

CHRISTIAN SERVICE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
Department of Theology



**THE EFFECTS OF DENOMINATIONALISM ON CHURCH
UNITY: AN EXEGETICAL STUDY OF JOHN 17:21-23**

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JULY, 2015

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BY

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A long essay submitted to Christian Service University College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Theology with Administration.

JULY, 2015

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis/dissertation/ project report is the result of my own original research, except for sections for which references have been duly made, and to the best of my knowledge, no part of it has been presented to this University College or any other institution for the award of a degree.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Also, to my Pastor, Rev. Emmanuel Owusu Aboagye, my parents Mr. and Mrs. Neleyun, my siblings, the extended family, and friends. Moreover, to all lecturers of CSUC and Ministers of God.

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From the bottom of my heart, all that I want to say is that, may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely, and may your spirit and soul and body be kept complete, blameless, and curtail the influx of the flaws in this world at the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. 'Doxa sto Theo'. I love you all!

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction and Background to the Study

Unity is an important element in life and is an important feature of the Africa society. It is unity which defines the African communal life. An Akan proverb says that, a broom, on removing one easily breaks, but as a unit or whole is very difficult to break”. Unity entails cooperation, trust, interdependence, loyalty and commitment among people with common intentions. Africans believe that, a man cannot live or succeed without the help from other people, hence; there is a saying that “the right hand washes the left and the left washes the right”. This is underscored by Mbiti when he says that in Africa, a person does not exist all by himself; he exists because of the existence of other people; ... “I am because we are, and since we are therefore I am.”¹

In biblical times there have been instances that showed that unity was not just a mentioned theme, but was played out in the lives of people. For instance, the story in Genesis 11 tells us of the power of unity and the ability of the people of the time to fulfill their aim of building the Tower of Babel. God Himself thus testified to the unity of the people which was proved by their singleness of language. The early disciples of Jesus were very much united and were able to carry the message of the gospel across the then world. The crucial question is that, is this unity and sense of purpose evident in the contemporary church? What then was the basis of Jesus’ prayer in John 17:21-23? It is significant to note that the Lord Jesus was seeking for a united church as he and the father are one. Thus, Jesus sought for unity in his church.

¹ John Mbiti, *Introduction to Africa Religion* 2nd ed. (Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1991), 108.

Concerning the major issues in the New Testament, unity of the Church is a key issue for discussion. The passage quoted above seems to suggest that there could be some minor disagreements among some believers, but that was not enough to break up their front. However, the church has continued to fight several schisms, heresies, reforms, and breakaways throughout its history. The major division of the early church was over the controversy on the doctrine of Christology which divided the Church into Eastern orthodox and Western orthodox in the year 1054AD.² This division was followed by a massive split during the reformation in the 16th century. This led the Church into denominationalism resulting in Protestantism and Catholicism.³

Thinking of the church as a unit today has become a paradox. Denominationalism has been an accepted norm in modern Christianity, yet to some it appears to pose some threat on church unity. These controversies have left the church in a dilemma as to what Jesus meant in John 17 in his prayer for the church. Can the church be one and still battle with controversies on doctrinal differences? Denominationalism has been referred to by some scholars as “unity in diversity”, yet others see it as a threat to church unity.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Notwithstanding the fact that denominationalism has influenced the spread of the church and for that matter the gospel, it has also created a different outlook of the church (the Body of Christ). Over the last decades of the century, the Ghanaian community has witnessed a phenomenal rise in the number of church denominations, para-church organizations and Christian fellowships such as the mainline traditions, Pentecostals, charismatics, neo-pentecostal movements, the scripture union, Full

² J. Kofi Agbeti, *West African Church History: Christian Mission and foundation (1482-1919)* (Leiden, The Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1986), 12.

³ Hans J. Hillerbrand, *The Protestant Reformation* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1968), xii.

gospel fellowship and Aglow women fellowship. The issue at stake in relation to John 17:21-23 is that, is the rise of denominationalism a mark of disunity? Can the church remain as one and still belong to denominations? The researcher seeks to find out the impact of denominationalism on the unity of believers in relation to Jesus' prayer in John chapter 17.

1.3 Research Questions

1. What is denominationalism?
2. What has accounted for denominationalism in the church's history?
3. Do doctrinal differences constitute disunity in the church?
4. In what ways has denominationalism affected the church unity?
5. In what ways can unity be achieved in the church, despite denominational differences based on doctrines and practices?

1.4 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The study seeks to:

- Examine the meaning of Jesus' prayer
- Examine the roots of denominationalism in the church's history.
- It will also address the effects of denominationalism on the church's unity in relation to the Jesus' prayer in John 17: 21-23.
- Examine the biblical basis of denominationalism
- Address the way forward on denominationalism and church unity in Ghana.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study is significant for the following reasons:

1. It will clarify the debate, as to whether denominationalism is biblical or not and thereby deepen the knowledge of Christians on the unity of the church.
2. It will also help the church and individual Christians to develop a deeper relationship with each other.

1.6 Research Methodology

The study is an exegetical one and will conduct an exegesis of the text to come up with its meaning in the original Greek. The researcher will employ the historical critical method and will use both primary and secondary sources in gathering data for the study. The primary source will entail interviews with key persons of Christian background such as pastors who have relevant information and are willing to share. Again, through participant observation, the researcher will obtain information from Church settings by observing proceedings of worship. The churches in focus are Mainline, Pentecostals, Charismatic and Africa Independence church in order to come out of their side effects of denominationalism. With respect to the secondary source, the study will make use of publications such as books, magazines, newsletters, brochures, and electronic sources such as the internet, radio and television.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The work is an exegetical study of John 17:21-23 in relation to denominationalism and church unity. It is also based on some information about four churches representing the major churches traditions in Ghana such as Mainline, Pentecostals, Charismatic and Africa Independence Church.

1.8 Literature Review

1.8.1 The Unity of the Church

More and Neff are of the view that the gospel of God has produced a remarkable unity, bringing together people who otherwise, were estranged from one another. There is now in Christ no middle wall of partition, no hostility, for those who have been saved by grace, concludes the authors.⁴

The views of the authors presuppose that the church is a unity of people of diverse backgrounds, who otherwise were alien to one another or were enemies of themselves. The fact that these people have been brought together is not a human creation but that of God. If, believers are one in Christ, we are at a loss if we allow denominationalism to separate believers along the lines of doctrines and practices.

In Berkouwer view, the unity of the church is most closely connected with God's express intention to gather a people for His name; its background is the one call of God out of darkness into His Marvelous light, the call of one people to the gracious election of God, to be His possession.⁵

The author is very clear on the fact that it is God who has called one people into a single wonderful relationship. But if this is so, we should not find multiplicity of church denominations and each with its own doctrines and practices.

Smith observes that from the time of the making of the Constantinopolitan Creed (popularly known as the Nicene Creed) in 381 AD, Christians have affirmed their belief in "the one, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church". And yet, there are many churches. He asks that "how does one reconcile the existence of Eastern Orthodox,

⁴ John More & Ken Neff, *A New Testament Blueprint for the Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 26.

⁵ Gerrit Cornelis Berkouwer, *The Church: Studies in Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949), 30-31.

Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican, Reformed, Baptist, and a host of other Churches with the belief in one church? This question, by the author places the belief in oneness of the church in a fix.⁶

On the part of Ed Hayes, the Church is the new community of the redeemed which is linked to Jesus Christ. In this new community of the redeemed, one's Jewish or Gentile identity does not count. The unifying principle is union with Christ, who is the Head of the Church.⁷

1.8.2 The Nature of the Church

According to Grudem, the church is the community of all true believers for all time. For him the church is made up of all those who are truly saved, and which includes all true believers both in the New Testament age and those in the Old Testament age. He concludes that it is Jesus Christ himself who builds his church by calling his people to himself.⁸

John Mac Arthur in observes that the church is not a physical building, but a group of believers, not a denomination, sect or association, but a spiritual body. He concludes that the church is a fellowship which includes all believers.⁹

The author sees the church as a spiritual entity and not a human institution. Its composition is not a human doing but is of Christ. This presupposes that the church traverses all geographical, social and chronological factors to constitute all believers of all ages and time, and located everywhere on the face of the earth.

⁶ David L. Smith, *All God's People: A Theology of the Church* (Illinois: Victor Books, 1996), 393.

⁷ Ed Hayes, *The Body of Christ the Church: In the World of Today* (Tennessee: Word Publishing, 1999), 10.

⁸ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Nottingham: Inter Varsity Press, 1994), 853.

⁹ John Mac Arthur Jr., *The Church: The Body of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 15-16.

On the part of Craig, the church is a social community, a community made up of people who are reconciled God and one another. He concludes that to be the church is to be in reconciled relationship. To be the church is to be in active fellowship. To be the church is to live in interdependence with others. For him, the church is a social community reflects the social reality of the Trinity.¹⁰

The view of the author underscores the church as made up of people who have a right relationship with God and with one another. This means that there cannot be a church without living relationships which ensures its unity.

1.8.3 The Purpose of the Church

According to Balchin, all who have repented and have been captured in the name of Jesus Christ have also received the gift of the Holy Spirit. In so doing they have discovered a new oneness, not only with God in Christ, but also with others with whom they had previously had little in common. The author adds that God Himself has given them a whole new basis for belonging together in the light of fellowship, peace and freedom. His concern is also for the worldwide spread of the good news, and in that the church is to continue to preach “to every creature under heaven” (Colossians 1:23).¹¹

In the view of the author, the church exists for a purpose, and that is to fulfill God’s will for humanity. The unity of all believers is strengthened by their resolve to pursue God’s agenda of spreading the good news. But is this purpose being realized in the contemporary church?

¹⁰ Craig Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church: A Community Created by the Spirit* (Michigan: Baker Books, 200), 108.

¹¹John Balchin, *I want to know: What the Bible says about the Church* (Sussex: Kingsway Publications, 1979), 20-21.

On the part of Charles Mylauder, members of Christ's Church are to sacrifice themselves to spread the gospel, win people to Christ, plant churches, launch mission efforts and take new ground for Christ.¹²

According to Nicholls, the church is a gathering community with a sending mission to the world. Throughout its history, the church has confessed its nature as only holy, catholic and Apostolic Church whose foundations are the apostles and prophets and whose cornerstone is Jesus Christ. But the church's nature is inseparable from her mission.¹³

The views presuppose that the church is a community established by God for a purpose. Thus, the church exists and functions a sending mission. This is significant in our understanding of the nature as well as the purpose of the church.

Jesus commanded, "Go and disciples" (Matthew 28:19). The rhythm of the church is gathering and going, worshiping and working, meeting together in order to be equipped to disperse, to disappear as the church in the various organizations and institutions of the community. Like salt on food and seed in soil, the church penetrates the world into which Christ sends it.¹⁴

In doing so, he has set in motion measures for the equipping of the church so that it can live up to its aim of impacting the world.

¹² Charles Mylauder, *Setting Your Church Free: A Biblical Plan to Help your Church* (California: Regal Books, 1994), 145.

¹³ Bruce J. Nicholls, *The Church: God's Agent for Change* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1986), 12.

¹⁴ Richard C. Halverson, *The Living Body: The Church Christ is Building* (Oregon: Vision House Publishing Inc, 1994), 142.

1.9 Definition of Relevant Concepts

Certain concepts which are relevant to the study need to be highlighted. This section deals with some terms which are used in the text.

1.9.1 Church

Church is the community of all true believers for all time.¹⁵ Therefore, when discussing issues concerning the church, reference is made to the universal church (not the local church) and to the invisible church (not the visible church). For the purpose of this study, the local, visible church is considered to fall under denominationalism.

According to the New Dictionary of Theology, Church is the family of believers¹⁶. On the part of Van Gelder, the church is both social organization and a spiritual community. For him church is more than what made the eye. It is more than a set of well-managed ministry functions and more than another human organization.

The word 'church' according to Bible dictionary comes from the root word *ekklesia*, which is defined as an assembly or called-out ones. The root meaning of the church is not a building, but people. We could realize that one common understanding that the church is not about building or denomination but people. According to the Bible, the church is the body of Christ all those who have placed the faith in Jesus Christ for salvation.

¹⁵ John Mar Arthur Jr., *The Church: The Body of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 16.

¹⁶ Sinclair B. Ferguson, David F. Wright, *New Dictionary of Theology* (USA: Inter Varsity Pres, 1988), 140.

1.9.2 Denominationalism

The term “denominationalism” is difficult to define as it has so many aspects to it, but also because its use is so widespread that it is a word easily identified by most people. However, Bosch sheds some light on its origins, and hence definition, when he says it was “when religious belief was removed from the realm of ‘fact’ to that of ‘value’, about which individuals were free to differ, that a societal system could evolve in which a multiplicity of denominations could exist side by side and have equal rights.”¹⁷ Bosch then quotes Newbigin who says, “It is the common observation of sociologists of religion that denominationalism is the religious aspect of secularization. It is the form that religion takes in a culture controlled by the ideology of the Enlightenment. It is the social form in which the privatization of religion is expressed.”

1.9.3 Unity

The Bible underscores the importance of ‘unity and oneness’. Unity with others is good and pleasant (Psalm 133:10) Unity is absolutely essential because the church is the ‘body of Christ’ according to Bible society¹⁸. Is of being undivided; having oneness; a condition of harmony.

1.9.4 Doctrine

New Bible Dictionary defines doctrine as idea of a body of revealed teachings which is expressed in both Old and New Testament.¹⁹ In religion, it is the set of true beliefs that define the parameters of the belief system.²⁰ Basic Christian doctrine is the study of the revealed Word of God. It is Christian Theology regarding the nature truth, God,

¹⁷ David Bosch, *Transforming Missions: Paradigm shifts in Theology of Missions* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991), 329.

¹⁸ Bible Society, 2000.

¹⁹ New Bible Dictionary 2nd ed. (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 288.

²⁰ www.thefreedictionary.com accessed February 18, 2015.

Jesus, salvation, damnation, the trinity, the Holy Spirit, the Gospel, resurrection and other.

1.10 Organization of the Study

It is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is the general introduction which discusses the background to the study, the statement of problem, aims and objectives of the study, research methodology research questions, significance of the study, definition of relevant terms and scope and content of the study. The second chapter entails an exegetical study of John 17:21-23 based on the original Greek text. The third chapter discusses some background issues on the nature of church. Chapter four is an analysis of findings which includes analysis of the text and the implications of the text significance of the denominationalism and significance of the unity of the church to God's Mission. Chapter five concludes the study and captures the summary of the study, the general conclusion and some recommendations.

1.11 Conclusion

The discussion was an overview of the study which focused on the general introduction. It discussed the background to the study, the statement of the problem, the aims and objectives of the study, the significance of the study, the research methodology and the scope and content of the study, literature review and the definition of relevant concepts.

CHAPTER TWO

EXEGESIS ON THE TEXT (JOHN 17:21-22)

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will capture issues include the background of the Gospel of John, Authorship and Date, purpose of the writing of John, Greek Text, Periscope of the text, an Exegesis of John 17:21-23, translation and the commentaries on the text.

2.2 Background to the Gospel of John

John is the last Gospel penned as it comes several years after the other “synoptic” Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke were written. Like the rest of the Gospels, John covered the events of Jesus birth and death, His teachings, works, and the plan of redemption. These events occurred early in the first century, from around 27-36 AD, during the reign of Pontius Pilate. According to Smalley, “John wrote to the church in turmoil, where the first generation of witnesses and Christian were dying out and the new generation was taking over”.²¹ Linders state that in the case of the fourth Gospel, it is clear that the author derives his thought from the Jewish and Christian tradition, but it is altogether probable that he writes for Greeks and duly takes their way of thinking into account.²²

The church had escaped the tribulations in Jerusalem and into Asia Minor just period to the revolts and destitution during 68-70AD. According to Craig, “during the writing of this gospel, John and any Jews connected with the new Christian sect movement were being expelled from the synagogue and the family and cultural

²¹ Stephen S. Smalley, *John: Evangelist and Interpreter* (England: Paternoster Press, 1978), 123.

²² Barnabas Lindari, *New Century Bible: The Gospel of John* (Great Britain- London: Eerdmans wnm Pub. Co. 1972), 35.

structures".²³ During the writing of this Gospel, John and any Jews connected with the new Christian sect movement were being severally harassed had already been expelled from the synagogue and their family and cultural structures. He stressed that this was a time of tough, antagonistic Jewish persecution, giving the Christians a squeeze in the middle of harassment and hostility from the Roman too. The city officials in the Roman province such as Asia Minor to which the Jews and Christian fled after the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD were also destroyed.

Some of the Christian were starting to lose their focus and this Gospel provided a beacon of hope and inspiration.

According to Barreth some Jewish Christian were venturing back to the old ways of the Law to please the Pharisees in order to get back in or gain more benefits in their synagogue and standing in the community.²⁴ So, John the Apostle wrote to inspire the believers not to give up and strengthen their faith in Jesus Christ.

2.3 Authorship and Date

There are certain features in the fourth Gospel that indicate the presence of the author as an eyewitness to the events described: The words "*We*" beheld his glory in 1:14 suggest this.

Again in 19:35 we read He who saw it has borne witness - his testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth. Some scholars have argued that a writer would not refer to himself in this remote way, but this claim is simply mistaken - we have an almost exact parallel in Josephus' account of his own part in the Jewish War. We have the evidence of John 21:24 on. Here the words "*This*" is the disciple' refer to the *beloved disciple* who reclined next to Jesus at the last supper, as the previous verses

²³ Keener Craig S., *The N IV Bible Background Commentary* (Michigan: Inter Varsity Press, 1992), 20.

²⁴ Barret Charles Kingsley, *The Gospel According to John* (London: Westminster Press, 1978), 42.

clearly indicate. The claim then is that this disciple either himself wrote, or at least caused it be written.

These suggest that the author of this gospel was the disciple and eyewitness of Jesus Christ, John 21:24. Leon underscores that, the basic reason for holding that the author was John the Apostle is that this appears to be what the gospel itself teaches.²⁵ The external evidence of the Gospel was affirmed by Irenaeus and Polycarp who had relationship with the author in the writing of Eerdman. Eusebius comments;

“Here it is worth noting that in his enumeration he mentions the name of John; the former of these Johns he puts in the same list with Peter and James and Matthew and the other apostles, clearly indicating the evangelist; but the latter he places with the others, in a separate clause, outside the number of the apostles, placing, Aristion before him; and he clearly calls him elders”²⁶

Church tradition cites that this Gospel was written in 85-90 AD, prior to John being exiled to the island of Patmos which was around 90-95 AD. This seems right and this Gospel has the earliest fragments dating to the early second century, a mere half of a generation afterwards.²⁷ There is far more textual evidence for this gospel than any other ancient text or work, including the classics of Plato and Socrates. Some scholars cite it as having been written prior to the Temple's destruction, and thus a contemporary to the synoptic Gospels. But, the discovery of the “Rylands” fragment of John 18 that dates to 130AD is a conservative proof of a late, second century origin. Key words like the “sea of Tiberias” that was only used after 70AD and an allusion to Peter's execution in 66AD shows this later date. In addition, the Sadducees

²⁵ Leon Morris; *The Gospel According to John; the English Text with introduction, exposition and notes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans publishing Co., 1971), 9, 10.

²⁶ William B. Eerdmans, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Cambridge Publishing Company, 1991), 68, 69.

²⁷ Randolph V. G. Tasker; *The Gospel according to St. John; An introduction and Commentary* (Bredford Square: Tyndale Press, 1960), 20.

are not mentioned as they were in the other Gospels. Because they died out after 70AD (they were sad of the destruction of temple), John did not bother with Jesus' retorts to a dead system (John 21:19). Hendrisken also affirm this range of date in his book, *New Testament Commentary*²⁸.

2.4 Purpose of Writing

The Gospel of John, like the other book of the Bible, is the word of God to men and women of all periods, of time. Whether preached in first or the twenty-first century, it communicates the will of God to us. It is important, however, to keep in mind that God chose to communicate through a particular person, during a particular time in history, and with a specific purpose in view.

In the view of Ngewa, “the purpose of the book is the most crucial background factor of understanding John’s message. He insisted that the purpose is expressed out clearly in John 20:30-31”.²⁹ Though, throughout church history, there has been a good reason to believe that Apostle John wrote to replace, interpret or supplement the Synoptic Gospels, to restate the Christian gospel in Hellenized terms and as polemic or apology, Carson ascertains that; the proper place to begin is with John’s own statement of his purpose: Jesus did many other miracles signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, and that by believing you may have faith in his name (20:30-31).³⁰

²⁸ William Handrisken; *New Testament Commentary; Exposition of the Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953), 28

²⁹ Samuel M. Ngewa, *The Gospel of John; A Commentary for Pastors, Teachers and Preachers* (Nairobi: Evangel Publishing House, 2003), 3

³⁰ Donald A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 88, 89.

He continue that in fact it can easily be shown that this expression are used for both initial faith and continuing in faith so nothing can be resolved by the appeal to one textual various or the other.

2.5 The Periscope of the Text, John 17:21-23

John 17:21-13 is an excerpt of Jesus' farewell discourses with his disciples. The words of Jesus in chapter 13 through 17 are spoken to an unknown number of his followers ("13:1). It began after his last super with the disciples and he prayed after the Lord's Supper discourse to God for himself, disciples and future believers (those who will believe through apostolic message) in the presence of the eleven disciples (Judas had left them). Verse 21-23 is a part where he prayed for the future believer. It was a closing prayer

2.5.1 The Structure of Farewell discourse

A. Gathering scene (unity with Jesus expressed in mutual love)	13:1-35
B. Prediction of the disciples denial	13:36-38
C. Jesus' Departure tempered by assurance of power	14:1-14
D. Promise of the Holy Spirit	14:15-26
E. Troubling encounter with the world	14:27-31
F. The vine and branches teaching, producing community of mutual love	15:1-17
E1. Troubling encounter with the world	15:18-16:4a
D1. The promise of the Holy Spirit	16:4b-15
C1. Jesus departure tempered by assurance of the father's power	16:16-28
B1. Prediction of disciple denial	16:29-33

A1. Departing pray (unity with Jesus expressed in mutual love) 17:1-26³¹

The list shows parallel themes as well as the framing and centering of the discourse material. As Brouwer put it, the chiasmic structure of chapter 13 – 17 punctuates the importance of the position of the prayer within the entire scene³². Brouwer can agree that chapter 17 not only serves as an inclusion with the meal scene of chapter 13, but it summarizes the content of the discourses in chapter 13 through to 16.

2.5.2 Commentaries on John 17:21-23

The text has been explained by many commentators. The following are some of the views of some of them:

Beasley-Murray continue on verse 23, ‘I in them, and you in me.’ In the former case the redeemed become one by participating in the koinonia of the father and the son; in the latter case that participation is through their union with the son, a concept which is in harmony with representation of God. By this means redeemed men and women become ‘perfected into one’ (τετελειωμένοι): in this Gospel the latter term is chiefly used of Jesus achieving his work, so 4:34; 5:35; 17:4. Accordingly, the unity envisaged is possible only through the accomplished redemptive action of God in Christ.³³

Macdonald explained that in John 17:21, the prayer was for unity among believers, but this time it was with the salvation of sinners in view. The unity for which Christ prayed was not a matter of external church union. Rather it was a unity based on

³¹ Wayne Brouwer, *Literary development of John 13-17; A Chiastic Reading* (Atlanta; Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 185

³² Brouwer, *Literary development of John 13-17; A Chiastic Reading*, 185.

³³George R. Beasley-Murray, *Word Biblical Commentary of John* (Waco: Word Books Publisher, 1987), 301, 302.

common moral likeness. He was praying that believers might be one in exhibiting the character of God and of Christ.

This is what would cause the world to believe that God has sent him. This is the unity which makes the world say “I see Christ in those Christians as the father was seen in Christ”

17:22, In verse 11 the Lord prayed for unity in fellowship. In verse 21, it was unity in witness-bearing. Now it unity in glory. This looks forward to the time when saints will receive their glorified bodies “The glory which you gave me” is the glory of resurrection and ascension.

We do not have this glory yet. It has been given to us as far as the purposes of God are concerned, but we will not receive until the savior returns to take us to heaven. It will be manifested to the world when Christ returns to set up His kingdom on earth. At that time, the world will realize the vital unity between the father and the son, and the son and His people, and will believe (too late) that Jesus was the sent one from God. 17:23, The world will not only realize that Jesus was God the Son, but it will also know that believers were loved by God just as Christ was loved by God. That we should be so loved seems almost incredible, but there it is.³⁴

According to Carson and others, He made no distinction between those who had heard him personally and those who had heard through others. For both the prayer is for unity. The pattern for unity is the relationship between the father and the son in verse 21, the basis is abiding in the father and the son, and the purpose is evangelistic, in verse 21, 23. The cycle here is faith leading to unity which leads others to faith. Another aspect of the unity theme is glory, a theme which is echoed from the opening

³⁴ William MacDonald, *Believers Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Nelson Publisher, 1990), 1558.

words of this prayer. The suggestion is that the glory of Christ engenders unity. Not only must the unity be complete, but it must be shown to the world. If we pause to reflect on the church's record of disunity, we can easily see how far we have fallen short of Jesus' requirements.³⁵

Elwell comments that, before Jesus hinted at the church which would grow much later. The good shepherd has "other sheep not of this fold" (10:16). Now Jesus turns directly to concerns for others who will believe as a result of his disciples' work (17:20-26). It is interesting that Jesus' chief concern in 17:20-23 is again for unity. The later Johannine community must have been torn by divisions if 1 John is evidence (cf: 1John 7-11, 18-21). Again he ask that the Father/Son relationship would be the model of this unity (17:21; cf. v. 11). And again it is facilitated only by a profound spiritual unity with God in Christ (vv. 21, 23). Unity is not merely a human achievement, but flows from a mature walk with Christ.

Just as we noted the importance of Jesus' final public words (12:44-50), now we read his final private teachings for his disciples before his arrest. John 17:24-26 sweeps up subjects from the entire farewell discourse but emphasizes one central theme: Jesus desires that he and the father indwell the believer, conveying to him the certainty of God's love.³⁶

On the part of Tokunboh, Jesus had prayed for unity for his disciples (17:11), and now he prays for it for all believers (17:20) their unity is to be patterned on the unity of the father and the son (17:21, 22). But not only is this to be the model for their unity, they are also to share in this relationship (17:21b). Like the father and the son,

³⁵Donald A Carson, R. T. France and other, *New Bible Commentary (21st century Edition)* (Leicester: Inter varsity Press, 1994), 1060.

³⁶ Walter A. Elwell, *Baker Commentary on the Bible based on the NIV* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1989), 873.

believers are to be united in working towards their goal of bringing the world to believe in the father and the son.³⁷

2.6 Greek Text John 17:21- 23

21 ἵνα πάντες ἐν ᾧ σιν, καθὼς συ;, πα;τερ, ἐν ἐμοί; καὶ ἡ ἐν σοί;, ἵνα καὶ αὐτοί; ἐν ἡμῖν ᾧ σιν, ἵνα ὁ κόσμος πιστεύῃ/ ὅτι συ; με ἀπέστειλας.

22 καὶ τὴν δόξαν ἣν δέδωκάς μοι δέδωκα αὐτοῖς, ἵνα ᾧ σιν ἕν καθὼς ἡμεῖς ἐν, 23 ἐγὼ ἐν αὐτοῖς καὶ σὺ ἐν ἐμοί, ἵνα ᾧ σιν τετελειωμένοι εἰς ἐν, ἵνα γινώσκῃ ὁ κόσμος ὅτι σὺ με ἀπέστειλας καὶ ἠγάπησας αὐτοὺς καθὼς ἐμὲ ἠγάπησας³⁸

2.6.1 Translation of John 17:21- 23

21. That all (of them) may continuously be one as you, father in me and I in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

22 And the glory which you have given me (which is still with me today) I have given them; that they may be one as we are one;

23 I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity by themselves to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you loved me.

2.7 Exegesis of the Text (John 17:21-23)

The researcher, in this periscope will look at the Greek words which have bearing on the translation and effect of the text:

³⁷Tokunboh Adeyemo, *Africa Bible Commentary* (Nairobi: Word Aliver Publisher 2006), 1315.

³⁸Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, and others, *The Greek New Testament* (New York: Bible Society Publisher, 1975), 208.

ὄσιν - (Osin,) as used in verse 21 is a present subjunctive active of (ὄσι) refers to continuous or repeated action, without implying anything about the time of the action as accomplished by the subject of the verb. That they all continuously and repeatedly may be one. This therefore denotes that unity among the believers must be a continuous work.

πιστεύῃ - (Pisteue) as used, is a 3rd person singular aorist active (that the world may believe). Which is referring to the reality of the event or action that the world may believe that Jesus was sent by the father. The unity of future believers shall testify to the world God sent Jesus.

ἀπέστειλας. Apesteilas, is a 2nd person singular aorist tense. It is denoting a single action in the past which therefore suggests that Jesus was sent by the father in the past (time) once and he had come to accomplish the task (mission) for which he was sent.

δέδωκάς (Dedokas) as in this verse 22, is a 2nd person singular perfect indicative active (you have given), showing it has occurred in the past. The glory you have given to me which is still with me, this implies that the result of the glory was still with Jesus.

δέδωκα. (Dedoka), is a first person singular perfect indicative active (I have given) indicating already happened. The same glory which the father gave to Jesus, he gave to his disciples, and the result or effects of the glory is still or shall be with the disciples.

τετελειωμένοι, Teteleiomenoi, as in verse 23, is a perfect nominative plural middle voice. τετελειωμένοι is driven from the root word "τελεο" (end). In the sense of verse 23, is to come to complete end of unity. τετελειωμένοι, if in its normal tense, is a nominative plural masculine participle perfect passive tense. But as used in this

narrative, 17:23 is a middle voice not passive. τετελειωμένοι Is plural nominative because it ends with "οι" as it stands and which further suggest that all believers are acting as subjects in this case.

τετελειωμένοι is in perfect tense which supposed that an action has been taken place but the effect has continue to date and will keep on and shall continue even in future.

τετελειωμένοι is a middle voice as in John 17:23. In Classical Greek, the middle voice often has a reflexive sense: the subject acts on or for itself, such as "The believers are to unit of themselves". It can be transitive or intransitive. It can occasionally be used in a causative sense, such as "The father causes his son to be set free". The middle voice denotes grasping for oneself or with reference to oneself, and thus to comprehend. In the context of 17:23, the responsibility of unity is upon the believers; they are to carry out the 'action of unity by themselves for their own good. "May they be brought to complete unity by themselves". Therefore, the unity in 17:23 is not to be carried out by God but by the believers who shall come to believe through the message of the disciples. Here, the subject themselves (believers) are to carry out the task of unity upon themselves for their own good for the world to know that God sent Jesus.

2.8 Conclusion

The chapter has dealt with the issue such as the background to the fourth Gospel, Authorship and Date of the Gospel, Purpose of the writing the fourth Gospel, Periscope of the text, Greek Text on John 17:21-23, Exegesis of the text, translation of the text and what other commentators said about the text.

CHAPTER THREE

THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH

3.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the issue on nature of the church: These include Israel as united people of God in Old Testament, the disciples at time of Jesus, the unity of early church, the church as the body of Christ, the Church in Christian history; the church in medieval period, the church under Reformation period and Pentecostal Dispensation.

3.2 Israel as united people of God

In Genesis 12:1-3; 15:1-6 and 17: 1-8 God made a binding and eternal promise to Abraham to make him great and through him, his descendants will be numerous and that he would be a great nation. According to Barth, "God elected the whole people of Israel as his own people"³⁹ This presupposes that Israel was God's choice for his own purposes. Thus Israel was to be known as the people of God set out for God's will. We are told in Exodus that Moses was asked by God to go and tell Pharaoh "let my people go". This indicated that Israel was God's "property" and he loved them and purposed to send them to the Promised Land. It is interesting to note that the covenant which God entered into with His people became the mark of God's "ownership" of Israel. The covenant thus unified the people into obedient devotion to God. Leonard underscores this assertion by saying that "it is not merely that there was a nation

³⁹Christoph Barth, *God with Us: A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapid: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 42.

called Israel which the covenant formed into a certain type of nation; it is even true that the covenant makes them into a nation.⁴⁰

3.3 The disciples at the time of Jesus

The people who became Jesus' disciples were those who believed him as their Lord and personal saviour. Jesus called everyone to repent and accept God's salvation. Those who responded to his call or invitation followed him as his disciples. According to Smith "Jesus was gathering together the people of God who would form the nucleus of the post-resurrection church. Indeed, this band of disciples was the church in embryo (born on the Day of Pentecost).⁴¹ Clowney affirms in his writings that the disciples are the servants of the master and others in his name. He broke bread and shared with them and fed them with the words of God. This confirms that the early disciples were those who believed in Christ and as Galatians 3:26 says, we are the sons of God through faith in Christ and in him we all are one.⁴²

3.4 The unity of the Early Church

After the ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven, it was thought of that, the disciples would be scattered. But, we are told by the scriptures that these disciples returned to Jerusalem and continued with one accord in prayer (Acts 1: 12-14, 2:1). They had been assured by Jesus that another comforter or counsellor would come. It is significant to note that with the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, these disciples were further united with the Spirit's power. The Pentecost event transformed these timid disciples into a fearless army who were prepared to die for the course of Christ. Thus, in the midst of persecution, these disciples were able to stand on their grounds.

⁴⁰Leonard Johnston, *A History of Israel* (London: Shed and Ward, 1964), 35.

⁴¹David L. Smith, *All God's People: A theology of Church* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1996), 235.

⁴²Edmund P. Clowney, *The Church* (Illinois: Inter Varsity, 1995), 46.

We are again told in the book of Acts that the early Christians were further united by their continuous prayer, Bible studies, fellowship and the breaking of bread (Acts 2:42). An amazing aspect of their lifestyle is that they became a community in which they shared all things in common. Even though they were people of different tribal descent and social background (rich and poor alike), they remained solidly united in their love for Christ and in joyous fellowship. They buried their racial and linguistic barriers that seemed to separate them. This sense of unity brought a seemingly great awe among many people in the then known world.

From Acts 15: 7, we are told that there arose a threat in the church. According to Moore and Neff, the Jerusalem council comprising the apostles and the elders came together to consider the challenge posed by the false teachers concerning the addition of circumcision and the Law of Moses to the working of the Spirit in the Body of Christ. They further maintain that the council concluded that "God made no distinction between Jew and Gentile, for he purified their heart by faith. It should be realized that God's greatest concern was, and is, the heart (Acts 15:8) Thus we are united in our hearts because of Christ and the enabling power of the Holy Spirit.

The love of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit continued to work in the early church bringing in the new converts daily and working of various miraculous works which gave credence to the Lord's presence in his Church.⁴³

3.5 The Church as the Body of Christ

A key description of the church in the Pauline Epistles is the concept of the body of Christ. Just as in the natural sense, the human body is composed of many parts, so it is

⁴³John Moore & Ken Neff, *A New Testament Blueprint for the Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 29.

with the church. The many parts of the body all function together to keep the entire body sound and healthy.

When one part fails to function properly, it affects the entire body mechanism. It is significant to note that, no part of the human body is irrelevant, or useless. All are important for the healthy functioning of the human body.

In describing the church as the body of Christ, Paul would like us to understand that, it also has many different parts which are held together by Christ who is the head. Thus, all believers, those who have accepted Christ and placed their faith in him, are together members of the body Christ. No matter one's social, cultural or economic background, in so far as he or she is in Christ, then membership of the body of Christ is guaranteed. In 1 Corinthians 16:18, Paul writes to the Christian community at Corinth; "For by one spirit we were all baptized into one body, Jews or Greeks, slaves or free, and all were made to drink of one Spirit. (1 Corinth. 12:13). Arthur believes that the "Spirit regenerates all believers, places them in one body of Christ and comes to in dwell them". He concludes that the unity of the church is all wrapped up in the spirit.⁴⁴

Craig maintains that Paul uses the image of the Body of Christ as the divine ruler who is the head of the church. (Ephesians 1:22-23). Thus, Paul's use of the image of Christ's headship is closely related to the conception of God's redemptive reign and to be 'in Christ' is to be within the redemptive reign of God that is both already and not yet.⁴⁵

3.6 The Church in Christian History

⁴⁴John Mac Arthur Jr., *The Church: the Body of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1974), 17.

⁴⁵Craig Van Gelder, *The Essence of the church: A Community Created by the Spirit* (Michigan: Baker Books, 2000), 111.

The Christian faith has been preserved and advanced by hundreds of monumental events, from its inception to the present days. Wars, councils, creeds, controversies, missions, schisms, denominations, translations, others, edicts and so on. According to Taylor it was into such and moral degenerates, sensual and cruel world that Christianity was thrust to conquer and raise to a fitting place in which to live".⁴⁶ It is not surprising the church is still seeing these challenges in these contemporary times. The church has being through many epochs as follows: Medieval Period, Reformation Period, and Pentecostal Dispensation. These periods were also fundamental as far as doctrinal differences in the church are concerned. It is therefore necessary to discuss these periods in this chapter.

3.6.1 The Church in Medieval Period

The church in the medieval age experienced the first Great spiritual revival. While the middle age were a time of great upheaval and change for the church, the theologians of this period had only a few elements to add to the evolution of ecclesiology. The two concepts that did come to the fore were the primacy of Roman and identification of the church with the kingdom of God. Smith writes, it was this time that the system of sacraments in the Roman Catholic Church was completed and the numbers set at seven by the council of Florence in 1439.⁴⁷

The church in this period was split into the eastern and western Orthodox Church all because of the Christology. Smith added that, "the variation in the views of the Lord's Supper between Amdocs of Milan and Augustine of Hippo created some tension in the Western Church"⁴⁸. Aside the Lord supper there were problems in Renaissance,

⁴⁶Gene Taylor, *A Study of Church History* (Centerville: Padfield Road 1998), 9.

⁴⁷David L. Smith, *All God's People; A History of Theology of the Church* (Illinois: Victor Books Publication, 1996), 66.

⁴⁸ Smith, *All God's People; A History of Theology of the Church*, 67.

which, some, like Erasmus Jan Hus, and John Wycliffe wrote letters to combat such practice in the church. Most of the breakaway church leaders justify the action based on this major split of church into eastern and western and therefore say there is nothing wrong with church division which subsequently runs into reformation period.

3.6.2 The Church under Reformation Period

The Protestant Reformation is probably one of the most important events in the history of the world. When studying the sources of the development of denominationalism, it can be said with justification that the concept of denominationalism was birthed during the Reformation.

While the reformation may be seen as a religious revolution which attempted to retain the purity and simplicity of New Testament Christianity, its causes were many and varied. They include economic, political, and intellectual factors. But diverse as they were, they combined to produce a solution which profoundly affected the common conceptions of the church and its ministry.

According to Smith “The purpose of reformation was to reform the church but the divide it”.⁴⁹ The key personalities were Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli. They set to correct the unbiblical practices in the Roman Catholic Church but did not succeed which also led to Protestantism, hence the division. The division further led to the multiplicity of other church traditions such as Lutherans, Anglican, Basel and others.

3.6.3 Pentecostal Dispensation

The Azusa Street Revival was a historic Pentecostal revival meeting that took place in Los Angeles, California and is the origin of the Pentecostal Movement. It was led by

⁴⁹ Smith, *All God's People; A History of Theology of the Church*, 9.

William J. Seymour, an African American preacher. It began with a meeting on April 9, 1906, and continued until roughly 1915. The revival was characterized by ecstatic spiritual experiences accompanied by miracles, dramatic worship services, speaking in tongues, and inter-racial mingling. The participants were criticized by the secular media and Christian theologians for behaviors considered to be outrageous and unorthodox, especially at the time. Today, the revival is considered by historians to be the primary catalyst for the spread of Pentecostalism in the 20th century. As time went by, division set in because of theological issues that began to divide the movement. In line with this Burgess and Eduard stated that, "the racial harmony of Azusa Street waned within a few months, and as a result, Pentecostalism remains racially divided with very limited progress toward reconciliation."⁵⁰

Many churches today are products of Azusa Street Revival movement, which began effective and sustained evangelization in the world including Ghana in 1828 with the arrival of the western missionary societies.⁵¹

3.7 Conclusion

The discussion in this section captured issues such as Israel as united people of God in the Old Testament, the disciples at the time of Jesus, the unity of the early church, the church as the Body of Christ, the church in Christian History, the church as the body of Christ, the church in Christian History, the church in medieval period, the Reformation period; Pentecostal dispensation.

⁵⁰ Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard M. Van Der Maas, *International Dictionary of Pentecost and Charismatic Movement* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Company, 2002), xviii.

⁵¹ Abamfo Ofori. Atiemo, *The Rise of the Charismatic Movement in the Mainline Churches in Ghana* (Accra: Asempa Publisher, 1993), 24.

CHAPTER FOUR

INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the study examines the following: analysis of findings from the field of interview, implication of the text, significance of denominationalism, significance of church unity in the mission of God.

4.2 Analysis of Findings

From the passage (John 17:21-23), it was said that Jesus was very concerned with the unity of the church and therefore prayed for his future believers to continue to be in union with him as he is with the father. From the findings from the field of interview, three of the four interviewees agreed that Jesus' prayer was not for one world church but one community of believers with a common faith in Christ. That, the meaning of John 17:21-23 is that all believers will live in peace or co-existence as a community of one faith. Unity in the church has always been a problem in Christianity and this is because of human factor such as selfish ambition. Jesus was not praying for one physical church but the unity of believers in the faith, the brotherhood of all believers in the world. One mind, one purpose and one action in faith. As in 1 Corinthians 12, a tree with many branches with the same fruits but one system.

On the other hand, in an interview with Gabriel Owusu Asare on 8th May 2015, at Samaritan Villa Guest House he is of the view that, Jesus' prayer was not for common faith or brotherhood, he did not support the idea of denominations, on the basis that Jesus prayed for one united church and not as stated by other three. Aside his opinion,

he made a comment, that man's conscience is powerful and God will judge us according to our conscience, so if one does something and his conscience does not condemn him or her, the person is permitted to continue in whatever he is doing but if it condemns him he must stop. Implying that, if the break-away churches (churches out of the Catholic Church) are not condemn by their conscience then, they should keep on. Jesus was born into sectarian society (Judaism), where there were so many sects but did Jesus ever condemn them or tried to bring them together. Therefore, if he never spoke against it, it suppose that His prayer could meant for bringing sects or churches together as one universal church.

The purpose of this unity is at least in twofold: (a) that believers may be in the Father and the Son and must be united by themselves and (b) that the world may believe that the Father sent Jesus. Jesus prayed that we may have the same oneness that He and the Father have. As we experience this God-like intimacy with one another, the world will believe that the Father sent the Son. In other words, Christian unity enables the world to see and understand that Jesus is divine in His origin and is God Himself. After all, one of the greatest miracles known to humankind is when Christians get along and are united as people with a common destiny⁵².

According to S. K, Adofo, unity is paramount, unity will win the day and that "Divisions in the church breed atheism in the world."⁵³ The converse is also true: Unity in the church will build belief of people in the world. The unity will impact the community positively. We can tell our neighbours, co-workers, classmates, family, and friends and other religions that we are one with each other as a church and that alone is testimony to the world about Jesus Christ as one sent from God.

⁵²Keith Krell, Free Bible Lessons: One church one world, last modified March 15, 2015, accessed May 28, 2015, [https:// bible.org/seriespage/14-one-church-won-world-john](https://bible.org/seriespage/14-one-church-won-world-john).

⁵³ Interview with S. K. Adofo, (Rev) Primate of Brotherhood Church, South Suntreso (14th April 2015)

Again, the purpose of this unity is "that the world" might "believe" that the Father "sent" the Son, namely: that Jesus was God's Son. The display of mutual love among Jesus' disciples shows that they are His disciples. Their love for one another shows that they really do follow His teachings and possess His life. This gives evidence that Jesus really was who He claimed to be. It vindicates His teaching and so glorifies Him.

As the exegesis emphasizes on the unity that must be continued by the believer, they (believers) must carry out the unity by themselves. The findings from the interview emphasizes that God has bound the Christians together as one body.

All the interviewees agreed that, denominationalism is as result of different interpretation, doctrinal difference. Grudem agree with them about the causes of denominationalism. He correctly stated that there can be a number of wrong reasons for church separation such as personal ambition and pride, or differences on minor doctrines or practices⁵⁴. They (interviewees) remarked that a need for the separation from a church may arise when the doctrinal position of the church deviates in such a manner for biblical standards.

Eshun mentioned that difference in interpretations also lead to proliferation of churches in contemporary Christendom. He stressed that it does not matter how numerous denominationalism church has become, the common faith in Christ cannot be affected⁵⁵. It was deduced from Owusu Asare that, denominationalism has come to its peak because most church Leaders are now craving for their own self-aggrandizement or selfish ambitions and also added that church has been seen as property for the

⁵⁴ Grudem Wayne, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1994), 880.

⁵⁵ Interview with Kennedy Eshun (Rev), District Pastor, The Church of Pentecost, Pankrono District (23rd April 2015)

family member to be inherited when the head pastor is dead. That, when that happened, associate leaders in the church are forced to go and start their own churches.⁵⁶

The findings also revealed effect of denominationalism as both positive and negative. Positive in the sense that, denominationalism has contributed in the following ways: It has accelerated the spread of the Gospel, different Christian groups pay visit to sick in hospitals, Building of school, changing lives of people and contribution to nation building.

On the other hand, it has negative effect which are: it breed more divisions, increase false doctrine and very difficult to control since all churches are autonomy of themselves. Christian or members of denominations look down upon others thinking theirs is the best.

4.3 Implications of the Text

The study has shown that, as believers, we are to live in loving fellowship with one another caring for one another as Jesus did with his disciples. The members of the church are of one family with one goal and destiny and must live and manifest the spirit of oneness, togetherness and singleness of purpose.

The text also brought to light the fact that as Christians, we are to live with the assurance that Christ prayed for us to be able to live as one people. When we live with this consciousness, then the unity with one another will be the most important value to any Christian since it is witnessed by the world.

⁵⁶ Interview with Gabriel Owusu Asare (Surgeon) Roman Catholic Priest, Samaritan Village (8th May, 2015)

Christ has given us the perimeters of our unity, that we should be one based on the unity between Him and the Father. In other words, church members should live in unity to the extent that without a fellow brother or Christian one cannot live. Jesus never did anything without the Father, in fact they were in union with one another in that nothing could separate them. So the church must emulate the union between the Father and the Son.

For this unity to exist in the contemporary church, there should not be any room for castigation of one another. Pastors should not use their pulpits to advertise their churches and castigate other churches in the name of trying to win members to their churches. Members of the same family should not fight even if there is friction, they should solve it amicably. Platforms should be used for bringing Christians together as one family and not to divide us.

Moreover there should be team work in the churches. Some people feel they are not part of church just because they have been left out in the activities of the church. They may feel of no value in the church. There, if all get involved as team players, it will promote unity and cohesion in the church.

In addition, there should be no room for discriminations in church. Things that encourage discrimination in the churches should be fought against so that all will feel loved and part of God's household. Thus, there should be room for sharing of ideas, and equal treatment of all of members. Discrimination can injure the unity and cohesion of the church.

Last but important is that, the church's unity is a catalyst for evangelism. Christians should know that the unity among them is a witness to the world that God sent Jesus to the world and this must be taken seriously. If Christians through disunity cause

people to disbelieve God by their actions and inactions, the researcher believes God will not take it kindly.

4.3.1 Significance of Denominationalism

Denominationalism seems to lead to church growth. Irrespective of how one sees denominationalism whether good or bad we cannot deny the fact that it has played a major role in the expanding of the kingdom of God and for that matter the church. It also breeds quality leadership in church which some of the Christian are looking up to in living their lives. Denominations have given people the opportunity to climb the leadership ladder and through that others have been inspired by their leadership skills and style. Again denominationalism has injected healthy competition in church mission. Churches everywhere seem to be competing for membership and therefore this competition in mission tends to fulfill the Great Commission.

4.3.2 The significance of Church unity in the mission of God

In the text (John 17;21-23), Jesus prays that those who believe in him might be unified. That is one of his goals. However, in this text, unity is also seen as a means to another goal. Verse 20-21 says, "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me".

Antwi Fredua stated "Christian proclamation might make the gospel audible, but Christians living together in local congregations make the gospel visible."⁵⁷ This text teaches us that: Church unity, created by a unified Godhead, pictures a uniting gospel. In other words, disunity paints a distorted image of the gospel to the world. Church

⁵⁷ Interview with Raymond Antwi Fredua (Rev.) Resident Pastor, Living Stream Church, Tasemanso, Kumasi (29th April, 2015)

unity erases the blemish mark of the church. The unity must enhance church cohesion among believers of the Christian faith.

Jesus first prays for himself, then for the disciples, and here he shifts his focus to the disciples whom he prays for once again. “*Not for these alone, but for those who will (in the future) believe in me through their word*”. That includes Christian of today. This prayer is not some vague generality, In the researcher's mind, Jesus has a particular people in view whom he is praying for. He prays; “*that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us*”. He prays that we might be unified, giving us the Trinity as our model.

Jesus prays that our unity might resemble something of the Trinitarian relationship between the Father and Son. So, we are distinct people, the gospel do not have to change the way you dress (unless it is immodest), it does not have to change your preferred culture (unless it displeases the Lord), it doesn't have to change your personality (unless that personality conflicts with the fruits of the Spirit). We should be distinct and yet a united people.

The inward life of the church has outward ramifications. Often, well-meaning Christians, who despise institutions, will demean anything a congregation does to serve its members. In their mind, the congregation exists solely for the benefit of the outsider. David Bosch, in his *magnum opus on mission*, writes of the early church, “Luke's church may be said to have a bipolar orientation, ‘inward’ and ‘outward’”⁵⁸ So, next time we are considering that backbiting, or gossip, or whatever causes disunity, know that not only are you sinning against the Lord, your actions cause the gospel to be skewed before the world.

⁵⁸ Bosch, *Transforming Missions: Paradigm shifts in Theology of Missions*, 331.

So we must be eager to maintain unity here in this body. However, this is where many churches stop. The clear direction of this text is that church unity is recognized by the world. Carson writes, “this purpose clause at the end of verse 21 shows beyond possibility of doubt that the unity is meant to be observable.”⁵⁹ So, if unity is only displayed within the bounds of these walls, we’re missing something of what Jesus is praying for here. *Application: Be unified, but that doesn’t mean isolation. Jesus just prayed, “I do not ask that you take them out of the world. . . . As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.*

4.4 Conclusion

The discussion dealt with the analysis of the findings, implication of the text, significance of the denominationalism, significance of church unity in the mission.

⁵⁹ Carson Donald Arthur, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 12.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of the Study

The study examined the effects of denominationalism on the unity of the church; based on an exegetical study of John 17:21-23. It was divided into five chapters with some subdivisions where necessary. The work commenced with an introductory chapter which focused on general overview of the study

The work further examined some background issues of the Gospel of John. It focused on the authorship and date, purpose of writing of the fourth Gospel, the periscope of the text, which puts the study in the right context, commentators view on the text, the Greek Text, exegesis of the text and translation of the text. Moreover, the work examined Israel as a united people of God, the disciples at the time of Jesus, the unity of the early church, the church as the body of Christ, the church in Christian history, the church in the medieval period and the Pentecostal dispensation.

Additionally, the work dealt with the interpretation and analysis of data which include: the analysis of findings, the implication of the text (John 17:21-23), significance of denominationalism, and significance of church unity in the mission of God.

The work concludes with a summary of the study, the general conclusion and some recommendations.

5.2 General Conclusion

The study set to examine the issue of the effects of denominationalism on church unity in the light of John 17:21-23. In line with the text, it can be noted that the unity of believers is possible based on the relationship between Jesus and the Father. If Christians see themselves as members of the body of Christ, then it means that we belong to one another, and thus the unity that Christ prayed for can be realized in the contemporary church. Christians must see members of denominations as one people under different roofs and endeavor to foster unity among themselves. We shared a common faith, and we have Christ as our Lord and Saviour.

5.3 Recommendations

Even though there seem to be some differences in opinions regarding the prayer of Jesus in John 17:21-13, there are sufficient grounds for church unity and peaceful coexistence as one body. The following are being suggested.

1. The Idea of local council of Churches should be given much impetus so that the unity of the church will be strengthened.
2. Inter-churches fellowship should be encouraged. Church leaders should endeavor to champion the ideals of brotherhood, togetherness and cooperation at area such as annual games, quizzes, competitions such joint programmes should be organized for all churches to come together and share ideas as these activities can eventually end up in uniting the Christians.
3. All pastors conferences should be encouraged so that pastors from different denominations will come together to share ideas. This has the tendency of removing differences that may exist between them. Sharing, correction and encouragement among ministers and spill over to the congregations to effect unity.

4. Church based theological institutions should open their doors to Christians from other denominations so as to remove all exclusivism and promote church unity

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PERSONALITIES INTERVIEWED

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Raymond Antwi Fredua, Living Stream Chapel, Setamansu, 26th April 2015

Gabriel Owusu Asare (Monsignor), Roman Catholic Church Retired Priest, Samaritan
Villa Guest House, 8th May, 2015

Kennedy Eshun (Rev.), The Church of Pentecost, Pankrono District, Pankrono, 12th
May, 2015.

APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Your personal interpretation of John 17:21-23
2. What are your views about church unity?
3. What kind of unity was Jesus praying for?
4. Can you boldly say that the church is united? If yes in what ways?
5. What is your understanding about church division?
6. What are your views about various denominations in Christianity
7. What is the impact of denominationalism in Ghana?
8. In your opinion, what can be done to bring church unity?