

# BIBLICAL ECONOMICS TODAY

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## THE SOCIETY OF SATAN

by Rousas John Rushdoony

Man is inescapably religious. He may deny God, but all the categories of his life remain religious, and all are categories borrowed from the Triune God. Since the only world man lives in is the world God created, his thinking even in apostasy is inevitably conditioned and governed by a God-given framework. Men cannot escape that framework. They may deny God's sovereignty, but they cannot stop believing in sovereignty; they merely transfer it to man or to the State. Total law and planning, *i.e.*, predestination, is inescapable; denied to God, it is simply transferred to the scientific socialist State which predestinates or totally governs and plans all things; if deity be denied to the God of Scripture, it merely reappears in man or the State. And if the church ceases proclaiming the Gospel, then religion does not perish; it reappears as politics or economics, and salvation continues to be offered to inescapably religious man.

Salvation is a necessity of man's being, and the goal of salvation is new life and freedom. If salvation be not accepted in God through Christ, then it is accepted in man, or in an order of man such as the State.

From the beginning of history, God instituted a holy society, a City of God, indicating its foundations in the institution of sacrifice, by calling the line of Seth, Noah, Shem, and Abraham, instituting the law of Moses, and confirming the covenant in Christ.

But another society has been in history from the beginning also, the Society of Satan, whose foundation was stated by the Tempter to Eve, manifested in the fall, proclaimed at Babel, continuing long as mankind's secret church and increasingly manifested openly.

### Environmentalism

Let us examine two important passages of Scripture with reference to this society. An exposition of Genesis 3:7-17 follows and Genesis 11:1-9 will be examined (later).

Genesis 3:7-17, in its main outlines, is simplicity itself. Confronted by God, Adam and Eve seek refuge in a feeble covering for their guilt and shame. The Hebrew word for cover, *Kaphar*, is also the word for **atonement**. Atonement is thus a covering for sin, and it can be an evasive covering, or the covering provided by God; it can be self-righteousness, or the righteousness of God in Christ. Man constantly seeks a covering for his guilt and shame in institutional facades, and one of the most popular of hiding places from God is the institutional church. Cultural anthropologists have divided societies in terms of guilt and shame cultures, and with reason. We can add that man seeks in institutional

structures an "apron" or covering for his sin, and the deeper the guilt and shame the greater the structural development.

Atonement as basic to institutional and especially civil structures is an important fact of man's history. Citizenship was once a religious act, and politics rested on atonement. The Greek polis was a religious entity, and modern politics has no less a religious frame of reference, in that it is still concerned with neutralizing sin and evil by means of institutional structures. Sinful men, united by the State, somehow, it is expected, will create a good society, *i.e.*, a good omelet out of bad eggs. The United Nations, that modern tower of Babel, is the epitome of this faith.

Man's basic and original sin is "to be as God, knowing good and evil." "Knowing" here has the force of determining, establishing, so that man's essential sin is to attempt to play God and to legislate creatively and substantively on the nature of morality in terms of his own godhead.

Man, seeking to be God, became less the man. Adam's response to God's question is to evade responsibility: It is the woman's fault. He says in effect: Poor, innocent man that I am, how could I resist the woman's wiles? In my innocence, I have been led astray. More than that, the fault is Yours, God, for giving me the woman: "The woman Thou gavest me." Had you not given her, I would not have sinned.

Eve is no less evasive of responsibility: Poor, innocent woman that I am, how could I withstand the serpent's guile? Not for all the world would she deliberately have done wrong: the guilt lies elsewhere.

Guilt thus is transferred, it is projected on the **environment**, made part of the ultimate frame of things, passed on to others, evaded by transference and projection. Guilt is denied to the individual in the name of social and natural forces.

Concretely, juvenile delinquency today is blamed on the parents, the home, or the environment, and it is commonplace for judges with a smattering of psychiatry and welfare theory at their command to excoriate already burdened parents with a fearful burden of misplaced guilt. Again, crime is blamed on the environment, on heredity, on any number of natural and social forces, so that, as Henry Miller has put it, punishment is criminal. The guilt is society's and especially, somehow, the non-criminal's for having fostered this tragic chain of reactions we call crime. Let the "good men" pay the price, therefore, and let the have-nations pay off the have-nots for the affront of their success and affluence. Our statist foreign aid program is premised on an anti-Christian theology in which failure is rewarded and success penalized. Its essence is hostile to missions and voluntary charity, which speak of mercy and offer regeneration on the assumption that a Godly reordering is required.

The race problem gives us a similar picture. The Christian cannot consistently believe in either racism or equality. God has made of one blood all nations, we are clearly told, and all are descendants of Adam. On the other hand, equality is a non-Biblical concept, imported from mathematics into human relationships, where both equality and inequality are inappropriate concepts. The Biblical concept is Calling, and its orientation is not democratic but divisive. Dewey was right, in a *Common Faith*, in calling Christianity's basic division between heaven and hell, saved and lost, sheep and goats undemocratic. "I cannot understand how any realization of the democratic ideal as a vital moral and spiritual ideal in human affairs is possible without surrender of the conception of the basic division to which supernatural Christianity is committed." The implication of Dewey's position is clear-cut: Grading by God or man is anti-democratic. Moral and spiritual distinctions are by nature aristocratic. Exactly so. Our faith is clearly anti-democratic and holds to an aristocracy, not of works, nor of blood inheritance, but of Grace. And, instead of a transference of guilt, it is the essence of Biblical faith to confess it, declaring with David that sin is primarily and essentially an offense against God: "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in Thy sight." Since every fact is a created fact, then every fact is a God-given fact, and we reckon in all things with the Creator. For us there can be no brute factuality but only God-given factuality, a totally personal universe. The Society or City of God is thus marked by a radically different approach to every fact in all creation.

#### The Society of Satan

Another society was offered to man and introduced into history by the fall, a society again proffered to man in its fullness by Satan in the wilderness temptation of Christ. What is the nature of this Society of Satan?

First, it is held that man is not guilty of his sin, not responsible for his lawlessness, for the sources of his guilt are not personal but social and natural. In the ultimate sense, the guilt is God's, for having dared to create so difficult a cosmos, and God, as well as God's people, must be made to pay for this cosmic insolence.

Second, a society is demanded in which it is unnecessary for man to be good. Everything is to be provided so that man may attain true blessedness, a problem-free life. The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12), in pronouncing a blessing on suffering, persecution, tears and trials for Christ's sake, are thus the epitome of perversion. A good God must make it unnecessary for men to be good, and, having failed to do so, the good State, the welfare state, must now make it unnecessary for man to be tested, unnecessary for man to be good. Man has all rights and no responsibilities. The duties are God's, who has failed in His duty to man.

Third, a society is demanded in which it is impossible for men to be bad. This is the logical concomitant of the second demand. It is a demand that there be no testing. How cruel of God to test Adam and to test us. The world must be trouble-free and test-free. The goal of most politics and sociology is to provide us with such a world. Is anyone bad? Let this fact be concealed from him, and the world be so ordered that self-knowledge never comes out. And because every man is god in his own eyes and god in terms of this sociology of Satan, then every man must be preserved from any testing that might shatter this illusion. Let politics and social planning operate on the premise of human omnipotence. Thus, there are no insoluble problems; man shall conquer all things, the cosmos and death included. Let no testing shatter his delusions of grandeur.

Fourth, a society is demanded in which it is impossible for men to fail. There must be no failure in heaven or on earth. All men must be saved, all students must pass, all men are employable, all

men are entitled to rights. As Satan stated it baldly in the wilderness, giving in short form the program for the "good" State, "If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." Make it unnecessary for man to work, unnecessary for man to be good, impossible for man to be bad. Provide man with such a cushion of social planning, the temptations asserted, that man might neither hunger nor thirst, work or suffer, believe or disbelieve, succeed or fail, be good or evil. Let his every need be met and his world be ordered in terms of his wishes. Let it be a trouble-free world, cradle-to-grave security; let there be no failure. No failure is tolerable, and none is recognized, save one, God's, for having dared to create a world in which we can suffer for our sins, in which we can be tried and tested, in which we can be good or evil, in which we can and must be men. Let us through communism, socialism or our welfare states construct a world better than God's, a world in which failure is impossible and man is beyond good and evil.

The result of Adam's fall was thus the birth of sociology, of religions and politics, which seek to create this Society of Satan, the City of Man. Against all this, the inescapable fact remains that man is created in the image of God, has fallen, is a sinner, and can never escape the fact except by means of regeneration and sanctification in Jesus Christ, except by becoming a member of Him and of His new humanity, a new responsible man, a citizen of the Kingdom of God.

In whose image are we trying to remake ourselves, our children, and our society? In God's image through Jesus Christ? Or in the image of man as proposed by Satan?

#### The Tower of Babel

The framework of thought manifested in the temptation and the fall was very early formally institutionalized. After the flood, the great institutional embodiment of the Society of Satan was the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9). The significance of that structure is of inestimable importance to us because its theoretical structure is basic to modern political and religious faiths.

We have, first, the declaration, "Go to, let us build us a city." The essence of a city was once a **unity of faith and community in terms of that faith**. The idea of a city was a religious concept and the city a religious entity and community. Historians speak of ancient cities as possessing, each of them, a particular god and being the people of that god. This is both accurate and yet erroneous in the impression it conveys. All the people of a particular area, i.e., Canaan, the Mesopotamian region, Egypt, and the like, would share a particular faith, but each city would be a particular cult or system of worship of that god, affirming its own particular form of **continuity with the deity**. There was no citizenship apart from worship, and the worship was particular and specific, hence localized and institutionalized in the city. The essence of this faith of the ancient pagan city was, however, its **essential participation in deity**, in whom all being participates. It was thus a logical step to try to force this total participation, and empires such as Assyria and Babylon, as well as Alexander the Great, moved in terms of this concept of oneness. The City of God, however, moves in terms of the faith held from the beginning, the **discontinuity between God and man, man's ethical fall, and the call for separation in terms of faith in God's saving power**. The Tower of Babel was an attempt to force this apostate thesis of ultimate oneness and equality onto all mankind. There was to be no division among men, and no separation or discrimination, only an absolute unity. The religion and virtue or ethics of Babylon was to be in the fact of humanity, and community was simply in the common fact of humanity. In the City of God, community is through the Redeemer in God; in the City of man, the Society of Satan, the ground of communion is a common humanity ir-

respective of any religious or moral differences. All differences, including those of intellect and status, must be suppressed in favor of the anonymity of union. The good life and the full life are in and through the State. The theological requirements for the unity of the godhead requires in this faith the unity of humanity, its one true god. Hence, "Let us build us a city," a one-world order, and usher in paradise apart from God.

**Second**, they declared, they must build further "a tower whose top may reach unto heaven." The structure of the tower had great symbolic significance. Its architectural style has been carried over into many cultures, and, in New York City, crowns the top of many skyscrapers, the most notable instance being the pyramidal tower which crowned the Bankers' Trust Building.

The Tower of Babel was a "stepped pyramid," largest in extent at the base, recessed with each story, the top floor being thus a single room, which presented, from every view, the appearance of a great ladder or giant staircase reaching "unto heaven." It was the ladder of works by which man reached the level of God, rivaling God by means of human achievement and thereby asserting man's independence and equality in relationship to God. It was also an architectural depiction of the **great chain of being**, the idea of the bond or continuity of heaven and earth. God and man were seen as one being, with man therefore able to think creatively, ontologically. The best possible status for God in such a universe is that of an elder brother. Instead of a Creator-creature distinction, the common being of God and man are asserted.

A **third** step characterized this great institutionalization of the Society of Satan: "Let us make us a **name**," or literally, a "**Shem**." A **name**, in the Old Testament, meant a **definition**; it was a summary statement of the **nature** of the thing named. Adam's task of **naming** the creatures was thus a scientific calling to identify and to classify them. When God called a man out of Chaldea, he first named him Abram and then later expanded that name to Abraham in terms of his calling, task and definition. His sovereign grace gave to that man. God's "name" **Jehovah**, "I am that I am," or "He who is," was the rejection of the possibility of a **name** or **definition** for God. He as Creator is that by Whom and in Whom all things are defined, and, being transcended by nothing, can be defined by nothing: **He is**. An abstract definition of God is thus impossible; a relational one can be given, and thus when Moses asked for God's name or self-definition, God first denied the possibility, "I am that I am," I am beyond definition, and then gave a relational or historical definition of Himself: "The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Exodus 3:15), the God of the covenant and the God of salvation. This latter description was made in its fullness with the new covenant in the person and work of Jesus Christ, "Jehovah saves," the **Shem** or **name** promised to man from the beginning, and, in terms of whom, and in the hope of whose coming, Noah's son Shem had been named.

In terms of all of this the meaning of the proclamation "Let us make us a **name**," becomes clear: let us be our own blessing, our own Messiah, saviour and god. Let us be our own creator, our own ultimate source of meaning and definition. Let there be no value above and beyond us; let man be the source of the definition, not the subject of it. Let man be beyond good and evil, and beyond meaning, since he is himself the source of all definition. "Let us make us a name!"

**Fourth**, the reason for their labor is stated: "Lest we be scattered." This is the evil to man in the Society of Satan; **dis-unity**, not apostasy or rebellion against God. Again, the import is theological. It is a philosophical and theological necessity that there be no disunity in the godhead; hence, if man be god, he cannot be divided; he must be one. Much, if not most, modern ecumenicity is premised on this faith; it seeks, not unity in Christ, but unity in mankind, in the fact of humanity, and disunity rather than heresy is the great problem. The United Nations also exemplifies this faith. As V. Orval Watts has noted (*Should We Strengthen the United Nations?* p. 221f.): "Clearly, the weakness from which the United Nations suffers is that it is not **selective**, either in aims or membership, in political terms, it is not limited. . . . This defect is written into the very nature of the United Nations by its Charter. It was 'planned that way,' and there is no prospect that its Members will try to change it." The only virtue to the United Nations is **unity**, and its concept of peace and order is the unquestioning acceptance of that unity and a total moral, spiritual and military disarmament in favor of it. The United Nations is non-discriminatory with respect to race, color, creed and all else because man is its god, and all in its god must be by definition good. Evil is that which opposes this **total unity** and this non-discriminatory faith. This non-discriminatory principle always works in favor of evil in that it **forbids truth and justice in favor of unity**. Its champions are in the modernist clergy. They include also John Dewey, Henry Miller, and the "Civil Rights" champions.

A **fifth** aspect of the Society of Satan is noted by God as He confounds it: "Nothing will be restrained from them." The one-world order sought by the Society of Satan means absolute dictatorship and total power. But this is what God will not permit. At the ostensible moment of triumph, He visits destruction and confusion upon them. To the men of Babel, their name meant "The Gate of God," i.e., the Threshold of their greatness and total power; to us, because to God, the true meaning remains **confusion**. Because Babel was a confusion of the divine order, confusion was visited upon it, and that very judgment was an act of mercy, in that it spared man from the total tyranny he sought to create.

The warfare today is between the City of God, which is transcendental in origin although present in history, and the totally immanent City of God, the Society of Satan. That demoniac order seeks to obscure the fact of conflict and to wage war behind the deceptive weapon of ostensible neutrality. We must recognize that this is a holy warfare, be unafraid to wage it, and proclaim that the sentence has already gone forth: "**Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen**," alerting Christians with the summons, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Rev. 18: 2-4). Men who look for the good life in and through the State have made the State their mediator and redeemer and have in effect renounced Christ, and they shall be partakers of the plagues of Babylon, of the Society of Satan.

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# AN ECONOMIC COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLE

by Gary North, Ph.D.

## No. 26: IMPERFECT JUSTICE

*Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens: And let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be, that every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee (Ex. 18:21-22).*

The Bible is not a perfectionist document. While it lays down a standard of perfection — a standard met only by Jesus Christ — it nonetheless acknowledges in its very law code that men's institutions and laws must be understood as fallible, limited, and tainted with sin. As this passage amply demonstrates, the Bible is hostile to the humanist's quest for perfect justice on earth.

Under Moses' direct rule, God's revelation was instantly available in any given case. Yet there was insufficient time for Moses to hear every case of legal dispute in the land. Perfect justice was limited by time and space; men had to come to Moses' tent and stand in (presumably) long lines. The quest for perfect justice was eating up countless man-hours of potential human labor.

Jethro warned Moses that the people, as well as Moses himself, were wearing away (vs. 18). He recommended the establishment of a legal hierarchy, thereby taking advantage of the principle of the division of labor. He could reserve time to hear the cases that were too difficult for his subordinates — "every great matter" (22) — and in doing so would redeem his allotted time more wisely by exercising leadership in other areas of Hebrew life besides the courtroom. Furthermore, this system would permit more rapid resolutions of disputes.

There was no express revelation from God to Moses concerning the establishment of such a legal bureaucracy. It was an ad hoc decision based on informed common sense. Acknowledging the principle of scarcity in the realm of time, Jethro came to an obvious conclusion. Yet this conclusion involved the acceptance of a fundamental principle: even in the historically unique circumstance of men's access to perfect justice, it is preferable in the vast majority of cases to obtain speedy justice rather than perfect justice.

The criteria for admission into this legal hierarchy were moral rather than technical. Uncovetous men (bribe-resistant), fearful of God, with reputations for truthfulness, were the preferred judges. Ability was also important, but moral qualities were emphasized (21). These men had been slaves; the whole generation, except Joshua and Caleb, possessed the slave's mentality, yet their rule in most cases was preferable to a system of perfect justice. Conclusion: *regular and predictable* justice provided by *responsible amateurs* is better than perfect justice provided on a sporadic or "first in line" basis. The burden of dispensing justice must be shared (22).

This was required to permit the people to endure, going their way in peace (23).

The right of appeal was limited to great matters. Issues involving fundamental principle, and those that would be likely to have important repercussions throughout the society, were the ones which were to be sent up the bureaucratic chain of command. At every level, it was the right of the appeal court to refuse to consider a case; it was mandatory that these courts limit the number of cases going upward. Access to the supreme court was to be restricted to great cases, and this required screening by the lower courts. Endless litigation would paralyze the justice system. (Such litigation was understood as an indication of moral paralysis by St. Paul [I. Cor. 6:1-8] and extremely dangerous; New England Puritans unsuccessfully tried to reduce litigation by making it illegal to practice courtroom law for a fee.)

Substantive issues were to determine appeals, not issues of formal (technical) law. The supreme court would decide in terms of permanent standards of justice as applied to each individual case. Technicalities were not the primary consideration in the verdict, except insofar as formal procedures were involved that were a part of the revealed legal code. Formal law was primarily a means of restricting the state and church from making arbitrary decisions, and as such, procedural matters were important, but the content of the law was far more important. An excessive concern for technical law over substantive law is characteristic of modern jurisprudence, and decisions in terms of technicalities have proliferated to such an extent that legal predictability and the restraint on arbitrary judicial acts have been swamped in a morass of conflicting precedents — precisely the condition that the modern theory of legal formalism was developed to prohibit! Modernism's emphasis on method over meaning in a supposedly relativistic world (except for method, of course) has led to the breakdown of law.

The legal hierarchy of the Bible assumed perfect standards, but it compelled men's acceptance of their own limitations. Applications would be perfect only in a few selected cases during a brief historical period. Nevertheless, men could be confident that in His sovereignty, God provides an ultimately gapless law of perfect retribution for every specific case. The concept of a *final judgment* relieved men of the psychological burden of the quest for perfect earthly justice.

The idea that a hundred guilty men should go free rather than to punish one innocent man is strictly pagan in origin and application. It would turn loose criminals to plunder a thousand innocents. The quest for perfect justice leads inevitably to massive lawlessness. Joseph in Pharaoh's jail, Daniel in the lions' den, and Jesus on the cross are examples of imperfect justice, yet godly men can live with imperfect justice because they know that perfect justice does exist and will be made manifest on the final day. Life is too short to expect perfect earthly justice, even if it were still available. Better to have speedy justice by godly amateurs than the clogged courts of messianic humanism. And if church courts are as clogged as Satan's, where will godly men seek justice?