

DENOMINATIONALISM: A blessing or curse in the Christendom?

This is an extract of the Lecture presented by His Eminence, The Most Reverend Dr. Rufus Okikiola OSITELU at the Adeleke Adejobi Foundation on the 26th of September, 2007.

INTRODUCTION

Generally, I will like to approach the above topic theologically, spiritually and practically.

- Therefore, I will first look at certain key words in the topic.
- I will then look into the church history as it affects the topic.
- This will be followed by the effects of Schism in the church.
- Finally, I will dwell on the advantages and disadvantages of denominationalism. The listeners to this lecture and readers of this paper will be left to arrive at their own personal decision, whether denominationalism is a blessing or a curse or both.

DEFINITION OF KEY WORDS

The key words of the topic of this lecture are: Denominationalism; Blessing; Curse and Christendom. I like to define them in order to flow together in the use of the words and for better understanding.

Denominationalism may be defined as a division into denominations, which are religious bodies with specific organizational names. In the Christian context, a denomination may be referred to as a group of people belonging to a particular branch of the Christian church.

Blessing in this context may be defined as that which brings happiness, praise, divine favour or heavenly reward. It therefore denotes the favour of God, which brings comfort, joy or benefit.

Curse is the general word for calling down evil or injury on someone or something. In the biblical context, it is to pronounce a sentence, a condemnation or judgement on someone or something.

Christendom may be defined as the Christian religious system and may refer to Christians collectively.

Christendom and Christianity are interchangeably used to refer to the whole body of Christ's followers.

Having carefully defined the four key words in the topic of this lecture, I will now like to go into the history of the church (the body of Christ) as it affects the topic.

DENOMINATIONALISM - Brief History:

Denominationalism came about as a result of schism in the body of Christ, as the result of difference of opinion, of the doctrine or practices and observances etc. Schism is historically a phenomenon, which we should not worry ourselves about unnecessarily. It becomes dangerous, when the reason for it has nothing to do with doctrinal difference(s) but greediness and the like.

In the beginning: The church began in Jerusalem, but it was not long before it spread out to many parts of the world. About three thousand people became new believers when Peter preached the Good News about Christ Jesus (Acts 2:41). The about three thousand pilgrims, who were converted on the day of Pentecost, brought the Gospel back to the home countries from which they had come. Every convert became a missionary for the Gospel.

By the end of the first century, the Church had her witnesses through-out the Roman Empire. Interestingly, the first country to adopt Christianity as its official religion was not in Europe as widely believed, but in Armenia - in the southwest of Asia. Credit is given to Gregory (the Illuminator - ca. 240-332) for converting King Tiridates to Christianity in 301. By 433, the Armenians had the Bible in their own language. As for the christianisation of the rest of the Empire, it took the conversion of the Constantine I (the Great - 285-337), a Roman Emperor (306-337). Emperor Constantine I adopted Christianity (312), and presided over the first council of the Christian Church at NICAEA (325), which condemned ARIANISM, which was based on the teachings of Arius (ca. AD 250-336), considered to be heretical by orthodox Christianity.

Arius taught that Christ, though divine, was neither equal nor co-eternal with the Father. The spread of Christianity to Britain is veiled in obscurity, but there is evidence that by the end of the third century, the church was already firmly planted in the land. Its subsequent growth is associated with two persons – Columba (521–597) and Augustine (d. 604).

Saint Columba (521-597) was an Irish Christian missionary in Ireland and Scotland. He founded several monasteries throughout Ireland. In 563, he left Ireland and founded an important monastery on the Island of Iona. As abbot, (superior monk) of Iona, he strove to convert the PICTS (the inhabitant of North East Scotland) to Christianity, and actively promoted the faith. At Iona, an offshore island, he developed an important centre of training, which, over the next two hundred years, sent out hundreds of missionary monk throughout Britain and Europe. Saint Augustine of Canterbury (d.604) was the first Archbishop of

Canterbury. He was sent from Rome in 596 by Pope Gregory I, at the head of a 40- strong mission to Christianise the English.

Arriving in Kent in 597, Augustine converted King Ethelbert of Kent (560-616) and introduced Roman ecclesiastical practices into England. The parliament of the King agreed to adopt Christianity as the official religion. This was followed by the baptism of about ten thousand people in one day. A Cathedral was built at Canterbury with Augustine becoming its first Archbishop. Around these periods, the Christian faith was spreading to other parts of the world, mainly in Asia, Africa and Europe.

Augustine emphasized the corruption of human will and the freedom of the divine gift of grace (Ephesians 2:8-9). There are other notable Christian leaders of the early centuries, including Athanasius (296-373) among others, who were the leader of the Church in Alexandria, Egypt. He led the fight against teachings that denied the full divinity of the Son, insisting that Christ was co-equal, co-eternal, and of the same substance with God the Father. In his various writings. He defended the teaching that the Son and the Holy Spirit were of equal divinity with God the Father and so shared a three-fold being - the Holy Trinity. The Church was thereafter beset by problems of political rivalries among the nations, internal ecclesiastical conflicts, and the spread of Islam across Northern Africa and Eastern Europe. She failed to expand over the next thousand years. By the middle of the second millennium, things were to change as a new age was dawning. Christians rediscovered the teachings of the Bible, lives were revitalised and a new zest was given to the Church.

SCHISM

The first major schism took place in 1054, when the Eastern and Western churches separated. The next occurred in the 16th century Reformation, with the split of Protestantism and the Roman Catholic Church. The third major schism occurred between the 19th and the 20th centuries in Africa, initiated by Africans. Schism has since then continued. Some of the denominations include, Lutherism, Anglicanism, Methodism, Baptistery, Presbytery, Aladura, Catholicism, and Orthodoxy, just to mention a few. Just as we have schism among the old mission churches, so also do we have it among the New Generation Churches. In some cases, schism came about by difference in opinions, doctrine, liturgy, etc. Schism also came about sometimes by greediness, jealousy, self-centeredness and the desire to embezzle Church's money or property.

Schism is historically a phenomenon, which has been with the church since the 11th century. It becomes dangerous when the reasons for it have nothing to do with doctrinal differences but greediness. In recent times, the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Geneva, Switzerland, an ecumenical movement is to some extent successfully trying to reunite all Christians.

In view of the above, let me briefly expatiate on the major denominations, some of the key players that led to their emergence and the reasons that caused the divisions and separation.

Catholicism

Catholicism is defined as the undivided Church as it existed before the schism of East and West in 1054 AD. Following this, the western Church called itself 'Catholic', while the Eastern Church called itself 'Orthodox'. Since the Reformation, the term has usually been used to denote the Roman Catholic Church, although the Anglican Communion and the old Catholics sometimes use the term as well.

Orthodoxy

Orthodoxy is the belief or the practice of the Orthodox Church. The Orthodox Church is also called: Byzantine Church, Eastern Orthodox Church, Greek Orthodox Church, etc. In a nutshell, it is defined as the collective body of those Eastern Churches that were separated from the Western Church in the 11th century and are in communion with the Greek patriarch of Constantinople.

The Orthodox Church is a community of about 130 million Christians living mainly in East and South East Europe, parts of Asia and a significant minority in the USA (and Africa) in cursive and bracket - mine. The church is a federation of groups that share forms of worship and Episcopal organization, but each group has its own national head. The largest group is the Russian Orthodox Church. Although there is no central authority, member churches recognize the patriarch of Constantinople (present day Istanbul, Turkey) as titular head.

Eastern Orthodox Christians reject the jurisdiction of the Roman Catholic Pope. When Constantine moved his capital to Byzantium (which later became Constantinople, the present-day Istanbul) in 330 AD, a separate non-Roman culture developed. Conflicts grew between the Eastern patriarchs and Rome. In the 1054 schism, West and Eastern arms of Christendom excommunicated each other's followers.

The spirit became irreparable when crusaders invaded Constantinople in 1204. Attempts at reconciliation in 1274 and 1430 AD failed. In 1962, Orthodox observers attended the second Vatican Council. In 1963, Eastern Orthodox Churches opened dialogue with Rome.

Lutherism (Lutheranism)

Lutheranism may be defined as the religious doctrines of Martin Luther, the German leader of the Protestant Reformation (1483-1546).

Lutheranism is the doctrines and Church structure that grew out of the teaching of Martin LUTHER. The principal Lutheran doctrine is that of justification by faith alone (*sola fide*). He objected to the Catholic doctrine of Transubstantiation, which in Roman Catholic theology is the doctrine that the whole substance of the bread and wine changes into the substance of the body and blood of Christ when consecrated in the Eucharist. Instead, Luther believed in the real presence of Christ “in with, and under” the bread and wine (Consubstantiation), that is, the substance of the body and blood of Christ coexists within the substance of the consecrated bread and wine.

The essentials of Lutheran Doctrine were set down by Philip MELANCHTHON in the Augsburg Confession (1530), which has been the basic document of the Lutherans ever since. Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560) was a German theologian and educator. In 1947, the Lutheran World Federation was formed as a coordinating body for Lutheranism on a global scale.

Martin Luther (1483-1546) was a German Christian reformer who was a founder of Protestantism, which is the religious system of any of the churches of Western Christendom that are separated from the Roman Catholic Church and adhere substantially to the principles established by Luther, Calvin, etc. in the reformation. Martin Luther was deeply concerned about the problem of salvation, deciding that it could not be attained by good works, but was a free gift of God’s grace. We are not saved merely as a result of our effort, ability, intelligence or act of service, but through God’s unmerited grace. “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.”

In 1517, Martin Luther affixed his Ninety-five Theses, which include statements challenging the sale of Indulgences (remission of temporal punishment for sin), to the door of the “Schlosskirche” in Wittenberg. This action led to a quarrel between Luther and the Catholic Church leaders, including the Pope. Luther

decided that the Bible was the true source of authority and renounced obedience to Rome. He was excommunicated, but gained followers among churchmen as well as the laity. After the publication of the Augsburg Confession (1530), he gradually retired from the leadership of the Protestant movement.

John Calvin (1509-1564) was a French theologian of the Reformation. He prepared for a career in the Roman Catholic Church, but turned to the study of classics. In 1533 AD he became a Protestant and began work on his "Institutes of the Christian Religion". In this work he presented the basics of what came to be known as Calvinism, which is a set of doctrines and attitudes derived from John Calvin. The Reformed and Presbyterian Churches were established in his tradition. Just like Martin Luther, he rejected Papal authority and relied on the Bible as the source of Christian religious truth.

Calvinism stresses the sovereignty of God and predestination. Calvinism usually subordinates state to Church, and cultivates austere doctrines, particularly predestination, and the rejection of consubstantiation (the doctrine that after the consecration of the Eucharist, the substance of the body and blood of Christ coexist within the substance of the consecrated bread and wine), in its Eucharistic teaching, caused a split in Protestantism between Lutheranism and Presbyterianism. Important Calvinist leaders include John Knox and Jonathan Edwards. John Calvin's original name is Jean Cauvin.

Anglicanism (Anglican Communion)

Anglicanism may be defined as the doctrine and practice of the Church of England and other Anglican churches.

Anglican Communion is a fellowship of 37 independent national or provincial worldwide churches, many of which are in Commonwealth nations and originated from missionary work by the Church of England. An exception is the Episcopal Church in the U.S.A, founded by the Scottish Episcopal Church. There is no single governing authority, but all recognize the leadership of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Worship is based on the Book of Common Prayer. Once in a decade, the Bishops of the Communion meet at the Lambeth Conference.

In 1982, diplomatic ties with the Roman Catholic Church were restored. In 1988, the conference passed a resolution of support of the ordination of women as Priests. Recently, there is a split within the Anglican Worldwide Communion as captioned in The Guardian newspaper: "Akinola installs parallel Anglican Bishop in the United States" and "Anglican Church of Nigeria in America: In keeping with tradition of

change". This schism came because of the liberal position of the Episcopal Church as regards gay-priesthood, which Archbishop Jasper Peter Akinola referred to as the "unbiblical agenda" of the Anglican Church in the USA.

Just like Martin Luther, Peter Akinola rejected the Archbishop of Canterbury's authority on this particular subject and relied on the Bible as the source of truth on this matter. Anglican rifts over whether homosexuality is biblically acceptable broke wide open in 2003 AD when the Episcopalians consecrated the first openly gay Bishop V. Gene Robinson of New Hampshire.

In 2007 AD, Archbishop Akinola installed parallel anti-gay Bishop Martyns Minns to lead the conservative USA parish network at Woodbridge, Virginia in the United States of America.

Baptistry (Baptistry)

Baptistry may be defined as a part of the Christian Church in which baptisms are carried out. A Baptist is a Christian who regards baptism by immersion as the only legitimate form sanctioned by the New Testament. Like the Anabaptists [radical Protestant sects in the Reformation who shared the belief that infant baptism is not authorized by the Scripture, and that it was necessary to be baptized as an adult.

The first such baptisms were conducted by the Swiss Brethren sect in Zurich (1525), the sect was the first to completely separate Church from State, when they rejected Ulrich Zwingli's Reformed Church], to whom they have an affinity but no formal links. The Baptists generally reject the practice of infant baptism, insisting that initiates must have freedom of thought and expression, and must already be believers. They originated among the English dissenters of the 17th Century, but have spread worldwide through emigration and missionary work. There is no official creed or hierarchy, and individual churches are autonomous.

Baptists traditionally advocate the separation of Church and State. The Baptist World Allianz (founded 1905) holds regular international congresses.

Presbytery (Presbyterianism)

Presbyterianism may be defined as a major form of Protestant Christianity that became the national Church of Scotland in 1690. It arose in the mid-16th Century from the teachings of John Calvin in Switzerland, and was taken to Britain by the Scottish religious reformer John Knox.

Church Ministers, who are occasionally called pastors, are elected by their congregation and confirmed in their office by the Presbytery, which is a group of members from the local area.

Members of the Presbytery are responsible for ordaining and installing (and removing), Church Ministers. Each presbytery sends delegates to an annual synod and to a General Assembly.

In 1972, the Presbyterian Church of England (formed 1876) united with the Congregational Church of England and Wales. There are Presbyterian churches all over the world, particularly in North America, where the Presbyterian Church (USA) was formed in 1983 through the merger of several older groups.

Methodism

Methodism may be defined as a worldwide religious movement that began in England in the 18th Century. It was originally an evangelical movement within the Church of England, which started in 1729 by John and Charles Wesley. John Wesley (1703-1791) stayed within the Anglican Church until his death in 1791. John Wesley was an English theologian and evangelist who founded Methodism. In 1729, with his brother Charles Wesley, he founded the Holy Club at Oxford. In 1738, he underwent a personal and religious experience during a Moravian meeting and this laid the foundation upon which he built the Methodist movement.

Charles Wesley (1708-1788) was an English Evangelist and hymn writer, and brother of John Wesley. He was ordained in 1735, and in 1738 he underwent an evangelical conversion. He wrote nearly six thousand (6000) hymns, including "Hark! The herald angels sing", "Love divine" and etc.

In 1793, the Wesleyan Methodists became a separate body and divided into other sects, such as the Methodist New Connection (1797) and the Primitive Methodists (1811). The United Methodists Church reunited the New Connection with the smaller Bible Christians and the United Methodists Free Churches in 1907; in 1932 these sects united with the Wesleyans and the Primitive Methodists. In the USA, the Methodist Episcopal Church was founded in 1784.

Aladura (Aladuranism)

Aladuranism may be defined as a major group of churches initiated by Africans. The Aladura churches are African instituted Christian religious movement that began in Africa in the early 20th Century.

“Aladura” is a Yoruba word (an African language, spoken in some parts of Nigeria, Benin Republic, Togo and Brazil), which means “the praying people” or “prayer fellowship”. The Yoruba language is widely spoken in the Southwestern part of Nigeria, and other parts of West Africa and Brazil.

The Aladura churches are known for their belief in the efficacy of prayer, fasting and healing ministry. Classical Aladura churches include, the Cherubim and Seraphim Church (C&S); The Church of the Lord (Prayer Fellowship) Worldwide (TCLPFW); the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC); and the Celestial Church of Christ (CCC).

The most popular among the African Initiated Churches (AIC) today, is the Aladura Church movement. It has the largest number of followers on the African continent. It is the largest congregation of the indigenous churches in Africa. Most of the churches known under this umbrella-name manage their own affairs and are independent of each other.

For example, the Church of the Lord (Prayer Fellowship) Worldwide [TCLPFW], started spiritually when the founder – Josiah Olunowo Ositelu (1900-1966) had a personal encounter with the Holy Spirit in 1925 while he was still a Catechist in the Anglican Mission. He formerly inaugurated (established) the Church in 1930. He started his person-to-person and house-to-house evangelism in 1925, and conducted his first open-air in 1929.

Just like Martin Luther, he rejected the local Anglican authority and relied on what the spirit of God was dictating to him. As a result, the Anglican Mission excommunicated him in 1925 because of his professed encounter with the Holy Spirit.

Josiah Ositelu was deeply concerned that it is very essential to obey God than men. He wrote down the essentials of Ositelu’s Aladura Doctrine as revealed to him in audio and vision. Some of these essentials include:

- God can be worshipped in the beauty of His holiness within the culture of the people as long as such culture agrees with the Bible, but not only within the culture of the European missionaries.
- Both male and female are called into priesthood.
- Anointed water, oil and handkerchiefs are spiritual elements useful for healing.
- Baptism should be performed for a young adult who has already confessed Christ as his/her Lord and Saviour.
- Babies born to Christians should be dedicated unto the Lord (a.k.a Christening), but not baptized.

The Church of the Lord [Prayer Fellowship] Worldwide (TCLPFW) now exists all over the world, including Europe, North America, Australia and Africa, as revealed to Josiah Ositelu in 1925 AD. In 2004, the classical Aladura churches came together to form the United Aladura Churches (UAC) Incorporated.

CONCLUSION

Is denominationalism a blessing or curse in Christendom?

Going through the causes, advantages and disadvantages of schism in Christendom as explained above, and especially the provision of the Scriptures, will guide us individually to arrive at our own conclusion, concerning the above question. Schism in Christendom, denominationalism or proliferation (rapid growth) of churches in all instances is on itself per se neither good (blessing) nor bad (curse). What really matters is the reason for the schism.

Is the reason for schism, spirit divine directed and/or based on biblical doctrinal differences? On the other hand, is it carnally guided, for example, the love of money, greediness, self-centeredness, seeking self-glory, etc.? The latter is very common nowadays among the New Age churches. From the brief history of denominationalism, according to this paper, we are able to identify doctrinal differences as in the case of the Old Mission churches and divine spirit directives as in the case of Aladuranism.

Realistically speaking, we also have schism that was motivated by greediness and the like. The Scripture has already warned us about this phenomenon. Paul the Apostle in Philippians 3:18-19; criticized the self-indulgent Christians, people who claim to be Christians but do not live up to Christ's model of servanthood and self-sacrifice. They are rather using Christianity to satisfy their selfish desires. "For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame."

No wonder, our Lord Christ Jesus exposed this type of people who sounded religious, but had no personal relationship with Him. They think that if they acquire material wealth and are able to quote the Bible from the beginning to the end, they will be rewarded with eternal life, but in the Day of Judgment God will judge sin and reward faith.

Jesus said: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord', will enter the kingdom of heaven (God), but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day (judgment day), 'Lord,

Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles? Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

In Nigeria for example, some Church leaders teach their members to view members of other denominations as unbelievers or yet to be born again. Let me warn here that when we read books or listen to sermons, we should check properly the content of what is written or said carefully, and not be fooled by smooth style of writing or speaking. Christians who study God's Word with Holy Spirit interpreting for them cannot be fooled while superficial readers or listeners may easily be taken in. John, a disciple of Christ Jesus in Luke 9:49-50 said: "Master, said John, we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we tried to stop him, because he is not one of us. Do not stop him, Jesus said, for whoever is not against you is for you."

Christian ecumenism is the answer to denominationalism. Christ Jesus wants all Christians to work together for the glory of the name of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And that is why we are cautioned in Luke 9:49-50 and Romans 16:17-18. Christians should not allow pride or jealousy disenable them to work in unity, under the motto: Unity in Diversity. Christians should rather share Jesus' open-arm policy and attitude to all Christian workers in other denominations.

Romans 16:17-18 says, "I urge you brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naïve people."

What the Lord Jesus desires of all Christians is to be united, even in their diversity (Unity in Diversity).

Ecumenism (Unity In Diversity)

The Lord Jesus prayed for Christendom in John 17:20-21 that all denominations may be united. According to 1 Corinthians 12:12; "The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So, it is with Christ."

Using the analogy of the body, Paul the Apostle emphasizes the importance of each Christian denomination and each Church member and elaborated on it in 1 Corinthians 12:14-24. If a seemingly insignificant part is taken away, the whole body becomes less effective. Different denominations have

different gifts, for example, the Aladura churches are very prophetic in ministry. As a matter of fact, the four cardinal tenets of the Church of the Lord [Prayer Fellowship] Worldwide (TCLPFW) are:

- Pentecostal in power;
- Biblical in pattern;
- Evangelical, prophetic and social in ministry; and
- Ecumenical in outlook.

Therefore, we should not look down on those who seem unimportant and we should not be jealous of or denounce others who have impressive gifts. Instead, we should use whichever gifts we have as individuals or as denominations to edify the body of Christ (Christendom), so that the world may believe.

Our Lord Christ Jesus prayed for His disciples, future believers and the unity of Christendom in John 17:20-21; "My prayer is not for them alone, I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 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."

According to my observation, some Christian leaders today are not genuinely interested in ecumenism, even when they belong to one ecumenical body or the other. Our Lord Jesus' great desire is for all denominations to be united as a powerful witness to the reality of God's love, that is, Christian Ecumenism (Unity in Diversity). The World Council of Churches (WCC) is the broadest and most inclusive among the many organized expressions of the modern ecumenical movement, a movement whose goal is to promote a united Christian voice and witness in the world.

The WCC is a fellowship of churches, which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is a body of autonomous member churches, which have made a free choice to join the WCC. In 2005, the WCC had a membership of 348 member churches, which together claimed 592 million Christian members in more than 120 countries.

WCC member churches include nearly all the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches; Anglicans; diverse Protestant churches, including Reformed, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Baptist; African instituted churches; and a broad representation of united and independent churches. While most of the WCC's founding churches were European and North American, today the majority are in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, the Middle East and the Pacific. The Catholic Church is not a member of the

WCC, but has worked closely with the Council for decades and sends observers to all major WCC meetings. A Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC has been functioning since 1965. A new document authorised by Pope Benedict XVI restating Roman Catholic views that Protestant denominations are not churches “in the proper sense” has been criticised as setting back the quest for Christian unity.

The document says that Protestants denominations of the Reformation “have not preserved the genuine and integral substance of the Eucharistic mystery [and] cannot, according to Catholic doctrine, be called Churches in the proper sense”.

In his letter to Cardinal Kasper, Reverend Setri Nyomi, the General Secretary of the Geneva-based World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), said of the document, “It makes us question the seriousness with which the Roman Catholic Church takes its dialogue with the Reformed family and other families of the Church. It makes us question whether we are indeed praying together for Christian unity”.

In response to the Vatican document, the World Council of Churches (WCC) spoke of “the importance of genuine ecumenical dialogue, and of common Christian witness on the problems facing the world today”. Using the term “catholic” in the sense of “universal” the WCC stated further, “Each church is the Church catholic and not simply a part of it. Each church is the Church catholic, but not the whole of it. Each church fulfils its catholicity when it is in communion with the other churches”. The above position, in my view, correlates with 1 Corinthians 12:12; in that the body of Christ (Church) is a unit with many parts (denominations), they all together form one body. In 2005, immediately after his election as pontiff, Benedict said he was “disposed to do all in his power to promote the fundamental cause of ecumenism”.

The questions we should be asking ourselves, as Christians are twofold:

1. Are you helping to unify the body of Christ positively, and actively involved in genuine ecumenism?
2. Are you avoiding gossip and working together with members of other denominations in humility and refusing to get sidetracked by arguing over divisive matters?

By their fruits, you will know them. God is using diverse denominations to reach different people of different backgrounds.

No religion has ever before existed in a cultural vacuum. None of the religions of this world ever existed in a cultural vacuum.

Every religion has always been practised within the cultural context of the believers. Same way, people should feel free to practise Christianity within their own cultural context as long as the practice agrees with the teachings of the Bible.

“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty”.

Thank you for your attention.

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ECOLOGY – Climate Change

The Church of the Lord (Prayer Fellowship) Worldwide – Nigeria Calls for Action on Climate Change

The Church of the Lord (Prayer Fellowship) is a member of the United Aladura Churches (UAC), All African Conference of Churches (AACC), Nairobi, Kenya and the World Council of Churches (WCC), Geneva, Switzerland.

The Aladura Church has long been concerned about environmental issues, including climate change, calling for urgent response to its increasing global impact, especially on the poor in the two-third world.

On the 22nd of December, the Youth Ministry of the Church in collaboration with the other youths of other Christian denominations, during her Triennial Convention discussed and appealed to the Nigerian government to attend to issues of Global Warming and implement the Kyoto Protocol. If we do not start to do something now, it will have great effect on the future generations, most especially in the developing nations of the world.

The emissions from bush burnings and the burning of fossil fuels are pushing carbon dioxide concentrations levels in the atmosphere higher than at any time in recorded history. We hereby call on countries of the world to ratify and implement the Kyoto Protocol.

The World Council of Churches (WCC), as part of its continuing work in solidarity with the victims of climate change, has prepared a new discussion document, which analysis the challenges of implementing the Kyoto Protocol and the basis for the policy framework for the post-Kyoto period. As a result, we need to seriously brainstorm on the steps to take in the longer term to continue to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions.

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