

CONCERNING BIBLICAL ECONOMIC SYSTEMS

Affirmations and Denials
(Topic No. 15)

Introduction

This statement was developed by the Steering Committee of the International Church Council. It contains affirmations and denials of truth concerning the Christian position on biblical economic systems. It presents what we believe are the essential points of the orthodox and biblical position on this topic.

For the glory of the One who is light, truth, and love, and in a spirit of humility, and a concern for doctrinal purity, and unity, we present this document to the Body of Christ worldwide for feedback and reasoned debate. We invite any Christian brothers and sisters who might disagree with the points made by this document to submit feedback to us.

Statements of Affirmation and Denial¹

Definition: Economics is the study and the implementation of principles for the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services.

Article I

We affirm that God created man and the earth in which man lives, and that man is given stewardship responsibility over the earth by the Creator.

We deny that man is no longer responsible to God as steward of earth's resources.

Gen. 1:28; 2:15; 3:23; Psa. 8:4-8; 24:1-2; 104:14; Heb. 2:8; Rev. 11:18

¹ The Bible speaks often about the things of value in this world and of our stewardship for them under God's mandate. The Biblical references included here are representative of principles that are pervasive through the text of Holy Writ; these given are listed in the sequence of the books of the Bible and not in any priority order.

The truths of Scripture related to economics have been so grossly distorted by many interpreters over the centuries that merely listing certain verses is a very incomplete way of making the case for these affirmation and denial statements. The same verses have been used in the effort to biblically endorse non-biblical economic theories; to do so, they lift the passage out of context. It is incumbent upon us therefore at this time in church history to be very careful with our exegesis.

Truth is found in Scripture by what it states and also by what it does not say about certain subjects. This is true especially when transferring concepts from the cultural images used by the authors into the cultural images of today. It is therefore strongly urged that the serious student go to the white papers supporting this issue document. It is also helpful to return to the "Foundations" series of documents developed by the Coalition On Revival, especially "The Christian World View of Economics and Business", published in 1986, and available at www.reformation.net.

Article II

We affirm that man's creativity and resourcefulness are a reflection of God's own image, in which man was created, and that a key area in which these traits are evidenced is in economic activities.

We deny that economic activities and efforts are in opposition to either man's or God's nature, or to the moral laws of the universe.

Gen. 1:26-31; Psa. 8:4-8; 104:14-15; Prov. 16:11; 31:22; Ecc. 2:24; 3:13; 4:9; 5:18-19

Article III

We affirm that the Bible teaches that individuals have the right to hold private property.

We deny that the Bible teaches an economic system in which all property belongs to the community or the state.

Exo. 20:9, 15; Lev. 19:13; Pro. 13:22; Jam. 5:4

Article IV

We affirm that the opportunity for the individual to profit from his labors, and to produce wealth through his just and lawful endeavors, is a primary motivator in the production of wealth, and a key ingredient to a society's economic health and stability.

We deny that wealth, economic prosperity, or technological advancement may be significantly achieved apart from the individual's opportunity to personally gain from his lawful efforts.

Deut. 8:18; Pro. 13:22; 1 Tim. 5:8

Article V

We affirm that the Bible is the sufficient source for learning the fundamental economic principles which both please God, and lead to economic prosperity and stability.

We deny that the Bible is inadequate to teach fundamental economic principles which please God, and lead to prosperity and economic stability.

Psa. 111:10; Pro. 11:1; Isa. 8:20; 2 Tim. 3:16-17

Article VI

We affirm that the Bible contains those economic principles which are moral and just, principles which ought to be followed by all people, all societies, and all states.

We deny that it is morally acceptable for any person, state, or institution to pursue economic gain in opposition to biblical principles.

Lev. 18:2-5, 24-30; 19:35-37; 20:22-23; Deu. 4:8; 16:18-19; Psa. 119:75, 106, 160; Pro. 13:18; Rom. 13:8-10; 2 Tim. 3:16-17

Article VII

We affirm that, for the Christian, the primary incentive for the production of wealth, is to be his attitude of stewardship to God.

We deny that a mature Christian attitude is one that seeks economic gain for selfish reasons.

Deu. 8:11-20; Pro. 30:8-9; Hab. 2:13-14; Luke 12:16-21; 16:9-13; 1 Cor. 10:31; Eph. 6:5-9; Col. 3:23-24

Article VIII

We affirm an economy will prosper to the degree in which its entrepreneurs honor the stewardship-before-God principle.

We deny that a healthy economic or social environment may long be maintained without a practice of the stewardship-before-God principle.

Exo. 23:24-26; Deu. 28:1-68; 2 Chr. 24:20; Pro. 13:11; Isa. 65:11-16

Article IX

We affirm that earning profits and gaining wealth in the process of serving the market with goods or services is a good and moral thing when pursued in accordance with biblical principles.

We deny that profitability which results from serving a free market in accordance with Scriptural principles is inherently wrong or merely self-serving.

Deu. 8:18; Pro. 12:11; 13:11; Ecc. 2:24; 3:13; 4:9; 5:18-19

Article X

We affirm that one role of civil government is to create an infrastructure, and a climate of justice and order, in which individuals are encouraged to create, develop, and produce products and services helpful to mankind, and to the earth's creatures and environment.

We deny that civil government's function is to manipulate, manage, or control economics, or the productivity of its citizens.

Exo. 20:15; Deu. 1:16-17; 16:18-20; Psa. 125:3; Pro. 29:2; Rom. 13:3-4; Eph. 4:28

Article XI

We affirm that economic prosperity grows out of the freedom of the individual to labor and to receive for himself the rewards of his labor, and that history demonstrates that this is true.

We deny that civil government has the ability to produce lasting wealth through the organized production, or by the implementation of Marxist, communistic, or socialistic principles. We further deny that there is any example in history where civil government organized production, or where Marxist, communistic, or socialistic principles have inured to the long term benefit of its people, or to the production of wealth.

(No Scripture references are given for Article XI because the appeal for proof is to the testimony of history, not the Bible.)

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Article XII

We affirm that though all men are created equal in regard to their rights and liberties, yet they are not created equal in their intellectual, creative, or physical abilities, and that these inequities are a factor in an individual's ability to produce wealth.

We deny that all people have the same intellectual or physical ability, or that all people should expect to enjoy the same level of productivity or wealth.

Lev. 19:15; Pro. 17:5; 22:2; Mark 14:7; Luke 19:12-27; Acts 10:34; Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:12ff; Gal. 3:28

Article XIII

We affirm that the Christian is called to the compassionate use of wealth which includes a call to sacrificial giving to assist the poor and needy.

We deny that a Christian worldview allows for the selfish use or hoarding of wealth.

Exo. 22:25; Deu. 15:7-8, 11; 24:14-15; Psa. 68:10; Pro. 14:21, 31; 19:17; 22:16; 28:8; Eph. 4:28; Col. 3:5; 1 Tim. 6:10,17-19

Article XIV

We affirm that God gives the individual the responsibility to make choices as to how he will use his wealth.

We deny that civil government has the duty or right to redistribute wealth, or to direct the individual in the use of his wealth, so long as the individual is not acting immorally.

Exo. 20:15; Pro. 10:15-16; 22:16; Ecc. 2:24-25; Mat. 25:14-30; 2 Thes. 3:10-15

Article XV

We affirm that it is the responsibility of the Church to teach the fundamental principles of biblical economics, and to equip its people to discern between biblical and unbiblical economic activities and systems.

We deny that the learning of, or practice of biblical economics is optional to the Christian, or that the ministry of the Church may be deemed successful without diligent training of its people in biblical economics.

Deu. 28:1-68; Psa. 119:142; Rom. 1:20; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Heb. 4:12

Article XVI

We affirm that tithing (which is 10%) is a fundamental biblical economic principle.

We deny that tithing does not apply to Christians today, or that a Christian's economic duty is fulfilled when tithing is not practiced.

Gen. 14:18-19; Lev. 27:30-32; Mal. 3:8-12; Mat. 23:23; Heb. 7:9-10

Article XVII

We affirm that every man who practices biblical economics may expect God's blessing of provision and increase upon his labors, and that God is ultimately sovereign in economics, and may for his own purposes withhold economic blessing.

We deny that man should labor without hope, or that there is any formula that will automatically, and without fail, insure economic prosperity, or that God's sovereignty is excluded from the realm of economics.

Job 1:21; Pro. 22:29; Ecc. 9:11; Hag. 2:15-19; Mat. 5:45; 20:11-16; 21:33-43;
1 Cor. 9:9-10; Heb. 11:32-40

Article XVIII

We affirm that there is only one legitimate economic theory for all people of all cultures, which is the biblical economic theory.

We deny that there are multiple valid economic theories.

Deu. 8:18-20; Pro. 14:34, 20:10; Eze. 5:5-8; John 16:13; 17:17; Rom. 1:18-22;
2:14-16; 1 Tim. 6:3-6; Jam. 4:1-10; Rev. 20:12-15