

CHRISTIANS, POLITICS AND VOTING

by Allon Maxwell

THE DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM

In Australia we live under a system of government known as **Democracy**.

This is traditionally defined as:

- * Government of the people,
- * By the people,
- * For the people.

This means that the people of the nation rule over themselves.

Decisions are taken by a vote in which all citizens are required to participate. When a vote is taken the will of the majority prevails and the constitution requires the minority to submit to and support that decision.

On most matters the people are required to delegate their vote to Parliament which consists of a number of representatives, appointed from among the people, to speak and act on their behalf.

For the appointment of these representatives, the nation is divided into a number of areas, called electorates, each of which elects its representative, from time to time, by a system of preferential voting. All citizens are required to participate in this process.

Occasionally, a particular issue is considered of sufficient importance for all citizens to exercise an individual vote in a Referendum, at which the will of the majority prevails.

The system is complicated by a system of party politics, in which groups of people join together to promote particular policies in Parliament.

When elections are held the party with the most members elected to Parliament holds the balance of power and the mandate to implement their policies.

Sometimes independent candidates, who do not belong to any political party, are elected on the basis of particular policies which suit the mood of their electorate. However, few independents have any real power to influence policy unless it also happens to suit the party in power.

The Majority Vote.

It is often not realised that, in a democratic system, all who participate in the voting process are committed to accept the majority decision.

Participation in arriving at the majority decision, implies responsibility for abiding by and implementing that decision.

Preferential Voting.

In a preferential voting system, even the candidate least preferred by any minority, may be favoured by the majority, and thus become the representative to whom ALL, including the minority, must delegate the power to speak and act on their behalf in Parliament.

This means that ALL who vote, share responsibility for the actions of their elected delegate and, ultimately, the combined decisions of Parliament.

Christians in Parliament.

Christians elected to Parliament, either as members of a political party, or as independents, are in a minority situation where they are unequally yoked with unbelievers ([2 Corinthians 6:14-16](#)).

They will also find themselves with divided loyalties and a conflict of interest, serving two masters and two kingdoms, with different values and goals.

Parliament exists to do the will of the people who elected the representatives.

Christians live to do the will of God.

Christians who wish to enter Parliament as members of one of the major political parties must first sell their soul, their conscience, and their undivided allegiance to the party in order to gain the necessary preselection nomination from the party.

No Christian can do this without, in some way, denying Jesus before men.

Christians who wish to enter Parliament as independents must first win the popular vote of the unbelieving majority in their electorate.

This inevitably requires ear tickling and compromise.

Democracy and The Kingdom of God.

God's kingdom is not a democracy. It does not run on the popular vote of unbelievers. His kingdom is a **theocracy** in which there is only **one** will, **one** opinion, **one** vote.

Christians who delegate their authority to representatives, elected by an unbelieving majority, will one day have to answer to God for their part in giving power to a Parliament which has legislated in favour of such things as:

- * Abortion
- * Prostitution
- * Homosexuality
- * Gambling
- * Easy divorce and remarriage

OUR NATION AT WAR

Jesus commands his disciples to LOVE their enemies, bless them, and do good to them. ([Matthew 5:44-48](#)) Making war is disobedience to this commandment. REAL Disciples of Jesus do NOT go to war or support the actions of those who do!

Our nation is currently at war against terrorists in Afghanistan. This war is supported by BOTH of the major political parties.

Thus, Christians who vote for either of these parties are giving them a mandate for the continuance of this war!

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS.

Three times Jesus refused to become ruler of an earthly kingdom.

1. He refused to bow down to Satan in order to gain the throne. ([Luke 4:6-8](#)).

Christians who sell their souls to a political party, compromise their position, or tickle the ears of unbelievers, in order to win the vote, have bowed down to Satan to receive a throne.

Christians who participate in the democratic process, have assumed a part in rulership of an earthly kingdom which, in so many ways, is in rebellion against God.

2. He refused to be made ruler by the popular choice of the people. (John 6:15). For those who follow Jesus and share in his kingdom, this excludes any thought of seeking power by democratic process.

3. He refused to allow his servants to fight to establish an earthly kingdom by force. (John 18:33-36).

His kingdom is not of this world. In his kingdom the only power to rule, is that of love. He does not impose his will by legislation or the force of numbers, but says simply, *"If you love me, you will keep my commandments"*. (John 14:15).

His servants will not choose any other way.

GOD RULES IN THE KINGDOMS OF MEN

In His sovereign will and for reasons not always revealed to men, God often allows men to come to power whose actions could not be endorsed by any follower of Jesus. (Daniel 4:17,32,35).

Too often, Christians who claim they have prayed to find God's will, before voting for a particular political party, are found to have given their first preference against the one that, for His own reasons, God raises to power.

Too often, other Christians find their first preference voted into power, with a mandate to do things which are in conflict with the laws of God.

There is a sober warning in this.

CHRISTIANS WHO PRAY BEFORE THEY VOTE

I have often been assured by Christians who do vote that they have prayed before voting to determine which candidate God wants them to vote for.

The problem with that, is that God seems to say different and even opposite things to many of them! How is it that Christian Labor Party voters "hear" different from God, compared to those other Christians who pray just a sincerely, and then believe God told them to vote Liberal, or Democrat, or even Greens? This is confusion!

Personally, I doubt that God told any of them anything!! God does NOT contradict Himself!! In the light of what we have said above, it seems much more likely that if God really did speak to any of them at all, He would have told them NOT TO VOTE AT ALL!

HOW CAN A CHRISTIAN STAND OUTSIDE THE DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM?

- * By refusing to seek earthly answers for problems which require heavenly answers.
- * By not taking part in the rulership of the people, by the people, in a kingdom "of this world".
- * BY NOT VOTING AT ALL!

BUT ISN'T VOTING COMPULSORY?

Yes In Australia, voting is compulsory UNLESS you have a valid excuse.

To refrain from voting on the grounds of conscience, arising from religious conviction, is regarded by the authorities as a valid excuse.

However, the onus is on the individual to establish that he does have a valid reason for not voting.

Usually, this excuse is requested in writing. If the excuse is not offered or accepted, a fine can be imposed. In any case, when conflict arises, the Christian is called to obey God rather than men. ([Acts 5:29](#))

WHAT ABOUT VOTING INFORMALLY IN SECRET?

When I was younger, we were told it was illegal to deliberately vote informally. I have not been able to confirm this. The most recent information found on the Internet suggests that, in Australia, this is no longer the case. The same information says, however, that it is illegal to encourage others to vote informally. I have no information about other countries.

In any case this is not really an option for a Christian.

First there is the question of motive. If the action is taken in secret to avoid a fine, it is a failure to "confess Jesus before men". ([Matthew 10:32-33](#))

If the motive is to reject a particular candidate (or all of them) it achieves NOTHING! The ballot paper is simply discarded. And since the Ballot is secret, there is no record of who did it, or of anything "extra" they might have written on the paper.

A public "failure to vote" is a far more effective way of expressing any personal conscientious rejection of the voting system. That way your "excuse" is read by someone in authority and goes on your record.

THE ROLE OF THE CHRISTIAN IN A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY.

The role of the Christian in our society is to call sinners to genuine repentance. The more effectively this is done, the more likely it is that the democratic majority and minority, both, will reject us as readily as they did our Lord.

Any Christian who finds himself elevated to power through the favour of the unbelieving world needs to search his heart in the light of the warning issued by our Lord:

"Woe unto you when all men speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets."
([Luke 6:26](#)).

The REAL priority need of this world is the Gospel of Jesus Christ

NOT a better Parliament!

If everyone started to obey Jesus, the world's problems would be cured overnight!