

## EDITORIAL

### Pentecostalism and the Public Sphere

German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, renowned for his significant contributions to the concept of the 'public sphere,' presented a more inclusive perspective on the role of religion in this domain in his 2006 essay, "Religion in the Public Sphere." This represented a notable shift from his earlier views. He argued that religion has gained "hitherto unexpected political importance" and, therefore, warrants renewed consideration.<sup>1</sup> This shift is particularly significant when contrasted with the predictions of secularisation theorists, who anticipated a gradual decline in the social and cultural relevance of religion within the public sphere. They believed that religious values would be supplanted by secular ones and that religious figures, such as church leaders, would lose their authority and influence in society. However, this prediction has proven to be fundamentally incorrect, as religion has become even more vital.<sup>2</sup> In fact, Habermas advocates for the inclusion of religious language in public debates due to its political relevance in diverse contexts around the world.

With the growth and resurgence of religions, especially Christianity in the form of the Pentecostal-Charismatic strands, and the role they play in various societies, Habermas's call to grant religious actors reciprocal rights in the realm of public discourse is critical. On the one hand, he encourages both religious and non-religious people to openly engage in discussions about the "truth content" of religious statements in the public sphere. On the other hand, he also urges secular citizens to acknowledge the dynamics of a "post-secular" society, which necessitates the integration of religion as a significant element influencing public discourse and civic life.<sup>3</sup> Habermas's approach effectively establishes a mutual responsibility for both religious and secular individuals, advocating for a framework in which religious perspectives can engage in political discourse without being co-opted by partisan agendas. This model seeks to facilitate the inclusion of diverse moral viewpoints in the public sphere while maintaining the integrity of their religious principles, ensuring that their contributions enhance democratic deliberation rather than distort it through political entanglement.

This issue highlights the important role of religion in the public sphere, focusing on the theme of "Pentecostalism and the Public Sphere." It offers various perspectives on the

---

<sup>1</sup> Jürgen Habermas, "Religion in the Public Sphere," *European Journal of Philosophy* 14 (2006), 1

<sup>2</sup> Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1967.

<sup>3</sup> Habermas, "Religion in the Public Sphere," 1

relationship between Pentecostalism and the African public sphere. Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity is recognised as a significant driver of social and cultural change within Africa. The goal was to compile essays that examine how Pentecostal-Charismatic movements and churches have instigated sociocultural transformations while also considering how the broader society has influenced these movements. We aim to explore the connection between Pentecostalism and public life, covering topics such as its impact on public discourse, its involvement in politics, its approach to social justice and human rights, its influence on public policy, its relationship with the media, and its strategies for public engagement.

The issue consists of six articles that explore a broad range of topics related to the main theme and two book reviews. The discussion begins with an intervention from Jeffrey Haynes, a professor of politics at London Metropolitan University. He posits that there exists a strong connection between the Church of Pentecost and the major political parties in Ghana, suggesting a significant interplay between Christianity and politics. Haynes analysed the CoP's Vision 2023 document and reviewed the National Development Conference held in 2023 to evaluate the ways in which the CoP aims to enhance the nation's morality, which they believe will subsequently strengthen democracy. He concludes that there is a correlation between morality and the health of democracy; however, the potential for enhancing democratic integrity by promoting national morality is limited. This limitation arises from the fact that many Ghanaians are sceptical about whether this approach will yield the desired outcomes.

Charles Prempeh follows with an article that examines the interplay between religion and politics in Ghana, with a particular focus on the Church of Pentecost (CoP) and its influence on the nation's public sphere. It highlights how the CoP has become a significant force in shaping Ghana's sociopolitical landscape, especially through its dedication to social services and moral leadership. The article concludes that the CoP views itself as God's chosen church, aiming to steer Ghana away from Western influences and to guide the nation's governance in order to fulfil its role as God's chosen nation for global evangelism. Abraham Nortey contributes a textual analysis of selected passages to highlight the Holy Spirit's role in leadership and societal development in the Old Testament, suggesting that figures like Daniel, Joseph, and Moses, as well as artisans Bezalel and Oholiab, were empowered by the same Spirit recognised in the New Testament.

Drawing mainly on secondary data, Patrick Kudadjie examines Pentecostal political engagement in Ghana, focusing on how these churches fulfil their divine mandate towards the state. The study identifies three primary forms of involvement: participation

in the democratic process, socio-economic initiatives, and prophetic politicking. Ultimately, it concludes that their engagement significantly aligns with their divine responsibilities. With Ghanaians going to the polls this year, Samuel Nkrumah-Pobi et al. examine how religion impacts the voting behaviour of Pentecostals. Their findings reveal mixed responses: while some educated respondents assert that policies should guide their votes rather than religious affiliation, others may choose to abstain from voting if candidates do not align with their religious beliefs.

In his concluding article, Justice Arthur analyses the methodologies employed by British abolitionist Thomas Clarkson in his efforts to combat the slave trade. He utilises Clarkson's framework as a springboard to propose strategic approaches for enhancing public engagement and advocacy within the Pentecostal-Charismatic community. The issue concludes with two insightful book reviews: the first by Christian Tsekpoe and Eric Kallai, followed by a review from Julia Owiti. Overall, the range of topics covered in these articles highlights the extensive research opportunities not only for Pentecostal-Charismatic scholars but also for those of other Christian traditions.

**Justice Anquandah Arthur**

Associate Editor