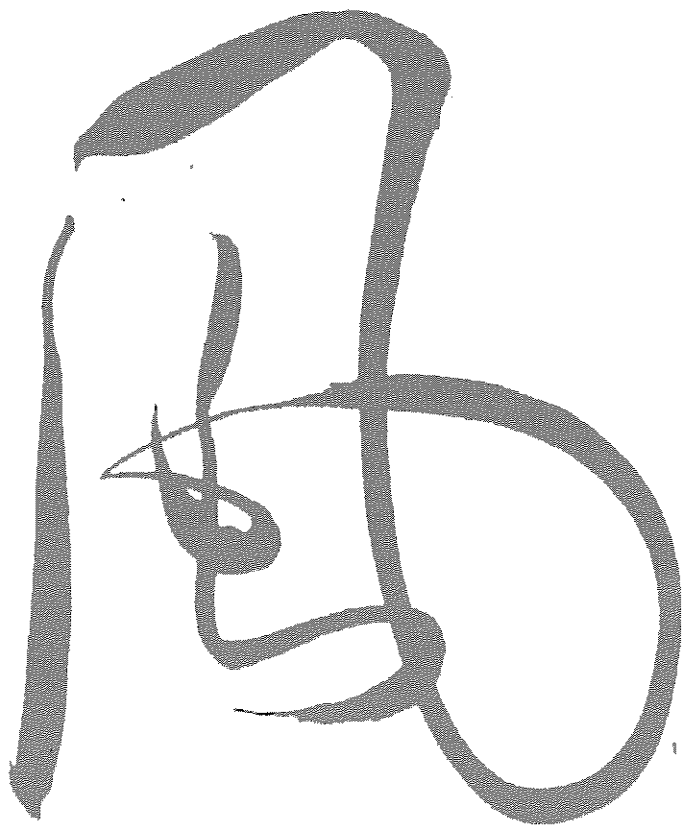


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PENTECOSTALS AND POLITICS

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1. Introduction

In recent years, as Pentecostals have started to appreciate that the proclamation of a “full gospel” includes not only evangelism (as traditionally understood) but also a social dimension,² there has been an increasing desire for the movement as a whole, and for individual members in their own right, to achieve political influence.³ In Western societies such as Australia,

¹ This paper arises out of a joint book project on the subject globalization and the mission of the church. The book, being written by myself and Professor Neil Ormerod of the Australian Catholic University, is being written as a single text (without differentiating the authors). As a result, some of the ideas and paragraphs in this paper are those of Professor Ormerod, and are used with his permission.

² See my further discussion of this in “Preaching the ‘Full Gospel’ in the Context of Global Environmental Crises,” submitted for publication with *Pneuma* – not yet published.

³ In the Australian context, this has led to various developments, including the founding of a Christian political party (Family First) and the election of Pastor Andrew Evans, the former president of the Assemblies of God in Australia (AGA), to the South Australian Parliament. It has also resulted in efforts to court the influence of politicians of all persuasions, as is illustrated by the fact that the Australian Prime Minister, John Howard, opened the new Hillsong building in 2002, and by the recent discussion forum that saw both the Prime Minister and the Opposition Leader (Kevin Rudd) respond to questions from key church leaders, including the various national executive members of the AGA.

the presumption of strictly held notions of church / state separation have resulted in a rising tide of media criticism being leveled at this new Christian voice.⁴ While much of this criticism is simply a result of sensationalist reporting, and reflects the contemporary media's bias against the church, there are some valid reasons for concern. These arise not only because the motives of the politicians and political parties are self-evidently questionable, but because there is a justifiable suspicion about the way in which people with conservative Christian values might seek to impose those values upon a broader society. In fact, the problem is that Pentecostals themselves have not developed an underlying theology and political philosophy capable of framing the way in which they should engage in the public realm. My goal then, in this paper, is to seek to contribute toward "developing the Pentecostal mind" (to cite the overriding theme of this conference) by setting out some parameters for the relationship between Pentecostals and politics.

2. A History of Church and State

Most of us (at least in the West) are so familiar with the idea of the separation of politics and religion, of church and state, that we find it hard to imagine anything very different. If, however, we take a larger historical perspective, we quickly learn how recent this apparent separation has been, and how in most of human history politics and religion have been inextricably linked. The Egyptians deified their pharaohs, the Romans their emperors. After the conversion of Roman emperor Constantine to Christianity, the intertwining of church and state produced Christendom where the Church could create and dispose of kings, lords and emperors if they failed in their "Christian" duties. The whole of society, of culture, was viewed as Christian and so the Church could interfere in all aspects of people's lives.

The story of the disentanglement of this relationship is complex, and one of conflict and struggle. The modern secular state finds its origins in the rise of Protestantism. Martin Luther, faced with a system of Church and state which threatened to overwhelm and destroy his movement of protest against Church corruption, promoted the notion of "freedom of conscience" and a separation of Church and state. According to Luther, the state had no right to violate the freedom of conscience of a religious

believer. But the pragmatic nature of this position was revealed when Luther himself invoked the right of "Christian princes" to suppress the Anabaptist sects that later emerged.⁵ And of course the other major reformer, John Calvin, reestablished a virtual theocracy in Geneva. We should not be too hard on the Reformers since, clearly, the transition from the strictures of Christendom was difficult one, and gave rise to ambiguities within both Catholic and the newly separated Protestant states. These ambiguities came to a head with the resulting "wars of religion" which troubled Europe for a century or so. Nations were divided into Catholic and Protestant camps, following the logic that the state will adopt the prince's religion. The bitterness and interminable nature of these conflicts led to our more modern position of a secular state, where religion is privatised and marginalised from the public realm. Rather than being a cause of social harmony, peace and forgiveness, Christianity had become the cause of social conflict and upheaval. Religion was, metaphorically, "sent to its room for bad behaviour." The political order could survive quite well without it, and at the same time the state put aside attempts to regulate religion, except in the most minimal ways needed for good social order. The philosophers of the Enlightenment promoted this separation as the triumph of reason over tradition, intellect over superstition, the forces of social progress over the deadening hand of religious ignorance. Consequently, the Enlightenment marks the beginning of the systematic exclusion of religion from the public realm.

[As an aside one might ask whether a purely secular human social and political order has done better than its predecessors. One still hears arguments against religion on the basis of the "wars of religion" and the social division caused by differences in faith⁶; but the 20th century is littered with conflicts between overtly secular states and systems. States which have sought to eliminate religion altogether, Communist Russia, North Korea, China, are hardly examples of human flourishing. In the absence of religion there is a constant temptation to absolutise the state, making political authority the absolute norm. When this happens, human beings without God are just as capable of conflict, violence and intolerance as those with God, or so it would seem!]

⁵ See http://www.uni-duisburg.de/Institute/CollCart/es/sem/s6/txt08_2.htm for the text of Luther's "Should Christian princes use the sword and employ physical punishment against Anabaptists?"

⁶ See, for example, Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2006).

⁴ See, for example, Tanya Levin, *People in Glass Houses: An Insiders Story of a Life in & Out of Hillsong* (Australia, 2007).

While the move away from the model of Christendom was particularly difficult for Catholic and mainline Churches, these same transitions paved the way for other streams of “free-church,” voluntarist Christianity. The newly developing logic of separation of church and state gave these voluntarist movements their independence (from both ecclesial and state-based control), and enabled them to flourish in the context of democratised society.⁷ At its core, voluntarist Christianity was an effort to empower those whom both the traditional church and the hierarchical society had tended to ignore and silence. Describing the pioneering leaders of voluntarism, Nathan Hatch says:

They shared an ethic of unrelenting toil, a passion for expansion, a hostility to orthodox belief and style, a zeal for religious reconstruction, and a systematic plan to realize their ideals. However diverse their theologies and church organisations, they all offered common people, especially the poor, compelling visions of individual self-respect and collective self-confidence.⁸

In this way, it can be argued that the free-church voluntarist movement, out of which Pentecostalism was ultimately born, was, paradoxically, a politically influential apolitical movement. The longer term difficulty, however, was that its acceptance of the idea that faith can be restricted to the private realm ultimately constrained its proclamation of the gospel, causing a loss of the broader social and cultural dimensions of the Kingdom of God. In more recent decades, Pentecostals (along with other free church movements) have begun to reconsider their involvement in political affairs, recognising not only that it is impossible to separate the private and public spheres of life, but also that the growth in their numbers enables them to achieve a certain degree of power and influence. The challenges that have arisen in this new environment of politically aware free churches are readily illustrated in the context of American politics, where evangelicalism has tended to focus its public engagement on issues of spirituality and morality, such as prayer in schools and the supposed gay agenda, rather than matters of social justice, either locally or globally. In addition, prominent leaders

⁷ Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (London, England: Yale University Press, 1989), 3-16. Also David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London, England: Unwin Hyman, 1989).

⁸ Hatch, *The Democratization*, 4.

in these churches have found themselves caught up in the political ideologies of the George Bush presidency.⁹

As we noted in introducing this paper, the underlying issue is not the desire to be involved in politics (as secular critics claim), but that the loose knit voluntarist movement of Pentecostal and other free churches has not yet developed a political philosophy and theology that is sufficient to enable it to operate in the pluralist context of modern democracies. There is, as a result, a tendency to seek the restoration of a so-called “Christian society,” one that is (once again) little more than a renewed Christendom, presumably now to be framed according to conservative Christian ideals! It is thus no wonder that secular critics respond to the increasingly prominent voice of Christians in politics with some degree of alarm.

3. Why Pentecostals Should Get Political

The starting point in the development of a political theology is the assertion that the mission of the church includes a public dimension. This has not been the position of traditional Pentecostalism. Pentecostals have proclaimed what is variously labelled the “fourfold” or “full gospel,” which announced Jesus as saviour, baptiser in the Spirit, healer and soon coming king.¹⁰ What is readily apparent is that these various elements of the Pentecostal proclamation have been framed in a manner that excludes a public responsibility. In the first place, salvation has been understood to be solely, or at least primarily, about salvation of the soul. From this perspective, social action takes second place to evangelism (understood in the narrow sense of term). In early Australian Pentecostalism, for example, the Pentecostal matriarch Sarah Jane Lancaster was roundly criticised for establishing a soup kitchen in the church, being told that “the money spent in feeding the unemployed would be better spent in evangelising Victoria, thus building up the Apostolic Faith Mission.”¹¹ While subsequent decades have seen the broadening of this stance, Pentecostals still tend to assume

⁹ Jim Wallis, *God's Politics: Why the American Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It* (Oxford, England: Lion Hudson, 2005), xxi-xxiv.

¹⁰ See Shane Clifton, “An Analysis of the Developing Ecclesiology of the Assemblies of God in Australia” (Australian Catholic University, 2005), 111.; also Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology: The Holy Spirit in Ecumenical, International, and Contextual Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002), 93.

¹¹ See Clifton, 136; Sarah Jane Lancaster, “Amongst the Unemployed,” *Good News* 23, no. 2 (February 1932): 10-11.

that the purpose of social action lies in its service to the task of evangelism. Social action is affirmed as a means of pre-evangelism, a method of selling the ministry of the church to individuals and society as a whole, rather than something intimately connected to the gospel. In respect to the other elements of the Pentecostal fourfold gospel, a similar restricted focus is apparent. The distinctive motif of baptism in the Spirit, which contains a wealth of meaning for Pentecostal culture and social structure,¹² has at a minimum been associated with empowerment – both for missionary service and for sanctification.¹³ The former has tended to link baptism in the Spirit to the movement's restricted proclamation of salvation of the soul, and the latter has focused on individual sanctification, often understood in a world-denying fashion. Likewise, the Pentecostal emphasis on divine healing has been focused almost exclusively on the individual person – rarely toward social concerns. In relation to the final eschatological element of the fourfold gospel, the usual association of Jesus' return with the rapture of the saints and apocalyptic destruction of the world actively discourages concern for the political affairs of society.

This theological position stands in tension with the developing social and political awareness of contemporary Pentecostalism, which has resulted largely for pragmatic and sociological reasons – as the inevitable consequence of the growth of the movement. Yet without wishing to provide a simple justification for these recent developments, it can in fact be argued that public responsibility should be central to the mission of the church. The church, birthed in the message and ministry of the Lord Jesus, exists because of and for the kingdom, and its purpose is to proclaim the good news that the kingdom is at hand. At its most basic level, the kingdom of God is "God's rule." This rule is achieved through the defeat of evil and sin at the cross, and the restoration of created perfection (peace, harmony, justice, love) apparent in the first-fruits of Jesus' resurrection and the gifts of the Spirit. Debates about the timing of the kingdom have generally concluded that the kingdom is "now/not yet," realised completely in the future, but nonetheless transformative of the present. Discussion of the scope of the kingdom, its spiritual or natural dimensions, have envisaged a

¹² See Frank Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006). Also Shane Clifton, "The Spirit and Doctrinal Development: A Functional Analysis of the Traditional Pentecostal Doctrine of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit," *Pneuma* 29, no. 1 (2007): 5-23.

¹³ Donald Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1987), 65.

holistic understanding, with the rule of God understood to impact the spiritual and natural realm, the whole person, the whole of society, and the whole creation. As David Bosch puts it, Jesus' preaching of and action towards the Kingdom launches "an all-out attack on evil in all its manifestations,"¹⁴ and this necessarily gives rise to the social and political dimension of its proclamation.¹⁵

Taken altogether, this is suggestive of the need to reframe the message of Pentecostalism, to ensure that the movement really does proclaim, in word and deed, a "full gospel." Briefly, this will include the recognition that salvation in Jesus is both personal and public, individual and social, extending to the salvation of people, of families, of social structures, of economies, of governments and of cultures. It will recognise that Spirit baptism occurs for the sake of empowering individuals to proclaim the whole message of the Kingdom, and that the Spirit exists not in the private realm, but to constitute unity and wholeness in local, national and global communities. It will understand that healing, which Pentecostals link to the atonement,¹⁶ extends to the defeat of sickness in every dimension of society. And it will recognise that what is needed is to find a mediating point between the apocalyptic pessimism that tends to lead to the complete rejection of any "this worldly" conceptions of the church's mission, and its opposite, the reactive neglect of eschatology which has arisen in many contemporary Western Pentecostal churches,¹⁷ and which leads to passive

¹⁴ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 32.

¹⁵ The literature on the kingdom of God is abundant, but some of the more prominent writers include, John Bright, *The Kingdom of God: The Biblical Concept and Its Meaning for the Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1981) (a survey of the biblical usage of the phrase); George Eldon Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1959) (drawing out especially the now / not yet nature of the kingdom); John Fuellenbach, *The Kingdom of God: The Message of Jesus Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995) (systematic survey of biblical and theological appropriations of the symbol of the kingdom, concluding that the symbol embraces the restoration of the whole of creation); Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus and Empire: The Kingdom of God and the New World Disorder* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2002) (drawing out the social and political dimension of Jesus' proclamation, and applying this to a critique of Western, especially American, society).

¹⁶ See, for example, William Menzies and Robert Menzies, *Spirit and Power: Foundations of Pentecostal Experience* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 160.

¹⁷ Mark Hutchinson, "The New Thing God Is Doing: The Charismatic Renewal and Classical Pentecostalism," *Australasian Pentecostal Studies* 1 (1998): 5-21,

acceptance (or even active affirmation) of the status quo. If eschatology is understood, not in terms of the end-times cessation of creation but in terms of transformation and fulfilment, then it is capable of standing as a motivating force for change. This hope for the future is grounded on the resurrection of Christ, achieved in the power of the Spirit (Rom. 8:11), and understood as the first fruits of the new creation.¹⁸ In Christ, we do not hope for the destruction of our bodies and the earth, but for resurrected bodies – “the body that is sown perishable is raised in imperishable” (1 Cor. 15:42). Understood in this way, our participation with the Spirit in the public work of justice will (by faith and in hope) have eternal value.

4. How Pentecostals Might Get Political

What is clear is that Pentecostalism should not capitulate to the view that it should remain separate from political involvement. The real question is not whether or not the church has a public role but, rather, how that role should be framed. There are two difficulties that have to be worked through in answering this question. Firstly, the tendency for Christians, when contemplating the “how” of Christian political engagement, is to turn to the bible, but while our theological paradigms are rightly grounded in the biblical text, the attempt to frame economic and political structures and policies on the Scriptures fails to recognise the contextual nature of both economics and politics, and this is true in the biblical narrative as much as it is in the present day. Indeed, there is no single political philosophy in the biblical text, as is apparent in the substantial differences between the Old and New Testaments, with the former arising in the contexts of Jewish tribal and monarchical structures, and the latter arising in the context of Jewish subjugation to a pagan Roman state. Secondly, the “how” of Pentecostals and politics is made even more complex by the tendency of our political discourse to bifurcate into the either/or of secular democracy or of a return to Christendom. It is a choice of one or the other, with no ground in between, and the result is that whenever a church leader speaks out on any issue, from the “Left” or the “Right,” the spectre is raised of undue interference of religion in politics.

notes, “Bigger congregations meant bigger churches meant, quite often, that we stopped looking for the millennium and started building for it.

¹⁸ Bruce Stevens, commenting on “Pentecostals and Ecology,” *Pentecostal Discussions blog*, http://scc.typepad.com/scc_faculty_pentecostal_d/2006/05/eschatology_is_.html#comments, accessed 9 May 2006.

One way of getting past both of these difficulties is to recognise that religion and politics operate in different dimensions and are not, thereby, mutually exclusive domains. This can be conceptualised in terms of Bernard Lonergan’s notion of the scale of values, and the recognition that human society is constituted by “vital, social, cultural, personal, and religious values.”¹⁹ Vital values are those values essential to life and well-being at its most basic level. These vital values are secured by the social order, which includes intersubjective spontaneity (i.e. the bonds of family and friendship), technological institutions, the economic system, and the political order.²⁰ Cultural values are the meanings, values and orientations that inform, uphold and challenge social values and structures.²¹ These cultural values emerge from the artistic, literary, scientific, scholarly, philosophical and theological labour of the “cosmopolis,”²² and are thereby dependent upon personal values and integrity. Finally, personal integrity, given the problem of evil, is dependent upon religious values, which impart grace, facilitate individual conversion, and thereby impact culture and society.

Neil Ormerod, borrowing from the categories of Lonergan, is able to conceptualise an explanation of social development, which can occur in two ways. First, in what Lonergan calls the “creative vector,” changes can flow from the lower levels in the scale of value to the upper levels, from society to culture. This is development that occurs by way of practical intelligence and human creativity, such that new technical, economic or political insights require a reconceptualisation of meanings and values at the cultural level. To avoid the charge of ideology, the cosmopolis responsible for culture will need to critique such social transitions, identifying bias, and the victims of social change and, thereby, facilitating a renewal in the technical, economic and political realm that will restore the integrator operator dialectic.²³ Secondly, in what Lonergan calls the healing vector, changes can flow in the other direction. This occurs when new meanings and values emerge, such as Christians would assert is possible

¹⁹ Robert M. Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 94.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 359-62.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 94.

²² *Ibid.*, 497.

²³ Neil Ormerod, “The Structure of a Systematic Ecclesiology,” *Theological Studies* 63 (2002): 3-30, 19-20.

in the communication of God's revelation to humanity, or otherwise in the creative human developments in philosophy, or changes cultures.²⁴

All of this to note that the proximate responsibility of the church is to be found in the healing vector, and begins with the recognition that church's task is to proclaim religious values (i.e. the values of the Kingdom) and, thereby, to frame the values and consciences of persons, who then have the responsibility to reframe the cultural values that frame and sustain the economic and political policies and structures that ensure the distribution of the vital needs of all people everywhere. What is apparent is the influence of the church upon the political realm occurs by way of a process of mediation, from religious to personal to cultural to social values. At each stage of this mediation, the outcomes are never automatic or infallible. Indeed the process becomes less and less certain as we move down the scale. By the time we come to the social and political level, it is quite possible for good Christian people to disagree with one another, as noted in the Catholic church's deliberations on church /state relations at Vatican II:

Often enough the Christian view of things will itself suggest some specific solution in certain circumstances. Yet it happens rather frequently, and legitimately so, that with equal sincerity some of the faithful will disagree with others on a given matter. Even against the intentions of their proponents, however, solutions proposed on one side or another may be easily confused by many people with the Gospel message. Hence, it is necessary for people to remember that no one is allowed in the aforementioned situations to appropriate the Church's authority for his opinion. They should always try to enlighten one another through honest discussion, preserving mutual charity and caring above all for the common good. (*Gaudium et spes*, n.43).

The temptation, succumbed to in the establishment of Christian political parties (such as Family First), is to move directly from the religious to the political, as if a political program can be read straight out of one's religious beliefs. This is the essence of a theocracy, giving the political realm a divine authority which is unquestioned and unquestionable. Where shifting the culture proves difficult, where resistance to "reason" is powerful, it is easy to succumb to the temptation to become a political lobby group which seeks to attain its goals by direct political action. Such a decision is to

²⁴ Ibid., 20-2.

confuse the religious and the political realm. It is also fraught with ambiguity, where "with equal sincerity some of the faithful will disagree with others on a given matter." Further, this sort of direct political action, taken in the name of God, is understood by society as little more than "the will to power" – the wielding of religious truth for the purpose of controlling others (drawing on the rhetoric of Nietzsche).²⁵ In reality, however, values and morality cannot be enforced through legislation, a fact that is inherent in Jesus' rejection of political conceptions of the messianic Kingdom, but that is forgotten by the political actions of many well-meaning Christians, such as the so-called moral majority. Jesus models an alternative approach, one that rejects the will to power, and seeks social transformation through self-sacrificial love, expressed fully in his life and death on the cross.

What this means is that the church's political responsibility begins in its proclamation of Jesus and the Kingdom of God, and in the teaching of the religious values of faith, hope and love that stimulate personal transformation and personal values, and that result in the reframing of personal priorities, an orientation to the beautiful, the good and the true and, therein, to the mission of defeating evil and seeking justice and liberty. Exactly how these values will translate to the political and economic realm is not direct or obvious and, therefore, political and economic policies should not be given the status of a divine imprimatur. It is one thing, for example, for the church to affirm the priority of God for the poor (and it should do so, loudly, publicly, and as often as possible), but it is another thing altogether to claim that either Marxism or capitalism constitutes a Christian economic structure. Similarly, it is one thing for the church to be "pro-life," but it another thing altogether to work out how this value should effect our response to stem-cell research.

All of this suggests that the church should avoid establishing Christian political parties, as well as making the claim, either directly or indirectly, that one or another political party (Liberal or Labor, Republican or Democratic) should be supported by Christian people. Similarly, it suggests that Christians should not vote for or support political candidates just because they are Christian (or vice versa). In each case what happens is that the policies of those parties and candidates are given a religious status that they do not deserve. *This not only undermines the right of Christian people to come to their own conclusions and to disagree on political and economic matters but, potentially, it brings the gospel itself into disrepute,*

²⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Graham Parkes (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2005).

as non-Christians dismiss the God who is supposedly behind these political ideologies (think of Christian political support for the war in Iraq, for policies that increase the wealth of corporations at the cost of workers, for carelessness about the environment, for the incarceration of refugees) – and who can blame them!

[As a second aside, I find the comparative checklists produced by conservative Christian parties particularly problematic in this regard. As is apparent in the Christian Democratic Party checklist that I have included in Appendix A, they tend to, i) confuse the political and religious realms, ii) focus on issues of personal morality (such as prayer in parliament and homosexuality) rather than on matters of poverty and justice, and iii) presume a straightforward (if not simplistic) Christian position on what are, in fact, complex and multi-faceted issues. Taken altogether these checklists lead to the impression that one or another party is more or less Christian and, in most cases, to the presumption that God himself is essentially right wing in his political leanings.²⁶ Of course this merely reflects the contemporary political climate in which all issues are addressed in a simplistic and populist fashion. But to appropriate such devices in the name of God and the church is to deny the Christian values of truth and love and, thereafter, to undermine the integrity of the church's proclamation of the gospel.]

At this point, it might seem as if I have returned to the conclusion that church and politics should not mix. This, however, is not my intention, and I stand by my earlier assertion that it is not only impossible to relegate religion to the private sphere, but that the mission of the church, in continuing Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God, demands a public engagement. What I am arguing is that the church's engagement in the political realm should not be direct – i.e. the church should not seek to legislate its vision and values. Further, I am suggesting that the church frame the values of its members and, thereafter, encourage them to participate in the public and political realm for the sake of seeking just social structures. In this way the church is able to fulfill its mission in and through Christian politicians, lobbyists, economists, bureaucrats, protestors, the media etc., all of whom will share values framed by the message of Jesus but who, nonetheless, are

²⁶ Jim Reiher notes, for example, that despite the suggestion by this checklist that the Australian Greens are demonic, a case can be made that the Christian priority for the poor and for justice underlies Green policy in a manner that is not apparent in any other political party. See Jim Reiher, "Which Party Should a Christian Vote for?" John Mark Ministries, <http://jmm.aaa.net.au/articles/18402.htm>, accessed 6 September 2007.

likely to hold different (and sometimes competing) political views. And the situation of shared faith and honest disagreement should be framed, not by the will to power (i.e. the need to force one's opinion on another), but by openness to alternate opinions and through the effort to understand one another. As Vatican II suggests, "They should always try to enlighten one another through honest discussion, preserving mutual charity and caring above all for the common good." This is to suggest, further, that it is not only the complex economic and legislative issues and conclusions that are at stake, but the way in which persons go about the political process. Sadly, labels like integrity, character, generosity, openness, teachableness (all important Christian values) are rarely heard of in political circles, and almost never attributed to Christian politicians, parties and lobbyists (although, this may again be partially explained by the media's bias against Christian involvement in political affairs).

5. Conclusion

Returning to the specific situation of Pentecostals and politics, this proposed theology and philosophy for political engagement, while not the explicit position of many Pentecostal churches at present, is not actually antithetical to key elements of Pentecostal self-understanding. As we have already argued, Pentecostals wanting to preach a "full gospel" should include a public dimension to their message, recognizing that salvation in Christ is both personal and social, that healing in the atonement extends to a sick and dying world, and that eschatology should have both a future and this worldly orientation. Pentecostals also understand that baptism in the Spirit entails the transformation of the individual and the empowering for mission. While the movement has never understood itself to have a specific political agenda, it has always recognized that people who subject themselves to the directing and leading of the Spirit are able to operate in new and effective ways wherever their specific call takes them – that the Spirit leads us to work for justice and liberty in all spheres of life. And Pentecostals have also readily understood that the leading of the Spirit is creative and diverse, that there is no single solution to the complex questions of life, and that unity need not require uniformity. This orientation, when not bound to simplistic and fundamentalist conflation of the religious and political realms, paves the way for Pentecostal involvement in politics which resists simplistic solutions based on stale slogans such as the "separation of Church and state" or the naïve attempt to restore a so-called Christian nation.

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