

Abstract

“Christianity and capitalism: Compatibilities and Pitfalls”

by: Richard C. Chewning

Distinguished Scholar in residence: John Brown University
Emeritus Professor of Christian Ethics, Baylor University (2000)

The paper reviews the antecedents of capitalism, both biblical and secular. It outlines the rise of the free market system through which capitalism emerged. It outlines the relationship that existed during its emergence between the two cultural forces referred to by historians as the Renaissance and the Reformation. The paper is built to argue a two part hypothesis: Part 1. *There is considerable recorded and experiential evidence for believing that there is significant compatibility between the Christian faith and capitalism.* Part 2. *There are many pitfalls associated with capitalism that are ubiquitous – present everywhere and constantly encountered. These ubiquitous problems are associated with **all** economic systems, not just capitalism.* The paper draws three conclusions: 1) capitalism rests on a biblical doctrine of *freedom* that has a high value in God’s mind; 2) capitalism needs the assistance of a godly body of “law” to help keep the ubiquitous sin that pervades it under control; and 3) capitalism provides the highest standard of living and care for the **poor**, the **orphans**, the **widows**, the **handicapped**, and those “**sinned against.**”