

# **“ALL MEN WILL KNOW”: EMERGING TRENDS IN CHRISTIAN TESTAMENT AND MISSIONS**

**Gideon Y. Tambiyi, PhD**  
**Department of Religion and Philosophy**  
**University of Jos, Nigeria**

**&**

**Jeremiah Sara**  
**Postgraduate Student**  
**Department of Religion and Philosophy**  
**University of Jos, Nigeria**

## **Abstract**

Different scholars have viewed the Gospel of John from different perspectives. Some see it as the Gospel of miracles, a priestly book and others consider its humble appearance. This work examines the problems of interpreting the Gospel of John, its variance in contents with the synoptic gospels and the purpose underneath Jesus' discourse with His disciples before His passion. The true intent of His discourse and prayer reported in the gospel reveal the type of love He exhibited in on the cross as equivalent with that between Him and the Father. In an attempt to unveil the evangelistic intentions behind the book, various hermeneutical tools and historic-literal methods used in interpreting scriptures have been used to evaluate various interpretations of John 13:35, 17:21 and 1 Corinthians 14:21. The study found the binding factor as unconditional love that Jesus revealed about God to man but through the cross as a means to evangelize and share the love of Jesus to the entire world. Finally, the essay discovered the great role of Africans in the gospel work in the history of the early church but concealed by Western propaganda that must be reversed through a biblical Africanization of the gospel message in line with the primal purpose of the Gospel of John.

**Key words: Missions, Testament, Gospel of John, Evangelism, Africa, Judaism, Hellenism**

## **Introduction**

That “all men will know...” is an excerpt of Jesus' intentional speech to his disciples that John narrated in John 13:35. In it one can see Christ showing his concern not only for his mission that was about to reach its peak, but also of his disciples whom will soon be without him. The Gospel of John, according to D. Moody Smith, is one of the New Testament books that has brought divisions in its study especially in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century (2). Smith also observed the difficulty in organizing how to treat its theology or in what context to understand it (2). It is in this perspective that this study will explore what is meant when John narrated the words of Jesus in the Gospel of John, that scholars and theologians have given so many interpretations to it thereby adding more to the problem. With these problems, the study wishes to find out the methodologies used in their analysis, interpretation and exposition in relation to the motif that Christ had in mind saying what he said. In addressing these issues, the study will also examine the background of the Johannine Literature, theologically, historically and exegetically within the dominant ideas of mission of Christ in the early part of the first century. Thereafter, the study will examine the interpretation of related scriptures with the African church in mind in its evangelistic intents. Finally, recommendations and conclusions will be drawn for an agenda for African sharing of the gospel.

## **The Background of Johannine Writings**

Tracing the roots of most of the Johannine literature is a herculean task. This is because of the lack of harmony of scholars on methodology. By methodology it is meant process of investigation; whether theological, historical, exegetical or textual. This problem is also prevalent in the Fourth Gospel popularly known in the Bible as the Gospel of John. To overcome these problems, the study will review different positions presented over the years such as those popularized by D. Moody Smith, Jorg Frey and C. D. Dodd. Smith observed that many scholars focused on who the author of the book

was and the book's relationship to the synoptic gospels. However, he comments that recent scholarship has gone further to consider "the date and place of composition, authorship, intended readers, purpose, sources and the stylistic features" (3). He argued that the Gospel of John's dating, place and authorship has been an issue of uncertainty, disagreement and deadlock. It is in this perspective that the major schools of thought will be examined in order to discover areas of agreement for further studies (3).

Smith set up his discourse firstly by examining the relationship of the Gospel of John with the synoptic gospels. He argues that John was probably one of the twelve 12 disciples that Jesus called. Smith opined that John could be the brother of Jesus, a son of Zebedee and the traditional testimony that John was the one identified as the Beloved Disciples in John 13:23 and also the one who wrote the gospel (21:23). This position, he argues, was accepted by most Christians towards the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century on the fact that the records being presented by an eyewitness of the ministry of Jesus (4). This position is in agreement with Irenaeus writing about John being the disciple of the Lord and on the authenticity of the gospel. To further support the authoritative composition of the gospel of John, reference must be made to Justin Martyr's (*First Theology* 61), Ignatius of Antioch (Romans 1:2-3) who made reference to John's theme of water (John 4:10), bread (John 6:33) and blood (John 6:53).

The contribution of later critics like Clement, a student of Origen cannot be left under the table. Smith also reports of this scholar's critique of some learned heretics like Heraclion, a student of the great Gnostic teacher, Valentinus (4). Clement criticized the friendship of the Gnostics to the Gospel of John as hypocritical. They could have ulterior motives in upholding and using many of the terminologies of the Gospel of John. The truth and the authenticity of the messages of the Gospel of John stood the test of critiques and remain canonized. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century studies of the Gospel of John, the factor that became important is the setting of the sources and the character of the Johannine theology in the gospel. Of concern to this study is investigating the root of the Gospel of John. According to Smith, there are four sources competing or identified that had great influence on the narration of the gospel of John. They are Hellenism, Gnosticism, Judaism (the Dead Sea scrolls) and Judaism (wisdom motifs) (10-17).

Stovell also understood the context of the growing relationship between the communities of Johannine literature. He stated that there has often been reciprocal relationship between, on the one hand, the perceived attitudes of the community related to love within the community versus to those outside the community, and, on the other hand, how the community included or rejected neighboring parties whether Jews, Jewish Christians, or other religious groups derived from Judaism or Christianity (e.g., Johannine sectarianism, Johannine Docetism, and Johannine Gnosticism) (434). Traditional thinking has it that John had a Greek background from the pattern of the language used in the Gospel of John. This is in contrast to the synoptic gospels. This assertion, which Smith made was with reference to Benjamin W. Bacon and Martin Hengels 'The Gospel of the Hellenists' and 'Judaism and Hellenism' respectively (10-11). In it, we see John's vocabulary style and even phrasing have similarity to I John and above all bringing philosophical or metaphysical connotations that characterize Greek thinking prior to the first century. Taking the first half of John 1:1-18, for instance, Smith presents clear evidence of the subject of *logos* translated as word. In it, he shows a clear personification of Jesus Christ as the Word (1:17). It is in this line of analysis that C. H. Dodd speaks of the Hellenistic influence that "It seems clear, therefore, that whether other elements of thought may enter into the background of the fourth gospel, it certainly presupposes a range of ideas having a remarkable resemblance to those of the Hellenistic Judaism as represented by Philo" (Smith 73).

If John is seen as a bridge between Greek philosophy and Christianity, definitely it is not only because of the *logos* concept though it is important. It is believed that such vocabulary may have an early connection with gnostic texts (Smith 12). Gnostic thesis hinges on salvation through knowledge. A lot of such texts were discovered according to Moody at Nag Hammadi in Egypt by 1945. What it meant was that some of vocabulary in the Gospel of John was also used in Christian and gnostic writings of that time. Smith rightly presents the fact that Gnosticism is known in some Christian literature. However, he also attests that some movements in its community like the Mandaeans have no relationship with Christianity (13-14). It is also noted that in some of their literature, reference to figures in the Old Testament are found; the mention of John the Baptist is also found in their writings just as it is in the Fourth Gospel. With all these parallels, he says there is no surety that they were influenced by Christianity only but could have been an off shoot of Judaism in a peculiar way. Other

offshoots of religions of the time that show some affinity to Johannine writings according to Smith are Manichean and Zoroastrianism religions (15). He comments on the Manichean religion, which St. Augustine once belonged to as having some similarities with Christianity. This group cannot be specifically linked as rooted in Christianity, he argues, because they have deep lineage to mystical traditions of the near east (15).

Specifically, it is reported that the founder of Zoroastrianism lived in earlier times before the beginning of Christianity almost about a millennium earlier in the area of present Iran (Smith 15). It is on record that the founder has strong emphasis on monotheism but for the world, he had a dualistic philosophy. D. Moody Smith traced this to the division of the world into good and evil, light and darkness and so on (15). This character of dualism that is prevalent in early Christianity in the gospel of John, which is also found in Judaism, started by the figure religion of the Essene community. An important document, which was discovered in 1947 at Qumran, has brought much uplift to the study of the Bible. Smith comments that scholars confirm that the Qumran manuscript fragments tested by palaeography and carbon 14 has put the dates to between 200 BC – AD 70 (16). Of interest to this study are important documents on community especially community rule or manual of discipline containing much of the dualistic theological vocabularies of Gnosticism and gospel of John that was highlighted earlier. As an exhibit let us consider this statement that Smith extracted from the Qumran Community Rule (cols. 3 and 4) that;

He has created man to govern the *world*, and has appointed for him *two spirits* in which to *walk* with until the time of his visitation: the *spirits of truth and falsehood*. Those *born of truth* spring from a fountain of *light*, but those *born of falsehood* spring from a source of *darkness*. All the *children of righteousness* are ruled by the *Prince of Light* and walk in the ways of *light*, but all the children of *falsehood* are ruled by the *Angel of Darkness* and walk in the ways of *darkness* (16).

James H. Charlesworth describes the words/phrases in italics above as common features of early Christian writing (76-106). He reports a striking observation of the community rule written in Hebrew while the Gospel of John was written in Greek. Smith after translating the rule in English, found them similar to what is found in the Gospel of John. Examples are *pneuma* (spirit); *aletheia* (truth); *phos* (light); *skotia* (darkness); *zoe* (life); *eirene* (peace) (17). It is of remarkable importance that the emphasis on tracing the roots of John's Gospel to Judaism. No wonder the narrated statements of Jesus in the Gospel, sometimes are references from the Old Testament writings.

Another source of linkage that Smith rightly and clearly shows from his study is the wisdom motifs found especially in John chapter 1 that is parallel to the Hebrew concept of creation in Genesis 1. The role of *logos* in John 1:1-18 clearly reveals a description of a personality highly exalted making things to happen as he wills. He said this personality expression is also equated in another Jewish text and Genesis 1 thus; "The Lord possessed me..." "the beginning, I was from everlasting, when there were no depths, I was brought forth" (Proverbs 8: 22-24); "In the beginning God..." (Genesis 1); "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God... all things were made by him...; in him was life..." (John 1:1-4). There is no doubt that John's narration of the Fourth Gospel has influences from Jewish backgrounds especially in areas of style, literary form and other language parameters of communication.

As important as a symbolism that Smith highlighted of relevance is the status of John the Baptist and his disciples which was similar to Jesus' relationship with his disciples (John 1:35, 3:25; Luke 7:18-30, 11:1; Matthew 11:2-15 and Acts 18:25-19:4). A final note on personification is the Samaritan woman in John 4. She stood in for the Samaritans and Jesus in an act of his mission broke both cultural and religious barriers of reaching out to her. This led to a great opening when she called her kinsmen to come and see a great prophet who was able to tell all about her life (19). This led to John's kinsmen accuse him of having strong relationship with Samaritans to the point of condemning him as an outcast. The remarkable use of the term *logos* in the Gospel of John was reviewed by Jorg Frey out of the works of Hugo Grotius' *Annotations*, that had similarities with the works of scholars such as John Lightfoots *Horae Hebraicae et Talmudicae*, Billerbeck, Rudolf Bultmann and C. H. Dodd to mention a few (Frey 170). To buttress the difference between John and the synoptic gospels, he argued that there was a discovered application of new texts, such as the Avesta, the Manichean and Mandaen sources, the Qumran discoveries and the Nag Hammadi codices" (Charlesworth 170). These

helped scholars in their investigations towards arriving at a more balanced evaluation. Even with these attempts, there were still uproots of scholarship that vehemently rejected this proposition.

Other scholars like David Evanson rejected John's apostolic authenticity and argued that the author of John was a converted Platonist whose doctrines are a heterogeneous compound of paganism, Judaism and Christianity (Evanson 235). The interesting part of this study is building on the part of the background of the Gospel of John. This thought continued being topical in scholarly discussions until Rudolf Bultmann in his reconstruction from "scattered elements of various texts, from biblical wisdom and Philo down to the late Manichaean and Mandaeen writings" (Frey 173). In another observation, Frey concluded Bultmann's reading of *logos* in the Gospel of John as a mythological pattern of pre-Christian origin. Not only that, he said that Bultmann categorized the language of Johannine literature as syncretism milieu of Gnosticizing sect in which the author of the Fourth Gospel had originally grown up" (171).

As to the Jewish-Christian foundation, Frey argues that the apostle's narration did not portray the relevance of the law and other Judeo-Christian elements, but emphasized *parousia* and apocalyptic imagery which willed into his epistles and revelation (173). A turn of event in the interpretation of the Gospel of John took place after World War II due to the discovery of the Qumran texts. Accordingly, Frey argues that scholars after examining texts from Cave I, the concept of dualism was found represented in "the War Rule 1 QM and in the Treatise on the Two Spirits (IQS 3:13 - 4:26)" (174). This he further said formed the roots of the Johannine literature and not gnostic dualism that Bultmann propagated. Later scholars like Karl George Kuhn proposed that the texts show the apostle John who could have been a member of the Essene Sector had access to their teachings, which he might have kept memory of (Charlesworth 88). Even Dodd, a student of Bultmann once reported on the influence of Jewish's on the Fourth Gospel in the following statements, "John could intelligently be read by a person with no previous instruction in Christianity... but it could hardly be so read without some knowledge of Judaism" (333).

Like the argument presented by Smith in an earlier section, Frey also supports the Jewishness of the Fourth Gospel by elegizing some concepts of the first chapter relative to some aspects from the Hebrew scripture. He said in the opening verse for instance, "In the beginning" John 1:1 is an allusion of (Genesis 1:1 LXX). Also John 1:17 - "the law was given through Moses" is another connection to Judaism. John 1:14 *logos* "tabernacle among us" is only conceivable of an Old Testament background of God dwelling in the holy tent (176). Other Semitic names that Frey highlighted from the narrative of the Fourth Gospel are priests, Levites, Pharisees, figures of the Messiah, Elijah and the prophets, Isaiah and his prophecy (177). These terms will only be appreciated by one that is familiar with the Old Testament if not they will remain inexplicable in the mind of the reader. It is also found in the apostle's narration of the Fourth Gospel i.e. the use of the other OT scriptures of Christological significance such as implying the serpent in the desert (Numbers 21:4-7) visualizing exaltation of the Son of Man (John 3:14; Psalms 82) in John 10: 34-35, the legacy of Jesus Christological dignity; the Passover lamb rules in John 19:36 linking or referring to Isaiah's vision of glory (Isaiah 6:1 LXX), and John 2:6 about referencing Jewish purification rites (Frey 178-179).

So far, the study has worked through different perspectives to understand the roots of the Fourth Gospel, which is clearly shown to have strong Jewish, Christian and even Hellenistic influence. Next, the study will investigate the implication of these characteristics on the agenda of evangelism of the church till now.

### **The Motif of Christian Evangelistic Intentions**

Throughout the Gospel, what became a priority to the scholars, according to A.M. Hunter, has been the life of Jesus Christ, the Kingdom of God and Christ's ministry (13). Undertaking this study objectively requires a deliberate examination of these concepts i.e. Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God. Many verses of the scriptures in the Bible attest to these facts, but for the purposes of in-depth study, this work focuses on three principle verses in the New Testament. These are John 13:55, John 17:21 and I Corinthians 14:24-25. The Kingdom of God and its revelation in Jesus Christ is the goal of his incarnation. We see this from God's promise after the fall of the first Adam and in the call of Abraham, "And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you. And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse, And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Genesis 12:2-3). This was the

beginning of the future re-establishment of the Kingdom. It can be noted that though God chose a people, but the ultimate reign still remains in his hand when he called his name the "I AM" Exodus 3:14, with a character as All Sustaining One. This will be seen later in God promising David that out of his lineage someone will seat on the throne of Israel (2 Samuel 12:14) and that he shall be righteous and through him God will rule Israel. God through the prophets continued to speak to his people Israel of the revelation of the king to come (Isaiah 7:13-25; Jeremiah 33:14-26).

Jesus finally established this Kingdom here on earth in the New Testament. One could even see in John the Baptist's message to Israel saying 'repent for the Kingdom of heaven has come near' (Matthew 3:2). It was not long when Jesus appeared for his baptism when John the Baptist after recognizing him proclaimed, "Look, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" John 1:29. Jesus came as was prophesied, lived among his people and continued his ministry work of proclaiming the Kingdom of God, assuring his hearers of free entry into it through faith that God has graciously opened to all creation. Faith should be shown by man through acknowledgement of his sinful nature and inability of doing anything in that regard. One must then repent of sin believing in Jesus' sacrifice on the cross on his behalf and forgiveness will freely be given. Jesus brought this good news to every creature who will listen, believe and repent as said, "For it is by grace you have been saved through faith and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works so that no one can boast about it..." (Ephesians 2:8-9). The time has come, he said and the Kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news (Mark 1:15). Repent for the Kingdom of heaven has come near (Matthew 3:2). Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people (Matthew 4:23). Having set a foundation on the purpose of the gospel books, the climax now is to turn to the crux of the study "all men will know..." which will be examined through John 13:35, John 13:1-17, 26; 17:21 and 2 Corinthians 14:24-25 and other related passages that will explain the main concern of this work.

### **1. The Context of John 13:35**

This work concurs with C. F. Hunter's understanding of the aims of the Gospel of John. He identifies three general reasons as to supplement the synoptic stories, to complete the portrait of Christ and to win men to faith in Christ (75). These factors could be explained as follows: the first reason is that the gospel of John has more on the description of Jesus' private life, his ministry in Judea and theologically the most spiritual. Secondly, John presented Jesus as the Eternal Son of God. Finally, he says the narration by John went beyond the meaning of Jesus' life, teachings and works. His arrangement of the acts of Jesus' life through allegories or symbolism like light, bread, and the way are easy to understand in all generations and needful to life (Hunter 76-77). Understanding the gospel and imbibing the behavior into a new being that Paul says "I have been crucified with Christ and no longer live, but Christ lives in me..." (Galatians 2:20). This was the position that Jesus was speaking to the disciples in John 13:35 and 17:21.

Following such position, Craig S. Keener comments on the difficulty of the scriptural discourse in its repetitive themes/style of writing (891). Keener also categorizes the scripture as a farewell message of Jesus to his disciples before the cross. He opines that Jesus' statements here is an interpretation of what scholars called Jesus' passion for his disciples (893). It was customary, according to Merrill C. Tenney that when one knows or has a premonition of his eminent death, sets to prepare the minds of his loved ones on what they should do or expect when he is no longer a life (11). This was exactly what Jesus did. The statement clearly builds from an earlier verse but climaxed in John 13:31-32 thus "...now is the son of man glorified and God is glorified in him at once". The earlier verses of the Fourth Gospel speaking on glorification are 7:39, 12:16, and 23. There seem to be emphasis or repetition of 'the glorification' of Christ. Of what significance could this be? Tenney says the repetition meant suffering and the cross (210) after which he will resurrect in victory over Satan and death. To Keener, the implication of the passion of Jesus is to explain to his disciples that they will share his suffering and the resurrection life also (893).

It is "by this all men will know..." (John 13:35) portends a hanging phrase. The work therefore investigates the intention and the passion deeply with the characteristics around it. Jesus speaks of the exit of Judas Iscariot from amongst the disciples proclaiming his soon glorification and by extension that of God through him. How this works is clearly depicted by Keener through his

thorough interpretation of John 13:31 by using Jesus' phrase 'Now' is the Son glorified (921). Keener observes that the glorification of the Son also meaning that of God. This adds meaning to the statement in 13:35 that Jesus said "by this all men will know..." if the disciples obey and work in his precept, especially of loving one another, as he (Jesus) had loved them 13:34. A new concept of the coming of the Kingdom is introduced here which becomes the crux of the entire works of John in the Bible.

The commandment to love one another, Keener says, has the implication of laying down their lives (in death) 13:34, because that is what he has come to do for them (923). He points out rightly also that the foot washing is another show of his love prior to his sufferings. All these are indicating the meaning of Christ's evangelistic intents the way John understood and wrote it down in the Fourth Gospel. It was part of what people saw in Christ that attracted them to him and same to the disciples then and those after them by the Holy Spirit. Another important dimension to the meaning of 'love one another' in John 13:34-35 explained by Keener refers to unity within the family of believers in Christ (923). The interesting thing here is the composition of the people at that time. There were Greeks and people from other nations (John 12:17-20). This shows the testimony that Christ loved Lazarus and the miracle he performed at raising him from the dead attracted everybody. This composition of different nationalities is what Keener calls 'in-group'. The essential identity sought for is reconciliation no matter the differences of the people. This, one believes, is the bridge building work of Christ and the removal of all barriers to societal fellowship. To that, Paul says "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

A new dimension of Jesus' command to the disciples according to Keener is that the love being spoken of amidst them must be equal to the love that Christ showed to mankind i.e. sacrificial love given to the point of death as recorded in John 13:34 and 1 John 2:8 (924). It is pertinent to note the demand on the Christian disciples then and those that will follow after them. Without much justification therefore, Jesus has set the requirements on the evangelistic intentions of his followers. It must be sacrificial love that has no condition out flowing from Christ's nature in all Christians. Keener insists rightly that the comparison Jesus has made to his own life with the Father must be the same that the disciples must strive for when the Holy Spirit comes upon them (Acts 1:8).

## **2. The Evangelistic Intention of John 17:21**

The entire intention of John is clearly revealed in this passage when it is stated; "That all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me" (John 17:21-23). This knowledge is connected to the love and unity of the Body of Christ which Jesus wanted knitted as evidence for the world to believe in the act and mercy of God for humanity. Kasemann argues that what we see from the Lord's discourse with his disciples concerning the love he commended into them is unity. This is clearly expressed "...that all of them may be one. Father just as you are in me and I in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you sent me" (John 17:21). The emphasis now is on those that will believe in Christ in the future through the united efforts of the first disciples he prayed for in 17:9. This unity he is calling for amongst them, according to Keener, is the bonding work of the Holy Spirit that the Father promised in Luke 24:49 (1061).

It is important to note that this is the main goal of Jesus' vision for all his future followers-embedded in divine love, shown by oneness in the spirit and that men will know of his working power in them. People all around the world will experience the virtues of Jesus in the followers, and testify of the non-discriminatory loving and caring attitude. This is the gospel that Jesus preached and expected for Christians to preach. It has the ability to attract people to want to be part of the family. This does not however mean that the love and unity amongst the believers will stand all shocks. This was why Luke recorded that he will send the Holy Spirit to empower believers when he ascends to heaven (Acts 1:8); John the Baptist told his disciples also that Jesus will baptize them with the Holy Spirit (John 1:33) different from water baptism. The Holy Spirit besides empowering them for ministry will lead them into all truths (John 16:13a). The narration in the gospels after Jesus ascended

to heaven recorded the exploits that the kingdom bearers (believers in Christ) did through the power of the Holy Spirit.

However, the early church also had serious challenges that Paul had to write to the church in Corinth to guard against. This was to do with the manifestation of God's power in Christians when the Holy Spirit comes upon them. He cautioned the believers in Corinth then about the gift of tongues that the Holy Spirit grants to believers. He said,

Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church. For this reason, anyone who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret what he says... tongues then are a sign not for believers, but for unbelievers; prophecy however is for believers not for unbelievers'. So if the whole church come together and everyone speaks in tongues and some who do not understand or some unbelievers come, will they not say that you are out of your mind? But if an unbeliever of someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming God is really among you (1 Corinthians 14:12-25).

A review of the interpretation of this scripture is important to help understand the caution Paul calls on the Corinthian Christians to take note of in regards to the use of gift of tongues in worship. G. K. Beale and D. A Carson rightly explain that Paul in writing to the Corinthian church predicated his admonition on the Jewish experience when God spoke to the prophet Isaiah. The people of Isaiah's day had turned down the counsel of God describing it as 'naïve' and childish' even though it was the right thing for them. They said that the priests, rulers, and prophets have also rejected God's advice on the issue of "rest to the weary" (Isaiah 28:12). The implication of not doing as God commanded was releasing his wrath on them through using the Assyrian army (a foreign language) to inflict them with misery as judgment. Beale and Carson thus explained that the strange tongues and lips of Isaiah 28:11-12 are those of God's rebellious people who reject his revelation and counsel from his true prophets (740-741). The relevance of this analogy to interpreting 1 Corinthians 14 is challenging as noted by the authors, yet Paul had emphasized the motif of foreign tongues in a re-occurring manner in his epistle. What Paul had in mind therefore is a foreign language in worship of God. The mention of this is a call to judgment for wrong doing to Gods command.

It is important to focus on Paul's advice on the use of manifesting the gift of tongue unruly so as not to bring confusion by its use without a commensurate interpretation 1 Corinthians 14:27. Paul was concerned about the negative implications of speaking in tongues on the unbelievers. Christian worship must bring glory to God which has the effect of reconciling sinners to repentance John 12:32. Therefore if utilizing the gift of tongues in worship with the unlearned or the unbelievers in attendance, it will only bring commotion then Paul says better hold it 1 Corinthians 14:23. To Beale and Carson, the unbelievers instead of conviction and conversion, would be further alienated thereby frustrating the evangelistic intention that Christ ushered his followers into.

Keener also explains rightly that the value of the gifts must be judged by their utility in any given setting; intelligible speech profits others in public worship, whereas unintelligible speech, no matter how inspired is profitable only privately or if interpreted (480). The gift that Paul speaks on that causes conversion of the unbelieving listener is prophesy. He specifically enjoins the gathering that if an "unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying" 14:24, there is the expectation that the community prophesy will lead to the conversion of outsiders who will respond by bowing down and worshipping God and declaring that "God is really in your midst". He also observes that other commentators see this response as the eschatological acceptance of God of Israel spoken in Isaiah 45:15; Zechariah 8:25 (742). However, before closing the Johannine intended argument on the selected Johannine passage, it is obvious to show from the Bible that it has been in the agenda of God for the world to know him. It has been the mind of God for the world to be converted and turn from their evil ways. God has been at the helm of affairs trying to evangelize the entire world. The world needs to hear from God. This started since the days of Moses. Moses was willing to do as the Lord said so that Pharaoh may know there is no one like the Lord our God (Exodus 8:10). It is obvious that God will send plagues to the Egyptians so that they will know that there is no one like him in all the earth (Exodus 9:14, 29). Such miracles were made so that the Egyptians will know that God is the Lord (Exodus 10:2).

Similarly, the Israelites and their generations were given the mandate to observe the Sabbaths so that they will know that God is the Lord who makes them holy (Exodus 31:13). In the days of Joshua, God planned to exalt Joshua before the people so that they will know the Lord is with Joshua (Josiah 3:7). It was the intention of God to reveal his love to even the people of Israel and their generations. God expected the Israelites to know that he is the Lord (Isaiah 41:23; 43:10; 45:3). In the days of the kings, God will hear their prayers so that the peoples of the earth may know the name of the Lord and fear him (1 Kings 8:43; 2 Chronicles 6:33). God will provide for them so that the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord is God and there is no other besides him (1 Kings 8:60; Isaiah 45:6). God should deliver them so that all kingdoms on earth may know that the Lord alone is God (2 Kings 19:19; Isaiah 37:20). God was willing to do mighty works among his people. God was to do mighty works among his people so that all men he has made may know his works (Job 37:7). The people are to be the witnesses of the Lord so that the people may know, believe, and understand that He is the Lord (Isaiah 43:10). God will bring Gog against his land so that the nations may know him (Ezekiel 38:16).

In the New Testament, the intention of God as revealed by John was that the entire world may know the deeds of God through Jesus. John 3:16 clearly attests to the love of God for humanity. Jesus did so many miraculous deeds when he was on earth. The essence was that the people may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins (Mark 2:10; Luke. 5:24) and show mercy and compassion to the people. It is clearly stated in the epistles particularly those of Paul. One sees Paul working so hard in his desire and preaching so that the people to know more of Jesus and the certainty of the things they have learned (Ephesian 1:17, 18; Colossian 2:2). In Colossians 2:2-4, Paul stated, "My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Paul also encouraged the people of Colossae that their conversation should be full of grace, seasoned with salt so that you may know how to answer everyone (Colossian 4:6). The writer of Psalm 145:10-13 made it clear when he stated, "All you have made will praise you, O LORD; your saints will extol you. They will tell of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might, so that all men may know of your mighty acts and the glorious splendor of your kingdom. Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures through all generations."

So far, the study has fixed not only the intent of Christians in carrying on the order of Christ in setting off the immediate witnesses of Jesus ministry. The scriptures highlighted have also informed same spirit of love, unity and edifying communications that all men will know that God is in the midst of His people in all generations and transforming people. This would make people of the nations of the earth to know Jesus and the workings of God in their lives. John has this in mind when he wrote his books in the Bible.

### **The African Church and Evangelistic Intentions**

When one talks of Christianity in Africa, there is need to be careful in searching through history of its role in the incubation period of the first century. Thomas C. Oden made an important discovery, which this work will utilize in reaching its objective. Other scholars like Peter Falk and Samuel Waje Kunhiyop's work will equally relevant. Taking a preview of their works will help one to discover that it started from the reception of baby Jesus when Joseph and Mary had to flee from Bethlehem under the direction of God into Egypt Matthew 2:12-15 (Tambiye 1-270). Northern Africa was therefore part of God's space in the mission of Jesus Christ. It also got rooted on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) and the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-40). It is obvious that:

Christianity was rooted in North Africa<sup>4</sup> but later got invaded by Arab crusaders predominantly in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Gospel revisited the African continent in the nineteenth century when the Portuguese missionaries brought the Gospel on the African soil. I used the word 'revisited' because Northern part of Africa (as state above) was known even in the days of the apostles during the first century AD to be a center of Christian religious activities with ministerial integrity and extensive Christian thoughts. There were strong churches, which existed in Egypt, Carthage, Abyssinia, Ethiopia and Nubia etc. within North and East Africa (Tambiye, *Priesthood* 1-2).



In a deeper sense, Thomas C. Oden writes that Africa played a decisive role in the formation of the Christian culture (9). Oden has also argued that both Judaism and Christianity have their roots in the life of people at an "interface between Africa and Asia. Both Jews and Christians, he said moved across Egypt, to Jerusalem to Samaria to Antioch" (16) and beyond. Examples of people like Apollos of Alexandria and Libyans at Pentecost and Simon of Cyrene and Ethiopian believers. Even Mark, an apostolic eye-witness, Odeon remarks, started the Alexandrian church (18; Falk 26). When one talks of Church Fathers notable names from Carthaginian and Nubian theologians like Tertullian, Cyprian, Amobius Opatius and Augustine (Oden 21) must be mentioned. Their roles in setting the agenda of Christianity and spread to Europe and Asia cannot be down played.

Sources of theologians and scholars in mid-twentieth century of Africa descent commenced serious academic endeavors to objectively inform the influences of Africans like Origen, Tertullian etc. in the spread of the gospel in their various generations (Oden 28- 29). Oden clearly traced historically how ecumenical decision making in Jerusalem took its bearing from Africa. He showed this by referring to the conciliar movements which started in Jerusalem (45 CE) as reported by Luke (48) of further African influence in the spread of Christianity through education was the famous catechetical school in Alexandria that was started by Pantaenus in 180 CE later Clement took over and then Origen (Falk 26).

Following such a foundational background of the emergent testament of Biblical and African evangelism and mission, it would be good to how subsequently Africans engaged in mission work following the evangelistic intentions of Jesus as documented by John and how relevant that would be to African Christianity today. Gideon Y. Tambiyi in a book, *The African Church under Fire* rightly argues that 'The Bible is nothing but Christ' (316). The books of the Bible were inspired of God to his servant over years and written in languages of the time in particular styles. For us to proclaim or teach the gospel in Africa, Tambiyi argued for three things that are necessary, which this essay will adapt. They are:

- (i) Contextualization of the scripture into African setting.
- (ii) Developing appropriate African Hermeneutical Methodology and,
- (iii) Having the right qualification and tools for the interpretation of the Bible (316- 335).

### **1. Need for Contextualization**

Tambiyi quotes John S. Mbiti on the need for interpreting the Bible in the African perspective, "The gospel was revealed to the world in the context and language of culture, and not in an empty vacuum. This revelation took place in specific cultural place. Palestine, among a specific people, the Jews, at a specific movement, two thousand years ago. Since then the gospel has been proclaimed, propagated and accepted within the cultural milieu of the people of the world" (184). Also, Paul Danbaki Jatau, trying to explain the new dimension of the new evangelistic intentions, reveals that the path of Christ and the evangelization as a promoter of authentic humanism should be seen as part of the new face of evangelism in Africa (21-22). What this means is that African culture and languages are different from the first recipients, therefore, for it to be understood in Africa, the scripture must be interpreted with the African mind. In effect, the various cultures and languages spatially distributed in Africa must be studied, documented and the gospel made relevant in its setting. There is no doubt his emphasis that the bible requires proper interpretation using the correct principles in spite the multi 'faced problems' arising from diversity of the African people. This would make the intention of Jesus fulfilled among the African people.

### **2. Methodologies of African Hermeneutics**

It is of paramount importance to develop proper methods for African biblical hermeneutics since they have not been properly harmonized as observed by Tambiyi (318). It was in this framework that S. O. Abogunrin observed rightly that to depend solely on the theories and rules of interpretation developed under the condition alien to the African life undoubtedly affects the growth of the church to maturity. It also reduces our credibility as African theologians, diminishes our spirit and distorts the universality of Jesus to whom the scriptures bear witness (2-3). In developing this tool, it is pertinent to cause the language styles of Jesus's passion in John literature earlier analyzed that has the power of conviction. John Piper highlighted the following characteristics of a biblical evangelization, which he found in the life of Johnathan Edwards. They are: i) stirring up holy affections ii) enlightening the

mind iii) saturating proclamation with scriptures iv) employ analogies and maps v) use threats and warnings vi) plead for response and probe the working of the heart. Others are vii) prayer of yieldedness of the Holy Spirit viii) tender hearted and broken with intensity (84-104). These factors need to consciously be built into whatever methodology recommended.

It is noteworthy to recall Ka Mana's emphasis on the importance of African hermeneutics to involve the creation of a new African society. He observed that "presenting a hermeneutics of resourcefulness as a fertile ground for the reading of the bible today, is given hope once more to Africa and opening doors of hope for the building of a new society". To this, Mana further called for a reevaluation of our educational philosophy with the gospel of entrenched in a "creative and inventive spirit" (102). These efforts to create a better African society in terms of mission and to maintain the standard of the Africans led to the quest for methodologies for African interpretation. Regarding this, Abogunrin observed, "the quest for new ways of interpreting the bible is perhaps the most important part of modern theological education in Africa" (2-3). To him, it is uncalled for, adulterated and syncretistic. However, these methodological quests stressed the Bible to its sole foundation. Parts of their bases rest on the scriptures and the culture of the African people (14).

There are interpretational methods gotten so far in Africa according to Tambiyi. As the Third World biblical hermeneutics has employed various methodologies to its frontiers 'militant reading,' 'guerrilla exegesis,' 'cross textual reading,' 'dialogical imagination,' and 'calypso exegesis' (Tambiyi 320), so also the African biblical hermeneutics. The African cultural hermeneutics according to Tambiyi are enculturation hermeneutics, indigenization, Africanization, deconstruction, decolonization, deculturation, incarnation, accommodation, reconstruction, intercultural hermeneutics, African theology, savanna theology, and relevance of the Gospel theology, liberation hermeneutics, comparative studies, evaluative studies, black reading, feminist hermeneutics and finding African presence in the Bible.

The Pentecostal hermeneutical methodology which centers on viewing the text, passage, phrases and words independently emerged and with the need for people to stand above the social economic challenges in the African context. This method has been making headway, concentrating on the spiritual message of text, passage, verse or words and creating hope in the word of God for the Africans. The most recent methodology is the post-colonial hermeneutics which got rooted in South Africa dominantly by R.S. Sugirtharajah (Tambiyi 320). Some of these methodologies have become threats to real African Christian theology in which the Bible is its source and authority. These threats are in the aspects of false interpretation. Having clear methodologies in Africa would greatly make the involvement of African evangelism and missions interesting as Jesus demanded of the Johannine community.

### **3. Qualifications and tools for interpretation**

There are people in Africa who are anxious to interpret the Bible even without the basic qualifications. This work has seen it fit to suggest some qualification, which will help the Africans in terms of Bible interpretations. These qualities are suggested for anyone who wants to be a biblical interpreter since the Bible is not an ordinary literature. These qualifications are divided into three: spiritual, academic, and practical qualifications, which are based on the grammatical historical method of Bible interpretation. The Africanization of the Bible is very important if the gospel is going to make meaning for evangelism amongst the various cultural settings on the continent. This can be achieved through deliberate training and development of African hermeneutical methods and tools. K. Frehlich, for example says "God did not use a language of His own or the language of angels I Corinthian 13:1), but made human language of particular times and places the vehicle of biblical revelation" (141-142). What this means is that the trained African scholars and missionaries with a true knowledge of the scripture will be able to use study tools and knowledge of the bible contextually to interpret it in the African cultural understanding. The materials and techniques have been documented and clearly spelt out by Tambiyi under the following sub-themes; Study Bible, Bible Dictionaries, Bible Commentaries, Theological Dictionaries, Greek and Hebrew Bibles, Bible Concordances and tools of general use like the internet, maps and atlases, Bible Handbooks, and Customs and Manners (325-332).

As for the spiritual qualifications, Tambiyi further highlights the following factors among others as basic; the interpreter must be a born-again Christian John 3:3. Must be Spirit Controlled

(John 4:25, 16:12-13), must be humble (1 Peter 5:5), must be a person of prayer (Matthew 7:7; John 14:13-14). A non-Christian may have head knowledge of a material but cannot discern the things of the Spirit neither speak nor hear from God through prayer. The carnal mind cannot understand spiritual things (321-334). These tools would spearhead the evangelistic involvements in the African continent as John wanted Christians to make Jesus known to the entire world.

## Conclusion

This work started with a general review of what the Gospel of John stands for, its background dynamics, what role it played in explaining the life of Jesus Christ and his ministry. It became imperative in the course of the study to harmonize the variation of perspectives on the authorship of the gospel. In doing this, few scriptures were singled out to find out what Jesus wished for his disciples at that moment and future followers that will continue to come into this Kingdom that he established. In the course of the study, it is found out that reasons for differences in perspective are due to varied methodological and contextual assumptions in interpreting texts of scripture. There was also the problem of scholarly pride of non-commendation of contributors to New Testament Theology. A real discovery of the great role of church fathers and scholars in the first and second centuries of African descent has motivated great interest in research in biblical theology of a recent. The discovery of historical facts that Africa was part of God's plan in the Kingdom progression informed this work's emphasis on the development of contextualized gospel, with adequate African hermeneutics and methodologies which would suit the African context and enhance the actualization of the evangelistic intentions of Jesus as expressed in the Johannine literature. Once this is fully developed, the Bible will be made more relevant, understandable and convincing to Africans thereby enabling them access to the Kingdom of Christ. This will go a long way in the fulfillment of the command to reach the whole world with the gospel; hence, the focus of John's writing was that humanity would know and believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life (John 20:30-31; 1 John. 5:13).

## Works Cited

- Abogunrin, S. O. "Situation Theology as a Recipe for African Theologian Exploration" *African Journal of Biblical Studies*. Vol. XV, No. 2 (October 2000).
- Abogunrin, S. O. "Situation Theology as a Recipe for African Theologian Exploration" *African Journal of Biblical Studies* Vol. XV, no.2, October 2000.
- Bacon, Benjamin W. *The Gospel of the Hellenists*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1933.
- Beale, G. K. and D. A. Carson. *Commentary of the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007.
- Blomberg, Craig L. *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*. Second Edition. Nottingham: IVP Academic, 2007.
- Charlesworth, James H. *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Gospel According to John*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996.
- Dodd, C. H. *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953.
- Dodd, C. H. "The Background of the Fourth Gospel" *Bulletin of the John Ryland's Library* 19 (1935): pp. 329-343.
- Evanson, Edward. "The Dissonance of the Four Generally Received Evangelists and the Evidence of their Respective Authority Examined" (Ipswich: George Jermyn, 1972): pp. 219 - 254.
- Falk, Peter: *The Growth of the Church in Africa*. Bukuru: ACTS, 1977.
- Frehlich, K. "Biblical Hermeneutics on the Move" *Word and World: Theology for Christian Ministry* Vol. 1, No. 2 (Spring 1981): Pp. 141-142.
- Frey, Jorg. "The Diaspora- Jewish Background of the Fourth Gospel." *Research Gate* January 2012.
- Hunter, A.M. *Introducing New Testament Theology*. London: SCM Press Ltd., 1957.
- Hunter, C. A. *The New Testament: Its Writers and Their Messages*. London; Methodist Sunday School Department, 1937.
- Jatau, Paul Danbaki. "A Contextual Reading of the Bible in the Light of New Evangelization in Northern Nigeria" *Tropical Journal of Arts and Humanities* 1:2 (2019), pp. 17-25.
- Jensen, Peter. *The Revelation of God: Contours of Christian Theology*. Leicester: Inter Varsity Press, 2002.

- Kasemann, Ernst. *The Testament of Jesus*. translated by Gerhard Krodel. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978.
- Keener, Craig S. *The Gospel of John: A Commentary. Volume Two*. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005.
- Keener, Craig S. *The IVP Background Commentary of the New Testament*. Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2000.
- Mana, Ka *Christians and Churches of Africa: Envisioning the Future*. Carlisle: Paternoster, 2002.
- Mbiti, J. S. "Christianity and African Culture" *The Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* September 1917.
- Moltmann, Jurgen. *The Crucified God; The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*. London: SCM Press, 1974.
- Newbigin, Lesslie. *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*. Michigan: Wm. B Eerdmans Publishing, 1989.
- Oden, Thomas C. *How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind*. Downers Groves: IVP Books, 2007.
- Piper, John. *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*. Revised edition. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2004.
- Piper, John. *God in the Gospel: Meditations on God's Love as the Gift of Himself*. Nottingham: IVP, 2005.
- Smith, D. Moody. *The Theology of the Gospel of John*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Spencer, Afda Bensanson and William David Spencer, eds. *The Global God: Multicultural Evangelical Views of God*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Bridge Point Books, 1998.
- Stovell, Beth M. "Love One Another and the Love the World: The Love Command and Jewish Ethics in the Johannine Community" Stanley E. Porter and Andrew W. Pitts eds. *Christian Origins and the Establishment of the Early Jesus Movement*. Leiden: Brill, 2018. Pp. 426-458.
- Tambi, Gideon Y. *Priesthood and African Christian Thoughts*. Muster: Lambert Publishing, 2017.
- Tambi, Gideon Yohanna. "Recovering Matthean Text of the Holy Family in Africa: A Coptic and Greek Textual Analysis" PhD Thesis at the University of Jos, 2018.
- Tambi, Gideon Yohanna. *The African Church Under Fire: Problems and Prospects*. Kaduna: Tubase Prints and Publications, 2014.