

## Politicizing Teachings and Leadership Positions in Christendom: The Way Forward

**L**ivinghope Magazine interviewed great men of God who have understanding in the Christian and political spheres: Pastor Bukki Gbenro, author, public diplomat and Senior Pastor of The Vineyard Assembly Inc. (TVA), Ibadan as well as Bishop Theophilus Taiwo Ajose, founder of Bishop Ajose Ministries (BAM), who was the former Lagos State chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria, Ikeja Chapter.

They gave their thoughts on the above topic and the consequences of actions on the practice of Christianity in our nation, Nigeria, today.

### Excerpts Below:

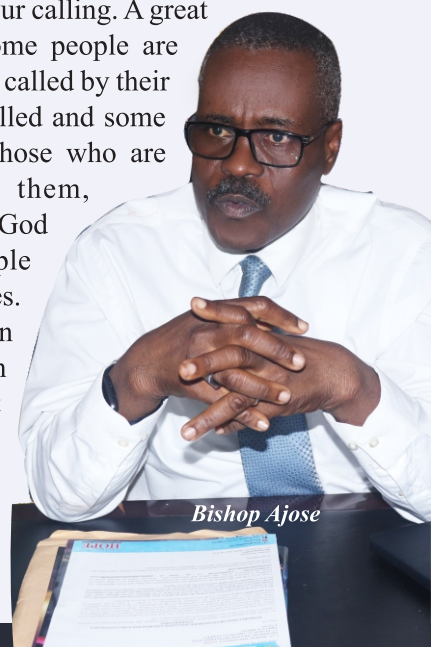
**LHM:** When it comes to theological conversations in the church, there appears to be an inconsistency in the arguments, with one side often keen to favor the portion of scripture that suits its interest or teaching. What is your view about this?

**Bishop Ajose:** One of the challenges in the body of Christ is lack of discipleship. We are busy raising members instead of raising disciples. When you raise members they are your own, when you raise disciples they belong to the Lord. Members will always say and do things that suit their leaders but disciples will always do and say things that please the Lord. When you look at it, we have error of leadership in the body of Christ. Look at the Islamic world, they have so many sects and factions than us but they speak in one voice when it comes to political talks. There is what we call spirit of leadership and the cores of leadership. When it comes to politicization it is not only in leadership but nowadays people don't understand that. A lot of people are not only disciplined, they are not disciplined in the things of God. They want to be heard, so this is the bane of Christianity. I have an NGO called the organization of Christians in democracy, where we establish Christian leadership and disciple them on how to behave in government while still being a child of God.

**Pastor Bukki:** We see in parts, we prophecy in parts. No one is an island of perfection. Most of the times we interpret the scriptures based on what we are going through, based on our background or based on what we have been told. There are many factors that have altered the perception of many people. When people read the Bible, they may not necessarily interpret accurately what they see, they interpret based on their environment. Most times, cultural issues are used to interpret what we see in the Bible. We live in an environment where most of the times we don't query things. When someone is approaching the Bible from a religious perspective they may not be able to have a true grasp of the scripture. We may see in parts, but if everybody is going to be sincere with the simplicity of the Bible, they will get the message that the Lord wants us to have.

**LHM:** Aside the seeming politicization of theological discussions, you would agree with me that there is often a struggle or fight in choosing a leader for a role, group or department in several churches and ministries. What is your disposition on this?

**Bishop Ajose:** You see incompetent people holding positions of service in church. There are fake loyalists to leadership. We have people who are not disciplined. The Bible says if the foundation be destroyed, what can the righteous do? Their foundation is wrong in the first place. If they are not disciplined, they would go to the pastor and say all sorts of things to discredit a person. Before you know it, the pastor would remove and put another person there or post the person to a very far place to be a pastor. The foundation is discipleship, holding firmly to His word, the authority, being the Bible, our focus. For example, when you see a pastor on Sunday and the sermon he is preaching is himself, when the Bible says preach Christ, if you preach yourself that means you have become their Jesus. That's why you see people moving from church to church. Church leaders do not disciple again, they only recycle members. Churches now have become business schools, teaching business on the pulpit. A lot of people now go to the church because one business man is coming. You have to know your calling. A great man of God told us that some people are called by God while some are called by their pastors, some of them are called and some people called themselves. Those who are called by God, we know them, unfortunately those called by God are now allowing the people under them to call themselves. There will be struggle in leadership within the church because they are not disciplined. The only solution is for them to return to the Lord because Jesus Christ is the center. Everything revolves around Him.



Bishop Ajose

**Pastor Bukki:** The truth of the matter is that the church is like a hospital. Every local assembly is like a hospital. Unfortunately, the church is a combination of sick people. In a hospital we have patients who come on a weekly or daily basis based on their appointments with the doctor. Some are in ICU, some are in accidents/emergency or in the ward, they are not yet okay, they watch them. When people come to church it is assumed that everyone who is born again, a child of God, who has given his life to Jesus Christ will need to surrender his life totally to God and allow the Holy Spirit handle the flesh. There are quite a number of people in church who have not subjected their lives to the Holy Spirit to deal with their flesh. They have the language of the church, they speak in tongues, they know the nitty gritty of how the church operates. If they are still operating in the flesh, they may have ambition, they may have a goal for leadership positions especially where the positions have been made juicy, where it has become a place to make money. Once people realize that, they begin to fight for positions. When they are fighting, they won't say it is because they want to have access to funds, they will spiritualize it as God guiding and leading them. If the leadership of the church and the system that runs a particular local assembly is dead to the flesh, straight forward and pure, such people operating in the flesh will not have access and opportunity. Unfortunately, most churches don't have Christians that can curb such. Even pastors fighting for positions of authority is not supposed to be because service in the kingdom should be 100% service unto God. It is not a money-making venture. Anyone who is a Christian who is carnally minded would fight for leadership positions.

**LHM:** What principles would you suggest leaders of the Christian faith put in place to manage the politics that comes with competing interests in the church? Is it possible to balance this without conflict?

**Bishop Ajose:** Unfortunately, we have church fathers who cannot call these people to order because the Esau spirit has crept into the church, where they think prosperity is spirituality or anointing. So if somebody has billions of naira, it means the person has more anointing than people who don't have. No! Does that mean the greatest armed robber is anointed by God? If it is what unbelievers have that you are proud of, then you are nothing because the Bible says if only for this world, we have hope in Christ Jesus we are above all name the most miserable. You can't flaunt your wealth before the Lord. We have church fathers who these people are giving millions without working. Once they are giving them, whatever heresy they give is approved.

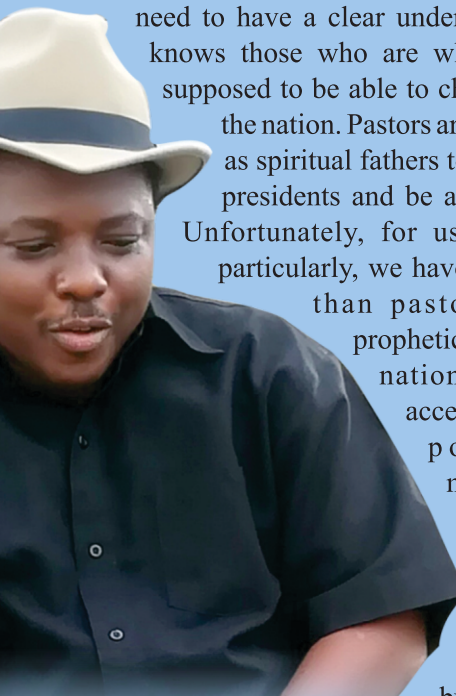
Even if they don't say it, body language and not correcting them shows it is approved. God is a God of order. There are times we cannot bypass our fathers because they are elders. I will just tell you the truth, in the church, it may not be stopped for a very long time. Nobody is saying anything because some of them are affiliated with church fathers. It's an evil silence going on in Nigeria. That is why the political class trample upon the church with impunity.

**Pastor Bukki:** Every pastor should focus on discipleship. We must build Christians as disciples of Christ first, make them understand the ways of Christ. There must be a system of transparency, honesty, a system where a child of God understands what service in the kingdom is all about. There should be a policy in the church. The criteria should be; you must be a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ which is dead to the flesh. Once we have that, we won't have much of the competing interest in the church. Leaders should not allow the flesh dictate who will be in a spiritual office. In my church, I have PhD holders, lecturers, bankers but when the Almighty God recently unveiled the identity of the young man that will succeed me, the fellow is not even in our church. You need to see how the church stood up and celebrated because I've shown them the process and pattern of the kingdom over the years.

**LHM:** The theme of the 19<sup>th</sup> edition of Livinghope Magazine is “Nigerian Project: The labour of the foolish wearies every one of them for they do not know how to go to the city,” culled from Ecclesiastes 10:15. Kindly share your understanding of this in relation to leadership and church politics.

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**Bishop Ajose:** Wisdom is from God, that is why it talks about the labor of the foolish. Wisdom grants ease of doing things but foolishness is hard labor. The wisdom of God that we need in this country is the wisdom that can only be downloaded from the throne room of God. When we have people who think they are wise but they are foolishly directing the affairs of this country, giving revelation from their own mind or heart, then we begin to see anarchy or struggle in the country. We begin to see that people will be moving outside of the divine order. I tell people that whatever God does comes with peace. The prophet says I will hear what the Lord will speak, for He will speak peace to His people. Whatever is not of peace is not of God. Apostle Paul was in the shipwreck. It is not about the circumstances around you, it's about God who is with you. When in the country, we have people who are using their names to represent God, speaking on behalf of God to the nation, things go wrong.



**Pastor Bukki:** We have a lot of mix up in the body of Christ today. Sin and iniquity is now beginning to look like righteousness. Agents of darkness are now appearing like angels of light. In the midst of the mix up, we need to have a clear understanding that God knows those who are who. The church is supposed to be able to channel a course for the nation. Pastors are supposed to serve as spiritual fathers to kings, governors, presidents and be able to guide them. Unfortunately, for us here in Nigeria particularly, we have seen where other than pastors providing a prophetic direction for the nation, they use their access to corridors of power to make money for themselves. In fact, some people have access to the corridors of power but they only use it to get licenses to establish their own university or for oil wealth. That is not the intention of God. The likes of Nehemiah, are not pastors, they are people in politics. Today we can quote Nehemiah in spiritual warfare.

*Pastor Bukki*

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They are just simply statements made by a government official standing in righteousness for God. Today, we are quoting him in spiritual warfare and are winning. God is trying to tell us to have an understanding of the position we are placed in. Church leaders also need to teach their members that way. Have the understanding that when God gives anybody a job, even in the government circle, he is giving that job as a platform for service. God will not give anybody a job because He wants to enrich the fellow. God can enrich anybody without a job. That is what God has called us into.

**LHM: Kindly tell us about yourself.**

**Bishop Ajose:** I am Bishop Theophilus Taiwo Ajose. I'm from Badagry, a division of Lagos state from a royal family, born a prince. I gave my life to Jesus Christ at the age of 13 in form 2, that was in 1978. I was a member of the Scripture Union and I started with evangelism. For the work of ministry, I was with Bishop David Oyedepo, where I was worshipping. I didn't want to be an actual pastor because when the call was coming, I was the head of the prayer team in Winners Chapel those days. After waiting on the Lord, in the year 2000, I started my prayer intercessory ministry. I'm into core intercessory prayer to nations, US, South-Africa, countries and cities of the world for apostolic intercession. Now we have an online intercession varsity where we train people on intercession.

**Pastor Bukki:** I am Bukki Gbenro. I am a pastor of The Vineyard Assembly Incorporated in Ibadan. I've been a full time pastor for 24 years now with an apostolic mandate. I'm pragmatic, a maverick, down to earth, and I love the Kingdom's business. I'm a child of God and I'm married.