

# PRONOUNCEMENT

## The Use & Abuse of Titles within the AFM of SA



### 1. INTRODUCTION

In this document we will be looking at the use and abuse of titles within the AFM of SA particularly by its Pastors. In an attempt to do justice to the topic, the following issues will be addressed: Titles and their meaning, the use of titles, the abuse of titles, concluding remarks that will end with the making of recommendations for the way going forward.

### 2. TITLES AND THEIR MEANING

When one talks about titles what are we talking about and what does it mean? To adequately answer this it will be important to look at the definition of titles, and what did it represent then and what does it represent now. The following titles will be used to explain what is was and meant.

Caesars; were titles and not names. Latin pl. Caesares) is a title of **imperial** character. It derives from the cognomen of Julius Caesar, the Roman dictator. The change from being a familial name to a title adopted by the Roman Emperors can be dated to about AD 68/69, the so-called "Year of the Four Emperors".

The term **apostle** is derived from Classical Greek πόστολος (apóstolos), meaning "one who is sent off", from στέλλειν ("stellein"), "to send" + από (apó), "off, away from". The literal meaning in English is therefore an "emissary" (from the Latin mittere, "to send", and ex, "from, out, off". **The word apostle has two meanings, the broader meaning of a messenger and the narrower meaning of an early Christian apostle directly linked to Jesus.** The more general meaning of the word is translated into Latin as missiō, and from this word we get missionary. The term only occurs once in the Septuagint.

The term **bishop** means "overseer." Paul used these terms interchangeably, equating elders with overseers or **bishops** (Acts 20:17,28; Titus 1:5, 7). ... Elder referred to the status or rank of the office, while **bishop** denoted the duty or responsibility of the office—"overseer." The term Bishop in the Ancient Greek has pre Christian, **origins**. It derives from the word "episkopos", translating as the overseer, from the elements "epi", meaning on or over, plus "skopein", to look.

The term **doctor** is an academic title that originates from the Latin word of the same spelling and meaning. The word is originally an agentive noun of the Latin verb *docēre* [dɔ'ke:rɛ] 'to teach'. "**Doctor**" is Latin for "teacher" and the **title** originally **had** no special connection with medicine. Instead, **a doctor** was anyone qualified to teach at a university (in medieval Europe teaching qualifications **were** typically determined by the church).

### 3. THE USE OF TITLES

With reference to the use of titles it is important to note the following:

Professor Merrill Unger explains; "an apostle is a person who has been sent with a special message or commission". In this context, the predisposition of some critics to consider the term 'apostle' in its first-century per-New Testament meaning as implying only the 12 apostles of Christ is most unfortunate, because after Christ's ascension, the apostles broadly considered the term 'apostle' to include such Johnny-come-lately personalities as St. Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14: 4): and also Andronicus and Junius (a lady apostle). Paul substantiates this point in his letter to the Romans: "greet Andronicus and Junius, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They were outstanding (apostles) among the apostles...(Romans: 16:7). By the middle of the second century AD, only the Pope in the Roman Catholic Church- assumed the term 'apostle' the first ever-Christian church. The Pope (a word coming from the Latin 'papa', father) is the bishop of Rome, and father or head of all bishops. His seat in Rome is called the 'apostolic' 'see' and he is otherwise known as 'apostolic bishop' (or apostle and bishop), a term confirmed by the Council of Rheims in 1049 AD. And he alone enjoyed that monopoly of double titles.

A **bishop** is an ordained, consecrated, or appointed member of the Christian clergy who is.... In the past, the **Bishop** of Durham, known as a prince bishop, had extensive ... and **titles derived from** Christianity for its clerical hierarchy, including **bishops** who have much the same authority and responsibilities as in Catholicism.

**Doctor** is an academic **title** that originates from the Latin word of the same spelling and meaning. ... Contracted "Dr" or "Dr.", it is used as a designation for a person who has obtained a Doctorate (e.g. PhD or a MD). These doctorates were earned from credible, respectable and officially recognized Universities throughout the world.

### 4. THE ABUSE OF TITLES WITHIN THE PENTECOSTAL AND CHARISMATIC CHURCHES

For many years Pentecostal churches have been against titles and preferred to be called brothers and sisters in this country and in the USA. Soon a time emerged when they were called Elders and Deacons. Not very long after that the AFM in SA accepted the title Pastor (Poimen) for its ordained ministers. all pastors were expected to be shepherds of the local assemblies.

Many terms describe clergy members of Christian churches, including **pastor**, elder, **bishop**, reverend, minister and priest. The hierarchy of ordained church personnel varies depending on a church's denomination. "**Pastor**" and "**bishop**," however, are both names for a church leader, along with the term "elder."

With the emergence of the new democracy in South Africa and the opening up of the world to South African, as well as the visits of people from various parts of the world, the issue of title forcefully finds its way into the ecclesiastical world. People became Bishops, Prophets, Apostles and Doctors. As you have seen from the previous paragraphs holding any of these titles, but the way in which these titles were conferred created a storm.

**The appointment of bishops** in the Catholic Church is a complicated process. Outgoing bishops, neighbouring bishops, the faithful, the apostolic nuncio, various members of the Roman Curia, and the pope all have a role in the selection. The exact process varies based upon a number of factors, including whether the bishop is from the Latin Church or one of the Eastern Catholic Churches, the geographic location of the diocese, what office the candidate is being chosen to fill, and whether the candidate has previously been ordained to the episcopate.

#### **4.1 Who is responsible for the appointment of Apostles?**

**The commissioning of the Twelve Apostles** is an episode in the ministry of Jesus that appears in all three Synoptic Gospels: Matthew 10: 1-4, Mark 3: 13-19 and Luke 6: 12-16. It relates the initial selection of the Twelve Apostles among the disciples of Jesus.

According to Luke: One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

In the Gospel of Matthew, this episode takes place shortly before the miracle of the man with a withered hand. In the Gospel of Mark and Gospel of Luke it appears shortly after that miracle. This commissioning of the apostles takes place before the crucifixion of Jesus, while the Great Commission in Matthew 28:16-20 takes place after his resurrection. Matthias (Hebrew transliteration: Mattityahu; Koine Greek: Μαθθίας; died c. 80 AD) was, according to the Acts of the Apostles, the apostle chosen to replace Judas Iscariot following Judas' betrayal of Jesus and his (Judas') subsequent death.

## 4.2 The Qualifications of an Apostle

Peter proposed choosing a new apostle and set the qualifications. Not everyone could be considered for an apostleship. Candidates needed to have been with Jesus during the whole three years that Jesus was among them. That is, he needed to be an eyewitness of Jesus' baptism when the Heavenly Father validated Jesus' person and work. He needed to have heard Jesus' life-changing teachings and been present to see His healings and other miracles. He needed to have witnessed Jesus sacrifice Himself on the cross and to have seen Jesus walk, talk, and eat among the disciples again after His resurrection. These were the pivotal facts of Jesus' life, the heart of the message they were to teach, and personal witnesses were required to verify the truth of the good news.

The prayer group in Jerusalem nominated two who met these qualifications for apostleship: Joseph Barsabbas and Matthias. Then the disciples asked God to guide them to know which one was to fill the post. Using a method of determining God's will that was common at that time, they cast lots, thus giving God freedom to make His choice clear. The lot fell to Matthias, and he became the twelfth apostle.

On repeated occasions, the apostles gave witness of their personal observations of Jesus, making such statements as, "We are witnesses of everything Jesus did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen" (Acts 10:39-40).

Months later, Saul, one of the Pharisees, was trying to stamp out the new "cult" of Christianity by killing and jailing some of Jesus' followers. While Saul was on one of his deadly errands to Damascus, the living Jesus personally appeared to him. This undeniable encounter with the resurrected Lord revolutionized Saul's life. In a vision to another believer in Damascus, Jesus said that He had chosen Saul "as My chosen instrument to carry My name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel" (Acts 9:15; cf. 22:14-15). Following his conversion, Paul spent some time in Arabia, where he was taught by Christ (Galatians 1:12-17). The other apostles recognized that Jesus Himself had appointed their former enemy to be one of them. As Saul went into Gentile territories, he changed his name to the Greek "Paul," and Jesus, who gave Paul his apostleship, sent many messages through him to His churches and to unbelievers. It was this apostle, Paul, who wrote over half of the books of the New Testament.

In two of his Epistles, Paul identifies the office of apostle as the first that Jesus appointed to serve His churches (1 Corinthians 12:27–30; Ephesians 4:11). Clearly, the work of apostleship was to lay the foundation of the Church in a sense secondary only to that of Christ Himself (Ephesians 2:19–20), thus requiring eyewitness authority behind their preaching. After the apostles laid the foundation, the Church could be built.

While Paul never claimed to be included among the original twelve, believers have recognized that Jesus appointed him as His special apostle to the Gentiles (Galatians 1:1; 1 Corinthians 9:1; Acts 26:16–18). There are others in the early church referred to as “apostles” (Acts 14:4, 14; Romans 16:7; 1 Thessalonians 2:6), but only in the sense that they were appointed, authorized, and sent by churches on special errands. These individuals bore the title “apostle” in a limited sense and did not possess all the qualifications of apostleship that the original twelve and Paul did.

No biblical evidence exists to indicate that these thirteen apostles were replaced when they died. See Acts 12:1–2, for example. Jesus appointed the apostles to do the founding work of the Church, and foundations only need to be laid once. After the apostles’ deaths, other offices besides apostleship, not requiring an eyewitness relationship with Jesus, would carry on the work.

In his writings, **Paul the Apostle**, although not **one of the original twelve**, described himself as an **apostle**, one “born out of due time” (e.g., Romans 1:1, 1 Corinthians 15:8 and other letters). He was called by the resurrected Jesus himself during his Road to Damascus vision and given the name **“Paul”**.

### 4.3 The Appointment of Bishops

The aspiring Bishops within the Orthodox and Catholic churches must be a priest. This requires formal training, including a four-year degree in theology. Once you complete your degree, you will spend anywhere between **four and five years** in a seminary, followed by work in the Catholic church as a deacon. A deacon is a layperson who assists the priest in a parish.

The **appointment of Church of England** diocesan **bishops** follows a somewhat convoluted process, reflecting the church’s traditional tendency towards compromise and ad hoc solutions, traditional ambiguity between hierarchy and democracy, and traditional role as a semi-autonomous state church. (Suffragan bishops are appointed through a much simpler process, reflecting their status as directly responsible to their diocesan bishop.)

### **4.3.1 The use of the title Doctor**

As we have seen from definitions in the previous paragraphs that the title Doctor referred to Academic and Medical Doctors who have earned their degree from credible officially recognized Universities. In the course of history many people were honoured for work they have done on various sectors of society and on that basis they were awarded with honorary Doctoral degrees.

### **4.3.2 The abuse of the titles**

The abuse of titles stem from the unbiblical, unauthorized, and illegal use of the titles of Apostle by persons who do not meet the biblical and historical criteria, with reference to their appointment and qualifications. Groups who do not historically and ecclesiastically fall within the framework of the Episcopalian church tradition also abuse the titles of Bishop and Doctor. Some of them are also not consecrated in terms of that tradition. In terms of the Doctoral title are people illegally apply the title to themselves while they know that they did not earn it by academic or professional achievements. Some simply acquire fake degrees over the internet, and or from fake Universities, but they are adamant and insist that they be addressed with this unmerited title. In all the cases of the abuse of titles as mentioned in this document, it boils down to fraudulent misrepresentation.

## **5. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

In the light of the above-mentioned issues with specific reference to the use and abuse of titles do we want to highlight and emphasize certain matters. People who use the titles of Apostle and Bishop should familiarize themselves with the Scriptures as mentioned in this document as a basis. They should seriously re-examine their exegesis and hermeneutics and do some studying in these fields of theology, ecclesiastical history and philosophy.

As far as the issue of the Doctoral title is concerned people who have fake and or fraudulent qualifications from a fake, unaccredited University, should stop using the title, and or insist that they be called by the title. Some people innocently, unsuspected and ignorantly enrolled at these fake or unaccredited institutions, which purported to be accredited or they simply did not declare their unaccredited status. In this regard those people mention in this previous sentence are victims of the circumstances. This however cannot be said about those who knowingly enrolled in these fake and unaccredited institutions. They are purporting to be what they are not, namely they are not true warranted bearers of a deserving title.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Going forward the AFM of SA, should disseminate this document to all Regions and request them to workshop the document and come up with recommendations in which the whole church had an input regarding the use of the titles of Apostle and Bishop.

All academic Doctorates that are not accredited by SAQA are fake doctorates. Those Pastors with such doctoral degrees should desist from using the title Doctor.

For the information of the church the names and institutions of all the accredited doctorates should be circularized to all the assemblies by all communication tools that are in use by the AFM of SA.



## THE APOSTOLIC FAITH MISSION OF SOUTH AFRICA

### National Office

Building no. 14, Central Office Park, 257 Jean Ave, Centurion,  
Gauteng, South Africa  
P.O. Box 9450, Centurion, 0046  
Tel: +27 12 644 0490 | Fax: +27 12 644 0732/4  
[www.afm-ags.org](http://www.afm-ags.org)

Connect with Us:

