

The Johannine Concepts of 'Faith' and 'Witness': Imperatives for authentic Christian Witnessing in Nigeria

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Abstract

The recognition that Nigeria is a very 'religious country' is expected to be of tremendous advantage based on the positive impact religion should have on the lives of people. If the adherents of the two major religions in Nigeria, namely, Christianity and Islam, which constitute at least 95% could take the common values contained in their sacred books as a *vade mecum* and allow these to function in the formation of their character, with mutual respect and understanding for one another, then Nigeria should be an enviable country. Ironically, despite the high level of 'religiosity' in Nigeria, the corresponding rate of evil perpetrated in all ramifications by many is an incomprehensible contradiction. This paper is from a Christian perspective, a biblical-pastoral approach. The paper makes a synchronic study of the Johannine concepts of 'Belief' and 'Witness'. It is a synchronic study in the sense of the biblical-exegetical method that seeks the unity of the bible as a unified whole, in contrast to the diachronic-exegetical method. On a second level, the paper is also contextual, having in mind the Nigerian context by seeking to address some societal and ethical issues. The paper is topical based on the fact that the Catholic Church celebrates during this period (Oct. 11, 2012-Nov. 24, 2013) the year of faith, so the call to intensify our faith and bear authentic witness to Jesus Christ cannot be overemphasized.

1. Introduction

The concepts of 'Faith' and 'Witness' are major themes in John's Gospel; this is not just evident from their overwhelming statistical occurrences, but largely based on the general emphasis that the Gospel places on the two concepts. Faith in John's Gospel refers to faith in Jesus Christ; it implies a total commitment that leaves no room for

doubt in Jesus Christ based on God's (the Father's) revelation in Jesus Christ (God's Son). Jesus is the reason and background of the Christian faith.

John's Gospel contains enough material and theological evidence to convince one of the divine origin of Jesus, being sent by the Father to the world in order to save the world (cf. Jn 3:17). Little wonder John's Gospel is popularly referred to as the theological Gospel (Anderson, 2007). An ideal Faith in Jesus Christ, as John's Gospel portrays, should not simply have proofs or signs as its basis, but, by appreciating God's revelation in his Son Jesus Christ, there should be a natural thankful-response to God by believing in His Son Jesus Christ (cf. Jn 3:16; 6:39-40; 17:20-25). Many have responded positively by believing in Jesus Christ, as we shall see in the course of this paper.

The goal of the Gospel is expressed in the first epilogue (Jn 20:31), thus: "but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name". Barrett describes Jn 20:31 as a summing up of both the author's theology and purpose (Barrett, 1955:478). John's Gospel itself is also regarded as 'Witness' or 'Testimony', largely based on the emphasis on this theme throughout the Gospel and the Author's comments in the epilogue (cf. Jn 21:24-25). John's Gospel does not only contain the witness of Jesus Christ, but also presents many witnesses to, about and for Jesus Christ. To bear witness to Jesus Christ in John's Gospel is a product of an intimate and sincere relationship with Jesus Christ

Many scholars have written a lot on the concepts of 'Belief' and 'Witness' separately in John's Gospel, but there are just a few works that considered the two concepts together. The immense contributions of R. Schnackenburg, J. Beutler, and U. Wahlde, are worthy of mention, details of which are contained in the Bibliography. It is the goal of this paper to contribute to the already existing works by examining the two concepts together and applying them to the Nigerian context. The scope of this paper, as the title says, is primarily 'Johannine understanding', although reference will be made to other biblical books when necessary; and at the second level, the Nigerian context is being examined. In other words, the approach is both deductive and inductive. It is deductive in the sense that we shall be deducing from John's Gospel a pathway or guide for 'faith' and 'witness'; it is inductive in the sense that as we read John's Gospel, we

respond to it or approach it based on the Nigerian context and from our particular experience.

2. 'Faith / Belief' in John's Gospel: *Vocabulary and Meaning*

The noun πίστις (*faith, belief*) and the verb πιστεύω (*to believe, have faith*) occur 243 times each in the entire New Testament. In John's Gospel only the verb πιστεύω occurs. Statistically, the overwhelming occurrence of πιστεύω in John's Gospel in comparison to the Synoptic Gospels and New Testament as a whole tells of the emphasis and importance of the concept in John's Gospel. Πιστεύω occurs 98 times in John, 11 times in Matthew, 14 times in Mark and 9 times in Luke. The fact that John's Gospel uses only the verb and not the noun gives one the impression or tells of the fact that in John's Gospel, the concept involves action.

A clearer understanding of the Johannine Faith is better appreciated when seen in connection with the prepositions associated with the concept (πιστεύειν εἰς πιστεύειν with dative ἐν and πιστεύειν ὄτι). My interest here is the use of πιστεύειν with the preposition εἰς in the accusative case which has the highest occurrence of 36 times. It is therefore logical that the Johannine understanding should to a large extent be inclined towards this usage. As such πιστεύειν εἰς (*believe in*) is used in John's Gospel in reference to Jesus Christ except in Jn 14:1 where Jesus himself used that expression while speaking to his disciples when he said: "... believe in God, believe also in me". From the foregoing, we can imply that πιστεύω (*to believe*) in John's Gospel is to believe in Jesus Christ.

How does one come to believe in Jesus Christ? It is evident in John's Gospel, especially in the book of signs (Jn 1:19-12,50), that the signs (σημεῖα) of Jesus lead to faith. But that should be properly understood and not be exaggerated as being a prerequisite for faith in Jesus. For Jesus himself made it clear that it should not be the basis. This can be better appreciated by considering some passages in John's Gospel. For instance, the demand that Jesus should perform some signs as a prerequisite for Faith is a sign of a world that lives in 'Unbelief' (Jn 2,18; 4,48; 6,26-27.30). Also Jesus said to Thomas in Jn 20:29 'Blessed are those who have not seen but believe'. Barth (πιστεύω *believe, have faith* in: EDNT III, 91-97, 96) observes: "John repeatedly emphasizes that faith is bound to Jesus' word or to witness concerning Jesus (1:7; 4:39,

41f., 50; 5:24 ...).” So Belief in Jesus Christ himself and his word is better than belief in signs (cf. Jn 4,46-54.50). Schnackenburg (1965:510), elucidating on the content and goal of faith in John, said that faith means accepting and believing the revelation in Jesus Christ as the bringer of salvation in order to have eternal life, for this is the purpose for which God sent his son into the world (cf, Jn 3:16.36).

Faith is also associated with 'seeing' (ὁράω) and 'hearing' (ἀκούω) in some instances in John's Gospel, but the concentration is on Jesus Christ, in the sense of 'seeing and believing' in Jesus (cf. 6:40; 12:44). 'Seeing' (ὁράω) in John's Gospel is therefore a process of faith (Jn 1:14,50; 14:19; 16:16); faith that Jesus is sent by the Father. Nevertheless 'to believe' even without seeing takes prominence in John's Gospel (cf. Jn 20:29). 1 Pet 1:8 speaks of loving without seeing, which probably as some connection with the Johannine tradition (Barth G., πιστεύω *believe, have faith* in: EDNT III 91-97). And ἀκούω (*to hear*) in relation to faith implies 'obedient listening'. Those who believe, hear and obey (cf. Jn 10:3.16.27), which is in contrast to the attitude of the Jews (cf. 8:40-47). Also Jesus said in Jn 18:37 'everyone who is of the truth hears my voice'. And he (Jesus) maintained in Jn 14:24, the words you hear are not mine but the Father's.

Also 'to believe' and 'to know' are used together in some instances in John's Gospel (cf, Jn 6:69; 17,8; 1 Jn 4:6). Some scholars observed that the topic on 'knowledge' especially in Jesus' supernatural knowledge in John's Gospel fascinated some Gnostics who saw in Jesus Christ the possibility of a redeemer who descended to give knowledge (Moloney, 1998:6-7). Jesus' disciples also asked questions on certain issues they couldn't comprehend (cf. Jn 4:27-38; 9:1-5; 13:7), but the coming of the Holy Spirit helped them in this regard.

Faith in John's Gospel is also associated with life, for Jesus says he who believes in the Son has (ἔχω) life (cf. Jn 3:16-18; 6:40; 11:25; 20:31 etc). It is worth mentioning that ἔχω (to have) is in the present tense, this implies that by believing in Jesus Christ one has a life which Jesus gives him/her and the life is not just futuristic but also present.

3. 'Witness' in John's Gospel: Vocabulary and Meaning

In John's Gospel, only two Forms that relate to the concept of witnessing appear, namely, the noun μαρτυρία and the verb μαρτυρέω. The noun μαρτυρία appears 37 times in the entire New Testament, it

appears 30 times in John's Gospel and in the Johannine Epistles, (14 times in the Gospel of St. John and 16 times in the Johannine Epistles). While the Verb μαρτυρέω appears 75 times in the entire NT with 43 occurrences in John's Gospel and in the Johannine Epistles (33 times in the Gospel of St. John and 10 times in the other Johannine Epistles). These statistics tell us of the importance of the concept in John's Gospel.

But how do μαρτυρία and μαρτυρέω function in John's Gospel? O'Day (1995: 586) contributes, thus: "'witness' (μαρτυρία *martyria*) has both religious and juridical dimensions in the fourth Gospel". John's principle of using the concepts μαρτυρία and μαρτυρέω is so unique, for instance in contrast to the OT usage (cf. Num 5:13; 35:30; Dt 17:6,7; 19:15). Brown (1966 [i-xii]: 223) observes: "John is not dealing with witnesses necessary to condemn a man, but with witnesses to confirm someone's testimony." This is really a positive understanding and use of the concept by John and in John and this understanding will accompany this paper.

'Witness' in John's Gospel has certain characteristics, for instance 'witnessing'/ giving testimony in John's Gospel has a public character, it is a public affair and not simply in the private sphere. John (the Baptist), for example, bore witness to Jesus Christ publicly (cf. Jn 1:7,34; 3:32; 5:33,39). Jesus himself spoke and bore witness boldly and publicly as well, he carried out his mission without fear, he maintained that he was born to bear witness to the truth and he (Jesus) considered that not just as a duty but an unavoidable responsibility; he considered that as the essence of his being (cf. Jn 7:7; 18:20-21,23,37). In Jn 12:17, the crowd that witnessed Jesus bring Lazarus back to life bore witness to Jesus publicly. There are many other examples in John's Gospel, but these suffice to mention a few.

One sees in John's Gospel different uses and senses of the concept of Witnessing. Beutler summarizes this notion in three categories: (1) The Testimony in favor of Jesus: These involve person(s) or means that give witness to authenticate what Jesus was doing (cf. Jn 1:7f. 15:19,32,34; cf. 3:26; 5:33). (2) The testimony of Jesus: This involves the testimony that Jesus himself gave (Jn 2:23-25; 3:11,31f; 4:44; 18:37 etc). (3) The testimony about Jesus: This involves the testimony that others gave about Jesus Christ based on their experience of him or what they heard about him [4,39; 19,35; 21,24 etc] (Beutler, 2006:126-132).

Apart from persons who encountered Jesus Christ in one way or the other and bore witness to him, Jesus had other witnesses. Of utmost importance is the witness of the Father himself (cf. Jn 5:32.37; 8:18-19; See also Jn 12:28.30). 'Witnessing' in John's Gospel is not just borne for Jesus; rather Jesus bore witness based on his personal relationship to the Father and based on what he has seen and heard and he insists that his witness is true. The witness of Jesus is valid because the Father also bore witness to him (cf. Jn 5:19-20; 8:13-14.18). Jesus Christ also bore witness about men and women because, based on his relationship to the Father as the Son of God, he has the supernatural power to know even the innermost heart of everyone (cf. Jn 2:23-25; 4:44; 7:7).

The works which the Father has granted to the Son to accomplish also bear witness to him (cf. Jn 5:37; 10:25; 14:12). Through the works of Jesus Christ, the Father is also at work. Such works by Jesus in John's Gospel are acts of God's saving work, which should ordinarily lead to faith (cf. Jn 5:20; 10:37-38). The scriptures also bear witness to Jesus Christ (cf. Jn 5:39). And even the Spirit also bears witness to Jesus (cf. Jn 15:26; 16:12-15).

I shall focus more in this paper on the 'witness' of individuals who bore witness to Jesus especially John (the Baptist) and Jesus' disciples, for Jesus challenged his disciples: 'You are my witnesses because you have been with me from the beginning' (cf. Jn 15:27). I shall also look at Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman and her townspeople (cf. Jn 4:5-42). The 'Witness' of those who were at the raising of Lazarus among others is worthy of mention and very important is the 'Witness' of Jesus himself before some Jewish Authorities.

4. Johannine 'Faith / Belief' and 'Witness': *An inseparable Pair*

The concepts of faith and witness cannot be separated from each other in John's Gospel. Genuine faith in Jesus Christ presupposes true witness, and there cannot be genuine witness without a solid foundation of faith. The two concepts are like '*surrogate twins*'. One gets this impression right at the beginning of the Gospel where the first appearance of the two concepts ('Witness' and 'Belief') is found in the same verse in Jn 1:7. I shall discuss the relationship of the two concepts by considering the faith of some figures and characters in John's

Gospel.

4.1. The 'Witness' of John the Baptist in John's Gospel

Witness is first associated with John (the Baptist) in the Gospel of John. The role John (the Baptist) plays in the fourth Gospel cannot be overemphasized; little wonder he is already introduced in the Prologue. In fact, chronologically, he is the first person to be mentioned in John's Gospel (Jn 1:6), even before Jesus and Moses (cf. Jn 1:17). In the Synoptic Gospels John is referred to as 'the Baptist' largely because of his role in this regard (cf. Mt 3:1; Mk 6:14,24; Lk 7:20), while in John's Gospel he is simply addressed as John (cf. Jn 1:6-8,15,19-34; 3:22-36; 10:40-41). In John's Gospel however, John's (the Baptist's) major role is different. He is basically 'a Witness' and not 'a baptizer'. Moreover, in John's Gospel, the baptism of Jesus by John (the Baptist) was simply mentioned, details were not given (cf. Jn 1:32-34), in contrast to the Synoptic Gospels which gave a detailed account of the baptism of Jesus Christ by John the Baptist (cf. Mt 3:13-17; Mk 1:9-11; Lk 3:21-22). John's (the Baptist's) role was to bear witness to Christ (the 'Light', the 'Lamb of God' and the 'Son of God', cf. Jn 1:7,19-36; 5:33-36).

John (the Baptist) was mandated by God to bear witness to Jesus Christ (Jn 1:6-7), and this wouldn't have been possible if he had not been a man of faith, for 'a Witness' should not be isolated from the content of what he is bearing witness to. John the Baptist bore witness to the truth (cf. Jn 5:33), but what does 'truth' mean here? Beutler (1998:12) said that truth in this sense is not different from the divine revelation which has its fullest expression in Jesus Christ (see also Jn 14:6). The goal of John's witness is contained and expressed in John 1:7: 'He came for testimony, to bear *witness* to the light, that all might *believe* through him'. This verse expresses how 'witness' and 'belief' are used, closely connected to each other.

4.2. The 'Faith' and 'Witness' of the disciples of Jesus

In contrast to the synoptic gospels where the closest associates of Jesus Christ were referred to with the term 'Apostles', the Gospel of John never used the technical term ἀπόστολοι (Apostles) for the twelve, rather it uses μαθηταί "disciples". The only occurrence of the noun ἀπόστολος (Apostle) in John's Gospel is in Jn 13:16, while the verb ἀποστέλλω (to send) occurs 28 times in John, in most instances in relation to Christology. Nevertheless, the criterion of membership to the group of Jesus' closest associates remains the same, both in John

and in the Synoptics, namely, being an eyewitness. 'Being an eyewitness' here also implies being with Jesus Christ right from the beginning and onwards (cf. also Mk 1:16-18; 16:7 [*Inclusio*] Lk 1:2; Jn 15:26-27; Acts 1:21-22; 10:36-42). The closest associates of Jesus Christ in John's Gospel should therefore be understood in the sense of the synoptic usage of the term 'apostles', but care must be taken because in some few instances μαθηταί is also used for followers of Jesus other than the twelve, for instance in Jn 6:66.

The first fruits of John's (the Baptist's) mission and witness (1:6-7.19-36) is seen already in Jn 1:37. After he introduced Jesus as 'the Lamb of God', two of the disciples of John followed Jesus and became Jesus' disciples. This shows the public and open character of John's witness. He never kept to himself what he knew about Jesus Christ and what he was mandated by God to do; rather, he led many to Jesus. The first two disciples who followed Jesus immediately became witnesses to Jesus Christ based on their first encounter with him. Andrew, one of the two, later told his brother Simon: 'We have found the Messiah'. This is also true of Philip and Nathaniel (Nathaniel is named only in John's Gospel: according to Jn 21:2 he is from Cana in Galilee. I will not go into the question in this paper if he was actually Bartholomew in the Synoptic Gospels or another person as others suggest). For Nathaniel, despite his initial skepticism, he later confessed: "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" (cf. Jn 1:49). And Jesus promised him that he will see greater things: this corresponds to the next time that the name Nathaniel appears in John's Gospel, that is in Jn 21:2 at the resurrection appearance of Jesus Christ, this can be considered as an *Inclusio*. Generally, Jesus' first encounter with his disciples shows how this 'first Belief' in Jesus Christ was brought about through the 'witness' of John (the Baptist), and it serves as a foundation to their subsequent or future discipleship of Jesus Christ.

At the beginning of Jesus' public ministry in John's Gospel at a wedding in Cana, where Jesus' mother Mary played a great role and expressed a great deal of faith, we are told that the disciples of Jesus also believed in him (cf. Jn 2:1-11). As the Gospel progresses, the disciples were able to believe more and even see in Jesus Christ the promise of God from Old Testament times (cf. Jn 1:45; 2:18.22).

The belief of Jesus' disciples is again an issue in Jn 6:60-71. After some followers / disciples of Jesus (apart from the twelve) could no longer

comprehend his teachings and withdrew from him (cf. Jn 6:66), Simon Peter spoke on behalf of the twelve promising their belief in and fidelity to Jesus Christ, saying, 'to whom shall we go to, you have the message of eternal life ... you are the Holy One of God' (cf. Jn 6,68-69). In Jn 11:15, in anticipation of bringing Lazarus back to life, it was also the intention of Jesus to strengthen the faith of the disciples. However, in the lives of some of Jesus' disciples, we find some ambiguous characters and behaviours, for instance, Judas' betrayal of Jesus (cf. Jn 13:18-30), and Peter's denial of Jesus (cf. Jn 18:15-27). One may ask: why the inconsistencies in the lives of some of his disciples? Wahlde (2010: 403) opines: "The resulting incongruity was very likely of no concern for the evangelist who was writing for his own time to explain the nature of belief and unbelief." The antagonism on the part of the Jews to Jesus during his public ministry, which led to his eventual crucifixion, also supports this view.

Jesus knew the weaknesses of his disciples and promised them the Holy Spirit / Paraclete. During his farewell speech to his disciples, Jesus spoke about the witness of the Spirit, namely that the Spirit will also bear witness to Jesus (cf. Jn 15:26). Παράκλητος is used here, which can be translated as helper or advocate. Jesus had already spoken to his disciples about the coming of the Spirit in Jn 14:16.26 where he promised the Spirit whom the Father will send. And in 16:7, Jesus says it is better that he goes so that the helper will come. But in 15:26, it is Jesus who will send the Spirit and it is stated explicitly that the Spirit will bear witness to Jesus Christ. Brown (1966 [xiii-xxi]:700) contributes on the unity between the Spirit and the disciples, thus: "The witness of the Spirit and the witness of the disciples stand in relation to each other much in the same way that the witness of the Father is related to the witness of the Son."

4.3. 'Faith' and 'Witness' of other 'disciples' of Jesus in John's Gospel

There are other men and women 'disciples' in John's gospel, some of whose characters are not stated clearly, and in some cases it is questionable whether they were truly faithful followers / disciples or not. Hylen discussed certain weaknesses in the lives of some of these characters, for instance, Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, and Martha and Mary (Hylen, 2009). But my interest here is in the element of 'Faith' in the lives of such people. In Jn 11:27, Martha believed in the words of Jesus and confessed: "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the

Christ, the Son of God, he who is coming into the world." I will not be able to discuss all those characters in detail in this paper, but some deserve special attention. I will therefore discuss Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman.

Scholarly opinion is not unanimous on the actual character of the man Nicodemus. Some are of the opinion that he is portrayed negatively in John (Blomberg, 1995:1-15), others say that he became a positive figure at the end of the Gospel (Carson, 1991:629). But Nicodemus deserves some commendation for, although he believed in Jesus based on the sign(s) that Jesus gave (Jn 3:2), his gesture to go to Jesus was a great step (many others also came to Jesus and believed in him, for example in Jn 3:26; 4:29-30.47; 10:41-42). Jesus is the true light, and he enlightens all who come to him (cf. Jn 8,12). Further instances add to Nicodemus' credentials; for instance he defends Jesus in Jn 7:50-52 and also his role at the burial of Jesus is commendable (cf. Jn 19:38-42).

The use of the verb μαρτυρέω in Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus in Jn 3:11 brings out clearly certain dimensions of testimony or witness, namely: 'speaking', 'knowing' and 'seeing'. 'What we know' here brings out the fact that the message is not just a mere opinion of an individual without any solid foundation; rather it is solidly grounded and given testimony to, as a result of strong conviction. Morris (1987:221) expresses it beautifully: "'Witness' does not point to opinions which may be debated, but to objective fact." Jesus then brings out in the same verse (3:11) the fact of the resistance that he faces especially coming from the Jews despite his witness (cf. Jn 3:11-20; 5:38-47 etc). John's Gospel uses the term 'Jews' to a large extent, with little exceptions, as a term for the religious authorities, particularly those in Jerusalem, who are hostile to Jesus.

Another person worthy of mention is the Samaritan woman whose encounter with Jesus Christ awakened her faith in him (cf. Jn 4,7-42). The fact that Jesus told her (almost) everything about herself motivated her to have faith in him. She ran to the town and shared her experience with the townspeople. They too came to see Jesus, and they believed the Testimony of the woman (cf. 4:39). In John 4:42, the Samaritans said, they believed not on account of what the woman said but on account of what they themselves heard. This implies that they too became firsthand witnesses to Jesus Christ; through hearing, they came to know and believe in Jesus Christ. One can see a gradual

growth of perception of Jesus by the Samaritan woman and the Samaritans. The Samaritan woman first perceived Jesus as a Prophet (4:19). Secondly she asked, could this be the messiah / the Christ? (4:25.29) And on the third level, the Samaritans confessed that Jesus is the savior of the world (4:42). This is a great expression of faith; in this story one sees how 'witness' and 'faith' come to play again. There are many other examples in John's Gospel of people who expressed faith in Jesus, for instance the man born blind who was healed by Jesus (cf. Jn 9:35-38), but I will not be able to examine all those characters in detail in this paper.

4.4 Jesus' 'Witness' before the high Priest and Pilate in John's Gospel

The theme on 'witness' plays a great role in the trial of Jesus before the high Priest and Pilate especially in the subunits Jn 18:19-24 and Jn 18:28-38a respectively. Although in these subunits the verb μαρτυρέω appears only twice (in Jn 18:23.37), elements of witnessing are seen throughout the subunit. At Jesus' trial before the high Priest, Jesus maintained that he had spoken openly / boldly / παρρησία, to the world (Jesus also spoke openly in Jn 6:59; 7:14.28; 8:20; 18:20). Although λαλέω (*to speak*) is used, not μαρτυρέω in Jn 18,20, it nevertheless shows the way Jesus bore witness here. Jesus spoke openly in the Synagogue and in the Temple before everyone (cf. Jn 5:14; 6:59-61; 7:14-16; 10:23). A true witness must be bold enough to speak the truth, no matter the cause. A true witness must be steadfast even during moments of humiliation and persecution.

At Jesus' trial before Pilate, Jesus maintained that he came into the world to bear witness to the truth (cf. Jn 18:37). Jn 1:14 states that the word was made flesh and dwelt among us filled with grace and truth. 'Filled with grace and truth' implies an embodiment of truth. Jesus Christ who is the embodiment of truth came into the world to bear witness to the truth even to the point of death, the truth with which he is filled. The death of Jesus Christ can be explained or understood in the sense of a Martyr's death, someone who died for what he stood for. In relation to John's (the Baptist's) introduction of Jesus as the lamb of God (cf. Jn 1:36), special attention must be given to the fact that Jesus Christ is not a lamb in the cultic sense as lambs which were forcefully slaughtered and offered, but as someone who gave himself up willingly with the disposition of a Martyr at the instance of the will of

the Father (cf. also Jn 10:17-18). The term Martyr used for someone who undergoes '*Martyrdom*', someone who gives his life even to the point of death, in the religious language is from the Greek word *mártys* (a Witness).

4.5 The 'Faith' and 'Witness' of the beloved disciple

The witness of the beloved disciple especially at the crucifixion of Jesus and in the last verses of the Gospel deserves attention and examination. His witness solidifies the fact that it is the witness of someone who was an eye-witness to the events. Added to his credentials is the fact that according to John's Gospel, the beloved disciple is the only recognised male-disciple of Jesus present at the crucifixion of Jesus, the rest were women including the courageous mother of Jesus Mary (cf. Jn 19:25-27). The beloved disciple invites all to believe his witness (cf. Jn 19:5). One sees here how witness and belief come together. The goal of his witness is: '... that you also may believe'. Bauckham (2006:127) expresses the value of the beloved disciple in John: "The beloved disciple is portrayed in the Fourth Gospel as the ideal witness to Jesus. It is his witness that the Gospel embodies (21:24)."

When one accepts the possibility that the other unnamed disciple who followed Jesus in Jn 1:37.40 together with Andrew was the beloved disciple, then the presence of the beloved disciple again in Jn 21:20 presents an '*inclusio*', depicting his witness as a steadfast one – from the beginning to the end. In both instances (Jn 1:37; Jn 21:20) the verb ἀκολουθέω (*to follow*) is used in the sense of discipleship. The Greek verb ἀκολουθέω is specially reserved and used especially in the Gospels for a special following of Jesus Christ and implies a conscious action with every sense of commitment and not simply a casual action.

4.6 'Faith' and 'Witness' after the resurrection of Jesus in John's Gospel

After the resurrection of Jesus, when Mary from Magdala told Simon Peter and the beloved disciple that the body of Jesus was not in the tomb, they hurried to the tomb; the beloved disciple got there before Simon Peter, he saw and believed (cf. Jn 20:8). One of the disciples of Jesus, Thomas, had difficulties believing in Jesus' resurrection, but after Jesus' appearance when Thomas was present, he confessed: "My Lord and My God" (Jn 20:28). Jesus then admonished him to believe even without seeing.

The epilogues to John's Gospel conclude and summarize the concepts of 'faith' and 'witness' in John's Gospel. The first epilogue being Jn 20:30-31 and the second being Jn 21:24-25. Jn 20:31 states: "but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name." The author maintains that his testimony is true (cf. Jn 21:24).

5. Some Implications of the Johannine concepts of 'Faith/Belief' and 'Witness' in the Nigerian Context

After examining the concepts of 'Belief' and 'Witness' in John's Gospel and the many examples seen, the next question is: How does it apply to us? Moloney (1998:543) provides an answer: "It is the desire of the author that all those who read this book or hear its proclamation be a community of beloved disciples." We become disciples of Jesus by believing in him and bearing witness to him. The goal of the Gospel permeates throughout the Gospel. Right in the Prologue, we are told that the testimony of John (the Baptist) to Jesus Christ, the Light, is aimed at making people believe through him (Jn 1:7). To believe in Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, who had seen God and had made him known (cf. Jn 1:18). And we have seen through the testimonies of many and in the epilogue to the Gospel that the purpose of the Gospel is that we also may believe (cf. Jn 19:35; 20:31).

A genuine witness to Jesus Christ must have a prerequisite, namely: a solid Faith. Jesus foresaw the danger of the faith that is not very solid, for instance, despite the fact that the signs Jesus performed led many to believe in him, he nevertheless emphasized several times that it should not be the basis of faith in him (Jn 1:50; 2:18; 4:48; 6:27.30; 20:29). Those who simply believe in 'signs' and 'wonders' fall into the risk of believing in magicians; once they see no signs, they lose hope, become disenchanted and feel dejected, because their 'faith' has no strong basis. Pastors of souls have the responsibility of preaching the essentials of the Christian faith without compromise.

It is unfortunate that the Christian Religion has now become a lucrative business or as some call it 'a good job'. The proliferation of churches in Nigeria attests to this. Many so-called 'Pastors of souls' are ignorant of the Bible they preach and in most cases manipulate the Bible and their congregation for their selfish interests, thereby leading many astray. The disastrous effects of the seeds they sow in their

members are seen in society at large. There is the urgent need for some strong regulations from the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in this regard. The Christian faith must be duly proclaimed and pastors of souls must be sincere and responsible in teaching the truth and essentials of the Christian faith. The Catholic Church, for example, has been focusing on and exploring many ways for a new evangelization. A new evangelization that is integral and one that tackles the contemporary pastoral challenges is greatly required. Proper catechesis, for instance the RCIA program, has been helping towards a better appreciation of the Christian faith.

The fact that Jesus goes to the Father puts him in a better position to help his followers who ask of his help (cf. Jn 14:12-13). Jesus promises another helper who will be with his followers forever, namely the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn 14:16-17). The Spirit will therefore enable the disciples of Christ to bear true witness to Jesus Christ. In Jn 15:27, Jesus challenges his disciples that they too will bear witness to him because they have been with him from the very beginning. This serves as the major criterion for a close association with Jesus as his Apostles. In Mk 3:14, Jesus gives the reason for choosing the twelve, namely that they might be with him and secondly that he might send them. Being with Jesus entails learning from the school of Jesus, how one should live following in the master's footsteps. The fruit of this encounter should permeate every facet of the lives of the persons concerned. And secondly, he says that he might send them out to preach. This entails mission; being sent out by Jesus means being sent out to bear witness to Jesus and to represent him well. The contemporary Christian is also sent by Jesus on mission; after encountering Christ and learning from his 'School of Faith', the Christian is sent on mission to bear authentic witness to him.

Why are there contradictions in the lives of many Nigerians? Why the hypocrisy in the lives and attitudes of many? Many Nigerians perpetrate evil in all forms with impunity and at the same time take the front pews in Churches every Sunday and offer thanksgiving regularly. The 'open character' of witness in John has far-reaching implications for Nigerians. For instance, the challenge before politicians and those in public or private service is enormous. Being a Christian is not just carrying the Christian-tag but being Christ-like. One should be inspired through the Word of God and the belief in Jesus Christ who bore witness to the truth (cf. Jn 18:37). Some Pastors

go into ungodly alliances and romance with office holders to manipulate the truth at the expense of the poor in the land. The majority are suffering because of the selfish interest of a few. The right relationship of 'Pastors of souls' with politicians and all those in positions of authority should be of challenge: they must be challenged to do what is right without compromise. People should be attached to the church for the right reasons and intentions. Their being Christian and serving in such positions should be of advantage to society, in the sense that they are called upon to live out the values of the faith, by being truthful and just to all in society. We must be men and women of credible character who will be consistent and steadfast in all our dealings. The world should see the difference in our commitment and our service to the truth. The fear of 'blackmail' or 'persecution' has instilled fear in the hearts of many Christians in Nigeria. Many compromise the truth because they want to remain in their positions. The Christian is called upon to bear witness to the truth, no matter the pressure or threat, by emulating the life of the master who remained consistent even unto death.

Nigeria needs very courageous men and women who can stand out and make heroic changes in the society. This involves everyone, beginning from the family life to the larger society. Being convinced of what the Christian reads in the Bible, one should be bold to say with the Psalmist: "Your Word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path" [Ps 118 (119):105].

6. Conclusion

God has shown us his love first (cf. 1 Jn 4:16) by sending his Son to us, and the Son, he who has seen the Father, has revealed him to us (cf. Jn 1:18; 3:16)). Based on a genuine faith in Jesus Christ, the true Christian has the responsibility of bearing authentic witness to Jesus Christ. Christianity as a whole must be taken as a way of life, and not just a mere confession. 'Belief' and 'Witness' in everyday life should be married together and seen as one without any dichotomy.

In his Apostolic Letter of October 11, 2011, *Porta Fidei*, on the 'Year of Faith' (October 11, 2012 - November 24, 2013), the retired Pope Benedict XVI called on all Catholics to pray for the success of the year and that it may be fruitful. He wrote: "At the same time, we make it our prayer that believers' *witness* of life may grow in credibility. To

rediscover the content of the faith that is professed, celebrated, lived and prayed, and to reflect on the act of faith, is a task that every believer must make his own, especially in the course of this Year." (*Porta Fidei*, no. 14 and 15). The change and renewal that we need both in the church and society will be a product of the witness that we give to Jesus Christ by living out the faith we profess.

"The proclamation and witness of the Gospel are the first service that Christians can offer every person and the whole human race, as they are called to communicate to all the love of God, who manifested himself fully in the only Redeemer of the world, Jesus Christ." (Pope Benedict XVI, 40th Anniversary of Vatican II's Ad Gentes, March 13, 2006).

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