

August 2012

Frank W. Nelte

DON'T MISTAKE THE WILL OF SATAN FOR THE WILL OF GOD

We in the Church of God have committed our lives to God. We regularly pray to the effect that "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). **We want to see God's will fulfilled** here on earth; that is our professed goal. And so we readily and eagerly do anything we perceive to be in agreement with the will of God.

This means that it is imperative that we come to correctly identify the will of God in various situations.

However, it is also a reality that Satan is the god of this present age (2 Corinthians 4:4). And in order to convincingly rule this age, Satan does not present himself in his real identity. No, **Satan has disguised himself** to appear to human beings as "**an angel of light**" (2 Corinthians 11:14), one aspect of that disguise being that he has appropriated the name "Lucifer" to himself. Satan's disguise fools not only all of the people in the world; in many areas it has also fooled the people of God to some degree or other.

The proof for this statement is clear for all of us to see: the fact that we have accepted any number of false teachings and false ideas about God and God's plan and about what the Bible supposedly teaches is proof of Satan's success in "deceiving the whole world" (Revelation 12:9), including us. That deception is the reason why over the past 60 years time and again we have had to come to "new understanding", to repeatedly remove Satan's deceptions from our minds in one area after another.

So we need to guard against assuming that we always correctly understand the will of God. The Apostle Paul presented this warning to us this way:

Wherefore be ye not unwise, but **understanding what the will of the Lord is**. (Ephesians 5:17)

If we are "unwise" then we will not correctly understand God's will. And we need to recognize the following point:

Satan obviously knows that we, the people of God, seek to do God's will. Therefore Satan also seeks to **deceive us about what God's will** really is in various aspects of our Christian lives. If Satan can deceive us to accept something that is actually Satan's will as if it was God's will, then Satan will continue to have some measure of control over us. It is the truth that will set us free.

Can you understand this?

Satan's will is the antithesis of God's will. God does not agree with Satan on anything of importance. So if Satan can deceive us into believing that his (Satan's) will is God's will, then Satan can also persuade us to do or to believe things that do not reflect God's will at all. Never underestimate the magnitude of Satan's deceptions.

We really do need to be careful to correctly understand the will of God in every area of our lives. So let's now consider one specific area.

VOTING IN NATIONAL ELECTIONS

Over 7 years ago I wrote a 27-page article entitled "Should Christians Vote?". In that article I examined the only article Mr. Armstrong ever wrote on this subject of voting, written in 1960, and which article then became the foundation for the Church's position that Christians should not vote.

I clearly demonstrated that **Mr. Armstrong's reasoning** regarding voting **was quite flawed**, that he in fact drew unjustified conclusions from the few Scriptures that he had presented in that article. My article was a far more in-depth examination of the subject of voting, when compared to what Mr. Armstrong had presented in his article. I showed that God neither commands us to vote nor forbids us to vote, that before God voting or not voting is no more significant than having orange juice for breakfast or not having orange juice for breakfast.

Before God the matter of voting is simply a non-issue!

I don't intend to repeat the things I presented in that article 7 years ago. That article is available for downloading from my website. However, now we should address something that I did not cover in that article. Now we should take **a closer look at the will of God.**

THE GREATER PICTURE

God is the Creator of this universe and everything in it, including all the angels and all physical life on this earth. And nothing can ever happen without God's active or tacit permission. For example, while God certainly did not want Cain to kill Abel, God nevertheless allowed that to happen. Cain was "able to kill Abel" not because God couldn't stop Cain from doing that, but because God chose not to intervene for Abel. And in that same sense "bad things" happen with God's permission because God chooses at this time not to intervene to prevent those "bad things" from happening.

It is in this sense that God currently exercises control over His creation!

Now there is a major difference between God calling someone to do "good things" on the one hand, and God using someone to do "bad things" on the other hand. Did you know that? Can you explain the difference between these two ways that God utilizes to achieve His purposes?

Here is the point:

God Himself calls every single individual who is granted an opportunity to have a part in the first resurrection (John 6:44). So God calls His servants! And God Himself places all of the people He has called into specific positions within the body of His Church (1 Corinthians 12:28). **God Himself is directly involved in the selection process of every one of the people in His Church!**

But God never, never "calls" people to fill "bad positions"! So whether it was the position to become the traitor amongst the 12 apostles (i.e. Judas) or whether it is the position to be "the beast" or the position to be "the false prophet" at the end time, those positions are NEVER based on "a calling from God"!

[COMMENT: Judas was called to be one of the original 12 apostles, to become a spiritual leader in God's Church. It was Judas' own conduct and attitude that opened Judas up to being influenced by Satan, and to betray Jesus Christ. But by no stretch was Judas predestined or "called" to betray Christ.]

Understand the following:

EVERY SINGLE PERSON WHO IS SELECTED TO DO "BAD THINGS" IN SOME LEADERSHIP

CAPACITY, IS SELECTED BY SATAN HIMSELF!

Where God "calls" people to do good things, so likewise Satan "calls" people to do bad things. That's what the god of this present age does, mirroring the process by which God does His work in this present age.

Whenever God's prophecies indicate that something "bad" is to be done by some human being, then it is ALWAYS Satan who selects the person for that "bad" job! God then allows that person to fill that specific role, much like God allowed Cain to kill Abel. And in the sense of being the Master of His whole creation God then sometimes states that He (God) has placed those people in these positions.

But please understand that God has never, never, never said something like:

"Let's see, I now need a really bad and perverse person to instigate a really severe persecution on some of my people (e.g. on the Jews); so let Me find someone who is evil enough and perverse enough to fill that role. Ah, there I see this fellow Adolf Hitler ... he looks perfect for the job I have in mind. So I will make sure that he will fill that role."

God has never done anything like that! And God will not do that in the future either! God never, never deliberately destroys any human being's chances for salvation by "calling" them to do bad things!

It is always, always Satan who selects the individuals that fill all the evil roles in human history. And the only sense in which God has "placed" such evil people in positions of power or influence to do evil is in accepting overall responsibility, in the sense of being the Master of His whole creation, for such evil people being in such powerful positions to bring about evil. When God "allows" something to happen, then that is like God having "appointed" that person to the position to do evil, even if God Himself did not select individual "A" over individual "B" for that position.

Satan is the one who made that selection! That's a part of what he does as the god of this present age (2 Corinthians 4:4), just like God selects the people who will do His work! We need to recognize this distinct parallel in activities between the Almighty Creator God and the god of this age.

Now let's examine an illustration of this point.

SATAN AND JOB

We all know the story of Job. So we can paraphrase most of the details. Job was a good man who was prosperous and who had a large family. Then there was a day when Satan had to appear before Jesus Christ (Job 1:6) in order to give account of what he had been doing (Job 1:7).

Jesus Christ then needled Satan somewhat by pointing out what a good God-fearing person Job was. Satan obviously didn't like that. So Satan leveled a false accusation against Job, by claiming that Job only obeyed God for totally selfish reasons, asserting that without all of God's blessings Job would actually curse God.

Now we need to pay attention! Notice what God then said to Satan:

And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath *is in thy power*; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD. (Job 1:12)

THIS IS ALWAYS THE KEY WHEN BAD THINGS HAPPEN! THEY HAVE BEEN GIVEN OVER "INTO SATAN'S POWER" TO MAKE DECISIONS, WITH GOD ONLY SETTING CERTAIN LIMITATIONS.

In Job's case the following things then happened. In each case all the servants involved but one were also killed.

- 1) **The Sabeans** stole all the oxen and asses (Job 1:15).
- 2) **Fire from heaven** killed all the sheep (Job 1:16).
- 3) **The Chaldeans** stole all the camels (Job 1:17).
- 4) **A tornado-like wind** killed all ten of Job's children (Job 1:18-19).
- 5) **Job's three friends** then came to console Job (Job 2:11).

The point we need to understand is that GOD did not have a hand in any of this! It was not God who selected the Sabeans, but Satan. It was not God who sent fire from heaven, but Satan. It was not God who selected the Chaldeans, but Satan. It was not God who sent the tornado to crush the house and kill all of Job's children, but Satan. It wasn't God who motivated Job's three friends to undertake the long journey to come and visit Job, but Satan.

ALL THESE THINGS WERE DONE BY SATAN!

Note especially that the servant who escaped claimed that it was "**the fire of God**" that had killed all the sheep! **BUT HE WAS WRONG!** That servant couldn't possibly know that **Satan was the one who had sent that fire**, albeit with God's permission. This is an example of the effectiveness of Satan's deceptions, people attributing Satan's destructive actions to God.

In the next part of the story of Job we see Satan again imputing a false motivation to Job, and God then gives Satan permission to afflict Job in any way that he (Satan) would choose (Job 2:6). And so we see that **SATAN SMOTE JOB WITH EXTREMELY PAINFUL BOILS FROM HEAD TO FOOT** (Job 2:7).

Again, God was not involved in selecting any specific affliction for Job. It was Satan who decided to afflict Job with boils, rather than afflicting him in some other way.

And then Satan motivated Job's three friends to come and visit Job, for the explicit purpose of giving Satan the opportunity to talk directly to Job through those three friends. God was not involved in anything those friends said to Job (Job 42:7); it was Satan who used those three men as his mouthpieces. Therefore God required these men to bring "seven bullocks and seven rams" as sacrifices (Job 42:8-9).

So here is the point:

The people and the events to do the dirty work of getting at Job were **ALL DECIDED UPON BY SATAN, NOT BY GOD!** The only thing God did in this whole trial upon Job was set limitations for Satan. But God did not select either the people or the events that afflicted Job. It was all Satan's doing!

Here is a key we need to understand:

Whenever **something positive** needs to be done or accomplished by the people of God, then **GOD** selects the people who will be the instruments in those events. But whenever **something negative** needs to be done or accomplished by people in the world, then **SATAN** selects the people who will be

the instruments in those events.

God's only involvement in the negative actions of worldly people is that God allows Satan to pick those individuals who will do "the dirty work" for those negative actions. That is what we can learn from the interactions between God and Satan in the Book of Job.

Let's look at another example.

THE CASE OF AHAB

Because of all of Ahab's evil deeds God had predicted that Ahab and his house would be destroyed. When the time came for Ahab to die, God actually had a gathering in heaven (1 Kings 22:19) to ask for suggestions regarding how Ahab could be persuaded to go to the battle where he was destined to die (1 Kings 22:20).

In this vision IT WAS A DEMON (i.e. a lying spirit, almost certainly Satan himself) who selected the false prophets who would encourage Ahab to go to war. The point is that GOD was not the One who inspired lies in those false prophets; it was SATAN who selected those false prophets, and who then inspired them with their deceptive message that led to Ahab dying in battle (1 Kings 22:22). God then simply gave His approval to Satan's suggestion, with the words "go forth and do so" (same verse).

Again it was Satan who selected the evil people to do the dirty work (in this case: deceiving Ahab into believing that he would be victorious). The words "go forth and do so" are the extent of God's involvement in this action.

Let's also consider the confrontation between Jesus Christ and Satan.

WHAT SATAN SAID TO JESUS CHRIST

When Satan tempted Jesus Christ one of the things Satan did is offer Jesus Christ rulership over all the world's kingdoms. Luke recorded this conversation as follows:

And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him **all the kingdoms of the world** in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, **All this power** will I give thee, **and the glory** of them: for that **is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it.** (Luke 4:5-6)

Now Satan is a liar, as we know (John 8:44). So here is the point. **The first part of what Satan said was true**, that all the world's kingdoms are indeed given into his hands, and that **he really does have the power to choose who will rule in those kingdoms**. Satan was talking to the very Being who had given that power to him, i.e. Jesus Christ; and for his temptation to have any credibility at all Satan couldn't possibly tell Jesus Christ a blatant lie in this regard.

Where Satan's lying comes into the picture is in the next verse (Luke 4:7). Satan would MOST CERTAINLY NOT have kept his word; i.e. even if Jesus Christ had worshiped Satan, Satan would not have kept his word. Satan wasn't about to give Jesus Christ anything. Satan hates Jesus Christ with a purple passion! Satan was simply willing to promise whatever it would take to trip up Jesus Christ. Satan is also the author of empty promises.

We need to always keep in mind that SATAN NEVER KEEPS HIS WORD! That is what not abiding in the truth means (see John 8:44). That is what being the father of lies means.

But notice the important information that Satan provided. It is Satan who does his utmost to get HIS CHOICES into the positions of power in all nations. That is the power God had "delivered to Satan", with the obvious proviso that God always reserves the right to intervene any time that God wants to intervene. It is this power to get his own people into positions of influence which is one major component of Satan being the god of this age.

So here is the point:

Whenever there is a choice regarding who will fill a position of power or influence in any area of human society, then SATAN ALWAYS HAS ONE CANDIDATE HE PREFERS ABOVE THE OTHERS! With Satan it is always a case of: may the worst candidate win! That is because Satan himself is "the worst possible candidate" for the position of "god of this age"! He is the worst possible candidate of all for any job that requires achieving good.

However, there is also some good news.

God gave us human beings totally free minds. And while there is a strong pull on the natural human mind to accept Satan's ways of doing things, we do have the ability to resist that pull, and to resist doing the things Satan would want us to do. That is why Satan doesn't always get his way with us human beings! He doesn't always get his first choice into positions of power. At times Satan has to be content with getting his second choice or even his third or fourth choice into certain positions of influence.

For example, Satan's first choice for the traitor amongst Jesus Christ's apostles was not Judas. Satan's first choice for that job was Simon Peter. That is what Luke 22:31 means! Jesus Christ told Peter "Satan has desired to have you (do the job of betraying Me)". But Satan didn't get his way here, and he eventually had to be content with getting Judas Iscariot for that job.

SATAN WANTS TO INTIMIDATE US INTO SUBMISSION

We need to understand that **Satan hates it when we resist him** and his influence. And so he wages psychological warfare against us even before we get into the ring with him. He does everything possible to intimidate us before any direct confrontation even takes place.

Satan hates it when he doesn't get his way. Now there are **two main reasons** why in this present age, of which age Satan is the god, Satan doesn't always get his own way.

Reason #1 is that God chooses to intervene to prevent Satan from having his way in certain situations. For example, I would speculate that in certain key battles in history, be it during World War II or be it in any other war all the way back into antiquity, God for His own reasons intervened to defeat the forces to whom Satan wanted to give the victory.

God has repeatedly intervened in the Satan-controlled affairs of human beings, with the explicit purpose of retarding man's descent into destruction and depravity. Drastic examples of this type of intervention by God include dividing humanity into 70 different language groups (Genesis 11:7) and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:24-25).

In each case Satan's influence in leading humanity into rebellion and perversion had progressed at a

much faster rate than God was prepared to accept. But I am confident that since ancient antiquity God has also intervened many thousands of times in far less overtly noticeable ways to prevent Satan's intentions in those specific situations from being fulfilled, and in each of those instances Satan didn't get his way.

By now some of you may be thinking about Daniel 2:21.

And he changeth the times and the seasons: **he removeth kings, and setteth up kings**: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: (Daniel 2:21)

Notice something about this verse that you may not have considered before? Regarding human rulers Daniel **starts off** his statement **with the negative aspect**, the removal of kings! Had you ever noticed that?

In other words, Daniel's statement infers that SOMEONE ELSE had actually placed a certain man into the position of being "king", and God decides to REMOVE THAT MAN! And in those instances God then replaces the man He has removed with His (God's) choice for the position of king.

This verse, when correctly understood, is simply a confirmation of the point I have made above: by and large it is Satan who places his people in positions of rulership. But when in this process things get too far off course, then God intervenes and replaces certain bad rulers with more suitable ones. A well-known example of this type of thing was God removing the whole line of Ahab and then replacing Ahab's line with Jehu (see 1 Kings 19:16; 2 Kings 10:17). With Ahab's line idolatry, especially Baal worship, had just gone too far, and so God intervened.

At key points in human history (e.g. the transitions between the different dominant empires identified in Daniel 2 and Daniel 7 and Revelation 13 and Revelation 17) God has undoubtedly been involved in ensuring that those transitions would proceed as intended by God, very likely limiting Satan's initial influence to some degree, just like God intervened to achieve a transition from Ahab's line to Jehu.

But by no stretch of the imagination does Daniel 2:21 mean that God is actually personally involved in the selection of every ruler in every nation throughout human history!

As Satan said to Jesus Christ, by and large it is within Satan's power to give rulership positions "to whomsoever he will give it" (Luke 4:6), the exceptions to this rule notwithstanding. And while Satan is never 100% assured that all the human societies will always accept his influence, he knows that by and large sooner or later most human societies will gravitate towards his influence, even if Satan occasionally has to for a while play "his second string team" for leadership positions in this world.

Let's now look at the second reason why Satan doesn't always get his way.

Reason #2 is that we human beings are not merely helpless pawns in Satan's hands, with whom Satan can do as he pleases. Even a simple little pawn can sometimes checkmate a king! God has given us a free will, and on many occasions human beings have used that free will to reject, to at least some degree, the things Satan wanted to inspire human beings to do. We don't have to do the things Satan wants us to do! We do have a free will.

And while we human beings cannot ultimately overcome Satan's will on our own, there are very likely many, many occasions when Satan had to be content with only getting his second, third or fourth choice of options, rather than always getting his first choice. Think again of the example of the Apostle Peter that I have already referred to, where Satan had to settle for having Judas do what Satan really wanted Peter to do.

So reason #2 is that in many instances **human beings have used their free will to deny Satan his first choice** regarding whatever Satan wanted to achieve. Even people who have never been in God's Church can have a degree of personal integrity that will resist some of Satan's more extreme intentions for mankind. Some societies will simply have higher moral and ethical standards than other societies, even if none of them are a part of God's Church in this present age. As Paul expressed it: some nations naturally do the things contained in God's law even though they don't actually have the law (see Romans 2:14-15).

Human beings are NOT powerless in regard to Satan's influence. Satan is a perverse and repulsive individual, and many human beings will reject many of Satan's more perverse views even without any real knowledge of God's truth.

So there are these two reasons why Satan sometimes doesn't get his first choice people into positions of influence and leadership.

Now above I mentioned that Satan will also use psychological warfare on us in an effort to intimidate us. But how would Satan do that?

The main thrust of Satan's psychological warfare against us consists of Satan trying to **present his will as if it is really God's will**, which it is very emphatically not!

Can you understand the powerful pressure upon us to comply with something we have been persuaded to accept as God's will? The immense power of this psychological pressure can readily be observed in the world's religions, where where two or more candidates are competing for a major leadership job, **Satan always has his own favorite candidate!** Satan will always want to see Barabbas elected over Jesus Christ. As I said earlier, Satan's first choice is always the worst candidate, because **Satan is the destroyer** whose goal is to spread as much destruction as possible. And since Satan is the god of this age who can select people to leadership positions in "the kingdoms of the world" (Luke 4:5 again), it follows that he will have his way **UNLESS** one of two things happens:

1) **God intervenes** because Satan's choice is worse than what God is willing to accept at that specific point in time. Or ...

2) **The people** who have the power to elect those leaders "**RESIST THE DEVIL**" (James 4:7), by with their votes blocking Satan's first choice candidate.

That's the reality Satan also has to face! The rules regarding how Satan can get his choices into the seats of power have changed somewhat. Elections aren't really a part of Satan's preferred method of ruling a nation. Elections may be useful when Satan's choices are coming up from behind; but elections are a definite pest once Satan's preferred people are entrenched in positions of power.

Now the people who are the most likely ones to want to "block Satan's first choice candidates" are the people of God. They are the ones who will reject the destructive ways that Satan's first choice candidates will invariably embrace. The people of God stand for peace and well-being, not for destruction. It is Satan who stands for destruction of anything and everything, a view that is usually also recognizable in Satan's first choices.

So here is the point which did not apply in apostolic times (because the system was different), but which does apply today. Are you ready?

**SATAN NEEDS TO CONVINCe GOD'S PEOPLE THAT VOTING IS AGAINST THE WILL OF GOD!
BUT IN FACT IT IS REALLY SATAN'S WILL THAT GOD'S PEOPLE SHOULD NOT VOTE!**

Satan really wants the evil, the wicked, the vile, the criminals, the ineligible and the perverse to vote! He desperately wants all those who will vote for his candidates to vote! But those who oppose Satan's first choice candidates, Satan desperately wants to convince that it would be morally wrong for them to vote.

It should be obvious that it is Satan's will that all those who would oppose Satan's candidates should be persuaded to not vote. Satan says:

"VOTE if you are going to support me, but DON'T VOTE if you oppose my candidates. Look, if God doesn't intervene and go against my candidates, then that should tell you Christians that you shouldn't oppose my candidates either. Don't forget that I am still in charge at this point in time."

Can you see what a **gigantic deception** Satan has palmed off on us, in persuading us to believe that it would be morally wrong for us to vote against Satan's first choice candidates? Does it make sense to say that both, God Almighty and Satan, would tell God's people the identical message: don't vote!? Such a view would imply that light does have "some communion" with darkness (see 2 Corinthians 6:14), that God and Satan can actually find some common ground. But that is preposterous!

Can we not see that **it is Satan who does not want Christians to vote**, because they are some of the most likely people to oppose Satan's first choice candidates?

So ...

If you don't want to vote in elections because you couldn't care less who is elected, then that's fine. God gives you the freedom to make that decision.

But if you decide that you will not vote because you believe that GOD doesn't really want you to vote, then you have Satan's 100% unconditional endorsement for this view. Satan knows that you would be unlikely to vote for his first choice candidates, and so it is better for Satan that you convince yourself that God does not want you to vote. Of course, in the process you wouldn't be doing what James tells us to do in James 4:7 and what Peter tells us to do in 1 Peter 5:8-9 (i.e. resist the devil).

THE BASIC FACTS

I don't go around seeking to find fault with Mr. Armstrong. But the facts are that in his 1960 article about voting Mr. Armstrong made a mistake. He reached the wrong conclusion from the Scriptures he looked at. We may as well call a spade a spade. Is it a major issue? Not necessarily. But his article and his assessment of this subject laid an unnecessary guilt trip on those people who would like to vote.

So the question is: **WHY did Mr. Armstrong reach this wrong conclusion?** Why couldn't he see that it is Satan who does not want God's people to vote in elections?

The answer to this question deals with something very fundamental.

A PESSIMISTIC VIEW OF THE WORLD

Prior to going to Ambassador College in the 1960's I had not attended any church. My entire "church experience" for my whole life up to that point in time amounted to from perhaps 50 - 100 times sitting in some or other Protestant church services before the age of 14. To me those experiences had been

nothing more than a meaningless ritual. To my knowledge I have never in my life attended "Sunday School".

Prior to driving onto the Ambassador College campus in Bricket Wood, I had never yet seen a minister of the Church, let alone had a visit or attended any Church of God services. I didn't really personally know anybody who went to any church. The only contact with the Church of God that I had had up to that point in time was some Plain Truth Magazines plus a thick handful of booklets and reprint articles. I was unfamiliar with the expression "the work of God" or "the Work" for short. And I had never heard of "Feasts" or "Holy Days".

But **I did have a positive point of view on life**. Life had been good to me. I didn't deserve the opportunities and experiences that I had been the recipient of up to that point. I was grateful for life and for the health that I had. And I enjoyed the opportunity to be at the College in England. And I didn't have any worries of any kind. It didn't occur to me that most of the students were hoping to be employed by the Church upon graduation, because I was only looking for an education, not a job. That's how my contact with God's Church started.

I did notice something that didn't quite gel with my way of thinking, though at that time I couldn't quite put my finger on it.

While most students were equally happy and cheerful in their own lives, **the way the faculty viewed "the world" was invariably negative, pessimistic and critical**. For anything that happened anywhere, it was always a case of interpreting it in the worst possible way. After all, there couldn't possibly be anything good in the world, could there? I mean, it is Satan's world, isn't it? So what do you expect? This was before 1972 and 1975 and any other dates some people may have set.

Certain people were looking for prophetic events to take place, and almost everything that happened had to have a prophetic significance. The attitude was one of wanting to see end-time prophecies being fulfilled. And that attitude profoundly affected how people spoke about the world.

It was only years later, long after I myself had been ordained as a minister, that it occurred to me that very often the more religious people are, the more critical they are of "the world". It is almost as if **religious people need the world to be bad**, so that they can feel good.

And that was the underlying vibe that came across to me at College. No doubt other students with different church backgrounds perceived these things differently from the way they struck me? Yes, we were all happy there at College, and the College was giving us tremendous opportunities to experience things. But the perception also was: once we have to leave here after graduation, then we'll have to deal with that evil old world out there, filled with carnality and all "the works of the flesh" (Galatians 5:19-21).

Now it is not as if the world out there isn't filled with carnality and the works of the flesh. That happens to be the way it is. Reaching this assessment was not the problem one way or the other.

THE PROBLEM was that this produced in many Church people a very critical attitude towards the world. Objectively assessing the wrong ways of this world was fine. But then embracing a critical attitude towards the world and everything in it was a problem. That attitude blinded people to seeing anything good anywhere.

THE ROOT OF THE "DON'T VOTE" TEACHING

This pessimistic view of the world and everything in it was also the underlying foundation of the "Christians Don't Vote" teaching. And the reasoning then was: there isn't actually anyone good enough on the ballot for me to vote for. Therefore I can't vote.

Of course there aren't any perfect politicians out there. And yes, many politicians are poorly disguised hypocrites, saying whatever they think will get them elected or re-elected. But then, there weren't any perfect ministers in the Church either, as has become very clear over the past two decades. So at the very least it would be prudent for us to not throw any stones regarding all the problems in the world.

We need to recognize that **Satan holds the view that "all is vanity"** (Ecclesiastes 1:2). It is Satan who promulgates the idea that the life God has given us is "a sore travail" (Ecclesiastes 1:13; Ecclesiastes 3:10; Ecclesiastes 4:8; etc.). In fact, throughout the Book of Ecclesiastes Solomon very liberally and freely presents many views that describe the way Satan's mind thinks. **Satan is critical of life** and everything in it. And back in the 60's many people in the Church espoused a very similar attitude towards life.

And of course, very conveniently that attitude ensured that those people who were most likely to always oppose Satan's first choice candidates in any elections anywhere in the world (i.e. converted Christians) would refrain from voting, thereby diminishing the potential opposition to Satan's first choice candidates.

Here is what I believe the correct view should be.

While no candidate in any election will be perfect, it should be clear that **SOME CANDIDATES** are less likely to make things worse for the community or the country than other candidates. To take a historic example: if there are two or more candidates on the ballot, and one of them is called "Adolf Hitler", then any sound-minded Christian should be able to recognize that a vote **AGAINST** Adolf Hitler is really a way of "resisting Satan". Now obviously, back in the 1930's Satan would have loved to persuade any "anti-Hitler" voters to not vote at all.

If we can see that one candidate is likely to destroy the country, while the other candidate may or may not do some good for the country, then we should never let Satan pressure us to withhold voting **AGAINST** the candidate who intends to destroy the country.

In those circumstances **it is perverse to reason**: it is probably God's will that the bad candidate wins so that he can then be instrumental in ushering in the Great Tribulation.

That line of reasoning is perverse, because it asserts that God himself selects people for jobs that lead to the lake of fire.

God doesn't select the "bad candidates" for ushering in end-time catastrophes! **Satan is the one who selects those individuals!** And this type of reasoning is nothing more than finding approval for the individual that Satan has selected to do his (Satan's) work.

So don't make the mistake of attributing Satan's will to be the will of God. Furthermore, I will tell you that **IF** you have a conscience problem with voting, then you actually have **a conscience towards Satan!** It is Satan who seeks to instill a feeling of guilt into your mind (i.e. if you vote), not God.

Don't be deceived.

I'd like to draw a parallel to the way the Apostle Paul explained something to God's people in the Book of 1 Corinthians. You are no doubt already familiar with all the relevant verses here.

THE PARALLEL TO 1 CORINTHIANS

1) **Regarding foods** offered (dedicated) to idols, Paul wrote: we know that an idol is nothing (1 Corinthians 8:4). In a way this statement implies that it is not really a big deal to eat something offered to idols.

2) Then Paul said: the problem is really just that some people still have a conscience towards these idols, which are nothing (1 Corinthians 8:7).

3) So my reason for not eating things offered to idols is not because it would be wrong to eat those things, but simply to avoid causing offense to a weak brother (1 Corinthians 8:13).

4) After discussing some other things for the next chapter and a half, Paul then gets back to this subject of eating or not eating things sacrificed to idols.

5) Now if you had stopped reading at the end of chapter 8, you would have been left with the distinct impression that as far as Paul was concerned: provided there wasn't a weak brother around who might take offense, it would be "no big deal" to eat things sacrificed to idols, since those idols don't actually exist in the real world.

6) However, in 1 Corinthians 10:19-20 Paul then turns this whole discussion on its head, by saying quite emphatically: no, you should NOT eat things offered to idols! Here are these verses:

What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing? But I say, that the things which the nations sacrifice, **they sacrifice to devils**, and not to God: and **I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils**. (1 Corinthians 10:19-20)

7) Now Paul says: the problem is not the idol itself, because that idol is nothing. The real problem is that those things are actually sacrificed to demons! And because I don't want you to have any contact with demons, THEREFORE you really should NOT eat things that have been offered to idols.

This is the passage that came to my mind while I have been writing this article. Here is **the parallel applied to voting**.

1) I have told you up-front that voting itself is not a big deal one way or the other. Before God you are free to vote or to not vote.

2) I have then explained that Satan rules this age by in many cases disguising his will as if it was the will of God.

3) Then I have pointed out that Satan is the one who seeks to actively prevent God's people from voting in elections, because God's people invariably oppose Satan's favorite candidates.

4) To pressure God's people to not vote against his favorite candidates, Satan has tried to persuade us to believe that voting would be against God's will. Satan seeks to instill in us a guilty conscience if we contemplate voting in an election.

5) So while in one sense it is not a big deal whether or not we vote, in another sense not voting amounts to yielding to Satan's wishes. And in that sense it is almost incumbent upon us to oppose Satan's selection for the top jobs in the nation.

6) To paraphrase 1 Corinthians 10:20, applied to voting:

"But I say that a conscience towards voting is a conscience towards Satan and his demons, and not towards God. And **I don't want you to have a conscience towards Satan and his demons.**"

7) The problem here is not the matter of voting or not voting. The real problem is for the person who decides not to vote because of a matter of conscience. It is important that our consciences are never guided by something that is nothing more than an expression of the will of Satan.

At the start of this article I mentioned that God's people are guided by a desire to see God's will being fulfilled. That fact is the reason why Satan seeks to deceive us about the will of God, just like Satan wanted to deceive Job with the things Satan inspired Job's three friends to say.

Thus it is helpful if we examine very carefully how it happened that Satan managed to deceive God's people regarding God's will in this matter.

ACCEPTING A WRONG PREMISE

During World War II Mr. Armstrong believed that "the time of the end" had started. And in that context it made sense to him that Adolf Hitler was the prophesied "beast" of the end.

The underlying flawed premise in that thinking was that GOD is the One who selects people for these "bad" jobs. And since we all actually want to see God's will being done, therefore it was quite okay for us to try to guess who God had selected for that role of "the beast" of the Book of Revelation.

AT THAT POINT MR. ARMSTRONG HAD ALREADY BEEN DECEIVED BY SATAN!

Mr. Armstrong had accepted the flawed premise that God selects people for such "bad" positions, when in fact that selection is really under the control of Satan. Mr. Armstrong had been deceived into accepting that something that is actually an expression of Satan's will (i.e. selecting human beings for these "bad" roles) is supposedly an expression of God's will.

The result?

The result was that **EVERYTHING**, and I mean EVERYTHING, that was built on this flawed foundation **was doomed to failure!** Nothing of value could be built on that flawed foundation!

It was on that doomed-to-failure foundation that all our speculations were built. And so a steady stream of "beast candidates" was put forward by certain people. Going back to the 1940's this was the sequence:

- 1) First Adolf Hitler was supposedly "the beast".
- 2) Next Marshall Tito of then Yugoslavia was supposedly "the beast".
- 3) Next Adolf Hitler was supposedly still alive and hiding in South America, just waiting to emerge from hiding to consolidate a United Europe under his leadership.
- 4) Next Franz Joseph Strauss from Bavaria, Germany, was supposedly "the beast".
- 5) When Strauss died, then Otto von Habsburg was supposedly "the beast".

6) And then Otto finally died in July last year at age 98 years.

For about 40 years these fanatical, idiotic speculations went on and on and on! And **they were always doomed to failure** from their very inception, because they were built on the false premise that it is God who selects "the beast".

In our desire to see God's will being done (besides feeling the rush of having an inside scoop on prophecy unfolding before our eyes) we blindly sought to help Satan do his work, by helping him find the right person for the job of "the beast". Throughout that period of time instead of resisting Satan, **we in fact cooperated with Satan**, by desperately wanting to see these men progressively fit the bill of being "the beast".

In that context there was no room for voting. When the will of God is supposedly obvious, how could anyone possibly vote for leaders? If anything, voting might even interfere with God's will being done, right? You surely don't want to fight against God's will, by voting for the wrong person, would you?

Had we understood that it is Satan who selects people for the leadership jobs, by Satan applying the principle of "may the worst man win", then we might have understood that in our modern context voting actually gives us the opportunity to resist Satan, by sometimes denying him his "first choice candidates".

Yes, there are no ideal candidates available anywhere. And yes, we can find faults with all candidates. And none of them are truly converted Christians. But it is a fact that some candidates will cause more damage to our countries than other candidates. And some are relatively better for our countries than other candidates.

Consider what Paul said to Timothy:

I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and *for* all that are in authority; **that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life** in all godliness and honesty. (1 Timothy 2:1-2)

We should ask God to give us leaders who will enable us to live "a quiet and peaceable life". Now at Paul's time Christians had no way at all to influence who would be in positions of authority over them.

In our system of voting, on the other hand, we today have the privilege to express our opinions regarding who we would prefer to see in leadership positions over us. So in our context we have the following situation:

1) There is an election coming up, and we ourselves can discern quite clearly that one candidate will give us a much better chance at leading quiet and peaceable lives, and that another candidate will surely put more burdens upon us and our country. In our own minds there is no uncertainty regarding which candidate we would prefer to see in office.

2) This means that Satan would surely back the other candidate, the one who is likely to make our lives more burdensome. That is what Satan always does, make life more burdensome for people. So Satan's will should be clear to us.

3) Now we can look at 1 Timothy 2:1-2 and we can then pray: Lord, please don't give us the candidate that will make our lives more burdensome. And then we sit back and hope that God will do that for us.

4) But God has in fact given us the opportunity in our modern world today to actually have some input in the selection process between those two candidates. We can show some resistance to Satan's first

choice candidates.

5) So should we say: no thank you, Lord, I will leave it all up to You to put the better candidate into office. Or should we say: thank you, Lord, I will voice my opinion by casting my vote, and having done my part I will then accept the outcome. But I realize that all along the worse candidate is the one that Satan wants to see elected. And therefore I will give my vote to resist Satan.

6) Above all we need to recognize that voting does not in any way whatsoever interfere with the will of God, though our voting very likely will interfere with the will of Satan.

7) And if we are looking for ways to identify Satan's first choice candidates, then we should bear in mind what Satan did in the three incidents we examined (i.e. with Job, Ahab and then Jesus Christ). Satan's first choice candidates are likely to employ the same tactics that Satan employed. In those situations Satan:

A) Presented false, unfounded and absurd accusations (with Job).

B) Told blatant lies (via Ahab's false prophets).

C) Made empty promises (to Jesus Christ).

So if any candidate in an election does these same things (i.e. **absurd accusations, blatant lies and empty promises**), then those are tell-tale signs that he or she is Satan's first choice candidate.

We need to make sure that we don't somehow mistake the will of Satan for the will of God. So this coming November I certainly intend to vote! And I will cast my vote against Satan's first choice candidate! If you don't want to vote, that is perfectly acceptable. But just be sure that your reason for not voting is not because you would feel guilty about going against Satan's will.

Frank W Nelte