

HEAVEN SAVE US FROM THE EXTREMISTS.

DAVID LANGE EDITORIAL

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There is nostalgic comfort in being able to recall, word for word, large chunks of The Bible, and illogical resentment when the passages are intoned in new so-called translations. The new becomes farcical when “Jonathan went into a cave to unburthen himself” becomes “Jonathan went into a cave to go to the washroom”.

I reflected on this on remembering the Authorized Version of the prime ministers injunction to his troops to “go forth and multiply”. What’s happening sounds in the MMP translation more like the Tower of Babel?

There is much talk of the emergence of what can only be described as a Moral Majority Party, the secular arm of the religious right.

National members are said to be ready to defect and serve under the new banner. Oddly enough, those who have been talked about as moving on have already been demoted by their leader in valid judgment on their political competence.

It’s hard to see what in theological or ecclesiastical terms they have in common. Some, like Graeme Lee, are determined church attenders and familiar with Oral Roberts videos. Others like John Banks pace themselves when it comes to church.

What would a new religious party stand for? Who is likely to support it? Is there anyone who would vote for them who isn’t a National voter now?

We know its likely adherents are conservative on social issues. They abhor abortion and would ban it. They adore capital punishment and would vote for it. Their stand on liquor licensing would be confused. They would be tough on beneficiaries. They would promote private schools, the monarchy, the flag and stricter censorship.

On gambling you would have to take your chances. They don’t like immigrants.

On foreign policy they would be interesting. They love the righteous bomb, so we’d be glowing in the dark. The United Nations is well known by religious

fundamentalists to be an agent of the devil, a stalking horse for godless world government, so we'd probably stop paying our subs.

It will be the same with economic policy. Here however, they are likely to attract not National votes but votes which used to go to Social Credit. The non-conformist religious right believes that there is at the core of international economic arrangements a Zionist conspiracy, which manifests itself in the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. These organizations, like the UN, embody the Anti-Christ.

Absurdity is not confined to this. The fundamentalists, who are the core of the Christian Heritage Party, have a new campaign under way. You may have seen the bumper sticker.

"Beware the number 666" it says, the number depicted in bar code format. This is because bar coding, and computer technology generally are the work of Lucifer.

These fundamentalists are serious nutters but not as nutty as the Exclusive Brethren who have an amazing menu of prohibitions. They are not allowed to join Sir Roger in learning how to use an ATM (Automatic Teller Machine) outlet. They must turn their back on turbocharged cars, dairy farming, home unit ownership, shared sewer pipes and cellphones.

Now it is the right of every New Zealander to be a serious nutter. Our law and custom must respect that right. But it is our duty to prevent extremists from inflicting this state on all of us.

In Israel, under its system of proportional representation, governments have, in the interests of maintaining a majority, succumbed to the extraordinary demands of religious fundamentalists who have seats in Parliament.

The requirement that parties have to get 5% of the vote before they can get list seats is supposed to stop this happening here. Heaven help us if it doesn't.

The idea of such a dogs breakfast becoming a political party is a bit weird, the idea of it having Parliamentary seats disquieting. If the Exclusive Brethren change their minds and drop their ban on voting, the extremists might make it. They would then declare that left-right labels are dated, and offer themselves in political communion with Mr Bolger. He would need a long spoon.