
United Church of God, *an International Association*



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Voting and Involvement in Politics

Doctrinal Study Paper

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All scriptures are quoted from *The Holy Bible, New King James Version* (© 1988 Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, Tennessee) unless otherwise noted.

VOTING AND INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS

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To what degree, if any, should a member of the United Church of God, *an International Association* (UCGIA) participate in voting and the secular political system of this society? When UCGIA was established, it was agreed to retain the long-held teaching that members should refrain from participating in secular political systems. However the Church has a process for addressing its official position in a given area, after which the position can either be reinforced or changed. The purpose of this study paper is to address the Church's official teaching on voting and participation in secular political systems.

Before continuing, it should be noted that participation in *secular* politics is a different issue from balloting for matters within God's Church while collectively seeking a Spirit-led outcome (see the study paper on "Balloting in the Church"). This distinction was addressed in a letter from the Personal Correspondence Department for the United Church of God. Below is the letter regarding the distinction between *voting outside the Church and balloting within the Church* (emphasis added throughout).

You asked if voting in church meetings is acceptable according to the Bible. Voting is the expressing of one's opinion in decision-making. It's used interchangeably with the word *balloting*.

According to the *Dictionary of Word Origins*, ballot comes from Italian and French words meaning "ball," as well as a Greek word for "throw." In balloting, different colored balls were rolled or thrown to take a secret or confidential poll. *Holman's Bible Dictionary* indicates that the Hebrew word for lot meant a small stone, so there may be some correlation between a ballot and the ancient Hebrew use of lots—although the details are unknowable.

Ballot has become synonymous with voting in modern usage. Voting is a more sophisticated version of the ancient rolling of a ball or a stone, or the tossing of a stick to indicate one's opinion, but it accomplishes the same purpose. Voting can be done by voice, raising one's hand or, to ensure privacy and to avoid being influenced by others, by paper ballot. The selection of a replacement for Judas involved some form of expressing opinions (Acts 1:23) and casting lots (Acts 1:26). The Bible doesn't reveal the details of how they accomplished this, but it was clearly some form of voting.

There is a significant difference between voting and what is commonly called "*politics*"—the unpleasant and ungodly wrangling over issues, along with vying for personal advancement. *Clearly, Christians must distance themselves from all negative and carnal "politics" of this nature* (1 Timothy 6:4-5; 1 Peter 2:11-12).

We employ voting or balloting as a method of expression at all levels within the UCGIA in an orderly and godly manner.

The Historical Position of the Church on Voting and Politics

In October 1948, the Radio Church of God (later renamed the Worldwide Church of God) published an article in *The Plain Truth* magazine entitled, “How Would Jesus Vote for President?” This article was reprinted in 1952 in *The Good News* magazine. Four years later it reappeared under the same title in the October 1956 issue of *The Plain Truth* magazine. The article also appeared in *The Plain Truth* in November of 1960. The last time it appeared in a publication of the Church was 1984 in the October issue of *The Good News* magazine. This article continued through all the years as the major statement by the Church on the subject of voting in political elections. Historically, this applied to voting and running for political and public offices.

Also in October 1948, a “Personal Letter” by Herbert W. Armstrong appeared in *The Good News* magazine:

“Are the worldly, unconverted people filled with more zeal and fervor and *patriotism* for the things of this world than real Christians for the things of God? Tuesday, presidential election day, will have passed before you read this. Those of this world will have *shown their patriotism by voting*. Those of the world feel a patriotism surging thru [sic] their very souls—it may be patriotism for country, for their college, for their fraternity, lodge, club, business or whatever *partisan organization* they feel they are part of.”

The Good News, October 1960, “Should a Christian Fight?” by L. Leroy Neff includes the following statement:

“Since we are NOW ambassadors for the Kingdom of God, we relinquish the right to vote or to take part in the politics or the government of this world. If you have further questions on this subject, write immediately for the article, ‘How Would Jesus Vote for President?’”

In 1980 Herman Hoeh explained the Church’s position over the years in a sermon on “Military Service and the Church” (February 2, 1980, sermon transcript):

“When I was called to appear before a judge, and I will not tell the whole story of that appearance at this moment because it involves another matter which is *voting*, which is *critically important in this subject*, this man told me, after our discussion, he said it is interesting that from the beginning of the principle of conscientious objection, there have been two churches that have remained fundamental in their understanding, the Mennonites and the Churches of God. For the Churches of God, then with the headquarters in Stanbury, Missouri, did appeal and were granted conscientious objector status in the days of President Lincoln. I did not know this. I had not heard this. But when the judge himself told me, who had to be responsible for law, I thought it was *a very fine historic record to know that this is the tradition of our people*” (more sermon transcript material available in Appendix A).

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In 1988, the Worldwide Church of God had a Personal Correspondence Department letter that continued to be circulated well into the 1990s:

January 1988

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning voting.

Those who are converted to God's way of life are ambassadors for Jesus Christ (II Cor. 5:20). As ambassadors and citizens of the Kingdom of God, Christians *are no longer to be involved in man's systems of government.*

Notice: "*For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ*" (Phil. 3:20, RAV). Christ taught that *His Kingdom was not of this world*. Consequently, His servants are called out of this world. See John 18:36 and Revelation 18:4.

The Bible reveals that it is *God who sets up rulers and removes them according to His will* (Dan. 4:17). The governments holding power do so only as long as God allows. While they do, Christians are instructed to be subject to them (Rom. 13:1). If, however, there should be a conflict between the laws of God and the laws of man, then, of course, we are to obey God rather than man. See Acts 5:29.

Jesus Christ said He will return to set up God's Kingdom, a world government with righteousness and justice. We are admonished to pray for His Kingdom to be established on the earth (Matt. 6:9-10), because then and only then will this world's problems be solved.

Other Church literature clearly established the Church as being opposed to voting or running for political office. See Appendix A.

What Are the Biblical Principles Involved?

A "principle" can be defined as, "1. A *basic truth*, law, or assumption . . . 2. b. The collectivity of moral or ethical standards or *judgments* . . . 4. A quality or an element determining intrinsic nature or *characteristic behavior* . . . 7. A *basic source* . . ." (*The American Heritage College Dictionary*, Third Edition, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997). God's Church has always had to make certain *judgments* to establish guidelines that, in absence of a clear command, were based upon a *clear* biblical principle. The Bible contains countless *basic* truths from which judgments must be made regarding the proper *characteristic behavior*. While there can be exceptions to many rules, a general principle can nevertheless be upheld. The Bible instructs Christians to obey specific commands and to follow wise *principles*—1 John 3:22, "And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments *and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.*"

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For example, 1 Corinthians 6:19 says, “Or do you not know that *your body is the temple* of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?” Paul wrote this while addressing the *sin* of “sexual immorality” (verse 18). However, the Church has cited this verse while upholding the teaching that Christians should refrain from smoking, which is not *specifically* mentioned in the Bible as a *sin*. Nevertheless a biblical principle *springs forth* from a specific passage and can apply to various matters that are under the umbrella of a given topic. Therefore, the Church has deemed that smoking is not a *characteristic behavior* in accordance with a *basic principle* in the Bible—that anything damaging one’s body, including smoking, is not *pleasing in God’s sight* (1 Corinthians 6:19; 1 John 3:22).

The Bible does not have a command *explicitly* targeting participation in secular politics by Church members. The governments recorded in the Bible did not select their leaders via political elections, or at least not *exactly* as we know it today. However, voting did exist under the Roman Empire. There were many offices that had to be filled. Under Roman law, citizenship was a very important status and carried with it many rights. However, this was not a political environment a Christian would typically be associated with. “Society from top to bottom was riddled with unnatural vice. *Fourteen out of the first fifteen Roman Emperors were homosexuals*” (*The Daily Study Bible Series*, Romans 1:26-27, William Barclay, Revised Edition, 1975). This would obviously create a conflict of interest for Christians.

Encyclopedia Americana says:

“In ancient Rome, at first only the patrician families, endowed with property and social prestige, had the right to vote. But the Roman *lower classes* resented the denial of suffrage based on lack of property, and after centuries of often bitter social conflict they attained suffrage. As the Roman polity expanded to the Italian peninsula and to the whole Mediterranean basin, Roman citizenship was gradually broadened and, in 212 A.D., *all free inhabitants of the Roman Empire were given the status of full-fledged Roman citizens*. By that time the government of the Roman Empire had been transformed into an *absolute monarchy*, so that suffrage was more important in *local and vocational, or guild, elections* than in matters affecting imperial policy” (copyright 2000 Grolier Incorporated; <http://gi.grolier.com/presidents/ea/side/sffrg.html>).

Encyclopaedia Britannica says:

“During the republic two different assemblies elected magistrates, exercised legislative power, and made other important decisions. *Only adult male Roman citizens* could attend the assemblies in Rome and exercise the *right to vote*. The assemblies were organized according to the principle of the *group vote*. Although each person *cast one vote*, he did so within a larger *voting unit*. The *majority vote of the unit became its vote*, and a majority of *unit votes* was needed to decide an issue.

“Because the knights and the first class controlled 98 units, they were the *dominant group* in the assembly, though they constituted the *smallest portion* of the citizen body. The assembly was deliberately designed to give the *greater authority to the wealthier element* and was responsible for maintaining the *political supremacy* of the established nobility.

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“The tribal assembly (*comitia tributa*) was a *nonmilitary* civilian assembly. It accordingly met within the city inside the *pomerium* and elected magistrates who did not exercise imperium . . .” (2003 *Deluxe CD*, Jacob E. Safra, Chairman of the Board; Ilan Yeshua, Chief Executive Officer).

Though political voting existed through the times of the apostles, the political system was weighted heavily toward the upper-class nobles. Yet God was not calling many of these individuals, “For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called” (1 Corinthians 1:26). Therefore the average Christian was typically uninvolved in major political issues. Before conversion, his potential involvement was *limited* to areas such as local occupational concerns. Paul instructed members to be “subject to the governing authorities” (Romans 13:1), paying taxes and other activities, which could be accomplished without voting or running for office.

The subject of voting naturally concerns *who* appoints leaders of secular offices—the voters, or God. The Bible offers clear guidelines in this area.

Psalms 75:6-7: “For not from the east nor from the west nor from the south come promotion and lifting up. *But God is the Judge! He puts down one and lifts up another*” (The Amplified Bible).

Jeremiah 27:5: “I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are on the ground, by My great power and by My outstretched arm, *and have given it to whom it seemed proper to Me.*”

Daniel 2:21: “And He changes the times and the seasons; *He removes kings and raises up kings*; He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding.”

Daniel 4:17: “. . . *the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will*, and sets over it the lowest of men.”

Daniel 5:21: “Then he [Nebuchadnezzar] was driven from the sons of men, his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. They fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till he knew that the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men, *and appoints over it whomever He chooses.*”

Romans 13:1: “Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and *the authorities that exist are appointed by God.*”

How to Apply Biblical Principles Today

Did this biblical principle change when today’s political elections were established? If not, then the nonexistence of the same type of election process in the Bible is somewhat irrelevant. Today the fact remains—“*the authorities that exist are appointed by God.*”

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Have members in God's Church been *passive* and *isolated* by not voting? For decades, God's people have refrained from voting in political elections as an act of *faith*, not passiveness or isolationism. This *faith* has been that God will place "whomever He will" in these secular leadership positions, independently of help from us. This has been one of the unique characteristics of God's Church. This practice has also helped protect the Church from the unsettling political partisanship of this world.

Though abstaining from voting, the Church has taught that government authorities should be respected, regardless of their political affiliation—"Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. *Honor the king*" (1 Peter 2:17). Members have obeyed governmental laws and policies to the best of their ability, without breaking God's law.

Romans 13:2-7: "Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the *ordinance of God*, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you *for good*. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to *execute* wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore *you* must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. For because of this you also *pay taxes*, for they are *God's ministers attending continually to this very thing*. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes *are due*, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, *honor to whom honor*."

Did Paul say this because these leaders represented the equivalent of the "Moral Majority" or "Religious Right" or "Conservatism" of their day? No, the respect here was not based upon the perceived *morality* of the person in office.

Regardless of the perceived level of immorality or morality, the Church's abstention from voting has been a token of the higher standards to which God has called us—"However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom *of this age, nor of the rulers of this age*, who are coming to *nothing*" (1 Corinthians 2:6). The "faith-based" policies of this world usually do not represent the spiritual maturity to which Church members have been called.

The Question of Citizenship

A common denominator between governments, in the Bible as well as today, is that these institutions *make laws that societies are to live by*. For a Christian, the laws and principles of the Bible provide the laws that *should* govern individuals, societies, nations and, ultimately, the entire world.

Philippians 3:20: "For our *citizenship* is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ."

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In Philippians 3:20, the Greek for “citizenship” or “conversation” (King James Version) is *politeuma*, which is used only once in the New Testament. The *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon* defines this *politeuma* as: “1. the administration of *civil affairs or of a commonwealth*, 2. the constitution of a commonwealth form of government and *the laws by which it is administered*, 3. a state, commonwealth. 3a. the commonwealth of citizens” (Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995).

The Collected Writings of W.E. Vine states, “**For our citizenship is in heaven**;—there is strong contrasting emphasis upon ‘our.’ The word *politeuma*, ‘citizenship,’ signifies *the condition or life of a citizen* (marg., ‘commonwealth’). The synonym *politeia* denotes the relationship in which a citizen stands to the state; see Acts 22:28. The word ‘heaven’ is plural in the original; it sets forth the region in its fullness, *in contrast to the earth*. There is no article before the noun, and this omission stresses its character. The verb for ‘is’ is not *eimi*, to be, but *huparcho* to subsist; *the citizenship ‘exists,’ it is a present reality*. The state to which the believer belongs is *not antagonistic to earthly civil order*, for that is appointed by God, but it is *contrary to the world, which is antagonistic to Him*” (Logos Library System, 1997).

Vincent's Word Studies of the New Testament says, “Conversation *politeuma* (NT:4175). Only here in the New Testament . . . The rendering ‘conversation,’ in the sense of ‘manner of life’ . . . has no sufficient warrant; and that *politeuma* (NT:4175) ‘commonwealth,’ is used interchangeably with *politeia* (NT:4174) ‘citizenship,’ is not beyond question. ‘Commonwealth’ gives a good and consistent sense. *The ‘state’ of which we are citizens is in heaven*” (Philippians 3:20, Biblesoft, 1997).

Politeuma is used in *The Works of Josephus* while commenting on the contrast between the governments of this world and that of a “Theocracy” from God: “Now there are innumerable differences in the particular customs and laws that are among all mankind, which a man may briefly reduce under the following heads:—Some legislators have permitted their governments to be under monarchies, others put them under oligarchies, and others under a republican form; *but our legislator had no regard to any of these forms*, but he ordained our government to be what, by a strained expression, may be termed a *Theocracy*, by ascribing the authority and the power to God.” The footnote for “Theocracy” says, “. . . *theokratian apedeixe to politeuma* that ‘Moses ordained the Jewish government to be a Theocracy . . .’” (Flavius Josephus, *Against Apion*, Book 2 (164-165), Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

A member of God’s Church is represented by the government of the Kingdom of God and *the laws by which it is administered*. This state of spiritual citizenship reflects a *present reality* of his heavenly citizenship, though the fullness of God’s government will not be visibly established on earth until the *future*. The state to which the believer currently belongs is *not antagonistic* to secular governmental authority. Nevertheless, the believer’s values, laws and allegiance are *contrary to the world, which is antagonistic to God*. Consequently, he’s waiting for a *theocracy*, “whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrew 11:10).

Ephesians 2:19: “Now, therefore, you are no longer *strangers and foreigners*, but *fellow citizens* with the saints and members of the household of God.”

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The Greek for “fellow citizens,” *sumpolites*, is another word that is used only once in the New Testament. *Sumpolites* is defined as, “*a fellow member of a socio-political unit . . .* The expression in Eph 2.19 may also be rendered as ‘you join with God’s people as fellow citizens together with them’ or ‘you and God’s people are all persons who belong to the same place’ or as in some languages, ‘. . . *people of God’s country*’” (Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, 1989).

The Ephesian gentiles were once “strangers and foreigners” from the Jewish Christians. They lived different lifestyles, based upon different values, principles and laws. The Jewish Christians were citizens but not *representatives* of the gentile’s lifestyle and vice versa. Upon conversion, these gentiles became “fellow citizens” under a heavenly government, not of a fleshly government. It would have been contradictory to allow a fleshly governmental system to cause division among citizens of a heavenly government.

Hebrews 11:13-16: “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced *them* and confessed that they were *strangers and pilgrims on the earth*. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that *country* from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly *country*. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.”

Some laws of the land are consistent with biblical principles. Otherwise, Paul would not have said that we should be “subject to the governing authorities.” However, a voter cannot ask a political party to apply his vote to the specific policies that he believes are consistent with the Bible. A voter cannot say, “Just apply my vote to your policies protecting innocent babies from abortion but not your policies concerning war, drugs, crime control, the death penalty,” etc. Therefore one’s vote contributes toward *everything* that a particular candidate stands for, whether the voter likes it or not. The specific areas of agreement may not create a conflict of interest, but the entire system, to which one’s vote is automatically contributed, will create a conflict of interest in one or more areas. Therefore, in the past, the Church has recognized the significant impact that a member’s involvement in secular politics could have on the unity within God’s Church.

But aren’t taxes also applied to areas that taxpayers disagree with? Voting is often voluntary in nature, unlike paying taxes and other laws of the land. Paying taxes has biblical support, “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s” (Matthew 22:17-21). Voting is usually voluntary, without biblical support. That’s a significant difference in comparing the two situations.

Though Church members are respectful, taxpaying and law-abiding citizens, there will always be a significant difference between man’s government and God’s government. “And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, ‘Be saved from this *perverse generation*’” (Acts 2:40).

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How about working and going to school in this world? Typically, secular governmental officials face issues and demands to endorse unbiblical positions on a much stronger level than that required of employees and students. Of course working and studying are necessary and consistent with biblical principles. Voting is not necessary and usually those who abstain are not punished. However in some countries voting is strongly enforced, which creates a different scenario that can warrant different judgment.

Some actions, though sincere, are not focused in the manner that God desires. Jesus rebuked Peter's *sincere* desire to protect Jesus—"Get behind Me, Satan! For you are *not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men*" (Mark 8:33). Peter simply didn't understand that his proactive approach was actually counterproductive to God's plan. Can this principle be limited to this particular scripture and scenario?

Though Satan doesn't have a visible office, he is nevertheless called the "ruler" or leader of this world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2; 6:12). Does this mean that everything associated with a government is *evil*? Of course not. However, these scriptures describe an *influence* that most governments do not recognize or take seriously. Therefore they are very susceptible to unknowingly being swayed by it. There are many *spiritual* behind-the-scenes activities involved with the secular political offices. Notice what an angel told Daniel while he was fasting for three weeks:

Daniel 10:12-13: "Then he said to me, 'Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words. But the *prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days*; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the *kings of Persia*.'"

Regardless of whether one interprets this as a spiritual or physical prince of Persia, the angel is spiritual and this depicts activities that citizens are unaware of. Again, does this mean that political leaders are demon-possessed? Of course not. However it does reflect the spiritual business that most are unaware of in regard to political affairs. Satan's influence has impacted many other areas. Yet not every area carries the same potential for an emotional, controversial and divisive impact on the Church that politics carries.

John 18:36: "'My kingdom is *not of this world*. If My kingdom were *of this world*, My servants would *fight*, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but *now* My kingdom is *not from here*.'"

Jesus Christ was physically born and counted in a national census and became a tax-paying citizen of the Jewish nation. So why did He say, "My kingdom is not of this world"? This was a response to Pilate's questions regarding the accusation against Jesus, "Are You the King of the Jews?" (verse 33). Christ answered, "You say rightly that I am a king" (verse 37) though His Kingdom is not of this world. The kingdoms of this world were being held in contrast to the *future* Kingdom of God—"but *now* My kingdom is *not from here*."

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Jesus' Kingdom does not come from the laws, thoughts, ideals, motives, principles, values and spirit that the people of this world embrace. Therefore Jesus Christ did not *align Himself* with any of the kingdoms of this world. Jesus was focused on the *future* Kingdom of God. Christ discussed this contrast of kingdoms in John 8:23, "You are *from beneath*; I am *from above*. You are *of this world*; I am not *of this world*." He wasn't saying that everything done in this world is evil. Nevertheless, the world's kingdoms and God's Kingdom are *from* two opposite ends of the spectrum, despite the "good" things some leaders may do. The kingdoms of this world are *mindful of the things of men* and the Kingdom of God is *mindful of the things of God*.

The *Word Biblical Commentary* says, "The meaning of the opening clause is made clear through its repetition in the final clause of the sentence: 'My kingdom is not of this world . . . My kingdom is not . . . *'from here'* (so Bauer in his *Lexicon*, 536); the Kingdom of Jesus, that is, does not have its *origin* in this world, defined by Barrett as '*the field in which humanity and the spiritual world are organized over against God*' (536). If the sovereignty of Jesus does not *originate* in this world it is self-evidently *not like the kingdoms of this world*, as Jesus proceeds to state: if his rule were exercised in the manner of the kingdoms of this world he would have an army, as they do, and his followers would do battle to prevent him from falling into the hands of his enemies, whether Jews or Romans; but he has no army! Pilate therefore must recognize that his rule is *wholly different from that of the political powers of this world*, and wholly different from anything that Pilate has experienced; hence *he constitutes no threat to Roman authority*' (George R. Beasley-Murray, Volume 36, John, 1998).

In the Old Testament, the preincarnate Jesus Christ was the King of the nation of Israel. He drafted their "constitution" in the "Book of the Law." These laws *came from God*. No other nation had a king and laws as great as Israel's—"And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?" (Deuteronomy 4:8). Christ was also the "Commander of the army of the LORD" (Joshua 5:14), who commanded Israel to drive out idolatrous nations. David regularly "inquired of the LORD" before making a major decision regarding war and other areas (1 Samuel 23:2-4; 30:8; 2 Samuel 2:1; 5:19; 5:23; 21:1; 1 Chronicles 14:10). And God responded to this "man after His own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14). During this time, Israel and its leaders fought to preserve the interest of the King and His laws.

Political Systems of this World

In the New Testament, God raised up the "Israel of God," which is a spiritual kingdom. Today *none* of the physical nations or national leaders *represents* God and His people, though members of God's Church are legal citizens of physical nations. There is only one kingdom that can *represent* the interest of God, His laws and His Church—the *future* Kingdom of God, which we proclaim via our Church literature. God has given us a *foretaste* of His Kingdom to enable us to be "looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God" (2 Peter 3:12).

Political leaders and their respective parties are "of this world," regardless of how an individual voter lives his life. Can a Church member, who is not of this world, be represented by a political leader that is of this world? This is not to say that everything in this world is evil, nor

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is every program in a given political party evil. The political systems of this world are actually a by-product of an approach that has an element of “good” in it—“the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Genesis 2:17). But this is the very tree that God instructed Adam and Eve to *not* eat from. The “good” in this tree did not justify their partaking of it. God did not instruct Adam and Eve to try to select the “good” fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, because even the “good” in this tree was representative of a *different* system.

Jesus did not allow Himself to be a representative of a political system of this world. But as Abraham had done, He looked “for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrew 11:10). He was mindful of, “a better, that is, a heavenly country” (Hebrews 11:16). Likewise Christians should “seek the one to come” (Hebrews 13:14). Are these verses speaking specifically of voting? No. Can these verses apply to the principle of voting? Yes.

Colossians 1:12-13: “Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and *conveyed us* into the kingdom of the Son of His love.”

The Greek for “conveyed” (*methistemi*) means “‘to change,’ remove (*meta*, implying ‘change,’ *histemi*, ‘to cause to stand’), is rendered ‘hath translated’ in Col 1:13” (*Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, “translate, translation,” 1985). Formerly we may have supported a candidate who chose to run for elective office as president. Now we support the Candidate of the Kingdom of God. Christians are not alone in switching to another candidate and party. Politicians switch to another political party when they become disenchanted with the beliefs and practices of the first party. They *no longer* give their allegiance to or support the first party. That’s what a Christian does.

There are many things that can preoccupy our minds and even become divisive elements in God’s Church. Secular political systems can easily cause one to be *mindful of the things of men*. Church unity concerns the *things of God* and is of primary importance. God has called us to be part of *His Church* and *His government*.

1 Corinthians 14:33: “For *God is not the author of confusion but of peace*, as in all the churches of the saints.”

This biblical principle can apply to any endeavor that causes confusion. The Greek word for “confusion,” *akatastasia*, does not refer to something that is puzzling or difficult to comprehend. The word could better be translated as “instability, a state of disorder, disturbance . . . revolution or anarchy” (*Vine’s Word Studies*). The Church’s position on voting can have a serious impact on its climate of peace. Therefore the Church must strive to make judgments that will maximize the potential for *peace in all the churches of the saints*, in accordance with biblical principles.

The political systems of this world have repeatedly proven to be replete with confusion and division—“Therefore by their fruits you will know them” (Matthew 7:20). This instruction regarding false prophets can be extended to many venues of life. The fruits of the secular political systems of this world are clear—confusion, deceit, jealousy and division. The results of

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such carnality are discussed in James 3:16, “For wherever there is *jealousy* (envy) and *contention* (rivalry and selfish ambition), there will also be *confusion* (unrest, disharmony, rebellion) and all sorts of evil *and* vile practices” (The Amplified New Testament, 1999). More often than not, this has been the *fruit* of the political system of this world, despite the presence of some good individual leaders.

The politically partisan standards of “good” leadership can be destructive if adopted by Church members vying to defend their party of choice. The political parties of the United States have divided the country along party lines, primarily Democratic and Republican. Carnal partisanship has become the norm where one party highlights the alleged faults of the other while its own faults are concealed or downplayed. Interestingly, these opposing groups often believe that they are supporting God’s viewpoint with their votes. This was discussed in a book titled, *Is Jesus a Republican or a Democrat?*

“During the sixties, if you attended a mainline denominational church, you could easily come away believing that *Jesus was a Democrat*. The social-justice concerns of those churches seemed to mesh smoothly with the platform of the Democratic Party. The attacks on racism, poverty, and sexism that formed the core of the Democratic agenda were also primary concerns of mainline denominations . . .

“Those were the days of Martin Luther King and his dreams for America. Those were the days when the support many conservative Christians gave to the war in Vietnam made them seem morally bankrupt . . . the mainline denominations created for America a God who incarnated their liberal causes.

“But now the pendulum has swung. Conservatism now appears to be the unstoppable social ideology. In both politics and religion (and it is often impossible to distinguish between them these days), the movement toward the right seems irresistible . . .

“Suddenly, it seems as though God has switched political affiliations. These days, *God seems to have become a deity owned by the Republican Party*.

“Awhile back, George Bernard Shaw remarked, ‘God made man in His image, and *we have decided to return the favor*’ . . .

“There is no better way for a political party to establish the legitimacy of its political point of view than to declare that Jesus is one of its members. This remaking of Jesus is not just some kind of harmless campaign technique. It is not merely something sophisticated sociological observers can pass off with a wry smile and a wave of the hand . . . *The Bible calls it idolatry! . . . But the God revealed in the Scripture is neither a Democrat nor a Republican*.

“The true God calls us away from such idolatrous tendencies. He stands above all political parties and *calls each one of them into judgment*” (Tony Campolo, Word Publishing, Dallas, Texas, 1995, pp. 1-3, emphasis added).

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The same is true for the political systems of all nations. Many citizens have convinced themselves that God is most like their political party. When Christ returns, the nations will learn how God feels about the “deceit” and “slander” that is so prevalent in their political parties, “These things you have done, and I kept silent; *you thought that I was altogether like you*; but I will rebuke you, and set them in order before your eyes” (Psalm 50:21).

Does it make sense to give voting support to a political leader whose “faith-based” programs oppose those of God’s Church? For instance, both Democrats and Republicans have official organizations that support the gay lifestyle—National Stonewall Democrats (www.stonewalldemocrats.org/main.html) and Log Cabin Republicans (www.lcr.org). What *political fellowship* does righteousness have with lawlessness (2 Corinthians 6:14)? It seems as though for every positive political view there is one or more views contrary to God’s way of life. A vote for a politician is applied toward *everything* he endorses, despite the voter’s preference.

Ambassadors for Christ

In 2 Corinthians 5:20 the apostle Paul states, “Now then, we are *ambassadors for Christ*, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.”

Paul describes the ministry as being “ambassadors for Christ.” Therefore those who are “reconciled to God” become citizens and representatives of God’s government. An ambassador’s main job is to show the lifestyle and speak for the government of the country he represents, not the politics of the country he lives in. The country he represents would disapprove if he aligned himself and became part and parcel with the politics of the land he lived in. Likewise, the citizens of the host country would be outraged to learn that a citizen of another country was trying to vote in their elections and influence political outcomes in a country where he was not a citizen.

Obviously, while ambassadors for Christ, we’re also citizens of the countries in which we live. Therefore does this mean that we should vote in an effort to maximize our *dual* citizenship? One should not assume that having dual citizenship justifies involvement in voting and politics. This could lead to a misapplication of other passages. For instance, consider 1 Timothy 6:12: “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life.” Therefore, should a Christian also be involved in verbal fights or fist fights with others? Should a Christian “soldier” therefore assume that he should join military forces? Obviously, our Christian “fight” places limitations on physical activities. Likewise our heavenly citizenship limits our physical citizenship. *Barclay’s Daily Study Bible* discusses the Greek words used here for “ambassadors:”

“The office that Paul claims as his one glory and his one task is that of ambassador for Christ. The Greek he uses (*presbeutes* . . .) is a great word. It had two uses corresponding with the Latin word of which it is a translation (*legatus*).

“(i) Roman provinces were divided into two types. One was under the direct control of the senate, the other under the direct control of the Emperor. The distinction was made on this basis—provinces which were peaceful and had no troops in them were *senatorial*

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provinces; provinces which were turbulent and had troops stationed in them were *imperial provinces*. In the imperial provinces, the man who administered the province on behalf of the Emperor, was the *legatus presbeutai*. So then, the word in the first place paints a picture of a man who has a *direct commission from the Emperor*; and Paul regarded himself as commissioned by Jesus Christ for the work of the Church.

“(ii) But *presbeutes* . . . and *legatus* have an even more interesting meaning. When the Roman senate decided that a country should become a province they sent to it ten *legati* or *presbeutai*, that is, envoys, of their own number, who, along with the victorious general, arranged the terms of peace with the vanquished people, determined the boundaries of the new province, drew up a constitution for its new administration, and then returned to submit what they had done for ratification by the senate. *They were the men responsible for bringing others into the family of the Roman Empire*. So Paul thinks of himself as the man who brings to others the terms of God, whereby they can become *citizens of his empire and members of his family*.

“There is no more responsible position than that of ambassador.

“(i) An ambassador of Britain is a Briton in a foreign land. His life is spent among people who usually speak a different language, who have a *different tradition and who follow a different way of life*. *The Christian is always like that*. He lives in the world; he takes part in all the life and work of the world; but he is *a citizen of heaven*. To that extent he is a *stranger*. *The man who is not willing to be different cannot be a Christian at all*.

“(ii) *An ambassador speaks for his own country*. When a British ambassador speaks, his voice is the voice of Britain. There are times when the Christian has to speak for Christ. In the decisions and the counsels of the world his must be the voice which brings the message of Christ to the human situation.

“(iii) The honor of a country is in its ambassador’s hands. His country is judged by him. His words are listened to, his deeds are watched and people say, ‘That is the way such-and-such a country speaks and acts.’ Lightfoot, the great Bishop of Durham, said in an ordination address, ‘*The ambassador, while acting, acts not only as an agent, but as a representative of his sovereign* . . . The ambassador’s duty is not only to deliver a definite message, to carry out a definite policy; but he is obliged to watch opportunities, to study characters, to cast about for expedients, so that he may place it before his hearers in its most attractive form.’ It is the great responsibility of the ambassador *to commend his country to the men amongst whom he is set*.”

How Would Jesus Vote for President?

The question “How Would Jesus Vote for President?” is a legitimate question. If we voted, we would no doubt try to figure which candidate believed, lived by and promoted the highest standard of moral character. Yet, there are times when God chooses to place those of the lowest of character in office. He sometimes gives people what they want or deserve to teach

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them valuable lessons about a wrong way of life. To be in harmony with God's selection of leadership, would you know when to choose those who appear to be the best or the lowest?

Church members faithfully give tithes and offerings to support *The Good News* magazine, a publication that strives to "cry aloud, spare not . . . tell My people their transgressions" (Isaiah 58:1). Of course, the average member does not "cry aloud" as the prophet Isaiah and others were called to do. However, the average member should strive to "*sigh and cry* over all the *abominations* that are done" (Ezekiel 9:4). Does voting for one who endorses abominable behavior before God create a conflict of interest for a Christian? Can a Christian align himself with a political party that would reject Jesus Christ as leader?

Consider this excerpt from *The Good News* article, "Could Jesus Christ Be Elected to the White House?"

"Jesus Christ remains one of the most respected leaders—as well as one of the most controversial—the world has ever known. Most people acknowledge He was good; many believe He was a great man. If He were on earth today, a fascinating question to ponder is whether the American people would ever elect Him to be president of the United States . . .

"So could He be a successful president?

"The short—and possibly surprising answer—is no. Americans would not tolerate Jesus of Nazareth in the White House.

"We can reach no other conclusion when we examine the electoral process and the priorities the American people use in selecting their president and contrast that to the platform Jesus would advocate. Americans want religious freedom (or freedom from religion), freedom of choice to select abortion for unwanted pregnancies and freedom to enjoy entertainment—including films, music, books and television drenched with violence and sex—for its pleasurable diversions. Many Americans demand unrestrained sexual freedom between consenting adults. They want and fully expect unhindered and total freedom of speech.

"For example, Jesus advocated that the Ten Commandments be universally taught and kept as the standard for human behavior . . .

"There go the atheist vote, agnostic vote *and, oddly enough, much of the Christian vote*—at least from those who believe the Ten Commandments are too invasive when it comes to their personal freedoms" (September-October 2000, p. 7).

Advertising one's self as being better than others for the office appears to contradict several principles. Running for office can easily come across as self-exalting and therefore contradictory to many biblical principles, e.g. Proverbs 27:2, "Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips." Philippians 2:3 states, "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit." Even if a political candidate were to avoid political

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mudslinging tactics, his self-centered campaign could nevertheless contradict certain biblical principles of humility.

If Church members voted and were visibly divided over whom they were voting for, then disunity could increasingly emerge among the brethren. How would the Church be impacted if members and ministers displayed conflicting political stickers on their cars? What if some opening prayers requested protection from leaders who endorse abortion, while closing prayers requested protection from leaders who endorse wars that kill innocent babies? How about e-mails and handouts that could be shared among members, perhaps even at church, that put down another political party? Some of these mistakes have already occurred even while the Church has been teaching that members should refrain from voting. Likewise, strong endorsements of political candidates for whom one believes the Church should vote can lead (and have led) to problems. These factors could very easily become counterproductive to preserving peace “in all the churches of the saints.”

What about if a Church member ran for and won an elective office? These types of divisive elements could also spill over in this case. Though on a smaller scale, it can have a major impact on a local congregation. Will his local supporters understand his spiritual commitments? Will he be forced to compromise certain policies for the protection of certain “rights” that contradict biblical principles? There can be exceptions where this delicate balance could be maintained, but the Church policy is based upon the *norm*, not the exception.

Those Appointed to Rule—Exceptions?

God was the King of Israel in the Old Testament, during which time He worked through a physical nation upon this earth. Moses, Joshua, the judges and the kings of Israel and Judah, among others, were leaders in Israel. Since they were appointed and since they ruled God’s people under His government, they do not provide examples supporting participation in secular political systems. Moses was a ruler in Egypt, but this was before his conversion and he did not seek that political office. And once Moses was called, he found that he could no longer participate in that office.

Joseph was taken to Egypt as a slave and was made a servant in the house of Potiphar. After being imprisoned, Joseph was appointed to an office by Pharaoh, a dictator. Joseph never *ran* for office. Nor was he voted in. God established Joseph. This certainly did not establish a precedent among his descendants.

Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego were taken captive by the Babylonians. They had to risk their lives for issues related to dietary laws and prayer. They were all appointed to their positions; therefore, their situation does not establish a precedent for God’s people.

Esther was told by Mordecai not to reveal her lineage to the king. She found favor in the king’s sight and eventually was chosen as a queen. God clearly blessed her and enabled her to have influence as the king’s wife, resulting in the protection of His people. This did not lead to a precedent where Israelite women were encouraged to try to become queens or get involved in Persian politics.

The Role of the Church

During the time of the apostles, certain issues would arise that were not explicitly covered in the Scriptures. Therefore the Church had to make certain judgments in order to preserve peace within the Church. A judgment can be in favor, against or neutral, based upon the individual situation and what the Church deemed as most appropriate. Consider some of the following examples in light of the subject of voting.

In 1 Corinthians 7:10, Paul says, “Now to the married *I command, yet not I but the Lord*: A wife is not to depart from her husband.” Here the biblical command was clear. Yet notice verse 12, “But to the rest *I, not the Lord, say*: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her.” Paul made a clear judgment. The fact that the Bible had not previously addressed this particular matter did *not* result in Paul saying, “*Do whatever you’re personally convicted is right.*”

Then in 1 Corinthians 7:25, Paul says, “Now concerning virgins: *I have no commandment from the Lord; yet I give judgment* as one whom the Lord in His mercy has *made trustworthy.*” Again, not having a direct commandment from God did not prevent the Church, which has been made trustworthy, from making a judgment. This time the judgment established a favored position while maintaining more flexibility than in verse 12. Interestingly, a factor in this judgment was the “present distress” (verse 26). Likewise the Church today, in light of the escalating end-time events, can teach clear principles regarding voting and political involvement. Here Paul made a judgment without going so far as defining it as sin (“But even if you do marry, you have not sinned,” verse 28). Therefore the Church’s favored position was not coercive: “And this I say for *your own profit*, not that I may put a *leash* on you, but for what is proper” (verse 35). The Church has the option of considering similar judgments in regard to voting.

In 1 Corinthians 8, 10 and Romans 14 Paul addressed issues pertaining to food, especially food offered to idols. The judgment here was that members should not condemn the private judgments of one another. Yet in Acts 15, which includes meat offered to idols, the Church made a firm judgment (“abstain from things offered to idols,” verses 20 and 29) according to the individual circumstances, the context of such activity and that which it felt was in the best interest of the entire Church. These examples demonstrate that when the Bible does not explicitly command something, the Church can still make a judgment (for, against or neutral) according to general biblical principles that it believes are applicable.

Lastly, in Revelation 12, the true Church is described as a chaste, commandment-keeping woman who is severely persecuted and has to flee and hide for a considerable period of time (verse 17). In contrast, Revelation 17 describes a powerful and fallen woman who sits controlling much of the religious system of the world and who “fornicates” with its secular rulers. She sits astride “the beast” that in the end-time will be represented by a political ruler who is given great power by 10 kings (Revelation 17:3, 12-13). In this context, fornication means freely mixing the religious with the political. She is depicted as being “the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth” (Revelation 17:5). This means she is the mother of a host of religious groups that also commit spiritual fornication with the earth’s rulers.

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But God tells His people, “Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities” (Revelation 18:4-5). Therefore, as God’s people we should avoid involvement in the political systems of this world, which one day will be utterly destroyed by the coming of Jesus Christ.

Additional Scriptures

Matthew 13:38: “The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked *one*.”

John 7:7: “The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil.”

John 14:30: “I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me.”

John 15:19: “If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

John 16:33: “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

John 17:14: “I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.”

John 17:16: “They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.”

Romans 12:2: “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

James 1:27: “Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, *and* to keep oneself unspotted from the world.”

James 4:4: “Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”

1 John 2:15: “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

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Concluding Statement

The United Church of God, *an International Association*, maintains its traditional teaching that a Christian should avoid voting and participating in political elections and running for public office. The Church does not declare voting, itself, to be a sin. However this does not change the teaching and judgment of the Church regarding what's in our collective best interest. Even if one does not vote, division can still result if one brings his political preferences to Church. The act of not voting in the elections of this world, in agreement with the principles given above, is not an end in itself. Even more fundamentally important for members of the Church, and serving as an underlying reason for not voting or running for a public office, is promoting peace within the Church, not division over vote-related issues. There is also the clear issue of *coming out of this world*.

Voting in local, issue-driven matters has been seen as an exception. Several kinds of situations might come up in this category—local school bond issues, PTA, water treatment, zoning changes, sewage disposal, trash hauling, wildlife and environmental protection, among other things that directly affect the residents of a township, city or rural area. These cases of local issues are not viewed in the same manner as participation in the politics of this world.

Appendix A

The Good News, October 31, 1948; Letter by Herbert W. Armstrong

“Are the worldly, unconverted people filled with more zeal and fervor and patriotism for the things of this world than real Christians for the things of God? Tuesday, presidential election day, will have passed before you read this. Those of this world will have shown their patriotism by voting. Those of the world feel a patriotism surging thru [sic] their very souls—it may be patriotism for country, for their college, for their fraternity, lodge, club, business or whatever partisan organization they feel they are part of.”

The Plain Truth, October 1956; “How Would Jesus Vote for President?”

“But regardless of the particular form of administration, this civilization which holds the entire world in its organized grip today is the same old Babylonish system started at the original Babylon by Nimrod. ‘Babylon’ means confusion. Competition and strife have produced confusion in the world. And God is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33).

“Most churchmen today, viewing everything from the perspective of this world today, blindly assume this is God’s world. They see certain forces of evil in it, and these they feel they must oppose. They see the Christian duty as to be that of working to make this a better world. That concept is a wrong viewpoint altogether. This is not a world of God’s making. This is Satan’s world!

“No, Jesus did not enter into this world’s politics! He called His disciples out of this present evil world—out of all its customs and philosophies and ways—to a life of separation from the world . . .

“He [the ambassador] does not serve the Soviet government nor enter into its politics nor devote his time in Moscow to trying to eradicate the evils he sees in their system, or to making their state a better state, or to entering into their politics, or voting, or entering their army, or fighting for their cause.

“The true Christian will so conduct himself as to be highly regarded by the powers of the government where he lives . . . But the true Christian is one who follows Christ, and Christ did not vote! He called His followers out of all participation in this present evil world, and to allegiance to His Kingdom which is to come.

“Since God’s Kingdom is not literally set up as yet, the true Christian’s citizenship, in his heart, is now reserved in heaven (1 Peter 1:4; Ephesians 2:19). Christians are called to be separate from the world (2 Corinthians 6:17) and all its affiliations, whether social, political, economic, or religious . . . Jesus said for the Christian to seek first the Kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33), and He also said we cannot give allegiance to and serve two kingdoms (verse 24).

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“What then would Jesus do in this time of presidential election? He would warn our people Israel: ‘Come out of her [Babylon], my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins and that ye receive not her plagues!’ The plagues of God are soon to fall upon Babylon and all who choose to remain a part of ‘Babylon.’ Jesus calls you out! What would Jesus do? He would be too busy proclaiming the good news of His own coming world-ruling Kingdom, and the way of salvation, to take any part whatsoever in the politics of this present evil world, or in any manmade form of government that is doomed very soon to be destroyed and replaced by the Theocratic government of the Kingdom of God!”

The Plain Truth, January 1964; “The Christian Attitude—Respect Government Authority” by Herman Hoeh

“Instead of preaching this truth from the Bible, most ministers preach their own words about ‘getting out the vote,’ or ‘supporting a Christian candidate.’ ‘It is your duty,’ they say. This is not what Jesus or the apostles taught. The REAL Christian duty is NOT to mix with political affairs of this world, but to be subject to authorities—to show RESPECT for those in public office. You are to be SEPARATE FROM the world, although living decently and respectfully in it (John 17:15, 16). The time to CHANGE this world is at the coming of Christ. And it will take Christ to do it.”

“Military Service and the Church,” February 2, 1980; Herman Hoeh, sermon transcript

“The Jehovah’s Witnesses came later. They obtained such status in the First World War, at that time through the aid of Judge Rutherford, but their view and ours would not wholly coincide. The Seventh Day Adventists, though they would not go to war as a general rule, did not take the view of either the Mennonites or ourselves with respect to conscientious objection in this sense, that they readily entered into, as a result of the teachings of Ellen G. White, non-combative military service especially related to the area of medicine and drugs and hospitals and so forth.

“In this sense we share a very close affinity with the view of the Mennonite churches within the United States, and in a sense the Worldwide Church of God *obtained a great deal of favor before the government* because of the previous efforts that had been made, both by the Churches of God for 80 years previous to this, and because of the powerful role of the Mennonite church in Washington and their recognition . . .

“But, there was one thing he simply couldn’t understand: why we wouldn’t defend a government that provided us the freedom to preach—that was one of our duties—provided us the opportunity to have free, peaceful assembling for religious services. Why would we at least not enter in as the Seventh Day Adventists? *Then I said something without realizing . . . that changed his whole view of the problem.* I said, ‘But we also, though we pay taxes, *do not vote. We do not enter into politics.*’ And suddenly he saw the whole picture. He said, ‘Well, if that’s the case, then you *really* don’t look on the governments today as the governments, if your church members are scattered around the world,’ which they then were not, ‘but you don’t look on the governments today as the ultimate government that you serve. You look on the government of God as a *future*

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government.’ *That changed his whole perspective.* If we had said it is the teaching of the church that we are conscientious objectors, that we do not enter into the military in non-combative roles, we even avoid that, we are subject to the penalty, in some cases we would even be willing to go to jail if that’s required, if we pay taxes, and *if we were to vote* for one party or another, and consider the government over us as the government that God has established to represent his kingdom, *because that’s the way it would be viewed*, that’s the way people who are Catholics and Methodists and Episcopalians look at it, that these are the governments of God which church members are a part of in terms of their spiritual life. Physically we all recognize physical citizenship, but in terms of our experience spiritually, is this the government that we’re a party of? Are we to be born, in a sense, into this government, this kingdom? And the answer is no. We are to be born into the government of God, the kingdom of God, the family of God, *which does not make its appearance until the world tomorrow . . .*

“The man himself was very aware that the drift, though we were separated by a decade more, the drift that began to take place in the church in the 1970s that the church members should *vote*, was a drift that indeed went contrary because if, contrary to all sense of reason, *if the church itself takes the view that we should vote democratic, republican, independent, or you name whatever it is*, if the church takes it that we all have a right, then he who determines who should rule over him also has the right to defend that right. Further, he has a responsibility to defend that right. If you have the right to determine whether President Carter should or should not be re-elected, and you exercise that right, and you demand to exercise that right, *which is to vote, then you cannot deny that the government has the right to call upon you to defend the system that gives you this right.* But when we decide that we pay taxes as citizens, because Jesus himself set the policy ‘render to Caesar that which is Caesar’s, to God that which is God’s,’ and God tells us that we should live at peace with our enemies as well as our friends; that we should not [only not] kill, but not even hate or not even allow an attitude of a grudge or something like that to separate one another. You remember Jesus’ statement that if you have something against your brother or you know your brother has something against you, get that straightened out too before you continue with a gift at the altar. All of that laid out in Matthew 5 under the subject of the commandment ‘You shall not kill.’ That is, if all those things are made clear as to what Jesus expects of us, and that we also pay taxes, which is what Jesus expects of us—Peter was questioned as to whether he had paid his taxes, and it did appear at that time he hadn’t really done it, a little negligent, so they fished and they found a coin and that was sufficient to take care of it . . .”

The Plain Truth, October 1980; Personal from the Editor, “No Political Elections in the World Tomorrow” by Herbert W. Armstrong; ***The Good News, September 1982;*** “No Political Elections in the World Tomorrow” by Herbert W. Armstrong.

Worldwide News, Special Edition, June 24, 1985; “Recent History of the Philadelphia Era of the Worldwide Church of God” by Herbert W. Armstrong.