

## **BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES OF ECUMENISM AND ITS EFFECTS ON MISSIONARY OUTREACH IN NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

*The church, nowadays, is passing through an untold schism. There is no doubt that proliferation of churches contributed to the unspeakable sectionalism and competition which have brought about lack of common understanding among Christians let alone adherents of other faith. The Lord Jesus Christ, towards the tail end of His ministry here on earth, made His mind known to the world by the reason of His prayer for the church in John 17: 21-23. He prayed that those who are members of the household should live together in harmony "That they all may be one" This also will motivate the whole world to believe that He was sent by God. However, this paper adopted a historical and phenomenological approach to explain ecumenism from biblical perspective and its effects on evangelistic missionary outreach in Nigeria. The paper discovered that ecumenism has made positive impacts various ways in Nigeria such as creating atmosphere of understanding, soul winning, expansion of Christ kingdom, societal development, peace and unity. The missionary outreach of ecumenism cuts across political, economic, educational and religious sectors in constructive global influences. This paper therefore recommends that ecumenism should be encouraged in Nigeria not only for positive missionary outreach but for sake of unity, security, economic development and political stability.*

**Keywords:** Biblical, ecumenism, evangelism, missionary, outreach.

### **Introduction**

Ecumenism is representing the entire (Christian) world, formed in English as an ecclesiastical word, from late Latin *Oecumenicus* "general, universal", from Greek *oikoumenikos* "from the whole world", from the *oikoumene* "the inhabited world" (as known to the ancient Greek); the Greek and their neighbors considered as developed human society (as opposed to barbarian lands), in later use "the Roman

world” and in the Christian sense in ecclesiastical Greek, from *oikoumenes*, present passive participle of *oikein* “inhabit”, from *oikos* “house, habitation”

Ecumenism is a movement or tendency towards worldwide Christian unity or cooperation. The word ecumenism comes from a family of classical Greek words: *oikos*, meaning a “house”, “family”, or “family”, or “nation”, *oikoumene*, “the whole inhabited world” and *oikoumenikos*, “open to or participating in the whole world”.

The Greek *oikoumene* comes from the noun *oikeo* (“to live, to dwell”). *Oikoumene*, which is derived from the present passive participle of the verb, suggest the land in which people live or dwell and is usually, translated “the inhabited world”. The word initially had no theological implications; it was a descriptive term used by the Greeks to describe the world they knew, and later by the Romans to describe the Roman Empire.

### **Concept of Ecumenism**

The root of ecumenism could be traced back to the Holy Bible, the collection of books that serve as informational and guiding rules to the ecclesia: the congregation, assembly or group of people of different ideology, language and belief called out to have fellowship with God as a body or an entity. According to Knowles (1976) its origin could be drawn to the following scriptural references: Isaiah 11:12 “He will raise an ensign for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth”. Jurji (1959) opines that this is an indication that some people are inhabitants of the earth (world) who are very dear to God but scattered and the intention and promise of God is to gather them together as indivisible members of a family. The Torah also establishes the etymology of ecumenism. “And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.....And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make a name lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the earth” (Genesis 11:1ff). The phrases: “and the whole earth” and “let us build us a city” were an affirmation that ecumenism has its root in the word of God, which is Bible.

Ecumenism is the principle or aim of promoting unity among the world’s Christian Churches. Obrien (1969) defined it as a *elan vital*, a vital force, and a manifestation of the action of the Holy Spirit in the Christian community. Ecumenism as defined by Father George Tavard, is the movement of the thought and action which is concern with the reunion of Christians. Since Christians are grouped in communities, or churches, one level of communication will be between the

Churches themselves and of this level Father Gustave Weighel (2010) remarked: The ecumenical movement is not an arena for the triumph of one Church over another. Ecumenism involves promoting or fostering Christian unity throughout the world. It relates to movement (ecumenical movement), especially among protestant groups since the 1800, aimed at achieving universal Christian unity and church union through international organizations that corporate on matters of mutual concern.

Oxford Dictionary.com defines ecumenism as interreligious or interdenominational (an ecumenical marriage). It is a mixture of diverse elements or styles; mixed (an ecumenical meal of German, Italian and China dishes). Ecumenism is referred to as efforts by Christians of different Church traditions to develop closer relationships and better understanding. The term is also often used to refer to efforts towards the visible and organic unity of different Christian denominations in some form. Ecumenism has been viewed as the “gathering of the scattered Children of God” by Jurji (1959).

Ecumenism is the movement or tendency toward worldwide Christian’s unity or cooperation. The term of recent origin, emphasizes on the universality of the Christian Churches. According to Olaomo, Yetunde Bolaji, ecumenism refers to initiatives aimed at greater religious unity or cooperation. Fatokun, Atowoju and Egbetakin (2010) view it as the movement for worldwide cooperation and unity among Christian Churches, the word is predominantly used by and with reference to Christian Churches and denominations separated by distance, practice, doctrine and history.

### **Old Testament Perspectives of Ecumenism**

Having tried to establish the origin of ecumenism and exhaustively defined what it is all about, it is very imperative to look at it from the Biblical perspective that is, the mind and position of God on ecumenism. Ecumenism simply and literally means coming together of two or more people as an indivisible family to accomplish a common goal. This was demonstrated when God was about to create heaven and earth. In Gen. 1:1-2, “In the beginning God created heaven and the earth.....And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters”. The Spirit mentioned there could be seen as a person who did the work of surveying the earth. But in verse 26 of the same chapter, it became clear that the work of creation was done in unification of Triune God by the used of plural pronoun “us” and “our”. If God did not do the work of creation in isolation, then, the coming together of the people of God called Christian as one indivisible body to pursue one course

(preaching the gospel of repentance, forgiveness, salvation and eternity) cannot be overlooked according to Jirji (1959).

The whole of the Old Testament reveals that God is gathering a people together. Isaiah 11:12 establishes thus: "He will raise an ensign for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth". In fact the story of Tower of Babel in Genesis 11:1ff affirms that, originally, the whole earth was ecumenical in nature because the people then were of one language and of one speech. They were in unity, togetherness and one mind to achieve one aim and goal. "And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven, and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the earth". Jirji (1959) avers that this call was ecumenical in nature. God Himself confirmed the ecumenical movement of this people, and said "Behold the people is one, and they have all one language, and this they began to do; and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do". The heavenly ecumenical family (The Trinity and possibly Angels) had to come down to scatter them because the motive behind their ecumenical movement was evil (Gen. 11:7).

The scenario in Gen. 11:1ff could represent the ecumenical concept which claims that all Christian Churches can come together as one united body here and now, if we have one heart and a new spirit as stated in Ezekiel 11:17-20. "Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD; I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. And they shall come thither, and they shall take away all the detestable things thereof from thence. And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give an heart of flesh: That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God"(KJV).

The strength of ecumenism from Old Testament is further entrenched by the words of King Solomon in Ecclesiastes 4:9ff "Two heads are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labour...". The book Deuteronomy also establishes the fact that one will chase a thousand, but two will chase ten thousand (Deut. 32:30). This is an indication that there is nothing unity and togetherness (ecumenism) cannot achieve if God is involved.

## **New Testament Perspectives of Ecumenism**

Christian ecumenism is an outgrowth of Jesus' commandments to love one's neighbor as oneself, and to make both love and unity the first and foremost principles in Christian practice. Predicated on proactively responding to Jesus' admonition to be "one in Him", (John 17 and Philippians 2), Christians are encouraged to reach out to estranged members of faith in other Churches.

According to Edmund Schlink, most important in Christian ecumenism is that people focus primarily on Christ, not on separate Church organization. In his work, *Okumenische Dogmatik* (1983), he says Christians who see the risen Christ at work in the lives of various Christians and in diverse Churches, realize that the unity of Christ's Church has never been distorted and obscured by different historical experiences and by spiritual myopia. For Phan (1990) both are overcome in renewed faith in Christ. The interconnectivity and interrelation of the "Triune God" that is, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit as reveal in the scriptures gives more volume to the necessity of ecumenism among people call Christians.

The Biblical basis for ecumenism from New Testament writings are as follows:

- 1. At baptism of Jesus:** When Jesus was to be baptized at River Jordan, Holy Spirit came upon Him like a dove and God spoke and declared Him as His Beloved Son- this could be seen as a unified empowerment on Jesus and His ministry (Matt. 3:16ff). If all Christians can take a clue from, this yearning our coming together as a team for kingdom work's sake would not be difficult.
- 2. The Great Commission:** Jesus Christ reveals that the work of souls winning and discipleship can be more effective and best achieved when we come and do things together from one single spirit, soul and body, by commanding us to go to all nations and baptize in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit- Matt. 28:19. It is of great importance to know that, according to the command of Jesus in Matt. 28:19, the Triune God must be fully present in our lives as Christians Churches before ecumenism can take its full place.
- 3. Ecumenism as the heartbeat of God:** Jesus' main purpose of coming to the world was to reconcile us to God in unity and this He confirms in John 10:16 when He said He would bring back the lost sheep to the fold and those who were not of the fold shall be sought for so that there can be one

fold and one shepherd. Therefore, for ecumenism to be effective among Christian Churches there must be a true reconciliation.

4. **That they may be one:** This was the prayer and pleads of Jesus to God for His followers in John 17:21ff. He understood the power of unity, cooperation and togetherness as an effective and irresistible powerful tool of speaking with one voice to accomplishing impossible, fulfilling the Kingdom task committed into their hands and fighting their common foes. The oneness Jesus advocated and prayed for, is the one borne out of perfection and not strife or deceit (Luke 9:46). “ .....that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.
5. **United we stand divided we fall:** The word of Jesus Christ in Matt. 12:25 gives credence to the necessity of ecumenism among Christian Churches. “Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them; every Kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand”<sup>23</sup>. For us as Christian communities; to be strong in one voice, action, to stand against the wiles of the devil and gate of hell not to prevail against the Church of God and as well to be able to accomplish God’s purpose for the universal Church, we must come together as one indivisible body of Christ.
6. **Paul’s message of oneness to the Ephesus Churches:** Paul the Apostle understood the importance and effectiveness of ecumenism of Christian Churches and admonished the Ephesians’ Churches to keep the unity of the Spirit, live in harmony because there is one body, one spirit, one Lord and one baptism (Eph. 4:3-4). The coming together of this present age Churches can only be possible if we accept the message of Paul to the Churches in Ephesus.
7. **The first letter of Paul to the Churches in Corinth:** Paul, servant of God advocated for oneness, unity and coming together of Churches in Corinth because in division they cannot stand. He preached against the claims of superiority of one Church over the other, which is a major ailment called “spiritual cancer” that is eating deep into the body of Christ (1Corinth.12:4ff). The only drug that can cure the “spiritual cancer” is our readiness to come to term that, though denominations may be defer but

our God is one, Jesus Christ we all believe in is one, Holy Spirit is one, the love of God we all profess is one, Bible, being the word of God we all read and use as our guide is one ( the versions may be different but the word of God therein is the same), the baptism is one either by sprinkling or by immersion.

8. **The Pentecost Experience:** The author of the book of Acts affirms the importance and effectiveness of ecumenism in Acts of Apostles 2:1 “When the day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all together in one place”. The phrase “they were all gathered in one place” shows God is interested in our unity and in align ourselves with this, the better for us in actualizing God’s promise for His Church here on earth and in heaven. More so, the testimony of others (Acts 2:5-11), who saw Jesus’ disciples who gathered in a place, speaking in different languages and tongues cutting across Africa, Europe, Asia and Mid- East Continents tells us that our diversity in languages, cultures, traditions and tribes should not be a barrier for Christian Churches to come together to serve God under the Umbrella of ecumenism.
  
9. **Broken down the wall of partition:** Apostle Paul’s letter to the Churches in Ephesus: Ephesians 2:14-21, “For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostilities, by abolishing in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end.....for through him (Jesus) we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God”. This message of Paul establishes the fact that God had broken down any wall of hostilities, superiorities, segregations, egoism and many other divisional vices among Christian brethren by giving us His only begotten Son, Jesus who is our peace. Accepting Jesus as our Lord and Savior should not only be mere confession but living and manifesting the purpose of His coming to this world of ours. In as much as we still allow all these divisional vices that Jesus had broken down by His death and resurrection to keep us at bay, then my question and fear is: Which God are we really professing and serving, and what is our hope of eternity if we cannot come together as members of the household of God?

## **Effects of Ecumenism on Evangelistic Missionary Outreach in Nigeria**

Effect means a change that is as a result or consequence of an action or other cause. It could be positive or negative. Weigel (1957) argues thus: if ecumenism is the quest for Christian unity, it must be understood what the divisions are which must be overcome. Christianity has not been a monolithic faith since the first century or Apostolic Age, if ever and today there exists a large variety of groups that share a common history and tradition within and without mainstream Christianity. Christianity is the largest religion in the world (making up approximately one-third of the population) and the various divisions have commonalities and differences in tradition, theology, church government, doctrine, and language.

### **Positive Effects of Ecumenism on Evangelical Missionary Outreach in Nigeria**

The following are some of the positive effects of ecumenism on evangelical missionary outreach in Nigeria:

1. ***Ecumenism brings understanding among brethren:*** The sole aim of ecumenism is for everybody to be on the same page. But this will not be possible if there is no understanding among brethren. This understanding can be seen among the brethren of the same Christian denominations like Redeemed Church, Anglican, Winners, Methodist, and so on. At the same time there will be understanding among brethren of different Christian denominations like Celestial Church and African Church, Methodist and Deeper Life and so on. Gospel conversations with other Christians make us to better grasp the central, underpinning truths of God's Word. Issues like God's character, his holiness and wrath, man's creation in God's image, sin, grace, the cross of Christ, and judgment all come into sharp focus. We have to think through explaining these concepts to different people in different circumstances within the same fold. And we learn better how these truths lace together all of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. Knowing something and explaining it to someone who doesn't understand it or believe it are two different things. These treasured truths become clearer to us as we explain them to others. Fagbiye opines that the focus of ecumenism is to unite the body of Christ. If ecumenism is allowed, it will bring understanding among brethren because without understanding there would not be unity.
2. ***Ecumenism helps to bring and win more converts:*** The gospel creates the church (Col. 1:5, 6), is its chief message (1 Cor. 15:1-3), and powers our growth in Christ (Phil 1:6). Therefore, we ought to do everything in our power to keep it central. We know that the world, our flesh, and the devil will do everything they can to move it out of view. One way we preserve the gospel is by working hard to pass it on to

others. Evangelism helps us maintain the gospel message as the engine of a growing life in Christ. The joining of hands makes it easier to win more souls for the kingdom. This would enable the church to reach the unreached and unchurched thereby populating the kingdom of God by bringing more souls through evangelism, mission, crusades, revivals and social services. Unregenerated people cannot be discipled in any biblical sense. They do not and cannot grow in godliness (Rom. 8:5-8). A great danger for the church today is assuming the salvation of people who simply claim the label "Christian" or are involved in church activities. Not being careful about who we consider to be "born again" often has its roots in unbiblical views of conversion. Or sometimes fear of man dissuades us from taking the risk of offending a professing believer by suggesting they may not be trusting in Christ after all. But making the gospel a part of our everyday conversation will often result in both nominal Christians and unbelievers actually being born again of the Spirit. The sower spread the seed liberally, seemingly without consideration for where it landed (path, rocks, thorns, soil; Mark 4:2-8). We too should share the gospel broadly and without discrimination, allowing our sovereign God to use it however he sees fit, to save the lost as well as encourage the saints. This will definitely populate the kingdom of God and is much possible through ecumenism.

3. ***Ecumenism helps to wipe off excessive claims:*** Claims like titles, mode of dressing, nomenclature, positions, etc are associated with each denomination within the overall body of Christ. Celestial Church of Christ (C.C.C) claims walking about bare footed and inside the church when they put on Sutana. Methodist, Anglican, Roman Catholic Church claim wearing of Cassock inside their chancels and not allowing anybody to enter the chancel unless such person wears cassock like theirs. Churches like Baptist and some other churches claim the use of suit and tie or collar like The Redeemed Church, Christ Apostolic Church (C.A.C). Effective and proper ecumenism will definitely wipe off all these claims of various denominations in order for unity and togetherness to reign within the church.
4. ***Ecumenism strengthens the church to fight common foes:*** There are different enemies or foes that might stand up against the church at any given time. Enemies could be cultural attack, other religions opposition, economic challenges, national issues, etc. The coming together of the Christian church will help to rise to fight all these. When the church is united, the tendency of conquering her enemies is at a very high rate. Majority of the church will help to fight against any intruders, disturbances and enemies that might want to divide and fight the church. For example, recently in Ogun state, the state government is planning to introduce the use of Muslim Hijab for all government schools but the Christian Council of Nigeria (C.C.N) rose to call the state government to order. C.C.N was of the

opinion that even if Hijab will be introduced, it should be in operation only in government owned schools not mission schools that are owned by churches like Catholic, Methodist, Anglican, Baptist, etc. the church was able to fight the enemy of Islamic infiltration and influence. With coming together of the church, cultural influence like "Oro festival" is curtailed to reduce its burden, pains and inconveniencies on the inhabitants of a particular community. Fagbiye (2018) supports that National issues like same sex marriage, Boko Haram Insurgency, Fulani herdsmen saga, to mention but a few are been quickly reacted to under the agenda of togetherness of Christian brethren.

5. ***Ecumenism helps the church to speak with one voice:*** Togetherness is all about speaking with one voice. Unity is simply operating with one mind towards one another. Ecumenism therefore, helps the church to speak concerning a particular issue with a common voice. Issues confronting the church could be international, national, state or local. Issues like insecurity, unemployment, fuel scarcity, economy, education and so on are some pressing issues that the church could be confronted with and the government will want to know the input of the Christian body as a whole. It is not the responsibility of a church to speak on behalf of other churches but it is the uttermost responsibility of the church as a whole to respond on behalf of the churches. Whatever is heard from church A should be the same with what church B will say. In unity we stand and divided we fall. Speaking with one voice has to do with the standard of God and the injunctions as laid down by the Scriptures. The standard of the word of God must prevail over and every situation.
6. ***Ecumenism enables the church to jointly execute projects:*** Big projects that cannot be executed by individual church or denomination are made possible through ecumenism. Projects like Ecumenical Guest House, Ecumenical Aircraft, Ecumenical Christian Bank, etc that will bring good income for the church are possible to embark upon and coming up with outstanding result. All efforts are directed to a particular direction as all hands are on deck to ensure the success of such project. Combined efforts are put in place when a joint project is about to be executed and no party is left behind or not carried along. In the same vein, building of a Secretariat for the church is made possible with ease as every party is directly involved in the building of such edifice.
7. ***Ecumenism brings about joint effort economically:*** Any issue relating to money or finance is given a general and united attention through unity and togetherness. Any programme that will bring all the denominations together will definitely increase the income and enable a robust purse. What unity will do is that, it will make the church to have a central purse where collective spending would be made. Every denomination is involved in financial contribution if need be and no one is

spared in times of spending. No party is seen as irrelevant during contribution no matter how small. The church is able to operate a central purse where all savings and spending take place.

8. ***Ecumenism fosters unquantifiable progress in the church:*** Romans 5:3-5: says not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. While we should not seek suffering for suffering's sake, we should be prepared to embrace suffering for the gospel's sake (2 Tim. 1:8; Rom. 8:17). In fact, suffering because of our evangelism should be an encouragement to us as it was to the early church (Acts 5:41). And sharing our faith helps ensure that we will suffer because of the gospel itself rather than because of unwise decisions or giving needless offense. Suffering for our proclamation of the gospel can deepen our faith as we look to our suffering Savior and this brings progress to the body of Christ- the church.

When there is understanding, when there is no excessive claims and when there is cooperation, there will definitely be progress. Fagbiye (2018) observes that progress in charity works, crusades, soul winning and other spiritual works. The whole essence of coming together is to make progress in all the activities of the church.

9. ***Ecumenism helps to protect the interest of Christians:*** The government of the day might be interested in the view and opinion of the Christian body on a particular issue. The interest of the Christian church is protected if the church is united and she will be able to speak with a common and united voice so that Christians will not be forgotten in any pressing issue in the nation and even in the whole world.
10. ***Ecumenism enables to make policy that will enhance the existence of Christianity:*** Recently the existence of Christianity has been tested in diverse ways with the different circumstances internationally, nationally and at state levels. The Fulani herdsman saga, the use of Hijab in all the government owned schools and lot more. All these situations have been posing a lot of challenges to the existence of Christianity. When the church is united in purpose, she will be able to rise and make a bold stand on any issue at any time. This will definitely send a clear message of outstanding existence of Christian body.

### **Negative Effects of Ecumenism on Evangelical Missionary Outreach in Nigeria**

The following are some of the negative effects of ecumenism on evangelical missionary outreach in Nigeria:

1. ***Denominational offices will be affected:*** One of the negative effects of ecumenism is that denominational offices will be affected. Each denomination has its own office titles which are been occupied by different people. Names such as Prelate,

Primate, General Overseer, Archbishop, Bishop, Most Senior Special Apostle, Senior Prophet, Pastor, etc are used to address people in their various denominations. If unity must thrive and have its way properly, the office holders must be ready to forfeit their offices. According to Fagbiye, the Prelate in Methodist Church Nigeria must forgo his title, Most Senior Special Apostle in Celestial Church must be ready to let go of his title and Bishops in other denominations as the case may be should be ready to lie low when everybody comes under the umbrella of ecumenism.

2. ***Denominational economy will be affected:*** For the purpose of unity, some means of generating income for a particular denomination will be forgotten to give room for a common means or purse. Any matter relating to money and how to generate income for the church becomes a collective venture and obligation. Denominational methods of generating funds are relegated and the common means of running the affairs of the church is projected. As a result of this, the negative effect of ecumenism will be that the denominational economy will be forfeited.
3. ***Denominational dressing or regalia will be affected:*** Under the large canopy of ecumenism, no denomination should lay more emphasis on the manner of dressing especially by both ministers and members of congregation of such denomination. Therefore, if ecumenism will take its effect, denominational manner of dressing should be forgotten and everybody will embrace the unity of the body of Christ. Whether somebody wears suit and tie, or long white robe, or cassock as the case may be to the church, it does not matter under the platform of togetherness and unity in the body of Christ.
4. ***Denominational doctrines will be affected:*** Different denominations have different doctrines. Different practices and beliefs will be wiped off if ecumenism must thrive and be in proper place. Doctrines should not be excessively pronounced within the big canopy of ecumenism but all must come under the leadership of Christ.
5. ***Denominational structures will be affected:*** Structures in the context will be seen from two perspectives. One, structures will see in terms of physical edifices. Different denominations have peculiar type of structure of their church. Methodist Church have a structure that she is known for, Celestial Church has her distinct structure, so also other denominations. If ecumenism will be promoted, the physical edifices of different denominations, the sitting arrangement in some churches, the structure of the altar will not be pronounced. Two, the structure could be the organogram or hierarchical order of such denomination. Different denominations have different hierarchical structure which they observe and cherished. For example, Methodist has the following order: Prelate, Archbishop, Bishop, Presbyter, Priest, Deacon, Deaconess, Lay Preacher, and Evangelist.

Redeem has a structure like General Overseer, Assistant General Overseer, provincial Pastor, Zonal Pastor, Area Pastor, District Pastor, Parish Pastor. If unity will prevail and take proper place within Christianity, all these structures must be forgotten, relegated and discouraged and look for a common ground in terms of the structure to be adopted.

6. ***Denominational nomenclature will be affected:*** Nowadays, different churches have different names by which they are addressed. There are so many names churches bear in the recent times. Different churches' names come under orthodox churches like Catholic, Methodist, Anglican, Baptist, African, etc. Many names come under Pentecostal Churches like Redeemed, Winners, Mountain of Fire, Gospel Faith, etc. organization of Africa Instituted Churches like Celestial Church, Cherubim and Seraphim, etc. No matter the name a church bears, for ecumenism to be effective and take proper course, different churches must forget the names they bear and adopt a general name to bear like Christian Association of Nigeria (C.A.N), Christian Council of Nigeria (C.C.N), Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (P.F.N) and some other. If this is done, unity and togetherness will prevail and reign.
7. ***Denominational heads will be affected:*** Each denomination has different heads with different names. The head of Roman Catholic Church is Pope; Methodist Church has Prelate as her head, Anglican calls her head Primate. The head of Redeemed, Winners and some of the Pentecostal Churches is General Overseer. However, if ecumenism will take its full ground, anything call denominational heads will be affected and forgotten. Everybody must see the reason to let go of whatever the title he is been addressed in his/her denomination. Headship must be subdued and allow Jesus Christ to reign supreme and as the overall head of church.
8. ***Denominational backbiting and gossip will be wiped off:*** One thing unity will do is, it will remove whatever the grievances any party has against the other party. If this happens, rumour, gossip and backbiting will not surface and take any effect. Proper unity takes away rancor, misunderstanding, and disharmony. As much as gossip and backbiting cannot be totally removed from humanity but since the church is working together as an entity to ensure the growth of Christianity, the level of gossip and backbiting will be minimally affected and reduced.
9. ***Denominational membership will be affected:*** Every denomination has her members which she claims and create a very good sense of closeness, companion and care with it. Everybody tends to say that I am a member of a particular denomination. Even some other people believe that their church is the best. Denominational Membership will be affected and do away with so that unity can prevail and reign supreme. Membership should not divide the body of Christ since Church is the body of Christ.

## **Conclusion**

Ecumenism is scriptural and it is the mind of God and prayer of Jesus that we should be gathered together wherever we have been scattered; to live together in peace as one big family, here on earth, with the eternity in view for the perfection of our union in heaven with God. The Psalmist writes, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Psalms 133:1), on this submission, the unity of the Church here and now is obtainable and achievable if only we are ready to aim beyond earthly positions, titles, edifice, and self-acclaim glory that end here on earth. Christians are called to unity, but not at all costs. According to Meyer (1999), Doctrine is paramount, especially when it concerns the person and work of Christ. Modern ecumenical efforts are often all too ready to part with biblical teachings. Therefore, we must take care when evaluating potential partnerships. If unity can be had without compromising fundamental Christian belief, then unity should be pursued.

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