

**THE ROLE OF SCRIPTURE IN CONTEMPORARY  
NIGERIAN CHRISTIAN WORSHIP: A COMPARATIVE  
EXAMINATION OF THE MAINLINE, FREE AND  
AFRICAN INDEPENDENT CHURCHES.**

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**BY**

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## ABSTRACT

This essay researched the role of scripture in Contemporary Nigerian Christian Worship by comparatively examining the Mainline, Free and African Independent Churches. The first chapter deals with the statement of the problem, purpose of the research, the research questions, methodology, delimitations and limitations, definition of terms and summary of chapters.

Chapter two establishes the Biblical-historical basis of worship concerning the Temple, Synagogue, Early church and Apostolic Fathers' era. Chapter three captures a brief history of churches, their doctrinal statement on the scriptures and how they use the Bible in worship. In chapter four, a survey of the churches is done through the instrument of interview questionnaire and observation, followed by a presentation of the data collected.

The fifth and final chapter entails the writer's conclusion and recommendations. It was found that although all the churches view the scripture as the Word, in practice, some of them do not. The magical use of the Word of God has become a practices in some of the churches. In response, one writer recommends that ecumenical bodies like Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and the Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN), and the Nigerian Baptist Convention Churches should train its worship leaders and enhance their use of the scriptures in worship.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### A. CONCLUSION

This research has shown that inspite of the general acceptance of the scripture as the Word of God by the Various Christian denominations in Nigerian, each denomination gives the Scriptures different interpretations and expressions. This has resulted in the insufficient use of the scriptures in worship and the development worship practices that contradict the scriptures. It is therefore necessary for the various denominations to take remedial steps to bring about the sufficient and proper use of the scriptures in contemporary Nigerian Christian Worship. Although we may not be able to follow the biblical-historical or New Testament pattern of worship verbatum on the use of scriptures, yet we can give it contemporary expression that retains the essence of the primacy of the reading, hearing, preaching, interpretation and teaching of Scripture in Christian worship. The recommendations made by the writer in this essay are therefore meant to help Christian to achieve this.

## **B RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1 To Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN).**

- (i) These ecumenical bodies should organize worship renewal seminars that will educate denominational leaders on Biblical - historical basis of worship. This will address the issue of ignorance and give the right perception of Christian Worship.
- (ii) They should also update their worship educational resources by subscribing to worship related journals, books, dictionaries, magazine which could be sold to Churches. This will also provide the foria for the self-development of worship leaders, which will eventually help them to keep worship in line with the scriptures.

They should also organize literacy classes for some denominational leaders particularly those of some African Independent Churches. This will help them have a better grasp of the Bible and consequently do a better interpretation of scriptures. Becoming literate will also help them to interact with worship materials. This recommendation is made against the background that illiteracy and ignorance are part of the bane of non-acceptance of the Bible as final authority in every day practice of faith in some denominations.



The ecumenical bodies can also update the theological knowledge of denominational leaders through seminars, conferences, workshops and so forth. This will help the leaders appreciate the implication of preaching sermons and teaching doctrines that are not biblically based during services. They should also encourage the African Independent Churches to strike a balance between contemplative and celebrative worship.

## **2 To the Nigerian Baptist Convention(NBC)**

The Nigerian Baptist Convention should take up the challenge of making worship materials available to churches. They can also organize worship seminars and workshops to improve the knowledge and skills of worship leaders.

The annual Ministers Conference and the sandwich period could be used to organize such worship programmes. This can also be strengthened through liaising with the various Conferences and Associations to train worship leaders like music directors, instrumentalists and even the choir, in composing and singing scripture based hymns and songs.

Baptists should adapt the use of a lectionary (either the Christian year or custom-made) in order to enrich the use of Scriptures in their worship. The lectionary like the Preaching/Hymn plan has the benefit of indepth, relevant and appropriate exposure of the worshippers to the truths of the Bible, the major events and themes of the Christian faith. The use of a

lectionary will not negate our democratic principles because it compares favourably with the Convention's Seek Daily, Sunday School and Church Training materials. The use of the lectionary was a common feature in the Temple, Synagogue, Early Church and Apostolic Father Era worship.

Baptists should rediscover their earlier use of Confessions of Faith for evangelistic and mission purposes. This compares with confession of faith in the Scriptures (Eph. 4:4-6; Tim 3:16; Deut 6:4). Biblical affirmations should be preferred over historical affirmations.<sup>1</sup> Every affirmation of faith should be Christ centred, scripture-based and faith building and like the Indian arrow achieve its purpose in christian worship.

### 3. To Baptist Churches.

In order to enrich and have an extensive use of scriptures in worship every Sunday, Baptist Churches should adopt the three lesson (text) plus Psalm pattern of Scripture reading. The three texts should cover the Old Testament, the Gospels and the Epistles. Psalms can also be combined with the responsive readings of the Baptist Hymnal along with the systematic reading of a book of the Bible. The days of two-verse reading during sunday worship is over. In the synagogue a minimum of twenty one verses were read at each service. This is possible today.

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<sup>1</sup>Paul E. Engle, Baker's worship Handbook (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House Co., 1998), p. 9.

