

2019

## **TROPES: Church Politics & Its Impact on the Black Female Identity**

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### **Recommended Citation**

Grantham, Awendela, "TROPES: Church Politics & Its Impact on the Black Female Identity" (2019). *Faculty Publications*. 19.

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TROPES

CHURCH POLITICS & ITS IMPACT ON THE BLACK FEMALE IDENTITY

By Awendela Grantham, Ph.D.

Richmond, Virginia

Published by Awendela Grantham

1<sup>st</sup> Edition

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ISBN: 9781713313199

Library of Congress Control Number: 2019918038

Published by Awendela Grantham

Published on Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing

Publishing Coach: Dr. Verlean Hailey of Turning My Own Pages Legacy Publishing

Cover Designer: [SelfPubBookCovers.com/BeeJavier](http://SelfPubBookCovers.com/BeeJavier)

Layout Design: Katie Brady Design

### *Dedication*

This book is for Christians who are looking for answers but cannot find them in the Church.

### *Acknowledgements*

My research was supported by the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship, the Social Science Research Council, and the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation.

Thank you to my friends Ms. Betsy Pennington and Ms. Sarah Scott for reading the manuscript and for encouraging me. May God continue to bless you abundantly.

## Chapter 1

### *WHAT IS A TROPE?*

After writing this book, I was strengthened with new hope. This new hope nurtured a hidden power within me. As you read this book, I believe that this new hope will be imparted to you as well.

Have you ever hoped that something could help you to ease the burden of what you were going through? Then, after you had it, you realized you were deceived.

All my life, I remember my parents trying to give me an “edge” or a “step up” for a better life. I grew up learning how to strive for better-- a better house and car, better friends, and a better neighborhood. This intense and constant striving led me to pursue things that would help me—things that would save me. I was looking for something to meet my needs. I searched for different things to help me with this “step up” to a better life.

My parents assumed that being part of a church validated us as “good” people. Church activities consumed our weekly calendar. I grew up attending 3 to 4 different services each week. Yet, I never questioned how church politics influenced my identity—the way the Church taught me to behave, the traditions we practiced, and the things we valued. Church attendance had made me a religious person, but not necessarily a kind one.

I realized one day that the enemy had deceived me by implanting his thoughts in my mind. These deceptions were ungodly **tropes**. **A trope [trōp] is “a figurative or metaphorical use of a word or expression.”** It is a recurrent theme which conditions the public to believe it.

You hear tropes so often in movies, TV, and music that you may not even notice them. Think about the trope, “They married and lived happily ever after.” That’s the cliché ending of

most children's stories. No one even questions it. How many young girls are deceived into thinking their married life will be a "bed of roses"? Is it possible to live "happily ever after"?

Church members embraced these tropes and didn't see how they contradicted the Bible. I lived in a "Christian" community. I went to a Christian school, and all of my family and friends attended church. We saw no harm in the way we thought.

Tropes can operate in the life of anyone who feels desperate. These tropes are traps that steal your time, your money, and your hopes for the future. These traps were patterns of thinking that deceived my grandparents, my parents, and me.

You may hear these ideas over and over. You can't get them out of your head. The tropes brainwash you into believing them. Sadly, some blindly follow these tropes instead of researching for true and accurate information.

A trope could be a person, ideology, or a consumer good. This book addresses tangible and intangible tropes: getting into the right schools, living in the most prestigious neighborhoods, making friends with "people who have money," winning the lottery, voting for the right political candidate, having the right body shape and size.

I will show you how tropes deceive us. They infiltrate the Church and change our identity in Christ. Is someone or something manipulating you? Are people stealing your time and money by promising false hope?

After reading this book, you will feel so much better about your life. You'll find the good that is already in your life—the good that is given and directed by God. I will show you how to dismantle these tropes which may be causing failures, hopelessness, and even depression. I identify each trope. Then, I share many Scriptures which helped me heal from what I

experienced. I quote Scriptures in their entirety throughout the book. Reading and memorizing the Word gave me rest when I couldn't find rest anywhere else.

As a Black woman, I have experienced many frustrations resulting from misplaced hopes in someone or something who promised to save me. I love people, so I want to warn everyone about these deceptions. I have come to know that these temporal solutions cannot save ME or you: When considered soberly, many claims prove to be blatantly implausible.

You will learn as I did that it is TRUE: Jesus [the Word of God] is the only way. He is the only SAVIOR who is able to conquer, deliver, and give hope for a way out.



## Chapter 2

### *TROPE: YOU CAN NEVER BE TOO RICH*

This book is not for people who curse God or mock God. Nor is it for people who just want God to be a cash machine.

This book is for the people of God who love Him with all their hearts. It is for the people who depend on the mercies of God and are not willing to settle for the things of this world.

These chapters are a testimony of how I walked through the fire and lived.

#### “YOU CAN NEVER BE TOO RICH OR TOO THIN”

Again and again, I heard this trope, “You can never be too rich or too thin.” Those words gave me a limited and skewed understanding of what success was.

As a high school Freshman, I was determined to destine my life for success so these words became my motto. This seemed to be the path to success. So, this would be the path I took. I didn’t understand the danger in embracing such a philosophy. It was presented as a goal everyone should aspire to attain in the churches I attended and in my Christian school.

My thinking gradually shifted from how I could please God to how I could obtain a rich and successful lifestyle.

Let’s talk about being “too rich” here and being “too thin” in another chapter.

For sure, it seemed like the actors on TV and the models in magazines were rich and thin. The people around me—people of all races—expected me to admire and imitate “people who had money.” My grandmother routinely handed me *Ebony* and *Jet* magazines and said,

“Read this, you can learn something.”

My dad studied piles of magazines like *Black Enterprise*, *Forbes*, *Money Magazine*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, *The Economist*, *The Atlantic*, *The New York Times*, *Business Week* and *U.S. News and World Report*. These magazines were all over the house. He bought every book Charles Schwab recommended. Those magazines captured his attention while the Bible collected dust on the coffee table.

Though my parents and grandparents’ intentions may have been to “broaden my horizons” and give me tools to “build my self esteem,” my young mind perceived it another way. They measured success in terms of material things, not in terms of character or love for each other.

“Rich people” had such favor with my family. They knew the way to success so I decided to do what the rich did.

## Chapter 3

### *THE RICH HAVE MANY FRIENDS* (Proverbs 14: 20)

American culture today glorifies celebrities and extravagant lifestyles. During the 1980's and 1990's when I grew up, America was no different. Most people will not assent that a rich person is "better." That confession would be distasteful. But, when preferential treatment is given to the rich, that is what's implied.

"You can never be too rich" is a trope. People embrace this trope as a personal philosophy, thinking that "riches" will "save" them and ensure success.

Let me state plainly how this trope operates: Money equals success. "People with money" are smarter, and more beautiful. They go to the best schools, drive the best cars, and wear expensive clothes. They can buy expensive massages, facials, vacations, and gourmet cuisine.

Money equals power. "People with money" control the courts, the media, and the major businesses in the world. They can do what they want! They can break the law and get away with it, because they can "buy" the judge, lawyers and often the jury.

The sum of this is.

"People with money" are better. Having money makes you valuable in the world. It makes you invincible. It makes you liked and admired. "*The poor man is hated even by his own neighbor, But the rich [have] many friends*" (Proverbs 14: 20 NKJV).

They say if you have money, you're a "good" person. Everyone wants to be your friend. You should pursue actions which lead to making more and more money. You should make decisions based on money. In fact, "*You can never be too rich . . .*" This trope has even

infiltrated the Church.

## Chapter 4

### *YOU CANNOT SERVE GOD AND MAMMON (Matthew 6: 24)*

Many of God's people are prioritizing and relying on money over Him. They often quote the Bible, "*The love of money is the root of all evil (1 Timothy 6: 10 KJV).*" They acknowledge, "Money can't buy happiness." They profess one thing, but their actions show they desire and pursue another. This is a double standard. The Bible refers to it as having a divided heart. In Matthew 6: 24, it says, "*No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon [money]*" (NKJV).

Is it possible that this could be what we are doing in churches today? We emphasize the need and desire to have more money. Yelling from the pulpit, Leroy Thompson coined the phrase, "Money come to me!" I've seen Kenneth Copeland scream with passion, "Money come to me, now!" It is so sad that they would confess their desire for money from the pulpit. Instead of talking to money, what about calling upon dear Jesus to supply your every need? What in the world are they doing?

The Church (the Bride of Christ<sup>1</sup>) is yelling, "Money come to me, now!" Who is the Church pursuing and embracing into her heart? Christ said, "You cannot love Me and mammon. You will love one and hate the other" (see Matthew 6: 24). So, I ask, who is the Church in love with? Who is the Church pursuing?

God said that you can't serve two masters (or two bridegrooms). If the Bride of Christ is pursuing money, then she is committing spiritual adultery or fornication with mammon [money]. Who is the Church passionate about, Jesus or money? Jesus promised that He would supply all

our needs according to His riches. I am devoting an entire chapter to this trope: The Black Church.

*The entire manuscript can be purchased at amazon.com.*

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<sup>i</sup> The metaphor that Christ is the Bridegroom and the Church is the Bride appears in numerous New Testament references such as Ephesians 5: 22-33 and John 3: 29.