

AFRICAN AMERICAN PENTECOSTALISM AND THE PUBLIC SQUARE

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Abstract

In the United States, a commonly held assumption is that the Constitutional separation of church and state necessitates a separation also of religion and politics, justifies a secular state, and commends reason as the “neutral” language of the secular state as well as the public square itself. Against this assumption, this article argues that, in our pluralist society, if our moral and religious convictions unavoidably influence our interactions with one another, then African American Pentecostalism, as a distinct expression of belief, morality, and thought, has a place in the public square. The article not only extols African American Pentecostalism’s qualities that contribute to social and political improvement, but also points out its aspects that are irrelevant to, obstructive, or impractical in the public square. Still, Pentecostalism’s witness of encounter with the Transcendent (God) establishes a locus of value for challenging the secular state’s judgements about matters having moral and religious undercurrents.

Keywords:

Pentecostalism
Democracy
Public Square
Religious Freedom

A Definition of “Public Square”

The term “public square” has fared no better than other terms that enter regular usage but without increased knowledge or their meanings. Most persons intuit that the public square, by virtue of the adjective that modifies the word “square,” has something to do with that which goes on in public life. Fewer persons are aware of the literal and figurative meanings associated with the term.

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A public square is figuratively and literally a “place” of gathering and interaction for all persons comprising the body politic, with focused attention on the facilities, services, and privileges clearly distinguished from the amenities in areas of social life and voluntary associations recognized as “private.” In the literal sense, a public square is an open area at the intersection of two or more streets, a place where several roads converge upon the center of a township. The public square could be a place such as a market or building where persons can meet for talk and other exchanges. The term is inclusive of the government-supported places such as schools, parks, courts, offices, and agencies available to its citizenry. Once persons have been drawn into these and other spaces, a presumed courtesy and access to services are expected. Pentecostals are one among many groups in the American body politic who are drawn from their private practice of religion into the public square for engagement with countless others on a wide range of concerns and issues.

Within American society, the concept of the public square is all the more tenuous because of the immense diversity and disparities within the nation’s population. More and more, diversity is being recognized and justified as a good thing for the United States. The legitimacy of institutions, organizations, businesses, and even churches is thought to be proven by whatever they can cite as evidence of their diversity. Unfortunately, the increased appreciation of diversity has not been accompanied by increased equality. The rates of poverty have increased, with the gap between the rich and poor more extensive than it has ever been in American history. The illusion that the United States had entered a period that is post-racial, upon the election of Barack Obama to the Presidency, has been overturned by the realities of persistent and pervasive racism exposed by rigorous scholarship and new waves of protest.²

Religion and the Public Square

The notion of a public square is further complicated by the confused and confusing position taken on the exclusion of religion from public life. In the United States, there is a Constitutional separation of church and state that is thought to require a separation also of religion and

²Scholarship of this kind is modelled in Eduardo Bonilla-Silva’s *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2014) as well as in the history of Black Lives Matter documented in Keeanga-Yamahatta Taylor’s *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016).

politics and justification for a secular and supposedly neutral state. The First Amendment contains an Establishment Clause (that Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion) and a Freedom Clause (that Congress shall make no law prohibiting the free exercise thereof). The government is supposed to be neutral on matters of religion. The Congress is barred from making laws that impose religion upon the citizenry. Persons, as they are guided by conscience, are entitled to hold any religious belief so long as they do not violate the rule of law. Of necessity, in a pluralist society, the state must rest upon a non-religious foundation. The public square, in a sense, is “naked,” stripped of religion overt and subtle, except maybe for the “civil religion” of the state.

In theory, reason becomes the “neutral” language of the secular state, in contrast to religion, which is regarded as private and inaccessible to the population at large. This supremacy of reason has resulted both in the outright rejection of religion and the reduction of religion to its statement only in secular terms. Religious language, ideas, and values are excluded from the public square unless they can be translated in the neutral, universal terms of reason. Based on the association of religion with the irrational, the processes of government are thought to run smoothly when disentangled from religious traditions, communities, and organizations. Ironically, reason does not reign in the public square. Rather than debating the issues and attempting to win by rational argument, politics descends to *ad hominem* attacks, defamation, filibuster, and boycott to force the opposition’s submission.

In reality, (1) there is an uneven, inconsistent purge of religion from the public square and (2) religious convictions constantly influence persons’ dealings with each other in the public square. The practice of prayer has been challenged in public schools, either leading to its elimination or continuation under very stringent rules. Still, public schools manage ways to close for religious holidays such as Passover and Good Friday. No court rulings are made to invalidate closing of government offices on Sunday or Christmas Day, weekly and annual observances for Christians. In lived experience, the tug-and-pull of the political process invariably aligns the state, more or less, with whichever religious tradition that happens to prevail at any given time. And more often than not, religious faith has an indirect role in shaping public discourse and public policy. Religion continues to play an essential and influential role in public life, in spite of the decline in religious affiliation.

Partisan Politics in Christian Social Imagination

Studies, like the Pew Research Center's analysis of church membership and political party affiliation, show unquestionably the correlation of race, religion, and partisan politics in the United States.³ In the United States, Protestant Christian denominations are divided into their affiliations with and leanings toward Republican, Democratic, or Independent organizations seeking through the electoral process to acquire and exercise power in government. White Pentecostal churches, like most white Evangelical churches, lean towards the Republican Party. The Church of God (Cleveland, TN) leans 52% Republican, 26% Democratic, and 22% Independent. The Assemblies of God leans 57% Republican, 27% Democratic, and 17% Independent. The Mormon Church whose members are mostly white leans 70% Republican. The Church of God in Christ (COGIC), the only Black Pentecostal church included in the study, leans 75% Democratic, 14% Republican, and 11% Independent. Other historically black Christian denominations such as the African Methodist Episcopal Church and National Baptist Convention lean 92% and 87% Democratic, respectively. The statistics disclose the apparent fact that, regarding Christian affiliation, the Republican Party's base is white Christian and the Democratic Party's base is black Christian.

African American Pentecostals' social imagination and civic engagement are heavily influenced as well as flustered by their location within the Democratic bloc. The Democratic Party is composed of three roughly equal groups: (1) the religiously unaffiliated persons of any ethnicity, (2) white Christians who are liberal not only in their political views but also in their theological perspectives, and (3) people of color who are religious.⁴ African Americans are the core of this third group. African American churches are morally and theologically conservative but

³U.S. Religious Groups and Their Political Leanings (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, February 2016): <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/02/23/u-s-religious-groups-and-their-political-leanings/>.

⁴Emma Green, "Democrats Have a Religion Problem: A Conversation with Michael Wear," *The Atlantic* (December 29, 2016): <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/12/democrats-have-a-religion-problem/510761>. The roles of religion and persons of faith in the Democratic Party are explored further in Michael Wear's *Reclaiming Hope: Lessons Learned in the Obama White House about the Future of Faith in America* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Books, 2017).

socially progressive. They are liberal on economic and civil rights issues, mostly limited to concerns with racial justice, but share much in common theologically with their white Evangelical counterparts who tend to vote Republican. For the sake of coherence, most African Americans are choosing the opposite extremes of liberalism or conservatism while a few are occupying the tensions of the middle. For example, Reverend William Barber has developed a theological position that marries the social progressivism in Democratic politics and Protestant liberalism. Leaving the Democratic Party for the Republican Party, Bishop Harry R. Jackson argues that moral conservatism carries with it a commitment to political conservatism.⁵ Counter to the prevailing trend of the Democratic Party's support of gay rights, Pentecostals like Reverend Leah Daughtry remain within the party and still hold to the traditional view of marriage between male and female.

The alignment of African American churches with the Democratic Party is as problematic as the alignment of white Evangelical churches with the Republican Party. African Americans regard religion as highly important in their lives but affiliate with a political party that has become increasingly averse to religion or imposes the rule of neutral (secular) language for any persons of faith desiring to speak. In the Pew Research Center's U.S. Religious Landscape Survey; 97% of blacks believe in God, with 71% convinced that God is personal and only 19% saying that God is an impersonal force or 3% claiming to be uncertain.⁶ The Democratic Party, still majority white like the Republican Party, makes overtures to various minority groups with promises to promote and protect the marginalized. The political rhetoric of the Democratic Party depicts African Americans, Latinos, women, and LGBTs as "victims" and represents Republican opposition as expressions of bigotry and racism, which might be true in some cases but not in all. Through the prism of partisan politics, African Americans assume that liberalism, more than conservatism, comes closest to the politics of Jesus.⁷ *The Open Letter to*

⁵Harry R. Jackson, *The Truth in Black and White: A New Look at the Shifting Landscape of Race, Religion, and Politics in America Today* (Lake Mary, FL: Frontline, 2008), 28, 106, 108.

⁶U.S. Religious Landscape Survey: Religious Affiliation: Diverse and Dynamic (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, February 2008):

<http://www.pewforum.org/files/2013/05/report-religious-landscape-study-full.pdf>.

⁷Obery M. Hendricks, *The Politics of Jesus: Rediscovering the True Revolutionary Nature of Jesus' Teachings and How They Have Been Corrupted* (New York: Three Leaves Press, 2007), 317.

Hillary Clinton Regarding Religious Freedom for Black America, signed by several African American clergy and scholars, states the demand of black Christians to be heard and their concerns taken seriously.⁸ The Republican Party reaches out to Christians, mainly white Evangelicals, and allows them limited expression of faith in public life. However, Jesus' solidarity with the poor and Hebrew Bible proscriptions against greed, selfishness, and injustice are very much at odds with the capitalism supported by political conservatives in the Republican Party.⁹ Whereas white Evangelical Christians grapple with reconciling the mandate of social justice with the political conservatism of the Republican Party, African American Christians struggle with reconciling their moral conservatism with the Democratic Party's liberalism.

Christian Interpretations of Civic Engagement

In addition to partisan politics, Christian faith and action is informed by other perspectives. Further complicating Christian social imagination are the broad, competing notions about social and political engagement held by Christians themselves. There are four perspectives that influence Christian thought. They are Christian Realism, Christian Idealism, Christian Reconstructionism, and Christian Communitarianism. Christian Realism is the dominant view. The other three views (Christian Idealism, Christian Reconstructionism, and Christian Communitarianism) vie against one another, with Christian Idealism having reached its height in the 1960s and laying the foundation for elected black political leadership and the political representation of other minorities. Among African Americans, the Christian Idealist view has enjoyed the highest level of acceptance. Of late, that is, since the 1980s, Christian Reconstructionism has dominated the interpretation of Christianity and morality in American public life mostly among Evangelicals. Since the 1970s, Christian Communitarianism has spread slowly and rather quietly among various Christian groups seeking to realize the potential of the Church as an autonomous institution for social change through reconciliation and community development.

⁸ Open Letter to Hillary Clinton Regarding Religious Freedom for Black America (Boston: Seymour Institute for Black Church and Policy Studies, 2016): <https://www.seymourinstitute.com/open-letter.html>.

⁹ Obery M. Hendricks, *The Universe Bends toward Justice: Radical Reflections on the Bible, the Church, and the Body Politic* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 116-119, 123, 139, 180-181.

Christian Realism is the view that, because humans are sinners, the moral principles that normally govern Christian life have limited or no application in public life, government, and international affairs. The role of democratic government is to maintain détente between competing interest groups. Democracy is all about maintaining order, national security, and the system of property.¹⁰ Effective political action is morally ambiguous and grounded in pragmatism.¹¹

Prior to Barack Obama's election to the Presidency of the United States, he leaned towards a Christian Idealist perspective, probably doing so because of his acknowledged admiration of leaders of the Civil Rights Movement. Early in his term as President, in his Nobel Peace Prize Speech, he stated a perspective that aligns, even repeats, the tenets of Reinhold Niebuhr's Christian Realism. Claims made in his speech include: (1) A world without war is unrealistic; (2) Evil exists in the world and cannot be eliminated entirely from it; (3) Idealists like Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., are not the only voices that we should consider in our decisions about war and peace; and (4) Though we cannot rid the world of war, we can control and contain war.

An exemplar of Pentecostalism within the framework of Christian Realism is John Ashcroft, former Missouri Governor, U.S. Attorney General and U.S. Senator. Ashcroft had a distinguished career in public office where he was more noted for his acumen in statecraft than for attempts to legislate Christian values. Other Pentecostals who could be characterized as Christian realists would be those persons in military vocations or public service roles where religious faith is regarded as private and kept separate from public life.¹² Bishop David A. Hall's concerns about COGIC members' not understanding and observing properly COGIC's pacifist position, which he talks about in his *Essays to the Next Generation*, underscores the problem of ethical dualism among those COGIC members adopting consciously or unconsciously some form of Christian Realism as their moral guide for vocations in military service.

As articulated best by Martin Luther King, Jr., whose activism has motivated many persons to adopt this perspective, Christian Idealism is the view that moral principles, resting upon God's eternal law, can be

¹⁰Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness: A Vindication of Democracy and a Critique of Its Traditional Defense* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1944), 3, 40-41, 64, 73.

¹¹Niebuhr, *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness*, 73.

¹²David A. Hall, *Essays to the Next Generation: An Interpretation of Church of God in Christ Faith and Practice in Context with Modern Issues* (Memphis, TN: David A. Hall, Sr., Publishing, 2004).

actualized (or approximated) in democracy and government when used for ordering and improving human life. When individuals, groups, and government work for the good, they achieve greater enrichment.¹³ Whenever the legislative process, of its own accord or by human sin, fails to produce greater freedom and justice for all citizens, it was necessary to exert pressure, through nonviolence, on governmental bodies for the formation of policy and laws conforming to the ideals (eternal law) of justice. Still, America, with all of its faults, plays a vital role in God's plan of redemption. Each forward development in American democracy is a victory that represents an accumulation of many short-term successes in the realization of God's kingdom.¹⁴ African American Pentecostals espousing versions of Christian idealism include the late J.O. Patterson, Jr. (COGIC bishop and former councilman and mayor of Memphis), Eugene Rivers (COGIC pastor, political commentator, and community activist), Leonard Lovett (ethicist and ecumenical officer for COGIC), and Leah Daughtry (House of the Lord pastor and former CEO of the Democratic National Convention Committee).

Christian Reconstructionism is the view that the United States of America is a Christian nation whose path to renewal (restoration) and charge of enforcing God's law is disclosed in the Bible.¹⁵ Other emphases include limited government, laissez-faire capitalism, fiscal conservatism, and identification of the "good citizen" with the "true Christian." Themes of Reconstructionism are echoed by Bishop Harry Jackson. He contends that African Americans are confronting problems that are mainly moral and spiritual.¹⁶ And these problems are unlikely to be resolved by the idealists because the protest methods of civil rights movement are outdated; new methods are needed for the present time.¹⁷ Personal responsibility, self-determination, and thrift are essential for change in individuals and the society.¹⁸ Racism is overcome by African Americans'

¹³John J. Ansbro, *Martin Luther King, Jr.: Nonviolent Strategies and Tactics for Social Change* (Lanham, MD: Basic Books, 2000), 67; *Martin Luther King, Jr., Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), 12-13, 180.

¹⁴King, *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?*, 12-13.

¹⁵The theology of Reconstructionism was first laid out in *Rousas John Rushdoony's Law and Liberty* (Nutley, NJ: Craig Press, 1971; reprinted, Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 2009).

¹⁶Jackson, *The Truth in Black and White*, 60, 68.

¹⁷Jackson, *Ibid.*, 194, 225.

¹⁸Jackson, *Ibid.*, 66, 138, 206, 210.

personal achievement and success, and then without the assistance of big government.¹⁹

Christian Communitarianism is the view that the church, not democratic government, is the principal realm where persons can discern and strive for the good. For the most part, Pentecostals have perceived themselves as a “separate” community. Empowered by the Spirit, the saints gathered together, holding each other accountable to the standards of holy living, caring for their families, building their churches and evangelizing the world. Pentecostals, who think of themselves as “in the world but not of it” and work for social change principally within their churches and faith-based organizations, may be classified as Christian Communitarians. T.D. Jakes’ Potter’s House, the base for T.D. Jakes Ministries, and T.D. Jakes Enterprises (for-profit operations) are an example of Pentecostal spiritual empowerment for evangelism, social service, and entrepreneurialism— building church and community simultaneously. The ministries of West Angeles COGIC, pastored by Bishop Charles Blake, similarly seek to bring personal and social transformation to persons through all means available to the church. In Bishop George McKinney’s *The New Slave Masters*, he suggests how churches may utilize their moral and spiritual resources to address various problems vexing African American communities in addition to their use of foundation support and government programs.²⁰ Several of Bishop McKinney’s ideas about how to create and nurture stable families and thriving communities have been implemented at St. Stephens Cathedral COGIC in San Diego. The quiet but extensive work of Arenia Mallory, Lillian Brooks Coffey, and others in education and women’s organizations

¹⁹Jackson, *Ibid.*, 210, 211, 228.

²⁰In George D. McKinney’s *The New Slave Masters* (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications, 2005), he identifies the following problems facing the African American community: drugs (chapter 4); materialism (chapter 5); racism (chapter 6); desire for instant gratification and mindless pursuit of pleasure, such as pornography, unnecessary credit-card spending, and gambling (chapter 7); rage (misdirected anger resulting from repeated injustice and violation (chapter 8); gangs (chapter 9); and abortion, absent fathers, and lack of caring adults in children’s lives (chapter 10). McKinney argues that civil rights laws and other forms of legislation are limited tools for dealing with these stated problems. According to McKinney, black people’s realization of freedom comes about not only in the acquisition and exercise of civil rights but also through the development of stable families and thriving communities that mitigate or resolve these problems.

built avenues for personal success and civic involvement for subsequent generations of Pentecostals.²¹

The Power of the Spirit for the Church and the World

Pentecostalism has its critics, few of whom can deny its latent potential. In James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time*, the African American Pentecostal church is depicted as a positive source of inspiration and community but a negative source of repression and hypocrisy, lacking the wherewithal to act in the world beyond its walls. Baldwin had a Pentecostal experience, lying prostrate at the altar, where he was "saved" and then "filled" with the Holy Spirit. At the age of 14, he became a Youth Minister, a stint that lasted for three years. After a year into his role of minister, he began to read and think critically and take notice of the flaws in himself and others in the Temple of the Fire Baptized.²² From his point of view, the principles governing the church were blindness, loneliness, and terror. He realized that his preaching was performance, driven by theatrics more so than by sincerity and truth. Behind the scenes, he saw the questionable dealings with the "Lord's money." In Baldwin's words: "The transfiguring power of the Holy Ghost ended when the service ended, and salvation stopped at the church door."²³ The commandment to love everybody was practiced only with regard to a select few within the church. He saw, as his only escape, leaving the church. Though critical of the Pentecostal church, Baldwin says that he had never seen any institution more powerful than the Pentecostal church. The excitement and the appeal of the Pentecostal church and the power of the Spirit were unlike anything that he had known or would ever know. He saw nothing comparable to this Pentecostal power.

Baldwin's desire for Pentecostalism to move beyond the interior of the church is met in James Forbes' description of Progressive Pentecostalism. By "Progressive Pentecostalism," he means the

²¹Anthea D. Butler, *Women in the Church of God in Christ: Making a Sanctified World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 118, 120-127. Arenia Mallory's work is described in E.M. Lashley's *Glimpses into the Life of a Great Mississippian and Majestic American Educator, 1926-1976* (n.p.: 1977).

²²Baldwin's experience is examined from a scholarly perspective in Clarence E. Hardy's *James Baldwin's God: Sex, Hope, and Crisis in Black Holiness Culture*, 3rd edition (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2009). Further insight into his life may be found in James Baldwin's *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (New York: Dell Publishing, Co., 1953), a semi-autobiographical novel.

²³James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time* (New York: The Dial Press, 1963), 53-54.

advancement of Pentecostalism from preoccupation with individual experience and internal church affairs to concern for the larger context of society and the world. According to Forbes, the Holy Spirit's work is throughout the world in "every aspect of human or divine activity which brings us closer to the realization of the kingdom of God."²⁴ Forbes offers a translation of Pentecostalism into social action. The Pentecostal response to sickness is the quest for "deliverance and healing through medically scientific and spiritual means." For sickness of mind, Pentecostalism would offer counseling. The Pentecostal response to poverty is "feeding the poor, offering personal charity, and setting up social service agencies." Against racial, class, and religious injustices, he says that "[Pentecostals] will influence social, economic and political structures."

In the public square, African American Pentecostalism must speak to many issues. White Evangelicals' cries of moral outrage have garnered the most attention. Their issues of concern are about abortion, immigration, same-sex marriage, bathroom privileges for transgender persons, the Health and Human Services contraception mandate, and encroachments on religious freedom. These may be issues about which African American Christians care a great deal. However, these are not the only issues that persons of faith are compelled to address. The #BlackLivesMatter Movement is expanding African American Christians' moral concern beyond those moral issues of interest to white Evangelicals. The protest movement calls for attention to and action regarding the social practices that devalue and destroy black lives and those of other racial and ethnic minorities such as police brutality, mass incarceration, the defunding of public education, and environmental racism.

African American Pentecostalism in the Public Square

A sympathetic but critical interpretation of Pentecostalism does not summarily commend the movement to all sectors of society and the world. Whereas there are aspects of Pentecostalism that would prove to be beneficial to the world, there are some that are harmful. The negative qualities of Pentecostalism that ought not spread into public square are: the disunity (theological and political fragmentation) of Pentecostalism; patriarchal, authoritarian leadership; spontaneity (impulsiveness, dearth of planning, and loose organization); anti-intellectualism; magical thinking

²⁴James Forbes, "Shall We Call this Dream Progressive Pentecostalism?" *Spirit: A Journal of Issues Incident to Black Pentecostalism* 1, no. 1 (1977): 14.

(interventionist theory of divine action, with little or no human accountability for effecting change); and demonology (tendency to overly spiritualize social problems), lack of coherent and compassionate perspective on human behavior (e.g., sexuality and sexual orientation). These negative qualities singularly or together conspire to make Pentecostalism irrelevant to, obstructive, or impractical in the public square.

The public square could benefit from the exemplary features of Pentecostalism. The good or positive influences that could be cited to justify Pentecostalism in the public square are the witness of encounter with the Transcendent (God); egalitarianism; entrepreneurialism; and creativity. These positive qualities together encourage initiative and innovation for human improvement and adaptation to changing circumstances. At its best, Pentecostalism promotes freedom and equality and challenges the philosophical naturalism that deprives humanity of the wonder of and engagement with the sacred. As Forbes says, “The Pentecostal experience has helped to restore a sense of worth, identity, and God-relatedness to those who expose themselves to its influence.”²⁵

In light of these positive qualities, Pentecostalism merits not only a place but also freedom in the public square. For all Christians seeking to assert their presence and perspective in the public square, Karl Barth’s *Church and State* is an important text on the freedom of the church. He says, “[the State] is one of those angelic powers (*exousia*) of this age, which is always threatened by that ‘demonization,’ that is, by the temptation of making itself absolute.”²⁶ He says, “[the Church] is the actual community (*politeuma*) of the New Heaven and the New Earth, as such here and now certainly hidden, and therefore in the realm of the State a foreign community (*paroikia*).”²⁷ According to Barth, the responsibility of the Church is twofold: prophetic speech (i.e., acting as the moral guardian and “Watchman” of society) and prayer (i.e., intercessory prayer for the State and those persons who serve as representatives of the State.) The Church has an obligation to resist the State when it threatens the freedom of the Church. The Church must criticize the State.²⁸ This criticism of the State is a high honor that the Church gives the State. Why is it such a high honor? Because the Church is urging the State to function

²⁵Forbes, “Shall We Call this Dream Progressive Pentecostalism,” 12.

²⁶Karl Barth, *Church and State*, translation of *Rechtfertigung und Recht (Justification and Justice)* by G. Ronald Howe (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1939), 10.

²⁷Barth, *Church and State*, 10-11.

²⁸Barth, *Church and State*, 69-71.

as a State and then within the sacred order, for the divine justification that the Church proclaims is for the benefit of all persons living within the State. The State cannot make persons moral. Moral formation lies within the work of the Church. The State can utilize its power to punish infractions of law and by this threat of punishment bring persons into compliance, but the State cannot make persons moral. The basic civility needed in the society, the State cannot solicit from its citizens. Civility, which is moral behavior, is cultivated by the Church. As Robert Franklin says, “[moral] vision and capacity is in short supply in the leadership of our major institutions— the market, the state, and the criminal justice system.”²⁹

The church is needed in the public square. According to Barth, proclamation of the message of justification underscores a basic truth about humans: God values human life and goes to great lengths to save and fulfill it.³⁰ Thus justification presupposes that those who are justified are worth being justified. As a source and norm, justification affirms the sacredness, dignity, and worth of human life. The work of the church in the world is rooted in this ethic of human value. Christians, inclusive of Pentecostals, may labor towards “increasing civic participation (especially voting behavior), addressing income and wealth inequality (or advocating a ‘shared prosperity’), working for a more sustainable planet, and leading truth and reconciliation processes to heal racial divides and new xenophobia directed at immigrants and religious minorities, such as Muslims in America.”³¹

The Responsibility but Indeterminacy of Translation

The church working for the good of society is a matter that raises little or no controversy; the point of contention is mainly in the public expression of faith in language that is unapologetically religious. The government of the secular state rarely objects to churches’ service to the poor, even when this religious work is clearly motivated by faith. The public square is supposed to be devoid of explicit religious speech and, if religion appears at all in the public square, religious speech must be translated into the neutral, secular language of the square. This exclusion

²⁹Robert M. Franklin, “Rehabilitating Democracy: Restoring Civil Rights and Leading the Next Human Rights Revolution,” *Journal of Law and Religion* 30, no. 3 (October 2015): 426.

³⁰Barth, *Church and State*, 44.

³¹Franklin, “Rehabilitating Democracy,” 426.

is not only of religion but also of the opportunity for engagement with others in conversations on morality and religion in the public square. Most Americans regard religious faith as important to their lives. To exclude religion from the public square means that a large part of people's lives are overlooked.

Against this Rawlsian liberalism³², namely the notion of neutrality with regard to moral and religious questions in the public square, Jürgen Habermas argues that the secular state has an obligation to exercise impartiality towards religious communities and to communicate law and policy in neutral language, but individuals and groups participating in the public square have no such obligation.³³ The publically accessible language of the secular state is a language of transaction. The prohibition against speaking religion-specific values and beliefs is laid only on politicians and other functionaries of the State.³⁴ Habermas says, "We cannot derive from the secular character of the state a direct obligation for all citizens personally to supplement their public statements of religious convictions by equivalents in a generally accessible language. And certainly the normative expectation that all religious citizens when casting their vote should in the final instance let themselves be guided by secular considerations is to ignore the realities of a devout life, an existence led in light of belief."³⁵ Pentecostals must, therefore, participate in the public square as Pentecostals, and more importantly as Christians rising above the partisan divide and their sectarianism that minimizes their impact in the world beyond the walls of the church.

An often quoted passage from the New Testament by Bishop Charles Harrison Mason is: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (1 Tim 2:1-2). Implied in his intercessory prayer for governing officials is a commitment to civility in the public square. Since acceptance of every point of view is not required or logically possible, mutual toleration may be the best for which we can hope in the public square.

³²In *Barack Obama's Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream* (New York: Broadway Books, 2007: 219), he echoes this Rawlsian liberalism, when he states that, in our pluralist society, religious persons must "translate their concerns into universal, rather than religion-specific values."

³³Jürgen Habermas, "Religion in the Public Square," *European Journal of Philosophy* 14, no. 1 (2006): 3.

³⁴Habermas, "Religion in the Public Square," 8-9.

³⁵Habermas, "Religion in the Public Square," 9.

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