

# There ain't no God in Church no more

## Has God left our Church Buildings?

*By JP Roelofse*

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*The author can be contacted at: [jpr.eldo@gmail.com](mailto:jpr.eldo@gmail.com)*

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## **PREFACE and DEDICATION**

This book is dedicated in humble adoration to my Creator and Almighty God for the wisdom, knowledge and talents, and for guiding me in capturing my experiences, witnesses and thoughts in His Honor and Glory. I trust that my humble voice be heard.

This book is dedicated to my wife - Gerda - for her trust, support, love and certainty in my abilities, even though I sometimes doubted myself; to my children - Marius, Nadia, Rolene and Wikus - for being my sound boards, my "discussion panel" - although you mostly had to listen. The love, dedication, support and loyalty of my family are the reasons I can be the best me.

Furthermore, this book is dedicated to all my friends and family who unconditionally supported me in prayer and messages of encouragement - although some of you also never believed or supported the truths of this book. To everyone who has directly and indirectly contributed, a word of gratitude, including all the internet writers and contributors that have added some thoughts over the years.

To the churches and leaders of all the churches that I had the privilege to attend and to have experienced all the positives, the teachings, the blessings - but mainly all the negativities and unconstructiveness that church - and more specifically its leaders - can offer, my deepest appreciation. The lack of God inside the church walls is diminutive in comparison to the proof of existence of God in the World.

To all the Gospel Artists and those secular Artist professing to be Christians - and the Gospel Production Companies - who were the essence of unbiblical and unprincipled behavior and conduct, my sincerest appreciation for letting me see your true

colors. For the few who have let me experience the value of true friendship and compassion, my utmost gratitude - there are so few of you in this world. For the last Praise and Worship band that I was part of for nearly 6 years, you have opened my eyes to experience the difference between Good and God Experiences, although very little God Experiences ever came the way of the band. For the many years of Bible Studies and Teaching that I had the privilege to attend every week - most of great value and a wealth of knowledge, only to realise that there also is no difference inside these groups than any other, my humble thanks.

***The lesser and lesser I saw of God in church, in Christian business and in all of you, the more I experienced that God existed outside the walls of institutionalized buildings, businesses, groups and denominations.***

This book is not intended to address all the issues where the church might be wrong - and it seems that this list is much longer than the "right" list - this is a collection on issues that I have personally experienced and witnessed over the years. I do not pretend to have all the answers, neither do I imagine myself having all the answers, but commonsensical reasoning and basic understanding of God and the Bible still prevail above denominational religious practices. I have not attempted to find "scriptural justification" for everything in the book, and the few scriptural quotes are used to emphasize my thoughts, not justifying my reason.

Quotations from others writers / contributors are formally acknowledged and copyright respected, but no specific origin references are used as these quotes can be found on numerous websites and reference sites.

May God alone be glorified in this book. © JP Roelofse - 2010

## What is wrong with our World?

*(A poem written expressing my experiences with church and Christians  
Groups and People)*

*I went to some friends,  
to find that of God they are only partially aware,  
I went to the mall,  
and I couldn't find my God doing His shopping somewhere;  
So I went to the Zoo,  
and saw Him in all creatures, in the cages of the lion, the bear;*

*I went to the my Cell Group,  
and found that very few – about God - actually care;  
I went to the Bible Study,  
and found that it is definitely not a Godly affair;  
So I went to the Bushes, the Mountains & Streams,  
I smell my God, in all the air;*

*I went to the Wealthy,  
and found that for money – their love is declared;  
I went to the Poor,  
and felt hopeless at all the anger against God that they share;  
So I went to the Ocean,  
and felt God in even the smallest and the rare;*

*I went to the Pastor,  
to find that God is only at the End of his Prayer;  
I went to the church band,  
to find God is only the words in the songs that they blare,  
So to the church I went in despair,  
only to realise... I could not find my God in there!*

**From: My God, My Country and Me**

A Collections of Poems, Verses and Songs by Koos Roelofse © 2010

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## Chapter 1: The book elucidated

In this chapter:

- What is “church”?
- Our most startling enemies
- The religious gap
- What this book is all about
- Compilation of the book
- Reformation is needed

After being expelled from a predominant Charismatic Church because I had the courage to disagree with the travesty in Praise and Worship and the unbiblical structures and activities within the Church, I have not only lost all confidence in the Church, but realized that the Church - as Institutionalized Religious Practice - and Christian Structures - inclusive of Christian and Biblical Businesses and Organisations - is the biggest downfall of Christianity as well as Faith in God in our modern World today. When we started attending a new church under a different denomination - I found that although the name of the Church might differ, the religious practices and denominational games are played the same as seemingly everywhere else.

This book - and specifically this chapter - is primarily concerned with my own observations and personal impressions of the church, religion and Christianity at large - from partaking in churches, observing church leadership, scrutinizing religious television channels and listening to many Christians and friends - to name but a few aspects.

Am I disgruntled because I was expelled? Definitely not! Am I disgruntled because of the deceptive controversies and practices in church? Definitely!

### **What is "church"?**

Some of the definitions I found of the word or concept of "church" include - inter alia - the following:

- Groups of Christians who have their own beliefs and forms of worship;
- a place for public (especially Christian) worship;
- church service - a service conducted in a house of worship;
- A body of people who attend or belong to a particular local church;
- A church building is a building or structure whose primary purpose is to facilitate the meeting of a church;
- "thing belonging to the Lord";
- the whole body of Christian believers; Christendom, or any division of this body professing the same creed and acknowledging the same ecclesiastical authority;
- ecclesiastical organization, power, and affairs, as distinguished from the state;
- Clergy and religious officials of Christian denomination;
- Any religious society, organization or congregation;
- institutionalized forms of religion as a political or social force;

The above disparate definitions of what church is suppose to, is an indication of the magnitude of the problem. If we are unable to have one, descriptive all-encompassing definition of the church - both inside and outside of church, then church can literally mean whatever anybody wants it to be.

My view is that all of the above definition, inclusive of all the ones given by specific denominations, plus all other possible definitions, are actually all correct. It describes the church as the church is, as the church is viewed in and by the world.

This unfortunately does not imply that any of the definitions is the true biblical definition of the church as taught by Jesus, the Apostles and the Bible at large. As you the reader progress through this book, you will be able to associate any and all of the definition quoted - or those that you personally know of - for all the “wrong” reasons with the modern church of today.

I believe it is safe to say - that per definition - the concept of “church” would most probably include church as we know it - the institutionalized religious practice center - but also the following “religious or spiritual groupings”:

- Christian Organisations
- Christian or Gospel Businesses;
- Biblical / religious founded Groups and Assemblies;
- Worship services in home (So-called “Home Churches”)
- And the assembly of any other religious grouping.

The same concept of “church” is actually used by most / or all religions in the world.

***To define “Christian Church” is basically impossible, for there are as many definitions as there are denominations; and there are as many denominations as there are explanations; and there are as many explanations as there are interpretations.***

A topic that has sparked numerous debates over the years is the matter of church attendance. Numerous studies have been done by a great deal of organisations, churches and institutions over the years and these statistical analyses are so disparate and the results even more incongruent.

***Given the magnitude of definitions for Christianity; the enormity of definitions of church; and the hideousness of denominations - it would basically be impossible to determine church attendance.***

We find statistics for “church attendance” ranging from 4% of “Christians” to just over 30%, dependent on the “definitions” used. We see statistics ranging from 2% of believers to 10% of “church people”. No one statistic is actually the “real truth”.

***One thing that is quite clear from all statistical results is that the “church” - even through the vastness of definitions and denominations - is not representative of Christianity, the Body of Christ, Christendom or the True Biblical God.***

### **Our most startling enemies**

I have learnt that our most startling - yet forewarned - enemies are our fellow Christians - and the church and its leaders seem to be right on top of the list. Today if one challenges the viewpoints of the denominations, or the articles of religion, or the pastors and church leaders or any “religious entity”; you are asked to leave the congregation to keep the “denominational unity” intact. These actions of immediate “eradication” tolerate no honest discussion, no resistance or even revision of situation and truths and eliminate any possible “threat” against the religious practices of denominations and religious groupings.

My worst experiences of back-stabbing, hypocrisy, greed and artificial actions - both in the secular and spiritual spheres - came from within “Christian Group” and from “Christian People” - and mostly “those in the front row or those on the stage and in the lime light”. I have learnt that the higher up in the

Church, Religious and/or Faith Hierarchy a person seems to place himself - or being placed by others - the greater the hypocrisy and pretentiousness seems to be.

Are those ones negative about the church the enemies of the church? Church Leaders almost always brand former or ex-church members as the worst enemies of the church - especially those that have left due to differences of opinion or who challenged any "denominational concealment". These unwanted or "negative members" are branded as obnoxious, disgruntled, unhappy or discontented with something that didn't go "their way". Although there might certainly be much truth in the latter statement, there are two types of "negative" people in the church:

- On the one side it is definitely those who are discontented with some or other unhappiness or even some personal vendetta against the leadership or someone in church
- Then there are those members who know what being a member is like, who know the doctrines well and who care what the church is doing and not doing.

I believe the worst "enemies" of the church are those members - in which category I would place myself - who knows too much about the "church".

***Church members who know too much - are those who have seen the deceitfulness and hideousness in church; who have witnessed the perpetuation of spurious religious practices and spiritual treachery; and who have experienced the egocentric gluttony of churches and church leaders.***

These members - if deemed as any risk to the church - are not only irrevocably expelled by the church, but are ostracized by the same church they used to belong to for normally many a year. These members are furthermore belittled and ill spoken

of by those groups they were part of and were accepted in. It is these people who the leaders of the church attack quite ferociously and trying to convince all that the “disgruntled member” left for “trivial reasons” or “trifling motives”.

Normally only the thoughts of the person has changed, so is this disgruntlement, differences of opinions - or is this pure spiritual hatred and denominational fortification?

***Can any person stay in a church or milieu which rationally contradicts God's Word, opposes one's own coherent integrity and lucidly refutes Biblical Truths?***

We can deliberate this issue at length, and I believe there is not a single Christian in the world who has not been hurt - directly or indirectly - by a fellow Christian, Church Leadership or the Church - in any form or denomination. Is this purely because of our sinful nature? - I belief not.

***If the hurting of fellow Christians by the Church and by other Christians are purely because of our sinful nature, why is so much emphasis placed in so many places on warnings and cautions in the Bible against our brothers, our friends, our church leaders and our fellow Christians?***

Is the church and Christians not using our “sinful nature” as an excuse for hypocrisy, greed, blunder and self-centeredness?

### **The religious gap**

A good friend of mine once said that the gap between where God is with a person and where the person thinks he is with God is filled by the church. I believe that this is also true for the modern day church and that the gap is ever increasing. The distance between where God is with the church and where the

church professes or believe to be with God is worlds apart - and this gap is growing bigger and bigger by the day. Because of this predicament, the church is growing stronger as an “institutionalized religious establishment”, but growing further away from God and God’s Word.

***We are seeing more and more institutionalized behavior and lesser and lesser of God.***

Denominational unity is growing stronger as more and more people are “converted” to the denominational doctrines and articles of religion of the church. God and the Bible is then “adapted” - through diversification of understanding - to suite the “religious requirements” prescribed by these articles and doctrines, and “worship” is tailored to the acquired denominational understanding.

**What this book is all about**

This book is intended to portray my personal experiences with the church, church leaders and religious institutions over a period of many decades, with specific emphasis on the last 10 to 15 years.

I wish to thank all those who have contributed positively in my life and my faith, but also those whose negative experiences have contributed positively to this book. Every time I am at a crossroad on whether I am just cynical or negative, your bad experiences have confirmed my beliefs and expectations, and God’s Word has corroborated my perspectives.

In retrospect, most or all of my knowledge was either built by a positive teaching, a constructive contribution or a negative experience - which in all instances led to me knowing more about faith and Christianity, but ultimately knowing more about

God and His Word. These led to me understanding and knowledge on why there are so many warnings and cautions in the Bible and being appreciative of the admonitions of the Holy Spirit.

Based on Matthew 13 verse 41 & 42, I believe that the church and church leaders are actually mostly included in the “causes of offence” as depicted in verse 41 with the preaching of false teachings, false doctrines, institutionalized religious practices and being the cause of the brokenness of the church overall.

***Mat 13:41 The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all causes of offense [persons by whom others are drawn into error or sin] and all who do iniquity and act wickedly,***

***Mat 13:42 And will cast them into the furnace of fire; there will be weeping and wailing and grinding of teeth.***

As one individual, I will most probably be criticized as “attacking” the so-called “body of Christ” - who many would like to believe is the “church”, and my book will most probably be branded as “blasphemy” by the same church I am “offending”, but I believe that I have trusted God for the wisdom, the Holy Spirit for the guidance and Jesus Christ for the teaching and warnings in Scripture.

In the Bible, we find that Paul actually instructed Timothy to “reprove, rebuke, and exhort” in 2 Timothy, but this did not make Timothy an antagonist against the church:

*2Ti 4:2 preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.*

*2Ti 4:3 For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts;*

History has proven that the truth does not always rest within the confines of the masses and the hysteria of the majority, but that is most of the time entrusted to the few and the minorities.

I personally believe that:

***“Being a minority or marginalized and branded wrong might be the biggest right one can ever be.”***

Most in the Christian community today would agree that Martin Luther was correct in his stand against the teachings and practices within the Church of his day. But Luther was part of the minority at the time. I am not professing to be the next Martin Luther, but can we argue with Luther when he voiced these true words (whether spoken by Luther himself or not)?

*“Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason - I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other - my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me.”*

But like it use to be in the Catholic Church in the days of Martin Luther, the majority within the Church today also accept the authority of councils, denominations, religious doctrines and articles, pastors, preachers, teacher and ecclesiastic leaders overall. In this turmoil of ambiguity and denominational chaos, God the Trinity has lost true meaning.

Although the next verse could be as true for me and this book as it is for the church overall, ultimately you the reader has to decide on what is wrong and what is right:

*Gal 5:9 A little leaven (a slight inclination to error, or a few false teachers) leavens the whole lump [it perverts the whole conception of faith or misleads the whole church].*

The intention of this book is not to convince you whether I am right or wrong, or whether my observations are factually correct, but to question that what is going on in our churches today through commonsensical and plain reasoning. It is my intention to proof through factual experiences, personal observations and remarks by friends and others that our churches and church leaders - with the associated religious or spiritual practices and man-made institutionalized entities - are mere affectations of personal beliefs, assertive religious doctrines, customary pious indoctrinations, egocentric performances and self-centered greed.

### **Compilation of the book**

I intentionally stayed away from lengthy reasoning and deliberations, and have tried to capture the essence of each topic addressed in a precise and straight to the point manner, leaving you the reader with food for thought, rather than trying to convince you of my personal views and beliefs. This booklet is intended to highlight the issues at hand, to query the actions of “religious” people and man-made institutions and to deliberate certain personal concerns with the modern churches of our time.

Although I sometimes make use of descriptive terminology and numerous adjectives to illustrate certain principles, the intent of the play with words is both “contemptuous” and illustrative, and sometimes intended to add a bit of humor to the topic. The latter is also true for some statements regarding God and the church, with no blasphemed or ill intentions towards the Almighty God, but rather serves as a condescending statement representing the falseness and deceitfulness of our churches and church leaders.

I do offer quite a lot of criticism at the church in the book, but I believe the Church is still needed for Christian fellowship, spiritual growth and the good messages sometimes offered there. I am not pleading for the church to disappear; I am pleading for the church to change and conform to Christ, not the other way around as is currently happening in our churches.

***I thank God that He has chosen to left our church buildings, and be part of the institutions of religious practices no more.***

What we are experiencing is that when people turn from the truth they are more willing to believe in a lie. God expects ALL His truths, as revealed in Scripture, to be obeyed in their entirety.

***The topics and deliberations in my book might be perceived as a gross generalization and over exaggeration - but is actually just minuscule in defining the church's gross tribulations.***

The opinions in this book are my own, and I don't profess to have all of the answers to all the issues. However, I hope this book will cause Christians to at least take a moment to think about how we can improve the church, our church communities, be more effective in reaching outside the walls of

the church, and how we can bring the church back to what Jesus wanted the church to be.

One of the most basic fallacies of the Christian World is its conception of the "infallible church". Reformation is needed, as badly as in the days of Martin Luther.

***2Co 5:18 But all things are of God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation;***

***2Co 5:19 to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation.***

***2Co 5:20 We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us: we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God.***

***2Co 5:2 Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him.***

Consider this as described by Bob Evelyn:

***"When in Scripture was the majority opinion correct? Were the Jewish leaders (the majority) correct, when God's prophets (the minority ... like Jeremiah) were proclaiming things that were "unorthodox" in their day? Were the Pharisees (the majority) correct when Jesus and later His apostles were proclaiming things that were "unorthodox" in their day? Were the majority of Believers correct as they clung to legalism, as Paul spoke of things that were "unorthodox?" (See Acts 21:20-21 when the majority of Believers in Jerusalem opposed Paul when he returned to Jerusalem .)"***

**Reformation is drastically required**

In the 1500, the Churches were huge and complex architectural structures, with numerous additions, alterations and wings added over the centuries. Reformer's of the time main objection against these mega-structures was that it was quite complicated to determine the simplicity intended of the original Church. It seems that the main objection of the time was "architectural" based.

In our modern day churches, I believe we are seeing the same problem as in the 1500, this time around it is not the "architectural" size alone that has been ever evolving as a major concern, but these structures are more representative of economic corporations and commercial conglomerates aimed at maximizing commercial potential through modern consumer Christians.

Don't get caught up by the false pretences of Reformation under the auspices of the so-called "Emergent Church Movement".

The emerging church (sometimes referred to as the emergent movement) is a Christian movement of the late 20th and early 21st century that crosses a number of theological boundaries: participants can be described as evangelical, post-evangelical, anabaptist, liberal, post-liberal, reformed, charismatic, neocharismatic, post-charismatic, conservative, and post-conservative. Participants seek to live their faith in what they believe to be a "postmodern" society.

Stuart Murray states:

*"Emerging churches are so disparate there are exceptions to any generalisations. Most are too new and too fluid to clarify, let alone assess their significance. There is no consensus yet about what*

*language to use: 'new ways of being church'; 'emerging church'; 'fresh expressions of church'; 'future church'; 'church next'; or 'the coming church'. The terminology used here contrasts 'inherited' and 'emerging' churches."*

**2 Co 11:13-15** *For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.*

God is performing true work outside of today's "religious practice centers" called churches, but the "emergent movement" seems to be the counterfeit to Gods Work. According to Ian Mobsby, *the suggestion that the emerging church is mainly focused on deconstruction and the rejection of current forms of church should itself be rejected.*

No more of a truer word has probably been spoken than the words of Leonard Ravenhill:

*"The world isn't waiting for a new definition of Christianity; it is waiting for a new demonstration of it".*

In conclusion, I believe Ravenhill has captured the essence of the problem, and that we are not only waiting for a "new demonstration" - but also a "true demonstration" of Christianity.

***Christians must seek to demonstrate Christianity as God wants it to be and not Christianity as the world - and specifically the church - wants it to be.***

I think the words in James 1: 26 and 27 are the beginning of us understanding the true meaning of what our faith and religion - thereby our churches per definition - should be all about and what we should be doing:

*Jas 1:26 If anyone thinks himself to be religious (piously observant of the external duties of his faith) and does not bridle his tongue but deludes his own heart, this person's religious service is worthless (futile, barren).*

*Jas 1:27 External religious worship [religion as it is expressed in outward acts] that is pure and unblemished in the sight of God the Father is this: to visit and help and care for the orphans and widows in their affliction and need, and to keep oneself unspotted and uncontaminated from the world.*

*We need to bring the church back to God so that God can return to the church.*

*1Ti 6:3 Anyone who teaches something different disagrees with the correct and godly teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*1Ti 6:4 Those people who disagree are proud of themselves, but they don't really know a thing. Their minds are sick, and they like to argue over words. They cause jealousy, disagreements, unkind words, evil suspicions,*

*1Ti 6:5 and nasty quarrels. They have wicked minds and have missed out on the truth. These people think religion is supposed to make you rich.*

The church has shown its readiness and willingness to compromise God and Salvation for the sake of doctrinal ideology and worldly theology.

A memorable warning by Rev. Dr. Martin Niemoeller (who was captured by the Third Reich), written July 1, 1937 - is worth noting:

*"In Germany, they came first for the Communists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the Trade Unionist, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Trade Unionist. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me, and by that time, no one was left to speak up."*

***For as much as we are expectant to spread the True Word of God's Gospel to all nations, we should be fervent to spread the word when God's Truths are veiled in that same Gospel.***

Pope Benedict XVI called for a deep purification of the Church, and voiced the following true words about the current state of the church:

*"The greatest persecution of the church doesn't come from enemies on the outside but is born from the sins within the church. The church needs to profoundly relearn penitence, accept purification, learn forgiveness but also justice."*

People seem to believe that the church is actually teaching God's Grace and Truth, and this conviction is accentuated in the immense prosperity and commercial dispensation of the church and its leaders and owners.

The church seems to have moved from the "Act of Supremacy" (of Henry VIII during the Reformation Era) - where parliament

gained the most - to the “Supremacy of the Clergy” where the clergymen and -women of the Church are now gaining the most.

***The church and church leaders have chosen Egocentrism to the detriment of servant hood.***

- Is this book not an over generalization of all churches? ***Once you the reader have read the book, you decide for yourself.***
- Is this book applicable to all churches of all religions and denominations? ***In some way or another, definitely.***
- Are all the wrongs mentioned in this book found in all churches? ***Most probably not exactly and to the degree as described, but I believe all to be true in various degrees of applicability to all churches.***
- Am I professing that the church should fall away? ***Absolutely not. The church should turn back to God and turn away from all religious and “church” sin.***

For the church of God to be an agent of transformation it needs to incarnate Godly and Biblical Truth in every area of life, religion, society and church practices.

***Eph 4:1 I then, the prisoner in the Lord, make this request from my heart, that you will see that your behaviour is a credit to the position which God's purpose has given you,***

***Eph 4:2 With all gentle and quiet behaviour, taking whatever comes, putting up with one another in love;***

***Eph 4:3 Taking care to keep the harmony of the Spirit in the yoke of peace.***

***Eph 4:4 There is one body and one Spirit, even as you have been marked out by God in the one hope of his purpose for you;***

***Eph 4:5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,***

***Eph 4:6 One God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all.***

Not all churches and church leaders have fallen into the dark pit of the churches greatest sin, but the temptations to follow suite of those who have gained so much from the evil pit of greed and material prosperity are luring more and more churchmen and -women into the pit by the day.

Most churches seem to be apostate in our modern day and age. They have abandoned true Religious Faith, Godly Truths and Biblical Morality. It is sad to see that most people have to leave church today to truly find God.

***God has left our church buildings - or rather - God has been "expelled" from our churches in favor of religious freedom, spiritual self-righteousness, egotistical human religion, deceitful denominationalism and material capitalism.***

Church has become nothing more than a mere spiritual warehouse ⇒ overflowing with consumer Christians ⇒ segmented through methodical and salient packaged goods and services ⇒ aimed at attracting as wide an audience as possible ⇒ using the language and aspirations of mass-market capitalism.

***Consumer faith and commercially sold salvation won't make you any more "sanctified" than a pair of branded shoes or tailored clothing will make you an athlete.***

Christianity and Salvation cannot be bought in any store - religious or secular, and it is definitely not a product of choice to be chosen from many.

## Chapter 2: The Church is Broken

In this chapter:-

- What's gone wrong with the church
- Ecumenical Confusion
- Godly Illusion
- The Counterfeited Hypocrite
- Pigeon Religion

*“Pastors are probably the most underrated groups of change agents today” so said Rick Warren.*

Without any doubt, the modern “Charismatic Movement” - inclusive of the “Emerging Church Movement” - in the contemporary Christian World is most probably the fastest growing religious movements of our day within the realm of those who profess Christianity. It is, in fact, growing faster than Roman Catholicism, Greek Orthodoxy, Protestantism, Pentecostalism, Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism.

At the same time, this movement is also producing more theological confusion, disarray and delusion than any other movement in the world - religious or otherwise. In addition, Pentecostal Groups seems to create more confusion of who or what the Holy Spirit is than what the Charismatic Movement creates perplexities about God, The Bible, Faith and Religion. They are rather establishing illusions of what the Church want people to believe that God the Trinity is what the church wants God to be.

The church is currently not only being criticized by people from outside the church, but quite a number of people within the church are also coming to realize that quite a number of

problems - and very serious problems - exist; and that these problems should be addressed as a matter of urgency.

In echoing the words of Dale Garris written in 2009 about “*Something is wrong with the Church*”, I believe his statement captures the essence of how I personally feel about the brokenness of the church today and why I wrote this book:

*“Something is wrong in the Church today. I don't say that lightly, or as someone who thrives on criticizing everyone else so as to establish my own spiritual superiority, or as someone who is feeding on sour grapes because things aren't the way I would like them. I say it because of how many people I meet on a daily basis who are discouraged by traditional church and have chosen not to attend anymore.*

*Everywhere I turn, I hear people complaining about the same thing. This isn't something localized to a particular area or limited to a certain social strata or denomination -- I hear this from all sorts of people, many with impeccable spiritual credentials. Oftentimes I hear from pastors who have spent decades in ministry who are now questioning the vibrancy of the Church. Others are just kids off the streets, armed with little more than a spiritual hunger, who refuse to attend church, not because they don't believe, but because they are repelled by what they see.*

*No matter how you view this issue, no matter what position you have, no matter what church you belong to, you have to admit that something is wrong.”*

### **What's gone wrong with the church?**

The churches in our world today, whether Traditional or Pentecostal, Roman or Greek, Protestant and Presbyterian, Cell Church or Mobile Church, Internet Based or Community Based, Big Buildings or Drone Tents, even so-called Christian Organisations and Biblical Businesses - they all have one big and

common problem. It really doesn't matter if they are so-called modern or traditional, charismatic, emerging, diverging, diluted, small, large - the moment they call themselves "church" or even "ministry" they all have exactly the same unified problem. This problem existed already in the 50's, as well as in the Reformation era, even dating back as far as the time of Paul. The problem today is just so much bigger and larger than it has ever been: The Church is broken!

There is no other way of putting it but the single truth. The church is completely busted, messed up and wrecked. The worst part about this truth is that we most probably have absolutely no idea how broken the church really is. I don't mean just spiritually, morally or religiously out of order, the church is just not working properly - or actually - I believe that the church - as intended by God and the Bible - is essentially not working at all.

In 2 Timothy 3:1-4 - Message Translation - we are warned of the troubled times ahead"

***2Ti 3:1 Don't be naive. There are difficult times ahead.***

***2Ti 3:2 As the end approaches, people are going to be self-absorbed, money-hungry, self-promoting, stuck-up, profane, contemptuous of parents, crude, coarse,***

***2Ti 3:3 dog-eat-dog, unbending, slanderers, impulsively wild, savage, cynical,***

***2Ti 3:4 treacherous, ruthless, bloated windbags, addicted to lust, and allergic to God.***

"What does this have to do with the Church?" you may ask. The answer is: Everything, absolutely everything. As we analyze the topics of wrongness and inequalities in the church, we will see

that these verses are absolutely true about the church of today. The nastiest part is that this seems to worsen by the day.

***Whilst the church is growing as commercial institution with God as a mere consumer product, it is growing further and further from God.***

***Rev 3:17 You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.***

Billy Graham once said:

*“Being a Christian is more than just an instantaneous conversion - it is a daily process whereby you grow to be more and more like Christ.”*

The aforementioned statement is probably the most truthful statement about Christianity at large, but what we are experiencing in our churches and the Christian World seem to be quite the opposite. When people turn from the truth they are more willing to believe in a lie. God expects ALL His truths, as revealed in Scripture, to be obeyed in their entirety.

We are living in an era where it is obvious that the church is in a state of impious turmoil. The church has become an institutionalized place of emotional experiences and expressive practices; a place of liturgical corruption and compassionate adapted doctrines - all of which seems to be completely disconnected from the Biblical connotations of the church and entirely distanced from the Church as described in the New Testament, and specifically the church as intended in Acts and in the teachings of Jesus.

We see more and more churches sprung up at every corner. Every Tom, Dick and Harry - male or female - who want to join this lucrative business opportunity as owner of a “charismatic

church”, needs absolute no qualification, no skills, no training and definitely no previous experience. All you need to do is add the title of pastor, prophet, father, minister or some ecclesiastic adjective in front of your name and start congregating followers. Soon you will be able to call yourself a “church”, a “ministry”, “place of worship”, “house of God” or some Christianized institutional name. The rest what happens from here is exactly what is known and described as “church”. The resulting end seems to be always the same.

Quite soon you will have more than one “pastor” or preacher and many elders, and soon afterwards the church will be divided and new churches will be the offspring of the original church - each again with new doctrines, new philosophies, new articles of religion and brand new liturgical processes - all intended to create and promote a brand new narrative of “God” and the “true church”. Only this time, this “new church” is the real deal, the “true Body of Christ” - as seems to be the case of all new churches blossoming from the “Emerging Church Movement”.

There are more churches and denomination today, than ever before in the history of mankind, and it is not getting better. Rather the problem is escalating by the day. This is not at all assisting to mend the church or to promote unity, but rather adding to break the church apart even more.

### **Ecumenical Confusion**

Ecumenical as an adjective is the concept relating to, involving, or promoting the unity of different Christian churches and groups; conceptually it is encouraging different Christian churches to work and worship together.

***Psa 133:1 A Song of Ascents; of David. Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!***

From what we see and experience in our “Christian World” today, we can see that so-called Charismatic Unity, Emerging Unity and even so-called Christian Unity, is definitely no Biblical Unity. It is actually just a mere “Ecumenical Confusion” flamed by so-called “denominational diversity”.

The church, and Christians overall, are more divided and scattered today as ever before. More and more “churches” sprung up with Christians “hopping” from the one emotional experience to the other, absorbing commercialized “religious practices” like sponges.

***The church has become a commercial platform of performing arts, a podium of emotional entertainment and a marquee of vibrant amusement - with the Bible merely a “storybook” used as a “common denominator” to define “God” and “Faith” as spiritual merchandise.***

With God as the “centre of attraction”, ecclesiastics are using whatever means to congregate followers under the auspices of everyone serving the same God and having the same Biblical foundations. We are living in a world in which Christendom is divided, by some estimates, into over 25,000 different denominations and sects. There are over 800 established denominations in the United States alone. This is not counting all the totally independent congregations.

Denominationalism in our church society is justified as a diverse understanding of God’s Word. Denominationalism is nothing but the pure personification of diversity, and is a complete contradictory to the message of unity preached by Jesus and

the Apostles in the New Testament. Per definition, denominationalism is nothing but making a mockery of the New Testament's plead for unity of the faith and all the people who profess Christianity. The so-called diversity in understanding implies that the Bible - and inclusive of the teaching of Jesus and the Apostles in the New Testament - is of such a nature that it is not easily understandable and/or that the Biblical Teachings and Content could be construed as complicated and diverse. I believe the opposite is actually true. Confusion has crept in over time with all the various translations of the Bible over the last millenniums, as well as the "diverse understandings and interpretations" of the Bible through the magnitude of denominations. This adds to both ecumenical as well as denominational confusion.

***Nonetheless, the problem is not the Bible or God's inability to provide something that is understandable and understandable alike by all - but the problem is man's unwillingness to accept what is taught and commanded in the Bible.***

The Bible in reality calls for the unity of faith, but the leaders and ecclesiasts in our churches are professing for a unity which disregarded the one true faith of the Word of God. We are all let to believe that the "unity" in church existed because the "church" - and all churches jointly - per definition, form the so-called biblical "Body of Christ". Yet we are furthermore let to believe that a single church - with its own doctrines, traditions and ways - also forms the same "Body of Christ". How can so many "body parts" coexist in harmony if they differ in every aspect of their existence and performance? Perhaps you are attending such a church, one that is '*modern, relevant, changing with the times, reaching out to the community*'? Perhaps your experience of 'Christianity' is that what is purveyed by such contemporary 'worship' as has become so

common in this day and age and so common in our churches today.

***1Co 12:12 For just as the body is a unity and yet has many parts, and all the parts, though many, form [only] one body, so it is with Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One).***

Although the aforementioned verse is often quoted purely in a single church to describe the members of a specific congregation, I believe this verse is actually more relevant with reference to Christian Unity as a whole. I believe that the church - inclusive of all denominations and confessions - has long gone left the traditions and teachings of the Bible, of Jesus and of the apostles and are now following the “teachings” of the so-called modern “Church Fathers”, and specifically those classified as “evangelists” and “prophets”:

***Luk 20:46 "Watch out for the religion scholars. They love to walk around in academic gowns, preen in the radiance of public flattery, bask in prominent positions, sit at the head table at every church function.***

***Mat 15:7 You hypocrites! How well did Isaiah prophesy of you when he said,***

***Mat 15:8 "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.***

***Mat 15:9 Their worship of me is empty, because they teach human rules as doctrines."***

CS Lewis has put it ever so correctly when he wrote:

*"God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks to us in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: It is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world".*

***The problem today is that the church Shouts what God Whispers and Whispers what God Shouts!***

The emphasis is completely wrong; the church is doing it the Wrong Way Round, and the emphasis is not on what is of utmost importance - the community and unity of faith!

Whilst there are so many churches, doctrines and denomination, there cannot be unity, there cannot be one body and there cannot be Godly Harmony. We have never achieved ecumenical unity in the Christian world - and will most probably never will - but the church of today has created more Ecumenical Confusion in the world known as Christianity than ever before. Even the word or concept of what "Christianity" entails has become so misused and confusing, that the origin of Christianity has lost true meaning in our world today.

**Godly Illusion**

Is it really Charismatic Reformation, Traditional Adaptation, Pentecostal Renovation, Apostolic Restoration or is it rather a matter of Charismatic Confusion, Biblical Delusion and Godly Illusion?... Is the Blind leading the Blind? Are we really doing God's Word's Work, or are we Working God's Word? Is the Church doing what the church is suppose to do, or is the church more concerned about Liturgical Experimentation, Spiritual Deception, Denominational Diversity, Creative Theology and Emotional Variety?

Chosen by the Catholic Council of Carthage in 397 after Jesus, the Bible as we know it today consists of a collection of 66 separate books. These 66 books are grouped into two major sections: The Old Testament consisting of thirty-nine books, and The New Testament consisting of twenty-seven books.

Catholic Bibles include additional books known as the Apocrypha.

The Old Testament is a collection of books concerned with the Creation, the Almighty God (Yahweh), the history of the early Israelites and the account of the prophets through which God communicated with the people. The New Testament is concerned with the coming of Jesus Christ, His life, teachings and ultimate crucifixion and the account early Christians.

The composition of the various books is thought to have begun around 1000 B.C., and to have continued for about 1,100 years. Much oral material is believed to have been included in these early compositions. These books and/or compilations were repeated from generation to generation, most probably revised over and over again, and eventually put into written form by various editors. No evidence of the existence of original manuscripts subsists today and there is most probably not one book which survived through the years in its original form.

***More and more we read about the Bible and its teachings being adapted to suite the changing times, rather than the times being adapted to suite the Word of God.***

The Bible has been rewritten so many times of the last millenniums that it is with difficulty to really know whether the Bible in its latest adapted form and format represents the original Bible or God's Word as initially intended.

Apart from the Biblical Confusion that exists regarding the "True Bible" and its "true Intent", each and every church, ecclesiastic, church leader and church owner has his/her own interpretations of what the Bible, selected portions from the Bible or Messages from Bible actually means. There are more interpretations of the Bible and varying explanations about God

and Christianity today than there are races and cultures of people in our world. Actually - and without turning it into a racial or social debate - it seems that there are numerous "bibles" and "Gods" in each and every race, cultural grouping and human society today, and that God has been adapted to suite each and every race, cultural and society profile in the world - basically God has become nothing more than idolatry (mage-worship or divine honor paid to any created object) in our world.

Maybe the words of Jin S. Kim explain the basic predicament we need to address:

*"Mutual affirmation of one another's culture as God's good gift, and simultaneously, mutual correction of idolatries rooted in every culture, speaking the truth in love."*

***Idolatry is a cancer that is eating away the truth of who God really is, and in the midst of idolatry, the homogeneous Biblical God seemed to have disappeared completely.***

Idolatry is the universal human tendency to value something or someone in a way that hinders the love and trust we owe to God. God - and therefore Christianity at large - has so drastically been adapted, changed and portrayed that God is but an illusion to most Christians and those who profess Christianity, ranging from a God of immense wrath and punishment to an ever-forgiving and all inclusive prosperity-given God with absolute no regard for what we do wrong - all covered in His all encompassing Grace.

***Somewhere in all of this turmoil and disaster in Christianity, Idolatry and the church, the truth is hidden of what and who God really is.***

I believe that we need to go back to the basics, back to what God intended us to be, and back to what God intended the Bible and Christianity to be. I am pretty sure that each and every ecclesiastic or clergy today in any church anywhere in the world, will tell you that his/her church/ministry is exactly that - the true representation of God and the intended church - and that all others are wrong and erroneous. And in this chaotic debacle, the actual truth is hidden away. We should beware of not reaching the proverbial "point of no return", that we grow so far from God that return is impossible - it's like trying to unscramble an egg.

In fact, it can be said that there is so much difference of opinion within the Church today that there are almost as many different forms of Christianity as there are Christians. This situation actually constitutes a serious, pervasive transgression of what we are told in John 17:20-22:

***Joh 17:20 My prayer is not for them only, but for all who will have faith in me through their word;***

***Joh 17:21 May they all be one! Even as you, Father, are in me and I am in you, so let them be in us, so that all men may come to have faith that you sent me.***

***Joh 17:22 And the glory which you have given to me I have given to them, so that they may be one even as we are one;***

And also echoed in 1 Corinthians 1:10-16:

***1Co 1:10 Now I make request to you, my brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you will all say the same thing, and that there may be no divisions among you, so that you may be in***

*complete agreement, in the same mind and in the same opinion.*

*1Co 1:11 Because it has come to my knowledge, through those of the house of Chloe, that there are divisions among you, my brothers.*

*1Co 1:12 That is, that some of you say, I am of Paul; some say, I am of Apollos; some say, I am of Cephas; and some say, I am Christ's.*

*1Co 1:13 Is there a division in Christ? was Paul nailed to the cross for you? or were you given baptism in the name of Paul?*

*1Co 1:14 I give praise to God that not one of you had baptism from me, but Crispus and Gaius;*

*1Co 1:15 So that no one may be able to say that you had baptism in my name.*

*1Co 1:16 And I gave baptism to the house of Stephanas; but I am not certain that any others had baptism from me.*

***Without true unity in faith, there can be no unity in Christianity, and ultimately no ecumenical unity.***

Whilst we have “justifiable diversity” in denominationalism, we will have no harmony. Without harmonious faith, God is portrayed as a mere illusion, and most people will never experience God in their lives, they will only experience religion and religious practices. They will therefore be limited to that what churches offer as an illusion and pious experience, and will never experience God in their lives.

R.A. Torrey remarks:

*“Those who regard sin lightly and who have no adequate conception of God's holiness will always find insurmountable difficulty in this command of God, but those who have come to see the awfulness of sin*

*and have learned to hate it with the infinite hate it deserves, and who have caught some glimpses of the infinite holiness of God and have been made in some measure partakers of that holiness, will, after mature reflection, have no difficulty whatever with this command. It is consciousness of sin in our own hearts and lives that makes us rebel against God's stern dealings with sin"*

### **The Counterfeited Hypocrite**

**Counterfeit** means not genuine or imitating something superior. **Hypocrite** means a person who professes beliefs and opinions that he does not hold. I believe that these two words should actually be combined as a single descriptive word in the Christian world of today.

By combining them, a counterfeited hypocrite - or ***"Counterhypocrite"*** - ***would then be a person imitating something superior who professes beliefs and opinions that he/she does not hold.***

This latter new combined word definition would most probably be a more accurate description of most of our churches and church goers today, and would definitely be of complete relevance to church leaders, ecclesiastics and the likes in our churches today.

There is quite a drastic difference between a "sinner" and a "hypocrite". Looking at these terms very basically, a "sinner" defines what a person "is", whilst a "hypocrite" relates more to what a person "do". All people are classified as "sinners" in the Bible, because of our inherent sinning nature. I believe that the main difference between a "sinner" and a "Hypocrite" lies in the cognizant decisions of what we do and how we act. When the Bible speaks about hypocrisy, it clearly condemns cognizant

actions and behavior and these are not classified or interpreted as “sinning”.

***The excuse used that people are hypocrites because of our sinful nature, is therefore a complete fabrication of an excuse. Hypocrisy relates to pre-determined, cognizant and conscious decisions to act or behave in a certain way.***

Most of the hypocrites found in churches and our Christian world today, are pretending to be in right standing with God and to be “Christ like” in their lives. Hence the word counterfeit is more appropriate as describing them as “imitating” something superior or something of higher value. In my foreword, I have eluded to the gap between where people are with God and where God seem to be with that person.

Most of the “counterfeits” pretends to be at quite a higher level with God, than God would most probably be with them - and specifically based on their hypocritical actions. The “Counterhypofeicrite” is therefore the people in our churches, and more specifically church leaders and ecclesiastics - that are pretending to be Christ like but who are acting and/or behaving the complete opposite. Most of these actions by “Counterhypofeicrites” are the main reason why churches and Christianity at large are branded as “hypocrites” and are the main causes of many injustices in the church and Christianity today - broadly grouped under the term “unrighteous”.

If we are to use modern technological terminology:

***I believe that the files of injustices that the unrighteous so easily delete from their conscience to set their minds at ease, are stored in the recycle bin of God, from which only He can erase. To delete seems easy, to erase nearly impossible.***

Although The Bible said that we are not judged on a daily basis, one day we will have to stand before the Witness Chair and “explain” these files that were kept in the Recycle Bin of Life.

Isn't it funny how most people in our Christian Society, especially the Counterhypofeicrites, think that the size and status of their bank accounts or their mansion is an indication of the size of their Blessings? This is merely only proof that they have money or earthly possessions.

***Blessings are positive truths in our lives, not positive balances in bank accounts only.***

There are quite a number of places in the Bible where Hypocrites are mentioned and addressed, but none as powerful as Matthew 23 (below quoted from the International Standard Version Translation):

***Mat 23:1 Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples,***

***Mat 23:2 "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat.***

***Mat 23:3 So do whatever they tell you and follow it, but stop doing what they do, because they don't do what they say.***

***Mat 23:4 They tie up burdens that are heavy and unbearable and lay them on people's shoulders, but they refuse to lift a finger to remove them.***

***Mat 23:5 "They do all their actions to be seen by people. They increase the size of their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels of their garments.***

***Mat 23:6 They love to have the places of honor at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues,***

*Mat 23:7 to be greeted in the marketplaces, and to be called 'Rabbi' by people.*

*Mat 23:8 "But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have only one teacher, and all of you are brothers.*

*Mat 23:9 And don't call anyone on earth 'Father,' for you have only one Father, the one in heaven.*

*Mat 23:10 Nor are you to be called 'Teachers,' for you have only one teacher, the Christ!*

*Mat 23:11 The person who is greatest among you must be your servant.*

*Mat 23:12 Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.*

*Mat 23:13 "How terrible it will be for you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door to the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. You don't go in yourselves, and you don't allow those who are trying to enter to go in.*

*Mat 23:14 How terrible it will be for you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You devour widows' houses and say long prayers to cover it up. Therefore, you will receive greater condemnation!*

*Mat 23:15 "How terrible it will be for you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over sea and land to make a single convert, and when this happens you make him twice as fit for hell as you are.*

*Mat 23:16 "How terrible it will be for you, blind guides! You say, 'Whoever swears an oath by the sanctuary is excused, but whoever swears an oath by the gold of the sanctuary must keep his oath.'*

*Mat 23:17 You blind fools! What is more important, the gold or the sanctuary that made the gold holy?*

*Mat 23:18 Again you say, 'Whoever swears an oath by the altar is excused, but whoever swears by the gift that is on it must keep his oath.'*

*Mat 23:19 You blind men! Which is more important, the gift or the altar that makes the gift holy?*

*Mat 23:20 Therefore, the one who swears an oath by the altar swears by it and by everything on it.*

*Mat 23:21 The one who swears an oath by the sanctuary swears by it and by the one who lives there.*

*Mat 23:22 And the one who swears an oath by heaven swears by God's throne and by the one who sits on it.*

*Mat 23:23 "How terrible it will be for you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! For you give a tenth of your mint, dill, and cummin, but have neglected the more important matters of the law: justice, mercy, and faithfulness. These are the things you should have practiced, without neglecting the others.*

*Mat 23:24 You blind guides! You filter out a gnat, yet swallow a camel!*

*Mat 23:25 "How terrible it will be for you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but on the inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.*

*Mat 23:26 You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup, so that its outside may also be clean.*

*Mat 23:27 "How terrible it will be for you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs that look beautiful on the*

*outside but inside are full of dead people's bones and every kind of impurity.*

*Mat 23:28 In the same way, on the outside you look righteous to people, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.*

*Mat 23:29 "How terrible it will be for you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous.*

*Mat 23:30 Then you say, 'If we had been living in the days of our ancestors, we would have had no part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.'*

*Mat 23:31 Therefore, you testify against yourselves that you are descendants of those who murdered the prophets.*

*Mat 23:32 Then finish what your ancestors started!*

*Mat 23:33 You snakes, you children of serpents! How can you escape being condemned to hell?*

*Mat 23:34 "That is why I am sending you prophets, wise men, and scribes. Some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will whip in your synagogues and persecute from town to town.*

*Mat 23:35 As a result, you will be held accountable for all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of the righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar.*

*Mat 23:36 Truly I tell you, all these things will happen to this generation."*

*Mat 23:37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones to death those who have been sent to her! How often I wanted to gather*

*your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you didn't want to!*

***Mat 23:38 Look! Your house is left to you deserted!***

***Mat 23:39 For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'How blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!'"***

I believe the seriousness of the problem of hypocrisy is emphasized by the amount - and literally the extend on harsh words used - of scripture dedicated to this problem, which seemed to have existed from the days of Jesus on earth. This seems to have just gotten worse in the 2,000 years thereafter; culminating in what I believe the worst state is that the church has ever been in - the contemporary or modern church of today.

### **Pigeon Religion**

Both doves and pigeons both belong to the family Columbidae, but there is an important difference in how the two terms are used colloquially. The connotations of the word 'dove' are usually much more positive and those of the word 'pigeon' are usually negative. This is because the birds classified as doves rather than pigeons are usually prettier and have long been associated with love and peace.

***Mat 3:16 And when Jesus was baptized, He went up at once out of the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he [John] saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on Him.***

***Joh 1:32 John gave further evidence, saying, I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and it dwelt on Him [never to depart].***

The birds classified as pigeons are nowadays generally considered to be a nuisance (except to people who like or actually keep them as pets). Native speakers generally associate pigeons with domesticated birds or birds that fly around in parks and squares in cities. They tend to associate doves with wild birds that live in forests and are a symbol of peace. There are quite a few expressions including the word “Pigeon” which also tend to have negative connotations, such as 'pigeon-toed', 'pigeon-chested', or even 'pigeon-holed'.

Although there seems to be no specific scientific difference between the two, the perceptions and actions of both these birds are completely different.

In the Bible, the Holy Spirit, Love and Peace are always associated with the Dove. In Church today, we see more often the actions and “performance” of Church Leaders and Church goers more leaning towards the concept of Pigeons than Doves. As the actions of domesticated pigeons would be, we are experiencing the current “pigeon religion” as being loud, being clapping wings and jumping birds, being pushy and intrusive, actually being nothing but a nuisance like pigeons in the parks, leaving more “chaos and mess” behind where they have been (refer to Matthew 23 as quoted above).

The biggest problem with “pigeon religion” however, is not the pigeon-styled actions we are experiencing, but the fact that they want us to believe, or at least trying very hard to convince us, that they are actually doves.

***Luk 20:46 Beware of the scribes, who like to walk about in long robes and love to be saluted [with honor] in places where people congregate and love the***

*front and best seats in the synagogues and places of distinction at feasts,*

*Luk 20:47 Who make away with and devour widows' houses, and [to cover it up] with pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation (the heavier sentence, the severer punishment).*

### **Conclusion**

*For as much as the statement is true that says unless mankind puts an end to war, war will put an end to mankind, the truth is that unless True Faith puts an end to the Modern Church, the Modern Church will put an end to True Faith.*

We shouldn't let our experiences interpret Scripture for us, but as we change and conform ourselves to Christ, we should interpret our experiences according to Scripture.

Unfortunately, this is not what is happening in modern Christianity and the modern Church of today.

*Many within the church today attempt to operate in the things of the spirit without the True Spirit, and this renders everything in the spirit worthless.*

Dr Ravi Zacharias once said:

*“The Bible's condemnation of hypocrites is clear. The Bible also clearly pledges that God will judge hypocrites (Matthew 24:51). God is more angered by hypocrisy than we can ever be.”*

Addressing 10,000 itinerant preachers and evangelists in Amsterdam in the summer of 2000, Dr. Zacharias then went on to challenge his listeners with these words:

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*“Why is it that a community that talks so much about supernatural transformation shows so little of that transformation? We will have to be men and women who embody the message that we are preaching, whose lives are faithful to the claims we are making.”*

Through our religious - and unholy concepts of self-redemption, self-justification, and self-sanctification, we are not only regarding sin as really insignificant, we are basically ignoring sin - as well as the Holiness and Righteousness of God - completely.

This leaves me with quite an astounding question:

***“If man has turned so far and so badly from God, can God be found if sought again by man, or should man’s actions be to such an extent that God will return to man?”***

## Chapter 3: Money Money Money

In this chapter:

- The love of Money
- Emotional Blackmail
- Trampling the Conscience

Money is easily the most recognizable symbol of economics in our world today. Money in itself is neither good nor bad, but money has the horrific potential of being either at any time. This is also true in our churches of today. Money has become a subject of “great blessings”, but also a downfall of many a church of our time. Many has been written and said on this topic throughout the years.

Success - and blessings - today is often measured by the accumulation of material possessions rather than who you are or your personal values and principles. Is it really appropriate to measure the spiritual strength and standing of a church based upon the financial strength of the leaders? Money is not of or even from God. Money is an economic medium of exchange developed by the world. We will deliberate a number of topics in this chapter emphasizing that churches and many church leaders have succumbed to the enticements of greed and self-centered commercial gain.

***If financial strength is gain through deceitful means, it can in no way even be associated with God, spiritual strength or any form of prosperity – other than human greed and lure.***

I realise and accept the fact that the church cannot do without some money, and that an amount of money might be required to do God's Work. The problem that I am faced with is the

acceptable ratio of allocating and utilizing money in church for these aspects. Is church per definition the “house of God” and justify all the money to be spent on the “house”? Or is the church purely a place of assemblage where people can get together and from where God’s Work is suppose to emanate?

Is the church building the intended “store room” depicted in the Bible? We have seen that “the love of money” and the expenditure thereof in our churches has become a fine art of emotional blackmail, of trampling the conscience and of swindling innocent “followers” in donating as much as possible to the benefit of the church, the church owners and the church leadership.

***Church has become nothing but a well-oiled business machine with God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and the Bible the best featured products there are to offer – all at a reasonable price of course.***

### **The Love of Money**

***In 1 Timothy 6:10 (KJV), Paul said "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."***

***1Ti 6:10 (Message) Lust for money brings trouble and nothing but trouble. Going down that path, some lose their footing in the faith completely and live to regret it bitterly ever after.***

With this in mind, I just wonder:

***If the love of money is the root of all evil, why are churches keep on begging for it?***

Let's look at an Institutionalized Religious Practices Building - known as a church - of today:

- We are building multi-storey megaton-structure churches and auditoriums from billions and billions of bricks, mortar and stone;
- Costing us tens and hundreds millions of dollars,
- Equipped with millions of dollars of equipment, bookshops, coffee-shops, luxurious seats, marble stages, just the best branded instruments; flashing lights and rotating domes;
- Built for economic active Worshipper's Comfort - mostly the attending flock from the greater geographical area surrounding these structures - for a few hours per week
- These man-made structures are occupying tens of thousands of acres of land;
- Housing thousands of church-goers, who are mainly the ones who can afford attending the church
- Donating hundreds of thousands of dollars
- To maintain and support the mega structures as described above
- And somewhere in the process, a few thousand dollars are given to a few tens of people in need

It is obvious that churches and the operations of churches are a close loop of economical activities. We are building churches for church-goers so that the church-goers can maintain the church - and the associated services - for their own personal benefit, and mostly to the benefit of church clergy and church leaders. The only moneys that seem to leave the church, are those spend on salaries and services acquired for the church.

Message Translation:

***Mat 25:31 "When he finally arrives, blazing in beauty and all his angels with him, the Son of Man will take his place on his glorious throne.***

*Mat 25:32 Then all the nations will be arranged before him and he will sort the people out, much as a shepherd sorts out sheep and goats,*

*Mat 25:33 putting sheep to his right and goats to his left.*

*Mat 25:34 "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Enter, you who are blessed by my Father! Take what's coming to you in this kingdom. It's been ready for you since the world's foundation.*

*Mat 25:35 And here's why: I was hungry and you fed me, I was thirsty and you gave me a drink, I was homeless and you gave me a room,*

*Mat 25:36 I was shivering and you gave me clothes, I was sick and you stopped to visit, I was in prison and you came to me.'*

*Mat 25:37 "Then those 'sheep' are going to say, 'Master, what are you talking about? When did we ever see you hungry and feed you, thirsty and give you a drink?*

*Mat 25:38 And when did we ever see you sick or in prison and come to you?'*

*Mat 25:39 (SEE 25:38)*

*Mat 25:40 Then the King will say, 'I'm telling the solemn truth: Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me--you did it to me.'*

Where in the Bible does it say: “OK, once you are comfortable, warm, looked after, in a nice building with good acoustics, brilliant sound, flashing lights, draping flags, maintained gardens, High Nett-worth Individual Preachers....

Then... “If you see someone hungry, feed him, or if you see someone naked, cloth him?”

I never heard God say: “OK, so now that you officially have your “church” in order, now My Work deserves some attention”. Is the work of the church only to preach to those flocking to the buildings? Is the “Great Commission” of God the building of churches and man-made structures so that the same few can be reached in comfort every week?

***Are we to accept that the church as a building is representative of God's Work and Blessings on earth?***

Can we really justify the building of “exclusive structures” whilst the flock of God - all His people - go hungry and naked? Can we really put our minds at ease that we have are God's People by concentrating on our own comfort and enriching the “owners” of these structures?

***1Co 11:22 You have homes in which to eat and drink, don't you? Or do you despise God's church and humiliate those who have nothing? What should I say to you? Should I praise you? I will not praise you for this!***

Is the Bible in the above verse referring to God's church as the institutionalized buildings we see, or is God's church His people - those out there all deemed part of God's Flock? Are the “homes” not perhaps including the “places of worship” we built for our own comfort and placate?

***Mar 12:33 And to love Him out of and with all the heart and with all the understanding [with the faculty of quick apprehension and intelligence and keenness of discernment] and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all the whole burnt offerings***

*and sacrifices. [I Sam. 15:22; Hos. 6:6; Mic. 6:6-8; Heb. 10:8.]*

But where does this love of money comes from?

*Most churches of our time believe that monetary gain equated to spiritual growth and prosperity.*

My problem all started when I started getting the “red letters”, the notices that my “pledge account” was in arrears, that my Tithes are currently paid as calculated after taxes, but should be calculated before taxes, that my offerings are “on top of” my tithes and that the special offerings for the Pastors new car or any special projects are excluded from the aforementioned.

*Luk 21:1 And looking up, he saw the men of wealth putting their offerings in the money-box.*

*Luk 21:2 And he saw a certain poor widow putting in a farthing.*

*Luk 21:3 And he said, Truly I say to you, This poor widow has given more than all of them:*

*Luk 21:4 For they gave out of their wealth, having more than enough for themselves: but she, even out of her need, has put in all her living.*

*Luk 21:5 And some were talking about the Temple, how it was made fair with beautiful stones and with offerings, but he said,*

*Luk 21:6 As for these things which you see, the days will come when not one stone will be resting on another, but all will be broken down.*

*Luk 21:7 And they said to him, Master, when will these things be? and what sign will there be when these events are to take place?*

***Luk 21:8 And he said, Take care that you are not tricked: for a number of people will come in my name, saying, I am he; and, The time is near: do not go after them***

Ever wonder why so much emphasis is put on money - and money alone as the “Biblical Principle” of tithes and offerings? Why the sow-and-reap principle always has a monetary connotation or something of monetary value? Why the church leaders would spend a whole sermon on “money”, but the rest, as actually pleaded by Jesus on numerous occasions, basically very little to none is ever said.

***Mat 23:23 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, pretenders (hypocrites)! For you give a tenth of your mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected and omitted the weightier (more important) matters of the Law--right and justice and mercy and fidelity. These you ought [particularly] to have done, without neglecting the others.***

It seems that the aforementioned verse actually emphasized all the other things to be of “more importance”, to be of “more value”, yet we are concentrating in our churches on what is of “lesser importance” - even if it was of “equal weighting”.

***Isa 55:1 The LORD says, "Come, everyone who is thirsty-- here is water! Come, you that have no money - buy grain and eat! Come! Buy wine and milk - it will cost you nothing!"***

In the following verses found in the Old Testament - and without going into too much discussion - I believe that the

tithes principle actually “prescribes” that only 10% (one tithe of the tithes) are to be utilized within the church, but I have never heard this used in any preaching / sermon before:

***Neh 10:38 And the priest the son of Aaron shall be with the Levites, when the Levites take tithes: and the Levites shall bring up the tithe of the tithes unto the house of our God, to the chambers, into the treasure-house.***

***Neh 10:39 For the children of Israel and the children of Levi shall bring the heave-offering of the grain, of the new wine, and of the oil, unto the chambers, where are the vessels of the sanctuary, and the priests that minister, and the porters, and the singers: and we will not forsake the house of our God.***

I have heard numerous excuses why this is not applicable, why our churches are spending 90% of their disposable income (obtained from tithes and offerings) on the things mentioned in Neh 10:39 above. Is this tithe of the tithes that goes to the “treasure house” then not what is to go to the “chambers” as indicated in Mal 3:10 - the infamous verse quoted for tithes and offerings?

***Mal 3:10 Bring ye the whole tithe into the store-house, that there may be food in my house, and prove me now herewith, saith Jehovah of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.***

Did God contradict Himself, or is the intention of Mal 3:10 still the same as the intent of Nehemiah 10:38 and 39. Is all not

suppose to go to “store-house”, and 90% (9 tenths) leave the church to do all the things Jesus said we should do and only 10% (1 Tenth) to remain in the “treasure-room” or “chamber” of the church to be used for those who minister, the singers, the vessels, the porters and the “house of our God”?

Personally, I am not too concerned whether the ratio should be 10%, 20% or 30% to the church or not. I honestly believe that the intention of all these verses are to advise us that the greatest portion of what we offer, should be attributed to God's Work - and God's Work is definitely not our church buildings and the clergy or ecclesiastics leaders.

Have we so gotten use to these close-loop economical institutions that we are actually measuring God's Grace and Blessings against our own comfort and the structures intended for that purpose?

***I believe that Christians have been so brainwashed over time believing that Church structures are the actual embodiment of God and His Grace, that we have forgotten what true Christianity and faith is suppose to be.***

We have grown so attached to our comfort structures and small economical religious societies that we are classifying our own comforts and self-indulgence as justification to squander most or all the tithes and offerings in our own churches.

This is merely white-washing - a true hypocritical pretense - of the true problem of greed and the love of money. We feel much more comfortable contributing to ourselves and believing in what we see than we would contributing to the unseen - to the real need in our world - the great flocks of God's sheep in desperate need.

Are the owners of these buildings - the ecclesiastic leaders, clergy and "men of God" - not reaping the benefits of these close-loop societies? Do they not take from this pot of gold the most? It would be quite interesting to really analyze the percentage of expenditure churches are spending on "supporting" the church owners and church leaders in comparison to the church doing God's Work. I believe that we will be stunned by the results.

*To build these great architectural buildings for the "spoken purpose" of congregating the sheep may appear to be the "godly" thing to do, but not necessarily the "God Commanded" thing to do. For while much focus is being placed on glorifying and expanding the beauty of our church building, God's sheep and His true temples - where The Holy Spirit is housed - go hungry - both physically and spiritually. While the building of stone is strengthened, the body of Christ - His Sheep - is weakened and glory is given to the building while the Spirit is acknowledged no more.*

Although I believe that these institutionalized church buildings drain resources and create nothing but consumer Christians, they can actually be great missionary centers to impact lives for the greater good of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We should steer away from buildings and commercial centers as the embodiment of Christ and the personification of God, and focus our efforts - including our money - on the Body of Christ - His Flock.

### **Emotional Blackmail**

Have you ever experienced such well trained "Emotional Blackmailers" as Church Leaders / Ecclesiastics? That 10 or 15 minutes - sometimes much longer - of "sermon" just before the tithes and offerings? When the preacher uses Fear, God and

Guilt to actually manipulate you, that piece of the ceremony where you are “coached” to take the 100 dollar note at the back of your wallet, and not the 10 dollar note in front, even sometimes the 100 dollar from thy neighbor. There where you are “warned” that you “need money to make money”.

I agree, the latter part of the previous sentence is a bit stolen from the Business World - but what the heck, it apparently works exactly the same way in church with the sow-and-reap principle: Money makes money, small amounts of money will only bring small multiplications? Well, it sounded more and more to me that you can actually “buy” blessings. I just wonder, if I borrow the money from the bank and give that as my tithe on Sunday, will the “blessing” now help the bank or will it actually help me?

I once asked a Pastor, who is a “master” in “biblical financial management”, what if I don't have money, but I have lots of time because I am currently unemployed. I was told that if you want to harvest corn, you have to plant corn, if you want to harvest pumpkin, you have to plant pumpkin. This principle I believe is actually being preached all over the world in all our churches today under the sow-and-reap principle.

My response to him was something like: “So from that lesson we can deduct that God will multiply your money if you give Him money, and multiply your business if you give a part of your business, therefore..... if you are unemployed with lots of free time, God will multiply your free time....But, if you are unemployed, you need a job that pays money, DEFINITELY NOT more free time.... and this is where he got angry and walked away .... Is this too a simplistic example? Although I agree that it is partly irrelevant, my argument was used to proof the point.

*2Co 9:10 And [God] Who provides seed for the sower and bread for eating will also provide and multiply your [resources for] sowing and increase the fruits of your righteousness [which manifests itself in active goodness, kindness, and charity]. [Isa. 55:10; Hos. 10:12.]*

Just a word of caution - and on a lighter note - if the pastor was right, PLEASE don't offer your wife or teenage kids to God, you won't be able to cope with the ramifications of the multiplications!

Abuse is any behavior that is designed to control and subjugate another human being through the use of fear, humiliation, intimidation, guilt, coercion or manipulation. Emotional abuse is like brain washing in that it systematically wears away at the victim's self-confidence, sense of self-worth, trust in their own perceptions and self-concept. Whether it is done by constant berating and belittling, by intimidation, or under the guise of "guidance," "teaching", or "advice," the results are similar.

Emotional Blackmail results in people feeling insecure, unimportant, unworthy and generally bad about themselves. Emotional blackmail is an attempt to influence or control by manipulating emotions. Emotional blackmailers often know your vulnerabilities and your secrets, and they use this knowledge to gain your compliance.

In the case of the church and specific for the intent of tithes and offerings - God's Word is manipulated to such an extent to create fear, to address vulnerabilities and for emotional purposes that church-goers are not only swindled into compliance, but are actually conned into giving as much as possible - normally quite a bit more than was originally

intended by the “blackmailed victims” - all this for the economical gain of the church and church leaders.

Somewhere in all of this turmoil of the love of money and the collecting thereof for church, God is completely lost.

***In the case of the church, the church leaders are “using” God as the emotional blackmailer – whether as a “threat” or as a “promise” - whilst they themselves reap the benefits of the blackmail itself.***

### **Trampling the Conscience**

Apart from the Emotional Blackmail, “Tithes and Offerings” has become a very fine art of “Trampling the Conscience” and “Theological Creativity”, an art of “Monetary Confession” and “Financial Declaration of Guilt”.

How ironic that we use thousands and thousands of dollars worth of instruments and side effects, so that hundreds of people can praise and worship, and in that trust God for that small Fridge that is so desperately needed for the Food Project of the Church. And if that fridge is donated full of groceries next Sunday, we buy even bigger amplifiers and two more speakers so that we can thank the Lord even more because He has been so good to us. And then we praise God and trust in Him to keep it full. Very ironic way of “believing” I would say.

Should we not be thousands of worshippers, collecting tens and hundreds of thousands of dollars, giving to millions of people....those who are hungry and naked, those who are sick and broken, those who are thirsty and homeless....

And if we have a nice roof over our head and a few instruments for that 2 to 4 hours on a Sunday, we will thank the Lord with

our Hearts and Voices, not with The Tamas, The Pearls, the Rolands, The Gibsons, The Ziljans and the Stradivariuses.

*Mat 25:31 When the Son of Man comes in His glory (His majesty and splendor), and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.*

*Mat 25:32 All nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them [the people] from one another as a shepherd separates his sheep from the goats; [Ezek. 34:17.]*

*Mat 25:33 And He will cause the sheep to stand at His right hand, but the goats at His left.*

*Mat 25:34 Then the King will say to those at His right hand, Come, you blessed of My Father [you favored of God and appointed to eternal salvation], inherit (receive as your own) the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*

*Mat 25:35 For I was hungry and you gave Me food, I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink, I was a stranger and you brought Me together with yourselves and welcomed and entertained and lodged Me,*

*Mat 25:36 I was naked and you clothed Me, I was sick and you visited Me with help and ministering care, I was in prison and you came to see Me. [Isa. 58:7.]*

*Mat 25:37 Then the just and upright will answer Him, Lord, when did we see You hungry and gave You food, or thirsty and gave You something to drink?*

*Mat 25:38 And when did we see You a stranger and welcomed and entertained You, or naked and clothed You?*

*Mat 25:39 And when did we see You sick or in prison and came to visit You?*

*Mat 25:40 And the King will reply to them, Truly I tell you, in so far as you did it for one of the least [in the estimation of men] of these My brethren, you did it for Me. [Prov. 19:17.]*

*Mat 25:41 Then He will say to those at His left hand, Begone from Me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels!*

*Mat 25:42 For I was hungry and you gave Me no food, I was thirsty and you gave Me nothing to drink,*

*Mat 25:43 I was a stranger and you did not welcome Me and entertain Me, I was naked and you did not clothe Me, I was sick and in prison and you did not visit Me with help and ministering care.*

*Mat 25:44 Then they also [in their turn] will answer, Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?*

*Mat 25:45 And He will reply to them, Solemnly I declare to you, in so far as you failed to do it for the least [in the estimation of men] of these, you failed to do it for Me. [Prov. 14:31; 17:5.]*

*Mat 25:46 Then they will go away into eternal punishment, but those who are just and upright and in right standing with God into eternal life. [Dan. 12:2.]*

I am not at all saying do not have those, all I am saying is the balance should be right.... the 90% should be outward focused and the 10% inwards, not the other way around.

In Church Marketing 101, Richard Reising writes, *“Your church might not have Solomon’s budget, but you can still shape what you do have into an instrument that glorifies God.”*

Yet the Churches of our world, realizing the power of wealth as well as mentally-controlled numbers and flocks, seek to gather to itself all it can.

### **Conclusion**

A common illustration used as a warning in the business world is the example of the railway barons of America in the last century. They made a fortune transporting goods and people across America as the country grew. They built huge empires, kingdoms almost, and had it all - infrastructure, money and skills. Yet one by one their little kingdoms collapsed. Why? Because they forgot what business they were in. They thought that they were in the business of railroading, whereas they were in reality in the transportation business.

So when cars and trucks became common, they ignored them, and when airliners started up, they ignored them too, and slowly their empires crumbled. We in the Church must learn from this lesson too.

***The church as Body of Christ is not supposed to be in the building of buildings business, but in the transport business transporting souls.***

I think there are quite a few questions we can ask ourselves: Does Scripture teach that salvation is only for people who have

jobs? Did Jesus teach His disciples to preach the Gospel only to specific economic classes of people? Does God discriminate or show favoritism?

There is the funny story of a preacher who got up one Sunday and announced to his congregation: "I have good news and bad news. The good news is, we have enough money to pay for our new building program. The bad news is, it's still out there in your pockets."

An interesting quote on church growth that I came across said that the trend for big mega-churches is to deliberately increase in members who are like-minded and have common socio-economic and sometimes also racial backgrounds. Just as marketing and businesses segment the marketplace, so have church builders cast a scientific eye toward the religious economy.

We have contemplated in this chapter the commercialization of the church and the associated consumer driven religious practices. If the church - and its unashamed love and solicitation for money - is nothing more than a commercial profit organization, the following passage from 2 Corinthians 2 must be unequivocally food for thought:

***2Co 2:14 But praise be to God who makes us strong to overcome in Christ, and makes clear through us in every place the value of the knowledge of Him.***

***2Co 2:15 For we are a sweet perfume of Christ to God in those who are getting salvation and in those who are going to destruction;***

***2Co 2:16 To the one it is a perfume of death to death; to the other a perfume of life to life. And who is enough for such things?***

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***2Co 2:17 For we are not like the great number who make use of the word of God for profit: but our words are true, as from God, being said as before God in Christ.***

Let's examine verse 17 from the Good News Bible translation:

***2Co 2:17 We are not like so many others, who handle God's message as if it were cheap merchandise; but because God has sent us, we speak with sincerity in his presence, as servants of Christ.***

## Chapter 4: Praise and Worship

In this chapter:

- Adoring Hearts Vs Performing Arts
- The Battle Of The Bands
- Praise OUR Worship
- The Confusion of the Holy Spirit

I used to play in a Church Band and have been involved in “praise and worship” in some form or another for more than a decade. One day I just realize that we as a band was more concerned with the Praise and Worship “performance”, more concerned about the choreography of the “emotions” than we were concerned with what the intent of Praise and Worship truly is.

Below mentioned are but some of these “performance based Praise and Worship” activities that I deemed did not need all that focus and attention - or basically - that has gotten ALL the attention ALL the time:

- Focusing on creating the right atmosphere with sound, lighting and acoustic effects;
- Creating the right volumes, acoustics and sound levels with the placement of the speakers and sound equipment;
- Creating the correct scenery or backdrop through the use of hundreds of meters of different material draping, flags and the likes;
- Concentrating on and forever be changing the stage layout and placement of band members to acquire the right “musical mix” and acoustical correctness;
- Spent hours and hours practicing different instrument use variations to get the right emotional vibe;

- Choreographing and arranging each and every song to the last note to ensure “perfect performance”;
- Choreographing and arranging the whole Praise and Worship Program to ensure the achievement of “emotional intent” of the program;
- And many, many, many more.

My view was that we are spending all our efforts on the performance, but nothing on what the performance is all about or who the performance is really for. I agree to a certain extent that the entire list above - plus all others not mentioned - are all valid things that need to happen within a band and are critical to ensure unity and harmony.

***Unity and Harmony in the band during our Praise and Worship activities are to be secondary to the primary intent of Praise and Worship - which is fellowship with God!; Band unity and harmony will automatically occur if the band is in unity and harmony with God and His Heart.***

We are focusing on the former unity of the band rather than any unity with God.

I made the horrible mistake of revealing “this problem” to the Praise and Worship Leader and ultimately the Pastors - including the “church owner” - of our church. The result was to be expected:- Immediate disposal. I was “politely” - in Jesus’s Name of course - asked to leave the band and the congregation - and the denomination - and rather find somewhere else I fit in. Which I obviously obliged and hence abruptly ended my “stay”. This has opened my eyes to one of the biggest - and horrifically wrong issues in our churches today: Praise and Worship.

Although there is a huge element of own contribution involved in Praise and Worship, there is a much deeper involvement required from God and the Holy Spirit in guiding us in Praise and Worship. Although Praise and Worship is basically an act of performance that we give unto God, it is not without the guidance of the Spirit and God Himself that we can truly be effective in our Praise and Worship.

### **Adoring Hearts Vs Performing Arts**

If Praise and Worship is suppose to speak to the heart and being of the Almighty God, how can we really either praise or worship Him if we are not fully connected to God, and more concerned with our personal agendas and self-centered emotional experiences. How can we bring offerings of praise or worships if we don't know the true heart of God? Are we true in what we do if our own hypocritical agendas are the drive behind our Praise and Worship Teams?

I personally agree with Bob Sorge on the issue of Worship:

*“There are so many concepts of what worship is (or is not), and so many interpretations of how worship is expressed or manifested, that answering the question “What is worship?” is a difficult task indeed. Many have struggled with finding an adequate definition of worship. Praise is not hard to define, but worship is another matter. No one definition seems to adequately express the fullness of worship — perhaps because worship is a divine encounter and so is as infinite in its depth as God himself.”*

Worship is quite different than praise. Worship brings us close to the heart of God. Relationship is a requirement for worship because worship is a two-way street, involving both giving and receiving. It is possible for praise to ascend one way only, but worship involves communion and fellowship.

Webster defines the word praise as “to say good things about” and it is synonymous to words such as admire, commend, extol, honor, and worship. A definition of Christian praise is most probably the joyful thanking and adoring of God, the celebration of His goodness and grace. God does not need our praises; we need to praise Him. God has commanded us to praise, not because of what it does for Him but because of the changes it brings in us. This part of the Praise and Worship would most probably require more from us than we would require inputs from God. The heart of man need not be near to God for praise to occur and anyone and everyone can praise the Lord:

*Psa 148:1 Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD from heaven, you that live in the heights above.*

*Psa 148:2 Praise him, all his angels, all his heavenly armies.*

*Psa 148:3 Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, shining stars.*

*Psa 148:4 Praise him, highest heavens, and the waters above the sky.*

*Psa 148:5 Let them all praise the name of the LORD! He commanded, and they were created;*

*Psa 148:6 by his command they were fixed in their places forever, and they cannot disobey.*

*Psa 148:7 Praise the LORD from the earth, sea monsters and all ocean depths;*

*Psa 148:8 lightning and hail, snow and clouds, strong winds that obey his command.*

*Psa 148:9 Praise him, hills and mountains, fruit trees and forests;*

*Psa 148:10 all animals, tame and wild, reptiles and birds.*

*Psa 148:11 Praise him, kings and all peoples, princes and all other rulers;*

*Psa 148:12 young women and young men, old people and children too.*

*Psa 148:13 Let them all praise the name of the LORD! His name is greater than all others; his glory is above earth and heaven.*

*Psa 148:14 He made his nation strong, so that all his people praise him--- the people of Israel, so dear to him. Praise the LORD!*

*Most of the time our spirit is willing to worship, but our flesh is weak and reluctant.*

Since praise is expressed through the flesh, it requires a stirring up of the flesh. But since worship is more a function of the spirit, what is needed is not a stirring up of the flesh but an unlocking of the spirit. Some Christians have made the mistake of equating praise with "the outer court" and worship with "the inner court." To place this strong a barrier between the two is completely artificial.

Unfortunately we have diminished Worship to the level of Praise in our churches and Praise-and-Worship is seen as one encompassing emotional act or poignant performance from us to God. I do not want to belittle Praise to Worship, as both are of equal importance and are suppose to be part of our daily lives, but there is quite a major difference in our stance and relationship with God in terms of Praise and Worship. Whilst Praise can be an emotional experience linked with joyfulness and cheerfulness on an emotional level, Worship involves true fellowship - a deep association with a Living God! Whilst Praise is almost always associated with some form of physical manifestation and visible expressions, Worship can transpire

without any physical activity - but can also include most or all of the activities used in praise.

Although the following topics would most probably be more relevant to Worship than it would be to Praise, I believe the same issues discussed are as important for the one as the other. It is not as much an issue of the performance of the performer, than it is the attitude and focus of the performance - both in praise and in worship!

*As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.*

~John Fitzgerald Kennedy

Safe for what has already been discussed so far, something has washed up on the shores of our churches in the last few decades which have all but carried the people away with its cheerful promise. This apparent wealth of riches in our Praise and Worship comes in many forms and guises, but all with certain similar features. Several words may describe it: Contemporary worship, Community churches, Charismatic leaders, Choruses, Clapping, Celebrations, Choirs, Courses, and even Confusing Chatter.

***“Praise and Worship” is an environment that is ever changing, a “treasure” that is ever evolving, adapted and disguised in each and every church today, with the resultant effects of emotional chaos and religious confusion.***

The Word of God is sent to reveal and illuminate to us that which will please the heart of God. Blessed, indeed, is the man who is willing to obey God's desires according to the Word; for he will receive that which the Word promises.

*Scripture says, "...Draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you." (James 4:9)*

*Worship is the dominant way of drawing into divine embrace.*

But "worship" has taken on so many hues and colors in today's church that the richness of God's desire in worship is often confused. Worship has become "preliminaries" and the art of praise is lost in the shadow of "great preaching" and great performances".

*Church seems to rely on Praise and Worship as "truly great emotional experiences" but very often are they "true God emotional experiences".*

The Praise and Worship is rather used as an "Emotional Preparation" for the intended "Emotional Experience" of the messenger rather than a "Godly Preparation" for the message and as adoration towards the Almighty God.

*The pulpit has become the center of focus while the throne stands negated and misunderstood by the many churchmen of the hour.*

### **The Battle Of The Bands**

In many churches today, planning for worship is a simple operation of tradition and/or a series of a few meetings. The pastor or an associate will simply delete from last week's bulletin the hymns, songs and anthems sung, and scratch in new ones in line with next week's theme.

The elements of the praise and worship service, differing in "time lengths from denomination to denomination - are arranged under a fixed series of headings: Praise Adoration,

Supplication, Inspiration, Dedication, and of course - and most importantly - the Praise-and-Worship Leader's own Personal Collection. What a better stage to release new songs for the necessary personal praises and personal appreciations afterwards.

The thought in these "praise and worship programs" is to give meaningful progression to the service. The service - dependent on time constraints of the "perfect service length" varying per denomination - alternates between a well choreographed program of music and speech, of standing and sitting and of listening and responding.

The main attraction is of course the delivering of the sermon, so all else seeks to get the assemblage of believers ready for the "morning ministry." The one secure and rational aspect of this service is its sheer predictability. The anthem always precedes the sermon; the Doxology most usually follows the offering; the responsive reading normally comes after the first hymn and before the prayer.

The best way for those in attendance to handle this type of approach is just to sit until told what to do next.

***To alter the fixed sequence of the structured sermon is to weaken the worshiper's one secure link with it - predictability!***

The weakness of such an approach is that it resists attempts on the part of worshipers to become attentively involved. To become actively or creatively alive to the potential of worship as a "life flow" in the assembly is deemed to be obstructive.

Worship is not supposed to be simply human activity, but rather an encounter with a living God. Many are missing such an encounter today. The transition from passive response -

conditioned by years of experience with the artificial praise and worship approach - to awaken thoughtful engagement in worship may be slow and lengthy, but it is a worthy objective.

The holy art of true worship seems to have passed away like the Glory of the divine presence of God has passed away in the tabernacle.

***As a result, we are left to our own devices and forced to make up the lack of spontaneous worship by bringing in countless cheap and tawdry activities to hold the attention of the church people.***

### **Praise our Worship**

In our churches today, most Praise and Worship leaders are appointees in church working for a salary. Not that it in itself is wrong, but by being merely a job to most, we found that this negatively impacts on what true Praise and Worship is suppose to be.

There are numerous examples of Praise and Worship leaders using the “church stage” as a platform to launch their careers as professional “gospel singers”. Although there is once again nothing wrong with being a gospel artist - if done for the right reasons obviously - the danger lies in this area that the Praise and Worship in Church has become nothing but a stage for upcoming artists seeking only admiration and appreciation.

We see more and more that “stages” are build to represent performing platforms with the right lightning, stage layouts, instrumentation and the rest. Praise and Worship leaders and bands are more concerned with the band’s and personal performances to obtain approval from the congregation as they are with being in fellowship with God.

Church -, music - and ecclesiastic leaders are more concerned about their own personal kingdoms and self-centered egocentric institutions and personal gains than they are about God and the divine Trinity. Praise and Worship leaders are more concerned about the “emotional experiences” of their “performing arts” - in line with the intended “emotional expectation” of the ministers, and the appreciation by the congregation of the touching journey than really leading a congregation into adoration for God and fellowship with through worship.

Church bands - in all shapes, forms and sizes - have become nothing more than the platform for performing artists in church. It is much easier to get into as a musician, mistakes and errors are more casually accepted and true testimony of faith is not really required. Praise and Worship Leaders have been elevated to the level of “church leadership”, and as such are deemed closer to God and the church management - eliminating all possible threats of disagreements and/or external inputs. Irrespective of the background of the Praise and Worship Leader, acknowledgement of God and testimony of the acceptance of God seems to be the only criteria for autocratic decision-making and dictatorial running of the Praise and Worship in Church.

Sunday programs have become well choreographed performances, with the assistance of the correct lightning effects, sound techniques and other peripheral aids as discussed earlier in this chapter.

***Many worship sessions and services today are nothing more than emotional experiences aimed to seek to conciliate the egotistic desires of the church's consumer clients.***

### **The Confusion of the Holy Spirit**

Being part of the band for many years, I always wondered who were confused the most. Was it really the Holy Spirit or God advising the band about the songs, and then keeps on changing the sequence, the songs, the key, the rhythm, the amount of instruments playing or not, backing vocals on or off, etc, etc. To illustrate my concern in this regard, I am going to take you through a light-hearted - yet serious intended - week before a Sunday service.

Normally on a Monday the Pastor / Church Leader together with the Praise and Worship leader will meet to discuss the past weekend's program and performance. Based on the outcome of the meeting, "prescriptive guidance" for next Sunday is determined. Based on these prescriptive guidelines, the Leaders will the "hear from God" - mainly on a Tuesday - the message and songs for next Sunday. Given what is then "heard from God", the Praise and Worship Leader - in collaboration with the preacher for Sunday - will then "interpret" God's message to derive the songs necessary for the service. The band then gets together for practice - normally on a Wednesday /Thursday, and it is normally then when the sequences are changed, songs are added or deleted and the program adapted to suite the availability of band members - which all seemed to be unknown to God (and the Holy Spirit) earlier the week when he "gave" the song list. All done and dusted, everybody is now ready for the quick practice for Sunday morning before the service.

As would be expected on a Friday / Saturday - law and behold unknown to God it seems - some sporting or other event will trigger a totally different message for Sunday, and the Praise and Worship will have to be adapted again. It is also very apparent that God tends to wake ministers, leaders and

ecclesiastics up at 4 in the morning the day of the service to give a complete different message than was intended earlier the week, with all the necessary changes to the program, the Praise and Worship, the Band Structure and Stage Layout. These last minute changes are then quickly “practiced” before the service starts to make sure everything falls into place as per the “last instructions” received from God.

Once the band gets going, the leader jumps in at just the right “emotional moment”, and delivers some message and the whole “program” is altered on the fly to suite the Holy Spirit again? The question remains, was it God and the Holy Spirit changing their minds all the time this whole week? I heard a famous preacher once said: “I don't know if God is lying, but someone is lying”.

### **Conclusion**

A boy was watching his father, a pastor, write a sermon.  
"How do you know what to say?" he asked.  
"Why, God tells me." The father replied.  
"Oh, then why do you keep crossing things out?"

Although much is quite wrong with Praise and Worship in our churches today, but all too often, praise and worship to God is something that many people leave at and for the church, an event that happens only when they come together with other Christians in a church building on Sunday.

Many church-goers are relying on choreographed programs by Praise and Worship Teams for the “emotional experiences” of Praise and Worship. Many church-goers have fallen for these performing arts as an impersonation of adoring hearts, and many Praise-and-Worship Leaders are basking in the personal attention and admiration received from church flocks.

Instead of being: the higher the adoration and efficacy we have for God because of our relationship with Him, the deeper and truer our emotional experiences are for Praise and Worship; we are seeing that the better the emotional experiences during Praise and Worship, the higher our admiration for the Praise and Worship Teams and the better we believe our relationship with God was. This completely dislodged from the truth in any possible way. We do not have a better relationship or fellowship with God because of our Praise and Worship; but we tend to always praise and worship God because of our relationship and fellowship with Him.

***Our Praise and Worship does not strengthen our relationship or intimacy with God, but our intimacy and/or relationship strengthen our Praise and Worship.***

The more artificial our relationship with God tends to be, the more we have to rely on artificial Praise and Worship to have the perceived interaction or fellowship with God. The truer and deeper our relationship is with God, the lesser we need artificial aids and synthetic Praise and Worship.

In the church of today, it seems that we are ever moving further and further away from real and true relationship with the Almighty God, and hence our Praise and Worship - with all the associated synthetic assistance and aids - have become more and more artificial imitating true fellowship with God.

We have gone to the extent where good experiences are perceived as God experiences, and successful Praise-and-Worship sessions are interpreted as successful relationship with God.

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Praise-and-Worship Leaders in these instances as nothing but enliven agents in our churches responsible for ensuring good emotional experiences.

*These experiences unfortunately have nothing to do with Praising and Worshipping God, and Praise-and-Worship Leaders are enjoying the performances in the artificial world of perceived Godly fellowship.*

## Chapter 5: Church and the Creative Imagination

In this chapter:

- Prosperity Theology
- Absolution through Exoneration
- The Epidemiology of Communicable Degrees
- Creative Theology
- Faith By Hinting

Imagination can be defines as:

*“an act or process of forming a conscious idea or mental image of something never before wholly perceived in reality by the one forming the images (as through a synthesis of remembered elements of previous sensory experiences or ideas as modified by unconscious defense mechanisms)”*

Whilst creativity can be defined as:

*“having the ability to create”*

To quote the wise words of Robert A, Nisbet, historian and educator:

*“Imagination could hardly do without metaphor, for imagination is, literally, the moving around in one's mind of images, and such images tend commonly to be metaphoric. Creative minds, as we know, are rich in images and metaphors, and this is true in science and art alike. The difference between scientist and artist has little to do with the ways of the creative imagination; everything to do with the manner of demonstration and verification of what has been seen or imagined.”*

In our church and Christian Societies today, we are more and more seeing the use of the “creative imagination” in both the

interpretations or understandings of the Bible as well as the construction of denominational religious groups.

The creative imagination is also employed when constructing Theological Theories, Religious Doctrines and Articles of Religion, all for the sake of congregating followers and church flocks.

There is a huge difference of being Creative in Theology and Creative Theology. In the first instance, the basis of the Theology is fixed, accepted, respected and creative means and measures are employed to communicate or illustrate the Theology. In Creative Theology, the Theology itself is adapted, changed and tailored through creative thoughts, metaphors and imaginations.

The first instance of creativity in Theology would be beneficial to the church, but the problem is that we are seeing more and more “Creative Theologies” in the magnitude of church denominations.

I believe that churches can employ creativity as long as they work with God and God’s work in a responsible and obediently manner without any alterations, changes or modifications. We are unfortunately seeing quite a number of “creative imaginations” being employed, and in this chapter I am but scratching the tip of the iceberg in terms of “creative theologies” and “creative religious practices”.

### **Prosperity Theology**

Prosperity theology (also known as prosperity doctrine, the health and wealth gospel, or the prosperity gospel) is a religious belief found among "tens of millions" of Christians centered on the notion that God provides material prosperity

for those he favors. It has been defined by the belief that "Jesus blesses believers with riches" or more specifically as the teaching that "believers have a right to the blessings of health and wealth and that they can obtain these blessings through positive confessions of faith and the 'sowing of seeds' through the faithful payments of tithes and offerings.

***Zec 11:4 The LORD my God said to me: Tend those sheep doomed for slaughter!***

***Zec 11:5 The people who buy and butcher them go unpunished, while everyone who sells them says, "Praise the LORD! I'm rich." Not even their shepherds have pity on them.***

Prosperity theology is most commonly found within the Charismatic and Pentecostal traditions of Christianity although it is not exclusive to these traditions. The prosperity gospel also has been called the "name it and claim it" theology. Common terms such as "name it and claim it" and "positive confession" are typical phrases associated with the teaching.

I believe luring people to Christ to get rich and be materially blessed is both deceitful and deadly. We must learn to teach and preach on prosperity without misunderstanding or misusing it.

***Prosperity should not be the main focus of our teachings and preaching, nor should prosperity be missing from it.***

There is a very fine line between the truth as Biblically found regarding prosperity, versus absolute prosperity found in modern theology and religious practices. The first step in knowing what to teach about prosperity involves knowing what prosperity actually entails.

Prosperity is found in freedom from our sins and our pasts, it is found in God's Blessings and our abilities to bless others. As Children of God, we can walk in His Blessings and His Grace, we can prosper in life, in business, in our marriages and our society, and all of these are all inextricable part of prosperity. God's prosperity, grace and blessing doesn't remove problems in our lives, it helps us get through them successfully.

Prosperity Preachers emphasize self-centeredness whilst selectively avoiding God's total goodness. Prosperity Theology believes that if one has adequate faith, so the argument goes, then the Lord will bless that person with good health and wealth. Specifically, if in faith one "sows" a financial gift to a Christian ministry, then that person is guaranteed to "reap" a hefty financial return for himself. If on the other hand one is suffering sickness or poverty, it is due to a failure of faith on that person's part.

***Rom 16:17 I urge you, my friends: watch out for those who cause divisions and upset people's faith and go against the teaching which you have received. Keep away from them!***

***Rom 16:18 For those who do such things are not serving Christ our Lord, but their own appetites. By their fine words and flattering speech they deceive innocent people.***

Prosperity Preachers prosper greatly from the tithes and offerings given by their congregations, much like corrupt politicians and rulers prosper from the wealth gained from their constituents. The "health and wealth" gospel is growing rapidly in Africa. This movement is led by charismatic preachers who easily captivate the imaginations of the masses with promises of prosperity. Coupled with the influence of America's

prosperity pastors, Africa's prosperity Pentecostalism is leading many African believers to connect Christianity with wealth and comfort.

God does not need our money. He is more concerned about our heart, our time and our life.

Prosperity Gospel is the gospel of materialism. A gospel that teaches that materialism (personal wealth) is an indicator of a person's spirituality, righteousness or holiness. Prosperity gospel says that the more you have, the greater your spirituality. Prosperity gospel teaches that you can use your faith to acquire wealth, fame and power. The danger of prosperity gospel is that it makes people seek God for the wrong reasons. And when people seek God for the wrong reasons, they seek Him for what they can get from Him rather than salvation.

***Mat 6:30 It is God who clothes the wild grass---grass that is here today and gone tomorrow, burned up in the oven. Won't he be all the more sure to clothe you? What little faith you have!***

***Mat 6:31 "So do not start worrying: 'Where will my food come from? or my drink? or my clothes?'***

***Mat 6:32 (These are the things the pagans are always concerned about.) Your Father in heaven knows that you need all these things.***

***Mat 6:33 Instead, be concerned above everything else with the Kingdom of God and with what he requires of you, and he will provide you with all these other things.***

***Mat 6:34 So do not worry about tomorrow; it will have enough worries of its own. There is no need to add to the troubles each day brings.***

***Rather than to run after fleeting riches, health and wealth - hunger and thirst for God's righteousness and salvation.***

Biblical prosperity is having God with you every step of the way, regardless of what you may be going through. Prosperity is not only in what you have, but what you are through God.

**Absolution through Exoneration**

It seems that we have one standard principle across all denominations and churches today: Do as thy wishes as long as you forgive through the principle exoneration. The churches have adapted the principle of forgiveness to the point where forgiveness and clemency are only inwards focused, whether you are the perpetrator or the perpetrated.

We are taught today in churches that we only have to “absolve” the other person that holds any grudge, resent or bitterness against us - irrespective of the cause or reason for such resentment or bitterness. We are taught that this is necessary for us to be “free” of guilt and culpability, and that we ourselves are not caught up in bitterness and animosity.

***Absolution has become a “biblical” excuse for bad actions.***

Christians - inclusive of Church Leadership - are banking on this deceived principle to justify their bad actions and ill behavior and an “excuse” or “plea” not to correct their mistakes, especially having to face the perpetrated and acknowledge their mistakes.

Although I agree to a certain extend with the forgiveness theory and that it is necessary for us to do, I believe that the

corrective actions by us should be taken first prior to the exoneration or absolution part.

***Mat 5:23 So if when you are offering your gift at the altar you there remember that your brother has any [grievance] against you,***

***Mat 5:24 Leave your gift at the altar and go. First make peace with your brother, and then come back and present your gift.***

Note that the aforementioned verses emphasize the “that your brother has any grievance against you”, and does not in any way indicate guilt or not to the grievance.

***God instructs us to reconcile with whomever we know that has whatever grievances against us for whatever reason.***

This principle is comfortably ignored when the exoneration or absolution principle is preached, and is especially true of church leadership today.

I don't think there is one single Christian / Believer in this world that has not been hurt in some way or the other specifically by the church as an institution or church leadership directly. I also believe that finding any of those hurt by the church / church leader able to testify that any effort was made to pardon for the mistakes, would be near impossible.

I believe that the damage caused by churches as mere Institutionalized Religious Practices are far greater than we can anticipate and that we know.

### **The Epidemiology of Communicable Degrees**

Epidemiology is the study of factors affecting the health and illness of populations, with specific reference to diseases and illnesses. In our Churches today, we are facing the same problem that is affecting the health and wellbeing of our Churches and Christians today: The Epidemiology of Communicable Degrees. The Church must be the only entity or “business” in the world where the wife or spouse automatically inherits the qualifications, skills, talents, knowledge and abilities of the husband. This is specifically true with reference to our preachers, pastors, ministers, apostles, prophets, reverends, priests - the whole Ecclesiastic Fraternity. Only in church do we find the principle of “Qualified by Marriage”.

The “Wife”, by design of her communicable degree, now acts as the “spiritual mother” of the church, being in charge of everything else that the Church Leader can't. And just giving enough time for the degree to digest, the wife also inherits the “title” - normally just adding an -ess at the back of the title. Once this title is “endorsed” by the husband, the wife can now start performing the same functions and responsibilities as the husband normally does - but with the added benefit of having the “spiritual endorsement” of the husband.

The aforementioned transfer of a degree seems only possible from male to female, from the husband to the wife. We do not find a lot of cases, actually very few, where the transmission of the “degree” happens from the wife to the husband. Hence we do not find a lot of husbands being able to perform all the spiritual functions and qualifications of the wife, in the case where the wife / woman is the ecclesiastic leader or church owner.

It seems that the main two things that need to happen for this transferring of degree from husband to wife is actually a very simplistic and automated process:

- The transmitting of the degree - with the associated skills, talents, knowledge and abilities - happens automatically by virtue of marriage - whether the husband had the qualification before the marriage or obtained the qualification during marriage;
- All functions and responsibilities of the husband can automatically be performed by the wife once “endorsed” or “released” by the husband. This step is more applicable where the wife fulfills a role in a specific church, but this is not a pre-requisite for the first step to happen.

There are so many warnings in the Bible against False Prophets and False Christs (to name but a few below from the Amplified Bible):

***Mat 7:15 Beware of false prophets, who come to you dressed as sheep, but inside they are devouring wolves. [Ezek. 22:27.]***

***Mat 24:11 And many false prophets will rise up and deceive and lead many into error.***

***Mat 24:24 For false Christs and false prophets will arise, and they will show great signs and wonders so as to deceive and lead astray, if possible, even the elect (God's chosen ones).***

***Mar 13:22 False Christs (Messiahs) and false prophets will arise and show signs and [work] miracles to***

*deceive and lead astray, if possible, even the elect  
(those God has chosen out for Himself).*

As is the case with communicable diseases where the infected party inherits the disease - with all symptoms and effects - the same danger exists in our churches with the epidemic of communicable degrees - false prophets will transmit false beliefs and principles to their spouses - which in turn will "teach" these doctrines to others, which in turn will spread the infected word to others. Thus, becoming an epidemic in our church: the *Epidemiology of Communicable Degrees*.

Although biblically we are becoming "one" when we get married, this concept of communicable degrees and transferability of skills and gifts is nothing but a fabrication of a downright lie.

### **Creative Theology**

Although very closely related, there is a huge difference between Creativity in Theology vs Creative Theology. We see nowadays that more and more churches are buildings adapted for performing arts. More emphasis is put on the emotional experience of the church goes than on the message. Technological advancements have allowed for more and more technology to be deployed in churches and the associated services.

Not that there is any problem with the utilization of technology and technological advances in church, but the biggest problem is that God was also adapted to suite the environment. The more and more churches deploy creative techniques of preaching and services, the more and more God was altered to co-exist with the environment.

Church Buildings are built and interiorly designed to “portray” what God is believed to be, what God is intended to be in line with that specific church’s interpretation of the “god” of that Church (note the capitalization of the last part of the sentence that illustrates the problem).

Contextual theology - which is nothing more than creative theology - has been defined as:

*“A way of doing theology in which one takes into account: the spirit and message of the gospel; the tradition of the Christian people; the culture in which one is theologising; and social change in that culture”*

Churches are built for emotional experiences and specific expressive religious practices, and are intended to suite the church goers “religious appetite” and “pious expectations”. More and more the size of the buildings are belief to be an illustration of either the size of God or the size of the “preacher”. Church buildings are per name associated with a specific religious theme or ecclesiastic preacher, and church goers are constantly reminded of the “owner” of the building or the religious denomination of the church, thereby placing God in a lesser or secondary position to the “church owners”.

I have been to so many churches where God’s or the Holy Spirit’s visitation is seen as this immense blessings or even favor by God. As if God decides what buildings “He and His Team” will visit based on certain actions or practices.

Some questions immediate spring to mind:

Are we not the vessels of God, the body of Christ that host God the trinity inside ourselves?

Are we not the ones that take God with us where ever we go and where ever we are?

Are we not the ones deciding whether God is present or not by allowing God into our lives?

Are we not welcoming God in our lives once and then keep Him there for always?

***It seems that more and more churches are seeking that “which seems to work” rather than seeking that “which is the truth”.***

God does not react to great emotional experiences or technological advancements to decide whether or not He will be present or whether He will visit a church or not, God is present when we decide to put Him alone first and all other things are there for Him. The opposite in churches are actually more accurate, all things are for the church goes, and God seems to be welcome if He wants to attend as well.

I always wonder if God has a selection panel in Heaven that decides on specific visitations dependent on the performance of the people, the bands and the pastors. Like an Idols Competition, it seems that churches compete for God's attention and visitation. More and more churches seem to be the performing artists on stage for “Heaven's got talent” with God, the Holy Spirit, Christ the Son and some angels being the panel of judges.

***Rom 1:28 And even as they refused to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up unto a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting;***

***Rom 1:29 being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity; whisperers,***

***Rom 1:30 backbiters, hateful to God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,***

*Rom 1:31 without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, unmerciful:*

*Rom 1:32 who, knowing the ordinance of God, that they which practise such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but also consent with them that practise them.*

### **Faith By Hinting**

Hint per definition is an indirect suggestion, a slight indication or to allude to lightly, indirectly or cautiously. Faith to the contrary is an absolute confidence in God.

Blessing from God are the most precious gift we can receive, whether we deserve them or not. But there is quite a seismic difference between "True Blessings received through faith" and "favoritism received through Hinting". The latter in church has become a very fine art defined as "Faith by Hinting".

So many times we are experiencing more the "faith by hinting" in our Churches - and specifically the "Bless-Me Clubs" (to be discussed later) - than we are seeing true blessings from God. Although God uses people, friends and many more in His delivering of Blessings, there is a huge difference between what God has told someone to do and what you have hinted for. By preaching - sometimes for weeks at end - about the car that God told you to sow and "prophesying" that God will provide you with a new one - knowingly that someone in church or the Bless-Me Club either has a garage or the ability to provide you with a new car - might not a blessing, but a blatant hint. When God tells you to sow your car and you do so without anybody knowing, and God replaces that car through someone unexpected, that is a Blessing.

The aforementioned example is so much more true when it comes to money for specific projects in the church or the desires of church leaders. Church leaders have perfected the art of “faith by hinting” to the extent that church goers actually believe these to be blessings, or at least let to belief that these are blessings by many a pastor.

### **Conclusion**

Although some truths do exist in “prosperity theology”, it is far from the whole truth. God - through His Grace and Love - afford much prosperity in many different forms. These prosperities are for God to decide. Although the Bible learns us of the promises of God and His desire for us to prosper, these prosperities are not to be confused with covetousness and materialism - the latter one of man's greatest sins.

We are receiving blessings from God through His Grace, but to manipulate people into giving through hinting and emotional suggestions are nothing but human greed and material desires.

***True faith in God needs no hints or suggestions to people, only absolute trust in God.***

Being creative and having an imagination, is part of what God has bestowed upon mankind. How we use our creative imagination will determine whether we glorify God or not. We furthermore receive talents, gifts, skills and abilities from God, and these are all given to us by God as He deem fit for each and anyone of us, all to be individually used to God's Glory.

***To pretend that gifts and personal accoutrements are communicable by marriage or union is nothing more but mere religious flummery.***

Asking for forgiveness and receiving forgiveness are two complete different acts. Exonerating the perpetrated if we are the perpetrators without pardoning or clemency - is as unbiblical as expecting God's forgiveness without asking. If we are not forgiven after we have truthfully asked for forgiveness, we can then exonerate the unforgiver for the benefit of our own emancipation. We are instructed or commanded in the Word of God to forgive (applicable to us as the perpetrated) for certain reasons as quoted below, but I believe that these verses should be read in conjunction with Matthew 5:23 and 24 (applicable as the perpetrator) commanding us to pardon those who has something against us.

Jesus commanded us to forgive:

***Mat 6:14 "If you forgive others the wrongs they have done to you, your Father in heaven will also forgive you.***

***Mat 6:15 But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive the wrongs you have done.***

But we also have to forgive so that our prayers will not be hindered by unforgiveness and bitterness:

***Mar 11:25 And when you stand and pray, forgive anything you may have against anyone, so that your Father in heaven will forgive the wrongs you have done.***

We are too easily just concentrating on the behaviors and commandments from God's Word for the perpetrated, but easily forget the instructions from the same Word for the perpetrators.

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***For us much as we are commanded to forgive our trespassers, we as trespassers are commanded to ask for clemency from those whom we have trespassed against.***

We should therefore forgive those who trespass us out of obedience to God, but we should also ask for forgiveness those whom we trespass also out of obedience to God. These two order both the perpetrated and the perpetrator to action.

***To forgive, to ask for forgiveness and been asked for forgiveness are all mutually inclusive commands from God, but they are not mutually dependent.***

## Chapter 6: The Shielding Church

In this chapter:

- The “Bless-me” Club
- Ecclesiastic Nepotism
- Count Thou Sheep
- Endorsed Calling

So far we have addressed the issues of quite a number of topics in our churches that are wrong with the church practices. These topics addressed the issue of doctrines, of faith, of articles of religion, of egocentric leadership and of narcissistic praise and worship in our churches.

The following chapter is aimed at addressing some of the major issue with regards to specifically the leadership of our churches, their self-centered approaches to the church as a family business and the maximization of income for the “pastoral household”. This chapter deliberates the issues on how selective members and/or groups are chosen to be part of the “Bless-Me Clubs” to ensure conformity, loyalty and to capitalize on profitability - both personally and for the institutions of churches.

We will endeavor to explore how and why ecclesiastics are merely interested in congregating the numbers for the sake of numbers, and are more interested in “counting their flocks” than “knowing their flocks” - the latter as originally commissioned by Jesus and the Bible. We have already discussed that any “threat” or “resistance” against any denomination in whatever form is disposed of on the spot. The topics addressed in this chapter is a peek at the endeavors by

ecclesiastics, church leaders and church owners to ensure that these threats and resistances are minimized as far as possible.

### **The “Bless-me” Club**

An unholy phenomenon - a pious flummery - that is found in most or all of our churches today is the “**Bless-Me Clubs**” - BMC for short. These BMCs are the commercial equivalent of Profit Centers. We find these clubs in specific churches and congregation and across congregations all over the world. These clubs are mostly church, geographical or area based or found in denominational groupings of churches and in church or religious structures overall.

These Bless-Me Clubs consist of selected individuals or church members, normally hand-picked by church-leaders and the first few founder members of the Bless-Me Club. Members are selected purely on potential “beneficial status” and these BMC’s are normally disguised as inter alia the “church management”, “praise and worship headship”, “management forums”, “pastoral cell groups”, “executive committees” or even “synods”, “boards” and “councils”. These Bless-Me Clubs differ in size dependent on structure and function, and can be from 1 or 2 persons to multi-international boards, councils or organisations. It seems that faith in these clubs is optional, but title and deed is of utmost importance. Material contributions seem to be much higher on the list than intellectual or spiritual contributions, and a member’s authority in the religious contribution area is directly proportional to his/her material contributions.

The club members are carefully selected to ensure that all members share the same views, the same “faith”, same apostate objectives and - ultimately and most importantly - the

same “interpretations” of specifically “blessings” and “godly favors”.

These BMCs meet regularly, and are characterized by excessive exchange of personal information, personal requirements and very detailed prayer requests - mostly of course in the disguised form of “faith by hinting”. The requests are communicated through prayer, counseling or “religious testimonies”. Members are blessed by other present club members on the fly as these “hints” and “suggestions” are exchanged in prayers, speaking in tongues and the exchange of personal “messages from God”. These blessings range from the fulfillment of personal requests and desires though to the awarding of lucrative church contracts and personal appointments of positions and posts - normally associated with rather lucrative remuneration agreements. All of this done in the secrecy of the BMC and never to be made known outside the concealment walls of the BMC. Should any of these ever slipped through the cracks or someone in the church accidentally finds out, it is easily explained as a “blessings from God” and all is forgotten and concealed from any further enquiries.

There are also quite a few of these Bless-Me Clubs, where no membership is awarded or required, but automatic membership is assumed based on title, deed or “religious status”. For instance: all pastors, ministers, prophets, church fathers and the likes will belong to a BMC with the same name as the ecclesiastic title of the members - e.g. the Pastors BMC. Members are club members not as much for the benefits of blessings and favors, but for the mutual protection and sheltering of all members against “outsiders”, criticism and any form of outside attacks.

These clubs are further distinguished based on specific members and range from specific groupings - like charismatic

leaders or Pentecostal Preachers - to more generalized BMCs like “Preachers of God”.

The one BMC that is absolutely blocked to any other member other than direct family members is of course the club for the members or partners of the family business - also known as the “Pastoral Team BMC” or the “Shepherds BMC”. Although blessings are mostly in form of the allocation of church activities, income, positions and special projects, this club is also the focal point to determine special needs, wishes and desires of the pastoral team - and in some cases also close family members and “special friends”. These are then escalated normally to the “Church Management Forum BMC” for ratification, allocation and execution.

Extended BMCs are sometimes disguised as “religious theme parties” - or RTPs for short, where non club-members are congregated to widen the “blessing” to fulfill the requirements BMC members alone can't do. Quite a number of special courses, special praise and worship events, counseling and religious seminars, business breakfasts, family weekends and others are good examples of these RTPs used to remunerate or benefit BMC members. It is quite amazing that all “extramural activities” presented by churches mostly come at an extra cost to the already drained congregation flocks. The extra costs for “extramural activities” are almost always to the benefit of BMC Members and are almost never to the benefit of either the church or the congregation.

BMCs always make use of the church infrastructure and buildings for BMC, RTP and other extramural events under the auspices of “doing God's Work” - thereby ensuring good response from the consumer congregation; and co-branded and marketed under the church's already existing “religious and spiritual merchandise”. By using the church as “events venue”,

not only are there no costs involved to the BMCs for these events (ensuring higher profit margins), but marketing is much more concentrated and response or consumer reaction - through spiritual manipulation - is much more guaranteed.

***Churches are blossoming as Commercial Businesses because Consumer Christians react on their Spiritual Obligations rather than on True Biblical Values.***

### **Ecclesiastic Nepotism**

Apart from the epidemiology of the communicable degrees as discussed earlier, we see more and more that churches are well-oiled family businesses. Nepotism is favoritism granted to relatives or friends, with no regard to merit. This illness is seen in almost all of our modern-day churches of today. It is quite interesting to read that nepotism - both ecclesiastical and denominational - seems to have originated in the church - and is gaining more and more impetus each day.

***Rather than following the scriptural teaching of Jesus in regard to true servant hood - the deceitful practices of nepotism is used by church leaders to rather serve themselves and their families and friends.***

Each member of the pastoral family or household will almost always be a salary or income earning individual in the church. Safe for our discussion on the “communicable degrees”, it seems that this statement of communicability is actually wider and includes the whole family circle. In most cases the pastor and his/her spouse are the lead “pastors” or “shepherd’s pair” of the church - one having the same as the other through inherited right of marriage. As the children get older, they also join the family business - for a small fee of course - to share in the riches of the tithes, the offerings and church income. Once

the child reaches adolescence, he/she would normally be in charge of the “adolescent group” on Sundays, or most probably be the Praise and Worship Leader - or at least a “very senior” member of the band and/or church leadership with direct “lines” to both the Pastors and seemingly also to God.

During the week the family members are all part of the “Management Team BMC”. All family members will also participate in a variety of other BMCs - on the one side to partake in all benefits of the “blessings” to be received, and on the other hand to ensure representation by the “business partners” in all other BMCs.

The latter is especially true where these “blessings” are meant for the “whole family” - like vacations, caravans, holiday homes, etc - but also more personal “blessings” like new cars, motorbikes, study bursaries, overseas trips, sponsored tours, etc. Once dad/mom - whoever is the “original pastor” - see that there is a decline in income or a specific need for increase / more expendable income, the formidable service about money follows, with specific emphasis on how the “pastoral household” is suffering.

***The sermon about money is normally a combination of “emotional blackmail”, spiced up with “trampling the conscience” and the specific requirements exemplified through “faith by hinting”.***

The worst part in our churches today is that there are many other households, who might be in much greater need or who are suffering much more than the church or the “shepherd’s home”, but whose situation is always unknown to the church.

***In the commercial church of today, many people will blindly contribute something they most probably cannot afford to someone who most probably doesn't really need it.***

It is undeniable that God bless us through His Love and Grace, and that God can and will bless us abundantly.

***To degrade and/or demean "Blessings" through Faith by Hinting, Bless-Me Clubs and Religious Theme Parties - and disguise solicited human favors as Godly Blessings - is diminishing the Generosity of and Faith in God.***

In his article of "Nepotism and Scoundrels", John Davies wrote: *"The fact remains that multi-million dollars Family run Evangelistic Ministries in America be it the Hinn's of Orlando, the Straders of Lakeland, the Howard-Browne's of Tampa, the Falwells of Lynchburg, the Brights of Orlando, the Robertson's of Norkfolk, the Roberts of Tulsa, the Copelands of Forth Worth, and the Graham's of Minneapolis are notorious for hiding their total salaries and those of their family members and special friends in their indirect personally owned non-profit religious corporation while they live in palatial palaces like kings and royalty."*

Although the aforementioned is highlighting examples from the US, I believe that this phenomenon of rampant nepotism is found everywhere in our world today - from the whole Western World, all the way through Africa and other developing - even underdeveloped - countries.

We have addressed the principle of the love of money by many - or most - of our churches today. Church leaders of our time see themselves as only "accountable" to God, and not to people. But are they not collecting worldly money for egocentric reasons from people, and not from God?

### **Count Thou Sheep**

Churches of our time have become institutions of numerical values, both on membership and income. There seems to be a modern outlook that the bigger the church congregation numbers, the bigger the income and the higher the posture of the church and church leaders in the eyes of God.

Churches and church leaders use every possible way and method of marketing the “church”, from the promises of guaranteed miracles to the emotional experience of a lifetime. The Printed Media, Mass Marketing, Television and Social networks like twitter, facebook and others are used to congregate numbers by the thousands, without any concern for the profiles of the acquired members, as long as the numbers are staggering and ever increasing. These platforms are used to promote the pastor’s personal “business”, their personal agendas and - of course - their personal “Godly Messages”.

Television and Radio Preachers - mostly known as Televangelists - are the best example of the aforementioned phenomena, and the exorbitant private lifestyles and world travels of these televangelists are a proverbial example of the benefits of congregating the numbers by the thousand, all at a cost of course and all in support of sustaining the lifestyle and excessive worldly requirements. Apart from the intended “television life” portrayed of the televangelist, very little is known about the “private lives” of these televangelists.

This religious phenomenon of mass hysteria is not limited to televangelists or “mass preachers”, but is also found in modern churches of today of all denominations. From claims of major godly miracles over the air to claims of miraculous healings are televised and marketed - most or all if you send in your cash contribution of course. It must be the only place on earth

where God actually accepts credit, master and debit cards, and in some places even Diners Card, and where these facilities are installed beforehand “as being told by God to do so”. We have yet to see “prayer points”, “service coupons” and “membership points” that are redeemable for miracles, healings and other blessings, but I presume this booklet will trigger this idea somewhere.

And if the “over the air” miracle, healing or blessing didn't work, there is always the DIY Booklet, Video, DVD or CD purchasable after the show / service. Internet E-Commerce items from “blessed downloadable paper cloths” that's been prayed over to miracle screensavers are available at a nominal cost. Sermons and Gospel Songs in MP3, MP4 and other digital formats are marketed under “ministries” for remunerated purposes only.

Once again, I personally don't have any problems with the use of any of the modern technologies like MP3, Ringtones, DVD or any other media, as long as the intent of the originator is not greed alone like we see in our world today. There is absolutely nothing wrong with making money, and making lots of money, but the problem is that this has become the major drive behind most or all of the televangelists, the gospel artists and preachers overall. God's Word is a mere method of mass manipulation and the stirring of mass emotions, with the only beneficiary the preacher himself. There are those televangelists who are actually trying to justify themselves by preaching biblical nonsense that Jesus was rich and the Apostles were successful businessmen with plenty of money.

When sentencing a very well-known televangelist to 10 years in prison for money laundering, mail fraud, conspiracy, and interstate transportation of stolen property in the US, the judge said:

*"You've picked the last flake of flesh from the carcass of the widow you defrauded."*

But why do these preachers prosper? It is an aspect of human suggestibility, and has been used by preachers of all religions since time immemorial. Suggestibility is the quality of being inclined to accept and act on the suggestions of others. A person experiencing intense emotions tends to be more receptive to ideas and therefore more suggestible. Generally, suggestibility decreases as age increases. However, psychologists have found that individual levels of self-esteem, assertiveness, and other qualities can make some people more suggestible than others, which has resulted in the concept of a spectrum of suggestibility.

Popular media and layman's articles occasionally use the terms "suggestible" and "susceptible" interchangeably, with reference to the extent to which a given individual responds to incoming suggestions from another. The two terms are not synonymous however, as the latter term carries inherent negative bias absent from the neutral psychological factor described by "suggestibility."

It is believed that the psychological basis of "suggestibility" is simply a usual tendency in human nature to believe any statement that is frequently repeated. This tendency to believe the statement has very little to nothing to do with the 'truth' or legitimacy - or even otherwise - of the statement. Reasons for believing the statement to be either true or false are irrelevant or the statement is unconditionally believed because it has been repeated many times.

Many argue that the poor, are the most likely to not only convert, but fall prey to financial donation structures, many find not based on any spirituality or sincere religious ideology at

all, but as merely tools to generate profits for the owners of the church, at the expense of a less educated and less financially-secure church flocks.

Well-known preacher John MacArthur published a number of articles in December 2009 that were highly critical of televangelists. In one of these articles, I believe the following extract is a precise synopsis of most or all modern televangelists, and would most probably include quite a large number of contemporary Christian preachers of all denominations at large in the “modern church”:

*“Someone needs to say this plainly: The faith healers and health-and-wealth preachers who dominate religious television are shameless frauds. Their message is not the true gospel of Jesus Christ. There is nothing spiritual or miraculous about their on-stage chicanery. It is all a devious ruse designed to take advantage of desperate people. They are not godly ministers but greedy impostors who corrupt the Word of God for money's sake. They are not real pastors who shepherd the flock of God but hirelings whose only design is to fleece the sheep. Their love of money is glaringly obvious in what they say as well as how they live. They claim to possess great spiritual power, but in reality they are rank materialists and enemies of everything holy.”*

### **Endorsed Calling**

We have all been to numerous services where we were taught about our gifts, and specifically the gifts as per 1 Corinthians 12. I absolutely believe in the gifts that we received from God, and these are the spiritual, physical and mental traits that distinguish us from each other, both in the spiritual and secular worlds.

If we believe the conceptual preaching of preachers that the church is the “Body of Christ”, and that that body - the church - consists of many parts and that each part has a role to play,

then the “endorsed calling” as enacted by the church leaders are in contradiction to the preaching.

Endorsement means the sanctioning, support or approval of something by someone. And this is what is happening in our churches of today: “*endorsed calling*”. We are all encouraged to explore our talents, to find our gifts, to develop our Godly skills - but when we want to use these anywhere in Church or in “direct competition” with Church Leaders and BMCs, we need their endorsement, or sometimes their plain ignorance. Have you ever been asked to complete the “contribution list” or “calling list”? That list where all church activities are listed and you have to place your name against all the areas that you were “called” for by God? Once your name is on the list, God’s work seizes and the church leaders now began their scrutiny of the list. If you are one of the lucky ones to be included in the group, it either means that you have connection in the Bless-Me Club, or the leaders have actually endorsed God’s recommendation and/or choice and approval is given to you to participate.

In quite a number of areas, there are more than endorsements required, there are intercessors called to verify with God, prayer groups formed to reaffirm God’s recommendations and then their findings are laid before the “pastoral selection committee” for final endorsement. If you are plainly ignored, it automatically implies that no endorsement is received and that you most probably heard wrong from God. You have to acknowledge the hierarchical order of approval, and your position in the hierarchy determines the speed of which your application for a specific “calling” is both processed and approved or rejected.

It seems that church leaders have automatically assumed themselves to be elevated above the rest, and that they have

the final approval / rejection of God's callings of others, especially in church. It seems to be common sense that God can not call someone else for any position or function that is already fulfilled by the family members of the leaders, as this will be in direct conflict to the objectives of the family business and the "pastoral strategy" of the church. Not even mentioning the devastating effects it will have on the family's disposable income and the "blessings" of the BMCs.

***"Called" by God seems to be only deemed as a recommendation from God to the church leadership, but final endorsement resides with the church owners and church leaders, not with God.***

The last step in "endorsed calling" - is denominational alignment and adaptation through internal qualification courses and training.

Without going into too much detail on these denominational courses and internal training - is this in itself would entail a few volumes of books - most or all of these courses are adapted to teach the following:

- Denominational Practice and Processes
- Denominational Outlook on the Bible and Christianity
- Denominational Interpretations and Beliefs
- Denominational Structures, Hierarchy
- And most importantly - Spiritual and Religious Authorities in the Denominations and Congregations

Although I fully agree with the need for training, growth and mentorship, there is a huge difference in enforcing certain adaptation through training and the transfer of knowledge.

*Churches train people to achieve “denominational unity” through dictatorial training styles leaving no room for participative exchange of ideas and/or knowledge.*

After endorsement is received and training has successfully been completed to the satisfaction of “church leaders”, the new “recruits” are introduced to the congregation - normally through special religious ceremony and sacred ritual - and great emphasis is placed on denominational placement, hierarchy and structures and most importantly - denominational authorities of new recruits.

I acknowledge the need for “denominational training” to ensure some sort of unity and standard, but that should not be the emphasis of the training nor should it be to indoctrinate “Denominational Christianity”.

### **Conclusion**

Throughout this book, and specifically this chapter, we have reasoned that the churches of our time is nothing more than commercial institutionalized religious centers geared for consumer Christians. These commercial entities are acting as mere lucrative family businesses with self-centered enrichment of family and “friends” - members of the Bless-Me Clubs - high on the agenda.

This chapter reflected on how the churches and church leadership shield themselves from not only resistance and confrontation, but how the church structures and denominational makeup safeguard them from accountability and answerability to anyone. There are very little to no “laws” governing churches and church structures - apart from the few commercial and legal regulations - and that in itself creates the

freedom for denominational chaos and economical merry-go-rounds.

From Bless-Me Club activities, through Ecclesiastic and/or Denominational Nepotism, all the way to Endorse Calling - all have only one thing in mind: To shield the Business from “aliens” and outsiders and to maximize commercial profits.

The church is definitely not alone in the practices of favoritism and nepotism, as there are many companies all over the world that are filled with co-workers who share the same DNA. But there is a huge difference between “workers” in the commercial world versus “servants” in God’s World.

But let me again reiterate my initial statement right in the beginning: although much is wrong with the church, we need the church. But we need reformation, we need the church to turn from their wicked ways and turn back to God.

Let me once again echo the words of Leonard Ravenhill:

*“The world isn’t waiting for a new definition of Christianity; it is waiting for a new demonstration of it”.*

***Church does not need religious circumvention, it drastically needs Godly Intervention. God will depart further and further from apostate leadership and churches as they are departing more and more from God.***

***Nepotism, Simony and “endorsed calling” are evil practices in our church diminishing the true meaning of servant hood.***

Simony stems from the Acts of the Apostles where Simon offer money to the Apostles to receive Apostolic Powers:

*Act 8:18 However, when Simon saw that the [Holy] Spirit was imparted through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he brought money and offered it to them,*

*Act 8:19 Saying, Grant me also this power and authority, in order that anyone on whom I place my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.*

Simony is also defined as the making of profit out of sacred things or the sin of buying or selling ecclesiastical preferments, benefices, etc.

I presume we can realistically classify all the aspects in this chapter - and most probably including all elements in this book - under the heading of "Simony" - which seems to be fervently practiced in almost all churches - of all denominations - all over the world.

In final conclusion, I believe my initial remark in Chapter 1 of this book, summarizes all sinful practices found in our modern day churches of today:

***God has left our church buildings - or rather - God has been "expelled" from our churches in favor of religious freedom, spiritual self-righteousness, egotistical human religion, deceitful denominationalism and material capitalism.***

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