

Christianity and Capitalism - Using Business to Reach Our World



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[Framework for freedom. Origins of freedom. Contrast Shall & Aught. Islam/Christian World views. Christians and world poverty.] Reformation

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BreakPoint with Charles Colson

<http://www.breakpoint.org/Breakpoint/ChannelRoot/FeaturesGroup/BreakPointCommentaries/Christianity+and+Capitalism.htm>

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At our recent BreakPoint "Christians in the Marketplace" conference, theologian and scholar Michael Novak told us of a trip he took to **Sudan**. He went for the State Department to talk to **guerilla leaders** there about religion, politics, and economics. About **half of those men rebelling against their oppressive Muslim government were Muslims themselves**. They told Michael that they were **frustrated because they felt that their religion provided them with no real framework for democratic reform**.

[From the above paragraph, what was the most surprising thing to read?
Was there anything approaching a movement or philosophy where men were considered to have certain freedoms beyond the state?
Ancient Greece (BC)?
Roman Empire?
Anywhere in the East?
For the record, what type of philosophy has been prevalent in the East from Christ's time forward except in some periods during the 20th Century? *
The Romans trace their freedoms to Greek influence.
The Greek trace their freedoms to their initial inquiries into Philosophy. Greek City/States.
Other World cultures trace their freedoms to exposure to the "West".
Where does the West trace their freedoms from?]

Explaining to those leaders how we in the United States had come to our understanding of basic human rights made Michael realize all the more **how foundational the role of Christianity is in our political and economic systems**. Unlike Christianity, you see, **Islam places its sole emphasis on the greatness of God**. The Christian faith emphasizes this as well, but it places equal emphasis on the **idea of a God who willingly humbled Himself to reach out to His own fallen creatures**. Islam does not.

The **Islamic world has never developed what Michael calls a "theory of liberty" -- the idea**

of a freely chosen relationship with the Creator. That relationship, he believes, even more important than the law, is fundamental if we're to have a civil society -- because **that consensus of belief provides the basis of human dignity, liberty, and equality.**

[Look at both sides of viewing morality. The shall and the ought. Let's pick on the relationship between a boss and their employee.

What would be some of the differences?

To what can we attribute the differences to?

Is it valid to compare Islam to "shall" and Christianity to "ought"?

Does the differences between "shall" and "ought" demonstrable in society today?]

And that relationship with the Creator also underlies our system of capitalism. **To be made in the image of God, Michael argues, is to be a creator.** The Scriptures teach that God gave us the **gift of creativity, the power to find and develop the potential within the world around us.** As Michael puts it, if you're running a business and not helping the people who work for you to develop their creativity and put it to good use, there's something wrong with your business.

The impact of a well run business reaches beyond its employees and even beyond its community. For example, just a few centuries ago, most people lived **under tyranny and in poverty.** But **today, two-thirds of the world's population lives above the poverty line.** This development is the direct result of **human creativity that is so encouraged in Christian societies.**

[Is this a true statement in comparing people of old verses today?

Is it true to say Christian societies encourage creativity?

What can be said for ancient Chinese advances?

What then can be said for Chinese advances 100 years ago (*pre-Communisim*)?]

The **Christian understanding of the world teaches that it is imperative to help as many people out of poverty as we can.** History demonstrates that the best way of doing that is using business to create opportunities for those around the world who need them. Moreover, **business development in needy countries will help provide the economic base that democracy needs in order to survive.** As Adam Smith demonstrated in his seminal work *The Wealth of Nations*, when we're trying to help the poor, the important question is not the root causes of poverty -- we don't want to create more of that -- but rather the root causes of wealth, and how to help these people attain wealth.

[Is this true - Christians are to move people above the poverty line?

If true, how is it to be measured?

Where (*What*) is the poverty line?

Who identifies the poverty line?

Who makes adjustments to the poverty line, or is it an absolute?

Business development is required for democracy to survive?

Is this true?

Has it always been true?

Can a nation improve their economic conditions without business development?

Does exporting oil, uranium, gas, diamonds, make a difference?

Does this constitute business development?

If you looked to a world globe, generally speaking, where would you find the most developed countries? The poorer countries?

In 1900 (*pre-Communism*), where would you find the most advanced nations in ...

Africa?

South America?

Asia?

Islands?]

The marketplace today is full of Christians, but unfortunately, many of them *don't understand how important their calling is, or how to live out their beliefs in their workplace*. They should start by recognizing that when we exercise the creative capacity that God has given us, we not only benefit ourselves. We are helping to transform the world for humankind and for Him.

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Do you agree Christian's do not know how to live out their beliefs in the workplace?

If yes, give some examples.

If no, what do you find troubling about the statement?

Do you agree most people don't understand the importance of the call?

Do you agree there is a call?

Do you understand the importance of the call?

If no, is it a lack of understanding or difference of opinion?

If no, did you agree with anything the author had said?

If yes, at what point did you part company?

What was the single most striking idea you got out of this article?]

With the exception of Mao's Communism, China has always believed in "one man". Not one government, or one society. Just one man. All else is subservient to the One Man (*One Leader, if you like*).

The contrast between how Christians and Islam view God. The logical outworkings in their underlying philosophy has profound ramifications.



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