

...Set For the Defence of the Gospel. (Phil 1:17)

# DEFENDER OF TRUTH

## MAGAZINE

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T H E M E :

# THE CHURCH OF CHRIST (2)

# DEFENDER OF TRUTH

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# EDITORIAL

You are welcome to the year 2022, which is the second year of publication of Defender of Truth Magazine. We thank the Lord for the wherewithal He has given us to do this work to His glory. We believe that we have been able to reveal the gospel of Christ which is the power of God to salvation for everyone that believes.

In this edition, we continue our discussion on the Church of Christ which we began in the last edition of 2021. Here, we are focusing on some of the key doctrines of the Church as revealed in the New Testament. Articles in this edition include *The Universal Church and The Local Church*, *The Church And The Christian Individual*, *Church Music*, *The Role Of Women In The Church*, *What About Paying of Tithes and Religious Titles*. We trust you will be edified by these articles.

## THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH AND THE LOCAL CHURCH

by Afolabi A. Akinyemi

The word church which is given in Greek as *ekklesia* is from two words, *ek*, "out", and *kaleo*, "to call". *Ekklesia* is used to describe a group of people who have been called out of someplace or relationship into another one. Thus *ekklesia* or church of Christ refers to people who have been called from the world into Christ by the gospel. There are two distinct ways the term is used about God's people in the New Testament; the universal sense which we call the universal church and the local sense which we call the local church.

Jesus speaks of the universal church in Matthew 16:18 *"Upon this rock, I will build my church"*. It is also spoken of by the Hebrew writer in Heb.12:18-23 *"to the general assembly and church of the firstborn"*. Paul the Apostle also talks of the church in this sense in Ephesians 5:23-32. These passages refer to the collection of all people who belong to and enjoy the fellowship of Christ. All those who have been baptized into Christ regardless of location. *"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ."*<sup>28</sup> *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus"* Galatians 3:27-28

The universal church is composed of all the saved of the earth, all who are in Christ, individual Christians. Jesus illustrated this in John 15:5-6 *"I am the vine and YE are the branches.....if any MAN abide not in me....."* 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 also illustrates this. *"For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ."*<sup>13</sup> *For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit"*.

The New Testament speaks of the church in a local sense *"To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours"* 1 Corinthians 1:2. Consider also Phillipians 1:1 *Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:* This refers to the church in a particular city, town, village or any recognized population center.

The Scripture does not refer to the church in a provincial, state, regional or national sense. Instead, the church is referred to in plurality when talking of provinces, regions, states, or nations. *"Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified"*. Acts 9:31 *"Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also"* 1 Corinthians 16:1.

The hierarchical arrangement that is the norm in denominations today has no foundation in the New Testament. Denominations have local churches/parishes reporting to area/state/diocesan churches which in turn report to regional churches which reports to the national churches which report to the international or worldwide church. This arrangement has given rise to various hierarchical titles; pastors, area pastors, state pastors, regional pastors, archbishops, cardinals, general overseers, pope, and many others depending on the organization of each denomination. This arrangement is a perversion of the New Testament pattern of Christianity and all sincere people who desire to serve in Spirit and in truth should reject this and return to the New Testament pattern.

Let us take a closer look at the differences in the universal church and local church as described in the New Testament.

### **MANNER OF ENTRY**

A person enters the universal church by the forgiveness of sins. God adds one to the universal church Acts 2:47; Gal.3:27. On the other hand, a person joins a local church. Acts 9:26, Paul wanted to join this local church. He was not seeking to join the universal church, he had been in it since he had obeyed the gospel, had his sins washed away, and had come into fellowship with God.

### **ASSEMBLING**

The universal church does not assemble while the local churches assemble regularly. Heb. 10:25.

### **ORGANIZATION**

The universal church does not have any earthly organization, Jesus Christ is the head, it has no elders, deacons, or evangelists Jn.10:11; Eph.5:23; Col. 1:18. The local church however has a plurality of elders or bishops Acts 14:23; Phil.1:1, Acts 20:17, 28.

### **WORK**

The universal church since it has no earthly organization is not a working unit; it has no collective action. On the other hand, the local church has an organization, it has collective action, and it is a working unit.

### **ENROLLMENT**

God enrolls us in the universal church and He never makes mistakes. In Hebrews 12:2 2-23, the Holy Spirit says: *"to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect"*. Likewise, in II Timothy 2:19 Paul says: *Nevertheless, the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity."* On the other hand, our fellowship with a local church involves enrolment by men. In Acts 9:26, after Paul was enrolled in heaven, he sought to be numbered with the saints in Jerusalem but they initially rejected him. This example demonstrates how men in their enrolment make mistakes; they can even refuse fellowship to individuals with whom God is in fellowship.

From the foregoing, it can be seen that the universal church is a relationship all Christians have with God through Jesus Christ 1 John.1:1-4; whereas the local church is organized, involves a local government with elders Acts 14:23, involves a local treasury 1 Corinthians 16:1-2, involves local discipline 1 Cor 5:4-5, 11 and is a collective unit that works in evangelism, edification, benevolence, and worship. Eph. 4:11-13 says *"And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and*

*some pastors and teachers,<sup>12</sup> for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,<sup>13</sup> till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ"*

God gave these offices; apostles and prophets for the establishment of the church, evangelists, pastors, and teachers in the local church today to rule over the church and lead the work and worship. Since these offices; evangelists and pastors exist only in the local church, it is the local church that is authorized to do the work of evangelism, benevolence, and edification. God did not plan the local church to be under the rule or jurisdiction of a provincial, diocesan, or national church. None of these kinds of hierarchies existed in the New Testament. The local church is under the rule of Christ. No local church is higher than another in the sight of God. Each local church is to be led independently by its elders, deacons, and evangelist. Ephesians 4:13-14 concludes that God designed the local church organization so that *"we all come to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the fullness of the stature of Christ: that we no longer be children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting"*.

It is therefore clear that the various hierarchical organizations of denominations are unauthorized and a perversion of God's pattern for His church.

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# THE CHURCH AND THE CHRISTIAN INDIVIDUAL

by Jobalo Oshikanlu

Bible Gems: "Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here." (John 18:36). "...for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17).<sup>1</sup>

In previous articles, we have indicated that the term used in the original Greek New Testament, which term has been translated as "church" in the Bible is *ekklesia*. *Ekklesia* means "Called Out" and refers to a body of people who are called out of one realm into another in which they are together. In Acts of the Apostles 19, the word is translated "assembly" (vs 32) where it has a secular meaning, referring to the citizens of Ephesus who were called together for a meeting in the midst of the city – an *ekklesia* of Ephesus. Howbeit, Jesus spoke of "My" *ekklesia* – the *ekklesia* of Christ (Matthew 16:18). The Bible is also clear that Christians have been "called" by the gospel of salvation (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14) to be "saints" (Romans 1:7) and that they have been "called out of darkness into His marvelous light" (2 Peter 2:9).

**THE CHURCH** (ek-kle-si-a)  
**EKKLESIA**  
**THE CALLED OUT ONES**

The *ekklesia* of Christ refers to the people who are called out and belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Church of Christ is the *universal body* of all believers in Christ who are called out of the world to serve the Lord. Considered in this its "universal" sense, the church is simply a relationship (1 John 1:7). The *universal church* is not an earthly organization that functions physically. Biblically, Christians do not join together to do church work at the universal level. If the Lord had intended for all Christians to function together as a universal body, He would have provided a universal organization for the universal church (2 John 9).

However, the Lord provided the local church as an earthly organization, a body of saved people in a given place or locality (1 Corinthians 1:2) who have agreed to do together the work (Acts 9:26-28) assigned by Christ to the church (1 Corinthians 15:58) and to assemble to worship regularly (Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 11:18). Moreover, each local church or congregation functions collectively, in

a manner distinct from the individual functions of its members (1 Timothy 5:16), by the planned use of its resources, which it possesses as a result of the first day of the week collections (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). This implies that there is a difference between the work of the church (local congregation) and the efforts and activities of its individual members. When an individual acts, that does not mean the church is at work. The church has neither the liberty nor the obligation to do everything the individual may do.

The word "church" is a collective noun whether considered in the "universal" or "local" sense. The Holy Spirit through the Apostle declared "For the body is not one member but many" (1 Corinthians 12:14). The "universal" church is composed of Christians (not congregations, Acts 2:47). While a Christian is expected to be a part of a local church and cannot, under ordinary circumstances, fulfill his responsibilities to God apart from collectively working and worshipping with other Christians, a saved person may be a part of the universal church for a time and not be a part of a local church. A good example is the Ethiopian Eunuch who was baptized on the road to Gaza. He went on his way rejoicing as a member of the church (universal), but he was not yet a member of a local church (Acts 8:36-39). Like the universal church, each local church is composed of Christians, as there cannot be a church of Christ without Christians. But one Christian does not make a church. A church is Christians, but not *just* Christians. This is because a church has a *collective* or *corporate* capacity, a togetherness of Christians apart from its individual members (1 Corinthians 12:12-20).

## THE INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIAN:

Each Christian is given *personal* responsibilities by God to be done individually, and then he is given *collective* responsibilities to be done together or in conjunction with other Christians in the church. One may not isolate himself from other Christians in his general locale without avoiding many extremely important responsibilities given to him by God. The idea that I may be a Christian and refuse to become a member of a local congregation of faithful Christians is false. If one does not exist close enough to enable me to join myself to it, I should

<sup>1</sup> Except where otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James' version (NKJV).



work towards the conversion of others so that soon a congregation will be assembled. Then I will be able to fulfill my collective responsibilities to God. Not every responsibility, however, is in the realm of collective action. God has given spiritual responsibilities to the church (Ephesians 2:19-22; 3:21; 4:1-16) and He has given spiritual responsibilities to Christians as individuals to be done in addition to their work in the church (James 1:27; Acts 18:24-28). The difference is simply that some things are to be done by all the Christians in a local church in their collective capacity, while some things are to be done on an individual basis.

This can be made clearer by viewing the total life of the Christian individual. A Christian has a *spiritual relationship* with his local congregation (Acts 9:26-28). This relationship is uniquely and peculiarly under the Lord's authority. In other realms, Christ has delegated law-making authority to human officials. But the Son of God is the only Law-Giver for His church (Ephesians 1:22-23). Notwithstanding, a Christian has other significant relationships outside of the church, or without the involvement of the church, in at least the following 4 other realms:

- a) A Christian has *family relationships* based on blood, biological, or other secular ties that are not spiritual, and has obligations and rights arising out of these relationships. Whilst the home is a divine institution, having been begun by God in the Garden of Eden (Matthew 19:3-6), and therefore the family relationship must be under the Lord's direction, the rights and obligations in the home are separate from and do not equate to the activities, work or business of the church (1 Timothy 5:8; 1 Corinthians 7:3-5).
- b) A Christian has *economic relationships*, as he is required to earn an honest living (Ephesians 4:28; 6:9; Colossians 3:22-25; 4:1; Acts 16:14; 18:1-3). Again, the activities in this realm fall outside the function of the church.
- c) A Christian has *social relationships*. Although the Lord teaches us how to behave relative to the community (1 Corinthians 10:27-29; Romans 12:15; Luke 14:8-10), and that we must live Christ-like lives before our neighbors at all times, so that our Godly lives may lead them to Christ (Matthew 5:16), the recreational and social activities of the individual Christian fall outside of the business of the church (Bible Gem – Romans 14:17).
- d) A Christian also has *civil relationships* vis-à-vis governmental and secular authorities. Civil government, like the home and the church, is one of the three divinely ordained institutions (Romans 13:1-7) and the Christian individual is required to obey the secular laws and pay his taxes (Titus 3:1). However, the Lord's church, as a spiritual institution, is entirely separate

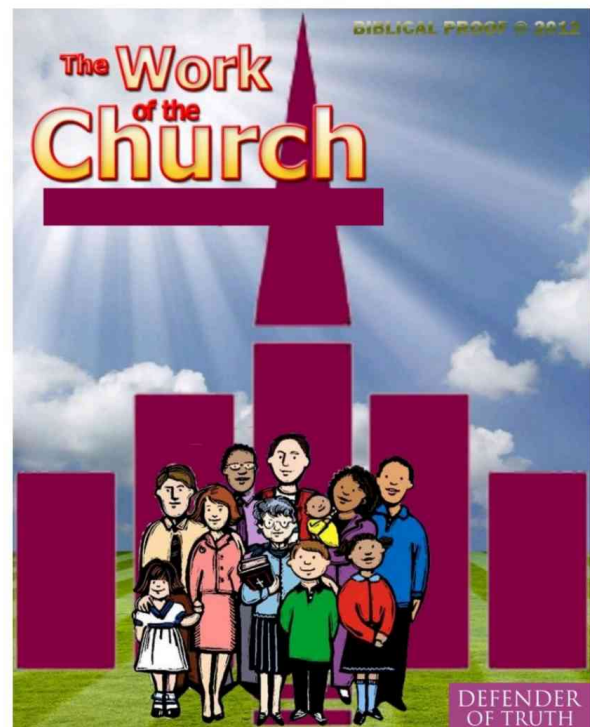
from political bodies or civil government (Bible Gem – John 18:36).

In no instance should liberties and responsibilities of the individual Christian conflict with the collective function of the church. A Christian should be ready to serve God both individually and in his proper role as a member of the local church to the best of his ability.

## THE WORK OF THE CHURCH:

There are several facets of life in which the individual Christian may have legitimate pursuits, and in all of which he must remember to serve the will of God, but which notwithstanding fall outside the work-scope appointed by the Lord for His church and must therefore be avoided by every local church.

Three phrases in Ephesians 4:12 set out the work ordained by the Lord for His church. The three phrases are set out in ascending order. The



church is to perfect (teach) its members, so that they, both individually and collectively (as a congregation), might do the work of ministry (service). This service includes preaching the Gospel to all (spiritual service) and relieving the needy within the church (physical service). In essence, apart from regular worship, the church has three-fold work to perform: teaching its members the Bible, preaching the Gospel to the lost, and relieving its own needy. If each church will worship faithfully, and also zealously pursue the three-fold

work revealed in the Bible, it will be edified (i.e. built-up, experience growth, both spiritually and numerically) in due time (Ephesians 4:13-16; 1 Corinthians 15:58).

However, denominational churches as well as, in some cases, churches of Christ, have completely or partially abandoned the divinely ordained work of the church and have replaced or supplemented them with humanly-devised schemes of church functions. The following are some unauthorized activities that have been introduced in modern churches:

- a) We have seen several and increasing social intervention schemes introduced by many churches and church leaders including in many cases preoccupied with economic rights or fighting to obtain educational and other rights for minorities or the "oppressed" or "less privileged". The majority of the causes are not only good but noble and laudable in the social sphere. We must however be warned that these are not part of the God-ordained work for the church. The Holy Spirit through the Apostle urged the Corinthians, whether slave or free, to "*abide in the same calling*" they were in (1 Corinthians 7:20-21). In a society of gross injustice and even slavery, the Lord left efforts to change the social and economic orders completely outside the function of the church. It is not in the place of man to add what the Lord has not included into the work of the church (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; 2 John 9).
- b) Many churches, including churches of Christ, engage in "universal benevolence", the practice of using congregational funds to relieve the physical needs of all, including non-Christians. There is no New Testament authority for the church to relieve the physical needs of any other than Christians and their families. It is called "*the ministering to the saints*" (2 Corinthians 9:1). The Lord's church is not a human organization such as the Rotary Club or Red Cross!
- c) Many churches, including churches of Christ, now engage in, participate or sponsor recreational activities or what are effectively social activities. Increasing content in many of our church activities, and the use of our church facilities, amount to mere entertainment rather than spiritual edification. These include the various wedding ceremonies, naming ceremonies, thanksgiving services, birthday parties, and the like, which are of increasing significance in many of our churches. Whilst individual Christians may freely engage in these activities, we must always remember that "*the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit*" (Romans 14:17).
- d) Church-sponsored secular education is another huge area of unauthorized activities by many churches. Although many churches today support secular schools with church funds, we

must realize that the church has the responsibility of teaching the Bible and Bible-related subjects, such as singing, which helps us in our worship service to God (1 Timothy 3:14-15; Ephesians 5:19). The church of Christ is not a sanctified school for secular education!

- e) Finally, many churches, including churches of Christ, engage in partisan politics and try to influence political affairs. Denominational churches, starting with the Roman Catholic Church, and including the leading large denominations in Nigeria today or of Nigerian origin, have all in varying degrees played the role of special interest groups in the political arena, to influence government policy and in electioneering, to sway candidates and voters along with various political views. We all must learn before it is too late, that the church of Christ is a spiritual government, not a political one (John 18:36). The Lord's church has no place in politics.

Christians must diligently and zealously pursue and maintain, in the church, only the work that the Lord has assigned for His church (1 Corinthians 15:58; 1 Timothy 3:14-15). If we do this, the church will be edified (Ephesians 4:12-16).

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## CHURCH MUSIC

by Osamagbe Lesley Egharevba



**M**usic is an important item of worship in the New Testament church. We noticed that one of the things that the early Christians did when the church started on the day of Pentecost was “praising God and having favour with all the people and the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47).

Music, according to the English dictionary is defined as “vocal or instrumental sounds (or both) combined in such a way as to produce beauty of form, harmony, and expression of emotion.” From this definition, we observed that music could be (1) vocal (i.e. uttered by the voice, sing); (2) instrumental (with the aid of mechanical instruments), or (3) a combination of both. But what kind of music is authorized by God in Christian worship? A perusal of the New Testament reveals that there are at least nine (9) references to music as done by the Christians in their efforts to praise God. We find all of these represented in both commands and approved examples. It is important to take a look at them.

In Hebrews 13:15, we are commanded to “offer up the sacrifice of praise to God continually that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.” The sacrifice of praise that we are to offer to God as mentioned in this verse is **the fruit of our lips – singing!**

In Ephesians 5:19, we find the command to the Christians; “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.” Again, from this verse, it is important to note that we are expected to **sing** and make melody from the **heart** to the Lord.

Paul unequivocally said in Colossians 3:16 to the Christians; “Let the

word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” Note also that in our efforts to worship God, we are to **sing with grace** in our hearts to the Lord! The command is not for us to sing with mechanical instruments to the Lord but to sing with grace to the Lord. Furthermore, we find in the book of James the following command about music; “Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing psalms.” (James 5:13)

Looking at some examples, we find that Jesus and His disciples **sang a hymn** together (Matthew 26:30). Also, we find that Paul and Silas **sang praises** to God in prison (Acts 16:25). Paul said in I Corinthians 14:15; “I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.” Paul did not opt to sing with mechanical instruments of music but to sing with the spirit and understanding. In Romans 15:9, we find this beautiful quotation; “*And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name.*” And in Hebrews 2:12 we find; “I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.”

The essence of quoting all of these passages is to answer the question of what kind of music is authorized by God in the New Testament. And from these passages, we can see that the vocal music is commanded by God and exemplified by Christians and thus, becomes authorized. We do not find a single passage in the New Testament that the Christians accompanied their worship with instrumental music. And so, introducing instrumental music in our worship is a deviation from what God has authorized. It is not good to be presumptuous and assume that God will accept mechanical instruments along with our singing in worship. In fact, David prayed that God should save him from presumptuous sins and that such sins should not have dominion over him (Psalm 19:13). Those trying to introduce mechanical instruments of music in Christian worship today are guilty of presumptuous sins because they are assuming that God will accept it without having any statement from God authorizing it. The only way we know the mind of God is by His revelation to us through His word (1 Corinthians 2:10-13). The New Testament is silent on the use of



mechanical instruments being used in worship.



### THE ERROR IN MECHANICAL INSTRUMENTS OF MUSIC IN WORSHIP?

Those who are using instrumental music in their worship service are clearly in error. This is because the New Testament does not instruct us to use mechanical instruments in worship and there is no single example in the New Testament of Christians using them in worship. To keep it short and simple, there is no New Testament authority for us to use it.

Often, people want to point us to the Old Testament and cite examples of people like David, etc. showing that it was used by these men of God in the Old Testament and so assume it will be allowed in our worship today. These people are not rightly dividing the word of truth which could be as a result of them not diligently studying to show themselves approved (II Timothy 2:15). The purpose of the Old Testament was to bring us to Christ that we might be justified by faith (Galatians 3:24). The Law came by Moses but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (John 1:17). When Christ died on the cross, He nailed the Old Testament to the cross and its purpose was fulfilled (Colossians 2:14). Christ took away the first covenant that He may establish the second (Hebrews 10:9). The change in priesthood necessitated the change of the law (Hebrews 7:12). The New Testament has made the Old Testament obsolete (Hebrews 8:13). And so, the New Testament is our standard of authority today (Hebrews 1:1,2). It teaches us how to be saved and how to worship God acceptably. The Ethiopian eunuch had gone to Jerusalem to worship according to the Old Testament pattern (Acts 8:27) but that mode of worship was obsolete and that was why the Spirit directed Philip to preach to him about Jesus and how to worship Him acceptably in spirit and in truth (cf. John 4:23-24). Many things were commanded under the Old Testament that are not taught today and which are not acceptable under the New Testament such as animal sacrifices, burning of incenses, keeping the Sabbath (Saturday) holy, etc. We cannot use mechanical instruments in worship today just because

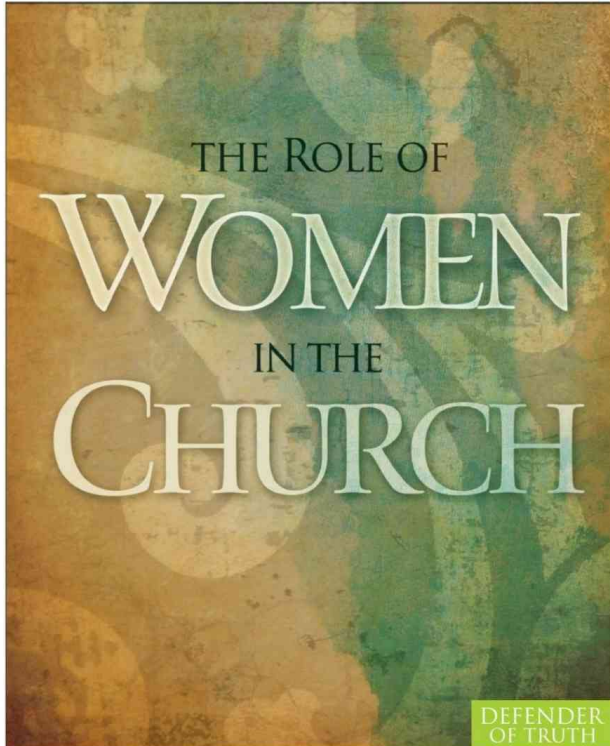
they are found in the Old Testament.

Also, the objection is usually brought forward that nowhere in the scriptures do we find the instruction not to use mechanical instruments of music in the worship of the church. These individuals want to have a command that states that "thou shall not use mechanical instruments of music in the Christian worship." But the truth is: when God has specified what He wants, He does not need to give a list of the things He does not want. If you send someone to buy an apple for you, you do not give the individual a list of other fruits that he should not buy. The fact that you have specified apple already excludes all other kinds of fruits. Similarly, since we find that God has commanded (specified) singing in worship in all of the New Testament commands, that excludes every other kind of music that we may have. It is not a mistake to have mechanical instruments of music in the Old Testament and we do not have it mentioned even once in the New Testament by God in connection with the worship of His children. Let us be obedient to God and praise Him with the fruit of our lips and not add to the commandment that He has given us. Only those who abide in the doctrine of Christ have both the Father and the Son (II John 9).

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# THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

by Kayode Adekunle



## INTRODUCTION:

**T**he sole purpose of establishing the church is to save the souls of both men and women. For this reason, the gospel of Christ must be preached to everybody. In Mark16:15-16, Christ charged His disciples to “go into the world and preach the gospel to every creature”. He says to them in Matthew28:19 “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” men and women inclusive. Paul wrote this to the Roman Church “For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?” Romans10:13-14.

The whole essence of this introduction is to state that the preaching of the gospel and its power to save has never been discriminatory. That is why the record in Acts 2 about how the gospel of Christ was preached, how people believed, and how the church started never reveals the gender of “three thousand souls” that got baptized that day Vs 41 and “those that being saved that are added to the church” Vs 47. We could further see in the conversion stories in the book of Acts that both men and women were baptized where the gospel was preached. When Philip preached in Samaria “men and women believed and were baptized” Acts8:12, Cornelius and his household Acts10, the jailor and all his family Acts16:33 (the gender of Cornelius

household and jailor family not revealed) Lydia and her household were baptized in Acts16:15.

So, in terms of the opportunity to the gospel and its conversion power, men and women are equal. However, the moment they are all baptized into the church, the bible makes it clear that there are areas where men and women share equal status and there are specific areas where they do not share equal status.

## THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

### 1. They are joint-heirs with men.

Both men and women share equal status as far as our eternal inheritance is concerned. Paul confirmed this in his letter to the Romans “and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together” Rom8:17. Peter says this in his admonition to the husbands “husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered”. 1Peter3:7. The implication of this is that everyone (both men and women) must work out their salvation in the church in order to inherit the crown of life Phil2:12; James 1:12.

### 2. They share the same identity with men in the church.

Paul told the Galatians that “for as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus”. Gal3:27-28. Both male and female are all called Christians in Antioch Acts 11:26 that is why they are both referred to as the “epistle of Christ 11Cor3:3. What this simply means is that as far as identity in Christ and representing Him is concerned, both men and women are equal in terms of responsibilities and commitment.

### 3. They are both true worshippers.

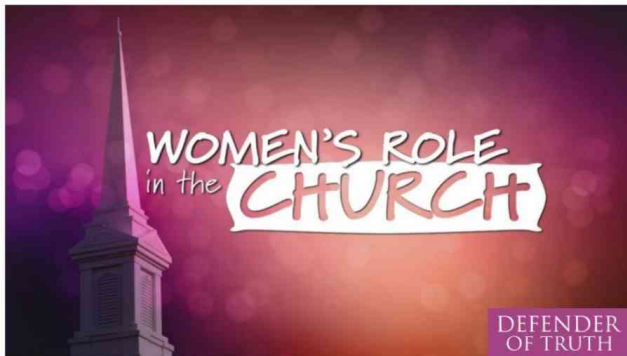
All those who have heard the gospel believed, and have been baptized into the body of Christ are all true worshippers. In Acts 2:42, we are told that all that got baptized that day “continued steadfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in breaking of bread, and in prayers”. Subsequently, all (both men and women) began to worship according to the doctrine of Christ as evident in the New Testament 11John:9-11. They engaged in singing Eph 5:19; Col3:16; breaking of bread (Lord Supper) Luke 22:19; Acts 20:7; 1Cor11:23-30; collection 1Cor16:1-2; 11Cor 9:6-7; prayers Thess5:17 and teaching Acts 2:42.

### 4. They are both teachers in the church

The New Testament reveals that both men and women are teachers in the church. However, while the men can teach the general assembly,



women can only teach women like themselves. Paul in his letter to Titus, enjoined him to teach the older women to admonish the younger women *"the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things, that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed"* Titus 2:3-5. This takes us to what we consider as the limited status of women in the church.



## LIMITED STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

### 1. Women cannot teach the general assembly of the Church

As earlier stated, women are not allowed to teach the general assembly. They are restricted in this regard. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul stated that women are not permitted to teach the collective gathering of the church *"Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church"* 1Cor14:34-35. Not permitted "to speak" here simply means they are not permitted to teach since those who "speak" in the Corinthian church *"speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men"* 1Cor 14:4. Paul wrote to Timothy *"let all women learn in silence with all submission for I do not permit women to teach"* 1Timothy 2:11-12. The clear implication of this is that women cannot be evangelists in the church.

### 2. Women cannot assume leadership positions in the Church

The New Testament makes it clear that women cannot be leaders of the church. They are not to *"they are permitted to have authority over men"* 1Tim 2:12. Those who rule the local church are the elders who are also the bishops. They are to oversee the affairs of the church. Paul says this to the elders of the church from Ephesus *"Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking [b]perverse things,*

*to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn every one night and day with tears"*. Elders are to be assisted by the deacons and these are all men. The qualifications needed in the New Testament to attain these offices show clearly that women can never assume them. The elders and deacons must be men who have wives. *"A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife"* 1Tim 3:2. *"Let deacons be husband of one wife, ruling their own children and their houses well"* 1Tim 3:12. We have practical examples where men took vital decisions for the church in the New Testament. Two examples that came to mind are the incidence in the Jerusalem church when reputable men were appointed to take care of a particular matter Acts 6:1-6 and the one in which the Apostles, elders, and leading men in the Jerusalem church help to resolve the doctrinal issue that emanated from the church at Antioch Acts 15:1-29.

## CONCLUSION

Without any doubt, the Bible is very clear about what God intends for the structure of the church to look like. Men everywhere and at all times to be ready to conform to this. All things must be done by the authority of Christ Col3:17. The situation we see in the world today, where women assume various leadership roles in the denominations is totally against the will of God, and Christ our master and people who engage or encourage such must repent.

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## WHAT ABOUT PAYING OF TITHES?

by *Oladapo Olawale*

**T**he topic of tithes is perhaps one of the most perverted teachings of the bible by many who profess to follow Christ today. To a very large extent, the Old Testament teaching on tithing has been altered to suit modern appeal in a bid to extract money from the unsuspecting public as well as to increase the contribution in churches throughout the world. Ironically, many who desire not to be bound by Old Testament commands and traditions (such as animal sacrifices) in this Christian era, still prefer to retain the practice of payment of tithes and foist the same on others despite a lack of New Testament validation for this.

Indeed, many who pay tithes today, sincerely assume that they know what the Bible teaches about the tithe while disseminating improper information concerning the subject. Merely being sincere about a belief or religious practice is no scriptural justification for such practice (Romans 10:2-3). Christian practices and beliefs must be based on sound or truthful knowledge as revealed in the word of God. It, therefore, behooves everyone who desires to obey God to examine objectively what the bible says on this subject.

### What does the Bible say about Christian Tithing?



#### WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ABOUT TITHES?

Tithe simply means "one-tenth" or ten percent (10%). Tithing took place under the old covenant. However, before the giving of the law of Moses, we read of Abraham paying tithes to Melchizedek (Gen. 14:20). Paul later said, *"Now consider how great this man was, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils"* (Heb. 7:4). Jacob swore that *".....of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You"* (Gen. 28:22). The tithes paid by Abraham and Jacob in the context of the scriptures were not commanded by God at the time, rather they were free will/voluntary payments.

Subsequently the Mosaic law formalized the tithe (a tenth) as a mandatory law on religious giving specifically for the children of Israel on Mount Sinai (Leviticus 27:34). In essence, this law was never meant to apply to any other people but Israel alone. In the Pentateuch we find law relating to tithes mainly in the passages below:

- a) In **Lev. 27:30-33**, a tithe was required to be given of the land, i.e. of the crops of the fruit of the trees, e.g. oil and wine, and the herd or the flock (cf. Deut. 14:22-23; 2 Chron. 31:5-6). The herds and flocks were to be counted as they passed out of the pasture (see also Jer. 33:13; Ezek. 20:37), and every tenth animal that came out was separated as holy and part of the tithe that belonged to the Lord. The owner was not allowed to adjust this procedure by searching among the animals for the tithe to find whether any is good or bad (small, weak, or sickly) nor could he replace a bad animal for a better one. If he did, both the chosen and the one for which it was changed were holy. Tithes of the herds and flocks could not be redeemed for money, but tithes of the seed of the land and fruit could be, but a 5th part of the value of the tithe had to be added.
- b) Again, in **Numbers 18:21-32**, it is stipulated that the tithe must be paid to the Levites. The Levites according to Heb. 7:5 are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood with divine authorization to collect tithes of the people. The Levites were so authorized to receive the tithes offered by Israel to God because they had no other inheritance in the land and return for their service of the tabernacle (Numbers 18:21-24). The Levites were also commanded to offer from their inheritance what is called a heave-offering, that is, a tithe of a tithe, to the priests (cf. Neh. 10:39). To carry out this command, they were to choose the best part of what they received.
- c) In **Deut. 12:5, 6, 11, 18**, it was prescribed that the tithe was to be brought to the place where God chose out of all the tribes of Israel, to put His name for a dwelling place, (i.e. Jerusalem); and in vs. 7, 12, and 18, the person bringing the tithe along with his household and the Levite within his gates were to use the tithe as a sacred meal. This passage is silent about tithing cattle, it only alludes to tithing corn, wine, and oil (cf. Neh. 10:36-38; 13:5-12).
- d) Further in **Deut. 14:22-29** it was laid down that if the journey was too long to carry the tithe to Jerusalem, it could be exchanged for money, and the money taken to Jerusalem instead, where it was to be spent on anything the owner chose. Thus, in this instance, the Israelites had the option of bringing money to the Lord's designated location. The



scripture is however explicitly clear regarding how that money was to be used. Whatever was bought was to be eaten by the person bringing the tithe along with his household and the Levites at Jerusalem. At the end of every third year, the tithe was to be reserved and eaten at home by the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. In Deut. 26:12-15 it was also stated that the third year after this feast had been given, it was required of the tithe giver/the landowner to go before the Lord his God, in Jerusalem, and ask God's blessing on the land of Israel through his acts of obedience.

From the foregoing, we can glean that tithe was paid of crops and flocks and not money. Also, we understand that essentially tithes were of three types namely:

- (i) Annual or yearly tithe given to the Levites-Aaron and other priests who served in the Tabernacle of meeting (Num. 18:20-24).
- (ii) Tithes of every third year were to be given to the Levites, widows, orphans, strangers, and the poor (Deut. 14:22-29). This was also known as the Poor tithe.
- (iii) The Levites were also commanded by God to pay tithe of tithe to the priests from the tithes they have received from the Israelites. This is known as the Heave offering. (Num. 18:26-29).

It will also be noted that the different types of tithes that the Israelites were required to bring in addition to the various sacrifices and free-will offerings, will cumulatively increase their religious and secular taxes to the excess of thirty percent of their total income. The level of their commitment and generosity is indeed commendable and worthy of our emulation under the Christian dispensation.



## IS TITHE PAYMENT A BINDING LAW TODAY?

A diligent study of the Old Testament laws of tithe as espoused above would ordinarily clear any misunderstanding that people may have

about tithe today. Without a doubt, the practice of tithe today is completely at variance with Old Testament law; in fact, many who practice mandatory tithing today would be in grave violation had the Old Testament still applied to us now. From our examination of the Old Testament, tithing was never paid in the form of money; more so only the Levites were commanded to receive tithe. Modern-day tithe payers who fail to comply with these directives cannot claim to be doing the will of God on tithe. Notwithstanding the clear stipulations on tithe in the Old Testament, it is startling that many today, to justify the mandatory payment of tithes, misapply the biblical teachings on tithes to Christian giving. Christian giving is not the same as tithe.

### ***Tithe payment is abolished with the Old Law***

To prove that the practice of tithe is still relevant today, reference is often made to several Old Testament examples of tithing such as Abraham and Jacob (Gen. 14:20; 28:22) and those under the law who were required to tithe (Lev. 27:30; Num. 18:21; 1 Sam. 8:15). After the Mosaic period, during the period of captivity and restoration, the people were instructed to pay their tithes. A failure to do so was considered robbing God (Neh. 10:37-38; Mal. 2:8; 3:1-ff). But reading all these passages proves nothing concerning tithing today. The law is no longer applicable as it has ended (Eph 2:15; Col 2:14, Hebrews 7:18; 8:13). Paul shows in Galatians 3:24-25 that the law was our tutor. He then says we are no longer under the tutor when Christ came. We are no longer under the law because it has been nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14). The Old Testament was a mere shadow of things to come but the New Testament is the real image (Heb. 10:1). We are now living under the law or New Testament of Christ (Heb. 9:16-17) with better promises (Heb. 8:6-7, 2Cor. 3:6-16). Whatever we do in word or deed, we must do it by the authority of Christ (Col. 3:17). Anyone attempting to practice tithing is estranged from Christ and fallen from grace (Gals 5: 4)!

Will those who teach tithes, and their followers do all that is found in the Old Testament? Are we bound by all that is found in the law? Will those who mandate payment of tithe today offer animal sacrifices (Heb. 9:1-7; 10:4)? Will they dwell in booths (Neh. 13)? Will they teach that there is no salvation for those uncircumcised according to the law? The entire old law as given through Moses is considered as ONE PACKAGE. Paul told the Galatians that if they kept part of it (e.g. circumcision), they were bound to keep the whole law (Gal. 5:3). James reiterated this in James 2:10 thus: **“For whoever shall keep the whole law and yet stumble in one point he is guilty of all.”** It is therefore wrong to practice tithe as separate from the entire Old Testament Law.

But some of those who advocate tithe payment today strangely are not content with the fact that the Old Testament is no longer binding on Christians today. They often stretch the argument by referring to Matthew 5: 17 which states that Christ has not come to abolish/destroy the law but to fulfill it, suggesting that tithing has not been abolished. Quite ironic and contradictory, the majority of those who cite this passage still prefer not to be bound by animal sacrifices

<sup>1</sup> This complete fulfillment took place on the cross.

and the burning of incense as required under the law. To have a better understanding of Matthew 5:17 it is instructive to read verse 18 and compare the passage with a similar statement of Jesus in Luke 24: 44 - 45 and Luke 16:17. Jesus was not saying that all or some of the commandments of the law will remain in effect forever, but that the goal of God's law will be realized in Him. All that was written about him in the law of Moses, in the Prophets, and the Psalms will thus have to be fulfilled (i.e completed). Jesus indeed has fulfilled all the prophecies concerning him, including his birth, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension as was prophesied. **As everything written about Christ in the law and the prophets were being fulfilled, the Old Testament law was equally, gradually passing or fading away until everything is thus fulfilled and completely done away with (Heb. 8:13, Heb. 10:9, 2Cor. 3:6-16, Cols. 2:14-17)<sup>1</sup>.** In realizing (fulfilling) the purpose of God concerning the law, Jesus Christ then became the substance (not shadow or tutor as the law is); we therefore no longer require the law as our tutor to bring us into Christ neither can we be bound to keep to the writing of ordinances of the law including tithes (Cols 2:14) because Christ is the fulfillment of the law!

#### ***The New Testament does not authorize payment of tithe today***

Proponents of tithe strenuously attempt to prove tithe is authorized by the New Testament by citing Matt. 22:16-ff and passages that show that the work must be supported (1 Cor. 9:13-14). Other passages on giving are cited (Acts 20:35). Reference is also usually made to Hebrews 7 and Matthew 23:23. Neither passage proves anything about the relevance of tithe to us today. Hebrews 7 just shows that there were some in the Old Testament that paid tithes. Matthew 23:23 states that Jesus instructed some Jews while the law was still in effect to pay tithes.

None of these passages even propose the concept of tithing. The New Testament is silent on the subject and for this reason, we cannot rightfully bind tithing on people today. If any man speaks, he must do so from the word of God (1 Pet. 4:11). If we are to practice anything today, we must do so by the authority of Christ (Col. 3:17).

### **WHAT DOES THE NEW TESTAMENT SAY ABOUT GIVING?**

Although Christians are not required to tithe today, we are nevertheless required to give of our means. Upon the first day of the week, we are to give as we have been prospered (1 Cor. 16:1-2). New Testament Christians also gave to support the needy (Acts 4: 34 – 35) as well as support those who preach the gospel (1 Cor. 9:13-14). The underlying principle is to give willfully and cheerfully (2 Cor. 9:7). We

are to give liberally (2 Cor. 8:1-7) according to our ability (2Cor. 8:12). Each one is to give as he decides in his heart not grudgingly or of compulsion (2 Cor 9: 8). He who gives sparingly shall reap sparingly and he who gives bountifully shall also reap bountifully (2Cor. 9:6). God promises to make all grace abound to the Christian who gives bountifully (2Cor. 9:8). The mandatory payment of tithe was not obtainable in the New Testament, because tithe was a compulsion, a law which even the Israelites found difficult to keep.

### **CONCLUSION**

There is no scriptural validation for payment of tithe as laid down under the law of Moses today because we live under a different dispensation – the Christian era. The law on tithing in the bible as we have seen is not payment of money as it relates specifically to crops and herds. Anyone who chooses to pay tithes today as they did under the law of Moses must comply with the requirements of tithing as prescribed under the law otherwise, he would be guilty of breaking the entire Old Law (Gals 5: 3; James 2:10) and remain under the curse of that law (Gals 3: 10 -13). But Christ has set us free in that he demands voluntary/freewill offering from us as much as God has prospered us. To demand and insist that tithe payment is binding today is to teach contrary to the doctrine of Christ. Anyone who sincerely believes that practicing tithing today is the only thing that brings prosperity today needs to understand that there is no such teaching under the New Testament of our Lord and that such zealous practice is a result of inadequate knowledge of the scriptures.

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## RELIGIOUS TITLES

by *Opemipo Olusola*

**B**y nature, human beings often desire a high and unhealthy sense of self-esteem leading to self-exaltation. One of the easiest ways to achieve this elevation of status in human life is sought in religion, especially amongst many who practice denominational Christianity. Jesus seriously warned his disciples concerning craving for religious titles, which are geared towards human and self-exaltation and for the oppression of the poor or ignorant ones. (Matt 23:4-5)

### CHRIST WARNED US AGAINST CRAVE FOR RELIGIOUS TITLES

According to our Lord, Pharisees love to be recognized among the crowd, thus, they choose the flamboyant garment for religious wear, they choose the best seats in the synagogue, they love greetings in the marketplace, they loved to be called rabbi i.e., leader, teacher, father and so on. But our true master forbids us from wearing those religious titles.

Our holy and humble savior summarized all these haughty attitudes of Pharisees as undue self-exaltation. *"And whosoever exalt himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted"* (Matt 23:4-12).

Similarly, when the mother of the two Zebedee brothers came to Jesus requesting for special rank/title for her sons, our Lord responds *".... yet it shall not be so among you, but whoever desires to be great(chief) among you, let him be your servant"* Matt 20:25-27.

### THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH IS AN ORGANIZED BODY

The church built by Christ is planned by God according to His eternal purpose (Eph 3:10-11). Thus, her name, worship, mission, terms of membership, and organizational structure cannot be altered by 'important' men. Matt 15:13. The wisdom of man is foolishness with God. 1 Cor 1:20

Also, there are offices in the New Testament church which do not carry the idea of title wearing in the name of practicing Christianity. Rather the offices depict the spiritual tasks of building up the members of the local church (Eph 4:11-12).

In Ephesians 4:11, five offices are placed in the church as God's gifts to men namely: Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Out of the five offices, two of them (i.e apostles and prophets) have ceased from existence physically due to the following scriptural reasons:

(a) Both offices functioned in the aspect of laying the foundation for the New Testament church (1 Cor 3:11; Eph 2:19-20)

(b) Both apostles and the prophets helped in writing and compiling the New Testament scriptures which are meant to guide all Christians in every age; it cannot be added to nor subtracted from (Eph 3:3-5)

(c) Both apostles and prophets perform a universal function on all local churches for their edification. In other words, their teachings or letters are authority, binding on every existing local church (1 Cor 4:17; 2 Cor 10:8; 13:10). No man possesses such authority today except Christ (Matt 28:18).

(d) The qualifications that are spelled out for anyone who would like to assume both the office of an apostle (Acts 1:20-23) and the office of a prophet (Acts 8:17-19), are impossible to be met today.

(e) The perfect/complete revelation of the scripture has come which has made the temporary spiritual gifts cease. Remember that both apostles and prophets cannot function in the church without supernatural gifts (1 Cor 13:8-13).

Therefore no one is scripturally qualified to be called an apostle and a prophet today. Those who claim both offices today are false, portending danger for our souls and are to be fled from (2 Cor 11:13-14; Acts 20:28-32; 2 Pet 2:1-3)

### OTHER SCRIPTURAL OFFICES

#### (a) EVANGELISTS

Evangelists are also called preachers (Rom 10:14). These are proclaimers of the gospel of Christ from place to place (2 Tim 4:1-5); they are to guide the local church in ordaining elders (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5,7). It is a work, not a title. For example, we see Philip the evangelist in Acts 21:8. There is no evangelist Philip in our Bible as it is being used in the denominational churches today.

#### (b) PASTORS

These men are also called elders, presbyters, bishops, overseers, and shepherds (please read Acts 20:17,28; Tit. 1:5,7; 1 Pet 5:1-3). The pastors are given the charge over the flock of God (Heb 13:7,17). They are not to lord over the church but to lead a godly exemplary life for the fold (1 Pet 5:3-4). They are called pastors because of their tasks of feeding the flocks of God. The term pastor is never used as a title in our Bible. Peter the apostle wrote: the elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the suffering of Christ (1 Peter 5:1). Despite being an apostle of Christ, Peter never saw himself as being superior to other elders around

him. The term 'fellow' is defined as of equal rank". Therefore, no pastor is superior or inferior to the other. Jesus Christ is the only senior pastor, general overseer/superintendent, archbishop e.t.c. that we have in Christianity: 1 pet 5:4.

(c) DEACONS

The term *diakonos* is translated as minister, servant, the one who serves the table (Acts 6:1-2). These men are the official servant of the church for Christ's sake; they are to serve under the pastors. They are not inferior to the pastors (i.e Bishops/Elders) (Philp 1:1), rather they are church official servants for Christ's sake (1 Tim 3:8-13).

(d) THE TEACHERS

These are men who have been taught accurately the gospel of Christ to support the evangelists in building up the church, for example, we have in the New Testament Silas and Apollo (Acts 18:24-28). There were teachers in the Antioch church (Acts 13:1). Barnabas was a good teacher who provided great help in teaching the Antioch church (Acts 11:23-26). The evangelists have the duty of reproducing new teachers for the church (2 Tim 2:2).

## EXAMPLES OF UNSCRIPTURAL TITLES

1) Pope

It is derived from the word "papacy" which is also called "father". Jesus Christ forewarned us and forbid us from Calling anyone our father on the earth (Matt 23:8-9). If we ordained some men to wear such papacy title today, then we are guilty of direct violation of our Lord's command (Matt 23:9).

2) Reverend

The psalmist wrote "... holy and reverend is Your name " (Ps 111:9; see also Matt 6:9). Thus, it is blasphemous for fallible men to assume such a holy title that is fitting only for the divine supreme being. Morally depraved men not only address themselves as reverend but also claim "most/right reverend". This is indeed sad!

3) Priests

During the Old Testament era, only the Levites were separated for priesthood service while Aaron and his sons were ordained as the High priests (Num.18:1-5). But under the Christian dispensation, the priesthood has been changed (Heb.7:12,18). Christ alone is now our High priest while all Christians through spiritual birth have become "royal priests " to God (Heb.4:14; 1Pet2:5,9). Therefore, it is heretical for anyone or a group of persons to create a special "priesthood" as an office or as a title today.

Other unscriptural titles include venerables, Cardinals, archbishop, general overseer, president, general evangelist, pastor (Mrs), deaconess e.t.c. All the above religious titles or hierarchies are man-made in origin; thus, they are additions to God's holy words. There is a divine curse that is attached to such arrogance against the God of

heaven in creating offices or titles which have no place in the organizational structure of the New Testament church as it is written in the Bible (Rev 22:18-19; Gals 1:6-9).

## CONCLUSION:

Having learned that self-exaltation is an instinct being constantly horned by the carnally minded religious people of all ages as in the case of the Pharisees in Matt 23, how well have you tamed that monster(selfish ambition) in your life?

Which one do you think will be acceptable unto God? Is it the title created by religious men for self-exaltation and the oppression/subjugation of the innocent/poor ones or the eternally planned organizational structures for Christ's Church?

It is not too late to resign from all those man-made titles such as Pope, General Overseer (G.O), Priests, Father, Pastor (MRS), Archbishop e.t.c. and be baptized into the church of Christ where the New Testament pattern for the church government is being strictly followed and obeyed (2 John. 1:9-11).

What are you waiting for? Acts 22:16.

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