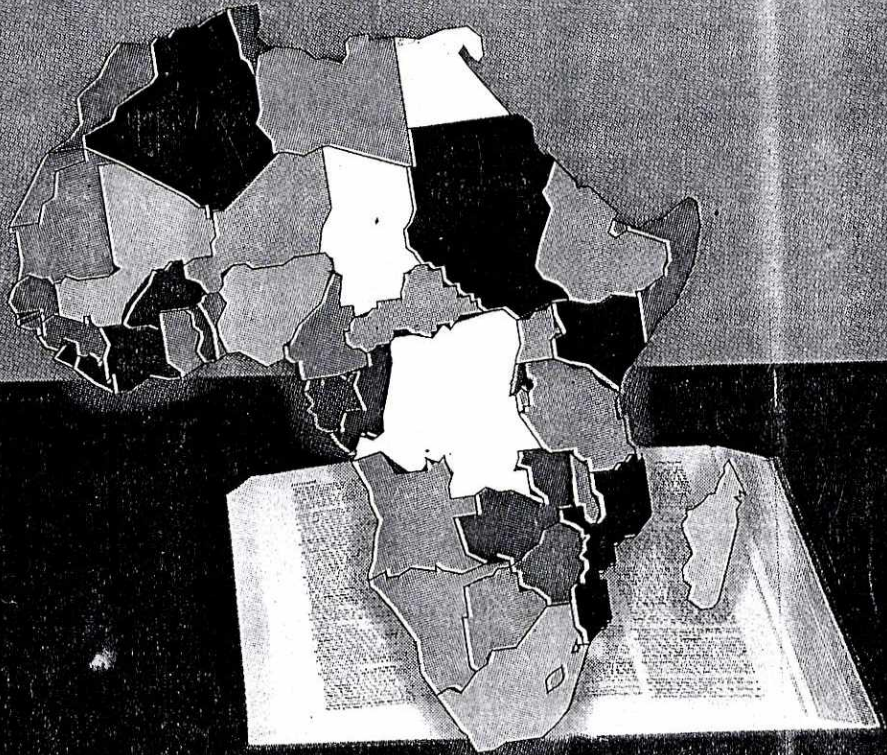


Biblical Studies *and* **Leadership In** **Africa.**



GENERAL EDITOR
REV. PROF. S.O. ABOGUNRIN ^{FNAL}
Biblical Studies Series Number 7

A PUBLICATION OF THE NIGERIAN ASSOCIATION OF BIBLICAL STUDIES (NABIS)

BIBLICAL STUDIES AND LEADERSHIP IN AFRICA

GENERAL EDITOR
REV. PROF. S.O. ABOGUNRIN

EDITORS
J.O. Akao
D.O. Akintunde
Kunle Dada
G.N. Toryough
P.A. Oguntoye

Biblical Studies Series
Number 7

*A Publication of The Nigerian Association
for Biblical Studies (NABIS)*

© Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies (NABIS) Ibadan, 2009

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means: electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

First Published 2009

Printed in Nigeria by
M. Alope Nig. Enterprises
08035629293

ISBN: 07-7602

CHAPTER 43

AN ASSESSMENT OF CHURCH LEADERSHIP IN NIGERIA IN THE LIGHT OF LEADERSHIP QUALIFICATIONS IN I TIMOTHY 3:1-7

REV. DAIRO A. OLALEKAN

Introduction

For either natural or spiritual leadership, there are some common features in the various definitions of leadership. It will be presumptuous for anyone to attempt a definition that will satisfy a student of leadership. Leadership is nothing if not linked to collective purpose; and the effectiveness of leaders must be judged, not by press clippings but by actual social change, measured by intent and by satisfaction of human needs and expectations. This is why Cribbins defines leadership as "the ability to gain consensus and commitment to common objectives beyond organizational requirement which are attained with experience or contribution and satisfaction on the part of the working group".¹

Leadership could be defined as the relationship in which one person or the leader influences others to work together willingly on related tasks to attain that which the leader desires. It is a means of direction. Leadership is the ability of management to induce the subordinates to work towards a group's goals with confidence and keenness. It implies that the leader accepts responsibility for the achievement of the group

objectives and it is, therefore, essential for the trust and cooperation from both sides to be evidence all the time.² Leadership is an art of getting things done. It can be learnt, improved, developed and perfected. It is the process of influence and the process always includes a number of key components such as leader and followers; they interact in situations and means of influence which emerge from the leader and from the followers, based on their value system and goals which the leader and the followers seek to achieve.

In sum, leadership implies that:

- The leader gives direction, motivates, reprimands and develops a set objectives along with his group and resolves individual or group needs.
- He represents the group, channeling information and maintaining perspectives.
- He develops the group, creating the group's ability to change and integrate the group with the environment.

It is indeed a dynamic reciprocal process of personal influence by which a manager or a leader shapes the attitudes and activities of others towards the achievement or attainment of organizational objectives. Even before the modern concepts of leadership came into being, Paul in the Pastoral, lists the qualifications for church leaders. These have remained the model for ages. For any church leader to steer the ship of the church successfully, these qualities must be imbibed. But contemporary experience in Nigeria has shown a marked departure from this Pauline list of qualifications for church leaders. The level of understanding expected from both the leaders and the followers is missing in most cases. This often results in crises within "the body of Christ".

In view of the above, this paper attempts a clarification of these qualifications according to Paul. It also relates them to the contemporary conceptions of church leadership in order to determine if the biblical injunctions are still being followed or not. To do this successfully, a critical exegesis of the Greek and English texts of the passages will be done in order to know what the texts means in their original context and what they mean in our own context today.

The Exegesis of 1 Timothy 3:1-7

The saying is sure; if any one aspires to the office of bishop, he desires a noble task. Now a bishop must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, sensible, dignified, hospitable, an apt teacher, no drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and no lover of money. He must manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way for if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how can he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil; moreover he must be well thought of by outsiders, or he may fall into reproach and the snare of the devil (RSV).

If a man wants to be a "bishop (Gk. *Ἐπίσκοπος*, i.e., one who has pastoral oversight, an overseer or pastor), he desires a noble and important work (1 Tim. 3:1). However, such person must have that desire confirmed by the call of God and the church God has specified for church leaders certain qualifications. This means that the church must not endorse any person for ministerial work based solely on his desire, education or claim. Any one seeking the office of a pastor, teacher, or missionary must be tested by the members of his or her church according to biblical injunctions in 1 Tim. 3:1-7, 4:12; and Titus 1:5-9. The church today has no right to change these scriptural requirements. They stand as the absolutes and must be followed.⁴ To have a clearer picture of these qualifications there is need to examine them one by one:

Must be blameless: The prospective overseer must be "blameless" (Gk. *ἀνεπιλημπτος*, literally meaning "not to be laid hold of"). This has to do with proven integrity or to be above reproach in his marital, family, social, and business life. No overseer should be justifiably charged with immorality or any misdeeds.

Not given to wine: This phrase, *mē paroinon*, means not to be by or near wine literally or with wine, or “be beside wine”. The Bible here requires that no overseer should drink intoxicating wine, or be enticed by it. Non-addiction to fermented wine was the standard required of kings, princes, and judges in the Old Testament (Prov. 31:4-7). It was also the standard for all who sought to be close to God (Lev. 10:8-11; Num. 6:1-5; Judge 13:4-7; I Sam. 1:14-15; Jer. 35:2-6; 4 Prov. 23:31).⁵ Those who rule in the church of Jesus Christ cannot have a lower ethical standard. Furthermore, all believers are called priests and kings (1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6), and therefore, are required to live by God’s standard (John 2:3, Eph. 5:18, 1 Thes. 5:6; Tit. 2:2).

Manage his own household well: This is an important qualification for candidates desiring the office of overseer, that is faithfulness in marriage and family relationships. *Not a New convert.* A new Christian may view being an overseer a prestigious office rather than a grave responsibility. Paul was aware that if a babe in Christ became an elder, he could become proud and conceited and fall into condemnation. In addition, a new convert does not have adequate knowledge of Christianity needed to shepherd the flock.⁶ *He must have a good report:* the prospective overseer must “have a good report” with Christians and non-Christians (v. 7). He must have a good report and continue to be good (7).

A Christian leader must be first and foremost “an example for believers” (1 Tim. 4:12, cf. 1 Pet. 5:3). His Christian life and steadfastness in the faith must be worthy of emulation by the congregation. A church leader must manifest the highest example of perseverance in godliness, faithfulness, purity in the face of temptation loyalty and love toward Christ (1 Tim. 4:12, 15). The people of God must learn godliness, not only from the Word of God, but also from the example of pastors who live according to apostolic standards. The pastor must be one whose faithfulness to Christ is an example to his followers. He must be “*the husband of one wife*” (1 Tim. 3:2). The candidate for the office of an overseer should be a believer who has remained morally faithful to his wife. The literal translation of the Greek *μίας μασ γυναικος*, an attributive genitive, is “*a one woman man*”, i.e. the faithful husband of his wife. This means that the candidate must be a person who can show the evidence of being true and faithful in this all-important area.⁸

Church Leadership: Nigerian Experience

In many churches in Nigeria⁹ false teaching, preconceived ideas and human-formed regulations have too often undermined the Holy Spirit's specifications about the choice of leaders. Paul said the church leader must be the kind of man he described above. All church leaders may not possess these qualities in the same measure but a leader must have these attributes to a degree that is noticeable in his life. If a man is known to be harsh instead of being gentle, intemperate instead of being temperate, disgraceful instead of being respectable, he has disqualified himself. The work of church leadership is a noble task. Such an office needs the right kind of people to serve. No doubt, the problem of erring church leaders is not peculiar to Nigeria or Africa. Rancorous divisions, muddled thinking and double loyalty have marked the history of the churches down the ages. However, some of the problems about church leadership in Nigeria are traceable to the prevailing economic condition. Food security is threatened. Privatization and commercialisation of education, which have increased the cost of education resulted in mass dropouts; added to this is the mass unemployment.¹⁰ What we are witnessing today is aggressive proselytising in which each denomination seeks for domination. The struggle for soul winning cum supremacy, we also have the social-economic considerations. This is the major reason for proliferation of churches. The messages are no longer about salvation, heaven and hell but the acquiring of material wealth, by capitalizing on the "gross ignorance" of the people about the teaching of the Bible on wealth. All over the world and particularly in Nigeria 'marketing' God is fast becoming a top bracket business. Today religion has become the "food basket of the nation, billowing into a flourishing agro-allied industrial complex".¹² There is a market value for everything under the sun and religion is not an exception. This is why people establish Churches today regardless of whether or not they possess the leadership qualifications listed by Paul.

Conclusion

Why did Paul dwell so much on the character of church leaders? He was well aware that the church situation cannot but be determined by the type of leadership it enjoys. The spiritual level of a church leader often determines the spiritual level of the generality of the church membership. Foreigners cannot rescue the Nigerian church from her present plight. The salvaging of the situation will have to be done by Nigerians themselves. The situation in Nigeria demands more than mere pretence; it needs concrete solutions.¹⁶

True leaders, who are living examples in integrity, honesty, consistency, and are deeply spiritual are few. Self-made leaders may possess a form of godliness, but would deny the power of God, in their actions. If the Body of Christ will get into the prophetic "promised land", this situation must change. Where capable leadership is not in place, most things do not work out, as they should. God's people in all ages have always suffered because of lack of good leadership.¹⁷ Throughout the scriptures, all God's servants must be qualify spiritually and properly trained (Ex. 18:13-25; Acts 6:3-5). Church leadership is more than mere academic qualifications. It requires combining the spiritual qualifications with the organizational ability.¹⁸

One of the solutions is to have a discipline leadership which, in turn, will be able to disciple others. The solution, therefore, requires a deliberate partnership between the churches and Theological Institutions/ Departments of Religious Studies all over the country. This is so, because the responsibility to train such Christian leaders is ours together. Together, we can help individuals to be authentic African Christian leaders who know how to deal with the contemporary problems in their communities and in the nation. The churches in Nigeria have no other option than partnership with the theological training institutions.¹⁹

The success will depend on the church's ability to respond holistically to the massive challenges facing its leadership. The church in Nigeria needs leaders who can adapt the gospel message to meet the harsh difficulties facing our people. A large number of courageous, faith-oriented leaders is needed to serve the growing church. They need to be

biblically rooted, culturally sensitive and proactive visionary men and women of God. The overwhelming challenges facing the Nigeria church today require dynamic agents of change. The churches of today must not turn from the righteous requirements for leadership, which God has set forth through the apostle. The church must also require from its leaders the highest standard of holiness, perseverance in faithfulness to God and His word and godly life. They are to be earnestly prayed for, encouraged and supported; while they too must be examples to believers in word in conversation, charity, faith, and purity" (1 Tim. 4:12).

End Notes

1. Quoted by Gabriel Oluwasegun, *Leadership in the Church* (Ibadan: International Publishers, 2005), p. 4.
2. Gabriel Oluwasegun, *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. C. Donald, Stamps (Gen. ed.) *The Full Life Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), p. 1908.
5. *Ibid*, p. 1906.
6. Lockman Foundation, "Truth for Today" *A publication of Lockman Foundation*, 1997, p. 29.
7. C. Donald, *Op Cit*, p. 1908.
8. *Ibid*, p. 1909.
9. Experience during participant observation in some African Instituted Churches as well as some New Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria, 1995-1997.
10. Kuala Lumpur, "Women Resist globalization – Assert Women's Rights" a paper presented at the 3rd World Women's Conference APEC, (Available: <http://home.vicnet.net.au/globalization/confnews.htm.1998.pp1-3>).
11. Experience during Participant Observation...
12. F.K. Obiora, *The Divine Deceit: Business in Religion* (Enugu: Nigeria Optimal Publishers, 1998), p. 51.

13. Bible Org: "Qualifications for the Evaluation of Elders and Deacons" (Available <http://www.bible.Org/page.Asp.Downloaded24/09/2004>).
14. *Ibid.*
15. *Ibid.*
16. S.O: Abogunrin, "St. Paul's Conception of Disciplined Leadership in the Nigerian Context" in S. Ade Dopamu (ed.) *Religion and Discipline* A Publication the of Nigerian Association for the study of Religions (NASR), 1986, p. 225.
17. A.O. Dairo, "Leadership Qualifications for Contemporary Church Administrators in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects". A Lecture Delivered at Workshop on "Leadership Skills for Church Administrators". Organized by Christian Theological Seminary, Ibadan, on Thursday 19th June, 2007, p. 1.
18. A.O. Dairo, "Church Leadership in Nigeria: Combining Spiritual and Organizational Techniques" in Ade P. Dopamu (ed.) *Religion, Leadership and Society: Focus on Nigeria*, Lagos: Nigerian Association for the Study of Religions, 2004.
19. Victor Nakah, "Issues Facing the Church in Zimbabwe and How the Church Can Respond" in *Journal of African Christian Thought*, (Vol. 6, No. 2, 2003), p. 18.