



ANALYZING ABEL DAMINA'S TEACHING ON TITHING THROUGH THE LENS OF THE SPIRAL OF SILENCE THEORY

Kalita Joseph Aruku (Ph.D.)¹, Inyali Peter Ogar (Ph.D.)²,
Joseph Ikangkang (Ph.D.)³, and Anruchi Peter-Wagbara⁴

¹University of Calabar, Calabar.
Email: Karuku@unical.edu.ng

²Transmission Company of Nigeria.
Email: inyalipeter@gmail.com

³University of Calabar.
Email: josephikangkang@gmail.com

⁴University of Calabar, Calabar
Email: anruchi.peter-wagbara@unical.edu.ng

Cite this article:

Aruku, K. J., Ogar, I. P.,
Ikangkang, J., Peter-Wagbara,
A. (2024), Analyzing Abel
Damina's Teaching on Tithing
through the Lens of the Spiral
of Silence Theory. British
Journal of Mass
Communication and Media
Research 4(4), 52-66. DOI:
10.52589/BJMCMR-
UBMAYBQT

Manuscript History

Received: 18 Sep 2024

Accepted: 8 Nov 2024

Published: 2 Dec 2024

Copyright © 2024 The Author(s).

This is an Open Access article
distributed under the terms of
Creative Commons Attribution-
NonCommercial-NoDerivatives
4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND
4.0), which permits anyone to
share, use, reproduce and
redistribute in any medium,
provided the original author and
source are credited.

ABSTRACT: *The practice of tithing has evolved over the years, with various theological leaders offering differing interpretations and approaches to its significance. This article examines the teachings of Dr. Abel Damina, a prominent figure in contemporary Christian evangelism, concerning the practice of tithing, which specifically advocates for appreciation of tithing over obligatory contributions in line with scriptural provisions. The concept of appreciation tithing stems from the idea that individuals should give joyfully, driven by gratitude rather than compulsion. To deepen the understanding of this paradigm, the Spiral of Silence Theory, developed by Elizabeth Noelle-Neumann, is utilized as a lens. According to this hypothesis, people are less inclined to voice their opinions when they believe they belong to a minority group, which might result in the suppression of different points of view. On the other hand, people feel more comfortable expressing when it is perceived the opinion is popular. By applying this theory, the article seeks to explore the implications of Damina's teachings within the larger discourse of Christian giving and the social dynamics that could influence a congregant's willingness to either embrace or challenge these ideas. The article concludes that societal constraints and community attitudes play a significant role in shaping the debate surrounding religious and other issues that are considered sacred and recommends among other things the encouragement and provisions for platforms for a robust discussion on issues of giving and other contentious Church doctrines for a better understanding and application for the good of society.*

KEYWORDS: Abel Damina, Tithing, Spiral of Silence Theory, Religious Discourse, Minority Opinion.



INTRODUCTION

The benefits of religious teachings and external effects on the behaviour of the congregation are various aspects that can be addressed from the perspectives of sociology, psychology, and theology. Depending on your ideology of tithing, you may get offended by what I am about to say. Boddie (2005) affirms that tithing is a traditional Judeo-Christian practice rooted in the biblical admonition to financially undergird religious institutions and assist the destitute. It is, in most Christian denominations, a scriptural mandate (See also the section Christian views below.) and is often done to help support the church community. Tithing is the practice of giving a tenth (tithe) of one's income or produce to a religious organization, a tradition here in play with similarly deep historical roots and which has undergone significant changes over time. Rooted in religious traditions, it has generated myriad debates on moral grounds, fiscal implications and contemporary appropriateness.

Dr. Abel Damina, a Nigerian pastor and well-known proponent of anti-prosperity theology, is one of the leading characters in modern Christian discourse. His ideas on tithing in appreciation rather than obligation have attracted a lot of attention and spurred several discussions both inside and outside the Christian community. Giving should, according to Abel Damina, originate from the heart rather than out of a sense of duty. He contends that mandatory tithing, which is frequently based on how one interprets passages like Malachi 3:10, has fostered a culture of fear and shame as opposed to one based on appreciation and love. Damina's method presents a more gospel-centred perspective, arguing that genuine generosity is derived from a comprehension of grace rather than a transactional approach. The Spiral of Silence theory, a concept that originated in the field of communications studies, can be used to further understand the implications of his teachings. As congregants grapple with these teachings, many people who have been silent out of fear of social rejection or judgment are now encouraged to voice their opinions about the obligatory tithing that has been in place for such a long time. However, many others are still afraid to voice their opinions, whether they are in support of or against the practice, out of concern for how they will be received in public. Expressed in the Sociological concept by Elizabeth Noelle-Neumann in 1974, this idea postulates that people might refrain from saying what they think if they feel like a minority which leads to the toxic silencing of unpopular voices, and will be motivated to speak out once they notice that their opinion is shared by many. This has significant implications in religious communities where doctrinal adherence and tradition play central roles. This paper explores the complex themes surrounding the practice of tithing as articulated by Abel Damina, integrating insights from biblical and cultural history. The paper will analyze Damina's interpretations of tithing, the controversies that have emerged within religious circles, and the implications of these teachings on contemporary discourse. Furthermore, it will employ the Spiral of Silence theory to examine how Damina's teachings have inspired a growing public dialogue about tithing, highlighting the dynamics of opinion formation and expression within the context of religious communities. The essay aims to provide a nuanced understanding of how Damina's advocacy for tithing interacts with broader societal trends and influences, encouraging critical engagement with his viewpoints.



Key Justifications for the Study

This study seeks to explore the intersection of Damina's teachings on tithing and the Spiral of Silence Theory. The analysis of this relationship is justified for several reasons:

1. **Tithing's Contemporary Relevance:** Tithing in Christian societies remains a divisive topic. Recent surveys indicate that 10 to 25 per cent of churchgoers routinely tithe, while the majority are either neutral or opposed to the practice (Barna Group, 2021). Understanding how figures like Damina express their teachings provides valuable perspectives on evolving perspectives regarding monetary contributions in contemporary Christianity.

2. **Contribution of Abel Damina:** Dr. Abel Damina, known for his progressive and sometimes controversial views, has a substantial following, especially in Africa and among the diaspora. His sermons often challenge traditional interpretations of scripture, including the concept of tithing. Analyzing how his teachings resonate within the context of the Spiral of Silence can provide a deeper understanding of the impact of his rhetoric on followers.

3. **Applicability of the Spiral of Silence Theory:** The Spiral of Silence Theory provides a framework for analyzing social dynamics and public opinion. It suggests that those who perceive themselves to hold minority views on tithing—whether in favour of or against it—might remain silent out of fear of social isolation. Investigating how Damina's popular teachings have influenced these perceptions can yield relevant findings about faith, money, and community interactions.

4. **Methodological Novelty:** While the Spiral of Silence Theory has been widely applied in political communication and public discourse, its application to religious teaching, especially concerning financial obligations like tithing, is relatively underexplored. This study will contribute to the growing body of literature that merges communication studies with religious studies, paving the way for future research in faith-based contexts.

5. **Implications for Religious Communities:** Understanding the sentiments surrounding tithing is vital for church leaders, policymakers, and scholars, as financial contributions play a critical role in sustaining religious institutions. This topic transcends mere financial discourse; it touches upon theological, ethical, and community aspects that underpin religious life.

6. **Social Implications:** The findings of this study may have broader implications for social dynamics beyond religious settings. They can inform discussions about how prevailing opinions—whether in media, politics, or other communal spheres—affect individual expression and participation in various aspects of life.



LITERATURE REVIEW

Historical and Cultural Background of Tithing

The concept of tithing is derived from the Old English word "tithe," meaning "tenth, tithe can be traced back to ancient Mesopotamia, where agricultural communities were established. Evidence suggests that these societies practised forms of taxation that would later evolve into religious tithing. According to the renowned scholar of ancient Near Eastern texts, *Dr. William W. Hallo*, offerings to deities were common in these cultures and laid the groundwork for organized religious practices, including the giving of a portion of one's harvest or goods.

The earliest detailed reference to tithing appears in the Hebrew Bible, particularly in the book of Genesis. In Genesis 14:20, Abram (later Abraham) gives a tithe of his spoils to Melchizedek, the king of Salem. The practice is later codified in the Mosaic Law, particularly in Leviticus 27:30-33, which mandates that Israelites give one-tenth of their produce and livestock to God. This practice served not only a religious purpose but also a social one, as the collected tithes supported the Levitical priesthood and those in need within the community.

In the early Christian era, tithing continued to hold significance. Church leaders such as *St. Ambrose* (c. 337-397 AD) promoted tithing as a way for Christians to support the church and its charitable works. However, as the Church grew in political and social power, formalized tithing re-emerged. By the medieval period, tithing became compulsory in many regions, codified in canon law, and utilized as a primary means of funding the Church (Pew Research Center, 2015). The Catholic Church formally adopted tithing in the Middle Ages, instituting it as an essential aspect of church funding. The *Council of Macon* in 585 AD decreed tithing as a duty, asserting that failure to contribute was tantamount to withholding God's due. The Protestant Reformation in the 16th century brought significant shifts to the practice of tithing. Reformers like Martin Luther and John Calvin emphasized the priesthood of all believers, which diluted the system of clerical authority and questioned the necessity of set tithing practices. Calvin, however, still advocated for the principle of giving, recognizing its importance in supporting the church community (MacCulloch, 2011).

Religious Variations in Tithing Practices

In Judaism, tithing is not only seen as a religious duty but also as a moral obligation to assist the poor. The *tithe* (*ma'aser*) is traditionally set at 10% of one's income, with separate directives for supporting the Levites and the needy. The practice significantly contributed to community welfare, promoting a culture of giving.

Islam has its equivalent in *Zakat*, which although not strictly a "tithe" in the traditional sense, demands that Muslims give a specific portion (typically 2.5%) of their savings to charity. This system, outlined in the Quran (Surah Al-Baqarah 2:177), emphasizes social responsibility and the redistribution of wealth, paralleling the ethos of tithing.

While Hinduism does not have a formalized concept of tithing, the practice of *dana* (generosity) embodies similar principles. Giving to temples and the needy is considered a virtue. Similarly, in Buddhism, the act of giving (*dana*) is celebrated and encouraged, emphasizing the importance of altruism and community support.



In the context of African Traditional Religion, tithing may not always manifest as a direct percentage of income or harvest, akin to the Christian definition of tithing. Instead, it often takes on diverse forms that align with community values and spiritual beliefs. These contributions can be made in various ways, including offerings of food, livestock, labour, or monetary donations to support communal rituals, spiritual leaders, or the broader community.

Today, tithing remains an important aspect of many Christian denominations. The amount typically given varies widely; some churches advocate for the traditional ten percent, while others encourage members to give whatever they can. Additionally, many modern churches focus on “grace giving” rather than a strict obligation to tithe (Barclay, 2018).

Religious leaders often argue that tithing fosters a sense of community and accountability, as well as providing necessary funding for church operations, charitable activities, and outreach programs. However, the modern context has also led to increased scrutiny over how tithes are used, prompting discussions on transparency, ethics, and fiscal responsibility within religious organizations (Tucker, 2020).

Critiques and Considerations over Tithing.

A lot of religious scholars and enthusiasts have argued that tithing is not scriptural but an old Jewish tradition that was practised by the Israelites. According to (2016) “The first problem with tithing is that it’s not biblical. It was a rule for the Israelites who worshipped under the Old Testament law. Jesus never commanded it for the church and neither did the apostles.” They insisted that there is not one passage of Scripture telling any Jew or Christian to give 10% of their money to a religious institution. Patridge (2019) posited that; even though tithing may be biblical, it is not Christian practice, and insisted that Christian giving does have a limited percentage of giving.

Others who also oppose tithing contend that it can place an excessive financial strain on members of the congregation, particularly in areas when the economy is weak. Additionally, some religious leaders are pushing for alternate kinds of funding that preserve congregational integrity due to concerns about openness regarding the usage of tithes. McKeown (2010). Many have argued that Pastors are not supposed to touch the tithe, according to Rodrigues (2001): “At the level of the local church, the sacredness of tithe is acknowledged when it is sent to God’s treasury. Not even the local pastor has the authority to place his hand on the tithe. She adds that pastors should not support any plans, presumably from local church members, to divert tithe to an illegitimate use, but should rather preserve its sacredness by placing it in God’s treasury” It is largely perceived that tithes is the major motivation behind the proliferation of Churches especially in Nigeria. According to Omokri (2020); “ tithing as presently practice by many churches, especially the so-called Pentecostal or Evangelical churches, is unscriptural. Take away tithing and the attraction and motivation to be the founder and president of an ‘international ministry’ would disappear. Many people’s calling would disappear”

The applicability of tithing in light of the present state of the economy has been contested by some detractors. The term "tithing" causes discomfort for many younger believers, who view it as archaic or overly strict (Garrett, 2019). As a result, alternative giving models that emphasize unique situations and the motivation behind donations rather than strict percentages have grown in popularity.



The Prosperity Gospel, which links material prosperity to a person's faith and generosity, is another topic that has complicated the tithing argument. This belief not only promotes tithing but also promises material rewards for the faithful, which leads to significant ethical questions about the manipulation of faith for profit (Ellison, 2007).

Another important point of contention lies in the interpretation of religious texts. Some believers argue that tithing is a biblical mandate, while others suggest that it was a cultural practice specific to ancient Israel and not necessarily a requirement for modern Christians. Passages such as 2 Corinthians 9:7 emphasize voluntary giving, which raises questions about the interpretation of tithing as a law (Ney, 2019). According to Omokri (2020); “tithing is an age-old AGRICULTURAL practice that predated even Abraham and Moses. Ancient communities, including African communities, set aside a certain portion of their harvest (usually a tenth) and sacrificed it to their gods through their priests. Now the tithing that Moses taught about was instituted by the living God because the Levitical priests were not given a portion of the land of Canaan as an inheritance, and as a result, they were to be supported by their fellow brethren.

Numbers 18:20–21 says:

The Lord said to Aaron, “You will have no inheritance in their land, nor will you have any share among them; I am your share and your inheritance among the Israelites.” I give to the Levites all the tithes in Israel as their inheritance in return for the work they do while serving at the tent of the meeting. (NIV)

From the above, it is clear that the tithes were specifically gifted by God to the Levites. You will never find anywhere in Scripture where God, His Son Yeshua or the early apostles and disciples asked the New Testament church to pay tithes to pastors.”

Scholars like Udam (2020) argue that; tithing had nothing to do with money, even though money was in circulation at the time. He explained that; Christ came and lived under the law (citing Gal 4:4) but frowned at the methodology of the tithe collection and the undue emphasis placed on its payment by the Pharisees of his days. (Citing Mathew 23:23 and Luke 11:42)

Damina's Teachings and Their Biblical Foundations

Abel Damina approaches the topic of tithing with a critical lens on its scriptural basis within the context of the New Testament. His central tenet is that the practice of tithing, as instituted in the Old Testament, is not a requirement for Christians today. Damina posits that tithing, primarily drawn from texts such as Malachi 3:10, which calls for bringing the whole tithe into the storehouse, is a component of the Old Covenant, that Look which he argues has been superseded by the New Covenant established by Jesus Christ (Hebrews 8:13).

Damina emphasizes grace over legalism, asserting that under the New Covenant, believers are no longer bound by the law but are called to give voluntarily and joyfully, echoing the sentiments found in 2 Corinthians 9:7, which states, “Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” He interprets this to mean that while contributing to the church and its mission is important, the specific requirement to tithe is not a divine mandate for Christians in the same way it was for the Israelite community in the Old Testament.



In Damina's framework, the motivation for giving should stem from a believer's relationship with God rather than an obligation to fulfil a religious duty. This perspective is consistent with the broader theological trend observed in many contemporary Christian circles that emphasize the principles of generosity and stewardship over strict adherence to tithing laws (Githiga, 2021). This position was reiterated by Boddie (2005) when he said:

“An account of the scriptural references to tithing sheds light on the reason for the variety of meanings, principles and practices that exist. In Genesis, the accounts of Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:1-5), Abraham (Genesis 14:20; Hebrews 7:1-10), Jacob (Genesis 28:20) and other biblical figures emphasize the act of giving generously out of a heart of thanksgiving for God's blessings in the past and future. These tithes were all voluntarily given as acts of worship. These tithes were all voluntarily given as acts of worship”

Boddie also explained that; in the Old Testament, tithing was also regarded as a social insurance system to provide for the needs of the religious institution and the needy. He explained that the law of the second tithe presented in Deuteronomy 12:6-19 commanded various tithing practices over a seven-year cycle. In years one, two, four and five of the cycle, the people of Israel were to take the tithes to Jerusalem and participate in a sacred feast. In years three and six, the tithes were distributed to the poor (Deuteronomy 26:12). In year seven, no crops or plants were harvested and this was the year of release. During these years the poor were allowed to gather food from the fields.

The New Testament's emphasis on free choice and conviction is consistent with Damina's beliefs. For example, according to 2 Corinthians 9:7, "Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." This captures the essence of Damina's teaching, which is that donating ought to be a joyful and choice act.

Abel Damina also frowns at the idea that tithing is entering into a transaction with God, whereby if you don't commit your part God will not commit his own, therefore if you don't give to God he will not give to you as many proponents of tithing suggest. He argues that such an impression demeans God's reputation as our father insisting that even our earthly parents do not have such a character. This opinion is shared by Anderson-Wash (2002) who posits that many people are compelled to pay tithes because of what they hope to receive in return. According to him,

“My experience is that most Christians give for one of two reasons and neither is very honourable:

Insurance: God will get me if I don't

Investment: God will bless me if I do

Therefore, we say that tithing for many a Christian, whether consciously or unconsciously, serves as their divine fire insurance premiums.”



Controversies Surrounding Damina's Teachings

Damina makes strong arguments, yet his tithing teachings have not been without controversy and criticism. One major area of controversy stems from the conventional perspective of many evangelical communities, which maintains that tithing is still required of Christians to fund their churches and ministry initiatives. According to critics, Damina's refusal to pay tithes jeopardizes church resources and may cause a drop in the spiritual practice of giving (Olatunji, 2022).

Additionally, many critics have labelled Damina's interpretations as an attempt to attract followers to himself by taking a more moderate stance on a divisive topic. This begs the question of whether his teachings are genuinely intended to promote a better understanding of scriptures or are merely a reaction to a changing cultural environment in which people are becoming less receptive to conventional forms of religious obligation (Chukwuma, 2023). Moreover, Damina's outspoken stance on tithing has also ignited debates within the African Christian community, where the practice has traditionally been held in high esteem. Many pastors and religious leaders feel their teachings are being challenged, leading to a divide among congregations in Nigeria and beyond. The resulting tension highlights a broader ecclesiastical conflict over theological interpretation, authority, and the principles of financial stewardship in the church (Nwankwo, 2023).

Theoretical Framework

The Spiral of Silence Theory

Having first been proposed in the 1970s by German political scientist Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, the Spiral of Silence Theory provides an appealing lens through which to view public opinion and its influence on personal expression. The problem is that; the theory goes on to argue that you're less likely to hear from people who think they're in a minority because expressing views that are unpopular might essentially drive up the appearance of prevalent views while driving down dissenting voices. Some of the main points in the theory consists of:

- **Fear of being isolated:** The Spiral of Silence Theory is based on the premise that societal isolation has a huge influence over why people conform to what they believe shows how most members of society feel about issues. People hide their actual opinions as Noelle-Neumann put it (Noelle-Neumann, 1974) because they fear receiving sanctions in the form of marginalization.
- **Social Climate Monitoring:** People are monitoring what is going on socially around them and measuring to which extent their views coincide with popular opinion. That watchfulness affects whether they are going to speak up. People are more likely to voice their opinion if they think it corresponds with the view of others. Alternatively, they may keep silent if they perceive themselves to be in the minority with respect to particular opinions which makes them fear negative consequences (Plummer, 2018).
- **The media is one of the most important tools of perception shaping,** particularly about public opinion. Media Representations — Media portrayals can actually increase some rhetorics to the extent that it seems as if all people are in favour of successes, and over time they affect our individual ways of looking at what is socially acceptable to express (Noelle-Neumann 1974).



- The theory also says that the more people who remain silent from one viewpoint, the louder and more dominant the prevailing opinion becomes. This creates what Hollander (1993) termed a 'spiral' where the loudest individuals override the dissenters and then those that are uncomfortable reinforce their view leading to less debate and open dialogue.

This theory can be applied in the following ways;

Polarization on Social Media: For many users, they are afraid to share their opinions as it can lead to a backlash on platforms like Facebook or Twitter especially when it comes to something highly debated such as politics or social justice. Research on online communities has found that people may not express their views if they think their opinions are different from those of the friends or peers who they fear (mainly when attacked or socially alienated (Sundar & Nass, 2000)

Public Opinion Poll; The Spiral of Silence has important ramifications for how public opinion surveys should be interpreted. Respondents may give socially acceptable responses to survey questions concerning touchy subjects like immigration or abortion, which would bias the results and solidify prevailing narratives (Berelson, 1954).

Workplace Dynamics: The spiral phenomenon is not limited to public arenas; it also extends to workplace environments. Employees might refrain from sharing dissenting opinions during meetings, worrying about how it might affect their career prospects. This self-censorship can lead to groupthink, where diverse perspectives are lost in decision-making processes (Janis, 1972).

Applying the Spiral of Silence to Damian's Teachings

1. The Dominance of Traditional Views:

1 The Dominance of Traditional Views: The conservative approach to tithing — commonly adhered to by numerous churches — represents the 'majority opinion' within Christian communities. People who disagree with these conventional beliefs or have doubts about them could feel alone or alienated. Those who support the traditional traditions documented in scripture may view Damina's teachings as heretical or contentious since they promote a more emancipated sense of giving.

When Damina's teachings become more popular, people who are first moved by his message could feel more confident in voicing their opinions. However, they might become silent out of fear of backlash from believers who fiercely disagree with these ideas. Consequently, the Spiral of Silence Theory clarifies the societal mechanisms in operation: As fewer people agree with Damina's position, it becomes increasingly challenging for potential supporters to come forward.

2. Creating an Alternative Space for Dialogue:

Damina's ministry uses social media and digital platforms to get beyond established religious institutions' dominance of conventional communication channels. Through lectures, podcasts, interviews and interactive sessions, he develops a community that openly explores diverse interpretations of scripture teachings, including tithing. This change enables people who might



feel alone because of their beliefs to find support and camaraderie among other believers who share their values.

Damina's ministry can be viewed in this light as opposing the Spiral of Silence. His lessons challenge the conventional narrative and have the potential to change public perception within communities by actively promoting debate and involvement in financial giving. This creates an alternative arena where differing viewpoints can be aired openly.

3. Social Reinforcement and Belonging:

As more individuals start to relate to Damina's lessons, a phenomenon known as social reinforcement may occur. This reinforcement reduces the perceived risk of social isolation by encouraging those who had previously kept quiet to share their newfound opinions. Testimonials and success stories from his community, for instance, serve to further validate his lessons and encourage others to participate.

The spiral can reverse when social situations change. People who had previously been reluctant to take part would now feel more confident in endorsing Damina's viewpoint, which would help to create a more modern interpretation of tithing within conventional religious frameworks.

Audience Reactions Through the Spiral of Silence Lens

1. Supportive Voices: A sizable portion of Damina's supporters agree with his viewpoint. His teachings inspire these people because they are consistent with their own views about faith and generosity. But even within this group, there could be a reluctance to speak out against conventional wisdom because of fear of criticism from peers or church authorities. This fear of being alone can prevent honest communication, making supportive followers keep quiet even when they want to push for reform. Fortunately for this group, the Damina message is gaining traction beyond expectations as many religious leaders are also coming out to identify with the teachings with some of them openly apologizing for their erroneous message in the past. This has helped to embolden members of this group to openly identify and express their opinions as regards tithing.

2. Opposing Views: In contrast, Damina's view can make people who support conventional tithe practices feel threatened. This group may feel like a minority and decide to keep their opposing views to themselves in order to prevent social exclusion from their religious community. Their quiet helps to create the impression that Damina's teachings are more generally accepted than they actually are, which could result in his immediate audience endorsing his ideas even more strongly.

3. The Middle Ground: There is also a section of the audience that occupies a middle ground, having ambivalent sentiments about Damina's beliefs. While some of his messages may resonate with them, they are hesitant to entirely give up on customs. They might stay mute out of internal tension, worried that they'll alienate people on both sides of the debate. As more people express their opinion on tithing, more members of this group will likely align with the popular opinion on the subject matter.



The Impact of Social Media and Public Discourse

In today's digital age, social media serves as a catalyst for public opinion formation. Damina's teachings and the ensuing debates have proliferated on various platforms, allowing for greater visibility of differing perspectives. However, the same social media landscape can create echo chambers where dominant opinions are reinforced while dissent is marginalized. Observing how different audience segments interact online can offer further insights into the Spiral of Silence at play, revealing how online discourse influences offline attitudes and behaviours.

Implications of Damina's Teachings on Tithing on Contemporary Discourse

Addressing Erroneous Teachings

The traditional model of obligatory tithing has often been exploited within certain circles to manipulate or coerce congregants into giving. Promises of financial blessing or threats of divine retribution can warp the intentions behind giving. By promoting appreciative tithing, Damina's teachings serve as a corrective to these erroneous practices, suggesting that true faith is about the heart's intent rather than simply fulfilling a requirement.

This shift also addresses misconceptions about God's character. It emphasizes God's desire for a relationship over mere compliance with rules, thus portraying a more loving and understanding deity. By rooting financial giving in gratitude rather than obligation, believers are encouraged to reflect on God's grace and generosity, changing the narrative from one of fear to one of love. As a result, many religious leaders have come out to apologize for their previous erroneous teachings on tithing, the most recent is the very cerebral and influential General Overseer of the Redeemed Christian Church Pst. Enoch Adeboye has previously insisted that those who don't pay tithes will not make it to heaven.

Using Tithing as a Tool For Social Justice; Changing the Story to One of Gratitude Rather than Obligation

Scripture has traditionally been used to frame tithing as a biblical duty, with different interpretations placing a strong emphasis on rigorous observance. But Damina's teachings exhort believers to view tithing as an expression of thanksgiving and thankfulness for God's favours. This rephrasing gives people greater freedom in their giving. When tithing is practised as an expression of gratitude, it promotes a giving culture that goes beyond strict percentages and stresses an authentic response to God's providence.

Empowering Communities Through the Redistribution of Wealth

Tithing can become a tool for social justice in this new appreciation paradigm. Setting aside a portion of one's salary for the church can enable congregations to support social justice, finance community development initiatives, and assist the underprivileged. People are more willing to give freely and selflessly when they see it as an opportunity to take part in God's mission on Earth, which includes tackling important social concerns and providing for the impoverished. For example, churches that take up Damina's viewpoint can successfully raise money for neighbourhood projects that aim to reduce poverty, enhance education, and encourage access to healthcare. Thus, tithing—which is defined by gratitude as opposed to mere duty—can work as a spark for significant social change and community involvement.



Encouraging Financial Literacy and Responsible Stewardship

By looking at tithing from an appreciative perspective, believers can develop a more comprehensive knowledge of financial responsibility. Tithing can encourage people to actively participate in their financial well-being rather than being seen as a sacrifice. They are encouraged to develop financial literacy and prudent resource management by using this strategy.

When people internalize the idea that their financial contributions are a form of giving back to God, they could be more motivated to look for methods to improve their income and make prudent spending decisions. This can have a cascading effect on their communities as they adopt budgeting techniques, investigate investment options, and ultimately improve their financial security.

Impact on Church Finances and Economic Agency

Furthermore, implementing the appreciation-driven tithe strategy that Damina teaches has a significant impact on church finances and economic agency. Churches that foster an attitude of appreciation-based generosity may see an increase in contributions since their members are driven more by gratitude than by duty. The church may be better equipped to carry out missions that have a significant impact, manage initiatives that promote community growth, and boost the local economy by creating jobs.

Furthermore, congregations that benefit from increased revenue as a result of this model might devise strategies for reinvesting in their members, thereby fostering an ecology that can maintain itself. Initiatives that foster entrepreneurship or offer vocational training, for example, can empower people and break the cycles of poverty by granting them economic agency.

CONCLUSION

The thankfulness tithing teachings of Abel Damina offer a novel perspective on financial giving in a religious setting. When the Spiral of Silence Theory is used, it is clear that societal constraints and community attitudes play a significant role in shaping the debate surrounding tithing, making it more than merely a question of personal belief. People could feel pressured to fit in with the prevailing narrative, which can stifle the variety of beliefs and approaches around generosity and tithing.

Damina's scriptural interpretations of tithing encourage a critical analysis of scripture interpretation and real-world application within the context of the New Covenant. Although his teachings seek to free believers from legalistic restraints, they have also caused a great deal of controversy and discussion among Christians in general. As the conversation goes on, it is still critical that pastors and followers of their faith carefully study the scriptures in order to cultivate a more profound comprehension of the role that faith and generosity play in their religious practices.



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Encouragement from Leadership:** Church leaders should offer platforms for debating varied viewpoints on tithing and voluntary donations. They can help allay dissenting worries and inspire members of the congregation to voice their opinions by candidly discussing different points of view.
2. **Educating Members:** By introducing biblical and theological concepts related to voluntary giving, one can foster tolerance and acceptance of dissenting opinions. People feel more empowered to freely express their ideas as a result of this understanding.
3. **Building a Supportive Community:** Members will feel more comfortable sharing their experiences with voluntary giving and tithing without worrying about being shunned if the church fosters a more loving and conducive environment for interaction.

REFERENCES

- Adams, J., & Lee, K. (2022). *Tithing-in-the-New-Testament-and-the-Christian-Church.pdf*. Adventist Stewardship Ministries. Retrieved from <https://stewardship.adventist.org/tithing-in-the-new-testament-and-the-christian-church.pdf>
- Barna Group. (2021). *Trends in Christian Giving*. Retrieved from Barna Group
- Baker, S. (2016). *The Problem With Tithing*. Retrieved From: <https://www.convergemedial.org/meeting-god-money/#:~:text=The%20first%20problem%20with%20tithing,and%20neither%20did%20the%20apostles>
- Barclay, J. (2018). *Principles of Giving: Balancing Generosity and Sustainability*. Church Publishing.
- Berelson, B. (1954). *Content Analysis in Communication Research*. New York: Free Press.
- Chukwuma, T. (2023). *Contemporary Issues in African Religion: A Study of Financial Stewardship*. Lagos: University of Nigeria Press.
- Cobb, C. (2017). "Tithing in Contemporary Contexts: The Ethics of Giving." *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 45(2).
- Damina, A. (2023). *Realities of the New Testament*. University of Eldoret CU. Retrieved from https://uoeldcu.org/site/uploads/docs/Abel_Damina_-_Realities_of_the_New_Testament.pdf
- Dreifus, Judith.(1997) "The Jewish Concept of Tithing." *Jewish Journal*.
- Githiga, M. (2021). *Tithing and Giving: The Biblical Foundations of Generosity in Christian Life*. Nairobi: East African Publishers.
- Hallo, William W. (1997). *The Context of Scripture: The World of the Ancient Near East*. Brill.
- Janis, I. L. (1972). *Victims of Groupthink*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Johnson, L., & Brown, T. (2020). *Tithing Practices Among Seventh-day Adventists: A Study of Tithing Demographics and Motives*. Retrieved from <https://www.adventistresearch.info/wp-content/uploads/Tithing-Practices-among-Seventh-day-Adventists-for-website-1.pdf>



- Jones, R. (2021). Applying the Spiral of Silence Theory in Social Media Contexts. *New Media & Society*, 23(5), 175-190.
- Jones, M., & Smith, J. (2021). Way to Give: Tithing Practices That Benefit Families, Congregations, and Communities. Retrieved from https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1457&context=esd_research
- Hashim, K, I.(2003). "Islamic Law: The Law of Zakat." Islamic Texts Society Publishing.
- Hollander, J. A. (1993). "The Social Context of Oppositional Voice: A Spiral of Silence Model." *Journal of Communication*, 43(3), 80-102.
- James, M.(2019) "The Tithing Debate: A Christian Perspective on Tithes and Offerings." *Journal of Biblical Ethics*.
- MacCulloch, D. (2011). *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years*. Penguin Books.
- McKinney, Charles. "The Spiritual and Financial Implications of Tithing in the Modern Church." *Church Finance Review*. (2021).
- Miller, K. (2020). Exploring the Spiral of Silence in Contemporary Social Networks. *International Journal of Communication*, 14(3), 201-215.
- Moran, C. (2019). "Should Churches Have Transparency in Financial Matters?" *The Atlantic*.
- Ney, A. (2019). "The Debate Over Tithing: What Does the Bible Really Say?" *Christianity Today*.
- Noelle-Neumann, E. (1974). The Spiral of Silence: A Theory of Public Opinion. *Journal of Communication*, 24(2), 43-51.
- Noelle-Neumann, E. (1984). The Spiral of Silence: A Theory of Public Opinion. *Journal of Communication*, 24(2), 43-51.
- Noelle-Neumann, E. (1974). "The Spiral of Silence: A Theory of Public Opinion." *Journal of Communication*, 24(2), 43-51.
- Nwankwo, J. (2023). *Divine Principles: Understanding Controversies in Modern Christian Practice*. Abuja: Faith Publishers.
- Olatunji, R. (2022). *The Role of Tithing in the Modern Church: Perspectives from African Theology*. Ibadan: Nigerian Theology Society Press.
- Omokri, R. (2020). What Does Scripture Say About Tithing? (Part 1). Retrieved From: <https://medium.com/@Omokri/what-does-scripture-say-about-tithing-part-1-b79d997715c1>
- Patridge, G.(2019)"Why Tithing is Biblical But it's Not Christian". Retrieved From: <https://relearn.org/why-tithing-is-biblical-but-its-not-christian/#:~:text=First%2C%20to%20challenge%20a%20few,biblical%20it%20is%20not%20Christian>
- Pew Research Center. (2015). "The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050."
- Plummer, D. (2018). "The Spiral of Silence: A Theory of Public Opinion." *SAGE Open*, 8(3).
- Rosenberg, D. (2016). "Tithing in the Biblical Context." *Biblical Studies Journal*, 24(1).
- Rosenberg, D. (2016). "Tithing in the Biblical Context." *Biblical Studies Journal*, 24(1).
- Smith, B. (2022). Public Opinion and the Spiral of Silence in Online Discussions. *Communication Studies*, 19(4), 112-127.
- Sundar, S. S., & Nass, C. (2000). "Conceptualizing Sources in Online and Offline Communication: Effects of Perceived Source Credibility on Information Acceptance." *Journal of Communication*, 50(4), 43-59.
- The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). Zondervan Publishing House.



-
- Tucker, W. (2020). "Accountability in Religious Organizations: The Case for Financial Transparency." *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*, 32(1).
- Udam, M, K. (2020) "Thinking About Tithe Payment Today" Retrieved from: https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=10160056078908626&id=726358625&mbextid=Nif5oz
- Williams, S., & Taylor, R. (2019). The Trojan Horse Of Tithing: Critiquing Contemporary Perspectives. Retrieved from <https://gotoheavennow.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/The-Trojan-Horse-Of-Tithing-March2020-wo-fm.pdf>
- Young, A. (2023). The Spiral of Silence Theory in the Digital Age. *Journal of Communication Research*, 12(3), 45-59.