

## **A Pentecostal Perspective in a Politically Pugnacious Environment**

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The purpose of this article<sup>1</sup> is twofold: (1) to assess the current involvement of Pentecostals/evangelicals in the political realm; and (2) to raise three political proposals in light of the largely negative assessment: the principle of subsidiarity, Grant's new social American compact with deliberative democracy, and a politics of love. These considerations, I believe, should constitute a *portion* of the framework for a Pentecostal political theology.

The need for a Pentecostal political methodology could be demonstrated through various avenues. One primary example is the widespread negative view that non-Pentecostals or non-evangelicals have of evangelical/Pentecostal believers in terms of their involvement in politics.<sup>2</sup> Tony Campolo illustrates this point well when discussing his experience at an Ivy League university. Having asked the students what they thought evangelicals believed, the response he received had nothing to do with theological convictions (what many ascribe as the most important element of evangelicalism). Rather, the students came to the consensus that evangelicals consisted of Christians who are: "anti-gay, anti-feminist, anti-environmentalists, anti-gun-control, pro-war, right-wing ideologues."<sup>3</sup> The picture non-believers have of Pentecostals/evangelicals regarding politics has become bleak and dismal.

Also, Christian "neutrality"<sup>4</sup> in the area of politics hinders the progress of the state. Eberhard Jüngel asserts that the articulation of a theological understanding of the state and its inherent responsibility to preserve justice and peace is an essential task of Christians, to the extent that they *cannot* remain "neutral" in either the theological or socio-political spheres.<sup>5</sup> Further, Richard J. Mouw argues that biblically speaking, Christians are no less than commanded to interact with politics. Since American democracy grants the right publicly to criticize, review, debate, and challenge policies and officeholders, in light of Romans 13, Christians now have the *duty* to make use of that right.<sup>6</sup>

Another factor pointing to the necessity of a Pentecostal political theology is the ambiguity in the biblical text concerning the Christians' involvement in politics. This has caused considerable confusion and contradictory views among Christians today. Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) notes that the New Testament "is acquainted with political ethics, but not with political theology;" however, the Scriptures "always reject the fanaticism that tries to set up the kingdom of God as a political project."<sup>7</sup> Therefore, a delicate balance must be struck between the naïvely utopian Marxist or other humanistic ideologies and the overly socially pessimistic systems of some apocalyptic pietists. Scripture reveals that the kingdom of

God is indeed “already, but not yet.” Ronald J. Sider contends that, “far too often we miss the profound political implications of Jesus’ proclamation of the kingdom of God and the resurrection’s confirmation that Jesus was indeed the Messiah who had ushered in that long-expected kingdom.”<sup>8</sup> A Pentecostal approach would undoubtedly see the impact of Jesus’ ministry as bringing personal salvation, but it cannot stop there; rather, a more holistic view of redemption needs to be adopted. That is, while salvation involves eternal security, it also involves redemption of the whole person, in this life, now. Jesus’ collision with the temporal world also brings about an opportunity for the believer to work through political structures in a beneficial way for both the community of believers and nonbelievers.<sup>9</sup>

Beyond covering some of the basic reasons for a necessity of a Pentecostal political theology, and before offering some proposals, a further assessment of the current Christian political scene is in order. First, Nicholas Wolterstorff, in the foreword to the groundbreaking compilation of essays, *Evangelicals and Empire*, notes that since Hegel, “domination and liberation have been the fundamental categories of social analysis and critique [because theoretically out of the two opposing forces will come the synthesis]. An authentically evangelical voice in the discussion will question this and propose instead that justice and injustice be the fundamental categories.”<sup>10</sup> These categories will be adopted in this essay since the domination/liberation model is flawed on account of exceedingly broad definitions that condone movement toward tyrannical oligarchy with little oversight.<sup>11</sup>

This is witnessed by the burgeoning analysis of American empire and evangelicalism’s role in that empire. As Benson and Heltzel state, “Inasmuch as some evangelicals work

together with movements in the Religious Right that are perpetuating the dark side of empire—including U.S. practices of war and torture,<sup>12</sup> neoliberal economic policy, and unilateral, isolationist foreign policy—they continue to participate in empire.”<sup>13</sup> Further, global market fundamentalism, as Yong and Zalanga call it, has become a hegemonic force taking on the status of a religion itself, and the rationality underpinning such unbridled capitalism has invaded the Church of Christ in the way they *compete* for *market shares* (converts) by developing a *product* with either *mass consumer appeal* or specialization for a specific *corner of the market*.<sup>14</sup> The question then is: Will Pentecostalism be a medium for the forces of biopower (“a subtle form of manipulation that infects our brains and makes us internalize the values of capitalism”<sup>15</sup>), or will it be a subversive movement championing the struggle for justice against the hegemony of empire?<sup>16</sup> If a movement exists within Christianity that could withstand the lure of American civil religion and the global market fundamentalism tied to it, Pentecostals and Charismatics could be the ones capable of hurdling such a daunting obstacle.<sup>17</sup> What is missing, however, is a proper understanding of how to communicate our ideals in the political sphere, what our Christian faith means for our political involvement, and what it truly means to be a citizen.

First, one firmly entrenched perspective that needs eradicating revolves around the widespread belief that America is a Christian nation that needs “taken back for God.”<sup>18</sup> As Black notes, the United States has always been a pluralistic nation; from the Articles of Confederation through the ratifying of the Constitution, the freedom of religion has been a foundational principle of our democracy.<sup>19</sup> Thus, the claim that Christianity holds the right to dictate policy

in a certain direction is misguided to say the least. Hence, Gregory Boyd's thesis in *The Myth of a Christian Nation* deals with American evangelicals' fusion of the kingdom of God with the kingdom of this world through political involvement as nationalistic and political idolatry.<sup>20</sup> Further, Boyd clarifies some misguided notions:

For some evangelicals [and Pentecostals], the kingdom of God is largely about, if not centered on, 'taking America back for God,' voting for the Christian candidate, outlawing abortion, outlawing gay marriage, winning the culture war, defending political freedom at home and abroad, keeping the phrase 'under God' in the Pledge of Allegiance, fighting for prayer in the public schools and at public events, and fighting to display the Ten Commandments in government buildings.<sup>21</sup>

Results of this presumptuous thinking are widespread. Boyd highlights five ramifications of this pervasive myth: (1) the myth increasingly harms global missions; (2) home missions are hindered because people are misled into thinking that their civil Christianity is *real* Christianity; (3) the church is damaged when believers misplace their trust in the wrong power; (4) as a result of believing the myth, some, intentionally or unintentionally, position themselves as moral guardians of society, believing it their duty/mission to preserve the moral fabric of the nation; and (5) the myth creates the notion of America as a theocratic nation comparable to Old Testament Israel.<sup>22</sup>

The need for a new kind of political thinking is evident through the analysis of the abounding myths, misplaced trust, and bad theology. The following is a series of proposals for a holistic Pentecostal political theology that takes seriously the effects of empire on Christian thinking, the myth that

America is a Christian nation, and the pitfalls of global market fundamentalism. An eclectic methodology has been used in terms of borrowing portions from various authors and perspectives and, in that sense, I have not contributed anything new, but highlighted what I think is important for Pentecostals to consider in developing a more thorough political theology. The proposals are all guided, however, by the fact that while the Christian faith impacts one's political decisions, believers are citizens of a pluralistic democracy.<sup>23</sup> Christians are first citizens of the kingdom of God, but are *in* the world. As Jesus prayed, "I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one" (John 17:15, ESV).<sup>24</sup> Thus, Christians must take seriously the fact that as citizens of the kingdom of God, they also have responsibilities as citizens of a democracy.

### **The Principle of Subsidiarity<sup>25</sup>**

Given the fact that Christians are both citizens of the kingdom of God and the world, a dilemma faced since Jesus' announcement of the kingdom and extensively dealt with early on in Augustine's *City of God*, Catholic political theology developed the principle of subsidiarity. This principle notices that neither the Church nor government can solve all societal problems. Thus, the two must work together in partnership on social issues. Since 1931, when the principle was first introduced, a vital part of the idea has been that government should not replace the smaller forms of community, including the church, because the church often remains closer and more connected and thus is better suited to aid the community. While the state should not absorb these smaller communities, they should provide assistance (*subsidium*) when the churches are unable to contribute to the common good. Most concisely, the principle states, "government is an important,

necessary, and limited agent to provide for the common good, but it functions best in partnership with associations that are close to the people and best able to meet their particular needs.”<sup>26</sup>

### **Jane E. Grant’s New American Social Compact<sup>27</sup>**

In *The New American Social Compact: Rights and Responsibilities in the 21st Century*, Jane E. Grant examines the history of the American social compact. This goes beyond contract theories developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that set forth a set of civil liberties and political rights, and later in the nineteenth century expand to a set of social rights.<sup>28</sup> The compact expands these rights to include a *civic ethos*. The civic ethos involves creating a climate of interchange where the rights can be either supported or contested as well as the *obligations* that flow from them.<sup>29</sup> Such obligations, as Grant sets out, “could include responsibilities to others in one’s own nation, to future generations, to other nations and their citizens, to stateless individuals, and to other species and the biosphere.”<sup>30</sup> This new compact and *civic procedural ethos* will honor the civil, political, and social rights already established in the United States (procedural republic). It would go further, however, in defining the particular responsibilities and obligations of citizens.<sup>31</sup> In recent years a shift in the opposite direction has taken place in government where an emphasis on authorization has supplanted that of accountability as people vote on personal characteristics more than ability to govern.<sup>32</sup> With such a shift no one should be surprised—appalled yes, but not surprised—to see a leader more influenced by Niccolo Machiavelli and Thomas Hobbes than Thomas Jefferson and James Madison.<sup>33</sup>

Grant talks about many issues of the new compact, but I will focus primarily on the

concept of democratic deliberation. Kurt Richardson speaks of “democratic learning” in his “Political Complexities and Rivalries of *Pneuma* and *Imperia*,” but this seems to end for him once the basic competencies required of an active citizen in a democracy are established.<sup>34</sup> As Richardson notes, Christian pneumatology points to an inherently egalitarian anthropology, pivotal for a new social compact and proper deliberation.<sup>35</sup>

However, Grant provides some examples of what such deliberation might look like. One proposal involves deliberative panels in the public sphere that would provide recommendations to legislative and executive bodies in the government.<sup>36</sup> Of course such panels would have access to expertise in politics, science, technology, and social and economic information.<sup>37</sup> Such panels, unlike participating in town hall meetings, may be in some form partially obligatory, as is jury duty. The particular model, though, is not as important as the idea of public involvement. Grant works from the ideas of Arendt and Habermas, who asserted that deliberation, when executed properly, can be transformative because it generates proper perspective. It focuses on the common good; it provides ordinary citizens with access to the public policy agenda. Since Americans are typically uninformed about policy issues, it provides access to information on complex problems.<sup>38</sup> Finally, Grant notices that communication and public deliberation performed vital roles in forming the constitutional state; likewise, communication, public discussion, and deliberation are necessary in the new compact as well.<sup>39</sup>

### **A Politics of Love and a “Consistent Ethic of Life”<sup>40</sup>**

In the others I do not look at what is like myself, but at what is different in them, and try to understand it. I can only

understand it by changing myself, and adjusting myself to the other. In my perception of others I subject myself to the pains and joys of my own alteration, not in order to adapt myself to the other, but in order to enter into it. There is no true understanding of the other without this empathy. Together with the other I enter into a process or reciprocal change.<sup>41</sup>

To arrive at community, Moltmann stresses the need to know one another. In order to know each other, people must come closer to one another, make contact, and build relationships.<sup>42</sup> It does not suffice to simply see in 'the other' a reflection of oneself and to embrace that one in our own image.<sup>43</sup> Rather, a politics of love would initiate reciprocity, an invitation into relationship.<sup>44</sup> This approach must move from mere sentimentality to action, for according to Jesus, the love of God comes to realization in love for neighbor.<sup>45</sup> A politics of love then works in conjunction with a new American compact enabling deliberation to take place fruitfully within a stimulated populace because reciprocity takes the place of individualism.<sup>46</sup> Thus, this link between the two becomes much more than superficial.

A theology of politics founded in a consistent ethic of life would further exemplify an almost forgotten *prophetic religious voice* in America that has brought about such great changes as abolition, suffrage, and the civil rights movement.<sup>47</sup> That voice, in love, would never be partisan; it would remind us of the downtrodden and those neglected by society (the poor); it would challenge national self-interest and individual self-interest. Politics of love would appreciate and respect, as God's gift, the ecosystems, rather than being mere users and abusers; it would earnestly consider *every* possibility before entering a war; it would act multi-laterally

instead of unilaterally; it would be selfless; and finally, a politics of love would encourage deliberation in order to experience 'the other.' While 'the other' could be anyone, the U.S. has millions of children living in poverty, more than one billion of the world's people live on less than one dollar per day, and nearly half the world's population (2.8 billion) live on less than two dollars per day.<sup>48</sup> What would a politics of love look like to them? Costa, Keller, and Mercedes surmise:

Christian love for the poor has become erotic when the 'Christian' and the 'poor' are no longer a distinct subject and object but have become so close that the space between them blurs and each benefits from the rich subjectivity of the other. The benefit can be at once mutual: whose pleasure do we seek, our own or the other's? When it is good we both are fulfilled, or I am fulfilled in your fulfillment, or vice versa, and I can barely tell the difference: a hair's-breadth. The neighbor is loved 'as the self' when love is practiced not out of any effort to do the right thing but rather like the inhalation and exhalation of one's own breath: it is its own reward.

For those U. S. Christians who have been so enamored by empire that love for the other as the self seems much more like piety than breath, perhaps a good start toward coalition would be a deep breath of the common air of the empire's impoverished.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>This paper was presented at the 38th annual meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies in Eugene, Oregon, 2009.

<sup>2</sup>Two examples, of which there are undoubtedly many, are Kevin Phillips' "Too Many Preachers," in *American Theocracy: The Peril and Politics of Radical Religion, Oil, and Borrowed Money in the 21st Century* (New York, NY: Viking, 2006), 99-264; as well as Janet E. Grant, though she only mentions the prospects of the Religious Right's political agenda as a repugnant alternative to other proposals. See Jane E. Grant, *The New American Social Compact: Rights and Responsibilities in the Twenty-First Century* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008).

Niebuhr commented on the Christian's temptation in light of the recognition of such a sinful world to disavowing his or her own responsibility to contribute to a "tolerable justice" in the world's affairs. He noted, "A Christian pessimism which becomes a temptation to irresponsibility toward all those social tasks which constantly confront the life of men and nations—tasks of ordering the productive labor of men, of adjudicating their conflicts, of arbitrating their divergent desires, of raising the level of their social imagination and increasing the range of their social sympathies—such a pessimism cannot speak redemptively to a world constantly threatened by anarchy and suffering from injustice. The Christian gospel which transcends all particular and contemporary social situations can be preached with power only by a Church which bears its share of the burdens of immediate situations in which men are involved, burdens of establishing peace, of achieving justice, and of perfecting justice in the spirit of love. Thus is the Kingdom of God which is not of this world made relevant to every problem of the world;" Reinhold Niebuhr, *Reinhold Niebuhr on Politics: His Political Philosophy and Its Application to Our Age as Expressed in His Writings*, ed. Harry R. Davis and Robert C. Good (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960), 153-4.

Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) warns that in Christianity's claim to the ultimate truth in the midst of a pluralistic democracy Christians often comes across as politically intolerant, and this must be dealt with carefully. Conversely, Ratzinger supports a dual system of government where the Church has no authoritative power over the state per se; its impact rather comes through the Church's influence by its possession of the transcendent ethic that is necessary for the rational grounding of the ethics that the state relies upon to enforce its policies. It is the Christian faith that substantiates ethics and, in this sense, reason that is closed in on itself does not remain reasonable, while the state that attempts perfection becomes tyrannical. Joseph Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism, and Politics: New Endeavors in Ecclesiology*, 1987, trans. Michael J. Miller et al. (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2008), 143-255.

<sup>3</sup>Tony Campolo, *Red Letter Christians: A Citizen's Guide to Faith & Politics* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2008).

<sup>4</sup>Either in the sense of the old Anabaptist isolationism, or simply remaining non-committal in most political scenarios except those issues of utmost importance—these are usually rather arbitrary judgments.

<sup>5</sup>It is further noted that, "One's hope is that this process may encourage us to move beyond 'political theologies' to 'theological politics'—a theologically driven approach to the state rather than a politically driven approach to God. This would involve an approach which interprets our responsibilities *to* the state and *within* the state in the light of God's inclusive, recreative and healing purposes held forth in God's Word of grace to humanity. Such an approach to society, to culture, to the state and to the ecosystem would be both more *radical* and more *liberating*—theologically and politically—than so much that has sought in recent times to lay claim to these attributes" [author's

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italics]. Eberhard Jüngel, *Christ, Justice, and Peace: Toward a Theology of the State, in Dialogue with the Barmen Declaration*, trans. D. Bruce Hamill and Alan J. Torrance (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992), xix-xx.

<sup>6</sup>Richard J. Mouw, *Political Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1973), 55.

<sup>7</sup>Ratzinger, 204.

<sup>8</sup>Pietists fall short by reducing Jesus' message to that of forgiveness of sins and personal salvation, while Brunner argues that the kingdom of God is totally beyond the limits of earth and time. Thus, it has nothing to do with our personal relationships in this life, the state, justice today, etc. Both of these understandings miss important facets of the Christian message of deliverance. See Emil Brunner, *Justice and the Social Order*, trans. Mary Hottinger (London: Lutterworth Press, 1945); and Ronald J. Sider, *The Scandal of Evangelical Politics: Why Are Christians Missing the Chance to Really Change the World?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008), 64-71.

<sup>9</sup>For an articulation of the legitimacy of forming a political ethic on the teachings of the New Testament, see John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994).

<sup>10</sup>Bruce Ellis Benson and Peter Goodwin Heltzel, eds. (Foreword by Nicholas Wolterstorff), *Evangelicals and Empire: Christian Alternatives to the Political Status Quo* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2008), 9.

<sup>11</sup>Several things are in mind here. For instance, free market enterprise or global market fundamentalism has been increasingly given reign over the interests of the general public. Rampant deregulation that was originally put in place, not as a Democratic hoax for more 'big government,' but rather to serve as a check on profit-driven corporations who are becoming more detached from the customers they are supposed to serve and with the purpose of 'speaking for the people.' The corporation then takes control of Washington, pays little attention to any harm they cause the environment or the consumer, and no one is left to blow the whistle. The domination/liberation model then leaves us with systems that are in many ways promoters of injustice while being lauded as the great synthesis of a Hegelian framework. Some of this will be further developed in the following section on Empire.

<sup>12</sup>The *preemptive* invasion of Iraq by the United States would have to be considered unjust by basically every set of written standards on "unjust war" theory. [Note: Author's opinion. AGTS holds no official opinion on the justice or injustice of the Iraq War.] Also, it is hard to miss the brutal dehumanization of the prisoners at Guantanamo Bay once they are situated beyond the reach of all legal codes.

<sup>13</sup>Lester Edwin J. Ruiz and Charles W. Amjad-Ali describe the link theologically from Reformed traditions with their double-predestinarian theology producing extremely unjust polities. This occurs when groups lay claim to others' land, property, and labor as their own entitlements under the guise of the "blessings of God." The theology dominates U.S. foreign policy at the moment: America is the righteous nation who has done nothing wrong and is preordained to a hegemonic status. The enemies on the other hand are totally wrong and immoral; they are ontologically inferior and preordained to a negative status because they stand against God's chosen—the United States. "This blissfully uncomplicated, simplistic, and misinformed understanding of self and 'enemy' takes on interesting, if amusing, forms. For example, the United States defines itself metaphorically as both David (because of its righteousness and the justness of its cause) and Goliath (for who else but one specially blessed can have the power, strength, and armor that Goliath displayed?). Such schizophrenia is at times totally unbearable and for its victims an unmitigated disaster." Charles W. Amjad-Ali, & Lester Edwin J. Ruiz, "Betrayed By a Kiss: Evangelicals and U. S. Empire," in *Evangelicals and Empire*, ed. Bruce Ellis Benson and Peter Goodwin Heltzel (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2008), 57-8.

<sup>14</sup>Amos Yong, and Samuel Zalanga, "What Empire, Which Multitude? Pentecostalism and Social Liberation in North America and Sub-Saharan Africa," in *Evangelicals and Empire*, ed. Bruce Ellis Benson and Peter Goodwin Heltzel (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2008), 237.

<sup>15</sup>They further state that, "liberal democratic societies may think they are free, but they are not because capitalism turns their day-to-day life into a 'social factory.'" Yong and Zalanga, "What Empire, Which Multitude?" 238-9.

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 238.

<sup>17</sup>The task is undeniably ominous. A shift has taken place from an older monastic-type piety which rejected greed and affluence for the sake of God's blessings through simplicity, poverty, and serving others, where *individuals* now seek success and as much wealth as they can possibly acquire with as little work as possible, often regardless of the means. See Amjad-Ali & Ruiz, "Betrayed By a Kiss", 54-66.

<sup>18</sup>Amy Black, political science professor at Wheaton College, in agreement with Gregory Boyd's assessment, tells of his congregation's reaction (also briefly mentioned in Boyd's introduction) when he delivered his six-part sermon series dealing with Christianity's involvement in politics before the 2004 elections. While he received the most praise he had ever received, he also lost 1,000 members of his 5,000-member church for preaching against the close alignment of Christianity with American politics. He does not say we shouldn't participate in politics, but he does say that the kingdom of God must not be equated with the pursuits of the Religious Right. His book is a timely contribution to Christian Americans steeped in American civil religion of the Right and Left persuasion. Gregory A. Boyd, *The Myth of a Christian Nation: How the Quest for Political Power is Destroying the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 9-10; and Amy E. Black, *Beyond Left and Right: Helping Christians Make Sense of American Politics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008), 55-6.

<sup>19</sup>Black, 17-8.

<sup>20</sup>The guilt, for Boyd, lays both in the Religious Right and Religious Left camps. For both attempt a fusion to some degree of the kingdom of God with a *preferred* version of the kingdom of the world, whether through specific programs, particular political philosophies, or national interests. See Boyd, *The Myth of a Christian Nation*, 11.

<sup>21</sup>Boyd also argues though that the Religious Left is guilty of the same thing when they make the fundamentalists, the gay bashers, the Christian Coalition, the antiabortionists, and the Religious Right the enemy. This is simply two versions of the kingdom of the world fighting each other as Boyd argues. Boyd, *The Myth of a Christian Nation*, 12.

<sup>22</sup>Boyd also prophetically speaks to American Christians when he points out our own hypocrisy and selective morality, "We evangelicals may be divorced and remarried several times; we may be as greedy and as unconcerned about the poor and as gluttonous as others in our culture; we may be as prone to gossip and slander and as blindly prejudiced as others in our culture; we may be more self-righteous and as rude as others in our culture—we may even lack love more than others in the culture. These sins are among the most frequently mentioned sins in the Bible. But at least we're not gay!" Boyd, *The Myth of a Christian Nation*, 108, 111, 116, 127, 137-8, 147.

<sup>23</sup>Politics is certainly a means for demonstrating God's love in action, but that does not mean that a Christian political party (as is often proposed) is a valuable pursuit. The diversity of the body of Christ allows for varying perspectives and allows for disagreement and *discussion* about differing views. An examination of the current Christian perspectives on politics across the different denominations proves this point. Mainline Protestants (1/5 of the electorate) typically highlight the role of Jesus as the model for Christian morality and thus call for political action on issues of justice, equal rights, and racism. Their voting behavior has consequently been closely divided between the two major parties in the recent past (55% voting for Bush in 2004). Evangelicals (1/4 voters) focus on personal conversion which translates politically into emphasis on 'family values' and issues of individual behavior—abortion and homosexuality. They have therefore become a significant portion of the Republican voting bloc, 78 percent of them voting to reelect Bush in 2004. Black Protestants (8 percent of the electorate) have been known for their theological conservatism and political liberalism (ironically then, the same theological beliefs lead white evangelicals to the right, lead blacks to the left). Kerry in 2004 received 86 percent of the Black Protestant vote, down from the 91 percent that Gore won in 2000. Finally, Roman Catholics (another 1/4 of the electorate) emphasize a broad range of issues including family, community, and the poor. They have specific stances provided in the Catholic Social Teaching on abortion, gay marriage, combating poverty, protecting the environment, etc. While historically favoring the Democratic party, they have been recently more split between them and the Republicans. Fifty-two percent of the Catholic vote went to Bush in 2004. Details from Black, *Beyond Left and Right*, 75-8.

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<sup>24</sup>The context of this passage clearly calls for a separation from the world by the people of God. This separation, as Keener notes, produces organic community cohesion in the midst of the opposing interests of the world. However, we remain in the world, and where believers and nonbelievers can interact and work together for just ends, the opportunity should not be ignored. That is where the early Anabaptist separatism went wrong. Thus, political ends that point to the inherent value of each person, that take poverty seriously, and that work toward a ‘consistent ethic of life’ should be collaborated on by nonbeliever and believer alike. On the John passage, see, Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, vol. 2 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 1057-61.

<sup>25</sup>Information for this section can be reviewed in Black, *Beyond Left and Right*, 142-3.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup>This section looks at the proposals from my former professor, Jane E. Grant, *The New American Social Compact: Rights and Responsibilities in the Twenty-First Century* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008).

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, 1-2.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>30</sup>Grant is here developing from the “civic republican” ethos that dominated early in the country’s history, then to the “procedural republican” ethos which became central through the 20th century, to now a new ethos that is required that would incorporate valuable aspects from both the civic and procedural republics. *Ibid.*, 2-3.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, 3-4. Typical of today’s average citizen is a complete negligence of a sense of obligation. Liberalism in the modern day has become devoid of duty, duty found in the German *Grundgesetz* (Basic Law or German Constitution), Article 14.2 “Property involves obligation. It must be used for the benefit of all.” This essentially builds a civil community unfeasible without serious reshaping of our common involvement. Grant states that the “United States is not, in good faith, fulfilling its commitments to the people and the other nations in the world. We have substituted force for diplomacy, arrogance for humility, and power for what is right.” Not only have we failed in many respects as responsible citizens, but also the United States has continually neglected its commitment and obligations to the world community by breaking numerous treaties and conventions of the U. N. This is detrimental when a leading nation disregards the voice of the rest of the world population. Grant, *The New American Social Compact*, 137, 151. *Grundgesetz* quoted in Jürgen Moltmann, *God for a Secular Society: The Public Relevance of Theology*, 1997, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 154.

<sup>32</sup>Grant, *New American Social Compact*, 154.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, 154-5.

<sup>34</sup>Anders Richardson, “Political Complexities and Rivalries of Pneuma and Imperia,” in *Evangelicals and Empire*, ed. Bruce Ellis Benson and Peter Goodwin Heltzel (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2008), 139-40.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, 139-40.

<sup>36</sup>She states earlier in the book that, “To a very great extent, liberal theory places individual autonomy (and the derivative efficiency of the market) at the forefront of what society should value and protect. Yet, by so revering individual liberty, liberalism, especially as it operates presently in the United States, diminishes, at least in the public sphere and governmental sectors, the importance of providing opportunities for deliberative consideration of, and concerted action on, questions dealing with shared obligations and public principles.” Grant, *New American Social Compact*, 7, 152.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, 152.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, 151-3.

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 152.

<sup>40</sup>This section admittedly sounds more vague and apparent. However, the fact that the Church has failed in many respects to show a consistent ethic of life leads me to discuss it this way. Perhaps this could inform individual Christians as to how they should view others in society and how they must act out their faith. The point that this must go beyond sentimentality could not be overstated.

<sup>41</sup>Moltmann, *God for a Secular Society*, 145.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 133.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Trinitarian theology provides the most easily accessible and apparent, even eternal, foundation for such political reciprocity. The link between Trinitarian theology and reciprocity needs to be dealt with more thoroughly as this would provide a firm framework to further develop a political theology in this direction. The basic idea of reciprocity came from Mario Costa, Catherine Keller, and Anna Mercedes, "Love in Times of Empire: Theopolitics Today," in *Evangelicals and Empire*, ed. Bruce Ellis Benson and Peter Goodwin Heltzel (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2008), 291-306.

<sup>45</sup>Costa, Keller & Mercedes, 299.

<sup>46</sup>While Niebuhr argued that the problem revolved around the Christian ethic being so pure that embodying it in politics found difficulty because of the political reality of necessary conflict and coercion. It became, then, an impossible ideal, just like any other idealistic or utopian political philosophy. The question is no longer whether such a perfect love can permeate such stubborn political realities, whether it should compromise with them, flee them, or be indifferent to them. The question now is whether or not those who know such a perfect love have the *will* to bring it into the political sphere? If enough did, what would their involvement look like? Costa, Keller, and Mercedes question, "If some critical Christian mass were to recognize the radicality of the love-command, an agapeic love freed from the narrow restraints of morality, no longer exercised as a means of absolving oneself from debt to God, might its elemental force of love be released into the world?" See, Reinhold Niebuhr, *Reinhold Niebuhr on Politics: His Political Philosophy and Its Application to Our Age as Expressed in His Writings*, ed. Harry R. Davis and Robert C. Good (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960), 152; Costa, Keller, and Mercedes, "Love in Times of Empire," 300.

<sup>47</sup>See Jim Wallis' call for a new prophetic voice that is ready to emerge: Jim Wallis, *God's Politics: Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It* (New York, NY: Harper SanFrancisco, 2005).

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 279, 291.

<sup>49</sup>Costa, Keller, and Mercedes, "Love in Times of Empire," 304.