

# How The 'Wise' Have Failed Humanity

<sup>19</sup>"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." <sup>26</sup>For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. <sup>27</sup>But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; <sup>28</sup>and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, <sup>29</sup>that no flesh should glory in His presence. <sup>30</sup>But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—<sup>31</sup>that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the LORD." (1 Cor.1:19, 26-31).

Now what might the wisdom of this world have to do with global warming and climate change?

For two and a half centuries, since the dawn of the 'age of enlightenment', the wise of this world have been telling us that humanity is on a never ending curve of evolutionary progress. The laws of nature were supposed to propel humanity to ever greater degree of civilisation and sophistication, then all of a sudden, we discover that the same laws are leading humanity on a reverse course. With astonishing speed, humanity came to the dreadful realisation that the future is no where near as bright and promising as our leading wise men would have us believe.

How was it possible that the entire world was taken by surprise by such overwhelmingly bad news in less than half a dozen years? Where were the wise men all this time, when those bad news were in the making?

The signs were there for those who had eyes to see, for these things did not happen overnight. For just as the leaders of the Soviet Union were blinded by their own fallacious ideology, and could not see the abyss towards which they were heading their people, the leaders of the western world were blinded by their own pyrrhic success against the 'evil empire'.

Have a look at the following quote from *The Christian Herald No 2*, which we published in 1992. See the main concerns in the world at that time, and how tiny they were compared with what we are facing now.

"It is not a mere coincidence that at this particular juncture in world history, life is being threatened from several directions. People who know little about biblical prophecies talk about the precarious condition of life on this planet. This correlates well with the prophecies of Jesus Christ who foresaw a calamitous end for this world.

Are we not living in those days now? How much worse must things get before humanity realizes that it is heading towards catastrophe? The world has reached the saturation point as far as population is concerned. The environment simply can no longer support the ever-increasing population. It has been estimated that within a generation the world population will double, then in less than a century it will double again. It will then continue to double within an ever-reducing cycle.

One scientist remarked that if the world survives to reach that level, life conditions would become so miserable that death would be preferable to life. Well, for millions of people even now merciful death would be preferable to a hellish life. For those dying of starvation and disease in Africa and elsewhere, the question of survival is no longer an option, but dying with dignity is. A quicker death would be preferable to the slow, agonizing wasting they experience; all while watching their loved ones go through the same process.

About a decade ago, when images of starvation emerged from Africa, the world moved quickly to provide humanitarian aid. Now many more millions are starving on a far wider scale, but few want to hear of it anymore. Images of starvation on television screens draw only cursory looks these days. Some television stations will not even broadcast such programs anymore. They have become unpopular, they have lost their shocking value, and they no longer pull audiences.

What would it be like when every country and every city in the world has doubled in size? The environment is already dying. Can the world support such an increase when many resources are already in short supply? Can the world afford not to turn to God while He may still be found? Perhaps it is already too late.

What were considered alarmist predictions a few decades ago, not only have been fulfilled, but exceeded many times over. We are now learning about world problems that only a few years ago were unheard of. A decade ago no one knew of AIDS. Half a decade ago there was no talk of the thinning of the ozone layer. These problems alone pose catastrophic dangers. AIDS is threatening to destroy the regenerating power of many nations. The thinning of the ozone layer is posing a threat to the vegetation and the microscopic marine organisms, the very support of life on earth, in addition to whatever harm they may do directly to human beings. In February this year scientists raised the alarm when they discovered that the depletion of the ozone layer is much worse than previously thought:

"New finding of ozone depletion were so alarming, the scientists said, they decided to release them before completion of the data analysis in late March. "Everybody should be alarmed about this," said Michael Kurylo, a research manager at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). "We're seeing conditions primed for ozone destruction. It's in a far worse way than we thought." (*Sydney Morning Herald*, Feb. 5, 1992).

Apocalyptic times are well and truly upon us, yet people would not repent so that God may spare the world of these cataclysms. Can you see now why the sun is scorching the earth, and human beings suffer as a result?

"And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory." (Rev.16:9).

Governments are unable to address these problems because they require painful solutions. The people that elect them are more concerned with the pain of hunger than with restoring the ecological balance. Difficult problems are often

postponed and left for the next government to solve with the result that little is achieved. Often they prefer not to raise such concerns in public at all. Out of sight is out of mind. No one realizes that these problems will get much worse and will not be solved unless and until people turn to God.

How many people remember the events of 1991? Aside from the Gulf War and the ecological and social disasters that it created, how many know that in terms of natural disasters 1991 broke almost every record since record keeping began more than a century ago?

The US Congress allocates an annual percentage of its budget every year for emergency situations, to help those nations that suffer calamities and natural disasters. By May 1991, the sum allocated for the entire year was already exhausted. There were droughts, famine, floods, earthquakes, volcanoes, tornadoes, mudslides, etc., too many to be listed. Who remembers, for example, when approximately a third of China and nearly three quarters of Bangladesh were covered by floods? Or the repeated volcanic eruptions in Japan and the Philippines that caused damage over huge areas? Or the torrential rains in the heights of South America, where it seldom rains, that caused mudslides that covered entire communities?

How many people know that large tracks of the USA and Australia, the breadbaskets of the world, suffered the worst droughts on record? Preoccupation with the Gulf War and events in the former Soviet Union meant that most of these disasters passed unnoticed. As Jesus Christ said: "For as in the days before the flood [of Noah] . . . when they did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Mat.24:38,39). To compound the misery caused by natural disasters, were those caused by human folly. The year began with the madness of the Gulf War, and finished with the collapse of that bastion of atheism, the Soviet Union.

People believe that communism failed. Communism never failed, atheism did! Communism never failed because it has never been tried. What they practiced in the Soviet Union and its satellite nations was not communism but a parody of it. It is a satanic ploy to undermine every good idea that comes from the Bible. True communism will work in the Kingdom of God.

Soviet communism failed, but so has American capitalism. Such is the vulgarity of capitalism that at a time when a company like General Motors is closing down dozens of factories and laying off thousands of people, it grants its retiring Chairman an annual pension of \$US1.2 million. The Chairman of Chrysler, who has an allocated salary of \$4.5 millions, went to Japan with President Bush to lecture the Japanese on work ethics. When it was pointed out to him that the Chairman of Toyota, a much more successful company, earns a fifth of his salary, he stormed out of the meeting and left Japan indignant.

No social conscience on the part of those who clamber their way to the top. No Christian concern for one's fellow human beings from the leading citizens of the, supposedly, number one Christian nation on earth. Has no one ever told these people that "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God"? (Mat.19:24). Even at the retiring age they still do not think of the purpose of life and what lies beyond this temporary existence.

Where are the spiritual leaders of that nation? What have they achieved? Why are they silent in the face of such blatant greed and exploitation? Or are they part of the same mentality?

The country wonders why its economy is faltering so badly. Unfettered capitalism is just as unchristian as totalitarian communism. Soviet communism has collapsed; now watch for the collapse of capitalism. Those who believe that the USA will once again dominate the world as it used to, or that Great Britain will rule the waves as during the height of its empire, have some surprises coming their way.

This author grew up behind the "Iron Curtain" where a great part of his education involved indoctrination about the "glorious future the Soviet Union was leading the world into". It was a trial by fire that few people have known. The communists justified destroying everything and everyone who opposed their march towards a God-less "utopia", but instead of paradise, it became a Devil's nightmare.

Out of that atheistic nightmare, God had to bring someone at enormous personal sacrifice to preach His Gospel to the world, because those who had it all the time made a mockery of it by turning it into a money making venture.

The Soviet Union collapsed into ashes leaving a cauldron of ethnic tensions and unfulfilled dreams that threaten to draw the world into the end-time catastrophic conflict. The chaos left behind by that collapse is only now becoming apparent. God alone knows what three hundred million people will do with their nuclear weapons when wide scale starvation takes place. There are repeated warnings in the Bible that He will "bring disaster from the north and great destruction."

At a time when the world is facing the test of survival, few people understand that there is a connection between current problems and the spiritual decline of the world. Even the Churches of God, who once prided themselves in their ability to understand the prophecies of God, have fallen silent. At the time that their input is needed more than ever, they are engaged in an internecine war that is sapping their strength from within.

Once again, as it has happened throughout history, God has raised people from the lowest levels of society to do His work. The message that John the Baptist delivered to ancient Israel, prior to the coming of Jesus Christ, is now being delivered to the whole world, just in time for His glorious return to this earth.

<sup>1</sup>In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, <sup>2</sup>and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (Mat.3:1-2). <sup>9</sup>Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead." <sup>10</sup>And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" <sup>11</sup>Jesus answered and said to them, "Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things." (Mat. 17:9-11).

So repent, for the Kingdom of God is truly at hand. Things are being restored before your very eyes."

*(The Christian Herald No 2, pp. 7-9).*

Incredibly prophetic, isn't it? We did not know then how capitalism would collapse, we just knew that it had to. Unfortunately we now know that the entire world will collapse with it. The world has entered an age of drastic changes which will affect every human being. Nothing less than the very survival of life on this planet is at stake now.

It isn't that there is no solution to the world's problems; but that solution is no longer with human beings. Only God Almighty, who knew from the beginning that humanity would come to this end, can save humanity now. The problem is that human beings will not turn to Him to save themselves while He is still available.

Make no mistake about it: there will come a time when even God will not be available anymore, and everyone will be sealed in the condition in which he is found at that time.

<sup>10</sup>And he said to me, "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand. <sup>11</sup>He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still." <sup>12</sup>And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward *is* with Me, to give to every one according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the* Beginning and *the* End, the First and the Last." (Rev.22:10-13).

What are human beings to do in the meantime? This is what God is telling His people.

<sup>15</sup>"See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, <sup>16</sup>in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the LORD your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess. <sup>17</sup>But if your heart turns away so that you do not hear, and are drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them, <sup>18</sup>I announce to you today that you shall surely perish; you shall not prolong *your* days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to go in and possess. <sup>19</sup>I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; <sup>20</sup>that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He *is* your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them." (Deut. 30:15-20).

I set before you life and death, blessing and cursing, therefore choose life, said God. And what did they do? They chose death and that is why they lost their mission, their nation, and themselves. Ever since that time, they have been wanderers in the world. Israel however, was to be an example to the world, therefore humanity has a similar choice now.

"But I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. <sup>6</sup>And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day; <sup>7</sup>as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."(Jude 1:5-7)

It is not a mere coincidence that as the world has given itself to the same sins as Sodom and Gomorrah, it faces the same fate. There has been a conspiracy between the wise of this world, who have led humanity away from God with their notion of evolution, and the spiritually wise who were supposed to uphold the truth of God and keep humanity on track.

<sup>1</sup>But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift destruction. <sup>2</sup>And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. <sup>3</sup>By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber. <sup>4</sup>For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast *them* down to hell and delivered *them* into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; <sup>5</sup>and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, *one of eight people*, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; <sup>6</sup>and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned *them* to destruction, making *them* an example to those who afterward would live ungodly." (2 Peter 2:1-6).

Why do human beings 'follow destructive ways', and not the ways of God? And why are those who preach the Word of God and the true Gospel of salvation being ignored and persecuted, while the purveyors of deadly gospels are being honoured and rewarded? How did we know as early as 1992, when we published *TCH No 2*, that humanity had entered the age of troubles connected with the end time? We knew it from the Bible, and from prophecies like the following one.

<sup>4</sup>"But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase." . . . <sup>9</sup>And he said, "Go *your way*, Daniel, for the words *are* closed up and sealed till the time of the end. <sup>10</sup>Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand." (Dan. 12:4, 9-10).

<sup>9</sup>"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. <sup>10</sup>And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. <sup>11</sup>Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. <sup>12</sup>And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. <sup>13</sup>But he who endures to the end shall be saved." (Mat. 24:9-13).

How wonderfully these prophecies reflect our time. First they tell us that when these things happen it will be the time of the end. 'Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.' Isn't this a reflection of our modern age when transport and knowledge are so widespread? Then we are told that none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand. Where are the wise that understand these things? And if they understand them, why are human beings still in ignorance about their meaning? Why are they not turning to the only source that can save them from these impending catastrophes? Because the wise of Daniel are different from the wise of Apostle Paul (quoted at the beginning of this article).

The wise according to the knowledge of God understand what is happening in the world, whereas the wise according to the knowledge of this world are blindly leading humanity to perdition. It is not a mere coincidence that as the world is being devastated by global warming and climate change, the spectre of nuclear annihilation has raised its ugly head again.

# “Let go of Cold War mentality, US tells Putin”

“THE United States Defence Secretary, Robert Gates, has disputed a lengthy critique of American power by the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, telling a European security conference: “One Cold War was quite enough.” Mr Gates chose words of velvet, not steel, in offering Washington’s fullest response to Mr Putin’s long complaint on Saturday about US domination of global affairs. “As an old Cold Warrior, one of yesterday’s speeches almost filled me with nostalgia for a less-complex time,” he said. “Almost.” Mr Gates, a former director of the CIA recently called back to government service from academia to serve as defence secretary, told attendees of the 43rd Munich Conference on Security Policy that both he and Mr Putin had spent most of their careers in their governments’ spy agencies. “And, I guess, old spies have a habit of blunt speaking,” Mr Gates said.

“However, I have been to re-education camp - spending 4½ years as a university president.” His remark drew laughs and applause. His sharpest response to Putin was gently couched. “Russia is a partner in endeavours,” Mr Gates said. “But we wonder, too, about some Russian policies that seem to work against international stability, such as its arms transfers and its temptation to use energy resources for political coercion.”

Throughout the rebuttal, and in a longer discourse on how the US’s European allies must help rebuild Afghanistan and remain engaged in the fight against terrorism, Mr Gates mentioned Mr Putin only once by name. That came when he said he had accepted an invitation from Mr Putin to visit Moscow. Mr Gates cast himself as a geopolitical realist and drew a knowing laugh when he focused on Mr Putin’s assertion that the US and its allies were dividing Europe. “All of these characterisations belong in the past,” Mr Gates said. “The free world versus those behind the Iron Curtain. North versus South. East versus West. And I am told that some have even spoken in terms of old Europe versus new.” The US has asked Japan not to arrange a meeting between the Vice-President, Dick Cheney, and the Defence Minister, Fumio Kyuma, an apparent response to Mr Kyuma’s criticism of US policy, Kyodo news agency reported. Last month Mr Kyuma irked the US by saying it was wrong to start the war in Iraq. Mr Cheney is scheduled to meet the chief officers of Japan’s Self-Defence Forces during a visit next week. (Thom Shanker, *The New York Times*, Feb. 13, 2007).

While the US deals with velvet gloves with its Russian adversary, Putin makes incessant preparations to challenge America’s dominance of the world.

**Shanghai Co-operation Organisation – ‘timely and visionary’** “THE Shanghai Co-operation Organisation, whose members and observers represent half the world’s population, signalled at its annual summit yesterday its determination to play a central role in global energy politics. Russian President Vladimir Putin urged the formation of “an SCO energy club” - because it involves some of the biggest energy exporters and importers. The leaders of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan also moved at the Shanghai meeting to develop the group into a powerful military and economic force. They did not consider new members - instead asking the foreign ministers to draft new membership rules later - but expanded the role usually taken by observers. Those observers included Iran’s controversial President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who invited the energy ministers of the SCO to meet in Iran “to explore more effective ways of co-operating in the exploration, exploitation, transport and conversion of energy”. The invitation is likely to be taken up, not least because Iran has become the third-biggest supplier of oil to China.

India, an SCO observer like Iran, Pakistan and Mongolia, has recently been a major competitor with China for energy. It indicated a change in tack by sending its Petroleum and Gas Minister, Murli Deora, to the summit, and has decided to join China in bidding \$2.7 billion together to develop oilfields in SCO member Kazakhstan.

In his address to the summit, Mr Ahmadinejad commended steps “to turn the SCO into a strong, influential institution” with the capacity to “throw out the threats of domineering powers to interfere in the affairs of other states” - an apparent reference to the US. He called for more educational and cultural exchanges within the region. Yesterday’s meeting involving the leaders of Iran, Russia and China at the SCO underlines perceptions of a growing division within the UN Security Council - of which Russia and China are members - over US and European efforts to pressure Iran over its nuclear ambitions.

Mr Putin told his Iranian counterpart after the summit that he wanted to discuss a European proposal for Iran to relinquish its nuclear fuel enrichment program, while also stressing Russia’s long-standing diplomatic support for Iran.

“Russia has always been a reliable partner,” he told Mr Ahmadinejad, who responded by saying: “Our positions are clear and very close to one another.” China’s President Hu Jintao celebrated the growth in reach of the SCO in its five years’ existence, which he attributed to the “Shanghai spirit” - which involves developing a “new silk road” encompassing Confucian, Islamic, Slavic and Hindu cultures, while protecting the leaders’ capacity to rule their way without outside interference.

*[Notice, ‘Slavic’ not Christian. While the other cultures are designated by their religion, the Slavic one is not].*

Illustrating this spirit, the presidents appeared at a press conference, giving speeches but not allowing questions.

The leaders signed 10 agreements that sought to institutionalise growing collaboration, ranging from banking to education to economic collaboration, with China offering \$1.2 billion soft loans to buy Chinese goods.

Mr Hu urged the members to “strengthen strategic co-operation” against the “three evils” - separatism, terrorism and extremism - including through intelligence exchange and communication. He proposed a non-aggression treaty between SCO members and said he hoped the international community would “respect the social systems independently chosen by our members and observers and the foreign policy chosen by them”. And he urged “an even broader future for the SCO”. Mr Putin described the organisation’s establishment as “timely and visionary”, stressing the need to bring young people from the region together. (Rowan Callick, *The Australian*, June 16, 2006).

Did you notice how many members this ‘timely and visionary’ organisation has? Ten – all of them avowed anti-Israeli: Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Mongolia, Iran, Pakistan, and India. Some are mere observers at this stage, but make no mistake about it, they all see the advantage of belonging to an organisation that holds most of the world’s energy resources at a time when these are fast becoming a precious commodity.

Is this the ten-nation ‘beast’ that Russia is prophesied to lead against Israel and the western world in the end time? No one will know for sure until that happens, but since other signs point to the fact that we are on the very brink of that awesome event, there is every likelihood that this would be it.

# “Trilateral Forum to Counter America”

“The Foreign Ministers of India, Russia and China got together for a high profile trilateral meeting in New Delhi on Wednesday. The initiative, which will be useful for coordinating their efforts in the international arena, is being closely watched around the world. It's a forum, which all three sides are using to strengthen their political and economic influence but many also see it as a bloc to counter America's influence. Interestingly, the meeting came only days after President Putin's outburst against Washington. He accused the US of fuelling a nuclear arms race and undermining international institutions. Pranab Mukherjee, China's Li Zhaoxing and Russia's Sergei Ivanov discussed various global issues at the meet. Even though New Delhi denied the forum has been created against any third country, in the joint statement there was an indirect criticism of US policy and a thrust on multilateralism. The joint communiqué talks of the democratisation of international relations and in an indirect criticism of the war in Iraq. It also calls for respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations. Russia in particular has been vocal about a multi-polar world and saw this forum as a way to strengthen that. “We are united in the view that it's necessary to develop multilateral democracy and strengthen the UN's role,” said Sergei Lavrov, Foreign Minister, Russia. This was the second stand-alone meeting between the three countries after Russian city of Vladivostok two years back. Foreign Ministers of the three countries have earlier met four times on the sidelines of some international events, including twice on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York. The next meeting of the big three will be held in China.” (Nidhi Razdan, New Delhi, AFP, Yahoo, NDTV – Feb 14, 2007)

Ever since it came to power, the Bush administration has been telling the world that it is in friendly terms with Russia, a compliment that Putin and his administration have never returned. On the contrary, Putin is on record as saying that the Cold War is back on the agenda. Because of that he has embarked upon a massive program of upgrading his military machine on the one hand, and in creating a counterbalancing organisation to America's power on the other.

How many people have heard of the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation? Not many people for sure, because western media has either ignored it, or said very little about it. Yet this is the ‘timely and visionary’ organisation that Putin is incessantly cultivating to counter America.

And there is another reason why this organisation has received so little attention. While we have been saying that Russia will be a main player in the end time Great Tribulation, our nemesis has filled the world with the notion that Germany would be the country to lead a ten-nation alliance against Israel. Consequently, the world is looking in the wrong direction to see those prophecies fulfilled.

It is not a mere coincidence either that at this particular junction in world history, when biblical prophecies tell us to expect major world developments, that drought is devastating the world on an unprecedented scale. And yet, there are still skeptics who say that, in spite of all the evidence to the contrary, all these changes are within normal climate variations.

“**“Big dry's natural, not due to climate change”** says researcher Barrie Hunt, former leader of the CSIRO's climate modelling program. “The drought gripping southeast Australia is due to natural variations in climate rather than the greenhouse effect. The finding, based on CSIRO research, undermines claims – made by South Australian Premier Mike Rann at a water summit in Canberra last month that Australia is in the grip of one-in-1000-years drought.

“It is very, very highly likely that what we are seeing at the moment is natural climatic variability,” researcher Barrie Hunt has told *The Australian*, saying the CSIRO's model of 10,000 years of natural climate variability put current drought into perspective. “When people talk about it as a 1000-year drought, they haven't got the information. They don't understand that according to natural variability we could get another one in 50 years or it might be another 800 years, and there's no way of predicting it” The CSIRO's global climate model incorporates measurements of air pressure, temperature and wind at different levels of the atmosphere, sea surface temperatures and rainfall. . . .

Mr Hunt said the onset, duration and termination of the long dries could not be predicted because they were due to random processes. He said the current drought was an example of a dry sequence that began with an El Nino.

“It starts a drought and you get sea-surface temperatures flickering backwards and forwards a bit. The rainfall may go back to fairly near normal but it is still below average, and then you get another El Niño,” he said

“This can go on for a decade. Eventually it breaks. You don't know why, it is random thing. This is just part of the beauty of the climatic system. (Asa Wahlquist, *The Australian*, 28-12-2006)

See how wise and visionary this climate scientist is? “The drought gripping southeast Australia, he says, is due to natural variations in the climate rather than the greenhouse effect”. In so doing, he goes against the views of many other scientists, even of politicians who are notoriously slow in taking note of matters that are beyond their immediate concern.

“**Drought to “get dramatically worse”** “The states will receive an extra \$500 million for water-saving initiatives after Treasurer Peter Costello declared the drought was about to “get dramatically worse”. In an interview with *The Sunday Telegraph*, Mr Costello said he will spend part of next month working on ideas for water policy, even though Malcolm Turnbull is the Government's spokesman for the area. “This is going to be a long-term issue. There's a lot of work to be done in water, and it's got to be done well because it's so important. Water is going to be a big focus of next year.” . . . “All of our capital cities are under water restrictions and if it doesn't rain next year then the situation is going to get dramatically worse,” Mr Costello said. (Lincoln Wright, *The Daily Telegraph*, 24-12-2006)

Barrie Hunt says that when people talk about the current drought as “a 1000-year event”, they haven't got the information. The CSIRO, he tells us, has a global model which incorporates measurements of air pressure, temperature, wind, and sea surface temperature. Could it be that other people have their own model of climate change too?

He speaks of the drought in southeast Australia, when in fact the whole country is affected by it.

All of Australia's capital cities, not to speak of its smaller inland cities and towns are running out of drinking water. Sydney, Australia's largest city and its economic hub, has only about a year of water left in its dams.

“**Thinking Global and Voting Local”** “For the first time, climate change is set to take centre stage in the coming state and federal election campaigns. Not too long ago, global warming was something debated about in science journals and university lecture halls. When former NSW premier Bob Carr began banging on about the melting of the ice caps back in 2003, he was lambasted for taking his eye off the affairs of the state. But with the release of the Stern report,

the screening of the Al Gore movie *An Inconvenient Truth* together with some plain old weird weather, global warming together with future energy and water supplies is now registering in the public conscience. An exclusive Galaxy poll undertaken for *The Sunday Telegraph* last month found global warming was rated by NSW residents as the No. 1 issue which could threaten the quality of life in Australia. . . The fact that Sydney is on the verge of running out of drinking water has helped elevate the issue in a community facing the prospect of permanent water restrictions and possible future rationing. Recent figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics estimated NSW had around 1 and 1/2 years of water left in its major dams. (*The Sunday Telegraph*, Dec. 31, 2006).

How extraordinary that a statement made by the Premier of NSW in 2003, less than four years ago, about global warming, should be regarded as so far back in time. And where did he get that information from? He did not say, but we have kept him, and other State Premiers, informed of what is happening in the world.

**“Man is cooking the planet” “SCIENTISTS have now found the connection between man-made carbon emissions and global warming, proving once and for all that human activity is changing the world.**

And scientists have debunked the myth that global warming is simply a global cycle, saying that according to its cycle the earth should be in a period of cooling, not warming. The stunning find is to be released in the final report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in Paris on Friday, the biggest undertaking yet on the earth's changing climate. A leaked draft copy has detailed the main thrusts of the findings and leaves no doubt the effect mankind is having on the planet. Every inhabited continent on earth is affected, with different parts of the world visibly responding to human activity, such as the melting of ice caps.

For the past six years 2,000 of the world's leading climate scientists - climatologists, glaciologists, meteorologists, oceanographers and other specialists, have studied all known scientific literature on climate change, with the findings to be released Friday. In all, three reports making up the fourth assessment of the IPCC will be published this year, in full, with Friday's publication being the first. "It is highly likely (greater than 95 per cent probability) that the warming observed during the past half century cannot be explained without external forcing (human activity)," the draft says. And while the naysayers might dismiss the findings as a conspirational hoax, as some would have you believe, the IPCC is traditionally regarded as being conservative, with a preference for erring on the side of caution.

"Confidence in the assessment of the human contributions to recent climate change has increased considerably since the TAR (Third Assessment Report)," the draft says. This confidence is based on longer and more detailed records and observations available to the scientists. Given this, its assessment could not be more damning. Among the findings are:

- 11 of the earth's 12 warmest years since 1850 have occurred since 1995.
- Indications are the earth's temperature will rise three degrees celsius by 2100, with a possibility it could be as high as six degrees. This could be catastrophic, with a similar temperature shift marking the last ice age 12,000 years ago.
- It is virtually certain (99 per cent probability) that carbon dioxide levels and global warming is far above the range naturally varying in the atmosphere over the past 650,000 years.
- It is virtually certain that human activity has played the dominant role in this.
- It is likely that human activity is responsible for other observed changes to the earth such as ocean warming and melting of the Arctic sea ice. The IPCC report revealed climate change could be far worse than previously thought.

This risk is mainly because of potentially disastrous "positive" feedbacks which could accelerate rising temperatures.

In other words, because the world is warming, increasing evaporation from the oceans has caused atmospheric concentrations of water vapour over the sea - by 4 per cent since 1970.

This increased water vapour is a powerful greenhouse agent, and exacerbates the greenhouse effect.

However it is not all doom and gloom, with the report saying there are many "positive feedbacks".

As for claims that this global warming is simply part of the earth's natural thermal cycle, the report says: "These changes took place at a time when non-anthropogenic forcing factors (ie, the sum of solar and volcanic forcing) would be expected to have produced cooling, not warming. "There is increased confidence that natural internal variability cannot account for the observed changes, due in part to improved studies demonstrating that the warming occurred in both oceans and atmosphere, together with observed ice mass losses." (Paul Kent, *The Sunday Telegraph*, 30 Jan. 2007).

**“Vast ice shelf collapses in the Arctic”** “A vast ice shelf in the Canadian Arctic has broken up, a further sign of the astonishing rate at which polar ice is now melting because of global warming. The Ayles ice shelf, more than 40 square miles in extent - over five times the size of central London - has broken clear from the coast of Ellesmere Island, about 500 miles south of the North Pole in the Canadian Arctic, it emerged yesterday. The broken shelf has formed an ice island, in what a leading scientist described as a "dramatic and disturbing event", citing climate change as the cause. The news caps a dramatic year of discovery about just how quickly the polar ice is disappearing. It comes as America's leading climate scientist, James Hansen, warns in today's *Independent* that the Earth is being turned into "a different planet" because of the continuing increase in man-made emissions of greenhouse gases. The break-up of the Ayles shelf occurred 16 months ago, in an area so remote it was not at first detected. "This is a dramatic and disturbing event," said Professor Warwick Vincent of Laval University in Quebec City. "It shows that we are losing remarkable features of the Canadian North that have been in place for many thousands of years." Ice shelves float on the sea, but are connected to land (as opposed to ice sheets, which are wholly land-based). In the past five years, several ice shelves along the fringes of the Antarctic peninsula have started to become unstable or break up. The most spectacular was the 2002 collapse of the Larsen B ice shelf, the size of Luxembourg. Until now, there had not been a similar event among the six major shelves remaining in Canada's Arctic, which are packed with ancient ice that is more than 3,000 years old.

Professor Vincent, who studies Arctic ecosystems, travelled to the newly formed ice island and was amazed at what he saw. "It's like a cruise missile has come down and hit the ice shelf," he said. "Unusually warm temperatures definitely played a major role. It is consistent with climate change." The collapse was picked up by the Canadian Ice Service, which notified Luke Copland, head of the new global ice laboratory at the University of Ottawa. Using US and Canadian satellite images, as well as seismic data - the event registered on earthquake monitors more than 150 miles away - Professor Copland discovered that the ice shelf collapsed in the early afternoon of 13 August 2005. Scientists were surprised at the speed of the event, Professor Copland said - it took less than an hour. There have already been several disturbing indications this year that the Arctic ice is melting at a much faster rate than expected. In September, two NASA reports showed a great surge in the disappearance of the winter sea ice over the past two years, with an area the size of Turkey disappearing in 12 months." (Michael McCarthy, Environment Editor, *The Independent*, 29-12-2006).

# “A planet on the edge”

“They cling precariously to the top of what is left of the ice floe, their fragile grip the perfect symbol of the tragedy of global warming. Captured on film by Canadian environmentalists, the pair of polar bears look stranded on chunks of broken ice. Although the magnificent creatures are well adapted to the water, and can swim many kilometres to solid land, the distance is getting ever greater as the Arctic ice diminishes. ... Scientists have observed that in the struggle for survival, the bears – and females especially – are now much thinner. Scientists believe that four bears which recently drowned off the coast of Alaska had simply been unable to cope with a violent Arctic storm.

The plight of the bears was highlighted as the prospect of a gloomy future emerged from leaks of the most comprehensive report into global warming yet undertaken. Concluding that it is “highly likely” that mankind is to blame for climate change, it talks of more droughts, torrential rains, shrinking Arctic ice and glaciers, and raising sea levels for at least the next century. And it warns that the effect of a build-up of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere will last far longer.”

The report, from the UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, draws on the work of 2500 researchers from more than 130 nations and is the most comprehensive overview of climate change for policy-makers. It claims that global warming is “very likely” caused by human activity. ... Two participants, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that the group approved the term “very likely” in previous sessions. That means they agree that there is a 90 per cent chance that global warming is caused by human activity. The last report, in 2001, said global warming was “likely” caused by humans. There had been speculation that the participants might try to change the wording this time to “virtually certain” – which means a 99 per cent chance. The report is considered an authoritative document that could influence governmental and industrial policy worldwide.” (Bill Moulard, *Sunday Telegraph*, Feb. 04, 2007).

These are the sort of things that nightmares are made of – “the astonishing rate at which polar ice is now melting because of global warming” – except that these are for real. And what does the leading CSIRO scientist say about that? That “this is just part of the beauty of the climatic system.” For those who do not know what CSIRO stands for it is, Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation.

In 1982, I was travelling through NSW to take up a position in a country town. I did not expect to find green lush vegetation European style, but neither did I expect to find wanton devastation on a scale that staggered me. There are places where you could see the horizon in either direction and not see a tree in sight. In one particular case, there is a 90 kilometre stretch of highway without a tree in sight. And that is not the area marked as desert on the map, but the nation’s prime agricultural land. In order to maximise their profit, they have deforested the land and left it totally bare. And who has been guiding the nation’s farmers in their endeavours? The cream of wise men from the nation’s elite institution – the CSIRO. A decade later, when we published *The Christian Herald No 3*, we said that that policy would lead to disaster. That disaster came sooner than expected. With minor interruptions, drought has gripped the country ever since.

To be fair, not all CSIRO scientists think that this is “just part of the beauty of the climatic system.”

**“Scientist's warning: carbon dioxide eating the planet”** “The global level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has alarmed scientists by growing strongly for the last four years in a row. “That’s unprecedented,” said Paul Fraser, chief research scientist at the CSIRO’s Marine and Atmospheric Research division. Describing the trend as “a clear manifestation” of the world’s increasing hunger for fossil fuels, Dr Fraser said: “We are in line for the carbon dioxide future that we hope to avoid, a one-to-three degree rise in temperatures over the next century.”

Last year carbon dioxide levels grew by two parts per million, or 0.54 per cent, twice the rate of the early 1980s. Atmospheric nitrous oxide, produced by fertilisers and land clearing, also soared last year, rising one part per billion, or 0.3 per cent. And artificial greenhouse gases, including hydrofluoro-carbons, introduced during the 1990s to replace chlorofluorocarbons, set a growth record, up seven parts per trillion, a 5.3 per cent increase.

The CSIRO said 2005 “was a record for increases in green-house gas heating, the main driver of increasing surface temperatures”. Dr Fraser said that with carbon dioxide emissions, “normally we have one or two years of high growth, followed by one or two years of lower growth”. This comes from the oceans and the biosphere - including trees and plants - soaking up enough of the gas to take the edge off increases. However, sampling by the Bureau of Meteorology in Tasmania showed the normal pattern of higher and lower growth rates, called modulation, had failed to appear in the last four years. Instead, annual carbon dioxide increases had been consistently above average. “That’s a surprise,” said Dr Fraser, adding it would be extraordinary if the modulating effect of the oceans and the biosphere failed to kick in this year. However, the environment’s ability to absorb the gas could eventually be overwhelmed. The only solution was “emitting less carbon dioxide”, he said. Options included switching to solar, wind, nuclear, hydro or hydrogen power. Dr Fraser, who will present the findings at this week’s CSIRO climate meeting in Sydney, said it was for politicians to choose which option, or options, should be adopted. “As scientists, we have to keep putting the facts up.”

His good news was that methane - “the second most important gas responsible for the enhanced greenhouse effect” - had not grown for six years. The decline resulted from industry, particularly mining, reducing leaks. And ozone damaging gases declined again last year, continuing a trend that began in 1997.” (Richard Macey, *The Daily Telegraph*, May 16, 2006)

Use of harmful fertilisers and land clearing, largely responsible for Australia’s current crisis, continue unabated to the present day. Should we be surprised then that 2005 was a record year for increases in green-house emissions?

Now what happened to that much hyped about Kyoto protocol? So much has been said and written about it, many people thought that it would be the saviour of the world, if only everybody signed it and conformed to its objectives.

And what did we say about it at that time? That it would not make an iota of difference to the warming of the planet.

Scientists now acknowledge that even if all gas emissions were reduced to zero, which is impossible, not just to the 1990 levels as that protocol demands, the planet would still continue to heat up for several more decades.

“All nations must accept responsibility for the heating of the planet – and the consequences, says Dr Neville Nicholas of the School of Geography and Environmental Science at Monash University. When asked, “If all the world’s gas-generating power stations were turned off tomorrow, how long would it take before it affected global warming,” he replied: “Carbon dioxide remains in the atmosphere for a long time, so warming would continue for several decades, even if we stopped all activities creating greenhouse gases. But the rate of warming would definitely slow down.” (*Sunday Telegraph*, 7 Jan. 2006).

# “Unholy trinity – climate change, water shortage, and the peaking of oil supply - set to drag us into the abyss”

“We are about to experience the convergence of three of the great issues confronting humanity. Climate change, the peaking of oil supply and water shortage are coming together in a manner which will profoundly alter our way of life, our institutions and our ability to prosper on this planet. Each is a major issue, but their convergence has received minimal attention.

“Population is the main driver. In the 60 years since World War II, the world population has grown at an unprecedented rate, from 2.5 billion to 6.5 billion today, with 9 billion forecast by 2050 [*That is a highly optimistic underestimate. For if in 60 years the world's population had almost tripled, why should it grow by only a third in the next 50 years? Ed.*]

“That growth has triggered insatiable demand for natural resources, notably water, oil and other fossil fuels. Exponential economic growth in a finite world hitting physical limits is not a new idea; we have experienced limits at a local level, but we have either side-stepped them or found short-term solutions, becoming overly confident that any global limits could be similarly circumvented. Today, just as the bulk of the world's population is about to step on to the growth escalator, global limits emerge that are real and imminent. The weight of scientific evidence points to the fact the globe cannot support its present population, let alone an additional 2.5 billion, unless we embrace change.

“Climate change, peak oil, water shortage and population are contributing to a “tragedy of the commons”, whereby free access and unrestricted demand for a finite resource doom the resource through over-exploitation. The benefits of exploitation accrue to individuals, whereas the costs are borne by all. “Examples at local level abound, include overfishing and interrupting river flows for farming and irrigation. One mark of a mature society is that equitable solutions are found to the “commons” dilemma, and we have been relatively successful in doing this at local level. However as these issues become national and global, solutions become harder. For climate change, peak oil and water, the ultimate “commons” is the earth's atmosphere which we have been using as a garbage dump for carbon and other emissions. As Aristotle said: “What is common to the greatest number has the least care bestowed upon it. Everyone thinks chiefly of his own, hardly at all of the common interest.” In an underpopulated world this may not matter, but in our overpopulated world it is disastrous.

“Solutions require that we move beyond narrow national self-interest, take a global view and place our society and economy on a genuinely sustainable footing. Sustainability, “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”, encompasses the entire basis upon which global society operates, not just the environment. It requires realigning our ethical framework, moving away from the winner-take-all individualism which has created so many of the “commons” problems, to a more co-operative individualism, where managing the global and local “commons” is paramount. “Rather than the negative, focusing on supposed job cuts and fear of change, we should focus on the positive: we have a unique opportunity to set humanity on a new course, built around an ethical renaissance and sustainable societies. Undoubtedly there will be pain in the short term as conventional politics, economics and business models are turned on their head. However, the tools and technologies to solve these problems are available, the cost is less than we have been led to believe, and the benefits greater. Further, change can be achieved rapidly given the right impetus.

“Historically, this has rarely happened without a crisis. Fortunately the trinity are about to trigger that crisis with a prolonged period of “creative destruction” which will radically transform society and economy whether we like it or not. Our stark choice is either to embrace the tipping point bearing down upon us, seizing the opportunity to build a sustainable future, or fudge the issue, try to muddle through in the time-honoured manner and increasingly lose the ability to control our own affairs. For Australia, along with many other countries, water is the priority. Resolving the water crisis will be the first test of whether we can combine long-term vision and principled leadership with the need to take the hard decisions quickly enough to stave off impending disaster. If so, it will stand us in good stead to tackle the even greater tasks ahead.” (Ian Dunlop, former oil, gas and coal industry executive, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 Oct. 2006).

**“Frightening reality we face”** “SYDNEY is looming as one of the world's major climate change casualties, with temperatures expected to soar 50 per cent higher than the average rise forecast for the entire planet.

For the first time, Australian scientists have charted in detail the impacts on the nation's largest metropolis of man's insatiable demand for energy and burning of fossil fuels. *The Daily Telegraph* today exclusively reveals the landmark CSIRO report commissioned by the State Government which - for the first time - specifically details the impact of climate change on NSW. It paints a picture of a city baking under average temperatures almost 5C higher than now - which will kill 1300 people a year - and one battered by extreme winds and permanent drought. NSW Premier Morris Iemma said the report's findings were alarming. “This might sound like a doomsday scenario, but it is one we must confront,” Mr Iemma said. . . . “I do not want my kids to ask me in 10 years time why I didn't do more to address the issue of climate change.”

The CSIRO report warned that the city must work out how to adapt quickly, with the impacts of human-caused global warming now apparently inevitable. “The future climate of Sydney is likely to be warmer and drier,” the report says. “Such trends would also increase evaporation, heat waves, extreme winds and fire risk. “Nevertheless, despite this trend towards drier conditions, the possibility of increases in extreme rainfall events remain. “Although average changes in temperature, rainfall and evaporation will have long-term consequences for the catchment, the impacts of climate change are more likely to be felt through extreme weather events.” Climate change forecasts for the coastal zone put Narrabeen and Collaroy on the hot zone for storm- inspired sea surges of about 22m - which would inundate homes. Freak surges of 110m would be catastrophic. “Such increases in storm surge in conjunction with sea level rises, would increase the risk of coastal inundation,” the CSIRO says.” (Simon Benson, *The Sunday Telegraph*, Jan. 31, 2007).

**“After 10 years, the dithering has to stop”** “The threat posed by global warming is not as bad as we thought. It is considerably worse. This dire new assessment from the world's foremost authority, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, predicts temperatures could rise by as much as 6.4 degrees by 2100 and the seas with them. But long before this occurs, vulnerable regions such as Australia will face water crises, ravaged agricultural production and a huge loss of biodiversity - specifically, the death of the Great Barrier Reef, the loss of fragile alpine ecosystems and irretrievable damage to the Kakadu wetlands.

For the first time in the history, the 2500 eminent scientific opinions distilled in the UN report conclude it is “very likely” human activity has caused global warming and has as a result triggered a deadly rash of extreme weather events. No matter what humankind does now, the impact of climate change will be felt for hundreds of years; once the poison is in the system, nothing can be done to stop it working its way through. . . .” (Editorial, *SMH*, Feb. 5, 2007).



## “Plenty more fish in the sea? Don't bet on it”

Closely linked with the problem of overpopulation, is of course the supply of food for the world's teeming masses. We know that famines are caused by droughts, but few people envision a famine caused by a scarcity of seafood. One third of the world's population depends on marine food, yet this is what is happening in the world's seas at present.

“Enjoy those seafood meals now, because by 2050 there may be no fish, prawns, crabs or other wild sea creatures left to eat. Marine species are disappearing at an accelerating rate, posing a serious threat to human health and wellbeing, a four-year study of the state of the world's oceans has concluded.

Boris Worm, of Dalhousie University in Canada, said his team's research showed 29 per cent of seafood species currently fished had already collapsed, with catches having declined by at least 90 per cent. “If the long-term trend continues, all fish and seafood species are projected to collapse within my lifetime - by 2048,” Professor Worm said. Loss of biodiversity also reduced the ocean's ability to resist diseases, filter out pollutants and cope with climate change, the study concluded.

“Whether we looked at tide pools or studies over the entire world's oceans, we saw the same picture emerging. In losing species we lose the productivity and stability of entire ecosystems,” Professor Worm said. “I was shocked and disturbed by how consistent these trends are - beyond anything we suspected.” However, the good news was that biodiversity could recover quickly if protected marine areas were established. “The data show us it's not too late. We can turn this around.”

“A large team of international scientists and economists was involved in the study, which is published in the journal *Science*. They analysed commercial catches between 1950 and 2003 for 64 areas using the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation's database of fish and invertebrate species. “Fisheries were found to be collapsing at a faster rate in ecosystems with fewer species. Fishery records and sediment cores for the past 1000 years at 12 coastal regions around the world, including Brisbane's Moreton Bay, were also examined. “Steve Palumbi, of Stanford University, a member of the team, said loss of marine biodiversity made coastal regions more vulnerable to disease outbreaks and invasive species and reduced the areas suitable as nurseries. “The ocean is a great recycler. It takes sewage and recycles it into nutrients. It scrubs toxins out of water and it turns carbon dioxide into food and oxygen.” To carry out this service for the people who lived along the coast, the waters needed their full complement of plants and animals, Professor Palumbi said.

“Professor Worm said under 1 per cent of the oceans were protected but the studies they analysed from 48 protected marine areas showed ecosystems could recover quickly. “In many cases species come back more quickly than people anticipated - in three to five to 10 years. And where this has been done we see immediate economic benefits.”

“Ed Barbier, of the University of Wyoming, said preservation of marine biodiversity involved short-term costs, but “over the long term, biodiversity conservation and economic development are complementary goals”. (Deborah Smith, *Science* Editor, *SMH*, Nov 3, 2006).

Yes, marine ecosystems would recover quickly if protected, but will they? Australia has been desperately trying to prevent the long nets of the Asian boats from sweeping the ocean floor, an extremely damaging practice to marine ecosystems, but without much success. What these scientific reports do not tell us is that the krill, which is the basic source of food for many of the marine species, has decreased by 80 per cent in the last thirty years. This is another reason, beside overfishing, that so many of the world's fisheries have collapsed.

Ian Dunlop said that, “Given the dominance of short-term pragmatism in our political and corporate cultures, it is likely our leaders will continue to procrastinate and not rise to the challenge.” Exactly what we've been saying for years. “The pressure for change,” he continued, “must come from the community at large”. Hmmm! I wouldn't bet on that either. When people scrounge for a living, they haven't got much time for the environment. A “tipping point will force a fundamental realignment of political and corporate attitudes,” he says. Well, we hope so, but we doubt that too. That is because change has occurred so fast in the world, it has passed human ability to stop it, let alone reverse it.

## “Keeping a cool head amid warming hysteria”?

“Global warming doomsayers were out and about in a big way recently, but the rain came in central Queensland, then here in Sydney. January was also unusually cool.

We have been subjected to a lot of nonsense about climate disasters, as some zealots have been presenting extreme scenarios to frighten us . . . What we were seeing from the doomsayers was an induced dose of mild hysteria – semi-religious if you like, but dangerously close to superstition. . . Scaremongers have used temperature fluctuations over a limited period and in a few places to misrepresent longer patterns. Warming evidence is mixed and often exaggerated but can be reassuring. Global warming has been increasing constantly since 1975 at the rate of less than one-fifth of a degree Celsius per decade. . . Britain's University of East Anglia climate research unit found global temperatures did not rise between 1998 and 2005, and a NASA satellite recently found the southern hemisphere had not warmed in the past 25 years.” (*The Sunday Telegraph*, Feb. 18, 2007).

This article was written by none other than the head of the Catholic Church in Australia, Cardinal George Pell.

He must have done a lot of research to find sources that conform with his views of humanity – that there is no global warming or major climate change to worry about. He gave as supporting evidence the rain that fell in central Queensland and in Sydney. And what was the effect of that rain? The following article was in the same edition of *The Sunday Telegraph*.

**“Only 2 per cent of NSW not in drought” “NINETY-eight per cent of NSW is either in drought or on the brink of drought, up three per cent from December, NSW Government data shows.** The latest figures for January show 96.3 per cent of the state is drought declared, up from 93.2 per cent in the previous month, while the area in marginal territory is 1.7 per cent, Primary Industries Minister Ian Macdonald said today. Only two per cent of the state, in the Grafton

and Lismore regions in the far north of NSW, is experiencing satisfactory conditions. Rainfall since January is unlikely to have any significant impact on these figures. "While weekend rainfall was well received in isolated parts of the state, the vast majority of farmers continue to face tough, dry conditions," he said. At the end of January water storage levels across the state were at just 14.7 per cent of capacity, down 5.7 per cent from December. "We desperately need more than 100 millimetres of soaking rain in the next few weeks," Mr Macdonald said. He said follow up rainfall was then needed to enable winter crop planting to occur in autumn and pasture growth for badly needed stock feed." (*Sunday Telegraph*, Feb. 17, 2007).

So in spite of the rain that fell in January, the drought affected area of NSW grew from 93.2 per cent to 96.3 per cent. And the Sydney dam water, which was at a critical level before, grew by only three per cent and it is still at a critical level.

Now does it mean that if widespread rain comes, as it will one day, there is no climate change and no global warming?

Cardinal Pell says that he feels reassured that global temperature has increased by only one-fifth of a degree Celsius per decade since 1975. What he does not know is that a two degree increase in ocean temperatures would wipe out coral reefs around the world. Much of Australia's coral reef has already been bleached because of increase in the water temperature.

He says that "Britain's University of East Anglia climate research unit found global temperatures did not rise between 1998 and 2005, and a NASA satellite recently found the southern hemisphere had not warmed in the past 25 years."

We do not know whether East Anglia University is a Catholic one, but their figures are absolutely wrong. Eleven of the hottest years on record have occurred in the last twelve years. And this year is shaping up as the hottest year yet.

As for that NASA report, where is it? We would like to see it. It is un-professional to speak about a report and not quote it or give its reference. It is unforgivable to misrepresent an institution. This is what a study by NASA concluded.

**"North Pole Melting Into Sea"** "ICE is melting so fast in the Arctic that the North Pole will be in the open sea within 30 years. . . The researchers, funded by NASA, said the ice retreat was likely to remain constant until 2024, when the process suddenly quicken. In 30 to 50 years, they concluded, summer sea-ice would have vanished from almost the entire Arctic region. But their forecast may already be out of date, says Chri Rapley, head of the British Antarctic Survey. He said a recent study suggested emissions were rising more than twice as fast as in 2000, and this was likely to speed up ice loss even further. "The study may be an underestimate of when the Arctic summer ice might be all gone," he said. During the past 25 years, Arctic ice has been reduced by 25 per cent. Scientists have long known that ice reflects heat, and as the quantity reduces so does the amount of heat that can be bounced away from the Earth. However, the study team from the National Centre for Atmospheric Research in Colorado, and two US universities, identified warmer ocean currents as an additional factor. Disappearing ice is already causing problems for polar bears. Other wildlife, including seals, are also likely to suffer. "We have already witnessed major losses in sea ice, but our research suggests the decrease over the next few decades could be far more dramatic than anything that has happened so far," said Marica Holland, who led the polar warming study." (*The Australian*, Dec. 13, 2006).

Isn't it an insult to honest reputable scientists who have put their career on line to prove to the world that global warming is far more serious than previously realised, to say that they are doomsayers and scaremongers? Cardinal Pell could have known the truth if he wanted to, for this is what the same newspaper published two weeks before his article appeared.

### **"State of Despair, Climate report says NSW will be a disaster zone"**

**"NSW is in grave danger of becoming a state where thousands die from heatwaves, rivers dry up and snow disappears from alpine regions, a new report warns.** A detailed forecast of the impact global warming will have on individual Australian states and capital cities paints a grim picture of NSW's future as dry and deadly. The Climate Institute of Australia's report, released in Melbourne yesterday, explains the local ramifications of a major international report by the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. It warns that unless urgent action is taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, there will be devastating consequences.

Australia is the 10th largest greenhouse gas emitter in the world and has recorded a 10 per cent increase over the past 10 years, with a 17 per cent growth predicted by 2020. Scientists are demanding new government policies to reduce emissions but Prime Minister John Howard showed no indication of acquiescing yesterday. Global warming is almost certainly set to increase by one per cent by 2020. For NSW, this means droughts will become 70 per cent more frequent and widespread, while the number of annual heatwave deaths in Sydney will more than double from 176 to up to 417.

Snow-covered alpine regions would shrink by up to 40 per cent and extreme weather conditions would increase by a quarter. But if the pattern continues and global warming reaches more than three per cent by between 2060 to 2100, NSW will be a virtual disaster zone. Dengue fever would spread into Sydney, flow in the Murray-Darling Basin would fall by almost 50 per cent and there would be more than 1312 heatwave deaths in the capital every year. Snow-covered alpine regions would disappear by up to 85 per cent, the Macquarie River basin would drop by up to 35 per cent and extreme fire weather conditions could increase by about 75 per cent in spots like Coffs Harbour and Sydney Airport. There would also be significantly less run-offs into many rivers. Erwin Jackson, advisor to the Climate Institute, believes Australia should be leading the way in adopting environmentally-friendly policies because it is so vulnerable to the effects of global warming.

"There is overwhelming support within the Australian community, the business community and now the scientific community that climate change is a very serious issue which needs to be addressed," he said. "We have already wasted 10 years, during which time emissions have increased by 10 per cent. We can't look our children in the face in 20 years time and say we didn't do anything." He called on Mr Howard to re-assess his stance on climate change in light of the new reports. However, the Prime Minister was unmoved by the findings, which he described as "something we have known for a long time". He said Australia would continue measures to reduce emissions but only in a way that "does not unfairly hurt or damage the Australian economy and destroy Australian jobs". He said nuclear power could be part of the solution but ruled out signing the Kyoto agreement." (*The Sunday Telegraph*, Feb. 4, 2007).

Cardinal Pell said that January was a cold month, yet this is what the same newspaper published on the same day.

**"January world temperatures highest ever"** **"World temperatures in January were the highest ever recorded for that month of the year.** "The combined global land and ocean surface temperature was the highest for any January on record," according to scientists from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Climate

Data Centre in Asheville, North Carolina. The combined global land and ocean surface temperature was 0.85 degrees celsius warmer than the 20th-century average of 12 degrees celsius for January based on preliminary data, NOAA said. The figures surpass the previous record set in 2002 at 0.71 degrees celsius above average. Land surface temperature was a record 1.89C warmer than average, while global ocean surface temperature was the fourth warmest in 128 years, about 0.05 degrees celsius cooler than the record established during the very strong El Nino climate phenomenon in 1998. . . "The presence of El Nino along with the continuing global warming trend contributed to the record warm January," NOAA said. The unusually warm conditions contributed to the second lowest January snow cover extent on record for the Eurasian continent. "During the past century, global surface temperatures have increased at a rate near 0.06 degrees celsius per decade, but the rate of increase has been three times larger since 1976, or 0.18 degrees celsius per decade, with some of the largest temperature increases occurring in the high latitudes of the Northern Hemisphere." (*The Sunday Telegraph*, Feb.18, 2007).

Cardinal Pell said that there was no increase in global temperatures between 1998 and 2005, yet this article says that 2002 was a record year with an increase of no less than 0.71 degree Celsius, an enormous jump for a single year.

Are we also doomsayers and scaremongers because we put all this evidence before people so that they realise the perilous condition in which they find themselves, or is the Catholic Church clinging on to straws in a desperate attempt to deny reality and postpone the fulfillment of God's prophecies?

The whole of the Christian world, not to speak of other religions, is in a denying mood. They do not want to hear about overpopulation, diminishing resources, global warming, climate change, peak in oil supply, or anything that might bring their reign to a precipitous end. It is an insidious plot from the leading religious institutions of our time to cloud people's minds with falsehoods and misrepresentations in an attempt to lull them into a false sense of security. The tragedy of it is that they succeed at it. This is why Jesus said that the Great Tribulation will take the world by surprise, as the people of Noah's time were taken by the Flood.

<sup>38</sup>For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, <sup>39</sup>and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be." (Mat. 24:38-39).

The world has passed the point of no return. The sooner our leaders realise this, and turn to the only power that can save humanity now – our Almighty Creator – the less suffering will be in the world, and the more people will be saved. A decade and a half ago, we said that the world had entered the time of the following prophecy.

"Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire. <sup>9</sup>And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory." (Revelation 16:8-9).

Now not only has this prophecy been fulfilled, but because people have not repented of their evil ways and continued to blaspheme God, things have gotten considerable worse. For this reason we are announcing that this prophecy is now coming to an end, and the following one about to take its place.

<sup>17</sup>Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, "It is done!" <sup>18</sup>And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth. <sup>19</sup>Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. <sup>20</sup>Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. <sup>21</sup>And great hail from heaven fell upon men, *each hailstone* about the weight of a talent. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great." (Rev. 16:17-21).

Will people believe us this time? Will they turn to God and save themselves from this 'exceedingly great plague', or will they continue to sin, blaspheme God, and face His wrath and eternal damnation? Only a fool would want to wait another decade and a half to see whether we are right this time too. There just isn't that time anymore.

This is how the wise of this world have failed humanity. They have either denied God altogether, or sent people on wrong paths to find solutions to their problems. The result is all too clear for all to see: this world is truly on its last legs.

## Why Have People Lost Faith In God When They Need It Most?

It used to be that when God sent messengers to warn people of dire consequences because of their sins, they repented, changed their way of life, and escaped their punishment. A clear example of that is Jonas and the Ninevites.

<sup>1</sup>Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, <sup>2</sup>"Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me." <sup>3</sup>But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. . . .

<sup>1</sup>Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, <sup>2</sup>"Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you." <sup>3</sup>So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey *in extent*. <sup>4</sup>And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk. Then he cried out and said, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"

<sup>5</sup>So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. <sup>6</sup>Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered *himself* with sackcloth and sat in ashes. <sup>7</sup>And he caused *it* to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, 'Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water. <sup>8</sup>But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. <sup>9</sup>Who can tell *if* God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?' <sup>10</sup>Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it. . .

<sup>1</sup>But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry. <sup>2</sup>So he prayed to the LORD, and said, "Ah, LORD, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You *are* a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm. <sup>3</sup>Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for *it is* better for me to die than to live!" <sup>4</sup>Then the LORD said, "*Is it* right for you to be angry?"

<sup>5</sup>So Jonah went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city. There he made himself a shelter and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city. <sup>6</sup>And the LORD God prepared a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery. So Jonah was very grateful for the plant. <sup>7</sup>But as morning dawned the next day God prepared a worm, and it so damaged the plant that it withered. <sup>8</sup>And it happened, when the sun arose, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat on Jonah's head, so that he grew faint. Then he wished death for himself, and said, "*It is* better for me to die than to live."

<sup>9</sup>Then God said to Jonah, "*Is it* right for you to be angry about the plant?"

And he said, "*It is* right for me to be angry, even to death!" <sup>10</sup>But the LORD said, "You have had pity on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night. <sup>11</sup>And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left—and much livestock?" (Jonah 1:1-3; 3:1-10; 4:1-11).

When they heard the warning from God they did not say, 'who is this stranger to tell us what to do and how to live our lives', as we often hear these days; they repented, fasted, prayed, and worshiped God. The king himself took the initiative and gave an unusual but powerful decree:

"Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water. <sup>8</sup>But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. <sup>9</sup>Who can tell *if* God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?"

While humans were to turn from their evil ways and cry mightily to God, both humans and animals were to fast and be covered in sackcloth. And what happened then? God saw their works that they turned from their evil way; and He relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.

At no time in history has the world been in greater peril than it is now. Yet there never has been less faith in God than it is now. Why? Because the 'wise' of this world have convinced humanity that there is no God!

Has God stopped sending His messengers to the world, when they are needed most, because the world has turned its back to Him? Certainly not! Never before have the Scriptures been preached and explained more clearly, more widely, and more forcefully, than has been the case in the last decade and a half. And what has been humanity's response to that? Disdain, calumnies, threats and isolation.

We began publishing *The Christian Herald* in 1990, but the work of the Gospel began in fact in 1973 when I went to the headquarters of the Worldwide Church of God with a message from God. How was I received by the 'luminaries' of that Church? Like Jonas by the Ninevites? No, like Paul by the Jews when he began to preach Christ to them.

Like Jonas however, I run away from doing any further work for God when they robbed me and locked me out of my own flat. I could not understand why God let those charlatans treat me that way when all I wanted to do was to show them from the Scriptures the errors in the gospel they were preaching.

Like many of my contemporaries, I assumed that once you start working for God, you get His blessings and protection, when the very opposite happened to me. After all, isn't this the gospel they are preaching in the churches these days? But that is not the gospel that Jesus' Apostles preached, for what happened to me is what happened to them long ago.

What made me even angrier was the fact that I had withdrawn myself from a course in electrical engineering at Toronto University, which would have been a natural course for me given that I had qualifications in that field, in order to study humanity subjects such as study of religions and ancient history. Now my world was crumbling around me and I was at a loss as to why it happened and what to do next. Well, what I did next was to run away from those creatures, and immigrated to Australia. I run away from them, but not from God, because in my new country I decided to continue my studies in the humanity subjects. In hindsight, I can clearly see the hand of God in all that happened to me those days. I had enthusiasm, some knowledge of the Scriptures, and a message from God, but I was far from being mature enough and secure in that mission. It took no less than a decade and a half of intense studies, both privately and in tertiary institutions, before God visited me again and sent me to do His work again.

One of the questions I am often asked is how does God communicate with me, or I with Him, and how do I know it is He who speaks with me? It is a question that usually comes from mockers and unbelievers, which makes it even harder to explain, for once a person decide to take a position against God, it is virtually impossible to change his mind.

Even the apostles had a hard time explaining their visions or how God dealt with them.

<sup>1</sup>It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord: <sup>2</sup>I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was caught up to the third heaven. <sup>3</sup>And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—<sup>4</sup>how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. <sup>5</sup>Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities. <sup>6</sup>For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool; for I will speak the truth. But I refrain, lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me *to be* or hears from me.

<sup>7</sup>And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. <sup>8</sup>Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. <sup>9</sup>And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. <sup>10</sup>Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

<sup>11</sup>I have become a fool in boasting; you have compelled me. For I ought to have been commended by you; for in nothing was I behind the most eminent apostles, though I am nothing. <sup>12</sup>Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds. <sup>13</sup>For what is it in which you were inferior to other churches, except that I myself was not burdensome to you? Forgive me this wrong!" (2 Cor. 12:1-13)

Apostle Paul could not explain his visions of Paradise – whether he was there in the body or out of body. All he knew was that it was a miracle, and like all miracles, could not be explained in terms of our experience of the world. It has been like that with the prophets of God since the beginning of the world.

Now the Corinthians could easily have said, 'this guy does not even know what he is talking about, and is he teaching us how to live our lives?' But they didn't. Instead they listened to him carefully and followed his advice to the letter, so much so that he even had to chastise them later on for going overboard in certain aspects.

In the second paragraph, Paul speaks of a thorn in his flesh given to him by Satan, which God would not remove. Now consider God's reply to his request: "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."

Had I known this principle three decades ago, or the trials Jesus' disciples would undergo in their mission for God, I would not have been so disheartened by my misfortune, but rejoice that I was found worthy to receive a similar treatment.

<sup>29</sup>But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men. <sup>30</sup>The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. <sup>31</sup>Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. <sup>32</sup>And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."

<sup>33</sup>When they heard *this*, they were furious and plotted to kill them. <sup>34</sup>Then one in the council stood up, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in respect by all the people, and commanded them to put the apostles outside for a little while. <sup>35</sup>And he said to them: "Men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what you intend to do regarding these men. <sup>36</sup>For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody. A number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was slain, and all who obeyed him were scattered and came to nothing. <sup>37</sup>After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census, and drew away many people after him. He also perished, and all who obeyed him were dispersed. <sup>38</sup>And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; <sup>39</sup>but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it—lest you even be found to fight against God." <sup>40</sup>And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten *them*, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. <sup>41</sup>So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. <sup>42</sup>And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ." (Acts 5:29-42)

Jesus' disciples suffered trials at the hand of unbelievers, whereas I received them from 'Christians'. However it did not take long before they too had to contend with false Christians and false preachers.

<sup>23</sup>Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I *am* more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. <sup>24</sup>From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. <sup>25</sup>Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; <sup>26</sup>*in* journeys often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils of *my own* countrymen, *in* perils of the Gentiles, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren; <sup>27</sup>*in* weariness and toil, *in* sleeplessness often, *in* hunger and thirst, *in* fastings often, *in* cold and nakedness—<sup>28</sup>besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. <sup>29</sup>Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn *with indignation*?

<sup>30</sup>If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity. <sup>31</sup>The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. <sup>32</sup>In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me; <sup>33</sup>but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands." (2 Cor. 11:23-33).

We know that even these days many Christians suffer loss, even of life, in countries that do not accept Jesus Christ, but few Christians realise that over the centuries more true Christians have endured tribulations and lost their lives at the hands of people who falsely claimed to be Christians than at the hands of pagans. This is why I no longer wonder that my baptism of fire occurred at the hands of false Christians. The important thing is to turn those trials to your advantage, to use them to strengthen your faith, and not let them destroy it.

"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, <sup>2</sup>elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ:

Grace to you and peace be multiplied. <sup>3</sup>Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup>to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup>who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

<sup>6</sup>In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, <sup>7</sup>that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, <sup>8</sup>whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see *Him*, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, <sup>9</sup>receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of *your* souls.

<sup>10</sup>Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace *that would come* to you, <sup>11</sup>searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. <sup>12</sup>To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into. <sup>13</sup>Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest *your* hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; <sup>14</sup>as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; <sup>15</sup>but as He who called you *is* holy, you also be holy in all *your* conduct, <sup>16</sup>because it is written, "*Be holy, for I am holy.*"

<sup>17</sup>And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay *here* in fear; <sup>18</sup>knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, <sup>19</sup>but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. <sup>20</sup>He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you <sup>21</sup>who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. <sup>22</sup>Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, <sup>23</sup>having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, <sup>24</sup>because, "*All flesh is as grass, And <sup>f</sup>all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away, <sup>25</sup>But the word of the LORD endures forever.*"

Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you." (1 Peter 1:1-25)

This would be a good place to finish, with such wonderful words from Apostle Peter, but three are more things to be said. Continued Peter:

<sup>12</sup>Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; <sup>13</sup>but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. <sup>14</sup>If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed *are you*, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. <sup>15</sup>But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. <sup>16</sup>Yet if *anyone suffers* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.

<sup>17</sup>For the time *has come* for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if *it begins* with us first, what will *be* the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? <sup>18</sup>Now, *"if the righteous one is scarcely saved, Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?"* <sup>19</sup>Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls *to Him* in doing good, as to a faithful Creator." (1 Peter 4:12-19)

I spoke of the trials that Jesus' disciples endured, but of course, no one endured more than Jesus Christ Himself. He too endured them at the hands of those who claimed to be believers – God's chosen people – who in so doing thought they did God a service. Isn't it extraordinary how the worst murderers put their actions on behalf of God? It has happened since the beginning of the world, and it is happening today.

For the people of God however, trials, even loss of life, work towards their betterment. God rejoices when one of His faithful dies. <sup>5</sup>Precious in the sight of the LORD *is* the death of His saints." (Ps. 116:15). Now if God rejoices over our death, shouldn't we do the same?

This brings us to the second point regarding our means of communication with God. Apostle Paul enjoins us to acquire the mind of God in order to be like Jesus Christ.

<sup>5</sup>Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup>who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, <sup>7</sup>but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup>And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of death*, even the death of the cross. <sup>9</sup>Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, <sup>10</sup>that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, <sup>11</sup>and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Ph. 2:5).

Now what mind was in Christ Jesus? The mind of God, of course! This does not mean that God transplanted His mind in Jesus Christ, but that Jesus acquired it in the course of His upbringing. And how did He do it? By studying the Word of God, and by being obedient to God!

<sup>1</sup> Blessed *are* the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD!

<sup>2</sup> Blessed *are* those who keep His testimonies, who seek Him with the whole heart!

<sup>3</sup> They also do no iniquity; They walk in His ways.

<sup>4</sup> You have commanded *us* to keep Your precepts diligently."

<sup>5</sup> I will meditate on Your precepts, and contemplate Your ways.

<sup>16</sup> I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word." (Ps. 119:1-4, 15-16)

<sup>65</sup> "You have dealt well with Your servant, O LORD, according to Your word.

<sup>66</sup> Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe Your commandments.

<sup>67</sup> Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word.

<sup>68</sup> You *are* good, and do good; teach me Your statutes.

<sup>69</sup> The proud have forged a lie against me, *but* I will keep Your precepts with *my* whole heart.

<sup>70</sup> Their heart is as fat as grease, *but* I delight in Your law.

<sup>71</sup> It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes.

<sup>72</sup> The law of Your mouth *is* better to me than thousands of *coins* of gold and silver."

<sup>78</sup> "Let the proud be ashamed, for they treated me wrongfully with falsehood; *But* I will meditate on Your precepts.

<sup>79</sup> Let those who fear You turn to me, those who know Your testimonies.

<sup>80</sup> Let my heart be blameless regarding Your statutes, that I may not be ashamed."

<sup>97</sup> "Oh, how I love Your law! *It is* my meditation all the day.

<sup>98</sup> You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; for they *are* ever with me.

<sup>99</sup> I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies *are* my meditation.

<sup>100</sup> I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Your precepts." (Ps. 119:65-72, 78-80, 97-100).

There is no greater lesson on how to acquire wisdom than this one. For nothing indeed could make one wiser than the Word of God – the very mind of God. This then is how Jesus Christ obtained His wisdom, His mind of God. And this is how you can obtain it too. Try it, it won't harm you, and who knows, you may even surprise yourself with a new mind. But for this you need faith. And here is the crux of the problem: faith comes from God too, and for Him to grant it, you must get on your knees and pray to Him and worship Him in truth and in spirit. If you are too proud for that, you will retain your current mind and say good bye to any chance of salvation.

<sup>4</sup>But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, <sup>5</sup>even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), <sup>6</sup>and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup>that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup>For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup>not of works, lest anyone should boast. <sup>10</sup>For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." (Eph.2:4-10)

We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works. If you do not believe that you were created in the image of Jesus Christ for good works, but in the image of monkeys for the law of the jungle, then you cannot complain of your destiny, which is to be wiped out from the face of the earth and becoming ashes under the feet of the righteous.

<sup>17</sup> The memory of him perishes from the earth, And he has no name among the renowned.

<sup>18</sup> He is driven from light into darkness, And chased out of the world.

<sup>19</sup> He has neither son nor posterity among his people, Nor any remaining in his dwellings.

<sup>20</sup> Those in the west are astonished at his day, As those in the east are frightened.

<sup>21</sup> Surely such *are* the dwellings of the wicked, And this *is* the place of *him who* does not know God." (Job 18:17-21)

<sup>1</sup> Do not keep silent, O God of my praise! For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful have opened against me; They have spoken against me with a lying tongue.

<sup>3</sup> They have also surrounded me with words of hatred, And fought against me without a cause.

<sup>4</sup> In return for my love they are my accusers, But I *give myself* to prayer.

<sup>5</sup> Thus they have rewarded me evil for good, And hatred for my love." (Ps. 109:1-5)

<sup>1</sup> The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God."

They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none who does good.

<sup>2</sup> The LORD looks down from heaven upon the children of men, To see if there are any who understand, who seek God.

<sup>3</sup> They have all turned aside, They have together become corrupt; *There is* none who does good, No, not one.

<sup>4</sup> Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge, Who eat up my people as they eat bread, And do not call on the LORD?

<sup>5</sup> There they are in great fear, For God *is* with the generation of the righteous.

<sup>6</sup> You shame the counsel of the poor, But the LORD *is* his refuge." (Ps.14: 1-6)

Isn't this what characterises our world today? They say there is no God, and God says that there is none who does good, that all have become corrupt. O yes, there are many who donate to charities and work for the poor, but they do so for their own glory, on this earth, not for merit in heaven and for the glory of God. Otherwise God would not say that they have all turned aside, that none seek the Lord. But what about the preachers who make so much noise in their congregations, don't they believe in God and do the right thing as far as God is concerned? This is God's answer to that:

<sup>34</sup> "Wail, shepherds, and cry! Roll about *in the ashes*, You leaders of the flock! For the days of your slaughter and your dispersions are fulfilled; You shall fall like a precious vessel. And the shepherds will have no way to flee, Nor the leaders of the flock to escape." (Jer. 25:34-35).

<sup>1</sup> "For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up," Says the LORD of hosts, "That will leave them neither root nor branch. <sup>2</sup> But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise With healing in His wings; And you shall go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves. <sup>3</sup> You shall trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet On the day that I do *this*," Says the LORD of hosts." (Mal.4:1-3).

This then is what faith is all about: having confidence in the righteous judgment of God and the fact that in the end the wicked will become ashes under the feet of the righteous. Yes, someone might say, but these words are about the preachers and the people of ancient Israel, aren't they? Yes, but the following ones are not.

And He said to them, <sup>24</sup>"Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. <sup>25</sup>When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open for us,' and He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know you, where you are from,' <sup>26</sup>then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.' <sup>27</sup>But He will say, 'I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.' <sup>28</sup>There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. <sup>29</sup>They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God. <sup>30</sup>And indeed there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last." (Luke 13:24-30)

<sup>25</sup>"And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more.

<sup>26</sup>Therefore I testify to you this day that I *am* innocent of the blood of all *men*. <sup>27</sup>For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. <sup>28</sup>Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church <sup>5</sup>of God which He purchased with His own blood. <sup>29</sup>For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. <sup>30</sup>Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears." (Acts 20:25-31).

<sup>12</sup>But what I do, I will also continue to do, that I may cut off the opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the things of which they boast. <sup>13</sup>For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. <sup>14</sup>And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. <sup>15</sup>Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works." (2 Cor 11: 12-15).

Don't trust anyone regarding your salvation until you have checked it out in the Bible. For if the world was full of 'savage wolves' and false preachers in the time of the apostles, it is infinitely worse now. Have faith only in those who are prepared to have their preaching assessed by the standards of the Bible, for by looking in the Scriptures you will increase your faith too. Because many are those who claim to speak for Jesus Christ and yet deceive their listeners.

"And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. <sup>5</sup>For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many." (Mat. 24:4-5).

<sup>5</sup>Examine yourselves *as to* whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?— unless indeed you are disqualified. <sup>6</sup>But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified." (2 Cor. 13:5-6).

During one of his public escapades, for which John Paul II became renowned around the world, television cameras focused on two nuns that prostrated themselves before him and said: 'Holy Father increase our faith!' He gave them a wry smile and walked away. This is what humanity has come to: prostrate before a human being and ask him to increase their faith. And this from persons who ought to know better. But what do the Scriptures say?

<sup>10</sup>"And I fell at [the angel's] feet to worship him. But he said to me, "See *that you do not do that!* I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Rev. 19:10).

Catholic prelates do not want to talk about prophecy, especially those of the book of Revelation. (See *TCH* 14 and 15 to see why). How then can people increase their faith? This is how: "Faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Rom. 10:17).

When Apostle Paul wrote that epistle, books were very expensive. The only way by which people could increase their faith was to hear the Word of God. These days however, they can read the Word of God for themselves. Anyone who wants a Bible can have one.

Of course, they can increase their faith by going to church too, but which church? Which one preaches the truth these days when so many are in opposition to each other and even fighting among themselves? This is why the only sure way of increasing your faith is to have your own Scriptures. Read them and compare them with what they preach in the churches, and with what is happening in the world. In so doing you will avoid the destiny of those who go to perdition because they did not do their home work and blindly accepted the false preachings that are so prevalent in the world today.

# Salvation By No Other Name Except Jesus Christ

Christians should be first in acknowledging that there is no name by which people may be saved other than Jesus Christ. Yet, in an attempt to create a harmonious ecumenical movement, more and more of them are saying that all religions have the same God and all lead to the same place. Well, that is just not true. And this is why.

<sup>8</sup>Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: <sup>9</sup>If we this day are judged for a good deed *done* to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, <sup>10</sup>let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. <sup>11</sup>This is the *'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.'* <sup>12</sup>Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:8-12).

If there is no salvation in any other name but Jesus Christ, in what name do other religions save their people? And how do they know that their spiritual leader is a genuine savior? Has he proven himself by giving his life and taking it back as Jesus Christ did?

<sup>17</sup>Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. <sup>18</sup>No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father." (John 10:17-18).

Only one man in the history of the world has been on 'the other side', so to speak, and come back to tell us the way to eternal life. For that reason the Father loved Him and made Him Lord over both the physical and spiritual worlds.

<sup>18</sup>Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup>Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even to the end of the age.*" Amen." (Mat. 28:18-20).

If Jesus' followers were to go out into the world and make disciples of all the nations in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, could any other religion have such powerful backing to rival the very Creator of the world, His Son and the Holy Spirit? Jesus proved through His sacrifice to be the true Messiah, and Christianity to be His true religion. The Word of God in general and the prophecies of the Bible in particular, have amply supported that claim.

<sup>5</sup> "To whom will you liken Me, and make *Me* equal and compare Me, that we should be alike?

<sup>6</sup> They lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver on the scales;

They hire a goldsmith, and he makes it a god; They prostrate themselves, yes, they worship.

<sup>7</sup> They bear it on the shoulder, they carry it and set it in its place, and it stands; from its place it shall not move. Though *one* cries out to it, yet it cannot answer nor save him out of his trouble.

<sup>8</sup> "Remember this, and show yourselves men; Recall to mind, O you transgressors.

<sup>9</sup> Remember the former things of old, for I *am* God, and *there is* no other; *I am* God, and *there is* none like Me,

<sup>10</sup> Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *things* that are not *yet* done, Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure,'

<sup>11</sup> Calling a bird of prey from the east, the man who executes My counsel, from a far country.

Indeed I have spoken *it*; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed *it*; I will also do it." (Is. 46:5-11).

While Jesus Christ was in the world, He told His disciples why He alone was a good shepherd, and why none of those who came before Him were good shepherds.

<sup>7</sup> Then Jesus said to them again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. <sup>8</sup>All who *ever* came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. <sup>9</sup>I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. <sup>10</sup>The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.

<sup>11</sup>"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. <sup>12</sup>But a hireling, *he who is* not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. <sup>13</sup>The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. <sup>14</sup>I am the good shepherd; and I know My *sheep*, and am known by My own. <sup>15</sup>As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. <sup>16</sup>And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock *and* one shepherd." (John 10: 7-16).

None of those who came before Him, and none who came after Him, were good shepherds, for none gave their life for the sheep in the manner of Jesus Christ. No other person in the history of the world has made such a claim and proved it to be true. Therefore saying that all people have the same God and have an equal chance of salvation regardless on what religion they follow is not only a deadly error, but a blasphemy, for it denies the Scriptures in general and the words of Jesus Christ in particular. It would be tantamount to saying that Jesus' murderers were God's children and would be saved too. But what did Jesus Christ say?

<sup>39</sup>They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. <sup>40</sup>But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. <sup>41</sup>You do the deeds of your father." Then they said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father—God."

<sup>42</sup>Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. <sup>43</sup>Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. <sup>44</sup>You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *resources*, for he is a liar and the father of it. <sup>45</sup>But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. <sup>46</sup>Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? <sup>47</sup>He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God." (John 8:39-47).

This passage, more than any other, spells out clearly that there are two kinds of people in the world: those who are children of God, and those who are children of the Devil. What distinguishes one from the other? Their fruits, obedience to God, and their attitude to life!



The first obey God and value life, while the second obey their father and destroy life. Judged by their physical appearance, they look the same – they are all human beings – but inwardly some are sheep while others wolves. It does not matter what they believe, or whether they think that they serve God; what matters is what they do in this world.

Notice what Jesus Christ said about salvation.

<sup>13</sup>“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.

<sup>14</sup>“Because narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. <sup>15</sup>“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. <sup>16</sup>“You will know them by their fruits.” (Mat. 7:13-16).

Now what does that tell you about those who are behind the ecumenical movement that aims to create a universal religion? Whose job do you think they are doing? That initiative is not sanctioned in the Bible, except in the negative sense.

They will not be any more successful in bringing the whole world under one umbrella now, than the people who lived before the tower of Babel were able to stay united then. And why so? Because this world has been set up for a short duration, for a specific purpose. Read carefully the following chapter from the book of Romans, for it says many important things about salvation which we cannot cover in this short article.

<sup>1</sup>“I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, <sup>2</sup>that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. <sup>3</sup>For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, <sup>4</sup>who are Israelites, to whom *pertain* the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of *God*, and the promises; <sup>5</sup>of whom *are* the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ *came*, who is over all, *the* eternally blessed God. Amen.

<sup>6</sup>But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, “In Isaac your seed shall be called.” <sup>8</sup>That is, those who *are* the children of the flesh, these *are* not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. <sup>9</sup>For this *is* the word of promise: “At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son.”

<sup>10</sup>And not only *this*, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, *even* by our father Isaac <sup>11</sup>(for *the children* not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), <sup>12</sup>it was said to her, “The older shall serve the younger.” <sup>13</sup>As it is written, “Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.”

<sup>14</sup>What shall we say then? *Is there* unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! <sup>15</sup>For He says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.” <sup>16</sup>So then *it is* not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. <sup>17</sup>For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.” <sup>18</sup>Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens. <sup>19</sup>You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?” <sup>20</sup>But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, “Why have you made me like this?” <sup>21</sup>Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?

<sup>22</sup>What if God, wanting to show *His* wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, <sup>23</sup>and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, <sup>24</sup>*even* us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

<sup>25</sup>As He says also in Hosea: “I will call them My people, who were not My people, And her beloved, who was not beloved.” <sup>26</sup>“And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not My people,’ There they shall be called sons of the living God.”

<sup>27</sup>Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel: “Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, The remnant will be saved. For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, Because the LORD will make a short work upon the earth.” <sup>28</sup>And as Isaiah said before: “Unless the LORD of <sup>29</sup>Sabaoth had left us a seed, We would have become like Sodom, And we would have been made like Gomorrah.”

<sup>30</sup>What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; <sup>31</sup>but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. <sup>32</sup>Why? Because *they did not seek it by* faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. <sup>33</sup>As it is written: “Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, And whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.” (Rom.9:1-33).

It is easier to understand what Apostle Paul spoke about here if you know that the Devil itself was created for a specific purpose.

<sup>1</sup> “The preparations of the heart *belong* to man, But the answer of the tongue *is* from the LORD.

<sup>2</sup> All the ways of a man *are* pure in his own eyes, But the LORD weighs the spirits.

<sup>3</sup> Commit your works to the LORD, And your thoughts will be established.

<sup>4</sup> The LORD has made all for Himself, Yes, even the wicked for the day of doom.” (Pr.16:1-4).

What is the lesson in all this? That unless one submits to God in love and humility, not in wanton destruction of innocent life as we see in the world these days in the name of other gods, he cannot be a genuine child of God. And who is a child of God?

<sup>1</sup>Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. <sup>2</sup>Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. <sup>3</sup>And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. <sup>4</sup>Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. <sup>5</sup>And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. <sup>6</sup>Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.

<sup>7</sup>Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. <sup>8</sup>He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. <sup>9</sup>Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.

<sup>10</sup>In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother. <sup>11</sup>For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, <sup>12</sup>not as Cain *who* was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother’s righteous. <sup>13</sup>Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you. <sup>14</sup>We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love *his* brother abides in death. <sup>15</sup>Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. <sup>16</sup>By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren. <sup>17</sup>But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? <sup>18</sup>My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. <sup>19</sup>And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. <sup>20</sup>For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. <sup>21</sup>Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God. <sup>22</sup>And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. <sup>23</sup>And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment. <sup>24</sup>Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.” (1 John 3: 1-24).

He who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. Do you know what the sixth Commandment is? <sup>13</sup>“You shall not murder.” (Ex.20:6). Murder is to take innocent life. It has no justification, and nothing to do with religious dogma or worldly philosophy. God does not, and cannot, reside in murderers, and if He is not in you, you are a mere walking corpse.

No other man has been raised from the dead, and no other man has risen to heaven after resurrection.

Now have a look at the following lengthy statement from Jesus Christ and consider it carefully, for it has important implications about salvation.

<sup>35</sup>And Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. <sup>36</sup>But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. <sup>37</sup>All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. <sup>38</sup>For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. <sup>39</sup>This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. <sup>40</sup>And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.” <sup>41</sup>The Jews then complained about Him, because He said, “I am the bread which came down from heaven.” <sup>42</sup>And they said, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that He says, ‘I have come down from heaven?’”

<sup>43</sup>Jesus therefore answered and said to them, “Do not murmur among yourselves. “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.” <sup>45</sup>It is written in the prophets, ‘*And they shall all be taught by God.*’ Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me. <sup>46</sup>Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God; He has seen the Father. <sup>47</sup>Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. <sup>48</sup>I am the bread of life. <sup>49</sup>Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. <sup>50</sup>This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. <sup>51</sup>I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.” <sup>52</sup>The Jews therefore quarrelled among themselves, saying, “How can this Man give us *His* flesh to eat?” <sup>53</sup>Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. <sup>54</sup>Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. <sup>55</sup>For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. <sup>56</sup>He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. <sup>57</sup>As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. <sup>58</sup>This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever.” <sup>59</sup>These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum. <sup>60</sup>Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard *this*, said, “This is a hard saying; who can understand it?”

<sup>61</sup>When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, “Does this offend you? <sup>62</sup>*What* then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before? <sup>63</sup>It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and *they* are life. <sup>64</sup>But there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him. <sup>65</sup>And He said, “Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father.” <sup>66</sup>From that *time* many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. <sup>67</sup>Then Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you also want to go away?” <sup>68</sup>But Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. <sup>69</sup>Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

<sup>70</sup>Jesus answered them, “Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?” <sup>71</sup>He spoke of Judas Iscariot, *the son* of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve.” (John 6:35-70).

What do these statements tell you? That people of all religions have an equal chance of salvation? No! But that only those who are drawn by God to His Son, Jesus Christ, do. And on what basis does God draw people to His Son?

“The LORD looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek God.” (Ps.14:2)

This is why children of men must become children of God. But what does God see when He looks down upon human beings? “They have all turned aside, they have together become corrupt; *There is* none who does good, no, not one.” (Ps. 14:3).

The reason none is good and all have turned aside is because they have all been born corrupt in the first place.

- <sup>5</sup> “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.
- <sup>6</sup> Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden *part* You will make me to know wisdom.
- <sup>7</sup> Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
- <sup>8</sup> Make me hear joy and gladness, *That* the bones You have broken may rejoice.
- <sup>9</sup> Hide Your face from my sins, And blot out all my iniquities.
- <sup>10</sup> Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
- <sup>11</sup> Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.” (Ps. 51:5-11).

We often hear these days that love means accepting people as they are. You could do no greater harm to people than not to correct them when you see them doing evil things. If they mind, they are not worth having as friends. Such an attitude is not from God, but from the Devil, and you would not want to have fellowship with anyone who is not a child of God.

We are yet to find anyone who says, please tell us where we are wrong so that we do not miss out on eternal life. On the contrary, they are all fiercely defensive of their religion, even though they have never looked into it to make sure that its doctrines led to life and not to damnation. The Scriptures tell us that by the time of the end, all churches and religions would depart from the true path so much that they take arms against Jesus Christ when He comes to save them.

<sup>11</sup>Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. <sup>12</sup>His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. <sup>13</sup>He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. <sup>14</sup>And the armies in heaven, clothed in <sup>4</sup>fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. <sup>15</sup>Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. <sup>16</sup>And He has on *His* robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. <sup>17</sup>Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, “Come and gather together for the <sup>5</sup>supper of the great God, <sup>18</sup>that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all *people*, <sup>4</sup>free and slave, both small and great.” <sup>19</sup>And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. <sup>20</sup>Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. <sup>21</sup>And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.” (Rev.19:1-21).

This is the purpose of the crisscrossing of the world by certain religious leaders these days: not to prepare the world to receive Jesus Christ with open arms, but to take up arms against Him. They do that in the name of the so-called ‘ecumenical movement’.

# Why Apostle Peter Could Not Have Been the First Pope Of Rome

It is a long tradition in the Catholic Church that Apostle Peter was its first Pope. Many historians however disagree with it, pointing out that the first list of Popes was compiled more than a century and a half later.

**“Power and the glory of papal struggles”** “Historians disagree about the exact number of pontiffs and much else concerning the papacy. Although the Catholic Church claims an unbroken line of popes going back to the apostle Peter, tracing it is like following a meandering river back to the source. For example, the Vatican’s pontifical yearbook for 1961 stripped Pope Stephen II from the list of pontiffs on the grounds that although he had been properly elected in 752, he died before he could be crowned. But the last two popes abolished coronations, so perhaps it is time for Stephen to be reinstated. The first list of popes was compiled in 180 by the historian Iranaeus of Lyons, who listed all the elders who had headed the Church in Rome since the time of the apostles Peter and Paul.

Like most early historians, **he did not include Peter.** The first leader of the Christian community, according to him, was Linus followed by Anacleus, Clement, Evaristus and Alexander.

No one knew who the next in line was, so Iranaeus called him Sixtus – six. There have so far been five popes with that name, so it is a fair bet that the next pontiff will not be called Sixtus VI.” Popes have been changing their names as far back as the sixth century. But with monikers like Poppo of Brixen, Pietro Buccaporca (pig’s snout) and Maurice Burdanus (the donkey), it is easy to understand why. This has increased the confusion and discrepancy in an historical record strewn with anti-popes who were not always bad popes and popes who were not always holy . . . Electing a pope used to be a Spartan affair. It took 18 prelates meetings in Viterbo three years to agree on Pope Gregory X, which did in 1271. This was only after citizens tore off the roof of the palace where they were residing to supposedly help the Holy Spirit reach the cardinals. Gregory then decreed that cardinals should be locked up in future conclaves, with their rations systematically reduced during prolonged elections . . . But however stressful modern papal elections, they are nothing compared with the drama of the early centuries of Christianity, when popes struggles to establish their power as the Roman empire was collapsing and threats abounded from other cultures and religions. **Pontiffs became absolute monarchs, with their own army, administrations and lands, until other European kings re-asserted their own rights, shrinking the papacy’s power and forcing it to revert to its age-old spiritual role.”** (*The Daily Telegraph*, April 18, 2005).

The Catholic Encyclopedia however, an ‘authoritative’ source in these matters, gives the following lists of Popes:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. St. Peter (32-67)                              | 18. St. Pontain (230-35)                    |
| 2. St. Linus (67-76)                              | 19. St. Anterus (235-36)                    |
| 3. St. Anacletus (Cletus) (76-88)                 | 20. St. Fabian ((236-50)                    |
| 4. St. Clement I (88-97)                          | 21. St. Cornelius (251-53)                  |
| 5. St. Evaristus (97-105)                         | 22. St. Lucius I (253-54)                   |
| 6. St. Alexander I (105-115)                      | 23. St. Stephan I (254-57)                  |
| 7. St. Sixtus I (115-125) -- also called Xystus I | 24. St. Sixtus II (257-58)                  |
| 8. St. Telesphorus (125-136)                      | 25. St. Dionysius (260-68)                  |
| 9. St. Hyginus (136-140)                          | 26. St. Felix I (269-74)                    |
| 10. St. Pius I (140-155)                          | 27. St. Eutychian (275-83)                  |
| 11. St. Anicetus (155-166)                        | 28. St. Caius (283-296) – also called Gaius |
| 12. St. Soter (166-175)                           | 29. St. Marcellinus (296–304)               |
| 13. St. Eleutherius (175-189)                     | 30. St. Marcellus I (308-309)               |
| 14. St. Victor I (189-199)                        | 31. St. Eusebius (309 or 310)               |
| 15. St. Zephyrinus (199-217)                      | 32. St. Miltiades (311-14)                  |
| 16. St. Callistus I (217-22)                      | 33. St. Sylvester I (314-35)                |
| 17. St. Urban I (222-30)                          | 34. St. Marcus (336)                        |

We stopped at Pope 34 – St. Marcus – for a very important reason, namely that it takes us past the Council of Nicaea which took place in the year 325. At that Council, Christianity was supposed to have become officially the religion of the Roman Empire. What happened at that Council instead was that true Christianity was abolished and a fake one set up. The new Christianity had almost nothing in common with the Christianity of the apostles and the early Churches that they set up: not in doctrines, not in beliefs, not in practices, and not in Holy Days.

We have often discussed this topic in the past, and those who wish to look at it again can begin with *The Christian Herald No 11*. Now however, we want to concentrate on the one item that the Catholic Church claims as its bona fides – the mission that Jesus Christ gave to Apostle Peter which was supposed to have been passed on to all Popes after him.

<sup>13</sup>When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” <sup>14</sup>So they said, “Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

<sup>15</sup>He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” <sup>16</sup>Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

<sup>17</sup>Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven. <sup>18</sup>And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. <sup>19</sup>And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” (Mat. 16:13-19).

A mighty mission and great empowerment Jesus Christ gave to His leading Apostle.

Now it should be easy to prove that Apostle Peter was the first head of the Catholic Church, because that was a very advanced period for its time and left behind large volumes of writings – historical, religious, literary, military, and just about any other subject. It is from this time also that we have the New Testament. And yet, there is not a single piece of writing from that period that places Apostle Peter at the head of the Catholic Church, or indeed anywhere near Rome.

Let us leave aside the fact that historians cannot locate any document which would confirm that Apostle Peter was the first Pope in Rome, and look at the list provided by the Catholic Encyclopedia which has Peter as its first Pope.

First of all, we must point out that we do not address Peter as 'Saint' but as 'Apostle', because the term 'Saint' is never used in the Bible as an honorific title, but merely as a descriptive term of membership in the Churches of God. The title 'Apostle' on the other hand was specifically given by Jesus Christ to a limited number of disciples who would hold positions of kings and priests under Him in the Kingdom of God. (For further details on this topic, see *TCH No 1*). When spoken in general terms, it is 'apostle', but when applied to a specific person, it is capitalized, just as one does with the term 'doctor'.

And while we are talking about titles, Apostle Peter would never have taken upon himself the title of 'Father' used these days by Catholic prelates, let alone 'Holy Father' so loved by its Popes. Why not? Because he heard Jesus Christ personally saying, <sup>9</sup>"Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven." (Mat.23:9).

One should never forget also that the Third Commandment says, "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain." (Ex.20:7). If what the Popes are doing is not taking the name of the God in vain, what is it? The title "Holy Father" belongs to God and to Him alone, and that is why any man who presumes to call himself by that title commits an unpardonable blasphemy. The title 'Holy Father' is found only once in the Bible, and it was used by Jesus Christ to address His Father in heaven.

<sup>9</sup>"I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. <sup>10</sup>And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them. <sup>11</sup>Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are." (John 17:9-11).

By apportioning for themselves the title of 'Holy Father', the Popes took the role of God, and made it sound as if Jesus Christ would have prayed to them. Apostle Peter would never have done that.

The Catholic encyclopedia says that Apostle Peter took his position of Pope in the year 32, and held it until the year 67. It does not tell us where it got that information from, but we know that it did not get it from the Bible, because the Bible proves the very opposite – that Apostle Peter was never in Rome, during that period or any other period.

It also means that Peter became Pope while Jesus Christ was still on this earth before He was even crucified.

Why then does the Catholic Encyclopedia list Peter as Pope in the year 32? Because it knows that it cannot prove that he went to Rome in any other year and because the Scriptures prove that in the following years it was Paul who went to Rome not Peter! Catholic luminaries find it convenient to say that Peter became their Pope the moment Jesus Christ gave him that mission. The fact that it would be more than a year before Peter set up the first Church of God in Jerusalem, let alone Rome, does not bother them. They just hope that no one will take note of their sleight of hand.

In the book of Acts, we find the following statement: <sup>11</sup>"But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome." (Acts 23:11).

That was the year 60 AD, some 28 years after Peter was supposed to have taken his position as Pope in Rome.

Now if Peter was already in Rome, why would Jesus Christ want Paul to be His witness in that city as he was in Jerusalem? Apostle Peter did more witnessing in Jerusalem than did Apostle Paul. He had set up the first Church of God there, suffered imprisonment and persecution, and had he not fled that city in a hurry, he would have lost his life there as well. And that was long before Paul was even converted to Christianity. So if Jesus Christ wanted one who had witnessed Him in Jerusalem to do the same in Rome, He would have chosen Peter, but Peter was no longer available because he had gone to witness Jesus to the 'pilgrims of the dispersion', as we shall see. Also, if Peter had already been Pope in Rome, there would have been no need for Paul to be Jesus' witness there as he was in Jerusalem, for that would have meant undermining Peter's work. But we know that the Holy Spirit did not allow them to build on each other's foundation.

<sup>20</sup>And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation. <sup>21</sup>but as it is written: "To whom He was not announced, they shall see; And those who have not heard shall understand."

<sup>22</sup>For this reason I also have been much hindered from coming to you. <sup>23</sup>But now no longer having a place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you, <sup>24</sup>whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you." (Rom. 15:20-24).

Apostle Paul was hindered at first from going to Rome because he had not yet finished his job in Asia Minor and Greece. The Holy Spirit knew that he would not come back after he went to Rome.

Now clearly if Apostle Peter had already laid the foundation of the Church of God in Rome, Apostle Paul would not have been allowed to build another foundation or to build on the foundation laid by Apostle Peter. So contrary to what the Catholic encyclopedia says, in the year 60 AD, when the epistle to the Romans was written, Apostle Peter was not in Rome.

In the conclusion of that epistle, Apostle Paul greeted and named just about every Christian in that city. Apostle Peter was not among them. Notice:

<sup>1</sup>"I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea, <sup>2</sup>that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also.

<sup>3</sup>Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, <sup>4</sup>who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. <sup>5</sup>Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Greet my beloved Epaphroditus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia to Christ. <sup>6</sup>Greet Mary, who labored much for us. <sup>7</sup>Greet Andronicus and Junia, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. <sup>8</sup>Greet Amplias, my beloved in the Lord. <sup>9</sup>Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and Stachys, my beloved. <sup>10</sup>Greet Apelles, approved in Christ. Greet those who are of the *household* of Aristobulus. <sup>11</sup>Greet Herodion, my countryman. Greet those who are of the *household* of Narcissus who are in the Lord. <sup>12</sup>Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, who have labored in the Lord. Greet the beloved Persis, who labored much in the Lord. <sup>13</sup>Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine. <sup>14</sup>Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren who are with them. <sup>15</sup>Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them. <sup>16</sup>Greet one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ greet you.

<sup>17</sup>Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. <sup>18</sup>For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple. <sup>19</sup>For your obedience has become known to all. Therefore I am glad on your behalf; but I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil. <sup>20</sup>And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen. (Rom.16:1-20).

Apostle Paul is telling the "brethren" of Rome to note those who cause divisions and offences among them and avoid them. Now is it conceivable that Apostle Paul would have done that if Apostle Peter was their Pope? Not a mention of Peter anywhere in this lengthy epistle. And something else: Paul mentions Priscilla and Aquila and "the church that is in their house". They were not meeting in palaces or some other great buildings, but in the people's houses. Rome however, had a mighty religious leader, who lived luxuriously in great palaces, to whom the whole of the Empire paid obeisance. Who was

that leader? Not Apostle Peter to be sure, but one called Pontifex Maximus, or the Pontiff. Here are excerpts from a couple of articles, one from Wikipedia and another from Google about the Roman religion of that time.

"The **Pontifex Maximus** was the high priest of the Ancient Roman *College of Pontiffs*. This was the most important position in the Ancient Roman religion, open only to patricians, until 254 BC, when a plebeian first occupied this post. A distinctly religious office under the early Roman Republic, it gradually became politicized until, beginning with Augustus, it was subsumed into the Imperial office. It was last held by the Christian Roman Emperor Gratian until the title passed over to the Bishop of Rome.

Today, "Pontifex Maximus" is one of the titles of the Bishop of Rome as Pope of the Catholic Church. As a papal title, the translation **Supreme Pontiff** is customary when writing in English, in which the Latin term *Pontifex Maximus* refers to the former pagan Roman post. But Latin is still the official language of the Catholic Church and of the Vatican, and the Latin form *Pontifex Maximus* is still used in reference to the Pope when writing or speaking in that language. The title appears regularly on buildings, monuments and coins (among other things) dedicated by or otherwise made during each specific pontificate."

The *Collegium Pontificum* or College of Pontiffs was the most important priesthood of ancient Rome. The foundation of this sacred college is attributed to the second king of Rome, Numa Pompilius. It is safe to say that the *collegium* was tasked to act as advisers of the *rex* (king) in all matters of religion. The *collegium* was headed by the *pontifex maximus* and all the *pontifices* held their office for life. Prior to its institution, all religious and administrative functions and powers were naturally exercised by the king. Very little is known about this period of Roman history regarding the pontiffs as the main historical sources are lost and some of the events from this period are regarded as semi-legendary or mythical. Most of the records of ancient Rome were destroyed when it was sacked by the Gauls in 390 BC. Accounts from this early period come from excerpts of writings made during the Republican Period."

"The pontifex maximus was not a real magistrate: he did not serve for a fixed period but for life, and he remained, officially, a citizen. As the title suggests, the pontifex maximus was 'the greatest' or chairman of the college of the *pontifices*, 'priests'. They were responsible for the Roman state cult as a whole and for several cults in particular, viz. the cults that had no priestly college of their own (such as the *augures*, the *decemviri sacris faciundis* and the *fetiales*). The number of pontifices continued to grow. There were originally five 'real' pontifices, after the Lex Ogulnia (300/299 BCE) nine, after Sulla fifteen, and after Julius Caesar sixteen. Another member was the *rex sacrorum* ('king of the sacrifices') who performed the religious acts that the king had usually done. There were three (later 15) flamines, special priests for the main gods, and there were three mysterious *pontifices minores*. Finally, the high priest was also responsible for the eighteen priestesses of the goddess Vesta. This may have been his most important duty, and it comes as no surprise that the residence of the pontifex maximus, the domus publica, was next to the monastery of these women.

The main task of the pontifices was to maintain the *pax deorum*, the 'peace with the gods'. To obtain this goal, they gave advice to the magistrates, interpreted the omens, controlled the calendar and oversaw funerals. The pontifex maximus was responsible for a large collection of omens (*annales maximus*); every year, he wrote down the celestial and other signs, and added the events that had followed the omens, so that future generation would be able to better understand the divine will.

Until the Lex Ogulnia, all pontifices were patricians; this law introduced the possibility that plebeians were to be pontifex as well. The pontifex maximus was elected by the *comitia tributa*, an assembly of the people that was divided into voting districts. After 104 BCE, the ordinary pontifices were also elected - until then, they had been coopted.

Julius Caesar was elected pontifex maximus in 63 BCE and kept the office until his death. The house where he spent the night before he was killed, was the domus publica. After his death, Marcus Aemilius Lepidus became pontifex maximus (44-12 BCE); when he died, the emperor Augustus became responsible for the state cult. He also put an end to the election of the pontifices. From then on, a position in the college of pontifices was a sign of special imperial favor, comparable to a decoration in our age.

The word *pontifex* is sometimes explained as 'bridge builder', but is in fact related to the Etruscan word *pont*, 'road', and means something like 'preparer of the road'. The pope still calls himself *pontifex maximus*. Because the pontifex maximus was not a real magistrate, he was not allowed to wear the toga with the purple border. However, he could be recognized by the iron knife (*secespita*).

In 381, the Roman emperor Gratian was the first to decline to use the title of pontifex maximus. It was accepted by the pope."

We can deduct a few points from these articles.

1. The title 'Pontifex Maximus' had its origins in Rome's pagan past. Would Apostle Peter have accepted a pagan title for himself? And if he would not, why have the later Popes accepted it? They did so for one reason: they had always considered it to be their title by right. Pontifex Maximus meant 'high priest', which the emperors never were. The emperors had usurped it for a while, for the prestige and honor which it gave them, but they could not sustain that claim and in the end they gave it back to its rightful owners. The Popes accepted it unhesitatingly, even though it had nothing to do with the religion of Jesus Christ and everything to do with Rome's ancient pagan past.

2. Roman religious establishment was an extraordinarily complex and hierarchical one. On what basis would that establishment have accepted an alien as its leader? Remember, Apostle Paul found only a handful of Christians in Rome, and none of them was of a renowned name.

3. Although the title 'Pontifex Maximus' had been taken over by the emperors, Roman religious leaders still retained the titles of *rex sacrorum* (sacred or divine king), and *rex sacrificulum* ('king of the sacrifices'). These titles speak for themselves. The first assumed that the Pontiffs' position was of divine origin, while the second made them kings of sacrifices. Remember, they even sacrificed humans in their ceremonial games in those days. All their public ceremonies had the blessing of the emperor and the religious leader. The gladiators used to say to their leader: 'those who are about to die salute you', and the Coliseum would erupt in applause and stand in awe. The emperors took that honor upon themselves for a while, but long before and after them that honour belonged to the Roman religious leaders.

On what basis then would a foreigner like Peter have been elevated to that supreme religious position? And would he have accepted it? It would have put him in opposition to Jesus Christ who forbade His followers to take such honorific titles.

4. The Roman religious leader was also "responsible for the eighteen priestesses of the goddess Vesta". Would Apostle Peter have accepted to be in charge of eighteen priestesses of the goddess Vesta? In the first Churches of God, there were no monks and no nuns. Of the main apostles, only Paul was celibate and while he told his followers that it would be good for them all to be like him, he made no doctrine about it. Apostle Peter, on the other hand, was married even before he was called to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. In his first epistle, written from Babylon, he mentioned his wife and a son. <sup>13</sup>She who is in Babylon, elect together with you, greets you; and so does Mark my son. <sup>14</sup>Greet one another with a kiss of love." (1 Peter 5:13).

This epistle is dated in the year 60. What was Peter doing in Babylon if he was Pope of the Roman Church?

5. The Roman religious leader was also responsible for reading omens. And how did the Romans do that? By looking at the entrails of animals: chicken, lambs, pigs, etc... Can one imagine an apostle of Jesus Christ doing such a thing?

It is interesting to note that just as Paul sent an epistle to the Romans in which he named the Christians of that city among whom Peter did not appear, he also sent an epistle from Rome to the Colossians in which he again listed the Christians of that city among whom Peter once again did not appear.

<sup>7</sup>Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me. <sup>8</sup>I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that he may know your circumstances and comfort your hearts, <sup>9</sup>with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is *one* of you. They will make known to you all things which *are happening* here.

<sup>10</sup>Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him), <sup>11</sup>and Jesus who is called Justus. These *are my* only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision; they have proved to be a comfort to me. <sup>12</sup>Epaphras, who is *one* of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. <sup>13</sup>For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you, and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis. <sup>14</sup>Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you. <sup>15</sup>Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church that *is* in <sup>16</sup>his house.

<sup>16</sup>Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea. <sup>17</sup>And say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfil it."

<sup>18</sup>This salutation by my own hand—Paul. Remember my chains. Grace *be* with you. Amen." (Col. 4:7-18).

The epistle to the Colossians was written in the year 64, four years after the epistle to the Romans. Yet in this time the Church of Rome instead of growing had diminished. None of the Christians mentioned in the first epistle appear in the second. And of course, just as in the epistle to the Romans, the Colossian epistle does not mention Peter. So in the year 64, just three years before he was supposed to have been martyred in that city, Apostle Peter still had not appeared in Rome. Where does that leave the Catholic claim that Peter was its Pope from the year 32 to the year 67?

Now have a look at this:

"After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth. <sup>2</sup>And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them. <sup>3</sup>So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers. <sup>4</sup>And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks." (Acts 18:1-4).

This chapter of the book of Acts, describes events of the year 54 AD. At that time, Christians had not yet been distinguished from the Jews. In that year, Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome, hence all the Christians. What happened to Peter if he was already the Pope of the Church of Rome?

And if you want still more proof that Peter never went to Rome, notice what the Jews told Paul when he went there.

<sup>16</sup>Now when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard; but Paul was permitted to dwell by himself with the soldier who guarded him.

<sup>17</sup>And it came to pass after three days that Paul called the leaders of the Jews together. So when they had come together, he said to them: "Men *and* brethren, though I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans, <sup>18</sup>who, when they had examined me, wanted to let *me* go, because there was no cause for putting me to death. <sup>19</sup>But when the Jews spoke against *it*, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar, not that I had anything of which to accuse my nation. <sup>20</sup>For this reason therefore I have called for you, to see *you* and speak with *you*, because for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain." <sup>21</sup>Then they said to him, "We neither received letters from Judea concerning you, nor have any of the brethren who came reported or spoken any evil of you. <sup>22</sup>But we desire to hear from you what you think; for concerning this sect, we know that it is spoken against everywhere." <sup>23</sup>So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at *his* lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening. <sup>24</sup>And some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved. <sup>25</sup>So when they did not agree among themselves, they departed after Paul had said one word: "The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers, <sup>26</sup>saying,

*"Go to this people and say: "Hearing you will hear, and shall not understand; And seeing you will see, and not perceive;*

<sup>27</sup>*For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them."*

<sup>28</sup>"Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!" <sup>29</sup>And when he had said these words, the Jews departed and had a great dispute among themselves. <sup>30</sup>Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, <sup>31</sup>preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him." (Acts 28:16-31).

If Peter had been in Rome before that time, he was an extraordinarily ineffective preacher, for those Jews knew nothing about this 'sect' except that was 'spoken against everywhere'. But Jesus Christ did not choose Peter to be His chief apostle for nothing. He was courageous, gifted and a good orator. And since he was the Apostle to the circumcision – to the Jews in other words – it would have been inconceivable that he would go to Rome and not speak to the Jews at all.

When Paul was tried in Rome, he said that all people forsook him.

<sup>1</sup>I charge *you* therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: <sup>2</sup>Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. <sup>3</sup>For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; <sup>4</sup>and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. <sup>5</sup>But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil your ministry.

<sup>6</sup>For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. <sup>7</sup>I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. <sup>8</sup>Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

<sup>9</sup>Be diligent to come to me quickly; <sup>10</sup>for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica—Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia. <sup>11</sup>Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry. <sup>12</sup>And Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. <sup>13</sup>Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas when you come—and the books, especially the parchments. <sup>14</sup>Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works. <sup>15</sup>You also must beware of him, for he has greatly resisted our words. <sup>16</sup>At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them. <sup>17</sup>But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and *that* all the Gentiles might hear. Also I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. <sup>18</sup>And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve *me* for His heavenly kingdom. To Him *be* glory forever and ever. Amen!

Would Apostle Peter have abandoned Paul also if he were in Rome at that time? You can be absolutely sure that he would never have done that.

After setting up the first Church in Jerusalem, the Holy Spirit led Peter to convert the first Gentiles. But after baptising and granting them the Holy Spirit, he went over to preach to the lost tribes of the house of Israel.

<sup>1</sup>Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, <sup>2</sup>elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied." (1 Peter 1:2).

The pilgrims of the dispersion were the scattered Israelites and Jews who fled from the conquering armies of the Assyrians and Babylonians. Later, Apostle Peter went to Babylon because that is where the tribes of Judah were originally taken captive. This is another reason why Apostle Peter could not have gone to Rome. The Jews of Rome had gone there for commercial reasons, and there would not have been enough of them to warrant his presence there, especially after Caludius had ordered them to leave the city. Rome being the leading Gentile city of that time, it was Paul's role to lay the foundation for a Church of God in that city.

The question must be asked: if there is so much proof that Apostle Paul went to Rome, and none that Apostle Peter was its first Pope, why did the Catholic Church not list Paul as its first Pope and not Peter?

Because it needed Jesus' mission to Apostle Peter to conquer the world, not Paul's mission to just convert it.

<sup>18</sup>And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. <sup>19</sup>And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." (Mat. 16:18-19).

The Vatican had to lie in order to apportion Peter's authority. It could do so only after sufficient time had passed to wipe out earlier memories and records, and set up a fallacious list of Popes. Once it did that, it not only conquered the world, but committed unspeakable atrocities in the name of Jesus Christ against His very followers.

## Why Capital Punishment Will Never Be Abolished In the Eyes of God

When Saddam Hussein was judged for the myriad of crimes that he committed against the Iraqi and other peoples, the Vatican was the first to argue that he should not receive the death penalty. And when he did receive it, they did their best to prevent it from being carried out.

**"Clemency call for Saddam"** "AUSTRALIAN social justice advocates have supported a Vatican call for clemency for former Iraqi president, Saddam Hussein. The former dictator was sentenced to hang by a Baghdad court on Sunday after being found guilty of crimes against humanity. Director of the Uniya Jesuit Social Justice Centre, Mary Bryant, has opposed the sentence, saying "all life is sacred". "All people are created in the image and likeness of God and hence no-one has the right, no matter what the justification, to take away the life that has been given," she said. "Catholics have a social and moral responsibility to advocate for the sacredness of life."

"We must be ready to advocate and support the sacredness of life for all human beings no matter what the challenges are or the obstacles we face." The greatest challenge in life is offering forgiveness to those who are least deserving, she says." (Victoria Brooks, *The Daily Telegraph*, Nov. 12, 2007).

Now if all people are created in the image and likeness of God, who can argue against that? God does!

<sup>5</sup>Surely for your lifeblood I will demand a *reckoning*; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man. <sup>6</sup>Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man." (Gen. 9:5-6).

Did you get it? God says that murderers must pay with their life because they have taken life which was made in the image of God, while the Catholic Church says that murderers should not pay with their life because they are made in the image of God.

Now who do you think is right, God or the Catholic Church? Isn't it amazing how many millions, even billions, of people believe the Catholic Church and how few believe the Scriptures – the very Word of God?

Now if murderers are not made in the image of God, in whose image are they made? Herein lays a great mystery, for although we may all look the same on the outside, we are not the same on the inside. What makes us look like God is not our outside appearance, but our inward character. Murderers do not look like God on the inside, and that is why they must pay with their life for taking the life of people who have God's character. In whose image are murderers made then? In the image of their father – the Devil!

<sup>39</sup>They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. <sup>40</sup>But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. <sup>41</sup>You do the deeds of your father." Then they said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father—God."

<sup>42</sup>Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. <sup>43</sup>Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. <sup>44</sup>You are of *your* father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *resources*, for he is a liar and the father of it. <sup>45</sup>But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. <sup>46</sup>Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? <sup>47</sup>He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God."

<sup>48</sup>Then the Jews answered and said to Him, "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?" (John 8: 39-48).

The children of the Devil, who bore his image character wise, accused Jesus Christ of being demon possessed. Isn't this how things are in the world these days too? Jesus Christ performed miracles and spoke the truth of God, and yet they accused Him of being demon possessed. They denied that they were planning to kill Jesus Christ, and what did they do in the end? They crucified Him! And for what reason? That He spoke in the name of God, and made Himself the Son of God.

<sup>31</sup>"Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him. <sup>32</sup>Jesus answered them, "Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?" <sup>33</sup>The Jews answered Him, saying, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God." <sup>34</sup>Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your law, *'I said, "You are gods"'*? <sup>35</sup>If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), <sup>36</sup>do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'? <sup>37</sup>If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; <sup>38</sup>but if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father *is* in Me, and I in Him." <sup>39</sup>Therefore they sought again to seize Him, but He escaped out of their hand." (John 10:31-39).

Who do you think was made in the image of God, Jesus Christ or His murderers? The Vatican would say that both He and they, but Jesus Christ said that they were children of the Devil therefore they could not have been made in the image of God. Murderers are never made in the image of God, and that is why the death penalty for those who take the life of people who are made in the image of God will never be abolished. Not now, nor ever!

For ordinary people to become children of God, to be made in His image in other words, they must repent of their evil deeds. But do you think the Jews have ever repented of their deed? Many years ago, when I was living in Canada, I was walking with a converted Jew through a shopping plaza in Toronto in which there were a lot of Jewish shops. At one time, I said something about Jesus Christ. Upon hearing that name, my companion quickly made a sign to me to keep quiet and not mention that name in that place. I was stunned by his reaction. Surely the Jews would not be so bent against Jesus Christ as to be offended in what was then a Christian nation by someone mentioning that name in passing.

He assured me that they would be, especially so since we went there to buy unleavened bread for the Passover.

By the way, I said Canada was then a Christian nation, because in the meantime it has changed its religion to homosexuality. In that country, homosexuals get "married", lampoon, ridicule, and say anything they want about Christians, but heaven help him who says anything negative about homosexuals. And churches have supported that legislation.

Talking about homosexuals, do you think they are made in the image of God? The Vatican would argue 'yes', for it "profoundly respects them", but what do the Scriptures say?

<sup>18</sup>For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, <sup>19</sup>because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown *it* to them. <sup>20</sup>For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, <sup>21</sup>because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. <sup>22</sup>Professing to be wise, they became fools, <sup>23</sup>and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

<sup>24</sup>Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonour their bodies among themselves, <sup>25</sup>who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

<sup>26</sup>For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. <sup>27</sup>Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

<sup>28</sup>And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; <sup>29</sup>being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; *they are* whisperers, <sup>30</sup>backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, <sup>31</sup>undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; <sup>32</sup>who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them." (Rom.1:18-32).

"Those who practice such things are deserving of death". And this is not the Old Testament, but the New Testament. And yet what has the Vatican done with its myriad of priests who have abused children in this manner? It moved them around from parish to parish so that they could abuse more children.

For millennia, the Catholic Church burned and killed people whose only 'crime' was to possess a Bible, let alone obey it, yet now it argues that murderers and homosexuals must not receive the death penalty because they are made in the image of God, in exact opposition to what God says. In so doing, it is trying to escape the consequences of its own sins.

Can you see now why this institution takes an opposite position to God on the matter of capital punishment?

Jesus Christ said that He did not come to destroy the law – the Ten Commandments – but to fulfil them.

<sup>17</sup>"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil. <sup>18</sup>For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. <sup>19</sup>Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>20</sup>For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven." (Mat.5:17-20).

Why then did He forgive the woman that was caught in adultery? Because she repented on the spot, and because her captors were hypocrites! Where was the man with whom she committed adultery? The law required that they both be put to death. The truth is that they did not bring her to Jesus because they necessarily wanted her dead, but because they wanted to catch Him speaking or acting against the Law of Moses.

Jesus was faced with a situation that required the Wisdom of Solomon. Since He was greater than Solomon (Mat.12:42), He gave them an answer that they did not expect. Then He did not look in their eyes to challenge them, but stooped down and wrote on the ground, giving them the chance to slip away quietly, which they did.

The woman saw death in her face. When her accusers left and she was alone, she could have run for her life too, but instead she stood there motionless in front of Jesus Christ. Only God knows what was going on in her mind at that time.

"When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." (John 8:10-11).

This example is often used by people who say that there is no death penalty in Christianity and plead for its abolition all over the world. But let us consider it in the context of both the Old and New Testaments.

First of all, one must never forget that Jesus Christ said He came to fulfil the law not to destroy it. (Mat.5:17).

Second, the Scriptures tell us that God does not change. (Mal.3:6). Therefore His eternal laws do not change either.

Third, it was the dietary and sacrificial laws that were changed in the New Testament. These were of a temporary nature, being designed to bring us to Christ and no further (Gal.3:24).

Fourth, Jesus Christ did not come to be a judge of Israel (Luke 12:14). Those who brought the woman to Him knew this, but instead of taking her to those who were judges of such matters, took her to Him so that they might catch Him. Instead, He caught them in their hypocrisy! He could have said, 'I have not been sent to be a judge of Israel, so go to those who are judges, but had He said that, most likely He would have condemned her to death. Clearly, He did not want that and wanted to save her life.

Fifth, in the Bible, sexual sins are not unforgivable, as are blasphemies against the Holy Spirit. God often used sexual misdemeanour to refresh the blood line of His kings. Abraham, Jacob, Judah, and David are some of the examples of people who were involved in sexual acts that were not kosher under the law. But they were all forgiven because they repented of them when brought to their attention and did not commit them again.

Apostle John said that some sins lead to death, while others do not.



<sup>16</sup>If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin *which does not lead* to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not *leading* to death. There is sin *leading* to death. I do not say that he should pray about that. <sup>17</sup>All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not *leading* to death. <sup>18</sup>We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him. <sup>19</sup>We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies *under the sway* of the wicked one. <sup>20</sup>And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. <sup>21</sup>Little children, keep yourselves from idols. " (1John 5:16-21).

Whoever is born of God does not sin – does not commit murder. These are the people that are made in the image of God, not murderers who are born in the image of their father the Devil. The fact that physically speaking they all look the same does not matter. What matters is their character, and in that they could not be further apart. Here is the difference.

<sup>25</sup>"Husbands love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, <sup>26</sup>that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, <sup>27</sup>that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. <sup>28</sup>So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup>For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord *does* the church. <sup>30</sup>For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. <sup>31</sup>For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." <sup>32</sup>This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. <sup>33</sup>Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects *her* husband." Eph. 5:25-33).

Jesus Christ is preparing a bride for Himself "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and without blemish". Physically speaking, members of His Church – His bride – look the same as any other human being. Spiritually speaking however, they are worlds apart. Some are black on the inside, being children of darkness, while the other are shining on the inside, being children of light.

<sup>8</sup>For you were once darkness, but now *you are* light in the Lord. Walk as children of light <sup>9</sup>(for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), <sup>10</sup>finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. <sup>11</sup>And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose *them*. <sup>12</sup>For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. <sup>13</sup>But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. <sup>14</sup>Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light." <sup>15</sup>See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, <sup>16</sup>redeeming the time, because the days are evil." (Eph.5:8-15).

This then is the difference between children of God and children of the Devil, children of light and children of darkness, each being made in the image of their father. The first are heading towards a glorious eternal future, while the second towards an inglorious eternal darkness and damnation.

<sup>10</sup>"When Jesus heard *it*, He marvelled, and said to those who followed, "Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel! <sup>11</sup>And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>12</sup>But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Mat. 8:10-12).

<sup>11</sup>"But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. <sup>12</sup>So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. <sup>13</sup>Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast *him* into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' <sup>14</sup>"For many are called, but few *are* chosen." (Mat.22:11-14).

So, did Jesus Christ change the Law of God regarding capital punishment? To do so would have meant to put murderers and their victims on an equal footing. But God says that murderers are not made in his image, and can never have a place in His Kingdom? This is why the Scriptures say: "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man." It was so in the Old Testament, it is so in the New Testament, it will be so in the Millennium Kingdom, and it will be so forever more in the Kingdom of God. The law regarding capital punishment – the sixth Commandment – could never be abolished, because that law preserves the sacredness of life, and it shall do so forever more. If anyone tells you otherwise, he does not speak according to the Word of God.

Another argument that is often brought into this discussion is that innocent people may lose their life. Well, if anyone ever loses his life innocently, happy is that man. He had assured himself of eternal life in the Kingdom of God.

The truth is that there is another sinister reason why Catholic and other Churches are pushing for the abolition of the death penalty. Imagine what would have happened if such was the law at the time of Jesus Christ. You would have no Saviour now. Had the Devil and his servants known that they were digging their own graves, they would not have killed Him. Now they do not want to be trapped doing the same mistake, for they know that before the return of Jesus Christ, God's last two witnesses must also be killed. Here is their story.

<sup>3</sup>And I will give *power* to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth."

<sup>4</sup>These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth. <sup>5</sup>And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner. <sup>6</sup>These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire.

<sup>7</sup>When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. <sup>8</sup>And their dead bodies *will lie* in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. <sup>9</sup>Then *those* from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations <sup>10</sup>will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. <sup>11</sup>And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.

<sup>11</sup>Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. <sup>12</sup>And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them. <sup>13</sup>In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven." (Rev.11:3-13).

Those who push for the abolition of the death penalty want to change the course of history. They know that Jesus Christ cannot return until all biblical prophecies are fulfilled. They also know that when He returns, it will be the end of their reign upon this world. Only a blind person would not see that the events associated with the two witnesses are obvious in our world today.

# The Sabbath a Point of Contention Once Again

Jesus Christ left no doubt which day He expects to find His followers observing when He returns to this earth. This is what He told them when they asked Him about it.

<sup>15</sup>“Therefore when you see the *‘abomination of desolation,’* spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand), <sup>16</sup>“then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. <sup>17</sup>Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. <sup>18</sup>And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. <sup>19</sup>But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! <sup>20</sup>And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. <sup>21</sup>For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. <sup>22</sup>And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened.” (Mat. 24:15-22)

The reason they must pray that their flight from the Great Tribulation should not occur on the Sabbath is because that is a day of rest and worship, and they are not allowed to carry heavy burdens on that day.

Amazingly, Sabbath observing people are once again embroiled in a fierce debate on how to observe this day.

Two years ago, we received the following email from a congregation that simply signs itself as ‘Blow the Trumpet’

“Dear friends, For nearly two years Blow the Trumpet has pressed God’s Church to seriously address the issue of His people dining out on the Sabbath. For the most part leaders have attempted to dismiss this topic as unimportant as well as divisive. Some groups have even directed their members to refrain from discussing it altogether and have actually warned them that failure to conform to the church’s position could result in expulsion. Blow the Trumpet has written extensively on this subject and continues to receive words of encouragement from scores of members who have humbly sought God’s wisdom on this critical end time issue. We invite their comments and will always respond.

Recently we have received numerous requests to respond to a paper written by the United Church of God, defending this practice. We have done so in a series of articles that can be accessed by clicking the following link: <http://blowthetrumpet.org/TheUnitedChurchofGodvsASabbathTest.htm> . Respectfully, “Blow the Trumpet.”

We did not reply to this email and paid no further attention to it. We do not enter into discussion with people who write anonymously, or who hide behind epithets or some other subterfuges. Last year, they sent us this email again.

Now you would think that since they had received “encouragement from scores of members who have humbly sought God’s wisdom on this critical end time issue”, they would have enough to settle this question once and for all, but no, they still want our opinion. Well, we will give it to them; we just hope they will like it.

The easiest way to settle this question would be to go to the Jews for to them were given the ‘oracles’ of God, as Apostle Paul called the laws, judgments and statutes that God gave to Moses.

<sup>1</sup>What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? <sup>2</sup>Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God. <sup>3</sup>For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? <sup>4</sup>Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar.” (Rom. 3:1-4)

The apostles and the early Churches of God had no doubt which was the correct day of rest and worship, or how to observe it. They kept the Sabbath and worshiped on that day for almost three centuries, until the Council of Nicaea, after which this became a ‘crime’, and the Romans forced everyone to observe the Day of the Sun instead. Emperor Constantine used to worship his sun-god both before and after that Council. This is what Encarta Encyclopaedia says on this topic.

“Constantine was born Flavius Valerius Constantinus at Nis, in what is now Serbia, son of the commander Constantius Chlorus (later Constantius I) and Helena (later St Helena), a camp follower. Constantius became Co-Emperor in 305. Constantine, who had shown military talent in the East, joined his father in Britain in 306. He was popular with the troops, who proclaimed him Emperor when Constantius died later the same year. Over the next two decades, however, Constantine had to fight his rivals for the throne, and he did not finally establish himself as sole ruler until 324.

Following the example of his father and earlier 3rd-century emperors, Constantine in his early life was a solar henotheist, believing that the Sun god, Sol, was the visible manifestation of an invisible “Highest God” (summus deus), who was the principle behind the universe. This god was thought to be the companion of the Roman emperor. Constantine’s adherence to this faith is evident from his claim of having had a vision of the Sun god in 310 while in a grove of Apollo in Gaul. In 312, on the eve of a battle against Maxentius, his rival in Italy, Constantine is reported to have dreamt that Christ appeared to him and told him to inscribe the first two letters of his name (“XP” in Greek) on the shields of his troops. The next day he is said to have seen a cross superimposed on the Sun and the words “in this sign you will be the victor” (usually given in Latin, in hoc signo vinces). Constantine then defeated Maxentius at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, near Rome. The Senate hailed the victor as saviour of the Roman people. Thus, Constantine, who had been a pagan solar worshipper, now looked upon the Christian deity as a bringer of victory. Persecution of the Christians was ended, and Constantine’s co-emperor, Licinius, joined him in issuing the Edict of Milan (313), which mandated toleration of Christians in the Roman Empire. As guardian of Constantine’s favoured religion, the Church was then given legal rights and large financial donations . . .

Constantine intervened in ecclesiastical affairs to achieve unity; he presided over the first ecumenical council of the Church at Nicaea in 325. He also began the building of Constantinople in 326 on the site of ancient Greek Byzantium. The city was completed in 330 (later expanded), given Roman institutions, and beautified by ancient Greek works of art. In addition, Constantine built churches in the Holy Land, where his mother (also a Christian) supposedly found the True Cross on which Jesus was crucified. The emperor was baptized shortly before his death, on May 22, 337.

Constantine unified a tottering empire, reorganized the Roman state, and set the stage for the final victory of Christianity at the end of the 4th century. Many modern scholars accept the sincerity of his religious conviction. His conversion was a gradual process; at first he probably associated Christ with the victorious Sun god. By the time of the Council of Nicaea (325), however, he was completely Christian, but still tolerated paganism among his subjects. Although criticized by his enemies as a proponent of a crude and false religion, Constantine strengthened the Roman Empire and ensured its survival in the East. As the first emperor to rule in the name of Christ, he was a major figure in the foundation of medieval Christian Europe.”

Here now is a quote from the “Apostolic Letter sent by John Paul II to the Bishops, Clergy, and Faithful of the Catholic Church on Keeping the Lord’s Day Holy”. It is a long letter, but we will resume ourselves to just the most important paragraph on this topic. Please note our inserts in square brackets, which we will comment upon afterwards.

**“The first day of the week:** It was for this reason [*that Christ rose on that day*] that, from Apostolic times, “the first day after the Sabbath”, the first day of the week, began to shape the rhythm of life for Christ’s disciples (cf. *1 Cor 16:2*). [*The first lie*] “The first day after the Sabbath” was also the day upon which the faithful of Troas were gathered “for the breaking of bread”, when Paul bade them farewell and miraculously restored the young Eutychus to life (cf. *Acts 20:7-12*). [*Second lie*] The Book of Revelation gives evidence of the practice of calling the first day of the week “the Lord’s Day” (1:10). [*Third lie*] This would now be a characteristic distinguishing Christians from the world around them. [*Fourth lie*]. As early as the beginning of the second century, it was noted by Pliny the Younger, governor of Bithynia, in his report on the Christian practice “of gathering together on a set day before sunrise and singing among themselves a hymn to Christ as to a god”. And when Christians spoke of the “Lord’s Day”, they did so giving to this term the full sense of the Easter proclamation: “Jesus Christ is Lord” (*Phil 2:11*; cf. *Acts 2:36*; *1 Cor 12:3*). [*Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth lies*]. Thus Christ was given the same title which the Septuagint used to translate what in the revelation of the Old Testament was the unutterable name of God: YHWH.”

Now our comments: *The First lie*: “From Apostolic times, “the first day after the Sabbath”, the first day of the week, began to shape the rhythm of life for Christ’s disciples (cf. *1 Cor 16:2*).” All apostles and early Churches of God kept the Sabbath and the other Holy Days of God exactly at the time that the Jews kept them. And they did so until the Council of Nicaea in the year 325. John Paul II gave *1 Cor.16:2* as comparison point. Let us look at it to see if it confirms his thesis.

<sup>14</sup>Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: <sup>2</sup>On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.” (1 *Cor,16:1-2*)

We quoted both first and second verses so as to give a more complete picture. Apostle Paul gave instructions to the Corinthians, not to observe the first day of the week as a Holy Day, but to work on it – to make a collection for the saints in Jerusalem. In those days, they did not collect just money on a platter or in a basket as they do in churches these days. They collected food, and cloths, and other such necessities. That is why they had to do it on a working day not on the Sabbath.

*Second lie*: “The first day after the Sabbath” was also the day upon which the faithful of Troas were gathered “for the breaking of bread”, when Paul bade them farewell and miraculously restored the young Eutychus to life (cf. *Acts 20:7-12*).

We do not contest the fact that they broke bread on the first day of the week. What we contest is using this Scripture to turn that into a Holy Day. Since ancient times, braking bread simply meant having a meal.

<sup>18</sup>When they came to Reuel their father, he said, “How *is it that* you have come so soon today?”

<sup>19</sup>And they said, “An Egyptian delivered us from the hand of the shepherds, and he also drew enough water for us and watered the flock.” <sup>20</sup>So he said to his daughters, “And where *is he? Why is it that* you have left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread.” (*Ex.2:18-20*).

<sup>54</sup>Then Jacob offered a sacrifice on the mountain, and called his brethren to eat bread. And they ate bread and stayed all night on the mountain.” (*Gen.31:54*).

This is exactly what Apostle Paul did at Troas too.

<sup>11</sup>“Now when he had come up, had broken bread and eaten, and talked a long while, even till daybreak, he departed.” (*Acts 20:11*).

They did not break bread because that was a Holy Day, but because they were hungry and needed to eat.

Neither the Jews nor the early Christians broke bread on the Sabbath for religious purposes as do the Catholics and others on Sundays these days. Using this Scripture to prove that Christians worshiped on Sundays is extremely dishonest.

What Apostle Paul did on that occasion had absolutely nothing to do with taking the ‘Eucharist’ and everything to do with just having a meal. Taking ‘Eucharist’ was not a practice in the early Churches of God. The only time when bread was broken in a religious context was at Passover, which the Catholic Church does not observe. (See *1 Cor 11:17-34*).

*Third lie*: “The Book of Revelation gives evidence of the practice of calling the first day of the week “the Lord’s Day” (1:10). Let us look at *Rev.1:10* to see if it says such a thing.

<sup>10</sup>I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, <sup>11</sup>saying, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last,” and, “What you see, write in a book and send *it* to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.” (*Rev.1:10-11*).

Where is the connection between this passage and the first day of the week? You will not find the term, “Lord’s Day” connected with the first day of the week anywhere in the Bible. In fact, this is the only place where this term is used. The term, “The Day of the Lord” however is found in many places, and in every case it speaks of a terrible day for humanity. Let us give you a few examples from the three major prophets of the Bible.

<sup>6</sup>Wail, for the day of the LORD *is* at hand! It will come as destruction from the Almighty. Therefore all hands will be limp, Every man’s heart will melt, And they will be afraid. Pangs and sorrows will take hold of *them*; They will be in pain as a woman in childbirth; They will be amazed at one another; Their faces *will be like* flames. Behold, the day of the LORD comes, Cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger,

To lay the land desolate; And He will destroy its sinners from it. For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not give their light; The sun will be darkened in its going forth, And the moon will not cause its light to shine. <sup>11</sup>“I will punish the world for *its* evil, And the wicked for their iniquity; I will halt the arrogance of the proud, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. <sup>12</sup>I will make a mortal more rare than fine gold, a man more than the golden wedge of Ophir. <sup>13</sup>Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth will move out of her place, In the wrath of the LORD of hosts and in the day of His fierce anger.” (*Is. 13: 6-13*).

“For this *is* the day of the Lord GOD of hosts, a day of vengeance, that He may avenge Himself on His adversaries. The sword shall devour; It shall be satiated and made drunk with their blood; For the Lord GOD of hosts has a sacrifice in the north country by the River Euphrates.” (*Jer.46:10*).

<sup>1</sup>The word of the LORD came to me again, saying, <sup>2</sup>“Son of man, prophesy and say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “Wail, ‘Woe to the day!’ For the day *is* near, even the day of the LORD *is* near; It will be a day of clouds, the time of the Gentiles.” (*Ez. 30:1-3*).

So, the Day of the Lord is a day of anguish and pain for the world, a day that is yet to come. It’s time is right at the end of this age, when Jesus Christ returns to set up His Millennium Kingdom. No one knows when that day comes, other than

the Father. Neither does any one know in what day of the week it shall fall. So say the Scriptures, and so it shall be, and if anyone tells otherwise he is a liar.

<sup>36</sup>“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. <sup>37</sup>But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. <sup>38</sup>For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, <sup>39</sup>and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.” (Mat. 24:36-39).

Where then did the Catholic Church get the idea that the Day of the Lord falls on Sunday? Not from the Bible.

*Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth lies:* “And when Christians spoke of the “Lord’s Day”, they did so giving to this term the full sense of the Easter proclamation: “Jesus Christ is Lord” (*Phil 2:11*; cf. *Acts 2:36*; *1 Cor 12:3*).

Let us look at these three Bible references and see if they say what John Paul II said they do.

<sup>11</sup>and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (*Phil. 2:11*)

“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”  
(*Acts 2:36*)

<sup>3</sup>Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.” (*1Cor.12:3*).

Quite extraordinary, isn’t it? None of these Scriptures have anything to do with the Lord’s Day. Clearly this man, or whoever wrote this “Bull” for him, did not know the Bible or hoped that no one would check out these references.

Now let us look at the life of the apostles, and see what day of the week they observed and worshipped on.

<sup>11</sup>Therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and the next *day* came to Neapolis, <sup>12</sup>and from there to Philippi, which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a colony. And we were staying in that city for some days. <sup>13</sup>And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met *there*.”  
(*Acts 16:11-13*)

This journey took place in the year 53 AD, two decades after the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And in what day of the week was Apostle Paul praying with, and preaching to the Gentile Christians of Philippi? On the Sabbath, “as his custom was.”

<sup>1</sup>Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. <sup>2</sup>Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, <sup>3</sup>explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and *saying*, “This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ.” <sup>4</sup>And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas.”  
(*Acts 17:1-4*).

Here Apostle Paul was again preaching on the Sabbath, ‘as his custom was’ to both Jews and Greeks. Now if he were preaching to the Jews on the Sabbath and to the Greeks on Sunday, the Holy Spirit would not have inspired the author of the book of Acts to insert the words ‘as his custom was.’ Paul did not have one custom for Jews and another for the Greeks. Of course, if in his travels he happened to meet Christians on days of the week, he could not pass the opportunity to preach to them on those days. One could preach the Gospel of salvation on any day of the week, but one cannot work on the Sabbath just because he preached or used another day of the week for rest and worship.

<sup>10</sup>Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. <sup>11</sup>These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily *to find out* whether these things were so. <sup>12</sup>Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men.” (*Acts 17:10-12*).

Here Apostle Paul preached to both Jews and Greeks, and “many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men.” The word ‘Sabbath’ is not used but merely implied, for the Jews would not worship on any other day of the week.

<sup>1</sup>After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth. <sup>2</sup>And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them. <sup>3</sup>So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers. <sup>4</sup>And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.” (*Acts 18:1-4*).

As his custom was, Apostle Paul ‘reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.’

<sup>8</sup>And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. <sup>9</sup>But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. <sup>10</sup>And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.” (*Acts 19:8-10*).

For three months in the synagogue, then for two whole years in the house of Tyrannus, Paul preached to both Jews and Greeks. The Sabbath is not specifically mentioned, but could he have preached to the Jews on any other day? When he could no longer preach in the synagogue, he moved to a private house, but did not change the day of worship.

<sup>10</sup>Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. <sup>11</sup>These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily *to find out* whether these things were so. <sup>12</sup>Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men.” (*Acts 17:10-12*).

Whenever Paul went to a new city, he went to the synagogue first, where he always found both Jews and Gentiles.

Now notice something very interesting about the Bereans: “they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily *to find out* whether these things were so”.

Can you see why we always tell people to check out in the Scriptures what people preach? But this is not the interesting point that we want to make here. What Scriptures were the Bereans searching to find out whether these things were so? This was the year 53 AD, and the New Testament had not yet been written. With the possible exception of the synoptic Gospels, none of the other writings had yet been put on paper. Therefore the Bereans were searching none other than the Old Testament. And what were they searching for? The things regarding Jesus Christ! They did not search to find

out what day of the week was the right day of rest and worship, because that was not an issue at that time. For more than two centuries it was taken for granted that the day of rest and worship was the Sabbath. This is why the Greeks who sought the true God used to go to the synagogue and searched out the Jewish Scriptures.

Jesus Christ referred to His followers as Jews; therefore what was true of the Jews is true of the Christians.

<sup>8</sup>"And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, 'These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life: <sup>9</sup>"I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. <sup>10</sup>Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. <sup>11</sup>"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.'" (Rev.2:8-11)

<sup>7</sup>"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, 'These things says He who is holy, He who is true, "He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens": <sup>8</sup>"I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, <sup>9</sup>and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. <sup>10</sup>Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. <sup>11</sup>Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. <sup>12</sup>Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. <sup>13</sup>He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name." (Rev.3:7-12).

Now if Christians are Jews, they must observe the Sabbath, not the Day of the Sun, which the Romans had been observing for millennia before the Christian era. No matter how much Scripture twisting one does, he will never find justification for changing the day of worship from Sabbath to Sunday. The fact that Jesus Christ rose from the grave on the first day of the week, did not transform that into a day of rest and worship instead of the Sabbath. God has not given human beings the privilege of choosing for themselves their Holy Days or the day of rest and worship.

It is an extraordinary phenomenon that two thousand years after the advent of Christianity, both Jews by blood and Jews by faith have problems with keeping the Sabbath. Here is the polemic in which the Jews by blood are involved.

### **"Green light for kosher crossings"**

"AUSTRALIA'S first kosher pedestrian crossings will feature hi-tech detection sensors, allowing Orthodox Jews to cross busy Sydney streets safely during the Sabbath. Waverley and Woollahra councils are expected to install the devices at two intersections in Old South Head Rd at a cost of \$19,800, after the Roads and Traffic Authority rejected a plan to re-program traffic lights. The RTA has offered to pay one-third of the total cost, however, with the two councils sharing the rest. Pressing a button on the Sabbath - the period of rest between sunset on Friday and sunset on Saturday - is considered a breach of religious law by Orthodox Jews.

This has created safety fears as members of eastern Sydney's large Orthodox community dodge traffic on the way to and from local synagogues. The councils had proposed re-programming traffic lights to create regular, automated pedestrian-signal changes at the Victoria Rd and Penkivil St intersections at a cost of \$1000 each. But the RTA said this would create unacceptable traffic delays and foster "red light running behaviour". "Public transport would be particularly disadvantaged, as the periods requested coincide with the Friday-afternoon commuter and Saturday-morning shopping peaks," it said in a letter to Waverley Council. Instead, the RTA proposed a more expensive compromise solution, despite admitting it was "not an authority" on Orthodox religious law. "The RTA is in possession of a new technology which passively detects pedestrians waiting to cross at signalised crossings," the letter said.

"This detection method doesn't involve any conscious decision to activate the signalised crossing phase by the pedestrians - and the precise location of the detectors wouldn't be apparent to them." Rabbi Dovid Slavin, from Bondi, told *The Sunday Telegraph* he was seeking more information about how the new crossing system would work. Orthodox teaching bans work during the Sabbath, which would include the use of an electrical device to change a traffic signal. He said the compromise solution's compliance with religious law could depend on whether it worked with infra-red motion sensors or with heat sensors. Rabbi Slavin said he had offered to pay the \$1000 cost of the initial proposal. (Jim Dickens, *The Daily Telegraph*, Dec. 17, 2006)

The following lady put it wonderfully in commenting upon that article.

**"Kosher crossing pushes our button"** "It just makes my mind boggle at all the possible scenarios. They'd eat only cold food on the Sabbath, as cooking is forbidden. Even then, they can't take it out of the fridge, as they're forbidden from carrying. Then again, they would have to turn their fridge off, as it is an electrical device. (Hope their food doesn't thaw out in the freezer.) They'd probably like to read *The Sunday Telegraph*, but as they're forbidden from handling money, they couldn't buy it. As they're forbidden to drive to get it, they'd have to walk – but then they'd be forbidden from carrying it home. Naturally, they can't watch TV, play DVDs or use mobile phones, as they're forbidden from pressing buttons. They would have to sit in the dark all night, as they're forbidden to press the light switch. The sorriest scenario is that the whole Orthodox Jewish community would be unable to use their toilets, as they'd have to press the flush button. Perhaps they could use an old chamber pot, but they'd have to carry it. What a joke! And what a waste of council and RTA money." (Judy Kenny, Benora Point. Letters to the editor, *Sunday Telegraph*, 24/12/06).

We could not have put it any better. Can you see now how important it is for people to 'not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment'? But for that they need the Holy Spirit, and He comes only to Jesus' genuine followers. What do you think Jesus Christ would tell those Orthodox Jews other than that they are hypocrites? We can only give them the answer that Jesus Christ gave to the Pharisees of His day.

<sup>21</sup>Jesus answered and said to them, "I did one work, and you all marvel. <sup>22</sup>Moses therefore gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. <sup>23</sup>If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the law of Moses should not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath? <sup>24</sup>**Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.**" (John 7:21-24).

The Jews by blood may be excused for not knowing how to observe the Sabbath, for they have never had the Holy Spirit, and that is why they have been stumbling over this issue ever since the time of Moses, but what do we make of modern day fundamentalist Christians who claim that they have the Holy Spirit and yet still do not know how to observe it?

What does this tell you? That contrary to their claim, the Holy Spirit is not in them. And when the Holy Spirit departs from a people all they are left with is a spirit of confusion and arguments.

They keep sending us emails, expecting us to enlighten them on this matter, even though they say that hundreds of other people have replied to them. Why do they still want our comments if they have the answer from so many other people? They claim to be Jesus' preachers and yet they do not know how to keep the Sabbath.

We have already written on this topic a number of times, but the wise men of 'Blow the Trumpet' congregation want to hear from us again. If they were spending less time blowing their trumpet and more time worshipping God and studying His Word, they might have the answer too, for Jesus Christ clearly said:

<sup>7</sup>"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. <sup>8</sup>For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened." (Mat. 7:7-8)

They say that they continue to receive 'words of encouragement from scores of members' and that they 'invite their comments and will always respond'. They include us among their 'friends' even though we do not know who they are and have not responded to their previous emails. They say that they had already written a series of articles on this topic, but how have they written those articles if they still do not know the answer to it?

Apostle Paul said that there are people who ever learn and never come to the knowledge of the truth.

<sup>1</sup>"But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: <sup>2</sup>For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, <sup>3</sup>unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, <sup>4</sup>traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, <sup>5</sup>having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! <sup>6</sup>For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, <sup>7</sup>always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." (Tim. 3:1-7).

Why do they do it then if Jesus Christ has not sent them, and they are not His true ministers? This is why:

<sup>17</sup>Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. <sup>18</sup>For those who are such do not serve our Lord <sup>19</sup>Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple. <sup>19</sup>For your obedience has become known to all. Therefore I am glad on your behalf; but I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil. <sup>20</sup>And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly." (Rom. 16:17-20).

They are serving their own belly not Jesus Christ. They are always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. The problem is that they do not leave it at that, but become teachers of others. And when they get stuck, they can always ask others, or plagiarise them. We know that people have used our writings in their congregations without mentioning their source. Do you think that 'Blow the Trumpet' preachers would tell their congregation where they got the answer from if we gave it to them? We have never had problems with observing the Sabbaths or any of God's Holy Days. And we think our work proves with whom the Holy Spirit works these days.

The problem with preachers these days is that they do not know the Scriptures any better than the Pharisees of old. They do not know where the Old Testament stops and the New begins, or which tenets of the Old Testament are still valid under the New Testament.

Almost all things regarding the Sabbaths and Holy Days are still valid in the New Testament, a fact confirmed by the apostles and the early Churches of God when they observed them.

Now although we do not know who the people from 'Blow the Trumpet' are, we are almost certain that they belong to the group of churches that impose Levitical dietary laws upon their members. The Churches of God have been brought right back to square one, having fallen pray to false preachers and 'savage wolves' once again. Satan never slips. He is always looking for an opportunity to twist people's minds and make them see the world his ways. Have a look at this:

<sup>1</sup>Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, <sup>2</sup>speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, <sup>3</sup>forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. <sup>4</sup>For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; <sup>5</sup>for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

<sup>6</sup>If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed." (1 Tim. 4:1-6).

We know of no church that does not preach such 'doctrines of demons'. They may call them 'lent', 'dietary laws', or whatever, but under the New Testament they are still 'doctrines of demons', if they are enforced as religious doctrines.

Now if they stumble in such a simple and obvious matter, what chance is there that they would understand the deeper things of the Kingdom of God? As Jesus Christ said:

<sup>1</sup>There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. <sup>2</sup>This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

<sup>3</sup>Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

<sup>4</sup>Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

<sup>5</sup>Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. <sup>6</sup>That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup>Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' <sup>8</sup>The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." <sup>9</sup>Nicodemus answered and said to Him, "How can these things be?"

<sup>10</sup>Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things? <sup>11</sup>Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness. <sup>12</sup>If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? <sup>13</sup>No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, *that is*, the Son of Man who is in heaven." (John 3:1-13).

And as Apostle Paul said:

<sup>12</sup>For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need *someone* to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. <sup>13</sup>For everyone who partakes *only* of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. <sup>14</sup>But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, *that is*, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." (Heb. 5:12-14).

Jesus Christ showed flexibility regarding the manner in which the Sabbath should be observed, but He did not give licence to anyone to do whatever they want on that day. People often use the following Scripture as justification for breaking the Sabbath. Some even use it as justification for changing the Sabbath with Sunday as the day of rest and worship.

<sup>23</sup>Now it happened that He went through the grainfields on the Sabbath; and as they went His disciples began to pluck the heads of grain. <sup>24</sup>And the Pharisees said to Him, "Look, why do they do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?"

<sup>25</sup>But He said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he was in need and hungry, he and those with him: <sup>26</sup>how he went into the house of God *in the days of Abiathar* the high priest, and ate the showbread, which is not lawful to eat except for the priests, and also gave some to those who were with him?" <sup>27</sup>And He said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. <sup>28</sup>Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath." (Mark 2:23-28).

If Jesus' answer to the Pharisees did not mean license to break the Sabbath, what did it mean? He introduced certain flexibilities, to be sure, but did that amount to breaking it or changing it from being the day of rest and worship?

Certainly not, for He told us that He came to fulfil the law not to destroy it.

<sup>7</sup>"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil. <sup>18</sup>For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. <sup>19</sup>Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever *does and teaches them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>20</sup>For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds *the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees*, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven." (Mat. 5:7-20).

Whoever breaks the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of God. Therefore if you want to make it into the Kingdom of God, you must not break any of these commandments. And do you know which the fourth Commandment is? It is the one about the Sabbath, another reason for which Jesus could not have broken it or changed it with Sunday, for He knew that the Sabbath was a sign between God and His people.

<sup>12</sup>And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>13</sup>"Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: 'Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it *is* a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that *you* may know that I *am* the LORD who sanctifies you. <sup>14</sup>You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for *it is* holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does *any* work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people. <sup>15</sup>Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh *is* the Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does *any* work on the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. <sup>16</sup>Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. <sup>17</sup>It *is* a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for *in* six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.'" (Ex. 31:12-17)

The Sabbath was, is, and shall remain a sign between God and His people forever. The fact that some unworthy people have taken to observing it too does not change this fact.

Jesus Christ disagreed with the Pharisees on the manner in which it should be observed. This is where the new 'Pharisees', are stumbling too. And for the same reason that the old Pharisees did. Their heart is not right before God. For this reason they could never understand the will of God and the Scriptures – the mind of God.

Let us now look at what the Old Testament has to say about the Sabbath.

<sup>4</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not. <sup>5</sup>And it shall be on the sixth day that they shall prepare what they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily."

<sup>17</sup>Then the children of Israel did so and gathered some more, some less. <sup>18</sup>So when they measured *it* by omers, he who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack. Every man had gathered according to each one's need. <sup>19</sup>And Moses said, "Let no one leave any of it till morning." <sup>20</sup>Notwithstanding they did not heed Moses. But some of them left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and stank. And Moses was angry with them. <sup>21</sup>So they gathered it every morning, every man according to his need. And when the sun became hot, it melted." (Ex. 16:4-5,17-21).

Those days, cooking for the family was a full time job which took most of the day. Nowadays however, with our modern amenities, one can easily cook a fresh meal in hardly more than an hour, which is not that much longer than setting up a precooked meal. Therefore while the principle of preparing for the Sabbath beforehand still stands, I am convinced that minor adjustments like these are allowable as long as the rest of the Sabbath is observed correctly; and I think I am in tune with the mind of Christ, the Lord of the Sabbath. Now have a look at the following Scripture:

"When you come into your neighbour's vineyard, you may eat your fill of grapes at your pleasure, but you shall not put any in your container. When you come into your neighbour's standing grain, you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not use a sickle on your neighbour's standing grain." (Deut. 23:24-25)

If you happen to pass through your neighbour's vineyard or grain field, you may have your fill, but you may not take any with you. It says nothing about the day of the week in which you can do that, or that you cannot do it on the Sabbath.

Now do you remember what the Pharisees were complaining about? That Jesus' disciples were plucking heads of grain and eating them while they were passing through a grain field on the Sabbath.

What does that tell you? That they did not know the Scriptures, and that their complaint was a phoney one.

Undoubtedly, Jesus Christ could have told them about this Scriptures, but He knew that one could never win an argument with the hypocrites. He thought of better examples with which to confront them, and they had no answer to that.

This finally brings us to the question of whether people should eat in restaurants on the Sabbath. Well, to do that it would mean to support the people who engage in commercial activities on that day. Restaurants are not hospitals that require work on the Sabbath in serving the sick and disabled. Commercial enterprises however, which are opened on the Sabbath, do so for one reason only – profit. Christians should not encourage them by patronising their venues.

The only other exception that I can think of that I am sure Jesus Christ would approve of is when one is travelling far from home. That however is no licence to indulge in pleasurable activities – games, gambling, etc. – that are normally available to guests in hotels and other such venues.

The Sabbath is meant to be a day of rest and worship, of meditation and introspection, of cleansing one's soul and of drawing close to God. I doubt anyone would suggest that these could be achieved in restaurants.

The Sabbath should be used for family togetherness. After worship and a good family meal, a walk in a park, in nature, or in any inspiring place, would be appropriate for the Sabbath.

And yes, good television programs could also be inspiring and allowable on the Sabbath.

# Passover versus Easter, Sabbath versus Sunday

It is at the Council of Nicaea in 325 that both these questions were decided in favour of Easter and Sunday.

This is how the Orthodox Church justifies that decision. It is a lengthy quote, but an important one, for it shows us how similar the Orthodox and Catholic Churches are on this matter. It also shows us how faulty their reasoning is.

## “The First Ecumenical Synod and the Feast of Pascha “...not with the Jews” by Archimandrite Sergius”

“THE VERY REVEREND SERGIUS, former Assistant Professor at the Theological Academy in Sofia, Bulgaria, is the spiritual Father of the Russian Convent of the Holy Protection in Sofia, which is under the Omophorion of Bishop Photii of Triaditza, the sole Hierarch of the True (Old Calendar) Orthodox Church of Bulgaria and himself a former Assistant Professor at the University of Sofia. Father Sergius was dismissed from his academic post when he refused to accept the revised New, or Papal, Calendar, on the occasion of its introduction into the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. He is rightly considered a confessor of the Faith by traditionalist Bulgarian believers.

“OF LATE, a number of Orthodox theologians and clergymen have contended that the proscription against celebrating the Resurrection of our Lord, Pascha (known in the Western world by the pagan term “Easter”), “with the Jews” is unknown and not, indeed, as the Orthodox Church has always taught, an actual decree of the First Ecumenical Synod convened in Nicaea in 325 A.D. This innovative claim is based on the argument that the Acts of his council have not been preserved and that the twenty extant Canons of the Synod do not mention the celebration of Pascha. In fact, however, in both the epistle of St. Constantine the Great to those Bishops who were unable to attend the Synod, as well as the letter sent by the Synod to the Church of Alexandria, there are relevant—albeit, indirect—data to be found in the specific agreements between the Synod and the Christians of the Eastern domains with regard to the common celebration of Pascha by all Christians.

“Unfortunately, theologians of an ecumenical bent have precipitated from the evidence offered by these sources a simple affirmation that all Christians must celebrate Pascha at the same time, ignoring the question of a specific day. Likewise, they intentionally distort the explicit prohibition of the first Canon of the Synod held in Antioch in 341—that is, that the Christian Pascha must not be celebrated at the same time as the Jewish Passover—, misrepresenting its original meaning: the expression “not with the Jews” is simply interpreted as an injunction against the calculation of the date for Pascha according to the faulty system employed by the Jews, at that time, for the calculation of their Passover. Such groundless arguments are those of the Very Reverend Professor L. Voronov, in his article, “The Calendar Issue” and of Professor D. Ogitski in an article, “The Canonical Rules of the Orthodox Paschalion” (both articles appear in the collection, *Theological Works*, published in Moscow and issued by the Moscow Patriarchate in 1971). In keeping with such thought, Bishop Peter (L’Huillier) of Korsun (now Archbishop of New York [Orthodox Church of America]), in his report on Pascha at an ecumenical conference held in Geneva in 1977, “The Resolutions of the Synod in Nicaea Regarding the Concurrent Celebration of Pascha and the Passover and Their Contemporary Meaning” (published in French in “Journal of the (Russian) Patriarchal Exarchate in Western Europe”, Paris, Nos. 93-96, 1976), maintains that the proscription against the common celebration of Pascha and the Jewish Passover “does not in any way refer to the casual coincidence of these two dates” (p. 78) and that “not until the Middle Ages did this idea arise, based on a literal but erroneous interpretation of the expression ‘with the Jews’. His Eminence does not feel that “such a coincidence of Pascha and Passover contradicts the Church’s canonical prescriptions” and that the “Christian Pascha must *inevitably* follow the Jewish Passover” (p. 79). He cites as evidence of the “erroneous” application of the expression “met....? in the canonist Zonaras’ interpretation of the seventh Apostolic Canon, which states that “their [the Jews’] non-festal feast ... must come first, and then our Pascha should be celebrated”; and the canonist Matthew Blastaris, who includes, among the other rules for the determination of the date of Pascha in his *Alphabetical Codex*, a ban against celebrating the Feast in conjunction with the Jewish Passover.

“In response to Archbishop Peter, we might note that not only these late Byzantine interpreters, but also several Fathers and ecclesiastical writers— contemporaries of the First Ecumenical Synod or men who lived shortly thereafter—explicitly testify to the decisions of the Holy Fathers at Nicaea, as regards the issue of celebrating the Christian Pascha on the same date as the Jewish Passover. We will, then, examine evidence and data from a number of these Fathers, first and pre-eminent among them, St. Athanasios the Great, a personal and active participant in the proceedings of the Nicæan Synod.

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“In two of his epistles, St. Athanasios touches on the matter of the celebration of Pascha. In a letter to the Bishops of Africa (Chapter 2), he writes: “The Synod of Nicaea was convened on account of the heresy of Arius and because of the issue of Pascha. Because the Christians in Syria, Cilicia, and Mesopotamia were not in concord, *at the same time that the Jews celebrated their Passover, they celebrated...[the Christian Pascha]... , too*” (Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. XXVI, col. 1029). In his letter “On the Synods in Ariminum and Seleucia” (Chapter 5), the Saint comments: “The Synod in Nicaea was held not without manifest reason, but out of good reason and urgent need; for the Christians of Syria, Cilicia, and Mesopotamia were erring with regard to the holy days and celebrated the Pascha with the Jews (*ibid.*, col. 688). It is evident from the context, here, that, “ *with the Jews*, means precisely what the Church has always taught; the expression refers to nothing other than a common celebration with the Jews *at one and the same moment in time* ( τὸ καιρὸ ). Moreover, it is this very *temporal* concelebration which invited reproach and which was one of the reasons for the convocation of a synod in Nicaea.

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“**Volume XIV, Numbers 2 & 3 3** St. Ambrose of Milan (*circa* 339-97), in an epistle written to the Bishops of the district of Emilia in 386, observes, in response to a question from them regarding the lateness of Pascha in the coming year (387): “The determination of the Feast of Pascha according to the teaching of Holy Scripture and *the Holy Tradition of the Fathers who assembled at the Synod in Nicaea* requires not a little wisdom. Aside from other marvellous rules of Faith, the Holy Fathers, with the aid of eminently experienced men appointed to determine the aforementioned Feast Day, produced a calculation for its date of nineteen years’ duration and established a cycle of sorts that became a mod-*el* for ensuing years. This cycle they called the “*nonus decennial*,” its goal being...the sacrifice of the Resurrection of Christ at all places on the same night” (*Epistle XXIII*, Chap. 1, Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, Vol. XVI, col. 1070). The basic rule for the calculation of Pascha is set forth by St. Ambrose in the eleventh chapter of the same epistle: “We must observe a rule, such that the fourteenth moon [i.e., the fourteenth day of the month of Nisan, the Jewish Passover] be not set on the day of the Resurrection, but on the day of the passion of Christ, or on another preceding day, since the celebration of the Resurrection is celebrated on Sunday.” Further on, he justifies the rule in question by reference to the Feast of Pascha in 373 and 377, which fell on late dates: “Thus, in 373, when the fourteenth moon [that is, the Jewish Passover—*author’s note*] fell on March 24, we celebrated Pascha on March 31. Likewise in 377, when the fourteenth moon fell on April 9 (Sunday), the Pascha of the Lord was celebrated *on the following Sunday, April 16.*” In essence, St. Ambrose confirms the correctness of the basic condition set by the “Alexandrian *Paschalion*” and universally accepted by the Synod in Nicaea: that *the Pascha of Christ must never coincide with the Jewish Passover* and that it must not only follow the Jewish Passover, but be celebrated on *Sunday*, at that. In view of this clear statement by St. Ambrose in support of the nine-teen-year Paschal cycle devised by the Holy Fathers at Nicaea, it is difficult to understand why Archbishop Peter, who *also* cites the foregoing passage from St. Ambrose’s twenty-third epistle, who acknowledges that the Saint “thought in this way,” and who even admits that “the Alexandrian cycle was used in Milan and in



the Churches administered by that city," nonetheless later writes, wholly inconsistently, that "the idea that the nineteen-year long Alexandrian cycle was confessed by the Fathers in Nicaea was only *bit by bit* introduced" (*ibid.*, p. 75).

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"Another important source that confirms the basic rules for the calculation of Pascha is the collection of the *Paschal Epistles* of the Patriarchs of Alexandria, which were promulgated at the beginning of each year and in which the date for the next Pascha was announced. A great number of such *Paschal Epistles* have been preserved in the works of *St. Athanasios the Great* (in the period from 329 to 335) and in those of *St. Cyril of Alexandria* (during the years 414-442). Practically all of these epistles uphold the canonical proscription against celebrating Pascha "simultaneously with the Jews" and their Passover, since not a single of the Paschal dates listed coincides with the date of the Jewish Passover.

"Archbishop Peter is absolutely unjustified in his claim that in "the fourth century, after Nicaea, the Christian Pascha, *Orthodox Tradition*, and the Jewish Passover coincided several times" (*ibid.*, p. 79). In support of this false assertion, he cites the French scientist V. Grumel, who, in his essay "The Problem of the Date of Pascha in the Third and Fourth Centuries" (*Journal of Byzantine Research*, Vol. VIII, pp. 165-166), uses a table of Paschal and Passover dates, published by Swartz, for the nineteen consecutive years between 328 and 346. Only two of the dates in Swartz's list are, in fact, Sundays, namely, 329 and 333. With regard to the first of these dates, 329, St. Athanasios designates April 6 as the date of Pascha, not March 30, as does Swartz. With respect to the year 333, St. Athanasios writes that the date of Pascha was moved back, in order to avoid its coinciding with the anniversary celebration of Rome. Again, aside from the two years mentioned, none of the dates in the table used by Archbishop Peter falls on a Sunday. Therefore, the "Paschal" dates on which he bases his arguments are fictitious!

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"The late date of Pascha in 387 prompted St. John Chrysostomos, while he was still a Presbyter in Antioch, to deliver three sermons "Against the Jews" in the autumn of 386. Out of ignorance, many Christians in that city celebrated Pascha simultaneously with the Jewish Passover. On this account, they began Great Lent earlier than the correctly appointed time. In order to correct them, St. John Chrysostomos invokes the decree issued by the Synod in Nicaea in this regard: "More than three hundred Fathers, assembled in the land of Bythinia (at Nicaea), decreed this [that is, that Pascha must not be celebrated simultaneously with the Jewish Passover—*author's note*], and you dishonor them in this way. You convict them either of ignorance, as if they were unaware of what they were appointing, or of cowardice, as if they knew the truth, but only by pretense, and betrayed it. This is the implication, if you do not respect their decree. Great wisdom and manliness are *evidenced in all of the Acts of the Synod*.... Beware, then, of what you do, for you are bringing accusation against a great many wise and manly Fathers. If Christ is found among the two or three [St. Matthew 18:20], all the more was He found among the more than three hundred, when they determined and established all of these things. Furthermore, you accuse not only them, but the whole *ecumene*, for it approved their decree. *Do you consider the Jews more intelligent than the Fathers who were assembled from every part of the inhabited world?*" (*Third Sermon Against the Jews*, Migne, *Patrologia Grae-ca*, Vol. XLVIII, col. 865).

"How forceful, indeed, are the words that St. John Chrysostomos uses to chastise the Christian "Judaizers," and this not only for celebrating Pascha simultaneously with the Jewish Passover, but for "fasting with the Jews"—an infraction, incidentally, also explicitly forbidden by the seventieth Apostolic canon: "Whosoever fasts with the Jews or celebrates with them...should be excommunicated!" Yet Archbishop Peter, when quoting St. John Chrysostomos' homily on this specific issue ("To Those Who Fast Before it is Time"), maintains his silence with regard to the Christian "Judaizers," and, indeed, at the very beginning of his article even notes that "...in these discussions, provoked by the peculiar Paschal practice of the Orientals, *no one accused them of being 'Judaizers'*" [*emphasis mine*]! ... and the Jewish Passover coincided several times" (*ibid.*, p. 79). In support of this false assertion, he cites the French scientist V. Grumel, who, in his essay "The Problem of the Date of Pascha in the Third and Fourth Centuries" (*Journal of Byzantine Research*, Vol. VIII, pp. 165-166), uses a table of Paschal and Passover dates, published by Swartz, for the nineteen consecutive years between 328 and 346. Only two of the dates in Swartz's list are, in fact, Sundays, namely, 329 and 333. With regard to the first of these dates, 329, St. Athanasios designates April 6 as the date of Pascha, not March 30, as does Swartz. With respect to the year 333, St. Athanasios writes that the date of Pascha was moved back, in order to avoid its coinciding with the anniversary celebration of Rome. Again, aside from the two years mentioned, none of the dates in the table used by Archbishop Peter falls on a Sunday. Therefore, the "Paschal" dates on which he bases his arguments are fictitious!

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"**Volume XIV, Numbers 2 & 3 5** The Holy Fathers were, rather, guided by the Grace of the Holy Spirit and carefully took into account the fourteen Paschal moons in the course of the aforementioned cycle of nineteen years" (*ibid.*, col. 1091).

"Some centuries later, St. Maximos the Confessor (†662) perfected the nineteen-year Paschal cycle by multiplying nineteen by twenty-eight (the period after which a specific calendar date returns to the same day of the week, that is, to a Sunday). His amplification of the Paschal cycle is known as the Great Indiction, a repetitive cycle of five hundred thirty-two years (that is, 19'28, which=532) comprising the dates for Pascha for each individual year.

"In Chapter 14 of his noteworthy work, *A Short Clarification of the Re-deeming Pascha of Christ our Lord* (Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. XIX, col. 1232),<sup>1</sup> St. Maximos likewise notes: "We who are, by Grace, vouchsafed to keep the Pascha of Christ, our Lord, with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth [I Corinthians 5:8], allow one day to elapse [in order to celebrate Pascha] when March 21 falls on a Saturday and that Saturday is the fourteenth day of the moon. If April 18 happens to fall on a Sunday, and that Sunday is, according to the Jewish calendar, the fourteenth day of the lunar month, then we allow seven days to elapse before celebrating Pascha. This is because, within the thirty-five days between March 22 and April 25, the redeeming day of Pascha is appointed to be celebrated, according to the canons, not before the former date or after the latter, by virtue of Church rules and the tradition concerning these dates." The Alexandrian *Paschalion* abides by these same dates to this day, as well as the absolutely clear proscription, in St. Maximos' comments, against the celebration of Pascha on the same day as the Jewish Passover.

"**Volume XIV, Numbers 2 & 3 7.** Second, the ecumenist innovators seek not only to subjugate Orthodox with inane devices of the Jews or according to the spurious wisdom of the Gentiles; the Holy Fathers were, rather, guided by the Grace of the Holy Spirit and carefully took into account the fourteen Paschal moons in the course of the aforementioned cycle of nineteen years" (*ibid.*, col. 1091).

“From all that we have cited here from the Patristic witness, it is obvious that the arguments put forth by Archbishop Peter and other authorities, with regard to the meaning of the canonical proscription against the celebration of the Christian Pascha simultaneously with the Jewish Passover, are spurious. There are two apparent reasons for the “scholarly” myopia of those Orthodox who would trifle with the Patristic rules for the celebration of the Paschal Feast. First, as is well known, the adoption of the Revised Gregorian (that is, Papal) Calendar by many Orthodox Churches in this century was motivated by ecumenical considerations: an attempt to standardize the celebration of the Christian Feasts at the same time throughout the Christian world. In this way, despite the doctrinal differences between the various Christian confessions, there would be created an impression of oneness, thus downplaying the real reasons for separation—that is, matters of belief and piety. Since part of the Orthodox Church now follows the Gregorian Calendar, it remains for the ecumenists to overthrow the Orthodox *Paschalion*, a major stumbling-block to ecumenical union. Hence, the artless but deceptive attempts by Orthodox innovators to chip away at the monolithic witness of the Fathers with regard to this issue, whether by purposeful misinterpretations of the Greek texts of the Synods which established the formula for dating Pascha, or by simply ignoring the Patristic witness. (Archimandrite Sergius, The First Œcumenical Synod and the Feast of Pascha “...not with the Jews”) (ROCHoly Trinity.com, November 20, 2004).

This text is in the original. We have to specify this because there are many inserts which are said to be by the author – the author of the article who used ancient texts to prove his point, not us.

Now, neither this author, nor those of the ancient texts have realised that in taking issue with the Jews they had taken issue with the Bible – the very Word of God. It was not the Jews’ Bible, but God’s Bible. The Jews were merely His messengers. The fact that they have proved unworthy of their mission does not change this fact. Apostle Paul, who in other respects was very critical of the Jews, acknowledged them as the official carriers of God’s “oracles”. (Rom.3:2).

Now did you notice how often those so-called ‘Church Fathers’ referred to the Bible when they discussed the important topic of Pascha [the Passover]? None! Their critics however, referred to it twice. Yet the Passover is the most important Holy Day in both the Jewish AND the Christian calendars. This is what Apostle Paul said about the Passover.

<sup>21</sup>You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord’s table and of the table of demons. <sup>22</sup>Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?”

<sup>17</sup>Now in giving these instructions I do not praise *you*, since you come together not for the better but for the worse. <sup>18</sup>For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it. <sup>19</sup>For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you. <sup>20</sup>Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord’s Supper. <sup>21</sup>For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of *others*; and one is hungry and another is drunk. <sup>22</sup>What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise *you*.

<sup>23</sup>For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the *same* night in which He was betrayed took bread; <sup>24</sup>and when He had given thanks, He broke *it* and said, “Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” <sup>25</sup>In the same manner *He* also *took* the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me.” <sup>26</sup>For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.

<sup>27</sup>Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks *this* cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. <sup>28</sup>But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. <sup>29</sup>For he who eats and drinks <sup>£</sup>in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. <sup>30</sup>For this reason many *are* weak and sick among you, and many sleep.” (1Cor. 10:21-22; 11:17-30).

Now who do present day spiritual leaders of Christianity obey, Jesus Christ and His Apostles, or the ‘Church Fathers’ who committed the ultimate betrayal of turning their backs on the Bible? They imposed pagan beliefs and pagan Holy Days upon ‘Christianity’ which had nothing to do with Jesus Christ, and forbade the observance of true Holy Days which Christians had been observing until then.

The Passover is by far the most important Christian Holy Day, the one which Jesus Christ gave specific instructions on how to be observed, yet most Christians have never even heard of it, let alone observe it correctly.

There is Scriptural evidence that all of God’s Holy Days – all the ‘oracles’ that God gave to Moses – are essential Holy Days for Christians. (See *The Christian Herald* Nos 4 and 11 for a detailed analysis of this topic).

Let us now summarize what happened at the Council of Nicaea.

1) Christians were forbidden from Judaizing anymore – keeping God’s Holy Days with the Jews: the Passover, Feast of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Day of Atonement, Feast of Trumpets, Feast of Tabernacles and the Sabbaths. Instead, they were made to observe the Day of the Sun, Christmas, Easter, Halloween, various saint days, birthdays, national days, etc, which are not mentioned in the Bible, and have nothing to do with Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ was not born at Christmas, and was not resurrected at Easter. Easter comes from Ishtar, a pagan goddess. The Romans, and the Middle Eastern peoples, had been observing her day for millennia before Christianity.

Even if Jesus Christ was born at Christmas, and resurrected at Easter, these would not be Holy Days for the simple reason that God has never changed His Holy Days and never will. God’s Holy Days are set in stone and will be observed in the Millennium Kingdom and in the Kingdom of God forever. It is a matter of discipline and obedience to the will of God. It shows Him who His people are and who are not, who respect Him and who do not.

2) Mainstream Christianity calls the gathering of bishops in 325, ‘the Apostolic Council of Nicaea’. It was nothing of a kind. The Apostles of Jesus Christ were long since dead, and no other people could be appointed to such positions again. Those who acquired such titles later did so on spurious grounds. The book of Revelation makes it clear that the original Apostles of Jesus Christ, plus Paul and a few of his companions have important roles to play in the Kingdom of God, and no other people can be appointed to similar positions.

3) What happened at the Council of Nicaea was not that Christianity was imposed upon the Roman Empire, but that pagan doctrines and pagan holy days were imposed upon Christianity. The effect was that true Christianity was forced to go underground, from where it resurfaced more than twelve hundred years later, after the Protestant reformation. Whenever true Christians tried to do so during the Middle Ages, the Catholic Church burned them, chopped their heads, martyred them, and forced the rest to go back underground.

This is what the writer of the Hebrew book said about the trials the people of God had to endure at the hands of pagan people in ancient times. A perfect description of what happened to them since that time too.

“Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. <sup>36</sup>Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. <sup>37</sup>They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—<sup>38</sup>of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, *in dens and caves of the earth*.

<sup>39</sup>And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, <sup>40</sup>God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.” (Heb.11:35-40).

These days true Christians have to contend with a triple whammy: trials at the hands of mainstream churches, of fundamentalist churches, and of pagan religions. And I speak from experience.

# The Eleventh Commandment: Cleanliness is Next to Godliness

One often hears the expression, 'cleanliness is next to godliness', a saying that ought to have its equivalent in all languages of the world. I do not know about other languages, but it does not seem to have an equivalent in Romanian, the people who need it most. This is what God told ancient Israelites about personal hygiene and home and town sanitation.

<sup>10</sup>If there is any man among you who becomes unclean by some occurrence in the night, then he shall go outside the camp; he shall not come inside the camp. <sup>11</sup>But it shall be, when evening comes, that he shall wash with water; and when the sun sets, he may come into the camp.

<sup>12</sup>Also you shall have a place outside the camp, where you may go out; <sup>13</sup>and you shall have an implement among your equipment, and when you sit down outside, you shall dig with it and turn and cover your refuse. <sup>14</sup>For the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you and give your enemies over to you; therefore your camp shall be holy, that He may see no unclean thing among you, and turn away from you." (Deut. 23:10-14).

We all know that God hates spiritual filth – sins of any kind – but how many people know that He is just as concerned with their personal cleanliness and sanitary conditions of their living quarters? Those who think that God is far away and unreachable should think again. These passages makes it clear that God walks among His people, and if He finds them unsuitable, from any point of view, physical or spiritual, He departs from them. And if He departs from them, He does not hear their prayers anymore. Then He appears to be unreachable, when in fact it is their fault that He seems so far away.

Here is an interesting passage about Apostle Paul's experience in Athens.

<sup>16</sup>Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols. <sup>17</sup>Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the *Gentile* worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there. <sup>18</sup>Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, "What does this babbler want to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods," because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection.

<sup>19</sup>And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new doctrine *is* of which you speak? <sup>20</sup>For you are bringing some strange things to our ears. Therefore we want to know what these things mean." <sup>21</sup>For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing. <sup>22</sup>Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; <sup>23</sup>for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: <sup>24</sup>God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. <sup>25</sup>Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. <sup>26</sup>And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, <sup>27</sup>so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; <sup>28</sup>for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.' <sup>29</sup>Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising. <sup>30</sup>Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, <sup>31</sup>because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead." (Acts 17:16-31).

God also intensely hates images (or icons as they call them these days), the very things that Athens was full of. So much so that He made that the second most important Commandment. Here it is.

<sup>4</sup>"You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of *anything* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth; <sup>5</sup>you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth *generations* of those who hate Me, <sup>6</sup>but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments." (Ex. 20:4-6).

How well have the Greeks kept that Commandment after they converted to Christianity? Walk into any Orthodox Church and see for yourself. And they wonder that God seems so distant and unapproachable.

The problem with the Orthodox people is that just because God seems so distant from them, they seem to think that everybody is in the same boat. A Romanian editor, upon reading our magazines, and seeing that we consider ourselves to be God's messengers, angrily called upon the Orthodox Church to do something about our "blasphemy". What that Church could do about that he did not say. Clearly, in the Orthodox Church it is blasphemy to do the work of God, but it is not blasphemy to make images and prostrate before them, in direct contradiction to God's Commandments. They do not know that since the beginning of time, God has always had people in the world who were in close contact with Him and did His work for humanity. If that Orthodox editor had read the Bible, he would have known that the destiny of the whole world depends upon the work of a single man in the end-time.

<sup>5</sup>Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. <sup>6</sup>And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse." (Mal.4:5-6).

The word 'curse' should more correctly have been translated "utter destruction". If Elijah does not manage to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, this world will be allowed to annihilate itself, something it is very close to doing now. Is it not obvious that love between parents and children has all but vanished from the world, and that if Elijah comes today he will have an impossible time fulfilling that task?

What this prophecy is all about is as much about love between human parents and their children, as it is about love between God and his creation. For if there is no love between God and human beings, there will never be love between human parents and their children, because God is the source of love and compassion, of blessings and of punishments.

<sup>9</sup>"The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked; Who can know it? <sup>10</sup>I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings." (Jer.17:9-10).

<sup>26</sup>I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup>I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do *them*." (Ez. 36:26-27).

<sup>1</sup>"Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. <sup>2</sup>And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God:

<sup>3</sup>"Blessed *shall you be* in the city, and blessed *shall you be* in the country.

<sup>4</sup>"Blessed *shall be* the fruit of your body, the produce of your ground and the increase of your herds, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks.

<sup>5</sup>"Blessed *shall be* your basket and your kneading bowl.

<sup>6</sup>"Blessed *shall you be* when you come in, and blessed *shall you be* when you go out.

<sup>7</sup>"The LORD will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before your face; they shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways.

<sup>8</sup>"The LORD will command the blessing on you in your storehouses and in all to which you set your hand, and He will bless you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

<sup>9</sup>"The LORD will establish you as a holy people to Himself, just as He has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in His ways. <sup>10</sup>Then all peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they shall be afraid of you. <sup>11</sup>And the LORD will grant you plenty of goods, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your ground, in the land of which the LORD swore to your fathers to give you. <sup>12</sup>The LORD will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season, and to bless all the work of your hand. You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. <sup>13</sup>And the LORD will make you the head and not the tail; you shall be above only, and not be beneath, if you heed the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you today, and are careful to observe *them*. <sup>14</sup>So you shall not turn aside from any of the words which I command you this day, *to the right or the left, to go after other gods to serve them*.

<sup>15</sup>"But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you:

<sup>16</sup>"Cursed *shall you be* in the city, and cursed *shall you be* in the country.

<sup>17</sup>"Cursed *shall be* your basket and your kneading bowl.

<sup>18</sup>"Cursed *shall be* the fruit of your body and the produce of your land, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks.

<sup>19</sup>"Cursed *shall you be* when you come in, and cursed *shall you be* when you go out.

<sup>20</sup>"The LORD will send on you cursing, confusion, and rebuke in all that you set your hand to do, until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly, because of the wickedness of your doings in which you have forsaken Me. <sup>21</sup>The LORD will make the plague cling to you until He has consumed you from the land which you are going to possess."

<sup>47</sup>"Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joy and gladness of heart, for the abundance of everything, <sup>48</sup>therefore you shall serve your enemies, whom the LORD will send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in need of everything; and He will put a yoke of iron on your neck until He has destroyed you." (Deut. 28:1-21, 47)

<sup>1</sup>"Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call *them* to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God drives you, <sup>2</sup>and you return to the LORD your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul, <sup>3</sup>that the LORD your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the LORD your God has scattered you. <sup>4</sup>If *any* of you are driven out to the farthest *parts* under heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you. <sup>5</sup>Then the LORD your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers. <sup>6</sup>And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live."

<sup>11</sup>"For this commandment which I command you today *is not too mysterious* for you, nor *is it far off*. <sup>12</sup>*It is not in heaven*, that you should say, 'Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' <sup>13</sup>*Nor is it beyond the sea*, that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' <sup>14</sup>But the word *is very near you*, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it." (Deut. 30:1-6, 11-14).

There is one sin that God hates in the utmost, a sin that defiles the flesh and degrades human beings, but one which is now held in high esteem by national governments and international organisations: homosexuality. This sin is about to bring humanity unstuck. It is impossible for God to turn His heart to His creation as long as it wallows in this abominable filth, for this defiles both the physical body and the spiritual soul. It is our hope and prayer that the new head of the United Nations will overturn the decree that his predecessor enacted upon this world regarding homosexuality.

Now coming back to Apostle Paul's Athenian visit, did you notice what he told the Athenians about God? That they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us.

So whether we are talking about physical uncleanness or spiritual sins, they are both important to God and must be strictly observed. When people do that, God no longer seem to be so far away.

Now have you ever heard a preacher tell his congregation about the importance of cleanliness and personal hygiene?

This is a subject that is not normally discussed in the churches, not the least because some people might be offended by it. These days preachers would do anything not to offend their listeners. They do not know that speaking the truth should never offend anyone. Those who are offended by it, should examine themselves whether their heart is right before God.

<sup>1</sup>"And now, O priests, this commandment is for you. <sup>2</sup>If you will not hear, And if you will not take *it* to heart, To give glory to My name,"

Says the LORD of hosts, "I will send a curse upon you, And I will curse your blessings. Yes, I have cursed them already, because you do not take *it* to heart."

<sup>7</sup>"For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, And *people* should seek the law from his mouth; For he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. <sup>8</sup>But you have departed from the way; You have caused many to stumble at the law. You have corrupted the covenant of Levi," Says the LORD of hosts. <sup>9</sup>"Therefore I also have made you contemptible and base before all the people, because you have not kept My ways but have shown partiality in the law." (Mal.2:1-2,7-9).

God is not happy with His priests because they have not kept His laws. As a result, entire nations will suffer and even disappear from the face of the earth. Here is a prophecy that hangs over the world more ominously than ever.

<sup>12</sup>And this shall be the plague with which the LORD will strike all the people who fought against Jerusalem: Their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on their feet, their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets, and their tongues shall dissolve in their mouths.

<sup>13</sup>It shall come to pass in that day *that* a great panic from the LORD will be among them. Everyone will seize the hand of his neighbor, and raise his hand against his neighbor's hand; <sup>14</sup>Judah also will fight at Jerusalem. And the wealth of all the surrounding nations shall be gathered together: gold, silver, and apparel in great abundance. <sup>15</sup>Such also shall be the plague on the horse *and* the mule, on the camel and the donkey, and on all the cattle that will be in those camps. So *shall* this plague *be*.

<sup>16</sup>And it shall come to pass *that* everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. <sup>17</sup>And it shall be *that* whichever of the families of the earth do not

come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, on them there will be no rain. <sup>18</sup>If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they *shall have* no rain; they shall receive the plague with which the LORD strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. <sup>19</sup>This shall be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles." (Zech. 14:12-19).

Verses 12 to 15 describe nothing less than nuclear war, for that alone can cause the flesh of both humans and animals to dissolve on their bones. Verses 16 to 19 tell us that not many nations will survive the end time Great Tribulation. This is what Jesus Christ referred to when He said that no flesh would be left alive if those days were not cut short by God.

<sup>21</sup>For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. <sup>22</sup>And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened." (Mat. 24:21-22).

For the elect's sake those days will be cut short, and a limited number of people will survive into the Millennium Kingdom of Jesus Christ. Now while it is not so easy to tell who God's elect are these days, it is a lot easier to tell who are not. Knowing God's requirements of righteousness, holiness and cleanliness, and looking at the world today, one can easily see the nations that will have a hard time surviving the Great Tribulation. One such nation is my own – Romania.

Being the country of my birth, I felt an obligation to do something about it. Now even though I knew that my deadly enemies – the Securitate men, who had decimated my family – were still very much in power, contrary to what the Government would have us believe, I still decided to take that trip, hoping that those in power would understand the seriousness of the situation, listen to me and facilitate my plans for the country.

But no sooner did I board a Romanian aeroplane, on the last leg of my journey to Romania, between Vienna and Bucharest, that my problems began. As it is customary these days, after we boarded the aeroplane the pilot welcomed us aboard then passed on the microphone to his chief stewardess who gave us the usual talk about safety procedures in case of an emergency.

Everything seemed to be all right and professionally done, until she gave us the English version of it. It was a type of English that people learn from books, with the usual mispronunciations. When combined with the fact that she spoke it very fast, the result was that about a quarter of it was unintelligible.

I spent some time thinking about it, and whether it would be a good idea to tell them about it. In the end I decided to write them a note in the friendliest possible way, giving them some advice, some examples of particularly poor diction.

About five minutes after I gave that note to one of the stewardesses, she came back with it, threw it in my lap, and said: "you better learn to speak Romanian before you can teach us English. We learned our English in school and were well tested before we were given this job." And with that she turned around and walked away. I nearly said, 'you must have been tested by someone who speaks English the way you do,' but I was glad that she walked away and gave me no chance to prolong the discussion. But then, after giving it more consideration, I thought that their reaction was not right. So I wrote them another note in which I pointed out that Romanian was not my main language for four decades, and if I did not speak it well, it did not matter; no one's life depended on it, which was not the case with their English. People needed to understand every word of it in case they needed it in an emergency. Then I said that because they were travelling on international routes, I was hoping they might have acquired an international mentality and took advice and correction in the spirit in which it was given, but obviously they had remained as parochial as ever.

Another five minutes passed and the lady came back with pen and paper and demanded that I give them my name and address. I thought they would have that from their passengers list, nevertheless I gladly started writing it down. As I did so, I asked: 'may I know why you need this for?' She said, 'Yes, we are taking you to court. You insulted us; so you better get yourself a lawyer.' Ooops, this is getting serious. 'Would you like my telephone number?' 'Yes!' 'And my email address?' 'No, that is enough'. Now unless they were bluffing, they must have changed their mind, for I never heard from them again. Clearly, five decades of communism has affected these people deeply, to the point of not being able to distinguish between friend and foe, or friendly advice and unfounded criticism.

I arrived in Bucharest and then I travelled some three hundred kilometres to the south-west of the country to the place of my birth. Two people, friends of friends of mine, who happened to be on holiday themselves, offered to be my hosts and drive me to my place. I said OK, but only if the expenses are on me. They agreed, and we departed.

On the way, I noticed that every so often the lady would ask her husband to stop the car in wooded or cropped areas so that she could go out and relieve herself. I was uncomfortable with that, not the least because in Australia you are not allowed to do that wherever you like it. Every little town or village has well kept public toilets, some with showers, so as to encourage travellers to make a stopover and rest, eat and buy something. If the distance is too long between towns, there are designated areas for rest with properly serviced toilets, advertised ahead of time so you know how long you have before you reach them. Now while I did not expect to find such standards in Romania, I did expect to find public toilets at least in the major cities. So at one stage, I asked the driver to make a stopover in the next city at a park with a public toilet. Not long after that, he stopped the car in a wooded area and said: 'there is your public toilet'.

During our entire travel, passing through dozens of cities, towns and villages, over a distance of over three hundred kilometres, we did not find a single properly kept public toilet.

We arrived in my native city of Drobeta Turnu Severin, and lo and behold, a miracle: a tidy grocer's market, and a clean toilet nearby. I was proud of it until, that is, I used their toilet. Clean and tidy it was, but of the four taps for washing hands, only one was working. And that was so loose I was worried it might break in my hands while using it. As the janitor happened to be nearby cleaning the floor, I said, 'I presume you are going to fix these faulty taps soon.' He replied, without lifting his head, 'Why should I fix them? As soon as I fix them they break them and steal them again'.

'Well, that is no reason not to fix them, you just take measures not to have them broken or stolen', I said. 'Next time you have a meeting with your supervisors, tell them about these problems, and if they do not listen, go as high as the Mayor. I am sure he will listen to you.' He mumbled something like: 'Nah, I am not going to do that. That is not my job. Just use that one that is working.' To which I said: 'You have a week to fix these things. If not, I am going to write about it in an English magazine that goes internationally, and I don't think any of you are going to like it.' That finally caused him to stop work, lifted his head up, and fixed me with his eyes as if a thunder had hit him. He said nothing and I walked out. About a month later I went to see if they had fixed those taps. The toilet was closed. Over the next two weeks, I checked it again three more times, and every time the toilet was closed. My miracle had gone up in a puff of thin air.

The village of my birth lies about fifteen kilometres north of that city. Located in a beautiful valley, along a small river, it has become a place of refuge for city people who have built summer villas on just about every available piece of land. One such villa, on a large piece of land, has been transformed into a private resort by a man from, of all places, Belgium.

Memories of the old days kept rushing back. I remember how I used to bathe in pools of water in the river with other children while the few goats and sheep that we kept for milk, would ravage our neighbours' crops. It was a perennial problem – every summer our parents would serve us the same lesson which we never seemed to learn. We never did it on purpose, it is just that the animals would not stay in the woods where we'd leave them to feed while we rushed back to frolic in the water. That river has changed enormously since my childhood days. It is now much smaller than it used to be (like much of the world, Romania has been under severe drought for years), and it is much more polluted. In fact, in my young days it was not polluted at all, but now it is littered with rubbish left behind by city slickers who camp on its banks in weekends and holidays. Since there is no organised rubbish pick up, the leftovers keep piling up to the point that in some places the river has changed its course because of it.

After we spent about a week in that village, we returned to Bucharest for a few days, and then my hosts took me to the country's best: the mountain resort of Sinaia, and the beaches of the Black Sea.

Sinaia, a cosy little town, located between huge mountains, leaves a good impression, except for its cable cars. We took one of them to the top of one of the mountains. I was hoping that we would find a restaurant and enjoy the views while sipping on a drink or having a meal. But when we reached the top, there was nothing at all. Not even an observation post, the like of which one finds in many elevated places with indicators which tell people where to look and what to see.

And, just as one might have expected, there was no toilet either. When I asked the attendant if there was a toilet anywhere, she looked at me as if I had arrived from another planet. Why would one need a toilet on top of a mountain?

In winter time a lot of people go up there for skydiving purposes, for there are good skydiving vistas on those mountains, and they would surely need a toilet. Otherwise they would have to take the cable car down to the valley where there was a cramped and unpleasant toilet. And the cabin, it was so rickety, shaky and squeaky, the ride was positively scary.

A week later we made the trip to the Black Sea. Its beaches were jam packed with people, like sardines, especially on the most famous one – Mamaia. We had to walk a fair bit to find a place for our beach towels. And yet, hoteliers were crying out that up to three quarters of their rooms were empty. The problem was that all those people were day or weekend trippers, not foreign tourists. The media was full of stories of foreign companies having cancelled their bookings in Romania in favour of Bulgaria or some other places. Looking at pictures of the two country's resorts, it seemed that the Bulgarians go elsewhere for holidays and leave their beaches to foreign tourists with hard currency, whereas north of the border, in Romania, it looked as if half the nation had migrated to the sea for the summer.

One day, we decided to visit all of Romania's resorts, which spread over a length of about 80 kilometres, to see which were the best. As expected, some were better than others, but none had properly maintained public toilets with shower and change rooms the likes of which one finds on any of Australia's designated public beaches. At one time, I asked a beach attendant for a toilet. He gave me instructions on how I could find one behind a restaurant. I went there and I ended up in their kitchen. "You are looking for the toilet, aren't you?" "Yes, I am!" "Over there, on that side of the courtyard." After I used it I looked for a sink to wash my hands, but there was none in sight. So I went back to their kitchen, and asked for one. They pointed me to a tap on a wall on another part of the courtyard. No sink and no soap. And they wonder that foreigners were cancelling their bookings to the country's Black Sea resorts.

We returned to Bucharest, and I went to visit the country's pride and joy, the People's Palace – the second largest building in the world. Ceausescu bankrupted the nation in order to build a monument to himself.

When I was in Romania in 2002, that building was out of reach for tourists. I wrote about it in one of our magazines, pointing out that it could become a major point of interest for tourists if they opened it to the public. Well, they have, and I was glad that I could see it for myself. There were escorted tours throughout the day in various languages. In our group, designed for Romanians, was also a Belgian girl. When I found out that she spoke English, I offered to be her translator. In the course of our discussion, she said that she had visited many buildings in her life, including the Versailles Palace, but this was even more lavish and impressive. I concur with that, for I too have visited the Versailles, and I agree that as far as the building is concerned, the Bucharest Palace is greater, but its gardens pale by comparison.

Ceausescu demanded that everything to do with that palace had to be Romanian: architects, workers, materials, etc. Everything, including the toilets. In the three or four main floors that we were shown around, we saw just one toilet for the public, and one for the staff. By comparison, my local shopping centre, which is huge by any standard, but hardly a third the size of what we saw there, has three spacious public toilets.

Ceausescu had an interest in keeping toilets to a minimum, so that he could wire them up with listening posts. That is how he found out that some of his colleagues in the Central Committee were speaking against him. It was reported in the media at one time that he was planning to wire up the entire country like that through the telephone lines. Fortunately, history caught up with him and he did not have time to carry out his project. When megalomania strikes, paranoia is not far behind.

One day, I bought a few newspapers and decided to relax reading them in one of Bucharest's renowned parks – the Cismigiu – not far from the city centre. About two in the afternoon, an unbelievable stinking miasma wafted through the air. When I looked up, a few metres away, city workers were emptying an 'environmental' toilet with a pump directly into a cistern. In Australia they are called portable toilets and are used mainly on work sites. In my life, I had been many times on work sites – I worked as electrician for ten years before I became teacher and librarian – but I have never seen one such toilet being emptied that way. We always took it for granted that they were being replaced with clean and disinfected ones in the evening when everybody had gone home. The only public toilet that I saw in Bucharest that passed the test of hygiene and cleanliness, barely though, was located in the darkest, ugliest, and filthiest underground concourse you will find anywhere. And that is right in the heart of Bucharest.

A European representative that came to Romania to advise the government on how to prepare the country for the European Union said that Bucharest does not deserve to be called a European capital. Unbelievably, when his term expired, he was interviewed by journalists from the country's largest circulation newspaper, who asked him whether he would have liked to live in Bucharest permanently. He took time to answer as if he thought hard about that question. Most likely what he thought was, how dare these fools ask me that question when they know what I think of their capital. After a pause, very diplomatically he answered, probably not. Only he knows what he might have said un-diplomatically.

Another European compared Bucharest with a large village. People's Palace sits like a white elephant in an oasis. Five kilometres away and you are in a third world country.

Before the Second World War, Bucharest used to be referred to as the little Paris of the East. But the damage the communists have done to that city, once revered for its stylish architecture, is to be seen to be believed. It almost makes you cry when you see old buildings that retain some of their old glories, being run down and dilapidated, amidst grey high rises without any distinctive features other than peeling walls that pose a danger to passers by.

In 2002, during my previous visit to Romania, my hosts took me to visit a tourist landmark which they thought would be of interest to me – Cernica Monastery – located on an island in a lake near Bucharest.

At the end of the visit, my host excused herself for a quick visit to the toilet. When she came back I said I will go there too. She blocked my path with both arms, saying, if you can hold it, don't go; wait until we go home. I said I can hold it, but now that you made me curious I want to see it for myself. I wish I hadn't. It was a stinking hole in the ground surrounded by four dilapidated walls, which did not seem to have been cleansed and disinfected in ages. I turned around without using it.

When I returned to Australia, I sent a letter to President Iliescu, telling him that for a place of tourist interest, that was a disgrace. I was convinced he would do something about it, but I was wrong. This time I asked my new hosts to take me there again. That toilet was still there, only in a worse condition, if such a thing was at all possible. And of course, no water to wash one's hands anywhere other than the polluted lake.

A few years ago, an Orthodox monk wrote an article about life in the next world. Among other things, he said that there are no faeces in the Kingdom of God. I remember wondering why on earth would he be concerned with such a thing. Not any more. For the record, there must be toilets in the Kingdom of God. This is what Jesus Christ told His disciples.

<sup>27</sup> "Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. <sup>28</sup>For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. <sup>29</sup>But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom." (Mat. 26:27-29).

Wine always goes better with food. So if we are going to drink wine in the company of Jesus Christ in His Father's Kingdom, you can be sure that we are also going to enjoy good food. Indeed there are indications in the Bible that this will be the case, but we won't go into that here. Sufficient to say that this world is a poor reflection of the Kingdom of God. "As it is written: *"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him."* (1 Cor. 2:9).

Immortality does not mean that one lives forever lazing about without ever having to do anything. What did Jesus Christ say? "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working." (John 5:17). This is why lazy people will have no place in the Kingdom of God. God became tired after six days of creation and rested on the seventh. And He made us in His own image, therefore how we are, so is He.

Patriarch Teoctist wants to build a 'National Cathedral' in Bucharest, a monument to himself just as Ceausescu build the People's Palace. When people complained that the country cannot afford such a building, he is reported to have said that he already had the equivalent of almost half a billion dollars for it. I wonder whether a toilet was included in his plans. But then, one can always use an 'environmental' toilet. However, those things cost money too, so a hole in the ground might just do it. Better yet, if he could locate it in a wooded area, or in a park with some trees, he would need none of these.

When you see how his monks live, you cannot blame them for dreaming of a world without toilets.

Toilets are not a problem in civilised countries. They can come and have a look at Australia. Or they can go closer and look at French toilets. If they wonder what a bidet is or what it is used for, they can always ask for a demonstration. I am sure the good French ladies would be only too happy to oblige for such a good cause.

In 2005, Prime Minister Tariceanu sent back to Europe a gift of one billion euros. He did not know what to do with it.

My hosts did not take it kindly when I pointed out the lack of proper sanitation and suitable toilets everywhere we went in Romania. Like other Romanians, they seemed annoyed that I would concern myself with such 'trifling' matters instead of appreciating the country's achievements. I was rescued from their anger by the Guardian of London, which, by an uncanny coincidence, published an article which said that Romania needs a 'Revolution of the Toilets'. Romanian media made a brief mention of that article, and that was it. I thought that there might have been some editorials or some other comments about that serious problem, but nothing at all. And the intelligentsia, such as there is, did not utter a pip about that national disgrace. Total complacency all around! And they wonder that foreigners think so poorly about the country.

Three months after I returned to Australia, I found an interesting discussion on the internet among the readers of the newspaper that mentioned the Guardian article. This is what a lady said.

"I thank you for this comment, but who can contend with the Romanian nation? My God, we are the best, among the best. . . Romanian nation did this, did that, and so on. Isn't it obvious that we still suffer from Ceausescu's spirit? Wake up and look around you. You cannot find a toilet when you go somewhere and make a stop for it. The British would laugh in our face if they knew Romanian and could tell us who we really are. We lack hygienic conditions just as we did when we lived under communism. But we are not beaten, because nobody is like us." (Kati, *Evenimentul Zilei*, Dec. 27, 2006).

## Why Is the Orthodox Church Afraid of Prayer?

Having understood from prophecy that Romania was one of the countries that would have an impossible task surviving the worldwide catastrophe that is about to engulf the world, I felt a duty to do something about it. I remembered the promise that God made to Abraham regarding the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and thought that if I could find an equal number of faithful people, the country may have a chance of survival. Let us look at that story for it is quite instructive.

<sup>16</sup>Then the men rose from there and looked toward Sodom, and Abraham went with them to send them on the way. <sup>17</sup>And the LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, <sup>18</sup>since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? <sup>19</sup>For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him." <sup>20</sup>And the LORD said, "Because the outcry against Sodom and

Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave, <sup>21</sup>I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know."

<sup>22</sup>Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the LORD. <sup>23</sup>And Abraham came near and said, "Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked? <sup>24</sup>Suppose there were fifty righteous within the city; would You also destroy the place and not spare *it* for the fifty righteous that were in it? <sup>25</sup>Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

<sup>26</sup>So the LORD said, "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes."

<sup>27</sup>Then Abraham answered and said, "Indeed now, I who *am but* dust and ashes have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord: <sup>28</sup>Suppose there were five less than the fifty righteous; would You destroy all of the city for *lack of five*?"

So He said, "If I find there forty-five, I will not destroy *it*." <sup>29</sup>And he spoke to Him yet again and said, "Suppose there should be forty found there?" So He said, "I will not do *it* for the sake of forty." <sup>30</sup>Then he said, "Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Suppose thirty should be found there?" So He said, "I will not do *it* if I find thirty there." <sup>31</sup>And he said, "Indeed now, I have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord: Suppose twenty should be found there?" So He said, "I will not destroy *it* for the sake of twenty." <sup>32</sup>Then he said, "Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak but once more: Suppose ten should be found there?" And He said, "I will not destroy *it* for the sake of ten." <sup>33</sup>So the LORD went His way as soon as He had finished speaking with Abraham; and Abraham returned to his place." (Gen.18:16-33)

<sup>1</sup>Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw *them*, he rose to meet them, and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground. <sup>2</sup>And he said, "Here now, my lords, please turn in to your servant's house and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise early and go on your way." And they said, "No, but we will spend the night in the open square." <sup>3</sup>But he insisted strongly; so they turned in to him and entered his house. Then he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate. <sup>4</sup>Now before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both old and young, all the people from every quarter, surrounded the house. <sup>5</sup>And they called to Lot and said to him, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them *carinally*." <sup>6</sup>So Lot went out to them through the doorway, shut the door behind him, <sup>7</sup>and said, "Please, my brethren, do not do so wickedly! <sup>8</sup>See now, I have two daughters who have not known a man; please, let me bring them out to you, and you may do to them as you wish; only do nothing to these men, since this is the reason they have come under the shadow of my roof."

<sup>9</sup>And they said, "Stand back!" Then they said, "This one came in to stay *here*, and he keeps acting as a judge; now we will deal worse with you than with them." So they pressed hard against the man Lot, and came near to break down the door. <sup>10</sup>But the men reached out their hands and pulled Lot into the house with them, and shut the door. <sup>11</sup>And they struck the men who *were* at the doorway of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they became weary *trying* to find the door. <sup>12</sup>Then the men said to Lot, "Have you anyone else here? Son-in-law, your sons, your daughters, and whomever you have in the city—take *them* out of this place! <sup>13</sup>For we will destroy this place, because the outcry against them has grown great before the face of the LORD, and the LORD has sent us to destroy it."

<sup>14</sup>So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who had married his daughters, and said, "Get up, get out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city!" But to his sons-in-law he seemed to be joking.

<sup>15</sup>When the morning dawned, the angels urged Lot to hurry, saying, "Arise, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city." <sup>16</sup>And while he lingered, the men took hold of his hand, his wife's hand, and the hands of his two daughters, the LORD being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city. <sup>17</sup>So it came to pass, when they had brought them outside, that he said, "Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed." <sup>18</sup>Then Lot said to them, "Please, no, my lords! <sup>19</sup>Indeed now, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have increased your mercy which you have shown me by saving my life; but I cannot escape to the mountains, lest some evil overtake me and I die. <sup>20</sup>See now, this city *is* near *enough* to flee to, and it *is* a little one; please let me escape there (*is it not a little one?*) and my soul shall live." <sup>21</sup>And he said to him, "See, I have favored you concerning this thing also, in that I will not overthrow this city for which you have spoken. <sup>22</sup>Hurry, escape there. For I cannot do anything until you arrive there." Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar.

<sup>23</sup>The sun had risen upon the earth when Lot entered Zoar. <sup>24</sup>Then the LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the LORD out of the heavens. <sup>25</sup>So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.

<sup>26</sup>But his wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

<sup>27</sup>And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the LORD. <sup>28</sup>Then he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain; and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land which went up like the smoke of a furnace. <sup>29</sup>And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot had dwelt." (Gen. 19:1-29).

How many righteous people did God find in Sodom and Gomorrah? Four: Lot, his wife, and his two unmarried daughters! His wife did not appear to be all that pure in heart either, for she looked back, yearningly no doubt, and ended up becoming a pillar of salt. Now the New Testament tells us that those cities have become examples for us.

<sup>4</sup>For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast *them* down to hell and delivered *them* into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; <sup>5</sup>and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, *one of eight people*, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; <sup>6</sup>and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned *them* to destruction, making *them* an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, *who was* oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked <sup>8</sup>(for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented *his* righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing *their* lawless deeds), <sup>9</sup>*then* the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment." (2 Peter 2:4-9)

Any righteous man, who'd look at the world today, would not fail to be "oppressed" and "tormented", as Lot was, at the atrocities and abominations that are taking place in the world at present. Wicked people have well and truly taken over the world, and are dictating its policies. God has all but disappeared from their lips, and that is why the world is on the edge of the abyss.



Now by sounding out my friends and relatives, I was led to believe that it may not be all that difficult to set up a small prayer group in Romania and thus give the country a chance to survive the coming catastrophe. Unfortunately, I discovered that people could be so nice in letters, and so different in reality. When I arrived in Bucharest, I went to a fair bit of expense purchasing and preparing equipment for hymnal sessions and public address. It turned out to be all in vain. Not once did I use it. You cannot speak about God, or about what is happening in the world, with these people. They live in a world all of their own, totally separated from reality. Their rush to get wealthy, or just out of poverty, is so overwhelming, they would stop at nothing until they achieve their goal. They seldom stop to enjoy themselves, or meditate on the meaning of life. Neither do they know that wealth does not bring happiness in this world, let alone salvation in the next. In this however, one can hardly say that they are alone, for the entire world is on a similar slippery slope. I could not help thinking about the words of Jesus Christ, how the Great Tribulation will take the world by surprise as the Flood took the people of Noah's time. And that not for not being told about it!

"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.<sup>37</sup> But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.<sup>38</sup> For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark,<sup>39</sup> and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be." (Mat.24:36-39).

I left Bucharest for my native village with some friends who offered to drive me there, and as soon as we arrived, I went to visit a cousin. No sooner did we sit down at a table, that her teenage son said that the priest wanted to know whether it was true that I wanted to set up a prayer group in the village. I was stunned by that question, thinking how on earth did he know of my intentions, and what was his business if I wanted to do so anyway? Obviously he felt that that was his turf and did not want any interference with his flock.

My nephew had taken to heart the advice I had been giving him for years to believe in God, to be on good terms with the priest, and to go to church as often as it was convenient for him. I knew that those priests were hypocrites, but in the lack of a better choice, I gave him the kind of advice that Jesus gave to some of His followers.

<sup>1</sup>Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples,<sup>2</sup> saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat.<sup>3</sup> Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, *that* observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do.<sup>4</sup> For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay *them* on men's shoulders; but they *themselves* will not move them with one of their fingers.<sup>5</sup> But all their works they do to be seen by men."

<sup>25</sup>"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence.<sup>26</sup> Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.

<sup>27</sup>"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead *men's* bones and all uncleanness.<sup>28</sup> Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness." (Mat. 23:1-5, 25-28).

Today's preachers think that these words apply only to the spiritual leaders of ancient Israel, and not to themselves, even though they know very well that they are just as hypocrite. So just as Jesus told His followers to obey their spiritual leaders because they stood in Moses' seat, even though they were hypocrites, so I told my nephew to obey the spiritual leaders of our time, because they spoke for Christ, even though I knew that they were hypocrites too.

Apparently he had taken my advice too literally, for he became a helper for the priest and an altar boy in the church.

I told him to tell the priest that he had nothing to fear from me. The next day I went to another cousin, the only person in that village who knew about my intentions, and asked her how was it that the contents of a letter I sent her about two months earlier had reached the ears of the priest. What letter are you talking about, she answered. The one I sent you about two months ago. I received no such letter from you in the last couple of months, she said. Then I realised that my letter had been intercepted and its contents made known to the priest.

For years I have been telling friends and relatives that my mail was being interfered with in Romania, yet they would all say that I was mad to think that way because Romania was now a democracy and not doing those things anymore. Well, whether it was a democracy or not is debatable, but what was not debatable was the fact that I had proof that it was still doing those things. Since the fall of communism, its Securitate has changed its name – SRI – but not its habits.

I determined that I would not allow that to spoil the whole of my Romanian trip. A couple of days later, together with my cousin and the people from Bucharest, went to visit a monastery about seven kilometres deep into the mountains. Its priests and monks also serve the church in my village.

When we arrived, we were met by a monk who offered to be our guide. While he was giving us a tour of the monastery, the driver from Bucharest, who had remained outside, came in, tapped me on the shoulder, and motioned to me to come out. When I got out, he introduced me to a priest, who upon hearing that I was from Australia said that he had a good friend who was once a priest in Australia where he had set up six churches, and was now a lecturer in their Orthodox Seminary. His name was Gaina. When I heard that name, without saying a word, I raised my hand and waved it sideways in a sign that I was not prepared to talk about him, then I turned around and walked right back in. That turned out to be a big mistake on my part, for as I would discover later, they did not take kindly to my gesture. I did it instinctively though, without giving it a second thought, because in Australia it was a well known fact that Gaina was a high ranking Securitate officer who was in charge over priests in Australia and in other countries in that part of the world.

After about two decades in Australia, he had come home and become a lecturer in an Orthodox Seminary, something I was not aware of. As for the six churches he was supposed to have set up, I do not know where they were, because at that time there were only three Romanian Orthodox Churches in the whole of Australia.

When Ceausescu was overturned, he resigned his post from his Melbourne church, and like Patriarch Teoctist in Bucharest, and a host of other priests around the world, went into hiding. They must have prayed a lot during those days, for unexpectedly God turned things around and let former communists back in power. When those priests heard about the astounding turn of events in Romania, they came out of hiding and demanded their old positions back.

God always gives people a second chance when they repent, but if they continue with their old ways, there is no longer another chance but only a fearful expectation of judgment.

<sup>26</sup>For if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth [*or after we repent*], there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,<sup>27</sup> but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.<sup>28</sup> Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.<sup>29</sup> Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing,

and insulted the Spirit of grace? <sup>30</sup>For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The LORD will judge His people." <sup>31</sup>It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Heb.27:26-31).

It is indeed a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, especially so for those who do not believe in Him, yet pose as His ministers. It is clear that Securitate men who were left without positions of leadership in the banking sector, industry, government administration, political parties, and the media, had taken refuge in the Orthodox Church.

**"Securitate men dominate all spheres of activity"** "According to judge Constanta Carstea, national reform ought to begin with the reform of the secret services. In our country however, the main interest of these agencies is to dominate every sphere of activity. Their first concern is not national interest, but their own interests.

The difficult situation in which the country finds itself at present, the misery of its people, are a direct result of the activities of the secret services. The criteria by which these services select their cadres is first of all nepotism, then the 'quality' of being an informer. Other criteria are greed and servility. This explains the widespread public's exploitation and the internal and external robbery in which these people have been involved.

When the secret services felt that they were no longer the sole beneficiaries of the country's wealth, due to external pressures, they showed their willingness to share their loot with others in the name of 'privatisation', restitution, etc.

The failure of the economic sector is due on the one hand to the greed of our leaders, and on the other to their incompetence. How could it be otherwise when the directors of our companies found themselves in possession of diplomas of superior studies after graduating from high school through a miracle? That was the role of their Securitate dads who could not leave their illiterate offspring to do manual work. These are the people preferred by the Securitate heads, who are still in charge of the secret services, because they integrate well in their ideology and work criteria.

If anyone steps out of line, he is quickly terminated. No one should believe that anything will change for the better as long as these agencies remain as they are." (*Adevarul*, January 20, 2006).

Most Romanians do not know why their Orthodox Church, alone among Romania's institutions, refused to have its files opened to the public, and its clerics investigated for collaboration with the Securitate. My experience in Romania shows why.

After spending about a week in my village, we returned to Bucharest, and from there we went to the mountain resort of Sinaia, and then to the beaches of the Black Sea. A few weeks later, I returned alone to my native village, where I was planning to spend the rest of my stay in Romania. To my astonishment, I found a completely different atmosphere in the village this time. I was no longer the beloved son who had come home after so many years abroad, but a rogue who came to exploit, deceive, and take advantage of simple people, and many other such outrageous lies that are best left unspoken.

A dear friend from childhood, the only one whom I found to be totally honest of all the people that I met in Romania, dropped tears in front of me saying, 'how is it possible that such things are being spoken about you?' I told him that I had no idea where they were coming from, or whose interest it was to spread them, but they were not true. The problem was that their author, or authors, had inserted certain facts about my life which were totally unrelated, but which had the effect of giving credence to their calumnies. It was a master stroke, clearly done by professionals who knew what they were doing.

That however, gave their game away, for who in that village would have known anything about my life in Australia other than the Securitate men? Clearly, Gaina and his cabal of priests were not going sit down and let this alien unravel their intrigue and façade of respectability they had woven among the natives. The people in the village were meat in the sandwich. If their priest had told them something, what were they to do but to believe it?

During my first visit in the village about a month and a half earlier, I discovered that there were old people there who lived alone on a pension of about \$15.00 a month. Some who had never been employed by the government, such as housewives, had no pension at all. I do not know how those people live, but their story would break anyone's heart.

I could not help but feel for them, and I handed out some money to some of them, always telling them to keep quiet and not tell anyone about it. Well, what do you know? The priest found out, and what did he do? He told them not to touch my money because they were cursed. It was money I had swindled from widows, orphans and poor people in Australia, and as such they would put a curse on anyone who received them. I do not know what else they could have done with them other than give them to the church, I suppose.

Orthodox priests, or shall we say, Securitate men in priestly garbs, are fiercely opposed to foreigners who want to help the poor because that would put them to shame.

In my young days, the Orthodox Church had no possessions, other than the patch of ground on which the Church stood, and the cemetery nearby. But now, almost everywhere you look, the best land belongs to the Church. And who do you think is working that land? The priests and the monks? Why should they when there are so many people in the community who needed their services.

When I visited their monastery the second time, it was a festive occasion. I found my nephew there selling candles and other church paraphernalia to visitors. He looked tired and bleary eyed. Before I asked him anything, he said that in the last couple of days he had no more than two hours of sleep. I asked him, 'why?' He said that they needed to have all these things ready for the visitors. That is how the Orthodox Church deals with minors. Mind you that is a lot better than the way the Catholic Church has been dealing them. Stories of priestly abuse of children from around are well known.

The property which I inherited from my parents was used by squatters for ten years, the very people who were involved in the assault of my mother. When I visited the country in 2002, I looked at the property from outside, so that I would not disturb them. Then I told one of my cousins to tell them that I would pay their transport fee and three months rent if they left the house and moved elsewhere. But before she could tell them anything, they took their stuff and disappeared. I did not know at that time that they were involved in the viol and assault of my mother.

They did not move very far though, but in a neighbouring village. They were not native people, but newcomers. I was amazed how quickly the local Council found a new lodge for them. And the Church had a hand in it too. I was told that at one time it had given that family a cow for milk for its children, something the Church had not done for anyone else.

Since those squatters moved out in 2002, the house had been empty. It is now in an advanced state of decay. Local people simply helped themselves to whatever they could. What is left is good for nothing but to be demolished.

Now because the property is located in an ideal position, I thought that a sort of canteen/restaurant could be built in its place and the profits used to offer free meals to the destitute people of the area at least once or twice a week.

I discussed this possibility with a developer whose company was rebuilding the local school. He said that because the project would be good for the community, the European Union would cover half the costs.

He took me to a firm of architects, and after discussing all aspects of the project, I nearly put down a deposit to have work start on it. Now he is not even answering my emails. It could have been a lot worse.

In Romania, as in other countries I suppose, when an inheritance changes hands, certain formalities have to be completed. The documents are sent from the local Council to a regional office for registration. I was told that the process would take between two weeks and two months, well within my visa time in Romania. Seven months later, as this edition went to press my documents had still not been returned from the regional office. An unseen hand keeps throwing a spanner into my works in Romania. I wonder who that might be?!!

In my discussions with the villagers I discovered something that would shatter any decent human being. When my mother died fifteen years earlier, she was not merely assaulted, she was also violated and left in a pool of blood in her own courtyard.

I was in the company of a SRI officer when we discovered that horrible fact, yet instead of saying that he would do everything in his power to bring the culprits to justice, especially so since they are well known and still in the community, he said that I should forget about it because the crime happened so long ago it would be difficult to find out the whole truth.

The Jews are still hunting NAZI criminals sixty years after their crimes, yet fifteen years are too long for Romanian authorities to investigate such an unspeakable crime? I held my peace, for he was the driver who had brought me from Bucharest, but I began to wonder whether he was indeed the friendly chap he made out to be, or whether his 'friendship' had a different purpose altogether. Long ago, I had discovered that my mother's assailants had links with the Securitate. That is why all my attempts over the years to have that crime investigated had fallen on deaf ears. Now one of their own officers confirmed my findings.

The more I looked into that crime, the more it looked like a State crime. I am now convinced that as long as former President Iliescu and Patriarch Teoctist are alive, it will never be investigated. They have had powerful defenders in all Romanian Governments. I was hoping that membership into the European Union might make a difference. It has not.

I have never renounced my Romanian citizenship since I left the country, as did a lot of exiled people by paying money to Ceausescu's regime in order to be left alone by his dreaded Securitate. Yet the impostors who bent their backs to that odious regime, accepted unquestioningly a foreign atheist ideology, and betrayed the nation in so many ways, had given me a three months visa to visit the country. As it turned out, that proved out to be one month too long too.

I left my village and returned to Bucharest where I accepted the offer of hospitality from that SRI officer and his family. Although I began to have doubts that his friendship was genuine, I thought that nothing wrong could happen to me if I lodged with them for a few days. On the contrary, I felt that it would be safer for me to do so than to stay with other people, or in hotel, which I could. As the saying goes, keep your friends close, and your enemies even closer.

A few days later, they gave a party in my honour. Late in the evening, when there was no one around except he, his wife and myself, he became so aggressive and abusive towards me, I thought he could have shot me if he had a gun ready at hand. And for what? For having fled Ceausescu's 'paradise' four decades earlier. As they say, secret service agents have long memories and are unforgiving. And that a decade and a half after democracy was supposed to have come to Romania.

The man had no regard for the laws of friendship and hospitality, so valued in the eyes of God. He did that after I had given him and his family gifts worth hundreds of dollars.

In their heyday, Securitate men used to encourage children to betray their own parents. Therefore should I have been surprised that one of their officers would so blatantly trample on any notion of friendship and hospitality? These men have changed their name, but not their habits. It is no longer the Securitate, but the SRI, that is now in charge of Romania's security. Or shall we say, in charge of their own interests.

To say that I was astounded by such a turn around in his attitude while I was an invited guest in his house, would be an understatement. I was fuming inside, yet throughout his outburst I smiled and remained calm as if the whole thing was a little amusing. His wife said nothing throughout that ordeal, which tells me that they were in collusion, for whatever purpose. I cannot imagine what they might have done had I reacted otherwise.

All that night I was in agony, not knowing what to do. If I could I would have taken my luggage and run, but I could not do that because the door to their house and the gate to their courtyard were locked. I no longer felt as a guest, but as a prisoner. During the next few days, I behaved as if everything was alright. I had another month on my visa, but I went to the travel agency and asked them to do everything in their power to get me an earlier return to Australia, which they did.

They expressed surprise when I packed my luggage and told them that I was taking an early flight home, as if they had been perfect hosts to me. They did other things that hosts are never supposed to do, but I will leave it at that.

Throughout my stay in Romania, I knew that I was always under surveillance: first by my hosts from Bucharest, then by a colleague from childhood who was also Securitate officer. When I returned to my village alone, he showed up at my door expressing unbounded happiness to see me. We were colleagues in our young days, almost like brothers. Because he was orphan, I used to take him with me to my parents in the countryside where we used to sleep in the same bed.

He was a good student, but always a few places behind me. When we graduated, we were both invited to take training towards becoming officers in the secret services or the police. It was considered a great honour to receive such an invitation. To refuse was very damaging to one's career. He accepted it, but I refused it, and paid heavily for it. The law stipulated that supporters of families would not be taken into the army. Because I was the only son to my mother and grandparents, I assumed that I would be protected. But when did the law mean anything to communists?

They took me and sent me on the other side of the country to serve my army conscription. A few weeks into my term, the political officer, a Major in rank, ordered me into his office and asked why would I waste my time in the army when I could do three years of training and study law at the same time and become a Securitate officer. My only escape was that since my childhood I had always dreamed of becoming a marine officer in order that I could travel the world, and nothing would change my mind. In those days people behind the Iron Curtain did not talk about travelling the world, but I reckoned that by being open about it they would think that I was genuine about it. In fact, I despised their iniquitous system so much, I was prepared to put my life on line to escape it and fight it from the outside.

Time past and my colleague became a Securitate officer, while I took the road of the exile. Now, four decades later, he showed up at my door and declared his unbounded happiness at seeing me. He took me to meet his family, but politely asked me beforehand not to say anything, or ask anything, about his job. I got the message. This was not the free society in which people could talk openly about themselves, their jobs, their families, or whatever they wanted to, but still a closed one in which they had to guard their mouths even in the confines of their own families.

I was convinced that he had knowledge, if not a direct hand, in what happened to my mother, especially so since he said that he had prepared her for the visit to Australia, which took place two years before she was murdered. I felt it was safer not to say anything about it at that time. I returned to Bucharest where I had that horrible awakening to the kind of men that are still in charge in Romania.

I went to the country in the hope of doing something to save it from catastrophe, and I ended up leaving it hurriedly in order to avoid what was shaping up as a serious threat to my own life. Now let their beloved Dracula save them, because I doubt that God will ever look favourably upon that nation again.

Nice country Romania; pity about its politics! Pity more about its future!

# The “Startling Truth” About the End Time

We knew that as we approach the ‘Great Day of the Lord’ things would get from bad to worse as far as religious deception is concerned, but even so we were surprised by what we found on an American conservative web site.

“Next Pope Is John Paul II. Impersonated. Bible prophecy Shows He Will be Last Pope. Learn more. World’s Last Chance. A New World Order is about to start; are you ready? Bible reveals next and last Pope will be a devil impersonating John Paul II.”

John Paul II was dead for more than six months when this ridiculous advertisement appeared, so we clicked on their link to see who these people were. This is what we found.

**“The Truth Behind This”** “Through the study of *Revelation chapter 17*, the Lord has led us to a most startling truth, confirming that we are nearer to the end of all things than ever imagined. We are prompted by our loving God to share this prophecy, that none need be ensnared by the global events soon to transpire which will engulf the world in the grandest deception yet contrived by Satan.

**“World’s Last Chance** dares to declare this interpretation to the world because we adhere only to sound Biblical interpretation. This means we unlock Bible prophecy by using the Bible as its own interpreter. By doing so we are certain of the correctness of the revelation. With the vivid realization that we are living in the age just prior to the second coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven, we pray the Lord will impress you with the shortness of time available before the fate of every living person is decided, and may His Spirit give you the discernment and wisdom needed as you undertake this solemn study. AMEN.”

More advertising about their ‘startling truth’ and ‘sound Biblical interpretation’, but still they would not tell us who they were. We gave up on them thinking that they were just not worth our time, but then a few days later we came across their advertising again, only that this time it was in *The Jerusalem Post*.

Now we do not believe for a moment that the Jews believe an iota of the absurd notion that the next Pope will be a demon impersonating John Paul II. Clearly, those fools were paying a lot of money to have their claims advertised in such reputable media, but where are the ethics in all of this? Should profit be the only criteria in such dealings?

We also have made claims regarding the unfolding of prophecy before our very eyes, but we have always backed them with examples from the real world. We have meticulously correlated biblical prophecies with world developments, but have never made recourse to impersonating demons or other supernatural apparitions to prove our points. We simply rely on reason and fact, and let people decide for themselves whether we have been right or wrong.

As far as these people were concerned, it is easy to prove that their claims are not only false, but designed to deceive rather than enlighten people. Consider how the Popes are elected. A conclave of Cardinals vote among themselves until one of them gets the majority of votes. So what will the next Pope say, that he is not such and such a former Cardinal, but a demon impersonating John Paul II? Ridiculous to say the least!

And why should John Paul II be the preferred Pope for an impersonating demon? The man was a populist, but not the brainiest of Popes. If anything, from the spiritual point of view, the current Pope is worse. For many years he was the head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. And what is that? The new name of the former Inquisition.

It has been estimated that the Inquisition’s victims were as many as thirty-three million people. And yet, in a television interview, this man justified the activities of that odious institution.

Now although he is 79 years old, he seems to be of a robust health, which means that he could be Pope for many years. That would mean that the impersonating demon would have to wait for quite some time before appearing in the world as John Paul II. Well, the world does not have that time at its disposal before it is engulfed by the Great Tribulation. This is why we say that those who preach such things are deceiving people and leading them to perdition rather than salvation.

We were greatly surprised when we discovered that these people were not some insignificant ill informed backwater Christians, but none other than the Seventh Day Adventist Church.

Now why do you think they would stick their neck out with such irrational claims? We believe they did it to take the wind from underneath our wings. We know that they, and a lot of other churches, have been keenly following our preaching, some of their ministers even using our writings to prove the correctness of keeping the Sabbath. But here is an interesting difference: when we made an error, as we did at one stage, we went before the Almighty on our knees and asked Him where we went wrong. He sent us back to the Scriptures and opened our eyes to where we made that error. Sure enough, it was in regard to John Paul II.

Half a decade earlier, before there was any talk of a Pope visiting Jerusalem, we announced that for the first time in history the time was ripe for such a visit to take place. That visit took place in the year 2000. Our mistake was in assuming that that visit would unleash the end-time Great Tribulation. It did not. And why did we believe that? From the words of Jesus Christ.

<sup>1</sup>“Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. <sup>2</sup>And Jesus said to them, “Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not *one* stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”

<sup>3</sup>Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be? And what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”

<sup>4</sup>And Jesus answered and said to them: “Take heed that no one deceives you. <sup>5</sup>For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many. <sup>6</sup>And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet. <sup>7</sup>For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. <sup>8</sup>All these *are* the beginning of sorrows.

<sup>9</sup>“Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake. <sup>10</sup>And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. <sup>11</sup>Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. <sup>12</sup>And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. <sup>13</sup>But he who endures to the end

shall be saved. <sup>14</sup>And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come. <sup>15</sup>“Therefore when you see the ‘*abomination of desolation*,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand), <sup>16</sup>“then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. <sup>17</sup>Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. <sup>18</sup>And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. <sup>19</sup>But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! <sup>20</sup>And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. <sup>21</sup>For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. <sup>22</sup>And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened.” (Mat.24:1-22).

We had no doubt that verse 15 referred to the Pope’s visit to Jerusalem. When that visit came and went, and the events that were supposed to be unleashed by it did not eventuate, we knew that we made a mistake. But where and why?

Upon studying the Scriptures more carefully, we understood it. John Paul’s visit to Jerusalem, did not unleash the Great Tribulation, but the events leading to it and to “the time of Jacob’s trouble”.

<sup>1</sup>“The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, <sup>2</sup>“Thus speaks the LORD God of Israel, saying: ‘Write in a book for yourself all the words that I have spoken to you. <sup>3</sup>For behold, the days are coming,’ says the LORD, ‘that I will bring back from captivity My people Israel and Judah,’ says the LORD. ‘And I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.’”

<sup>4</sup>Now these *are* the words that the LORD spoke concerning Israel and Judah. <sup>5</sup>“For thus says the LORD: ‘We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. <sup>6</sup> Ask now, and see, whether a man is ever in labor with child? So why do I see every man *with* his hands on his loins like a woman in labor, and all faces turned pale? <sup>7</sup>Alas! For that day is great, so that none *is* like it; And it *is* the time of Jacob’s trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.” (Jer.30:1-7).

What happened since 2000 is well known: a sharp deterioration in world conditions, terrorism, two Iraqi Wars, climate change and global warming. Not the Great Tribulation, but the events leading to it. In fact, we said in 2000 that the world had entered the time of Jacob’s trouble, and we have been proven right. But we were still not happy with our mistake and wanted to know why we got it wrong. By going back to the Scriptures we understood why. Let us go to Daniel again.

<sup>14</sup>At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands *watch* over the sons of your people; And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, *even* to that time.

And at that time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book.

<sup>2</sup>And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame *and* everlasting contempt.

<sup>3</sup>Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever. <sup>4</sup>“But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.” <sup>5</sup>Then I, Daniel, looked; and there stood two others, one on this riverbank and the other on that riverbank. <sup>6</sup>And *one* said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, “How long shall the fulfilment of these wonders *be*?”

<sup>7</sup>Then I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever, that *it shall be* for a time, times, and half a *time*; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these *things* shall be finished.

<sup>8</sup>Although I heard, I did not understand. Then I said, “My lord, what *shall be* the end of these *things*?”

<sup>9</sup>And he said, “Go *your way*, Daniel, for the words *are* closed up and sealed till the time of the end. <sup>10</sup>Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.

<sup>11</sup>“And from the time *that* the daily *sacrifice* is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, *there shall be* one thousand two hundred and ninety days. <sup>12</sup>Blessed *is* he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days.

<sup>13</sup>“But you, go *your way* till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days.” (Dan.12:1-13).

We are only concerned with verses 12 and 13, but we gave you the whole chapter so that you can look at them in context. We erred at first in assuming that the two timelines – one thousand two hundred and ninety days, and one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days – run concurrently. Now we know that they run consecutively, which means that from the time the abomination of desolation defiles the holy place, there are still seven years and seventy five days until the Great Tribulation. Now let us go back to Jesus Christ. What do we make of His prophecy that, “when you see the ‘*abomination of desolation*,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand), “then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. <sup>17</sup>Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. <sup>18</sup>And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. . . .”

What was there to be understood about his prophecy when it is so clearly spelled out? In the face of it, it appears that it contradicts Daniel’s prophecy, for Daniel said that after the abomination of desolation profanes the holy place, there are still more than seven years until the end, yet Jesus Christ said that when that happens people should flee to the mountains.

Now if we had been right about John Paul II, he would have been the last Pope, and said so. Our friends at the Seventh Day Adventist Church apparently believed that too, but in order to save their face, they came up with the absurd notion that he will still be the last Pope but only by being impersonated. Since human beings could hardly do that, the impersonator had to be a demon. Thus they went from bad to worse and from the frying pan into the fire.

What is the explanation then, who is right, Daniel or Jesus Christ? Both! That is why Jesus Christ inserted ‘(whoever reads, let him understand)’ in the middle of His prophecy. He was telling His followers not to take that prophecy at its face value, which is what we did and went wrong. A lot of other people went wrong too, among them the Seventh Day Adventists. The difference between us however, is that we sought the answer by going before the Almighty in fervent prayer, not by inventing absurd ‘revelations’ about it.

By looking carefully at Daniel 12 and Mathew 24, and with the benefit of hindsight, we now know that they refer to two different visits to Jerusalem by the abomination of desolation. Daniel refers of the first one, which triggers not the Great Tribulation but the two countdowns to it, while Jesus Christ refers to the second visit which triggers the Great Tribulation.

How do we explain then the fact that it is not one Pope but two that have to be involved in these prophecies? This is where the Seventh Day Adventists have gone wrong for they assumed that the term ‘abomination of desolation’ could refer to one man only, when in fact it refers to all men who sit on the throne of the most murderous institution the world has ever seen – the Vatican.

All men who have claimed the titles, Pontifex Maximus, ‘Holy Father’, and ‘Vicars of Christ on earth’ qualify for the term ‘abomination of desolation’. Whoever reads, let him understand!

## THE CHRISTIAN HOLY DAYS FOR THE YEARS 2007 - 2009

	2007	2008	2009
<b>The Passover</b> (Pesah – Nissan 14) Unlike the Jews, who used to kill the Passover lamb “at the twilight” of Nissan 14 (meaning in the evening towards Nissan 15), we, Christians, observe the Passover when our “Lamb” – Jesus Christ – was sacrificed. That happened on the afternoon of Nissan 14, before the twilight of Nissan 14, meaning that we keep it a little earlier than the Jews. We commemorate His death, not His supper, which occurred the previous evening, as some churches do. The time when His body was broken, not when He broke the symbolic bread.	2 April	19 April	8 April
<b>Days of Unleavened Bread</b> (Nissan 15 – 21) On the first and seventh days there shall be holy convocations. No work shall be done on these days.	3 – 9 April	20 – 26 April	9 – 15 April
<b>Pentecost</b> (Shavuot – Sivan 6)	23 May	9 June	29 May
<b>Feast of Trumpets</b> (Rosh Hashanah – Tishri 1)	13 Sept.	30 Sept.	19 Sept..
<b>Day of Atonement</b> (Yom Kippur – Tishri 10)	22 Sept.	9 Oct.	28 Sept.
<b>Feast of Tabernacles</b> (Succoth – Tishri 15 – 22) On the first and the eighth days there shall be holy convocations. No work shall be done on these days.	27 Sept. – 4 Oct.	14 – 21 Oct.	3 – 10 Oct.

### Yes, children should partake of the Lord’s Supper

Among the myriad of contentious emails we have had to deal with, was one which purported to clarify the question of whether children should partake of the Lord’s Supper. This is what they said:

“Should children partake of the Lord’s Supper? The Lord’s Supper is an act of remembering, a commemorative event. Every time we take the Lord’s Supper we remember the price Jesus Christ paid for us on that cross. He took upon Himself the judgment that God would have given us. He gave His body to be destroyed (the broken bread), and for the forgiveness of our sins He poured out His blood (the wine symbolises this fact). At the Lord’s Supper, we meditate over what happened at Golgotha, remembering that these events were experienced personally by Jesus Christ on our behalf, and in so doing He wiped out our guilt on that cross. Our attitude must be one of gratitude, the Holy Scriptures are warning us to beware not to take the Lord’s Supper in an unworthy manner, but to receive it with reverence and humility. In this context, the term ‘unworthy’ means not to take the Supper unaware of its significance. For this reason, people who have not been born again should not partake of this Supper.” (Received on Feb. 15, 2007)

First of all, these people think that they have been ‘born again’ when every indication is that they do not have the Holy Spirit. We have reason to believe that this is a Sunday observing church, and no such church could ever have the Holy Spirit. Even many Sabbatarian churches do not have the Holy Spirit these days, let alone those who observe the Day of the Sun.

Second, the Lord’s Supper, or Passover as it should be more correctly called, is one of seven biblical Holy Days. You keep them all, or you keep none, which is what Sunday observing churches have been doing for millennia anyway.

Third, the Passover must be observed once a year at the right time, not willy-nilly every time there is a gathering for a religious service. It loses its significance if you do it that way. Since Sunday observing churches know nothing of God’s calendar – a lunar calendar, as opposed to the Roman solar calendar – it means that whatever they observe cannot be the Passover.

Fourth, the apostles made no distinction between people who were born again and those who were not born again. They merely said that people must not receive the Lord’s Supper in an unworthy manner. Some of those who claim to be born again are further away from God than many worldly people. Why do you think Jesus Christ said that many are called but few are chosen? The chosen come from among the called, from among those who think that they are born again.

Human beings cannot know a worthy person from an unworthy one, unless he is obviously a boisterous drunkard or sinner. Only God knows that. If they know that they are unworthy, and still partake of the Lord’s Supper, let it be upon their own head. Let them be responsible before Jesus Christ, and let not humans be judges of that.

If people want to partake of the Lord’s Supper, even strangers, they should not be prevented from doing so. The only requirement being that they observe the solemnity of the occasion. And that goes for children too.

What greater joy could parents have than to see their children quietly participate and take in the meaning of such an important memorial? I can assure you that Jesus Christ would not turn children away from commemorating His sacrifice.

In fact, I would suggest that if you have relatives, friends, or neighbours whom you think are worthy of it, who may benefit from it, and might be willing to participate in it in the appropriate manner, invite them along.

And no, there is no washing of feet on that occasion. Those who know that they are going to have their feet washed, scrub them thoroughly before hand, so that exercise becomes nothing more than an exercise in futility.

Jesus Christ gave us an example that we may live by it in the real world, not when we commemorate His sacrifice.