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Dear Friends,

The 'Obamania' of recent months has shown how strong religious feelings can be aroused in an otherwise secular society. Barack Hussein Obama, the new President of the USA, has been hailed as a 'messiah' and 'saviour', a Jesus and Gandhi, not only in America but throughout the world. In him were placed all the hopes of a world which is groaning under the burden of an unprecedented financial crisis. He promised 'change', and that is what people voted for.

As the world becomes more secular, its politics become more mythic and messianic. As the Christian faith is demythologised, belief in the miraculous powers of socialism is growing. Even though socialism/communism has failed on every level, much of the present elite of the world has embraced it as a firmly held religion. Its followers no longer look to God as the author and director of human history, but to man. In many ways their thinking has shifted from the Logos to the Mythos, from reality to mysticism. 'Change' has become the great dream.

Obama is not the first politician who is invested with godlike qualities. South Africa, too, has its mystic figure to make all things 'new'. The 'rainbow' nation was to be a miracle nation, fulfilling the hopes and longings of all its peoples, and its President, Nelson Mandela, was hailed as a saviour and a saint all over the world.

Christian or socialist?

One of President Obama's first acts of office was to legalise American funding of abortion on an international level. Prior to his presidency this had been outlawed for, in the USA alone, an estimated 50 million children had been aborted over the past thirty years. Nelson Mandela, too, legalised abortion soon after his inauguration and, during the past 13 years, an estimated 800.000 babies have lost their lives in South Africa. Though voted into office by countless Christians and supported by lively hopes, these leaders betrayed their peoples' godly expectations.

Whenever a leader is hailed in religious terms, it is an indication that a great shift to the left is imminent. Especially socialism/communism thrives on religious images. Robert Mugabe, the President of Zimbabwe, reportedly equated himself with Jesus Christ, 1) and when, in 2008, he failed to secure a majority, he declared that no man could displace him - *only God could remove him from office.* 2) Jacob Zuma, the president of the ANC, speaks in similar terms, saying: "*God expects us to rule this country because we are the only organization which was blessed by pastors when it was formed. It is even blessed in heaven. That is why we will rule until Jesus comes back.*" On another occasion he said: "*We believe it (the ANC) will be in power forever until the son of Man comes back.*" 3) And on yet another: "*God wants the ANC to rule South Africa.*" 4) - When he was brought to court on charges of corruption, the ANC chairman of the Free State likened this to "*the suffering of Jesus Christ.*" He said: "*In church they sing that they will follow Jesus wherever he goes. That's how we should be about Jacob Zuma.*" 5) Addressing a large crowd in a Soweto stadium, an ANC preacher stated: "*Anyone who fights him (Zuma) is fighting Nkulunkulu (the supreme being) personally.*" 6)

God's name is to be used in a holy and reverent way

Such language, of course, is blasphemy and in conflict with the Third Commandment, which says: "*Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.*" (Exodus 20:7; Deuteronomy 5:11) God's name should be used in a holy and reverent way in thought and word. The American Reformed theologian Dr Rousas Rushdoony explained what this means: "***To take the name of the Lord in truth,***" he said, "*means to ground our lives and actions, our thoughts and possessions, and every law-sphere of life firmly and fully on God and His law-word. **To take the name of the Lord in vain** is to deny in reality the only true God; it is empty profession of Him when our lives and actions, and often every thought, possession, and every law-sphere is alienated from God or blasphemously ascribed to ourselves.*" 7)

So to use God's name to promote alien causes is forbidden and invites His judgment. But not only politicians have failed in this way. Even ministers of religion have embraced a 'Christian Socialism' in which human needs and experiences take centre-stage. In their preaching sin and repentance are minimised, whilst poverty alleviation and political liberation are maximised. They promise not freedom from inward guilt, but freedom from outward circumstances. Charles Spurgeon, the eminent Baptist preacher of the late 19th century, warned against such religion and said: "I would not have you exchange the gold of individual Christianity for the base metal of Christian Socialism." From his pulpit he preached against the "blind guides" who were teaching "deadly principles" which would lead to "anarchy and riot". 8) History confirms this: Socialism/communism has not relieved poverty but increased it. In spite of this, it remains a powerful religion, and many Christians are confused when they are falsely told that Communism and Christianity have much in common. 9)

Messianic Communism

We remember how, in the days of South Africa's *liberation struggle*, Archbishop Desmond Tutu declared euphorically: "When justice prevails over injustice as in Zimbabwe, it shows that the kingdom of God is here already." 10) And how Dr Allan Boesak, looking forward to a free South Africa, exclaimed: "The New Jerusalem will arise from the ashes of all that which today is called 'Pretoria.'" 11) In 2008, when past President Nelson Mandela celebrated his 90th birthday, the Catholic paper 'Southern Cross' even applied a messianic psalm to him, saying: "You are the fairest of the children of men, and graciousness is poured upon your lips, because God has blessed you for evermore." (Psalm 45:2) 12)

Such religious accolades are hardly ever applied to true Christian personalities or to believing church leaders. In fact, Bible believing Christians are generally regarded as enemies not only by communists, but also by Christian socialists. When Friedrich Engels was asked by Karl Marx's daughter, whom he hated most, he replied: "Spurgeon!" The great Spurgeon was faithfully preaching sin and salvation through Christ, and in doing so, diverting England's urban working class away from atheist revolutionary socialism to Christian parliamentary reformism.

Owen Fourie, in his 'Law and Liberation' relates blasphemy to revolution. He says: "The most significant feature of ungodly revolution is its low language. The revolutionary language is characterised by profanity, blasphemy, and an obsession with ... perversion. Thus profanity is actually a barometer. It shows that there is a revolution in progress. It is an index to social deterioration and degeneration." 13) In today's world this process is visible not only in politics, but also in entertainment, art, advertising, and cartooning. Hardly any of these are without blasphemy. In fact, in South Africa even babies' nappies are now sold to the tune of *Silent Night, Holy Night!*

At this time of worldwide financial crisis, when the USA is undergoing a revolution, many people are looking for a saviour who will bring utopian change and relief. In Africa, too, the disappointed poor are looking for a saviour. They want to be loved by their president and cared for by the state. But there is a warning, loud and clear, and it comes from an unexpected source. Vladimir Putin, the Russian Prime Minister, who should know socialism/communism better than anyone, has warned the US (and the world) that they should take a lesson from the pages of Russian history and not exercise excessive intervention in economic activity. He also warns that people should not blindly believe in their state's omnipotence. "This lesson cost us dearly," he said. "I am sure nobody wants to see it repeated." At the 2009 *World Economic Forum* in Davos, Switzerland, he pleaded for the spirit of free enterprise and the principle of personal responsibility. 14)

We should be careful then, of messianic politics, of false hopes in 'saviours', and of promises of social and economic utopias. - With national elections due in April 2009, South Africans would be wise to examine the spiritual issues inherent in politics and to decide whether or not to stand for Christian values. Let us not put our trust in deified man, but accept that "the LORD is our Judge, the LORD is our Lawgiver, the LORD is our King; He will save us." (Isaiah 33:22)

May God bless you richly,
D. Scarborough.

Footnotes:

1. Sowetan, Save Africa from 'saviours', 30.3.07
2. News24, Mugabe: It's up to God, 20.6.2008
3. The Citizen, God talk condemned, 6.5.08
4. Shaun Willcock, Jacob Zuma says, 'God wants the ANC to rule South Africa, 3.7.2008
5. News24, Follow Zuma 'like Jesus', 19.1.2009
6. Saturday Star, Crowd raises Zuma to status of a deity, 3.11.2008
7. Rousas John Rushdoony, The Institutes of Biblical Law, p. 117
8. Joel McDurman, Spurgeon on Socialism, 7.3.2009
9. Agenda, SABC, 9.6.91, the SACP's Jeremy Cronin lauds the Sermon on the Mount.
10. EcuNews, 11/1980
11. Dr Allan Boesak, German Kirchentag, 6.5.1987
12. Southern Cross, 30.7.-5.8.2008, cited by Shaun Willcock, Bible Based Ministries, November 2008.
13. Owen Fourie, Law and Liberation, No. 4, The Creator's Mark, 1991
14. Putin warns US about Socialism. URL www.therightperspective.org/?p-1472,14.2.09.

The THIRD COMMANDMENT: To give Glory to God's Name

Taken from the Westminster Larger Catechism

**“Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain;
for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.” (Exodus 20:7)**

A. The Duties required in the Third Commandment.

The Third Commandment requires that the name of God be used in a holy and reverent way in thought and word.

To speak reverently about Him: “Hallowed be thy name.” (Matt. 6:9) “Observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name. THE LORD THY GOD.” (Deut. 28:58) “Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.” (Psalm 29:2)

To reverence God's ordinances: “Cursed be the deceiver... [who] sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing; for I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen.” (Mal. 1:14)

To keep His word holy: “I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy loving kindness, and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.” (Ps. 138:2)

To keep His sacraments holy: “And when he (Jesus) had given thanks, he break it, and said, Take, eat, this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me... He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.” (1 Cor. 11:24)

To pray reverently: “I will that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.” (1Tim. 2:8)

To use oaths rightly: “And thou shalt swear, The Lord liveth in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; and the nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory.” (Jer. 4:2)

Keep vows holy: “Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few. When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed.” (Eccl. 5:2-6)

Reverence God's works: “Remember that thou magnify his work, which men behold.” (Job 36:24)

Keep your thoughts on God: “Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened... and a book of remembrance was written... for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.” (Mal. 3:16)

Keep your meditation reverent: “O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! Who hast set thy glory above the heavens. When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man that thou art mindful of him?” (Ps. 8:1-4)

Keep your words holy: “Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” (Col. 3:17) “Sing psalms unto him; talk ye of all his wondrous works.” (Ps. 105:2)

Write the truth: “This shall be written for the generations to come; and the people... shall praise the Lord.” (Ps. 102:18)

Make a holy profession: “Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.” (1 Pet. 3:15)

Speak graciously: “Let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ.” (Phil. 1:27)

Do everything to God's glory: “Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” (1 Cor. 10:31)

B. The Sins forbidden in the Third Commandment

Not using God's name as is required: “If he will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the Lord of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings.” (Mal. 2:2)

Being ignorant: “I found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.” (Acts 17:23)

Taking the name of God in vain: “Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? Or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.” (Prov. 30:9)

Profaning God: “A son honoureth his father; and a servant his master; if then I be a father, where is mine honour? And if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar, and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the Lord is contemptible. But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, The table of the Lord is polluted, and the fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible.” (Mal. 1:6-12)

Using God's name in a superstitious way: "The elders of Israel said, Wherefore hath the Lord smitten us to-day before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies." (1 Sam. 4:3-5)

Using his titles and attributes in a blasphemous way: "Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." (Exodus 5:2) "For they speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain." (Ps. 139:20)

Speaking wickedly: "Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee." (Ps. 1:16)

Denigrating God's works: "They regard not the work of the Lord... [nor] the operation of his hands." (Isa. 5:12)

Blaspheming God's titles, attributes, ordinances, or works: "Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? And against whom hast thou exalted thy voice...? Even against the Holy One of Israel." (2 Kings 19:22)

Perjury: "I shall enter into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name; and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it, with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof." (Zech. 5:4) "Love no false oath for all these are things that I hate, saith the Lord." (8:17)

All sinful cursing: "And the Philistine [Goliath] cursed David by his gods." (1 Sam. 17:43)

All false oaths: "How shall I pardon thee for this? Thy children have forsaken me, and sworn by them that are no gods; when I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery..." (Jer. 5:7)

All sinful vows: "Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog, into the house of the Lord thy God for any vow." (Deut. 23:18) "Certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul." (Acts 23:12)

All sinful casting of lots: "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." (Ps. 22:18)

Violating lawful oaths and vows: "He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart: who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully." (Ps. 24:4) "Seeing he despised the oath by breaking the covenant, when, lo, he had given his hand, and hath done all these things, he shall not escape." (Ez. 17:18)

Fulfilling oaths if unlawful: "And the king [Herod] was exceeding sorry [when Salome asked for the head of John the Baptist], yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her." (Mark 6:26)

Complaining about God's decrees and providence: "Who hath resisted his will. Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" (Rom. 9:14-20)

Prying into His providence: "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." (Deut. 29:29)

Misapplying God's decrees: "But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? If the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?" (Rom. 3:5) "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid." (Rom. 6:1)

Not applying God's decrees: "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." (Eccl. 8:11)

Misinterpreting God's word: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time... But I say unto you..." (Matt. 5:21f)

Perverting the word: "With lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad... and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life." (Ezek. 13:22-23)

Profane jests: "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die." (Is. 22:13)

Curious and unprofitable questions and false doctrines: "He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings. Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness, from such withdraw thyself." (1 Tim. 6:4-5, 20)

Abusing God's name for charms: "There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch. Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. All that do these things are an abomination to the Lord." (Deut. 18:10-14)

Using God's word for sinful lusts and practices: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine: but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears: And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." (2 Tim. 4:3)

Maligning God's truth, grace, and ways: "But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming." (Acts 13:45)

Scorning God's truth: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." (Ps. 1:1)

Reviling: "They think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you." (1 Pet. 4:4)

Opposing God's truth: "Of how much sober punishment shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" (Heb. 10:29)

Using religion for sinister ends: "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; from such turn away." (2 Tim. 3:5) "Be not as the hypocrites... Verily I say unto you. They have their reward." (Matt. 6:1-5, 16)

Other sins forbidden by the Third Commandment are:

being ashamed of or a shame to God by an ungodly, unwise, unfruitful, and offensive way of life.