

BIBLICAL ECONOMICS TODAY

Vol. IX, No. 2

© Gary North, 1986

Feb./Mar., 1986

WHAT KINGDOM MODEL ARE HUMANISTS PERVERTING?

by Gary North

The opening words of the Bible are these: "In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth." This points to the most important doctrine in the Bible, the **Creator-creature distinction**. God is separate from His creation. He rules it because He created it. Only God is originally creative.

It is not only man who is subordinate to God. It is not only man who is reflectively creative as God's image. The angels are also subordinate. Indeed, the angels are subordinate not only to God but to man. This is why we are told that we shall ultimately judge the angels (1 Cor. 6:3). They were given power originally in order to serve mankind. This is still true of righteous angels. Because they presently possess greater power than we do, we tend to believe that they are superior to us. Such a faith in power indicates that we have adopted the major premise of the power religion. Whatever power fallen angels possess over us as masters is a result of Adam's rebellion against God and his implicit **ethical subordination to Satan**. Satan could not compel Adam's obedience in the garden; he had to win it by deception (Eve) and ethical temptation (Adam). It was not a power-play in the garden; it was an **ethics-play**.

Satan therefore must not be regarded as originally sovereign, either in power or ethics. He must be regarded as an ethical rebel who was initially subordinate to man, but who has temporarily escaped this subordination. The only way that he can maintain his functional superiority to mankind is to keep them in ethical subordination to him. This ethical bondage is what Jesus Christ came to destroy. It is only because He definitively broke that bondage at Calvary that redeemed men can hope to judge the angels.

Is Satan Creative?

I assume that most Christians would answer in the negative. They understand that only God is originally creative. Thus, whatever plans, programs, tactics, and deceptions that Satan possesses, he possesses them only by the temporary permission of God. When he tempted Job, for example, he was restrained by God at every step.

Once we grasp the fact that Satan is not originally creative, we should then ask ourselves this question: What models is he using to produce his programs of temptation, deception, and so forth? When God-hating men come before us to propose various alternatives to the rule of God in every area of life, what model are they imitating? If we say that Satan is not originally creative, then he must be **imitatively creative**. What is he imitating?

The biblical response is obvious: he is imitating God. Therefore, he is imitating various aspects of God, including God's plan for history. When we hear any plan of action or new authority which comes in the name of man, we should first analyze it in terms of what we know of God's plan and

authority. We need to recognize its appeal to man as the image of God, as well as its appeal to fallen mankind as ethically subordinate to Satan.

As time advances, we should expect to see the self-proclaimed autonomous imitators become progressively confused. This is what we are seeing. On the one hand, they progressively perceive who they are and what they are. As Cornelius Van Til says, they become **epistemologically self-conscious**. They perceive themselves more and more as **autonomous from God and His law, and therefore more and more required to replace God** in every area of life. Why should this lead to confusion? Because the more they separate themselves from God as subordinates, the more they are called upon to control the world as autonomous sovereigns. Furthermore, the more they abandon their last remaining traces of ethical subordination to God, the more they have to deny any traces of God in history or the present. They accept no more help from God because **they do not want to be judged by God**. Any cosmic Atlas other than man is required by man's law to shrug.

For example, men can no longer rely on any hypothetical "fixed natural law" to hold the universe together, for natural law points to a creator of some kind, or at least a binding impersonal sovereign. Belief in natural law establishes, first, a belief in fixed moral standards, a clear violation of each man's moral autonomy. Moral relativism has engulfed the world since the turn of the century, resulting in two world wars and the wilful killing of at least 110 million people, 1900-1970.¹ Second, men can no longer rely on fixed physical laws, for much the same reason. Modern physical science since the 1920's has become progressively irrational, especially at the level of subatomic physics. Subatomic physics is now beginning to resemble Zen Buddhism.² Faith in natural law, either impersonal (Greek and Roman) or personal, has faded. (The idea never commanded widespread acceptance until Christian scholars mistakenly tried to fuse the Greek idea of natural law with eternal biblical law, an effort which collapsed intellectually as early as the 14th century: William of Ockham and Thomas Bradwardine.³)

So autonomous man faces a major dilemma: to the extent that he removes himself from God and those philosophical categories that historically relied on a doctrine of God to maintain themselves, he removes himself from coherence.

1. Gil Eliot, *The Twentieth Century Book of the Dead* (New York: Scribners, 1972), p. 1. It may be closer to 150 million, depending on what China experienced under Mao.

2. Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics* (2nd ed.; Boulder, Colorado: Shambhala, 1983).

3. Gordon Leff, *Bradwardine and the Pelagians* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1957).

He must manufacture coherence, as a creator, or lose it in the whirl of flux. He is like a juggler who is required to keep an ever-increasing number of oranges in the air. The more he asserts his autonomy, the more oranges he has to deal with.

The Progressive Loss of Coherence

One of the continuing intellectual problems in the history of human thought is the question of coherence. How is it that the seemingly chaotic actions of individuals produce somewhat predictable results? How can it be that we go about our daily tasks with confidence that our words and actions will be understood by others? How can it be that the autonomous minds of men produce plans, and that these autonomously produced plans produce results that can be seen to fit the needs and plans of other autonomous men? Why do men have a sufficiently unified view of the universe, including other men, that their actions produce unified societies? From whence springs unity in a world of autonomous beings?

Consider the Tower of Babel. The remarkable fact of the Tower of Babel is not that everyone was scattered by the God-imposed confusion of tongues. That is quite understandable. If men cannot communicate, they scatter. The astounding fact is that before this scattering, all men on earth spoke one language and could cooperate on a huge long-term public works project like the Tower. They shared the same vision of mankind's future, implying that they shared a common world view. Contrast that with everything we know of man, from Cain and Abel until the present.

Since the days of the scattering, men have been at odds with each other in virtually every area of life. The human heart is the source of the wars men fight (James 4:1). It was before the Tower, too, yet somehow these evil instincts had been overcome temporarily. So vast was the vision of rebellious man, seemingly so close to achieving autonomy, that they could cooperate with each other in constructing the Tower. God intervened to keep them from achieving their goal. Their **implicit goal**—autonomy—was not within their grasp, for men are inescapably creatures and subordinate to God's authority, but the operating foundation of their efforts was power, and a massive centralization of power must have been within their grasp. This was why God stopped them.

The Quest for Political Unity

The Tower-builders wanted to make a name for themselves. They wanted to establish their own definition, independent of God and His plan. This outward manifestation of autonomy was not permitted by God. The Tower, as a **symbol** of man's autonomy, was prohibited. The centralization of effort which would have made its completion possible was also prohibited.

Autonomous men cannot escape the vision of the Tower. They want to achieve the outward manifestation of their own status as masters of the universe. The dominion covenant is basic to man: to subdue the earth to the glory of God. What has changed since the Fall of man is the definition of God. Rebellious man wants no God above him who is superior to him in every respect. He wants a different kind of god: one made in man's image. He wants, at most, a god who can be manipulated by ritual formulas. Preferably, autonomous man wants for himself the power that men once believed that only gods could possess. He wants to worship himself. He wants to worship mankind as the master of power. This has usually led to statism, for the State is the manifestation of the greatest concentration of power.

It is the disunity of man which testifies to the failure of man to achieve the goal of the Tower-builders. God must be unified, and if man is the new god, then mankind must be unified. The manifestation of this unity must be political. Political unity is a religious quest.

We hear a lot about a coming one-world religion which will accompany the Antichrist's one world State. This New World Order is supposed to be built by a planning elite (old liberalism) or by enlightened cooperating groups (New Age version). This New World Order will be a fusion of economics, politics, technology, and religion. Writers of paperback Bible prophecy books devote lots of space to discussing the nature of this coming world religion. What they generally fail to understand is that the one world order **is** the religion. Unified mankind is the god; one's affirmation of faith in man and his works is the only required creed.

Few proponents of the New World Order are calling for the construction of new theological creeds; they are calling "merely" for the abolition of divisive creeds. They assume that when all divisive theological creeds are abandoned, the **true bedrock faith in man** will triumph. Creeds are ephemeral, they believe, just as local political jurisdictions are ephemeral. Relegate these local boundaries to historical oblivion, and the New World Order will have its religion: **a creedless religion of man**. All religions will be welcomed, just so long as they are creedless. Two millennia ago, all local and national gods were welcomed into the Roman pantheon. The goal is the same once again. The issue, then as now, is **obedience to the common political order as the highest religious commitment**.

Why is this religious quest accelerating today? Many reasons. First, autonomous man's understanding of who and what he is, is developing. He is throwing off all remaining traces of the biblical God that he can identify. Therefore, he must grab for more power, in order to replace by his sovereign word all former signs of the providence of God.

Second, as men become progressively autonomous from God, they become progressively autonomous from each other. The self-conscious alienation of autonomous man from God has resulted in the alienation of man from man. The theme of alienation is one of the most familiar ones in modern social philosophy, from Hobbes to Rousseau to Marx to the existentialists. To overcome alienation, men must be forced into a world without alienation. To assert the autonomy of the species, men must abandon autonomy as individuals. Thus, the **one** of political mankind must overcome the **many** of autonomous mankind. Politics will heal the alienated souls of men.

Third, as men become aware of the implications of their **theological quest**, they must act to unify the godhead, mankind. They cannot escape the pressure of the dominion covenant, but mankind is now seen as the sovereign agent of that covenant. Who, then, represents man as the agent of the covenant's enforcement? Who imposes the blessings and cursings of the covenant? The answer is obvious: the highest manifestation of man's power. This means the State. But the State is divided; there are many States. Their number is increasing, as the General Assembly of the progressively less United Nations reveals.

We now face an accelerated push to create a one-world State, the New World Order. It is to be a top-down structure, with the elite at the top serving as the covenantal sovereign. What we are witnessing is the latest and most consistent quest of autonomous man to create an empire, autonomous man's perennial substitute for God's kingdom.

The Kingdom of God

Here we have the covenantal model that Satan uses to construct his own imitation kingdom. It is a mirror image of Satan's. His is a top-down bureaucratic model, a **pyramid of imposed power**. God's is a bottom-up judicial model, a **pyramid of appellate justice**.

Satan's political order is based on fluctuating legal and moral standards in a world of evolutionary development—a world which is headed towards the final extinction of absolute zero. God's political order is based on fixed legal and

moral standards in a world of progressive sanctification toward final judgment.

Satan's political order is based on a unitary State as the sole representative of elite planning men to the citizenry, with no court of appeal except revolution by autonomous men. God's political order is based on multiple political jurisdictions that represent God to man and man to God, with appeal always open directly to God, to other political jurisdictions, and also to resistance, passive and active, by covenantally subordinate men.⁴ In Satan's kingdom, final judgment is political. In God's kingdom, final judgment is ethical.

One World

Consider the program of world-wide political unification. What is Satan's model? It has to be Christ's Great Commission: "Go ye therefore, and teach [Greek: *disciple*] all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:18-19a). Jesus instructed His followers to **bring the nations of the world under Christ's discipline**.

How is this to be done? By the communication of the gospel to all men: kings and commoners, judges and harlots, scholars and tax collectors. No institution is to be ignored. Paul taught in a school (the school of Tyrannus), a court (Felix's), prisons, synagogues, a public meeting place (Mars Hill), and on board ship. Christ's is not exclusively a political disciplining, but it is an **inclusive discipline**. Politics is not left out. Neither is anything else.

There are standards of historic judgment for every covenantal institution: family, church, and State. These standards are **definitive** (the revealed word of God). They have been **imputed** to men in history. They look forward to an **eschatological fulfillment**. And they are **manifested progressively** over time.

So, with respect to world government, we should ask: Will there be a day of one-world government eschatologically? Obviously, there will be. In the New Heavens and New Earth, God will sit on the throne (Rev. 21:5), and kings will enter His city (21:24). The nations will enter it (v. 26).

Next question: Should we work toward an earthly manifestation of this eschatological climax? Yes, just as surely as we work toward the establishment of a decentralized but ethically unified family order and also a decentralized but ethically unified church order. We work on earth to reduce sin in our lives, and also the manifestations of sin in our institutions. Why? Because this is what God calls us to, and promises to deliver to us in the world beyond the grave. This is what dominion is all about: the rule of God's law. We have the same sort of covenantal obligation to work for one-world government: **the world under God's law**.⁵

Advocates of the New World Order want to establish their own one-world State. What is the difference between theirs and God's? The difference is **creedal**. New Age humanists want world-wide political centralization based on the sovereignty of autonomous man. The Christian wants political federalization on the basis of shared faith in the sovereign God of the Bible. The Satanist wants a **one-State world**, whereas the Christian wants a **one-world order**. The Christian understands **order** as **God's kingdom**. It is essentially an ethical and creedal kingdom. It will be fulfilled historically in a world marked by multiple authorities and a single fixed standard of general law, with regional and local applications of that law-order. It will be a one-world republic, or confederation, analogous to the 50 states of the federal union. It will be a federation based on **shared faith**. It will not be politically

imposed from the top down, but ethically assembled from the bottom up.

The Satanist's world is marked by a single hierarchical authority structure with fluctuating general law, and with no regional and local variations. The Satanist's law-order is universal, but it evolves according to evolutionary principles. Its principles of judicial interpretation are fixed, top to bottom, but they fluctuate over time.

The Christian's law-order is also universal, but it does not change over time; only the applications (case laws) vary in terms of regions and historical circumstances, not the principles of interpretation. Jurisdictional disputes are a way of life under Christian jurisprudence; such disputes keep the central planners disarmed. In the Satanist's law-order, jurisdictional disputes are denied in principle, and suppressed whenever possible; such unity keeps the public disarmed.

Whose New World Order?

The Christian affirms the existence of a New World Order. It was announced by Jesus during His earthly ministry, established by His death and Resurrection, and manifested at the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. In the Great Commission, He promised to be with His people, "unto the end of the world." In the Greek, it reads, "until the completion of the age." Which age? **Christ's new age**. It was established definitively, and is being imposed progressively; it will be completed eschatologically.

Satan also has a new age. It was imposed on him definitively at Calvary. It is being progressively manifested. It is an **age of defeat**. The new wine of the gospel has broken the old wineskins of regional Israel. The kingdom has been transferred from Israel to the church, as Christ promised: "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. 21:43). Satan faces a world-wide evangelism program by the church. He is on the defensive all over the world. This was not true before Calvary.

What the New World Order propagandists propose is in fact a return to the **Old World Order**—the world order of the **Tower**. It is this world order which is past, and which will never come again: a top-down centralized political order. Their attempt must fail. Built into our very languages is the covenantal testimony that this goal cannot be achieved. It is a demonic quest. It shall be visited with heavenly judgment, just as it was in Genesis 11.

The Seduction of Pietism

Christians in the last few years have at last become more aware of the threat of the humanist call for a one-State world. A growing minority have at last begun to recognize that the underlying theology of the one-State world is demonic, and not just some random political program. The problem is, those Christians who are most alert to the evil of the humanists' goal are convinced that the humanists really are capable of achieving this perverse political creation. Furthermore, virtually all of the alarmists deny that Christians can defeat the humanists with a decentralized counter-movement: politically, economically, and intellectually. They deny that God has any intention of creating a one-world ethical order prior to His physical second coming and His post-Rapture establishment of His own **top-down bureaucratic hierarchy of power**. They teach that it is futile for Christians to fight back with anything other than paperback warnings about the one-State world—warnings that will not be heeded, and which could do nothing more than slow down the humanist juggernaut even if they were heeded.

The great irony of these Christian "trumpeters" is that they themselves have adopted their own version of the top-down bureaucratic ideal. They see the future rule of the saints in terms of the exercise of political power. They have adopted the **escapist religion** of "meet, eat, and retreat" on

4. Gary North (ed.), *The Theology of Christian Resistance* (1983) and *Tactics of Christian Resistance* (1983), published by Geneva Ministries, 708 Hamvasy, Tyler, Texas 75701.

5. T. Robert Ingram, *The World Under God's Law* (Houston, Texas: St. Thomas Press, 1964).

this side of the Rapture because they are agreed with the humanists regarding the only possible model for world-wide dominion: the top-down hierarchy. They say the humanists are about to achieve this goal on earth, and that only the Rapture will thwart them in their drive to capture the church. They say that resurrected, eternal, sin-free saints will return to govern the world a bit later (that afternoon, for post-tribs, 3.5 years for mid-tribs, and 7 years for pre-tribs) and establish a reliable top-down hierarchy under Jesus. It will be reliable because sin-free, death-free people will run it. And Jesus will back it up with total power.

In short, they implicitly argue, without sin-free bureaucrats and managers to staff civil governments, and without the reign of Christ in person to exercise total power, **biblical political ethics is impotent**. This, it should be noted, is also Satan's publicly stated belief. Remember His temptation of Christ? If Christ refused to bow down and worship him, he implied, all these earthly kingdoms could not be His. He knew that Christ could beat him out of his squatter's kingdom. Satan knows that he will lose to God in any cosmic arm-wrestling contest. That isn't the point. What Satan teaches his followers, and what the vast majority of Christians have believed for almost 2,000 years, is that Satan's version of one-world order is the valid one. Power rules, not ethics. Might makes political right. Bureaucracies are more effective than covenanted, creedal, open brotherhoods. Nice guys finish last.

If power were "the name of the game," then Satan would have lost on the day he sinned. So would Adam. It is only because power is not the basis of dominion that life goes on. God showed mankind **mercy**, not power. God gave men a **substitute victim of God's holy law**, not immediate judgment. The fundamental issue is ethics, not power. This is what the church has ignored for too long. The race does not go to the swift, nor the battle to chariots. It goes to the **righteous**.

The Gods that Failed

The Satanist wants the initiation of activities at the top; the Christian wants initiation at the bottom. The Satanist believes in bureaucratic order. The Christian believes in a system of appeals courts. The Satanist believes in asking permission. The Christian believes in taking action, and then apologizing and making restitution later on, if required.

The power religion has suffered tremendous setbacks in the second half of the twentieth century. Conservatives may not have recognized this, but it is true. As recently as the late 1940's, serious economists were still proclaiming the possibility that European socialist nations would exceed the per capita output of the capitalist world. No one seriously argues this any longer. It is universally admitted that capitalism "delivers the goods." Capitalism's socialist critics now focus on the kinds of goods produced by capitalism, not volume and price.

Similarly, the central planners were supposed to be able to produce a society in which harmony of interests could be achieved, class warfare eliminated, and racial conflicts overcome. None of this has happened. The socialist paradises are noted for their barbed wire borders. The barbed wire is not strung up to keep potential immigrants out, but to keep potential emigrants in. The suppressed nationalities resent deeply their suppression by the Russian Bolshevik suppressors; so do the satellite nations. The top-down rule of the vanguard of the proletariat has satisfied only the handful of parasites who occupy the seats of power, and the Western intellectuals who still cling to the myth of Marxism.

Why, then, do intellectuals still promote central planning? Furthermore, why do voters still vote in favor of gov-

ernment-controlled wealth transfers, despite their grumbling about inefficient bureaucracy? It is partially **envy**: the desire to see rich men pulled down. It is partially **ignorance**: almost everyone has been indoctrinated in the theology of the top-down power religion, so they see no alternative type of rationality (i.e., market order). It is partially **religious**: the belief in "Man, the master of evolutionary forces," which really means "Elist Man, the master of political and economic forces."

A "primitive" society relies on an animistic world view. The local spirits of the field and hearth provide men with blessings and protection, but only for as long as these local gods possess sufficient power to keep invaders away. The modern world has seen the destruction of most of these animistic, polytheistic cultures. Their gods failed. Polytheistic cosmic personalism has been erased from most of the earth. (But not quite: a revival of animism is taking place within the New Age movement.) Primitive savages died, or were put on bureaucratically controlled reservations. Their members are the pawns of Western bureaucratic power.

The atheist or vaguely theistic society has proven unable to sustain a decentralized social order. They believe in no personal God who establishes reliable social blueprints. Thus, there is a continuing quest from a personal agency, the State, which is operated by elite planners who supposedly understand the "laws of development." These laws are supposedly impersonal, but the planners aren't. Such a view of the covenant assumes that **the central planners represent the masses** in the "palace" of evolutionary development. The planners somehow **personalize cosmic impersonalism**. Mankind supposedly rules nature through his scientific representatives; but of course the representatives eventually rule men, for men are seen as the products of nature.

Conclusion

Christianity is the only possible solution, for it alone knows who the Creator is. He alone guarantees meaning. He alone promises that His law-order allows **decentralization without fragmentation**. He alone offers progressive development toward an eschatological eternity.

It is significant that many of the proponents of New Age decentralization have adopted animism. In *The Secret Life of Plants* there is a chapter on the animist community of Findhorn, Scotland. Yet Findhorn is also one of the main centers of New Age publishing, the Vatican of the New Age movement, Constance Cumbeys has called it.

This is why the New Age movement is doomed. Animism is the religion of primitivism. It is the religion of savagery. We will not go back to it. God's history moves forward. So whatever talk there is by New Agers about decentralization, it is either naively utopian or else an ideological smoke screen for a massive, world-wide centralization. **Only a sovereign God can establish a workable decentralized commonwealth**. The animists' gods are too weak to guarantee survival of men's communities, and the evolutionists' god (central planning) is too impersonal, too blind, and too bureaucratic.

This is why the future is in the hands of God. This is why a **one-world order** can be established only by Christians, for it will be a **multiple-authorities world**. "One covenanted people, under God" is our goal, both eschatologically and historically.

You can't fight something with nothing. The best defense is a good offense. To defeat the appeal of the New Age decentralists and the New Deal centralists, we need a vision of victory based on the validity of biblical law, the legitimacy of decentralized authority, the productivity of the free market, and the guarantee of a sovereign God who has revealed Himself infallibly in the Bible. We do not need another round of "meet, eat, and retreat."

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. A free six month subscription is sent to those who ask to be put on the mailing list. **Subscriptions:** P.O. Box 8000, Tyler, TX 75711. All donations are fully tax-deductible; checks should be made out to **Institute for Christian Economics**.