

The Leadership Role of Christian Elders Toward Bringing Unity in the Midst of Diversity

by Venerable Dr Ifechukwu. U. Ibeme

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LEADERSHIP DEFINED

Though the actual meaning of Leadership could be elusive and complex, Leadership theories today involve five common themes:

1. **Position**, which may be attributed to a leader and/or a group of leaders;
2. **Process**, which may depend on personal traits and/or organisational procedure;
3. **Influence**, which may be by personal example and/or organisational authorisation;
4. **Community** which may be a whole and/or department of a whole community/organisation; and
5. **Attainment**, whose philosophy of attainable goal may arise from the leadership's perception and/or community aspiration.

Leadership is a social influence process whereby a leader or a team of leaders inspire other people to work towards a common or shared goal. Conversely, Tyranny coerces or deceives others for the tyrant's selfish interest and evil motive. **Leadership could therefore be defined as the rôle or process of strategising, initiating, directing, controlling and influencing the activities of a group of people towards solving its problems and attaining its shared goals.**

Leadership is not "lonership"; everyone could easily be a loner but not everyone could easily be a leader. LEADERSHIP is the ability and process of making decisions and mobilising people to implement programmes for public good and gain; LONERSHIP is making decisions and manoeuvring to implement plans for private good and gain. Every community needs leaders not loners. Leadership is not about making personal profit and subjugating others: that is selfish greed and tyranny. Leadership is about influencing others to enhance their lives and fulfil their dreams, and turning them into life enhancers for others.

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WHO IS A CHRISTIAN?

The Gospel of Christ announces the fulfilment of God's ancient prophetic promise that whosoever believes that Jesus is the Christ and receives Him as the risen Lord,

shall be saved from sinful damnation unto eternal spiritual life of divine righteousness by God's grace and power (Joh 1:12; 3:14-18; 20:31; Act 10:43; Rom 10:9). Therefore a Christian is anyone who is saved through faith in Christ in accordance with **The Gospel**, with active **participation** in the New Covenant fellowship of the Body of Christ, which is the Church (Act 2:38-42; 1John 1:3-7).

True Christians have **decided** and **undertaken** to live a life of **dedication** to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. They are not only **nominal** (claim to be Christians) but are also **active** (participate in the Church) and **committed** (dedicated to Christ). To be **saved** from damnation into the Kingdom of Christ, implies that one is **converted** from sin and **covenanted** to Christ (Act 3:19; 16:31; 20:21; 26:18-20). Devoted Christians realize that they are not only in **communion** with the Church but also on **commission** to reach-out to the world with the Gospel (Mat 28:18-20; Luk 24:46-47).

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WHO IS AN ELDER?

Every father is the Elder of his family by his **longevity**. Every leader is an Elder in the community by his/her **dignity**. From primeval times, in patriarchal societies, people **become** Elders by being the **oldest** Father or by being the succeeding **eldest** son of the oldest father in the family or community – primogeniture principles.

Later in the larger mixed society, one was **accorded** the **dignity** of Eldership and Leadership not only primarily because of **longevity** of life (e.g. aged Father and even aged Mother), but also secondarily because of other **influential functions** and **dignifying qualities** (Exd 18:21; Deut 1:13-17; Acts 6:3) such as:

1. **maturity** (i.e. in wisdom and understanding, in prudence and discretion, in discernment and awareness)
2. **reputability** (e.g. people of honour, integrity and courtesy, intellectuals, skilled experts, successful entrepreneurs, activists for good causes, patriotic warlords, champions, achievers, etc);
3. **responsibility** (e.g. officers, judges, rulers, spokesmen, popularly elected/acclaimed leaders, etc); and
4. **spirituality** (e.g. priests, prophets, ordained/consecrated spiritual ministers, spiritually vast adepts, etc).

Elders are therefore people of spiritual and/or temporal influence, maturity, dignity, equity and authority in any social or religious community. **Elders are usually vast in and custodians of the history, beliefs, tenets and values of their respective communities.** They readily give **counsel** and **intervene** for common good of their community whether in the Church or in the society.

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WHO IS A CHRISTIAN ELDER?

We are now clear about whom a Christian or an Elder is. A **Christian Elder** is therefore one who meets both criteria mentioned above for both the Christian and the Elder.

The Christian Elder is a dedicated and participating Christian who is experienced and exposed in life, doing exploits for Christ, exuding dignity in all wisdom and exerting influence by virtue of his/her longevity, maturity, reputability, responsibility and spirituality.

HOW COULD CHRISTIAN ELDERS FOSTER UNITY IN DIVERSITY?

It is proper and biblical for a move towards unity to begin with summoning the Fathers and Elders who are the primary community stakeholders and leaders. When God sent Moses to make His covenant proposition to the Israelites, it was to the Elders of Israel that Moses presented the proposal first. **The Elders accepted the covenant on behalf of the people first, before the whole populace was involved** (Exd 19:6-8). Again, the Elders of Israel were those who networked and organised themselves to approach the aged Samuel for a King in Israel leading to the institution of the Monarchy (1Sam 8:4-5). **Important decisions and negotiations are best deliberated by the Elders on behalf of the people.** There are several ways in which Elders and Fathers could provide leadership towards spiritual and social unity and harmony in the community. **United intercession for the people by Elders has great honour in the sight of God,** whether for remission of sins (Lev 4:13-15; Deut 21:1-9) or together with healing from diseases (James 5:14-15).

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1. A Christian Elder or Leader must have a reasonable grasp of the Scripture and the meaning and pattern of things done in the Church. It was the need to ensure this, that motivated Luke to write the *Gospel According to St Luke* and the *Acts of the Apostles* for Theophilus, an aristocrat Christian in the Roman Empire (Luk 1:1-4; Act 1:1). Apostle John also wrote his Third Epistle to Gaius a wealthy influential personality (3John 1). St Paul wrote ‘The Pastoral Epistles’ to Timothy and Titus, who were ordained Church Leaders (1Tim 4:14; 2Tim 1:6; Tit 1:5).

2. A Christian Elder or Leader should be in touch with the community and be committed to harmony and good works among people. In this age of individualism and radicalism, secularity and carnality, the Christian Elder should endeavour to work NOT ONLY for the unity, sanctity and security of Christendom at large BUT ALSO for the security and encouragement of the upright, irrespective of their faiths (Rom 12:17-18; 1Pet 2:17). It is important to remember that **God’s reason for the Church is to have a peculiar people purified for Himself to please Him and show forth His praise in the pluralistic world, through godly witness and good-works** (Eph 2:10; Php 2:15; Col 1:10; Tit 2:14; 1Pet 2:9). **The Church is meant to serve God’s purpose in the society.**

Eph 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.

Php 2:15 so that you may be blameless and innocent, God's children without any faults among a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine like stars in the world

Tit 2:14 He gave himself for us to set us free from every wrong and to cleanse us so that we could be his special people who are enthusiastic about good works.

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3. Christian Elders and Leaders should match the depth of their understanding of the Faith and the society with the befitting selfless commitment to unity in diversity. The foremost responsibility of enlightened Christian leaders and elders is to ensure the unity of the Body of Christ through articulate and purposeful leadership. Unity is not always uniformity because our gifts, cultures and dispositions are diverse (Rom 14:1-13; 1Cor 12:12-21). *Unity is harmony irrespective of diversity, based on mutual love and benevolence.* The mature and sound attitude to differences is to see them as diversity and variety rather than division and disunity. **Diversity of denominations and tribal or interest groups, should serve to complement rather than conflict against one another, cooperate with rather than contradict one another, supplement rather than subvert one another.** Christians must rank *Christ's Blood* above tribal blood, and rank *Christ's Body* above any other interest-affinity-fraternity group. In this way, whatever tribe or group we belong, we must always defend our brother and never undermine or sabotage our brother in Christ for anybody else. Regular interaction and united intercession will foster understanding and build trust, so we could fulfil Christ's desire for His Church, which is to be united in faith and purpose (John 10:16; 17:18-23) and to understand rather than undermine ourselves.

When the Apostles were faced with the division and confrontation between the Jews and the Gentiles in the early Church, they deliberated with the Elders and concluded that choices from among different matters that are equally right and biblical should not cause division but be a matter of CONCESSION or COUNSEL but not COMMAND. The Apostles and Elders were led by the Holy Spirit to permit Jewish Christians to circumcise and keep their Synagogue Sabbath while exempting Gentile Christians from circumcision and the Synagogue Sabbath (Act 15:19-22). This wise concession is because the Old Covenant signs of circumcision and the Sabbath are neither forbidden nor necessary for Salvation and justification of the New Covenant (Gal 6:15; Col 2:9-17). After all, Abraham had none of these yet when God accounted him *justified* by faith (Gen 15:6; Rom 4:9-12) before God cut and entered into *covenant* with him (Gen 15:9-18). The sign of *circumcision* was only introduced sooner, after 24 years (Gen 17:8-12) when the covenant was confirmed with covenant personal names (Gen 17:1-7); while the sign of *Sabbath* rest came even much later, after 500 years (Exo 16:23; 20:8-11), when the covenant was fulfilled in the birth of national Israel.

Once things were agreed by the Elders, it was easy to sensitize the rest of the Church (Act 15:23-31). The result was that the Christian Jews would attend the Synagogues to observe their Sabbath holiday on Saturday but meet with the Christian Gentiles on

Sunday evenings for Christian Eucharistic worship. This is godly wisdom for unity in diversity in the Body of Christ. Later, in AD 313, Sunday also became holiday.

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4. A Christian Elder or Leader must have a clear grasp of the sacerdotal pattern of ecclesiastical spiritual covenant leadership in distinction from the missiological ramifications of secular statesman pluralist leadership. Whether in the Old or New Testament, **Spiritual Leadership is a covenant leadership of a covenant people of a covenant God.** Therefore, Spiritual Leaders must be conversant with the tenets of the Covenant to which they belong. In the New Testament however, Statesman Leadership is a pluralist social leadership; though in the Old Testament, it was a covenant leadership in covenant Israel nation. Only outside Israel was leadership pluralistic as was the case with Joseph in Egypt, or with Daniel, Mordecai, Esther, etc in Babylon and Persia. In the Old Testament **under the EARTHLY Aaronic Priesthood and “shadow-copy” Tabernacle (Heb 8:5),** there were the **oracular ministers of the Word of God and intercessory ministers** (Priests, Prophets, Levites, and the Sanhedrin Council) for **GODLY PURITY.** In the nation or state, there were also the **secular statesman ministers of justice and the sword, peace and development** (Judges, Generals, Princes and Kings) for **GODLY POLITY.**

Under the New Testament the **secular statesman ministry**, for public services of justice and the sword, peace and development (Rom 13:1-7; 1Tim 2:1-3), is left **outside the Church to be pluralistically shared** with non-Christians BUT TO BE SALTED/LIGHTED/LEAVENED (Matt 5:13-16; 13:33; Luk 13:20-21) with righteousness and equity in the State. Statesman Leadership is attainable by people of influence and valour, people of negotiation and toleration, people of strategy and prodigy, people of integrity and authority. Women were statesman leaders too (Deborah Judg 4:4-6; Judg 5:6-9; Queen of Sheba 2Kin 10; 2Chr 9; Matt 12:42; Athaliah 2Kin 11; 2Chr 22-23; Queen Esther of Persia Esth 5:1-8; 8:1-8; and Ethiopian Queen Candace Act 8:27). Participation of Christian men and women in secular Statesman Leadership to the highest level is therefore not forbidden but enjoined as godly (Rom 13:8-14; Luk 1:1-4; Act 1:1-3; and 10:1-8; Php 1:13 and 4:22). Examples of successful godly statesmanship within a pluralistic non-Christian government include first-class scholars like Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in Babylon (Dan 2:47-49); pageant celebrities and lobbyist-strategists like Esther in Persia (Esth 4:15-17; Esth 7:1-10); business and agro-engineering geniuses like Joseph in Egypt (Gen 41:37-49); strategists, crime-busters and activists like Mordecai in Persia (Esth 2:19-23; 4:1-2; 8:1-17); Roman aristocrats like Theophilus (Luk 1:3); and Roman military commanders like Cornelius & the like (Luk 7:1-10; Act 10:1-8ff). More recent and contemporary examples of Christian statesmanship abound on every continent of the world.

This leaves the **oracular and intercessory ministry** within the New Covenant Church (under the “real-spiritual” Tabernacle of Christ’s **HEAVENLY Priesthood, Heb 8:1-13; Heb 12:22-24**). There are two categories of Ecclesiastical offices: first

Apostles, Bishops and Presbyters/Priests ordained as **sacerdotal recruited clergy** or overseers to minister oracular instruction to (and make intercession for) the congregation; and second **Deacons and Deaconesses** elected as **lay reputed councils** to administer the local congregation's temporal treasures and serve tables (Act 6:2-4).
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5. Christian Elders and Leaders should foster unity in diversity for every good and godly cause whether in the Church or in the community. Christian Elders must work together in network and concord to courageously champion good causes together for every Christian and even non-Christian who stands for **equity, humaneness, uprightness and respect** for all in the society. The Bible gives four cardinal guides to this: ***Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king (1Pe 2:17).*** Also, *The righteous is as bold as a lion (Pro 28:1). God has not given us the spirit of fear but the spirit of power, love and sound mind (2Tim 1:7).* Christians must be alert to use every opportunity in a godly and circumspect manner (Matt 10:16; Luk 21:15; Eph 5:15-17), to powerfully and visibly *shine as the light of the world (Matt 5:14-16)* in such a way that wickedness and crookedness cannot overcome (John 1:5; 12:35). ***Christian elites must offer that leadership which outgrows selfish parochialism, individualism, separatism, vendetta and witch-hunting bigotry, so they could serve as level-headed and broad-minded bridge-builders in the Church and the society.*** Christ and His Apostles taught that in the pluralistic society Christians are to enthusiastically mingle as invisible salt (Matt 5:13) and leaven (Matt 13:33) of righteousness, and also serve as visible light and peacemakers among ourselves and with all people in equity (Mat 5:7-9, 14-16; Rom 12:18; Tit 3:1-2; Heb 12:14). **The Church can only salt the earth by getting involved in it without losing her savour. The Church can only leaven the world by mingling with it surreptitiously without losing her leavening power. In addition, the Church can only lighten the world by obvious social action against iniquity and inequity.** Because *righteousness exalts and gladdens a nation while unrighteousness brings reproach and regrets (Pro 14:34; 29:2)*, the only way to move any community forward is through purposeful participatory fairness and righteousness that aims to transform patterns of social INTERACTION and the principles of INSTITUTIONAL policy at every level and sphere. Men and brethren, events of our day show that our world is groaning under wicked bondage and is crying out for righteous liberty.

Romans 8:18-23:

(18) For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

(19) For the earnest expectation of the creation waits for the manifestation of the sons of God.

(20) For the creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who has subjected the same in hope,

(21) Because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

(22) For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now.

(23) And not only they, but ourselves also, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, that is, the redemption of our body.

As sons of God, let us forbear one another in peace and unity (Col 3:12-15) for the good of our generation and posterity.

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6. Christian Elders and Leaders should mobilize Christians for shared understanding of the social input they should make to the development and harmony of the society. For many, Christian social principles are mere paranoid clichés like “*give to Caesar what is his*”, “*turn the other cheek*”, and “*come out from amongst them*”, with conflicting application. More than these, Christ and His Apostles taught us:

- to be visibly active as the light to the world and be invisibly active as the salt and leaven to the earth to the extent that the society notices our good contributions and gives glory to God our heavenly Father (Matt 5:13-16; 13:33);
- to love one another and be in unity to the extent that the society notices our unity for well-doing and so admits that Christ is truly the Lord and Saviour (John 13:34-35; and 17:21);
- to be righteous-humane leaders (Mark 10:41-45), resourceful-responsible citizens (Rom 13:1-7), and peacemakers who relate well to all people (Rom 12:14-18; Tit 3:1-2; 1Pet 2:13-17);
- to do charitable deeds, heal the sick, defend and support the weak and the poor (Act 20:33-35); relieve the broken hearted, the wounded and the neglected, and liberate the oppressed and those in spiritual and social bondage (Luke 4:18).

“Something is missing in the Church about the full Heavenly Kingdom commission of Christians and the Church to the world.

- **Ecclesiastical** and **Monastic** Christianity (Act 2-6) has misconstrued Christianity to be designed only for winning and calling out MEMBERS/CLIENTS/PATRONISERS and meeting the needs and demands of the DISCIPLES in their FELLOWSHIPS/FOLLOWERSHIP (Denominations and Ministries). So much study and skill even subterfuge have gone into this.
- **Evangelistic** and **Philanthropic** Christianity (Act 11-18) thinks of the Church as Kingdom agency for salting the earth only through philanthropy and charity to needy SOULS and for lighting the world only through preaching the Gospel for conversion of sinful SOULS. (Outreach Agencies). Reasonable study and experience is coming on along these lines.
- There seems to be either ignorance or negligence of **Missiological** or **Kingdom** Christianity (Act 22-26) that sees every Christian as a Kingdom diplomat and change agent sent on the strategic ambassadorial assignment of lighting, salting and leavening the world through statesmanly involvement, coherent infiltration and purposeful influence. Such missiological impact must aim towards the reformation and saturation of the NATIONS and MULTITUDES at every level of the SOCIETY, with the kingdom best practices, kingdom worldview and kingdom values of God’s goodness, loving-kindness and righteousness. This requires strategic Christian involvement in the Mass Media, the Professions, the Corporations, the Academia, the Arts, and amongst the Entrepreneurs, the Politicians, the Security Operatives, the Opinion Leaders, the Masses, the Princes, the Magistrates, the Parliamentarians, the Experts, the Pacesetters, the Consultants, etc; but this requires biblical purposefulness and strategic cohesion amongst all Christians and Churches. Yet there is very minimal study, reflection and coordination in this direction!

Christian Elders and leaders in the Church today are either ignorant of or are unconcerned about what Christian Leadership and the Kingdom Mission of the Church are fully about. So much is invested into

developing Christian “*church fellowship ministry*” and “*soul winning mission*” for “*spiritual/pastoral*” leadership for the purpose of ecclesiastical growth and spiritual revival toward GODLY PURITY. Unfortunately, things are even worse since this has become perverted into sole-proprietor enterprise today.

On the other hand, little or nothing is being done about developing Christian “*world lighting and earth salting ministry*” and “*secular leavening mission*” for “*godly influential statesmanship*” leadership for societal transformation and strategic impact toward GODLY POLITY. These should be the full leadership and missiological focus of the Church today. After all, the Church was meant to be on mission both as the “*Gospel proclaiming agency*” to save souls for eternity and as the “*godly relational agency*” to do God’s will on earth for Christ’s Kingdom. Christian Elders do not network and consult with team spirit and rallying point, neither do they seem to work from broad based constituency support nor develop foresighted visions and utilitarian plans.

Christians today, especially in Africa have a pretty reasonable understanding of their ecclesiastical and evangelistic duty and ethical identity but have very little grasp of Christian social transformational duties, rights and missiological opportunities. *This is ecclesiology without missiology.* Our elites and leaders tend to leave their faith behind when getting involved in the affairs of the pluralistic society. *This is sociology without missiology.* Even our seminaries teach only personal ethics, mission and evangelism for ecclesiastical purposes and no longer social presence, civil action for missiological purposes. The result is that there is no theological cohesion among Christians between what is seen as spiritual and that which is seen as social. This calls on Christian elders, scholars and leaders to pursue as a matter of urgent concern and common importance, a robust insight into “**the theology of Christian social presence**”. This goes beyond evangelism to convert persons to INDIVIDUAL purity, and moves on to *reformation that overcomes and replaces evil INSTITUTIONAL policies and principles as well as INTERACTIVE social practices with good and biblical alternatives* in pluralistic societies. This is full ambassadorial “missiology” for God’s Kingdom.

“In the wider society under the sun, though the Church has mainly got this muddled up, God clearly indicates from the Scriptures, the propriety of the separation of powers (2Chron 19:11) between the Church and the State:

1. the Christian **Church** (ruled with the **regenerating Word** and spiritual **grace** for godly PURITY through justification, pardon, persuasion and ministration to deliver from INIQUITY, and for ecclesiastical **communion**, and mission Act 6:3-4), **where pardon is enjoined towards enemies and vengeance against evil is forbidden** so that none is condemned and all are enjoined to live in holiness and righteousness (Rom 12:14-21). Ecclesiastical authority is meant to be occupied by qualified Church members (believers only) **to guarantee spiritual safety of members; and**
2. the pluralistic **State** (ruled with the **restraining Sword** and temporal **law** for orderly POLITY through justice and reprimand, policy promulgation and enforcement to discipline and defend against INEQUITY, and for territorial **citizenship** and dominion Rom 13:4-6; 1Pet 2:13-17), **where punishment, vengeance and wrath against evil and misdemeanor are ordained as the just duties** of respected and remunerated officials to ensure there is no offence whether criminal or tort and **all are ordered to live peaceably** in harmony (Rom 13:1-7; 1Tim 2:1-3). Civil authority is meant to be occupied by full citizens (believers and unbelievers alike) **to guarantee social safety of citizens.**

Christians in civil authority should distinguish these two and carry out appropriate duties righteously and strategically, but should neither usurp spiritual authority nor legislate over spiritualities."

*"In the Scriptures, God indicates the propriety of separation of powers between the Church and the State. **Christians have dual citizenship rights and responsibilities, one spiritual and eternal in the Church as Priests of Christ's Ecclesia** – meant to witness the Gospel message in the world **and the other civic and temporal in the State as Kings of Christ's Basileia** – meant to bring the Kingdom order in the world (Mat 6:10; 22:21; 1Pet 2:9; Rev 5:10). **Christians are called for patriotism in the State as well as pietism in the Church but when patriotism conflicts with pietism, pietism prevails even at the cost of shame and suffering (Act 4:19; 5:29). Also as individuals, Christians are physical as well as spiritual (Mar 14:38) but when the physical is at variance with the spiritual, the spiritual supersedes, however inconvenient (Gal 5:16-26).**"*

Christians are ***the light of the world*** and should not hide under **the bushels** of their Churches and secluded lives as Christ taught in Mat 5:14-16. In the **pluralistic society**, Christian elders and elites should not be self-centred and KITCHEN minded (for only food on their **tables**) but should be KINGDOM minded (for influence beyond their **territories**), and therefore strategically participate and cooperate to influence their **pluralistic societies** as God counselled the Jews in Babylon (Jer 29:4-7). Whether in business, mass media, public views and debate, parliament, governance, academia, civil service, classroom, courtroom, boardroom, marketplace, athletics, politics, military, offices, family, community and the street, Christians should understand they are one team of diplomats and ambassadors of God's heavenly Kingdom for bringing God's love and purpose amongst all peoples, not only within the Church. To do this requires a good grasp and effective application of strategies derived from biblical examples and spiritual wisdom learned from biblical principles. When Christ was sending His disciples into the world, He taught them that the harmlessness of DOVES combined with the wisdom of SERPENTS are imperatives for them as endangered SHEEP to succeed and survive amongst ravenous WOLVES of this world.

Matthew 10:16

(16) Behold, I send you forth as SHEEP in the midst of WOLVES: be therefore wise as SERPENTS, and harmless as DOVES.

These powerful Kingdom ambassadorial or diplomatic principles and strategies for influence in **pluralistic or secular society** cannot be copied from worldly politicians and businessmen as seems usual in leadership programmes today, but could rather be learned from the experiences and examples of great godly men and women who influenced the gentile world and prevailed amongst the ungodly:

- **Abraham** in Syria, Canaan and Egypt (faith, hope, prayer altars and water wells, entrepreneurial investment, dialogue, survival and self defence strategies),
- **Joseph** in Egypt (vision of great future, fear of God, excellence, integrity, team contact, developmental strategies, diplomacy, discretionary privileges, lobbying and wisdom),

- **Moses** in Egypt and the wilderness (defence of the downtrodden, vision, hope, faith, determination, diplomacy, conquest strategy, law and order, nationhood, patriotism),
- **Daniel and the Three** in Babylon and Persia (prayerfulness, teamwork, excellence, lobbying, tactful wisdom, spiritual insight, courage, trustworthiness, faith, patience, integrity, political participation and godliness),
- **Ezra** the Scribe (study, document gathering and mass media report influence),
- **Nehemiah** the Governor (project strategy, burden for the Church's good, security watchfulness and prayerfulness),
- **Esther and Mordecai** in Persia (tactful ascendancy, discretionary privileges, conscientious objection, burden for the Church's good, lobbying and legislation for defence of the downtrodden).
- **Erastus and Gallio and other eminent men** in Corinth (Christian participation in political offices such as the Treasurer of Corinth and the Deputy of Achaia and great judicial insight on divinely appointed the purpose and limits of the powers of the State to civil matters without infringing on but to rather protecting freedom of conscience and religion Act 18:7-17; Rom 13:1-7, 16:23; 1Cor 1:14; 2Tim 4:20; 3John 1).

Much more could also be learned about exerting dynamic, effective and strategic influence in a pluralistic world from the patriotic prowess of the **Judges (i.e. Generals)** of Israel amongst the Canaanite States, from the godly royalty of **David**, from the entrepreneurial and intellectual royalty of **Solomon**, and the transformative royalty of **Josiah**, the Church and State cooperation and conflicts between the **Kings and Prophets** of Israel, the inner caucus mentoring and sacrificial, exemplary leadership of **Jesus**, the teamwork, networking and transformational influence of **the Apostles**, as well as from **Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus and Paul**, who used the leverage of their good offices, high-wire contact and expertise for the furtherance of the Gospel despite hostilities.

Government or public service is a divine institution under God. The Bible teaches that *“the most High rules in the kingdom of men”* (Dan 4:17, 25) and that God has ordained rulers to be *“the minister of God to you for good”* (Rom 13:1-7). Christians are dispersed sojourners in our communities (1Pet 1:1) and so do not merely belong to any place, party or people in this world but ultimately belong to Christ's heavenly Kingdom. As dispersed lights or stars to this dark world Christians are God's authorised light agents in every place, party or people ***not only to convert the hearts and conducts of SOULS through preaching (bring the Kingdom justification WITHIN) but also to transform the governance and cultures of SOCIETIES through strategic participation (bring the Kingdom justice NEAR)***. Christians need not only **presence, prayer, preaching**, but also **planning, participation, pacesetting, publishing, and production** to bring God's Kingdom on the Earth and to bring souls into the Kingdom.

Christian influencers do not need to belong to same denomination or political party, or ethnic group or country, but should always share the same basic Kingdom agenda for the good of the Church and the society, which good comes with victorious influence of the godly for righteous and tactical royalty nuggetted in Prov. 29. Despite their dispersion into various groupings Christians are one and should avoid rancour on secondary matters that jeopardises the primary programme of God's Kingdom because of their denominational, political or ethnic affiliations.

"Though both the Church and State are subject to God, Whose Kingdom reigns in the affairs of humans and spirits (1Kin 22:19-20; Jer 27:5-7; Dan 4:17), the CHURCH LED BY PASTORAL MINISTERS IS NOT THE SAME AS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN, for the **Kingdom of Heaven is in godly life ruled by God through the Holy Spirit's fullness** (Rom 14:17-19; Gal 5:22-23). Also the STATE (Kingdoms of the Nations 2Chron 20:6; Rev 11:12) LED BY POLITICAL OR PRINCELY MAGISTRATES IS NOT THE SAME AS THE KINGDOM OF THE DEVIL, for the **Worldly Kingdom of the Devil is in lawless life ruled by the devil through fleshly lust and wickedness** (Eph 2:1-3; Tit 3:1-3; 1John 2:15-16). *The Church is God's ordained means to reveal and propagate the Kingdom of Heaven and redeem the world, while the State is God's ordained means to restrain the kingdom of this world.* Christianity and the Gospel of the Kingdom are not merely about **ministerial Regeneration/Revival of souls** but also about comprehensive **magisterial Reformation of societies**. (For synopsis of discussions on "Church and State" during the 16th Century Reformation, see: Roland H. Bainton's "*Here I Stand – A life of Martin Luther*", Chapters XIII, XIV and XV – First published in 1950, now a classic in public domain and published by many publishers). These were well understood and utilised by the American founding fathers.

For instance in 1811, United States Congress ratified a bill to incorporate the Protestant Episcopal Church in Alexandria, Virginia. When the bill was presented for President James Madison's signature, he promptly vetoed it. He furnished a list of his objections, in a veto message, which in part included:

*"Because the bill exceeds the rightful authority to which governments are limited by the essential distinction between civil and religious functions, and violates in particular the article of the Constitution of the United States which declares that **'Congress shall make no law respecting a religious establishment.'** The bill enacts into and establishes by law sundry rules and proceedings relative purely to the organization and polity of the church incorporated... This particular church, therefore, would so far be a religious establishment by law, a legal force and sanction being given to certain articles in its constitution and administration."*

Of President Madison's historic veto, constitutional law professor John Eidsmoe states in his book, ***Christianity and the Constitution***:

*"His reason was that incorporation was a form of licensing by which government gave churches permission to operate. Therefore, incorporation was superfluous; **government has no jurisdictional authority to tell churches they can or cannot operate.**"*

This accords with Gallio's magisterial veto in Corinth, when Jews sued Paul against the State accusing him of perverting their religion because he preached the Christian Gospel to the Gentiles:

Acts 18:13-16

(13) Saying, This fellow persuades men to worship God contrary to the law.

(14) *And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked crime, O you Jews, reason would that I should bear with you:*

(15) *But if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look you to it; for I will be no judge of such matters.*

(16) *And he drove them from the judgment seat.*

(For more details see <http://www.scribd.com/doc/66478343/CHURCH-LEADERSHIP-SEPARATION-The-Ordained-Clergy-and-the-Elected-Lay-Council>)

*That is why civil authorities (especially the Christians amongst them) could be approached or appealed to by the Church for their “**God ordained sword bearing State functionaries for judicial vengeance and wrath**” duties against lawless criminals, transgressors and oppressors that would require fines, forfeiture, incarceration, corporal and capital punishments. This is why civil authorities have legislative, judicial (tort and crime), security, enforcement, jail and military functionaries to execute justice, vengeance and wrath. **Though the Church needs adjudicatory structure for resolving internal tort or interpersonal conflicts, she does not need to have enforcement, jail and military apparatuses, nor has she the responsibility for criminal justice, fines, forfeiture, incarceration, corporal and capital punishments.** It is therefore the divinely bounden duty of every Christian to fulfil their civic duties: to be peaceable and law abiding, to pray for and respect civil authorities as well as pay taxes and tributes to sustain them (Rom 13:4-7; 1Tim 2:1-4; Tit 3:1-2; 2Pet 2:13-17).”*

(For more details see <http://www.scribd.com/doc/65989063/CHRISTIAN-JURISPRUDENCE-and-Conflict-Resolution>)

A robust concept of *Christian Social Presence* and participation ought to be not only *evangelization for personal conversion*, (gospel witnessing and soul-winning), but also includes *strategization for societal reformation or public influence*:

- *social action* (relevance activism which is prudentially spiritual, intellectual, technological, cultural, administrative, economic, developmental and even environmental);

- *social interaction* (dialogue and toleration across plurality of groups, ethical example, inculturation and apologetics);

- *social status* (citizenship rights or liberties and egalitarian opportunities for strategic leadership positions);

- *social service* (hard-work, charitable duty and equity amongst all people); and

- *social enlightenment* (basic literacy for all and general education in all fields of liberal learning and civic/social matters).

These were the social and strategic roles played by temporal leaders like Joseph in Egypt (Gen 40 and 45-50), Obadiah under Ahab and Jezebel (1Kin 18:1-15), Daniel and friends in Babylon (Dan 2:48-49), Esther and Mordecai in Persia (Esth 4-9), Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea in Judea for Jesus (John 7:45-53; 19:38-40) the Pharisees of Jerusalem Senate for Paul (Act 23:6-11) and Crispus, Gallio and Justus in Achaia for the Church (Act 18:7-17). Though this is no longer remembered, but the development of most social principles and state institutions in the free,

pluralistic, advanced and industrialized nations of today were born out of **Christian inclusive and humane missiology**.

Elite Christian elders, intellectuals and leaders, have the missiological duty to unite so they could brainstorm and network, interact and intercede, in order to serve as concordant **think-tank** and non-divisive **vanguard** of true progress for the Church and the whole society. They must offer the Church and the society in-depth and progressive wisdom on common inclusive ways and means to best enjoy God's love and Christ's reconciliation for all humanity, and thereby move the society and nation forward in harmony and tolerance, in righteousness and excellence, in prosperity and peace. The Bible teaches us to *participate in* and *pray for* the peaceful and progressive governance of wherever we live and work. (Jer 29:4-7; 1Tim 2:1-4). The elite American founding fathers and leaders served such missiological think-tank purpose in their days by delineating the Church from the State in a way that guaranteed religious toleration, plurality and freedom based on "*Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's*" (Mark 12:17); They developed secular State institutions on missiological principles of equity, humaneness and democratic self-determination based on "*overcome evil with good*" (Rom 12:21). It will be regrettable if we fail our generation by not getting involved in our own time. May God help and bless us all.

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By Venerable Dr I. U. Ibeme
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