



ETERNAL VALUE REVIEW

MONEY MONITOR & GLOBAL TRENDS REPORT

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“For thinking Christians seeking to understand the times.”

AUGUST 2017

FEATURE REPORT

Fake News and False Futures

In recent times, “fake news” and “false media” have come into the public awareness. Why recently? Fake news and so-called “alternative facts” were purported to have been major factors in the recent U.S. election outcome. A malleable sense of truth created false realities and “media spin” that served political agendas. Non-truth and bias were broadly accepted as political tactics ... so long, of course, that these lined up with one’s cause and preferred perspectives.

As such, many apparently came to the lamentable conclusion that there is no such thing as “truth” in the public arena of discourse, nor any “telling it like it is,” nor “just the facts, ma’am,” as Detective Sergeant Joe Friday of the television series *Dragnet* used to say.

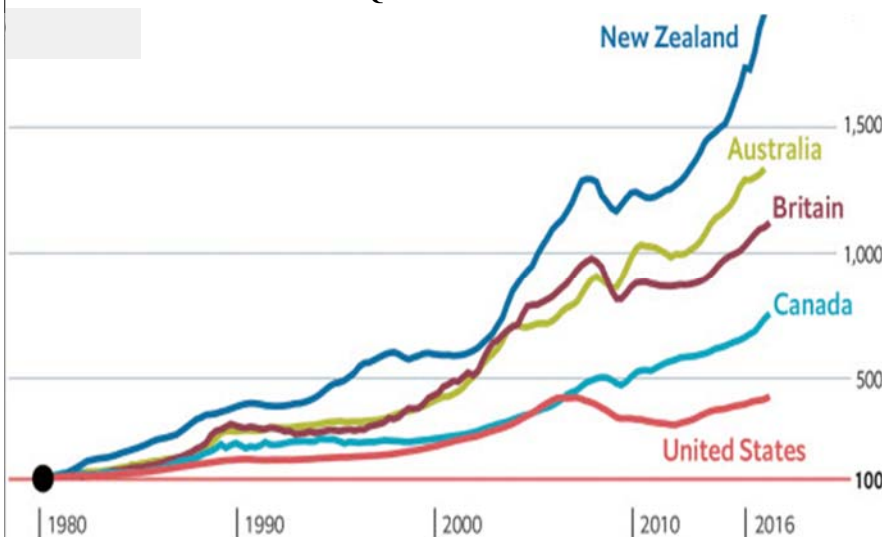
News reporters and policymakers therefore could no longer be counted upon to transmit unbiased and unvarnished facts. Rather, the media was mostly seen to be sold out to biased opinion, viewership numbers and profits. Of course, political candidates of all stripes also sought influence with spin and bias. In that sense, the news and politicians suited each other ... in fact, they actually need each other.

Fake news is not news, though it certainly seems it is becoming much more accepted and widespread today. But can we say that these are new trends? Says one analyst, Chris Hedges of *Truthdig*, journalists and the media companies have long ago abandoned reporting the news. Quoting him directly: “The media landscape in America is dominated by ‘fake news’: It has [been] for decades. This fake news does not emanate from the Kremlin. It is a multibillion-dollar-a-year industry.”¹

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Global House Price Index

Q1 1980 = 100



Source: Demographia.com

WORLD MONEY UPDATE

Déjà vu: A Warning That Hits Home

Real estate prices are again soaring. In fact, this is the case virtually everywhere in the world, not just in North America. Residential prices are soaring to all-time highs from Sweden to Australia. (The chart on this page shows how widespread the phenomenon.) Other countries experiencing steep price inclines and rarefied cost levels (vs. household income) are South Korea, Hong Kong, Canada, New Zealand and elsewhere. Why is this happening?

There are at least two answers. Firstly, and initially, housing affordability improved mainly due to all-time lows in mortgage interest rate levels. Given record-low interest rates, home buyers can afford to carry a larger mortgage. Also, investors can buy real estate with an attractive rent yield vis-à-vis prevailing interest rate levels. As such, rental cashflow is seen to be quite attractive to

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“Great is our Lord
and mighty in power;
his understanding has
no limit.” - Psalm
147:5

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many investors. These factors tend to push up housing prices.

However, we must not overlook the second reason. This is the impact of rising confidence and speculation. Following substantial rises in real estate prices, people begin to believe that prices will continue to soar and begin to base their actions upon presumption alone. Real estate is bought on the expectation that it will continue to rise in price, making up for the fact that the property has a negative cash flow (i.e. interest costs and expenses rising above rental revenues.)

We have written articles about real estate bubbles several times over the decades. Most notably, in May 2004 we wrote [A Warning That Hits Home](#). It clearly identified the “bubble” that was underway in U.S. real estate markets and warned that it was not sustainable. (We will provide some excerpts from this article.)

As it may be this time around, while commercial real estate is soaring in the U.S., trends in residential real estate are not as extreme as in other countries, i.e. Canada. Nevertheless, it is again timely to warn that real estate bubbles always end badly. People fail to realize that rising home prices (assuming one owns only one house) does not increase wealth. Rising home costs only serve to impoverish households. Most sadly, high home prices frustrate first-time home buyers.

Of course, it is good to have a home and to own one’s own home if possible. However, some time ago yearning for home ownership began to be used as an instrument of ensnarement. Something that was good was taken to excess. This development paralleled an idolatrous shift in society overall to the worship and pursuit of wealth.

The objective of national home-ownership policies changed. Leaders and politicians still gave lip service to the ideal of home ownership for all — including the

disadvantaged — but the emphasis had changed to emphasize the wealth itself that housing represented rather than shelter and hearth. Owning a house was good; even better if it continued to rise in price. After all, that makes people feel wealthy ... and, generally, encourages them to spend. Real estate became the prime vehicle of what became known as the “wealth effect.”ⁱ Woe to the leaders that allow housing prices to fall.

Policymakers (politicians, central bankers) long ago recognized that the surest way to make people feel happy and prosperous is to have the perceived wealth of their homes and other assets rise. This new demagoguery became brazen in the early 1990s, openly endorsed in intellectual circles. A quote reflecting this thinking states that “*now many societies, and indeed the entire world, have learned how to create wealth directly. The new approach requires that a state find ways to increase the market value of its productive assets.*”

Such an economic policy that “*aims to achieve growth by wealth creation therefore does not attempt to increase the production of goods and services, except as a secondary objective.*”ⁱⁱ Many other intellectuals could be quoted that advocated a similar approach. Here the point is clearly made that the apparition of rising wealth — by hook or crook — is to be focused on, not the real aspects of human labor, financial conditions or anything else. Wealth, even if it is only an imitation, is wanted above all.

The core of this rotten ideology is found in high places. The lure of financial wealth — more exactly, the perception of wealth — has become a deliberate policy tool. Wealth goes before all. Make most people think that they are becoming wealthier, that more wealth gains are probable, and national prosperity and economic growth will follow. This “hoodwink” ensnarement is leading North America and other nations astray and is bound to result in hardship in the not-too-distant future.

And, it is that type of thinking that may be impacting your home. How so? For that explanation, a little history is first helpful.

Interest rates are at all-time lows (recently even at 5,000 year lows in some countries). Homeowners will tend to feel rich and secure because they have been led to think that housing prices will continue to rise forever. Moreover, the idea that house prices could actually fall is thought to be inconceivable. The consequence of this false confidence is that the average household today pays the same or more in interest costs as a proportion of their income than was the case when interest rates were four to five times higher just twenty years ago. There is little security to be found in this situation.

These trends in recent years again have crescendoed to maniacal and dangerous levels. Apparently, not only do people think that home prices will rise forever, they also must be assuming that interest rate levels will never rise



ETERNAL VALUE REVIEW
MONEY MONITOR & GLOBAL TRENDS REPORT



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again. It will indeed be a new world if that were to be the case.

We conclude that the world today is probably experiencing one of its biggest global housing inflations in history. Conditions in many housing markets, as explained, are building towards precarious levels. Imagine what will happen when the day arrives that real estate prices begin to fall ... when perhaps rising interest rates cause mortgage payments to rise to where some homeowners will begin to default on their mortgage obligations. Will this happen? Yes, most certainly at some point. The facts of history confirm it.

The corrupt modern-day world of globalized humanity has deliberately turned people's desire to have a home into a trap for those that are unwary. It is a mechanism that will kick in to cause further economic calamity sometime in the future. Then, many households will be caught in a difficult financial situation and will be crying out for policymakers to solve this difficult problem. Dangers of this type exist even now.

It is a fact that most North Americans are "house poor." The lure to possess a large house inhabits them, rather than these people inhabiting their houses. Their mortgage payment and ownership obligations have been placed first in priority, sometimes squeezing out their ability to provide for other important needs, even the first of our obligations — giving to the Lord. Many cannot do so even if they wanted, given the large mortgage payment for a home that they really cannot afford.

King David modeled a good attitude in this respect. After he had settled in his new palace, he said to Nathan the prophet, *"Here I am, living in a palace of cedar, while the ark of the covenant of the LORD is under a tent"* (1 Chronicles 17:1). He clearly put his emphasis and the desires of his heart elsewhere. The Bible holds him up as the king that most had his heart upon the Lord.

Besides taking practical precautions to ensure that our financial houses are in order, we still have one better promise. Christ said, *"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going"* (John 14:1-4).

If we build on solid ground, our houses will be secure ... both on heaven and earth.

EVR

Notes

i According to US Federal Reserve statistics, the average American household has four times as much wealth in housing than in stock markets.

ii Foreign Policy magazine, Fall 1996. Securities: The New World Wealth Machine, John C. Edmunds.

The Bible has another word for "fake news": it is called "lying." As such, of course, fake news originated much earlier. It has been around in one form or another since the dawn of time.

However, let's return to more recent times. Fake news in print media really only came into existence about the same time that news began to be widely circulated; this being around the time that Johannes Gutenberg invented the printing press in 1439. Almost immediately—and ever since—there were issues of poor journalistic ethics; confusion about what was true and false, and "news for hire."

Today, the media business is a very large industry globally, and ownership has become increasingly concentrated in recent decades. This is true globally as well as domestically for most high-income countries.

For example, consider that 7 or less companies control greater than 50% of the print media in America today. According to a 2016 survey by *Forbes* magazine, 15 billionaires in America controlled the entire media industry. Merger negotiations are ongoing.

Indeed, the greed and profit motive most certainly plays a large role, as well as political bias. There can be no doubt that the major media companies are beholden to their shareholders. This applies to the whole corporatist profit model. In this sense, media businesses are no more culpable than any other public corporation. In fact, media companies have made no bones about this.

As the head of Westinghouse once put it (which at the time owned CBS, the television network), "We are here to serve advertisers. That is our raison d'être."² Other media heads were in broad agreement. Rubin Frank (a former NBC news president) said, "News is what someone wants to suppress. Everything else is advertising."

As the corporate culture took dominance and competition between different media heated up, the pressure to "produce" news that people will want to read increased. Again, quoting Chris Hedges, "Journalists long ago gave up trying to describe an objective world, or give a voice to ordinary men and women. They became conditioned to cater to corporate demands."

In fact, many journalists openly work as scribes to the powerful and influential ... repackagers and spinners of the new "sound bite" so as to meet alternative agendas of perhaps lobbies, industries or individual wealthy people.

As a result of all the above-mentioned trends, says George Friedman (the intrepid geopolitical analyst and founder of *Geopolitical Futures*): "The prestige press, as we used to call it, squandered its inheritance from prior generations of journalists and lost its right to pronounce the truth."³

Along the way, we also note that what is called news today is often nothing more than stories that entertain. Much of popular news content is trivial—Hollywood output, and updates on the rich and famous. The newscasters on the popular news channels tend to have movie star good looks and makeup. Female journalists are shown to be sitting on tall stools dressed in short skirts. Youth and gossip sells.

Real news—past, present and future—receives scant mention. As well, balanced international news continues to shrink from the public domain, even during these times of foreign anti-terrorism activities. What international news does catch the eye of mass media channels is either superficial or selected for its entertainment or propaganda value.

Illusion Is Truth

The idea that illusion and falsehoods can be peddled for truth—even convincing an entire society to discard reality—is an old one. In was an idea first promoted in the Garden of Eden. “Did God really say ...?” (Genesis 3:1). Satan promoted a lie, spinning the truth.

However, for the most part, people tend to like to believe lies. Why? Because the message of the lies will seem pleasing to them. Knowing them to be lies, they yet will accept them.

The prophet Zechariah confirms in his two visions in Zechariah 5, that “lying and stealing” will define the essence of human society in the last days. But, just how can one achieve the task of making everyone believe lies?

Adolf Hitler, evil as he was, was a master observer of the human psyche. (So is Satan, “the father of all lies,” John 8:44.) Quoting Hitler: “All propaganda has to be popular and has to accommodate itself to the comprehension of the least intelligent of those whom it seeks to reach.” He used this understanding to great harm and celebrated this vulnerability, saying: “What luck for rulers that men do not think.”

But, what is propaganda? It is anything that chooses to manipulate truth. However, its outlets today are virtually everywhere, especially given new technologies: the wide reach of the Internet, commercial and social media (i.e. Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc.).

What is popular, or what will “go viral” is not necessary truthful nor likely to be important news. However, this “stream” of blogs, news sites, Facebook and YouTube postings (to mention just some of the major social sites) produces a type of new shared reality for societies.

Richard Sennett, in his book *The Fall of Public Man*, makes the observation that a “[...] collective personality [is now] generated by common fantasy ... and those that can manipulate and shape those fantasies determine the

directions taken by the ‘collective fantasy.’” To endorse (i.e. to accept as one’s view of life and the world) the “collective personality of common fantasy” is frankly to be misled and ungodly.

Thoughts to Ponder

The Bible says that anyone who seeks comfort in worldly things and perspectives builds on sand. It is the words of Christ we are to hear and heed, not the fantasies of the world (Matthew 7:26). Says James: “You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God” (James 4:4).

In an earlier article in this space, we documented the topic of global media concentration. The focus of that article was the deluge of information and entertainment that took up an increasing proportion of people’s focus and thinking time (see “The Business of Snatching Minds,” MCM, November 2004).

There, we quoted Senator John McCain, who at the time was worried about the possible effects of continuing media concentration. He said something that aligned with the enablement of Biblical prophecy (though he may not have known this): “At some point, you’ll have many voices—and one ventriloquist.”

With the common pursuit of profits and the continuing concentration of media and news, there likely will be an ever smaller group—indeed, perhaps only one individual—who can control all media messaging in the world at some point in the future. That outcome may be some time away ... or perhaps not.

The Bible identifies two creatures that may be future candidates for the role of such a “one-world ventriloquist”—the Antichrist and the False Prophet.

While “fake news” has at its origin the Father of all Lies, its reign of lawlessness over the world has surely progressed. George Friedman makes a broad observation about such a society, which we already largely see today: “Therefore, lies flourish, despicable charges are made, and some on each side are free to believe what they want to believe. [...] Censors and accountability no longer exist.

Wilfred’s Itinerary 2017: *The Mulberry Ministry*

- October 1-2, 2017: Atlantic Prophecy Congress: Myrtle Beach, SC. Contact Midnight Call Ministries 1-800-845-2420 www.midnightcall.com

Presentation Topics

1. **Prophecy Unfulfilled: Anxiety Merchants and Profiting False Prophets**
2. **Amazing Unfilled Prophetic Trends**

Twitter is the place where malicious people with time on their hands can tell lies.”

But there is an additional dimension of fake news that readers should not miss. Daniel Boorstin in his book, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, alludes to it: “The very same advances which have made them [images] possible, have also made the images—however planned, contrived, or distorted—more vivid, more attractive, more impressive, and more persuasive than reality itself.”⁴

More persuasive? Could this be possible, an image that is more persuasive than reality itself? That would be a most dangerous development, as the real can then no longer be discerned from an image. Truth would be entirely undiscernible for the ungodly in such a world. Values would be unhinged from facts and truth.

In Revelation, we read of an image that is conjured up to deceive the entire world. “Because of the signs it [the Second Beast] was given power to perform on behalf of the first beast, it deceived the inhabitants of the earth. It ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. The second beast was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that the image could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed” (Rev 13:14-15).

Just what messages would proceed from such a false image? We cannot know exactly; however, we know that “Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light” and tries to exalt himself. “It is not surprising, then, if his servants [both humans and demons] also masquerade as servants of righteousness” (see 2 Corinthians 11:14-15). Evil can be made to appear as good ... lies to imitate the truth (Isaiah 5:20).

Are these concerns and challenges that we face already today?

Apostle Paul was already concerned about the treachery of the Devil’s bending of truth 2000 years ago ... long before the printing press or the Internet. “But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:3).

EVR

Notes

1. Chris Hedges. *Truthdig*. “‘Fake News’ in America: Homegrown, and Far From New” (December 18, 2016).

² *Advertising Age*. February 3, 1997.

³ George Friedman. *Geopolitical Futures*. “The Internet and the Tragedy of the Commons” (January 4, 2017).

⁴ Daniel Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*.

Signs of the Times: The Rise of Three False Gods of the Endtimes—Part III



Who Are They?—Part III

At the end of Part II of this series, we considered the thought that mankind’s faith in science and technology may have led to the emergence of a false god.

What seemed possible was that a new god of science and technology, in the end times, had replaced the many “gods of the fathers” mentioned in Daniel 11. But surely, science and technology cannot be a modern-day god? After all, its explanations and claims are not fictional. The hypotheses of science are tested by verifiable and repeatable observations. Though electricity itself is unseen, its properties are nevertheless well documented. It can propel a large 25-ton ore truck, illuminate television screens and power global telecommunications systems. Therefore, its existence is not mythical.

Indeed, true science does not involve the metaphysical. Yet, the crucial fact is this: The new reliance on the modern-day ingenuity of science and academy has led to a lessening role for the one true God. In fact, with the advance of modern technology, the world arrogantly no longer sees a need for the sovereign God, the One who created the heavens and the earth and man in his own image.

Even the unknown frontiers of the future no longer require a belief in God. Modern probability theory has taken care of that too, and in the process has given rise to enormous financial service industries such as insurance and securities markets. As such, though modern science has superseded perhaps tens of thousands of mythical false gods, it has itself become a new one. It alone has replaced many others, including the one and only God. That makes it a false god.

Could this be one of the three new false gods named in the Bible? To recall, Daniel mentioned three — “the unknown god”, a “foreign” one and a “god of fortresses” (Daniel 11:38-39).

Could the modern day faith in the new god of science and technology be the same as the “god of fortresses” found in Daniel 11:37? There are more than a few possible connections. Fortresses are fortified structures as their name implies. By design, they are strategically defensive and play an important role in the balance of wars and conflict.

In Daniel’s day, as in our time, the design of strong fortifications and the implements of warfare demonstrated the leading edge of technology. Fortresses needed to be

intelligently constructed. Not only was their location critical, equally important was an effective layout. Lookout towers needed to be strategically placed; wall heights and thicknesses were carefully specified; building materials needed to be flame-proofed as best as possible; and every physical advantage calculated to survive a long siege if necessary. In this sense, the science of fortress construction is related to the modern “god of fortresses” (named science and technology).

A people with advanced technology will tend to have strong fortresses. Countries with leading-edge armaments and early defense systems will feel secure and invulnerable. Impenetrable fortification speaks of independence. It sets itself up as a bulwark against outside intervention. Who will attack a strong city-state that is ruled by a “god of fortresses”? It represents a society that is insulated against all enemies — either natural or human — and is convinced that it can determine and control its destiny. (We will return to expand on these connections in upcoming articles.)

However, the true “god of fortresses” is someone else. Psalm 18:2 says that, “The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge.” In fact, God is referred to as our Fortress on at least 20 occasions in the Old Testament. He is also referred to several times as a “tower.” For example, “The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe” (Proverbs 18:10). On the other hand, the “god of fortresses” worshipped by the kingdom and people of the last days is another god. He is a counterfeit and causes mankind to trust in the works of their hands through knowledge, science and technology.

Let’s call him SCITE, short for science and technology.

In reality, this god is nothing more than the faith of humanity in the knowledge of science and technology. Science and technology is not evil in itself, of course, but mankind has turned it into an idol, supplanting God himself.

Searching for the Unknown God

What about the “unknown god?” Though Daniel may not have been able to recognize him, I believe some clues are given which allow us to attempt an identification today. What we do know is that he is new. He didn’t exist in Daniel’s day. If that were not so, Daniel would not have named him “unknown.” Therefore, the faculties or capabilities that he represents were probably not evident 2500 years ago but would become known at the time of the end.

Also, as was the case with the “god of fortresses,” the new “unknown god” must fill a void left by the other gods — the “gods of the fathers” and “the god desired by women” that are regarded no more — who will no longer hold influence over mankind. We also know that the “unknown” and “fortress” gods are not the same as they are mentioned separately in the same verse. Therefore, the

“unknown god” must also represent something entirely distinct from science and technology yet something that is also new.

So, what is this god? There are more clues found in Daniel 3:37-39. The unknown god is also one that the king or kingdom of the last days “will honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts.” This is an illuminating piece of information. (Interestingly, a similar reference to the gifts mentioned here is found in Revelation 18. The very same order is used to describe the commodities being traded with Babylon the Great.)

What we note is that the “unknown” god is honored in a very different way than the “other gods of the fathers.” The latter gods and the “god of women” were not generally honored with such precious gifts. Their images may have been constructed out of gold and silver, yet it was not gold and silver that was offered to them. Rather, the types of things offered to these gods were drink libations, animal and meat sacrifices, the practice of various rituals or even human sacrifices. However, in the case of the unknown god, all the items that are used to honor him are of an extremely high value — gold, silver, jewels and other unknown costly gifts.

What kind of god accepts gifts such as these? An inanimate (non-physical) god would not be able to consume these donations. If these were charitable gifts offered at a shrine of the unknown god, surely the priests of this temple would be mobbed with job applications. Precious gifts such as these given to a god that cannot consume them? If so, these honorary gifts would find their way into the pockets of the priests no sooner than they were donated. This belief system would quickly turn into a religion of kleptocracy. Who in our modern day would serve such a self-serving faith?

Clearly, this type of god is both impractical and improbable. The god must then be either figurative or take a true physical, living form. The latter alternative isn’t possible either. There simply is no other living god besides the God of the Bible and if this were meant, Daniel would have been shocked. His whole life is a huge, faithful testimony to the existence of the one, true, living God that shouts a message of hope across several millennia. It was the Living God that bound the mouths of the lions when Daniel was thrown in the pit. Therefore, the unknown god can only be a figurative one, unassociated with any organized religion or system of donations.

There is more significance in the fact that the honorariums given to the unknown god are all of very high monetary value. In fact, each of these — we cannot know if this is true for the “other costly gifts” as we do not know what they are exactly — may also have served a monetary function. Certainly this is true for the commodities of silver and gold. Most struck coinage was made of either substance throughout early history, though not exclusively.

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Facts & Stats ... Ends & Trends



TOPICAL QUOTES

Some people are afraid of spiders. Others, heights. Or maybe you're unreasonably fearful of clowns. The list of phobias is long, and researchers recently added one more: In 2012, the world learned of "No-Mobile Phobia" or "nomophobia" – the feeling of panic one has upon being separated from one's phone or tablet. In one UK survey, 73% of respondents felt panic when they misplaced their phone. And for another 14%, that panic spiraled into pure desperation. - **The Week, February 28, 2017**

South Koreans are set to have the longest life expectancy in the world, eclipsing longstanding leader Japan, according to a new study. Women in South Korea will by 2030 be the first to claim an average lifespan of more than 90 years, forecast the study's authors, who put the developments primarily down to investment in universal healthcare. - **Financial Times, February 21, 2017**

The number of malls in the US grew more than twice as fast as the population between 1970 and 2015, according to Cowen and Company's research analysts. By one measure of consumerist plentitude – shopping center "gross leasable area" – the US has 40% more shopping space per capita than Canada, 5 times more than the UK, and 10 times more than Germany. So it's no surprise that the Great Recession provided such a devastating blow: Mall visits declined 50% between 2010 and 2013, according to the real-estate research firm Cushman and Wakefield, and they've kept falling every year since. - **www.theatlantic.com, April 10, 2017**

Clearly, much economic forecasting is guesswork. Worse, the gap between prediction and reality may be widening. [A] study – done by David Reifschneider of the Federal Reserve and Peter Tulip of the Reserve Bank of Australia – found that forecasting mistakes had worsened since the 2008-09 financial crisis. An interesting question (which the study did not ask) is whether economic forecasting has improved in the past century. In the 1920s, with no computers, forecasters relied on random statistics: freight car loadings;

grain harvests and prices; bank deposits. Today, forecasters employ elaborate computer models that scan dozens of statistical series describing the economy. Yet the predictions seem no better. - **Washington Post, March 8, 2017**

For all of human history, meat was something you raised and produce was something you grew. Not anymore. Since 2013, scientists from around the world have successfully grown meat from cultured animal cells on multiple occasions. In fact, just this week a startup from San Francisco managed to create the first lab-grown chicken strips. The people behind these projects believe that lab-grown meat will become a normal staple in grocery stores in the very near future, because growing meat in this fashion is a lot less resource intensive, and the taste is almost indistinguishable from natural products. - **Zero Hedge, March 21, 2017**

During the past 40 years, generalized trust in the United States has declined markedly. Since the early 1970s, the share of those who respond that most people can be trusted has declined from about 50% to 33%. Changes in the composition of the US population, moreover, tend to mask the true extent of the decline. When controlling for changes in US demographics, the decline in generalized trust is even more pronounced, mainly because the population has become more educated, and more educated people tend to trust more. Trust in government shows a similar downward trend. - **Finance & Development, March 2017**

The number of people at risk globally from NTDS [neglected tropical diseases] has fallen by 20%. Most of Latin America has eliminated river blindness. The number of new cases of leprosy has declined in 8 of the past 9 years. In the past year 8 countries eliminated lymphatic filariasis. The number of cases of sleeping sickness is at its lowest in 75 years, and eradication is now thought possible. In 2015, 1.5bn treatment doses were donated by drug firms, and almost a billion people received them – an increase of more than a third since 2012. - **The Economist, April 22, 2017**

"For as wealth is power, so all power will infallibly draw wealth to itself by some means or other." – *Edmund Burke (1780)*

"Of great riches there is no real use, except it be in the distribution." – *Francis Bacon (De Dignitate et Augmentis Scientiarum, 1623)*

"That mankind as a whole shall become richer does not, of necessity involve an increase in human welfare." – *John Bates Clark*

"Riches: The saving of many in the hands of one." – *Eugene V. Debs*

"Those persons who comprise the independent classes are dependent upon two things: the industry of their fellow creatures; and injustice, which enables them to command it." – *Based on John Gray (A Lecture on Human Happiness, 1825)*

[Editor's Note: Keynes' choice of three false gods.] "For at least another hundred years we must pretend to ourselves and everyone that fair is foul and foul is fair; for foul is useful and fair is not. Avarice and usury and precaution must be our gods for a little longer still." – *John Maynard Keynes*

"No rich man is ugly." – *Zsa Zsa Gabor*

There are at least two common characteristics to each one of the identified gifts that were true even in Daniel's day. Each served as a storehouse of wealth or an object of adornment that signifies wealth. This leads us to a safe conclusion about the character of this unknown god: It is a god that is closely related with wealth. But, as it is an unknown god of wealth, could it therefore refer to a modern day god of wealth?

The Magical God of Money — MOFI

I propose that this new unknown god very likely prefigures the rise of a massive idolatry with modern monetary finance — the new high faith in globalized economics and markets. Other evidence we will yet examine suggests that it could be the very seat of sorcery that's behind the "magic" of Babylon the Great of Revelation 18. He is a great monetary/financial/commercial behemoth that rears up to assume a life of his own through human faith. Ennobled with great powers and arrogance, this god could not exist as easily if the god of Tammuz (the "god of women") was still around.

It is necessary that the "god of women" be cast aside in order for this new god to stride the global stage. Why? An endtime boom in wealth and the emergence of a giant global financial/economic system would not be otherwise possible. Funded pension systems are a modern-day development that unlink retirement from the procreation and raising of children. (See other Mulberry publications that provide a more detailed explanation.)

Mankind's confidence in this new god even rises up to eclipse a reliance and belief upon God. Who will need God when Mammon shows itself able to provide all the economic and material sustenance that mankind desires? As such, we here propose that this false god represents humanity's faith in monetary finance. We will name this god MOFI — short for monetary finance. Interestingly, an "unknown god" is mentioned in the New Testament. In Acts 17:23, it is mentioned that Apostle Paul refers to an Unknown God that the members of the Areopagus worshipped. Though we cannot connect the unknown god of the Greeks to that mentioned by Daniel, we can identify at least one commonality: The people were "[...] ignorant of the very thing you worship" (verse 23).

MOFI's influence today is enormous, though very few people may realize this. We will yet explore these important connections in upcoming articles in this series.

The Third and Final False God Revealed

Next, let us attempt to identify the third god — the "foreign god" — who emerges as another very powerful force. Again, referring to Daniel 11:37-39, we read that the king of the last days "will attack the mightiest fortresses with the help of a foreign god." We know that

he will overcome even the strongest fortresses on earth — a feat that would not be possible without the assistance of this god of foreign origin.

But just what does the word "foreign" mean in this scripture? Foreign can imply something unknown, or strange, or something that is non-domestic, pertaining to something having to do with another country. In my estimation, a careful study of all of the clues in this passage leads to the conclusion that this god finds its power outside of a country ... in sovereign foreignness.

The reference to a "foreign god" seems to have much to do with the sovereignty of countries as it is related to the conquest of "fortresses." After all, fortresses are almost always associated with the defense of a sovereign nation. Therefore, the "mightiest fortresses" represent actual sovereign countries. Even the strongest and most powerful of nations will be attacked and overcome with the aid of the "foreign god." Yet, how can something that is itself foreign — the other sovereign fortresses — simultaneously be attacked by something foreign? We see that foreign countries are being captured by something foreign. This is indeed strange. Just what is this foreign god?

We review the additional clues. We can know that it is not an unknown god in the same way as the second god we identified — MOFI — there again proving that it is a god having to do with foreign countries. We also know that it isn't a "foreign god" in the generic sense, as is sometimes used in the exhortations of the Old Testament prophets. Why? Because all of the three endtime gods we are examining qualify as foreign gods in this sense. Therefore, it is not logical that only one god would be identified as foreign and the others not.

We are left with the only definition that can apply. The riddle, wrapped in an enigma, is this: It is a god that cannot be a single country, yet it is something pertaining to a foreign nation and stronger than a single nation. It must then be a collective ... something greater than the whole yet different from its parts.

I propose that it is a god of globalism.

GLOBO — The Most Powerful Modern God

Can globalism be a god? Indeed, I believe that GLOBO is the single most powerful vehicle of the spirit of the humanists and antichrists in our time. GLOBO is an immensely powerful god that can be both incredibly alluring or vicious and indescribably brutal. Working together with the "unknown god" — the god of monetary finance (MOFI) — and science and technology god (SCITE), they are literally smashing the very mightiest fortresses of sovereignty around the globe. Even the United States and other strong nations are being immobilized by this god of globalism, their ramparts being stormed by a flood of foreign values, and attracted to the

humanist idea of self-determination.

We may finally have uncovered the unholy trinity that fosters the misplaced worship of a humanistic world and aids the spirit of the antichrist — the creatures and entities that commandeer the final last days kingdom from under the cover of deception and darkness. They are mankind's self-sufficiency based upon globalism, monetary finance, and science and technology — GLOBO, MOFI and SCITE.

Alarming, these three gods (representing the collective faith of humanity) have only risen to power during the last 250 years or so. That is an extremely short period of time in relation to the entirety of human history. Their advance has been rapid. Not one of them existed in their present form during Daniel's time. What he foresaw over 2500 years ago has all come into existence in the last tenth of this period.

Why There Are Three False Gods

We want to conclude our brief introduction to the three false gods by linking them with the temptations of Christ and weaknesses of mankind mentioned by the Apostle John that we reviewed in Part I. It is no accident that there are three in number. The spectre presents itself that the three false gods of the end times are clearly a sophisticated, last-day manifestation of mankind falling prey to the three temptations of Christ (Luke 4:1-14). These three false gods appeal to humanity's three main weaknesses (1 John 2:15-17). It is remarkable how these factors line up.

MOFI, the god of monetary/finance which underpins our modern "market society", lines up with the "unknown god" (Daniel 11), the "lust of the flesh" (1 John 2), and with the enticement to make a "stone become bread" (Luke 4).

GLOBO, the "foreign god" (Daniel 11) lines up with the "lust of the eyes" (1 John 2) which speaks of a global, humanistic realm, and power and position for mankind. An appeal to Christ for power and dominion by promising "authority and splendor" (Luke 4) was the corresponding temptation of Christ.

SCITE is the "god of fortresses" (Daniel 11), aligning with the innate tendency to "boasting" (1 John 2) that man is the creator and the temptation to "tempt the Lord your God" (Luke 4).

The alignment we identify should not surprise. The Bible rhymes. And, it has a clear message to our generation living during these very last days.

This reality becomes much more evident as we take a closer look at each of these new gods, their tactics, ruses and deceptions, and their implications for each of us. In the next articles in this series, we will examine the present-day existence and tactics of each of these endtime gods.

We continue with part IV in the next issue.

EVR

Christians invest their money ... their savings, in other words. I'd like to tackle this question in two parts — the conceptual and the practical. The conceptual applies to everyone. The practical application, however, will differ depending on individual situations and callings.

This is the same approach that I employ in setting investment policy for portfolio management, separating the strategy (or the investment policy, as some call it) from the implementation. While the investment view remains the same — for example, that the stock market may be a high-priced store of value, and the interest rate levels are attractive — it will not apply to all stewards in the same way. Some are wealthy, some are on a tight budget who require ready access to their savings, and others are retirees. Some have a God-given role to earn much money to give generously, while others feel inclined to take vows of poverty as their means of honoring God. Each will find that a different application of this investment view may be appropriate.

There are no real absolute guidelines in the question of application. Isn't everything that is right not an absolute? Therefore, is this not an unbiblical concept? I don't think so. Apostle Paul embraces the concept of differing application commenting that "One man's meat is another one's poison." Augustine counseled a similar perspective, saying, "In all essentials unity, in non-essentials diversity; but in all things charity." There are absolutes that are essential and inviolable.

Yet, it isn't diversity that complicates the answers that we are seeking. It's the same contrast between these two questions: What is God's plan of salvation? And, what is God's will and calling for my life? The answer to the first applies to each one; the second will be diverse.

I often say that Christian stewardship is 90% motives management and 10% practical investing. In fact, to be a good steward may not require you to be an investor at all. Of course, the message of the financial industry is completely contrary. They like to promote the view that being a successful investor is the evidence of good stewardship. It is otherwise. All the successes and blessings of knowledgeable stewardship will be lost for eternity if the motives and the condition of the heart are not right to begin with.

But, let's first set the correct foundation for our examination. Let's then examine our hearts. To begin, just what role do we allow greed to play in our lives? Greed is the main doorway leading to participation and entrapment with an endtime regime — what I call the endtime money trap. Immorality and greed are all connected. Just as we are to "first seek the kingdom of God [before] all else will be added unto us" (Luke 12:31) we could also say "seek ye first money, and all the other impurities and sins will be added unto us."

Apostle Paul certainly held this view saying, “the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.” (1 Timothy 6:10). To be blunt, greed is idolatry. It places money and gain ahead of God. A greedy person worships at the altar of Mammon and thus breaks the very first commandment, “Thou shalt have no other Gods before me.” Therefore, the Bible is uncompromising in its judgment of greed. “No immoral, impure or greedy person — such a man is an idolater — has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God” (Ephesians 5:6). Greed seeks its inheritance upon earth. In contrast, true stewardship sets its hope upon eternal riches and reward.

A plan of attack is laid out in 2 Peter 1:4-7. Peter says, “For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.” These elements that Peter outlines are essential in the exact order that he presents so that we might escape the spiritual lures of an endtime, materialistic world. To do that is to be a good steward.

Firstly, he begins with faith. Without it, salvation is not possible. We cannot be saved if we do not first have faith. And, if we have not first been saved, then no goodness can be found in us. God alone imparts his goodness to us through the atoning sacrifice of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Without these foundational elements, there’s little point in striving to be knowledgeable or self-controlled. Even if we were to meet the remaining requirements of Peter’s list, we still wouldn’t be saved. There will be no eternal riches. Let’s deal with the rest of Peter’s outline, point by point.

Next is knowledge. First and foremost, we need information and insight. Through the study of the Bible we can know the season of the times that we live in, the wiles of Satan, and everything else that we need to navigate spiritually in our lives. We should not be unaware of his schemes. Next, we must inform ourselves as to what is happening in the world both near and far. We should strive to stay informed about the factors and powers at play these days in world and domestic affairs. Fewer and fewer North Americans have any notion of the times nor trends affecting the whole world. Polls show this to be so.

Self-control is required next. We are called to guard our hearts and not to allow our affections to fix on earthly possessions. Everything we own or seek upon earth must be under the ownership of our Lord Jesus Christ. Everything — small or large — must ultimately be in His service. This is where Godly stewardship applies. Christ Himself implores us to guard against all kinds of greed. “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of [...] possessions” (Luke 12:15). We can

use money and technology and enjoy God’s global creation. We do not, however, need to be in their service, worship them or allow them to set up a kingdom in opposition to God.

In dealing with money we must guard against getting carried away by improper motivations. Why are we saving or investing? Is it a humble and balanced ethic of stewardship that is governing these activities? Or, is it purely the lure of high financial returns, the lure to engage the world in its competitive clamor to hoard wealth and comforts, or to boastfully elevate ourselves over others? No eternal reward will accrue to our account in heaven if these impulses drive our lives. Disappointments could yet impact our lives upon earth if we chase such false gods of wood and stone.

Perseverance. The most difficult part of escaping the entrapment of Mammon is perseverance. I believe that this is the case for a number of reasons. Though we can live to honor God, the wicked will continue to prosper. While God carries with His judgment, desiring that none might go lost, we watch many godless and evil people amass fortunes and kingdoms on earth. They flaunt it in our face, exulting in their ease and comfort. The world venerates them, giving them a high profile in glossy magazines, chronicling their lives as if they were gods. All this while we live quietly and humbly, resting in our relationship with Jesus Christ.

If that weren’t enough, we must contend with our wayward friends and Christian brothers and sisters. We meet them for coffee and they tell us of their material conquests. Perhaps they boast about how much money they have made wagering their money on a risky, fast-growing mutual fund or a hedge fund. We nod in affirmation ... possibly even congratulating them in an attempt to conceal our pangs of jealousy.

Over dinner in our homes or during conversation at a church social, we hear of the material indulgences and financial exploits of our fellow Christians. Even in this supposedly safe harbor we sometime venerate rich people, treating affluence as evidence of godly living and wisdom. After experiences like these, the passions for the world and its temporal towers of wealth can be inflamed. It can require hours of being alone with God to again quiet these fires of lust for material gain.

Temptations to consort with the present prosperity boom — deceitful as it is — can come from within the church and not just from our Christian friends. Often, we are encouraged to strike out and make fortunes from the pulpit ... from the supposed watchman of our faith, no less. Look what Isaiah had to say about the religious leaders of his day: “Israel’s watchmen are blind, they all lack knowledge; they are all mute dogs, they cannot bark; they lie around and dream, they love to sleep. They are dogs with mighty appetites; they never have enough. They are shepherds who lack understanding; they all turn to their own way, each seeks his own gain. ‘Come’, each one cries, let me get

wine! Let us drink our fill of beer! And tomorrow will be like today, or even far better” (Isaiah 56:10-12).

Prosperity theology is running rampant in the Western church today. Eternal values are being preached for the sole purpose of earthly gain. Some well-known preachers even openly state that they don’t want to wait for their eternal rewards but want material blessings now.

In this environment of super-blessed materialism, many Christian financial counselors pass themselves off as infallible prophets of Mammon. This may seem like a harsh thing to say. Of course, this statement does not apply to everyone. Yet, as the prosperity gospel has invaded the church, many financial planners are being venerated as wealth creators. Some even claim that they are Spirit-led investors. What they imply is that God will reveal Himself through them by means of a superior investment record. This is completely unbiblical.

Imagine! In a world that is defined by godless financial markets and is mad with greed, the Holy Spirit anoints these financial planners to reap riches? Can these be the true disciples of Him that “has no place to lay His head” (Matthew 8:20)? What such financial advisors have done is nothing different than join the world in its frenzied rush for financial wealth. In my view, they have pinned their clients to the tail of a false, deceptive endtime boom in world financial markets.

This hardly qualifies as appropriate conduct for a true prophet. They have made no valiant predictions other than to extrapolate yesterday to tomorrow.

Godliness. Just how can we remain godly in a financial world given over to greed and materialism? We are called to be good stewards, of course. However, stewardship and investing is not necessarily one and the same thing. The two actually stand entirely separate. Stewards may never be required to be investors. Investors, on the other hand, must always be good stewards.

This view goes contrary to the message of many Christian financial counselors these days: To be a good steward you must invest heavily ... you must buy mutual funds they say, for example. If you do not, they may claim you are not stepping out in faith. It’s not that simple, of course. In my view, stewardship is nine-tenths managing motivations and affections; one-tenth actually managing money and possessions.

True stewardship is not born out of the question, “How can I run with the bulls of Pamplona without getting gored?” or, “How can I grab onto the tail of an endtime money boom and not get stung?”. Why not carouse and frolic in the worldly financial markets — though it is part of a complex system that seeks to ensnare the world of the last days — grab our share, and duck out just before the lights go out? According to the advice of some Christian financial planners, it’s a greater sin to miss a bull trend in stock markets than to have complicity in a diabolically-deceptive

financial system.

Apostle Paul makes some suggestions as to how we might live godly lives in an adulterous world. “Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody” (1 Thessalonians 1:11). He recommends that believers in Thessalonica should work in low profile professions and work with their hands.

What did he mean by this directive? It flies straight into the face of today’s push to boost the “knowledge economy.” Most countries try to promote the growth of their “knowledge” businesses as opposed to the “old economy” smoke stack industries.

I am inclined to believe that Paul was suggesting that believers take jobs that do not lead them into complicity with a corrupt world — complicity to an Endtime Money Snare, for example. He chose to do so himself. He was a learned scholar, yet worked with his hands making tents. Supposedly, he could have been a consultant ... a knowledge worker of some kind. Instead, he chose to work with his hands.

However, I view Paul’s writing as a suggestion only. Paul recommended to Timothy that it would be better to not marry, either. If one wanted to serve the Lord without any diversions and unnecessary obligations, better to not marry was his view ... and better to not have a lofty elite job. Yes, one can be a knowledge worker — a lawyer or a financier, for example. God puts His people in all kinds of professions.

However, Paul does make a point that is worth considering. Many professions today require that you become an accomplice in the corruption of the world or enlist in an endtime conspiracy that sets itself up against God. I certainly believed that this had become the case in my profession at times. I made voluntary attempts to remove myself.

You may choose to do the same if you feel that you are being subjected to unnecessary temptation or are forced to endorse corruption. Should you really do this? Only God can provide personal direction on this difficult question. In this regard, Apostle Paul provides us with a good benchmark to follow: “You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men. Brothers, each man, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation God called him to.”

Practicing Biblical stewardship today in full truth and spirit will win few accolades and publicity. If you think that the challenge of perseverance sounds tough to this point, it gets even worse. It will get excruciatingly tough in the final stages of an endtime money boom. Few will be able to withstand the temptations to consort with a tower of hoarded financial wealth and bow to the wayward spirits of the times.



Personal Perspective

The Bible: Disinvestment Guide—A Brief Primer

Just how should Christians invest their money? I get this question often. It's a real, "rubber meets the road" issue that many Christians who are seeking truth want to resolve. Yet, it is also a difficult question to answer. The prescription varies for each person as it involves both subjective and absolute issues. Uppermost, the question concerns itself with the condition of the heart. As such, no investment advisor or financial planner can truly provide a comprehensive answer for you. You must be involved. Only the individual can truly manage the desires of the heart.

Despite the complexity of the role of material wealth in our lives, I do believe that it is possible to lay out a guideline that can be helpful to Christians in this most important matter of stewardship. This article lays out a brief primer on Christian stewardship. I have chosen its title for a reason. First off, it's a little bit of a reaction against the current vogue in Christian circles that bills the Bible as the "best investment guide in the world."

A few teachers, preachers and financial planners promote this message. They may be well-meaning; they may also be misguided. Of course, the Bible is full of helpful guidelines on stewardship. Money and materials is dealt with more than any other topic. God does not wish poverty for the world. If humanity would live according to Godly precepts, there would be no such thing as poverty. The fact that a large part of the world is plagued with poverty and is destined to remain this way to the end is mostly a result of sin and idolatry. Just as sin is a part of the world condition, so are the poor.

Even as scripture sets out principles that could technically help humanity avoid the horrible suffering of abject poverty, at the same time the Bible was not inspired to be a "get rich quick book." The very reason that so much of the Bible deals with the topic of money is that God knew very well that "the love of money is the root of all evil." He knew that it would provide the greatest leverage point for Satan and his cosmic agenda. Therefore, He seeded the Bible with lots of advice and admonishments about the many sorrows and deceptions of Mammon.

As such, to call the Bible an "investment guide" is perverse and in direct opposition to its true intent. It's really a disinvestments guide ... how to be a godly steward without being ensnared by money and material. It's all about vesting our hope in the eternal promises that have been given to us, not staking our claims in a temporal world that will pass away.

Hear the invitations that call out to us these days — many times from the pulpit. In spirit, they are these: "Come let us consult the Bible so that we may prosper;" "Let's find what we may in scripture that will bless and support our material idolatry;" or "Invest with a Christian financial advisor and outperform worldly stock markets." In my view, these entreaties miss the point entirely. The Bible is all about unveiling true eternal riches and how to conduct our sojourn on earth in an attitude of worship, our hearts fully rooted and centered upon God, enjoying the security of our salvation, and then collect eternal rewards.

Not that I always had this perspective straight. A series of bumps certainly helped. As a young man, I once made a deal with God, a lucrative one that I thought He couldn't refuse. I conspired, "Hey, I'll invest my money and I'll give you 10% of everything I make if you bless me. I'll promise to shower the offering plate with abounding riches." You can guess what happened to this arrangement. Thankfully, I took a beating on the first big investment I made. It could have been otherwise. If I had made a big gain, I could have continued in this delusion and perhaps misled a lot of people.

What did I do wrong? In post-game analysis, given my training as an economist/global strategist, I could give a detailed perspective of the accepted "dos and don'ts" of the investment world — what to buy, what to sell. I could re-examine the investment analysis that led me to buy this certain investment. Doing so, I may take away a few lessons that will stand to my benefit in the future.

However, the truth is that my mistake was much more fundamental. It began with a wrong condition of the heart. My motive had not been to be a good steward, one that is husbanding blessings, skills and resources that had been consigned to me by God. Instead, I had allowed myself to set my eyes upon riches. Then, ridiculously, I had wanted God — He who already owns everything — to bless my idolatry, cutting him a deal in the process. How stupid ... par for the course for many others possibly.

I do believe that the Bible clearly lays out the proper principles of stewardship. Follow them and you will be blessed. You will be content. However, you may not be rich. In fact, for some — I believe most people, actually — to be rich would be the worst curse. A taste of wealth would quickly hinder their relationship with God as competing idolatries set in. Satan knows this, too. Therefore, financial abundance is not always a blessing from God. Indeed, a global boom in wealth would do more for Satan's cause than Christ's. After all, we do know that a massive world-wide boom in wealth is one of the prophesied conditions of the end times.

Let's begin grappling with the question: How should

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