

Johannine Implication of the Church as a Living Organism

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Introduction

The Post-Easter faith has left theologians with the problem of the meaning, purpose and nature of the early Church. How and when did the Church become conscious of its existence as a distinct community from Judaism? Was the Church a constitutive ontology of Hebraic social movement, seeking religious re-interpretation of the Rabbinic Scriptures while at the same time breaking down the walls of Jewish orthodox nationalism or was it a distinct Institution intrinsically welding ethical norms and religio-political movement of people who have come to experience classless brotherhood of believers in Jesus of Nazareth? These are some of the questions that have settled in the minds of theologians as they try to proffer solutions on the intentions of Jesus Christ in the “call out” of individuals for a special assignment of the Kingdom of God.

Jesus was a Jew to the core. “He was born a Jew. He lived a Jew and died a Jew.”¹ During his earthly life He gathered a group of twelve followers. But gathering of disciples was a remarkable feature of typical Jewish Rabbi. His followers went into hiding when He was killed. Besides the twelve, Jesus had many other Jewish admirers. When he rose from the dead these disciples and admirers began to gather and pray together. This was in obedience to his words that they should “stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). This group, about one hundred and twenty, remained in Jerusalem praying and waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Ten days after the Lord’s Ascension, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples with a great sound recorded in Acts chapter two. A. E. Horton says, “That

was when the church began. For the true church is the body of people who are united to Christ by the Holy Spirit, who lives in them”² Well, if the uniting factor of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the believers in Jesus Christ constitutes the main feature of the church then the Pentecost scenario could be accepted as the beginning of the church. One wonders why the constitution of the Church should be dated to the Pentecost as against a period during the life and times of Jesus. Yet, at Pentecost the Church constituted all Jews and no Gentile. Was the Church supposed to be a distinct community from Judaism or was it supposed to be a sect within Judaism or was it supposed to be a reformation of Judaism? Scholars have taken various positions on this issue. Whichever is one’s position, another basic question remains whether it was the intention of Jesus to establish an institution that safeguards its boundaries and very conscious of its distinctiveness as against movement that is rather conscious of the decaying society, plunging itself into this deadened socio-cultural environment to proffer pollution? This is the main problem this research resolves. If the Church is a living organism it becomes conscious of growth. Growth implies all-round development and expansion, quite inclusive, as against a closed system conscious of geo-cultural boundaries. Redaction critical methodology on biblical texts became very necessary in this research.

The Growth of the Church

Growth is a major characteristic of a living organism. Growth is internal and external. In fact, it is the internal changes in the organism that results in a visible enlargement of the physique. The Church also shares in internal and external changes called growth. This internal and external growth can be described in terms of vertical relationship and horizontal relationship. Horizontal growth is a function of Vertical growth. Horizontal growth cannot take effect without Vertical growth. While vertical growth describes the intrinsic progressiveness of positive relationship with God, horizontal growth describes the socio-

ethical connectivity that characterises relationships in the world. The Church is made up of human beings who are either Jews or Gentiles brought together by the power of the Holy Spirit. The closer these human beings get to God, vertical growth, the more they are expected to affect the lives of fellow human beings, which in turn, bring about conversion, horizontal growth. The closer one gets to God, as a believer, the more one develops a divine love that consequently drives one to see the enormity of the problem of moral decadence and depravity that results from a cleavage between man and God. This love is expressed among the believers in various ways. It drives the believer into active participation in missions and evangelism. It was the same love that brought Jesus from heaven to earth, incarnation. Incarnation theology establishes a relationship between man and God which is progressive and very visible in activities. Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father" (John 14:12). The work that Jesus did was preaching the gospel, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, and empathising both with those who believed in him and those who did not care whether he was there. This text has so much relevance with "the Vine and the Branches" episode in chapter fifteen of John's Gospel. Those who are in Christ are already established in vertical relationship, yet the cleansing of the Word of God is a continuous vertical process and brings the believer closer to God's strategies and requirements. In the vertical growth one must differentiate between the divine *genetic deposit* (I John 3:9), which is there in every believer, from the fruit mentioned in chapter fifteen of John's Gospel. Johannine writer uses *fruit* to define the internal disposition of the believer that produces external effects.

Divine love is an internal disposition that forms a consolidated base to manifest all godly virtues. When believers express virtues the world around them recognises the presence of Jesus their Master. This is the qualitative growth which initiates and directs all quantitative growth. When the power of love took over

the believers after Pentecost it is said that they had all things in common and none kept anything to himself. The cleansing of the Word of the Master was a regular exercise that explains vertical growth. Until the present day believers realize that they cannot do without vertical growth many Christians in Nigeria will continue the miracle craze that have little or no relevance to vertical growth. Intrigues and scramble for membership will characterize the purpose of the activities of the churches.

At Pentecost they were many Jews from other countries in Jerusalem, for the celebration of the Jewish Passover feast. It was not a Christian feast they came to observe. But then all rushed together to see what was going on among some Jewish believers who suddenly broke into some foreign languages. They mistook them initially for drunkards. Peter began at once to tell them about the Lord Jesus Christ. He challenged them to accept him as the messiah of the Jews. That day three thousand people joined the church and got baptised Acts 2: 41.

Three thousand Jews who had come to join a group of twelve men who turned out one hundred and twenty on Pentecost could not have dispersed to their various countries, though Jews, without getting established in the events and teachings of this Jesus who they believe had come to save them. This is horizontal growth as a result of the power of the Holy Spirit, vertical growth. Yes, vertical growth yielding horizontal growth. The wondrous growth of the Church could be summarized thus:

- The original nucleus at Pentecost was 120 (Acts 1:15)
- Three thousand more came on Pentecost (Acts 2:41)
- People were subsequently being added to the Church daily (Acts 2:47)
- Soon there were 5000 men plus women and children (Acts 4:4)
- Multitudes were being saved (Acts5:14)
- Addition changed to multiplication (Acts 6:1)
- Religious leaders began to be converted (Acts 6:7)
- Samaritans came to Christ (Acts 8:12)
- An Ethiopian was saved (Acts8:38)

- Entire town committed to Christ (Acts 9:35)
- A great number of Gentiles became Christians (Acts 11:21)
- A Roman proconsul believed (Acts 13:12)
- Large multitude of Jews and Greeks accepted the faith (Acts 14:1)
- Churches increased in number daily (Acts 16:5)
- Prominent women followed Jesus (Acts 17:12)
- A ruler of the synagogue became a Christian with his household (Acts 18:8)
- So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed (Acts 19:20)³

This is indeed a wonderful growth within a couple of years. The zeal and readiness to preach the theology of the church could not have come from the Pentecost scenario alone. An experience which brought a much more unfolding revelation and zeal is obviously the exaltation or resurrection of the Master.

The Post Easter Faith

The resurrection was not just a disappearance of the body of Jesus Christ from the grave. It was neither an abstract apparition phantom nor mental illusion. It was a real bodily assumption of a dead and buried historical person. In fact, the periscope is preceded by the passion narrative, the later being a clear witness of suffering, death and burial of Jesus Christ.

In the early period of the primitive church the tradition of the empty tomb which is represented in Mark, the earliest of the Gospels, was a unit on its own. The appearances as a tradition existed on its own and may have come much later. Johannine tradition skilfully combined these two traditions, perhaps, with a purpose to establish grounds for the church's Easter faith.⁴

John's elaboration of the incidence leading to the discovery of the empty tomb shows the distinctiveness of the unit and the essence of the story. Early the third day, after the Jewish festival, Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb. The writer presumes

the reader is conversant with the tradition that Joseph of Arimathea buried the body in a sealed tomb with linen clothes. He also presumes the reader is aware of the tradition that some other women accompanied Mary Magdalene to the tomb. So Mary could say “we do not know where they have put”. She was surprised at the tomb stone rolled away.

On the alarming report of the women, Peter and the beloved disciple, perhaps because he as younger, outran Peter to the tomb but would not, perhaps for fear, go into the tomb. Peter first went into the tomb only to observe the empty tomb. He also observed the linen cloths and napkins which had been used to cover the Lord. The writer may have selected this periscope to counter the false claim by the Jews that his disciples had stolen his body away. In this regard Chrysostom made a strong argument, “for neither, if any person had removed the body, would they before doing so have stripped it; nor, if any had stolen it, would they have taken the trouble to remove the napkin, and roll it up, and lay it in a place by itself.”⁵

On his side, if Jesus had chosen to prove the resurrection to the Jewish community he couldn't have chosen the women as a witness, knowing fully well that no typical Jew will accept the witness of a woman. The self-revelation of the Lord is what generated belief in an individual irrespective of where the witness comes — man or woman. Jesus is Lord over all the earth and would not need the assistance of man to prevail over all circumstances. He has the ability to cause repentance in the heart of a sinner. However, he requires the witness of disciples who themselves would have had experiential revelation of him. It is in the experiential witness of the disciple that Jesus reveals himself to the hearer. This in turn results in the conversion of the hearer.

The redaction of the evangelist clearly manifests in his use of Raboni which was used by the Palestinian Judaism to refer to God. The church later used it to refer to Jesus. Some scholars have based on this point to argue that John's Gospel represents a later development of the church's belief in the Christ of faith as against the activities of the simple man of Galilee — Jesus of

history. That Jesus could appear even in a closed door room also represents that belief of the Johannine tradition. All these lead to the ultimate purpose of the redaction — “that all may believe”.

The Apostolic Commission

It has already been noted that the significance of the empty tomb, the appearances and the confessions of the appearances, all lead to the ultimate purpose of the Johannine Gospel. The unique appearances culminate in the great commission of the disciples who must take up the work of the incarnation to the far ends of the earth. The purpose of the incarnation itself has been shown to be an expression of the ultimate love of God to the totally depraved man. Remove this love and the incarnation will be meaningless. The formal inauguration of the Christian mission is recorded in John 20:19-25.

In close doors the Son of God came in and pronounced, “peace be with you”. Peace — Shalom in Hebrew — is a form of Jewish greeting. But it also goes beyond an ordinary greeting. Here, Onwu’s definition becomes very important. According to him “in the prophetic literature, therefore, shalom refers to the total well-being of the people and it includes healing, prosperity, love, righteousness/justice, unity, freedom, repentance etc.”⁶ When the Johannine Jesus pronounces this “Easter Peace” one should understand where John is coming from. It is in this premise that John’s Jesus declares “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (14:27). The peace of the world is momentary and conditional. The Romans insists “if you want peace prepare for war.” One needs war to bring peace and needs war to sustain peace. Yet, the peace of the world is not a real peace of mind. It is conditional peace brought in by war and sustained by war. The peace that Jesus promises and commissions the disciples as vanguard is peace that comes from God and has no conditions. John presents Jesus as the one who calms every troubled heart and bring the eternal or lasting peace.

By analysing Onwu's point it includes healing, prosperity, love, righteousness, justice, unity freedom, repentance etc. In other words, whatever makes life meaningful and worth living is included in the peace that comes from the Master. Onwu is therefore right in observing that for too long the dominant religious traditions in the modern society have been, not only paying lip service to the quest of socio-religious peace, but content to preach a gospel of spiritual peace and brother hood that does not fundamentally affect the social structures of our lives.⁷

Peace would not only be viewed as a spiritual virtue. It must address the socio-political needs if it must make a meaning to the living person. Of what use is spiritual peace outside religious and socio-political dialogue, for example? The spiritual peace must address socio-political problems thereby bringing solution to the ethnic and tribal acrimony. This is the implication of Onwu's proposition. The mission and calling of the Church cannot therefore be addressed outside this purview.

The Commission

“As the father has sent me, I am sending you” forms the ultimate commission. Jesus had spent three years in his ministry. He could not have restored peace in the world within three years. The disciples had to take over from that point. He himself was not leaving them alone. He was only going to the Father and to assist them in another form of manifestation and presence.

In this text Jesus uses *apestalken* to denote the father sending him and *pempo* to denote his sending of the disciples. But one only needs to compare the two words to discover their synonymous usage in John's Gospel. Kittel observed that

ἀποστελλειν seems to be used quite promiscuous with *πεμπειν*. Thus, to denote his full authority both to the Jews and the disciples Jesus uses *ἀποστελλειν*, since he thereby shows that behind his words and

person there stands God and not merely his own pretension. Again, in prayer he uses the same term to describe his relationship to God. Yet in close proximity to it he uses *πεμπειν*. as well in such a way that there is no self-evident distinction. Closer investigation, however, shows us that when the Johannine Jesus *πεμπειν* in speaking of his sending by god he does so in such a way as to speak of God as the *πεμψας με*. This usage is wholly restricted to God, being sometimes amplified to *ο πεμψας με πατηρ*; when speaking of himself he uses other focus of *πεμπειν*.⁸

By way of analysis and further elucidation of this synonym one only needs to compare Johannine texts. For the sending of Christ by the Father one observes *apostellein* - 3:17, 34; 5:36, 38; 6:29, 57; 7:29; 8:42; 10:36; 11:42; 17:3, 8, 21, 23, 25.

For *pempein* - 4:34; 5:23f, 30, 37; 6:38f, 44; 7:16, 18, 28, 33, 8:16, 18, 26, 29; 9:4; 12:44f, 49; 13:20; 14:24; 15:21; 16:5. For the sending of the paraclete *pempein* also features - 14:26; 15:26; 16:7. For Christ sending his disciples both verbs are also applied - 4:38; 17:18, *apostellein* and *pempein* features - 13:16, 20.

The rabbinic usage of these two verbs is *Πλψ* (Shalah), "to send". The words and works of Jesus the Father confronts men and not a mere Jewish prophet or Rabbi addressing men. God is fully seen in Jesus who himself offers an obedient service to God. It was God who acted and not merely a human Jesus. God was in Christ reconciling the world. When Jesus commissions his disciples he does so in a manner that transfers divine authority on them. When the disciples carry out this commission they do so in a manner that transfers divine authority on them. When the disciples carry out this commission they do so in such a manner that Jesus confronts men and reconcile them

to God. Therefore Jesus is the true Jehovah's Witness and the disciples are the true Jesus' witness.

The *apestalken* used in the Johannine commission of 20:21 is third person singular, perfect active indicative of *apostello*. That Jesus uses third person singular as against third person plural while addressing the disciples is very significant. Here, he sees them as a collective body of the "called out" – the ecclesia or his body – as against individuals. If he had used third person plural one would restrict the commission to those disciples present at that moment. By the usage both the present and the future disciples who constitute his body or the called out assembly – ecclesia – are constitutive macrocosm of the commission.

The implication of the commission is made clearer when one closely examines the perfect tense used in this text. According to Fuller, "The perfect is used for a state or condition that now exists because of something that happened in the past. It happened then, but the result is still in effect".⁹ By way of analysis the commission is an outcome of the commission of Jesus by the Father. In fact, the implication is so clear, "peace be with you! As the father has sent me, I am sending you" (20:21 = NIV). The same way the Father commissioned his Son, who brought "peace" from the Father, so the Christians are commissioned by the Son to bring peace from the Son to the world. "Peace" here constitutes the divine initiative of all that makes for peace, development and reconstruction. By development and construction, is meant the extended application inclusive of both human and ecology. Here the human peace is meant all that makes for conducive habitation. This is jointly associated with the Genesis commission of "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground" (Gen 1:28, NIV). This development stems from Johannine theological approach. In the Johannine Christology is summarised thus, "in the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God" (John 1:1

NIV). He looks back to the Genesis account in his usage of idea. The words of Genesis connote the idea of Genesis. John presents Jesus as the one who also created in Genesis. That the commission account in John is therefore strongly associated with the commission in Genesis is not to be overlooked. It is in this regard that Johannine commission narrative is very different from the Synoptic Gospels and Acts of the Apostles. This also presents the holistic nature of the Johannine commission narrative against the parochial nature of the Synoptic Gospels and Acts of Apostles accounts. Barrett has noted very strongly that as Jesus in his ministry was entirely dependent upon and obedient to God the Father, who sealed and sanctified Him (4:34; 5:19; 10:37; 17:4, and other passages: 6:27; 10:36), and acted in the power of the Spirit who rested upon Him (1:32), so the Church is the Apostolic Church, commissioned by Christ, only in virtue of the fact that Jesus sanctified it (17:19) and breathed the Spirit into it (v.22), and only so far as it maintains an attitude of perfect obedience to Jesus.¹⁰

The key point in Barrett's observation is that the Christian missions is meaningless and useless without the sanctifying power of Jesus. Just as Jesus acted on the power of the Holy Spirit that rested on Him so He breathed into the disciples the presence of the Holy Spirit that will lead them into all truth and also glorify their master Jesus. In his words, "It is the mission of Jesus himself which, through the Spirit, is perpetuated in the mission of the Church; and the Church by its faith is related to Christ as Christ is to God."¹¹

The commission of the disciples is an outcome of the love of the incarnation. Incarnation was the commission of the Father on the Son. The significance of this is the love of the Father which restores order, peace and development of the habitat. This in turn is the significance of the commission of the disciples. They were commissioned to express the love Jesus has for humanity. They were commissioned to restore the peace of Christ in the habit. This is the order that was lost at the Garden of Eden. The commission is therefore a focus on humanity and

ecology. When the Church becomes conscious of this idea it enables her to resist every temptation that tends to put a cleavage between her and the affairs of the society. The Church is to act in the society and on the society so that divine peace and development would become very experiential in the fabrics of the society.

The Problem Of Identity

All the while it has been said that the Church was formed from a group of Jews. But were they formed as a body of believers distinct from Judaism? From all indications they were a movement of Jewish reformers. That is why they insisted on the Jewish religious rites even after they have started operating as Christians. They even insisted that the Gentiles should first become Jews – proselytes – before they could be baptized to become Christians. This was the problem Peter himself was facing when God asked him to go to Cornelius, a gentile.

But there is a sociological law that a movement either disintegrates or becomes an institution in the long run. To compare some early Christian movements, for example, the Waldensians of the twelfth century became in Italy the “*la Chiesa Evangelica Valdese*,”¹² the Quakers of the seventeenth century who eventually disintegrated into the evangelicals¹³ etc.

How much this sociological law applies to the first century Church is gradually made clear as one considers Loisy’s remark, “Jesus foretold the Kingdom and it was the Church that came.”¹⁴ Jesus foretold a Kingdom where righteousness, love, justice and peace will pervade the world. The disciples were commissioned to be the vanguards and carriers of the Kingdom. Jesus did not intend to form a new religion but a Kingdom. The disciples turned their calling and responsibilities towards others into a new religious group. Their survival as a separate religious group began to preoccupy them rather than their commitment to the reign of God. Jesus, for example said, “But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the Kingdom of God

has come upon you” (Matthew 12: 28). Jesus saw the Kingdom in His activities not the Church.

With their signs, miracles and preaching of the Messiahship of Jesus brought them into conflict with Jewish religious leaders. They had accused the Jewish leaders of killing the Son of God. Kee and Young have noted that “this opposition pointed up the basic incompatibility of the new community with Judaism in spite of the broad areas of agreement between the two.¹⁵ It was conflict in theological ideology and hostility by the Jews and government that led the disciples to gradually elevate their house fellowship to Christian Church.¹⁶ This metamorphosed into Sunday worship service within a short time. As early as 155 Justin described the Christian Sunday services in the following words:

On the day called, there is a meeting for all in one place, according to the city or countryside where one lives. The memoirs of the Apostles (i.e. the Gospels), or the Writings of the Prophets, are read as long as there is time. When the reader has finished, the President, in a sermon, calls us to imitate these good things. Then we all stand and pray.¹⁷

As they understood a more distinct identity they began to own property and erect special buildings dedicated for worship. This is what was later called church building. With this gradual unfolding of self consciousness the early Church ceased to be a movement and turned into an institution. Institutionalized Christianity, as against ethical Christianity, started quite early in the life of the Church. But what is the difference? Niebuhr noted that the essential difference between an institution and a movement is, “the one is conservative, the other is progressive,; the one is more or less passive, yielding to influences from outside, the other is active, influencing rather than being

influenced; the one looks to the past, the other to the future.”¹⁸ However, while the Jerusalem Church had become an institution quite early the Antioch Church was still a movement in the first century Christianity. This change has affected the way believers view the Church today. As against a movement that should be changing the society and bringing lasting divine peace there is emphasis on separation from the world and a cleavage that is aimed at seeing a group of individuals that have no business with the world; because believers must ascend to heaven very quickly. Abandoning the world to Satan and his agents is openly preached as an ideal sermon. Love not the world is wrongly interpreted to mean have nothing to do with the world. Perhaps Gnosticism is gradually permeating the modern Christian gospel very surreptitiously.

The Living Organism

When Jesus said, “For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18: 20) he meant a Church or association of human beings who are physically alive. Whatever affects an individual affects the entire Church. Paul variously described the Church as the Body of Christ, made up of living – physically and spiritually – human beings. In fact, Paul uses human faculties to describe the relationship of members in the Church. The implication is that it is the human beings that make up the Church. Remove the human beings and there will be no Church. When figures are used in the scriptures to describe the statistics of the Church they represent human beings and not mere abstract terms. It is absolutely correct that the Church is “*A community of people who possess the life of God’s Kingdom and who express it together*”¹⁹

Jesus is the head of the Church. The Church is his body in the world. St. Paul relates this image to the bride and Bridegroom when He says that Christ, the head of the body, nourishes and cherishes the church in the same way that husbands would take care of their wives (Ephesians 5: 21 – 32).

All Christians are part of the body of Christ. Each one is a member of the body. While the oneness of the body expresses the unity among members, the image of the body also shows that there is a great diversity. There are differences among the members within the unity of the body (Romans 12: 4 – 5; 1 Corinthians 12: 12, 20). People are different because they have been given different gifts with which to function in the body (Romans 12: 4; 1 Corinthians 12: 27; Ephesians 4: 11). The people of God are knit and joined together by Christ. When each part of the body works properly there is bodily growth and the church upholds itself in love (Ephesians 4: 16). Internal growth and external growth are characteristics of the living body called the church.

The scripture reflects a dynamic, active organism called the church. It is alive. It is a relationship with the living God. It is based on the foundation of the risen Christ. The church is made up of people. The people are the people of God. Hunter says “It is a living organism. It can be healthy or sick. It can die. It has a living Lord who is in charge. Growth and reproduction are ongoing functions of an organism.”²⁰ But here one must refer to the Church, living and growing in a self alienated world from God yet impacting and bringing succour to this world. It is a living body that permeates into the fabrics of the society to affect the society. The Church must resist every temptation to lure it into evil practices yet it must be part of the society for the society to experience God. It is neither Jewish nor Gentile. It is a body of believers who are called to bring peace to the society. Yes, whichever society or culture one finds oneself the peace of God must be paramount. It is the introduction of the Son of God in the society that brings peace.

Implications for the Church in Nigeria

Peace is the result of the love of God generated from the believers into the society. This is what brings peace. Emphasis on this must be laid if the Church in Nigeria must have a divine oriented focus. At the moment there seems to be so much interest

in miracles and healing, devoid of divine peace. The Church in Nigeria is characterized by denominational intrigues and cleavages. Denominationalism is a feature of institutionalized church as against an ethical church or, at least, an ethical movement. But the church is supposed to be institutional, ethical, and a movement. The guarding of boundaries is already noted as a chief feature of an institution. This is the reason every denomination is over conscious of its existence as against the existence of the Body of Christ. If the Nigerian Christian is made to understand that he is a significant part of a whole, and that whole is the living body of Christ as against his denomination the Christian Church in Nigeria will likely serve God better. Christians will come to live in peace and harmony, advancing the Kingdom of God, which is the essence of the calling of the church. Yes, the purpose of the church was to advance the Kingdom of God in the world.

It was not a mistake that Jesus preached the Kingdom and the church emerged. The Church emerged to emerge the Kingdom of God. That was always the eternal purpose of God. If the amount of effort employed to safeguard a denominational empire where expended to advance the Kingdom of God it is very obvious the non-Christian adherents would have come to appreciate the love and power of God better.

Unfortunately, some Christians in Nigeria do not see Christianity in any other person that belongs to a different denomination. As a result the church suffers the defeat concerted victory. A situation where a fellow Christian becomes an enemy simply because he does not belong to the same denomination is not scriptural. In the body of Christ every Christian is very important and every effort is required.

The research does not condemn denominational setups of the church in Nigeria. In fact, denominational failures must be seen as failures in the Church or body of Christ. Denominations should lend helping hands to other weak denominations that seek support. The body was formed to be a mission and to do mission to the world. Anything short of this is not scriptural. The love

that was expected of the believers among themselves was meant to be lived out for the benefit of both Christians and non-Christians. Without this love how would people come to appreciate the love and favour of God?

The Church was neither a Hebraic social movement nor Jewish orthodox nationalist. However, it was a body religious individuals seeking a re-interpretation of the Rabbinic Scriptures while at the same time breaking down the walls of Jewish orthodoxy. It is intrinsically institutional, ethical and a movement welding within itself ethical norms and socio-religious organism of people who have come to experience classless brotherhood of believers in Jesus of Nazareth?

End Note

¹E. A. Ituma, *Introduction to early Christianity* (Lagos: Chinedum Publishers Ltd, 2003) p.19

²A. E. Horton, *The Church Age: An Outline of Church History* (Canada: Everyday Publications Inc, 1978) p.7

³C. Peter Wagner, *Acts of the Apostles: God's Training Manual For Modern Christians* (California: Regal Books, 1994) pp.26f

⁴*Ibid*, p.466

⁵Edwyn C. Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd. 1947) p.541

⁶E.N. Onwu, "Biblical Perspective for Peace, Development and Reconstruction: its Socio-Religious Implications for the Churches in Africa" p.34

⁷*Ibid* p.38

⁸Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* Vol 1 (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978) p.404

⁹Lois Fuller, *You can Learn New Testament Greek* (Kaduna: Baraka Press and Publishers, 1993) p. 320.

¹⁰Barrett, *Op. Cit.*, p.474

¹¹*Ibid.*, p.472

¹²S. B. Ferguson and D. F. Wright, *New Dictionary of Theology* (England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1998) p. 714

¹³cf. *Ibid.*, p. 553

¹⁴Alfred Loisy, *The Gospel and the Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976) p. 166

¹⁵Kee and Young, *The Living World of the New Testament* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1986) p. 192

¹⁶Ituma, *Op. Cit.*, p. 83

¹⁷John Foster, *Church History 1: The First Advance AD 29 – 500* (London: SPCK, 1982) p. 24

¹⁸H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Kingdom of God in America* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959) p. 11f

¹⁹ Frank Viola, *The Kingdom, the Church, and Culture*, <http://www.ptmin.org/culture.htm>

²⁰Kent R. Hunter, *Foundations for Church Growth* (Missouri: Leader Publishing Company, 1983) p. 45