

**THE CHURCH IS IN THE WORLD BUT NOT
OF THE WORLD (JOHN 17:16-26):
CHURCH IN NIGERIA AND SCANDAL**

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Abstract

This paper studies the phrase "the Church is in the world but not of the world." Christ while on earth had one united community – the church – which he left under the leadership of the foremost apostle, Peter (Matt 16:18). None was lost except Judas. Even before he ascended into heaven, he made arrangements on how they will be guided by the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49). This Spirit eventually vivified them (Acts 2:1-4) and encouraged them to do things in common with one mind and heart (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32). The desire was for the 'Waters of Baptism to be thicker than blood'. Hence, they were called Christ's followers in Antioch (Acts 11:19-26). It was this same Church that Christ gave the order to go and evangelize the whole world (Matt 28:18-20) that brought Christianity into Nigeria. Though the Church was already divided into scandalous factions before entering into Nigeria, it has become even more factionalized today than ever within Nigeria. Apart from the divisions in the Church that have made the prayer of Jesus look ridiculous, there is also ethnicity, inauthenticity, materialism or business in religion and so on. This paper exposes how the standard of the world has affected and influenced the Church instead of the other way round. This was achieved through thematic exegesis of John 17:6-26. Significantly this work serves as a clarion call for the Church to live according to their vocation and prayer of Jesus for her, 'to be in the world but not of the world,' and 'to be one.'

Keywords: Church, World, One, Nigeria, Christianity

Introduction

The World, from the Christian point of view, according to the Genesis account of creation, was created by God (Gen. 1). It involves both living and nonliving things. There are very many channels (religions) through which mankind approaches God to worship him. The prominent among them include Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Chinese traditional religion, Buddhism, African traditional religion, and so on. There are yet others that do not believe that God created them and they include the atheists

and even agnostics. In the world, the population of 20 largest different religious groups and none believers according to Juan are thus:

S/no	Religion	Population
1	Christianity (all denominations)	2.1 billion
2	Islam	1.3 billion
3	Nonreligious (Secular/Agnostic/Atheist)	1.1 billion
4	Hinduism	900 million
5	Chinese Traditional religion	394 million
6	Buddhism	376 million
7	Primal-indigenous	300 million
8	African traditional and Diasporic	100 million
9	Skhism	23 million
10	Juche	19 million
11	Spiritism	15 million
12	Judaism	14 million
13	Bahai	7 million
14	Jainism	4.2 million
15	Shinto	4 million
16	Cao Dai	4 million
17	Zoroastrianism	2.6 million
18	Tenrikyo	2 million
19	Neo-Paganism	1 million
20	Unitarian-Universalism	800.000 ¹

A closer look at the above list shows that there are believers and nonbelievers in the world. There is also Neo-Paganism among them. These are those who intend to revive ancient polytheistic religions like African Traditional Religion. Their membership is drawn from the major religions especially Christianity. This set constitutes the greatest obstacle to Christianity in Nigeria. Christianity was founded by Christ who happens to be the only Son of God, who lived in the world, trained followers, suffered, crucified and died for the salvation of mankind, was buried and rose from the dead after three days. He handed the power of propagating this religion or way of life to his followers and promised to be with them till the end of the world

¹ Juan, Sephen (2006). The Register. <https://www.theregister.co.uk>. Retrieved on 11/8/2019.

(Matt 28:16-20). He did this because the inhabitants of the world seemed to have wandered away from God. The picture of the event of the Tower of Babel is called to mind here (Gen.11:1-9). Christianity is the most populated religious group in the world. The original plan of God in Christ for them is for them to be 'one' and at the same time be the "Light of the World", and "Salt of the Earth" (Matt. 5:13, 14). He had wanted them to be exemplary to all in the world. It was through them, according to the mind of God in Christ, that the world would be reconciled fully back to God.

Even the apostles and immediate converts of the apostles lived according to the mind of Christ. No doubt Paul could urge the Ephesians to "Maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace . . . there are one body and one spirit . . . one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above and through all and in all" (Eph.4:4-6). Again, addressing Corinthians when he heard that there was a strife in their midst he said to them, "I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind, and the same judgment" (1Cor. 1:10). Paul also made it clear to the Galatians that in Christ, "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). Through these admonitions, Paul affirms the statement of Jesus on the issue of unity that results from the love for one another, "By this, all people will know that you are my disciples if you have a love for one another" (John 13:35). All these would have made us understand that Christianity according to the mind of Christ is meant to be the source of unity, reconciliation, and progress in the world.

The greatest obstacle to that God-given-vocation is divisions or factionalism which Jesus and his disciples fought seriously against. The root causes of the divisions in the Christendom or Church include sexual immorality/promiscuity, a man marrying more than one wife, materialism, selfishness, pride, ethnicity or son of the soil syndrome, Christological heresies and so on. As a result of these we have the following as sects within the body of Christ, the Church in the world:²

S/no	Denomination	Population
1	Catholic Church	1.285 billion
2	Protestantism	920 million
3	Eastern Orthodox Church	270 million

² Wikipedia, (2019). List of Christian Denominations by number of members.
<https://en.m.wikipedia.org>. Retrieved on 11/8/2019

4	Oriental Orthodoxy	80 million
5	Non-Trinitarian Restoration	35 million
6	Independent Catholicism	18 million
7	Minor branches	3 million

Above list is not exhaustive, there are numerous others that we captured under the umbrella of Protestantism yet others still are unclassifiable. Within Nigeria, there are also very many denominations and sects. The Holy Roman Catholic Church that claims apostolic succession remains the most highly populated, traditional, and remains under one head named the Pope whose order is final as far as administration, faith, and morality are concerned. This does not eliminate minor squabbles that one sees in one local community or the other. A good example is a nomination of a bishop for the diocese of Ahiara of Eastern Nigeria on 7th December 2012. Other Christian denominations are more or less autonomous from their parent Churches as it concerns faith and morals as well as administration. For instance, "the Church of Nigeria has continuously opposed the liberal inclinations of the Episcopal Church of the United States and the Anglican of Canada, which led to the acceptance of non-celibate homosexuality and non-celibate homosexual clergy."³ This the Africans in Anglican communion rejected for it is against their culture.

According to a research carried out by the Religious Literacy Project, Harvard Divinity School in 2006, out of the approximately Seventy million (70,000,000) Christians in Nigeria, there are about 19 million Roman Catholics, about 18 million Anglicans, diverse group of protestant Churches like Baptists about 6 million members (Nigerian Baptist Convention Church), Presbyterians, Assemblies of God, Methodists, the Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ, and what are known as the Aladura Churches or Church of the Lord (Pentecostal and Spiritualist independent Churches which emerged out of the Anglican Church during colonialism have their large populations also. Others include ECWA (Evangelical Church Winning All), Redeemed Christian Church of God, Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria, Christ Apostolic Church (the first Aladura Church present in Nigeria), The Gospel Faith Mission International, Faith Tabernacle, Church of God Mission International, Deeper Christian Life Ministry, The African Church, N.K.S.T ("Nongu u Kristu u i Ser u sha Tar" which means Universal Reformed Christian Church), Cherubim and Seraphim, QIC-United Evangelical Church, The Apostolic Church Nigeria, Mission Africa,

³ Okoh, Nicholas (2019). The Church of Nigeria Anglican Communion (www.anglican-nig.org) Retrieved on 24/08/2019)

African Initiated Church (Moses Orimolade Tunolase), and so on.⁴ As one goes into the hinterlands, one notices so many other ecclesiastical groups in the name of a Church scattered all over. The only things that seem to unite all these groups are the copy of the Holy Bible and the name "Christ" but what they make out of the contents of this book and this name is unimaginable. Just as they are divided into names so they are all divided into their teachings. The worst of all is that there is a cold war between these groups thus they see each other as a rivalry which is against the spirit of Acts 4:32; 44-45. The existence of these irreconcilable groups of Christians makes mockery the prayer of Jesus in John 17:6-26. Let us try to understand the meaning of the following:

The World: The 'world' generally, without considering other planets, implies the planet Earth and all life on it, including humankind. It is the earth, together with all of its countries and people. From creation, it is clearly stated that God was the one who created all things and reigns over all that he has created including the world, and all that therein. During his earthly ministry, the bible made it explicitly clear that Christ manifested his power and glory while moving about in the world (Ac. 10:38). It is in the world that he wrought the great number of his miracles, thus, "he was in the world, and the world came into being through him, and yet the world did not know him" (John 1:10). Jesus Christ was born and bred in the world, and for his divine agenda the world was made by him, but unfortunately, "he came to his own, but his accepted him not" (John 1:11). Above all things, it is still for this very world that Christ was crucified.

We are going to look at the world in this write up from Jesus' point of view. The World in the farewell discuss of Jesus (John 15:19; 16:8) refers to the unbelieving world that rejects Jesus (John 15:20-25) and no doubt will also reject the disciples (John 17:14)⁵, we are not talking of the physical world created and loved by God to the point of sending Jesus as its Saviour (John 3:16; 17:11, 13) but the world that has rejected God and the teachings of his only begotten Son and his representatives as a result of fleshly/worldly lives like strife, enmity, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissension,

⁴Harvard Divinity School (2019). The Religious Literacy Project. <https://rlp.hds.harvard.edu>. accessed on 13/08/2019

⁵ Ezeogamba, A. I. (2015). If All Christians were Really Salt and Light (Matt. 5:13-16): Corruption would have been Eradicated From the World in International Journal of Arts and Sciences(Academia.edu. Google) pp 265-278.

factions and so on (Gal 5:19-21).⁶

The Church: Here let us just use Paul's understanding of the Church as very ad rain for this write-up. Paul refers to the Church in terms of God's "call" (klēsin, klēsis 1 Cor. 1:26; Rom. 11:29). That points to the fact that members of the community have not simply chosen to belong to the Church as another club; rather, God has called them out of the world. The distinguishing feature of those in the Church and those outside it is the ritual of baptism. Baptism makes one fully incorporated in Christ and makes members see one another as brothers and sisters.⁷ Paul uses several metaphors to express his understanding of this community gathered through baptism in Christ. Four of them are very prominent namely: Paul looks at himself, co-workers as well as the Church and concludes that the Church is a field that he, Paul has planted and Apollos has watered, but God gives the growth (1 Cor. 3:6-9). Secondly, he describes the Church as "a family." Here he addresses his readers as "brothers" or refers to a co-worker as 'brother' or 'sister' (adelphē) [Rom 15:14; 16:1; 1 Cor. 1:11]. With this term, he strengthens the community's identity and unity. Thirdly, Paul looks at the Church as "the body" of Christ (1:12). He emphasizes here that various gifts to individuals are for the building up of (oikodome) this body as a whole (1 Cor. 14:26). Finally, Paul metaphorically regards the Church as "a building" (oikodome; 1 Cor. 3:9, 16-17), this combines unity and multiplicity with a profound sense of the divine presence within the community.⁸ Ekklesia is the term used by Paul to refer to the communities which met in the name of Christ.⁹ All these metaphors Paul used in describing Church point at one thing, which is 'unity,' 'oneness' and 'indivisibility.' The above metaphors make factionalism alien to the community of believers.

Exegesis of John 17: 6-26: Here we shall not occupy ourselves with the authorship, date of the composition and the provenance of the Gospel according John from where we got our text, but we shall not fell to look at the authentication of the text through textual criticism. Luke, K. (1994) in union with majority of scholars divided the gospel of John into four sections namely the book of testimonies (1:1-51); the book of signs (2:1-12:50); the book of passion (13:1-19:42); and finally, the resurrection of Jesus (20:1-10). John 17:6-26 falls within the third section which is the book of passion

⁶Okure, Teresa (2004). "John" in The International Bible Commentary (Bangalore: Theological Publications) p. 1567.

⁷ Dunn, J.D.G. ed. (2004). The Cambridge Companion to St Paul (South Africa: Cambridge University press) p 201.

⁸ Dunn, J.D.G. ed. (2004). 205-207

⁹ Dunn, J.D.G. (2005). The Theology of Paul the Apostle. South Africa: Cambridge University press. 537

(13:1-19:42). The book of passion (13:1-19:42) can be broken down into smaller eleven units thus: the farewell discourses (13:1-17:26); the arrest of Jesus (18:1-11); Jesus before the high priest (18:12-14); Peter's denial (18:15-18); Jesus questioned by the high priest (18:19-24); other denials of Peter (18:25-27); Jesus before Pilate (18:28-38a); the condemnation of Jesus (18:38b-19:16a); the crucifixion and death of Jesus (19:16b-30); the piercing of Jesus' side (19:31-37); the burial of Jesus (19:38-42).

Furthermore, John 17:6-26 is part and parcel of the farewell discourses of Jesus (13:1-17:26). This section can be further be broken down so as to get to our unit into twelve smaller units namely: the washing of the disciples' feet (13:1-20); foretelling the betrayal (13:21-30); the new commandment (13:31-35); Peter's denial predicted (13:36-38); Jesus the way to the Father (14:1-14); the promise of the spirit (14:15-31); Jesus, the true vine (15:1-17); the world's hatred (15:18-16:4a); the spirit's work (16:4b-15); sorrow to be turned into joy (16:16-24); Jesus' victory over the world (16:25-33); and finally, Jesus' prayer (17:1-26).

It is this twelfth unit of the farewell discourses of Jesus that captures our attention. The prayer of Jesus for the Church, which is his followers who are in the world and those who will later believe in him through the works of those who were with him then. The implication is that he prayed for the Church then and the Church today and the Church tomorrow. We are not going to look at the whole prayer of Jesus in chapter 17 because of want of space but surpasses to mention that Chapter 17:1-26 is a unit that is filled with the Greek first-person pronoun *egō* "I" and *eimi* "I am" where we see Jesus addressing his Father for the good of his followers and would-be followers. The major intention of that prayer is for God to keep his followers, his Church, hen "One" in the world so that the temperature of the world will not drown it or so that what is happening in the society will not happen in their midst. Thus, this prayer of Jesus can be divided into three sections namely: Jesus' prayer for himself (17:1-5); Jesus' prayer for his followers (17:6-19); and Jesus' prayer for his future believers/followers (17:20-26). Our interest will be narrowed down to the prayers of Jesus for the Church yesterday, today and tomorrow which is verses 6-26. Prior to the day of his prayer and even the very moment he was praying for the Church, the Church was one, he was praying for them to remain one and for those who will later believe in him, may they be one also. Our studies are only interested in verses 6-26 to expose how the Church today or followers of Christ or Christianity has ridiculed the heartfelt prayers of Jesus before he left the world.

Textual Criticism of John 17:6-26

There are so many critical problems in this section of the text. Practically all the verses from verses 6-26 have one critical problem or the other except for verses 9 and

26. Apart from these two verses, every other verse has critical problems which range from omission, an alternative reading of a word or phrase, to insertion of a word or phrases.¹⁰ Discussing these numerous critical problems will occupy much more space and not discussing it will not contradict the topic under consideration.

Thematic Interpretation of John 17:6-26:

For easy studies, this passage is divided into two major themes namely Vv 6-19 which is the prayer of Jesus for his followers and Vv 20-26 - the prayer of Jesus for his future believers. Suffice it to mention that liturgically, this passage is very important in the Catholic Church's liturgy, for it forms the major reading that is read annually at the Chrism Mass on Holy Thursday when Catholic priests renew their vows of ordination especially for them to remain firm in the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. In the ecumenical circle, it is seen as a prayer for Christian unity. But within the gospel itself, it is seen as the last prayer that manifests Jesus' account of his mission on earth to God.¹¹

Prayer of Jesus for His Followers/Church (Verses 6-19): Reflecting on the prayers of Jesus in these verses for his followers/Church, Dorothy Lee thinks that this prayer was done as a result of the impending separation that will soon take place between the Church and Jesus. Hence, she says, "This part of the prayer acts as a kind of protective seal over the disciples, guarding them against the dangers of the world and emphasizing that the love they have already received from him will not be taken from them."¹² Love is the greatest value that binds the community together, without it the community will be in disarray. In these verses, Keener says, "This passage addresses the inevitable conflict between Jesus' followers and the world. Jesus' followers here assume the role assigned to Israel in most extant Jewish portrayals of the end times".¹³ A closer look at these prayers of Jesus for His Church shows a re-echo of prayers already said somewhere else by Jesus as he teaches his followers on how to pray. It is a prayer that has some semblance with the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4). Such semblances are seen in the following: *Patēr* "Father" (Matt. 6: 9 and John 17:11, 25); *hagiason* which is an aorist imperative from the Greek verb *hagiazō* meaning 'hallowed, sanctify, separate, consecrate, cleanse, purify, regard, or reverence as

¹⁰ Nestle-Aland, Novum Testamentum Graece. 27th Edition.

¹¹ Okure, pp. 1566-7.

¹² Lee, Dorothy A. "John" in The New Interpreter's Bible, One Volume Commentary (Nashville: Abingdon Press) p. 728.

¹³ Keener, S.C. (1993). The IVP Bible Background Commentary, New Testament (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press) p. 305.

holy¹⁴(John 17:17, 19 and Matt 6:9), by implication, it means to demonstrate its holiness and its sacredness. Simply put, it means "to set apart and dedicate a person or thing for the service of God and to dedicate as a sacrifice".¹⁵ Another resemblance is seen in the genitive singular phrase, *tou ponērou* "of the evil (one)" (John 17:15 and Matt. 6:13). Three areas of stress in the above prayer are namely, that God the Father is the one who answers all prayers, secondly, he is the only one who sanctifies every one against the activities of the evil one. Hence, "their place within the Trinitarian circle of love is assured. Once again, though the Spirit is not named explicitly, it is precisely the role of the Paraclete to ensure and actualize that ongoing presence, despite the disjunction of Jesus' departure."¹⁶

Verses 6-8 expose the vocation of Jesus as one who came at the instance of God the Father. It is clear in these verses that Christians/followers of Christ, and indeed the Church is taken out or called out from the world to live a different life that is contrary to the standard of the world. They belong to God and God gave them to Christ to form them with God's logos "word" (Vv 8, 14), for them to live a divinely oriented life. The actions of Jesus here resemble the actions of Moses in Exod. 3:13, 15 where he was meant to reveal God's name to the Israelites. It is more than a mere revelation of name, it also involves the revelations of the character and attributes of God which involves what God is capable of doing (Exod 33:19; 34:5,14). Jesus is seen reporting how he has fulfilled the task or mandate given to him as it affects them, the Church. He reported that they have properly been taught and they have equally accepted the teaching. Verse 7 shows that they know the source of what Christ taught them, God.

In Verses 6-8 Christ rehearses his ministry to his followers, they are like adoration where the Son of God exposes the greatness of the Father. Jesus made it clear that he has revealed to them God's onoma "name" which means all they needed to know about God, for God to be with them and work with them. This affirms the popular saying, 'knowledge is power.' In "Semitic thought the name signified the inner reality of a person; to know a person's name was to have possession of the person."¹⁷ Furthermore, a name encompasses who God is in his character, his essential nature. In the OT God's name is put in the central sanctuary (Deut. 12:5, 11), and knowledge of

¹⁴ Perschbacher, Wesley J. (ed.) [1990] The New Analytical Greek Lexicon (Massachusetts: Hendrickson) p.3.

¹⁵ Rienecker, Fritz (1980). A Linguistic key to the Greek New Testament (Michigan: Grand Rapids) p.255.

¹⁶ Lee, p 728

¹⁷ Okure, p. 1567.

his name implies life commitment (Psalm 9:10).¹⁸This fact seen in verse 6 is also alluded to in verse 26. The emphasis is on how powerful this "name" is. This name was given to Jesus and the name helped him in his work, that same "name" as seen in verses 11-13 was demanded the protection of the Church that remains in the world but not of the world.

In verses 9-10, we see Jesus hitting the nail by the head. He narrowed down the intentions of his prayer and why he was praying at all. He was praying for his followers or the Church who have been under his tutelage. He was praying because he himself has seen the world and knows the negative effects of the promptings of the world. The prayer was not for the world but his followers so that the world will not contaminate them instead they will sanctify the world (Matt. 5:13-16). Hence, they will influence the world positively.

In verses 11-13, the emphasis here is that if Jesus were still going to remain in the world there would not be any need of praying for them the way he did for he himself has known the "name" and its value, for he will always help to cement them together through the name he has known and which had been given to him. Jesus knows that the evil one is afraid of him and will never strike while he is around (Mark 1:24; Matt 8:29) but if he leaves the world anything may be possible, hence the prayer. In verse 12 the emphasis is that he protected the disciples while he was with them in the world with that precious "name" because he knows them very well. This idea is explained already in John 13:11, 18, 26 as well as in Acts 1:16. As long as he is around he knows how to keep the body (the Church) together. For instance, Judas made arrangement to betray his master and did that (Matt 26:14-16); Peter denied Christ (John 18:13-27); again, Thomas denied the possibility of the resurrection (John 20:24-29) outside the presence of Christ and outside the community of believers.

Verses 14-17 show that Jesus knows very well the danger of living them without divine assistance. They are hated by the world because they have imbibed the logos of God and are now living according to the demands of the words hence the world hates them through the activities of the evil one (Matt 10:16). It is clear that "the disciples are not removed from danger and the power of the Evil One but rather protected in the Father's love and unity within the context of violence and persecution

¹⁸ Kostenberger, Andreas J. (2007). "John" in Beale, G.K. and Carsibm D, A, (eds.) Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament (Michigan: Grand Rapids), p.498

(v.15)."¹⁹ Jesus knows that unlike himself "who is not touched by the "rulers of this world" (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:33), the disciples could be, and they must be kept safe from the "evil one." Though the believers are not "of the world," since they have accepted him, they still remain "in the world" and are at least potentially subject to its influence.²⁰ But they need not fear since Christ had already conquered the world (Matt 28:16).

Jesus was aware that their joy will be complete if they remain united with one another hence, the prayer. For the sake of emphasis, Jesus emphasized the commonality he has with his followers in the prayer thus, "They do not belong to the world, just as he does not belong to the world" (v.16). The implication is that the world loves theirs and hate ones that are not theirs (Lev. 11:44-45; Isa. 10:20-22; Joel 2:32). He, therefore, would like them to be sanctified in God's logos which is the *alētheia* "truth". The Israelites of old were set apart from among nations through the giving of the Torah by God, in the same way, the Church is set apart in the world through the coming of God made a man or the greatest interpreter of the law. In this sense, the Church is the new Israel or the remnant of Israel (Isa 10:20-22; Joel 2:32; Amos 9:8-12).²¹ In line with the above, Lee says, the "disciples are protected also by the word that Jesus has given them, a radical self-giving that draws them like a magnet to holiness and truth."²²

Verses 18-19 emphasize again that Jesus was sent by the Father, and Jesus subsequently sent his followers, the Church (Matt. 28:16-20). He asked the Father to consecrate them in the truth. For if they are really consecrated in truth, they can influence the world. Jesus himself was consecrated in truth for their sake so that they might also be consecrated. Jesus consecrated himself by presenting himself to the Father to be one with him, and to all people as the perfect revelation of God. He prays that the disciples may live in God's truth, sanctified by faith in the Father he has revealed to them. The implication of these is that Jesus was fully aware that he was in the world then and never of the world. There is no doubt he made the disciples aware of this fact too through the promise of the Holy Spirit (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7).

¹⁹ Lee, p. 278

²⁰ PHEME, PERKINS (1996). "The Gospel According to John" in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (New Jersey: Geoffrey Chapman), p. 979.

²¹ Keener, p. 305

²² Lee, p.728.

Prayer of Jesus for Future converts (17:20-26) : In verses 20-21 Jesus prays for the unity of immediate followers and those who will believe through them. Thus he transcended the present, reached beyond his immediate followers to those who will believe through their message.²³ Thus, "The circle of intimacy between the Father and Son, which has widened to include Jesus' disciples, now widens even further: future believers are drawn into the orbit of the divine love and union."²⁴ His desire for them is for them to be united. The name was given to Jesus, from Jesus to his immediate followers, from his immediate followers to his future followers. Jesus used his relationship with the Father to describe what he wishes them to be among themselves and with him, and with the Father (vv. 20-21, 22-23). That unity is very important, for it will be a wonderful sign that Jesus himself came from God as well as that they (his followers/the Church) are from Jesus or that they are his followers. The Picture that is being shown in these verses is the picture that one noticed in the Christian villages of the early days of the Church in Eastern Nigeria where oneness was self-evident.²⁵ It also portrays the spirit of Acts 4:32 as well as 2:44-45 where the multitude of believers was one in heart and soul. "See how they love one another" according to Mitchell Lewis was a popular reference being made in the ancient Roman territory concerning Christians/believers.²⁶ There is no doubt that such unity would foster faith in their mission. On this Keener says, "The unity of Father and Son models the unity to be experienced by their people in whom they dwell".²⁷ If they were to remain united in the world that is hostile to the truth, it will not be too long before they will conquer the whole world and such will mark the culmination of the work of Christ. Okure affirms this when she says, "Unity among the disciples is a mark of the coming of God's reign, which will receive its consummation in the inseparable union between Jesus and his disciples in heaven" (John 17:26).²⁸ PHEME carries it further when she says, "There are two dimensions to expressions of unity as they emerge in the Fourth Gospel. The vertical dimension grounds unity in the relationship between Jesus and God. The horizontal dimension sees in the command to love one another the expression of that relationship among members of the community (John 13:34-35; 15:12, 17)."²⁹

²³ Kostenberger, p. 498

²⁴ Lee, p.728.

²⁵ Obi, C.A. "The Christian Village as an Early Missionary Strategy for the Evangelization in the Lower Niger Mission" in Nwosu, V.A.Ed. (1985). The Catholic Church in Onitsha. People, Places and Events [1885-1985] (Onitsha: Etukokwu press) pp 18-41.

²⁶ Mitchell, Lewis (2018). See How they Love One Another. (<https://www.baylor.edu>.) Accessed on 16/8/2019

²⁷ Keener, p. 305

²⁸ Okure, p. 1568

²⁹ PHEME, 979.

In verses 22-23 Jesus hinted at the source of the unity between him and the father which happens to be the *doxa* "glory". God gave him this glory and that united him with the Father; Jesus on his part has given this glory to his followers so that they may be one as he and God are one. Jesus wants a situation where he will be in them just as Father is in him so that they will perfectly be one. The glory of God consecrates everywhere it dwells (Exod. 29:43). Again, this perfect unity which comes through the glory of God will prove to the world that Jesus came from the Father.

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Verses 24-26 appear to be the summary of all the prayers already said from verses 6-23. The only addition is for them to be where their founder will be. Jesus made it clear here that he has known the Father and he has also made the Father known to his followers or the Church but the world does not know him. Verse 24 tells us that Jesus has shared the glory with God before the foundation of the world. This fact is also made reference to in verse 5 as well as in Chapter 1:2 as well as in 1:14. These authenticate the claims of Jesus. The unity or oneness Jesus talked about abhors secessionists of all kinds, ethnic bigots, self-centered people, materialistic people, proud people, and so on. Those who are in the above categories go always against the demands of Jesus as he wishes his followers to be under one flock and one shepherd (John 10:16). The Church as came down from Christ must be "One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic."³⁰ Hence advocating for one flock and one shepherd (Ezek. 34:23; 37:24). The implication is that before the Church claims authenticity, it must be examined with the above four signs namely, it must be apostolic in origin; it must be a united entity, it must be universal and finally, it must be holy. This means any gathering of people without the above four signs is a sure sign that the gathering is devoid of the glory of God (John 11:52) and scandalizing the prayer of Jesus, but where there is unity there is the glory of God (John 12:20-23). Above all, the unity of the Church will go a long way to prove that Jesus came from the Father and that he

³⁰ Broderick, Robert C. ed. (2005). "Church" in A to Z Guide to the Catholic Faith (Vancouver: Thomas Nelson) p. 124

did not labour in vain (v.23; Isa. 49:4). It will also bear an eloquent witness to the true identity of Jesus as "the Sent One of God."³¹ Let us not assume the reverse since the failure of some students or even all students do not always prove that the lecturer never taught.

The Church Today and the Prayers of Jesus: As we expressed above, Christians were under one shepherd from the time of Christ to the Decree of Milan and indeed to the beginning of the pontificate of Gregory the Great, A.D. 590. Describing the social life of Christians in the above periods, John Laux said:

At a time when slaves were treated worse than cattle by their pagan masters, the Christians recognized the human dignity and the rights of their slaves and regarded their emancipation as a work pleasing to God. Justice and Charity were the Christian's guide in his dealings with his fellow-men. At a time when usury was rampant and the prisons were filled with its victims, the Christians neither gave nor took an interest.³²

It must be as a result of the above behaviour that manifests the spirit of Acts 4:32 that must have made Emperor Constantine make sure that the Decree of Milan, the religious tolerance granted to Christians in the Roman Kingdom was not a dead one. Hence, "by a series of enactments, the clergy were exempted from taxation and all municipal functions; the churches were empowered to receive donations and legacies; public business and servile work were forbidden on Sunday, the Christian holiday, to both Christians and pagans, and crucifixion was abolished as a penalty."³³ The question is, what is wrong with our present crop of Christians? Sunday is no longer respected in our time. Businesses and meetings thrive and even more lucrative on Sundays. It is no longer seen as a holiday of obligation for almost the majority of Christians especially here in Nigeria. The first major division in the Church was the great Eastern Schism. It is not too much to say that the estrangement between the East and the West, which culminated in the great Eastern Schism of 1054 AD, was begun on the day when Constantine laid the foundation-stone of New Rome on the shores of the Bosphorus.³⁴ From then apart from minor heresies that emanated and was handled, Christianity started being funny, went on to duplicate itself negatively and therefore

³¹ Kostenberger, p.499

³² Laux, John (1989). Church History (Rockford: Tan Books and Pub.) p.89.

³³ Laux, p. 92.

³⁴ Laux, p. 95.

jettisoned the value of the prayer of Jesus. Hence, "as of 1980, British statistical researcher David B. Barrett identified 20,800 Christian denominations in the world. He classified them into seven major alliances and 156 ecclesiastical traditions."³⁵ This is really scandalous. It is good to mention some of them again: Coptic Orthodox Church, Eastern Orthodox Church, and the Roman Catholic Church as the foremost division as we have mentioned already which remain even till today. Others that followed later include the Salvation Army, the Assemblies of God Church and Calvary Chapel Movement. The next major division in the Christendom occurred in the 16th century with the Protestant Reformation. This movement started with Martin Luther with his 95 Theses in 1517 AD but the Protestant Movement began officially in 1529 AD. There is no doubt that Reformation marked actually the beginning of denominationalism as we have it today. "Those who remained faithful to Roman Catholicism believed that the central regulation of doctrine by Church leaders was necessary to prevent confusion and division within the Church and corruption of its beliefs."³⁶

Yet very many went their own way then and even today many are still moving away as a result of lack of proper consultation among believers. Hence the saying, "There are many denominations, but one body of Christ. Ideally, the Church on earth - the body of Christ - would be universally united in doctrine and organization. However, departures from Scripture in doctrine, revivals, reformations, and various spiritual movements have forced believers to form distinct and separate bodies."³⁷

Outside denominations that have broken away from the Church, there is internal strife in almost all existing denominations. The causes of these strifes include ethnicity or son of the soil syndrome. Ethnicity is noticed at the appointment of bishops and the creation of provinces, dioceses, as well as parishes. Another thing that causes strife is the embezzlement of Church funds, power tussle between ministers, irregularities in propounding the doctrine, ordination of women, ordination of homosexuals as priests or ministers, materialistic tendencies, inauthenticity among believers and so on.

³⁵ Fairchild, Mary (2019). Development of Christian Denominations, History and Evolution of Christian Branches and Faith Groups (www.lernreligions.com). Retrieved on 25/8/2019

³⁶ Fairchild,

³⁷ Fairchild,

Evaluation and Conclusion

We have exposed above the real situation we have today in Christendom and the Church in Nigeria. We have seen that the divisions are against the prayer of Jesus. The physical "Bible" carried by these Christian denominations and answering the mere name "Christian" is not enough to be the only thing unifying Christians. They would have been if Christians were to live according to the demands of the Bible as well as living the type of life that made followers of Christ be called Christians in Antioch (Acts 11:19-26). Hence, the present-day church of Jesus Christ is regrettably divided against itself and unready to seriously rectify their differences may be because of pride. Secondly, there are so many false prophets in the Church today and false doctrines in the Church which Jesus even warned against before leaving the world (Matt. 7:15-23; 24:11), this fact was also corroborated by Jesus' followers (2Pet. 2; 2 Tim. 4:3-4; 1 John 4:1-6). Thirdly, through ethnicity, it is now conspicuously disheartening that ethnicity or son of the soil mentality has held the church, especially in this 21st century in a broken unity. Fourthly, there is presently business in religion, which has manifested itself in the fraud of all types. Fifthly, materialism is eating deep in the world to the extent that worldly people have entered into the sanctuary and are now part of ministers hence all manners of abracadabra and enchantments to deceive gullible and unsuspecting followers abound. Sixthly, politicians have entered the sanctuary and some of them have even joined the hierarchy of the Church and they are dividing the Church even more.

In Conclusion, this paper believes strongly that if the various leaders of the Church can reflect well on the prayers of Jesus in John 17:1-17 and allow the fruits of the Spirit in Gal. 5:22-23) to control their emotions and sentiments; again if Christians were to allow their flesh to be crucified (Gal 5:24) and allow themselves to be guided by the fruits of the spirit, the unity which Christ prayed for will envelop them. By implication, the Church will return fully to what Christ prayed for in John 17:6-17 i.e. "ONE".