is intended to provide you, our nation’s policymakers, with a cogent biblical basis as to why and how government should most efficiently go about promoting economic



prosperity. The best means of promoting economic development, we will discover, are based on biblical revelation—biblical teaching and biblically revealed principles regarding what the Bible says is the role of God’s ordained institution of civil government. 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 a respect for human dignity in its populace. Any attempt at national economic development void of these cultural underpinnings is virtually impossible. And further, these underpinnings are something that only Christianity, not government, can provide. Again, this is a critical distinction to make up front prior to embarking on our study; this presupposition must be underscored and not overlooked.

## II. RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT IS GOOD

Scripture does not support the idea that material prosperity is evil. For leaders to reason that government should restrain material prosperity because material prosperity is evil is counter to Scripture as attested by the following verses. As a matter of fact, the apostle 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 rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’”*

This passage implies that God expects mankind to discover, develop, and produce goods and services from the earth for his own betterment. It also determines if or not mankind is predisposed to better understanding the universe in which he lives through gaining knowledge about it. Created by God and accountable to Him, this passage decrees man’s standard operating procedure. Such a presupposition, or lack of it, determines if a populace is intent on developing its natural and human resources, or not. Herein is the theological impetus, the motivation for the pursuit of goods and services.

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

“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 further indicate that resource development is good, that adding value to raw goods is a great thing to be about! Keep in mind that this fact must first be established before considering the outline point that will follow: Government should encourage individuals to develop privately-owned resources.<sup>2</sup> (i.e., Why should a government do that if ma-

### VERSE OF THE WEEK

## Genesis 1:28

*“And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’”*



God expects mankind to discover, develop, and produce goods and services from the earth for his own betterment.





James Madison



“I own myself the friend to a very free system of commerce and hold it as a truth that commerce shackles are generally unjust, oppressive and impolitic – it is also a truth that if industry and labor are left to take their own course they will generally be directed to those objects which are the most productive, and this in a more certain and direct manner than the wisdom of the most enlightened legislature could point out.”

— James Madison, signer of the Constitution, author of The Federalist Papers; framer of the Bill of Rights; secretary of state; fourth president of the United States.

James Madison, *Speech in Congress*, April 9, 1789; *James Madison’s Advice to My Country*, p. 21, University of Virginia Press.

material is not viewed as good, rather as evil?)

### A. BLESSING EQUALS PROSPERITY

In Ephesians 1:3, the apostle Paul states that God has granted believers “*every spiritual blessing.*” This passage serves to indicate that *blessings* from God are more than material. But God’s *blessings* are not void of being material either. In fact, God repeatedly gives promises of material blessing in response to those who trust in Him and are obedient to Him. Again, there is much more to Scripture than material prosperity (per the mantra of prosperity preachers.) It stands to reason that if the material world were evil, God would not grant material things as gifts to His people. Note this in Deuteronomy 8:7–10, which 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; a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; 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. When you have eaten and are satisfied, you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you.”*

This beautiful, wonderful passage adroitly fits with Genesis 1:28!

**Believing that the spiritual world is good and the material world is evil is a false dualism that is not supported by Scripture.**

What Scripture does teach is a distinction between good and evil, not material rich-

es versus material poverty. 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:

*“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? Accordingly, it follows that it is not outside of the biblical realm to think God will and does bless those He created in His image with material things. Is this not underscored by the book of Job?

### B. THE BOOK OF JOB

Job, arguably one of the most righteous yet persecuted men of the Old Testament (OT), remained faithful to God even while Satan was allowed to take his livestock, his camels, his family, and his health. Nonetheless, Job 42:10–17 says one of the ways the Lord rewarded Job for his faithfulness was to double his material wealth.

*“The LORD restored the fortunes of Job.... The LORD increased all that Job had twofold.... The LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning.... And Job died, an old man and full of days.”* (vv. 10, 12, 17)

### C. 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?

#### D. THE POOR AND PROSPERITY

Throughout Scripture, poverty is not seen as positive but something that needs to change for the better. This idea in itself reveals that God sees material possessions as a good thing. Notice 1 John 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 indirectly 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—and certainly there are abundant natural resources in the planet He has created and given us stewardship over to abundantly meet the needs of everyone. God is good. In fact, one of the OT descriptors for God is *Jehovah Jirah*, meaning “God our provider.”

#### E. 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 sis-*

*ters here with us?’ And they took offense at Him.”*

#### F. 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 2 Thessalonians 3:7–8, Paul states that others need to 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, 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 implied as a normative way of life in God’s eyes in all of these passages. As stated earlier in this series on Government and Economics, even prior to the fall (after the fall, labor will be difficult), *labor* has always been God’s means for man to gain the benefit of the earth’s natural resources (cf. Genesis 2:15). God could have just given man value-added products 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. And as God would have it, the way He designed man, his sense of dignity and worth is largely determined by his *labor*.

#### G. GOD’S PRONOUNCEMENT

As previously mentioned, characteristic

of false teachers in the New Testament (NT) is their asceticism.

**Asceticism is the 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 spiritual maturity. In 1 Timothy 4:4 we find Paul negating this heretical teaching. He states summarily that resource development is 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 does not hinge on possessions or lack thereof, but rather with the intent of one’s heart for the use of material things one possesses: Do you idolize them or do you use them for God’s stated purposes? Are you a hoarder or a steward? Is your orientation all about you or others? The answer to those questions will determine how you use what God has given you. In this same line of thinking, note 1 Timothy 6:10:

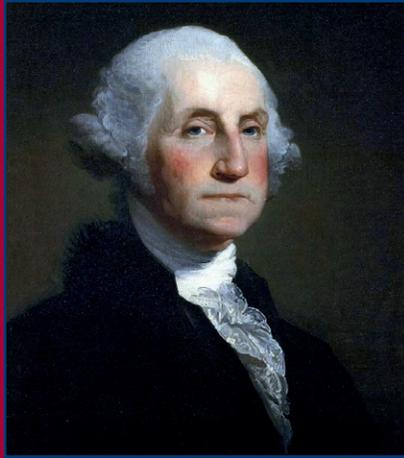
*“For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”*

No better recent illustration of this is the NBA home office and various players kowtowing to China’s totalitarian, autocratic, despotic rule over its citizenry in many forms. More important to the NBA home office was making a buck, than were the God-given human rights of individuals.

Note that God does not disdain money,



George Washington



“A people...who are possessed of the spirit of commerce, who see and who will pursue their advantages may achieve almost anything.”

— George Washington, first president of the United States; commander-in-chief of the Continental Army; member of the Continental Congress; president of the Constitutional Convention, ‘Father of His Country’; judge.

George Washington, *First Inaugural Address*, April 30, 1798.

he distains *the love* of it. In 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 products and services. God desires industrious individuals, His stewards, to *labor* and then use those resources He has given us for His purposes. Having 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 citizens to create economic growth for themselves; as we have just seen, there is nothing inherently evil about resource development! To do so is to enrich, diversify, and stabilize a nation *and* its civil administration. As we learned in part 2, 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 and incentivizing the unique contribution of each of the other four God-ordained institutions: commerce, family, marriage, and church. 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.<sup>3</sup>

#### 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 goods and services and jobs for others. The expense of building a business is tax deductible in the sense of depreciation—what a wonderful incentive to grow a business!

#### B. THE INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE

Government has historically provided tax incentives for married couples to have more children. When our daughter gave birth to our fifth grandchild (We now have seven!), it was just in time to pick up the federal child tax deduction and the California state tax credit. With all the open land and abundant natural resources our nation has, why not up the incentives and double the size of the nation—that will certainly stimulate the economy, and it will keep us competitive with other countries who are outgrowing us in terms of population. The dictatorship of Belarus, for example, will provide a family with a free home if they have at least seven children. To the contrary of population/economic development, if for no other reason than an economic argument (and there are better, morally based arguments), pro-abortion laws serve to hurt the economy: America, in fact, should have fifty million more laborers and consumers than it presently does contributing to the GDP,



as well as, by way of taxation, enabling a larger military budget to combat other countries who represent evil desires and possess growing militaries.

### C. THE INSTITUTION OF FAMILY

Legislation in Arizona, created by former Congressman Trent Franks when he was a state representative, which is now spreading to other states, gives tax deductions to those who pay to educate their children in private schools. This ends up actually saving the government money through reduced enrollment in expensive, noncompetitive bureaucratic-laden public schools. This is brilliant thinking in that it not only provides more choices to the parents for a child's best education, but also saves the state money. Education vouchers should be passed into law to further create competition in education—and competition always creates better everything!

### 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 achieve nearly as efficiently that which each of the other institutions does best and is specifically designed by God to accomplish. In this case, the church builds character in the citizenry, whereas the government is not in the character-building business *per se*; rather, it exists to punish evil. For government to incentivize religion is for government to create character in its own present and future leaders.

### E. SUMMARY OF POINT

Fortunately, in America our government has acknowledged the value that each of

these institutions provides to the nation and has profoundly and wonderfully *served* them by way of incentivizing each to do what they do best. Is it no wonder America has been so prosperous a nation! It is nothing short of a genius application of biblical principles. Why would we ever change this?

**What has resulted is a huge cultural synergy of good and rapid resource development that has achieved national advancement unparalleled in world history.**

The aforementioned serves as an insightful, biblically informed analysis as to why, and I say this again for emphasis, America became such a great nation in a relatively short period of time. If you are ever asked that question, or asked to speak on it, the above should be your outline! As a lawmaker and policy maker, these are examples of great laws that align with the teaching of Romans 13:4. They must be preserved: They wonderfully manifest the biblical teaching that government *“is a minister of God to you for good.”* Notice importantly that Scripture does not say “you are to be a servant of government for its good.” (Obviously regimes don't get what this passage is teaching!) Herein illustrated by our own country is the biblical idea that government should incentivize the overall development of a nation, and even more specifically, its resource development—in contrast to socialist/communist countries that believe civil government can do it all by owning it all. Is it any wonder why socialist countries like Venezuela always fail? It is because:

**Socialist countries are not built on biblical premises.**

You and I can praise God that we live in a country that is, at least in this area and

for now, biblically spot-on! May the institutional incentives *from* government only increase in the years ahead! Herein is the biblically based theological understanding as to how civil government can and does best grow a nation's resources and its economy!

### 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 government 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, ask what you can do for your country.”**

When government postures and disciplines itself to serve its citizens so they can create private wealth, it creates a culture of self-reliant individuals versus those who are dependent on government handouts. I have traveled into many former communist-controlled countries and seen firsthand what communism has done to the hearts of people. It is very difficult to reignite a can-do entrepreneurial spirit that so characterizes the citizenry of historic capitalistic cultures. 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 principle of individual self-reliance stems from the teachings of Romans 13:4! “It is a minister of God to you for good.”* This is an informative and inviolate biblical principle concerning a government's



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proper understanding of economics—herein is how God wants government to view its job! It follows too, that when people have an abundance of personal resources, they are in a better position to help the needs of the less fortunate—versus a government trying to meet all those individual needs with little personalization, no spiritual solutions, and huge inefficiency.

## 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 impaired by a fallen world—and this does occur through a myriad of ways—is that there is a more effective, personal, and successful way of meeting the needs of and fostering self-reliance in the poor. 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 God’s instruction to government in Romans 13:4, government plays a more efficient and effective role when it *smartly and shrewdly* empowers and incentivizes the other God-ordained (and coequal if not more important!) institutions to meet the needs of the less fortunate versus attempting bear the burden itself.

## VI. SUMMARY

Herein is the Christian world view and the passages supporting that, that pertain to a civil government’s 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 private property and creating an ensuing, effective societal safety net. Herein is how best a government fosters resource development through scripturally based incentivization.

Next week in part 4, we look at free markets and regulation. **cm**

- 1 It should be noted that Judaism contains both of these theological aspects as well. Even though a much younger nation than even America, Israel’s economic prosperity can be attributed to these same religious moorings: both rational thinking and human dignity.
- 2 The biblical premise of private ownership in a capitalistic economy is the thesis of the first Bible study in this series.
- 3 Stating what follows is not to imply that our government does everything correctly, in fact some existing policies and regulations serve as disincentives to each of the God-ordained institutions.

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