

# BIBLICAL ECONOMICS TODAY

Vol. III, No. 4

© Institute for Christian Economics, 1980

Aug./Sept. 1980

## SEPARATION AND DOMINION

By Gary North

**But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that ye may know how the LORD doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel (Ex. 11:7).**

Basic to many of the ancient cultures was the distinction between "the people," the group to which a citizen belonged, and "the others," or "barbarians," who were outside the covenantal membership. Egypt was no exception. Wilson comments: "In their feeling of special election and special providence, the Egyptians called themselves 'the people' in contrast to foreigners."<sup>1</sup> So deeply embedded in Greek and Roman thought was the division between peoples, that classical legal theory recognized no common law within the city.<sup>2</sup> "No one could become a citizen at Athens," writes Coulanges, "if he was a citizen in another city; for it was a religious impossibility to be at the same time a member of two cities, as it also was to be a member of two families. One could not have two religions at the same time. . . . Neither at Rome nor at Athens could a foreigner be a proprietor. He could not marry; or, if he married, his marriage was not recognized, and his children were reputed illegitimate. He could not make a contract with a citizen; at any rate, the law did not recognize such a contract as valid. The Roman law forbade him to inherit from a citizen, and even forbade a citizen to inherit from him. They pushed this principle so far, that if a foreigner obtained the rights of a citizen without his son, born before this event, obtaining the same favor, the son became a foreigner in regard to his father, and could not inherit from him. The distinction between citizen and foreigner was stronger than the natural tie between father and son."<sup>3</sup>

There was also the linguistic difference. The very term "barbarian" has its origins in Greek grammar. The Greeks spoke Greek, of course, while foreigners' languages sounded like "bar bar"—incoherent, in other words. This, at least, is the standard explanation of the term, and it is repeated by the influential British historian of classical culture, H. D. F. Kitto, in the introduction to his book, *The Greeks* (1951). Both Kitto and C. M. Bowra argue that "barbarian" did not have a pejorative sense in Homer, but later the term came to mean inferior status.<sup>4</sup> Gilbert Murray, whose *Five Stages of Greek Religion* (1925) is regarded as a classic, says that we can mark the

origin of classical Greece with the advent of the cultural distinction between the Greek and the barbarian, when the Greek historian Herodotus could write that "the Hellenic race was marked off from the barbarian, as more intelligent and more emancipated from silly nonsense."<sup>5</sup> By the middle of the fifth century, B.C., the difference between Greek and barbarian, in the minds of the Greeks, was enormous.

The unity of man, which was assumed and announced architecturally at the tower of Babel, had been shattered by God when He confounded their language and scattered them. God's restraint on the creation of a one-world State brought freedom to men—freedom to develop personally and culturally. Yet it also brought an audible distinction between men. This distinction is more fundamental than race, for races can mix, leaving few if any traces of their genetic past, but linguistic distinctions, at least in literate cultures, resist alterations, and even when linguistic changes occur, the written records of the past draw men's thoughts and commitment back to a once-distinct past. It was no accident that the perceived unity of the Roman Catholic Church was maintained by the Latin Mass, and it was not accidental that the historically unprecedented disruptions within that church which took place from the mid-1960's onward were intimately related to the successful efforts of the church's religious liberals in abolishing the use of the Latin Mass.

Religious humanists, especially in the nineteenth century, sometimes have attacked this kind of division between men. Ludwig Feuerbach, whose book, *The Essence of Christianity* (1841), created a sensation and converted a whole generation of European intellectuals to atheism. Frederick Engels, Marxism's co-founder, remarked once that "One must himself have experienced the liberating effect of this book to get an idea of it. Enthusiasm was general; we all became at once Feuerbachians."<sup>6</sup> In this book, Feuerbach attacked Christianity's concept of saved and lost. Such a view of man separates men from other men. Yet man is a unified whole, a species being. In fact, Feuerbach said, God is really nothing more than man's own thoughts, projected into the religious consciousness of men. "God is the human being; but he presents himself to the religious consciousness as a distinct being."<sup>7</sup> The Christian denies that man is God, and this is unforgivable. Even worse, Christians say that some men will be saved by God,

and others will not be saved. "To believe, is synonymous with goodness; not to believe, with wickedness. Faith, narrow and prejudiced, refers all unbelief to the moral disposition. In its view the unbeliever is an enemy to Christ out of obduracy, out of wickedness. Hence faith has fellowship with believers only; unbelievers it rejects. It is well-disposed towards believers, but ill-disposed towards unbelievers. In faith there lies a malignant principle."<sup>8</sup>

Marx and Engels, his most famous converts, rejected Feuerbach's brand of non-divisive humanism. They saw the illusion of God as a product of a deliberate lie: a weapon used by capitalists to suppress the proletariat. The problem is class divisions; the solution is class warfare, with the proletariat finally emerging victorious over the bourgeoisie.<sup>9</sup> They called for unconditional surrender; they called for all-out warfare. They predicted absolute victory. They saw that victory over evil involves triumph, in time and on earth.<sup>10</sup> They saw that there must be a self-awareness on the part of the "vanguard" of history, the proletariat, of the irreconcilable differences between them and their class enemies, the bourgeoisie.<sup>11</sup> And they substituted the forces of dialectical, materialistic history for the providence of God, thereby preserving an eschatology of victory.<sup>12</sup> They saw that there must be separation in order to achieve victory.

#### Victory through Separation

God announced that there was a radical difference between the Hebrews and the Egyptians. So great was this difference, that dogs would not bark at the Hebrews upon their departure from Egypt. The fear of the Hebrews would be so great, that the very dogs of Egypt would cower at them. There would be no dogs yapping at their heels during the exodus, as arrogant dogs do when they chase an intruder from their master's property. The meaning was clear: the Hebrews would leave victorious, having seen their enemies so thoroughly defeated, that not one of them would raise a cry against them. No jeering crowds would force them to "run the gauntlet," throwing rocks or garbage at them as they departed. The Egyptians respected them and their leader, Moses. "And the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover the man Moses was very great in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people" (Ex. 11:3). They believed in the continuity of being, and Moses had vanquished the representative of Egypt's gods, who himself was believed to be divine. Were not the Hebrews linked to that victorious God, through Moses?

Consider the exodus from the point of view of a citizen of Egypt or one of the Canaanitic nations. A slave population had successfully challenged the dominant political order of its day. Egypt's wealth and power, even in decline (if Courville's chronology of the dynasties is correct), was recognized through the ancient world. Yet Egypt could not bring these Hebrews into submission. The ancient world viewed a military defeat as a defeat for the gods of the vanquished city-state. What a defeat for the gods of Egypt! A slave population had risen up, under the very noses of the Egyptians, and had smashed the political order. So complete was this victory, that the invading Hyksos (Amalekites) swept over Egypt without encountering military resistance. God had been so victorious over Egypt that His people did not even bother to remain in the land as conquerors. So contemptuous of Egypt were the Hebrews that they marched out, leaving the spoils of war to the Amalekites, who

were being replaced in Canaan by the Hebrews. Here was a God so great, that He did not even bother to subdue the land of Egypt. And now, the Canaanites knew, these people were coming for them. Is it any wonder that they trembled for a generation (Josh. 2:9-11)?

The division between Egypt and Israel was assured. The Hebrews could not be tricked back into submission. Egyptians would not be able to subdue them, as vanquished populations sometimes do, by intermarrying, nor would the Hebrews absorb Egyptian religion and culture by intermarrying. The religious and linguistic separation would be maintained permanently, since God was taking them out of Egypt and displacing the Canaanites. The Canaanites must have known what was in store for them. Israel took no prisoners. Israel, if the people remained faithful to their God, would annihilate the Canaanites.

When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whether thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; And when the LORD the God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them: Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy you suddenly. But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire. For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth (Deut. 7:1-6).

There was a difference between the Egyptians and Israel. That difference was God. He had made a covenant with them. They had been a tiny nation; now they would be victorious. They had already been so victorious over Egypt that the dogs of Egypt recognized it; they would not even bark at the Hebrews' cattle. Yet it had not been their strength which had led them to freedom. "The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt" (Deut. 7:7-8). It was God's choice, not theirs, to redeem them—to buy them back. It was God's choice when He had promised the land of Canaan to Abraham for his seed. It was God's choice when He had selected Moses as their leader. It was God's choice to harden Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not compromise and permit the Hebrews to go and sacrifice to their God. God had done it all, and God would continue to do it all, if they remained faithful to His covenant.

The covenant was a great sword. It was the dividing line between Israel and Egypt. It was the dividing line between Israel and the nations of Canaan. It separated Egypt from Israel, and it was to serve as a means of destruction in Canaan. God

had separated Israel from Egypt geographically; He planned to separate Israel and the tribes of Canaan biologically: the Canaanites would all die. The Canaanites recognized this, according to Rahab. Among the Hebrews of Moses' day, only Joshua and Caleb recognized the commitment of God to give His people total victory, in time and in Canaan (Num. 14). As was the case when the Jews and Romans had a stone rolled across Jesus' tomb, in order to keep His disciples from taking His body and claiming that His prophecy concerning His resurrection had been fulfilled, while the disciples scattered to the winds in self-imposed defeat, the Canaanitic enemies of God recognized the threat facing them, while the Hebrews of Moses' era did not recognize the inevitability of their impending victory. They had not recognized the nature of their victory over the Egyptians. They did not understand the nature of the God who had given them freedom, nor did they understand the nature of the ethical covenant which He had set before them. They had to serve Him continuously. They chose to serve other gods intermittently. They were supposed to exercise dominion continuously. They chose to exercise dominion intermittently. They were supposed to be victorious continuously. They were defeated intermittently.

### The Covenant and Separation

The covenant is the means by which God separates His people from the world. It is supposed to be the means by which His people bring the world into conformity with God's law. He shows grace to His people and gives them the tool of dominion, His law-order. The separation finally results in the **permanent separation** between God and His enemies, on the day of judgment. **Eternity is marked by this covenantal separation.**

The covenantal separation began with God's promise to Abraham concerning the future success of his seed, and it was marked by the circumcision of Isaac. It was reaffirmed at the time of the exodus, so that all the world could see the historical implications of this ethical covenant. It was reaffirmed by Joshua's invasion of the Promised Land. He separated Abram from Ur of the Chaldees. He separated the seed of Abraham from the surrounding nations, and the sign was circumcision. He separated Israel from Egypt. All of these separations were essentially separations from pagan gods and pagan cultures. But separations from did not imply retreat and isolation. These separations were established in Israel's **history** in order to give God's people confidence concerning Israel's **future**. The covenantal **separation** from other nations implies and demands Israel's **dominion** over those nations. Israel wiped out most of the Canaanites, and they were supposed to wipe out all of them. **A new training ground had been prepared, a type of paradise, a symbolic return to the original training camp of the garden.** This land had been cleared of wild beasts (Ex. 23:28-29) and rebellious cultures. It was a theological, cultural, and political **clean sweep**. Israel had taken the land by force, and the land was to become the base for a great population explosion which would carry the Israelites across the face of the earth, even as it had carried them out of Egypt. They had been a tiny family when God made His covenant with them: an old woman and her older husband. Now they would fill the earth, if they remained faithful to the covenant.

The separation of God's people from ethical rebels is a permanent separation. Heaven does not eventually fuse with hell. The new heavens and the new earth do not eventually

merge into the lake of fire. The residents of the new heavens and new earth rule eternally (Rev. 21; 22); the residents of the lake of the fire are subjected to endless defeat (Rev. 20: 14-15). The people of God are separated from the ethical rebels on a permanent basis after the final judgment, and this **final separation** brings with it **absolute dominion**. It is the final victory of God over Satan, and it involves the permanent dominion of man over the creation. The rebels are killed, for they suffer the second, permanent death (Rev. 20:14). **Covenantal separation therefore implies covenantal dominion.**

This necessary relationship was never meant to be postponed until the day of judgment. It was supposed to be progressively worked out, in time and on earth. **God's separation** of Abram from his people, of Abraham's seed from the other nations, of Israel from Egypt, and of Israel from all the religious traditions of Canaan, all required **action by His covenanted people, in time and on earth**. Abram left Ur and Haran, he circumcized Isaac, and Moses acted to challenge Pharaoh. Israel did not stay in Egypt. Israel did not wander in the wilderness forever. **Israel fought and won, in time and on earth, in terms of God's separating covenant, which is a dominion covenant.** These mighty acts of God were designed to convince Israel of the necessity of remaining true to the covenant. The prophets kept returning to these historical acts of God in the life of Israel, especially the delivery from Egypt (I Sam. 8:8; Isa. 11:16; Jer. 2:6; Hos. 13:4). So did Stephen at his transfiguration (Acts 7). **Men's separation from Satan and his works is to bring them dominion over Satan and his works:** in politics, economics, military affairs, art, medicine, science, and every other area of human action.

The covenantal separation from Egypt did not bring Israel into the wilderness to die. That was the charge of the rebels against Moses time after time, and they all died in the wilderness. Their children led by Joshua and Caleb—those two men who understood the nature of God and His covenant—took possession of the land. It was **Satan's lie** that covenantal separation meant defeat and impotence for Israel, in time and on earth. That same lie has been one of the most important factors in Satan's success against the church in the twentieth century. Whenever that lie becomes the dominant opinion among God's covenanted people, they can expect to die in the wilderness, as the complainers and defeatists of Moses' day also died in the wilderness. Christians must also recognize that **the defeat of complainers and defeatists in one generation does not necessarily condemn the next generation to a similar defeat.** When men recognize the optimistic nature of God's separating covenant, and when they seek to work out the terms of God's law-order in their various spheres of influence and responsibility, they will discover the impotence of God's enemies, even as Joshua and 80-year-old Caleb discovered it. Their **separation by God** implies their **victory with God**, in eternity but also in time and on earth. Furthermore, with respect to the enemies of God, their **separation from God** leads directly to their **defeat by God**, not only throughout eternity, but in time and on earth. Their eventual defeat by the people of God—those who honor the terms of God's separating covenant—in time and on earth is their earnest (down payment) of their coming eternal defeat. Without God's law, men become progressively impotent culturally. When God separates His people from the world by means of His separating covenant, He provides them with the means of external victory,

not simply their individualistic internal victory over personal sin. As God progressively separates His people in terms of their conformity to His law, He thereby gives them their tool of dominion.

The dogs of Egypt had more understanding of this fact than did the fleeing slaves of Moses's day. The dogs of Egypt had better understanding of the implications of God's covenantal partition than the twentieth century's hordes of self-proclaimed experts in biblical prophecy. The dogs of Egypt held their tongues; the twentieth-century church would have fared better if the experts in prophecy had held theirs.

#### Footnotes

1. John A. Wilson, *The Burden of Egypt: An Interpretation of Ancient Egyptian Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, [1951] 1967), p. 112.

2. Fustel de Coulanges, *The Ancient City: A Study on the Religion, Laws, and Institutions of Greece and Rome* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor, [1864] 1955), Bk. III, ch. XI.

3. *Ibid.*, Bk. III, ch. XII, pp. 196-97.

4. H. D. F. Kitto, *The Greeks* (Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin, [1951] 1962), pp. 8-10; C. M. Bowra, *The Greek Experience* (New York: Mentor, [1957] 1964), p. 26.

5. Gilbert Murray, *Five Stages of Greek Religion* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor, [1925] 1955), p. 38.

6. Frederick Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy* (1888), in *Marx-Engels Selected Works* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1962), II, p. 368.

7. Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. George Eliot (New York: Harper Torchbook, [1841] 1957), p. 247.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 252. Emphasis in original.

9. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Communist Manifesto* (1848), in *Marx-Engels Selected Works*, I, pp. 52-53.

10. The closing words of the *Communist Manifesto* are a call to world domination: "The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communistic revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win." *Ibid.*, I, p. 65. Engels wrote that Marx did not base his demands for communism in terms of the lack of justice in bourgeois society, "but upon the inevitable collapse of the capitalist mode of production which is daily taking place before our eyes to an ever greater degree..." Engels, Preface to the first German edition of Marx's *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1884) (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, n.d.), p. 11. In the neglected but revealing document, the *Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League* (1850), published after the failure of the European revolutions of 1848-49 (for which the *Communist Manifesto* had been contracted in advance by the League of the Just, later renamed the Communist League), Marx and Engels wrote: "... it is our interest and our task to make the revolution permanent, until all more or less possessing classes have been forced out of their position of dominance, until the proletariat has conquered state power, and the association of proletarians,

not only in one country but in all the dominant countries of the world, has advanced so far that competition among the proletarians of these countries has ceased and that at least the decisive productive forces are concentrated in the hands of the proletarians. For us the issue cannot be the alteration of private property but only its annihilation, not the smoothing over of class antagonisms but the abolition of classes, not the improvement of existing society but the foundation of a new one." *Marx-Engels Selected Works*, I, p. 110. The victory of the proletarians is inevitable: "The knell of capitalist private property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated. The capitalist mode of appropriation, the result of the capitalist mode of production, produces capitalist private property. This is the first negation of individual private property as founded on the labour of the proprietor. But capitalist production begets, with the inexorability of a law of Nature, its own negation. It is the negation of negation." Marx, *Capital: a Critique of Political Economy* (New York: Modern Library, [1867]), p. 837. In a footnote on the same page, Marx wrote: "What the bourgeoisie therefore, produces, above all, are its own grave-diggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable." This is taken from the *Communist Manifesto*, in *Marx-Engels Selected Works*, I, p. 45.

11. "All previous historical movements were movements of minorities, or in the interests of minorities. The proletarian movement is the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority, in the interests of the immense majority. The proletariat, the lowest stratum of our present society, cannot stir, cannot raise itself up, without the whole superincumbent strata of official society being sprung into the air." *Communist Manifesto*, in *Marx-Engels Selected Works*, I, p. 44.

12. "The general conclusion at which I arrived and which, once reached, continued to serve as the leading thread in my studies, may be briefly summed up as follows: In the social production which men carry on they enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will; these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their material powers of production. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society — the real foundation, on which rise legal and political superstructures and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of their development, the material forces of production in society come in conflict with the existing relations of production, or—what is but a legal expression for the same thing — with the property relations within which they had been at work before. From forms of development of the forces of production these relations turn into their fetters. Then comes the period of social revolution. With the change of the economic foundation, the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed..." Marx, "Author's Preface," *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (New York: International Library Publishing Co., [1859] 1904), pp. 11-13. This is reprinted in *Marx-Engels Selected Works*, I, pp. 363-63.

**Biblical Economics Today** is published six times a year, alternating with **Christian Reconstruction**. It is published by the Institute for Christian Economics, a non-profit, tax-exempt educational organization. It is mailed free of charge to residents of North America. Subscriptions: P.O. Box 25, Sterling, VA 22170. Checks should be made out to Institute for Christian Economics.