

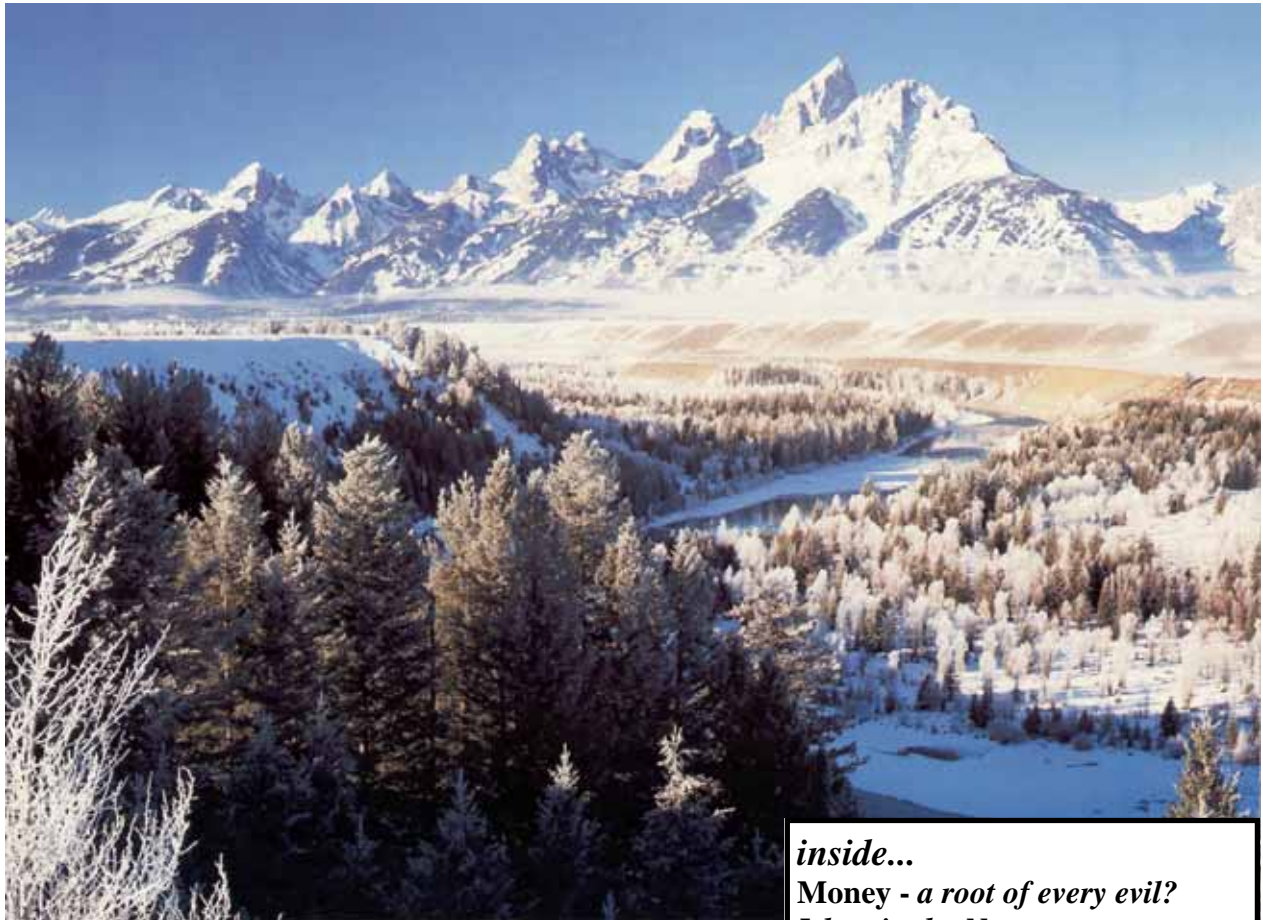
NEW

Horizons

Vol 10 No 6

November/December 2006

addressing the important issues for today and tomorrow



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CGOM

Churches Of God Outreach Ministries

With around two thousand Christian denominations vying for your attention, it's easy to miss the important issues of life and religion. It's our hope that through *New Horizons* our readers will come to understand the true meaning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Gospel was proclaimed by Jesus and by his apostles in the clearest of terms - and recorded for us in the Scriptures. Over the centuries that truth has been buried, dug up, buried again. Our desire is to restore the simple apostolic message. We hope you will be excited by what the Scriptures reveal about life, and the horizons beyond

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Churches of God Outreach Ministries
P O Box 54621
Tulsa, OK 74155-0621
USA
e-mail: information@cgom.org
1-800-611-8080
Editor: James McBride
e-mail: coguk@aol.com

The Churches of God, UK
PO Box 2525
LINCOLN LN5 7PF United Kingdom
Regd Charity No 283358
e-mail: coguk@aol.com

The Churches of God Outreach Ministries
100 Northcote Street
Aberdare NSW 2325 Australia
e-mail: icg.aust@netcentral.com.au

The Churches of God Outreach Ministries
PO Box 476 Don Mills Station
Don Mills Ontario M3C 2T4 Canada
www.canadianchurchofgod.com

or from:

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new Horizons

Issue No 60

November/December 2006

**It 'makes the world go round'.
Everyone, it seems, wants more. Is
money the root of every evil?**

Stock market fever. 'Keeping up with the Jones's'. A bigger house. New car. Credit 'shopping pollution'. The good life. Economic growth. And in their wake debt, bankruptcy, poverty, taxes, inequality, corruption, drugs, crime, suicide,.. Money underpins all:

*Money is the root of all evil...
Gimmie some more
Gimmie some more
Gimme some more*

Money - we need it. The accumulation of wealth can be a positive benefit - we all need to save for 'a rainy day'. The Bible encourages it. Earth's bounty is a divine gift to provide resources for increasing mankind's prosperity. Human skill and ingenuity can turn 'earth' - it all comes from there - into an object of beauty, a practical device, comfort. Fair work deserves fair reward.

Yet 'the economy' preoccupies the minds of humble treasurers, business people, mortgage holders, shareholders, you and me - and Chancellors of the Exchequer. An army of accountants swarm in every nation, probing every tax loophole, every tax haven. In every nation there flows, like sewage, a stream of scavenging men and women intent on gain by any foul means.

Whole nations, Big Business (remember Enron, the 'internet bubble?'), industry giants, banks, stock

dealers - charities even - thrive in a culture of fraud and sly dealing. The man-in-the-street isn't averse to shady deals, to unquestioningly accept what 'fell off the back of a lorry'. The Internet swarms with scams intent on robbing you and me of our assets. The 'black economy' - avoidance of taxation - undermines good financial governance. The urge for a 'fast buck' and high taxes combine to fuel widespread financial criminality. VAT fraud has this past year cost European Exchequers a whopping €100billion. Insurance miss-selling has undermined the financial stability of countless savers. Pension funds have collapsed projecting bleak retirement prospects. Yes, money is indeed a root of every evil. Increasingly, true values are discarded.

Fundamental Cause

Despite all this financial complexity the cause is neatly summed up in our words: 'You should not covet'. It could also be summed up in the words of one writer concerning the area in which he now lives: 'People are, in a material sense, poor. In terms of their lifestyle, however, they are among the world's super-rich'. Or, hear the apostle Paul: 'But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we have brought nothing into the world, and it is plain that neither can we carry anything out. But having food and clothing, we will be satisfied with these' (1 Timothy 6:6-8, Ecclesiastes 5:13-15). Translated into cold northern climes it means we should be content to have food in our bellies and a roof over our heads.

Money of itself, of course, isn't a problem. It is prudent - legally - to increase our wealth, to diligently and wisely exploit our talents and hone our skills for profit. Wealth lawfully gained by our efforts is a gift from God - and to be enjoyed in a godly way - for family, for charitable purposes, for service to God. (see Deuteronomy 8:18, Ecclesiastes 5:19, Proverbs 13:11, 22, Job 20:10.) Over-zealous Christians can violate this principle by 'giving all to God's work'. The apostle Peter, however, makes clear (Acts 5:4) that it is our personal responsibility to determine how we apportion our resources in the light of God's Word.

Conspicuous Consumption

What hurts, on the other hand, is the dedicated pursuit of money. Paul again: 'For the love of money is a root of all evils, by means of which some having lusted after it were seduced from the faith, and they themselves pierced through by many pains' (1 Timothy 6:10). Pursuit of gain for its own sake, for self-indulgence, can divert us from that narrow path that leads to eternal life. But especially by those 'not in the faith', where there isn't the restraint of the teachings of Jesus.

The urge to acquire a larger home or the latest mobile phone or tv or hi-fi or new-model car, or Christmas overspend, or to satisfy a craving for nicotine or so-called 'recreational drugs' or harlotry or gambling, - all conspire to fuel Britain's trillion pound plus debt mountain. Such activities do indeed bring 'pain', for 'the payback from sin is death'.

Such behaviour requires money and is, in the Scriptures, called 'covetousness' [avarice, cont'd p.8

Money - a Root of Every Evil?

ISLAM in the News

Recent years has seen the religion of Mohammed dominating the headlines. Not surprising, as Islam boasts over one in six of mankind. Not surprising, as almost all terrorist outrages today are Islam-inspired. Not surprising, then, that Biblical prophecy doesn't ignore it.

There is an 'Islamic crescent' stretching from China to the Atlantic, taking in China, Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Sudan, Turkey, the rest of North Africa, a third of Nigeria. And don't forget the fifty million Muslims settled in Europe - one hundred and twenty million if we include Turkey. In all, an estimated 1.3 billion. In France, one estimate says that by 2030 Islam will dominate the population. Surely not to be ignored in the Scriptures, which say so much about 'the end-time'!

The Biblical end-time scenario depicts one Satanic world empire emerging from a horrendous period of intense persecution of true believers (Christian) and indeed of the Anglo-Saxon nations. It will be just a 'second' of time, to be swiftly ended by the returning King of kings and Lord of lords, Jesus the Messiah.

One of the LORD's first tasks will be to gather His people, Israel, from the nations in which they have been enslaved. The Bible details the area of their incarceration: *'And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth'* (Isaiah 11:11-12).

At face value those nations are, in our era, Islamic. (There are other views, eg that these nations are now located elsewhere.) Now, why would Israel (the 'Ten Tribes') and Judah (the Jews) need to be rescued as outcasts and dispersed from those areas if not there unwillingly? More, they are to be rescued also from 'the North': *In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers* (Jeremiah 3:18)

Alternatives

Bible prophecies have spawned a supermarket of varied interpretations. The 'end time' is the usual focus, whether in 1000AD or 2000AD.

One popular stream of prophetic interpretation will here yell 'wrong'. For the belief is that the ten-toed image of Daniel (*ch 2:42-44*) refers specifically to Europe - to a self-selecting ten-nation portion of the European Union (though it now has twenty-five nations with two more East European nations soon to join).

That view is not here being challenged. But there is another dimension, another world player. It is called *Islam*, and the prophecies do not ignore it.

Adherents of that faith have cruelly demonstrated their abhorrence of all things 'Western'. (And there is much to abhor.) Historically it has grown by wielding the sword. Random murder, suicide bombs, flying bombs, mass civilian murder, extermination of Israel, destruction of the world's greatest philanthropist nation - none of this encourages a view of a religion at peace with itself and with the world. Islam, wherever practiced, has shown itself capable of perpetrating a holocaust.

A Bridge Too Far

The Bible prophecies indicate a European power subservient to the

Vatican (shades of the Inquisition) will bring about the downfall of the United States and her allies, notably Great Britain. Link this with the Isaiah 11 prophecy and there appears to be some kind of end-time alliance between Christian Europe and Islam.

What, then, is the bridge linking Catholicism and Islam? Observers have noted that the late Pope John Paul II made serious overtures to Islam. He was the first Pope ever to visit a mosque - even kissing the Koran, symbolizing its authenticity. Many of his statements were complimentary. Islam, of course, shares some of its sources with Judaeo-Christianity. and admits Jesus as a 'prophet'. They, as much as does Rome, venerate the Virgin Mary. A pact between Rome and Mecca is not beyond question.

A mass enslavement of the Houses of Israel and Judah could indeed involve both Europe and Islam. This by no means suggests that all Moslems would take part in atrocities. In forties Europe the general population of Germany and Poland didn't take part in Nazi atrocities - but those who did know were apathetic. Islamic fundamentalists, however, have demonstrated capability.

Co-operation

Perhaps we should not be surprised. In the 1930's and 1940's there was an alliance between the Islamic leadership and the National Socialists in Germany. The Grand Mufti of Jerusalem (the Arab leader Amin al-Husseini), worked with Hitler to exterminate the Jews. He is believed to have suggested the 'final solution'. Hitler called him 'the Fuhrer of the Arab world'. The Nazi-Islamic Hanzar brigade, 100,000 strong from Bosnia, were among the most brutal of Hitler's forces. Muslims from many nations were in Hitler's armies. Recall too, that Islamic Turkey and Germany were allies in World War I.

Commenting on 1940's Germany, one author wrote: *"What an image: a Nazi-Moslem alliance to conquer the world! Naturally, totalitarian ideology (as shown by the cont'd p.8*

Jesus Christ wants each of us to
be highly successful in our
Christian walk

Christ Wants “Doers”!

Ian Hufton

Jesus inspired the apostle Paul to write:

Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward (1 Corinthians 3:12-14)

Read the whole section for yourself and you will see that even those who built with wood, hay and stubble, (which would be burned up in the fire) still receive salvation.

It appears that the important thing for salvation is that we be building. In Christ's parable of the talents, He points out that the servant that did nothing with the talent given him, was called a “wicked and slothful servant” and consigned to “outer darkness with weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

To Do Or Not To Do

Many are certain that Christ and God, the Father, don't want Christians to do anything, except let Jesus do everything for them. Let's see what Christ, himself, has to say:

Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall DO and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:19)

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, DO good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; (Matthew 5:44)

Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, DO ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets (Matthew 7:12)

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that DOETH the will of my Father which is in heaven. (Matthew 7:21)

Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and DOETH them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: (Matthew 7:24)

And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and DOETH them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: (Matthew 7:26)

For whosoever shall DO the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother. (Matthew 12:50)

Jesus is clear and powerful about the need for His followers to be doing certain things. Why is it important to our Father and Jesus Christ that Christians be active in doing? Could it be that they are extremely eager to see their babes in Christ mature, grow and develop into the fullness of Christ?

And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. (Ephesians 3:19)

Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: (Ephesians 4:13)

The End Result Is Becoming Love

God is love. He expects us to grow in lovingness until we are born into the Family of God and are married to our future husband, Jesus Christ. Jesus tells us that the we are to learn how to love God, and our neighbors, and our enemies.

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. (Matthew 22:37-39)

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you (Matthew 5:44)

Learning how to love is one of god's highest priorities for each of us. Paul, also, points out how critical it is to learn to love:

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity (love), I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity (love), I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity (love), it profiteth me nothing. Charity (love) suffereth long, and is kind; charity (love) envieth not; charity (love) vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up... And now abideth faith, hope, charity (love), these three; but the greatest of these is charity (love) (1 Corinthians 13:1-4, 13)

How Can Humans Learn God-like Love?

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But be ye DOERS of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a DOER, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect LAW of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed (James 1:22-25)

Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the Law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a DOER of THE LAW, but a judge. (James 4:11)

Is this not saying that we are expected to be *doing* the law? In man's societies, it goes with out saying, that everyone is expected to keep the law. The law of the land, in most cases, has been crafted by the leaders of society to provide good living conditions and to keep the citizens as safe as possible. By keeping the law (of man) children learn how to grow into fine, upstanding, law-abiding citizens. Why should it be so strange to so many people, to think that God is using the same system (that of law) to develop Christ-like beings for life in the eternal society. Could it be they will tolerate a police force they can see, but rebel at the law of a God they can not see?

If ye fulfil the Royal Law according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self, ye do well: (James 2:8)

Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the Law. (Romans 13:8)

Is it not clear that God expects us to *do* His law, and thereby develop a God-like love to mankind and to God himself? These two Scriptures

clearly show that fulfilling the law is loving others -not just our best friends, but all other human beings. This is not easy to achieve. That is why God gives us the law of God as a guide. If we follow and obey and DO the law of God, we continue in the growing (in love) process. The end result of this growing process is becoming totally Christ-like.

The Result of Law-keeping

For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth. (Romans 10:4)

Many want this to mean that when Christ came to earth, he ended the law. If that were the case, then all the writings of the New Testament should ignore the law, since it would no longer have application to daily life.

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. (Matthew 5:17-18)

Christ wants the law fulfilled or filled fully. Why? Because loving God's law and having it written in our hearts and minds, and living it daily, leads us to more Christ-likeness.

But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people. (Jeremiah 31:33)

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after

those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: (Hebrews 8:10)

This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; (Hebrews 10:16)

Having God's law written in our hearts and minds is a major part of God's new covenant plan. How can anyone suggest that God doesn't want us obeying His law?

You have seen that there are many references to God's law in the New Testament Scriptures so what does "end of the law" mean? Notice in the Scriptures below, that this term, "end", has application to "the end result of". What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? For THE END of those things is death. (Romans 6:21)

(NOTE; The end result of "those things" is death, at a future time.)

But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. (Romans 6:22)

Who shall also confirm you UNTO THE END, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 1:8)

Here, it is very clear that there will be a continuing action until the end arrives. This verse gives us greater understanding of the "end of the law" (Romans 10:4) verse. If we read Romans 10:4 from this perspective, it is clear that Christ, or coming to Christ (at the wedding supper of the lamb), or Christ-likeness in us, is the "end result" or purpose of the law.

By practicing the law of God, we become more and more Christ—like. This does not, however, mean that we of ourselves and by *cont'd p.8*

STUDY THE WORD
Be sure to enroll for our
free 32 lesson Study
Course. It's a key to what
is for many a
'Book of Mystery'

Soon you may have no choice but to cease work on Sundays.
Are you ready?

Friday. Saturday. Sunday. Each is considered special by large segments of the world's populace. Near enough two billion observe in some degree the Christian *Sunday*. Almost all Protestant denominations write Sunday observance into their catechisms – a practice shared by the various sects of Roman Catholicism. *Sunday* is a sign that you are 'Christian'. [Request our free article **The Day To Remember**]

How the day is observed varies from a 'nod and a wink' through to the dedicated Sabbatarian who treats the day as if it were a divinely-appointed Sabbath. For serious Christians Sunday observance is considered a vital part of their religious practice. It's a voluntary choice, freely observed. *But not for long!*

Blue Laws

The twentieth century witnessed a sharp decline in the veneration of Sunday as a day for worship. The century ended with a catastrophic fall in church going. Yet when the century began we had not long emerged from the influence of the 'blue laws'. These were prohibitions against various activities on Sunday – often with attached penalties.

Indeed America's first state Sunday law, in Virginia in 1610, included the death penalty for failing to show up for church for the third time. Serious breaches, in the 1656 Connecticut law, also included a death penalty. As late as 1898 a New Hampshire Senator proposed to Congress a national blue law. It was a Bill "...to secure to the people the enjoyment of the first day of the week, commonly known as the Lord's Day, as a day of rest, and to promote its observance as a day of religious worship". The Bill was opposed by seventh-day Sabbath observers, and eventually failed.

In England the established

Church exercised widespread coercive authority on religious matters. There were 'Sunday laws' in some form since the 7th century, and especially since Edward VI's *Act of Uniformity* (of religion) in 1551. Ecclesiastical censure and fines were imposed by statute in 1558 – the penalties repealed only in 1846. Only in recent years has Sunday trading been permitted by Law.

Such laws arose from the sincerely-held view – however misapplied – that a godly nation ought to venerate a weekly day of rest and worship, dedicated to the Creator. Indeed Sunday is held in high esteem to this day by millions whatever the law of the land may be.

The current lax legal approach to Sunday observance, however, may soon come to a grinding halt!

Unholy Alliance?

Whatever the profound differences and historical antagonism between Romanism and Protestantism, they are certainly agreed on which day of the week to set aside for worship. Since the fourth century the majority in Christendom, willingly or by force, have observed Sunday. Perhaps surprisingly, as the Roman Church claims to be the 'mother of Sunday', having changed it from the apostolic (and divinely-appointed) seventh day Sabbath. Even Protestant scholars agree that Rome made the change contrary to the Scripture teaching.

Sunday, however, is fast becoming a bridge of reconciliation for Protestants and Catholics. The seed-bed for this is the United States. Roman Catholics now represent 26% of the population – some 57 million, up from well under 2% in 1776. They

Get Ready for SUNDAY

are increasingly influential in private and public life. And this can be seen as a positive influence, given the papal stand on such matters as abortion, personal responsibility, family values – and morality in general. It contrasts sharply with the general immorality of government and the populace at large.

Indeed the two issues of abortion ('pro-life') and Sunday observance are the key to the new alliance between the Roman Church, and evangelical Protestantism represented by Pat Robertson's *Christian Coalition of America*. Together they are a powerful political force, representing perhaps half of all Americans.

What, though, does this new alliance bode for religious liberty?

Free To Obey

The moral pressure exerted by 'Man of the Year', the late Pope John-Paul, is almost irresistible. Seen as an icon of moral stability he was all but worshipped by the general populace wherever he went, and feted by governments. He was seen as a major architect of the downfall of communism, courted by politicians and religious leaders and his influence was in demand to quell international dispute – as in Jerusalem.

But for Pope John-Paul, the observance of Sunday as a day of worship was of high priority. Concerned at the increasingly low attendance at Sunday mass, he published (May, 1998) his pastoral letter *Dies Domini* – the Day of the Lord. Equating (wrongly!) Sunday with the Biblical Sabbath, the Pope called for Catholics to use their influence in legalizing Sunday observance.

In Catholic *Canon Law*, attendance at Sunday mass is a 'grave obligation' –

non-attendance sinful. *Dies Domini*, however, goes further. In it the Pope urged Christians to "strive to ensure that civil legislation respects their duty to keep Sunday holy". (Incidentally, only God can 'make something holy'!)

Legislation, of course, is written by the *civil* authorities. Addressing some 15,000 public officials from around the world in November 2000, Pope John Paul said that political leaders must conform civil laws and policies to God's objective moral law – meaning, of course, as understood by Rome.

In support, former Soviet Union president Mikhail Gorbachev told the assembly that the task of civil leaders in the twenty-first century would be to unite morality to politics. In the recently published *Catechism* it is stated "...Christians should seek recognition of Sunday and the Church's holy days as legal holidays."

This theme has been taken up by the *Christian Coalition of America*, which also wants to see Sunday protected. Indeed an increasing number of Roman Catholics are members of the *Coalition*, and in key posts within it. Given the propensity for politicians to 'roll over' to protect their position, a grass-roots opinion swell for Sunday ('blue') laws is likely to succeed in the United States. And it's now thought that Catholics, 26% of the population, command the 'swing vote'. They are expected to vote according to conscience – the conscience of the Pope.

Sunday blue laws may not be far away!

Is It Important?

So, doesn't that just mean an extra day off? It's an attractive idea in our frenetic western world. And to slide past the *Constitution* and the *First Amendment*, the health and family aspects of such legislation are highlighted by Catholic spokesmen - not

the 'promotion of religion'. What, however, does it mean for you – for Judaism, for Adventists, for Muslims and for the multitude of other seventh-day observers and non-observers of Sunday? It's the freedom of such religious minorities that is at stake.

Commerce and the entertainment industry have been the driving force behind the abolition of restrictions on Sunday work, coupled with the decline in religious observance in general. Business is not likely to take kindly to such legislation. Especially if you request off Saturday – or Friday – to fulfill religious obligations! Should Sunday blue laws be introduced or revived (they still quietly grace the legislation of some States) then minorities would be excluded from the economy: "Work on Saturday, or else."

Prophetic Insight

Such a scenario was predicted by Jesus in his message to the world for the end-time – for *now*.

We are to expect the rise of a short-lived, humanistic anti-God [*ie* the God of Scripture] confederation of nations in Europe described as a 'wild beast' (Revelation 13:1-10). It will attain world dominion and be widely acclaimed – but will, however, be a persecuting power, hell-bent on destroying true believers, those '*written in the Book of Life*' (v.7, 8). Behind the beast is the shadowy figure of man's arch enemy, Satan (v. 2).

Perhaps surprisingly, this secular power gains its vast worldwide authority through the influence of religion. Another 'wild beast' – also motivated by Satan (v.11) – is personalized as an individual practicing deceptive miraculous acts, even calling down fire.

In an echo of the great image erected by King Nebuchadnezzar of ancient Babylon, he will order the fabrication

of an '*image to the beast*' which he will miraculously cause to speak (vv.14, 15). Don't scoff - recently a fish (in New York) reportedly spoke in Hebrew!

Indeed the first beast's persecutions are instigated by the influence of the second, religious, beast. It's a reflection of the medieval practice of committing heretics to the secular power to administer punishment - including the death penalty.

The initial trigger is economic: "*And he causes all...to receive a mark on their right hand or on the forehead* [indicating submission and obedience], *and that no-one may buy or sell except one who has the name or the mark of the beast, or the number of his name*" (vv.16-17).

It's all a bit mysterious!

Prepare For Sunday

We get a clue to the mystery in the next chapter. Jesus—not so 'meek and mild'—tells us that those who submit to and obey the beast power will suffer '*the wrath of God*' (the seven last plagues). By contrast those who will suffer under the hand of the beast will "*keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus*" (ch 14:12).

That's interesting! They '*keep the commandments of God*'. And this co-exists with keeping '*the faith of Jesus*'.

No major religion and no secular power advocates that its people kill or perjure or steal or dishonour the elderly—though they may encourage it by defective laws. That is, they would in general support obedience to the last six of the Ten Commandments. But this humanistic authority egged on by the religious power turns against those '*who keep the commandments*'.

In other words, the focus is on the *first four* of the Commandments,

which teach us how to 'love God'. (And there is but *one* God!)

Pivotal to these four is *"Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy"* (Exodus 20:8-11). The only weekly day God made holy was the seventh, basically our Saturday (Genesis 2:3). That's why many of those Christians who observe the seventh-day Sabbath will at that time be martyred! As the apostle Peter said to the secular/religious authorities: *"We ought to obey God rather than men"* (Acts 5:29).

Mass Extinction

Before the first Christian century expired, most of the visible church of God had departed from the faith of Jesus. Over time true teachings were ditched, new practices added. Echoing the departure from the faith of the northern House of Israel's King Jeroboam (I Kings 12), the age-old faith of the Bible was abandoned and the trappings of sun worship were grafted on to the church.

Prominent was the transfer of worship to Sunday and the abandonment of the seventh day Sabbath together with the Biblical annual holy days, all of which were the apostolic practice. Biblical Christianity—the religion of Jesus—became all but extinct.

Prophecy indicates this 'lawless' form of Christianity will be widespread in the end-time. It will lead to the unholy alliance of a false form of religion co-operating with the secular authorities. Those who 'worship the beast' will bask - briefly - in a time of peace and prosperity. *It won't last.*

A Warning Unheeded

During the preceding time of *'stress upon nations'* the signs of the times and the warnings of the church of God will have gone unheeded. The publishers of *New Horizons*, for ex-

ample, have been part of a work which for the past almost seventy years has been calling for our nations to turn to God.

The vast majority of those who have heard the warning, however, have refused to respond. By the time Jesus Christ returns all the world will have heard, will have been confronted by their idolatry.

Here's what Jesus told John: *"But the rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues [largely the effects of our misuse of the planet] did not repent of the works of their hands that they should not worship demons [any religion that isn't based on the Scriptures], and idols...and they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts"* (Revelation 9:20-21). We're back to those Ten Commandments again!

And keep My sabbaths holy, and they shall be a sign between Me and you, that you may know that I am Jehovah your God

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unsigned articles are by the Editor

Personal Choice

Clearly, our 'choice of religion' is limited: God's way, the Biblical way. Or any other way.

Many of those who become, and remain, patiently faithful to the Word of God, however, will be martyred. But their incredible destiny is to be resurrected shortly thereafter at the return of Christ and to reign with him perpetually in the Family of God.

We each have a stark choice. Anciently the Creator God (Exodus 20:11) gave the *seventh-day* Sabbath as an identity sign. Who is the Creator? The God whose 'rest day' is the *seventh* day, Saturday. His people identify with Him by observing that same day (Exodus 31:12-17, Ezekiel 20:20).

But hear what a prominent cardinal mistakenly says: "Sunday...is one of the most patent *signs* that we are a Christian people". And Pope John-Paul in *Dies Domini*: "More than a replacement of the Sabbath, therefore, Sunday is its fulfilment."

Dark days lie ahead for our world. The rejection of God as Creator and the widespread exaltation of Satan and all his works calls for the intervention of a wise and just God to save His Creation.

Persecution and, for some, martyrdom will come. Satan is increasingly angry with those who choose to submit to God - not least in the observance of His commands including the weekly seventh-day Sabbath coupled with their personal testimony of Jesus: *"And the dragon was enraged over the woman, and went away to make war with the rest of her seed, those keeping the commandments of God, and having the testimony of Jesus Christ"* (Revelation 12:17).

You are urged to *believe God* and not men - and reap the destiny of eternal life safe in the Family of God **Ω**

ISLAM... cont'd from p.2

Sino-Soviet and Iran-Taliban splits, for example) is a notoriously weak glue, so it is questionable how far this could have prospered. But the thought is chilling enough."

Doesn't this recall the vision of Daniel referring to the end-time. He foresaw a world-dominating destructive Gentile empire that was an explosive and incompatible mix of fundamentalist religion and totalitarian political force: *"And as to that you saw, the feet and the toes were partly of potters' clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided. But there shall be in it the strength of iron, because you saw the iron mixed with clay of the potter"* (ch 2:41).

Mediaeval Bible expositors saw in Mohammed (7th century AD) a precursor of the end-time Antichrist. They thought he 'ticked all the boxes'

of what were considered its identifying features.

Historically, Daniel's *'King of the North'* (ch 11:40) was Syria, which at that time stretched, north of Pales-

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he comes and knocks, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he comes shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants Luke 12:34-38

tine, from the Mediterranean to beyond the Euphrates. Today this area spans Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Iran.

Hasty Interpretation

It is perhaps foolish to view 'what's going on now' on the world stage as the final end-time scenario. Nations rise and nations fall. Dictators arise and are deposed. Circumstances propel events: *'a week is a long time in politics'*.

There are sound reasons to acknowledge the transfer, in prophecy, of this 'king of the north' to the Roman Empire and to its modern image - Europe. The Islamic presence on the continent and in world politics cannot, however, be ignored.

We can perhaps look to a short-lived uneasy alliance between these two powerful world forces. **Ω**

Money... cont'd from p.2

inordinate desire for more]. God warns against it in His guide to human happiness: *'You shall not covet'*. Jesus, too: *'And he said to them, Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man's life doesn't consist in the abundance of the things which he possesses* (Luke 12:15).

Rather, says Jesus, invest in the intangible: *'But treasure up for you treasures in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust [wear and tear] cause to perish, and where thieves do not dig through [break in] and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also'* (Matthew 6:20-21).

Look around your home. How much goes beyond keeping you at the comfort level? *'Have money will spend'* is a common attitude. In the UK, over £1billion is stashed away in unused domestic hardware. And how much of it drips from your credit card? The average credit card debt in Britain is over £3000.

Credit fuels economic growth. But

limit its use to what you can affordably repay - allowing for emergencies. Invest your resources, wisely, in projects that enhance the lifestyle of the underprivileged. Invest in activity that will reach beyond the grave. Invest in those things which cannot perish.

Above all invest in what is 'treasure' in God's eyes. This latter we discern as we steep ourselves in His Word.

Doers... cont'd from p.4

ourselves can use God's law to make ourselves perfect. Obviously, we can not. Only the interaction of God's Holy Spirit in our minds (as we strive to obey the law of God), can accomplish this growth toward Christ-likeness. Do we see how important the Law of God is? It is the lamp unto our feet (Psalm 119:105) to guide us in our Christian walk. The end (or end result) of that walk, will be that we truly and totally will have come to Christ.

Can we, too, join with King David and say, *"Oh, how love I thy law"*? **Ω**

What does God see as *'the pearl of great price'*: *'How much better is it to get wisdom than gold'*, wrote King Solomon (Proverbs 16:16). Gold - anything that we consider precious. *Wisdom* is the principle thing (ch 4:7; see also 8:11).

Paul advances the same message: *'Set your mind on things above, not on things that are upon the earth'* (Colossians 3:2).

Your investment is an indicator as to *'where your heart is'*. What do you consider to be your 'treasure'? Jesus again: *'Seek first his Kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be added to you'* (Matthew 6:33).

Accumulating in this life for 'heaven' - for your eternal future - ensures that as a part of the Kingdom of God you will have free access to everything that is good for you!

It's a concept to be meditated on as the Christmas splurging season approaches! **Ω**

MiniStudy

When the LORD your God shall cut off the nations from before you, wherever you go in to dispossess them, and you dispossess them, and dwell in their land; take heed to yourself that you be not ensnared to follow them, after that they are destroyed from before you; and that you inquire not after their gods, saying: 'How used these nations to serve their gods? even so will I do likewise.' You shall not do so unto the LORD your God; for every abomination to the LORD, which He hates, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters do they burn in the fire to their gods. All this word which I command you, that shall you observe to do; thou shall not add thereto, nor diminish from it (Deuteronomy 12:29-13:1)

For I, Jehovah, change not (Malachi 3:6)

Christmas...holiday or holy day?

The darkness at the end of the year invites us to party to lighten the dreary days. The religion of most people living in the northern hemisphere fills the gap with some form of celebration. For most Christians it is Christmas. For Jews, Hanukah. And for those without some official recognition of the death of the old year and the birth of the new—well, Christmas sounds good. It has almost become a global celebration. If you are not personally 'into religion' never mind, it's a chance of a knees-up. And indeed Christmas has largely become a secular holiday when all work grinds to a halt—sometimes for two or three weeks. The months leading to December 25 are an eternity of credit-fuelled frenzied shopping and poisoned by Christmas 'music'. Christmas has become a holiday, not a holy day.

- *Christmas* is promoted by the Christian church as the time of the birth of Jesus—the Messiah, Christ
- The name derives from the Roman Catholic 'Mass of Christ'
- The timing derives from the ancient celebration, known as *Saturnalia*, of the annual re-birth of the sun god: that is, when the sun begins its ascent from our shortest days in late December
- During the festival, homes—and churches—are today festooned with evergreen trees, brightly-coloured baubles, candles; songs lauding the birth of Jesus as 'a babe in the manger' are sung; food is consumed in excess; and not infrequently the celebrations dissolve into drunken debauchery. All such practices were derived from the worship of '*gods that are no gods*'
- None of this, of course, is a concern to most Westerners. Christmas is a holiday, party-time. And anyway, who cares about religion?
- But what if you are a Christian, have strong beliefs in Jesus and in the Christian Scriptures? The text quoted above should give pause for thought
- It is a well-established historical fact that Jesus was not born in the dead of winter, but in the early autumn; possibly the first day of the *Festival of Tabernacles*.
- The Scriptures do not provide the date of the birth of Jesus as they do the divinely-appointed holy days (*see* Leviticus 23). Christmas celebration is a late starter—from the mid-fourth century AD
- There is no New Testament confirmation that the brethren celebrated the birth of Christ; the focus is on his death and resurrection, and on God's Spirit indwelling His people
- Jesus, the apostles and all members of the early church observed the Biblical holy days. Each of these highlights aspects of the life and mission of Jesus
- However sincere a believer may be, the observance of Christmas is an affront to our Saviour. Jesus perfectly reflects the teachings of the Old Testament, and expects his disciples to follow his example
- Many Christians around the world have come to understand the importance and significance of the Biblical days, and faithfully observe them

Request the free articles:
The Feast of the Nativity
God's Holy Days and A Framework for Prophecy

Contact any of our addresses if you have any questions regarding the observance of the Biblical holy days

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some hints about how to
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P.O. Box 54621
Tulsa, OK 74155-0621