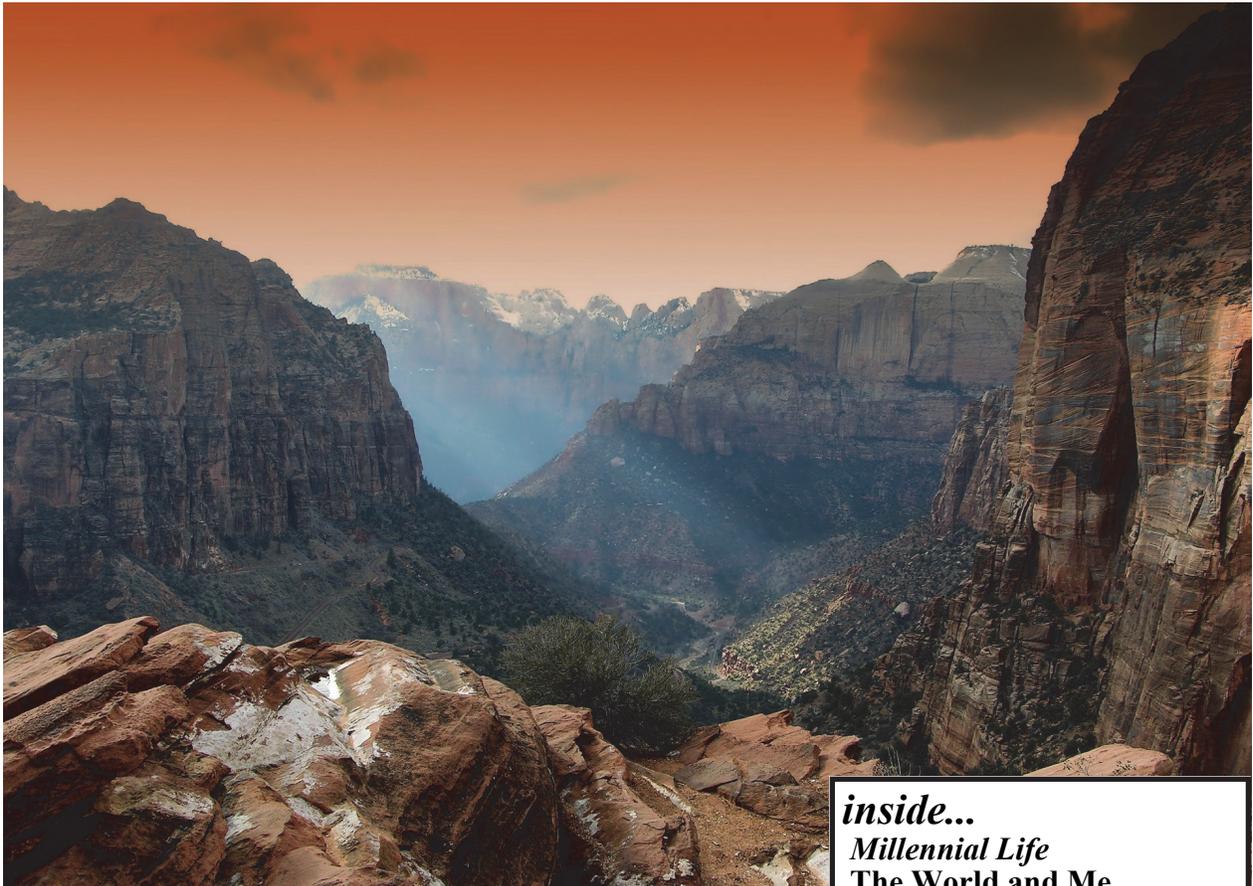


new **Horizons**

Vol 20 No 6

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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

Who We Are

The *Churches of God Outreach Ministries* is an international association of independent local assemblies - Christians who meet together for worship, instruction in the faith and fellowship. Each assembly is self-governing according to Bible principles, but co-operates through our Conference with other like-minded assemblies to work towards agreed evangelistic goals

These goals are within the framework of the commission set for his church by Jesus: "...going, therefore, disciple all nations, baptising them...and teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20). He further commanded that we "...Shepherd...[and] feed my sheep".

To these ends we publish Bible-based literature - eg our bi-monthly e-mail Newsletter OUTREACH, the NEW HORIZONS magazine, the BIBLE BASICS on-line home study course, and the 32-lesson Study Course. The *Outreach Ministries* also supports a network of independent fellowships and scattered brethren

We cordially invite all independent fellowships of whatever size - and individuals - to associate with us in this worldwide ministry. Our *Statement of Beliefs* and a *Publications Catalogue* is available from any of our addresses or from our web site www.cgom.org. We are pleased to offer you, without charge, any of our publications

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If you would like a copy of our *Statement of Beliefs* please request it from any of the addresses listed

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The 'millennium' may hold a few surprises for some Christians!

What will it be like in the millennium? Peaceful and law-abiding? *Certainly*. Improved health? *Yes*. Hunger eliminated? *Of course*. Abundant water? *A gain yes*. Harmony among nations? *Yes*. One faith? *You bet*. But let's not run away with the notion of perfection!

Messiah will enter our world as it staggers out from under the awesome consequences of years of demonic oppression, wars, disease, famine—the end result of our millennia-long neglect of divine guidance. As the prophet Isaiah predicted:

'... the earth [Heb eretz] is profaned under those living in it, because they transgress laws and violate a statute, and break the everlasting covenant. On account of this a curse has devoured the land [Heb. eretz]; and they who live in it are held guilty. For this those living in the land [Heb eretz] are consumed, and few men are left' (ch 24:5-6).

For decades following Christ's return He, as King of kings and together with the resurrected saints, will be 'picking up the pieces'. The waste cities will be reconstructed to a divine pattern: *'...they shall build old ruins; they shall raise up former desolations; and they shall restore the waste cities, ruins of generations and generations' (ch 61:4).*

Isaiah (ch 2:2-4) focuses a spotlight on the coming new era:

'... it shall be in the last days, the mountain of the house of Jehovah shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow into it. And many people shall go and say, Come and let us go up to the mount of Jeho-

vah, to the house of the God of Jacob. And He will teach from His ways, and we will walk in His paths. For out of Zion the Law will go forth, and the Word of Jehovah from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among the nations and shall rebuke many people'

Note what God says through His prophet:

- All nations choose to be subject to Jesus the messiah
- They will be taught 'his ways'
- God's laws will govern them, and
- Christ (and the apostles) will judge misdemeanors
- There are penalties for transgressions of the Law

Not a 'perfect place', then! Mankind will still have human nature.

Millennial life

Good News

Underpinning all the material reconstruction and the establishment of law and order, however, will be the worldwide proclamation of the good news—the message of salvation.

Take the returning (to their ancestral homeland) remnant of the people of Israel. Both the House of Judah (the Jews) and the hitherto 'lost' House of Israel will respond to the Gospel: *'...this shall be the covenant that I will cut with the house of Israel: After those days, declares Jehovah, I will put My Law in their inward parts, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people' (Jeremiah 31:33).*

[Note: Not enforced—it's a free personal choice, as in this age]

But not just Israel: *'...the Lord has commanded us, "I have set You for a Light of nations [Gentiles], that You be for salvation to the end of the earth. (Acts 13:47, Isaiah 49:6). Isaiah again: '...the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea' (ch 11:9).*

Faith Once Delivered

That same Gospel message by which true believers today become part of the divine Family will be extended to all people. As said Zechariah: *'...Jehovah shall be King over all the earth. In that day there shall be one Jehovah, and His name one' (ch 14:9).* And: *'...everyone who is left from all the nations which came up against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, Jehovah of Hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles' (v.16).*

The universal backdrop to millennial life will be that one God-ordained faith—no Hindu, no Muslim, no atheist. And not the distorted version of the faith that passes today for 'Christianity'. No other faith than that of the Christian Scriptures will be known—or allowed! The divine pattern of worship will be universal. (Leviticus 23).

Indeed, since all will share the same faith, the criteria for judging will be on behaviour. Jesus addressed this in speaking to the disciples (Matthew 25:31ff). *After he returns and is reigning ('...on the throne of his glory') He will individually assess each person on how they treat 'my brothers': '...Truly I say to you, In so far as you did it to one of these, the least of My brothers, you did it to Me' (v.40).*

'Nations are regarded as gathered collectively; but in contemplating the act of separation the Lord regards the individuals' [Matthew 25:32].
(Vincent Word Studies)

Note Jesus's own

cont'd over

definition: ‘...who are My brothers? And stretching out His hand to His disciples, He said, Behold, My mother and My brothers. For whoever does the will of My Father in Heaven, that one is My brother and sister and mother’ (Matthew 12:48-50).

Under the benign reign of Messiah God’s Spirit will be freely available to all without the malign influence of Satan—who in this age has subverted most from a proper understanding of Christ’s message.

As wrote Paul ‘...our gospel is being hidden, it has been hidden in those being lost, in whom the god of this age has blinded the thoughts of the unbelieving, so that the brightness of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God, should not dawn on them’ (II Corinthians 4:3-4).

In the millennium—no excuse! Motivated by God’s Spirit the vast majority of mankind (then converted) will, as today, lead compassionate and caring lives. But those who refuse to make the necessary changes in their life, who adamantly reject God’s gracious gift of salvation through Jesus, will be judged by their treatment of those around them—‘...my [Jesus’s] brothers’. Their (the ‘goats’, the wicked) stubborn refusal to change will earn them a dire consequence. Said Jesus: ‘...Go away from Me, cursed ones, into the everlasting fire having been prepared for the Devil and his angels’ (Matthew 25:41).

Fate of the Wicked

Sings the Psalmist: ‘...The LORD preserves all them that love him: but all the wicked will he destroy’ (Psalm 145:20). And, ‘...the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous...and the way of the wicked shall perish’ (Psalm 1:5).

They, the wicked, will die (*cp* Ananias and Sapphira—Acts 5:1-11), and their corpses burned: ‘...you shall tread under the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day which I am preparing, says Jehovah of Hosts’ (Malachi 4:3).

Isaiah, too, describes their fate:

‘...it will be, from new moon to another new moon, and from Sabbath to another Sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before Me, says Jehovah. And they shall go out and see the dead bodies of the men who have rebelled against Me; for their worm shall not die [the life-cycle of maggots!], nor shall their fire be put out; and they shall be an object of disgust to all flesh’ (ch 66:23-24)

The apostle John, by analogy, quotes Jesus: ‘...Unless one remains in Me, he is cast out as the branch and is dried up; and they gather and throw them into a fire, and they are burned’ (John 15:6). The branches die and are then burned in ‘hell’ (Gk *gehenna*).

Eternal Life

In contrast to the wicked the righteous will during that millennial era ‘...inherit the Kingdom prepared for you’ (Matthew 25:34). And what a Kingdom!

God’s Kingdom has always existed: ‘... Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations’ (Psalm 145:13). It is the Family of God to which we belong as children when we, following baptism and the laying-on of hands, receive—are begotten by—God’s Holy Spirit.

Resurrected at the return of Messiah, the ‘saints’—all those in whom dwells God’s Spirit—will reign with Him as ‘a kingdom of priests’. Jesus’s twelve apostles will ‘... in the regeneration when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you also will sit on

twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel’ (Matthew 19:28).

Those who in this age were redeemed through Jesus will have a judicial role in that Kingdom: ‘... You were slain, and by Your blood purchased us to God out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign over the earth’ (Revelation 5:9-10, 20:4). The saints will also have a role in the future judgment of angelic beings. The apostle Paul tells the Corinthian church: ‘...Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is judged by you, are you unworthy of small judgments? Do you not know that we shall judge angels (I Corinthians 6: 2-3).

Divine Call

It is to this end that God is now selecting and training those who will then reign with the Messiah. With Satan restrained for a thousand years those who physically survive the coming end-time chaos will experience a lifetime of perfect government, and will themselves be trained in the way of righteousness in preparation for Eternity.

Should any of our readers feel God’s ‘tap on the shoulder’ and are willing to embark on ‘the narrow way’ we urge you not to ignore the Father’s call but to commit fully to Jesus the Messiah. **Ω**

Read this!

The Churches of God Outreach Ministries publish a range of booklets and articles designed to guide you towards God’s Kingdom. They are listed on our website www.cgom.org where you can download or request titles of interest. Or, a list of publications can be mailed to you.

All materials are free and sent without obligation

God's church is commissioned to take the message of salvation 'into all the world'. To every nation...but to every person?

What an immense task. In our age there are near enough two hundred nations and eight billion souls out there with but a relative handful of true activists to fulfil the Great Commission. To judge by numbers we are failing to reach a significant portion.

That may not be surprising when we contemplate the Committee-building, navel-gazing of the churches! Conference follows Conference. Days consumed by 'planning'. Endless tortuous discussion with the same issues arising year-after-year on the minutiae of doctrine and administrative detail. No surprise, then, that 'the work' languishes.

With a focus on detail it is little wonder dissension arises, disputes escalate, and division splinters the organizations.

The Work

Which situation promotes the question: *just what is 'the work'*? What *is* the function of the church? Whatever it may be it will steer the course of evangelism.

Many churches of God are structured in the form of a business organization. Each has its President and its CEO—it's chief executive officer. Committees for multifarious departments, with their multiple officials, mushroom and each is the basis for a budding resource-sucking empire.

All a far cry from the—very fruitful—activities of the early church. With painful foot-slog and the occasional donkey they '*...turned the world upside down [disturbed the peace]*'! (Acts

2:41. 4:4, 17:6).

A Different World

We, of course, inhabit a vastly different world from that of Paul. With the world available at the touch of a button we should be able to accomplish exponentially more than the first century 'missionaries'.

But we don't. And there are reasons:

- The Gospel message was fresh in that world
- The Jews remained under the Roman yoke
- God's Spirit was active
- Every member was involved—even to the death
- The message was focused on Christ

Yes—our world has changed. In contrast, the Gospel in our age is mere background noise for most people. Nor have we in the West experienced the fearsome pressures of oppressive foreign invasion but rather we bask in our comforts. Life is relatively easy.

Even in the church, love—a burning desire—has 'grown cold' and few are willing to openly share their faith. Bureaucracy at the corporate level stifles innovation. The gift of the Holy Spirit in believers smoulders rather than bursts out in an energetic life-giving flame (II Timothy 1:6).

The Messenger

When commissioned to deliver a message you must be clear as to its content. You target the recipients. You deliver it faithfully—focused, and no 'Chinese whispers'. How do we measure up?

Quotations from the Bible in New Horizons are from translations which clearly express the meaning in modern terms

Into All the World

Do we have a laser-sharp focus on '*...Christ and him crucified*' or is our focus on the short-term millennial reign of the everlasting Kingdom of God? Do we demonstrate the unspeakable merits of

Christ or do we seek to 'scare' our hearers into the Kingdom with an emphasis on a fearsome 'tribulation'? Are we distracted from our commission by a 'social gospel'? By gimmicks? By empire building?

God Calls

To share in '*...the divine nature*' (II Peter 1:4)—that is, to become an integral member of the Family of God—is the core definition of 'salvation', and to enable this in individuals is the goal of our evangelism. This is the Great Commission Jesus gave to His Church and to this end the apostles were willing to lay down their lives—and did so.

The Message

Our calling is not designed to protect us from death or disease. Nor to enrich or prosper us materially. We are not called to 'feed the world' beyond our individual compassionate personal encounters with need.

We are called '*...on the other hand, [to] preach Christ crucified*' (I Corinthians 1:23). The Father will then draw to Jesus those who respond—so that they may be disciplined within the embrace of His church: '*...teaching them to observe all things, whatever I commanded you*' (Matthew 28:19).

Our focus? Jesus Christ—his origin, birth, life, death, teachings, death, resurrection *cont'd p.8*

The World and Me

As a 'stranger and pilgrim' in the world how do I, as a Christian, daily relate to it?

It was the apostle Peter who counselled his readers: '*...Beloved, I exhort you as pilgrims and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul*' (I Peter 2:11). The writer of Hebrews recounts the history of God's faithful down the ages: '*...These all died by way of faith, not having received the promises, but seeing them from afar, and being persuaded, and having embraced and confessed that they are aliens and tenants [KJV 'strangers and pilgrims'] on the earth*' (Hebrews 11:13).

Life is temporary for everyone, and for the most part we just fit into the culture—and the belief system—in which we are born. Born in the Amazon rain forest? That's your culture, your language, where you learn the local life skills you need. Born an Anglican you will most likely remain an Anglican.

Transformation

Start to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ, however, and everything changes. Your life is turned upside down and you begin to live differently. What, then, are Peter's '*...fleshly lusts which war against the soul*'? We occupy a different world, a different era—so have those desires changed? Has human nature been transformed? *[The side bar lists some changes with which you will want to compare.]*

'Transformation' sums up the Christian's life. Wrote Paul to the Romans (*ch* 12:2): '*...be not conformed to this age, but be trans-*

formed by the renewing of your mind, in order to prove by you what is the good and pleasing and perfect will of God'.

No Easy Ride

Live like this, however, and it's no easy ride through life. Jesus and the other Bible writers warn us to expect 'persecution'. As wrote Peter: '*...if you suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are you: and be not afraid of their terror [intimidation], neither be troubled [agitated]*' (I Peter 3:14). Consider it a blessing that you are standing up for Christ and his values!

Few modern Western Christians so far, however, have suffered real persecution as did so many of the people of God throughout the ages. As is recorded in Hebrews: '*...you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood as you struggle against sin*' (*ch* 12:4).

Choices

Day by day, hour by hour, everyone faces choices—from trivial to potentially life-changing. Unless you are psychopathic or criminal your conscience will tell you *don't murder, don't steal, don't perjure in court*. Others won't be troubled—maybe just a little—by *adultery*. Why the difference?

Well, our conscience is tutored by *nurture*—by environment, by education (from parents, friends, peers, school *etc*). As children, for example, our choice of diet is dictated largely by parental example—fat parents, fat children. Parents lax in purloining from work? So, too, the child. Parents or friends or school sexually immoral? So the children's conscience accepts loose sexual behaviour.

Human Nature
(but not all the time!)
People's desires make them give in to immoral ways, filthy thoughts, and shameful deeds. They worship idols, practice witchcraft, hate others, and are hard to get along with. People become jealous, angry, and selfish. They not only argue and cause trouble, but they are envious. They get drunk, carry on at wild parties, and do other evil things as well. I told you before, and I am telling you again: No one who does these things will share in the blessings of God's kingdom' (Galatians 5:19-21)

Transforming Goals

God's Spirit implants new goals

- Seek God's will, always
- Discipline yourself to be Christ-like in character
- Worship God in the way He has revealed in the Scriptures
- Flee idolatry: *ie. All pre-Christian style worship and practices etc*
- Respect the Torah
- Immerse yourself in the Scriptures

Commit to following Messiah and the 'source' that feeds your conscience changes. We now ask *What does God say?* And where do we find that? In the Christian Scriptures, the Bible. As we immerse ourselves in God's revelation our conscience is informed, we view the world and its culture through His eyes, and with the help of His Spirit we come to discard that worldly culture and apply His ways to our daily life.

How does He want us to worship Him? Look to the Scriptures alone. How does He define idolatry? It's there—in the Book. What about sexual relationships? Again—in *cont'd p.8*

What Can the Righteous Do?

These are uncertain times. In the words of the hymn: 'Change and decay in all around I see'. It is, of course, no new thing (the Law of Entropy), and it's a theme picked up by the Psalmist: '...What can an honest person [KJV: the righteous] do when everything crumbles?' Decay of every kind dogs every generation!

The frequent response is to 'run and hide', to squirrel away a nest-egg, to arm yourself, even to literally migrate to a supposedly safe location. But that's not the solution posed by the Psalmist:

The LORD is my fortress! Don't say to me, "Escape like a bird to the mountains!" You tell me, "Watch out! Those evil people have put their arrows on their bows, and they are standing in the shadows, aiming at good people. What can an honest person do when everything crumbles?"

The LORD is sitting in his sacred temple on

his throne in heaven. He knows everything we do because he sees us all.

The LORD tests honest people, but despises those who are cruel and love violence. He will send fiery coals and flaming sulfur down on the wicked, and they will drink nothing but a scorching wind.

The LORD always does right and wants justice done. Everyone who does right will see his face
(Psalm 11)

King David (he wrote this song) had more reason than most to deal with troubling times. As his song explains, he ignored the doomsayers and placed his trust in his Creator. God testifies of him '...I have found David the son of Jesse to be a man in accordance with my heart, who will carry out all my will' (Acts 13:22). By no means perfect, yet he continually looked to Him in every adversity. He understood clearly '...what can the righteous do?'

ilar thought:

'He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide in the shade of the Almighty. I will say to Jehovah: My Refuge and my Fortress, my God; I will trust in Him. For He delivers you from the fowler's snare, from destruction's plague. With His feathers He will cover you, and under His wings you shall seek refuge; His truth is a shield and buckler. You shall not fear the terror of night, nor of the arrow that flies by day; of the plague that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction laying waste at noonday. A thousand shall fall by your side, and a myriad at your right hand; it shall not come near you'
(Psalm 91:1-7)

Stay close to God, he writes. Be guarded by the shield of truth. Trust Him—do not be afraid when calamity strikes but realize that '...God is always at work for the good of everyone who loves him. They are the ones God has chosen for his purpose' (Romans 8:28).

Paul also expressed it like this: '...Be anxious about nothing, but in everything by prayer and by petition with thanksgivings, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus' (Philippians 4:6-7).

Trust in His guidance, unburden yourself to Him, be thankful for His loving care—and divine peace of mind will sustain you whatever trial befalls.

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'

unsigned articles are by the Editor

Another psalm expresses a sim-

ilar thought: Jesus himself said: '...Come to Me, all those laboring and being burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, because I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest to your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light' (Matthew 11:28-30).

When through repentance and baptism we accept that 'yoke', being bound to him, we commit to conducting our life by his standards and in accordance with his will. That is no bed of roses for, as Jesus explained: '...Go in through the narrow gate. The gate to destruction is wide, and the road that leads there is easy to follow. A lot of people go through that gate. But the gate to life is very narrow. The road that leads there is so hard to follow that only a few people find it'. And he follows it with the warning: '...Watch out for false prophets!' (Matthew 7:13-15).

Those false prophets—the pulpit teachers—suppress these crucial words of the Saviour, implying an easy ride through life if you 'accept Jesus into your heart'. Yes—please do that, but then be ready to follow where he leads. Such an encounter with mankind's one and only Saviour has to be a life-changing experience.

The apostle Peter assures us that God provides the resources to sustain us in that journey: '...Grace to you, and peace be multiplied by a full knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord. As His divine power has given to us all things pertaining to life and godliness through the full knowledge of the One calling us through glory and virtue, by which means He has given to us the very great and precious promises, so that through these you might be partakers of the divine nature, escaping from the corruption in the world by lust. For these things being in you, and abounding, they will make you not idle, not unfruitful in the full knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Ω

also read the article:

What Do You Mean—Repent?

View or download at
<http://www.cgom.org/Publications/Articles/hatDoYouMeanRepent.pdf>

What Makes It 'Moral'?

**'Nothing can of itself always be labelled as 'wrong'
Bishop Robinson**

From the pen of an Anglican Bishop that may sound strange. It could, though, be argued that war isn't always 'wrong'. Perhaps that it isn't always wrong to steal—to eat, for example (Exodus 22:3-4). What of abortion—*always* 'wrong'? Growing up I was warned about playing cards—the 'devil's cards'. For others it's dancing, or alcohol, or co-habitation, or deviant sexual relationships, or war, or drugs—even music. We all have our list!

But may we not be permitted to claim that serial murder is indeed 'always wrong'? Or, the molesting of a small child? Or the gross neglect of the disabled or the elderly? Or criminal activity as an occupation?

The modern consensus is that anything goes, that if it doesn't bother you then do it. And unless it seriously impinges on someone's 'rights' then the Law isn't bothered.

Consequences

There are, of course, consequences. That last statement concerning law enforcement brings to mind the sage comment of wise King Solomon: *'...Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil (Ecclesiastes 8:11)*. Hence repeat offenders, as thieves are repeatedly 'slapped on the wrist' (or not at all).

But that's not all. Getting away with murder generates a *laissez-*

faire attitude to violence, from street crime to further violence, riots and more murder. A blind eye to rape begets more sexual violence. (Rates are soaring.) A casual attitude to the killing of the unborn undermines respect for life in every age group. The growing menace of sexually transmitted disease and infertility stems from the blasé attitude to sexual promiscuity of all kinds from serial co-habitation, to adultery, to same-sex relationships. And it starts in the nursery. Witness also the devastation wreaked by divorce.

Such consequences affect everyone and are not the sole province of the 'religious'. Atheists and humanists will experience the same consequences! And when they analyze human behaviour they must quickly reach the same conclusion—that standards are essential for a stable society.

Morality Defined

We don't, then, have to wheel out the Bible to say 'be good'. Moral standards are writ large on the canvas of human experience and are obvious to anyone who thinks carefully about them.

The Bible, however, puts these standards (morals) into the context of the sole purpose for life. The Creator formed mankind as the raw material which He could shape into beings who would reflect His character, become truly His children—for eternity. Those who embraced His 'standards' would become part of His Spirit Family—the Kingdom of God. Writes Isaiah: *'... You, LORD, are our Father. We are nothing but clay, but you are the potter who molded us' (ch 64:8)*.

He formulated the planet and its resources to perfectly supply every need to sustain us. The health of our physical, psychological and spiritual needs depends on our observance of those in-built laws of life—*true* morality. They are in-built since mankind's creation. Transgress those Laws and we experience adverse consequences.

Paul again *'...Some people naturally obey the Law's commands, even though they don't have the Law [the Gentiles] This proves that the conscience is like a law written in the human heart' (Romans 2:14-15)*.

The degree to which a society voluntarily adheres to such standards determines its vitality, its success as a nation. Ditch them and ultimately oblivion awaits. The pattern of rise and fall set by ancient Israel is a red flag of warning for all nations—especially those spiritually nourished by the Christian Scriptures.

God's protective hedge is uprooted as a consequence of our rejection of His in-built, eternal laws of life. Ω

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Neither sexually immoral people, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor passive homosexual partners, nor dominant homosexual partners, nor thieves, nor greedy persons, nor drunkards, not abusive persons, not swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And some of you were these things, but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

(I Corinthians 6:9-11)

Shadows of the Future

The apostle Paul assures us that there are valuable lessons for us in the Scriptures (that is, the writings that we call ‘the Old Testament’). They were written, he says, ‘...for our learning’. We can, expect some ‘hidden’ meaning in the artefacts associated with Israel’s worship—what has been termed *type* and *anti-type*.

Central to the nation’s worship was the ‘Ark of the Covenant’ - an ornate ‘box’ placed in the holiest part of the Tabernacle—an elaborate tent around which all the tribes assembled and where God met with them. The ark was itself an exact pattern revealed by the LORD to Moses on Mount Sinai. The size, shape and ornamentation was itself of great significance. God’s instruction was: ‘...the tent where they serve is just a copy and a shadow of the real one in heaven. Before Moses made the tent, he was told, “Be sure to make it exactly like the pattern you were shown on the mountain!” (Hebrews 8:5).

The material Tabernacle, despite its glorious ornamentation, was a symbol that under its worship regime there was no access to the real Holy of Holies—the dwelling-place of the Father (Hebrews 9:24).

This part of the Tabernacle—the ‘Holy of Holies’ or ‘Holiest of All’—was accessed by the High Priest just once a year on the *Day of Atonement* (Hebrews 9:7). For the sake of his own safety he had to follow a clearly defined ritual (see Leviticus 16), and as with all these rituals, materials and measures he represented Jesus Christ. They, wrote Paul to the Colossians: ‘...are a shadow of

coming things, but the body [the substance] is of Christ’ (ch 2:17). The reality casts a shadow that gives us insight as to that reality.

Divine Law

Placed within the Ark were the two tables on which the LORD had written the Ten Commandments: ‘...I [Moses] turned and came down from the mountain and put the tablets in the ark which I had [caused to be] made. And they are there, as Jehovah commanded me’ (Deuteronomy 10:5).

Sin, notes the apostle John, is *lawlessness* [KJV...*transgression of the law*] (I John 3:4), and at the heart of Christian behaviour is respect for the law of God. Indeed only those who obey Him will receive the Holy Spirit: ‘...we are His witnesses of these things, and also the Holy Spirit, whom God gave to those obeying Him’ (Acts 5:32). As the people of Israel are regathered following the events of the end-time it is stated that ‘...I will put My Law in their inward parts, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people’ (Jeremiah 31:33). Writes Isaiah: ‘...Hearken unto Me, you that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is My law’ (ch 51:7).

God’s Law has always been at the heart of His worship, integral to our walk with Him. These ten commands—all of them—underlie all the statutes incorporated in Israel’s Constitution. To observe them is no robotic obedience but a joyous expression of our willingness to do God’s will. Too many professing Christians are careless in their submission—especially of the fourth command defining His day for worship. Ω

Trumpets Revisited

The *Day of Trumpets* is observed on the first day of the seventh month (*Tishri*) on the Hebrew calendar, in our autumn. It is an annual holy day, one of seven such, and is the ‘head of the year’, new year’s day in effect. It is a ‘day of blowing’ when the *shofar* was sounded to invite us to remember the divine plan.

That plan unfolds in the revelation given by Jesus Christ to the apostle John, As the end-time unfolds a point is reached when trumpets are sounded by angels. Each sounding initiates events on the world stage. Each event, each angelic intervention, extends over some time—an example is the *sixth* angel, whose judgment lasts a year (Revelation 11:14-21). Also, the activity of the *fifth* angel persists five months. [There may be some overlap.]

The apostle Paul explains that Jesus returns (with the saints) at the *last* trumpet blowing: ‘...we shall not all fall asleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in a glance of an eye, at the last trumpet; for a trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall all be changed’ (I Corinthians 15:51-52). These events are heralded by the *seventh*—the ‘last’—angel.

The *Day of Trumpets* (*plural*) is traditionally associated with this event. It may, however, represent the range of events associated with the work of all seven angels. In accord with Jesus’s warning, therefore, it may not be of use to determine the time of his return as is often suggested: ‘...as to that day and that hour, no one knows, neither the angels of Heaven, except My Father only’ (Matthew 24:36). Ω

Q Why didn't Jesus tell the rich young ruler that to enter eternal life he should, believe and worship only the one God and observe the seventh-day Sabbath?

The background for the encounter between Jesus and this man is circumstance. There is a nation in which these two concepts are deeply entrenched—both monotheism and Sabbath observance.

The Jew's seventy year experience as captives in Babylon was a consequence of persistently treading all over the Sabbaths (II Chronicles 36:21), and the religious authorities were determined, perhaps excessively, to protect the sanctity of the day (Nehemiah 13:15-22).

Sabbath-breaking was subject to the death penalty: '*...Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you an holy day, a sabbath of rest to the LORD: whosoever does work therein shall be put to death*' (Exodus 35:2).

The seventh day observance, then, was part of the fabric of life in the first century—everyone downed tools

Friday afternoon as a matter of course. There is no need for Jesus to mention it. Even the Roman occupiers respected Sabbath observance. And to entertain the notion of a plurality of gods would be anathema. To claim to be a Jew required it.

The *Torah* (the Law) was the basis of Israel's national constitution. It had two parts ('tables')—God-ward and man-ward. It was to the latter table that Jesus referred his enquirer, naturally assuming the man's adherence to the first four commandments.

During the future thousand year reign of Messiah on earth the

Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law? And Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." On these two commandments all the Law and the Prophets hang'
Matthew 22:36

same conditions will apply, as observance of the weekly and annual Sabbaths will be universally the norm: '*...from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, says the LORD*' (Isaiah 66:22ff).

...when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. And before Him shall be gathered all the nations; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats'

The unconverted (the 'goats') will be judged by how they treat Jesus's brethren: '*...In so far as you did it to one of these, the least of My brothers, you did it to Me*' (Matthew 25:31ff). His definition?: '*... [pointing to] His disciples, He said, Behold, My mother and My brothers. For whoever does the will of My Father in Heaven, that one is My brother and sister and mother*' (ch 12:49-50). Ω

'As I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow to Me, and every tongue confess to God'

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World ...cont'd from p.4

the Book. As the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy: '*...keep on in what you learned and were assured of, knowing from whom you learned, and that from a babe you know the Holy Scriptures, those being able to make you wise to salvation through belief in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, so that the man of God may be perfected, being fully furnished for every good work*' (II Timothy 3:14-17).

Jesus's brother Jude wrote a letter (v.3) to the brethren: '*...I had need to write to you to exhort you to contend earnestly for the faith once [once for all] delivered to the saints.*' Don't, in other words, add

to the revealed Word of God, he tells his readers! Stick with The Plan!

As we embark on our 'pilgrimage' as a child of God following our baptism we must '*...grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*' (II Peter 3:18). It is a process as, through the Scriptures, we daily add to our understanding of what it means to become 'perfect'.

Without the sacrifice of Christ applied personally I am spiritually dead. In Christ I can grow to become a partner in His Kingdom. The degree to which I change towards Christ-likeness determines my usefulness for such an awesome task.

We can't go out of this world. But we can—and must—reject the world's ways and live by Kingdom standards. Ω

MiniStudy**LOVE GOD'S LAW**

'Oh how I love Your Law! It is my meditation all the day. You make me wiser than my enemies by Your Commands; for they are forever mine' (Psalm 119:97-98)

'We present you with this Book, the most valuable thing that this world affords. Here is wisdom; this is the royal Law. These are the lively oracles of God' (UK Coronation)

'Where laws end, tyranny begins' (Pitt the Elder)

The chaos of war and civil strife incites lawlessness—see Iraq, Libya, Syria as contemporary examples. Or London or Charlotte when rioters set it aflame. No nation can thrive without a firm foundation of law—nor can it survive under the stranglehold of a surfeit of petty laws. Law, and law enforcement, is the essence of a civilized society. Yet when it comes to religion law is often deemed unnecessary and the mantra is: *'...the law is done away'*.

- Jesus laid down a foundation principle: *'...Do not think that I came to annul the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to annul, but to fulfill'* (Matthew 5:17). 'Law' here is of course the first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures—which include those laws which were incorporated in the civil Constitution of the new-born nation of Israel. As such there were penalties attached for contravention, as with all Constitutions.
- Those laws—the Ten Commandments and their attendant statutes—existed from man's beginning days. We thus find it said of the patriarch Abraham (about 2000 BC): *'...Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws'* (Genesis 26:5). And Joseph, some four centuries before Moses received the Law from the LORD, resisted sin (adultery) with his employer's wife: *'...how should I do this great evil and sin against God?'* (Genesis 39:9). Sin, remember, is *'...transgression of the law [lawlessness]'* (1 John 3:4)
- Just as the operating system of a computer enables it to function, so, too, God's law drives the human psyche. 'Law' (Heb. *torah*) simply means instruction, guidance—but guidance with the implication that to go contrary to it has automatic negative consequences—consequences that are certain but may not kick in for a very long time. Our first parent, for example, was warned that to go contrary to God's instruction would result in his death: *'...of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it: for in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die'* (Genesis 3:17). That happened—but some 930 years later! (*ch* 5:5). And so, sooner or later, all his progeny to this day
- Christians are not exempt—we die. The divine *torah* has a hold on all of us, and disobedience to our 'heavenly calling' has the same outcome as to any non-Christian. Simply from the point of view of self-preservation we live by those commands—all ten of them, with the relevant statutes that hang on them. But that's not all, for *'...Oh how I love Your Law! It is my meditation all the day'*
- As children of God we delight to embrace that precious law. It's a law that surpasses all other: *'... what nation is there so great, that has statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?'* (Deuteronomy 4:8). It is to our benefit: *'...the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear [respect] the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive'* (*ch* 6:24). Immeasurable benefits tumble out of the treasure chest of God's word as we immerse ourselves in this divine wisdom: *'...You give peace of mind to all who love your Law. Nothing can make them fall'* (Psalm 119:165). The prophet Isaiah invites us to *'...call the sabbath [the fourth commandment] a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shall honour him'* (*ch* 58:13)
- Hear Jesus: *'...Until the heaven and the earth pass away, in no way shall one iota or one point pass away from the Law until all comes to pass'* (Matthew 5:18). Our life depends on it Ω

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