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## PAUL'S IDEA OF THE HAGIOI AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN CHRISTIANITY

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Saint Paul is a great name in Christian theology, practice, and life. Apart from Jesus Christ, there is apparently no one whose teaching and authority are so enshrined in Christianity as Paul. Thirteen out of the twenty-seven documents of the New Testament in the form of letters are accredited to Paul as the writer. According to biblical scholarship, the majority of Paul's letters antedate the earliest Gospel records by several years. Consequently the record of either a saying or an action of Jesus in some earlier epistles of Paul is the oldest written record of such<sup>1</sup>. Since the Christian era, millions of known and unknown lives have been transformed by the message of the extant letters of Paul. Prominent among the lives that received new light and power from Paul were the great African professor of rhetoric, later known as St. Augustine of Hippo, bishop and theologian<sup>2</sup>; the German professor of Sacred Theology, Martin Luther, who led the famous sixteenth century Reformation<sup>3</sup>; and the great evangelical revivalist of the Anglican Church in the 18th Century, John Wesley<sup>4</sup>.

Paul, the acclaimed Apostle of Gentile Christianity had certain convictions about the new life in Christ to which he spent the greater part of his life inviting men and women. Some of these convictions were unacceptable to his Jewish colleagues and others made his Gentile converts uneasy. But he was not out to please men, and nothing would separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus<sup>5</sup>. Thus his missionary theology which exempted Gentile Christians from circumcision irritated ardent Jewish Christians known as Judaizers and they opposed him fiercely. On the other hand, such Gentiles Christians as the Corinthians living in the "Vanity Fair" of the ancient world, felt Paul's sharp rebukes on sexual laxity and litigations.

Herman Ridderbos, a Dutch Pauline scholar, rightly says that "the redemptive-historical significance of the New Testament Church as the people of God already finds clear expression in the name **hagioi** with which Paul associates himself"<sup>6</sup>. Paul, as a Christian theologian not only associates himself with calling the people of God the **hagioi** (saints, holy ones), but uses it with a distinction. W. G. Kummel, K.G. Kuhn, and those before them do circumscribe the concept within Pauline ecclesiology. In this article we shall examine Paul's idea of the Christians as the **hagioi** and its implications for the Nigerian Church of today. Firstly, we shall look at the Old Testament idea of the **hagioi**. This will lead on to the examination of some passages in the Epistles of Paul which deal with this concept. Finally we shall

attempt to highlight the significance of Paul's idea for contemporary Nigerian Christianity.

### **The Old Testament Idea of the Hagioi**

Yahweh, the God of Israel, is a holy God (Is. 6:3). He is holy in such a majestic fashion (Ex. 15:11) that none equals him (1 Sam. 2:2). Consequently everything around him must be holy whether it is angels, men, things, space, or time.<sup>7</sup> The Sinaitic Covenant brought Israel into a special relationship with God (Ex. 24:4-8). Thus the idea of holiness which is the personal essence of Yahweh is brought into the relationship between God and His people. And because Yahweh who is holy dwells amongst His people, Israel too must be holy (Deut. 7:6; Lev. 19:2). This holiness demanded that Israel must have no dealings with the rites of other nations and Yahweh only must be worshiped (Deut. 6:4). In the concept of Israel as a holy nation (Ex. 19:6) the cultic and national elements are indissolubly merged.<sup>8</sup> Israel was chosen by Yahweh and exalted above all other nations (Deut. 26:19) and the condition for the intercourse of Yahweh and His people is holiness because Yahweh is holy - "You shall be holy for I am holy" (Lev. 19:2). The cultic character of holiness which is being demanded is inseparably tied up with purity. The **hagioi** must be pure. God's presence and holiness were consummated in the Ark of the Covenant which right from Sinai was linked with the sanctuary and later, the Holy of Holies in Solomon's temple.

In prophetic theology however, the holiness of Yahweh as God stands out clearly in moral antithesis to man's creaturely nature (Hosea 11:9). Israel had broken the terms of the covenant with God by desiring to be like other nations and actually following the cult of Canaanite gods. It is only the incomprehensible love of God taken into His holiness that spares Israel from total destruction. In the theology of Isaiah, even the prophet himself had been alienated from Yahweh's holiness. There must be atonement initiated by God once man recognised his unworthiness. Yahweh as the Holy One of Israel binds Himself to Israel on the condition that only the holy remnant must be spared (Is. 4:3). The special privilege of Israel as the covenant people and therefore holy people of God carries with it a serious responsibility: they must pay for every iniquity committed (Amos 3:2).

In rabbinic concepts of holiness merely being an Israelite did not confer this status on anyone. It is only "the man who fulfils God's commandments and leads a pious life pleasing to God" that is holy. Furthermore, the holy man must keep himself separated from the Gentiles, their idols, and all forms of vices.

Besides the prophetic and rabbinic significance of the **hagioi** it has a decidedly eschatological sense typical of later Jewish Apocalyptic literature as have been ably defended by W. G. Kummel, A. Wikenhanser, and K.G. Kuhn. In the eschatological sense, the **hagioi** represent the true people of God (**Qahal-Yahweh**) whom the Lord has preserved and delivered from godlessness and

the **har-ammegeddon** into which the historical Israel was submerged and to which in the great future He will fulfill His ancient and external promises (Is. 4:3; 6:13; Dan 7:18, 21ff).

### **The Hagioi in the New Testament**

The New Testament or covenant was established with the blood of Jesus Christ when he suffered the vicarious death on the cross. The new covenant is therefore Christocentric. Jesus the **hagios pais** (holy child) of God is both the sacrifice and the High Priest ministering at the real sanctuary of which the Old Testament Holy of Holies is a shadow (Heb 8:5). As the New Testament is a fulfilment of the Old, there is the **ekklesia** of God that arises out of the old Sinaitic covenant people of God. The **ekklesia** of God is reminded that in accordance with the old covenant of which they are the fulfillers, they are **ethnos hagian** (a holy nation) (1 Peter 2:9) and the injunction that they must be holy as God is holy all the more holds. Thus the members of the **ekklesia** of God, a cultic circle grounded in the sacrifice of Christ, becomes the New Testament **hagioi**.

The ecclesial significance of the expression is attested by its pre-Pauline usages, usages solely reserved to refer to the Jerusalem Church - the **urgemeinde** (see Rom. 15:25; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 8:4; 9:1, 12). A general Christian early usage is easily readable from the following texts: Acts 9:13, 32, 41; 26:10; Heb. 3:1; 6:10; 13:24; Rev. 5:8; 8:3-4 and Jude 3.

Consequently it has been very powerfully argued by many eminent scholars<sup>10</sup> that the **hagioi** being the equivalent of the Old Testament **kadosh** has no reference to ethical or moral estate. The **hagioi** are only different from other people on points of being separated to God in Christ and dedicated to His service. Ethically and morally, therefore, the **hagioi** are no better than others.

Following tradition and redaction criticism these exegetes conclude that **hagioi** is, according to **opinio communis**, "a self designation of the Christian Church" which goes back to a pre-Pauline **testimonia**. The **testimonia**, according to their argument, was an early Christian composition of the collections of Old Testament proof-texts containing specific themes. We are, however, of the opinion that whatever meaning the concept of the **hagioi** had, the ethical and moral references were not absent. Jesus as the Head of the Church hammered constantly on the ethical and moral demands of discipleship as the Sermon on the Mount makes clear. In the theology of the early Christians a mere false declaration attracted instant death (Acts 5) and neglect of one's family relations classified one as an infidel (1 Tim. 5:8). A Christian is forbidden to suffer as an evildoer or a criminal (1 Peter 4:15) and no false preacher must be received by Christians (2 John 1:10-11). There are numerous other testimonies to the effect that in the New Testament the **hagioi** did not rely merely on the covenant relationship with God in Christ but were expected to demonstrate moral and ethical holiness.

### Paul's Idea of the Hagioi

In the powerful historical sweep of Paul the concept of the people of God has burst its national limits and come to be equated with the Church of Christ. On the holy stump of the O.T. people of God the new branches from the Gentile world have been engrafted (R. 11:17) and they are sanctified by the stump. The stump is obviously Christ as **he rhiza tou lessai** (R. 15:12) ordained to rule over the Gentiles<sup>11</sup>

The concept of the **hagioi** has been taken over and been typologically fortified by the Apostle Paul in the cause of his evangelisation in the Gentile Churches. In his letters, the appellation is employed many a time as an epistolary form of address, that is, in the salutations (cf Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2); (2 Cor. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:2) and in the subscript (cf Rom. 16:15; 2 Cor. 13:12; Phil. 4:21, 22). For some scholars the preponderance of these text-references are a concrete proof that **ekklesia kai hagioi** are synonymous expressions in Christian antiquity. In principle, they are meant to be so but in practical terms did Paul classify them as one?

For Paul the **communio sanctorum**, the church, is the true people of God, the eschatological Israel which inherits the promises of God because of the salvation He has wrought through Christ. The Church is by no means the historical Israel but the hopeful Israel. Only in the light of this theological reflection can one understand the meaning of the qualifiers attached to the 'saints' as the 'elect' (**hoi eklectoi**), 'the beloved' (**hoi agapemenoi**), and 'the called' (**hoi kletoi**).

### Why are Christians Saints?

The expression **hagioi** and its cognate modifiers complement one another, that is to say, the saints integrally constitute the true church. The central idea is that God has first chosen and called a people to Himself out of all peoples as Abraham was called out of the Ur of the Chaldeans (Gen. 12:1-4). **Mutatis mutandis**, believers have been called by the Gospel of God's grace to Himself. Consequently the faithful are beloved (**agapemenoi**), holy (**hagioi**), placed on God's side and separated from the world. The **hagioi** are believers in Christ, the church of the great future, the perpetuation of the true Israel in the **heilsgeschichte**.

In Paul's epistles to the Philippians,<sup>12</sup> Ephesians, and Colossians, we find the phrase, **tois hagioi**,<sup>12</sup> which means, "to the saints or holy ones" used repeatedly. "Saints", as Paul uses the term means, "set apart for God's possession, use, and service"<sup>13</sup>. But both Barclay and Moule opine that the term "saint" is a misleading translation for the Greek word **hagios** and the Hebrew equivalent **kadosh**, because both words are less concerned with any excellence of character than they are with the commitment and loyalties of the Christians to God who has made them His own.<sup>14</sup> The meaning is clear but since the modern man

identifies a saint with stained glass windows of a church, it is best to translate **hagioi** as "God's dedicated people".<sup>15</sup> But we are more inclined to agree with Mussner that the description "saints" is "very important" since it enables us to understand how the early Christians saw themselves and how we must see ourselves today.<sup>16</sup> It is one of the most important clues to the recovery of the New Testament idea of the Church.<sup>17</sup> We find it difficult to accept that the term **hagioi** had little reference to moral excellence or actual holiness. To deny the moral connotations of the term may reveal the natural human tendency of defensiveness: "If I admit they were actually holy, then I must be so too or admit failure". The popular view is that these people were called saints on point of their status rather than performance. Paul's idea, however, deviates from this view.

The Philippian Church was the chief of the churches of Macedonia which Paul highly commends in 2 Cor. 8:1-5 for "begging us earnestly for the favour of taking part in the relief of saints" though they were in extreme poverty. He almost swore as to his affection for them (Phil. 1:8) since they shared his vision and were partners in his Gospel ministry (Phil. 4:15). The Ephesian Christians were **hagioi**, being famous for their faith in Christ and love to all the **hagioi**. This evoked continual thanksgiving to God by Paul. He reminds them that saints are created in Christ Jesus for "good works" and now that they are "fellow citizens with the **hagioi**" he prays for them to "comprehend with all the **hagioi**" the full measure of Christ's love. As **hagioi**, God gave ministry gifts to them for the perfecting of the saints because Christ will come again for a glorious church, holy and without blemish. Finally in sharing Paul's ministry, they are to pray with "all prayer and supplication for the **hagioi**" and for Paul himself.<sup>18</sup> As their counterparts in Ephesus, the Colossians were **hagioi** known for their faith in Christ and love for all the **hagioi**. Paul and his team prayed for them to have the full grace of God as they had been "qualified" to be partakers with the **hagioi**. The mystery of God hidden for ages has been made "manifest to the **hagioi** and they must not be "mystified" by any cosmological teachings. Paul admonished them especially slaves, to put exemplary performance in their work. Also as partakers in his Gospel ministry they were to pray for him, remembering his fetters.<sup>19</sup>

In Paul's epistles to the Romans and Corinthians, they were **kletois hagiois**.<sup>20</sup> **Kletois** comes from the verb, **kalein** which is "to call". The root idea comes from the Old Testament. It involves Divine summons. All eminent servants of God like Moses and the prophets were called.<sup>21</sup> So the Roman and Corinthian Christians were **called to be saints**. Paul who repudiated **huperochen logou** (excellency of speech) does not use words carelessly. The implication of this kind of address is that though the Roman and Corinthian Christians were called to be saints, they had not attained it. In status of being separated in Christ and dedicated to God, they were saints but in performance, they were yet to prove their mettle. Why we may ask? The Christian Communities had scandalous divisions in their churches that grieved Paul. The one in Rome was between Jews and Gentiles. It is believed that the disturbances caused

by this division made Emperor Claudius to expel Jews from Rome in 49/50 A.D.<sup>22</sup> The Gentiles seemed to over-exercise their Christian freedom to the extent of despising the Jews especially in matters of foods and drinks. The Jews on their side were proud of their election and saw the Gentiles as lawless impostors. Paul devoted a great part of the epistle battling with this problem. When in Chapter 12 he had dressed down both Jews and Gentiles, he admonished them to present themselves to God as living sacrifices, **hagian** and pleasing to God. In 13:11ff Paul commands them to "wake out of sleep" and clothe themselves with the Lord Jesus Christ in order to defeat the desires of their sinful nature. In chapter 15, he intimates them of his ministry to the **hagioi** in Jerusalem. Phoebe, a deaconess of the Church in Cenchrea was to visit them and should be given a reception worthy of the **hagioi**. Earlier they were enjoined to contribute to the needs of the **hagioi** and practise hospitality.<sup>23</sup> The enormous problems of the Corinthian Church are clear to Bible students. It ranges from the four-party division to law-suits, fornication/adultery and even to the insult on the personality and ministry of Paul. The Corinthian Christians in instituting lawsuits did not know that the **hagioi**, will judge not only the world but angels. The God who in the Corinthian Church was portrayed as the author of confusion in the issue of glossolalia is a God of peace in all the churches of the **hagioi**. Like one of them, Shephenas, who was "addicted to the service of the **hagioi**," they were to make regular collection for the **hagioi** in Jerusalem. Though the Corinthian Christians had been initiated and were behind no church in spiritual gifts, they were "acting like mere men." In his second letter, Paul sent greetings to the Church with the **hagioi** in Achaia. Further mention of the **hagioi** concerned the collection of gifts for those in Jerusalem.<sup>24</sup>

The Christians in Philippi, Ephesus, and Colosse were **hagioi en Christo** (i) and the ones in Thessalonica were "**ekklesia**. . . **Theo(i) Patri kai Kurio(i) Jesou Christo(i)**" --the Church in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. In Paul's theology the phrase, "in Christ, in Christ Jesus, and in the Lord," are very significant. According to Barclay, the phrase "in Christ Jesus" occurs 48 times, "in Christ," 34 times, and "in the Lord", 50 times.<sup>25</sup> For Paul, this was the very essence of Christianity since Christ is our **hagiasmos** (santification). M.R. Vincent sees the Christian being in Christ as a bird in the air, a fish in the water, or a tree rooted in the soil.<sup>26</sup> In fact, the Christian is hid with Christ in God (Col. 3:3). Some scholars have tried to attribute the use of **ekklesia** in the earlier letters of Paul and the use of **hagioi** in the later ones to the development in his theology. But whatever was responsible, the tone of the epistles to the Thessalonians<sup>27</sup> reveals that Paul was equally happy with their performance as he was with the Philippians, Ephesians and Colossians.

In Paul's Epistle to the Galatians who were "bewitched", there is no mention of **hagioi**. And **en Christo(i)** is used only once to refer to the Church in Judea (1:22). On point of status, they had been baptised and become churches but Paul was so infuriated by their low moral performance in Christ and their majoring in legalistic matters that he called them "foolish

Galatians". Gal. 5:19-21 contains one of the catalogues of vices which, Paul severely warns, will keep Christians out of God's Kingdom.

From the foregoing discussion, it is evidently clear that Paul's idea of the **hagioi** is quite distinct. To be sure, he did not originate the concept: he gave it a stronger meaning. The **hagioi** are not only set apart for God's possession, they must allow God to use them and also do his service. If they must be "workers together with him", they must live holy lives as holiness is his essence. Using an academic analogy, one is not totally a student of a University by matriculation. He or she must perform to justify his/her status or the authorities will "show him Road One."

The idea of **election** must not deceive the **hagioi** into taking God for granted as old Israel did and suffered rejection. Thus Paul approved and reinforced the rabbinic concept of holiness as a cementing factor in his missionary theology.

### **The Significance of the Pauline concept of Hagioi for Contemporary Nigerian Christianity**

Today the average Christian and average Church member would never permit himself to be classed among the saints. He thinks of saints as those who have attained a supreme degree of Christian perfection.<sup>28</sup>

To call all the Church members saints strikes a modern Christian as quite strange. The word saint has suffered a sea of change since the days of the early church. In our time it connotes a figure in stained glass, wearing archaic clothes and commemorated in liturgical prayers. At its simplest it designates in modern speech the extraordinary Christian, the hero, the martyr.<sup>29</sup>

The above quotations truly represent the modern Christian's view about sainthood whether he is a Nigerian, a Briton, or an American. Saints are Christians in antiquity who were superhuman. Though the Roman Catholic Popes are addressed as "His Holiness" and are "infallible in matters of doctrine," only those that pass the canonisation tests can merit the title, "Saint" and only after their death.

In Nigeria today, there are two trends in church life which make Paul's idea of the **hagioi** a concept that needs to be given very urgent attention. One of these trends is positive while the other is negative. On the positive side, there are revivals going on here and there in different denominations. Enthusiasm for revival seems to come from students in higher institutions of learning. As the Church is growing, there is a quest for the jewels of early Christianity buried in traditions and covered by the dust of years. Catholic charismatic renewal, a pentecostal and evangelical movement in the Roman Catholic Church, one of the biggest denominations in Nigeria, is very significant. Recent utterances of some Catholic bishops show that this movement has



become a force to be reckoned with in the church. The movement is threatening the church's foundation by challenging Mariology and the use of rosary in prayers. Many dioceses of the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) are coming alive with the Gospel. During the Easter of 1985, the youth of the Kwara Diocese held a Holy Spirit Convention conducted by Rev. Dr. S.G.A. Onibere of the University of Ife in co-operation with other Anglican Pentecostals. The 1983 National Conference of the Nigerian Fellowship of Evangelical Students (NIFES) at the University of Port Harcourt attracted over 5,000 young Christians and the move of the Spirit was such that only God knows if anyone who left that Conference as an unbeliever. And since 1984, the Scripture Union National Conference ceased to be open to all those who could attend because the number of people attending was posing serious accommodation and administrative problems. Thus the Church in Nigeria seems to be experiencing some of the vigor witnessed in the Acts of the Apostles.

On the negative side, there are still many of the established Churches which believe that there are no living saints though there are good Churches and good church members. Whether one is regenerated or not, is not as important as being baptised and confirmed. Being a Christian involves nothing spectacular. It's simply a matter of rituals and ceremonies.

Christians are urged from all sides to find ways of communicating with the present day secularised 'post-christian' man in such a way that he will see the relevance of their Gospel. Indeed . . . relevance seems to be replacing truth as a criterion of permissible discourse. What concerns us is the possibility that certain efforts in this direction of communication and relevance merit the charge of reductionism, that is, the charge that in some way the distinctions of the Christian message are being watered down or undermined.<sup>30</sup>

When being a Christian shifts from holiness to mere initiation and ritual, serious moral and behavioral problems begin to grip the Church. Little wonder that eminent Christian theologians assure outsiders that Christianity is not the way<sup>31</sup> but a way to God. Christian politicians instead of taking the Christian principles into politics succeed in bringing politics into the church.<sup>32</sup> In some places Christian individuals and Churches outdo everyone else in lawsuits, embezzlement and immorality.

With wrong theology and religious politics flourishing in the Church in Nigeria, she has witnessed the worst types of leadership tussle and unprecedented lawsuit scandals. Early in this decade, a leadership tussle caused the breakaway of a major section of the Eastern branch of the Christ Apostolic Church. It became the Christ Ascension Church after court litigation and a forceful removal of the leading pastor from the vicarage by the police. Presently the bishop in translation from Ekiti to the Lagos See of the Church of Nigeria cannot be installed because of the court action of six members. On 19th September, their

ambition "to enthrone a 'son of the soil' was shattered by a Lagos High Court."<sup>33</sup> But six days later, their lawyer "went to the Appeal Court asking it to reverse the verdict of the lower Court".<sup>34</sup> **The Guardian** of 4th October reports sympathetic appeals by two appeal court judges concerning troubles disrupting the Methodist church. Part of the report reads:

Mr. Justice Uthman gave the crisis-torn Methodist Church a chance to settle its long drawn rift out of court on Wednesday after admonishing feuding members to stop "washing their dirty linens in public." Another Judge of the Court, Mr. Justice Mohammed Kutigi said he was particularly piqued at the recent incident in the Wesley, Ikoyi branch of the Church, where policemen had to be called in to stop two pastors from performing the Sunday service at the same time. . . . "If disputes such as these cannot be settled in the Church, where else can they be settled?" he asked.<sup>35</sup>

The judges appealed to the lawyers of both parties to negotiate and "amicable settlement" and come back on December 5 to "report the reconciliation." This case which centres on former Patriarch, Professor Idowu's refusal to quit office at the constitutional age of 70 years, is only one in the series sparked off by the 1976 Patriarchate Constitution of the Methodist Church of Nigeria.

It is evident that in the midst of the enviable revivals in Nigeria, her ecclesiology is still beset with divisive and grotesque power-thirsty magnates, the kind Paul denounced as Pseudo-Apostles parading themselves as **diakonoi tou Christou** (2 Cor. 11:5-6). Very recently, Governor A. Madueke of Imo State of Nigeria lashed Nigerian Church leaders for not living up to moral expectation and misleading the youths. The newspaper report read in part:

"For Christian Churches, to regain the grip which they appear to be losing on society", the governor said, "both their members and the clergy **must** live as shining examples according to what they preach." Navy Capt. Madueke observed with regret, that it did not serve any useful purpose for Churches to teach young ones what they are expected to do when some days afterwards these youths see the elders doing the opposite of what have been taught . . . the Church had apparently lost the former influence and ecclesiastical hold she had exerted on her adherents.<sup>36</sup> This he said, "is very unfortunate."

If the revival in Nigeria is to be spiritually rewarding and if the Nigerian Church hopes for an eschatological rendezvous with the **ecclesia Triumphans** which is holy (Mt. 27:52; Rev. 11:18, 18:24), then holiness cannot be avoided. Wedel rightly argued that once a member of the people of God, there is no possible escape from the vocation to sainthood except by sinful

denial.<sup>37</sup> If one fails to reveal himself as a Christian by holiness of life he will certainly be able to conceal himself in the Church but all the same will not belong to it.<sup>38</sup> Saints are separated ones in a double sense, a negative separation from evil and a positive dedication to God<sup>39</sup> which make them occupy an incomparable position among world's social groups.<sup>40</sup> They are in the world but not of the world. The light must neither become darkness nor the salt lose its taste.

In considering the argument about the outdatedness of the terms, McIntyre opines that christian language gains its significance only when seen in the context of Christian world view. To do otherwise would be a logical reductionist approach.<sup>41</sup> Vincent holds that ideally hagioi implies personal holiness and moral purity.<sup>42</sup>

Holiness, after all, is a mark of the Church but when the Church experienced peace after the persecutions, sinners within the Church became numerous . . . No mathematical axiom is more certain than this moral one that where the fruits of holiness show themselves there is Holy Ghost and there is true doctrine.<sup>43</sup>

In conclusion it is pertinent to emphasise that Christians are called to a life of holiness and separation to God.<sup>44</sup>

Far from degrading the quality of sainthood or lowering the Standard of ideal Christian man, this conception extends the obligation to every Christian to measure his living by the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.<sup>45</sup>

We have tried to show that Paul the great Apostle of the Gentile Churches is of the idea that every Christian should be a saint. And, in a collective sense, the members of the Church in any community should be the **hagioi** both by initiation and performance. Paul, as an outstanding New Testament theologian who influenced the subsequent history of the Christian thought, must be reckoned with.<sup>46</sup> The congregational and eschatological dimensions of the **hagioi** in Paul are thus very important in Nigerian theologising in the ongoing quest for the Christian **Theologia Africana**. Christianity in Nigeria is fast growing to a climax. With the resurgence of the traditional religion and the serious effort toward a marriage of convenience with other religions, Christianity must be returned to its right footing before a tragic decline begins. Already we have adopted such terms as "born-again Christian", "nominal Christian", "professing Christian" etc. more or less indicating the varying degrees of commitment or seriousness within the Church.

We are aware that there are very many denominations with varying doctrines. These denominations constitute Nigerian Christianity and some may argue as a frontline Christian group once did in their handbook that they "are not a holy club". Nevertheless our conviction is that sainthood as conceived by Paul is an inescapable vocation for any true Christian Church.

**Notes**

- 1 F. F. Bruce, "The Epistles of Paul" **Peake's Commentary on the Bible.** (Lagos, Nelson, 1981) 927.
- 2 Augustine's eyes fell on Rom. 13:13-14 when he heard the injunction, "Take up and read."
- 3 Paul's insistence on justification by faith in the Epistle to the Romans was the starting point of Luther's Reformation Theology.
- 4 Wesley's heart was "warmed" after listening to Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans.
- 5 Cf. Gal. 1:10; Rom. 8:38-39.
- 6 Herman Ridderbos, **Paul** (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977) 328.
- 7 Holy angels, Job 5:1, 15:15; holy priests, Lev. 21:1-6; holy sacrificed and tithes, 1 Sam. 21:5-7; Deut. 26:13; Holy of holies, Ex. 26:34; holy ground Ex. 3:5 and holy day, Is. 58:13, Neh. 10:32
- 8 O. Procksch, "Hagios" **TDNT Vol. 1** 92-93.
- 9 H.W. Kuhn "Hagioi" **TDNT Vol. 1** 100.
- 10 C.K. Barrett, F.W. Beare, H.M. Carson, J. Gnifka, C.F.D. Moule, W. Sanday, and M.R. Vincent.
- 11 Procksch, 106.
- 12 Regarding Pauline authorship of the Prison Epistles, though substantive arguments have been framed on both sides, we should accept these writings as products of his apostolic pen until overwhelming evidence to the contrary is produced.
- 13 J. Knox, "The Epistle to the Romans" **The Interpreter's Bible** Vol. IX (New York, Abingdon Press, 1954) 384-5.
- 14 C.F.D. Moule, **The Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary** (Cambridge, The University Press, 1968) 12.
- 15 W. Barclay, **The Daily Bible Study**, cf. **Letters to the Corinthians**, 10 and **The letters to Philipppians, Colossians and Thessalonians**, 10 (Edinburgh: St. Andrew's Press 1979).
- 16 F. Musner, **The Epistle to the Colossians.** (London, Sheed and Wood, 1971) 12.
- 17 T.O. Wedel, "The Epistle to the Ephesians", **The Interpreter's Bible**, Vol. 10 (New York, Abingdon Press, 1954) 612.

- 18 See Eph. 1:15, 18; 2:19; 3:18; 4:12; 5:27, and 6:18.
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