

The

Vol 12/99

Dec  
99

WINE

Dec 99 2000 by several authors only



*Christmas greetings and  
Blessed New Year 2000 to  
all of you!*

## **WHAT'S HAPPENED TO CHRISTMAS?**

### **THE BIG QUESTIONS...**

What does Christmas mean to you? In a cartoon, a weary mother has been Christmas shopping. She rests with her little son on a seat in the middle of a very busy department store. He's asking 'what's it all about?' questions and she answers: "No one is quite sure how Christmas got to be like this, but the theologians are working very hard on that question." How about you? What do you think?

Reflecting upon the First Christmas it is good to ponder upon three Basic Questions.

### **1. WHAT WAS GOD UP TO?**

In the Christmas event 2000 years ago, God was reconciling the world to himself (2 Corinthians 5:19; see also Galatians 4:4, Philippians 2:8, John 1:14). God stooped (seven steps are there in Philippians 2) to take on our humanity. God inhabited a human body, ate and drank and toiled and sweated among us. God was telling us 'matter matters'.



More than that, the Christ-hymn (Philippians 2:6-11), probably one of the earliest Christian songs, tells us what God is like, and how we can be like God. God is a servant, and comes to us to serve us. To be great, you don't lord it over others, but serve them. Jesus had to tell his disciples that true greatness was not striving to 'get to the top' and have power over others. Whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant. Whoever wants to be number one must be the slave of all. Jesus said he did not come to be served, but to serve, and give his life for others (Matthew 20:25-28).

## 2. WHAT'S THE WORLD UP TO?

Same as ever: we live in a world both lovely and evil. The world into which Jesus was born was a mixture of economic and cultural growth - and savagery. We too, live in a world of beauty and terror. Christians are being persecuted, imprisoned, tortured and/or killed in several countries of the world today. (Can you name them?). It still happens these days - I read an article about how a Filipino worker suffered terribly for his faith in Saudi Arabia in a recent issue of Reader's Digest. His story almost sounds unbelievable but it happened. These martyrs are precious to God; let us not forget them.

So God comes into our world again and each generation asks questions too: 'Where are you?' (Genesis 3:9). God is especially incarnated in the Church, God's 'being-redeemed' people. And we are to do in our world what Jesus did in his...

Finally...

## 3. WHAT AM I UP TO?

Christmas is not only about something Scriptural, or historical, but God's coming into our world and into our lives is supposed to make a difference.

Paul talked about God's self-emptying in Philippians 2:1-11, but the point here is not simply theological, but rather behavioural. There must have been some disharmony in the church: like many churches they had some difficult people. In fact, in the earlier verses he hints at three causes of disunity -

(a) Selfish ambition. Paul talks about 'humility' - a concept not highly valued by the Greeks. Jesus Christ has made humility one of the noblest human values. The cure for dissension is selflessness - counting others better than yourselves, forgetting your own interests in favour of others'.

(b) Personal prestige. The Christian's aim is not self-display, but self-denial. We do good deeds, not to glorify ourselves, but to glorify God.

(c) Lack of concern for others. When over-concern for our own interests collides with the priorities of others, they become opponents, enemies, a threat to us...

So Paul is calling upon these people to exercise three virtues - unity, humility, and helpfulness. His coming to us and living among us were marked by humility,

obedience, self-renunciation. So God has exalted Christ in heaven, we should praise God in our lives every day. We give Christ a loyalty due to no other person in the universe. Our response to all this: 'Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all'; we are 'lost in wonder, love and praise'. We worship, not out of fear, but as a response to love.

And what do we do with all this? 'Love came down at Christmas', so now is a good time of the year to share this love with others. Hopefully our response also includes sharing God's love with a lost world. Amen.

**Pastor Martin Ycc**

This, as incredible as it may sound, is a true story.

In the early days of the American space program, NASA received reports from the astronauts that their pens would not write in space. Ball points, fountain pens, even quills, nothing worked! So NASA contacted the people who had supplied the pens and made money available for the production of a pen which would write in space.

Eventually, thousands of dollars later, a suitable pen was produced, incorporating a small gas filled cylinder which propelled the ink out of the pen. It worked both in space and underwater. The problem was solved, albeit at great expense.

Many years later, when co-operation with the Russians was established, it occurred to someone at NASA to ask how the Russians had solved the problem.

There was no problem, they said, we used a pencil.



## **END OF DAYS** - The

latest Arnold Schwarzenegger movie is about how miserably the Roman Church fails to stop Satan at the end of his 1000 years bondage and how one man (Arnold) manages to stop Satan at the last minute before the clock strikes 12 to bring in the year 2000.



Of course to tell you how he single-handedly manage to battle a more powerful foe and win would spoil the fun for you. Needless to say, the writers have come up with some pseudo-biblical story linking the year 1999 to 666 when seen upside down.

The most scary part for me was that the whole world was celebrating the Millennium event completely oblivious of a battle going on which could bring on the End of Days. This is what the Bible says would happen in the Last Days.



This is an interesting number that has spawned a lot of sensationalism and paranoia. However, the number is also popular with intelligent people – the mathematicians who have worked tirelessly to discover its fascinating properties and those with creative juices to spare in the entertainment industry. Really, the number can be a great source of entertainment, whether one finds amusement with the number *per se* and its derivatives or with the player behind the number who employs it expertly to serve an end.

Mathematics happens to be one of my favourite subjects. Therefore I note with some excitement that such a simple-looking number can be looked at in so many beautiful ways:

$$666 = 6 + 6 + 6 + 6^3 + 6^3 + 6^3$$

$$666 = \text{sum of squares of the first 7 primes} \\ = 2^2 + 3^2 + 5^2 + 7^2 + 11^2 + 13^2 + 17^2$$

$$\begin{array}{l} 666 = 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 567 + 89 \\ \quad = 123 + 456 + 78 + 9 \\ \quad = 9 + 87 + 6 + 543 + 21 \end{array} \quad \left. \vphantom{\begin{array}{l} 666 = 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 567 + 89 \\ \quad = 123 + 456 + 78 + 9 \\ \quad = 9 + 87 + 6 + 543 + 21 \end{array}} \right\} \text{3 ways to use digits in sequence}$$

$$666 = 1^6 - 2^6 + 3^6$$

etc.

If Mathematics is also in your blood, you may not be surprised to discover that there are countless ways to manipulate the number for beautiful effect. Any mathematical operation (addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, exponentiation, etc.) may be used, whether working on the number independently or in connection with a chronogram (an ancient form of word play) or an alphametic.

I wonder why the majority of people dwelling in the unreal cyberworld choose to limit themselves to the use of the basic operations in their search for the Beast with the number 666 and when they issue dire warnings about the identity of him who is ready to devour us as the world comes to an end.

Such warnings are very important because, justified or misplaced, they do affect people round the globe for the right or wrong reason, for the present or through life eternal according to their choices of actions. Hence, those who issue such warnings and those who receive them ought to treat the warnings with great caution lest they carelessly miss out the real beast and unwittingly malign the harmless creatures.

If in doubt, Christians know where and how to seek the truth – read the Bible and pray to God for guidance. Here is what the Bible says:

*“This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast...” (Rev. 13:18)*

Wisdom is called for to know the truth, and nowhere does the Bible prescribe only simple arithmetic for calculations. Evidently, it is not easy and not for everyone to be able to identify the beast, but for only a select number of spiritually wise people who are bestowed with the gift of insight. Indeed, the Bible is silent on how the calculation is to be carried out. Many have attempted using diverse methods – ASCII computer codes, binary notations, letters of the alphabet, etc. Their findings on the identity of the antichrist included Bill Gates, Ronald Wilson Reagan, Adolph Hitler, the Pope and even Barney the purple dinosaur, to name just a few. (Anyway, Reagan was alleged to be the antichrist simply because each of the words in his name had 6 letters and he had the number 666 for his address – See how creative the discoverer of this “beast” was!) I cannot be sure which wise person has the real beast on target.



Interestingly, every season produces its own wise men to pronounce the name of the beast. At one time, Saddam Hussein was high on the list; at another time, it was somebody else. In the current season, Bill Gates is a popular candidate for the dubious qualification. Instead of being enlightened by those who nominate him for the unholy title, I become more and more wary about the unbridled tongue of the Internet. A quick look at how Bill Gates has been labelled with the triple-six number will bring out a sobering truth:

- There is nothing unusual about the real name of Microsoft's chief – "William Henry Gates III". However, since he is commonly addressed as "Bill Gates", the idea of working with this shortened name took root.
- Converting the letters of this to ASCII codes produced the sum of 663, not 666. The "III" in the name came in handy. Let "I" stand for 1; so, we have  $1 + 1 + 1 + 663 = 666$ . *Eureka!*
- Really, it can be argued that if we stick to ASCII codes, since the ASCII code for the letter "I" should be 73, "III" translates to  $73 + 73 + 73$ ; so, "Bill Gates III" add up to 882 without even a '6' in the sum.
- For good measure, people decided to associate passages in Revelation to anything that had the imprimatur of Bill Gates. Still not satisfied, the Internet spewed out more and more indirect links of Bill Gates to 666. For example,
  - a) "MS-DOS 6.21" became the target of numerological attacks. The letters and numerals in ASCII added up to 666, so it was computed. I cannot figure out why the earlier or later editions of MS-DOS have never featured in the fervour with numerology to determine the antichrist. (Why the sub-sub-version-6.21 in particular?)
  - b) "WINDOWS 95"= $87+73+78+68+79+87+83+57+53+1 = 666$  also came to the fore to link Bill to the "Gates of Hell". Yet, nowhere is there any explanation for the extra +1 in the sum. Without this extra +1, the sum should be only 665. (I also wonder: Why not WINDOWS 3.1 or WINDOWS 98?)

With the liberty to attach a +1 as anybody pleases, our ordinary TAN AH SENG can also be transformed into a beast with horns by making use of ASCII codes.

I am not out to defend Bill Gates, but to use an outstanding example to demonstrate the phenomenal influence of the Internet in working the minds of people by its sheer power for regurgitating statements so that surfers become woozy due to the relentless mental assaults. (Surf the Internet to see assertions

about Bill Gates vs. 666 being wholly copied from one website to another and to another and to another...)

The sobering truth is the extent to which numerology can be put to puissant use to further anybody's agenda and how the Internet is an artful partner in propagating the intended message. Whether Bill Gates is the antichrist or not is beside the point; my concern is that anybody may be the antichrist and we may be caught off-guard. The Bible does warn us that the antichrist will be someone nobody suspects; so he may be anyone known or unknown to us. If you like to play the numbers game, you can translate almost any person's name into the number of the Beast if you try hard enough to devise a suitable formula. (You may count "Santa Claus" in.)

An American who dislikes the conservative movement may become energized at the website [www.calweb.com/~kwdaids/666.html](http://www.calweb.com/~kwdaids/666.html) to see how, by assigning values to letters in the "most natural way" (not using ASCII), the Republican Party and various persons are turned into "devils". In fact, whatever your nationality, if you have an axe to grind against any institution or person, will you not be capable of doing the same painting job with your game of numbers except that your Christian conscience should restrain you from such an unholy adventure?



Regarding what the Bible says about the number of the beast, people could be wrong with the way they search for the beast. Let me quote a portion from John Gill's Exposition of the Bible:

*"for it is the number of a man; either a number that may be reckoned by man, or which is in common use among men; see (Revelation 21:17); or that which is contained in the name of a man: and his number [is] six hundred threescore [and] six: which some think refers to the time of the rise of antichrist, in the year 666; but that seems rather to be in the year 606, when the bishop of Rome obtained the name of universal bishop; others have been of opinion that it refers to the expiration of the beast, which they thought would have been in the year 1666, the number of the thousand being dropped, as it is in our common way of speaking ..."*

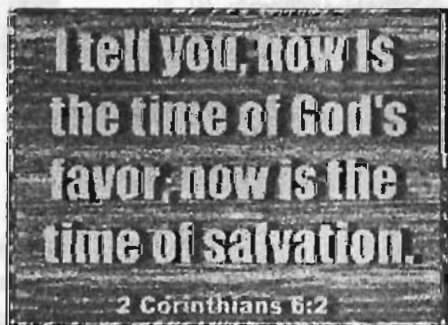
If you also refer to other Bible commentaries, you will be convinced that there has been no universal agreement among scholars about a unique interpretation of Rev. 13:18. The verse may well be telling those with wisdom and insight

(not just "anybody") to seek out clues of the beast in the number instead of merely looking for the number in a name.

Revelation is not an easy Book to understand. We have to be very careful not to over-interpret the cryptic symbols and fall into the trap of spiritual deception. Consider, for example, this "evolution" found on the Internet "World Wide Web → WWW → V/ V/ V/ → VI VI VI → 666" and decide for yourself whether to give credence to it.☺ While we guard against our imagination running into overdrive mode, we should also not be complacent with the unequivocal truths that are revealed to us in the Bible:

*"Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us. But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth. I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because no lie comes from the truth. Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist – he denies the Father and the Son." (1 John 2:18-22)*

People may say they know who the antichrist is, but they fail to notice that the antichrists are actually in their midst. Those who have an anointing from the Holy One know the truth. This is the truth that we have in Jesus Christ, the revelation of Him and revealed by Him so that we are guarded from errors and temptations.



If anyone does not have the requisite means to calculate the number, there is no need for apprehension. I have no doubt that when the time comes and the need arises for one to know the beast lurking around, the faithful children of God will have the unction of the Holy Spirit to guide them. Meanwhile, speculations do not serve any useful purpose.

*John Lee*



## Report by Genevieve Leong



The faster I hoped that the day Nov 20th would come sooner, the slower the time appeared to move. I eagerly looked forward to enjoying every bit of the children camp activities, which would end 3 days later on Nov 22nd.

When the day finally came, my parents sent me to JCC where I checked-in and collected my name tag, T-shirt and sleeping bag. The children were told to assemble upstairs at the hall for orientation.

After orientation, we had singspiration followed by Victory 1, a sermon delivered by Auntie Cecilia with subsequent group discussions led by our group leaders. (Victories 2 to 4 were similar to Victory 1, but on different topics).

Next, we went for some outdoor activities within the church compound.

The most frightening activity for me was



sitting on an upside-down T-shaped bar, clinging on to dear life with a rope tied around my body and pulling me upwards from ground level to the 1<sup>st</sup> floor at the other end. My heart was beating very fast throughout this activity. The other activities were equally exciting but less frightening.



After the activities, we took turns to bathe and had dinner. The rest of the night was spent on more singspiration. Victory 2 and a briefing on the preparation for the skit to be presented on Prophets' Nite the next day.

On Day 2, we had devotion followed by breakfast. After that, the Sunday morning was spent at Bukit Timah

Forest Reserve. Upon reaching the summit of the Hill, we had a worship service. Apart from hymns and prayers, Uncle James Sim delivered a



message from God's Word. After the worship service, we descended the Hill and had our lunch before returning to JCC.



That afternoon, activities included skit preparation, singspiration and Victory 3.



We also did some handcraft.

Each of us was given a coin box to paint. I could see that some of my friends were rather creative.



The Prophets' Nite followed after dinner. My group came in fourth. As usual, we had our review and supper before going to bed.

The last day dawned bright and sunny. We had our devotion, and then did some physical exercises in the carpark. We also jogged upstairs, along the corridors and down by the other staircase. By the time we returned to the carpark, I was panting for breath.

This was followed by more devotion, then breakfast. After a short rest, we began Victory 4 and Bible games.

The fire station educational tour in the afternoon was exciting. We visited the Boon Lay Fire Station. The firemen demonstrated how they would slide down poles in response to emergency calls. We were given a



ride in a fire engine and shown the equipment inside it. After that, we each had a turn to fight an imaginary fire. I liked it very much.

Back to JCC, the day ended with prize giving and evaluation. The time seemed to arrive too soon for us to pack our bags and say goodbye to one another. On the way home, I felt tired but happy. Ω

Report by Jonathan Tan, our best camper



The 1999 K.I.D.S. camp was a great camp, which I want to give thanks to God for. God gave us fine weather for the three days of the camp.

After the orientation and inspiration, we had outdoor activities which were both fun and thrilling. The activities enabled us to boost our confidence.

However, what I loved best was the blind man activity which needed two persons for a



team, one to be blindfolded and the other to guide him/her over some obstacles.

Before being blindfolded, it looked easy to clear the obstacles; but when I was blindfolded, I began to realise the importance of trust between friends.

The second day of the camp was the most memorable as all the



kids climbed up Bukit Timah Hill. The hike was not only fun



but also exciting as all of us got to meet all kinds of creepy crawlies. At one part of the nature trail, we had to scale some rocks. The climb was challenging and after it was over, I felt a strong sense of achievement.

The last outing of the camp was a trip to Jurong Fire Station. There, I saw many



funny gadgets used to fight fires. All of us got a chance to ride in a fire engine and some even got a taste of fighting fires. This trip to the fire station not only taught us the danger of fire but also the variety of equipment used by firemen.

Praise God indeed for such a wonderful camp. I must also thank the teachers of K.I.D.S. Church for their hard work in organising the camp. Ω



✦ Not for kids alone!



Wheel of Fortune



✦ Exuberant Audience at Prophets' Nite



✦ Small Groups in Discussion ✦



✦ Cheerful "Casualties"



# Reborn

I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to Spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, "You must be born again."

John 3:5-7



▲ At the K.I.D.S. Camp, these children responded to the call to receive Jesus Christ. Only two of them whose parents worship in JCC are from K.I.D.S. Church.

*Merry  
Christmas*

**JESUS  
IS THE  
REASON  
FOR THE  
SEASON!**

*Jesus  
inside*

Jesus is the reason  
for the season.  
He is the only  
one who can give  
us the joy and  
peace we need  
this Christmas.

## Letter from Lily

I want to share my experience that I really can't forget. Because of God's presence in my heart I'm strong and brave to face the trials and challenges in my life.

As a person that has an aim in my life, I came out from my country, Philippines and worked in a foreign land. First I worked in Singapore. I didn't know about the people whom I would work with but I prayed to the Lord and He blessed me with the best employer. They helped me to be born again in Christ and to know more about the Christian life. They also helped me with other needs in life. This family is blessed to be a blessing.

With about one and a half years left of my contract with them, I tried to apply to work in Canada. Many months passed and there was no answer until I was about to give up hope. Then with 6 months to go, the Canadian High Commission called me for an interview. There was an interview and a medical examination then another wait for the results. Finally the day arrived for my departure.

The night before my flight, my employer talked to me and prayed for me. They prayed for me again at the airport. I boarded a flight, which transit in Hong Kong. At the Hong Kong airport, I read a book, which my friend gave me. In it there was a verse which said that God would never leave me or forsake me. Eventually, it was time to board the connecting flight to Canada. However, I was held up because they suspected that my passport was a forgery. They searched everything including my luggage but though I was puzzled, I was not worried. I asked God why I am having problems here. Then I said, "Lord I trust everything to You. If it Your will You will do something for me. God I don't want to worry because everything is in your control and I believe that You will make a way for me."

The next day, I was brought to the Canadian Consulate in Hong Kong. After some questioning, I was allowed to go on my flight. I don't blame God for what happened. We must remember that we can turn our problems into triumphs through believing in God's word and keeping it in our hearts.

For young Christians, I pray that my experience will challenge them to turn to God in times of trouble. If no one is with you, God is enough.

Thank you Beng Lay and Wong Mui for bringing me to the Christian life and making me a child of God. Blessings to everybody.

# Is Gambling Really Wrong?

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language defines gambling as *"to bet money on the outcome of a game, contest, or other event. To take a risk in the hope of gaining an advantage. To expose to hazard, to risk. An act of undertaking of uncertain outcome."*

Simply put, gambling can be equated with coveting the possessions of another. It involves taking a risk in order to obtain something for nothing and more often than not means losing what one has and obtaining nothing. It is fueled by greed, plain and simple.

Today gambling takes on many forms: lotteries, scratch off tickets, slot machines, punch cards, bingo, raffle tickets, card games, shooting dice, keno, sweepstakes chances, numbers, pari-mutual wagering, wagering on sporting events, buying sweepstakes tickets, matching for cokes, pitching for pennies, even online gambling over the internet. The amount that you gamble does not excuse nor negate the fact that it still constitutes gambling, and is condemned by the Word of God.

Even though scripture does not specifically address gambling, it is a practice that is clearly condemned in numerous passages. The Bible provides us with sound principles to guide us in reaching a biblical answer to the question of "Is Gambling Really Wrong?". While God's word does not say, "Thou shalt not gamble," it does teach that while we are free to do all things, all things are not profitable and we should never allow ourselves to be subject to the power of anything other than Christ in our lives. *"All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not."* - 1 Corinthians 10:23; *"All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any."* - 1 Corinthians 6:12.

## What other Scriptures Say Regarding Gambling and it's effects:

Proverbs 28:19-22 - <i>"He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread: but he that followeth after vain persons shall have poverty enough. A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent. To have respect of persons is not good: for for a piece of bread that man will transgress. He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him."</i>	God intended for man to acquire assets through diligent labor, not quickly through games of chance.
Ephesians 4:28 - <i>"Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth."</i>	The Bible advocates earning a living through righteous means. Gambling is a process that takes advantage of those who are inexperienced. It often reaps its benefits from funds that would have benefited innocent mothers and children.
Proverbs 13:11 - <i>"Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase."</i>	Wealth obtained by gambling does not endure. It diminishes, it is transitory.

<p>Genesis 4:7 - "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him."</p> <p>Romans 6:12 - "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof."</p>	<p>God gives us a clear admonition against being dominated by our sinful actions.</p>
<p>1 Timothy 6:6-11 - "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness."</p>	<p>God instructs us to be content with what He has provided us through labor or His providence.</p>
<p>Proverbs 20:21 - "An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning; but the end thereof shall not be blessed."</p>	<p>Ideas of getting rich quick (the motive behind gambling) are warned against.</p>
<p>Colossians 3:23-24 - "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ."</p> <p>2 Thessalonians 3:7,10 - "For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; 10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat."</p>	<p>Gambling undermines and destroys the work ethic which God wishes to instill within us. It encourages the philosophy of "getting something for nothing" and encourages laziness and sloth.</p>
<p>Romans 1:28-32 - "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:</p> <p>Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."</p>	<p>It is clear that those who are driven by the sin of "covetousness" shall not inherit the kingdom of God.</p>
<p>1 Thessalonians 5:22 - "Abstain from all appearance of evil."</p> <p>Romans 12:9 - "Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil;</p>	<p>As followers of Christ we should shun the appearance of all evil.</p>



<i>cleave to that which is good."</i>	
<i>Colossians 3:5 - "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:"</i>	Gambling is fueled by covetousness which is idolatry; and, idolatry is sin.
<i>Proverbs 23:4 - "Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom."</i>	God's Word clearly tells us not to seek to be rich.
<i>1 Corinthians 16:2 - "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come."</i>	Gambling violates the principles of christian stewardship.
<i>2 Corinthians 9:6-7 - "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."</i>	
<i>Matthew 22:37-39 - "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."</i>	Gambling violates the principle of "Loving thy neighbour as thyself".
<i>Matthew 7:12 - "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."</i>	
<i>Ephesians 5:23-31 - "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;</i>  <i>That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh."</i>	Gambling violates God's plan for the christian home.
<i>Ephesians 6:1-4 - "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."</i>	

<p><b>Romans 12:17 - "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men."</b></p>	<p>Gambling prevents us from demonstrating to others that we are Christ-like examples.</p>
<p><b>Romans 13:1-2 "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation."</b></p>	<p>Gambling is nothing more than a state-sponsored "Vice" that seeks to subvert the moral fabric of society through greed. Government is to be a minister to God. Those in government who should be seeking to promote order and virtue pursuant to God's plan, but promote disorder and disobedience will answer to God for their wrongs.</p>
<p><b>1 Timothy 5:8 - "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."</b></p> <p><b>2 Corinthians 12:14 - "Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children."</b></p> <p><b>2 Thessalonians 3:12 - "Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread."</b></p>	<p>Gambling tempts people to neglect their God-mandated responsibility to care for their own families. It is a major cause of family neglect and a growing social problem.</p>
<p><b>Genesis 3:19 - "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."</b></p> <p><b>2 Thessalonians 3:10 - "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat."</b></p>	<p>Gambling attempts to circumvent God's plan and order!</p>

Gambling corrupts the values of the Christian life replacing them with greed and selfishness. It is a form of theft from taxpayers, encourages the neglect of children and jobs, draws unscrupulous people, cultivates laziness and entices one to other sins such as alcohol and drug use and prostitution. In any form, it is wrong. Gambling is not authorized by God. It stands condemned by God. As Christians, we believe we must stand against society's attempts to legalize and promote ANY forms of gambling.



**Paul & Pia Aragones Jr**

**Willy Sibayan**

## Why Is Denominationalism Wrong?

While many people are attracted to the good news of the grace of God offered through His Son Jesus Christ, certain questions often linger in their minds...

- a. Why are there so many different denominations?
- b. Can't the followers of Jesus Christ learn to get along?
- c. What can be done about the religious division that exists today?
- d. Is it possible for me to be simply a Christian, following Jesus without being a member of any denomination?

### UNDERSTANDING THAT DENOMINATIONALISM IS WRONG HAS LED TO THESE INTERESTING STATEMENTS...

1. From **Martin Luther**, the leader of the Reformation Movement:

**"I ask that men make no reference to my name, and call themselves not Lutherans, but Christians. What is Luther? My doctrine, I am sure, is not mine, nor have I been crucified for any one. St. Paul, in 1 Cor. 3, would not allow Christians to call themselves Pauline or Petrine, but Christian. How then should I, poor, foul carcass that I am, come to have men give to the children of Christ a name derived from my worthless name? No, no, my dear friends; let us abolish all party names, and call ourselves Christians after Him Whose doctrine we have."**

2. From **John Wesley**, another great reformation leader, among whose followers are Methodists, Wesleyans, etc.:

**"Would to God that all party names, and unscriptural phrases and forms which have divided the Christian world, were forgot and that the very name [Methodist] might never be mentioned more, but be buried in eternal oblivion."**

3. From **Charles Spurgeon**, one of the greatest Baptist preachers who ever lived:

**"I look forward with pleasure to the day when there will not be a Baptist living! I hope that the Baptist name will soon perish, but let Christ's name last forever."**

### DENOMINATIONALISM IS HARMFUL TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST...

1. Jesus knew that unity among His disciples would be "the final apologetic"
  - a. Cf. "that the world may believe" - Jn 17:21
  - b. In view of Jesus' words, we should not be surprised when unbelievers are slow to accept the gospel coming from a divided church
2. Many people point to the divided condition of those professing to follow Christ...
  - a. Atheists and agnostics often use religious division as an excuse not to believe in God
  - b. Adherents to non-Christian religions (such as Islam, Judaism, etc.) will often use denominationalism as a reason not to believe in Christ
3. Denominationalism has also given support and encouragement to the cults
  - a. Mormonism started in reaction to the denominationalism of Joseph Smith's day
  - b. Those who call themselves "Jehovah's Witnesses" use religious division to encourage people to follow their strictly-controlled organization

For a detailed study of this topic you can go to [www.ccel.org](http://www.ccel.org) **The "Executable Outlines" Series**, Copyright © Mark A. Copeland, 1999

# To Death and Back

*(Testimony by Yeo Toon Joo to  
Citibank's Christian fellowship,  
22/11/96)*

I believe many of you here today<sup>7</sup> are believers. But some of you may still be searching for the truth... of life and living: What life is all about or should be about? What is the meaning of your daily wakening, going to work, going for that beer after work, going home, going to sleep, waking up again, going to your country club on weekends, waking more money, getting that position, raising a family, growing up, growing old. And knowing that all this must one day end. Perhaps, that's why you are here today.

Some of you already have the answers because you had an open mind and at some point in your life surrendered yourselves to God who in turn blessed you by revealing Himself to you.

Thank God today that you resisted your banker's instinct to analyse God, creator of the Universe, like a clients balance sheet, and instead accepted in faith what God's Holy Word, the bible, tells us. For God is beyond human understanding. Who are we mere men, not even a speck in the universe, to question God? We do not choose God. He chooses us.

Like some of you I tried for years to analyse God and His teachings, and

use my puny intellect against His. Until one day, I received such a kick in the butt, that I

stopped trying to be smart, and believed. I had no alternative.

I hope what I share with you today will be of help to those among you with questions. To those of you who already believe and have received the gift of life, I pray it will strengthen your faith and inspire you to share with others, and with missionary zeal, that gift you have received.

Like some of you, I had - for years - been wondering what was the meaning of life, and this nebulous thing called happiness.

I had found prestige and power in life. I had been a leader of men - more than 2,000 at one stage - head of a large department, No.2 man in a newspaper organisation, speaker at international conferences, had my name and picture in newspapers, was entertained by rich and powerful men, including top bankers. In fact, one banker even opened a checking account for me without my having to put in one cent, or filling in a form. He filled it in for me, gave me temporary cheque leaves on the spot, and an almost unlimited OD line - clean - for me to speculate on the stock market.

As a newspaper editor, I had more power than I had realised. Prime ministers and even bankers - had time for me.

As a PR practitioner with my own consultancy, I have also earned good money. In the early 1980s, my real take home, including the tax-free portion of it, was maybe \$200,000 in one year. Several years ago I had five club memberships, which is now six, and had brought my golf handicap down to 13. I bought things cash, even my one-year old 2-litre Toyota Cressida. Of course, my mother was a little disappointed that I had not bought a Mercedes Benz instead. But who wants to take a loan and let the bankers earn all that interest!

In the estimation of today's young, aspiring executives or young upwardly mobile Singaporeans, who are still counting their pennies and paying installments on their cars and condos, I would have been described as successful. "I had arrived!"

I tried almost everything to find pleasure - and satisfaction. I could be the life of a party. I drank heavily, and everyday; I drank when I had a good day, I drank when I had a bad day. I had other women. I even tried smoking pot! There are other unmentionable things that I did, so I won't mention them. But I felt empty. I was not truly happy. Or, if I was, that happiness was fleeting. Something was missing.

At the end of each day, each week, and each year, I could not resolve one important thing: what was all that about? What had I achieved that gave my life meaning? I was not at peace. There had to be a better reason for living, a real meaning for my existence, and an explanation for my mortality. And not just some clever and persuasive theories by some swami, soothsayer, false prophets - and there are

many - or philosopher.

I read essays by the humanists. And as I had been brought up in the church fairly young, I read the Bible, but would not believe it. I even started to read up on Buddhism.

I went to church with my family. But in church I would look at the priest and wonder: what if that poor misguided fellow who had given up all the pleasures of life that I was merrily indulging in died only to discover that there and eternal life for him? What a waste!

One day something happened to me that made me change - from a Godless, hard drinking, womanising, empty person into a happy, assured, fulfilled person and firm believer in God. Not only just in God but a personal God, someone who knows everything about me, cares for me, and guides and guards my every step, every moment of the day.

It gave me not only meaning in life but a higher plane in life and living, but a new and great joy in living. God showed me what is life, and that death is nothing - to those for whom He has unlocked the secret of life. God let me experience death - to understand life. He let me die, not once but twice.

In 1989 and 1991, I had to undergo surgery. The first occasion was to remove a tumour in my scrotum. While under general anaesthesia, I suddenly found myself hovering above a group of people huddled over the operating table on which my body lay. Then I found myself in total darkness. I saw a bright patch ahead flying towards me.

Then I was sucked into that dark tunnel. At that point I lost consciousness.

It was a scary experience. But I dismissed it as a dream - and from watching too much TV. The tumour turned out to be benign. No cancer. A bad dream. I thought no more of it.

Two years later (in November 1991), I had chronic sinunitis which turned septic. I was using up boxfuls of tissues every day to stop the bleeding. Antibiotics did not work. Cancer was suspected. The doctor recommended surgery and a biopsy.

While unconscious in the operating theatre, I was awakened by voices: I found myself at a boozing party, in a dimly lit garden. I wanted to leave, but someone said: 'Come on, one for the road.' I heard myself protesting that I had to get home to my family, but someone kept saying: "Have one more for the road." It was like the many party situations I had been in. I stayed for another drink.

That became my last 'one for the road'. Because I stayed I found myself unable to get home to my wife and two daughters. Next, I found myself driving home in total darkness, but not able to make headway and get home. I felt as if I was driving in infinite space but there was no sense of having a body or a real car.

Then I found myself at another boozing party. I was going through a tormenting series of playbacks of my high living life: first I was enjoying myself and getting high on party, and then something bad would happen: I would experience regret but not be able to change home.

It occurred to me then that I was never going to get back. I suddenly realised that I was dead. As if to confirm that fact, I heard a cold voice. It said: "You are dead." Somehow I knew that the voice was the devil.

I realised that I would spend eternity in unending and unhappy playbacks of my past life of boozing and pleasure seeking. I was in hell, and hell was worse than the lake of fire. The torture was mental, and eternal. It dawned on me then that what the Bible had said and what I had been told about God, sin and hell were true. God did exist, so did the devil and punishment for those who refused to believe in God. I asked that cold voice: "You mean there is God after all?" The voice replied: "Yes." I wanted a second chance - to get back to life - but could not. I protested: "It's not fair, it's not fair." The voice said: "Your value system does not apply here." God, I realised, could not help me anymore. I was lost - forever. I was terrified but powerless to do or change anything. It was too late.

I lapsed into my series of memory playbacks. I was conscious of what was going on, but impotent. My mind was alive, but I had no body, no will or control. Then I heard a voice over me saying, "He's dead." I felt a pair of hands turning my head from side to side. I saw my limp body, and my head slumped over the back of a church pew, and my wife and two daughters standing behind.

I tried to communicate with my family, but could not. They could not feel my presence. I could not get through to them. I was in another dimension.

*Look out for the exciting conclusion in the next issue of The Vine.*



## COINCIDENCE OR ACT OF GOD

In January 1999, missionary Mr. Staine and his two sons were burned to death in Orissa, India. Now in November 1999, cyclone hits Orissa, India with an estimated death toll of thousands. I am not drawing any conclusions, just pointing out an apparent coincidence.

Try to finish within 5 minutes

### QUESTIONS:

R  
i  
d  
d  
l  
e  
s

1. Is there a 4th of July in England? Yes or no?
2. How many birthdays does the average man have?
3. Is it legal for a man in California to marry his widow's sister?
4. How many animals of each sex did Moses bring with him on the ark?
5. A butcher in the market is 5'10" tall. What does he weigh?
6. How many 2-cent stamps are there in a dozen?
7. What was the President's name in 1960?

### ANSWERS:

1. Yes. It comes right after the 3rd.
2. One (1). You can only be born once.
3. No. He must be dead if it is his widow.
4. None. I didn't know that Moses had an ark.
5. Meat...that is self-explanatory.
6. Twelve (12). How many eggs are in a dozen? TWELVE...it's a dozen.
7. Bill Clinton. As far as I know, he hasn't changed his name.

IN THE BEGINNING, GOD CREATED THE EARTH AND RESTED. THEN GOD CREATED MAN AND RESTED. THEN GOD CREATED WOMAN. SINCE THEN, NEITHER GOD NOR MAN HAS RESTED.

I MARRIED MISS RIGHT. I JUST DIDN'T KNOW HER FIRST NAME WAS ALWAYS.

# Christmas Party 1999

Saturday, 4th December 1999, Jurong Christian Church organised a special Christmas Party to reach out to the community around us. The event was organised by the Community Development Committee, chaired by Chan Yoke Meng. One of the main objectives was to make contact with the community and also to share the Word. Some headway was made in contact but the main aim of sharing the Word was dependent on the over 100 pcs of JESUS VCD, which we gave out. Please continue to pray that when the people watch this VCD, their hearts will be open and their lives transformed.

