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The GE2011 is past, Singaporeans have shown themselves to be forgiving. At least 60% were willing to accept the PAP's apologies.

I am not a political commentator, so that is all I have to say about the GE.

However, Forgiveness as a topic, is something we can talk about. In Psalms 51, King David asked God for mercy after breaking about 4 of the 10 Commandments. He committed adultery, committed murder, coveted his neighbour's wife and probably he had to lie to cover all these sins. Yet he was confident enough to come before the Almighty to ask for forgiveness, maybe because he knew that: *"If we confess our*

sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

If you remember the story of the Prodigal Son, the Father was waiting for the son to come to his senses and return home despite having squandered his fortune in wild living. (Luke 15:11-24)

Dear friend, I am sure you have not sinned as greatly as King David or the Prodigal Son, and even if you did, we have a God who is very merciful and forgiving, and have paid the price for your sins by the blood of the Lamb.

If your sins are many, Jesus says, *"If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, 'I repent,' forgive him."* (Luke 17:3-4) Do not carry the adversary's accusation with you, come and ask God to restore to you the joy of His salvation. (Psalm 51:12)

Martin Cheah

“A Voice from D Heart”

...IT'S MY LIFE UNTIL NOW...

I remember that I sat in All Saints' church, wondering what happened last night. I had the weirdest experience. I shouted “JESUS, please help me!” Finally, I could breathe from the choking experience I had in my sleep. No other names called, worked. I woke up in cold perspiration.

I was a staunch Taoist and Buddhist in an Anglican School. As a young girl who was brought up in a strict and protective family, it was natural that I had to follow the family's religious ways and pay respect to our ancestors. I knew Jesus through the compulsory school worship assembly every Wednesday. I went through the motions until that night...

I began my journey to find out more about Jesus. A classmate brought me to a family church in Bedok. Soon, I was baptized and had a challenging Christian journey during my adolescence. As a young Christian, I spent my time in the Youth Ministry, acted as the Treasurer for the collection of tithes, helped with the tea breaks and preparation of the Communion, visited church members in need, went for Bible studies, supported the Children's class and prayed.

Also, I saw my rebellious life at home while I was serving in Church. The time spent in Church affected my parents' expectations for me. They were worried that I was joining a cult group. In that year, besides hopes of their daughter passing the Secondary Three examinations, I had to sit for my GCE O Levels Second Language Chinese paper. Family ties strained.

The struggles of growing up and witnessing many drastic happenings in Church, I became quiet and withdrawn. I did well for my GCE O Levels and moved on to College. I managed to further my studies and met good Christian friends. Today, they are still my good friends.

Then, I was visiting Churches to find answers. I had better relations at home but my parents have not accepted my decision to be a Christian.

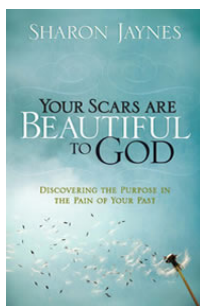
After graduation, I started work in a Quasi-government organization with over 22,000 employees worldwide. My work life as a young executive began. It was an exciting start to socializing and networking. I had the chance to travel for work, training and leisure on complimentary tickets

every year. Jobs came and went. The people I met, left. I was still having my moments with God, attending Bible studies and singing in a choir at a huge Church in Dhoby Gaut. I know that Church is important or is God more important?

The days of dating, hanging out with friends, having crushes and infatuations, thinking that it is love every time, came and went. Friends started getting married and having kids. The conversational topics were on diapers, breast-feeding and understanding crying babies. When would it be my turn, God?

I almost gave up meeting someone. My prince charming showed up. I prayed and battled with many questions. Is he the right one? We have different backgrounds and family expectations. There were not many ticks for him against the long list of criterias I had for the love of my life. He was: a Christian who serves in Church; a son who loves his mother and family; a friend who treats me well and prays with me. We believed that communication is important and love is about facing hard facts together. Did I pray hard? Of course, I did. Yes, we got married in Church and had a wedding dinner followed by a honey-moon trip. My dad walked me down the aisle! Amen!

We were in the life stage of balancing married life with work life and church life. Or should all these areas be alive with God? The reality, after the wedding, is the marriage as husband and wife. Life was blissful with the throes of agreements and conflicts. Two years ago, we lost our baby at 6 months during pregnancy. The near-death experience due to internal bleeding and complications had a big impact on our lives. My husband and I wept bitterly with our families. Friends prayed. Brothers and Sisters-in-Christ visited us. We are comforted to know that God is with us as we grieve the loss. Why did it happen, God?



Life for my husband and I, has been filled with hectic work schedules and travels since. We needed time for healing and are thankful to the people who have been praying for us and with us.

I was reading a book, “Your Scars are Beautiful to God” by Sharon Jaynes, given by a sister and brother-in-Christ recently. Through prayers, I had the courage to pen this article after deciding to support the Multi Media

Ministry as a Journalist.

I learnt that a Christian, who serves in Church, needs to serve at home. *“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men”* Col 3:23. We are the Church because we need Jesus in our hearts. In our lives: working, marriage, family, decisions, we can plan the path. But, you know, God makes the road. He is with us in our lives.

We give thanks to the pastors, brothers and sisters-in-Christ who have visited and prayed with us in the times of need. The group from the Chinese congregation, who visited, sang carols and shared our sadness two years ago, thank you. I am grateful for my gynecologist who has been praying with me and my husband during the medical consultations, reviews and procedures. The gratitude goes beyond words for our family members (especially my mother-in-law) who have been taking care of me during my recovery. Love keeps relationships alive! God’s love will keep us alive with hope, even in sadness.

“We know and rely on the love of God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him?” 1 John 4:16.

As my husband and I continue to pray and get back on our feet every time we fall, we remind ourselves, *“Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”* Col 3:17.



We need to pray and walk with JESUS.

It’s my life until now. My journey with God continues. Pray for us.

JOYCE TAN

I hope the readers will encourage The Vine’s newest writer to keep on writing as we slowly introduce more and more new writers in the coming months. - Editor

News Items You Might Have Missed

In the Bible, it is also clear that Christians are to pray for their enemies. "In China, the thinking is that if someone doesn't offend me, I won't (offend him). Otherwise, I'll give it back to him... But we need a harmonious society and the basis is love," said Prof Zhao Xiao, a Christian economist.



INSANITY STREAK

See my comments about this article by Terence Tan in the following pages.... Editor

life!

THE STRAITS TIMES SATURDAY, APRIL 9 2011 PAGE E7

Faith in tolerance

After 22 years, my devout Christian mum reconciled her faith with traditional Chinese beliefs

viewpoint

terence tan

An inter-religious dialogue of sorts took place within my family recently.

For the first time in more than 20 years, my devout Christian mother stepped into a Chinese temple.

Not only that, she also took part in Taoist religious rites and made offerings to the deities at the temple in Macau. These were the same deities that she had previously dismissed as "pagan idols".

All this was to appease the angry spirits who, according to a fengshui master, my father had unintentionally offended when he toured there way back in November 2004.

This religious journey by my mother, made just a week before my father's death earlier this year, brings home to me how my mother has become more tolerant towards other faiths.

It is a state of affairs touched on only last month in a report in *The Straits Times*, in which Foreign Minister George Yeo said that Singapore may be a role model of racial and religious harmony, but the Government worries about potential conflicts daily. Maintaining harmony is "a daily struggle" for Singapore, he said at the dialogue attended by close to 50 religious leaders from eight countries in Asia.

The inter-religious dialogue of sorts that took place within my family came about because shortly before my dad died of pancreatic cancer in February, he was exploring other "options" in addition to the chemotherapy that was causing him so much pain and discomfort.

An aunt of mine had recommended her fengshui master friend to us and the fengshui master said my dad's condition would improve if he made a trip to the temple and perform the necessary rituals. As my dad was too weak to travel, my mum went instead.

In a way, my mum had come full circle. Years ago, our family was Taoist-cum-Buddhist before I led them all to the Christian faith. My conversion to Christianity started when I enrolled in Anglican High, a Protestant mission school.

During compulsory Bible classes in school, I learnt how Noah built his Ark and how Moses crossed the Red Sea. I was also

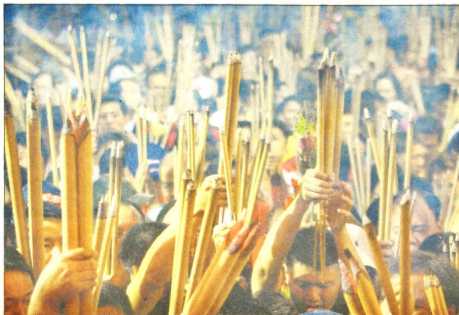


PHOTO: REUTERS

thought that it was a sin to bow before other gods and to worship my ancestors.

As an impressionable teenager, I lapped it all up and back home, conflicts quickly flared up between me and my parents.

They simply couldn't figure out how I got myself involved with this strange "ang moh" religion that seemed to be at odds with everything that Chinese culture and tradition stood for.

I have not been alone in turning my back on traditional Chinese religions such as Taoism. Once the island's most common faith, today 10.9 per cent of residents count themselves Taoists, according to Census 2010 figures released in January.

Resigned to the fact that I would not be burning any joss money for them when they die, my parents eventually decided to become Christians as well, starting with my mum, who was baptised together with me on Christmas Day, 1989.

Ironically, after her conversion, my mum became so zealous in her religious observances that she would turn down dinner invitations from non-Christian relatives for fear of eating food that had been offered to idols or ancestors.

Twenty-two years later, the same mother who once rid the house of Taoist idols with the fervour of Mao's Red Guards visited the Sea Goddess temple in Macau to make peace with the spirits my dad had offended. The trip failed to save my dad - he passed away barely a week after my mum returned from Macau.

However, I'm still glad she went

because it showed that she has reconciled her faith with traditional Chinese beliefs.

My mum had reasoned that certain mysteries of the spiritual realm just cannot be fathomed by the lay Christian and that such spirits and deities had been in existence long before biblical times.

Also, my dad's condition was deteriorating rapidly and we all wanted to do whatever we could to help him get well. Desperate times do call for desperate measures.

"I'm sure the Lord would understand why I'm doing this," my mum said.

I'm sure He would.

Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew caused a bit of a stir when he called on Muslims to be less strict in their Islamic observances - in his latest book *Hard Truths To Keep Singapore Going* - in order to integrate with other Singaporeans. Muslim or Christian, Buddhist or Taoist, I believe an overly strict observance of any religion is the root cause of much of the disharmony and unhappiness around the world today.

On the first day of the Chinese New Year this year, I lit a joss stick for my late grandfather, more than two decades after he passed away.

Like my mum, I no longer have any reservations about visiting Taoist shrines or offering joss sticks to dead relatives.

I still attend church regularly but in my household, we will serve a "more inclusive" interpretation of Christianity.

✉ terence@sph.com.sg

Send your views to stlife@sph.com.sg

ARE CHRISTIANS INTOLERANT?

In the article, Faith in tolerance, by Terence Tan, the writer commented that his Christian mother went to a temple in Macau to make offerings to deities, to appease the angry spirits. To the writer, this action of his mother shows how tolerant she had become towards other faiths. He concluded his article by telling us that he “no longer have any reservations about visiting Taoist shrines or offering joss sticks to dead relatives.” Indeed, he considers himself serving a “more inclusive interpretation of Christianity”.

In Deut 6:13-14, Moses wrote: *Fear the LORD your God, serve him only and take your oaths in his name. Do not follow other gods, the gods of the peoples around you*” and in Matt 5:19, Matthew wrote: *“Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven”*. King David declared in 2Sam 7:22 *“How great you are, O Sovereign LORD! There is no one like you, and there is no God but you”* and Naaman in 2Kings 5:15 said, *“Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel”*

The Holy Bible is very clear about there being only One God and that there is only one way to Him, Jesus said in John 14:6, *“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*

In fact, Christians are the most tolerant of all peoples because they believe that *“God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”* (John 3:16)

Everyone can be saved if they so choose. In the recent times, there were some comments made about regretting for five years after making the wrong choices. Is this an intolerant statement or one that reflects the reality of making wrong choices?

“Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.” (Joshua 24:15)

Maybe Terence has an unspoken misgiving that no Christian will attend a Chinese traditional style funeral. I wonder if he realizes that when the funeral happens near a festive occasion like Chinese New Year, only the Christian friend will attend. It is true that we do not participate in the various practices of funeral rites but our presence is a sign of our respect for the deceased. Despite the fact that Christians do not think there is any significance in the color red, we will not wear it for such occasions out of respect.

Where the festivities do not border on religious significance, eg the Chinese wedding traditions, most, if not all Christians have no qualms in performing the various traditional services, like the tea ceremony or giving of dowry.

More than twenty years ago, my non-Christian best man told me he could not perform the role because his relative passed away suddenly. I told him it is not a problem for me but he still refused. So instead he came to my wedding as a guest. Who is being intolerant?



At the time of this writing, there is a movie showing in the cinemas, called THOR, supposedly the god of Thunder. In this movie, the gods battle against frost giants and among themselves. If in some Scandinavian country, there is a temple to Thor, would it be intolerant if Christians do not enter to pay homage to him?

Basically, Christians believe in only One God, so not believing in the existence of other gods is not being intolerant but being faithful to what we believe in. We respect the other person's right to his belief but we do not believe he is right. This is not intolerance.

I have seen great intolerance shown in support of tolerance. - *Samuel Taylor Coleridge*

Don't be narrow-minded but walk the narrow path. – *Andrew Thinagaran*

Martin Cheah

DESTINATION: KLUANG, JOHOR, MALAYSIA

Vehicle: Choo-choo train operated by KTM

2nd May 2011

It was a great 2-day-1-night fellowship outing for nine of us: John, Peggy, Peter, Jessie, Martin Yee, Betsy, James Tan, Susan and Alice.

We started off with a hearty morning breakfast at Old Town White Coffee in Johor Sentral followed by leisurely window-shopping. A wonderful time of fellowship to begin the day, after booking a one-way ticket from KTM Johor Sentral station to Kluang.



We thought that it would not be a problem to buy a return train ticket at Kluang itself or, alternatively, travel by bus from Kluang to Singapore. As it turned out, a blessing actually, we could not get a ticket home by train or bus on the same day; so we stayed overnight in the White House Hotel (probably almost like where President Obama would have stayed ☺).



Why was it a blessing for the overnight stay? The hotel rooms were big, spacious, comfortable and cheap. An overnight stay gave us an extension of fellowship time with a grand feast at a Chinese restaurant. The food was simply great – drunken herbal prawns, stir-fried wild boar meat, de-boned fragrance duck, home-special beancurd, etc. – all at unbelievable prices – cheaper than what we can get at Singapore's



coffeeshop *zhi-char*. For such a big spread, the bill came to only about MR200 for 9 pax.

We also managed to be briefly entertained by a Chinese *getai* (concert) performance before retiring for the night.

We couldn't have asked for more. It was such a wonderful and relaxing time in a sleepy town. We are looking forward to another such opportunity for a carefree fellowship outing. Hope that we will have a bigger group then.

John Lee



General Election 2011



The people have decided ...

- ... to return the PAP government to power,
- ... to give a vote of confidence to our Prime Minister with a higher percentage of votes,
- ... to send a signal to the government about the non-invincibility of the GRC scheme,
- ... to make clear their desire for an alternative voice in parliament,

It is obvious that people can come out with 101 different ways to analyze the election results. Whatever the analysis, one thing is clear – the people of Singapore have made their choice, for better or worse. Of course, hope is that it is for the better of Singapore going forward as we cherish the political stability of the bygone decades and seek to continue our best in riding the challenges of a new age.

Where is God in all this?

You cast your vote - your individual vote is like a drop in the ocean. Whether you vote for Party A or Party B, this vote of yours does not assure you that your wish for your chosen candidate will be granted.

Yet, at the end of polling when the mountains of voting slips are poured onto the counting table and sorted out, a pattern emerges that reflects the consensus of most Singaporeans:

- We need stability of leadership even if we want to show our unhappiness.
- We want an alternative voice, but we don't just vote in any Tom, Dick & Harry.
- We want change, but we elect for it in measured steps without ushering in a wild tsunami.

When I look at the “judicious” outcome of the votes collectively, against the background of discordant campaign messages, emotional coercion by desperate contestants, and free-for-all outbursts in new media, and I look back to observe the same in past elections, I can sense an invisible hand at work in bringing out to the fore the distress and concerns of the people, in expressing their wishes to get the deserved attention from the government, and in bringing about a result that will prompt positive change in an orderly

way without destabilizing the country. The blessings that Singapore enjoys (contrast the frequent natural disasters and political misadventures of other countries) cannot be taken for granted. We can have political awakening and a strong democracy, combined with a caring and effective government highly respected by the citizenry. Just like different individual votes disparate in intentions can coalesce into a big-picture national effect that is positive, likewise the seemingly dissonant wrangles within a democratic institution may well be guided by the hand of God to bring about the best that is yet to be for a nation that God intends to be blessed to be a blessing.

Although God's Authority is above human authority, we must be cognizant that human authority exists as an extension of God's rule. In other words, human governments are a part of God's plan, but not a replacement or substitute for God. Neither do we reject God for a human government (like what the high priests did in John 19:15, "We have no king but Caesar") nor do we deny the government our duty of obedience as we are taught in Romans 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:13-17. We are subjects of both God and government. We render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's. (Mt 22:21) There is no disharmony if we abide by the Bible teachings. We thank God for His blessing of a democratically elected government for the next five years when we shall once again call upon God to reveal His will for us.

Majulah Singapura!

John Lee

UNPURCHASABLE PEOPLE by Selwyn Hughes

With most people the desire for things finds its focus in the pursuit of money. If you have money, people believe, you can get everything else. Though the inability of money to satisfy the heart has been demonstrated in every age, people are still caught by its lure.

The story is told of a poor man who had just enough money to support himself and his family, and who spent his days enjoying modest pleasures and helping others. He came into contact with an extremely rich man who was immersed in his business, worked 18 hours a day, and was a slave to acquisition. The poor man commented to the wealthy man, "I am richer than you are." "How can you possibly say that?" exclaimed the rich man. "Well," replied the poor man, "I have as much money as I want and you haven't."

Professor W.E. Hocking has argued that we cannot have a sound society unless we have a sufficient number of men and women who cannot be bought. He calls them "unpurchasable people". Jesus calls us to be such people. No good, happy, harmonious social life is possible unless there is a quorum of men and women of integrity, men and women who cannot be bought by anything.

DIALECT MINISTRY UPDATE

17 April 2011 - The speaker of the day was Rev Oh Beng Kee. The service began with the baptism of 8 persons by Rev Chung. The MPH was filled to capacity with additional chairs required to accommodate the more than 140 people who came. Roger prophesied this even before it came to pass.

It was indeed a great celebration to see so many people and after the message by Rev Oh, an even greater celebration to see about 8 more people responding to the altar call.



I don't think it was Rev Oh's relatively simple message but the Holy Spirit who moved the people to respond to it. In our human mind we think we need eloquent speakers to deliver powerful messages and we are surprised when the message is not that powerful and yet the people responded to it.

Thank God for using JCC in the work of the Hokkien harvest. Indeed as Peter and his team work tirelessly, may God renew their strength so that they may run and not grow weary.



Boys' Brigade Enrolment

10 April 2011 – The Boys' Brigade Enrolment Service. The day began early in the morning with a message from Bro Yew Neng. This was followed by the usual parades and prize giving ceremony.

This year, the speaker proposed that there be more variety of activities for the boys, like fencing. I can imagine that one day we will have a fencing



performance during BB Enrolment service.

Anyway, there was an unusual dance routine during the song presentation which was quite cute.

Furthermore, the BB is planning to send a contingent of boys to Cambodia to help with food distribution. To raise funds, in May, they will be doing car wash at \$5 per car. Do support them.





You never can tell that the boy you support today may be your pastor or bishop many, many years down the road.

How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! (Romans 11:33b)



Family Day 2011

30 April 2011

Organized by the Outreach committee, this year's event consists of 2 parts. The first part was games held in the MPH and the second part was a visit to a fish farm. The games were quite entertaining for all ages, whether to participate or to watch in amusement. It was everyone for himself in the fish farm portion as the group broke up to do their own thing with no central coordination.



There were about 40% outsiders so it was quite challenging for the Outreach team to reach each person. I guess we should have more long time members to join the family day next time. After all, this is family day and the guests are still not yet part of the family.





The church's next big family event will be the upcoming Retreat in June. With the government providing us the money to go, there is no better time to join a church retreat. See you there.

Look out for **RETREAT 2011** report in the next issue of The Vine....



NEWS IN BRIEF

The pre-AGM and AGM went smoothly and all the reports were passed without much fuss and the people were almost unanimous in voting for the rebuilding of JCC.

For the English Council, the only change is Kin Cheong who stepped down.



Managing Money

by Os Hillman

The minute we start trusting in riches, God will, in fact, "shake the tree" to demonstrate who is the source of wealth to turn us back to trusting Him completely. He did it in my life, and He'll do it in your life too because He loves us too much to allow us to continue down this destructive path.



Money is mentioned more than 2,000 times in the scripture. Jesus used it many times in illustrating an important lesson to his disciples. He spoke often of being a good steward of the resources He entrusted to us. He wanted a return on His investment and He wanted us to stay away from making money an idol in our lives.

As we look at our relationship to our heavenly Father and our use of money, it is clear that we, like Jesus, are here to do the will of the Father in all areas of life. This means seeking to live a life that is totally yielded to His purposes -even in the financial area.

Money, independence, and security are often the reasons many start their own businesses or change jobs. Check your motives today and see if your financial life can stand Jesus' scrutiny. Are you operating as a steward of the financial resources He has entrusted to you?

In the World But Not of the World: The Perspective of the Christian Voter

Jacob Behnken

Lutherans look to Scripture for insight and guidance in all matters of faith and life. For voting in the political arena, however, God has provided no specific set of instructions for us anywhere in his Word.

Despite the lack of a specific chapter and verse, Christians nevertheless find great counsel and direction to guide their voting decisions in the principles God presents in Scripture. Perhaps a framework to help Christians understand their task in this matter of voting comes from Jesus' dual description of his disciples: "They are still in the world," but at the same time, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of it" (John 17:11, 16). To vote in earthly elections, therefore, is an entirely appropriate act on the part of Christians who live in a society that encourages and even depends on such participation in its government. At the same time, Christians recognize that they have dual-citizenship. Christians are also, and most importantly, members of Christ's kingdom. Christians, therefore, do not live in this world with the expectation of one day reaching enduring and lasting peace and happiness here on this earth. After all, the Christian's stay on earth is only a temporary sojourn on the path to an eternal home in heaven.

In the World: Christians Vote as Members of an Earthly Kingdom

A Christian approach to voting is derived in part from an appropriate understanding of the distinct roles God gives to the church and state as well as an understanding of the tools God provides to each to carry out its function. The church follows Christ's command to "make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). They accomplish this work through the means of grace—the gospel in word and sacrament. Through these means, God works through the church to call and unite believers to himself.

To the government, however, God has given a different role. Paul captures it nicely in his first letter to Timothy: "I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—

for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness” (1 Timothy 2:1-2). In this encouragement for prayer, Paul reveals God’s purpose for establishing government: to bring peace and security to this earth. The government’s concern is outward behaviour.¹ God does not provide the government with the church’s means of grace; the tool he gives to the government is human reason. God has blessed humankind with the ability to reason, and he expects government to operate on the basis of that capacity. “God has left non-spiritual things to human reason,” Professor Deutschlander notes.² Of course, since sin has corrupted this ability, the government operates with a certain handicap. Luther makes this intriguing comment about the challenge of the government’s work:

The government employs reason to establish and administer the “sword” of laws and ordinances that regulate the lives of its citizens. These laws function from two angles. First, they reward civic righteousness – that is, acts of outward good. Second, laws and ordinances punish those citizens who transgress them. Through capital punishment, prison, and monetary fines, the government punishes lawbreakers with the goal of maintaining peace and security in its realm. (Cf. Romans 13:3-4.) Through their unique roles and tools, God makes clear that he wants Christians to make an appropriate distinction between church and state.

The Christian enters the voter’s booth mindful of this distinction between the church and the government in respect to both their unique roles and tools. This understanding has a number of important implications for the voter. First, a Christian recognizes that, in the task of voting, he or she is performing a duty that falls within the realm of earthly government. In fact, when any citizen votes, that person is performing a function of government, since choosing representatives and elected officials is every citizen’s duty in a form of government that requests such an activity. The Christian votes, therefore, with the understanding that his or her duty is to use that vote to advance the role of government: to provide and maintain peace and security in society. In voting, Christians act as members of an

¹ Daniel Deutschlander, *Civil Government: God’s Other Kingdom* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1998), 34.

² *Ibid.*, 81.

earthly kingdom. They do not vote with the intent of creating a “Christian” society here on earth, for God does not assign that duty to the government. The Christian does not pursue an earthly theocracy, because Jesus says, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36). A Christian, therefore, chooses candidates on the basis of who he or she feels will most effectively carry out the duties of office and thereby promote peace in society. Christians make this choice mindful of God’s purpose for government. Likewise, Christians in their voting make use of the tool God gives for temporal affairs: human reason. God entrusts decisions about government to people. Christians recognize this and use reason to make the best choice they can for the governing of their society. Indeed, Christians vote as members of an earthly kingdom. They vote because they are in the world.

But Not of the World: Christians Vote as Members of a Heavenly Kingdom

Do the paragraphs above mean that Christians disregard their faith as they step into the ballot box? Not at all! Christians live and function as Christians in every aspect of life, including in their voting.³ “So whether you eat or drink, do it all (π.ντ.α) for the glory of God,” Paul encourages (1 Corinthians 10:31). Certainly, all things include the matter of voting, so Christians desire to vote in a way that gives all glory to God. How Christians accomplish this goal may vary from Christian to Christian and from circumstance to circumstance, although one might make a few generalizations. First, Christians take the opportunity to vote seriously. Since Christians are mindful of Christ’s command to give to the government what it demands (Matthew 22:21), a Christian does not flippantly dismiss the opportunity to vote and say, “One vote doesn’t matter anyway.” A Christian sees that the government expects its citizens to vote and reacts appropriately. Professor Brug notes, “The New Testament does not speak directly on the responsibilities of Christian citizenship, but there are several Scriptural principles which justify the

³ Deutschlander, Civil Government, 76.

conclusion, ‘Being a faithful Christian includes being a responsible, patriotic citizen.’”⁴

Christians also recognize voting as an opportunity to put into practice our Lord’s command to love one another as he has loved us. (John 13:34) The unbelieving world, as in all things, approaches the matter of voting with one thought: “What’s in this for me?” The Christian’s mindset, however, is markedly different. Christians do not seek first their own advantage.⁵ Instead, Christians see voting as an opportunity to love and serve others. “How can I use my vote to bring about a government that will best provide peace and security for my neighbors?” the Christian asks him or herself. The psalmist writes, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path” (Psalm 119:135). While the effects of sin run rampant through an unbelieving world and corrupt man’s abilities, God’s Word refines and enlightens the Christian. Where the coarse outbreak of sin has clouded or darkened a society’s sensitivities, the Christian finds insight and clarification in God’s Word. In matters of voting, Christians recognize the blessing God’s Word provides them. They recognize that God’s Word speaks on many issues that confront modern society, and they cheerfully submit where God’s Word has spoken. Christians want governmental laws to conform to God’s law because they recognize the good it brings about—even as a curb for the unbeliever. When God speaks on an issue, Christians follow because they know God’s ways always result in blessing—not only for the individual Christian, but also for society.

In the World But Not of It: Making the Two Meet

But how do Christians balance these two forces in the matter of voting? This question strikes at the heart of the issue. The problem is that no one answer exists. Individual Christians and especially the church, therefore, resist the notion of promoting or even implying some sort of “canon law” in regard to how the Christian must vote. In fact, two different believers

⁴ John F. Brug, “The Lutheran Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms: General Principles of Christian Citizenship,” *Our Great Heritage Volume II*, Lyle Lange, ed. (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1998), 385.

⁵ Brug, 385.

might face the same set of circumstances and the same candidates yet arrive at two different, God-pleasing choices, because both of them are seeking to make a decision for the best of society. Additionally, Christians might reach a God-pleasing decision to vote for a candidate that they recognize is morally deficient or even supports positions in contradiction to God's Word—sometimes over and against a candidate who does demonstrate a more godly character. A Christian might make such a choice because he or she feels that, despite perceived faults, the candidate will nevertheless best serve government and society. Of course, Christians never make such choices lightly or without the prayer for more God-pleasing candidates in the future. The point stands, however: In voting, Christians might reach different, though equally acceptable, decisions.

Clearly, then, the issue of voting has the potential to create troubling situations for Christians. Mindful of this danger, Christians exercise the greatest care – no matter where their political convictions stand – never to vote against their conscience. Additionally, Christians (and especially ministers of the gospel) make certain never to burden the consciences of their fellow Christians by explicitly or implicitly suggesting a moral imperative to vote for a particular candidate or political party. Certainly, the Christian's faith guides his or her viewpoints on many political issues; however, the Christian also remembers that the Christian faith centers in a Savior from sin, not a set of social values.

The old adage tells us to avoid the topics of politics and religion. How a Christian votes, therefore, may not be the easiest of conversations. Without a doubt, voting raises many complex issues for Christians. The key is to strike a balance: We recognize that we are in this world as salt and light. We also recognize that, although we are in this world, we are not of this world. Finally, as in all matters, Christians look to Christ for comfort. We are sinful creatures in the matter of voting, too, and so we confess these sins to Christ and cling ever more closely to him who has covered every last one of our sins with his blood.

End of the World Predictions

God's Church Ministry, 2008

According to God's Church minister Ronald Weinland, the end times are upon us--again. His 2006 book "2008: God's Final Witness" states that hundreds of millions of people will die, and by the end of 2006, "there will be a maximum time of two years remaining before the world will be plunged into the worst time of all human history. By the fall of 2008, the United States will have collapsed as a world power, and no longer exist as an independent nation." As the book notes, "Ronald Weinland places his reputation on the line as the end-time prophet of God."

Pat Robertson, 1982

In May 1980, televangelist and Christian Coalition founder Pat Robertson startled and alarmed many he informed his "700 Club" TV show audience around the world that he knew when the world would end. "I guarantee you by the end of 1982 there is going to be a judgment on the world," Robertson said.

The Millerites, April 23, 1843

A New England farmer named William Miller, after several years of very careful study of his Bible, concluded that God's chosen time to destroy the world could be divined from a strict literal interpretation of scripture. As he explained to anyone who would listen, the world would end some time between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844. He preached and published enough to eventually lead thousands of followers (known as Millerites) who decided that the actual date was April 23, 1843. Many sold or gave away their possessions, assuming they would not be needed; though when April 23 arrived (but Jesus didn't) the group eventually disbanded—some of them forming what is now the Seventh Day Adventists.

Mormon Armageddon, 1891

Joseph Smith, founder of the Mormon church, called a meeting of his church leaders in February 1835 to tell them that he had spoken to God recently, and during their conversation he learned that Jesus would return within the next 56 years, after which the End Times would begin promptly.

Latest Date: May 21, 2011 @ 6 pm

The rumor that May 21 would kick off the end of the world was started and propagated by Harold Camping, the president of the Oakland, Calif.-based Christian radio broadcasting network Family Radio. Camping, who also made a failed doomsday prediction in 1994, he claimed that his mathematical interpretation of the Bible pointed to May 21 as the day of the rapture. Earthquakes were supposed to shake the globe, throwing the dead from their graves as believers' souls ascended to heaven. Five months later, on Oct. 21, 2011, the universe was supposed to end.

Extracted from Live Science website.

LADIES FELLOWSHIP

16 April 2011 This year's Ladies Fellowship was held at JCC. Ladies from all the various congregations made their way to Jurong to gather and fellowship with each other. There were a number of performances by the pastors' wives, the Chinese choir (ladies only) and the Dialect singers. The men were totally outnumbered that day.

The message of the day was delivered by Dr Violet James.

