

Do Christian ethics lead us to the left or to the right?

Does Christianity demand or
lead to free market capitalism?

Does Christianity lay the
groundwork for democratic
socialism?

Ecclesiastes 10:2

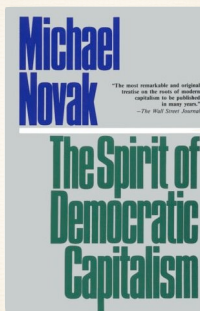
“A wise man’s heart directs him toward
the right, but the foolish man’s heart
directs him toward the left.”

John Adams

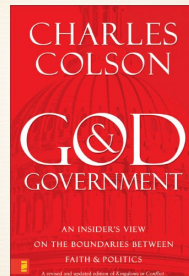
*“We have no government armed with
power capable of contending with
human passions unbridled by morality
and religion. Our constitution was
made only for a moral and a religious
people. It is wholly inadequate for the
government of any other.”*



**A defense of American
exceptionalism**



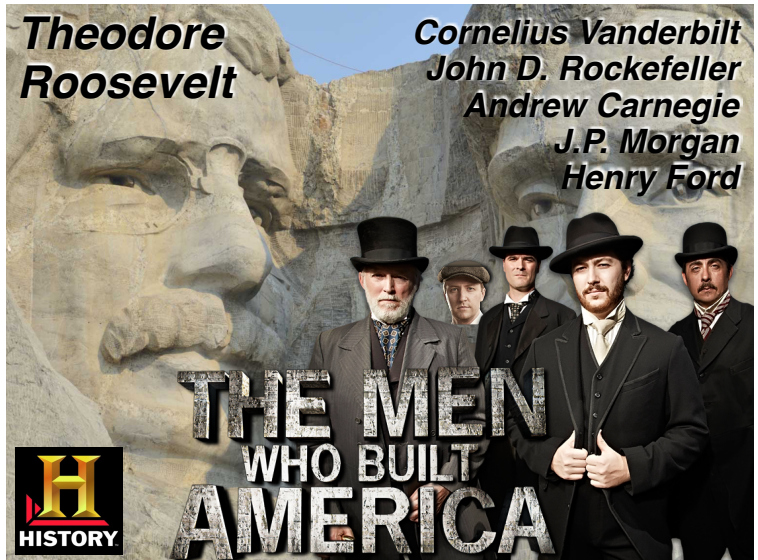
**A defense of the role
of Christian values
in U.S. politics
and economics**



**A politically non partisan
perspective**

**Theodore
Roosevelt**

**Cornelius Vanderbilt
John D. Rockefeller
Andrew Carnegie
J.P. Morgan
Henry Ford**



**The best compliment that can be given
the American system of government is:**

**It embraces the most realistic
view of human nature -**

depraved dignity.

E pluribus unum

Ephesians 4:28

“He who steals must steal no longer;
but rather he must labor, performing
with his own hands what is good, so
that he will have something to share
with one who has need.”

- **Private ownership** of property (the fruit of labor not theft) is assumed.
- Ownership calls for stewardship, **sharing** with those in need.
- One of the **marks** of Christian conversion - takers become givers.

Disciples of Jesus have two callings:

- 1) They are to pray
and
- 2) be the answer to
someone else's prayer.

Acts 4

"³² And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own; but all things were common property to them. ³³ And with great power the apostles were giving witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all. ³⁴ For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales, ³⁵ and lay them at the apostles' feet; and they would be distributed to each, as any had need. ³⁶ And Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means, Son of Encouragement), ³⁷ and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet."

Is socialism sanctioned by the N.T.?

Observations on Acts 4

- **Description is not Prescription** - This describes what happened not what was commanded.
- **The faith community** - This is what happened within the church fellowship not the state.
- **Voluntary** - This was not legislated or forced but voluntary.
- **Occasional** - There is no indication that this was the pattern outside the Jerusalem church in the very first days after Pentecost.

This tells us a lot about the community spirit within the early church (but not about the structure of the state).

Are corporate decisions (socialism) sanctioned by the N.T.?

NO!

Not as a mandated system of civil government.

YES!

As a sentiment of the Christian Spirit.

Separation of church and state addresses:

1. Union of any particular religious sect & state.
2. Union of any particular system of government & state.

American capitalism's challenge to the Christian:

- ✓ **Community** - How do we build and maintain a large tranquil community that is diverse?
- ✓ **Exploitation** - How do we keep the rich and powerful from manipulating the system?
- ✓ **Economic justice** - How do we maintain a sense of just distribution of the benefits of a free enterprise community?
- ✓ **Values** - How do we promote the higher values of the Christian faith when the system is driven by self serving (greed), competition, materialism, and individualism?
- ✓ **Anxiety, stress, & depression** - epidemic.

Preamble to the U.S. Constitution

"We the people of the United States, in order **to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty** to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

The government's role is to secure personal liberty by preventing it from destroying community.



John Kenneth Galbraith

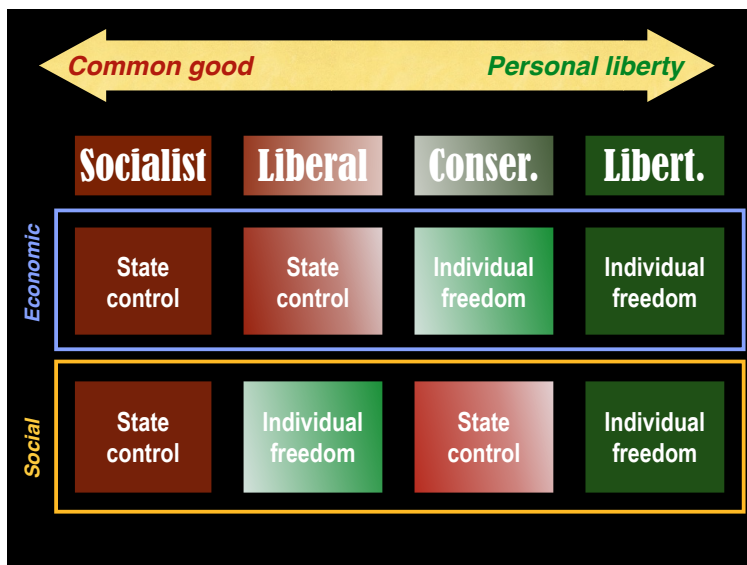
"Under capitalism, man exploits man. Under communism, it's just the opposite."

Martin Luther King Jr.

"Morality cannot be legislated, but behavior can be regulated. Judicial decrees may not change the heart, but they can restrain the heartless."

Serj Tankian

"Capitalism unchecked is not a democratic system."



Examples of socialistic principles in American capitalism

- **Insurance** - where the costs and benefits are shared by a large pool of participants.
- **Regulations of commerce** - where those in power are not allowed to exploit those without it.
- **Public service** - Postal service, Education, Law enforcement, Standard measures & procedures, etc.
- **Community covenants** - where rules are made to protect and promote the general well-being of a neighborhood.

Christian capitalists

Competition that is fair

It is motivated by the pursuit of efficiency, and effectiveness as stewards more than personal comfort and power as consumers.

Cooperation that is proactive

It is sensitive to the well-being of the community as well as the family and the individual.

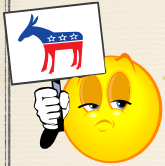
Compassion that is sacrificial

It is free to be generous and sensitive in addressing the true needs of others, especially those without power or dignity.

Common myths:

- ✓ Capitalism is built on a commitment to self interest that is always toxic to the general welfare - especially the poor and weak. (Only when and if it is driven by selfish people and without reasonable government controls).
- ✓ Capitalistic systems ALWAYS work better than socialistic systems (except where socialistic systems are successful - Singapore, Scandinavia, Canada, Germany, Modern China?, etc).
- ✓ You should not MIX socialistic and capitalistic elements. (Almost all nations, like the USA, and China are a mixture of both for good reasons).

Both sides share somethings in common:



- They are preoccupied with the temporal / material. **"It's all about this life and now."**
- They are convinced that the solutions are political. **"It's all about social systems."**



- They associate their politics with their theology. **"God is on our side."**
- They are more committed to being "understood by" rather than "understanding" each other. **"We don't need or care to hear about your ideas."**
- They question the motives of those on the other side. **"We are the only ones addressing the real issues with the right motives."**
- They fail to appreciate their need for each other. **"We are better off without you."**

American Sacred Cows fear any and all forms of socialism

- ✓ **Free expression** - Americans can 1) voice their true beliefs and feelings and 2) curse both government and God.
- ✓ **Free enterprise** - Americans can 1) create / produce and 2) manipulate / oppress.
- ✓ **Personal autonomy** - Americans are 1) free from enslavement to man or government and 2) from God.
- ✓ **Competition** - Americans are 1) able to rise to the limits of their ability and 2) have contempt for those who are not as competitive.

Why disciples of Jesus should like democratic socialism.

- ✓ **It rewards the right things** - community, cooperation, social tolerance and respect.
- ✓ **It is sensitive to the marginalized** - poor, powerless, inept, victimized, etc.
- ✓ **It is just** - distributing material wealth more equitably than other systems.
- ✓ **It is efficient** - in coordinating resources & needs.

Why disciples of Jesus should be concerned about socialism.

- ✓ It can discourage initiative & bureaucratic efficiency.
- ✓ It can minimize individual worth and significance.
- ✓ It can be inefficient in creating, maintaining, or ending.
- ✓ It too often rewards and promotes the inept & foolish.

Why disciples of Jesus should like free market capitalism.

- ✓ **It works** - rewarding creativity, achievement, sensitivity to material needs, etc.
- ✓ **It is respectful of the individual** - consistent with personal freedom and responsibility.
- ✓ **It is self correcting** - disciplines through natural consequences.
- ✓ **It is better than the alternatives** - socialism, fascism, etc.

Why disciples of Jesus should be concerned about capitalism.

- ✓ It glorifies competition, individuality, & privacy.
- ✓ It too often promotes greed, stress, and exploitation.
- ✓ It rewards (keeps score) with the wrong thing (money).
- ✓ It too often leads to social inequality and division.

Conclusions

- Political systems make a difference but are not the main issue in Kingdom Ethics.
- In culture wars be careful that you do not die on the wrong hills (for the wrong issues).
- The USA has wisely combined capitalist and socialist principles in its commitment to liberty and justice for all.