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Transforming The Nation

Christians need to think hard on how to respond to issues facing our country.

BY BISHOP HWA YUNG

Moment



The Day We Chant Merdeka!

"...And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it" (Rev. 21: 24 NLT)

We can only imagine the scene when we enter the new city as stated in the book of Revelations. We would bask in the glory of being there. And yes, finally we would meet our God face to face and truly worship him for he deserves all praise.

We will be there as Malaysian Chris-

tians. Malaysia is our land, our home. What makes it exciting in this grand entrance is that we would also bring in the splendour of our country there. What is the splendour of our country? There are so many things that defines our country. Yet one thing stands out - the people of Malaysia. With different ethnicity and languages, it is really great to note that at the end, Malaysia would be represented there by it's people. This is for me the most memo-

orable thing about being Malaysian.

May we at this time of celebration of our independence rejoice and be thankful to God who blessed us with this land we live in. In God's grace and mercy he has revealed himself to us and has blessed us in so many ways. May we continually pray for our country, king, government and people. May God's light continually shine in this land for justice, righteousness and hope. Selamat Hari Kebangsaan Malaysia.

ARCHIVE PHOTO TAKEN FROM WIKIMEDIA

By Michael William

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Malaysia National Prayer Network

Church (the LORD is great!)

*Let all that I am praise the Lord;
with my whole heart, I will praise his holy name.
Let all that I am praise the Lord;
may I never forget the good things he does for me.
(Ps 103, NLT)*

We Pray That

| The Church continue to praise the God, lift up His holy name and serve Him with gladness.

| We continue to cry out for our brothers and sisters who face injustice and suffer for the name of Christ, may God's steadfast love hold them up and His consolations cheer their souls; may justice return to the righteous.



Pray for the Christians in Malaysia

| The Education Ministry has shut down a tuition centre at Old Klang Road here that allegedly tried to convert Muslim school-children to Christianity.

As We Celebrate Merdeka Day

*Our days on earth are like grass;
like wildflowers, we bloom and die.
The wind blows, and we are gone—
as though we had never been here.
But the love of the Lord remains forever
with those who fear him.
His salvation extends to the children's children
of those who are faithful to his covenant,
of those who obey his commandments!
(Ps 103, NLT)*

Continue to Pray

| For respect, love and concern for one another
| For a sensible, responsible and morally good society.
| For a clean and just government who fulfils its role as the government of all *rakyat* and to execute its duties with integrity & clean hands.
| For the religious departments to embrace knowledge and discretion in their speech and action.
| For protection for all minority groups, their wellbeing and rights will be safeguarded.
| That those who practice deceit and speak lies will fall.

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Christians and Nation Building

Christians need to think hard on how to respond to issues in our country.

BISHOP HWA YUNG



At the end of July, I was invited to help out with some work at the 18th World Assembly of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES) in Poland. IFES is the mother body of many Christian student fellowships all over the world, including FES in Malaysia and Singapore, OCF in Australia and New Zealand, and UCCF in UK. But the invitation had a special attraction for me because the Assembly was being held in Krakow. What so special about it?

First, Krakow is only an hour's drive to Auschwitz, the largest concentration camp built by the Nazis during the 2nd World War. I would never want to pass over the opportunity to see it, although it is a horrible place to visit. The best estimate is that 1.2 million (1.1 million were Jews, and the rest included Gypsies, Poles, and handicapped persons) were murdered there. The prisoners were first gassed with hydrogen cyanide and their bodies were then burnt to

Evangelicals are strong on enthusiasm and short-term activism, but often rather naive about long-term strategy in electoral politics.

ashes to hide the crime. People like Ahmadinejad, the current President of Iran, who deny that the Holocaust ever happened should pay a mandatory visit there. In face of all the facts, such silly denials would indeed have been so funny and laughable, if the reality had not been so tragic!

Since 1947, Auschwitz has been set up as a museum by the then Communist regime, as a reminder to the world of the depth of human evil and the final logic of racism of any kind! It is also a reminder to us all of the danger of remaining silent and not making a stand in face of rampant evil. Martin Niemöller, a German pastor had initially supported Hitler for nationalistic reasons. But when he finally came to realise how evil Nazism was, he began resisting it and ended up imprisoned for 7 years. After the war, he summed up the danger of staying

silent with the famous quote:

'First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out--Because I was not a Socialist. Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out--Because I was not a Trade Unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out--Because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me- and there was no one left to speak for me.'

The second reason why I specially wanted to see Krakow is a much happier one! Krakow is ancient capital of Poland and the location of Jagiellonian University, the second oldest university in Eastern Europe. Here in this city the late Pope John Paul II went to university and, during the 2nd World War, trained for the priesthood in an underground seminary. In 1964, at the young age of 42, he was appointed the Archbishop of Krakow—with the permission of the Communist authorities in Poland, who wrongly thought that he would be a political pushover! Instead, he proved to be an outstanding pastor, a first-rate administrator, and brilliant thinker. But there was more. During his time as Archbishop he fearlessly, though always tactfully, stood up to the communist authorities in Poland. In October 1978, against widespread expectations, he became the first non-Italian pope in five hundred years!

Pope John Paul II's work has a special relevance to us today. He had lived through the war years under the Nazis, and knew evil for what it is. Then as the Archbishop of Krakow, he saw with absolute clarity how destructive Soviet communism was of almost all that is good and beautiful in life. Thus he took a firm stand against it and all its oppressive and dehumanising power. Repeatedly, he encouraged his people to reject the tyrant's most important weapon, fear! His unflinching advice in the 1950s to the Polish clergy in face of intense persecution was **'Don't be afraid!'**

Even though he played down his own contribution, many have credited him as being one of the major forces behind the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989. Gorbachev, the then Soviet leader, had no doubts about that. Writing in 1992, he said: 'Everything that happened in Eastern Europe in these few years would have been impossible without the presence of this pope and the important role ... that he played on the world stage.' Stalin, one of the worst of 20th century tyrants, once asked mockingly: 'How many (military) divisions has the pope?' He finally got his answer!

I write this against the background of the many happenings in our country today. In the past few months alone, we had the



drama of the Sarawak state elections where corruption was the central issue. This was soon followed by the Bersih 2.0 demonstrations of 9th July calling for clean and fair elections in the country. The movement was initiated by some 60 NGOs, representing all major racial and religious groups, because of the perceived failure of the Electoral Commission to protect the electoral process against manipulation. Did the government's heavy-handed response to Bersih arise out of a sense of deep insecurity and fear? For example, government censors even blacked out parts of *The Economist* (16 July 2011) report on the event. This seems silly in our internet age as the full report was and still is freely available on the net! In any case, the scenes of police action on 9th July beamed around the world did much damage to Malaysia's image.

Bersih 2 was followed in rapid succession by the release of the report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry on Teoh Beng Hock's death. Although produced by highly respected individuals, nevertheless many have questioned whether the report told the whole story. Be that as it may, even the conclusions of the report as it is are enough to leave the reputation of MACC in tatters. What credibility can the nation's primary anti-corruption agency have when three of its officers, at least one who is senior, have been shown to lie publicly?

The latest episode is that of the JAIS raid on an NGO dinner held on DUMC premise on the evening of 3rd August. Leaving aside the charge of alleged proselytisation, for which no evidence has been given, two fundamental issues are at stake. First, such a raid by a government agency for Muslim affairs on a church premise demonstrates a total disrespect for non-Muslim religious groups in the country. So much for slogans about 1Malaysia! Second, since no court warrant was obtained, it appears that the whole raid was strictly-speaking illegal, despite claims to the con-

trary! Otherwise, why would the JAIS Director be back-peddling, and now saying that it was not a raid but only a 'check' (*The Star*, 12 Aug 2011)?

One certainly hopes that this is not the beginning of a downhill slide in which our country ends up a failed state where lawlessness prevails, like Somalia. Neither would we wish to see our citizens being haunted by the constant fear of raids, like those of the Gestapo or the KGB. But what is certain is that the JAIS episode (together with other issues) does raise crucial questions about the future of religious freedom in the nation.

With some exceptions, in the past Christians have generally taken a rather low profile in the politics of this country. Yet this is fast changing. As Joceline Tan says, increasingly Christians are a 'Minority with a major role' (*Sunday Star*, 24 July 2011; Focus, p.23). This is not a bad thing in our context today as Christ has called us to be 'salt' and 'light' in the world. But it can be a dangerous thing too—not because it is wrong to be concerned and involved, but because it is too easy to be naïve and starry-eyed in our involvement! What do I mean?

A recent study on evangelical Protestant participation in politics in Africa, Asia and Latin America, sponsored by the Pew Research Center, revealed some interesting observations. In his review of this study, Joel Carpenter ('Now What? Revivalist Christianity and Global South Politics,' *Books and Culture* [Mar/Apr 2009], pp. 26-28) highlighted a number of concerns about Christian political involvement.

First, in contrast an earlier reluctance, evangelicals in the non-western world are increasingly getting involved in politics and public life in recent years. Secondly, although they can mobilise their followers quickly for action at special critical moments, evangelicals are not good at sustaining political involvement long-term. Thirdly, evangelicals, once in power, are just as prone as others to corruption and

cronyism. Fourthly, although there are growing signs of political maturity amongst evangelicals, in general their greatest weakness in their efforts at electoral politics is the lack of any serious political thought, based on clear principles and long-term goals. As Carpenter puts it, evangelical 'activism often work against their valuing intellectual work, engaging traditions of Christian social and political thought, and developing principle-driven, long-term strategies.'

In other words, evangelicals are strong on enthusiasm and short-term activism, but often naïve about long-term strategy in electoral politics. Even worse, they are just as easily sucked into the culture of corruption and power abuse that often goes with political power. This brings their public usefulness to a quick end and the church is discredited in the process. Does this bring back echoes of Sabah from not too long ago?

When I look at the present Christian responses in the country, I sense a real problem. I suspect that many think that if they can only win the battle in the ballot box, they will be able to save the nation from our present mess! Even if this is the answer and proper course of action for the moment, nevertheless, it is short-term at best. What the Pew study clearly shows is that it is naïve to think that there is all that is to it, if we are truly concerned about our nation's future.

Today we are faced with an extremely complex national situation, as well as a deeply divided nation. Christians need to avoid merely knee-jerk reactions, but to think hard about how we respond. Our actions must be based on both carefully thought-out short-term actions and long-term strategies that will truly enhance nation-building in Malaysia. In the next few issues of the Pelita I hope to discuss further what some of these short and long-term considerations should be. May God grant us much humility and wisdom as we wait on Him to lead us forward!

Features

Special

Holy Living

Continuing from our series on "Spreading Scriptural Holiness", Rev. Thomas Lau answers some questions on the issue and its implication for Methodists today.

BY REV. THOMAS LAU

What did John Wesley mean by Holy Living?

John Wesley (1703-1791 A.D.) lived in a very challenging context. Mark A. Noll observes in his book *Turning Points*, that: The world of eighteenth-century Europe was no longer the world in which the Protestant Reformation was born ... Now Christendom was an increasingly beleaguered concept, beset on the one side by Christian sectarians who were willing to give up Christendom in order to save the church and on the other by a growing number of secularists who wanted to give up Christendom in order to escape the church ... Now Bible reading was rapidly becoming a solitary activity that divided, rather than united, communities ... [Even] innovative secular interpreters were beginning to question the unique divine authority of Scripture ... Now great cities had become a magnet for spiritual, as well as economic, innovation, and the landscape was dotted with increased numbers of growing towns ... [As a result] evangelicals and pietists were busy with two tasks ... [that is] retrieving elements of the Protestant past—especially *Sola Scriptura*, an emphasis on grace, and priesthood of all believers (p.235-237).

In 1738, Bishop George Berkeley (1685-1753 A.D.) literally declared that religion and morality in Britain had collapsed "to a degree that was never before known in any Christian country". Donald Drew, in his article entitled "England before and after Wesley" depicts such spiritual and moral quagmire explicitly:

First, by and large the clergy of the Church of England were corrupted and that corruption then spread from top to bottom of the populace ... [A]rchbishops and bishops lived luxuriously, neglected their duties, unashamedly solicited bishoprics and deanery for themselves and their families ... Secondly ... The barbarities practiced in industry were bad enough, but those carried out in slave ships end then in plantations, chill one's blood ... Thirdly ... In politics, nepotism, place-seeking, bribery were the order of the day especially at election times ... Fourthly ... [I]n the treatment and mortality of children ... between 1730-1750, three out of four of all children, born to all classes, died before their 5th birthday ... Fifthly ... the 18th century in England is known as the 'Gin Age' ... And of course the inevitable evils followed: poverty, violence, prostitution, murder ... Sixthly ... the perverted conception of sport, which, like alcohol, brought attendant evils in its train, such as further coarsening of the personality, cruelty and gambling ... Seventhly, gambling was, for all classes, a national obsession, bringing appalling ruin to thousand upon thousands ... Finally ... for lawlessness: thieves, robbers, highwaymen, footpads abounded throughout the length and breadth of the land; as Horace Walpole observed in 1751, "One is forced to travel, even at noon, as if one were going to battle".

John Wesley, an Anglican priest and a graduate of Oxford stepped into this predicament. His heart was "strangely

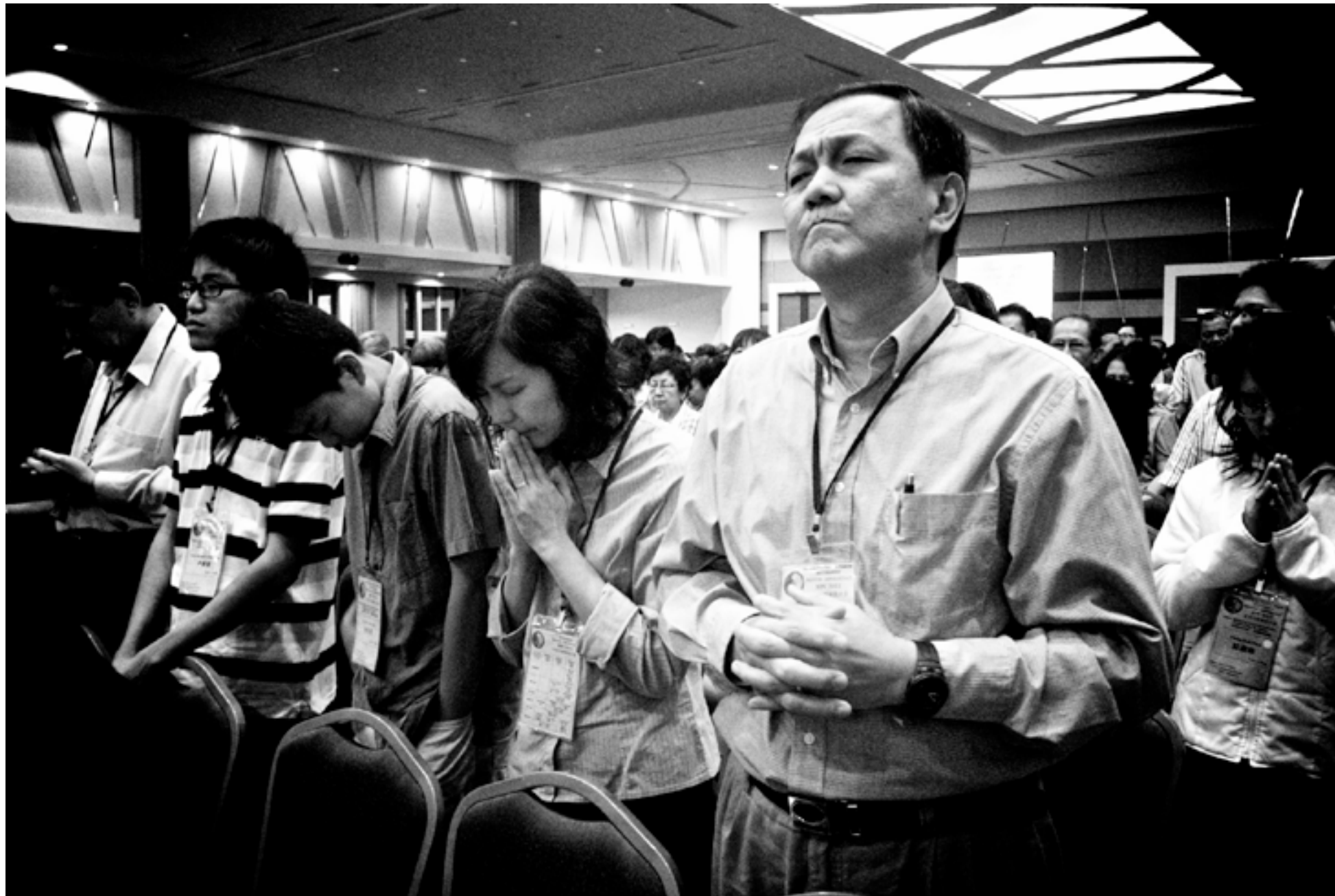
warmed" in a Moravian service on May 24, 1738, that is, transformed by the justifying grace (he wrote, "I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation") as well as the regenerating grace of God (he wrote, "And an assurance was given me, that Christ had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death").

From then on, Wesley did his best to inspire as well as to bring men and women into an authentic and deep experience of God's abundant saving grace and holy love. His earnest cry to God was:

Thy kingdom come - May thy kingdom of grace come quickly, and swallow up all the kingdoms of the earth: may all mankind, receiving thee, O Christ, for their king, truly believing in thy name, be filled with righteousness, and peace, and joy; with holiness and happiness, till they are removed hence into thy kingdom of glory, to reign with thee forever and ever! (Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament, p.37)

His constant emphasis in preaching and disciple-making was: [H]oliness of heart and life, inward and outward conformity in all things to the revealed will of God ... in a steady imitation of Him they worship, in all his imitable perfections; more particularly, in justice, mercy, and truth, or universal love filling the heart, and governing the life. (Works VIII, p.352)

His conviction was: Religion itself ... we define, "The loving God with all our hearts, and our neighbour as ourselves; and in that love abstaining from all evil, and



doing all possible good to all men ... [Such] love we believe to be the medicine of life, the never-failing remedy for all the evils of a disordered world, for all the miseries and vices of men. Whenever this is, there are virtues and happiness going hand in hand. There is humbleness of mind, gentleness, long suffering, the whole image of God, and, at the same time, a peace that passeth all understanding, and joy unspeakable and full of glory. (Works VIII, p.472, 474)

His wise and practical discipleship method was that he encouraged converts towards holy being (i.e. pursuing "entire sanctification" in which pride, self-will,

anger, and love of the world would be purged out by the mighty Spirit) and holy living by organising them into "United Societies", "classes", and "bands" through which, he hoped that:

[T]hey may help each other to work out their salvation ... [particularly] First: By doing no harm, by avoiding evil of every kind ... Secondly: By doing good; by being in every kind merciful after their power; as they have opportunity, doing good of every possible sort, and, as far as possible, to all men ... Thirdly: By attending upon all the ordinances of God; such are: the public worship of God; the ministry of the Word, either read or expounded;

the Supper of the Lord; family and private prayer; searching the Scriptures; fasting or abstinence. (Works VIII, p.269-271)

Admittedly, Wesley's vision of and the Methodists' commitment to both holy being (i.e. believing that one's heart can indeed be delivered from the guilt, power, and even being of sin, by faith in Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit) and holy living (i.e. Christians' individual and corporate dedication to personal as well as social holiness) had reformed his nation and spread Scriptural-practical holiness over the land. In Wesley's own words: "He that treats of faith and leaves out repentance, or does not enjoin practical holiness

to believers ... he does not preach Christ!" (Explanatory notes upon the New Testament, p.885)

In the light of this, it is no wonder that the renowned scholar Mark A. Noll, a Reformed evangelical Christian points out that the tenth decisive turning point in the history of Christianity is none other than: "The New Piety: The Conversion of the Wesleys" He wrote, "[T]he Wesleys' work kept alive the message of God's grace and greatly broadened its outreach". (Turning Points, p.223)

Is Holy Living practical to us in the current time? How?

"With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible!" (Mt. 19:26) God Almighty, who had enabled John Wesley and the people called Methodists "to reform the nation, particularly the Church; and to spread scriptural holiness over the land," is still sovereign, gracious, and at work today. Therefore holy living is practical even in current times.

The testimony of brother Richard, the lay leader of CAC, (available from: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2bwFJyS2cGE>) shows that Wesleyan vision of holy living, in a world that struggles with the pressures of S.P.M. (sex, power, and money), remains practical. Richard experienced God's amazing grace and holy love

The challenges in living holiness include: identifying our personal and social predicament or quagmire clearly and reflecting on them in the light of the Scriptural truth.

in his business by providing his daily needs on the one hand, and keeping him from the temptation of bribery and corruption on the other hand. As he determined not to give in to corruption, he experienced the goodness and faithfulness of God in making a way out for him. Has not God of Abraham, Joseph, and Daniel promised, "Those who honour me I will honour"?! (1 Sam.2:30b)

According to John Wesley, the practice of holy living needs: First, "faith which worketh by love---All inward and outward holiness"; second, fellowship of Christians that exhorts one another to faith, love, and good works; and third, faithfulness to the calling of being the light and the salt in the world, at all costs, for the glory of God. Wesley's conviction is expressed in his essay "A Blow at the Root":

"Without holiness no man shall see the Lord, no man shall see the face of God in glory ... [N]one shall live with God, but he that now lives to God; none shall enjoy the glory of God in heaven, but he that bears the image of God on earth; none that is not saved from sin here can be saved from hell hereafter; none can see the kingdom of God above, unless the kingdom of God be in him below. Whosoever will reign with Christ in heaven, must have Christ reigning in him on earth. He must have "that mind in him which was in Christ", enabling him "to walk as Christ also walked". (Works X, p.364)

What are the challenges in Holy Living?

The challenges in living holiness include: identifying our personal and social predicament or quagmire clearly and reflecting on them in the light of the Scriptural truth.

Interceding unswervingly for both personal and social transformation, remembering the words of Wesley, that is, "Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God, and I care not a straw whether they be clergymen or laymen; such alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the kingdom of heaven on earth. God does nothing but in answer to prayer".

Imitating Jesus Christ's incarnation model in living holiness, particularly, together with other disciples who also have the God-given similar spirit in combating corruption of all kinds.

Implanting the vision of holy being and living as well as a biblical worldview in the younger generation.

Inculcating in all Christians the powerful theology, conviction, and courage of John Wesley, that is, "God works, therefore I can work; God works, therefore I must work!" (Works VI, p.511)

What are the fruit(s) in churches with the practice of Holy Living?

The fruits include: growing experiences of God's preeminent, convincing, justifying, regenerating, assuring, sanctifying, and entire sanctifying grace in daily lives; glowing as the authentic light and the influential salt of the world, enabling the world to see wonders in Christ through our sufferings, perseverance, and godliness; going as a convert - winning and disciple-making community, opening the eyes of the world to see: "The best of all, God is with us!"

Rev. Thomas Lau Sie Ngiu serves as a Lecturer in the Methodist Theological School, Sibiu.

The Day I Walked With My Fellow Malaysians

Mr. Anthony Row, member of the Tamil Annual Conference and the Secretary of the General Conference shares with us on his participation on the Bersih 2.0 walk.

BY ANTHONY ROW

9th July has come and it has flown by. Many a story has been told by word of mouth, print, YouTube and what not. Let me share with you my experience.

I woke up early on that auspicious day. I was all excited as it was to be my first involvement in a peaceful walk for a just cause. Over the weeks leading to this day so much fear had been drummed up by the authorities, so much so I did not know what to expect. I picked up a friend on the way and got my first experience of the “Lockdown of the City” when I was deterred from entering the road leading to the city near Megamall. I was directed to go towards Cheras even though I pleaded with the police to allow me to go to Brickfields as my intention was to park my car in the grounds of the Tamil Methodist Church and then proceed to Merdeka Stadium. Not being able to do so we had to go through Old Klang Road to reach the LRT station in front of Amcorp mall. All along the way I noticed there was a heavy presence of policeman and they were setting roadblocks at random as though they were out to frustrate the people and make them angry towards *Bersih*. That was causing more road jams and many were indis-

criminally breaking the law just to get out of the jams in frustration.

We took the train from Amcorp Mall and made our way to the Station at Central Market. We were joined there by Rev Dr. Joseph Kumar, who had made his way to KL from Seremban earlier in the day. We were glad that we had come into KL early, as we heard that the stations’ shutters were closed at about 12 noon. On the train to Central Market, we noticed that there was an eerie silence surrounding the city. Helicopters were flying about, few cars were on the road except for police trucks whizzing around like they owned the roads. KL looked like a “war zone”. We decided to grab some food as we did not know what the rest of the day was going to be like.

Most of the shops around Central Market were closed except for a few. We finally found our way to a shop and observed that it was difficult to get a seat as it was packed with many who had come to be part of the rally. We were offered to join a table by a group of Christians, many of whom had come from different towns in Malaysia and even as far as Singapore. Talking to them was so refreshing because they were there to make a stand for their

future.

Having had some food we made our way to the Merdeka Stadium. We wanted to go through Petaling Street. All along the way, what I witnessed was amazing – people from all walks of life but most were young people coming out to be part of the Bersih Walk. We were not able to make it to the Stadium for the crowd that had gathered at the entrance of Petaling Street was soon joined by others from the surrounding streets. The numbers had grown and we then marched to Jalan Sultan and there was already a group amassing there. The numbers continued growing and the chants became louder – “*Bersih Bersih...Hidup Rakyat...Adilan...*” The group was joined by many others. Not being able to reach the Stadium the group retreated and made its way to Menara Maybank. There was so much of laughter, commitment, and sharing within the group. It was truly Malaysia. No rhetoric. People shared water, gave out yellow flowers, shook hands and chanted with one voice irrespective of age, creed or color. I was proud to be in their midst. We met so many people. I met neighbors of mine who were surprised to see me just as I was to see them. Once

again I met many Christians from different walks of life some of whom, had booked into cheap hotels the night before because they did not want to miss out on the march.

There were people on wheel chairs, youths, and seniors. All shapes and sizes, professionals and ordinary citizens were there. They were marching for their future. They were marching to send a message to the Government that electoral reform was needed.

The crowd moved to the front of Menara Maybank and there we were joined by more people. We were wondering where they had come from. I believe that in that crowd there were already more than 30,000 people. That is my assessment. I could be wrong but the streets were filled with people – from the junction of Kota Raya to Menara and from there all the way to the Tung Shin Hospital. Through it all the group was well mannered, even allowing cars and motorbikes to pass through. It had a carnival atmosphere. Helicopters were still flying around and the heavy presence of police surrounding us was so very evident and very eerie.

And then the worst of my fears came to pass. Out of nowhere and for no apparent reason, I had my first experience of being fired upon by chemically laced water and tear gas. People were running in all directions to get away from the effects of both. The tear gas burnt the eyes but more damaging was the difficulty in breathing caused by the tear gas. Many were struggling to breathe and see where they were going. Instinctively we looked for any road/lane/way out. I made it to the back of the Menara, my eyes still smarting and gasping for fresh air. After a short while we gathered once again and this time in front of Puduraya barely realising that it was a tactical move by the police to get us pegged in from both sides. We did not realise that there police had already blocked off our exit and we were sandwiched by police in riot gear armed with batons, supported by armoured vehicles spewing tear gas and chemically laced water and police in helicopters directing operations. Once again they fired water and tear gas into the crowds. Again the group ran looking for any outlet fleeing from the onslaught of the police. The second round of tear gas made more people vomit including me. People were helping one another. Water was shared, wet towels were shared, salt was handed out and helping hands were stretched out to those in need. Once again we assembled and this time we linked our arms together and sat quietly on the road. This angered the po-

lice more. They charged at the crowd whilst firing water and tear gas into the crowd and it was one big thick cloud of smoke. Those who could not run fast enough were beaten and dragged to the police vehicles. We found refuge in the Tung Shin Hospital and even then they fired tear gas and water into the compound with one canister bouncing off the window of the hospital. I saw people with bloodied faces being dragged away. It made me want to weep. But through it the people stood firm. The police tried rushing up the road and many ran into the hospital to take refuge. The police pursued and again many were dragged away.

A short while later there were signs that the police was willing to negotiate and agreed to allow the crowd to march through on one side of the road by providing a way out of the impasse. Sivarasa a PKR’s MP tried to negotiate on behalf of the group. While the negotiations continued there was a hush and someone led in the singing of the “*Negara Ku*”. It gave me goose pimples. It was absolutely wonderful. That feeling was short-lived as the police turned on Sivarasa by arresting him and dragging him off into the waiting Black Maria. That was a ruse by the police to lure the people out from all the lanes and the buildings. The police began chasing people and the crowd began shouting at the police and it led to another round of tear gas and water cannon and another charge by them. More arrests and more beatings. We have seen such incidents unfolding in other parts of the world on TV but never thought it would happen in our own country.

It was after 4pm and many started to disperse using the back lanes to get home. We made it to the Masjid Jamek LRT Station hoping to catch a train to AMCorp Mall. To our dismay it was still locked and whilst we were seated on the steps waiting for the doors to open the police once again harassed and chased us away from that place. Many tried to reason with the police but they became abusive and violent threatening to arrest and beat us up. I wondered then, who actually were the criminals and who were the victim. So the long walk home began and by the time I reached AMCorp Mall to pick up my car another roadblock confronted me, this time at the Jalan Timur Lake. They checked my IC and asked me some questions and grudgingly let me pass. I think they saw the annoyance on my face.

Some of you may ask what we have achieved or what it is that I have experienced. Let me state this:

1. Malaysia was more evident here than at any other gathering I have been to.
2. The Youth are becoming more vocal and want to see justice being done. They are well aware of what is going on.
3. There was willingness to help one another that transcended age, creed or colour.
4. People were not afraid and if there was to be another peaceful march, more will definitely come forth.
5. The police seemed to be more concerned with stopping the march at all cost than with tactful means of crowd control. It raises questions about what instruction were given them by the powers that be.

More can be said and added to this list and I am certain those who attended will add more but for now let it suffice. As for us as a Church:

1. We should continue praying.
2. We should make sure that all our members have registered as voters. This task must be taken seriously. It is not a call to vote BN, Pakatan or some other party. What is needed is that we should do our duty to vote.
3. Educate our members on the events unfolding before us. This is to help our members to respond intelligently.
4. We need to stand up and be counted. We cannot let others do the fighting for us. We must be own our future and the future of our nation.
5. As a church we who are called to do justice and show mercy and stand up for righteousness. Unfortunately, many stayed within the safe confines of our churches or our homes and all we did was to pray. I am glad that many of us did this, but I wish we had done more. We have read accounts when Christians stood up and were willing to be counted in wanting to make a difference. John Wesley, Martin Luther King to name a few. Where was the Church on that day? Even now a man has died and many continue to be in prison. Where is the voice of the Church?

Let me close by saying this: I have no choice but to stand up and be counted for I believe that it is part of “holy living”. I cannot just speak and not act. I must be willing to join hands with all, irrespective of age, creed or colour. This is my home and if I do not stand up for right, for justice, for mercy, for transparency, then my faith is in vain and my hope for the future is in vain.

Living

And Jesus answered him saying, “It is written that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.” (Luke 4:4)

Mission | Worship | Fellowship | **Discipleship** | Care & Concern



The Theology of Lady Gaga. With her “out-of-this-world” outfits and entertaining songs, she is slowly defining current pop culture that is influencing our youths.

BY GRAHAM SMITH

Lady Gaga is a phenomenon. Her songs are becoming a soundtrack to a generation and she has legions of devoted fans across the globe. Her impact on UK culture has been dramatic. In 2010 she was the most played artist on UK radio, grabbing both the number 1 and 3 slots with singles Bad Romance and Alejandro. Her albums have been just as successful, with The Fame Monster and Born This Way now approaching 3 million sales. She is beloved of fans and music reviewers alike, with her albums receiving positive reviews across the music press (even NME gave Born This Way 8 out of 10!).

Lady Gaga draws heavily on religious ideas and imagery for her music and videos (in particular Christianity). At times it seems she is embracing elements of a Christian worldview, and at others pouring on scorn. In some senses it is the classic postmodern pluralistic approach to spirituality, drawing together different sources to create her own version of the truth. Because of this she causes controversy amongst religious groups and has even been banned in Lebanon after officials deemed her latest album ‘offensive to Christianity’!

The first single taken from her latest album, Born This Way (the name of both single and album!) is a clear demonstration

of this, and worth spending some time considering because of how it has both influenced culture and is a reflection of our culture.

The basic premise of the song is God makes us the way we are, and so we should be proud of that, not changing for anyone or anything.

“I’m beautiful in my way
‘Cause God makes no mistakes
I’m on the right track baby
I was born this way”

There is certainly an element of this that Christians can affirm. Genesis teaches us that God created humans exactly the way

He wanted, and that we carry his image (Gen 1:27), the Psalms that God knitted us together in our mother’s womb (Psalm 139:13), Paul’s epistles that God has a good and perfect plan for our lives (Eph 2:10) and Jesus that He knows every hair on our head (Matt 10:30). From scripture we can affirm that God is perfect (Matt 5:48), that he makes no mistakes and that He knows and loves every person on this planet and has a plan for their lives. In these areas Lady Gaga seems to have a

Just love yourself and you’re set
I’m on the right track baby
I was born this way”
The message is simply, ‘love yourself and it will all be fine’.

In an interview with The Guardian’s Simon Hattenstone Lady Gaga gives a further insight into her views on religion, that links directly to the lyrics of Born This Way:

“The previous day she had said it’s diffi-

Jesus certainly does say we should love others. However nowhere does he say we should love ourselves. This is the very essence of sin. She has replaced the command to love God with the command to love ourselves. She goes so far as to say it doesn’t matter if you love God, or a guy. She is commanding a generation to love themselves and their friends above all else, pushing God to the margins.

Another insight into the philosophy behind Gaga’s lyrics comes in the second



Lady Gaga: “It’s more self-worship, I think, not of me. I’m teaching people to worship themselves.”

grasp on the Christian worldview. Where this premise falls down is a failure to acknowledge sin, of a need to repent, of a need to relate to God in any way. Gaga seems to see God as someone who sets things in motion and then just lets you get on with it whatever way you deem right. There is no accountability, which is not what the Bible teaches (Rev 20: 11-12). Gaga’s philosophy is shown in the continuation of the chorus;

“Don’t hide yourself in regret

cult to talk about the show to people who haven’t seen it. She was right, I say, it’s like a revivalist meeting. “Yes, it is. It is a religious experience. But it’s like a pop cultural church.” She pauses. “I never intended for the Monster Ball to be a religious experience, it just became one.”

She’s become the Billy Graham of pop, I say. She laughs. “It’s more self-worship, I think, not of me. I’m teaching people to worship themselves.”

What is going wrong with conventional religion if kids are looking to her for spiritual guidance? “The influence of institutionalised religion on government is vast. So religion then begins to affect social values and that in turn affects self-esteem, bullying in school, teen suicides, all those things.” Her message, she says, is simple and perfectly Christ-like – love yourself and love others.” Here we see perfectly the post-modern pluralistic approach to spirituality, and why it can be dangerous. Lady Gaga paraphrases Mark 12: 29-31, where

verse where she states “love requires faith”. To live the life that she advocates in this song she makes a tacit acknowledgement that spirituality is vital. In that most post-modern of ways, she is rejecting the modernist notion that everything can be rationalised and explained and is returning to faith as an integral part of life. This increased emphasis on spirituality is something we see in post-modern culture.

It is in this that we as Christians can most usefully utilise the work of Lady Gaga. We can affirm what is good in her music, building a bridge to the post-modern society around us, whilst looking to develop a positive discussion about where her musings differ from the Christian world view, and how actually in loving God rather than ourselves we can find life in all its fullness (John 10:10).

Mr. Graham Smith is a young Christian blogger [http://grahamintheroom.wordpress.com] who writes Christian books’ reviews, spiritual articles and etc.

Arts

“The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his own possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.” (Deut 7:6)

Books | Movies | Music | Architecture

Transforming Lives From Port to Port

BY EILEEN CHUA

Logos Hope, the world's largest floating book fair, is coming to Malaysia.

Between late August and early December, the vessel, in partnership with OM Malaysia, will dock in the ports of Penang, Port Klang, Kuching and Kota Kinabalu.

The ship's purpose is to bring knowledge, help and hope.

Knowledge comes in the form of books, with over 5,000 titles in the book fair including novels, cookery books, children's titles and much more. In some countries, crew members bring help with projects such as construction work, cleaning up community areas or raising awareness of issues such as HIV and AIDS. The crew have been providing free dental and medical care to people and to give out free eyeglasses. The hope aspect involves crew members sharing their stories with people, often on the ship's Visitor Experience Deck. Here, the crew members can connect with local people over snacks or coffee. In addition, many events are held on board, including International Night, which features songs and dances from around the world.

With 400 crew members from 45 different nations, many of them in their 20s, the ship gives young people exposure to cross-cultural service and outreach. Life in the diverse onboard community challenges crew members to cultivate new interpersonal skills, while simultaneously developing practical skills in their jobs. Most commit to serving on the ship for two years, where they will work full-time in a department of the ship such as the engine room, deck, galley (kitchen), as a cleaner or in the book fair. The ship currently has six Malaysian crew members. One of them, Mellisa Krishnan from Penang, has served on *Logos Hope* for two years as an electrician. Mellisa has always been interested in missions and had gone on many short term mission trips before joining the ship. After eight years of working as an electronics engineer, she decided it was time to do something on a longer term.

Unsure about which mission field to go into, Mellisa was advised to join *Logos Hope*. “You get more exposure on the ship,” she explained. “You see more countries, so then you can narrow down where your burden is and which field to go into later.” As the only woman in *Logos Hope's*

team of electricians, Mellisa works in a very male dominated field. This has presented its challenges, but she says it has made her more dependent on God.

“I have learned to rely more on God and less on my own strength, realising that in my weakness He is strong,” she said. I have also learned to take on challenges that I think are too big for myself because I know that with God everything is possible.”

Mellisa also believes that being on the ship has taught her to become more open in sharing her faith, particularly during the ship's visits to the Caribbean and West Africa. She particularly enjoyed serving with a land based team in Liberia, West Africa. The team helped to build a wall around a school to prevent vandalism. Mellisa found it encouraging to see the wall completed and to work with the school children by singing songs, playing games or teaching them a math lesson.

Looking back on her two years on the ship, she said: “I wouldn't say that it has been smooth sailing all the way. But it has been the experience of a lifetime and it has made me grow spiritually, emotionally and mentally.”



Port & Dates for Malaysia:

Penang	30 Aug - 26 Sept
Port Klang	29 Sept - 23 Oct
Kuching	28 Oct - 14 Nov
Kota Kinabalu	18 Nov - 04 Dec





John Wesley's Design of the United Societies

Such a society is no other than "a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation."

