Pentecostalism and Social, Political, and Economic Development

Allan H. Anderson

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Abstract

This article traces the global impact of Pentecostalism with reference to its definition, varieties, and statistics. It also discusses the subject of development from a theological perspective, considering how development applies to Pentecostalism. The first part considers the ambivalence involved in Pentecostal sociopolitical engagement, and then in the second part, discusses how Pentecostalism and development relate to each other. It gives examples throughout the article of how Pentecostals are involved in development projects and sociopolitical activities worldwide.

Pentecostalism's Global Impact

It now a well-known fact that Pentecostalism has spread across the world to such an extent that it is found in almost every country and has affected every denomination worldwide. This has happened in a remarkably short space of time, beginning in the early twentieth century but with most of it occurring in the past fifty years. There are many different movements accepted by scholars as "Pentecostalism" but among these movements there is absolutely no uniformity. There is no single form of Pentecostalism, nor clear-cut theological criteria by which it can be defined.[1] They can be divided historically into four very broad, often overlapping groups. First there are:

(1) "Classical" Pentecostals with origins near the beginning of the twentieth century; and

(2) Independent Pentecostal churches from the same era, especially those in Africa and Asia.

But in the statistics so frequently quoted the term also includes:

(3) "Charismatics" in older churches from the 1960s onwards, of which Roman Catholic Charismatics are as numerous as classical Pentecostals.

Pentecostalism also includes what is probably the fastest growing sector:

(4) Independent Charismatic megachurches and "Neocharismatics" that commenced in the mid-1970s, often promote the "prosperity gospel," and are the most controversial globally. Some of these prominent megachurches have been hit by financial and sexual scandals. But many of these churches also have a significant role to play in the social development of their members and their communities.

In this article, "Pentecostalism" and "Pentecostal" will refer to all these different types, with the exception of the older church Charismatics. Facts and figures on the growth of any global religious movement are notoriously difficult to come by. The most frequently quoted ones are those annual figures of Todd Johnson and his team, who estimated that Pentecostalism had some 644 million adherents in 2020, about a quarter of the world's Christians, a figure predicted to rise to over a billion by 2050. This number was placed at only fifty-eight million in 1970, so remarkable growth has occurred since then.[2]

But it is not just the numbers that are so significant. Pentecostals outside Europe and North America are usually a grassroots movement appealing especially to the disadvantaged and underprivileged. They thrive in developing countries. Many, if not most, of the rapidly growing Christian churches in these countries are Pentecostal and operate independently of Western Pentecostalism. Even though some American-founded classical Pentecostal denominations like the Assemblies of God are rapidly growing in many parts of the world, the vast majority of their international membership (around eighty percent) is in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. The Global South has indeed seen a remarkable expansion of Pentecostalism in the last half-century, an expansion that has altered global religious demographics considerably. This is an important religious and social phenomenon that has enormous implications for "development," which is used here in its academic, narrow sense of sociopolitical and economic progress in "developing" (in contrast to "developed") countries. The

discipline of "development studies" is interdisciplinary, and this article will also discuss the subject of development from a theological perspective. It considers how development applies to Pentecostalism. It will first consider Pentecostal sociopolitical engagement, and then discuss how Pentecostalism and development relate to each other, giving examples throughout of how Pentecostals are involved in development projects and sociopolitical activities worldwide.

Pentecostalism and Sociopolitical Engagement

Involvement in social change is not a subject with which many Pentecostals are familiar. They have not always felt comfortable with relating to wider society, but this is something that is gradually changing. For many years, Pentecostals in the Western world have struggled with issues of social involvement as opposed to what they see as the priority of evangelism, and have usually considered this and social development to be mutually exclusive strategies. Furthermore, there has not been a clearly articulated theological foundation for social ministry. Although some Pentecostals more recently have been involved in social issues like race, class, or gender equality, others have often failed to take a stand and have simply reflected the discrimination that prevails in the wider society. They have been accused of an otherworldly spirituality that avoids involvement in "worldly" issues like politics and the struggle for liberation and justice. They have sometimes been justifiably charged with proclaiming a gospel that either spiritualizes or individualizes social problems. The result has been a tendency either to accept present oppressive social conditions or to promote a "prosperity gospel" that makes material gain a spiritual virtue.[3] In particular, Pentecostals have traditionally been opposed to political involvement even when they have operated social services. Douglas Petersen, in his account of social welfare activities of the Assemblies of God in Latin America, suggests that the reason for Pentecostal aversion to political action is that "they have had little hope that a revolutionary change of government would necessarily bring change to the social structures."[4] As a result, Pentecostals have preferred to be involved in various charitable activities rather than direct political engagement. However, a lack of political involvement does not necessarily indicate insensitivity to matters of social justice. Petersen argues that Pentecostals construct "alternative instruments of social justice," and that "political involvement is only one alternative among several options of social action to institute social change."[5]

Actually, Pentecostals in many parts of the world do not separate sociopolitical engagement from evangelism. They engage with society because of their conversion and the liberation brought about by their experience of and empowerment by the Holy

Spirit. Petersen suggests that Pentecostals are committed to social transformation and that Pentecostals need to "provide viable alternatives that will affect significant change in the social structures."[6] There is an increasing awareness of the potential of Pentecostalism for a politically and socially relevant engagement, particularly because of its tendency to attract marginalized and working-class people. This awareness is particularly strong in some parts of the Global South. The founder of the Brazilian Pentecostal denomination Brasil Para Cristo, Manoel de Mello, typified the change in approach saying, "The gospel cannot be proclaimed fully without denouncing injustices committed by the powerful."[7] These significant changes are to be welcomed. Many Pentecostal leaders, however, especially in the Western world, may not yet be entirely convinced of the need to be more involved in social engagement, which might deflect them from their central "spiritual" focus. Murray Dempster observes:

> Current engagement in social ministry among Pentecostals seems to depend more on the individual conscience of influential leaders and the time-bound exigencies of politics and culture than on broadly-shared theological agreements concerning the nature of the church and its moral mission in society. The Pentecostal community is still sorely in need of a social ethic to inspire, direct and validate its ministry of promoting and instituting social justice.[8]

Dempster observes that Pentecostalism is "capable of integrating programs of evangelism and social concern into a unified effort in fulfilling the church's global mission." He argues that "the rapidly changing social face of Pentecostalism intensifies the need for a theology" that can "inspire and direct the church's moral engagement with the society without diminishing the church's historic commitment to evangelism."[9] Accordingly, any kind of transformation in this life, whether through evangelism or social action, can be seen as the work of the Holy Spirit. Pentecostal empowerment has the potential to equip people towards liberation, whether personal or collective. Pentecostals do not always separate the spiritual from the physical, but integrate them holistically, leading to involvement in social issues and politics.

When it comes to involvement in sociopolitical structures, there is some ambivalence among Pentecostals. Their aspirations for political office show themselves in different and contrasting ways. Even when obvious support for oppressive structures is absent, Pentecostals have only seldom been politically involved—except that they have sometimes shown support for political causes that have later been shown to be those of the wrong kind.[10] But political structures are often seen as part of the "evil world" with which Pentecostals are exhorted to have nothing to do.[11] This belief has an

eschatological dimension, as a feature of Pentecostalism throughout its relatively short history is that current political events are taken as negative signs of the times, proof that the Lord is coming back soon. However, Pentecostal origins in the socially-active revivalist and holiness movements of the nineteenth century resulted in a commitment by some early Pentecostals to the struggle for social transformation. Most early Pentecostal missions had philanthropic and educational activities, especially in the creation of orphanages, schools, and rescue centers—Albert Norton's work in India, Mok Lai Chi's in Hong Kong, and Lillian Trasher's in Egypt being prime examples. Norton wrote disapprovingly of those missionaries who fraternized with European colonialists in their sports and amusements "to ignore and deny the existence of the sufferings of the poor."[12] The evangelism of the earliest Pentecostals did not therefore obliterate all other concerns, although it must be said that all other activities were usually seen as subservient to the primary task of getting individuals "saved" and filled with the Spirit.

But, at least in the USA, the social commitment of Pentecostals soon changed. In the words of Robert Anderson, although Pentecostalism was "born of radical social discontent," as it became institutionalized it gradually withdrew from the social struggle. A movement designed to protest against the social system that marginalized and oppressed its members soon "functioned in a way that perpetuated that very system."[13] Harvey Cox lists several characteristics of what he calls "very unattractive political and theological currents" running through American Pentecostalism. He discusses their participation in right-wing politics, by which Pentecostalism might "lose touch completely with its humble origins and become the righteous spiritual ideology of an affluent middle class."[14] Most American Pentecostals supported the "religious right" during the Reagan years. Pat Robertson, a Charismatic Baptist and founder of CBN and Regent University in Virginia Beach, was a leading contender for the right-wing Republican presidential nomination in 1988. He has made many public statements to articulate his extreme views. He called for the assassination of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez by American operatives in August 2005. For this he later apologized, while at the same time likening his call to that of Bonhoeffer supporting the assassination of Hitler.[15] Robertson and the vast majority of white American evangelicals have been conspicuous in their support of Donald Trump since the 2016 presidential elections. In Guatemala, Rios Montt, president of the country from 1982–83 and leader of an oppressive military dictatorship, was a member of an independent Charismatic church and leader of a conservative political party.[16] There have also been serious criticisms of the "prosperity gospel" propagated by certain sections of

Pentecostalism, and the so-called "Americanization" of global Christianity, where it is claimed that the Bible was being used to further the USA's economic and political ends.

These criticisms may suggest that Pentecostalism has in many cases changed from being an "apolitical" and "otherworldly" movement to becoming a supporter of reactionary politics, not only in the USA, but in countries like Guatemala, Chile, and South Africa. The reasons for this are complex and some of them can only be summarized here. Pentecostals sometimes cloud the differences between "moral" issues like abortion and sexuality, and political ones. The result is that right-wing politicians who promote these issues as a political agenda to win votes are seen as having "Christian values"—without regard to other policies and practices that are antithetical to Christian ethics. A connected reason for this about-turn may be wily politicians who court the Pentecostal vote being conscious of their significance. There can be no doubt that this was the strategy of Donald Trump, and he successfully gained a huge portion of white American Pentecostal support. Pentecostals have also been influenced by a premillennial eschatology that saw Communism (and now, radical Islam) as anti-Christian; so they believed that support for the state of Israel (and opposition for Palestine) was a biblical duty. Unfortunately, these views have tended to be shared mostly by figures like Trump representing the wealthy middle class and political right, which has sat uncomfortably with those Pentecostals of more humble status. Pentecostals have also been accused of being representatives of colonialism and obstacles to liberation. In general, they are seen as "apolitical" and otherworldly. These examples might certainly give support to these views.

But the Pentecostal approach to sociopolitical causes is actually more nuanced than these stereotypes suggest, especially outside the Western world. Pentecostalism has the potential to transform oppressive structures, as the following examples will illustrate. Latin American Pentecostals are playing an increasingly important political role and becoming a force for social transformation throughout this region. In Chile, the majority of Pentecostal members represented the lower, working classes and supported the popular, socialist politics of Salvador Allende before his overthrow and death in a military coup in 1973. However, some Pentecostal leaders in the largest Chilean evangelical denomination actively supported the oppressive regime of military dictator Augusto Pinochet. Questions were raised about the leaders of the Iglesia Metodista Pentecostal's friendly relationship with the Pinochet government, as Pinochet's presence at Pentecostal functions in the face of Catholic opposition seemed to legitimize his oppressive regime. But there were some Pentecostals who resisted Pinochet's regime and were harassed, tortured, and even killed.[17]

Pentecostals have been an important part of the ruling president's support base in Latin American countries like Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Brazil, and in African countries like Nigeria, Ghana, and Benin. They have played an active role in Zambian politics since the rise of "born again" President Frederick Chiluba in 1991, who declared Zambia a "Christian nation," and Nevers Mumba, Vice President from 2003–04 and unsuccessful presidential nominee in the 2008 election, is a well-known Pentecostal preacher in that country. In South Africa during the transition to democracy in the 1980s and early 1990s, most white Pentecostals were still supporters of the oppressive apartheid structures, while the majority of African Pentecostals sympathized with the liberation movements and the African National Congress of Nelson Mandela. Some Pentecostal leaders like Frank Chikane were practically involved in the liberation struggle.[18] In the Philippines, Eddie Villanueva, founder of the largest Pentecostal church there, Jesus Is Lord Church Worldwide, has been immersed in political activities. He stood unsuccessfully as a presidential candidate in the 2004 and 2010 elections, and was a strong opponent of the Gloria Arroyo government—leading a petition for her impeachment. He remains a strong proponent for justice in the Philippines and has not hesitated to call out and demand an apology from President Duterte, whom Villanueva recently charged with "insulting God."[19]

Pentecostalism and Development

The 2014 conference of the interdisciplinary European Research Network on Global Pentecostalism (GloPent) was held at SOAS University of London on the theme of Pentecostalism and development. Some of its papers were published later in the journal *PentecoStudies*. The keynote was provided by Australian development practitioner and academic Matthew Clarke, who looked for common ground between development and Pentecostalism.[20] The first point Clarke makes is that the rapid growth of Pentecostalism in the developing world means that there are development opportunities in these communities. Development theorists and practitioners have often seen religion as hindering development. Marx saw religion as the opium of the people. Pentecostalism in particular was seen to be so heavenly minded that it was no earthly good. As one development practitioner put it, "Religion and faith were regarded as inherently contentious and a barrier to development."[21] Adogame points out "the contradictory, complex and cross-cutting relationships religion has with development goals and values."[22] Ter Haar and Ellis noted that religion "seemed irrelevant to the processes they were analysing other than, perhaps, as an obstacle to modernisation."[23] Thankfully, things have now changed, and religion is now seen as having great potential

for development. Clarke argues that religion does not stand apart from the development process, but "religion and religious groups are potent tools for change in a range of spheres, including the social, economic, ideological and political."[24]

How does Pentecostalism relate to development? To address this question, Clarke discusses what "common ground" might exist between Pentecostalism and development, and begins by looking at Pentecostal theology. What is often picked up by social scientists as a feature of many forms of global Pentecostalism often misses the theological dimension, usually the prime reason for involvement in society, and therefore in its development. Although Pentecostals may not yet have a fully articulated theology to promote the transformation of society, this theology can be discerned in their practices and teachings. Adogame reminds us that this may also be applied to the relationship between theology and development, as we "define, critique, conceptualise and theologise development, human progress and flourishing not only through abstract, metaphysical and canonical expressions, but also in concrete, prosaic, lived experiences."[25] Clarke finds three theological emphases that connect with development. First, the Pentecostal belief in the immanence of God means that "God will move in the affairs of the world and answer prayers." Because God is ever present and near, Pentecostals believe as a consequence that God wants all humans to have "spiritual redemption, social wellbeing and physical prosperity."[26] To elaborate on this idea, ter Haar and Ellis point out that for many peoples in the developing world:

> . . . the invisible world is an integral part of the world, which can not be reduced to its visible or material form only. For them, the material world is linked to the spirit world. . . . In such a holistic perception of the world, it follows that people's social relations extend into the invisible sphere. In the same way as they try and maintain good relations with their relatives, neighbours and friends for their own benefit, individuals and communities invest in their relations with spiritual entities so as to enhance the quality of their lives. Thus, people all over the world enter into various forms of active communication with a spirit world in such a way as to derive information or other resources from it with a view to furthering their material welfare or interests.

This is of course especially true for Pentecostals, who see the spiritual world everywhere, affecting all aspects of their lives. Whether it is the omnipresence of God or the working of evil spirit forces, this world impinges on everything that happens. As I have written elsewhere: "In Pentecostalism the all-encompassing Spirit is involved in every aspect of life—everything in individual, community, city or national life has

'spiritual' meaning."[27] Furthermore, in Africa at least, "there is a direct connection between the spirit world and human flourishing."[28]

Second, Clarke suggests that Pentecostal beliefs in being "Spirit-filled" result in receiving power to be involved in God's mission for the world. This empowerment includes bringing solutions to the world's problems, whether these solutions are "spiritual salvation or social justice, or both."[29] The spiritual and physical aspects of life cannot be separated from each other in this perspective. It is also true that Pentecostals believe that inner transformation is an essential priority for the transformation (or development) of society. Third, Pentecostals believe in "sacrificial service," meaning every Pentecostal believer is supposed to be involved in serving God in some way, including serving the wider community. This is the radical outworking of the Reformation doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, where every member is to be involved in some form of ministry or service. Social scientists would call this "voluntary association." The active involvement of a community in a project is an essential part of development theory and sustainable development practice.[30] Pentecostals are very good at maintaining energetic community life. What Clarke correctly notices is that social engagement in development opportunities is part of what it essentially means to be Pentecostal. It is part of their very identity.

Unlike the situation in the Western world, global Pentecostalism is usually a grassroots movement among the poor. It might be said that Pentecostals practice their own system of development that could be termed "development from below" rather than and in contrast to that "development from above" that results from government and international development agencies. It must also be recognized that most countries depicted as "underdeveloped" still suffer the consequences of "colonialism and the economics of unequal exchange."[31] Yet Pentecostals have been successful in accommodating ordinary people's "everyday lived experiences" in both the spiritual and physical dimensions as an integrated whole.[32] This has made them particularly effective in development when it has been initiated by them, though not without challenges. Although Pentecostals have not often been involved in overt sociopolitical activity in the wider society, in their own communities there is abundant evidence of social concern in the structures created for the welfare of members. The result of their beliefs about the nearness of God, the empowerment of the Spirit, and the involvement of every member in ministry means that they have a holistic approach to all of life, whether spiritual (which usually takes priority), physical, or social.

This has been the point of more recent research. Sociologists Miller and Yamamori regard Pentecostalism as "the new face of Christian social engagement." They point out that "Pentecostals are not trying to reform social structures or challenge government

policies so much as they are attempting to build from the ground up an alternative social reality."[33] They write that "Pentecostalism has the potential to be an agent of social transformation," and they identify three ways in which this occurs. First, it has the "potential to blunt the pain of poverty and human rights violations by promising people a better life in the hereafter." Second, Pentecostalism has "an incremental impact on people's social welfare," as there is "substantial evidence for the 'social uplift' associated with Pentecostalism." They have a "competitive economic advantage over their neighbors because of their moral prescriptions against alcohol, drugs, gambling and womanizing." Third, Pentecostalism focuses on human rights and believes that everyone is created in the image of God, and so "all people have equal value in God's sight." Pentecostalism is undoubtedly "a religion of the people," as every member has "the right to interpret the scripture themselves," everybody has equal access to God without the need of a mediator, and everybody can receive the Spirit baptism and other Charismatic gifts of the Spirit without any reservation.[34] This last point confirms the theological reasons above as motivation for the involvement of Pentecostals in social engagement.

Miller and Yamamori term Pentecostals engaged in various forms of social ministry "Progressive Pentecostals" who have moved beyond acts of individual charity to actual social transformation through development-oriented ministries.[35] A British development practitioner makes a case for the role of "faith groups" in development:

> They make an important contribution to poverty reduction through providing services and humanitarian assistance, promoting empowerment and accountability, changing beliefs and behaviours, building support for development and building peaceful states and societies.[36]

Richard Shaull, who studied Brazilian Pentecostalism, pointed out that while Pentecostals "have not made many efforts to develop a theology of social responsibility clearly integrating the personal and the social, a number of things are happening in their communities in which this integration is a reality." As a result, they are "emerging as an important force for social transformation, especially among poor and marginal people."[37] For Pentecostals in different parts of the world, "freedom in the Spirit" allows them to formulate, often unconsciously, a social theology that has meaning for people in different life situations. This is one of the most important features of Pentecostal theology that is often overlooked.[38] Theology is far more than written, academic theology—it is also to be found in the preaching, worship, and social activities of churches that have contextualized Christianity in such a way as to make it really meaningful to ordinary people and very helpful to those who are poor and needy.[39]

This is a feature of Pentecostalism all over the world. As Clarke puts it, ". . . acts of service to the poor or marginalised are perceived as evidence of changed lives, not an attempt to transform society. The end result of a transformed society, however, is that which brings Pentecostalism and development back together on common ground."[40]

There are many examples of this common ground and the ways that Pentecostals more recently have made the transition from an almost exclusive focus on spiritual needs (with many exceptions) to catering for the whole person. Clarke gives examples of Pentecostal efforts in providing healthcare and education, and the finance that flows from migrant Pentecostal communities in developed countries back to their countries of origin in the developing world.[41] It might be mentioned also that in the UK these migrant Pentecostal communities also register as charities and engage in all sorts of activities in their communities. Adogame describes the work of a Nigerian Pentecostal denomination, the Redeemed Christian Church of God, in the UK:

> They take up charitable initiatives and actively promote civic engagement through micro-finance programmes, supporting thrift shops, providing soup kitchens, warm clothing and blankets to the vulnerable during winter season, language classes and tutoring for children and youth. They also provide training geared towards self-employment and poverty alleviation, youth and women empowerment and making contributions to the welfare of their constituency through a multiplicity of spiritual and social resources.[42]

Throughout their book, Miller and Yamamori give examples of Pentecostals involved in social work in their wider communities, and write of the "upward social mobility" that comes to people after their Pentecostal conversion to a life committed to hard work and moral discipline, "updating the Protestant ethic thesis" of Max Weber.[43] In more than twenty countries I have visited in Africa, Asia, and Latin America I have personally seen examples of schools at all levels, universities, healthcare and welfare centers, medical facilities, and self-help small businesses founded and operated by Pentecostals. One recent example of the latter are the entrepreneurial businesses operated by members of the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa, and based on Jesus' parable of the talents—well known by its Shona word *matarenda.* In our interdisciplinary research in 2017 into this phenomenon we examined seven case studies of these enterprises, six in Zimbabwe and one in the UK. This church claims that its faith-based entrepreneurship model has a positive impact on the lives of poor Zimbabweans, both locally and internationally, and we saw evidence that this claim was not an exaggeration.[44]

In an earlier article, I discussed the multiple activities of the Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul, South Korea, one of many examples of Pentecostal and Charismatic "megachurches" with extensive development and social care projects. I wrote about the implicit "social theology" of its founder Yonggi Cho, upon which the social, educational, and health activities of his church are based. The social activities of the Yoido church are extensive and obvious, even to a casual observer. They include disaster relief efforts, an orphanage, medical center, home for senior citizens, slum relief, paper recycling, a leprosarium, and support for low-income households, among other ventures. These many activities are not only intended for the people of South Korea, but include ventures in North Korea and elsewhere in Asia and Africa through the church's international missionary network. The "social theology" of Cho is based on his concept of the love of God that fills the life of Christians through the Holy Spirit, and enables them to share this love with others. Thereby Christians meet Jesus in daily life through serving poor and disadvantaged people in the immediate society as well as in other countries. As Cho put it, it was the church's "time to share love." The church's ministry among the poor, the opportunities given to women leaders, and the social activities based on a theology of love demonstrate the potential within Pentecostalism to be a force for social transformation.[45] A similar motivation was expressed by a Nigerian Pentecostal leader, who said that central to his church's approach to development was "obedience to Jesus' command to love our neighbour and provide for the less privileged." Pentecostals, he said, would see "their efforts as the enlargement of the kingdom of God on earth."[46] Again we see the connection made between the theological beliefs of Pentecostals and their engagement with development.

Dena Freeman writes that Pentecostal churches are often more effective in bringing about social and economic development than Western, secular NGOs are.[47] Research at the University of Birmingham conducted by Richard Burgess and Naar M'fundisi in Nigeria and Zambia respectively considered how African Pentecostals initiate organizations within their communities to train and empower members to tackle poverty, HIV/AIDS, unemployment, and violence, thus improving the quality of life in their communities. In both cases, these initiatives were totally supported by the African churches without any outside funding.[48] These examples could be multiplied all over the world.

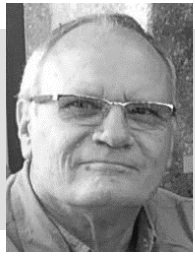
It is not altogether positive, however. Development practitioners and NGO agents from the Western world have had some challenges with Pentecostal churches in their development practices. One described their "track record" as "patchy—a mixture of spectacular success, dreadful failure, and a lot of mediocre work in between."[49] Another challenge may be the disparate nature of Pentecostal approaches to development.

Haustein and Rakodi observed "that it may not be possible to associate Pentecostalism with a specific approach to development policy or practice."[50] As a result, it is not always possible to formulate formulae or principles that would satisfy an academic discourse on development. However, for effective cooperation with Pentecostal communities it is necessary for development practitioners and agencies "to take people's own understanding of the world as a point of departure."[51]

Conclusion

This article has approached the subject of Pentecostalism and development, recognizing that little academic writing has addressed this in any detail. Pentecostalism is so diverse that it is virtually impossible to come up with a theory or policy that applies to all its forms, and the context of a specific development situation must always be considered. Having said that, however, Pentecostals across the world, and especially in the Global South, have increasingly become involved in various projects aimed at the betterment of the lives of both their own members and the wider community. There are strong theological reasons for this based on the love of God for all humanity and God's support for those who are less privileged. Pentecostal belief in the involvement of God in everyday life, the power of the Spirit, and the need for every believer to minister, provide strong motivations for development. Because of this Pentecostals are involved in social and (sometimes) political activities and various projects that bring about a better society and a better life for those around them. It can no longer be said that religion is irrelevant or a hindrance to development. Pentecostal efforts in development are an example of the need to take religious groups seriously and for secular development agencies to engage with them in their mutual desire to improve human wellbeing

Allan H. Anderson (a.h.anderson@bham.ac.uk) is Emeritus Professor of Mission and Pentecostal Studies at the University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK.



Notes

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