

The History and Theology of the Ecumenical Movement in East Africa
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INTRODUCTION

In writing the history and theology of the ecumenical movement in East Africa, one needs to look at how ecumenism is understood by Christians in this part of Africa. Just as there is a broad understanding of ecumenism in many countries of the world, there are also shifts in the way ecumenical movement has been conceived and carried out in East Africa. From 1913 there were such high hopes and the people involved in the earliest stages of the ecumenical movement in East Africa truly believed that the movement could and would make a difference. That the church could and would not only be renewed but changed and that there would be in their life time a united African Christian Church. The formation of the All Africa Conference of Churches in 1963 and the explosion of local ecumenical initiatives were all optimistic indicators that the ecumenical movement would undoubtedly reach its destination in East Africa. By the end of the last century, there were indicators that the ecumenical movement had slowed down.

At the beginning of the 20th century ecumenism was understood as the movement among Anglican and Protestant churches working in East Africa toward Christian unity, which was lost first in the 11th century between Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches. And secondly, was lost in the 16th century between Roman Catholic and Anglican and Protestant churches. In the centuries following the Protestant Reformation, there was bitter animosity between Roman Catholics and other Christian traditions. As Paul M. Minus says:

Over much of Europe a mindset emerged that regarded Protestantism and Catholicism as mutually exclusive: one must be the true Christianity, the other a heretical Christianity. The vehemence with which fanatics on both sides viewed their religious enemies is suggested by a comment of Pope Paul IV: Even if my own father were a heretic, I would gather the wood to burn him.¹

Although the unity eventually was not expressed in an organic union rather expressed in a national council structure and later in the regional ecumenical organization, the dream of unity was something that continued to be shared mainly by non-Roman Catholic churches in East Africa. For a long time the Roman Catholic Church in East Africa remained skeptical and aloof from the ecumenical movement partly because of the fear of an artificial unity among Christian traditions. However, in the last few years the Roman Catholic Church in East Africa has also

1 Paul M. Minus, The Catholic Rediscovery of Protestantism: A History of Roman Catholic Ecumenical Pioneering (Ramsey, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1976), 12.

come to share the dream of Christian unity.²

The insights gained by Christian ecumenical theologians from the history of the Christian church in East Africa from the 1900s have brought about some important paradigm shifts in the understanding of the term ecumenism. For instance, some ecumenical theologians have begun to argue that in an ecumenical dialogue, there is no need for total agreement or uniformity. Unity must be achieved irrespective of whether uniformity of faith and practice is possible. Even the existence of deep differences of conviction is not convincing ground for churches in East Africa not to enter into new forms of Christian unity. This argument goes beyond the Third Laus, Sweden Faith and Order Conference held in 1957 which stated that “churches...should...act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to separate.”³

The question that needs to be asked is “why is church unity important in East Africa today?” The answer has to do with the mission of the church in the region. The mission of the church in East Africa is to proclaim the good news that Jesus Christ is the savior of humankind and that all Christians are one in Christ. Yet, this is a region that is full of broken relationships at local, national and regional level partly due to tribalism, ethnic, denominational and border line differences. Is there something wrong in the way of being church in East Africa? The church in East Africa has come of age and gone beyond the stage of mission "from the West to the rest," to that of mission "from everywhere to everywhere" and must therefore seek to work for the transformation of the region by adopting new models of being church. In this book the author argues that in a region where there are two realities that are inherent in today's African Christian life namely, the African community consciousness and Christian religious experience, ecumenical movement that is entrenched in the African concept of neighborhood can act as a new paradigm for mission. This kind of ecumenical movement is a concrete realization of the oneness of the church that goes beyond tribal, ethnic, denominational and border line differences and is a new way of being church in the region.

The ecumenical movement that is entrenched in the African concept of neighborhood is an appropriate paradigm for mission in the region because Christians in this part of Africa in most cases approach the church as a human organization although not forgetting that it belongs to God. Secondly, people in this part of Africa live out their commitment to Jesus Christ in the neighborhood setting. It is in the neighborhood setting that people in East Africa:

- i. Come to know one another and relate to one another more meaningfully.
- ii. Identify the new signs of the times and creatively respond to them.

2 For a detailed interpretation of ecumenism, see H. Fries and K. Rahner, Unity of the Churches: An Actual Possibility (New York: Paulist Press, 1985); H. Meyer and L. Vischer, Growth in Agreement: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level (New York: Paulist Press, 1984); and E. Yarnold, In Search of Unity (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1988).

3 Oliver S. Tomkins (ed.), The Third World Conference on Faith and Order: Held at Lund August 15th to 28th, 1952 (London: SCM, 1953), 16.

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In East Africa, neighborhood is the immediate field of the church's activity and a vibrant church is expected first to care for its own neighborhood before it cares for the national and the universal community. The ecumenical movement that is entrenched in the African concept of neighborhood therefore depicts an ecclesiology that is developed and based on a correlation of the church's Christian tradition and the African culture. This model helps the Christians in East Africa to live the gospel in the actual context of their lives and to reach out in witness and service in the neighborhood and the wider society as a whole. From this point of view, neighborhood is defined as "the quality or state of an African Christian being a brother or a sister to the other person." It is that sensitivity an African Christian attaches to the existence of another person. Ultimately the concept of neighborhood is about first, the affirmation of an African identity based on the Christian experience that goes beyond, tribal, ethnic, denominational and superficial border line differences. According to this model, a neighbor therefore is that person no matter who he or she is. From this point of view, a neighbor is not necessarily that person who lives next door. Rather it means all people because they are all created in the image of God and made after His likeness no matter who they are or where they come from.

For a long time, the church in East Africa has been inwardly focused and the reality is that even the most faithful Christians in this region unmistakably constantly choose who should be their neighbor (s). In most cases the choice is between "them" and "us." While the ability to choose is a human right, the theological dilemma is "how does one decide that particular people are not my neighbors?" Is this not the more reason why many people in the modernized neighborhoods in East Africa are physically near each other while paradoxically living very far from one another? Is this not the more reason why mutual acceptance, tolerance and solidarity pose serious challenges in the region? It is the element of neighborhood in the ecumenical movement that I believe will form the backbone for more strength and vitality of the church in East Africa as it carries out its mission in the region.

Although this book deals with the history and theology of the ecumenical movement in East Africa, lecturer/professors and students with different terms of reference and those from countries outside East Africa where ecumenics is one of the studied subjects in tertiary institutions, should still find most of the ideas expressed in this book relevant to their situation. This book primarily targets professionals of ecumenics in tertiary institutions, church leaders and lay Christians who are interested in church unity.

CHAPTER ONE

THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

1. Introduction

The story of the modern Christian ecumenical movement is first the extraordinary and radical reversal of a centuries-long history of un-Christian divisions. Secondly, it is a return to obedience to Christ's gift and prayer that all should be one as there is one Triune God, one body, one baptism and one calling to discipleship in a broken world. At the international level, the acknowledgment of God's will for unity was sparked off by the social problems in the world in the 19th and 20th century. For instance, there was the First World War and the emergence of the totalitarian systems of Communism and Fascism that threatened the social order of the world. Some people asked how could a divided church play a constructive role in such a situation? In response, there emerged the ecumenical agenda for common Christian witness to the Gospel of Christ and joint service to humankind.

The noun ecumenism comes from the Greek word *oikoumene*, which, literally means that which pertains to the whole inhabited world. For instance, in Matthew 24: 14 we read that the good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world (*oikoumene*). With time the word *oikoumene* began to take on a more limited meaning. In the New Testament period *oikoumene* came to refer to the whole Roman Empire as in Luke 2:1 where the Emperor decreed that a census be taken in the entire world (*oikoumene*). Later the word came to mean that which pertains to the whole church as opposed to that which is divisive. Gideon Goosen says:

Initially it was used in this sense in the life of the church. Thus the first few councils of the Christian Church, like Nicea (325), Constantinople (381), Ephesus (425), or Chalcedon (451) were called Ecumenical Councils as they were seen to represent the whole, universal Church.⁴

The implication was that the Council was representative of the whole church and that its actions were authoritative and binding on all Christians. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, the word ecumenism has been used in a limited sense to mean the concern for the unity and renewal

⁴ Gideon Goosen, Bringing Churches Together: An Introduction to Ecumenism (Newtown: E. J. Dwyer, 1993), 14.

of the church. In general terms the word ecumenism therefore refers to the Christian movement that is concerned with the restoration of unity among Christian churches in the world.

From the earliest times in the history of Christianity the term *oikoumene* was used to express the range of the church's fellowship. The church of the Apostles was one both in spirit and practice and people believed that it would forever remain in an organic unity. But this has not been so in the Christian church. Even while people have been drawn together in Christ, the unity of Christians in the world has been a painful one. For instance, many of Paul's Epistles in the New Testament are directed toward the healing of divisions in the Christian community. The Acts of the Apostles also talks about the many difficulties that strained the unity of the early Christian church. There were personality conflicts too, among the leaders of the early church. For instance, Paul and Barnabas disagreed over the question whether to take John Mark along on a missionary journey or not. The two missionaries ended up going their separate ways.

Since the fourth century serious divisions have threatened the existence of the Christian church. For instance, the Nicene Creed was the church's attempt to find a solution to what was considered to be Arius' wrong teaching about the relationship between God the Son and God the Father. On the relationship between the Father and the Son, Arius said that if the Son were truly a Son he must have had a beginning. According to Arius, the distinction between the Father and the Son is based on the lack of knowledge of God. He said that God cannot be known by any other creature including the Son. He went on to say that the Son can know the Father only when he is aided by the grace of God. The Son therefore is in the same situation of the need of God's grace as any other created being, said Arius.

On the relationship between the Son and other creatures, Arius said that there is a distinction between the Son and other creatures including human beings. He however, said that the Son shares the creatures' essentially created nature. The difference, according to Arius, is that the Son is a perfect creature whereas the rest of the creatures are not.⁵

Arius' teaching contradicted the early church's teaching on the relationship between God the Father and God the Son. The early church leaders did not keep quiet. One of the church leaders to question Arius' teaching was Athanasius. He quoted Arius as saying:

- a) God was not always a Father, only later did he become a Father.
- b) The Son did not always exist and therefore there was a time when he was not in existence.

According to Athanasius, Arius' teaching was heresy because:

- i. It is only God who can save and one of the essential features of being a creature is the need of redemption. Unfortunately, no creature can save another creature; it is only the creator who can do it.
- ii. If the Scriptures regard Jesus Christ as *savoir*, it is obvious to accept Jesus Christ as God incarnate.

5 For detailed information about the Arian controversy in the early church see, Christopher Byaruhanga, Christian Theology for University Students (Kampala: Wavah Books Limited, 2005), 57ff.

- iii. If Jesus Christ were a creature, then Christians are guilty of worshiping a creature instead of God. Athanasius therefore accused Arius of calling Christians idol worshipers.⁶

To end the controversy a convincing description of the relationship between the Father and the Son had to be arrived at. The debate centred upon two terms namely, “homoiousios” (of like being/substance) and “homoousios” (of the same being/substance). At Nicea in 325 AD it was decided against the Arians and the church began to teach that the Son is of the same substance/being with the Father.⁷ The Nicene Creed has been used by the churches throughout history to testify to the Christian faith. However, the major crisis in the Christian church took place in 1054. The two parts of the church from that time became known as Greek or Orthodox and Latin or Western churches. The Western church continued in unity until the 16th century when there were a number of breaks from what is today commonly known as the Roman Catholic Church.

With the breakup of the Catholic Church in the 11th century and in the 16th century, the various Christian traditions became alienated from each other. For several centuries, it was not rare to find a Christian tradition getting deeply involved in attacking the other Christian tradition as the latter defended its own position. Although history shows that there have been many divisions among Christians since the very beginning, there have always been men and women with great desire to see divisions eliminated and unity restored. Their argument has been that the existence of divisions in the life of the church is a great contradiction of its very nature. Such people have always believed that the church is God’s gift to human beings and that Christians constitute a distinctive, worldwide community, a single oikoumene of Christ. The ecumenical movement therefore is aimed at nurturing the unity of the Christians, which has to be reflected in the church as the body of Christ. Emilio Castro says:

The central calling of the ecumenical movement is the quest for the unity of the church. It is a quest, which looks to the kingdom of God and participates, in human conflicts in the name of the gospel of Jesus Christ.⁸

Presupposed in what is commonly known as the modern ecumenical movement is the historic Christian conviction concerning the believers’ oneness that is grounded in Jesus Christ’s prayer as recorded in the Gospel according to St. John 17: 20-21a “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.” Christ willed Christians to be one. Christians are called to manifest the oneness that Christ willed in witness and service to the world. Christians are called to show the world that they are doing

6 For detailed account on Athanasius’ teaching on the relationship between the Father and the Son see, the memorandum of the decision of the Egyptian Synod of 321 in A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Vol. IV, 1980, 68-71.

7 For detailed information about the Council’s decision see, the letter of Eusebius of Caesarea to the people of the diocese in A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Vol. IV, 1980, 74-76.

8 Emilio Castro, A Passion for Unity: Essays on Ecumenical Hopes and Challenges (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1992), 1.

something to restore unity. In his prayer, Jesus does not invite Christians only to see something of the character of the inner life of the Triune God but also to share visibly in that life. The drive to restore what was lost mainly in the 11th century and 16th century should not be characterized by conformity but rather by what various Christian traditions hold in common.

Although all members of the various Christian traditions read with understanding Jesus Christ's prayer as recorded in John 17: 20-21, there is usually very little energy put forth in putting it into practice. What, one sees in the Christian church in East Africa today is not only various Christian traditions going about their business separately but also competing with one another. Christian disunity has become a stumbling block to the proclamation of the Gospel. In a region such as East Africa that is characterized by divisions on so many fronts, the Christian church has to act as a home for unity. However, unity in the present context does not mean a return to a more harmonious kind of church one finds in the early church. While the early Christians were not divided in the same way Christian traditions are today, because they were able to share together in the Eucharist, it is naïve to think of merely recovering that unity which the early church once had. Unity today neither means having all Christians act alike nor having a monolithic church structure. Rather it means together as Christians making the Christian faith real and visible. This can only be possible through practical cooperation. The scandalous picture of Christian traditions, for example, competing for church ministries in East Africa, calls for various forms of practical cooperation.

Practical cooperation could manifest itself in different ways. For instance, it could be in the form of a common mission, membership in councils of churches, sacred conversation in prayer or it could be through formal church agreement of full communion. However, practical cooperation by different Christian traditions in East Africa is a new phenomenon, which African Christians have to struggle to understand. Even then, practical cooperation among Christian traditions in East Africa is no longer a luxury, but a necessity. However, practical cooperation can only be possible if the index of the modern East African church is her capacity not only to tolerate but also to encourage the coexistence of diverse Christian traditions. Chris Arthur says:

There are no undiscovered religions existing beyond the horizon of an uncrossable ocean or desert, the catalogue of human faiths lies open and effectively complete for anyone to view. In such a situation . . . traditions that were once separate and self-contained are brought into unavoidably close contact and can no longer merely ignore or casually reject each other or at least not with any credibility.⁹

Christianity seems to thrive much more vigorously in a place like East Africa where there has been denominational diversity than in countries where the great majority of the people are embraced within a single denomination. Referring to a situation like that of East Africa, Philip Jenkins says:

⁹ Chris Arthur, The Globalization of Communication: Some Religious Implications (London: World Association for Christian Communication, 1998), 36.

Often, relations between expanding denominations are cordial or at least non-confrontational, on the grounds that each church has plenty of room to grow, with ample likely converts. In much of Africa, different denominations have evolved good working relations in the form of conferences or federations of Christian churches.¹⁰

Definitely the East African type of Christianity can be criticized on many grounds. Nevertheless, there is much that is imaginative and valuable in the life of the churches in East Africa, and it is hard to believe that this vigor does not in part arise from the diversity of the region's type of Christianity and the constant interactions among the different groups.

The many different traditions of piety and devotion that have been available in the past must continue as Christians engage in the quest for the unity of the church. Stephen Sykes supports this point of view when he says:

If God's work is to be done in a world of vastly differing patterns of personal and social life, we must expect men to be called to live in different traditions of piety and devotion. To attempt to conform all Christians to a uniform ideal would be a gross mistake and danger.¹¹

Each Christian tradition has a certain integrity that cannot be mixed with other traditions without loss of its distinctive character. Any quest for unity raises for consideration the fundamental nature of the church and its ministry.

What unites all Christians all over the world is their faith in Jesus Christ and the ministry that they have received. Jesus Christ never saw a denomination, since denominations never existed at that time at least in the modern sense of the word, until long after his time. Nevertheless, there are elements in the life of Christ that could and should be applied to the present situation. The first element is the combination of need and deed. There was always a crowd around Jesus during his earthly ministry. The reason why the crowd was always around him is because people were needy. Their need itself made a plea, an appeal to Jesus Christ for help. Theologically, the need expressed by Jesus' congregation called forth his deed. In response, he satisfied their needs.

Need is the driving force behind every Christian's ministry. Sometimes other motivations get mixed-up with the central good of meeting a need such as religious pride, opportunism, theological indoctrination. But, if a Christian's life is any good, it can and should bring critical attention to bear on people's needs. The church in East Africa has to recognize the real needs of the Christian community and respond accordingly. The church in East Africa cannot adequately meet people's various needs unless there is a change in her witness to the world. Castro says:

We are called to present the witness of a united church, which can symbolize, anticipate and serve the reconciliation and unity of all humanity and the whole

10 Philip Jenkins, The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 155.

11 Stephen W. Sykes, Christian Theology Today (London: Mowbrays, 1971), 33.

creation.¹²

Christians in East Africa are confronted by the challenge of change which is built on the principle which says that need necessitates the deed. Once Christians from different Christian traditions become aware of the need for change in the way they relate to one another, they will be obliged to make some type of response. Two possible general responses in the area of the quest for unity could be made. The first and the easiest response could be to ignore the need for change by continuing to have the same negative attitude toward people of other denominations. The second general response could be to resurrect the old negative attitudes, which do not immediately apply in the present situation or choose to go in the opposite direction.

The impression I got from the various respondents is that Christians in East Africa want to be together spiritually, grow together and move forward together. This is what I would call practical cooperation of diverse Christian denominations. There are several advantages in practical cooperation among Christian denominations, and the major ones are:

- a) Practical cooperation among Christian denominations in East Africa is likely to generate its own peculiar method and style of religious reflection. Once there is an attitude of openness to the other Christian tradition, Christians are likely to appreciate the importance of simply listening to what their colleagues from other denominations are saying and recognize their faith in the light of their colleagues' religious tradition. Joseph L. Mangina says:

Coming to recognize one's own faith in the often strange idiom of another tradition helps foster the conviction . . . that the church's unity is an already existing reality, even though hidden under human sin.¹³

In such a situation Christians are likely to develop an attitude of openness to others and a strong sense of loyalty to their own Christian traditions. When Christians become genuinely open to other Christian traditions, they consequently allow their own traditions to be transformed while preserving their rich Christian heritages.

- b) Once Christians from different denominations have listened to each other, understood the underlying historical reasons behind their differences, it becomes harder to believe that those differences dividing them are meaningful. This is because first, the experience of friendship seems to play a greater role in practical cooperation than in any other form. Secondly, the misconception about what the other Christian denomination holds dear will have been corrected by gaining the insight into the original historical context from which those divisions began.
- c) Practical cooperation helps Christians not to see Christian denominations as potentially

12 Castro, A Passion for Unity, 1.

13 Joseph L. Mangina, "Ecumenical Theology," in Dictionary of Historical Theology, 2000.

warring groups among which there can eventually be only one winner, rather as stores of rich religious ideas. There is the recognition among Christians that throughout the centuries the different Christian denominations have developed many varied religious ideas, all with their roots in the one common living God. Although Christians have disagreed among themselves on exactly how these values should be lived out in concrete circumstances, they all argue that the Gospel must be applied to ever-changing historical situations which create new religious values.

- d) The church in East Africa is faced with serious financial crisis as it tries to perpetuate the Western pattern of running the affairs of the various denominations. For instance, many church institutions are facing tremendous economic pressures, and their future is doubtful. If there is practical cooperation, the denominations involved would not only pool resources together but also allow the exchange of ideas and all this would lead to enhancement in the quality of the Christian community.
- e) A dynamic church requires shared leadership. Practical cooperation provides the participating denominations an opportunity for sharing their varied experiences in church ministry through which each of them might be stimulated for, and encouraged in, their work. One aspect of this sharing involves the church ministers in the exchange of information about church ministry and the resources which are available for their common task.

The greatest advantage of practical cooperation is that Christians find both the courage and the resources to do things that they would be reluctant or unable to undertake alone. In spite of this greatest advantage, practical cooperation if not well planned has its limitations as well. First, as it places the focus on the need to be met, it tends to ignore the building of enduring relationships among the Christian denominations. Practical cooperation will last as long as the need exists. Secondly, since practical cooperation is often demanding, some denominations will be forced to undertake certain activities alone. Christians in East Africa need always to be reminded that practical cooperation alone cannot realize the vision of the unity the African Church seeks. The church therefore needs always to be at the feet of Jesus Christ.

From the findings, few tertiary institutions in East Africa give much emphasis to ecumenics either as a separate subject or as an essential component of all theology courses or religious studies. Miriam Reidy says “ecumenism as a subject tends to be a grudgingly admitted extra in an already overcrowded curriculum.”¹⁴ The reasons for this kind of attitude are many. However, the major ones that were highlighted by the lecturers of theology at Limuru University, Ggaba Major, Bishop Tucker School of Divinity and Theology and Makumira University are:

- i. There are some Christians in the faculties and schools of theology in the universities and colleges/seminaries in East Africa who believe that they are the true orthodox Christians

14 Miriam Reidy, “Teaching and Learning Ecumenism,” in Mid-Stream 28/4 (October 1989):401.

and go on to warn other Christians against their involvement in the ecumenical movement. One of their arguments is that ecumenism denies one of the important traditional marks of the Church namely, “one” in favor of a number of them such as *koinonia* which claim to be of equal status.

- ii. Among the lecturers and professors in the faculties and schools of theology, there are those who call themselves fundamentalists while others call themselves conservatives. While most of the fundamentalists say that ecumenism is one of the Roman Catholic Church’s plots to bring every Christian under the Pope’s authority, some conservatives argue that ecumenism dilutes the Christian faith. This is because in the process of looking for common ground one ends up compromising the ideals of his or her denomination.

I agree with scholars who say that a passionate commitment to church unity cannot really be descriptively taught. Rather ecumenism needs to be communicated and “caught.” At the present time when East Africa is moving toward federation, there is great need to teach and to communicate a passion for ecumenism within an East African context.

2. The missionary origins of the modern ecumenical movement

Many scholars of ecumenics such as Peter Alban Heers agree that the contemporary search for the unity of the church was initiated within the framework of the mission endeavor. He says, “the contemporary Ecumenical Movement has its roots in the Protestant missionary movement of the 19th century and its inspiration in the desire of Evangelical Protestants to achieve a “unity in fellowship” amongst themselves for greater success in the mission field.”¹⁵ This desire was against the background of Protestant churches’ own divisions that were reflected in the denominational chaos which was transplanted to the mission field. Again Heers says “the Protestant missionary enterprise served as the spring board of the ecumenical movement and prepared the ground for the arrival of the “ecumenical century” and the move from a missionary to an “ecumenical ecclesiology.”¹⁶

a. 1910 Edinburgh Conference.

The idea of a great international conference to discern the next step for the worldwide Christian mission was first conceptualized by the eighteenth-century English missionary William Carey (1761-1834). Carey was born in Paulerspury, Northamptonshire, in 1761. Carey had a modest formal education but he taught himself several modern European languages, translated the Bible in twenty-five Indian languages and dialects as taught Indian languages at Fort William College in Calcutta for thirty years. Convinced of the need for foreign missionary work, Carey published a book in 1792 with the title “An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians, to Use Means for the

15 Peter Alban Heers “The Missionary Origins of Modern Ecumenism: Milestones Leading up to 1920,” An address prepared for the Academic Conference on the Mission of the Orthodox Church and the World Council of Churches, in Athens, May 15, 2005, 1.

16 Heers “The Missionary Origins of Modern Ecumenism: Milestones Leading up to 1920,” An address prepared for the Academic Conference on the Mission of the Orthodox Church and the World Council of Churches, in Athens, May 15, 2005, 4.

Conversion of the Heathens, in which the Religious State of the Different Nations of the World, the Success of Former Undertakings, and the Practicability of Further Undertakings, are Considered.” In May 1792 Carey was the preacher for a meeting of Baptist ministers at Nottingham. Inspired by Carey’s desire to preach the Gospel to all nations, the ministers created the Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel Among the Heathen. It was this society that sponsored Carey’s mission to India from 1793 to 1834.¹⁷

Carey proposed a decennial interdenominational world missionary conference to be held first in Cape Town, South Africa in 1810. His idea was taken up seriously by men and women of his day. Since the mid-19th century Carey’s suggestion has found expression in the interdenominational conferences that were held in New York and London in 1854, Liverpool in 1860, London in 1878 and 1888, and New York in 1900. 1910 Edinburgh Conference therefore stood in this line of succession.¹⁸ Kenneth Scott Latourette says, “the World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910, was the birthplace of the modern ecumenical movement.”¹⁹

The 1910 Edinburgh Missionary Conference is one of the consolidation of the modern ecumenical movement. Its inspiration is usually traced from the great desire of men and women who always believed that the church is God’s gift to human beings and that Christians constitute a distinctive, worldwide community, a single oikoumene of Christ. The various ecumenical initiatives that were formed before 1910 Edinburgh Conference were joined by new initiatives after 1910 that resulted in more comprehensive institutions. John R. Mott the Conference chairman called it: “the most notable gathering in the interest of the worldwide expansion of Christianity ever held, not only in missionary annals, but in all Christian annals.”²⁰ The guiding question has always been “how are we to stay and grow together in the household of God?” Every generation has tried to answer this question and in the process there has been a shift in paradigms of understanding of the meaning of oikos (the household of God).

John H. Thomas argues that:

What happened in 1910 was not really the birth of a new movement, but the signal that the cause of Christian unity, for the sake of Christ’s mission, had matured to a point where dramatic new initiatives were now possible.²¹

The nineteenth-century missionaries became aware of the too much diversity in the one Christian faith they were passing on to their converts in the mission field. This awareness was the impetus behind the 1910 Edinburgh Missionary Conference, which took place in Edinburgh, Scotland.

17 For a detailed summary of these vents see, Stephen Neill, A History of Christianity in India 1707-1858 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 186-88.

18 See Ruth Rouse, “William Carey’s Pleasing Dream” International Review of Mission 28 (April 1949): 181-192.

19 Kenneth Scott Latourette, “Ecumenical Bearings of the Missionary Movement and the International Missionary Council”, chapter 8 in Ruth Rouse and Stephen C. Neill, eds., A History of the Ecumenical Movement, 1517-1948, Vol. I, 4th ed., (Geneva: WCC, 1993 [1954]), 362.

20 Quoted in C. Howard Hopkins, John R. Mott 1865-195: A Biography (Geneva and Grand Rapids: WCC and Eerdmans, 1979), 342.

21 John H. Thomas, “Walking Together: The Ecumenical Vocation of the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)” in Mid-Stream 39, 3(July 2000), 41.

While the roots of contemporary ecumenism are to be found in the nineteenth-century missionary movements, the symbolic beginning of contemporary ecumenism is the 1910 Edinburgh Conference which has been hailed as a “watershed event in the ecumenical cooperation.”²² By the beginning of the twentieth-century, the need for unity of Christians began to gain strength in Europe and America as a result of the great concern by the Protestants and Anglicans to spread the gospel to the non-Christian world. Ecumenism at this time was closely linked with mission, for it was in the mission field that disunity was most obviously a liability. As Europeans and Americans preached the gospel in non-Christian countries, many came to see with little relevance in the mission field the differences of doctrine, church government and style of worship, which divided churches at home. For them proclaiming the gospel was a greater task than any single mission society or denomination could undertake by itself. Under such circumstances, inability to work together was recognized as a scandal.

The opening years of the twentieth-century were also marked by the mood of optimism in Europe and North America. A lot of people believed that the world would continue going in that peaceful direction even if there were isolated events that continued to disrupt human community. Only a few people such as John Raleigh Mott held a contrary view to the optimistic belief in the inevitable progress of the world. Mott believed that the world would not continue going in that peaceful direction unless all the nations of the world were evangelized.²³

Mott had great influence in the church, in the Young Men’s Christian Association, World Student Christian Federation that he founded in 1895 and in the Student Volunteer Movement where he was an executive secretary. Mott believed in superiority of Western Christianity and in the Christian Church’s God-given obligation to extend its biblical gospel to the non-Christian nations of the world.²⁴

Closely connected with Mott’s understanding of the concept of the superiority of Western Christianity was his sense of gratitude for the Gospel he had freely received. His missionary zeal reflected the phrase: “Every blessing which you now enjoy whispers freely you have received freely give.” Mott’s concern echoed ideas contained in David Bogue’s article, “To the Evangelical Dissenters who Practice Infant Baptism” which in part read:

CHRISTIAN BRETHERN

God has favored us with the knowledge of the way of salvation through a crucified Redeemer. Our obligations to Him on this account are inexpressible; and, I trust, we are often prompted from the fullness of our hearts to ask, *What*

22 Norman E. Thomas (ed.), Classic Texts in Mission and World Christianity (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1995), 224.

23 A good example of isolated events that continued to disrupt human community at the beginning of the twentieth-century see, E. A. Ayandele, J. D. Omer-Cooper, R. J. Gavin and A.E. Afigbo, The Growth of African Civilization: The Making of Modern Africa (London: Longman, 1971), 199-236.

24 J. D. Douglas (ed.), “Mott, John R” in Twentieth-Century Dictionary of Christian Biography, 1995. Mott was born in Sullivan County, New York in 1865 and brought up in Iowa. He was converted to Christianity while a student at Cornell.

shall we render unto the Lord for all His benefits? If in many things we are anxious to make a suitable return, there is one thing with respect to which, if weighted in the balance of the sanctuary, we shall be found wanting. A survey of the state of the world presents to us more than one-half of the human race destitute of the knowledge of the Gospel, and sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death.²⁵

Missionary thinking at this time was Christendom-oriented, and the missionary task was a one-way movement from the Christian West into the non-Christian world.²⁶

As early as 1906, Mott had suggested a conference of the leaders of the Boards of North America and Europe during which they would thoroughly study and make consultations on those issues that were likely to hinder their work in the mission field. Mott was of the view that issues on doctrine and polity should not be discussed in a conference whose focus was on the immediate occupation of all unoccupied fields.²⁷

Mott's idea of a World Missionary Conference was realized at Edinburgh Conference in 1910. Apart from being one of the prominent speakers, Mott was elected chairman of the 1910 Edinburgh Conference. Norvald Yri says that 1910 Edinburgh Conference:

Marked a new beginning in the Church's missionary thinking and practice. It also precipitated something its conveners least anticipated---the ecumenical movement.²⁸

The Edinburgh World Missionary Conference was organized on an interdenominational basis. Due to its inclusive nature, Norman E. Thomas says:

Out of it grew the movements which were to merge to form the World Council of Churches in 1948, and the International Missionary Council, which became the mission and evangelism arm of the WCC in 1961. Convinced that God was calling them to world evangelization, the Edinburgh delegates saw church divisions as a mission weakness and unity in mission as a divine imperative.²⁹

The delegates at Edinburgh included:

- a) The official delegates belonging to organizations with missionaries abroad, a characteristic that made it a body which could speak for the divided churches.
- b) Only missionary organizations working among non-Christian people.
- c) Participants from younger churches whose presence marked the beginning of a trend to embrace younger and older churches on terms of equality. Stephen Neill says:

25 Bogue's article quoted in Richard Lovett, The History of the London Missionary Society 1795-1895 (London: Oxford University Press, 1899), 6.

26 For further information on Christendom-oriented thinking see, Norman A. Horner (ed.), Protestant Crosscurrents in Mission (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968), 30ff.

27 For more information on Mott's proposed conference see, William Richey Hogg, Ecumenical Foundations (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1952), 100.

28 Norvald Yri, Quest for Authority (Nairobi: Evangel Publishing House, 1978), 36.

29 Thomas (ed), Classic Texts in Mission and World Christianity, 223.

No subject was more earnestly discussed than the future of “native Churches.” And now for the first time, and perhaps with pained surprise, the leaders of the Western Churches were to find that the younger Churches were beginning to be able to talk back.³⁰

A distinctive feature of 1910 Edinburgh Conference was that it was designed to be a working conference, reflecting and planning. The aim of the organizing committee was that it should be “a united effort to subject the plans and methods of the whole missionary enterprise to searching investigation and to coordinate missionary experience from all parts of the world.”³¹ Eight Commissions which worked over the preceding two years prior to 1910 produced reports on eight topics namely, Carrying the Gospel to all the non-Christian World, The Church in the Mission Field, Education in Relation to the Christianization of National Life, The Missionary Message in Relation to Non-Christian Religions, The Preparation of Missionaries, The Home Base of Missions, Missions and Governments, Cooperation and the Promotion of Unity. Mott described the Conference as “the first attempt at a systematic and careful study of the missionary problems of the world”³² Andrew Walls says: “Edinburgh sought to survey and assimilate the accumulated experience of the interaction of Christian and non-Christian worlds with a view to bringing the encounter to a new stage.”³³

Delegates at 1910 Edinburgh Conference deliberately avoided matters of doctrine and concentrated only on mission. Latourette later said: “in countless missionary and other organizations Christians of more than one denomination, bound together by the faith which characterized the revivals, worked hand in hand for the spread of the Gospel.”³⁴ The delegates’ experience of an inclusive togetherness was from now onward reflected in the inter-mission cooperation. Two things excited Mott most during the conference. First, the conference’s decision to express the spirit of togetherness in the mission field. Secondly, the experience of the oneness of the church that he thought would in the near future result in a two-way missionary movement from the West to the rest of the world and then back to the West. Mott expressed this vision clearly when he wrote:

Jesus Christ must have all the races and all the nations through which to make known fully His excellence and to communicate adequately His power. Informed, transformed, enlightened, enlivened by the reception of Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, Asia, Africa, and Oceania will surely exercise a profound influence upon the Western Church and help greatly to enlarge and enrich its conceptions of Christ and His Kingdom.³⁵

30 Stephen Neill, Men of Unity (London: SCM Press LTD., 1960), 22.

31 Quoted in Keith Clements, Faith on the Frontiers: A Life of J.H. Oldham (Edinburgh and Geneva: T. & T. Clark and WCC, 1999), 77.

32 Andrew F. Walls, The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission and Appropriation of Faith (New York and Edinburgh: Orbis and T. & T. Clark, 2002), 59.

33 Walls, The Cross-Cultural Process, p. 59

34 Latourette, “Ecumenical Bearings,” 353.

35 John Raleigh Mott, The Decisive Hour of Christian Missions (New York: Student Christian Volunteer

Edinburgh Conference in 1910 closed with the formation of a Continuation Committee and Mott was elected its chairman and Joseph Houldsworth Oldham its secretary. The Continuation Committee was mandated to serve as an instrument of missionary cooperation across national and denominational boundaries.³⁶ From the 1910 Edinburgh Conference, came the spirit that has sustained the priorities of modern ecumenism, namely common fellowship: the inability to confess a common faith, share the sacraments, recognize members and ministries, and agree on a common understanding of the nature of the Church. On top of that there is common service and common witness.

At the 1910 Edinburgh Conference, statements on other cultures were more sympathetic than they were in the previous years. Missionaries were called upon to try to understand other cultures, to seek for their useful elements, and to use them as steps to higher things, though confidence was still placed in the absoluteness of the Christian faith and the civilization it went with. Most of the missionary societies' plans at that time can be summarized as follows: "to make the whole tribe English in their language, civilized in their habits, and Christian in their religion."³⁷

While the participants were struck by the diversity of the delegates, from a longer historical perspective it is striking to note how limited was their range. The church outside Europe and North America was represented by the Asian delegates. The Asian delegation's presence was interpreted as a sign of the success of the Western missionary movement to the non-Christian world. But Andrew Walls observes, "there is no sign that these delegates were expected to have a distinctive or original contribution to the conference."³⁸ One of the Asian delegates by the name V.S. Azariah in his contribution to the discussions is reported to have said:

Through all the ages to come the Indian church will rise up in gratitude to attest the heroism and self-denying labours of the missionary body. You have given your goods to feed the poor. You have given your bodies to be burned. We also ask for love. Give us FRIENDS!"³⁹

There were no African participants. It was presumed that the Church in Africa was too young to make any meaningful theological contribution.

From the 1910 Edinburgh Conference the question was "how to do mission?" The discussion focused again on matters of strategy. Participants at the 1910 Edinburgh Conference were full of enthusiasm, believing that it was their obligation to spread the Gospel to the ends of the earth. At this conference they sought to establish "how to do mission" without, in my opinion, developing

Movement for Foreign Missions, 1910), 237.

36 Three members from the younger churches were elected to represent their own people. These were: Bishop Honda from Japan, The Rev. Dr Chatterji from India and Mr. Cheng Ching-yi from China. For further information on this point see, Neill, Men of Unity, 25.

37 Thomas (ed.), Classic Texts in Mission and World Christianity, 61.

38 Walls, The Cross-Cultural Process, 58.

39 World Missionary Conference 1910: The History and Records of the Conference (Edinburgh and London: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier; New York, Chicago and Toronto: Fleming H. Revell), 315.

what it means to be a church which by definition is in the concept of mission both at home and abroad. For the 1910 Edinburgh Conference, the understanding of mission was how to convert other religions, faiths, and cultures to Christianity and Western culture because the non-Western people especially Africans, it was argued, were on “a wrong spiritual path.”

The view of the delegates was that the non-Christian cultures could be seen as preparation for the Gospel, either as the revelation of deep wants of the human spirit which the Gospel satisfies, or as partial insights which are corrected and completed by the Gospel. It is unfortunate that the 1910 Edinburgh Conference did not produce nor did it spell out a theological statement of mission that acknowledges mission as God’s which could have implied taking seriously God’s revelation in the African culture. Even when the missionaries later began to prepare the Africans for church ministry, they aimed at creating an African ministry that had a European approach to the Gospel. This situation was even more to be expected where there were rival missions of different European origins as was the case in East Africa.

The 1910 Edinburgh Conference did not even tackle the question of denominationalism. Throughout the history of the Christian Church many of its divisions have been due as much to differences of culture and national characteristics as to essential differences of religious beliefs. Too many of the early disagreements between missions and churches in Africa were inspired not only by religious divergences but as much, if not more, by the nationalities of the missionaries and the politics of their respective governments. The early rivalries between, for instance Anglicans and Roman Catholics in Uganda, were due very much to the fact that while the Anglicans were British the Roman Catholics were French. A further confirmation of this point is that the Mill Hill Fathers, with their headquarters in London, although Roman Catholics, enjoyed the good will and support of the largely Anglican British administration in East Africa.

Within the Roman Catholic and Protestant ranks we find a not-too-happy co-existence between, respectively, the French Holy Ghost Fathers and the Italian Consulate Fathers and the British and American Protestants who disagreed at first about the role of missions in education that was a reflection of the different policies in their respective countries. Denominations used political situations to their own advantage in East Africa. For instance, in Uganda, which was a British Protectorate the Anglican Church approximated to an established church. At times the Roman Catholics could legitimately complain of discrimination. The foregoing discussion supports the assertion that the denominationalism of the Northern Churches was transported to East Africa, even though the original causes of division had not been part of the experience of the people in East Africa.

To the East African Christians the divided state of affairs certainly brought bewilderment coupled with confusion. Africans could not understand why the exponents of the Christian faith worked against rather than with each other. It has been admitted that in many places in the mission field, Christians belonging to different denominations, for instance Roman Catholics and Protestants were taught to see each other as open enemies, and far more than in most European countries. They have since then presented two rival social groupings struggling for every position

of power and influence. Admittedly this divided state of affairs has brought deep loyalty to particular Christian denominations. Yet, many Africans have grown impatient, believing that if it were not for the “imported” divisions from the West, they would be united in one African Christian Church.” However, some scholars have argued that when one recalls the multiplicity of African Initiated Churches, which some people prefer to call “Independent Churches,” one realizes that such a sentiment is oversimplifying the facts. While that observation is true, there is a growing evidence to show that African Christians show greater readiness to serve their common Lord together than do many of their Western counterparts.

The divided state of religious affairs in East Africa today stems from the initial missionary situation at the close of the nineteenth-century. It is a pity that, in spite of some striking individual exceptions, the early missionaries were unfriendly to one another, but it was largely inevitable seeing the religious climate of the time. The present situation in East Africa presents the churches with the plain alternative of either working together over a wider field or disappear altogether as was the case with the church in North Africa in the early centuries. If they cannot, for instance make the common influence of all Christians on political life, then they will be responsible for the fact that politics will shake off all contact with religion. Regretfully, Christians have often worked separately until some great world threat has forced them to work together. Regrettably too, Africans in their response to the Gospel have contributed to these divisions. To this effect, some people have wondered if there is any hope for a better future in African Christianity.

For sure there is a better future for the Christian church at least in East Africa. This optimism is based on the life of the Church in Uganda. For instance, until the 1950s, only Anglicans and Roman Catholics carried on missionary work in Uganda. For many years, rivalry and suspicion dominated relations between the two Christian traditions. But when Joseph Kiwanuka, a Roman Catholic became the Archbishop of Kampala, Uganda his Anglican counterpart, Archbishop Leslie Brown approached him on the question of co-operation. As a result in 1963 the bishops of the two churches agreed to form the Uganda Joint Christian Council, which was inaugurated in 1964. Since then the Council has been joined by other churches. Sub-committees of the Uganda Joint Christian Council concerned with education, social welfare, mass communication and medicine were established. Remarkable developments in co-operation in Uganda have been realized in such areas as theology, religion and religious education, leading to the introduction of the same Baptismal Formulary in Uganda for Anglican and Roman Catholics and a Joint Syllabus in Christian Religious Education for Primary Schools, Secondary Schools, and Teacher Training Colleges.

b. 1925 Stockholm conference: Life and Work Movement

World War 1 was a great setback to the 1910 Edinburgh Conference’s spirit of togetherness in the mission field. However, during and after the war, a group of churchmen promoted Edinburgh spirit among prominent churchmen in many nations, which were at war. Their success was largely attributed to Nathan Söderblom the bishop of the diocese of Uppsala, and Archbishop of Sweden. He was born at Trono in the Swedish province of Halsingland on January 15, 1866 to

The History and Theology of the Ecumenical Movement in East Africa

Jonas Söderblom, a Lutheran pastor and Sophia Söderblom. Söderblom entered Uppsala University in 1883. As a student at Uppsala University, Söderblom won respect not only for his intellectual attainments but also for his personal charm and talent as a speaker. He took his bachelor's degree in 1886, with honors in Greek and competency in Hebrew, Arabic, and Latin.

In 1890 he visited New England in the United States of America under the auspices of the Student Christian Movement, and made his first effective ecumenical contacts. After listening to a lecture during the Christian Student Conference delivered by a visiting clergyman, Söderblom wrote in his diary a sentence that was to prove prophetic. The statement read, "Lord, give me humility and wisdom to serve the great cause of the free unity of thy church."⁴⁰

Söderblom was ordained priest in 1893 and appointed chaplain to a mental hospital. In 1894 he accepted a call to the Swedish Church in Paris where he stayed until 1901. During this time, Söderblom was pursuing graduate studies in theology, history of religions, and in languages with the Protestant Faculty of the Sorbonne. He eventually became the first foreigner ever to earn a Doctor of Theology degree at the Protestant Faculty of the Sorbonne. From 1901 to 1914, Söderblom occupied a chair in the School of Theology at Uppsala University and concurrently, from 1912 to 1914, a chair at Leipzig University. In these productive years he wrote a series of books on religious history, religious psychology, and religious philosophy.

In May 1914 Söderblom was elected bishop of the diocese of Uppsala, and Archbishop of Sweden. His election as archbishop of Uppsala, and, in consequence, primate of the Church of Sweden, was a surprise because he was not as distinguished a bishop as his two competitors were. During the last seventeen years of his life, Söderblom administered the duties of the head of the ecclesiastical establishment and carried on with his own research and writing.

Internationally, Söderblom is best known as the architect of the ecumenical movement of the twentieth century. He had already begun to move toward intercommunion between the Swedish Church and the Church of England as early as 1909. In 1920 he arranged to have Bishop Woods of Peterborough, England, participate in the consecration of two Swedish bishops. In the following year Woods welcomed Söderblom's Life and Work movement to Peterborough.

Söderblom found out that the ecumenical movement was hampered during his time for various reasons. For instance, the French, the German, and the American church officials were conservative and those who were interested in unity of the church were men without power. Söderblom saw himself as a man with power since he was the head of a national church and decided to make use of this opportunity.

Söderblom was not happy with the omissions of the church in its witness to the world, especially in the realms of international justice and peace. He argued that the church, while not neglecting its spiritual role, should lead in matters of social justice. He had a strong conviction that Christian social movements had great potential for uniting churches. Soderblom was convinced

40 Bengt G. M. Sundkler, Nathan Söderblom: His Life and Work (London, Lutterworth, 1968), 38.

that while the kingdom of God can never be equated to any pattern of human society, Christ's Gospel of the Kingdom carries guidance and power for the better ordering of people's relationships in society.⁴¹

Söderblom argued that the broken and warring society needed to see the reconciling work of Christ reflected in the Church Universal. He therefore made persistent endeavors during World War I to voice the church's call to reconciliation. In 1914 Söderblom issued a statement to the various leaders entitled "For Peace and Christian Fellowship" which in part reads:

The war is causing untold distress. Christ's body, the Church, suffers and mourns. Mankind in its need cries out, O Lord, how long?...we, the servants of the Church, address to all those who have power or influence in the matter an earnest appeal seriously to keep peace before their eyes, in order that bloodshed soon may cease...Our Faith perceives what the eye cannot always see: the strife of nations must finally serve the dispensation of the Almighty, and all the faithful in Christ are one. Let us therefore call upon God that he may destroy hate and enmity, and in mercy ordain peace for us. His will be done!⁴²

Söderblom's views helped to give expression to, and remind the world of Christian realities in friendship and calling which were stronger than the enmities and divisions of war. He hoped that even while the war was on, it might be possible to convene an International Christian Conference in the service of reconciliation and peace. As the war continued, Söderblom made further attempts to achieve some form of Christian Conference across the dividing lines of war. This was the starting point of various movements, which contributed to the formation of the Life and Work Movement in 1925 that was held at Stockholm under the chairmanship of Söderblom.⁴³

The Stockholm Conference in 1925, which brought together Anglican, Protestant, and Orthodox Christians, was the culminating event in Söderblom's ecumenical efforts. Rome was not represented and in his opening address, Söderblom regretted the absence of the Apostle Peter. Stockholm Conference laid the basis for a future ecumenical creed, emphasized the need to reconcile the competing philosophies of subjective spirituality and of objective social action, and sought to find unity in appealing for world peace.

At the forefront of the Life and Work Movement was the commitment to world peace, to foster inter-church aid to victims of war and disaster, to address issues of poverty and oppression. Although Stockholm Conference did not solve all the problems at that time, it did however, constitute a landmark in the recognition by the churches of their economic, ethical and social responsibility in the national and international order. The Life and Work Movement was meant to be the practical face of the church. Its practical orientation was seen in its slogan, "doctrine divides, service unites." In this slogan is found two distinct dimensions of any ecumenical effort.

41 For more information on Soderblom's determination to see the church committed to social action as well as missionary outreach see, Hogg, Ecumenical Foundations, 142ff.

42 Quoted in Neill, Men of Unity, 27-28.

43 Soderblom won support of a number of Christian leaders in England whose chief spokesperson was William Temple. In Germany he won support of the famous professors: Adolph von Harnack and Adolph Deissmann.

On the one hand there is doctrine; on the other hand there is service that stems from one's belief. Söderblom was convinced that it was possible to achieve unity without bothering about doctrinal issues. He wrote:

We are concerned with service, and we believe that by serving the co-operation of the churches we shall break down prejudices and create a spirit of fellowship which will render the accomplishment of the aims of the Faith and Order Movement less difficult to achieve.⁴⁴

Rather than affirming the old creeds as Faith and Order Movement was doing, Söderblom wanted Life and Work Movement to look for "a clearer expression of the teaching of Christ and of our Christian duty regarding the brotherhood of the peoples and regarding the moral foundations of society."⁴⁵

Söderblom's basic concern in the theology of the ecumenical movement was with God's revelation. He rejected the traditional teaching that Jesus Christ is the sole medium of revelation. His thesis was that there is a general revelation within which people are enabled to discern God's special revelation. He went on to say that although God has taken the initiative and has freely made his nature and purpose known to human beings in the Bible and above all in the person of Jesus Christ, this does not mean that God's self-disclosure ends with Jesus Christ. According to Söderblom, there is a continuing divine self-disclosure which manifests itself in:

Creation. He said that God's self-disclosure dates from the creation of the world. The creative dimension appears in beauty and in character, in social structures and in the works of art. Söderblom saw the created order as God's revelation to all people of his eternal power and deity, which obliges them to acknowledge God and give glory to Him. Söderblom therefore rejected the view that the Bible regards one dimension of revelation to be more authentic and of greater value than another. He maintained that God revealed himself in Jesus but not first and only in him; otherwise no adequate explanation of the relevance of the Old Testament is possible. Revelation, as Söderblom understood it, is not confined to the Biblical record. He therefore concluded that the church's distinction between special revelation and general revelation is not only inadequate but also unbiblical.⁴⁶

Although during Söderblom's time the Bible was regarded as possessing high revelatory value by the church, he rejected the idea of confining God's special revelation to the Bible. He also did not regard special revelation to be the unique deposit of the church. His argument was that revelation is not given in a vacuum but within particular historical experiences and human reflection on God. His conclusion was that God's revelation must not be regarded as finished with Christ and the Bible although the latter is uniquely the foundation of Christian truth. Söderblom's theology of revelation therefore determined his understanding of church unity.

44 Quoted in George Kennedy Alen Bell (ed.), The Stockholm Conference 1925: The Official Report of the Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), 378.

45 Bernt G. M. Sundkler, Nathan Söderblom: His Life and Work (Lund: Gleerup, 1968), 245.

46 Edgar, M. Carlson (ed.), Soderblom, Nathan: Nature of Revelation (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966) 201f.

History. Söderblom said that God reveals himself in some sense through the process of judgment reflected in the rise and fall of nations and world powers.

Moral life. Söderblom said that God has revealed himself to all human beings in the conflicts of their moral life. He said “God is able to speak to humanity even through lips which deny his existence.”⁴⁷

c. 1927 Lausanne Conference: Faith and Order Movement

The delegates from the different church traditions at Lausanne conference gathered to reflect on those things which impeded their common fellowship. The Life and Work conference had concerned itself with working together on various projects that required no doctrinal agreement. The conference therefore deliberately left out on the agenda the greatest issues that give the churches their distinctive character. This exclusion covered questions of:

- i.** Doctrinal bases of the churches and their difference from one another (Faith).
- ii.** Matters concerning the ministry and the sacraments, the exercise of authority and the right ordering of the church’s life (Order).

Following 1910 Edinburgh Conference, the churches officially began to consult one another on the great questions of Faith and Order. One of the delegates at 1910 Edinburgh Conference was a United States Episcopalian Charles Henry Brent (1862-1929) then a missionary bishop in the Philippines. Charles Henry Brent was born on April 9, 1862 and died 1929. He was the third of ten children of the Reverend Henry Brent and Sophia Francis Brent. Brent was raised in Newcastle, Ontario, where his father was an Anglican parish priest. After graduating from Trinity College School in Port Hope, Ontario, Brent enrolled in Trinity College, University of Toronto, and majored in the classics. He graduated in 1884 and moved back to Port Hope where he was a school teacher for two years. During these two years, Brent was studying privately for the holy orders.

In 1886 Brent was ordained a deacon in the Anglican Church of Canada and moved to the United States. In 1887 he was ordained to the priesthood and began to work in Buffalo, New York. In 1889 Brent moved to Boston, where he lived in an Episcopal monastic order, the Society of St. John the Evangelist. The Society of St. John the Evangelist put Brent in charge of St. Augustine's chapel that was erected to minister to the African-Americans living in the Western slums of Boston.⁴⁸ The Society of St. John the Evangelist had a profound impact on Brent. Later he wrote:

Daily meditation was a severe and joyous task. The Practice of the Presence . . . the love of Jesus Christ, the application to modern life of principles by which He li`ved, and the overwhelming importance of the unseen, were instilled into my being in a manner and to a degree from which there is, thirty-five years later, no

47 Carlson, Soderblom, Nathan: Nature of Revelation, 181.

48 For Charles Henry Brent’s work in Boston, see Alexander D. Zabriskie, Bishop Brent: Crusader for Christian Unity (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1948), 28-29.

escape.⁴⁹

In 1901 Brent was offered a position on the staff of the prestigious and progressive St. George's Episcopal Church in New York City. The University of the South elected him to their faculty, while General Theological Seminary, New York, was seriously considering him for the position of dean. Then quite unexpectedly, Brent was elected missionary bishop of the Philippines. After confiding with close friends and after many days of prayer, Brent accepted the post. He was consecrated missionary bishop of the Philippines at Emmanuel Church, Boston, on December 19, 1901.⁵⁰ After declining three elections to bishoprics in the United States in order to continue his work in the Philippines, later in 1918, Brent accepted the position of Bishop of Western New York.

Brent did not arrive in the Philippines until August 25, 1902 where he found a small American congregation worshipping in a borrowed school house. Within a very short time Brent erected an impressive cathedral in Manila, schools, a settlement house in the slums of Tondo, a hospital and nurses' training school. These projects of social uplift were intended to address the physical needs of the ordinary people in the Philippines. In his Episcopal ministry, Brent could have devoted himself chiefly to efforts to convert the Roman Catholics instead he directed his efforts toward working with the Roman Catholics in converting non-Christians in the Philippines. Brent always insisted that the Roman Church was an authentic expression of the Christian faith.

From the time of his ordination, Brent not only took the world to be his parish but was also deeply interested in ecumenism. His experiences in the Philippines had aroused in him a strong concern for the cause of visible Christian unity. He believed that church divisions were a great hindrance to the mission of the church. He said,

We missionaries have moments of deep depression when the consciousness sweeps over us that it is little short of absurd to try to bring into the Church of Christ the great nations of the Far East unless we can present an undivided front.⁵¹

In 1910 he had the opportunity of attending the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh, Scotland. Even then Brent was not happy with the absence of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox participation. In addition, he felt the conference's agenda evaded fundamental theological and polity issues that divided Christendom. He wrote "it is worse than folly to pretend that such things matter little or do not matter at all."⁵² Convinced that "wherever God gives a vision, He also points to a new responsibility," Brent was of the view that the dream of a united church brought the duty of confronting the doctrinal differences which 1910 Edinburgh Conference had

49 S. Whitney Hale, "Bishop Brent," Church Militant (April 1959): 2.

50 Lawrence to Brent, July 15 and July 20, 1901, Brent Papers, LOC, Box 5. Quoted in Mark D. Norbeck, "The Legacy of Charles Henry Brent," International Bulletin of Missionary Research 20/4 (October 1996).

51 Quoted in Heers "The Missionary Origins of Modern Ecumenism: Milestones Leading up to 1920," An address prepared for the Academic Conference on the Mission of the Orthodox Church and the World Council of Churches, in Athens, May 15, 2005, 10.

52 Eugene C. Bianchi, "The Ecumenical Thought of Bishop Charles Henry Brent," Church History 33 (December 1964): 449.

avoided. While at Edinburgh, Brent resolved to ask the Episcopal Church in the United States to take a lead in the calling of another world conference which would deal with the greatest issues that give the churches their distinctive character.

In 1910, Brent persuaded the Protestant Episcopal Church of America's Convention to invite all Christian Communion throughout the world for a meeting. At the General Convention of the Episcopal Church of the United States a resolution proposed by Rev. W. T. Manning, later bishop of New York was accepted. The resolution read:

Whereas there is today among all Christian people a growing desire for the fulfillment of our Lord's prayer that all His disciples may be one; that the world may believe that God sent Him; Resolve, the House of Bishops Concurring, that a Joint Committee be appointed to bring about a conference for the consideration of questions touching Faith and Order, and all Christian Communion throughout the world which confess Our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior be asked to unite with us in arranging for and conducting such a conference.⁵³

After long preparation in August 3, 1927, a total of 406 delegates, representing 108 denominations, met in Lausanne, Switzerland, for the First World Conference on Faith and Order under the chairmanship of Brent.

The agenda of the 1927 Lausanne Conference dealt mainly with the following topics: The call to unity, The Gospel--the church's message to the world, the nature of the church, the church's common confession of faith, the church's ministry, the sacraments and lastly the unity of Christendom and the place of the different churches in it. In his opening address, Brent concentrated on the unity of the church and said:

The missionary quality of Christ's prayer is passionate---that the world may believe...What a challenge to Christendom to set its own house in order before it further infects Christendom with sectarianism and robs the Gospel of its corporate power and gives people a stone instead of bread.⁵⁴

Brent told the delegates that:

- a. The aim of the conference was neither the formation of a federal nor total agreement on all issues that divide the catholic church.
- b. True unity would be a long and agonizing process but that Faith and Order was an important step in the restoration of the true catholic church.
- c. There was need to begin and strengthen Christian fellowship among Christian traditions.⁵⁵

53 Lukas Vischer (ed.), Faith and Order Louvain, 1971: Study Report and Documents (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1971), 9.

54 Newell Herbert Bate (ed.), Faith and Order Proceedings of the World Conference, Lausanne 1927 (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., 1928), 7.

55 For more information on Brent's opening speech see, Eugene C. Bianchi, "The Ecumenical Thought of Bishop Charles Henry Brent," Church History 33 (December 1964): 451-53.

Even after Brent's chairmanship, the Faith and Order movement continued to be concerned with how churches can:

- i. Learn to know each other's minds.
- ii. Enter with deeper knowledge and sympathy into traditions other than their own.
- iii. State and explain one's own inheritance and convictions for a deeper purpose than promoting propaganda and controversy.
- iv. Be involved in the discussions of the similarities between the traditions and practices of the various churches.

The discussions and studies of the similarities between the traditions and practices led to new approaches to one another on the part of representatives of different denominations and also to the published work on four main themes namely:

- α) The Doctrine of Grace.
- β) The Ministry and the Sacraments.
- γ) The Church of Christ and the Word of God.
- δ) The Church's Unity in Life and Worship.

Although there was great gain in understanding and agreement among the delegates to the subsequent Faith and Order conferences, the real point of progress and decisive action laid with the churches which they represented and not with Faith and Order conferences. This was also the time when the churches realized that:

- i. The number of ecumenical initiatives springing up was confusing and counterproductive.
- ii. If efforts for church unity were to take hold, the churches had to be officially involved.

These two concerns led to decisions by both Faith and Order and Life and Work at their 1937 World conference to form a committee to plan for merger in a world council of churches.

Brent's theological ideas were influenced by the intellectual tides of his day. At an early age, Brent stopped believing in the infallibility of the Bible, the traditional doctrine of the atonement, the church and the ministry. A. C. Zabriskie says, his living belief centered increasingly in Jesus Christ, His majestic manhood, His revelation in human terms of God's purpose and character and love."⁵⁶ Brent's original thesis was that the New Testament and the Apostles' Creed were the result of the church's spiritual selection. He said that since it was the church which defined the authenticity of the New Testament and the Apostles' Creed, it could also change its doctrines and reluctantly change the Apostles' Creed:

There is no reason whatever why a united Church should not revise and change its doctrines, but to me it is a most perilous thing for any fragment of the Church to attempt to improve upon the Apostles' Creed either by taking from it or by adding

56 Clinton Alexander Zabriskie, Bishop Brent: Crusader for Christian Unity (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1948), 189.

to it. I would as soon think of dropping out a book of the Bible as I would an Article of the Apostles' Creed.⁵⁷

Brent understood the Bible not to be a canonical body of literature that was forever closed at the end of the apostolic age but rather a mark of a new starting point for literature. Revelation, Brent argued is not given to a book but to dynamic human beings. Theology therefore was not static.

As far as salvation is concerned, Brent said that God has a plan for the whole humankind to become fully human. This state of affairs was described as "Christ-likeness as a result of its world-wide mission."⁵⁸

3. Ecumenical movement during the time of the World Council of Churches

In the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Christians began to pray and work together across denominational boundaries. They also began to form pioneering ecumenical movements whose aim was to call for church unity worldwide. The delegates of second Conference on Faith and Order that met in Edinburgh in 1937, and those of the Life and Work Conference that met at the University of Oxford in the same year agreed that their work should be coordinated, and in 1938 a provisional committee was named to establish a body representative of the churches. The establishment of a body representative of the churches which was to have come about in 1941 was delayed for seven years due to the outbreak of the Second World War. From August 22 to September 4, 1948, representatives of 147 churches assembled in Amsterdam to establish a body representative of the churches which they named the "World Council of Churches." The World Council of Churches was formed at a time when the world was recovering from World War I (1914-1918) and was beginning to prepare for World War II (1939-1945) and a lot of people had lost hope in life. Against this background of despair, the fellowship of churches was constituted and on August 23, 1948 the World Council of Churches was officially founded in Amsterdam.

The idea of the World Council of Churches was coined along the lines of the League of Nations that came into being after the end of World War 1. The League of Nation's task at this time was to ensure that war never broke out again. It was believed that the only way to avoid a repetition of the devastation of World War 1 was to create an international body whose sole purpose was to maintain world peace and which would sort out international disputes as and when they occurred.

If a dispute did occur the League of Nations could carry out the following sanctions:

- a. It could call on the nations to have round-table discussions. This would be done in the League's parliament which would listen to disputes and come to a decision on how to proceed.
- b. If the nations in dispute failed to listen to the Parliament's decision, the League could

57 Charles H. Brent, The Commonwealth: Its Foundations and Pillars (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1930), 160-161.

58 Brent, The Commonwealth: Its Foundations and Pillars, 149.

introduce economic sanctions. This would be arranged by the League's Council. The idea behind the economic sanction was to push an aggressor nation toward economic bankruptcy.

- c. If the economic sanctions failed, the League could introduce physical sanctions. This meant that military force would be used to put into place the League of Nation's decision.

Many people therefore looked to the League of Nations to bring stability to the world. However, unlike the League of Nations that had politics as the underlying principle, the World Council of Churches had a Christian touch.

Amsterdam Assembly

The World Council of Churches' first assembly in Amsterdam that was held from August 22, to September 4, 1948 has been declared the climax of a long development of ecumenical efforts that began mainly with:

- i. The missionary movement that had made the Christian church a worldwide community. Soon after 1910 Edinburgh Conference, there was the formation of a network of interdenominational councils in many countries. In these councils the missionary representatives from the older churches met with those from the younger churches for consultation and cooperation in their missionary activities.
- ii. The Life and Work movement that had brought the churches together in their attempts to make Christianity respond to the needs of society. It is here that the Christian church made an impact on human life in its everyday affairs.
- iii. The Faith and Order movement that had identified the doctrinal differences that had to be overcome before total unity of the Christian Church is achieved. It is here that churches were able to study together the areas of agreement and disagreement in the hope that full unity might one day be achieved.⁵⁹

There were some members who argued that Life and Work Movement and Faith and Order Movement both were manifestations of the same desire for full unity within the Christian church. Representatives of the two movements therefore resolved to form one body that would combine the interests of Life and Work and Faith and Order movements. They proposed the name "The World Council of Churches." Delegates from 147 Protestant Churches mostly from Europe and North America gathered in Amsterdam to constitute the World Council of Churches.⁶⁰ W. A. Visser 't Hooft says:

All confessional families except the Roman Catholics were represented. A

59 For a detailed account of the long development of ecumenical efforts that led to the formation of the World Council of Churches see, W. A. Visser, 't Hooft The First Assembly of the World Council of Churches (London: SCM Press, 1949), 12-15.

60 Today the membership includes many Orthodox churches of the East.

number of Roman Catholics had been invited to attend as observers, but they could not accept the invitation because in June the Holy Office had issued a Mortalium to the effect that no Roman Catholic would receive permission to attend.⁶¹

The theme chosen for the Amsterdam conference was “Man’s Disorder and God’s Design.” The second part of that phrase, "God's design" was taken from the letter to the Ephesians (1: 9-10) which says: "For God has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a design for the fullness of the times, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth." The assumption was that the work of the church in the world is to announce that God Himself is at work rebuilding His own order amidst the disorder of man. Humbled by the disorder of the postwar world, but confident that God Himself was at work rebuilding His own order, on Monday August 23, 1948 the delegates approved with no dissenting votes a resolution that the formation of the World Council of Churches be declared to be. Mott was appointed Honorary President of the Council and W. A. Visser 't Hooft was appointed General Secretary.

At the assembly in Amsterdam, four sections were organized to examine aspects of the theme “Man’s Disorder and God’s Design:

- a) The universal church in God’s design.
- b) The church’s witness to God’s design.
- c) The church and the disorder of society.
- d) The church and the international disorder.

Although the reality of divisions within the Christian church was recognized, the unity of the church as the body of Christ was unanimously affirmed. The delegates in all their diversity discovered and affirmed that they belonged to a single community in Jesus Christ. The official Amsterdam Message stated that:

Christ has made us His Own, and He is not divided. In seeking Him we find one another. Here at Amsterdam we have committed ourselves afresh to Him, and have covenanted with one another in constituting this World Council of Churches. We intend to stay together. We call upon Christian congregations everywhere to endorse and fulfill this covenant in their relations one with another. In thankfulness to God we commit the future to Him.⁶²

The Basis of the World Council of Churches that was adopted by the inaugural assembly in 1948 read: “The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which accept our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior.” In 1961, the third assembly in Delhi modified the basis to read:

61 't Hooft, The Genesis and Formation of the World Council of Churches (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1982), 63.

62 The Official Report of the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches, (1949): 9.

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The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior according to the Scriptures and therefore seek to fulfill together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.⁶³

The description of the World Council of Churches as a fellowship of churches implies that the Council is not itself in any way a church. However, according to the World Council of Churches constitution, agreement with the basis upon which the Council is founded is a precondition for membership.

The functions of the World Council of Churches are to:

- i. Call the churches to the goal of visible unity in one faith and in one Eucharistic fellowship expressed in worship and in common life in Christ.
- ii. Facilitate the common witness of the churches in each place and in all places.
- iii. Support the churches in their worldwide missionary and evangelistic task.
- iv. Express the common concern of the churches in the service of human need, the breaking down of barriers between people, and the promotion of one human family in justice and peace.
- v. Foster the renewal of the churches in unity, worship, mission and service.
- vi. Establish and maintain relations with National Councils and Regional Conferences of Churches, World Confessional bodies and other ecumenical organizations.
- vii. Carry on the work of the world movements for Faith and Order and Life and Work and of the International Missionary Council and the World Council on Christian Education.⁶⁴

Since 1948, there has been growing participation in search for Christian unity by the churches from both the developed and developing countries not only numerically but also in theological and spiritual vitality. In every continent new relationships have been established between the historically separated churches. All the churches, which become members of the World Council of Churches realize that churches separated by history and tradition are held and brought together by Jesus Christ alone.

A church to qualify for the World Council of Churches membership, it must meet the following criteria:

- a) It must have a sustained independent life and organization, including the right to decide to apply for World Council of Churches membership without the permission of anybody or person.

63 Quoted in Peter Lodberg, "Common Understanding and Vision: An Analysis of the Responses to the Process," in The Ecumenical Review 50, 3 (July 1998): 269.

64 For detailed information on the functions of the World Council of Churches see, D. Gill (ed.), Gathered for Life (Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 1983), 324 - 325.

- b) It must acknowledge that all churches are interdependent and must practice constructive ecumenical relations with other churches in its country, region and continent.
- c) A church must have at least 25,000 members. The churches that qualify for World Council of Churches membership come from a cross-section of religious traditions apart from, at the moment, the Roman Catholic, Adventist and Salvation Army. Goosen says:
 - One can cite almost the whole spectrum of Christian churches: Old Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, Anglican, United, Disciples, Brethren, Independent...Reformed...Moravian, Pentecostal, Quaker, and Mennonite.⁶⁵

On becoming a World Council of Churches member the church has to commit itself to:

- i. Being faithful to the Basis of the Council.
- ii. Participate in the Council's fellowship.
- iii. Participation in the life and work of the Council
- iv. The ecumenical movement as an integral part to the mission of the church.⁶⁶

The World Council of Churches' theological teaching is based on the Council's Basis, which states that the World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches, which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior according to the Scriptures, and therefore seek to fulfill Together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. All member "churches and ecumenical organizations accept the Basis as a vital part of their theological self-understanding."⁶⁷

Theological explanation of the Basis

Which accept our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior. Some theologians have argued that this phrase finds its origins in the 1855 Young Men's Christian Association's Basis and later in the 1894 World Young Women's Christian Association. The phrase was later used by the World Student Christian Federation and at the convening of the first world conference of Faith and Order, invitations to this conference were addressed to churches "which accept our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior."

The people who covenanted together at Amsterdam in 1948 were living in a fast changing world in which rival hopes were competing for human loyalty. There was for instance, democratic

65 Goosen, Bringing Churches Together, 26.

66 For detailed information on Membership, Purpose and Function of the World Council of Churches see, Diane Kessler (ed.), Together on the Way: Official Report of the WCC Eighth Assembly. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1999), 366-371.

67 Lodberg, "Common Understanding and Vision: An Analysis of the Responses to the Process," in The Ecumenical Review 50, 3 (July 1998): 269.

humanism and scientific humanism which appeared to give hope to a lot of people in the world. Against this background, the people who had covenanted together at Amsterdam insisted on the Lordship of Jesus Christ over his church and the world. This pronouncement was as a result of the trials they were going through and commitment they had. The World Council of Churches “reflected and stimulated the general movement of biblical theology of the period, and for good reasons.”⁶⁸

The World Council Churches member churches confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is not only God and Savior but also the head of the church. Christ’s headship over the church compels all Christians to enter into practical cooperation with each other. The 1950 World Council of Churches Central Committee said, “conversation, cooperation and common witness of the churches must be based on the common recognition that Christ is the Divine Head of the Body.”⁶⁹

However, the World Council of Churches respects the freedom of its member churches to interpret the Lordship of Christ according to their own teachings.

Some theologians have expressed dissatisfaction with the phrase “Jesus Christ as God and Savior” in the Basis. They argue that this is another way of committing member churches to a definite doctrinal formula. There are some ecumenical scholars who say that the confession of the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior is too limited a ground for Christian unity. Their argument is that the Basis should include other fundamental affirmations as well. Others say that the straightforward testimony to the divinity of Christ does not do justice to his humanity. For instance, Konrad Raiser, a German ecumenical scholar says those world events since World War II have given the churches of the World Council:

A new appreciation of the humanity of Christ, his suffering and his solidarity with those who live at the margin of history...The incarnation, the perspective from above, and the cross, the perspective from below, have to be affirmed together.⁷⁰

Scripture. The Basis says that the common confession of the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior is according to the Scriptures. In 1954, the World Council of Churches’ Second Assembly said:

We must all listen together in the midst of our disunity to our one Lord speaking to us through Holy Scriptures. This is a hard thing to do. We will struggle to comprehend the meaning and authority of Holy Scriptures. Yet whenever we are prepared to undertake together the study of the Word of God and are resolved to be obedient to what we are told, we are on the way towards realizing the oneness of the church in Christ in the actual state of our dividedness on earth.⁷¹

68 Robert S. Bilheimer, Breakthrough: The Emergence of the Ecumenical Tradition (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 82.

69 Quoted in Marlin VanElderen, Introducing the World Council of Churches (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990), 6.

70 Quoted in VanElderen, Introducing the World Council of Churches, 6.

71 Quoted in VanElderen, Introducing the World Council of Churches, 7.

This does not mean that among the churches of the World Council of Churches there is agreement on the authority and interpretation of the Bible. On the authority and interpretation of the Bible, Hans-Ruedi Weber says:

If we talk about the Bible then the Bible is divisive. If we let the Bible talk to us, in the discipline of corporate Bible study, it will be uniting. But it will be uniting by affirming and also correcting our diversities, leading to mutual respect.⁷²

Togetherness. Aram I says:

The WCC is not a self-reliant, self-contained and self-sufficient organization. It is the churches in their togetherness. Therefore, the council has no right to insist upon its self-understanding and agenda. The churches should say what it is, what it should become and what it should be.⁷³

Through the World Council of Churches the member churches seek to move together towards the same goal.

In 1938, William Temple, the Archbishop of Canterbury said:

The very nature of the church demands that it shall make manifest to the world the unity in Christ of all who believe in him. We may not pretend that the existing unity among Christians is greater than it in fact is; but we should act upon it as far as it is already a reality.⁷⁴

Temple's words point to two important elements which characterize the fellowship in the World Council of Churches, viz:

- a) The fellowship in the World Council of Churches depends on a reality that already exists before they decide to come together namely, their common participation in the reality of the triune God. What Temple called "the unity in Christ of all who believe in him" is something given, not something achieved by joining "a fellowship of churches."

- b) The fellowship in the World Council of Churches is based on a pledge to make the already given unity visible. In 1950, the World Council of Churches Central Committee said:
WCC member churches recognize that membership of the church of Christ is more inclusive than the membership of their own church body. They seek, therefore, to enter into living contact with those outside their own ranks who confess the Lordship of Christ.⁷⁵

72 Quoted in VanElderen, Introducing the World Council of Churches, 9.

73 Aram I, "Report of the Moderator to the WCC'S Eighth Assembly, Harare, 3-14 December 1998," in The Ecumenical Review 51, 1 (January 1999): 70.

74 Quoted in VanElderen, Introducing the World Council of Churches, 9f.

75 Quoted in VanElderen, Introducing the World Council of Churches, 10.

The most obvious evidence of this living contact is in the fact of being together in the fellowship of the World Council of Churches.

In their message to the churches, the delegates to the Amsterdam Assembly spoke of their intention to stay together, which inevitably leads to working and growing together. Togetherness means giving up coercion as a way of winning a neighbor to one's side. For several years now the member churches have sought to live out this common calling by building and maintaining what seems to be fragile links of communication.

Some ecumenical scholars have argued against any Basis. They argue that the Basis could introduce an element of ecclesiastical judgmentalism while others prefer the Nicene or Apostles Creed as the Basis. It has to be mentioned that the Basis is not a creedal test to judge the member churches. Rather the member churches have the freedom to interpret the faith in their own way.

Post-World War II Reconstruction

In 1948, the World Council of Churches saw post-World War II reconstruction as an ecumenical task, which was aimed at rebuilding the whole life of the fellowship of churches. To achieve this aim, the World Council of Churches concentrated on:

Refugees. The war had displaced about 12 million people in Europe and although caring for them and integrating them into local communities was understood as a task for national and regional councils of churches, aid to refugees called for specialized legal knowledge and familiarity with the resources of the numerous international, governmental and voluntary agencies. Since few national churches had such expertise, the World Council of Churches set up a centralized service to carry out projects for refugees who were not able to find a country of resettlement.

Inter-church aid. The Assembly at Amsterdam recognized that Inter-church aid could no longer be considered a temporary program. It extended this concern for Christian service beyond Europe to other parts of the world.

International affairs. The World Council of Churches placed itself in the service of peace. Just after the Korean war broke out in June 1950, the World Council of Churches Central Committee issued a statement which talked about seeking peace by expanding justice and by attempting to reconcile contending world powers. The Central Committee praised the United Nations as an instrument of world order for having authorized "police action" in Korea.

Women's ministry. Soon after World War I, German women lost positions as pastors of very large congregations to which they had been assigned during the war when men were in the army. Christian women in India did speak of their perplexity when the government urged them to get an education and take a role in society while their churches talked only of the role of wife and mother. Women from the United States of America described the large women's group in their churches, which often collected most of the money to finance church programs but had no voice in decision-making about funds and church programs. In response to complaints raised by

women, the World Council of Churches formed a permanent commission to coordinate activities related to women's ministry in the church.

The work of the World Council of Churches since its inception in 1948 is well assessed by Peter Lodberg. He says:

The WCC is the institutional and theological framework that has enabled the churches to take part in the difficult process of forgetting outdated theological ideas in the interest of a common Christian identity.⁷⁶

Evanston Assembly

This was the second assembly of the World Council of Churches. It was held in Evanston, Illinois in 1954. At the moment, this is the only World Council of Churches assembly to have been held in the United States. The main theme for the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches was "Jesus Christ, the Hope of the World." The assembly's theme set off sharp differences in theological viewpoints that were related to the experiences of war. For instance, delegates from Europe tended to view this theme in apocalyptic terms, while delegates from North America tended to view Christian hope progressively. This demonstrated that not only were the various governments on opposite sides of the Iron Curtain, but churches themselves were separated from one another on political and ideological grounds. Definitely the Assembly was a major step forward for the World Council of Churches. If the motto of the first Assembly at Amsterdam in 1948 was "staying together," the watchword at Evanston was "growing together."

The Evanston Assembly theme had six sections namely:

- a. Our oneness in Christ and Our Disunity as Churches.
- b. The Mission of the Church to Those Outside Her Life.
- c. The Responsible Society in a World Perspective.
- d. Christians in the Struggle for World Community.
- e. The Church amid Racial and Ethnic Tensions.
- f. The Laity: the Christian and his Vocation.⁷⁷

Issues that emerged at Evanston Assembly in 1954 included:

Racism. Evanston declared that segregation based on race, color or ethnic origin is contrary to the gospel and incompatible with the Christian doctrine of man and with the nature of the church of Christ. Evanston urged churches to abolish racial discrimination within their own life and within society.

⁷⁶ Peter Lodberg, "Common Understanding: An Analysis of the Responses to the Process," in The Ecumenical Review 50, 3 (July 1998): 276.

⁷⁷ For detailed information on the six sections see, Edward Harold Fey, A History of the Ecumenical Movement, Vol. 2: 1948-1968 (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970), 40.

Evanston declaration provoked a reaction from the delegates of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa who complained that the Assembly had not taken their situation seriously. The resolution was revised to acknowledge the difficulties some churches would have in achieving the goal of eliminating segregation at once. However, after the killing of 67 blacks by the South African police at Sharpeville in March 1960, the World Council of Churches affirmed that no Christian could be excluded from any church on grounds of race or color, and it called attention to the injustices of apartheid. In reaction, the Prime minister of South Africa publicly dismissed what the World Council of Churches said, and shortly thereafter the three South African Dutch Reformed World Council of Churches member churches withdrew their membership.

Colonialism. Decolonization and nation-building increasingly concerned the ecumenical movement during the 1950s. The World Council of Churches had been slow to grasp the urgency of the problems facing the developing countries. While many European and American churches stressed that the colonized people must be carefully prepared for independence and self-government, Christians from “younger churches” were impatient at the slow pace of decolonization. Many Western churches were critical of nationalism while the churches in the Third World countries stressed that the new nation-states could instill dignity and self-respect in their people.

Events in October 1956 created further sharp tensions within the World Council of Churches. For instance, some Hungarian political leaders accused the World Council of Churches of having encouraged the attempted coup. It was at this time when the British and the French joined the Israelis in an attack on Egypt over the Suez Canal. The World Council of Churches responded to the Suez crisis by recalling the Evanston declaration that nations should “refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity of any state.” This declaration upset a number of French church leaders.

New Delhi Assembly

New Delhi Assembly took place from November 19 to December 5, 1961. It was attended by 577 delegates from 197 member churches. The theme for the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches held in New Delhi was “Jesus Christ - The Light of the World” which was to be studied in the light of the Lordship of Christ over the entire world and the church. New Delhi’s theme was again Christocentric. But the discussion now included the issue of the other world religions. However, the assembly was faced with the theological problems of understanding other religions in the light of Jesus Christ. The question was, is Jesus Christ present in these religions? Does God reveal himself to men/women through those religions?

New Delhi Assembly in 1961 symbolized the World Council of Churches’ recognition of what it means to be a world body. There were signs of growth at this Assembly namely:

- i. At Amsterdam in 1948, the founding churches came from the major historic tradition of the Protestant Reformation. In New Delhi, eighteen out of twenty-three new member churches were from the third world countries namely, Africa (13) and Asia (5). For the first time two Pentecostal churches in Chile became members. The increasing presence of churches from the

third world where Christianity is growing most rapidly today has to affect the World Council of Churches' agenda in the subsequent years.

- ii. Five other new member churches were from Europe and North America. The presence of the large Orthodox churches from Eastern Europe was regarded as an opportunity to ensure “a real spiritual dialogue between Eastern and Western churches.”⁷⁸ It is estimated that out of the 400 million Christians who belong to the World Council of Churches member churches today, almost 140 million are Orthodox. The decision of these Orthodox churches to join the World Council of Churches is not a surprise because the first official church to propose the formation of a body like the World Council of Churches came from the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople's Encyclical of 1920 “Unto the Churches of Christ Everywhere.”⁷⁹
- iii. There was the full integration of the International Missionary Council into the World Council of Churches. Although the two bodies had always had a close working relationship, there had been some resistance on both sides to a merger. This marked the beginning of the department of “World Mission and Evangelism” in the World Council of Churches.
- iv. Marlin VanElderen says “while the largest church in the world, the Roman Catholic Church, kept its distance from the WCC in the early years, the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) made a clear commitment to seek unity with “separated brothers and sisters.”⁸⁰ The Vatican for the first time sent observers to the World Council of Churches assembly. The World Council of Churches also accepted an invitation to send observers to the 2nd Vatican Council. In 1965 the World Council of Churches and the Vatican agreed to establish a Joint Working Group, which has since met annually to coordinate World Council of Churches-Roman Catholic relations.
- v. The Assembly extended the idea of diakonia beyond charitable relief and service to programs of social advancement. Christian service has been a constant dimension in the search for the unity of the churches in the World Council of Churches. The World Council of Churches believes that Christians cannot seek to unite without trying to meet the world's needs.
- vi. During the 1966 Church and Society Geneva Conference, the majority of the participants came from outside North America and Europe, making it the first large ecumenical conference in which Western participants were not in the majority.
- vii. The Geneva conference insisted that revolutionary action, whatever support Christians

78 Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement, 2nd ed., 2002.

79 W. A. Visser't Hooft, The Genesis and Formation of the World Council of Churches (WCC: Geneva, 1982), 2.

80 Marlin VanElderen, “Happy Birthday WCC,” at www.wcc-coe.org accessed on October 15, 2009.

gave it, could not escape the judgment of biblical faith on all human action.

- viii. On economic systems, the conference focused on economic justice rather than on rendering moral judgment for or against any particular economic system. The discussion centered on the challenges brought about by political, economic and social change especially in the Third world.
- ix. The New Delhi Assembly tackled the challenge of how to distinguish Christian service from mere philanthropy. While being aware of the complexity of economic and political life of various countries, the World Council of Churches mobilized the churches' resources for more effective social action. By doing this the World Council of Churches was beginning to assume increased responsibility of extending a helping hand to people in distress all over the world, a role the council has played ever since New Delhi Assembly.
- x. It was during this time that the ecumenical movement came under increasing pressure from voices in the churches which were calling for militant action in favor of the poor. They were asking the church to commit itself more definitely to radical political action for justice and freedom.
- xi. The New Delhi Assembly approved an extension of the World Council of Churches Basis by adding the phrase "according to the Scriptures," and the Trinitarian formula.

During the first World Council of Churches Assembly in Amsterdam, the churches committed themselves to stay together. During the 2nd World Church of Churches Assembly in Evanston the member churches affirmed their intention to grow together and now during the 3rd Assembly in New Delhi the member churches committed themselves to assume new tasks in the world.⁸¹

Uppsala Assembly

The Uppsala World Council of Churches Assembly that was held in Sweden from 4 to July 20, 1968 ended the old era in the ecumenical movement and marked a new one. It was attended by 704 delegates from 235 member churches. The laity, mainly through the youth, made their presence felt at Uppsala in a way not known at the three prior Assemblies. The theme of the Assembly was "Behold I Make All Things New." Uppsala has been described as the World Council of Churches' most activist and politically oriented assembly.

More than any other World Council of Churches Assembly, Uppsala Assembly is associated with radical changes in the life of the Council. The Uppsala Assembly faced the growing gap between the rich and the poor nations, the negative effects of racism, the ambiguity of scientific and technology and the tensions created by the generation gap. This was the first of the World Council of Churches Assemblies in which the largest group of voting delegates one hundred and

81 For detailed information on this point see, Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement, 2nd ed., 2002.

forty were from the Orthodox and Eastern churches, and fifteen observers from the Roman Catholic Church. There were clear indications of the anti-America in Vietnam that were expressed in songs. There was also the conspicuous absence in Uppsala of representatives from China.

Economic and social justice was high on the agenda, with special emphasis on the need to control population and improve food production and distribution. According to the Uppsala Assembly, taking development seriously requires churches to get involved across the board. It was realized by the delegates that the rich were becoming richer and the poor were becoming poorer. The Assembly recommended the member churches to:

Set aside 1% of their total income for development aid and appeal to their governments to invest the same percentage of their gross national product. The central issue of development is the criterion of the human. Public opinion must be persuaded to support deep changes in both developed and developing nations.⁸²

The 1970 World Council of Churches consultation said that development should aim at three interrelated objectives namely, justice, self-reliance and economic growth. It went on to say that the churches' task is to participate with the poor and oppressed in their struggle for that kind of development. There are people who criticize the World Council of Churches due to its involvement in social, economic, and political questions that usually lead the churches away from their central task of proclaiming the gospel, worshipping God, and offering salvation. As the existing World Council of Churches structures were seen as inadequate for undertaking such support, the "Commission on the Churches' Participation in Development" was created. Since then, it has engaged in research, education, documentation and publication. Since its creation, the Commission on the Churches' Participation in Development has provided technical advice and financial support where possible.

Although by the Uppsala Assembly churches and ecumenical statements had consistently condemned racism, there was a strong sense of the need to go beyond exhortation to action. In 1969 the World Council of Churches set up a program to combat institutional racism which had been entrenched in social, economic and political power structures. The understanding was that the victims of racism must undertake their own liberation and outsiders should play only a supportive role. It is said that "for the first time the idea of a genuinely universal council, able to speak for all Christians, was articulated."⁸³

Symbolizing increasing contact between the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church was Pope Paul VI's visit to the Ecumenical Center in 1969. Since the Uppsala Assembly, there has been the question of the membership of the Roman Catholic Church in the World Council of Churches. On this point Pope Paul VI said:

We do not consider that the question...is so mature that a positive answer could or should be given. The question still remains a hypothesis. It contains serious

82 Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement, 2nd ed., 2002.

83 Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement, 2nd ed., 2002.

theological and pastoral implications. It thus requires profound study.⁸⁴

During the World Council of Churches, Uppsala Assembly several new programs were added to the council. These programs are: the Commission on the Churches' Participation in Development, the Christian Medical Commission, Dialogue with people of Living Faiths and Ideologies, the Sub-unit on Education and the Program to Combat Racism. For many people "the Uppsala Assembly is inseparably linked with its concern to address the sin of racism and its initiative to begin the Program to Combat Racism.

From the Uppsala Assembly to the present the most characteristic feature of the World Council of Churches assemblies has been their orientation on action, in contrast to the emphasis on study and persuasion that characterized the first three assemblies.

Nairobi Assembly

Nairobi Assembly stands out as an important World Council of Churches Assembly due to the fact that it was the "first assembly at and through which the possibilities of a truly ecumenical movement became clearly, although tentatively, visible."⁸⁵ This was due to two reasons. First, there was the collapse of old ecumenical slogans such as "Evangelism in our time," "Unity in our time" and "Liberation in our time."

The World Council of Churches 5th Assembly in Nairobi in 1975, was unique in the following ways:

- a. It was the first World Council of Churches Assembly to be held in Africa. David E. Jenkins says:

Nairobi, consolidating in this respect the experience of the Bangkok "Salvation Today" conference, made it quite clear that the participation, contribution and influence of what, once upon a time, was called "the younger churches" and of what are now referred to as "third world" churches, have reached what might be described as a "critical mass." That is to say that the weight of the influence and importance of these churches is now sufficient and sufficiently obvious to finally shift the WCC from a primarily western body, trying to be worldwide to a worldwide body into which churches and groups, "western," "third world," "second world," or what you will, must fit as best and as appropriately as they may.⁸⁶
- b. It called for a moratorium on sending missionaries and money to Africa. The word

84 Quoted in Castro, *A Passion for Unity*, 8.

85 David E. Jenkins, "Nairobi and the Truly Ecumenical: Contribution to a Discussion about the Subsequent Tasks of the WCC," in *Ecumenical Review* 28/3 (July 1976), 276.

86 David E. Jenkins, "Nairobi and the Truly Ecumenical: Contribution to a Discussion about the Subsequent Tasks of the WCC," in *Ecumenical Review* 28/3 (July 1976), 280.

moratorium means a pause or a halt to something which is happening. At the World Council of Churches in Bangkok in 1972, a suggestion was put forward backed by African and Asian delegates, to ask all missionaries to withdraw for a period of time in order to allow the churches in Africa and Asia to assess and rediscover their own identity and then if they wish to invite them back will do so. This proposal had already been suggested by the Rev. Dr. J. Gatu in 1971.⁸⁷

Nairobi continued the discussion on the moratorium under the theme “Ecumenical Sharing of Resources.” By this time, some African church leaders were arguing that the massive flow of outside funds and personnel for mission to their churches had created a new form of domination and dependency. The delegates argued that the moratorium would allow the churches in the Third World countries which had depended on foreign countries rediscover their own identity and take responsibility for the work of the church in their own countries. This widely debated call had already been made by the All Africa Conference of Churches in 1974 when it said:

The African Church, as a vital part of the African society, is called to the struggle of liberating the African people. The African Church, as part of the world community must also share in the redeeming work of Christ in our world. But our contribution must be African. The contribution of the African Church, however, cannot be adequately made in our world if the Church is not liberated and becomes truly national. To achieve this liberation, the Church will have to bring a halt to the financial and manpower resources... Only then can the Church firmly assert itself in its mission to Africa and as part of the ecumenical world.⁸⁸

Some church leaders in the Third World countries supported the proposal while others did not. The church leaders from the developed countries opposed the proposal arguing that it was intended to cut off churches in the Third World from those in Europe and North America.⁸⁹

START 6/9/10

iii. Nairobi was the first World Council of Churches Assembly to which persons of other faiths were officially invited as guests. However, many delegates voiced fears that dialogue with people

87 J. D. Douglas (ed.), “Gatu, John” in Twentieth-Century Dictionary of Christian Biography, 1995. Presbyterian minister and ecumenist. Born in a Christian family in Kenya, he began his education at Kambui Mission School....In 1951 he was converted in the East African Revival, studied at St. Paul’s United Theological College (1951-1955), and in 1956 was ordained in the Presbyterian Church of East Africa....He has insisted that the best way to promote African initiative and participation in the growth of the church in Africa is through limiting its dependence on Western personnel and funds.

88 “The Struggle Continues: An Official Report Third Assembly,” (Lusaka: All Africa Conference of Churches, 1974), 53.

89 For detailed information on moratorium, see Elliot Kendall, The End of an Era: Africa and the Missionary (London: SPCK, 1978), ch. 1ff.

of other faiths would in the long run weaken concern for mission and lead to syncretism. Jenkins says “left many Asians and others feeling that their insights and convictions were being trampled on and betrayed.”⁹⁰

iv. More than before a fifth of the delegates to Nairobi were women. The assembly therefore called for a major World Council of Churches study on “The Community of Women and Men in the Church.”

v. The search for a “just, participatory and sustainable society” was a theme for much of the World Council of Churches’ work following the 5th Assembly. The major emphasis was on how science and technology affect the search for a just, participatory and sustainable society. During Faith, Science and the Future Conference held in 1979, participants from the Third World countries spoke out about how developed countries use science and technology to serve their own military and economic interests which bring about great suffering in the world.

vi. The World Council of Churches Assembly, Nairobi called for a halt to the nuclear arms race, which resulted in an International Public Hearing on nuclear disarmament in November 1981. The findings of the International Public Hearing published under the title “Before It’s Too Late” concluded that the time had come for the churches to declare it a crime against humanity not only to use but also to produce and deploy nuclear weapons.

vii. On poverty, the World Council of Churches Assembly, Nairobi said that although the means and resources exist to eradicate poverty in the world, the number of poor people is steadily increasing. The 1980 Conference on Mission and Evangelism in Melbourne, Australia, described the poor as the criterion for mission work today.

viii. The years following the World Council of Churches Assembly, Nairobi, were characterized by the fight against racism. In 1978 the World Council of Churches gave the Patriotic Front of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia, then engaged in an armed struggle to overthrow the white minority regime of Ian Smith, a grant of US\$85,000. From that time, the Program to Combat Racism’s Special Fund made annual grants to organizations of the racially oppressed and groups supporting victims of racism for humanitarian activities. The Special Fund symbolized ecumenical solidarity against racial oppression, and it soon came to be a focal point for general attacks on the World Council of Churches as a whole.

David E. Jenkins says:

Nairobi represents, or marks, a decisive change in context for the doing of ecumenical business by the churches and by the WCC. The disappearance of slogans and the evident collapse of the notion of a single line of ecumenical and historical progression indicate that a fairly narrow historical phenomenon, the twentieth century ecumenical movement of the Christian churches, originating from a largely western base and motivation, has

90 David E. Jenkins, “Nairobi and the Truly Ecumenical: Contribution to a Discussion about the Subsequent Tasks of the WCC,” *The Ecumenical Review* 28/3 (July 1976), 281.

reached a mature point of mingling with God's ecumenical movements throughout the whole inhabited world. We have the initial experiences and glimpses of a truly ecumenical movement.⁹¹

Vancouver Assembly, 1983

Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada welcomed the sixth Assembly from July 24 to August 10, 1983. The World Council of Churches' sixth assembly, in Vancouver has been described as "A Worshiping Assembly." Its theme was "Jesus Christ - the Life of the World." The assembly tackled this theme under eight subthemes namely:

a. Witnessing in a divided world. This subtheme focused its attention on certain global situations in which Christian witness is done. Of particular importance was the witness that comes from children, the poor and inclusive communities of women and men. The churches were urged to find symbols and ways of expression that are meaningful to the worshippers in today's pluralistic world.

b. Taking steps towards unity. It was argued that the World Council of Churches' stated goal of "visible unity in one faith and in one Eucharistic fellowship" depends on whether the churches believe that the unity for which Christ prayed already exists. However, the model that was encouraged was that of a "conciliar fellowship of local churches" rather than "reconciled diversity" or a "communion of communions" which some people would have preferred.

c. Moving towards participation. The member churches were urged to think seriously about the implications of *koinonia* (fellowship or participation). According to Scripture *koinonia* implies both the believer's participation in Christ and mutual participation in the community of believers. Participation in the community of believers therefore goes with making a positive contribution to those issues that affect their communities.

d. Healing and sharing life in community. The sharing, it was argued, should not be from one direction. It should be mutual sharing in community. Such sharing has to be the result of spiritual growth and maturity.

e. Confronting threats to peace and survival. Two contradictory ideas about the relationship between peace and survival were identified namely, peace is an essential condition for the survival of the world and without the fulfillment of the basic conditions for human survival peace cannot be maintained. It was noted that the growing inclination by countries in the world to rely on military means of coercion when handling conflicts was wrong.

f. Struggling for justice and human dignity. The assembly noted that the struggle between those who yearn for justice and human dignity and those who seek to maintain the present power relationships, whether their ideology is capitalist or socialist was becoming violent day by day. The World Council of Churches' involvement in the search for justice should be theological in the sense that it should witness to the Kingdom of God demands. However, the kingdom should never be identical with the people's movements for freedom.

91 David E. Jenkins, "Nairobi and the Truly Ecumenical: Contribution to a Discussion about the Subsequent Tasks of the WCC," *The Ecumenical Review* 28/3 (July 1976), 279.

g. Learning in community. It was noted that the quality of Christian nurture depends on the quality of the community. The assembly therefore encouraged informal learning in everyday contexts by “sharing skills and gifts rather than by transferring knowledge from those who know to those who don’t know.”⁹² The goal of such education, it was hoped, would be the development of a global and ecumenical consciousness that respects the importance of the existence of other cultures.

h. Communicating credibly. It was noted that the credibility of communication depends on the quality of the community that sustains it. For member churches, the unique message that they share is the fullness of life offered in Christ. However, this message is “inescapably linked to the communication order of the wider society with its divisions of rich and poor, power and dependency, profit and loss.”⁹³

There was a renewed emphasis on common worship and the highlight of worship in Vancouver was the celebration of the Eucharist according to a liturgy reflecting the convergences in the Lima text on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry. The Archbishop of Canterbury presided over the Eucharist celebration, joined by six ministers from other Christian traditions and parts of the world. The people who read Scripture and led prayers at the service included the Roman Catholics and the Orthodox Christians. The ecumenical worship services at the Vancouver assembly must have been for many delegates a foretaste of what they hope Christian unity to be. From July 24 to August 10, 1983 the Vancouver assembly was a global community gathered in worship, using songs and prayers from many traditions. The delegates went beyond the cultural, confessional and linguistic boundaries that usually define a congregational worship. Jean Stromberg says:

The image associated with the Vancouver assembly in 1983 is that of the striped worship tent, aptly indicating the central place worship occupied in that Assembly, as it increasingly does today in the continuing search for unity. In the Vancouver tent, the Archbishop of Canterbury celebrated the Eucharist using, for the first time at an Assembly, the Lima Liturgy, which had emerged from the historic document which outlines wide agreement on the three traditional church-dividing issues of Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry.⁹⁴

Vancouver insisted that the struggle for justice and the struggle for peace may not be separated, and that engagement in this single struggle is a matter of the church’s faith. Two basic concerns came together in shaping this fundamental emphasis, viz:

i. The realization that the world as a whole was in danger. Nuclear and chemical weapons gave the twentieth-century generation the capacity to destroy the whole of creation. The assembly said that fighting nuclear wars would be morally wrong whatever the circumstances. At the

92 Michael Kannamon, “Vancouver Guide to Issues,” in *Theology Today* 40/2 (July 1983): 163.

93 Michael Kannamon, “Vancouver Guide to Issues,” in *Theology Today* 40/2 (July 1983): 164.

94 Jean Stromberg, “Why Have an Assembly?” at www.wcc-coe.org accessed October 12, 2009.

Vancouver assembly “the nuclear threat and neo-colonialism glowered like dark clouds on the horizon.”⁹⁵

Vancouver’s statement on peace and justice called on churches to condemn, on ethical and theological grounds, the production and deployment as well as the use of nuclear weapons as a crime against humanity. The assembly also encouraged member churches to address environmental concerns as part of a common effort to promote justice, peace, and the integrity of God’s creation.

ii. The need to articulate theologically the church’s understanding of the present human predicament and to spell out theologically the specific Christian responsibility.

The 1986 World Council of Churches consultation on Inter-church aid insisted that the poor and oppressed individuals should be at the center of Christian service. The consultation described diakonia as “liberating and transforming, suffering and empowering.” It was argued that Christian service cannot be separated from the struggle for justice and peace.

Canberra Assembly.

Canberra, Australia was chosen as the site for the World Council of Churches’ Seventh Assembly in February 1991 under the theme “Come, Holy Spirit - Renew the Whole Creation.” The Assembly focused on the person and work of the Holy Spirit. This was “the first time a theme had explicitly invoked the third person of the Trinity, and it did so in the context of the physical universe.”⁹⁶ The World Council of Churches recognized the Christians being together under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The World Council of Churches believed that time had come to enlarge her Trinitarian theological reflection after several years of theological reflection on Christology. Ans J. Van Der Bent says:

It was hoped that this theme signaled that the Council was reaching out to charismatics and Pentecostals. After the second of two keynote addresses, the possibility of this pneumatological expression drawing in fresh theological perspective was such as to also kindle controversy evidenced most pointedly in division between Orthodox perspectives and elements of worship that drew upon indigenous spirituality.⁹⁷

The Assembly concentrated on:

i. The search for the unity of the church in koinonia. The Assembly said:

The Holy Spirit draws churches into relationships of love and commitment. The Holy Spirit calls the churches to an increased commitment to the search for visible unity and more effective mission. We urge the churches to heed the call of the

95 Vancouver, 24 July -10 August, 1983 at www.wcc-assembly.info accessed on October 11, 2009.

96 Canberra, 7-20 February 1991 at www.wcc-assembly.info accessed on October 21, 2009.

97 Ans J. Van Der Bent “WCC Assemblies” in Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement, 1991.

Spirit, to seek new and reconciled relationships between peoples, and to use the gifts of all their members.⁹⁸

The Assembly said that under the guidance of the Holy Spirit they had recognized that the unity sought is fundamentally a *koinonia*, a communion in God with one another. Its nature is profoundly spiritual, and liturgical. Canberra encouraged churches to move beyond cooperation to shared common life (*koinonia*), which is full visible unity. *Koinonia* includes cooperation but goes beyond it in finding specific ways by which ecumenical cooperation can change the way in which churches live together at all levels in a visible expression of Christian unity.

The cry for Eucharistic sharing still expresses a kind of nostalgia for the total presence of God in the Christians' life. It was argued that just as the invocation of the Holy Spirit in the holy Eucharist is a call for the transformation of the supper in the actual reality of the living Christ, the calling for the Holy Spirit in relation to the unity of the church could also be responded to in the same mystery of communion of love.

ii. The Holy Spirit at work in the world. The theme of the Assembly was an invitation to explore the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in all creation, outside as well as inside the church. Krister Stendahl says:

When we call on the Holy Spirit to renew the whole creation, we become aware that God's Spirit permeates the whole cosmos and the whole *oikoumene* in ways which cannot be controlled or manipulated by us.⁹⁹

The Assembly affirmed the presence of the Holy Spirit both in holding creation as life and in promoting renewal and change in history.

iii. The Holy Spirit sanctifies. The assembly said:

We believe that the Holy Spirit brings hope even amidst all that seems to militate against hope, and gives strength to resolve the conflicts which divided human communities. Repentance must begin with ourselves, for even in this Assembly we have become aware of our own failures in understanding, sensitivity and love. As we commit ourselves to continuing repentance, so we call all people to share in that commitment and to pray for the renewing power of the Holy Spirit to renew in us, personally and corporately, the image of God.¹⁰⁰

It was argued that as the churches move towards each other on the ecumenical pilgrimage, the Holy Spirit calls every Christian to repentance and engagement in a process of forgiveness.

Commenting on one of the shortcomings of Canberra assembly, Lawrence E. Adams said:

The Seventh Assembly, held in Canberra for two weeks in February, was no exception. To the extent that the WCC displays the church universal, the

98 Michael Kinnamon (ed.), *Signs of the Spirit* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991), 2-3.

99 Krister Stendahl, *Energy for Life* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990), 49.

100 Kinnamon, *Signs of the Spirit*, 3.

Assembly was a kaleidoscope. Participants came from all continents and traditions; they dressed every imaginable way and spoke a multitude of languages. But for all its diversity, the Assembly was far from “representative” of the church; most of the world's Christians who are found in Catholic, Pentecostal, and evangelical fellowships would find little of the familiar in Canberra.¹⁰¹

Harare Assembly.

Harare, Zimbabwe was chosen as the site for the Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches by a meeting of the organization’s Central Committee in Johannesburg, South Africa in January 1994. The Harare Assembly that was held from December 3 to 14, 1998 was the largest in the World Council of Churches history. Diane Kessler says:

The Harare assembly was the largest in WCC history. It included 966 voting delegates chosen by 336 member churches to represent them....They came from the regions of Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, North America and the Pacific. The largest number of delegates was from Africa and Europe.¹⁰²

The theme of the Eighth Assembly “Turn to God - Rejoice in Hope” echoed the Evanston Assembly closing message which said that therefore we say to you: rejoice in hope.

There were two appeals in the theme of the Eighth Assembly which was “held on this continent where there is often more to mourn about than there is cause for celebration.”¹⁰³ The first was an appeal to turn to God. In a continent faced with a lot of suffering, the appeal to turn to God was appropriate for the Eighth Assembly. ‘We do not blame God for our suffering,’ one African delegate announced, ‘We know that God suffers with us.’¹⁰⁴ Africans believe that life is meaningless unless one turns to God for help. Sebastian Bakare says:

For Africans, turning to God is a completely normal thing; indeed, life would be unimaginable if we did not have the possibility of turning to God for protection and help. Africans expect God to be with them, to see them through droughts and wars and diseases, through exploitation and oppression and slavery, through all of life and through death. Africans naturally turn to God who participates in their suffering.¹⁰⁵

Turning to God “implies a conversion of the mind and soul. It begins with looking and seeing things as they really are, with overcoming our blindness. It leads to the refreshing healing which

101 Lawrence E. Adams, “The WCC at Canberra: Which Spirit? in *First Things* (June/July 1991): 1.

102 Diane Kessler (ed.), *Together on the Way* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1999), 6.

103 Sebastian Bakare, *Jubilee in an African Context: The Drumbeat of Life* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997), 21.

104 Anastasios Bozikis, “An Ecumenical and Theological Assessment of the World Council of Churches (WCC) Assembly,” www.othodoxresearchinstitute.org/articles/ecumenical accessed on December 30, 2009.

105 Bakare, *Jubilee in an African Context: The Drumbeat of Life*, 3.

Hosea promises.”¹⁰⁶ Turning to God was interpreted by the delegates as an invitation to new life which implies letting go of the old life.

The second appeal was to rejoice in hope by looking at Jesus Christ as the centre of the Christian faith. Muller-Fahrenheit said:

The second assembly (Evanston 1954) affirmed Jesus Christ as the "hope of the world"; the third (New Delhi, 1961) spoke of him as the "light of the world". The fifth assembly (Nairobi 1975) called on Jesus Christ as the one who "frees and unites" and the sixth (Vancouver 1983) rallied around the affirmation that Jesus Christ is the "life of the world". This emphasis on Jesus Christ had many advantages, for it enabled the churches to concentrate on the life and death and resurrection of the one who is, and must remain, the base and centre of the Christian faith.¹⁰⁷

While joyful celebration had been an element of each of the Council's previous assemblies, this was special celebration because:

i. The Eighth Assembly came during the year of the 50th anniversary of the founding of the World Council of Churches. The delegates shared stories about the remarkable steps toward unity taken by churches and individuals in the past fifty years.

ii. When the delegates gathered in Amsterdam in 1948 for the World Council of Churches' first assembly, the African presence was insignificant. Since then the World Council of Churches assemblies have witnessed an increasing number of member churches from Africa being represented by indigenous Africans.

iii. The Eighth Assembly took place at a time when the center of gravity of the church worldwide was shifting away from Europe and North America to Africa.

iv. By the 50th year of the World Council of Churches' existence, there were clear signs of hope for the development of an authentic African Christianity. The delegates from Africa present at the Eighth Assembly in Harare were determined, from that time onward, to develop a theology which will enable Africans to own the Christian church in Africa instead of being mere custodians of it. In 1948, few of the delegates present would have given any thought to the possibility of a distinctive African Christian Theology.

The World Council of Churches assembly at Harare that has been described as "an African assembly first and foremost" tackled concrete aspects of human condition in the world in general and on the African continent in particular. Some of these are:

106 Elisabeth Raiser, "Turn to God – Rejoice in Hope: Reflections on the Theme of the Eighth Assembly from a Woman's Perspective," in *Ecumenical Review* 50/2 (April 1998): 236.

107 Geiko Muller-Fahrenheit, "Turn to God of Mercy: New Perspectives on Reconciliation and Forgiveness," in *Ecumenical Review* 50/2 (April 1998): 196.

i. Internally displaced people. Africa has more internally displaced people than any other continent in the world. This is as a result of corruption and oppression by the political systems in Africa. The internally displaced people live a life of sorrow and despair. It appeared to the delegates in Harare that there is no one who has more hope in God than an internally displaced person for whom all human hopes have been shuttered.

ii. The debt crisis. The Eighth Assembly took place at a time when 20% of the world's population controlled 84% of the world's resources; and 80% depended on debts for survival. The debt crisis in the countries of the world including African countries has negative effect on the lives of people. In 1996, the President of Tanzania said:

One of the problems that act as a milestone around the neck of Africa is the unbearable debt burden. External debt for sub-Saharan Africa rose from US\$84.3 billion in 1980 to a staggering projection of \$313 billion in 1994. Tanzania, for example, has an external debt of \$7 billion. If we were to apportion this debt to every man, woman and child, each one of them would be indebted to the magnitude of their total earnings for two-and-a-half years. And if we were to spend all our national foreign exchange earnings to pay off this debt it would still take us over 12 years to do so.¹⁰⁸

At the Harare assembly it was echoed that the debt crisis in developing countries is a creation of the developed countries which do not accept the idea of free market. The assembly called for a market whose effect is not the exploitation of the poor.¹⁰⁹

iii. The AIDS pandemic. AIDS has claimed a lot of lives in the world and especially in Africa. The Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, meeting in Johannesburg in 1994, called for the formation of a high-level consultative group to study all the dimensions of HIV/AIDS and their implications for the church. In its report, the committee said:

For many of us HIV/AIDS has acted as a spotlight, exposing and revealing many iniquitous conditions in our personal and community lives which until now we have not been willing to confront.... It exposes any silence and indifference of the churches, challenging them to be better informed, more active and more faithful witness to the gospel of reconciliation in their own lives and in their communities. Increasing numbers of people worldwide are falling sick, suffering physically, emotionally and spiritually....The effects of HIV/AIDS are impoverishing people, breaking their hearts, violating their human rights.¹¹⁰

The Harare Assembly called the churches in the world and especially in Africa to be healing communities.

The Harare Assembly achieved the following:

108 "Ecumenical Chronicle," in *The Ecumenical Review* 48, 2(October 1996): 523.

109 For detailed information on the Harare Assembly's resolutions see, Kessler, *Together on the Way*, 177-182.

110 "Facing AIDS: The Challenge, the Churches' Response," 1997.

i. The quest for visible Christian unity. The Harare assembly was very clear on the goal of visible Christian unity. The delegates recommitted themselves to the quest for the visible Christian unity. Their argument was that visible Christian unity will change the way churches relate to each other and to the world.

ii. The spirit of ecumenical interdependence on the local in relation to the universal. The Assembly said:

The ecumenical movement is one. It is whole. Its story belongs to everyone. Its tradition is our tradition. Our churches are a part of it. We have participated in it. We have contributed to it. Its strengths are our strengths. Its weaknesses are our weaknesses. Its struggles are our struggles. And Christians everywhere will help shape its future.¹¹¹

iii. A longing to make the ecumenical life whole. In Harare, delegates supported the idea of continuing to consult with leaders of various ecumenical bodies about the possibility of a global forum which embraces the World Council non-member churches.

iv. Attention paid to the concerns from the Orthodox churches. Anastasios Bozikis says:

The Assembly opened in an air of impending crisis concerning its relations with the Orthodox Churches. A growing sense of frustration at the direction and structure of the WCC had reached its climax during the Canberra Assembly of 1991 where the Orthodox issued a separate statement (as did the Evangelicals) expressing particular concerns and raising the possibility of reviewing their membership in the future.¹¹²

The Harare assembly approved the motion to create a special commission to study the concerns from the Orthodox churches. Some of the concerns included the desire to increase Orthodox Churches' participation in the decision-making bodies of the World Council of Churches and also the resistance to issues that are foreign to the Orthodox tradition.

v. Reaffirming the importance of dialogue. The Assembly reaffirmed the dialogical process in making official decisions, in seeking common grounds and in clarifying the sources of differences.¹¹³

Some of the weaknesses of the World Council of Churches

111 Kessler, Together on the Way, 23.

112 Anastasios Bozikis, "An Ecumenical and Theological Assessment of the World Council of Churches (WCC) Assembly," www.orthodoxresearchinstitute.org/articles/ecumenical accessed on December 30, 2009.

113 For detailed information on the achievements of the Harare Assembly see, Kessler, Together on the Way, 22-27.

At first, the goal of the World Council of Churches was the restoration of the unity of the church. Today its goal includes the wider unity of humanity, creation and other religions. Abraham Kuruvilla observes:

There is a persistent complaint, particularly from the Orthodox Churches, that the world Council is deviating from its primary task i.e., the unity of the church. Presumably the World Council's involvement with the issues of justice, political freedom, ecology, gender etc and the global economic crises are seen as shifting the focus away from the primary task of the unity of the church. On the other hand there have been criticisms of the World Council from the perspective of liberation theology questioning the relevance of unity of the church without a commitment to the struggles of the poor and the marginalized. A church which does not exercise its preferential option for the poor, it was alleged, is irrelevant for God's mission of liberation, whether it remained united or divided. What was primary was to express solidarity with the struggles of the poor.¹¹⁴

Although the above mentioned goals might appear to be genuine, the World Council of Churches does not give sufficient definition of the theological criteria to be used in such restoration of the unity of the church. For this reason one can say that the World Council of Churches is not what you could call a focused and well defined organization. For all these years it has failed clearly to define its priorities and focus its efforts.

At the beginning, the World Council of Churches was a Western organization. Today it is an international organization which covers all the continents. Due to its global nature it runs the risk, first of being out of touch with the local churches. Secondly, it runs the risk of increasingly departing from the theological basis of the Council, in an attempt to make it a forum for every opinion that comes from the wider ecumenical world.

Although the World Council of Churches is an international organization, there still many churches that are outside of its fellowship. The World Council of Churches is yet to address this challenge. Even those that are inside its fellowship, some of them such as the Pentecostals, are largely on the margins of the World Council of Churches, partly because of their theological perspectives.

One of the program units is Justice, Peace and Creation. When the World Council of Churches Assembly makes some decisions or statements along the lines of social justice and peace such statements or decisions are seen as political pronouncements. This was the case when the World Council of Churches in 1978 gave the Patriotic Front of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia, then engaged in an armed struggle to overthrow the White minority regime of Ian Smith, a grant of US\$85,000. From that time, the Program to Combat Racism's Special Fund made annual grants to organizations of the racially oppressed and groups supporting victims of racism for humanitarian activities.

114 Abraham Kuruvilla, "Ecumenism After Harare" in *Ecumenical Review* 50/2 (April 1998): 2.

The World Council of Churches assemblies do not normally exceed the duration of two weeks and usually there is no system of retaining the members for the next assembly. The high turnover of delegates from one assembly to the next does not promote continuity of thought and action by the assemblies. The short time given in which the members of the assembly should transact the World Council's business at times leads to arriving at conclusions that are not well researched.

Despite these weaknesses the World Council of Churches through its programs, as Wes Granberg-Michaelson has observed “provides an utterly unique opportunity for many of the world's Christian denominations and communions to experience in reality the joy and promise of Christ's call that we all might be one, so that the world may believe.”¹¹⁵

The World Council of Churches Harare Assembly as it marked its fiftieth anniversary was intended to set the course for the ecumenical movement for the next fifty years. To certain extent it did although it did more on the reflection on the past fifty years of the World Council of Churches existence. As Bozikis says:

The Assembly debates were strictly controlled to avoid the emergence of contentious social issues especially homosexuality and abortion. Potential conflicts were quickly diffused by being referred to committees and many delegates began to express frustration at the procedures adopted.¹¹⁶

Some of the major achievements of the World Council of Churches

Since its creation in 1948, the World Council of Churches has supported and inspired church participation in struggles for justice, peace and creation. In 1968 the World Council of Churches Central Committee created a program to combat racism. Since then the World Council of Churches member churches have directed their energy, through the Program to Combat Racism in fighting against racism in society. When the apartheid system came to an end, Nelson Mandela the then democratically elected president of South Africa traveled to the World Council of Churches headquarters in Geneva to thank the council for its efforts in coordinating and strengthening the moral, spiritual and theological opposition to apartheid around the nations of the world.

The World Council of Churches has played a transforming role in the life of the world, churches and individuals. For instance through its struggle for justice, peace and creation support was also given in bringing to an end the two- decade long civil conflict in Sudan.¹¹⁷

115 Wes Granberg-Michaelson, “My Life with the World Council of Churches” in Leadership: Reformed Church in America (February 27, 2006).

116 Bozikis, “An Ecumenical and Theological Assessment of the World Council of Churches (WCC) Assembly,” www.othodoxresearchinstitute.org/articles/ecumenical accessed on December 30, 2009.

117 The Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Harare in 1998 celebrated the 30th anniversary of the Program to Combat Racism.

Right from the beginning the World Church of Churches has held the idea of Christians becoming unified. Because of this Christian prospect and imagination the World Council of Churches has faithfully inspired countless ecumenical groups and councils throughout the world.

The World Council of Churches has encouraged the creation of regional and national councils of churches and other ecumenical bodies in different countries. These councils have created a worldwide ecumenical network. The ecumenical councils have enabled the member churches to share theological, liturgical, spiritual, material and human resources.

The World Council of Churches initiated a week of Prayer for Christian unity. During this week Christians are drawn together into the prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ that all who call Him their Lord and Savior may be one so that the world may believe. This Week, whose theme is developed each year by the World Council of Churches' Faith and Order Commission with the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity, draws churches at the local level into deeper Christian fellowship.

The Roman Catholic Church, which for many years remained skeptical and aloof from the ecumenical movement based on a fear of an artificial peace among churches, and in addition, held the view that unity would occur only when those denominations that broke from it were to return to it, is a full member of many regional and national ecumenical councils.

There have been strong-shared convictions on faith, life and witness among churches of different traditions. Theological reflections that were for long time taken from strictly confessional points of view are being enriched. For instance, the World Council of Churches' Faith and Order Commission produced a statement on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry that has led to a greater understanding of the two sacraments and changed relationships between churches of different traditions in regard to church ministry.

The reconstruction of Africa as a continent is on the top agenda of the World Council of Churches. The World Council of Churches has realized that Africa as a continent is changing rapidly as a result of the new forms of domination. The Eighth Assembly in Harare in 1998 called on the ecumenical family to accompany the churches in Africa on a journey toward a new vision for Africa. The member churches of the World Council were challenged to help Africa set her own agenda rather than following one that has been designed outside the continent.

CHAPTER TWO

IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS IN THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

1. The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral

The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral states the four Anglican essentials for a reunited Christian church. It is generally understood to have had its immediate origins in the United States, in a

resolution from the American House of Bishops meeting in the general Convention at Chicago in 1886 stimulated by the ideas and writings of William Reed Huntington, the leading presbyter of the House of Deputies. Huntington was concerned with the interpretation of the word Anglicanism. He said:

The word brings up before the eyes of some a flutter of surplices, a vision of village spires and cathedral towers, a somewhat stiff and stately company of deans, prebendaries and choristers, and that is about all. But we greatly mistake if we imagine that the Anglican principle has no substantial existence apart from these accessories.¹¹⁸

The Chicago Quadrilateral that was adopted by the House of Bishops in 1886 states:

We, Bishops of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, in Council assembled as Bishops in the Church of God, do hereby solemnly declare to all whom it may concern, and especially to our fellow-Christians of the different Communion in this land, who, in their several spheres, have contended for the religion of Christ:

1. Our earnest desire that the Savior's prayer, "That we all may be one," may, in its deepest and truest sense, be speedily fulfilled;
2. That we believe that all who have been duly baptized with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, are members of the Holy Catholic Church.
3. That in all things of human ordering or human choice, relating to modes of worship and discipline, or to traditional customs, this Church is ready in the spirit of love and humility to forego all preferences of her own;
4. That this Church does not seek to absorb other Communion, but rather, co-operating with them on the basis of a common Faith and Order, to discountenance schism, to heal the wounds of the Body of Christ, and to promote the charity which is the chief of Christian graces and the visible manifestation of Christ to the world.

But furthermore, we do hereby affirm that the Christian unity...can be restored only by the return of all Christian communions to the principles of unity exemplified by the undivided Catholic Church during the first ages of its existence; which principles we believe to be the substantial deposit of Christian Faith and Order committed by Christ and his Apostles to the Church unto the end of the world, and therefore incapable of compromise or surrender by those who have been ordained to be its stewards and trustees for the common and equal benefit of all men.

118 William Reed Huntington, The Church Idea: An Essay Toward Unity (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1870), 155.

As inherent parts of this sacred deposit, and therefore as essential to the restoration of unity among the divided branches of Christendom, we account the following, to wit:

1. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the revealed Word of God.
2. The Nicene Creed as the sufficient statement of the Christian Faith.
3. The two Sacraments,--Baptism and the Supper of the Lord,--ministered with unflinching use of Christ's words of institution and of the elements ordained by Him.
4. The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of His Church.

Furthermore, Deeply grieved by the sad divisions which affect the Christian Church in our own land, we hereby declare our desire and readiness, so soon as there shall be any authorized response to this Declaration, to enter into brotherly conference with all or any Christian Bodies seeking the restoration of the organic unity of the Church, with a view to the earnest study of the conditions under which so priceless a blessing might happily be brought to pass.¹¹⁹

Huntington was influenced by the civil war. After the war, he saw it as a time for reconciliation and the church could not be left behind in this venture. He was of the view that those who had died in the civil war could be honored by having a moral code expressed in church unity. Huntington interpreted the civil war as being God's way of purging the American society of moral evil. This was, for Huntington the time therefore for the United States to build up a just society. Huntington believed that this need of building up a just society should begin in the Episcopal Church because it had already created a structure which allowed it to survive as a National Church. Second, unlike all other Protestant denominations the Episcopal Church was a historic church. The only problem he saw in the Episcopal Church was that it was too much of the upper class.

Huntington's argument was that if the Episcopal Church were to become a center of unity in the United States, it needed to reform itself. He said:

If our whole ambition as Anglicans in America be to continue a small, but eminently respectable body of Christians, and to offer a refuge to people of refinement and sensibility, who are shocked by the irreverences they are apt to encounter elsewhere; in a word, if we are to be only a countercheck and not a force in society; then let us say as much in plain terms, and frankly renounce all

119 Anglicansonline.org/basics/Chicago_Lambeth accessed on October 19, 2009.

claims to Catholicity. We have only, in such a case, to wrap the robe of our dignity about us, and walk quietly along in a seclusion no one will take much trouble to disturb. Thus may we be a Church in name, and a sect in deed.” But if we aim at something nobler than this, if we would have our Communion become national in very truth, ... then let us press our reasonable claims to be the reconciler of a divided household, not in a spirit of arrogance...but with affectionate earnestness and intelligent zeal.¹²⁰

He also went on to say that if Anglicanism was to be the basis of a Church of Reconciliation, it was necessary to determine what Anglicanism pure and simple is. For Huntington, true Anglicanism is to accept the Holy Scripture as the Word of God. He defined the Holy Scriptures as a record of humanity’s response to God. Second, to accept the Primitive Creeds as the Rule of Faith. Huntington said that these are records of people’s religious experience. Third, is to accept the two Sacraments ordained by Christ himself. For Huntington, sacraments are symbols of divinely instituted instruments through which people are made children of God and incorporated into a world wide community. The last point Huntington dealt with was the acceptance of the Episcopate as the key-stone of government unity.

Huntington said that the foundation of all Christian ministries is Jesus Christ and his major ministry is of reconciliation. There is no Christian priesthood apart from this reconciling function of humanity which ministry is derived from Jesus Christ. In this ministry of reconciliation every Christian has a role to play. The Episcopate is an organizing historical principle. There is no doctrine attached to it rather than a description of a historical reality to build up community. According to Huntington, these four points make the “Quadrilateral” of pure Anglicanism.

When these four points went to Lambeth in 1888, they acquired an international Anglican value. The Lambeth Conference of 1888 resolution 11 says:

That, in the opinion of this Conference, the following Articles supply a basis on which approach may be by God's blessing made towards Home Reunion:

(a) The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as "containing all things necessary to salvation," and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith.

(b) The Apostles' Creed, as the Baptismal Symbol; and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith.

(c) The two Sacraments ordained by Christ Himself--Baptism and the Supper of the Lord--ministered with unflinching use of Christ's words of Institution, and of the elements ordained by Him.

(d) The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the Unity of His Church.¹²¹

The above four points were described as a basis for an approach to reunion. However, Lambeth said that these points were a starting point and not an end in themselves. The 1895 General

120 Huntington, *The Church Idea*, 210-211.

121 Anglicansonline.org/basics/Chicago_Lambeth accessed on October 19, 2009.

Convention adopted the Lambeth form, and from this time onward the Episcopal Church was fully committed to the 1888 Lambeth-Quadrilateral. Today, the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral is the ecumenical standard which the Anglican Church officially regards as authoritative. For the first time since the English Reformation, an ecumenical statement was adopted in an attempt to reaching other parts of the Christian church.

Quadrilateral has all along been very popular because it states minimum conditions to the communion with other Protestants while keeping the basics of Catholic Christianity. For instance, it stresses the historical facts which are the structure through which reconciliation takes place. However, there have been different understandings of the nature and purpose of the Quadrilateral from its inception. John Woolverton says:

Behind the constant reiterations of the four points has been a debate about whether the Quadrilateral was a *terminus ad quem*, that is a conclusion to which unity talks should proceed or whether it was a *terminus a quo*, an agreement to be reached before we would commence to talk about unity with others and from which greater demands for agreement and conformity would naturally follow.¹²²

The Roman Catholic Church was unaware of the initiatives of the Quadrilateral because at that time when Lambeth adopted it the Roman Catholic Church had a different theological understanding of other denominations which it considered to be broken away churches. Due to this theological understanding, whatever was going on in the ecumenical movement was being suspected by the Roman Catholic Church. It understood ecumenism as the ecumenism of return of the Anglicans and Protestant churches to the Roman Catholic Church. At this time the Roman Catholic Church was suffering from the effects of the English and Protestant Reformation and the French Revolution. Its view was that when people become judges of their religion, society becomes chaotic. In order to avoid such a situation to appear again, the Roman Catholic Church understood its mission to be that of preserving authentic Christianity and the Western Civilization until the Anglicans, Protestants and the Orthodox return and be in communion with the successor of Saint Peter.

The vision of the Roman Catholic Church during this time was a restoration one. According to the Roman Catholic Church, change meant stooping down to modernity which it considered to be godless and satanic. This was a period which has been called “Fortress Catholicism” in that the Roman Catholic Church was responding to four revolutions, namely, changes in religion. According to the Roman Catholic Church, reformation uplifts the authority of the individual above that of the Church and tradition. For the Roman Catholic Church, this is not God’s guidance. Another challenge concerned scientific revolution especially of Galileo. Galileo said that God speaks through Scriptures as well as through nature. According to the Roman Catholic Church, this meant that Galileo was establishing another source of revelation and therefore taking away part of the church’s authority. Third, it was responding to philosophical revolution. Descartes argued “I think therefore I am.” Descartes was establishing ultimate truth independent

122 John F. Woolverton, “The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral and the Lambeth Conference,” in Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church, 53(June 1984): 101.

of the authority of the church. The fourth challenge was the political revolution. The revolutionaries especially in France realized that they must return to the old order and disregard the authority of the church and the nobilities.

When the Roman Catholic Church looked at civilization from the time of the English and Protestant Reformation it all ended up not only in being anti-church but ultimately anti-humanity. The root cause of all this, according to the Roman Catholic Church was wrong thinking. In the early 1800s, the Pope began to take firm control of certain institutions. For instance, he began to appoint bishops. The church began to keep its theologians in a limited range. This was the time when Rome began to issue condemnations.

In 1864, Pope Pius IX issued a syllabus of errors. He disassociated himself from liberalism and modernity. When Pius IX convoked Vatican I (1869-70), the issue before the Council was “how do we get back to Western civilization?” There were some people who looked to Rome for solutions (Ultramontanists). For such people, a strong papacy meant health civilization. Vatican I produced a document called “What is Faith?” so as to meet the intellectual threat of the day. Some people began to advocate for a document which would give a proper definition of the church. The Ultramontanists too began to advocate for a document which would strengthen the papacy and in 1870, a document on papal “Infallibility” was produced.

Basing on Matthew 28: 18-20, the Roman Catholic Church teaches that Christ founded his Church as a visible and perfect society. He wished the church he founded to be one with a visible corporate unity of faith, government and worship. He bestowed on his Apostles and their legitimate successors the power to secure this threefold unity. If Christ promised to be with the Apostles and their successors to the end of time it means that those whom they are to teach in his name have to receive and accept it as infallible.

Vatican I defined as a divinely revealed dogma that when the Pope speaks as pastor and teacher of all Christians and defines by virtue of his supreme Apostolic authority, a doctrine of faith or morals to be held by the entire church such definitions are irreformable of their own nature and not by reason of the church's consent. This means that the infallibility claimed for the pope is the same in its nature, scope, and extent as that which the church as a whole possesses. His ex cathedra teaching does not have to be ratified by the church's teaching in order to be infallible.

In 1878, Leo XIII was elected Pope, and immediately he restored the theology of Thomas Aquinas which he considered to be the solution to the contemporary theological problems. However, at this time, there were some people in the Roman Catholic Church who wanted the church to adapt to modernity and to meet the new challenges for the sake of the Gospel. People with such views were condemned by Pope Pius X in 1907 who issued strong measures to stamp out modernity. All Roman Catholic bishops were directed to stamp out modernity and in 1910 there was an imposition of an oath against modernism. It was during this time that many catholic philosophers and theologians went into historical studies. The historical studies opened a way to change. They made it more difficult to maintain the myth that Aquinas gave the definitive way of

looking at history.

In 1928, Pope Pius XI reaffirmed the ecumenism of return but the Quadrilateral could not be accepted because according to Pope Pius XI, the doctrines revealed by God are not negotiable. It would have appeared that the Roman Catholic Church was stooping down to human interpretation and yet it is not allowed by the doctrines it holds. In 1929 under Pius XI, the Roman Catholic Church became aware of the World Council of Churches but it continued with its traditional claim that it is the only true church. The Pope insisted that other churches have to return to the Roman Catholic Church, the only true church.

In January 1959, Pope John XXIII announced a Council with the intention of putting the Roman Catholic Church in ecumenical relationship with other churches. To this end he extended invitation to the “separated brothers.” In 1960 he appointed a Secretary for the Promotion of Christian Unity. In 1963 Pope John XXIII died but his vision emerged triumphantly at the Council. On November 21, 1964 the Council promulgated three documents in which the Roman Catholic bishops formally committed themselves and the rest of the Roman Catholic Church to the ecumenical movement. The three documents are:

- i. The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church.
- ii. The Decree on the Eastern Catholic Churches.
- iii. The Decree on Ecumenism.

For many non-Roman Catholic Christians, this was the end of fortress Catholicism and from now onward as John Borelli says:

Catholics gradually began renewing the inner self and abandoning the strategy of welcoming other Christians to return to unity with Rome. Catholics joined other Christians in the great ecumenical pilgrimage to restore unity.¹²³

Vatican II bridged the past and the future by creating an ecumenical era for the Roman Catholic Church. In the Council there were people who saw ecumenism as coming from the Holy Spirit with the purpose of promoting unity. For this reason they argued that the Roman Catholic Church must participate in promoting Christian unity. It can be safely said that it was Vatican II which officially brought the Roman Catholic Church into the ecumenical movement. Vatican II made the Roman Catholic Church at last come to terms with the question of modernity. Its decree on ecumenism talks about the hierarchy of truth. This was one way of trying to look for the essentials that can bring the Christian denominations and the Roman Catholics into dialogue. Already in the early stages of the Faith and Order Movement, discussions on particular church-dividing issues raised questions like: What are the elements of the unity we seek? Some denominations emphasized the already existing spiritual unity as a sufficient basis for mutual

123 John Borelli, “The Decree on Ecumenism at 40 Years: Our Challenge Today” in Ecumenical Trends 34, 3(March 2005): 1.

respect and for co-operation in mission and service. Others went a step further and pleaded for general agreement on some basic convictions of faith. Anglicans with the Roman Catholics in mind, argued for Corporate Union.

In the Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue corporate union does not mean realizing unity by surrendering existing ecclesial traditions. Rather different church communities come together to in corporate union on the basis of an essential consensus on questions of faith and a joint Episcopal constitution as in the early Church. This is a fellowship of faith and life in which they are relatively independent corporate members retaining a permanent place. In this kind of model, the two churches have the possibility and the duty of preserving what in view of the apostolic witness they consider to be permanent value in their theology and piety placing it in the service of the fellowship as a whole. In this model, a merger of the two churches is rejected because every church fellowship would lose its character in a fusion of this kind. This means that corporate union is a union in diversity.

Two concepts have proved to be important in the Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue in East Africa in their endeavor to conceive of and practice models of union. These are “Ecclesial Types” (Communion of Communion). In the past, it was believed that the ecumenical problems derive from the fact that, ever since the early days, distinct basic types of the faith have existed within Christianity; these types differ distinctively from one another with regard to specific characteristics of piety, and doctrine. The ecumenical task then is not aim at eliminating these basic differences but rather of making them visible and preserving them together in fellowship of the one church for which Anglican and Roman Catholics in East Africa strive.

The view that within Christianity there exists different ecclesial types has also been presented in recent times. The term “types” has been defined as a situation where there has been long coherent tradition, which urges people to love, create and sustain a humorous whole. The elements which constitute each ecclesial type are a characteristic theological approach, liturgical expression, and canonical discipline. For this reason, the life of the church needs a variety of types which would manifest the full catholic and apostolic character of the one and holy church. This is the approach which Cardinal Johannes Willebrands took when he described the church of the future as Communion of Communion.

Another model which is of particular importance for Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches in East Africa in their dialogue toward unity is that of “Reconciled Diversity.” This model of unity was developed from the insights and experiences of the international bilateral dialogues. This model includes all essential elements required for unity: a shared faith; mutual recognition of baptism, Eucharist and ministry, and agreed ways of deciding and acting together. What is distinctive is its beginning from the legitimacy of the present denominational differences and the need therefore to preserve them, though not as ends in themselves but as points of reference within the larger Christian identity. According to this model, church unity does not necessarily demand the surrender of denominational convictions and identities, as often advocated and usually implied in the concept of organic union. Rather denominational traditions and

confessional convictions can have a continuing identifiable life within the one church, provided that in the process of dialogue, of living encounter and mutual correction, they lose their denominational exclusiveness and divisive tendencies and be transformed into a reconciled diversity.

Reconciled diversity assumes that the separate confessional churches should continue to exist side by side at local, national, and international levels; they can be reconciled but remain institutionally separate. This model urges those confessional churches to be faithful to the truth as it has been traditionally handed down to them. The reconciled diversity model intends neither to downplay the concept of organic union nor the concept of conciliar fellowship. Rather its point is that even diversities can be points of fellowship. This is the idea which John Macquarie holds in his book, "Christian Unity and Christian Diversity." In many ways the reconciled diversity concept has positively been received by the Lutheran Church.

The model I would suggest for East Africa, in the light of the Quadrilateral is "Unity in Solidarity." The author of this model is Jos Sobrino. For Sobrino unity and catholicity mean co-responsibility between local churches, mutual giving, and receiving, bearing one another's burdens. The important thing in this model for the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches in East Africa is not the relationship between the different confessions, but rather their common solidarity, suffering with the poor. The fundamental division in humankind, according to this model, is the alienation between the rich and the poor, between the oppressed and the oppressors. This model implies that unless models of unity are committed to solidarity with the poor and the oppressed, they will create a unity, which is, at best, marginal in expressing the fellowship of believers. While Huntington was influenced by the civil war as being God's way of purging the American society, and a pointer to a just society, I think today he would say that the rich nations need to build a just society by being in solidarity with the poor nations of East Africa. This model too, helps the Anglican and the Roman Catholic Churches in East Africa to know that they both need each other.

The various models embody important differences in the approach to unity. For instance, proponents of organic unity doubt that a model like reconciled diversity which begins from the present divisions of the church can ever inspire a compelling vision of future unity. On the other hand proponents of reconciled diversity claim that recent failures of some church union schemes, illustrate the need to maintain denominational identities. All the models of union contain valuable pointers for shaping Anglican-Roman Church fellowship in East Africa. One should by no means assume, however, that there exists one single model which can lead the Roman Catholics and Anglicans to fellowship. What is significant and perhaps useful is for the two churches to remember that the unity they seek will be a unity in diversity. The two denominations need to learn from the proposed Concordat of Agreement between the Lutheran and Episcopal Churches in the United States.

Christian reconciliation has to play an important part in all forms and phases of the unity the two denominations seek. This mutual reconciliation does not eliminate their differences. This means

that reconciliation has its price of tolerance. This price has to recognize the fact that the one church of Christ exists in various places such as in East Africa, and that the same faith can be expressed and lived in different ways. Such differences can and should be recognized as legitimate. These differences in denominations make the one Catholic Church more comprehensive.

Progress in Anglican-Roman Catholic relations in East Africa will not be attained by pretending that the two historic Christian traditions are other than they are. There is need for continued deeper mutual understanding of each other in the context of unconditional mutual acceptance. Deeper mutual understanding reveals more clearly what the Anglicans and Roman Catholics have in common due to the more than a thousand years they lived together in one fellowship. For instance, they all share faith in Jesus Christ, both believe that in the Bible the inspired word of God is expressed, all believe that in the Eucharist there is the spiritual but real presence of Christ as His sacrifice for us in the consecrated bread and wine. All believe in the ancient Creeds and all uphold Episcopal structure. In the Anglican-Roman Catholic relations therefore, it would be a distortion to see these relations exclusively in terms of the problems associated with the issue of say the ordination of women. The way forward is to go beyond ideological and historical divergences and recover their common ground. Anglicans and Roman Catholics are deeply related to each other in Christ through baptism. The common ground for every Christian is the incorporation into the body of Christ by baptism. Baptism is a sufficient basis for admission to communion because through baptism, Christians are brought into union with Christ, with each other and with the church of every time and place.

If Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches are realistic about baptism as the apostolic writers are, then Christians from the two denominations are already by one baptism one body, and the continued separation of the two communions is a public denial of what they are already in Christ. Baptism moves Christians forward from cooperation to commitment. This commitment has to seek for full visible communion. By the fact that there are already relationships established, the Anglicans and Roman Catholics have entered into a new relationship that looks to the future which future seeks increasingly to overcome the estrangement of the past. Local initiative is the key to overcoming the estrangement of the past for there can be no authentic Anglican-Roman Catholic relation which does not take place at the local level. While for example, in modern times four Archbishops have visited the Pope in Rome, prayed and witnessed together the faith they hold in common and frankly discussed their differences, this spirit of hope and attitude of openness needs to be reflected in the two communions' local situations.

On February 14, 1994, Pope John Paul II addressing a group of participants in the Graduate School of the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey said that we need to remember that the unity of Christians always remains a divine gift, thus no human endeavor, no matter how successful or well planned can itself heal our divisions. The Quadrilateral continues to be the Anglican foundation for ecumenical relations as the interpretation of its meaning also continues to develop in various ecumenical contexts. As Arthur A. Vogel says:

The principles of the Quadrilateral immediately move us into the mystery of our

salvation and reveal the structure of our most intimate life with God. They are not just tests one community can give to another to see whether they may both be called by the same name.¹²⁴

2. Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC)

Introduction

The Anglican - Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) was established by Archbishop of Canterbury Michael Ramsey and Pope Paul VI in 1967. Its terms of reference were established by the Malta Report in 1968. The Commission has worked in two phases. The first phase of work completed its final report in 1981. This phase dealt with three topics namely, the Eucharist, Ministry and Authority. The second phase dealt with a more diverse range of topics that were condensed in the publication of *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ* in 2005. A preparatory commission for a third phase of ARCIC met in London in October 2007.

The Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) is an Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue. This dialogue must be understood against the background of the break in communion between what were later to be known as the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England. This break in communion came to a climax in the 16th century with the outbreak of the Church reformation in England. There are several events that consolidated the break between the two communions. In the 16th century there were great changes which were taking place in the English life. Some of these changes were:

- i. The breakdown of the old feudal system. The old feudal order of society was breaking down to be replaced by a new nationalism. Due to the emerging spirit of nationalism, people were opposed to any intrusion of alien influences and the papacy was one of those alien influences.
- ii. New generation of university graduates. In the 16th century university education produced a group of intellectuals with new ideas. Most of the pioneers of church reformation in England used the university lecture halls to proclaim the need for reformation.
- iii. The English parliamentary statutes. At different intervals the English parliament adopted a series of statutes that were aimed at restraining the authority of the pope. In 1351 the English parliament passed the first statute which stipulated imprisonment for anyone who accepted an ecclesiastical appointment from the pope. In 1534 the Act of Supremacy was passed by parliament confirming Henry VIII and his successors as supreme head on earth of the Church of England. In 1559 parliament revised Henry's Act of supremacy and declared Queen Elizabeth I the supreme governor of the Church of England.

124 Arthur A. Vogel, "Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral: Yardstick or Mirror?" in J. Robert Wright, Quadrilateral at One Hundred, Essays on the Centenary of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral, 1886/88-1986/88 (Cincinnati, OH: Forward Movement Publications, 1988), 128.

iv. The 1552 English Ordinal. Archbishop Cranmer produced an English Ordinal which was to be used for the consecration of bishops, and for the ordination of priests and deacons.

v. The bull *Regnans in Excelsis* by Pope Pius V. For the first ten years of Queen Elizabeth's reign there was little trouble between her and the pope. Pope Pius V thought to win her back and he offered to prove the new book of Common Prayer if the Queen would acknowledge his authority. When it became evident that reconciliation was no longer possible, the pope issued a bull of excommunication against Elizabeth in which he absolved the Queen's subjects of allegiance to her.

One major event that strained relations between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Church in the nineteenth-century was the promulgation in 1896 by Pope Leo XIII of the *Apostolicae Curae*. In particular the *Apostolicae Curae* judged Anglican ordination to be null and void. Leo XIII argued that the 1552 Ordinal's understanding of the ordained ministry was in conflict with the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church since it deliberately excluded all reference to the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist and of the priesthood. This exclusion of all reference to the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist and of the priesthood rendered the ordinal defective so that all ordinations in which it was used were invalid. In 1897 the Archbishops of Canterbury and York responded to the *Apostolicae Curae* by stating that the Church of England in its ordinations intended to confer the ministry that was instituted by Christ.

The consequences of the 16th century events and Pope Leo XIII's apostolic letter led to an almost complete estrangement between the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England which lasted until the 20th century. However, between 1921 and 1925 there were conversations between the Roman Catholic and Anglican scholars that were initiated by the English layman Edward Wood Halifax commonly known as Lord Halifax. The conversations centered on what could be done to restore the relations between the two communions. From 1932 officials from the Council for Foreign Relations in Canterbury began to visit Rome. In 1960 Archbishop of Canterbury Geoffrey Fisher visited Pope John XXIII.

The positive change in the Anglican-Roman Catholic relations took place during the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) at which the Anglican observers were present. In March 1966 Archbishop Michael Ramsey the Archbishop of Canterbury at the time visited Pope Paul VI and, in a historic common declaration, expressed their intention to inaugurate between the two communions:

A serious dialogue which, founded on the gospels and on the ancient common traditions, may lead to that unity in truth, for which Christ prayed.¹²⁵

The historic common declaration resulted in the formation in 1970 of the first Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC I).

125 Kevin McDonald, "Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue," in Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement, 1991, 27.

The first phase of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission

The first commission (ARCIC I) which met between 1970 and 1981 brought together two communions not only with their own painful history of division but also with many contemporary signs of hope in life and work. The Commission addressed itself to those issues which were historically divisive between Anglicans and Roman Catholics and which were also raised in the *Apostolicae Curiae* by Pope Leo XIII. At the outset the intention was of working toward organic unity of the two churches. From 1971 to 1981 ARCIC I produced a number of agreed statements namely:

- i. Eucharistic doctrine (Windsor 1971). The Windsor statement on the Eucharist was the first of the ARCIC texts to be published in 1971. Together with the subsequent Elucidations it witnesses to a remarkable degree of convergence, particularly in two areas, the doctrine of the real presence and the understanding of sacrifice.
- ii. Ministry and ordination (Canterbury 1973). There is a general agreement in the statements that the only context for understanding ordained ministry is that of the whole people of God. The starting point is the recognition of the fact that all ministries derive from Christ and is always exercised through the power of the Spirit. The threefold ministry of bishop, priest and deacon serves as an expression of the unity the two communions seek and also as the means of achieving it.¹²⁶

In its concluding statement on Ministry and Ordination in 1973, the commission declared:

We are fully aware of the issues raised by the judgment of the Roman Catholic Church on Anglican Orders. The development of the thinking in our communions regarding the nature of the Church and the ordained ministry, as represented in our Statement, has, we consider, put these issues in a new context.¹²⁷

It further went on to say that “a substantial agreement had been reached.” Authority in the Church I (Venice 1976) and Authority in the Church II (Windsor 1981). Of all the areas of ARCIC I authority has the most unresolved problems. However, the Commission said that it had reached a degree of agreement on authority.

The results of the Commission were published in 1982 in the final report commonly known as ARCIC I. The final report of the first commission was duly submitted to the authorities of the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion for their evaluation. Before the two communions had given their responses to the final report of the first commission, in 1982, Pope John Paul II visited Canterbury at the invitation of Archbishop Robert Runcie and in a joint declaration set up a second Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC II) to:

Examine, especially in the light of our respective judgments on the final report, the

126 For detailed discussion on Ministry and Ordination, see “Ministry and Ordination: An Agreed Statement of the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission,” 1973, 1-38.

127 “Ministry and Ordination” in Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission: The Final Report (Windsor, September, 1981): 38.

outstanding doctrinal differences which still separate us...study all that hinders the mutual recognition of ministries of our communions.¹²⁸

One of the obvious hindrances was the judgment of Leo XIII on Anglican orders. After an initial study of the problem, Cardinal Jan Willebrands, wrote a letter to Pope Paul II and Runcie in which he stated that in the light of the progress made in the dialogue a new context had been created in which to judge the Anglican orders as no longer open to the criticisms that had led to the negative judgment made by Leo XIII. At this time Cardinal Willebrands was open to the idea expressed by ARCIC I that the new context called for a reexamination of the conclusions in the *Apostolicae Curae*. The second commission produced its first report "Salvation and the Church" and an agreed statement was published in 1987.

The Anglican Communion at the 1988 Lambeth Conference recognized the agreed statements of ARCIC I on Eucharistic doctrine, Ministry and Ordination and their elucidations as offering sufficient basis for taking the next step forward toward the reconciliation of the two communions. Lambeth 1988 said:

This conference recognizes the Agreed Statements of ARCIC I on Eucharistic Doctrine, Ministry and Ordination, and their Elucidations, as consonant in substance with the faith of Anglicans and believes that this agreement offers a sufficient basis for taking the next step forward towards the reconciliation of our Churches grounded in agreement in faith.¹²⁹

In 1989 Archbishop Runcie visited Rome and the two leaders, Runcie and Pope John Paul II made a declaration in which they particularly talked about the problem posed by the ordination of women to the ministerial priesthood. The declaration stated:

The question and practice of the admission of women to the ministerial priesthood in some provinces of the Anglican communion prevents reconciliation between us even where there is otherwise progress towards agreement in faith on the meaning of the Eucharist and the ordained ministry.¹³⁰

The official Roman Catholic response to ARCIC I Report came out in 1992. In its official response to the ARCIC I the Roman Catholic Church praised many aspects of the report especially the substantial agreement on the Eucharist. However, on June 30, 1998, Rome published Pope John Paul II's apostolic letter *Ad Tuendam Fidem* (To Defend the Faith) that introduced into the Code of Canon Law a new penalty that would be incurred by Roman Catholic Christians who adamantly refused to observe the definitive teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, which are considered to contain the divinely revealed truths. *Ad Tuendam Fidem* did not mention any specific doctrines but a "Doctrinal Commentary" issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and signed by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger soon accompanied the Pope's letter. In this commentary there are several examples of definitive teaching that fall in that category such as the priestly ordination being reserved to men. The final example given in this

128 McDonald, "Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue," in Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement, 1991, 28.

129 Lambeth Conference 1988, 210.

130 Quoted in McDonald, "Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue," in Dictionary of Ecumenical Movement, 1991, 28.

category of definitive teaching is the Apostolic Letter (*Apostolicae Curae*) of Pope Leo XIII that invalidates the Anglican ordinations.

The second phase of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission

A special consultation of Anglican and Roman Catholic bishops, meeting under the chairmanship of the Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, and the President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity Cardinal Edward I Cassidy, at Mississauga, Canada in 2000, asked ARCIC for a study of Mary in the life and doctrine of the Church. The Commission had already addressed this topic in *Authority in the Church II* (1981) and a significant degree of agreement was reached at. The Commission said:

We agree that there can be but one mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ, and reject any interpretation of the role of Mary which obscures this affirmation. We agree in recognizing that Christian understanding of Mary is inseparably linked with the doctrines of Christ and the Church. We agree in recognizing the grace and unique vocation of Mary, Mother of God Incarnate (*Theotókos*), in observing her festivals, and in according her honor in the communion of saints. We agree that she was prepared by divine grace to be the mother of our Redeemer, by whom she herself was redeemed and received into glory. We further agree in recognizing in Mary a model of holiness, obedience and faith for all Christians. We accept that it is possible to regard her as a prophetic figure of the Church of God before as well as after the Incarnation.¹³¹

However, the remaining differences were noted:

The dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption raise a special problem for those Anglicans who do not consider that the precise definitions given by these dogmas are sufficiently supported by Scripture. For many Anglicans the teaching authority of the bishop of Rome, independent of a council, is not recommended by the fact that through it these Marian doctrines were proclaimed as dogmas binding on all the faithful. Anglicans would also ask whether, in any future union between our two Churches, they would be required to subscribe to such dogmatic statements.¹³²

The Commission asked to what extent the doctrine concerning Mary belongs to an authentic apostolic tradition and finds supported in Scriptures. The Commission was convinced that the holy Scriptures written bear clear witness to God's plan of salvation. It went on to argue that it is impossible to be faithful to Scripture and not to take Mary seriously. However, the Commission recognized, that for some centuries Anglicans and Roman Catholics have interpreted Scriptures differently. The Commission argued that no reading of a text is neutral, but each is shaped by the context and interest of its readers. The Commission in its deliberations read Scriptures within the context of the members' dialogue in Christ. The Commission considered this to be an ecclesial and ecumenical reading that sought to consider each passage about Mary in the context of the New Testament as a whole, against the background of the Old, and in the light of tradition.

131 ARCIC: *Authority in the Church II* (1981), par., 30.

132 ARCIC: *Authority in the Church II* (1981), par., 30.

The concept of Mary as God-bearer (Theotókos) developed in the *patristic* period from two main sources namely, the deep reflection on Scripture and due to the challenges of the Christological controversies of the first five centuries. The reflection on the vital part played by Mary in the incarnation formed part of the orthodox belief in Jesus Christ as both divine and human. The early church affirmed both the divinity and the humanity of Jesus Christ. It did not teach that Jesus Christ:

- i. Was totally divine and that he could not have a body.
- ii. Just appeared to have human flesh and attributes.
- iii. Had just temporarily joined himself with a body of a certain spiritual man.

On the contrary the early church taught that Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary. Today, both the Anglicans and Roman Catholics boldly make this affirmation. They also affirm that Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy. Since according to the Nicene Creed Jesus Christ is true God from true God, begotten not made of one being with the Father, the early church concluded that Mary, can rightly be called God-bearer.

In the Middle Ages the meditation on the lives of both Christ and Mary became increasingly popular, and gave rise to the development of such devotional practices as the rosary. Mary began to be considered as one who does not only represent the faithful church but who also dispenses Christ's grace to the faithful.

In the 16th century, the reformers rejected the devotional practices that made Jesus Christ inaccessible apart from through Mary. They argued that Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and humanity. However, the reformers continued to acknowledge Mary's role in the Incarnation as God-bearer because this was seen to be both scriptural and in accordance with ancient church's tradition. Mary was referred to as a pure virgin by the reformers. Today, Mary has a new prominence in Anglican worship through the liturgical renewals and in the Roman Catholic theologies. The Commission's conclusion is that that the tradition of the doctrine of Mary has at its center the proclamation of the Trinitarian economy of salvation.

The two communions ended the 20th century with a new relationship that looked to the future and sought increasingly to overcome the estrangement of the past. On February 23, 2003 Prime Minister Tony Blair of England, along with his wife Cherie, attended Mass and received communion from Pope John Paul's private apartment. This action by Pope John Paul was not only a sign of respect for Blair but also for ARCIC I Report. Another positive sign came in October 4-5, with the visit to Rome of the new Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams. This was the first time the new Archbishop of Canterbury visited the Bishop of Rome at the beginning of his term. This visit appeared as if the new archbishop was being confirmed in his ministry as an archbishop by the Bishop of Rome. Despite the spirit of hope and attitude of openness with which the two communions entered the 21st century, the Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue was faced with serious internal challenges at the beginning of the century namely:

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- i. The Anglican diocese of New Westminster in Canada issued a formal rite for the blessing of same-sex unions.
- ii. The Episcopal diocese of New Hampshire elected Gene Robinson as the first openly gay bishop in the Anglican Communion. The Episcopal Church in the United States confirmed the election and consecrated him on November 2, 2003. Earlier in October 2003 the Anglican Primates meeting at Lambeth Palace had stated that Robinson's consecration as bishop coadjutor of the diocese of New Hampshire was likely to "tear the fabric of the Anglican Communion at its deepest level."¹³³
- iii. Jeffrey John, who acknowledges a homosexual orientation but says he is celibate was elected bishop of the Anglican diocese of Reading in England. After a lot of pressure from the anti-gay movement in the Anglican Communion, John later withdrew.
- iv. On the side of the Roman Catholic Church the declaration that the exclusion of women from priestly ordination is based on the word of God and has been infallibly taught creates a new challenge
- v. Again the teaching by Rome of *Apostolicae Curae* as an infallible papal declaration has presented a new obstacle to progress in the Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue.

These developments have threatened to generate a schism within the Anglican Communion. They have also posed serious consequences for the Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue. For instance, the International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission meeting which was scheduled to take place in Seattle in February 2004, to work out a common statement of faith, was put on hold. In the light of the Anglican-Roman Catholic relations, the crisis in the Anglican Communion is likely:

- i. Not to produce significant defections from the Anglican Church to the Roman Catholic Church.
- ii. To unexpectedly bring the two communions closer together. Archbishop Williams of Canterbury has proposed, and the Vatican has accepted, the formation of an adhoc subcommittee to consider the ecclesiological implications of the crisis in the Anglican Communion. This is also an opportunity for the Roman Catholic Church to reflect on her identity and structures.
- iii. To create a situation in which the two communions can together address the common internal problems.

Since the inauguration of ARCIC, the Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue has faced several obstacles that probably were not foreseen by Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Ramsey when they

133 Episcopal News Service, accessed October 16, 2009 at <http://gc2003.episcopalchurch.org>.

inaugurated it.

3. Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (BEM)

The discussions on baptism, Eucharist and ministry have been at the center of the Faith and Order Movement since the first Faith and Order conference at Lausanne in 1927. However, serious discussions that led to the BEM texts began in 1964 during the meeting of the commission on Faith and Order in Aarhus. A thorough study on baptism had already been done before the world conference in Montreal in 1963, what the commission desired now was to explore whether and to what extent a consensus could also be reached on Eucharist and Ministry.¹³⁴

The history and theology of BEM is divided into two periods. The first period dealt with the doctrinal comparisons among denominations. The various denominations were given the opportunity to define their own identity. The second period dealt with the systematic study of the Eucharist and the relationship between Scripture and Tradition. Gunther Gassmann says:

Emerging convergences in the understanding of holy communion were formulated, especially on the relation between word and sacrament and on the sacrificial aspect of the Eucharist¹³⁵

The study also tackled the anamnetic and epicletic character of the Lord's supper, its universal and eschatological dimensions, as well as the main elements of the Eucharistic liturgy. The study was taking place during the sessions of the Second Vatican Council. This was the first time that Roman Catholic theologians were taking part in the discussions.

Throughout the two periods theological discussions also covered ministry and baptism. On baptism, the study first dealt with the controversial issues of faith and baptism, infant and adult baptism, baptism and confirmation before tackling the Christological, pneumatological, ecclesiological and eschatological character of baptism. On ministry, the special or ordained ministry was set in the framework of the general ministry of all believers and was developed within the Christological and pneumatological concept of the nature of the church.

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The findings of the study were discussed and revised by the Faith and Order Commission at

134 For a detailed account on this point see, Vischer, "The Convergence Texts on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" in *Ecumenical Review* 54/4 (October 2002): 432-434.

135 Gunther Gassmann, *Documentary History of Faith and Order 1963-1993* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1993), 22.

Accra, Ghana in 1974. Gunther Gassmann says:

An important stage in the work of Faith and Order had been reached when the Commission decided that the three reports which had been revised in Accra should be sent to the churches and interested groups and individuals for their consideration and comment.¹³⁶

The commission meeting in Accra in 1974 decided that this text should be submitted to the churches for their reactions. The report reads:

What is to happen to these documents now? Quite clearly they are not the last word on the three themes. Many points can be stated more accurately, and it is my hope that the commission will carry the process of improving the quality of the text a stage further. But I hope, too, that it will at the same time give some thought as to how best to present the consensus already achieved to the churches... The commission must ask itself whether these three documents are now mature enough to be put before the churches with some confidence that they will respond... But continued study of this and other themes only makes sense if the churches themselves regard it as the continuation of what has already been achieved.¹³⁷

The texts were published in a booklet. The publication of these texts marked the beginning of a new phase whose objective was how to set up the process of reception. In the preface it was made clear that:

For a time, the commission will not do any further work on these themes. In its opinion, it is now up to the churches themselves to comment on its findings. Further discussion can only be constructive and fruitful if it has its basis in affirmations which really carry us further forward. We need discussion at a new level, and this new level can only be created by the churches themselves.¹³⁸

The World Council of Churches Assembly in Nairobi requested that:

In responding, the churches should not only examine whether the agreed statements reflect their present teaching and practice, but indicate the ways in which they are prepared to contribute to the common advance towards unity.¹³⁹

The findings of the study were also discussed by the Faith and Order Commission at Bangalore, India in 1978. Vischer says:

Further important perspectives were developed at the commission meeting in Bangalore (summer 1978) which attempted to set the effort for a consensus on baptism, eucharist and ministry in a wider framework. First, the commission

136 Gassmann, *Documentary History of Faith and Order 1963-1993*, 24.

137 Accra 1974, meeting of the commission on Faith and Order, Legon, Ghana, 23 July-4 August, 1974, minutes and documents, Faith and Order paper no. 71, Geneva, WCC, 1974, p. 16.

138 *One Baptism, One Eucharist and a Mutually Recognized Ministry: Three Agreed Statements*, Faith and Order paper no. 73, Geneva, WCC, 1975, p 5.

139 "Breaking Barriers: Report of the WCC Fifth Assembly in Nairobi, 1975," Geneva, WCC, 1976, p.69.

reaffirmed the Nairobi assembly's definition of the goal of the ecumenical movement as conciliar fellowship. This goal was to guide all the commission's efforts, but at the same time it needed to be described more precisely and the commission decided it should take this task upon itself. There was general agreement that there were three requirements for the unity we seek: (a) a common understanding of the apostolic faith; (b) mutual recognition of baptism, eucharist and ministry; and (c) agreement on how the church teaches and makes decisions.¹⁴⁰

After thorough discussion of the findings of the study, the Commission at Lima, Peru in 1982 unanimously moved the motion which in part read:

The Commission considers the revised text on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry to have been brought to such a stage of maturity that it is now ready for transmission to the churches in accordance with the mandate given at the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Nairobi 1975, and re-affirmed by the Central Committee, Dresden 1981.¹⁴¹

The three convergence texts on *baptism, eucharist* and *ministry* (BEM) were adopted by the commission on Faith and Order at its meeting on January 12, 1982. This famous document was published by the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches at Lima and sent to the churches for their comments and reactions. Lukas Vischer says:

The texts were hailed at the time as a breakthrough; they were immediately translated into numerous languages and discussed in detail in many churches. The Lima documents, or *BEM* as they came to be known, became a well-recognized concept. They generated a long series of publications and articles and, indeed, even appear as an entry in their own right in some church encyclopedias.¹⁴²

In 1982, Faith and Order Commission invited all churches to prepare an official response to the Lima text. On this point Max Thurian says:

The churches were asked to say how far they could recognize in this text the faith of the church through the ages, what consequences they could draw from it for their relations particularly with other churches that also recognize the text as an expression of the apostolic faith, what guidance they could take from the text for their life and witness, and what suggestions they could make for incorporating of BEM material into the ongoing project of F&O.¹⁴³

The churches were requested to prepare one response to which contributions would come from the many local churches. The process to develop church response to BEM included three basic steps. The first step was the broad consultation within all churches at large. The second step was

140 Vischer, "The Convergence Texts on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" in *Ecumenical Review* 54/4 (October 2002): 442.

141 Lima, 1, 112(1982): 83.

142 Lukas Vischer, "The Convergence Texts on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" in *Ecumenical Review* 54/4 (October 2002): 431.

143 Max Thurian, "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry," in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, 1991, 83.

the preparation of a draft response and the third step was to put the response into the final form. By 1990, one hundred and ninety churches including the Roman Catholic Church had responded to BEM and the Lima document had been translated and published in thirty-five languages. When the Vancouver Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1993 extended the time for replies to Faith and Order Commission to December 31, 1995 many churches took the opportunity to polish their responses. The responses to Lima text came from all over the world, though the majority came from Europe and North America. Some commented on all or most parts of the Lima text, while others concentrated on what they considered to be the most significant points.

In their initial response many churches pointed out where BEM was wrong because it did not exactly tackle what those individual churches had always believed and practiced. Those churches failed to recognize that a new ecumenical principle had been initiated and therefore it was no longer a matter of judging the results merely from their own denominational context. The nature of the BEM process is well stated by Max Thurian who says:

The ecclesiological conviction underlying the composition of BEM is that when the churches, through their representatives, are gathered together by the WCC, they are no less churches than when making their decisions individually. Indeed, when a church is validly represented at a responsible ecumenical gathering, its tradition and witness are enriched by the contribution of the other churches gathered there. The sharing of the truth in love illumines and reveals the fundamental nature of each.¹⁴⁴

BEM document is therefore a result of a long process of study of the three expressions of the life of the Christian church namely, baptism, Eucharist and ministry whose understanding and practice have contributed to the divisions between churches. Since 1927, there has been universal church representation in the process of study and dialogue with steadily growing involvement of the Orthodox Church, the Anglican Communion and after the Second Vatican Council, of Roman Catholic theologians. In 1980 Pope John Paul II spoke of the significance of the study of baptism, Eucharist and ministry in the context of the search for unity as follows:

Studying together baptism, the Eucharist and the ministry, not only are you dealing with realities that are at the heart of the mystery of the Church and her structure, but you are also tackling questions which were, if not the cause of our divisions, at least among the main subjects about which opposition arose. Now there cannot be a true and lasting re-establishment of unity without our succeeding in expressing our faith clearly together in these aspects of the mystery on which we opposed one another. The question of the ministry certainly remains a key question for the re-establishment of full communion.¹⁴⁵

Since 1982, BEM has become something of an ecumenical event to the extent that it has been given serious attention even by non-members of the World Council of Churches such as the Roman Catholic Church. Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, Faith and Order Paper No. 111 says:

144 Thurian, "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry," in Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement, 1991, 82.

145 Information Service, Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, Vatican City, 45(1981): 2.

If the divided churches are to achieve the visible unity they seek, one of the essential prerequisites is that they should be in basic agreement on baptism, Eucharist and ministry.¹⁴⁶

BEM:

Explores the growing agreement - and remaining differences - in fundamental areas of the churches' faith and life. The most widely-distributed and studied ecumenical document, BEM has been a basis for many "mutual recognition" agreements among churches and remains a reference today.¹⁴⁷

As far as the authority of the BEM document is concerned, it is not a complete solution to the historical doctrinal differences among the various churches. Rather it is intended to give a theological service in ecumenical dialogue to those churches which accept it. As a broad-based ecumenical document BEM could be used by church ministers at parish level in instructing believers in the Christian faith. Second, it could be used in the field of theological education when training theology and Christian religious education student-teachers. Third, it could be used as an ecumenical reference text for bilateral conversations among churches and lastly its "Lima liturgy" which was the order of the closing worship at Lima in 1982, could be used on ecumenical occasions.

Applying the ideals of BEM can take the churches in East Africa to full visible unity in the following ways:

Baptism. The majority of Christians in East Africa live in an age where the deep seated loyalty to the denomination to which one belongs is no longer as strong as it was during the missionary era. This is because of the common belief that all Christians share a "common baptism." This idea is supported by the Faith and Order paper on baptism that came out of the consultation held at Fa Verges, France, in 1997. It says:

Through our common baptism we are all brought into Christ, and this forms the basis of our ecumenical engagement with each other: because Christ has claimed us, we have no right to reject one another... Since we as Christians are all incorporated into the crucified and glorified Christ, nothing - not even the churches with their centuries of division - can separate us from one another.¹⁴⁸

Because of the common belief that all Christians share a "common baptism some of the Christians marry persons outside their own denominations while others swap from one denomination to another with ease. When Christians in East Africa swap from one denomination to another, or marry outside their own denomination, one of the immediate problems they encounter has to do with baptism. For instance, a Roman Catholic priest may want to re-baptize a former Anglican Christian before the two can be allowed to wed in the Roman Catholic Church.

146 Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, Faith and Order Paper No. 111 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1982), viii.

147 "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" in Faith and Order Paper No. 111, the Lima Text, www.oikoumene.org/resources accessed on October 23, 2008.

148 Thotnas F. Best and Dagmar Heller, eds, "Becoming a Christian: The Ecumenical Implications of Our Common Baptism," in Faith and Order paper 184, 3.

The couple may find it difficult to understand why the priest wants to re-baptize the already baptized Christian. BEM in such a case helps the various denominations in East Africa to realize three things:

- i. That what is decided ecumenically affects the spiritual lives of ordinary Christians at a practical level.
- ii. All forms and practices of baptism should be embraced as equally valid and appropriate. This does not mean that differences of emphasis and practice should disappear. What the denominations should look for, is how much diversity can be embraced and celebrated.
- iii. The guiding principle should not be that a certain denomination's form and practice of baptism is wrong because it differs from one's denomination's form and practice but rather what BEM says:

Churches which have insisted on a particular form of baptism or which have had serious questions about the authenticity of other churches' sacraments and ministries have at times required persons coming from other church traditions to be baptized before being received into full communicant membership. As the churches come to fuller mutual understanding and acceptance of one another and enter into closer relationships in witness and service, they will want to refrain from any practice which might call into question the sacramental integrity of other churches or which might diminish the unrepeatability of the sacrament of baptism.¹⁴⁹

As John S. Pobee says:

The ecumenical document *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* has helped us to rediscover our oneness in the body of Christ by virtue of baptism, which consecrates each of us for mission.¹⁵⁰

Eucharist. The Eucharist is the most visibly dividing at the same time the most important aspect of Christian life. The question is, "how can the Eucharist be a sacrament of unity today in East Africa?" At the international level, there is the Lima Liturgy that has provided a possible answer to the question of diversity. The Lima liturgy which is a Eucharistic/Holy Communion service expresses, in one possible liturgical form, the ecclesiological convergence on the Eucharist reached in the Faith and Order text *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM). Gordon Lathrop says:

While the text of this liturgy has had no official standing in any church, it has had a growing history of ecumenical use. The text became a place in which diverse churches could meet each other.¹⁵¹

The Lima liturgy was drafted by Frere Max Thurian and it was first used at the Faith and Order

149 Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, 5.

150 John S. Pobee, "Ecumenical Formation in the Service of a Renewed Church," in The Ecumenical Review 53, 3 (July 2001): 325.

151 Gordon Lathrop, "The Lima Liturgy and Beyond" in Ecumenical Review 48/1 (January 1996): 63.

Plenary Commission meeting in Lima, Peru in 1982. From that time, the Lima liturgy has been widely used at world ecumenical gatherings as well as at local ecumenical events. In their document “Celebrations of the Eucharist in Ecumenical Contexts,” Christians from different churches meeting at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, Switzerland from May 12 to 21 1995 noted that:

These celebrations have, in the spirit of the Lima liturgy, often moved beyond one liturgical tradition simply showing its historic or current forms to the assembled Christians, many of whom are from other traditions. Rather, there has emerged a challenging new form of ecumenical prayer arising from a concern to enable the present actual community to pray together, from a theological convergence emerging from many sources, from a continued and shared scholarly exploration of the liturgical heritage of Christians, and from an eagerness to see that heritage celebrated in ways appropriate to the dignity and gifts of specific human cultural contexts throughout the world.¹⁵²

However, the Lima liturgy does not resolve the ecclesial issues of mutual recognition. What it does is simply to create space for the churches to meet together.

The disunity over the Eucharist is both at the theological and at the practical level. Theologically there are denominations that understand the Eucharist in terms of a sacrifice and real presence and there are those that understand it in terms of memorial and spiritual presence. Judging from the level of cooperation already achieved, there is much more common ground in respect of the above mentioned factors of disunity although some real differences still exist in many denominations in East Africa.

Ministry. The Christian church in East Africa would be better off if it were able to have a mutual recognition of ordained ministries across all denominations. Mutual recognition of ministries would mean less of shortage of ordained ministers. The cost of educating new ministers would be less than it is now. At the moment the disunity centers on the nature and practice of the ordained ministry. Not every denomination in East Africa has the exact three-fold ministry of bishop, priest and deacon which BEM considers to be the norm. But all of them have ordained persons who officiate at church functions in different capacities. BEM helps these denominations to recognize others' ministries even when those ministries are not exactly equivalent.

Apostolicae Curae

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that the church has never existed without persons who have specific authority in the church. It believes that Christ who chose and sent the apostles continues even today to call persons to the ordained ministry. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that:

- i. There is an effective link between the college of the twelve apostles, and the hierarchy of ordained ministries in the church.

152 “Celebrations of the Eucharist in Ecumenical Contexts,” in the document by Christians from different churches meeting at Bossey from May 12-21, 1995, p. 1.

- ii. The uniqueness of the ordained ministry is sanctioned by the doctrine of the sacrament of order.
- iii. Ordination confers a permanent character on the person receiving it.
- iv. The ordained ministry includes three orders, that of bishops, priests, and deacons.

The question concerning the validity of the Anglican orders has been in existence since the reformation when in 1552 Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, issued a new ritual of ordination, which was intended to replace the medieval rituals in use in England at that time. In 1896 Pope Leo XIII set up an eight-member commission of theologians to discuss the question of the validity of the Anglican orders. When the commission could not reach a consensus, papal theologian Father Raffaele Pierotti was given the mandate to summarize the commission's work and make his own judgment on the question. Pierotti's judgment that Anglican orders were invalid was accepted by the cardinals and the Pope, and on September 13, 1896, Leo XIII issued an apostolic letter called *Apostolicae Curae*, in which Leo XIII concluded that the orders conferred with the use of the Anglican Ordinal were not valid according to the standards of the Roman Catholic Church. Bishop Bell of Chichester considered the Bull to be "one of the sharpest and most public rebuffs that the Church of Rome can ever have administered."¹⁵³

The Pope gave three reasons for this verdict on the Anglican orders, namely, that:

- i. From the time of the reformation, Rome had treated Anglican orders as invalid and in 1896 there was no sufficient reason for Rome to change her mind.
- ii. The Anglican Ordinal was defective in intention. His argument was that the bishops who performed the first Episcopal ordinations in the reign of Elizabeth I intended not to ordain priests who would offer the sacrifice of the Mass.
- iii. Leo XIII argued that a form of words which omitted all reference to Eucharistic sacrifice was deliberately adopted at the beginning of the same reign.

For these reasons, Pope Leo XIII concluded that Archbishop Cranmer and the Church of England as a whole intended to introduce a radically new rite into the church, one quite different from those approved by the Roman Catholic Church.

Four members of the "Apostolic Commission" advised Leo XIII in favor of recognizing Anglican Orders in 1896. Their argument was that a historic continuity with the medieval Church in the Anglican Church could easily be traced in modern Anglicanism. They warned that Leo's judgment to the contrary would be seen as the climax of a process in which two Christian traditions sought to distance themselves from each other forever. Today those who advocate for reconsideration of *Apostolicae Curae* say that:

¹⁵³ Quoted by Christopher Hill, "Anglican Orders: An Ecumenical Context," in Anglican Theological Review 78/1 (Winter 1996): 87.

- i. *Apostolicae Curae* is re-formable because it was not a doctrinal declaration. The statement by Anglican-Roman Catholic/United States (ARC/USA) says that in the light of the new historical documents, *Apostolicae Curae* did not end a process of dialogue rather began it.
- ii. The Anglican Church has reformed its ordinal and theology in the direction of the Roman Catholic teaching, and for this reason the defect of both form and intent has been cured.
- iii. The Latin rite for the ordination of priests and bishops which was introduced in June 1968 by Pope Paul VI has narrowed the gap between the Anglican and the Roman Catholic Ordinals.

One major consequence of *Apostolicae curae* has been the denting of Anglican self-esteem and the distorting of Anglican ecumenical approaches to other Christian traditions. Since 1896 the Anglican Church has over-emphasized the issue of apostolic succession as an unconscious compensation for *Apostolicae curae*. Christian unity between Anglicans and Roman Catholics did not come to an end in 1896. For instance, immediately after Leo XIII had issued the *Apostolicae Curae*, Cardinal Rampolla began to support informal visits, meetings, correspondence, and prayer in order to maintain good relations with the Anglicans. On the Anglican side, Lord Halifax in 1890s was engaged in selling information about Anglicanism to the Vatican. The question of orders interested Halifax only as a means of opening a continuing dialogue between the two churches. He believed that the dialogue should not focus only on Rome's recognition of Anglican orders but also Anglican recognition of the validity of the ministry of the bishop of Rome.

In 1897 the Archbishops of Canterbury and York replied to the *Apostolicae Curae* on behalf of the whole Anglican Communion. They said that:

- i. The Anglican Church intends to confer the office of priesthood instituted by Christ and all that it contains.
- ii. The Anglican Church teaches the doctrine of the Eucharistic sacrifice in terms which are similar to those of the canon of the Roman Mass.
- iii. The words and acts required by the pope in 1896 are not found in the earliest Roman ordinals, so that if their omission rendered an ordination invalid, the orders of the Church of Rome are on no surer footing than those of the Anglican Church.

Despite Leo's judgment, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, continued to refer to the Pope in 1897 as "our venerable brother." A similar attitude to the Roman Catholic Church prevailed at the Lambeth Conferences of 1908, and 1920.

Inspired by what was happening between the Anglican and Roman Catholic Church, Halifax between 1921 and 1925, initiated a series of private meetings between Anglican and Roman Catholic theologians. Theologians from the two denominations argued that the reconciliation

between the Anglican Church and the Roman Catholic Church does not imply any denial of the historic claims of the Anglican Church. On the Roman Catholic side the Second Vatican Council (1962-5) opened the official relationships between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Church. In its decree on Ecumenism (*Unitatis redintegratio*), Vatican II said that all the baptized persons were in some degree in communion with one another and with the Roman Catholic Church. When the Synod of Bishops met in November 1985 to commemorate and promote the teaching and inspiration of Vatican II, the bishops strongly reaffirmed, and extended the notion of communion to the whole ecumene.

In 1966, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Michael Ramsey visited Rome. Ramsey and Pope Paul VI inaugurated a theological dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion. This theological Commission is what is called “Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission” (ARCIC). Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission was requested to search for agreement on the disputed issues of Eucharist, Ministry and Authority. It completed its report on these topics in 1981 in which it claimed to have reached a substantial agreement on ministry.

In 1985, Cardinal Willebrands said that the issue of Anglican orders should not be limited to merely reconsideration of the past. In an address given at St. Mary’s in Cambridge in 1970, Cardinal Willebrands described the church of the future, in which Anglicans and Roman Catholics will be reconciled. His argument was that the universal church is not only a Communion of Communions, but a Communion of diverse types of Communions. This trend of thought leads to the idea that contemporary Anglicanism, with its liturgies, its spirituality, its Episcopal organization, and its customary mode of authority, qualifies as an ecclesial type, which would have its proper place in the reconciled universal church.

On the International level the 1988 Lambeth Conference officially recognized the agreed statements of ARCIC-I on Eucharistic Doctrine, Ministry and Ordination, as consonant in substance with the faith of the Anglican Church. Lambeth voted that such an agreement on Eucharist, and Ministry offers a sufficient basis for taking the next step forward toward the reconciliation of ministries of the two Churches.

The Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission gave its opinion that time had come for the reconsideration of the condemnation of the Anglican orders by Pope Leo XIII. This conviction was given formal recognition by Pope John Paul II and the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1982 when they specifically said that one of the tasks of the new ARCIC-II is to study all that hinders mutual recognition of the ministries for the two Churches.

In 1968, Lambeth recommended the admission of women to the historic diaconate. In 1971, the Anglican Consultative Council renewed the call to Anglican churches to express their views on ordination of women. In reply the Council of the Diocese of Hong Kong passed the resolution that stated:

In reply to the request of the Council of the Church of South-East Asia, this Council advises the Bishop of Hong Kong, acting with the approval of his synod, and any other bishop of the Anglican Communion acting with the approval of his province, that if he decides to ordain women to the priesthood, his action will be acceptable to this Council; and that this Council will use its good offices to encourage all provinces of the Anglican Communion to continue in communion with these dioceses (Resolution 28 b). (Limuru 1971) *Carried by 22 votes to 24.*¹⁵⁴

The Anglican Consultative Council meeting in Dublin in 1973 adopted three statements and one of them read:

The Council recognizes that any firm decision on the ordination of women to the priesthood will have important ecumenical repercussions, which need to be taken into account; but this consideration should not be decisive. The churches of the Anglican Communion must make their own decision. Carried. In favour 54, against 1, abstentions nil.¹⁵⁵

In 1975, Archbishop Donald Coggan wrote to Pope Paul VI to tell him that the ordination of women to the priesthood within some of the Anglican Communion was imminent as a result of the slow but steady growth of a consensus of opinion within the Anglican Communion that there were no fundamental objections in principle to the ordination of women to the priesthood. In part the Archbishop's letter to the Pope letter reads:

To inform Your Holiness of the slow but steady growth of a consensus of opinion within the Anglican Communion that there are no fundamental objections in principle to the ordination of women to the priesthood. At the same time we are aware that action on this matter could be an obstacle to further progress along the path of unity Christ wills for his Church.¹⁵⁶

In reply the Pope said that the Roman Catholic Church teaches that it is not admissible to ordain women to the priesthood, because there were no women among Jesus' Apostles. Referring to the Roman Catholic teaching, Pope Paul's letter to the Archbishop in part reads:

She holds that it is not admissible to ordain women to the priesthood, for very fundamental reasons. These reasons include: the example recorded in the Sacred Scriptures of Christ choosing his Apostles only from among men; the constant practice of the Church, which has imitated Christ in only choosing men; and her living teaching authority which has consistently held that the exclusion of women from the priesthood is in accordance with God's plan for his Church.¹⁵⁷

154 Quoted in Christian Howard, "Ordination of Women in the Anglican Communion and the Ecumenical Debate," in *Ecumenical Review* 29/3 (July 1977): 236.

155 Quoted in Christian Howard, "Ordination of Women in the Anglican Communion and the Ecumenical Debate," in *Ecumenical Review* 29/3 (July 1977): 236.

156 Quoted in Christian Howard, "Ordination of Women in the Anglican Communion and the Ecumenical Debate," in *Ecumenical Review* 29/3 (July 1977): 241.

157 Quoted in Christian Howard, "Ordination of Women in the Anglican Communion and the Ecumenical Debate," in *Ecumenical Review* 29/3 (July 1977): 241.

On October 15, 1976, Pope Paul approved a Declaration on the “Question of the Admission of Women to Ministerial Priesthood” that was prepared by the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. This Declaration is an explanation of the statement that “the Church, in fidelity to the example of the Lord, does not consider herself authorized to admit women to priestly ordination.”¹⁵⁸ In 1976 when asked by the General Synod about his communications with the leaders of other churches, the Archbishop of Canterbury said that “the question may well then be not so much should women be ordained as to what should the relationship be between churches which do, and churches which do not ordain women.”¹⁵⁹

The 1978 Lambeth Conference recommended that those Anglican Churches that had not ordained women do so. The most contentious issue of the 1988 Lambeth conference was episcopate. While many bishops from North America had privately agreed not to celebrate the Eucharist at this gathering in order to show their displeasure at the Anglican Churches that had refused to ordain its women priests, some Anglican bishops had declared that they would consider themselves out of communion with a woman bishop and those who consecrated her, and would refuse also to accept the validity of the ordinations she in turn would perform. A motion put forward by a group of bishops urging restraint for an unspecified period, was defeated in a secret ballot by 277 to 187. In 1989 fifty-five male bishops laid hands on the Rev. Barbara Clementine Harris ordaining her Suffragan Bishop in the Episcopal Church of the United States of America. The consecration of Harris was the first in four hundred and fifty years of the history of the Anglican Communion. However, it did not come without bitterness and resistance. Harvey Cox says:

Boston has never been particularly friendly to women preachers...within a decade of its founding the Puritan divines drove Ann Hutchinson out of the colony for organizing a religious discussion group in her parlor---“not a fitting activity for women” they decreed. Then a few decades the same serious gentleman publicly hanged Mary Dyer, a Quaker, on the Common. The alleged witches of nearby Salem fared no less badly. So for a city where history always weights heavy on the present, the consecration of Barbara Clementine Harris as Suffragan Bishop in the nation’s largest Episcopal diocese did not go unnoticed either by the living or the dead.¹⁶⁰

The ordination of Harris to the episcopacy calls into question the traditional idea that only men can stand in the line of apostolic succession. Paul Washington put it clearly when he said during the ordination sermon:

You didn’t come here to see a woman being consecrated. You have come to see God, who with God’s mighty hand, has lifted up one who was at the bottom of society and has exalted her to sit in the chair to be one of God’s chief pastors. The

158 Quoted in Christian Howard, “Ordination of Women in the Anglican Communion and the Ecumenical Debate,” in *Ecumenical Review* 29/3 (July 1977): 242.

159 Quoted in Christian Howard, “Ordination of Women in the Anglican Communion and the Ecumenical Debate,” in *Ecumenical Review* 29/3 (July 1977): 240.

160 Harvey Cox, “Big Day in Back Bay,” in *Christianity and Crisis* (March 20, 1989): 78.

word of God is once again being made flesh in our midst.¹⁶¹

Since the ordination of Harris to the episcopacy, the Church of England had not voted to move toward ordaining women bishops. This historic move came on July 11, 2005 when:

The Church of England voted on Monday to move towards ordaining women bishops, a step which could provoke an exodus of conservative clergy and deepen the widening splits within the worldwide Anglican Communion. A Synod meeting in the city of York voted to remove legal obstacles in Church law to women bishops, a process Church of England officials say could take about four years to complete. All three houses of the synod---the church's parliament---voted in favor. The most senior house, the House of Bishops, voted 41 for and only six against.¹⁶²

Christina Rees, chair of Women and the Church is quoted to have said:

(This is) historic, memorable, hugely affirmative. I think we will look back and say why did it take us so long to get to July 11, 2005.¹⁶³

Rome brought to Canterbury polite but firm warnings to the effect that the consecration of women to the episcopate would raise new obstacles. Australian Newspaper reported that:

The Vatican last night regretted the decision by the Church of England to ordain *women bishops*, saying it would present a "new obstacle" to reconciliation between the Holy See and the *Anglican* communion. The vote of the General Synod earlier yesterday had sent a signal to Rome that the ecumenical goal of full visible unity had never been further away. "We learned with regret the news of the vote of the Church of England that opens the way to the introduction of legislation that would lead to the ordination of *women bishops*,"....The decision would be "a new obstacle to reconciliation between the Catholic Church and the Church of England."¹⁶⁴

The ordination of women as bishops creates for the Roman Catholic Church greater problem than their ordination as priests, because bishops bear a greater responsibility for the church and also because rejection of women bishops involves the rejection of any priests they ordain. So that the Roman Catholic Church's recognition of Anglican orders, according to some people, is made more remote. The World Council of Churches' Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry document mentions the issue of the ordination of women in the context of the call of the whole people of God.

There are reasons for and against the ordination of women by the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches respectively. The Anglican Church argues that:

i. Galatians 3:28 should be interpreted to mean that the male-female, along with all social

161 Quoted in Joan Brown Campbell, "Toward a Renewed Community of Women and Men," in Mid-Stream, 30, 2(April 1991): 119.

162 New Vision, Wednesday, July 13, 2005.

163 New Vision, Wednesday, July 13, 2005.

164 "Anglican Women Bishops an Ecumenical Problem," in America 194/7 (2006): 6.

barriers have been removed for Christians, who now share a radical equality.

ii. The humanity of Christ which is expressed in the Word becoming flesh includes male and female. The ministerial priesthood represents the priestly nature of the whole body of the church and is in special relationship with Christ who redeems the entire humanity.

The Roman Catholic Church on the other hand argues that:

i. It is not wise to break a tradition of only males which has been in existence since the time of Jesus Christ.

ii. The ministerial priest represents Christ rather than the whole people of God. Christ came as a man and in the incarnation, he assumed maleness within that humanity.

iii. Jesus Christ chose only men as his Apostles, the forerunners of modern bishops.

Goosen concludes the debate on the ordination of women in these words:

One factor that does influence the debate and will continue to do so, is the sociological fact that the role of women in society has changed in recent decades....women stepped into roles in politics, business and government that have been traditionally the preserve of males. This movement has influenced the churches, even if some would not admit it.¹⁶⁵

165 Goosen, Bringing Churches Together, 97.

CHAPTER THREE

NINETEENTH CENTURY MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE IN EAST AFRICA

1. Introduction

The Christian church in Africa has actively participated in the ecumenical movement since the apostolic period. The present Ethiopian Orthodox Church traces its origins to the Ethiopian eunuch who was baptized by Philip while the Coptic Church in Egypt traces its origins to St. Mark. This part of the early Christian oikoumene produced some of the most prominent church leaders of the day. Commenting on early African prominent church leaders, Elizabeth Isichei says:

Victor the first pope, whose native speech was Latin, was a North African, and so was the Emperor Septimius (reigned 193-211) and Apuleius, whose novel *The Golden Ass* is one of the few masterpieces of the ancient world.¹⁶⁶

The vibrant Coptic and Ethiopian Orthodox churches did not only have close contact with the rest of Eastern Christendom but also were linked together in one great unity of spirit. It was this great unity of spirit that was to play a significant role in the formation of the modern ecumenical movement. In 1948, the only African churches at the inaugural assembly of the World Council of Churches, in Amsterdam, were the Egyptian Coptic Church and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

2. Planting of the Church in East Africa

The Coptic Church and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church did not evangelize East Africa rather the planting of the church in East Africa was first attempted by Christian missionaries from Portugal in the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries. However, the Portuguese missionaries were not successful in evangelizing East Africa. The only reminder of their presence in East Africa is “the ruins of churches and the monumental Fort Jesus at the coastal town of Mombasa. The failure is attributed to various factors including rivalry between the various religious orders, lack of catechesis, superficial conversions, strong Muslim influence on the local context, tyrannical Portuguese rule that resulted in intense hatred by the local people, loss of Portuguese personnel due to tropical diseases and constant fighting between the Arabs and the Portuguese.”¹⁶⁷

166 Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of Christianity in Africa: From Antiquity to the Present* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 15.

167 Philomena Njeri Mwaura “African Instituted Churches in East Africa” in *Studies in World Christianity* 10/2 (2005): 160.

The second attempt was made in the nineteenth century again by missionaries from Europe. This was the time when the European countries were competing for territories in Africa. As the European countries were competing for territories, the missionaries were on their part scrambling for converts. This alliance is well explained by Lukas Malishi who says:

Christian communities, though multiplying, were beset with strife, intolerance between denominations, scrambling for territory to the exclusion of others, bigotry and sectarianism. The conflict between the White Fathers and the Moravians which had to be settled by the German government in the Berlin agreement of 1920 is a case in point. Boundaries were drawn between them; and choice of religion became determined by the accidents of geography.... It was difficult to distinguish between the messenger of the gospel and the imperial official.¹⁶⁸

The nineteenth century Christian missionary activities introduced a divided God on the African religious scene and created a divided church in Africa. Sam Kobia says:

Jesus Christ founded one church but European and American missionary activities in Africa in the 19th century brought and planted a divided church. The roots of division continued to grow even deeper in subsequent years.¹⁶⁹

Since the nineteenth century, Christians in East Africa as elsewhere in Africa, have accepted a divided God of the missionaries. Various Christian traditions were important in bringing the Christian faith to East Africa although their value today is questionable. This is because the situation in which these Christian traditions exist has changed drastically from that of the nineteenth century. Christian congregations that were earlier on a force of division are a force of reconciliation today. Christian traditions in East Africa feel ultimately responsible for representing the Kingdom of God in their communities.

The spirit of ecumenism among the various Christian denominations in East Africa can be traced from the time of the three pioneer missionaries, namely Johannes Ludwig Krapf, Johannes Rebmann and James Erhardt. The three missionaries belonged to the German Lutheran Church but were sent to East Africa by the Church Missionary Society, which was a British Anglican Church Society. The three pioneer missionaries' coming to East Africa is associated with David Livingstone. Although Livingstone's journeys did not take him to East Africa itself, nevertheless they did awaken Britain to the needs and possibilities of the African peoples beyond the Niger and the lower Nile. Livingstone published accounts of his explorations under the title, "Missionary Travels and Researches," and it was his research that aroused the enthusiasm of Britain for the opening of Africa to Christianity, Commerce, and Education. Livingstone, believed that Christianity and Commerce would relieve the Africans from ignorance, famine, disease and from the East Coast slave traders. Writing about Livingstone, Northcott said:

All his speeches were based on his chosen theme of 'Commerce and Christianity'

168 Lukas Malishi, Introduction to the History of Christianity in Africa (Tabora: Tanganyika Mission Press, 1987), 131.

169 Sam Kobia, "Denominationalism in Africa," in The Ecumenical Review 50, 3(July 2001): 295.

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as the beneficent medicine which would cure all Africa's ills and provide a promised land of rich markets for the manufacturers of industrial Britain.¹⁷⁰

At this time, commercial considerations in East Africa were tied up with evangelical zeal.

Krapf a German Lutheran preacher and the Rebmann also a German Lutheran pastor arrived at Mombasa in 1844 and 1846 respectively. The two missionaries were sponsored by the Church Missionary Society. M. G. Capon says:

It may seem strange that at this time the C. M. S could not find Englishmen ready to volunteer for service in Africa. But as no Englishmen were forthcoming, the Society was ready to send out men of another ...communion. The advance of the Kingdom of Christ seemed more important than considerations of denominational prestige.¹⁷¹

Krapf looked forward to a chain of mission stations stretching right across Africa. Earlier on Krapf's vision was to reach the Galla people living in Ethiopia whom he hoped would be the key to the reaching of the rest of Africa. He therefore entered Ethiopia in 1837 but he was expelled from the country by the Roman Catholics before he realized his dream. He therefore determined once again to reach the Galla people from the East. The vision of a chain of mission stations guided his missionary activities in East Africa. Soon after his arrival at Mombasa, his wife and child died. Reporting this tragedy to the Church Missionary Society in Britain, Krapf wrote:

And yet I keep to my course. Africa must be conquered by Missions: a chain of Missions must be effected between the east and west though a thousand warriors should fall to the left, and ten thousand to the right....The idea of a chain of missions between East and West Africa will yet be taken up in succeeding generations carried out; for the idea is always conceived ten years before the deed comes to pass. This idea I bequeath to every Missionary coming to Africa.¹⁷²

When weakened by malaria Krapf wrote to the Church Missionary Society in Britain:

170 Cecil Northcott, David Livingstone: His Triumphs, Decline and Fall (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1973), 13. Cross and Livingstone, "Livingstone, David (1813-73)," in Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, 2nd ed., 1974. [Livingstone was an] African missionary and explorer. A native of Blantyre in Strathclyde,....The study of Thomas Dick's *Philosophy of a Future State* determined him to devote his life to missionary work and the alleviation of human suffering; and after attending medical classes in Glasgow he went to London in 1838, where he joined the London Missionary Society....In 1840, inspired by R. Moffat, he embarked for the Cape of Good Hope and for some years worked as a missionary in the Bechuana country. Here he became passionately interested in Africa and worked for several years among the African people, winning their confidence by his medical work and schools. Reports of his exploration and experiences aroused wide interest in England....In 1871 he was found in a state of exhaustion by H. M. Stanley of the *New York Herald*. He died in 1873. For a detailed account of David Livingstone's role in arousing the enthusiasm of Britain for the opening of Africa to Christianity, Commerce and Education, see David Livingstone, Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa. (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1858).

171 M. G. Capon, Towards Unity in Kenya (Nairobi: Christian Council of Kenya, 1962), 1.

172 Quoted in Charles P. Groves, The Planting of Christianity in Africa (London: Lutterworth Press, 1958) II, 107.

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As the victories of the Church are gained by stepping over the graves of her members, you may be more convinced that the hour is at hand when you are summed to the conversion of Africa from its eastern shore.¹⁷³

As M. Louise Pirouet says in Mombasa and its hinterlands he and his companions made only a tiny handful of converts, the mission he established became a backwater, and his grand missionary strategy proved a nonstarter.¹⁷⁴ The two missionaries decided to move from Mombasa and established the first mission station at Rabai among the Wanyika where they hoped to be joined by missionaries from other Christian Missionary Societies. One of the first activities Krapf engaged himself in was the writing of the first Swahili dictionary and the translation of some portions of the Bible into a few Kenyan local languages. The writing of the Swahili dictionary and the translation of some portions of the Bible into a few Kenyan local languages eased the work of all other missionaries who came to Kenya later. It is said that:

Krapf preached the Gospel to all who would hear; but only one person, a dying cripple named Mringe, was baptized as a result of his stay.¹⁷⁵

The two missionaries soon discovered that the Wanyika were resistant to the Christian Gospel. They therefore decided to try to extend the Gospel to the Akamba who lived in the highlands. Krapf later wrote:

From the first establishment of our missionary station at Rabai Mpia it had been our wish to visit in the interior those Wakamba tribes who traversing as they do for trading purposes a large section of E. Africa, may well claim the most serious attention of a missionary.¹⁷⁶

Missionary work during this pioneer period concentrated mainly on rehabilitating former slaves. The former slaves were instructed in the Christian faith and eventually became the first effective missionaries to the interior of East Africa. Due to ill health Krapf retired in 1855 but returned to East Africa for a short time in 1861 as leader of the Methodist Free Churches. His colleague, Rebmann did not leave East Africa until 1875 when he was taken home blind. Some theologians in Africa have argued that the major contribution that should be attributed to Krapf in the evangelization of East Africa is the vision of mission stations that he placed before the various churches in Britain and in Europe.¹⁷⁷

It was at this time that Britain was interested in colonizing East Africa. In May 1886 the Sultan of Zanzibar gave William Mackinnon's Imperial British East Africa Company permission to administer and carry out trade in some parts of Kenya. However, Mackinnon soon realized that

173 Quoted in W. B. Anderson, The Church in East Africa (Nairobi: Uzima Press LTD, 1981), 1.

174 M. Louise Pirouet, 'The Legacy of Johann Ludwig Krapf,' in International Bulletin of Missionary Research 23/2 (April 1999): 69.

175 David B. Barrett, George K. Mambo, Janice McLaughlin and Malcolm J. McVeigh (eds.), Kenya Churches Handbook: The Development of Kenyan Christianity, 1498-1973 (Kisumu: Evangel Publishing House, 1973), 30.

176 J. Lewis Krapf, The Travels, Researches, and Missionary Labours During an Eighteen Year's Residence in East Africa (London: Frank Case & Co., 1968. First Published in 1860), 283.

177 For a detailed study on the role of former slaves in the evangelization of the interior of East Africa, see A. J. Temu, British Protestant Missions (London: Longman, 1972), ch. 1ff.

little profit was being got from Kenya. He therefore focused his attention to Uganda. This was also the time when Henry Morton Stanley was on an expedition across Africa.¹⁷⁸

Stanley visited Uganda and spent several months at King Mutesa's court while exploring the shores of Lake Victoria. Mutesa by this time had become very much interested in Islam, and had allowed Arab and Swahili traders to trade their cotton cloth and guns for ivory and slaves. Due to the Arab and Swahili traders' presence, Uganda had been exposed to the outside influence. Commenting on the welcome he received at Mutesa's court, Stanley wrote:

I landed amid a concourse of two thousand people, who saluted me with a deafening volley of musketry and waving of flags. Katakiro [Katiikiro], the chief Mukungu, or officer, in Uganda, then conducted me to comfortable quarters, to which shortly afterwards were brought sixteen goats, ten oxen, an immense quantity of bananas, plantains, sweet potatoes, besides eggs, chickens, milk, rice, ghee, and butter. After such a royal and bountiful gift I felt more curiosity than ever to see the generous monarch; and in the afternoon Mtesa [Mutesa] sent to say that he was ready to welcome me. Issuing out of my quarters, I found myself in a broad street eighty feet wide and half a mile long, which was lined by his personal guards and attendants, his captains and their respective retinues, to the number of about three thousand....Arrived before the audience house the king rose...dressed in Arab costume...I was invited to sit.¹⁷⁹

It is most likely that Mutesa at this time wanted Stanley to be his ally against the Egyptian aggression. While in Uganda, Stanley introduced King Mutesa to Christianity, and as a result Mutesa requested Stanley to invite Christian missionaries to Uganda:

Say to the white people, when you write to them, that I am like a man sitting in darkness, or born blind, and that all I ask is that I may be taught how to see, and I shall continue a Christian while I live.¹⁸⁰

Upon Mutesa's request, Stanley wrote his famous letter which appeared in the "Daily Telegraph" of November 15, 1875. In part it read:

I have indeed undermined Islamism so much here that Mtesa [Mutesa] has determined henceforth, until he is better informed, to observe the Christian Sabbath as well as the Muslim Sabbath,....He has further caused the ten commandments of Moses to be written on a board for his daily perusal...as well as

178 Stanley's expedition across Africa was sponsored by the two newspapers namely, the "New York Herald," and London's "Daily Telegraph." One of the aims of this expedition was to look for Livingstone whom he met on November 10, 1871.

179 Stanley, quoted in Stock, Story of Uganda, 16-17.

180 Henry M. Stanley, Through the Dark Continent, Vol. I (London: Sampson Low Marston Searle & Rivington, 1878) 325. For further discussion of Stanley's visit to Uganda, see Henry M. Stanley, How I Found Livingstone (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1889) 412ff; Baring Gould, "The Coming of Stanley," in Uganda Church Review 8(October-December, 1927), 110; and F. B. Welbourn, "Speke and Stanley at the Court of Mutesa," in Uganda Journal 25, 2(1961): 220-223.

the Lord's Prayer and the golden commandment of our Savior, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thy self. This is great progress for the few days that I have remained with him and though I am no missionary I shall begin to think that I might become one if such success is feasible. But, oh! that some pious, practical missionary would come here! What a field and harvest ripe for the sickle of civilization....It is not the mere preacher, however, that is wanted here. The bishops of Great Britain collected, with all the classic youth of Oxford and Cambridge, would effect nothing by mere talk with the intelligent people of Uganda. It is the practical Christian tutor, who can teach people how to become Christians, cure their diseases, construct dwellings, understand and exemplify agriculture, and turn his hand to anything like a sailor - this is the man who is wanted. Such one, if he can be found, would become the savior of Africa....Now, where is there in the entire pagan world a more promising field for a mission than Uganda....Here gentlemen is your opportunity - embrace it!... The people of the shores of the Nyanza call upon you.¹⁸¹

Two days after Stanley's letter had appeared in the "Daily Telegraph," the Secretary of the Church Missionary Society received a letter, signed, "An unprofitable Servant," in which the writer placed five thousand pounds at the disposal of the Society if they would follow up Stanley's letter and send missionaries to Uganda. On November 17, 1875 the "An unprofitable Servant" wrote:

Dear Mr. HUTCHINSON,----My eyes have often been strained wistfully towards the interior of Africa, west of Mombasa, and I have longed and prayed for the time when the Lord would, by His Providence, open there a door of entrance to the heralds of the Gospel. The appeal of the energetic explorer Stanley to the Christian Church from Mtesa's capital, Uganda, taken in connexion with Colonel Gordon's occupation of the upper territories of the Nile, seems to me to indicate that the time has come for the soldiers of the Cross to make an advance into that region. If the Committee of the Church Missionary Society are prepared at once and with energy to organize a Mission to the Victoria Nyanza, I shall account it a high privilege to place 5,000 *pounds* at their disposal as a nucleus for the expenses of the undertaking. I am not so sanguine as to look for the rapidity of success contemplated by Mr. Stanley; but if the Mission be undertaken in simple and trustful dependence upon the Lord of the Harvest, surely no insurmountable difficulty need be anticipated, but His presence and blessing be confidently expected, as we go forward in obedience to the indications of His Providence and the command of His Word. I only desire to be known in this matter as "AN UNPROFITABLE SERVANT."¹⁸²

181 Stanley, Through the Dark Continent, Vol. I, 209.

182 Unprofitable servant's letter quoted in Editorial, "Our Jubilee," Uganda Church Review 8(January-March, 1927): 3; G. K. Baskerville, "The Three Henriets: Founders of the Uganda Mission," in Uganda Church Review 5(January-March, 1927): 4. There is now no longer any reason for this Uganda "Benefactor" to remain anonymous.

On November 23, 1875 the Committee of the Church Missionary Society responded to the invitation, and in a resolution accepting the gift from the “unprofitable servant” recorded that it:

Undertakes in dependence upon God to take steps for the establishment of a Mission in the vicinity of the Victoria Nyanza, in the prayerful hope that it may prove a center of light and blessing to the tribes in the heart of Africa.¹⁸³

On April 27, 1876 the Church Missionary Society sent to Uganda a party of seven missionaries. Stock says that:

He [Smith, the leader of the group] had already been in communication with the Church Missionary Society when the call came for laborers for the Victoria Nyanza Mission. He at once volunteered for the work. Send me out, he said, in any capacity, I am willing to take the lowest place. But the committee, perceiving the worth of his character and experience, at once appointed him leader of the expedition.¹⁸⁴

At the south of Lake Victoria, it was decided that only two members of the remaining expedition, namely, Shergold Smith, and Rev. C. T. Wilson should go to Uganda to meet King Mutesa. The two men arrived at Mutesa’s court on June 30, 1877. Thomas O’Neill was left alone at the south end of Lake Victoria since Dr. J. John Smith had already died in May 1877. It is not very clear as to why O’Neill was left at the south end of the Lake; perhaps the expedition wanted to know the kind of reception they would get from the king before all could be in Uganda.¹⁸⁵

Impressed by Mutesa’s warm welcome, Smith’s first task was to write out the alphabet in Roman characters. He however, decided to return to the lake to fetch the other member of the expedition, but both of them ended up being killed in a clash with the King of Acari Island. Wilson remained alone at Mutesa’s court in Uganda while being helped by Dallington Scorpion Muftaa in conducting regular Christian services.

On November 6, 1878, Wilson was joined by Alexander Mackay. Of all the Church Missionary Society missionaries, Mackay was the first missionary to stay for a long time in Uganda. He taught Ugandans not only to become Christians but also helped them to acquire practical skills. In his ministry, therefore Mackay fulfilled the qualities of an ideal missionary Stanley appealed for in his letter to the “Daily Telegraph.” In his letter to the “Daily Telegraph,” Stanley had said that people in Uganda needed a missionary who would enable them to acquire practical skills.

He was Mr. Henry Wilson, late of Westbrook, Sheffield. He was a munificent giver to Church work of all departments, especially in Sheffield where...he gave upwards of 60,000 *pounds* to Church work....An anonymous gift to the Church Missionary Society about 1876 for Mission work in Central Africa was from him.

183 Baring Gould, “The Coming of Stanley,” in Uganda Church Review 8(October-December, 1927): 110.

184 Stock, Story of Uganda, 19.

185 Editorial, “Our Jubilee,” in Uganda Church Review 8(January-March, 1927), 1. [The first group included] Lieut. Shergold Smith, R. N.; Mr. Alexander Mackay, an Engineer; Rev. C. T. Wilson, a Manchester curate; Mr. T. O’Neill, an Architect; Dr. John Smith, from Edinburgh; Mr. G. J. Clark, an Engineer; Mr. W. M. Robertson, an artisan; Mr. James Robertson. The latter was rejected on health grounds but went at his own risk and expense. On August 5, 1876, James Robertson died at the Coast. Clark and W. Robertson were sent back home due to sickness. And Mackay nearly shared the same fate but he slowly recovered from severe fever when he returned to the Coast.

Mackay not only taught Ugandans practical skills but was able to turn his hand to anything, for which he was greatly respected by Mutesa.¹⁸⁶

Stanley's letter was a spark that kindled the emotions that had already been stirred by David Livingstone's "Travels and Researches" in Africa. Once again, the Church Missionary Society had not insisted that its missionaries must be Anglicans. For instance, the most influential missionary in Uganda, Mackay was a member of the Free Church of Scotland.

The first evangelization of the present day Tanzania was by the Portuguese Augustinian missionaries who arrived with Vasco Da Gama in 1499 at Zanzibar. They did not last long due to Arab Moslem opposition. The second and successful evangelization of Tanzania was in the 19th by the Roman Catholics, Anglicans and Protestant missionaries. The Universities' Mission to Central Africa had begun work in the present day Tanzania as early as the 1860s. The early history of evangelization of Tanzania is dominated by denominational competition between the different Christian denominations. This competition was sometimes so strong that the colonial government had to divide exclusive areas for the different denominations to avoid possible violence. For instance, in 1879 it was decided that the Church Missionary Society should continue to work in Kenya and Uganda and the Lutherans should continue work in Tanzania. This was the time when the European powers were scrambling for spheres of influence in Africa. An agreement was reached by the Treaty of Berlin in 1885 that Africa should be shared out among the European powers. Following the Treaty of Berlin, the present day Tanzania fell under German control. Kenya and Uganda fell under the British control. The Berlin Treaty provided for free movement of missionary societies across territorial boundaries irrespective of the colonial powers who ruled those territories. It stated:

All persons exercising sovereign rights in the Protectorates are to protect and support without difference of nationality or worship, all religions, scientific and beneficent organizations and enterprises, created and organized for that purpose. Christian missionaries as well as their followers, their belongings and collections also form the subject of special protection. Freedom of conscience and religious toleration are expressly guaranteed to the native, as to the subjects of a country, and to strangers. The free open exercise of all forms of worship, the right of constructing buildings for Divine Service and the organization of Missions, to whichever kind of worship the same may belong, shall admit of no kind of restriction or hindrance.¹⁸⁷

With the clauses relating to religious freedom that were contained in the Berlin Treaty and with the completion of the Kenya - Uganda railway line in 1901, there was a rush of European missionaries into the interior of East Africa. For instance, the Church Missionary Society, the German and Scottish mission, the Africa Inland Mission, and the Friends Africa Industrial

186 For a detailed account of the death of Smith and O'Neill, see T. B. Fletcher, "The Introduction of Christianity in Uganda," in Uganda Church Review 13(April-June, 1929): 65-70.

187 Quoted in Capon, Towards Unity in Kenya, 3.

Mission, the Gospel Missionary Society made East Africa a fertile ground for all sorts of missionary activities. However, each colonial power tended to accord preferential treatment to missionary societies originating in its own country. Consequently, the territories under British control received a majority of British Protestant missionaries; territories under French control received a majority of French Roman Catholic missionaries. In the case of Tanzania, which was controlled by Germany, German Lutheran missionaries predominated until the beginning of World War 1 when the territory was entrusted to Britain after the war by the League of Nations, British Protestant missionaries increased there, especially under the Church Missionary Society and the Universities Mission to Central Africa.

The various missionary societies in East Africa began work within a radius of a few kilometers from each other. For instance, by 1907 in the north east corner of Lake Victoria there were to be found the Church Missionary Society, the African Inland Mission, the Seventh Day Mission, the Friends Africa Mission and many other independent groups within a radius of a few kilometers. The rush of Christian missionaries into the interior therefore led to competition among the converts as well as among the missionary societies. The Christian missionaries considered East Africa to be an easy religious prey that they might capture if it were not for the irritating interference of the other missionary society. Adrian Hastings rightly says:

Such missionary attitudes inevitably passed across to the new Christians and feelings of hostility, often even stronger than those to be found on a wide scale in Europe, developed among them.¹⁸⁸

At the beginning of 1900 Christian missionaries began to consider how the Gospel could be spread most effectively in East Africa. In order to avoid the overlapping between the activities of different missionary societies, the missionaries came up with the idea of dividing the country into “spheres.” Each missionary society had its own spheres in which to operate without any interference from another missionary society. Each denomination made sure that the African converts would not get in contact with other denominations. Denis M’Passou says:

Africans in different areas had to become members of the denominations operating in their particular areas by geographical accident without any choice.¹⁸⁹

Due to the policy of spheres of influence, for many years there was no competition in evangelism between the Protestant Missions in East Africa.¹⁹⁰

In the early days of missionary work in East Africa, the principle of spheres led to practical cooperation. With time African Christians were not willing to accept that they must belong to one sphere rather than another just because they happened to live in a particular place. They

188 Adrian Hastings, Church and Mission in Modern Africa (New York: Fordham University, 1967), 240. For a detailed account on the tradition of hostility and bitterness imported by the Anglican and the Roman Catholic churches on their converts in Uganda, see Louise Pirouet, “The Historical Background to Religious Tension in Uganda,” Paper presented at the Kampala Ecumenical Discussion Group: Kampala, 1971.

189 Denis M’Passou, Mindolo: A Story of the Ecumenical Movement in Africa (Lusaka: Multimedia Publications, 1983), 2.

190 It is important to note that the Roman Catholic Church did not accept this arrangement.

began to insist on freedom of worship and liberty of conscience. Also a few European missionaries foresaw the danger of each mission establishing its own denominational African Church. Eventually the policy of dividing East Africa into spheres that reflected the unhappy divisions of Protestantism in Europe was abandoned in favor of a United Church.

The 1913 Kikuyu conference

Two ecumenical conferences of great significance took place shortly after World War 1. These are the 1910 Edinburgh conference and 1913 Kikuyu conference. The latter was held at a church of the Scotland missionary society in Kenya. Unity in the true sense of the word, the elimination of divisive differences, and therefore the achievement of church fellowship were and have been the main concerns in the dialogue initiated in June 1913 between the Protestant and Anglican churches in East Africa. The interior of East Africa began to experience the influx of Christian missions from the 1890s. This was also the time when the Christian missions began to lay strategies for unity and cooperation. The pressing question at this time was, “what was the African Christians to make of the fact that when they gathered together in their extended families they represented several distinct and sometimes hostile ecclesiastical traditions?” In 1913 there assembled a large number of the non-Roman Catholic missionaries working in East Africa for a conference at Kikuyu. They represented the Church Missionary Society, the Africa Inland Mission, the Church of Scotland Mission, the Seventh Day Mission, the Universities Mission to Central Africa, the Gospel Mission Society, the German Lutheran Mission, Friends Africa Mission and UMMS. All the non-Roman Christian missions were agreed on their call to be the disciples of Jesus Christ, their call to spread the Gospel to the Africans and their call to establish the church of Christ among the non-Christians. In order to respond positively to their call, two schemes were before the delegates namely, a Federation of Missions and a United Native Church.

The two schemes namely, the Federation of Missions and a United Native Church were the result of much preliminary work that had taken shape in previous three conferences namely, Vihiga, Maseno and Nairobi. In order to cement their solidarity John Jamieson Willis suggested that missionaries working in East Africa should occasionally have a quiet time of prayer and reflection on their call. In 1907 it was agreed that they hold their first meeting at the Friends Africa Mission station in Vihiga from late December 1907 to early January 1908. The items on the agenda were prayer, reflection and consultation on the adventure of cooperation in their Christian missionary work in East Africa. They wanted to find ways to avoid over-lapping and confusion in the mission field.

In this first conference only four missionary bodies were represented: the Church Missionary Society, the Seventh day Adventists, the Quakers, and the African Inland Mission. Commenting on this first conference Willis wrote: “how deep and real is the unity which underlies all the more superficial differences.”¹⁹¹

191 Willis, J. J, “Maseno,” in Willis Papers (January 14, 1908): 181.

At the Vihiga conference, the missionaries dealt with the question of unity and cooperation from two angles. The first one concerned unity and cooperation among themselves as missionaries. They agreed to recognize unconditionally converts of sister missions. They also agreed to use the same books in each and every mission. In this regard they aimed at minimizing as much as possible the competitive conflicts without surrendering those vital doctrines, which defined who they were. Second, they sought to agree on how and what to teach the Africans. According to Willis they had to agree on “the first principles of what they were to teach them.”¹⁹²

On steps to unity and cooperation Willis wrote:

Subject to the approval of the authorities of the missionary societies involved we decided on a definite participation of the territory among us, in order to avoid, where possible, creating unnecessary confusion in time to come.¹⁹³

The Vihiga conference was an opener to how much they would accomplish together in the years to come. The members left Vihiga more determined than never before to hold more meetings for quiet time, prayer and consultation. Commenting on Vihiga conference Willis said:

It was purely local conference attended by the representatives of different missionary societies working in Kavirondo. It discussed purely local and practical difficulties. It decided on a common policy in regard to language problems, the use of lingua franc, the unification of native dialects, the submissions of translations to one center, a common method of spelling, the same names for God for Spirit for soul, and the like.¹⁹⁴

Another conference similar to the Vihiga conference was held at Maseno from January 4-8, 1909. The Maseno conference was attended by delegates from nine different missionary societies. By the end of the conference on January 8, 1909 a number of resolutions had been adopted. The major one was on the influx of missionaries of several denominations into Kavirondo. By 1909 there were Anglicans, Roman Catholics, Baptists, Quakers, the Seventh Day Adventists and a few independent missionaries working in Kavirondo. This influx raised the question of unity and cooperation in the mission field. The Maseno conference expressed the desire to promote without delay the growth of what was common between the various Christian Missions that were working in East Africa rather than each Mission forcing the young African Church to follow its own forms of worship and doctrine.¹⁹⁵

The Maseno conference resolved that first the ten commandments of the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles creed and the hymns that were in use in Kenya be translated into Kiswahili. Second, Kiswahili be the medium of instruction in all schools. Third, two members represent the constituent groups on the Missionary Education Board and finally, boarding schools both for

192 Willis, “Maseno,” in Willis Papers (January 14, 1908): 181.

193 Willis, “Maseno,” in Willis Papers (January 14, 1908): 182.

194 “Report of the Conference of Missionary Societies in British East Africa, Kikuyu,” in Owen Papers CMSA (July 23-26, 1918): Acc. 83 Z3.

195 For more background information on the number of missions working in this area, see F. Rowling, “A Missionary Conference in Kavirondo, BEA,” in Uganda Notes 119(March, 1909): 41.

girls and boys respectively be established. The Maseno conference's resolutions were an important step toward the attainment of unity and cooperation in East Africa. In order to attain the desired unity and comity in missions, the Maseno conference decided that there should be a country-wide conference in Nairobi in June 1909.¹⁹⁶

The more representative conference of missionaries was held at the Railway Institute in Nairobi on June 7-11, 1909 and was opened by J. N. Frazer of Bombay in India. The delegates came from eight missionary societies namely, the Church Missionary Society, the Church of Scotland Mission, the Africa Inland Mission, the Friends Africa Industrial Mission (Kaimosi), the Friends Industrial Mission (Pemba), the United Methodist Mission, the Lumbwa Industrial Mission, and the Seventh Day Adventist.¹⁹⁷

Willis read his paper entitled "The Desirability of a single Native Church in British East Africa." In this paper Willis discussed the desirability of a single Native Church in East Africa, the way it can be achieved, and the consequences of a single Native Church. The idea of cooperation in the mission field was also being promoted at this time by the Lambeth Conference. The 1908 Lambeth Conference said:

There is no subject of more general or more vivid interest than that of Reunion and Intercommunion...Every opportunity should be welcomed of co-operation between members of different Communion in all matters pertaining to the social and moral welfare of the people. The members of the Anglican Communion should take pains to study the doctrines and position of those who are separated from it and to promote a cordial mutual understanding...The constituted authorities of the various Churches of the Anglican Communion should, as opportunity offers, arrange conferences with representatives of other Christian Churches, and meetings for common acknowledgment of the sins of division, and for intercession for the growth of unity.¹⁹⁸

Willis laid down the four terms of the Lambeth Quadrilateral as the four basic conditions on which it might be possible to unite. These terms were the Bible as the common standard of appeal, the Apostles' and the Nicene creeds, the two Gospel sacraments and the Episcopacy. In his conclusion, Willis put forward two options: that of a United Christian Native Church that would include all Christians unconditionally or a Federation of Christian Native Churches that would unite on many practical issues while maintaining a position of practical independence.¹⁹⁹

In principal all the delegates accepted Willis' proposal of the minimum requirements for the

196 For more information on the efforts toward the attainment of the desired unity and comity in missions, see A. E. Pleydell, "Annual Letter," in Furlough 60(February 3, 1910).

197 On the Church missions represented, see Horace R. A. Philip, A New Day in Kenya (London: World Dominion Press, 1936), 27.

198 The Five Lambeth Conferences, 313.

199 For a detailed discussion of Willis' conclusion, see G. H. Mungeam, Kenya: Selected Historical Documents, 1884-1923 (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1978), 152-161.

proposed united Christian Native Church. They said:

It is not our present position that causes us anxiety, for the native church is still very young; but it is the thought of what the native church will be, say, twenty years hence. If the result of all the efforts of the missions is to be eight different branches of the Church of Christ, which are independent of each other and have no fellowship with each other, one cannot but feel that the missions have not done the best they might have done for the Church of Christ in this country.²⁰⁰

However, the two Quaker groups expressed their reservations about the two Gospel sacraments and the Episcopacy.

The Nairobi conference laid a firm ground for the 1913 Kikuyu conference in two ways: First, it passed a resolution, which stated that:

The orderly development, organization, and establishment of a united, self-supporting, and self-propagating Native Church be a chief aim in all mission work.²⁰¹

This became the central point in the discussions at 1913 Kikuyu conference. Second, the Nairobi conference appointed a representative sub-committee to work out the practical side of a policy of a United Native Church. Willis wrote:

A representative Committee of all the Missions concerned had been appointed to consider the whole matter, and draw up, if possible, a feasible basis of union, and failing that federation.²⁰²

After due consideration, the members concluded that re-union in the near future was impracticable, and they therefore planned a general scheme of federation. The sub-committee drafted a constitution that was presented to the 1911 Nairobi conference.

The 1911 Nairobi conference discussed the draft constitution presented by the 1909 Nairobi conference sub-committee and ended in a deadlock due to a conflict of loyalties. Although the missionaries understood themselves as being one in Christ Jesus, they never forgot that they were representing those overseas churches, which had sent them to East Africa. R. Macpherson says:

They were not in a position to act. Quite apart from any conscientious scruples they might hold as individuals, the position of their sending churches overseas had to be taken into account. For the Africa Inland Mission,...its very existence as an organization depended on the unswerving loyalty of each of its members to a particular interpretation of the authority of the Scriptures. Similarly, for Anglicans, their identity as a church called for undeviating maintenance of the principle of Episcopal confirmation, ordination and authority. The Friends eschewed sacraments. For the Seventh Day Adventists, the seventh day doctrine was essential. For Presbyterians, a church without elders and an integrated conciliar system of government would be unthinkable.²⁰³

200 Kikuyu News, 14, 1.

201 Mungeam, Selected Historical Documents, 170.

202 Willis, "Maseno," in Willis Papers (June 24, 1909): 226.

203 R. Macpherson, The Presbyterian Church in Kenya (Nairobi: The Presbyterian Church of East Africa,

Willis wrote:

The attempt to translate broad principles into concrete and detailed action revealed unexpected difficulties.²⁰⁴

The June 17-22, 1913 Kikuyu conference for missionaries was the most famous one of all the conferences in British East Africa. It was presided over by Bishop Willis of Uganda. The conference met mostly to discuss a possible Federation of the various missionary bodies working in the area. Gavin White says:

It was an honest attempt to discover whether various missions could get together before they imposed foreign denominational structures on Africans.²⁰⁵

Apart from the federation proposals that had ended in a deadlock in 1911, the agenda included such items as Sunday attendance by the colonial government officials, the status of African women, the education of Africans, the reimbursement of customs duty on hospital drugs. The major missions that attended the conference included: the Anglican mission, the Presbyterian mission, the United Methodist, Church missionary society and the Africa Inland mission.²⁰⁶

In his opening remarks Willis urged members to look forward to one United Native Church with African Christians as partners in mission. He said:

If God gave the thought, if He has cleared the way, we must keep Him close before our eyes that we may know whether His mind is that the Federation is to be adopted. We must look forward to one Church, not fifty churches, nor one broken into sections. This work cannot be done by missionaries, only the natives of the country can effect it; but missionaries can prepare the foundations. The question for us today is, How far can we get on towards converging lines, which in the future shall lead to one United Native Church?²⁰⁷

The advantages of Federation were stated as follows: First, it would make evangelism, translation, educational and industrial work more effective. Second, it would impress upon African converts the meaning of the one church, united in the worship of God and in proclaiming one message. Third, it would answer in actual life Jesus Christ's prayer, "that all may be one." Fourth, it would serve as a valuable precedent and example to friends in Britain and the USA and lastly, Africans would stop moving from one mission sphere to another.

The 1913 Kikuyu Conference proposed a Constitution of the Federation which provided for:

- a. A common form of organization to be adopted by all Missions in developing Native churches.
- b. Positive preparation on African Christians for Church Union by similar forms and usage in public worship; inter-visitation on the part of church members; common attitude towards what they called heathen customs; common church discipline; common course of instruction for

1970), 53.

204 Willis, J. J, Towards a United Church, 1913-1947 (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1947), 27.

205 Gavin White, "Frank Weston and the Kikuyu Crisis," in Bulletin of the Scottish Institute of Missionary Studies 8-9 (1992-1993): 49.

206 For detailed background information on this point, Willis, Towards a United Church, 1913-1947, 27ff.

207 Quoted in Capon, Towards Unity in Kenya, 12.

catechumens and indigenous ministers and systematic Bible study.

c. A representative council of the federated societies was to be set up until the Synod of the African church was to come into existence.

The Constitution included practical proposals for dealing with matters of dispute between missions as follows: spheres were to be respected, there would be one ministry in the united church, and a common order of worship similar to the Daily offices in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer was outlined. The Constitution aimed at making the federated churches to recognize the validity of one another's ministries. In this way full members of any church that were unable to communicate in a church of their own denomination would be accepted as communicants by any of the federated churches.²⁰⁸

The basis of the Federation it was argued, would be the acceptance of the Scriptures as the supreme rule of Faith and Practice; the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds as the expression of fundamental Christian belief; common membership between churches; regular administration of Baptism and the Lord's Supper and a common form of organization. The historic episcopate was a stumbling block for some of the participants. Apart from the representatives of the Seventh Day Adventists, the Gospel Mission Society, the German Lutheran Mission and Friends Africa Mission, the rest of the representatives at the 1913 Kikuyu conference approved the federation plan and signed the proposals for consideration by their home societies. Those who did not sign the proposals however, expressed full sympathy with the proposed federation plan. At the close of the conference a celebration of the Holy Communion service according to the rites of the Book of Common Prayer presided over by Bishop Peel of Mombasa assisted by the Rev. J. E. Hamshere, of the Church of Scotland Mission was held in the Chapel of the Church of Scotland Mission. All the delegates apart from the Friends, who do not believe in sacraments, participated in the united communion service. The Rev. Norman Maclean who was present at the 1913 Kikuyu conference and had preached at the communion service described it as "epoch-making event, ...impulse of which will be felt throughout every mission field in the world."²⁰⁹

The delegates left Kikuyu with high hopes that the Federation would soon be in operation. Bishop Frank Weston of Zanzibar remarked that "I venture to say that there has not been a Conference of such importance to the life of the *Ecclesia Anglicana* since the Reformation. For it has brought us to the parting of the ways that we have so long dreaded and sought to avoid"²¹⁰ On August 5, 1913 Bishop Frank Weston of Zanzibar who was not present at the 1913 Kikuyu conference wrote a letter of protest to the Archbishop of Canterbury demanding an official inquiry into the proceedings at Kikuyu. By this time, Weston had begun to get concerned with the excesses of Modernism and liberal thought that were gaining hold throughout the Church of England. He had earlier on written to the Archbishop of Canterbury about Modernism as a

208 For detailed information on the Kikuyu Conference of 1913, see G. White, "The Kikuyu Conference of 1913" Dissertation, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

209 Scotsman Newspaper, August, 9 1913.

210 Bishop Frank Weston, "Ecclesia Anglicana. For What Does She Stand?" An Open letter to the Right Reverend Father in God Edgar, Lord Bishop of St. Albans written on November 11, 1913.

hindrance to the progress of the Gospel. In June 1913 Weston read the collection of essays published as “Foundations” and determined to react to it. In the midst of all this, Weston heard of the Kikuyu Conference and the two Anglican bishops Peel and Willis attempt to create a federation of denominations in East Africa. He called upon the Bishops of Uganda and Mombasa to make a public admission that they had not faithfully emphasized the Holy Communion as different from that administered in Protestant Bodies and the difference in Church Doctrine which made it impossible to communicate at another’s altars and the need for Episcopacy in the Church.

When the Kikuyu controversy was at its climax in December 1913, Charles Gore, the then Bishop of Oxford said that the cohesion of the Church of England had never been more seriously threatened than it was now.”²¹¹ Weston published a pamphlet in a form of an Open Letter entitled “Ecclesia Anglicana – For What Should She Stand? addressed to the Bishop of St Albans who had recently suppressed an attempt to introduce Mariolatrous devotions into the diocese. In this letter, Weston expressed his deep shock at what had happened at the 1913 Kikuyu conference and called for Catholic faith and order to be upheld and for the condemnation of Modernism and the Kikuyu proceedings. His letter raised the question of the coherence of the Church of England in particular and of the Anglican Communion in general. Weston argued that if the two bishops were not prepared to publicly recant their views, they should appear in an open assembly chaired by the Archbishop. The reason for appeal to the Archbishop was that since there was no independent Province of East Africa at the time, the Archbishop was the one to whom these bishops all owed canonical obedience.

Weston may have misunderstood the 1913 Kikuyu conference proposals first to be a final document and that all the missions were already committed to the proposed federation. Second, the united Holy Communion service seemed to Weston a denial of Catholic practices. In his letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Weston said:

We are bound to declare them [Nonconformist celebrations of the Communion] null and void, except as spiritual communion....a man must be in loyal fellowship with the Episcopate before he may receive Holy Communion, it is of no avail to reassert this truth hourly, and yet to invite to the reception of the Blessed Sacrament Christians who are in open rebellion to that Episcopate.²¹²

The letter of indictment was written at the end of September 1913, and Weston was invited by Archbishop Randall Davidson to meet him on February 7, 1914. On February 9, 1914, the Archbishop issued a statement in which he made it clear that there would be no trial of the two Bishops whom Weston accused of “propagating heresy and committing schism.” In his letter the Archbishop wrote:

Looking carefully at present-day facts and conditions, I have no hesitation in

211 The Times December 29, 1913.

212 Part of Weston’s letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury on October 29, 1913 quoted in Willis, Towards a United Church 1913-1947, 36.

saying that in my opinion Diocesan Bishop acts rightly in sanctioning, when circumstances seem to call for it, the admission to Holy Communion of a devout Christian man to whom the ministrations of his own church are for the time inaccessible.²¹³

The Archbishop did not allow proceedings for heresy on the grounds that the Kikuyu proposals had not yet been implemented. In his conclusion the Archbishop said:

The subject of Reunion and Intercommunion is with us day by day: it is not going to be forgotten: our efforts are not over: we ask continuously for Divine guidance towards the haven where we would be. We do not, I am persuaded, ask in vain.²¹⁴

According to Davidson, the aim of the church was to create, out of the labors of all those involved, a native African Church, not a part of the church organization of England transplanted to Africa.

The Archbishop's solution was a compromise in the sense that he refused a heresy trial, which Bishop Weston had demanded but appointed fourteen bishops from different provinces to advise him on the issue at hand. The fourteen bishops met in July 1914, a few days before the outbreak of World War I. Weston and the Archbishop met again on February 25, 1914 and on August 26, 1914 and Weston was asked what he would do if the finding of the Consultative Committee went against him. Weston gave three alternatives. The first would be to join the Roman Catholic Church without seeking ordination but live as a layman. The second would be to be out of communion with the diocese of Mombasa and the diocese of Uganda. The third alternative would be to retire into lay communion in the Church of England.

In 1914, Weston drew up his own Proposals for a Central Missionary Council of Episcopal and Non-Episcopal Churches in East Africa. These proposals included a draft Service containing Acts of Faith, Hope and Charity, Self-Surrender and Communion. He recommended, that wherever possible the Service should be held in a building other than the church, so that the sense of guilt of disunion may be deepened in the hearts of all the participants. Weston also prepared a case for the Consultative Body in his seventy-page document entitled, "The Case Against Kikuyu – a Study of Vital Principles." In this document Weston argued that the local Bishop is the link with the Catholic Church and the College of Bishops is the complete bond of union, of which the local bishop is its point of contact with the individual soul. Bishop Peel and Bishop Willis also prepared a case for the Consultative Body in a sixty-four-page document entitled "Steps towards Reunion." In this document, the two bishops presented an honest attempt to interpret what they believed to be the spirit and intention of Jesus Christ for His church in East Africa.

In April 1915 the Archbishop issued a seventy-page statement named "Kikuyu" in which he showed that he was more interested in the preservation of a working unity in the Anglican Communion than in the theological or pastoral issues raised by the Kikuyu controversy. In his judgment, the Archbishop did not support the idea that the non-Anglican churches could simply

213 Quoted in Capon, Towards Unity in Kenya, 17.

214 Quoted in Willis, Towards a United Church 1913-1947, 51.

be thought of as outside the church. On the other hand it was not satisfactory to sanction the receiving of Holy Communion by Anglicans at the hands of non-Anglican ordained ministers. The Archbishop's judgment satisfied neither Bishop Willis and Bishop Peel nor Bishop Weston. By this time Weston's accusations had been affected by two developments in the Anglican Church. First, the precise ecclesiastical character of the proposed federation had changed, and second, in England, the Non-conformists had already been invited and participated in the Anglican Service of Holy Communion. Weston seems to have acted hastily in relating Kikuyu in Africa to Modernism in England.

After the controversy members of the Church Missionary Society and the Church of Scotland Foreign Mission Committee met in Britain and made slight alterations to the scheme as follows:

- i. The name was changed from Federation to Alliance.
- ii. It was formally recognized that any attempt to constitute a United Church at that time would be premature but the Alliance was definitely aimed at preparing for further organic unity.
- iii. It was expressly to be permitted that missionaries might visit their adherents who were living in the sphere of another Mission.
- iv. In the Basis, recognition of common membership between the Churches in the Federation and a common form of Church organization were omitted.

The conference to consider the future of the federation of Missions proposals in the light of overseas comment was held at Kikuyu from July 23- 26, 1918. It was attended by 100 delegates of whom only 14 had been present in 1913 Kikuyu conference. In the chair was Bishop Willis who gave a historical review of the federation movement and made it clear that:

The members of the Church of England were prepared to go in loyalty to the formally expressed Opinion of the archbishop of Canterbury.²¹⁵

The Archbishop of Canterbury's opinion stated:

Full intercommunion was, for the present at least, impossible. Members of non-Episcopal Churches might, and would be, welcomed at the Holy Communion in Anglican Churches, when temporarily isolated from their own. Bishops could not, however, bid their own Church members, similarly isolated to seek the Holy Communion at the hands of Ministers not episcopally ordained. Such Ministers might be invited to preach on occasion in Anglican Churches. The United Service of Holy Communion, which had been such a marked feature of the previous Conference was, for the present, deprecated by the Archbishop as giving rise to grave misunderstanding. No such service therefore would be possible in connection with the present Conference. It remained to be seen whether, in spite of these necessary limitations, the other Churches and Societies concerned will recognize that behind the hindrances which they could not in loyalty pass, there lay

215 Capon, Towards Unity in Kenya, 11.

hearts that longed for a larger unity and could meet and co-operate on the basis of a common love of Christ.²¹⁶

Bishop Frank Weston also gave his own proposals for a United Church which were rejected by the delegates.

Members from the non-Episcopal churches expressed their fears which also affected the decision of the idea of a united church. A representative of the American Inland Mission argued that the integrity of scripture and the deity of the Lord were above any denomination. Under such circumstances the conference decided to form the Alliance of Missions. The conference fully debated its own plans for an Alliance and the Constitution was unanimously accepted by all the representatives of the Missions working in East Africa apart from Bishop Weston who made a formal protest against its being signed by bishops of Mombasa and Uganda. In its conclusion the Constitution read:

We, being profoundly convinced for the sake of our Common Lord and of those African Christians, to whom our controversies are as yet unknown, of the need for a United Church in British East Africa, earnestly entreat the Home Authorities to take such steps as may be necessary, in consultation with the Churches concerned, to remove the difficulties which at present make this ideal impossible. In the meantime we adopt the Basis of Alliance not as the ideal, but as the utmost possible, in view of our present unhappy divisions. And the Members of the Alliance pledge themselves not to rest until they can all share one Ministry.²¹⁷

Again the delegates left Kikuyu with high hopes in the proposed Alliance.

The Kikuyu Conference was an important step in the development of ecumenism in East Africa. In his book, Tucker of Uganda, Shepherd says:

Its implications have become the inspiration for a great deal of the missionary comity since accomplished, and its challenge has been largely responsible for the quickening of the desire for the unity of the Church throughout the world, and for the growing determination of the younger Churches of Africa and the East not to be chained by the denominational fetters of the last three hundred years of Western Christendom.²¹⁸

The immediate outcome of the Alliance was the founding of the Alliance High School which is a leading ecumenical educational institution at secondary school level in East Africa. In 1924 the Alliance of Missions became the Kenya Missionary Council. In 1943 the Kenya Missionary Council was renamed the Christian Council of Kenya which is today called the National Council of Kenya. In 1959 a group of Roman Catholic priests and Lutheran pastors began to hold regular meetings in Arusha, Tanzania. In the same year the East Africa Church Union Consultation was inaugurated. This was the framework through which regular church union discussions were held.

216 Quoted in Capon, Towards Unity in Kenya, 20-21.

217 Capon, Towards Unity in Kenya, 24.

218 Arthur Shepherd, Tucker of Uganda: Artist and Apostle 1849-1914 (London: Student Christian Movement, 1929), 197-198.

The East Africa Church Union Consultation produced the “East African Liturgy which continued to be used for the celebration of the Eucharist in many ecumenical gatherings until the 1970s.

In practice, the 1913 and 1918 Kikuyu conferences promoted some amount of agreement in the adoption of common forms and usages of church organization among many missions working in East Africa. The spirit of the Kikuyu conferences kept the hope for the possibility of achieving a united church among African Christians who had not been party to the doctrinal squabbles of the nineteenth and twentieth-century missionaries in East Africa. The two conferences also initiated the spirit of friendship among African Christians which still exists even today. The 1913 and 1918 Kikuyu conferences’ dream became a reality in India where missionaries were inspired by the ideas of the conferences and launched what later became the Church of South India.

Although the 1913 and 1918 Kikuyu Conferences were forerunners of many contemporary ecumenical initiatives in East Africa, they had the following basic shortcomings:

i. The African dimension was missing. The discussions excluded Africans who were neither members nor agents of missionary societies. The missionaries saw themselves as the authorities on the future of the Christian church in Africa. The missing African dimension at this stage meant that they had no influence over the form of the future Christian Church in East Africa. From the point of view of a modern ecumenical theologian, it is hard to account for the 1913 and 1918 Kikuyu conferences being held without any African delegates, or even observers being present. Some non-African scholars have argued that in 1913 and 1918 the number of African converts in East Africa was small and apart from a few at the coast, they had not attained such a standard of education as would have enabled them to take part in the discussions with any real understanding. Macpherson says:

Another mark of the unreality of the Alliance as a serious factor in promoting a united Church was the absence of Africans at its Conferences. This was of course only to be expected in the early meetings when, apart perhaps from a few at the Coast, no African would have been willing to attend, let alone care about or understand what was going on.²¹⁹

Consultations about the future of the African Church must have seemed rather strange when there were no Africans there to take part in them. Sam Kobia says:

By the time Africans were included in the discussions, from the mid-1940s onwards, denominational feelings were already to deeply entrenched.²²⁰

ii. The ecclesial dimension was missing. Ecumenism seeks to promote mutual understanding and closer unity between the Christian Churches and not societies. At the Kikuyu conferences, the promotion of mutual understanding between African churches was seen as a concern which would come after the missionary societies had established a federation or an alliance. The Kikuyu conferences therefore were an initiative to bring about co-operation between societies and not

219 Macpherson, *The Presbyterian Church in Kenya*, 72.

220 Sam Kobia, “Denominationalism in Africa: The Pitfalls of Institutional Ecumenism,” in *The Ecumenical Review* 53, 3(July 2001): 302.

churches.

iii. There was no commonness of purpose among the missionary societies. For instance, Bishop Weston of Zanzibar disagreed with his fellow bishops of Mombasa and Uganda, and felt that the Anglicans should not enter into fellowship with denominations that were non-Episcopal. Earlier on the Church of England had insisted on what it regarded as a valid ministry as an essential condition for union. Later on, the African Inland Mission withdrew from the proposed federation, because such a federation they thought would include Anglo-Catholics.

3. Attitude to Christian unity

East Africa is one of the most Christian regions in Africa. Every major branch of the Christian Church is represented. Some of these branches are Roman Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Orthodox, Seventh Day Adventist, Baptist and Methodist. There are also a number of theological positions such as conservatism, fundamentalism, liberalism and evangelicalism. In this region the Christian faith has spread denominationally and these divisions have caused confusion and strife. Brian Hearne in his book *Ecumenical Initiatives in East Africa* says:

The effect of the divisions that have given rise, not just to internal dissensions, but to churches that are doctrinally and structurally divided from one another, has been seen as a serious infidelity to the will of Christ and to the mission of the Church. The modern ecumenical movement is a response to this situation of sinful division, which has affected Africa as elsewhere, even though Africa was not involved in the original disputes that gave rise to the divisions it has inherited through the different mission churches.²²¹

Referring to the impact of the Gospel proclaimed by the divided church Gosbert T. M. Byamungu says:

Denominationalism and sectarianism weaken the strength of the gospel and its spirituality, and annul its kerygmatic potential. Its disunity and petty competitions weaken its power to face the challenges of pluralism, especially where other religions propose their programs of liberating the poor.²²²

While the Christian churches in East Africa have had valuable ecumenical initiatives on one hand, the very churches on the other hand have for quite long suffered from a tradition of hostility imposed on them by the 19th century missionaries who were unfriendly to one another. Referring to the Christmas message, Dr Kwame Nkrumah wondered how there could be goodwill “if Christians think more of their differences than of their wholehearted devotion to the God of all.”²²³

Today there is an increased awareness that the division between the Christian churches in East Africa is a scandal and does not correspond with Christ’s intention. Besides, divisions hinder a

221 Brian Hearne, *Ecumenical Initiatives in Eastern Africa* (Nairobi: AACC/AMECEA, 1982), 1.

222 Gosbert T. M. Byamungu, “Construing Newer Windows of Ecumenism for Africa,” in *The Ecumenical Review* 53, 3(July 2001): 351.

223 R. K. Orchard (ed.), *The Ghana Assembly of the IMC* (Edinburgh: SCM Press, 1958), 166.

plausible Christian witness in the East African society. This awareness has made Christians from different Christian traditions come together and strive for the restoration of unity among all Christians in East Africa. Christian traditions in East Africa consider participation in the restoration of Christian unity as an obligation of faith.

There are three kinds of ecumenism in East Africa, namely:

Natural ecumenism. This is in the form of extended family which is well illustrated by Anne Kerepia who says:

In my own culture, before even Christianity came, we knew how to share because we live in extended family situations. So we share our land together and we share our food and we all work together in a community – so we live in a community of people. So really, it goes right back, even before Christianity came to us.... It is born in you as human beings and you have that feeling of compassion for others, feeling for other people's plight, for somebody else's suffering, for their joy and you want to share all that.²²⁴

From time immemorial, people in East Africa have possessed certain values of unity. In many places, an African family is an ecumenical institution and it is common today to find in a family several members of different denominations living together without any sense of denominational differences. Their extended life-style makes them go beyond religious affiliations, which they consider to be unnatural impositions on Africans.

Enforced ecumenism. The harsh conditions in which people in East Africa live force Christians of different denominations to come together to work for survival. For instance, the dictatorship of Idi Amin in 1973 forced some of the Christian denominations to come together under the protection of the Anglican Church of Uganda. In 1976, the Roman Catholics and Anglican leaders sent a joint memorandum to Amin stating that his government was responsible for the killing, and disappearance of many Ugandans.

Structured ecumenism. Another name for structured ecumenism is institutionalized ecumenism. Structured ecumenism simply means that the ecumenical movement activities are so important that they cannot just be left to the spontaneous good will of the church. James R. Kelly says that “There are organizations focused on ecumenism and offices and careers within them to ensure that neither time, fashion nor indifference will cause them the question of church unity to disappear.”²²⁵

This is the kind of ecumenism which takes its impetus from the modern ecumenical movement. A good example of this type of ecumenism in East Africa is the Uganda Joint Christian Council which was established in 1963 by the then three leaders of the Catholic Church, the Anglican Church of Uganda and the Orthodox Church. It was established primarily to help the churches in Uganda to:

224 Quoted by Byamungu, “Construing Newer Windows of Ecumenism for Africa,” in The Ecumenical Review 53, 3(July 2001): 348.

225 James R.Kelly, “Spirals Not Cycles: Towards an Analytic Approach to the Sources and Stages of Ecumenism” in Review of Religious Research 32/1 (September 1990): 11.

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- i. Work toward greater mutual understanding and unity among the member churches.
- ii. Work with member churches to fulfill the great commission of preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world and make disciples of all nations.
- iii. Achieve cooperation by means of consultation, coordination, and action on practical matters of common interest among member churches.
- iv. Constructively engage with member churches, government, and other organizations in resolving conflict, enhancing harmonious co-existence and upholding human dignity.
- v. Make consultative recommendations to member churches and appropriate bodies for action on issues and matters agreed upon.²²⁶

Uganda Joint Christian Council runs the following programs:

i. Peace and consensus building. This is a program that seeks to assist key community leaders at various levels to appreciate that peace building is a collaborative effort; and to enable them become critical players in advocating for peace related policies and in peace and consensus building initiatives.

The program focuses on:

- a. Strengthening the collaboration of faith communities and other community leaders in peace and consensus activities and policy advocacy.
- b. Promoting inter-political organizations dialogue.
- c. Promoting and supporting local and cross border peace-building initiatives.
- d. Engaging with national and international stakeholders in addressing the proliferation of small arms in the region.
- e. Equipping community leaders with appropriate skills for advocacy, peace building and conflict resolution.

ii. Democracy and good governance. This program seeks to build capacity and to strengthen the involvement of community leaders and civil society organizations in working for a just society and to make government leaders and institutions accountable to the populace. The program focuses on good governance and human rights as well as economic justice.

On democracy, the Uganda Joint Christian Council's focus is on democracy monitoring which involves analyzing the functioning of key constitutional bodies charged with upholding law and order namely, the army, the police, prison, electoral commission, and the civil service. The aim of democracy monitoring is to ascertain to what extent these institutions are promoting the

226 These points are what Uganda Christian Council Profile calls aims.

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democratic culture among the people.

On good governance, the Uganda Joint Christian Council's focus is on increasing civil society organizations' engagement in the legislative process. It does this through:

- a. Information gathering and dissemination of parliamentary proceedings, legislation and other policy documents.
- b. Creating space for dialogue on draft registration and providing reports and memorandum to parliament with people's views of concern.
- c. Networking with other civil society organizations and other institutions to advocate and influence the policy legislative formulation process.

iii. Economic and social rights. This program pays special attention to economic justice issues. It is believed that poverty is responsible for much of the corruption, violence and instability in Uganda. Uganda Joint Christian Council therefore is engaged through the Economic and Social Rights program in:

- a. Guiding on how people can meet their daily practical needs without being corrupt and violent.
- b. Strengthening the involvement of community leaders toward the realization of practical and strategic needs by all human beings in order to improve their quality of life and ensure their human dignity.

Economic and social rights program also focuses on:

- a. Sensitizing community leaders on human rights and peoples' responsibilities.
- b. Equipping the target group with knowledge and skills in human rights monitoring.
- c. Empowering communities with knowledge and mechanisms on human rights institutions and organizations that can assist them redress human rights concerns.
- d. Increasing informed participation of the population in governance and development issues through sensitization and empowerment seminars and workshops.
- e. Monitoring accountability mechanisms and implementation of Poverty Eradication Action Plan.
- f. Influencing policy alternatives with regard to economic justice issues, such as privatization, globalization and the role of multinational companies particularly through carrying out advocacy activities with other civil society organizations involved in these initiatives.
- g. Involvement in fair trade policy advocacy because of the great influences both positive and

negative effects of trade on existence of poor communities and the pursuit for sustainable development.

h. Disseminating New Partnership for Africa's Development and sensitizing leaders in the member churches on opportunities and challenges under this framework.

In Uganda, Uganda Joint Christian Council has become the visible expression of the desire of Ugandan Christians to forget the past religious wars and work together for a better Christian life.

Negative attitude

Ecumenism at the international level is likely to fail unless the local Christian congregations take keen interest in it. Although there are some people and groups of Christians working hard at establishing a new ecumenical spirit in their respective denominations an underlying attitude of fear is always reflected in the way a lot of Christians from different denominations relate to one another. Probably because of this deep-seated fear, many Christians admit the existence of antagonism among Christians.

Five main reasons are usually given for this antagonism, and these are:

i. The influence of church leaders.

Many of the divisions in the modern church in East Africa are created and sustained by the self-interests of the church leaders. A lot of African Christians do not know and do not care about say the theological and the historical grounds for these divisions. What they are concerned about is doing something not approved by the church leaders. This fear has forced many of them into living with divisions and fighting harder to defend denominational Christianity than to preach the Gospel of love. John Mbiti says:

We duplicate Christian service and our meager financial and human resources of the church under the umbrella of trying to give an Anglican, or a Roman Catholic or a Methodist witness.²²⁷

Church leaders therefore hold a place of primary importance in the development of ecumenical relationships. On the role of church leaders in the advancement of ecumenism, Titi Dina says:

African church leaders are called to develop a new, life-giving approach among the people of Africa. God has predestined them to lead his peoples; this is a divine calling, a rare status which must not be abused by failing to comply with the Master's directives. The new approach which we seek from African leaders is that they resolve anew to want to make ecumenism effective on the continent.²²⁸

ii. Persistence of attitudes of mutual fear, suspicion and mistrust.

There is always a fear among Christians, which is related to the importance of the church group as a source of the individual's sense of identity. In that case, the strongest fear is that someone

227 John Mbiti, "Diversity, Divisions and Denominationalism," in Barrett et al, Kenya Churches Handbook, 145.

228 Titi Dina, "Life-Giving and Healing Ecumenism in Africa," The Ecumenical Review 53, 3(July 2001): 383.

might try to convert a person to another group, so that he or she would cease to be who he or she is. There is still therefore much suspicion of one another's real intentions and regarding the evangelical inspiration of one another's programs and actions. Other Christians are afraid of being absorbed by the more powerful denominations, while others express mistrust toward groups that insist on certain negative and scandalous situations to attack denominations.

iii. Exclusivist attitude

This is when Christians see their own Christian denomination, tradition, their understanding of God as the one and only correct way, excluding all others. There is always a fear of associating with those Christians belonging to other denominations. The right attitude toward others could be promoted through combined social action such as helping the refugees to settle. Christians from different denominations can come together to help refugees settle in their new places. When Christians demonstrate together their Christian love of their neighbor they cease to be strangers to each other.

iv. Religious prejudice and ignorance

While the Pentecostal and African Instituted Churches are often not regarded by some Christians as genuine ecclesial communities, the Roman Catholic too is regarded by some Christians as not a Christian organization. In January 2006 the Conference secretary of the Methodist Church in Kenya acknowledged the existence of fear and mistrust between denominations. He said:

There are some Christian groups who still don't believe the Catholic Church, for example, is a Christian organization....There are those who fear its age and its presence everywhere. These are stereotypes we are working on.²²⁹

This attitude of self-enclosed superiority continues to cause problems in East Africa. Religious prejudice and ignorance can be overcome mainly through Bible study, group discussions and prayer. It is through discussions that members gain insights and understanding on those issues that cause religious prejudice. This is because discussions are not aimed at proving one's point correct and others wrong but at understanding. Praying together is important if the group is to get to know each other better and listen to what God is saying to the two groups.

v. Negative attitude about other denominations.

Negative attitude about other denominations is one of the major obstacles to ecumenical understanding and progress. This point is well illustrated by the Kenyan Roman Catholic Bishops' fear of other denominations' activities. They said:

We do not wish to be naïve in calling for ecumenism at every level of the Kenyan Church....We know that many of our Catholic faithful feel pressured by individuals of other Christian denominations to reject their Catholic faith and to leave the Catholic Church....We understand also that many priests feel particularly worried about this and that a call to ecumenism is not prominent in their minds.²³⁰

229 Kenya Catholics urge Church Unity, but Warn of Challenges” in Ecumenical News International Bulletin 01(January 2006): 6.

230 “Kenya Catholics Urge Church Unity, but Warn of Challenges” in Ecumenical News International Bulletin 01(January 2006): 6.

Such a fear usually finds expression in religious prejudices, which cloud the consciousness of many Christians and make it easy for them to avoid facing the truth of what others are and do.

One of the easiest and most common methods of assuring ourselves of our own superiority over others is by putting them into clearly labeled categories. Labeled categories are perhaps more difficult to overcome between Roman Catholics and Protestants because from the beginning, Catholic and Protestant identities in East Africa are marked with opposition to one another. For instance, in Uganda there was rivalry from the very beginning of the Christian mission. People like Alexander Mackay and Simon Lourdel had little understanding of one another. Mackay thought that Lourdel was deliberately frustrating the Anglican ministry, while the deep-seated Lourdel's suspicion of what he saw as Anglican power-seeking did nothing to make the relationship smooth.

vi. Lack of ecumenical ideals

In all the Christian denominations, there are members who have not been reached by the ecumenical ideals. Some of those Christians think that ecumenism compromises their faith and is an admission of an insufficiency in their Christian tradition, which they are not ready to accept. They usually conclude that ecumenicity betrays Christian truth and serves anti-Christ rather than Christ.

vii. Historical memories

Although much has been achieved in places with regard to the purification of historical memories, some Christian denominations say that the memory of past events, remote or more recent, still impedes or hinders ecumenical relations. These old traditions of bitterness, mistrust and hostility have been passed on through the years as part of the identity of African Christians who belong to one or the other of the missionary churches, usually through no direct choice of their own. It is extremely difficult to counteract these negative attitudes, but this should be a priority for church leaders in all the churches and at every level of the life of the churches today, when these old traditions are outdated, and when the genuine theological reasons for division among the churches are being gradually overcome.

Positive attitude

In spite the heritage of divisions, in East Africa, the ecumenical landscape has been in the process of change and there are indications of the existence of positive attitude. These indicators are:

i. Common witness among Christians

At the national level, there has been a growing mutual understanding between church leaders of the various denominations in East Africa leading to joint activities. For instance, in Uganda despite all religious and political problems, there has also been a strong interest among many Christians in trying to work for Christian unity through the Uganda Joint Christian Council. The aim of this council is to assist the churches to come together, to listen together to the voice of Christ and the Holy Spirit, a voice of love, forgiveness and understanding. The Council is a

visible expression in Uganda of the desire of Ugandan Christians to forget the past and work together for a better future. The attitude of the member churches of the Uganda Joint Christian Council toward each other has become more positive as a result of working together on common projects.

There are a number of joint activities that promote Christian unity, mutual trust, respect and common witness among Christian Churches in East Africa. These include: the joint Medical Stores in Uganda, the Joint Refuge Services in Kenya and the joint Bible translation.

ii. Traditional concerns for peace, harmony and forgiveness

The ground for more positive attitude to ecumenism on the East African scene is already present in the traditional concerns for peace, harmony and forgiveness in the community. Africans are naturally a forgiving people. This however, does not mean that they are morally superior or more religious than other people when it comes to keeping peace, harmony and unity as a result of forgiveness. Rather Africans consider forgiveness to be a social virtue which implies much more than words of absolution. It involves restoration to fellowship, the re-establishment of links which have been severed by the past behavior of the one who needs to be forgiven.

iii. The traditional idea of extended family and life in community.

There is much ground for hope in the positive traditions of East Africa for a new approach to ecumenism. Africans are well known for their deep sense of extended family and life in community that transcends denominational distinctions. Life in the community is one of the distinctive contributions of Africa to the modern ecumenical movement. On this point Sebastian Bakare says:

Our world is a divided one, and the task of the ecumenical movement from the outset has been to try to build bridges across these divisions (in the churches). The stumbling blocks on the road to unity cannot be removed by individuals, but only by those committed to building a community of communities. The African entry-point on the road towards church unity is thus a communal approach.²³¹

iv. Enthusiasm of the young generation.

The young generation of Christians is interested in world ecumenism. They are never concerned with confessional differences even if their roots are in the anti-ecumenical past. What matters to them is their faith in Jesus Christ.

There are two basic conditions for real ecumenical commitment namely, renewal of the Christian Church and a radical change of attitude toward people of other denominations. As regards the renewal of the Christian Church, the Roman Catholic Decree on Ecumenism says:

Every renewal of the Church essentially consists in an increase of fidelity to her own calling. Undoubtedly this explains the dynamism of the movement towards unity. Christ summons the Church, as she goes her pilgrim way, to that continued reformation of which she always had need, insofar as she is an institution of men

231 Bakare, The Drumbeats of Life: Jubilee in an African Context, 48.

here on earth. Therefore, if the influence of events or of times had led to deficiencies in conduct, in Church discipline, or even in the formulation of doctrine (which must be carefully distinguished from the deposit of faith), these should be appropriately rectified at the proper moment.

4. Some of the achievements of the ecumenical movement in East Africa

Ecumenical cooperation in East Africa has taken various forms. For instance, churches have worshiped together at thanksgiving services, and during the celebration of National Bible Week. By far the best examples of successful ecumenical cooperation in East Africa are:

Translation and the use of the Bible. For quite long Africa has been an active participant in Bible translation. In the 3rd and 4th centuries there was a translation of the Bible into the Bohairic and Sahidic dialects of Coptic in Egypt. A translation of the Bible in the present day Ethiopia was made in the 5th and 6th centuries. The first New Testament was printed and published in Africa in the present day Ethiopia in 1549, and the first biblical passage translated in an African language south of the Sahara was the Lord's Prayer in 1624. Beginning in the late 19th century missionary societies actively promoted Bible translation on the continent as a first step toward evangelization. In 1816 the Gospel of Mark was translated and published in one of the Sierra Leone languages. In 1835 Madagascar produced the first complete Bible. In 1857 a complete Bible was translated in one of the languages of Botswana and South Africa. Ghana had a complete Bible translated in 1866 and in East Africa the Bible was translated by Krapf in 1844.

Stephen Neill says:

What has brought Protestant missions together more than anything else has been fellowship in the work of the translation of the Bible.²³²

Vital Christian life requires Bible reading. The Bible is the most widely read book in East Africa, having been translated into many African languages. It is believed to be the most influential document in the lives of most people in East Africa. Among the vital books owned by a Christian in East Africa as elsewhere in Christian Africa is a Bible. At first its translation was not coordinated. Missionaries of one denomination would embark on the work of translating, while another group of a different denomination would duplicate the effort by launching their own translation. Sometimes different spellings would be used, even for basic words such as the name of Jesus, and this led to great confusion.

Since the coming into existence of All Africa Conference of Churches great variety of organizations and missionary enterprises have worked collaboratively to ensure that Africans have access to the Word of God in clear and readable translations. Contrary to what used to be the case during the missionary era, Bible translators working under the direction of All Africa Conference of Churches in East Africa are now competent first language speakers of the particular languages themselves. No longer is it as was the case in the past that one or more

232 Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions* (London: Penguin, 1964), 540.

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Western missionaries would take the lead and then have a few first language speakers serve as “language informers.” All Africa Conference of Churches places the competent first language speaker of the language at the very heart of Bible translation to make sure that the translation is done properly.

The advance of ecumenism has led to the attempt to standardize the Bible translation in many languages. Remarkable progress has been made on joint translations in East Africa. Joint translation leads to joint publication and use. Although there is a great need for ecumenical education in the use of the Bible at the local church level, the Bible has already become a strong force for unity among Catholics, Anglicans and Protestants. All Christians be they Roman Catholics, Protestants or Anglicans, “appropriate the words of the scriptures and assume that they are the intended audience.”²³³

The celebration of Bible Sunday each year on the first Sunday of December is one of the joint church activities in East Africa. In addition to a special sermon on the role of the Bible in Christian life, a collection is taken up for the support of the Bible Society and for Bible work in general. In many churches in East Africa Sunday Lectionaries based on approved common Bible translations are being used. The establishment of national Bible societies, with both Catholic, Anglican and Protestant participation, is a significant ecumenical achievement. This is based on a common theological insight about the centrality of the Bible in the life of the church, for, while there are differing interpretations of the Bible among churches, every church places it at the center of its life.

Due to Bible translation, the following activities have been archived:

i) Working in cooperation with others. One of the major goals of Bible translation is to work in cooperation with other churches and Christian organizations to provide people with the best tool they can have to grow as children of God. An active Christian community therefore needs resources for inspiring, informing and equipping Christian witness. These resources are based on the Bible. The translation process itself has provided East African Christians with excellent opportunities for the acquisition of those resources.

ii) Building a connection between the present and the past. There is an in-built desire in the Christian communities in East Africa to meet together for Bible study and worship, to encourage each other and to share their Christian experiences. The Scriptures in the language of the people have become a reference for evangelism, teaching, preaching and devotion. In the end, the translated Scriptures in the various local languages of East Africa have given a means of connecting with God’s faithful people in the past by reflecting on their experiences.

iii) Developing an indigenous church. Translated Scriptures have become a crucial element in a the indigenization of the church in East Africa. Translated Scriptures have helped promote a truly appropriate indigenous worship style and teaching style in many churches in East Africa. It is not

233 Musimbi Kanyoro, “Reading the Bible from an African Perspective,” in The Ecumenical Review 51, 1(January 1999): 18.

meaningful simply to indigenize church structures because an indigenous church has to be the living response of people to the life-demands of the message in the way they understand it and interpret it. When Christians in East Africa are denied access to Scriptures in their local language, there can easily be a lack of ownership and relevance.

All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC). The All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) is a pan-African fellowship of Christian Churches in Africa. By the time of the Eighth All Africa Conference of Churches Assembly, which sat in Yaoundé, Cameroon from November 22-27, 2003 there were 169 All Africa Conference of Churches member churches in 39 countries with a population of 120 million Christians across the continent.²³⁴

When the World Council of Churches was formed in 1948, there were at least two African Churches involved namely, the Egyptian Coptic Church and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. But it was not until 1958 that leaders of missionary churches in Africa met to consider forming themselves into an ecumenical body. From January 10-19, 1958 a gathering of African Christians met in Ibadan, Nigeria with the theme “The Church in Changing Africa.” The Ibadan All Africa Church Conference was attended by two hundred representatives of church bodies from twenty five African countries. This was a much more widely representative gathering of Africans for any purpose in the history of the continent.²³⁵ The most remarkable feature of the conference was that “here for the first time the African Church found its voice.”²³⁶ Previously it was the missionaries who spoke to the outside world as interpreters of the continent, the people and the church. During the Ibadan conference, the non-Africans were urged to keep quiet. The report says: It was most heartening to see the African churchmen and church women themselves come forward one after the other, speaking capably, confidently and effectively; and to watch the growing sense of personal responsibility, initiative and commitment with which they dealt with the issues before them.

The major themes the gathering tackled were:

- i. The church, youth and family.
- ii. The church and economic life.
- iii. The church and citizenship.
- iv. The church and culture.
- v. The growing church.

The report of the first All Africa Church Conference says:

Here, for the first time, the Church in Africa found its voice. The conference was dominated by African delegates. It was designed to be this way because the conference was called for the specific purpose of affording the African church

234 Elias Massicame and Mitch Odero, “The All Africa Conference of Churches 8th General Assembly,” in The All Africa Conference of Churches Bulletin, 4(November 14, 2003).

235 “The Church in Changing Africa,” AACC Report Ibadan 1958 Assembly, 5.

236 “The Church in Changing Africa,” AACC Report Ibadan 1958 Assembly, 7.

leaders an opportunity to speak their minds on church matters.²³⁷

Delegates were of the view that the values of the conference should not be lost through the failure to continue the fellowship. The delegates passed a resolution establishing a Provisional and Continuation Committee charged with the responsibility of establishing African church unity. It reads:

In view of the unanimous conviction of the members of this first All Africa Church Conference, that the conference has been of immense value as a means of fellowship and understanding between the churches of this vast continent, and in view of the many important issues raised and recommendations made in the course of the meetings, be it resolved that this conference name a committee here to consult with the Christian Councils of Africa, church bodies and other agencies concerned with the witness of Christ in Africa, in order to give consideration to the implementation of the report of this conference and, particularly, as to the appointment of a continuation committee and/ or a regional secretary.²³⁸

Members of the Committee were:

Sir Francis Akanu Ibiam

Esther L. Coker

Henry Makulu

Julius J. Mignel

Jean Keller

Stefano Moshi

Jean Lubikulu

Alan S. Paton

T. Rasendrasahina

George W. Carpenter²³⁹

Sir Francis Akanu Ibiam was appointed chairman of the Provisional Committee.

The delegates left Ibadan determined to meet the challenges of the time. In its message to the churches in Africa, the conference said:

The continent of Africa will see unparalleled events and changes during the rest of this century - welcomed by some - feared by others.... We believe that the Christian Church in Africa will play its role as champion, teacher, counselor and shepherd during these crucial years.... We are humbly aware of our responsibility to God on this continent and dedicate ourselves anew to their performance trusting that we shall be led and supported by our fellow Christians throughout Africa and the world.²⁴⁰

237 "Drumbeats from Kampala," in Report of the First Assembly of the All Africa Conference of Churches (April 20-30): 5.

238 "Drumbeats from Kampala," in Report of the First Assembly of the All Africa Conference of Churches (April 20-30): 6.

239 "The Church in Changing Africa," AACC Report Ibadan 1958 Assembly, 17.

240 "Drumbeats from Kampala," in Report of the First Assembly of the All Africa Conference of Churches

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The work of the Continuation Committee, which was appointed following the 1958 Ibadan Conference, led to the birth of the All Africa Conference of Churches during its maiden General Assembly on April 20 to 30, 1963 in Kampala, Uganda.

Prior to the Kampala conference, the Continuation Committee brought churches together to discuss issues related to Christian Family Life, Christian Literature, and Christian Education. These conferences prepared ground for the Kampala Assembly in 1963 in which churches of Africa triumphantly declared their acceptance of the responsibilities that now were theirs. There were a number of immediate tasks facing the All Africa Conference of Churches when it came into existence including the battle against colonialism in Africa. The theme of the Kampala Assembly was "Freedom and Unity in Christ" and the delegates addressed the colonial situation in the spirit of nationalism that permeated the political scene of the 1960s. Just as African colonies looked forward to a time when they would be free to rule themselves, the Christian churches too, looked forward to their role in an independent Africa. Although by 1963 there were very few African countries that were independent, soon many more nations took the example of the present day Ghana, which became independent of European nations in 1957. Such political developments affected the church in Africa, which had for quite long been seen as an agent of colonialism.

During the age of African nationalism, the World Council of Churches sought to address issues of war and injustice and yet Africa's political climate could not allow it to operate directly in Africa. What was needed was a regional Christian agency to consider how the World Council member churches could best meet the challenges of African nationalism. The first assembly of All Africa Conference of Churches that took place in Kampala was attended by five hundred delegates representing one hundred different churches in Africa. It was during this conference that the delegates approved the establishment of the All Africa Conference of Churches. The message of Kampala to the churches in Africa asked a very important question which is still vital for the church in Africa today:

Why, in Cape Town, Dakar, in Douala and Nairobi, on the plains and by the rivers of this land, must we continue in those divisions, which crucify the Lord until He returns?

This was the beginning of a new chapter in the history of the church in Africa. Commenting on this new chapter, the Chairman of the Provisional and Continuation Committee said:

This assembly brings to a close a period of great expectation which has seen the phenomenal development of the AACC and opens a new chapter in the life and history of the Church in Africa.²⁴¹

The pioneers of the All Africa Conference of Churches Assembly were determined to work for the development of dignity and a mature personality in Christ. They encouraged the member churches to actively participate in the building of the African continent on the strong foundation

(April 20-30): 7.

241 "Drumbeats from Kampala," in Report of the First Assembly of the All Africa Conference of Churches (April 20-30): 9.

of Christian spirituality. This point is well brought out by Nyambura Njoroge when she says:

Our fathers and mothers in the faith, following the clarion call of Ibadan in 1958, that the Christian Church must seek to ensure that the new Africa is built on the strong foundation of Christian spirituality, declared that the AACC must lead in a commitment to the renewal of Christian Spirituality and Africanness by moving the African Churches to see the Gospel of Jesus Christ as a way of life rather than a creed to merely be recited. They declared that the AACC must help Africans to make Jesus, and not their denominations, the sole object of their faith, understanding the Church to be the messenger to the world, and in our case, primarily to Africa.²⁴²

All Africa Conference of Churches Assembly, Kampala achieved the following:

- i. Established the post of a general secretary and S. H. Amisshah was appointed as its first general secretary.
- ii. Adopted a constitution which contains the following statement of basis:

Believing that the purpose of God for the churches in Africa is life together in a common obedience to him for the doing of His will in the world, the churches and the National Christian Councils of Africa subscribing hereto have constituted the All Africa Conference of Churches as a fellowship of consultation and co-operation within the wider fellowship of the universal church...The All Africa Conference of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and only Savior according to the Scriptures and therefore seek to fulfill together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.²⁴³
- iii. Located the All Africa Conference of Churches secretariat at the Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation in Kitwe, Zambia from where it was transferred in 1965, to Nairobi.

On membership, the assembly said:

- i. The All Africa Conference of Churches shall be composed of those churches in Africa which express a desire to join the All Africa Conference of Churches, which accepts its basis and which satisfy such criteria as the assembly may prescribe.
- ii. National Christian Councils in Africa which express a desire to join the All Africa Conference of Churches, and which accept its basis, may become associate members of All Africa Conference of Churches. They may, however, appoint not more than one delegate per Council to

242 Nyambura Njoroge, "Editorial," in Ecumenical Review: The Quarterly of the World Council of Churches, 53, 3 (2001): 293.

243 "Drumbeats from Kampala," in Report of the First Assembly of the All Africa Conference of Churches (April 20-30): 63.

the assembly, with power to vote.²⁴⁴

The All Africa Conference of Churches is program-oriented and its functions were stated in 1963 as follows:

- i. To keep before the churches and National Christian Councils the demands of the Gospel pertaining to their life and mission, for evangelism, for witness in society, for service and for unity, and to this end to promote consultation and action among the churches and councils.
- ii. To provide for a common program of study and research.
- iii. To encourage closer relationships and mutual sharing of experience among the churches in Africa through visits, consultation and conference, and the circulation of information.
- iv. To assist the churches in finding, sharing, and placing personnel and utilizing other resources for the most effective prosecution of their common task.
- v. To assist the churches in their common work of leadership training, lay and clerical, for the task of the churches today.
- vi. Without prejudice to its own autonomy, to collaborate with the World Council of Churches and other appropriate agencies in such ways as may be mutually agreed.²⁴⁵

The formation of the All Africa Conference of Churches in Kampala in 1963 provided a new forum through which African Christians in the member churches of the organization could meet and exchange views. Since 1963 there has been remarkable increase in ecumenical discussions on theological matters between scholars and church leaders of various denominations. During the ecumenical discussions the originating vision of the All Africa Conference of Churches, which is freedom and Unity in Christ, is always kept in focus by the scholars and churches leaders.

The various departments of the All Africa Conference of Churches have since 1963 convened workshops, consultations, seminars and other meetings to discuss the priorities of the member churches. Such gatherings have been occasions for the participants to refresh and enrich their theological insights through fellowship, study and exchange of experiences. All Africa Conference of Churches as an ecumenical body links up with other ecumenical bodies like the World Council of Churches in other parts of the world. Since its inception, the All Africa Conference of Churches has been the means through which the Christian denominations in Africa have come together to tackle issues that face the African continent, as well as giving voice to the voiceless especially the youth and women. Within the Social and Economic Justice Team

244 Information on membership is got from "Drumbeats from Kampala," in Report of the First Assembly of the All Africa Conference of Churches (April 20-30): 64.

245 The information on the functions of the All Africa Conference of Churches is got from "Drumbeats from Kampala," in Report of the First Assembly of the All Africa Conference of Churches (April 20-30): 63-64.

of the All Africa Conference of Churches, there is the Women's Desk. The Women's Desk came into existence immediately after the 5th All Africa Conference of Churches General Assembly, which took place in Lomé Togo in 1987. The 5th General Assembly delegates stressed the urgent need for mobilizing women for full and active participation in church and society activities. Since 1987 the Women's program of the All Africa Conference of Churches has mobilized women for full and active participation in church and society affairs.

The All Africa Conference of Churches Women program acknowledges women's vital role in both practical and symbolic life-giving activities. It makes the church in Africa aware of women's subordinate position in church and society. Ensures that women are not learning in isolation, but together with men in their respective communities. Seeks to make a connection between local social justice issues and international or global issues in seeking alternative gender sensitive approaches to development which are just, participatory and sustainable. Advocates for and facilitates the mainstreaming of gender perspectives into the All Africa Conference of Churches programs and policies. Strengthens the capacity of church-women in Africa through training, skills acquisition and resource material production. Increases and enhances the women's opportunities for networking with other agencies and organizations working with women's issues. Has developed the gender policy and guidelines for the All Africa Conference of Churches and has built the capacity of women for political and economic emancipation and for their active and effective participation in leadership in church and society.

With the changing face of the Christian faith with the center of gravity of the Christian world shifting to the southern hemisphere, in many way the future of ecumenism will be decided in Africa. The biggest challenge facing the All Africa Conference of Churches therefore is the shift of Christianity from the Western world to Africa, which brings with it doctrinal, liturgical and spiritual shift as well. And yet the institutional structures of All Africa Conference of Churches are patterned after such institutional structures in the Western world. This calls the All Africa Conference of Churches to become more African-centered in its ecumenical commitment.

What is an assembly of All Africa Conference of Churches?

An assembly of All Africa Conference of Churches is an occasion when the member churches together examine the global issues that affect their life and witness in Africa in order to reach a certain measure of consensus for common action. The assembly does not legislate for the member churches. However, the moral force of the consensus poses a direct challenge to their style of life and engagement in the world.²⁴⁶

Since the first official General Assembly in Kampala in 1963 there have been more assemblies with different themes, namely: Abidjan 1969 with the theme "Working with Christ in Africa Today," Lusaka 1974 with the theme "Living No Longer for Ourselves but for Christ," Nairobi 1981 with the theme "Following the Light of Jesus Christ," Lomé 1987 with the theme "You

246 For detailed information on the AACC assembly, see *The Struggle Continues*, Lusaka 1974, p. 7.

shall be my Witnesses,” Harare 1992 with the theme “Abundant Life in Jesus Christ,” Addis Ababa 1997 with the theme “Troubled but not destroyed,” Yaoundé 2003 with the theme “Come Let us Rebuild.” Yaoundé was the first Assembly in the new millennium and the eighth Assembly since 1963.

Abidjan 1969 AACC Assembly

The Second General Assembly was held in Abidjan, Cote d’Ivoire from September 2-12, 1969. Its theme was “Working with Christ in Africa Today.” There were thirty denominations from forty-two countries representing more than 130 churches and Christian. The Abidjan Assembly gave an opportunity to Christians from different member churches of the AACC and other participants to worship, study, discuss and have fellowship together. It was describes as a rallying point for effective engagement in the demands of the post-independent era of Africa. The Assembly notes the various achievements African countries and churches had registered at the same time urged countries and churches to work toward total liberation of the African people from political and economic oppression. The Assembly said:

The people of Africa have seen more achievements but there is much more to be accomplished. While millions of our people are free and independent, millions are still oppressed. Racial, tribal and ethnic discrimination endanger our security and cause dissension, social injustices prevail...It is within this context that we are called to serve with Christ in Africa today.²⁴⁷

The Abidjan 1969 Assembly looked back at the first 6 years of the AACC and noted both areas of progress and areas that needed reform.

Lusaka 1974 AACC Assembly

The Third General Assembly was held in Lusaka, Zambia from May 12- 14, 1974. Its theme was “The Struggle Continues.” At the Assembly it was discovered that living for Christ was no longer for the Christians themselves. Rather it meant identifying themselves with the complexity of liberation struggles that were going on in Africa at that time. The Assembly urged Churches in Africa to accept to be set free by Christ before they could share in His liberating and renewing activities. The Assembly said:

Before we can achieve for Africa what is expected of us, before we can become a society which lives wholly and exclusively for others, we must call upon the churches in Africa to allow Christ to set them free from: 1. theological conservatism; so that we can understand, interpret, apply and experience the message of the Gospel. 2. Denominationalism and out-molded church structures, and rigidity and timidity in choosing them, so that we maybe led by the Holy Spirit to a reality of oneness in Him. 3. Fear to proclaim the new message of redemption and denounce evil boldly. 4. Hypocrisy that leads to denouncing evil abroad and condoning it at home. 5. Selfishness in sharing with one another our resources of manpower, skills, time, finances, so that God may lead us into a rediscovery of our missionary role in the use of these resources. 6. Easy

247 “Engagement,” Abidjan 1969 Assembly, 71.

dependency upon foreign money and men without making efforts to educate ourselves for self-reliance.²⁴⁸

Nairobi 1981 AACC Assembly

The 4th Assembly was held in Nairobi, Kenya from July 31-August 2, 1981 with the theme “Following in the Light of Jesus Christ.” There were 450 participants out of which 150 were delegates representing 94 churches. The past seven years were full of challenges for the All Africa Conference of Churches. First, the moratorium that was imposed by Lusaka was met with a loss of political and financial control of the AACC. Secondly, the leadership of AACC suffered a setback when General Secretary Carr resigned his post. He was not replaced until 1978 when Sara G. Schemata joined AACC as the General Secretary. Schemata served for only a year and left. He was replaced in 1978 by Kodwo A. Ankrah who also resigned in 1980. Ankrah was replaced by Maxime V. Rafransoa, who had formerly worked at the World Council of Churches. He was the General Secretary during the 4th Assembly in 1981. The delegates therefore gathered in Nairobi ready to discuss the future of the AACC.

Lomé 1987 AACC Assembly

The 5th Assembly was held in Lomé, Togo from August 18-25, 1987 with the theme “You shall be my Witnesses.” This was a unique assembly for the following reasons:

- i. It archived a record participation of member churches. There were 600 delegates from 138 member churches.²⁴⁹
- ii. It met without the Assembly’s President and the General Secretary.
- iii. For the first time, there was a reasonable balance between the clergy, the youth, women and lay persons.

The Assembly Theme “You Shall be my Witnesses” spoke to the realities the Church in Africa was confronted with in its daily life. The Church in Africa was being challenged by social, economic and political crisis that demanded an unequivocal theological stance. Again Africa’s deepening material and moral crisis demanded that the church spoke and lived in truth.

The assembly also grappled with such issues as hunger, poverty, colonization. Unlike in the previous assemblies, the issue of women and youth participation was dealt with conclusively.

Harare 1992 AACC Assembly

The 6th AACC Assembly was held in Harare, Zimbabwe from October 25-29, 1992 with the theme “Abundant Life in Jesus Christ.” The assembly was convened at a time of deep crisis on the African continent, with many churches facing a major crossroad. Many countries in Africa were faced with armed conflicts as well as economic and political restructuring. The theme for the assembly was described as:

Wholehearted, responsible and accountable self-giving...Africa is rich in human

248 “The Struggle Continues,” AACC Report Lusaka 1974 Assembly, 14.

249 “You Shall be my Witnesses,” AACC Report Lomé 1987 Assembly, 1.

resources. Even in the most dire circumstances, there is an abundance which can be measured not in monetary terms, but only in terms of compassionate human initiative.²⁵⁰

The key issues that were discussed included:

- i. The effects of slavery and colonization. With many countries in Africa being independent, what had changed was the color and nationality of the oppressors. The former colonial countries continued to exercise power over Africa by remote control.
- ii. The struggle to be free from dictatorship and one party system of government. At this time, dictators were clinging to power to the detriment of the human community. For many countries the attraction to multi-party system of government was based on very shallow understanding of democracy.
- iii. Ethnic clashes and civil wars. This was a sign of the failure to understand the cost of the spirit of nationalism.
- iv. Militarization. Militarization of the local communities in Africa had a negative effect on all people especially the young.
- v. Bad governance. Many governments in Africa exhibited double standards in their utterances and actions.
- vi. Education. Problems in many countries in Africa often led to disruptions in education. For instance universities would close down for many months.
- vii. Economic resources. Lack of economic resources often made Africans vulnerable to conditions dictated by outside countries. Many countries in Africa experienced unreliable economic base that would propel the economic growth. This lack often created an infrastructure gap between grassroots and experts as it pertained to economic strategies. On the other hand there was mismanagement of the meager resources by the African governments.²⁵¹

Addis Ababa 1997 AACC Assembly

In the 7th Assembly held in Addis Ababa from October 1 to 10, 1997, the All Africa Conference of Churches echoed the cry of the African people in hope under the theme: Troubled But Not Destroyed (2Cor. 4: 8-9). In so doing, the All Africa Conference of Churches committed all the people of God in Africa in a process of renewal capable of assisting their communities face the challenges at the dawn of the 3rd millennium. African churches were challenged to be active in all aspects of community life in order to be part and parcel of the development process. It was envisioned that in so doing, churches would be part of the engagement to free the troubled African communities from social, political, economic, cultural and spiritual hardships that are threaten to destroy them.

In choosing the theme: Troubled But Not Destroyed, the Assembly affirmed that in spite of all the troubles facing the African continent, African peoples are not destroyed; an affirmation of hope for the continent.²⁵² The key issues for the Assembly were:

250 “Abundant Life in Jesus Christ,” AACC Report Harare 1992 Assembly, 7.

251 “Abundant Life in Jesus Christ,” AACC Report Harare 1992 Assembly, 16-17.

252 For detailed information on the theme “Troubled But Not Destroyed, see A Report of AACC 8th General

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- i. Political – the Assembly tackled situations of conflict, injustice, violation of human rights and the mismanagement of public office in Africa.
- ii. Socio-economical – the Assembly was concerned with the crushing external debt burden, poverty, illiteracy, disease, ecological degradation and moral decadence in Africa.
- iii. Ecclesial- the Assembly was unhappy with the divisions, competition, fear, hatred, silence on critical issues, acquiescence, marginalization of children and the discrimination of women and the youth within the church.²⁵³

In light of what the Assembly tackled, the message to the Church in Africa that was signed on October 10, 1997 concluded in these words:

As members of the Church in Africa we commit ourselves to stand up in the name of God, to be part of all efforts directed toward the critical political, social and economic transformation of our beloved continent. God bless the Nations of Africa. God bless the AACC, God bless the Church in Africa.²⁵⁴

Yaoundé 2003 AACC Assembly

The 8th Assembly was held in Yaoundé, Cameroon from November 22-27, 2003 with the theme “Come Let us Rebuild.” The Assembly called on the churches in Africa to continue where they left off at Kampala when they were called to participate effectively in the building of the African continent. The background of the theme was that like Jerusalem during the time of prophet Nehemiah, the African continent had gone through many types of destruction such as bad governance, corruption, global economic injustice and emergence of HIV/AIDS pandemic.

The assembly themes was an open invitation to all Africans, Christian and non-Christians alike and to all men and women of good-will to unite for the purpose of reconstructing the African continent.

The main objectives of the Assembly were:

- i. To review the work of the AACC since the 7th Assembly.
- ii. To prepare for a common future engagement by churches of the challenges facing Africa in particular and the world in general.

The following were key issues that were discussed:

- a.** Reinforcing the foundation.
- b.** Setting the continental agenda.
- c.** Partnership building.
- d.** Celebrating world ecumenism.
- e.** Strategies for rebuilding and celebrating hope for Africa.²⁵⁵

Assembly, published by AACC, 2006.

253 “Troubled But Not Destroyed,” AACC Report Addis Ababa 1997 Assembly, 6.

254 “Troubled But Not Destroyed,” AACC Report Addis Ababa 1997 Assembly , 7.

255 “Come Let Us Rebuild” AACC Report Yaounde 2003 Assembly, vii.

Fellowship of Christian Council in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa

Michael Kinnamon and Brian E. Cope say:

The existence of councils of churches constitutes in numerous countries an ecumenical fact which the non-member churches cannot ignore and may well challenge the churches in countries where such councils do not exist.²⁵⁶

The National Councils of Churches' contribution to the unity of the church in East Africa is the membership of Roman Catholic Church in the ecumenical movement. The Roman Catholic Church is the full member of all the National Councils of Churches in East Africa. This is as a result of the Second Vatican Council's recognition of the ecclesial character of other Christian Churches.

The National Councils of Churches have enabled participating churches to present a united voice on vital issues of national importance to governments, or to issue joint statements and pastoral letters on some national situations. In East Africa, the national councils have formed a Fellowship of Christian Councils in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa.

Prior to the Nairobi meeting the idea to form a fellowship of Christian Councils was floated at a meeting that took place in Johannesburg in November 1996, South Africa under the auspices of the All Africa Conference of Churches. The purpose of the Johannesburg meeting was to:

- i. Share information on the situation in the Great Lakes Region.
- ii. Reflect on common Christian witness.
- iii. Draw out general principles and strategies for developing a common approach to the problems in the region.

The keys issues that were identified included:

- α. Insecurity.
- β. Instability and violence.

During this meeting, a core group and the formation of a Platform of Action was realized to reflect on the situation in the region and develop an understanding and approach to the issues of peace, justice and reconciliation based on common principles of Christian virtues. Similar meetings were held in Entebbe – Uganda in March 1997, Kigali – Rwanda in August 1997 and Geneva in 1997. These meetings brought together members of the core group and ecumenical partners from the West. Four basic convictions emerged from these meetings. These are:

- i. It was considered imperative that the churches in the region remain at the center of regional initiatives and agenda setting.
- ii. It was emphasized that churches in the region must own the process of peace and reconciliation at all levels.
- iii. It was agreed that churches were best placed to define their priorities in partnership with churches and other agencies outside the region.

256 Michael Kinnamon and Brian E. Cope (eds.), The Ecumenical Movement: An Anthology Key Texts and Voices (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997), 477.

- iv. The formation of the fellowship as a milestone in the long ecumenical journey. This would help the churches in the region to walk together and collectively address critical issues in the region.²⁵⁷

through which the councils of the churches in the region

The Fellowship of Christian Councils in the Great Lakes Region was launched during a meeting of church leaders that was held at Barclays Bank Staff Training Center, Nairobi – Kenya from March 2-5, 1999. The meeting drew together representatives of 10 councils and churches, Great Lakes Advocacy Network, All Africa Conference of Churches, World Council of Churches, Christian Aid, Norwegian Church, Dutch Interchurch Aid and the United Evangelical Mission, Germany.

The vision of the Fellowship of Christian Council in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa is the creation of communities in the Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa, founded on the Christian principles of justice, peace and freedom. The Fellowship came into existence against the background of long-standing conflicts in the region. The story of these conflicts began in 1884 with the Berlin Conference when European powers decided to share Africa among themselves. In order to avoid clashes with one another, they created spheres of influence which are part of the East African ecumenical story. The East African ecumenical story has revealed that the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa are in a crisis stage. Many people in this part of Africa have lived under difficult circumstances for a very long time as a result of conflicts and violence. The church in this region is faced with many challenges that are posed by conflict and violence.²⁵⁸

The Fellowship agrees with K. J. Holsti who argues in his book, “International Politics: A Framework for Analysis” that in any human society the interaction between individuals and groups results into certain patterns of relationships that have characteristics of conflict. The implication here is that conflicts are inevitable in any human society and at crisis stage some of these conflicts end up exploding into open violence.²⁵⁹

The Fellowship’s focus is on: First, critically examining the root cause of the ongoing culture of conflict and violence in the region. Second, critically analyzing the plight of this region, that continues to degenerate into a scene of conflict and violence. Thirdly, provoking its audience to

257 “Fellowship of Christian Councils in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa,” Jumuia NCKK Publication (January – April, 1999): 1-2.

258 Fellowship of Christian Council in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa (FECCLAHA) based in Nairobi, was set up by the Christian Council of Tanzania, the National Council of Churches of Burundi, the National Council of Churches of Kenya, the Protestant Council of Rwanda, the Sudan Council of Churches, the New Sudan Council of Churches, the Uganda Joint Christian Council, the Church of Christ in Congo, the Eritrea Orthodox Church and Evangelical Church of Eritrea.

259 For background information on this point see, K. J. Holsti, International Politics: A Framework for Analysis (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1972), 447ff.

think how to deter the prevalence of violent conflicts and how to resolve disagreements before they reach crisis stage.²⁶⁰

The Fellowship argues that the resort to violence is not part of the African nature rather is a result of historical conditioning. In this regard the fellowship has come up with factors that have contributed to conflict and violence in the region and the major ones are:

i. The legacy of the region's experience of slavery. Many Africans were uprooted in many parts of this region. Even in this 21st century the region has not yet recovered from the effects of slavery to the extent that independent political, social and at times religious thinking is very far pushed to the remote future. The lack of independent thinking creates a gap which is usually filled by European and American designers of agendas for East Africa. This is one of the major reasons why East Africa is at a crisis stage. East Africa needs to set her own agenda rather than following one that has been designed by her "present" and former masters.

ii. The legacy of colonialism. The colonial past has contributed to conflicts and violence among the various language groups in the region. The superpowers of the time could choose where they wanted to go without consulting the owners of the land. They divided the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa in any way they wanted without taking into consideration the future interests of the inhabitants. They also had a program of alienation, discrimination, social exclusion, and manipulation of tribal identity where one tribe would be deliberately favored against the other. All this was intended to ensure domination and control over the inhabitants of this region. The Africans' immediate reaction to the superpowers' behavior was to make a social and political arrangement, which they thought, would recognize and safeguard the right and well being of each language group. Since 1964, countries in this region have agreed to honor faithfully the political boundaries, which were given to them at the Berlin Conference. The irony is that while the superpowers are coming together, this region is still a prisoner of the 1884 Berlin Conference resolutions. The reality is that language groups in this region have agreed to live together, condemn for instance tribalism publicly but practice it secretly in all its forms. The question of how to accept the rich diversity of cultures and languages has laid the foundations for conflict and violence in this region.²⁶¹

iii. Debt crisis and repayment obligations. By 1998, 20% of the world's population controlled 84% of the world's resources; 80% depended on debts got from the 20% for survival. The debt crisis in Africa has negative effect on the lives of people. In 1996, the President of Tanzania, Benjamin William Mkapa, while addressing the meeting of the World Council of Churches on Faith and Order in Moshi said:

260 It is important to note that not every conflict is violent. According to Fredrick O. Wanyama in his article, "Conflict Resolution in Africa by Africans: A Review of Past Experiences and Prospects for the Twenty-First Century" in Godfery P. Okoth (ed.), Africa at the Beginning of the 21st Century (Nairobi: Nairobi University Press, 2000), 194. Violence only occurs at the crisis stage of a conflict.

261 Colonialism created the conditions for many of the conflicts in Africa today mainly through arbitrarily drawn colonial boundaries, which merely reflected the political compromises of great powers of Europe in the 1880s that introduced the European concept of formal political borders to territories that had never before known such an arrangement.

One of the problems that act as a milestone around the neck of Africa is the unbearable debt burden. External debt for sub-Saharan Africa rose from US\$84.3 billion in 1980 to a staggering projection of \$313 billion in 1994. Tanzania, for example, has an external debt of \$7 billion. If we were to apportion this debt to every man, woman and child, each one of them would be indebted to the magnitude of their total earnings for two-and-a-half years. And if we were to spend all our national foreign exchange earnings to pay off this debt it would still take us over 12 years to do so.²⁶²

Conflicts and violence have cost this region a fortune in terms of meeting debt repayment obligations. Foreign debts incurred by countries in this region are closely related to the costs of these conflicts and many of them continue to pay debt services by shifting the already limited resources away from vital health delivery services, education, and from other programs aimed at say eliminating poverty. In an age of globalization, the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa is quickly becoming the primary place of poverty in Africa.

iv. Corruption. Corruption ravages the resources of this region thus diminishing the various countries' capacity to address human needs. What was said of Nigeria in 1983 is representative of many countries in the Great lakes Region and the Horn of Africa. Chinua Achebe wrote:

Corruption in Nigeria has passed the alarming and entered the fatal stage; and Nigeria will die if we keep pretending that she is only slightly indisposed....Nigerians are corrupt because the system under which they live today makes corruption easy and profitable.²⁶³

In a few countries in this region corruption is accepted as a normal way of life, to the extent that those who enjoy it do not feel any guilt.

The fruits of corruption in the Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa are malnourished babies, illiterate, and the unemployed masses. Hundreds of millions of people are losing their lives and are denied the most basic elements of human dignity. Many of them live in extreme poverty, while surviving on an equivalent of less than one United States dollar, a day. Children are one of the groups most affected by poverty. Many die from hunger or lack of adequate health care. Most lack access to health services or safe drinking water. Preventable diseases threaten to wipe out so many people in this region.

v. Bad governance. This region experiences a characteristic uncertainty about her future. Many people feel a sense of betrayal by their political leaders. Wole Soyinka gives a clear picture of the sense of betrayal by the political leaders when he says:

That those who had fought and were admired for the anti-colonial struggle were, in the main, just interested in stepping into the shoes of departing colonial master...and, in fact, strengthening the relationship between the ruler and the ruled, which we had inherited from the colonial powers, stepping into their mansions, hiring it up in grand style, and allowing the real interests of the people take second place, any place at all.²⁶⁴

262 "Ecumenical Chronicle," in *The Ecumenical Review* 48, 4(October 1996): 523.

263 Chinua Achebe, *The Trouble with Nigeria* (Nairobi: Heinemann, 1987), 38.

264 Herald Newspaper, Zimbabwe, December 12, 1994.

Since the early 1960s this region has seen for example the imposition of the multi-party system of democracy, which works in America or Britain but not in many parts of Africa. There has been the emergence of oppressive regimes and continues to experience the lack of creative leadership. The number of people living under constant fear, people who have not experienced normal life because of war and poverty has increased. Internal conflicts have also increased. Internal conflicts in this region may be grouped into three categories, viz:

- i. Classic wars. This kind of conflict involves two governments using their military forces against each other. In the Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa this could be over say a disputed land on the border between the two countries. This is the factor behind the various Ethiopia-Somalia conflicts.
- ii. Wars of state formation. This kind of conflict usually involves one government and an opposition group demanding autonomy. In the recent past, this has been the main cause of the war in Southern Sudan.
- iii. Internal wars. At times different political groups in a country disagree to such an extent that they resort to violence. This is usually when one group sees itself as the liberator. A good example of this kind of conflict is 1980s National Resistance Army bush war.²⁶⁵

Internal conflicts in this region intensify year after year. And as the Western countries develop better and more efficient weapons some of the world's deadliest conflicts continue to rage in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa. For instance, in the recent past there have been wars in the Horn of Africa in countries like Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia and Eritrea. In the Great Lakes Region there have been wars in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda. Some of these wars have gone on for so many years resulting in millions of people either dead or displaced. What Basil Davidson called the decade of AK-47 referring to 1980s is even true today.²⁶⁶

Conflicts and violence therefore thrive in the absence of conditions such as democracy, and respect for human rights which are the foundations for peace, justice and freedom. However, none of the factors mentioned above may be sufficient alone to cause conflicts and violence in East Africa but in combination they create conditions in which conflicts and violence are likely to erupt.

A disturbing byproduct of the ongoing conflict and violence in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa is the large number of those persons who are forced to flee from their homes but do not cross an international border. East Africa is one of those regions in Africa which has a big number of internally displaced people. The internally displaced people often find themselves in even more desperate situations since they are not entitled to international legal protection. They often live a life of sorrow and despair. All these examples are an indication of a deep crisis,

265 For more information on the causes of war in this region and Africa as a whole, see Michael Kene, Christianity and Social Issues (London: Stanley Thornes Publishers LTD., 1995), 124-133.

266 On the 1980s as a decade of AK-47, see Basil Davidson, The Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State (London: James Curry, 1992), 243-266.

which shows itself in the lack of infrastructure, lack of a meaningful school system, lack of a meaningful health system for the poor in many of the communities.

The Fellowship has realized that the danger of overstating the crisis is that the church in this region may become unnecessarily incapacitated. It may thereby become immobilized, unable to develop effective action. On the other hand, a danger of understating the importance of the crisis is that the church's response may be inadequate and thus contribute to more serious problems. The Fellowship believes very strongly that the church in this region, as part of her call to faithfulness, is invited on the basis of the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to participate actively in peace and reconciliation process in every aspect of her life. Active participation in the peace and reconciliation process is not something that is optional for the church in the Great lakes region and the Horn of Africa. While there are so many ways of understanding the term peace, for the Fellowship, peace signifies salvation, which goes with wholeness and integrity. It also signifies righteousness, and justice. The Fellowship believes that justice creates peace but it is particularly upset to note that conflicts compromise the unity and love that has been entrusted to the church by Christ.

As regards peace and reconciliation, the Fellowship of Christian Council in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa is confronted with a number of challenges and opportunities. However, the pertinent question is "what kind of modern Christian church are people in this region part of? Are they part of a church, which is in a state of serious crisis? Or are they part of a church, which is capable of adequately extending its services to humankind? In its ministry to this region, the church is looked at as either in a state of serious crisis or in a better position from which it can effectively extend her services to humankind.

Those African Christians who believe that they are part of a church, which is in a state of serious crisis, argue that the church in this region does not have serious commitment to the promotion of her prophetic vision. Their conclusion is that at best they are part of a resolution-making church. It is true the church in this region over the years has found itself entangled in conflict and violence. Yet one would have hoped that the vibrant church in the Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa would bring increasing control of conflict and violence. On the contrary the church has to admit how little it has been able to restrain human readiness to resort to violent methods of resolving conflicts. It appears the church in this region does not have the capacity to resolve these conflicts as they arise.

Many African Christians have argued that there is something fundamentally wrong in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa, which is preventing the church from doing its business as usual. The usual business for the church is, among others, to educate the population, protect the weak from being exploited by the rich, and above all overcome those conditions that make men and women sub-human. Conflict and violence are one of those conditions that make men and women in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa sub-human.

What is the role of the church in peace and reconciliation from the point of view of African Christians who believe that they are part of a church, which is in a state of serious crisis? Most of them argue that the church in the Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa should aim at heavenly life and ignore what is taking place in the region which they term as “worldly, temporary and passing away.” They agree with an English writer by David Nicholls who wrote in his article entitled “Your God is Too Big” that:

The Church is primarily a religious organization and the Christian Gospel caters for the religious needs of men.... It is the job of the Church to preach, to pray, to sing hymns and to encourage and develop the pious feelings of its members....

Religion is not concerned with the whole of life but with a part of life.²⁶⁷

There are several reasons why some of the African Christians think that way. First, the church in this region often operates under pressure from within and without. This comes sometimes from a strategy of survival and the tendency to feel that the burden of carrying the cross is too heavy and costly. Consequently the prophetic mission is not fully understood within the church itself and this forces it to define its mission in a narrow and limited sense.

Second, there is a strong tendency in some churches to encourage heavenly bound spirituality, which does not relate to concrete reality. This is seen when excessive emphasis is placed on pietism, to almost total exclusion of everything that seems to be “worldly.” The task of such churches is to prepare people adequately for the heavenly journey. Christians in those churches are encouraged to refuse to engage in any actions that are aimed at rectifying injustices and oppression that people in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa experience.

Third, there have been situations where church leadership in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa has not acted as one in response to the aspirations and voices of the majority of the Christians. Church conflicts and divisions contribute nothing to societies like those in this region that are already volatile. The church in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa cannot respond as a homogeneous body to conflicts and violence because the leadership itself embodies the religious and at times the political divisions of the conflict. The level of divisions in some churches in this region has reached a shameful and unchristian stage, which makes it difficult for the church to provide a united mission and witness in conflicts and violence in the region.

Fourth, the church in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa lacks the strength required to sustain a ministry of justice and peace. For instance, the church in this region lacks the analytical capacity for the demanding work of justice and peace ministry. Its institutions for training the next generation of leaders are not only weak, but also channels for utilization of available Christian talents are lacking.

There are African Christians in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa who believe that they are part of a church, which is in a better position from which it can effectively extend her services to humankind. They agree with Emmanuel Asante who observed that:

267 Quoted in Reginald Stackhouse, Christianity and Politics (London: The English University Press, 1966), 5.

A vision of a world without conflict is highly utopist. As far as we live in societies characterized with ethnic, political, and religious differentiation, we can hardly avoid conflict. Conflict, by definition is nothing short of clash of interest. Since we have different interests, which are informed and defined by our ethnic, political, economic and religious differentiation, we cannot avoid conflict. Thus, the vision is not a world without conflict.²⁶⁸

Bearing in mind Asante's assertion, how the church handles conflict without resorting to violence is the issue at hand in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa.

African Christians who believe that they are part of a church, which is in a better position from which it can effectively extend her services to humankind, further argue that the church in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa is truly a unique phenomenon. It is simultaneously secular and spiritual in quality. It is in this part of Africa, but it is not of this part of Africa. It is supposed to confront the problems of the region in general and yet, mindful of its spiritual heritage, it is obliged to develop some special check points that are aimed at promoting its continued spiritual growth and development. This means that any meaningful search for solutions to conflict and violence in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa ought to proceed from the ecclesiastical realm. This puts the role of the church in peace and reconciliation on the spotlight. John Stott reminds the church of its responsibility when he says:

God has made peace with us and between us through Christ. We cannot claim to be his authentic children unless we engage in peace-making too.²⁶⁹

The church in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa is one of the very few institutions of civil society, which are not on the decline. It is not only growing in terms of numbers and influence but also in terms of credibility among the people. What Anglela Stultze-Crawlle said of the church in her country applies to the church in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa. She said:

The churches have a lot of credibility among the people. They are practically the only institutions people trust. They are still willing to hear the recommendations of the pastors and priests. People demand church intervention when there is violence.²⁷⁰

Since the majority of the people outside the church in this region are believed to act in bad faith, everybody in cities, towns, trading centers and villages turns to the Christian church to provide the moral guidance.²⁷¹

268 Emmanuel Asante, "Peace and Development in West Africa: The Role of the Church," in *All Africa Journal of Theology* 1(January 2001): 65.

269 John Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today: New Perspectives on Social and Moral Dilemmas* (London: Harper Collins, 1990), 102-103.

270 Quoted in Dafne Plon, *Peace in Troubled Cities: Creative Models of Building Community Amidst Violence* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1998), 2.

271 For background information on this point see, Kevin Ward, "Christianity, Rebels and the State in Northern Uganda," in *Journal of Religion in Africa* 31, 2(2002): 201ff.

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Referring to the role of the church and in particular the Church of the Province of Uganda in the conflict and violence of the period between 1986 and 1999 Kevin Ward says:

The churches are also central to this attempt to create a new public space. They are employing a discourse that addresses material and temporal as well as transcendent realities. The churches have become important not least for their ability to envision alternative futures, to hold out possibilities of peace-making and social reconstruction.²⁷²

On the political scene, there has been a movement for what I would call the “second African revolution” which has been aimed at reviving the aspirations of the 1960s nationalist spirit. The church has been a key player in this second African revolution. It was a common practice in the 1980s for Catholic bishops from what is today known as the Democratic Republic of Congo to be appointed to chair the second African revolution seminars. Referring to President Mobutu who had problems with the democratization process in his country, Gerard Prunier says:

When Mobutu wanted to close down what was fast developing into a Constituent Assembly, the members elected Mgr Monsengwo, Bishop of Kisangani, as their President.²⁷³

In most of the countries in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa National Council of Churches and individual bishops have been actively involved in speaking against factors, which lead to conflict and violence. For instance, in Kenya the most articulate criticism of President Moi’s regime came from Gitari. As the Archbishop of the Church of the Province of Kenya, Gitari spoke boldly on many issues such as corruption and injustice. He demonstrated deep concern for the well being of all the people of Kenya especially the poor and the oppressed in society. For example, on several occasions he preached against land grabbing from the poor by either the rich or by the government of Kenya. In 1988 he took the lead in opposing the rigging of elections.

The above-mentioned examples are signs of hope and peace, but there is more to be done and the church in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa needs to prepare herself thoroughly so as to respond adequately to conflicts and violence in the region. If the church is to take up the ministry of peace and reconciliation in situations of conflicts and violence in this region, I suggest that: First, it goes beyond calls for say Africanization of its structures and ministry. Second, it must be committed to the quest for meaningful change, justice and peace. Referring to the involvement of the Christian Church in Rwanda in the 1994 genocide, Timothy Longman says:

Not only did church buildings become the sites of massacres, but most of the killers were Christians, and even some pastors and priests participated in the slaughter.²⁷⁴

272 Kevin Ward, “The Armies of the Lord: Christianity, Rebels and the State in Northern Uganda, 1986-1999,” in *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 31, 2(2001): 189.

273 Gerard Prunier, “The Catholic Church and the Kivu Conflict,” in *Journal of Religion in Africa* 31, 2(2001): 144.

Alison De Forges has put Longman's observation differently. He says:

Church authorities left the way clear for officials, politicians, and propagandists to assert that the slaughter actually met with God's favor.²⁷⁵

The church in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa can give the people hope only if it identifies itself with the cries and struggles of the ordinary people in concrete and tangible ways in their day-to-day concerns. In most cases priority is given to dealing with the immediate consequences of conflicts and violence by providing support to victims. While such a response is important and should be strengthened wherever possible, there needs to be much more than that. People should be made aware that conflicts and violence are predictable and preventable. In a society like East Africa that yearns for meaningful change and progress, the church should not sit back and be content with nice and lively Sunday worship services. It must subject that reality to the demands of peace and reconciliation.

The church in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa has a critical role to play at a time when there are many unresolved border conflicts. Peace is a prerequisite for any development in situations where conflicts have become endemic. Christians who intend to be involved in peace-making need to recognize two basic things for meaningful reconciliation: First, true reconciliation presupposes establishing conditions for justice. There cannot be peace in situations of conflicts unless the injustices that underlie the existing conflicts are resolved to the satisfaction of the actors. Second, reconciliation presupposes change of individuals, and circumstances that foster and nurture conflicts. Unless change is experienced fear, manipulation and conflicts become intensified.

If the church is interested in playing the role of peace-making among its members in this region, it has to: First, rediscover the centrality of peace ministry in the mission and calling of the church in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa. Second educate its congregations on the meaning of peace ministry in the church. Third, train its leadership and members to play the role of reconciliation. Peace-making in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa is no longer an option, but an expression of the church's faithfulness to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Today there are corporate forces in the church in this region that are making a commitment to resolve ongoing conflicts. One of them is the All Africa Conference of Churches, which has been actively involved in programs of conflict mediation in all parts of Africa. However, one of the challenges the church in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa is facing today is finding its own solutions to conflict and violence.

Time has come for the church to look more closely at itself and come face to face with the consequences of its actions. It needs to engage in dealing with those critical issues, which lead to conflict and violence from its own perspective. It can no longer rely on outside help. The church

274 Timothy Longman, "Church Politics and the Genocide in Rwanda," in Journal of Religion in Africa 31, 2(2001):164.

275 Alison Des Forges, Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1999), 246.

needs to challenge itself to live up to the requirements of God's peace. In this way the church can gradually build a community of people for peace in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa. Working for peace in this region means working to build a culture of peace. There are several tools and techniques in building a culture of peace but the major ones are:

i. Preventive Diplomacy. It is much cheaper to prevent conflicts before they erupt than to undertake the costly peace talks. The church in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa should actively be involved in fact-finding missions and in creating early warning systems. Adequate early warning, followed by quick responses, are key to any successful efforts at preventing conflicts.

ii. Peace-making. The church should be aware that peace processes are not short-term exercises. There is need therefore for the church in the Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa to constantly examine the deeper causes of conflicts, and constantly address the grievances that lead to conflicts so as to ensure durable long-term solutions.

The above tools and techniques lead to conflict management rather than conflict resolution. By conflict management I mean the reduction of the means of conflict rather than the settlement of already contentious issues. The church in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa should therefore re-discover its proper place in public life by moving away from cathedrals into centers of power and centers of decision-making. For the church to respond adequately to conflict and violence in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa, it needs to assess critically the situation in which it has to operate and also appreciate the limits and opportunities at its disposal. In order to assess critically the situation in which it operates and in order to appreciate the limits and opportunities at its disposal the church in this region needs to subject itself to self-criticism, rectify its weaknesses and build on its strengths. In this way it can emerge out of its present position of "only *waiting* to pay homage to the victims *of* injustice and a cruel world."²⁷⁶

Ecumenical Association of Third-World Theologians – Africa

Ecumenical Association of Third-World Theologians (EATWOT) is an association of theologians from the global south namely Africa, Asia, Latin America and minority groups from the USA. African, Latin American and Asian theologians in Louvain, Belgium started the idea of an Ecumenical Association of Third-World Theologians (EATWOT) in 1974.²⁷⁷ The idea was further developed at the World Council of Churches, Nairobi Assembly in 1975 and in 1976 the Ecumenical Association of Third- World Theologians was created in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, bringing together scholars from Latin America, Africa and Asia. The Ecumenical Association of Third-World Theologians organizing committee that took place in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania in 1976 announced a radical decolonization of theology. It was argued that theology is not merely

276 Moses Ngaava Kandovazu, "Current Challenges Facing the Church in Botswana," in *Africa Challenge* I, I(January 2001):73.

277 For detailed background information on the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians see, T. Okure, "Reading from this Place: Some Problems and Prospects," in *Reading from this Place*, by F.F.Segovio and M.A.Tolbert (Minneapolis: Fortress), 48ff.

“Faith seeking understanding” through harmony with reason and science, while leaving traditions of injustice and structures of oppression in the Majority-World countries intact and colonial domination unchallenged. Right from the beginning the association was determined to promote dialogue and fellowship members across continents. Since 1976, the Ecumenical Association of Third-World Theologians defines itself in relation and contrast with Western countries, culture and theologies.

Due to the debate regarding the meaning of the term third-world, the United States of America minorities were not included as founding members of the Ecumenical Association of Third-World Theologians. However, it soon became clear to the Ecumenical Association of Third-World Theologians that “the US minorities are third-world, but they are forced to be first-world citizens in imposed third-world conditions.”²⁷⁸ Their inclusion today means that the term Third-World is not limited to geographical space.²⁷⁹

Since its creation in 1976, the Ecumenical Association of Third-World Theologians has held several congresses all within the framework of liberation theology. The Majority-World theologians have realized that the theologies shaped in Europe and America are inadequate in solving the problems of the poor people in the majority-world countries. They argue that although their “regions have been influenced by those theologies and ideologies. But it is clear that Latin America is the most westernized of the three third-world continents and serves as an example of how complex this European Christian take-over has become.”²⁸⁰

Although by the 1970s many theologians from the majority-world had already begun to challenge the dominant theology of Europe and North America, they were not quite aware of each other’s work and were not knowledgeable about the theological alternatives that each was seeking to provide. For instance it was discovered that there were similarities between Africa and Asia on the question of doing theology in a multi-religious context. The 7th International Conference said:

Looking at the regions of EATWOT, one is struck by the similarities between Africa and Asia on the question of doing theology in a multi-religious context. Religio-cultural realities are strongest where traditional religions and cultures have resisted the European attempt to westernize the whole world.²⁸¹

The Ecumenical Association of Third-World Theologians therefore represented an attempt by the majority-world theologians to end their destructive isolation. Three major concerns shaped the development of the Ecumenical Association of Third-World Theologians. These are:

278 Editor, “Commonalities, Differences and Cross-Fertilization among Third-World Theologies,” Ecumenical Review 40/2 (April 1988): 290.

279 I am inclined to using the term “the majority-world” rather than the demeaning term “third-world.”

280 Editor, “Commonalities, Differences and Cross-Fertilization among Third-World Theologies,” Ecumenical Review 40/2 (April 1988): 288.

281 Editor, “Commonalities, Differences and Cross-Fertilization among Third-World Theologies,” Ecumenical Review 40/2 (April 1988): 288.

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- i. The desire to encourage theologians of each continent to work together in order to deepen their analysis of the socio-political and religio-cultural structures in their countries and the need to develop a theology that is accountable to the poor masses. The majority-world theologians reported on the socio-political exploitation of the poor in their countries, the commonality of the situations of oppression and the struggles of liberation in the majority-world became increasingly clear to all participants.
- ii. The concern to encourage and assist the majority-world theologians to participate in a joint effort toward the development of a tri-continental third-world theology that all could support.
- iii. The hope to develop a creative dialogue with progressive theologians from Europe and from North America, which would lead to an interpretation of the faith that all Christians could accept.

At the first international Ecumenical Association of Third World-Theologians Conference, which was held in Ghana in 1977, African theologians began the process of developing an African Christian theology that emphasized the indigenization of the Gospel and the liberation of the people of Africa from the cultural and economic domination of the churches and theologies of Europe and North America. It was emphasized that theology is not an attempt to explain away suffering in Africa rather it is critical reflection on life-transforming faith-practice with a view to getting rid of the causes of poverty and suffering. Africa's theological response takes two directions namely, relating Christian theology to African culture and spirituality and emphasizing the need for liberation from the socio-political oppression. At the Second International Ecumenical Association of Third-World Theologians Conference in Sri Lanka in 1979, Asian theologians concentrated on the problem of doing theology in a poor and religious pluralistic society.

The Brazil Ecumenical Association of Third-World Theologians Conference held in 1980 focused on Latin American liberation theology which emphasizes the role of economic analysis and socio-political transformation in the doing of theology.

In an atmosphere of a widespread search for political, economic, social, cultural and religious identity by once colonized people, from 1977 there emerged progressively decolonized and decolonizing theologies. In Africa grew theologies of Black Liberation and Black Humanity. All majority-world theologians stress liberation as the central core of the gospel, the need to re-read the Bible in the light of the poor, theology as an activity, which is subordinate to a commitment of solidarity with the poor and the rejection of the dominant theologies of Europe and North America.

What is common among Third-World theologians is their resistance to oppression, racism and dictatorships. Their theologies are:

Born of suffering and humiliation on the one hand and the will to dignity on the other. They are rebellion and protest against personal and social sin and against all forms of domination. They start from the people's painful experience of poverty

and death. Commitment to and practice of liberation come first; praxis is pregnant with theory; theology articulates the truth of praxis. The starting point is the faith experience and description of historical reality understood analytically/intuitively as well as struggles for change in favour of the oppressed. The event of Jesus and the tradition of his movement are accepted and reread in the light of our sufferings, struggles, and faith experience.²⁸²

Through Ecumenical Association of Third-World Theologians, African theologians are able to be in dialogue with different churches both in Africa and outside Africa. After several years of dialogue with each other, the majority-world theologians decided to dialogue with progressive theologians of Europe and North America. During their first meeting in Geneva in 1983 the Western and the majority-world theologians evaluated the nature of their differences, and sought for common grounds for doing theology in a world divided by racism, sexism, and classism. The Geneva conference represented the beginning of a process in which Western and the majority-world theologians are seeking to overcome centuries of theological alienation.

The Ecumenical Association of Third-World Theologians is faced with the challenge of rekindling its hopes and giving new directions to its members. Some of these challenges are:

i. The West has continued to regain its control of the international theological situation. The result is that the elite group in the third world is convinced that first-world theologies from the West are more authentic than those from the Third-World. As a result most of the church leaders from the Third World are suspicious of theologies from the third-world. The 7th EATWOT International Conference held at Oaxtepec, Mexico in December 1986 observed:

Attempts are being made to exercise repressive control over theological thought and over religious thinkers and organizations. What is under threat is the joyful freedom to be faithful to the living word of the God of life. We realize that it is not easy to be a prophet or theologian in the third world.²⁸³

ii. Its regional activities (in Africa, Asia, Latin America, US minorities) and its two intercontinental committees (theological and women's committees) have been carried out on a voluntary basis, with great generosity by many contributors.

iii. Although theologians belonging to the Ecumenical Association are committed to many personal, professional, and church tasks, they are usually overworked, communications are difficult, and good wishes remain unfulfilled.

iv. Funding partners have reduced donations partly because they have not been given adequate and immediate reports and therefore the Ecumenical Association has not been seen as their priority.

282 Editor, "Commonalities, Differences and Cross-Fertilization among Third-World Theologies," Ecumenical Review 40/2 (April 1988): 288.

283 Editor, "Commonalities, Differences and Cross-Fertilization among Third-World Theologies," Ecumenical Review 40/2 (April 1988): 287.

v. The Ecumenical Association of Third-World Theologians has been challenged to call for a conscious incorporation of theologies other than Christian into the African and Asian Church's thinking.

Christian Religious Education Syllabus

East Africa in general and Uganda in particular is one of the most Christian regions in Africa. Every major branch of the Christian Church is represented. Some of these branches are Roman Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Orthodox, Seventh Day Adventist, Baptist and Methodist. There are also a number of theological positions such as conservatism, fundamentalism, liberalism and evangelicalism. In this region schools have spread denominationally and this trend has caused confusion and strife in society.

Religion has always been part and partial of the East African pattern of living. On the eve of the missionaries' contact the people who presently occupy the territory known as East Africa were in search for an answer to the question concerning their origin and destiny, the world and evil. They found an answer in religious beliefs and practices. God's existence was acknowledged by the people whom they had always invoked as a kind and loving God. Some people have argued that there were no atheists on the eve of the missionaries' contact. Everyone in Uganda was a religious carrier and for this reason there were no specialized missionaries and there were no specialized teachers.

People in East Africa conceived God as the author of all life which included the visible world and the invisible spirits. He was recognized as the creator, the giver and the protector. These attributes implied that God's acts were tangible. Of all these attributes that of creator was the most prominent. Even today, some people in East Africa believe that God's creative activity which began from time immemorial still continues. People in East Africa used to communicate with God by means of occasional prayers. Some of these prayers expressed the power and the providence of God.

The missionaries did not hesitate to describe the God of the Bible by the very names, which were being used in East Africa such as Ruhanga (creator). However, confusion still existed among the missionaries whether the African God was a remote god, minding his own business and leaving his creation to ancestral spirits or not. For the people in East Africa this was not a problem because they believed that God had withdrawn from the world to that remoteness which was part of His greatness.

Religion has played a major role in shaping people's lives in East Africa from time immemorial. In order to preserve its religious beliefs, the pre-Christian society in East Africa used education as a means through which religious knowledge was communicated to the young and the old. The aims of religious education were mainly two. These were:

- a. To prepare the young people for the transition from the infant stage to maturity. The content of religious education was therefore defined by the needs of society and every adult was qualified to instruct the young people. In most cases, the young people's reasoning and personal reflection were suppressed.

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- β. To develop an awareness of and respect for the religious dimension of life. In pre-Christian East Africa, morality was derived from God, the divinities and the spirits and the adult members were regarded as teachers of religion. God remained the standard against which the moral standard of everyone in society was measured.

Religious education at that time aimed at producing a person who was obedient, loyal and of good character.

The method used to educate the people was mainly in the form of instruction or indoctrination. There were some advantages to this kind of approach to the teaching of religious education namely;

- α) Religious education was done according to what the local context demanded and not what the teachers could manage to teach. What the students learnt was approved by the community.
- β) Religious education was concerned with the transmission and continuation of values and norms from one generation to another through the process of socialization and initiation. The subject content was never alien to the students and to the community. That is why the method of content delivery was experiential and practical.
- χ) A student was motivated to learn not because of the certificates, diplomas and degrees he or she was expected to receive but because he or she developed an interest to learn in order to accomplish a religious task within the given community.

Was it necessary to move away from traditional religious education to the present type of religious education? The following are some of the disadvantages to the traditional way of teaching religious education. These are:

- i. Students had to accept whatever was taught without question. Since they were expected to be passive learners, there was no way how they could choose between the various alternatives.
- ii. Religious education was characterized by conformity to the religious rules of the society. Students were not given the opportunity to think through the concepts being taught. They therefore accepted every material imposed on them by their teachers.
- iii. The methods employed did not encourage independent thinking among the students. The teachers regarded themselves as a source of knowledge and enjoyed giving instructions to students in a communal manner.

Since the nineteenth century, Christian religious education as it is known today has been part of the East African panorama. It began with the arrival of various missionary societies in East Africa in the nineteenth century. The missionaries emphasized that education should be regulated by the church. As long as the missionaries stayed in East African, formal schooling as we shall see later was mainly religious and under the direct control of the Christian missionaries. Even today, most people believe that the task of education is seen as producing "the most constructive effects of moral and religious improvement."

During the nineteenth century, the teaching of Christian religious education in East African was very much shaped by what happened in Europe between the Protestants and the Catholics. Even when missionaries from these two branches of Christianity came to East African they tended to

work somewhat independently, which quickly led to serious competition for students. The Protestants introduced the evangelical-revivalist type of education. The evangelical expression was manifested in educational efforts that called for a return to the fundamentals of the Christian faith with the focus on conversion and proselytism. This was also the Catholic missionaries' agenda in East Africa.

Right from the beginning, the missionaries saw the educating of the indigenous population of East African as a means of facilitating their conversion to Christianity. For instance, during their stay at the King's palace in Buganda, the Christian missionaries saw the pages as appropriate targets for Christian religious education. These pages out of curiosity began to supplement their normal instruction with the missionaries' classes in Christian religious education. In the case of the Anglican missionaries, it was the policy of the Church Missionary Society not to baptize anyone who had not learned to read the Gospels. Bishop Alfred Robert Tucker wrote:

For a long while the rule of the mission had been not to baptize anyone (except blind and infirm persons) who had not learned to read the Gospels in the vernacular. Education was not our first object in making this rule. It was made rather as a test of sincerity and purity of motive. Large numbers were coming forward and asking for baptism. Of their life we knew nothing. They said: We believe, and wish to be baptized. Very well, was our answer, we don't know you. We must test you. We must see that you have an intelligent knowledge of the way of salvation. Here are the Gospels. We will teach you to read them, and when you have read them we shall expect you to give an intelligent answer to the questions which we shall then ask.²⁸⁴

Literacy was taught in "reading classes" as a key to the reading of the Bible and other religious literature and for many years the term "readers" was used to refer to both converts to Christianity and to those attending schools. The missionaries not only learned the local languages, but they also produced the learning and teaching materials in the various local languages. The first educational material to be translated was the Bible. Other materials included the "reading sheet," which consisted of the alphabet, syllables, words, the Lord's Prayer and some biblical passages.

At first, the primary aim of the Christian missionaries was not to give Africans Christian religious education as an end in itself but as a means to an end, which was to communicate the gospel and enable the converts to read the Scriptures. Mission founded schools became places for the effective communication of the gospel on a daily basis through Christian religious education. In East African as elsewhere in Africa, formal education and the gospel were so intertwined that to the missionaries the success of the gospel depended on useful education and useful education depended on the gospel. G. ter Haar says:

Whatever way one looks at it, missionary influence has been of vital importance in the history of education in sub-Saharan Africa even before so since the colonialists originally left education almost exclusively in the hands of the

284 Alfred Robert Tucker, Eighteen Years in Uganda and East Africa, Vol. II (London: Edward Anorld, 1911), 233-234.

missionary agencies who first and foremost used it as an instrument for propagating the Christian faith.²⁸⁵

At first, the missionaries' efforts were focused on making Africans literate so that they could read religious materials. By 1901 the missionaries had recognized the need for a form of education designed to help build the character of the students so as to make them useful citizens of their country. The missionaries felt that Africans could best be prepared for a wider world through high school education. High schools took a more functional literacy beyond mere reading of the Scriptures as more educational subjects were taught.

During the missionary era, the issues of curriculum content and policy were in the hands of individual missionary societies. The formation of the Phelps-Stokes Commission which visited East Africa in the early 1920s was a major watershed in the educational policy in the region. The commission made a plea for religious and moral education as the basis for lasting education. After the visit of the Phelps-Stokes Commission, there were various conferences held over the plight of education in Africa and those which have had direct bearing on Christian religious education were held between 1951 and 1963. In 1952, there was a Cambridge Conference on African education and in 1961, the Addis Ababa Conference on the development of Education in Africa was held. There, far reaching measures on African education were arrived at. In 1962, there was another Conference for Higher Education in Africa, during which participants expressed the desire to exclude religious education from the secondary school curriculum. For instance, in 2008 the Ugandan Government came under severe attack from the religious bodies for thinking of excluding Religious Education from the school curriculum.

In pre-independent East Africa, the school long served as a pivotal means of evangelization for many churches and the churches were responsible for offering education. But in 1960s when most of East African countries became independent nations, there was the transfer of responsibility for education from church to state. Even when the government became a major stakeholder and controlled the curriculum and the payment of teachers' salaries, Christian religious education in schools retained its Christian character. The influence of the Christian mission too, continued to be felt in government funded schools to the extent that Christian religious education was included in the schools' curricula in all schools especially in Uganda. It became mandatory for Christian religious education to be taught in all primary schools. At the secondary school level where it was not mandatory, Christian religious education remained one of the key subjects in the secondary school curriculum. The conditions under which Christian religious education was to be taught were set out clearly by the church. For instance, daily opening of the school with prayer and Bible reading and a number of compulsory periods per week for Christian religious education were part of the conditions. The teachers of Christian religious education were required to lead exemplary lives of spiritual development and moral decency. This fact continues to be the emphasis of the church in East Africa where it is a founding body. The kind of Christian religious education that was offered was individual-

285 G. ter Haar, Faith of our Fathers: Studies in Religious Education in sub-Saharan Africa (Utrecht: University of Utrecht, 1990), 36.

focused. The aim was to nurture the students in the Christian faith. The emphasis was put on individual-orientation as well as on one tradition namely, Christianity.

From the early 1960s, Christian religious education in East Africa took a shift toward ecumenical education. Joint Christian Religious Education syllabuses at primary, secondary and tertiary levels are common in this region. In the 1960s it was realized that the attainment of political independence by the East African countries, did not mean the attainment of educational independence. For instance, in Uganda at the Ordinary and Advanced levels Christian religious education final examinations were standardized by the Cambridge Overseas Examination Syndicate. The Cambridge Religious Education syllabus emphasized Bible-centered approach to the teaching of Christian Religious Education. Randolph Crump Miller says:

Bible-centered teaching in many courses of lesson materials is concerned with the mastery of the content of Scripture. By reading, memorizing, and recitation, the student learns what is in the Bible. Passages are selected in terms of his capacity to understand, or at least to read and recite. The goal is knowledge for its own sake. His reward is the mastery of the material, a grade, a prize, or praise.

As Miller rightly says, Bible-centered teaching in many courses of lesson materials was concerned with the mastery of the content of Scripture. At the Ordinary level students studied two Synoptic Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. At Advanced level, students studied Old Testament Prophets, the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles and Modern Church History. This approach provided a storehouse of religious facts which may have answered certain intellectual questions. The kind of religious education which was studied in East Africa was taken for granted to apply to every culture in the world. This might have been one of the reasons why the syllabus did not take the students' culture into consideration.

Most of the European teachers also believed that one of their main tasks in teaching Bible knowledge was to propagate the benefits of Western civilization. This kind of thinking depended on at least two prior assumptions, first, the belief that the African culture was under the devil's control and therefore Bible knowledge had to be presented as a direct challenge to what African culture stood for. Second, at this time, there was the belief that Britain constituted a model of civil society. The popular belief was that it was the Biblical teaching that had made Britain and other countries in Europe great. God's design therefore was to create more nations on the same pattern. At both levels the syllabus stressed a detailed knowledge of the textual content, and students were not expected to relate what they were taught to their cultural and religious heritage. From the African point of view, the Cambridge Religious Education syllabus promoted a mechanical approach which had little adaptation to the needs of the learners. In short, it did not relate to life issues.²⁸⁶

286 For detailed background information about the Cambridge Religious Education syllabus, see Christopher Byaruhanga, Teaching Christian Religious Education in Secondary Schools (Kampala: MK Publishers, 2003), ch 1 & 2.

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The teaching of Christian Religious Education in East Africa has undergone various changes over the years. Soon after independence, the Cambridge Syndicate was replaced by the East African Examinations Council. However, syllabuses introduced by the British government continued to be used until new alternatives could be found. Although syllabus formulation was a national issue which affected all school subjects in East Africa, the task of revising Christian Religious Education syllabuses was slow since Christian denominations had to consult each other on what Christian Religious Education syllabuses should contain. The new Christian Religious Education syllabuses were intended also to provide a practical solution to a historical problem of suspicion between the denominations in East Africa.

The first syllabus for Ordinary level was given code number 224 by the East African Examinations Council. Syllabus 224 has five papers, namely the Old Testament, St. Luke's Gospel with emphasis on its relevance for Africa today, the Early Church, the Church in East Africa, and African Religious Heritage. In structure, syllabus 224 was intended to make Christian religious education relevant to the situation in East Africa, while at the same time maintaining some continuity with the Cambridge syllabus. Its objectives were either Bible or Christian centered and they pointed toward confessional aspect of Christian Religious Education. Syllabus 224 that was developed soon after independence therefore needed to be revised so as to make it more learner-related.

The Joint East African Religious Education Committee and the Association of Member Episcopal Conference of Eastern Africa mandated a committee of Roman Catholic, Anglican and Protestant educationists and theologians from Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi and Zambia under the title "Rubaga Workshop" to look for a better way to approach the teaching of Christian Religious Education in East Africa. The Rubaga Workshop suggested that a new syllabus which follows a student-related approach be drawn. It was argued that religious understanding starts from the student's own perspective, since understanding always proceeds from the fore structures of the interpreter. The workshop also suggested that the content of the course be based on the social, religious, and psychological needs of the learners. It was also agreed that the interests and concerns of the students in the adolescent stage of development should determine the themes with which the new syllabus would deal. The Rubaga Workshop prepared syllabus 223 and called it Christian Living Today

The Joint East African Religious Education Committee and the Association of Member Episcopal Conference of Eastern Africa in 1970 approved the new syllabus which emerged from the Rubaga Workshops coded 223. This was an alternative syllabus to syllabus 224. While syllabus 224 maintained continuity with the Cambridge syllabus, alternative 223 did not. The Rubaga Workshop argued that the special aim of syllabus 223 was to enable the learners to grow toward responsible Christian maturity. This syllabus has five major themes, each with three sub-themes grouped as follows:

Man in a Changing Society.

This theme has three sub-themes, namely Living in a Changing Society, Working in a Changing Society and Leisure in a Changing Society.

Order and Freedom in Society.

This theme has the following sub-themes: Justice in Society; Service in Society, and Loyalty in Society.

Life.

This theme has three sub-themes and these are: Happiness, Unending Life, and Success.

Man and Woman.

This theme has the following sub-themes: Family Life; Sex, Courtship and Marriage.

Man's Response through faith and love.

This theme has three sub-themes namely, Man's Quest for God, Man's Evasion of God, and Christian involvement in the World.

The teacher and students discuss each sub-theme in the context of present situation, African tradition, Church history, the Bible and synthesis in such away that:

They may see themselves in their present situation, influenced by technology, ideas, and value systems of the rest of the world (Present Situation). They may understand themselves as a product of their traditional African milieu, formed in African culture and values (African Tradition). They may understand themselves as a product in Christian history influenced by various Christian traditions in Africa (Church History with emphasis on Africa). They may look at themselves in their own situation in this changing world, seeking its meaning for themselves in the light of God's revelation as mirrored forth in the Bible, of which the fullest expression is in Christ (Bible). Having fully considered the experience and circumstances of their lives, they may give an enlightened response to God (synthesis).²⁸⁷

The emphasis in the student-centered approach, as contrasted with Bible-centered approach, is on the development of the student rather than the mastery of content.

In the new approach to teaching Christian Religious Education as seen in syllabus alternative 223, the teacher cannot promote understanding among the students simply by talking to them. It is believed that learning results from real experience obtained by doing things. Good teaching of Christian Religious Education must involve presenting students with situations in which they may experiment and hence learning by actively constructing their own knowledge through interacting with the learning environment. This is what is known as student-related approach to the teaching of Christian Religious Education. What makes the thematic approach to the teaching of Christian Religious Education student-related is the way the teacher begins from the students'

287 Byaruhanga, Teaching Christian Religious Education in Secondary Schools, 41f.

experiences and gradually leads them into meaningful concepts of God. The assumption here is that a genuinely student-related Christian Religious Education begins with the principle that the student's prior understanding is a vital component to the learning process. This approach is not only related to the student but also to other subjects, so that education is seen as a whole and Christian Religious Education as a valid part of that whole.

Why Christian religious education?

In East Africa no one wishes to return to the days of pre-independence when Christianity enjoyed a privileged status in formal education in general and Christian religious education in particular. In the present situation, such approach cannot be justified, even when the majority of the population adheres to the Christian religion. The majority of East Africans therefore endorse an approach that gives due respect to the major religions that a student of Christian religious education encounters everyday in his or her community and at school. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that there are diverse views within the Christian traditions on Christian religious education. Although Christian traditions in East Africa have maintained diverse views on Christian religious education, a consensus has been reached on a number of points as to why it should be taught in schools. Some of these points are:

- i. **Morality.** The core values such as equality, respect for human dignity that are contained in the Constitutions of the countries in East Africa are all a manifestation of the moral principles that have shaped East Africa as a region. Unless the education system promotes understanding of the core moral values, the values that are contained in the Constitutions of these nations will result in the kind of moral bankruptcy that is associated with the abuse of human dignity. Christian religious education should offer a framework for understanding the context of moral living and develop students' abilities to improve on their moral lives.
- ii. **Continuous deepening of values.** The Constitutions of the various countries in East Africa articulate and mention a number of basic human rights which have to evolve as East Africa develops into modern and democratic nations. Future generations must be prepared to interpret and apply these basic human rights in new situations in a godly manner. Since Christianity teaches transcendent values, the students of Christian religious education will be helped to meet those challenges.
- iii. **Integrated approach to education.** An integrated and holistic approach to education requires that students be developed emotionally, intellectually, physically, psychologically, culturally and spiritually. Alongside emotional and intellectual development, East Africa as a region has also to invest in the spiritual growth and development of her citizens.
- iv. **Responsible citizenship.** A good education system is that whose products recognize their responsibilities in the nation. Christian religious education does exactly that.
- v. **Transformation.** Christian religious education by nature has both a conserving and transforming impact. It puts the students in touch with the traditional African values of the past generations while giving the individual students a vision of a better way of life

that leads to a transformed society.

- ⦿i. Cultivate a culture of tolerance. While all students in East Africa should know and understand Christianity as one of the key factors that have shaped the region's vibrant cultural heritage they should be sensitive to the beliefs of other people so as to cultivate a culture of religious tolerance. Knowing about religions other than one's own discourages the attitude of rigid fundamentalism that often provokes conflict. Christian religious education encourages students to value and respect other people and their religious views.
- ⦿ii. Religion as a center of the students' emotional life. Christian religious education helps the students to understand their own religion and its values. This is why Christian religious education as the center of the students' emotional life should be taught in a responsible way by a qualified teacher of Christian religious education.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE FUTURE OF THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT IN EAST AFRICA

1. Introduction

In East Africa, there are two very different worlds of ecumenism namely, institutional ecumenism and experiential ecumenism. Institutional ecumenism is expressed through formal relationships directly between denominations and the activities of ecumenical bodies. For the most part these involve the few in a discourse that is accessible only to them. On the other hand experiential ecumenism is expressed by those who, for example worship in a multi-denominational congregation, do evangelism together or engage with the people they work alongside. But on the whole, the majority of Christians in East Africa are not being ecumenically engaged and transformed. What Stephen Charles Neill said in the last decade is equally true today. He said:

The movement is still too much an affair of leaders in the church, of ministers rather than lay folk, and of those who can afford the time to go to conferences rather than those who must stay at home. This again is doubtless inevitable at the start; ideas begin with the few, and a long time must be allowed for the dissemination of those ideas to the mass.²⁸⁸

This point was also emphasized by W. A. Visser 't Hooft when he said:

The ecumenical movement is not sufficiently rooted in the life of the local congregations. In spite of all attempts made to educate church members for participation in the ecumenical enterprise, the movement is still too much an army with many generals and officers, but with too few soldiers. It would seem that not enough has been done to show that the ecumenical concern is not to be conceived as one of the many concerns in which a local congregation may take interest, but as a concern which arises out of the very nature of the church. It is clear that real advance towards full unity will be made only if, in coming years, local congregations and their members discover that to follow Christ means to follow him in his work of building the one body, his body.²⁸⁹

Michael Kinnamon says:

To put it bluntly, ecumenism has been, to a large extent, domesticated, brought under control, by the churches it was expected to reform.²⁹⁰

2. Anglicans and Roman Catholics in an ecumenical encounter

Ecumenical conversations have been going on in East Africa since 1907/08 and yet for the last few years some Christians in East Africa have viewed the organized ecumenical movement with

288 Ruth Rouse and Stephen Neill, A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1517-1948, Vol. 1 (London: SPCK, 1954), 730.

289 Fey (ed.), A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1948-1968, 26.

290 Michael Kinnamon, The Vision of the Ecumenical Movement and How it has been Impoverished by its Friends (Chalice: St. Louis MO, 2003), 84.

indifference. However, ecumenical institutions such as All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), National Council of Churches such Uganda Joint Christian Council (UJCC) and unity efforts such as Ggaba-Mukono Ecumenical Contact (GAMEC) have continued to search for unity largely out of the public eye. The assumption is that in a region which is increasingly divided along political, economic and religious lines, a Christian church which is growing together in unity helps to preach the gospel with ease which would have been otherwise difficult to do. The pressing question has been “what ecumenical opportunity does the history of the Christian church in East Africa offer?” Given the denominational way in which the Christian church in East Africa has been organized from its inception, facing unity and forging a way forward is a style to which every Christian must be converted and committed. Adrian Hastings rightly says:

Nothing has weakened and confused Christian life more in Africa than the divisions and rivalries it has been subjected to from the beginning, and nothing could strengthen it more today than ecumenical reunion.²⁹¹

Having inherited a divided church, some Christians in East Africa have come to believe more than before that unity is better than divisions. Fr. John O’Donohue says:

It is evident that it makes absolutely no sense that ancient European history should divide the followers of Christ... If the Christians...who are serious about their Christianity could come to see this, and simply refuse to accept the divisions which have been imposed upon them by outsiders as a result of old quarrels..., they might be initiating a movement which could have repercussions throughout the Christian world.²⁹²

In November 1974, representatives from the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches met in Entebbe to discuss the relationship between word and sacrament, and the concern was how could the Roman Catholic emphasis on the centrality of the Eucharist in the life of the church be reconciled with the Anglican emphasis on the word of God in the Bible and in preaching? Other questions dealt with in detail included the notion of sacrifice in the Eucharist, Christ’s presence in the Eucharist, and the role of the Holy Spirit in sacraments, ministry and preaching. The Entebbe Ecumenical meeting pointed out that while their meeting was characterized by the spirit of fellowship and Christian unity, the close and fraternal unity they experienced was sadly, almost a rarity and a wonder, and that, practically, the Roman Catholic and Anglican Christians in Uganda do not experience their common unity in Christ. Many practical proposals were made which would lead to visible unity. However, most of these proposals still remain a dead letter.

The full realization of unity given in Christ and promised by him calls for concrete forms of ecclesial life in common. In East Africa a lot of efforts have been invested in replacing attitudes of social hostility between Roman Catholics and Anglicans by a good-neighbor attitude and

291 Hastings, Church and Mission, 238.

292 Quoted in Hearne, Seeds of Unity, 21.

cooperation on the social level. The good-neighbor attitude has characterized the ecumenical endeavors in East Africa for so long. The two churches need visible outward forms which are able to encompass the elements of inner differentiation and spiritual diversity as well as the element of historical change and development. For instance, since 1963 the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches have been drawn together in the forum constituted by the Uganda Joint Christian Council at the national level and by Ggaba-Mukono Ecumenical Contact at the Seminary level because of two presuppositions which seem to be contradictory at the first sight. First, is that in God the church as it is known is a single reality and that all those who confess the name of Jesus Christ have a duty to make this reality visible. Second, Christians meet in their various capacities as separate churches each of which claims that its cherished tradition represents in full the church of Christ.

While on one hand the Roman Catholic and Anglican Christians in East Africa are convinced that they have to be together, grow in holiness together and move forward together, on the other hand the two churches acknowledge that the unity they yearn for is not yet sufficient enough to enable them for instance, to share the Eucharist together or recognize each other's ministries. Christians from the two churches have continued to love and help one another, what remains now is understanding one another. This need therefore calls for the formulation of possible models for unity which are not only based on the Bible and tradition but also informed by reason and experience. Some ecumenical scholars have proposed the following models:

The church as fellowship - this is a model which goes back to the early days of the church. In recent times it has been particularly stressed by the Second Vatican Council which argues that the one church exists in and consists of particular churches. The variety of local churches with one common aspiration is particularly good evidence of the catholicity of the undivided church. This view is regarded as both giving rise to and determining the re-establishment of unity. This model has two characteristics. The first is cooperative action. To make the unity most meaningful the areas of cooperative action need to be comprehensive. The unity must be seen in many areas. This cooperative action can become effective within the continuing independence of the churches, not only in their legal form but also in their special features of confession. The second characteristic of this basic model is the uniqueness of the churches. These related churches remain clearly distinct from one another in their own eyes and in the eyes of those who look at them from without. They still function as separate bodies. The church as fellowship model teaches that there are times when churches disagree with each other on fundamental issues. In this case, cooperation does not necessarily mean compromise. As Michael Kinnamon argues:

Even in such moments [of disagreement], we must recognize that the "them" we oppose are in some fundamental way "us." The ecumenical church cannot fear controversy or confrontation...but it must hate division because the story by which we live tells us that we have been linked in communion with persons we would otherwise shun.²⁹³

293 Kinnamon, The Vision of the Ecumenical Movement and How it has been Impoverished by its Friends , 21-22.

However, to some people this model only accomplishes partial union. As far as the relation of the churches one with another is concerned, there is no desire for a closer inter-ecclesiastical communion, and the present side-by-side existence of churches is encouraged to be left as it is. This form of unity is proposed out of the desire to protect differences that are acknowledged to be legitimate. What the Christian church in East Africa needs are those models which go beyond partial aspects and bring the whole of unity into view.

Organic unity - this model refers to the unity of the church as the body of Christ. It reflects a thinking, which regards the existence of different confessional churches as a decisive obstacle to attaining true Christian unity, and therefore takes the view that unity can be realized only by surrendering traditional ecclesial and confessional allegiance and identity. This is the fullest expression of a mutual recognition between the two churches. Such recognition is also manifested in the exchange of membership and ministrations. It regards sacramental inter-communion as a necessary part of any satisfactory church unity. The working out of such things like common confession of faith, agreement about sacraments, ministry, and a common organizational structure implies that all concerned are true churches.

Organic unity model is costly because it calls first, for a needless suppression of diversity achieved through so many years of ecclesiastical self-definition. Second, it eventually leads to total surrender of the denominational identities through merging to form one body. This is a kind of death of the denominations which existed before.

Unity in reconciled diversity - this model aims at a kind of fellowship in which the existing ecclesial traditions with their particularity and diversity would remain. The focus of this model is the relation of the churches to one another. The churches involved are to examine the differences that have divided them with the aim of not necessarily resolving them, but rather to deprive them of their church-dividing components. Also in this model the churches continue both their identity and their independence. Unity and diversity are held in purposeful tension. Working together in witness and mission is imperative. The goal is a visibly united church coming into existence without the conversion of individuals or groups from one ecclesial allegiance to another. Rather the conversion from ecclesiastical allegiance to another would take place in God's own time. However, each of the uniting traditions would have to change profoundly in order to enter into full communion, but they could do this, it is believed, without rejecting what is essential to their own Christian identities.

Unity in reconciled diversity model is based on the idea that the variety of denominational heritages is legitimate and forms part of the richness of life in the church universal. The idea of unity in reconciled diversity means that these diversities, when they are transformed in the process of theological dialogue, they lose their divisive character and are reconciled to each other into a binding ecumenical fellowship in which even the confessional elements are preserved. Unity in reconciled diversity therefore does not mean mere coexistence. In a united Christian body there will be mutual recognition of baptism among the denominations; recognition and reconciliation of their ministries; regular Eucharistic sharing; joint mission and service projects.

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This means genuine church fellowship, including a binding common purpose of witness and service will have begun. This does not mean that the separate institutional existence will have ended, rather the process toward a united ecclesial body will have begun.

This model can also be conveniently called "convergence" ecumenism. This form of unity would not need to involve wholesale reorganization. The members of different denominations would experience a kind of diversity that allows them to move back and forth as they enjoy the spirit of mutuality in mission. The degree to which this model is likely to be successful in East Africa is only known by God but what is clear is that the Christian Church in East Africa will be genuinely one. There will be an expression of full unity in the faith, full communion in ministry and sacraments, and agreement about lines of authority and responsibility in the church.

There are some people who seriously call in question the value of the search for unity. Their argument is that if the Roman Catholic and the Anglican churches are able to do their spiritual business effectively on their own, why bother with the need for unity? Is unity in faith and spirit not enough? Unity in faith and spirit is fundamental, but that unity must be expressed in a visible form. To be complacent about things as they are and to make no effort to resolve the problems that divide Roman Catholic and Anglican Christians in East Africa is an attitude in conflict with the mind of Christ. On the other hand the pursuit of Christian unity is a matter of Christian obedience to the command of Christ. Unfortunately, in East Africa search for Christian unity is of such paramount importance to an elite group of ecumenical specialists. On the contrary it should be the concern of all Christians, rather than being confined to the ecumenical specialists.

There are many areas where the two Christian denominations diverge or may be found to be in conflict. The more times Christians from the two denominations meet to do their thinking together, the more hopeful the future of these denominations become. The new paradigm of unity for these two denominations in East Africa is first, churches in mutual dialogue in Christ. In the East African context, unity should be understood essentially as the conversation of the two Christian denominations among themselves. This dialogue is necessary for mutual correction and for a common discrimination of the Word of God from human words. This venture will lead each participating denomination to an increasingly deeper conversation with Jesus Christ. It will help the two denominations discover afresh a common word for the universal church and the world. Second, unity is liberation of the two churches from an attachment to outdated values and patterns of life. Unity becomes meaningful only if it is pursued as part of the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches' search for an authentic self-hood. For the case of East Africa, it means freeing the two denominations from the unfortunate legacy of Western Christendom which was transferred to East Africa in the period of Western expansion.

The new paradigm calls Christians who belong to the two denominations to commitment not to institutions but to one another and to God. There is need for a broader understanding of ecumenism itself which should be grounded in the real meaning of oikoumene. This real meaning of oikoumene involves the shift first from competition to cooperation among the two Christian denominations in East Africa. Any competition, rivalry among the two Christian groups is a

contradiction to the Gospel of Christ. While grounding in and knowing one's denomination's history and theology is vital to the life of a Christian, one should be aware that denominationalism creates competition, and rivalry. This should be challenged and corrected. Second, from condemnation of to dialogue. The unfortunate legacy of early Christian missions has been the negative attitude to other church traditions and the need to convert them to what one belongs. Today many Christians in East Africa are realizing that such attitude toward others is not relevant in this part of the world where regional cooperation is being promoted. Third, from isolation to collaboration. The beginning of the ecumenical movement in East Africa began at a time when there was an influx of Christian missionary societies. The fathers of the ecumenical movement in East Africa felt the need for dialogue and collaboration between the various missionary societies. Their example should be emulated by the Roman Catholic and Anglican Christians in East Africa. Fourth, from unity to diversity. In the early days of the ecumenical movement, the emphasis was on what made Christian denominations different. The new emphasis is on what these Christian denominations hold in common.²⁹⁴

A significant movement toward unity should arise from the local experience and not from the agreements of the denominations. The Roman Catholic and the Anglican Christians in East Africa have realized that the task of evangelizing the modern society is so great that Christians from the two churches need to coordinate their work. Christians from the two churches need to agree to a commitment which will be publicly signed by the leadership of those churches, showing the various aims of working together and the areas for that cooperation. The commitment may state, for example that the churches will engage in their evangelistic work together, develop a shared ministry and a united congregation. Hastings gives examples that highlight the importance of Anglican-Roman Catholic relations in East Africa. He says:

The Catholic proto-martyr of modern Africa, St Joseph Balikuddembe, was killed in 1885 because he had bravely spoken up against the murder of the Protestant Bishop Hannington; that the last night the body of David Livingstone spent in Africa was in a Catholic chapel, of the Holy Ghost Fathers at Bangamoyo; that it was a Protestant minister who presided over the funeral and prayed at the grave of Bishop de Marion Bresillac in Freetown in 1859. Best of all, our martyrs died together. Catholic and non-Catholic were burnt side by side at Namugongo for their common belief in Christ.²⁹⁵

3. African churches and the Ecumenical Movement in East Africa

African churches are those churches in Africa that have allowed the Gospel to interact with African traditional way of life without the interference of European missionaries. The nineteenth century missionaries rejected African way of life as one of the means by which divine revelation was mediated. For some African Christians, the rejection of their way of life was too great a price to be undertaken and the issues of concern for those Africans centered on alienation from the

294 For a detailed discussion of this point, see J. Macquarrie, Christian Unity and Christian Diversity (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975); R. Wright, A Communion of Communion: One Eucharistic Fellowship (New York: Seabury Press, 1979); and O. Cullman, Unity Through Diversity (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988).

295 Hastings, Church and Mission in Modern Africa, 247.

community and the loss of a sense of identity. This forced the African converts to Christianity to embrace their traditional ways of life, as well as the Christian message. As a result, these converts disengaged themselves from the institutions that brought Christianity to Africa. From the African response to Christianity emerged two types of churches namely, African churches and mainline churches. African churches, as Philomena Njeri Mwaura says, are rooted self-consciously in the African culture and do contribute to a richer world-wide interpretation of the gospel.²⁹⁶ African churches are in two closely related churches namely, African Pentecostal churches and African initiated (independent) churches.

(a) African Pentecostal Churches

African Pentecostal churches are the latest development in East African Christianity. Pentecostalism is found in denominations and para-church organizations that emphasize the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Christians. The Pentecostal boom is taking place in East Africa and what makes people embrace the Pentecostal message is their experience of the power of the Spirit of God. Pentecostalism is a renewal movement within the church that places special emphasis on a direct personal experience of God usually through the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Pentecostalism is a general term that includes a wide range of different theologies and cultures. For instance, many Pentecostals are Trinitarian and others are non-Trinitarian.²⁹⁷ There is no single central organization/ church that directs the movement instead many Pentecostal groups are affiliated with the Pentecostal World Conference.

It has been generally believed by Christians from the mainline churches in East Africa that the Pentecostal Churches are not interested in ecumenism. The idea of Pentecostal anti-ecumenism stems in part from theological convictions imported into rather than derived from the Pentecostal experience of the Spirit. On the other hand, the Pentecostal Churches argue that the Pentecostal Movement started as an ecumenical revival/charismatic movement within the mainline churches in the United States of America.

The two stages of Ecumenical Pentecostalism

There are two major stages of ecumenical Pentecostalism namely, the ecumenism of the Azusa Street revival and the ecumenism of the charismatic renewal that embraces the global ecumenical Pentecostalism today.

The Azusa Street Ecumenism

The Azusa Street mission (1906-1908) was multi-racial. It drew participants from several races, ethnic groups, cultures and nationalities together in worship. Blacks and whites were found worshipping and singing together in the mission. During the Azusa Street mission "the color line

296 For more information on this point see, Philomena Njeri Mwaura, "African Instituted Churches in East Africa" in *Studies in World Christianity* 10/2 (2005): 161ff.

297 For more background information on this point see, Frank, D. Macchia, "God Present in a Confused Situation: The Mixed Influence of the Charismatic Movement on Classical Pentecostalism in the United States" in *Pneuma: the Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 18/1 (1996.): 33.

was washed away in the blood."²⁹⁸ The result of Azusa Street mission was not only a transformation of hearts, but also a tearing down of barriers to the experience of genuine Christian unity. However, this experience did not last for a long time. Soon white and black Pentecostal Christians formed their own denominations due to the socio-economic and political pressures in force at that time. It was not until October 1994 when the all white Pentecostal Fellowship of North America (PFNA) voted to dissolve and reconstitute as a racially inclusive group. The result was the emergence of the Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches of North America (PCCNA).

The ecumenism of neo-Pentecostalism

The neo-Pentecostalism which is also known as charismatic renewal in the mainline churches emerged in the 1950s. By this time, the Pentecostal experience of the Spirit had ceased to be a unifying force for Christians. Instead denominational lines had hardened, and the power of the Spirit to bring Christians together had emerged in Pentecostal churches. This was also the time when some Christians in the mainline churches began to appreciate in a new way the work of the Holy Spirit. This is what is technically known as the renewal movement, neo-Pentecostalism or charismatic movement in the mainline churches.

Neo-Pentecostal It was those Christians who participated in the renewal movements in the mainline churches that began to see the ecumenical potential of the experience of the Spirit. They recognized that the vitality imparted to the church by the Pentecostal outpouring was a common experience that cut across denominational lines.

Classical Pentecostals were initially suspicious of the authenticity of neo-Pentecostalism. This suspicion was intensified in the 1960s by the outbreak of neo-Pentecostalism (charismatic renewal) in the Roman Catholic Church. However, for many Christians, the Pentecostal experience of the Spirit meant stronger ties with all the Christian traditions and groups. Models of Christian unity centered on common Christian mission between Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals.

Pentecostalism emerged on the African continent in the early part of the twentieth. Churches that are influenced by this movement "in style they often look to the west and to western Pentecostalism and to urban society rather than to African rural traditions."²⁹⁹ The spread of the Pentecostal movement followed two patterns. First, as the Bible was translated into local languages, a situation of dissatisfaction was created that prompted an intense search for a deeper dimension of the Christian faith. African evangelists began to announce the dawning of a new era of African Christianity. Those who embraced this message, moved out of the mainline churches and established churches that were Pentecostal in nature. Kingsley Larbi says:

These charismatic leaders and their followers succeeded where the mission churches had failed. To escape the hegemony of the mission churches and their

298 Frank Bartleman, Azusa Street: The Roots of Modern-day Pentecost (1925; reprint, Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1980), 54.

299 Padwick, "Spirit, Desire and the World," 8.

colonial associates, the new churches sought an affiliation with certain Western Pentecostal bodies.³⁰⁰

The second pattern was when some Pentecostal missionaries from the West went to Africa to preach the Gospel and set up a mission stations. By 1970 the Pentecostal movement as we find it today had been firmly established in Africa. Its success was partly due to its:

Ability to place the traditional understanding of the cosmic struggle in the realm of Christian belief, their exaltation of Jesus at the center of the cosmic struggle, their aggressive evangelism, their ethical rigorism, and their strong sense of community. They also benefited from several years of Christian presence.³⁰¹

However, the phenomenal growth of the movement that has undercut the mainline churches, took place between the 1970s and the 1980s.

Christians in East Africa were first attracted to the unity and passion of Pentecostal groups in 1960, three years after a mass salvation crusade was held in 1957 in Mombasa by Dr. T.L. Osborn. One of the Pentecostal leaders in Uganda said “after that crusade in Mombasa, Kenya the fountain of the river of Pentecostalism spread in the heart of East Africa.” At first Pentecostals in East Africa were denied permission by the colonial governments to operate because Pentecostalism was received with skepticism and apprehension. Some of the Christians in the mainline churches who became Pentecostal were excommunicated. However, later in 1960, the colonial governments authorized them to start operating freely.

To many Christians in East Africa, the news of the Pentecostal faith spread like a wild fire. Now, the Pentecostal movement has flourished in countless churches in East Africa. Since 1960 the Pentecostal churches have grown tremendously, and they are bent on winning many more people for Christ. These churches have even grown in influence both as the world’s fastest-growing branch of Christianity in East Africa. Pentecostals have not only demystified the word church but they have also groomed and channeled out quite a large number of Pastors. Nowadays it is easier to start a church and they are many – mainly for Born Again Christians. Tiny and makeshift, these churches sprout up almost overnight. The Pentecostals have also managed to ably squeeze themselves in the bracket of the mainstream religious traditions namely, Catholic, Anglican and Orthodox. Referring to Pentecostalism in East Africa, Mwaura rightly observes:

Regardless of where they are found in East Africa, NPCs have certain distinguishing characteristics like aggressive use of media technologies in evangelism, prominent roles for women and youth, lay oriented leadership, emphasis on holiness and prosperity gospel and urban centered ministries.³⁰²

300 Kingsley Larbi, “African Pentecostalism in the Context of Global Pentecostal Ecumenical Fraternity: Challenges and Opportunities” in PNEUMA: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, 24/2 (Fall 2002): 141.

301 Kingsley Larbi, “African Pentecostalism in the Context of Global Pentecostal Ecumenical Fraternity: Challenges and Opportunities” in PNEUMA: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, 24/2 (Fall 2002): 143.

302 Mwaura, “African Instituted Churches in East Africa” in Studies in World Christianity, 10/2 (2005): 165.

Today, there is a remarkable power of the Pentecostal experience that has bridged not only denominational differences but also spoken to the hearts of Christians that come from divergent denominational backgrounds in East Africa. Revival fellowships like those in schools, and institutions of higher learning have been attended by Christians many of whom would never have been found together under the same roof. These Christians have returned to their churches full of the Holy Spirit. This is what one of the respondents in Kenya called ecumenical Pentecostalism. One church leader from one of the mainline churches in East Africa said “as Pentecostals in East Africa have come to know non-Pentecostals in a deeper way in various Christian missions, they have come to appreciate the diversity present in the body of Christ.”³⁰³

Although Pentecostal relationships with the mainline churches have come a long way in East Africa there still remains the long-standing reluctance among many individual Pentecostal Christians to be associated with structural efforts at church unity, especially those derived from organized ecumenical activities such as those of the All Africa Conference of Churches. This is partly:

Because of their restorationist perspective on the history of the church that views existing churches as having fallen away from God's intentions through compromise and sin. Another reason is the way so many existing churches have marginalized and rejected the Pentecostals when they attempted to share their testimonies of what God had done in their lives.³⁰⁴

Even at the global level it was not until the 1960s that “a couple of Pentecostal churches in Chile and one in Brazil came into membership of the World Council of Churches.”³⁰⁵

The majority of the respondents noted that at the global level the ecumenical quest of Pentecostalism has remained vital. However, it was a general observation that there is less of a concern among Pentecostals for a unity of theological opinion than for common activity for the Kingdom of God. In the theological terms ecumenism for mission has precedence over ecumenism for *koinonia*. However, a respondent in Tanzania said that “ecumenism has been an essential and foundational quest of Pentecostalism.” Despite the pressures, from within and without, to succumb to the temptation of sectarian values, the Pentecostal Churches in East Africa have maintained an ecumenical dimension as a core value. For many Christians in East Africa, ecumenical dialogue with Pentecostal churches is no longer a strange idea.

Pentecostals are a significant group of Christians within the church in East Africa. In their theology they do not only hold to the claims of historic Christianity but also believe that the characteristics of the first-century Apostolic Church namely, the gifts and operations of the Holy Spirit should be the norm for the church's life. They subscribe to the second touch by the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues, and baptism of the Holy Spirit. The reality of the Pentecostal

303 Church leader interviewed by the author on January 12, 2009.

304 <http://www.oikoumene.org/member-churches/church-families/pentecostal-churches.htm>, accessed on August 27, 2009.

305 Geoffrey Wainwright, “The One Hope of Your Calling? The Ecumenical and Pentecostal Movements after a Century” in *PNEUMA: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies*, 25/1 (Spring 2003): 22.

movement and the future of ecumenism in East Africa “is that it is a potent agent for change, engendering a fundamental transformation of social and religious values.”³⁰⁶

With the legalized freedom of worship in East Africa, new churches that are Pentecostal in character are on the increase in all the five countries. What is common to all of them is the emphasis of the East Africa revival teaching namely, the need for personal experience of Jesus Christ, a deliverance theology focused on the power of the Holy Spirit that is at times manifested in healing and crusade evangelism.

(b) African Initiated Churches

African Instituted churches are new churches and independent Christian groups that were started by Africans, either as a break away from the mainline churches, or as an independent creation. They have been given many names such as African Indigenous churches, Praying churches. Some non-Africans have called them Independent churches because these churches claim to be free from the mainline churches’ control. These churches have continued to reflect the failure of the mainline churches to completely influence the African Christian mind to Western Christianity. Commenting on the important place these churches occupy in global Christianity, David Bosch wrote:

Few students of the African religious scene today would doubt the importance and significance - also the future of Christianity on this continent - of the African Independent Churches. These churches, together with similar Christian movements among other primal societies ... may indeed be seen as the fifth major Christian church type, after the Eastern Orthodox Churches, the Roman Catholic Church, the Protestant Reformation and the Pentecostal churches.³⁰⁷

In all the five countries, Kenya has the highest number of Christians belonging to the African Instituted Churches.

The causes of independence

(a) Search for active participation in church leadership

The African Instituted churches in Africa emerged because Africans in the mainline churches felt discriminated and treated unfairly by European leadership. For instance, Africans were never given positions of responsibility in the mainline churches. The very few Africans, who were promoted to high positions of responsibility, their salary scales were different from the Europeans’ for the same kind of job and qualifications. Mwaura says;

Most nationalist churches retained the liturgy, organizational structure and doctrines of the churches they broke away from except in the observation of certain cultural practices like polygamy, female circumcision and other rituals.³⁰⁸

Where Africans were excluded from political activities, African Instituted churches offered an

306 Kingsley Larbi, “African Pentecostalism in the Context of Global Pentecostal Ecumenical Fraternity: Challenges and Opportunities” in *PNEUMA: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies*, 24/2 (Fall 2002): 154.

307 Mwaura, “African Instituted Churches in East Africa” in *Studies in World Christianity*, 10/2 (2005): 161.

308 Mwaura, “African Instituted Churches in East Africa” in *Studies in World Christianity*, 10/2 (2005): 163.

experience and training in socio-political organization. This is why in East Africa African Instituted churches have been associated with the rise of nationalism.

b. Search for cultural freedom

The European missionaries forced the African converts to leave their African traditional values and adhere to moral standards, which were non-Biblical. When European missionaries came to Africa, they determined to instill in the African converts, Western values. But the majority of African converts were never convinced about the inferior status of their cultural and religious values. According to the African converts, the missionaries' attitude was against the Gospel and Christian doctrine about the equality of all people before God. This understanding, forced some African Christians to seek to rehabilitate the African culture in the context of their new faith, and expressed an active reaction against the domination of the West that was also reflected in the mainline Churches.

For African Christians, the break away from the mainline Churches meant their spiritual freedom from mission control and support. The freedom of the African Instituted Churches as the sons and daughters of God has allowed them to contextualize Christianity in Africa.

c. Search for Christian love

During the first few centuries of Christianity, there were no Church buildings. Christians formed small worshiping communities. The African Instituted Churches have taken up this model. They have their own holy places where salvation is experienced there and then in the context of a salvation dimension of African ritual system. African Instituted Churches have formed a community based at the centre, and at the same time broken up into smaller communities, which resemble African extended families in which every one has the sense of belonging. In these communities, immediate human needs are appreciated. The African Instituted Church community is not exclusive in its concern, mutual respect and care.

d. Search for meaningful ritual

One of the main reasons for the emergence of the African Instituted churches was the quest for meaningful and suitable ritual, especially that of healing. They looked for a ritual to compensate for what was being lost in the Westernized African society. Contextualized Christianity, they thought, would give vitality to some traditional aspects that were in danger of being lost. Rituals of healing and purification were among the most important aspects of life in traditional societies in Africa, and these Churches sought to establish accessible rites of healing with a Christian reference and within a caring community led by gifted individuals.

Characteristics of African Instituted Churches

i. Key charismatic leader(s)

A key charismatic leader or leaders usually lead African Instituted Churches. Many of them arise out of the vision of one person who gives his or her time and energy to establish his or her own Church. Women are always in the majority and are more active than men and they are allowed to hold all the positions in African Instituted Churches. The leader is always given a position of

authority and respect in the Church.

ii. Teaching and preaching

African Instituted Churches give priority to teaching and preaching ministries. They believe in the potent word spoken by the Church leader, read and recited from the Bible. This is one of the reasons why most of African Instituted Church leaders are itinerary preachers and teachers. They are often selective in the parts of the Bible from where they preach and teach. African Instituted Church members are encouraged to recite some Biblical verses for their potency. However, Christians in these Churches are always eager to discover the truth of Scripture and are usually familiar with big portions of the Bible.

iii. Leadership training

These are grass-root Churches that arise from local needs although a few are part of a worldwide network. They therefore emphasize the training and deployment of every member of the congregation. Christians in these Churches are encouraged to lead as many open-air revival crusades as possible. Members are required to show signs of commitment before the Church releases the gifts of the Holy Spirit among them. Being passionate about conversion and making clear to the inquirers what they must do to become Christians is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit every Christian must have.

iv. Freedom and enthusiasm in worship

The worship in African Instituted Churches is usually spontaneous and everyone has an opportunity to participate actively in worship. Everyone is inspired for instance to clap hands speak in tongues, to give testimony and dance. The use of traditional musical instruments makes Church worship very attractive. The lively music and challenging worship, sometimes attract young people who come alive in their faith and speak out their faith to others.

v. Healing

There is a strong belief in divine healing among African Instituted Church members. Special days are set apart for healing purposes and many testimonies talk about divine healing, after the failure of the modern hospitals to heal the sick. Healing is usually offered to those whose lives are broken. This may be through counseling, meeting their immediate needs or the laying on of hands. Usually there are spiritual or faith healing homes set up adjacent to the Churches to serve as clinics.

Lesson for the mainline churches while in the ecumenical cooperation

a. Learn to plan for and expect growth

Many of the African Instituted Churches usually plan towards, pray for and expect growth to take place. They see themselves as extensions of the dynamic traditional communities. The members of African Instituted Churches see their Churches not as places where people go for worship and then go to their separate ways. Rather they are places where people come to listen and tell each other stories of their Christian life. It is this sense of belonging to a concerned and caring community, which, in many ways, has been one of the attractions to these Churches. These

Churches are concerned with all things that make life worth living.

b. Learn to offer new forms of worship

It is true most of the mainline Churches are by nature liturgical. These Churches offer freer styles of worship. The challenge the mainline Churches in Africa are called to do is to search for new forms of worshipping and expressing the Gospel at the depth of the African situation. For it is in exploring new ways of talking about human experience of the Deity that the Church testifies that there are many ways of divine disclosure.

c. Learn to give greater weight to teaching and proclaiming the Gospel

Although the mainline Churches have a good framework for reading the Scriptures in their lectionaries, their teaching is often considered to be brief and unrelated to life. They also do not separate the Gospel from Western values, which missionaries paraded as Christianity. They are also known for not bridging the gap between the past and the present, between African culture and Christianity. There is need for these Churches to take greater care in training their Christians in the knowledge of the Scriptures as African Instituted Churches do.

With the collapse of colonialism in East Africa in the 1960s the mainline churches blossomed while African churches became institutionalized. Some of them such as Church of Christ in Africa and Africa Church of the Holy Spirit sought membership to the National Christian Councils. Today, African churches are trying to redefine their mission with the help of ecumenical bodies such as Organization of African Instituted Churches. Through the ecumenical bodies, African churches are becoming increasingly aware of their role in the world-wide church. These churches have become a powerful mobilizing force that is dedicated to the creation of an alternative vision of church unity in the region.³⁰⁹

What brings the African churches together is their membership to the East African revival movement that started in Rwanda in 1927 and subsequently spread to the rest of East Africa. This movement is interdenominational. It is an informal Christian movement that is sustained by both the laity and clergy. Each member of the East African revival movement is expected to have a personal encounter with Jesus Christ and make public confession of sins.

The African churches have developed Christian ministries such as Fellowship of Christian Unions (Focus) that target the youth in institutions of higher learning. These Christian ministries have facilitated the spread of the charismatic renewal all over the country and within East Africa.

Fellowship of Christian Unions (FOCUS)

FOCUS Kenya has the following set up.

Vision: To be a model of godly transformation in Church and society.

309 The Organization of African Instituted Churches is an association of African founded Churches which was founded in Cairo Egypt in 1978 with its headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya .

Mission: To reach every student in university and college for Christ and equip them for effective service in and after campus.

To share in the life and service of the church and society, students and graduates are encouraged to seek God's guidance on areas of practical involvement according to their calling, gifting or training. Our homes, institutions, offices or duty station are the first point of service to influence students and society to make godly choices in life, thereby changing Kenya, and the world, for God. We send missionaries to work in other cultures but our stations are the starting point.

Objectives

Evangelism - To present Jesus Christ as Saviour, Lord and God to the students in universities and colleges with a purpose of leading them to a personal faith in Him.

Discipleship - To deepen and strengthen the spiritual lives of students and equip them for a lifetime of service in the family, church and society.

Mission - To encourage and equip students to take the good news of Christ to every nation on earth and to be part of the church's witness of the good news in order to be salt and light in every area of life.

Leadership Development - To develop Christian leaders who will play key leadership roles in church and the wider society.

Core values

We endeavor to be faithful to the Holy Scriptures.

We exemplify moral, financial and intellectual integrity.

We uphold apprenticeship as a training model.

We strive for excellence in all areas of life.

We are student-centred in our operations.

Doctrinal Basis

Membership shall only be open to Christian Unions, Fellowships and Associate Branches whose constitution is in agreement with the fundamental truths of Christianity including the following:

The one holy universal Church to which all true believers belong.

1. The unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the Godhead.
2. The sovereignty of God in creation, revelation, redemption and final judgment
3. The divine inspiration and entire trustworthiness of Holy Scripture, as originally given and its supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct
4. The universal sinfulness and guilt of all men since the Fall, rendering them subject to God's wrath and condemnation.
5. Redemption from the guilt, penalty, dominion and pollution of sin solely through the sacrificial death (as our Representative and Substitute) of the Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God.
6. The bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead and His ascension to the right hand of God the Father.
7. The presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the work of regeneration.

8. The justification of the sinner by the grace of God through faith alone.
9. The indwelling and work of the Holy Spirit in the believer.
10. The expectation of the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ.³¹⁰

4. Muslims and Christians in an ecumenical encounter

Christians in East Africa live in a pluralistic society and this pluralism is evident in the area of religion. The trend of Christianity and Islam in an ecumenical encounter in East Africa was at first affected by the radical transformation of the socio-political landscape in the 19th century and 20th century. The presence of Islam in East Africa is believed to be as early as 830 AD and the oldest intact building in this region is a mosque at Kizimkazi dated 1007 AD. By the 14th century, Islam had widespread along the coastal area and when Ibn Battuta from Maghreb visited East Africa in 1332 he reported that as a Muslim he felt being at home among his fellow Muslims. Up to the 19th century Muslims controlled trade in East Africa. Arabic and Swahili were the languages of literature and trade. In East Africa, Islam was spread mainly through trade activities with people in the interior but remained an urban religion for many years.

By the time the Portuguese introduced Christianity at the East African coast in the 16th century, Islam was already well established. At the beginning of the 18th century when the Muslims drove out of East Africa the Portuguese, the former gradually increased their political influence. During the German colonial era in East Africa, the Muslims were hired as civil servants. The Germans also established schools along the coast with Kiswahili as the medium of instruction. The great expansion of Islam in East Africa was halted in the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century when Uganda became a Protectorate and when Kenya and Tanzania became British colonies. After World War 1, the Christian missionaries increased their activities through the spread of the English culture and the establishment of schools. Eventually Christians joined the civil service, which had been in the previous years the preserve of Muslims. With the introduction of colonial administration in East Africa, Muslims were gradually eliminated from the administration and the political scene. By the middle of the 20th century, East Africa had ceased to be under the British control and had become an independent society. Tanzania regained her independence in 1961, Uganda 1962 and Kenya in 1963. This change also affected the socio-religious and cultural developments within the three countries.

The twenty-first century has become for Muslims and Christians in East Africa a great century when Muslims and Christians are committed to extend their missionary activities to as many people as possible. According to the World Christian Encyclopedia, there are approximately one billion Muslims in the world. There is a recognizable presence of both Christians and Muslims in East Africa. In Uganda, Muslims are 16% while Christians are 66%. In Kenya Muslims are 10% while Christians are 78% and in Tanzania Muslims are 35% while Christians are 30%.³¹¹

310 This information is got from FOCUS, Kenya at www.focuskenya.org accessed on June 21, 2009.

311 Regarding the percentages of Muslims and Christians in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania, see United States Institute of Peace Report No. 140 (May 2005). Method Kilaini, a Tanzanian Roman Catholic scholar puts the number of Christians in Tanzania at 48% and the number of Muslims at 34%. He also puts the number of Muslims

Since the middle of the 20th century, Christianity and Islam have played a crucial role in the way local communities in East Africa relate, react and respond to one another. There are three ways in which the adherents of the two religions have related, reacted and responded to one another. The first one is the exclusivist position. People who hold the exclusivist position argue that only their religious tradition contains the absolute truth and that the other religious tradition does not possess valid and legitimate truth claims. From this point of view for Christians would quote John 14:6 where Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except by me." They would go on to say that though there are truths and values in Islam, there is only one saving truth, namely the gospel of Jesus Christ. Salvation therefore is only possible through confession and surrender to God in Christ and for Muslims it is through the Qu'an and belief in Muhammad as his prophet. In this case exclusivism implies that for Christians only Christianity is true and that the beliefs and practices in Islam are false. And for Muslims, only Islam is true and that the beliefs and practices in Christianity are false. Each religious tradition tries to lure the other religious tradition to its side.

Christian-Muslim relationship in Tanzania

At the moment, Tanzania is the largest of the five countries that make up East Africa and has the highest population that is estimated at 35 million people. It also has the largest number of ethnic groups which number to about 120 and this makes Tanzania the most multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society in the region. The Tanzanian government is secular, but the majority of Tanzanians are affiliated to one of the following religious groups: Christianity, Islam, Traditional Religions, Hinduism, Judaism, and Buddhism. Buddhists, Hindus and Jews form small minorities.

The introduction of Islam in Tanzania is the result of three circumstances: first, the political situation in Persia and Arabia that led to a group of Muslim political refugees to come and settle on the East African coast; second, trade carried out by Muslims, who came to settle in East Africa and controlled the existing trade routes; and third, the coming of Muslims preachers from Islamic countries. These groups established coastal towns such as Bagamoyo, Tanga and Kilwa, and towns on the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba, from which Islam spread to the mainland.

Indigenous Tanzanians were attracted to Islam for various reasons namely the Muslim immigrants presented themselves as civilized and therefore superior to the indigenous Tanzanians. To become a Muslim meant to be civilized. Arabs engaged in trade and were wealthy people. Therefore, becoming a Muslim meant belonging to a community of the wealthy people. More often than not, it was easy for those who could identify themselves as Muslims to secure employment from Arabs. Furthermore, conversion to Islam was facilitated by the message contained in the religious teachings. Also, becoming a Muslim brought certain privileges, such as not being sold into slavery. Some became Muslims through marriage: some Arabs married

in Kenya at 6%. On this point, see Method Kilaini, "Ecumenism in a Multi-Religious Context," in The Ecumenical Review 53, 3(July 2001): 361-362.

African women and their children became Muslims. Islam in Tanzania was not spread by force, as in some other parts of the world, but by indigenous people willingly being converted.

The first attempt to introduce Christianity into Tanzania was made in about 1505 by Franciscan missionaries from Portugal. This attempt was disrupted by war between the Arabs and Portuguese. The Portuguese lost the war and that was the end of Christianity until some 355 years later. Christianity was officially introduced on the Tanzanian mainland in about 1868. The first group of missionaries, 'Holy Ghost Fathers', started the first mission in Bagamoyo and thereafter they spread to Morogoro, Mpwapwa, Dodoma and Arusha. Around 1878, the Holy Ghost Missionaries were joined by another group of missionaries, Missionaries of Africa, or White Fathers. This group was responsible for spreading Christianity around the lake regions. From that same period, other groups of Christian missionaries continued coming until recent times. It is estimated that there are about 150 churches in Tanzania that claim to be followers of Christ. The largest are the Catholic Church, with about six million members, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania, with more than one and a half million members.

Islam was the first foreign religion to be introduced into Tanzania, followed by Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism and Buddhism. However, Christianity seems to have more followers, especially in the interior of Tanzania, for the following reasons. First, Missionaries were well organized and trained for evangelization. Second, besides evangelization, missionaries started other projects which attracted people to Christianity, notably, schools, hospitals, and developmental projects. Third, a number of missionary societies had support from their home countries, including financial support and protection in some areas where the indigenous people were hostile to the missionary activities.

Of all the countries in East Africa, the exclusivist position has affected Tanzania most. Since 1985, conflict between Christians and Muslims in Tanzania has been steadily increasing.³¹² Many respondents said that this conflict ranges from verbal disputes to physical confrontations. There are usually public attacks on central Christian doctrines such as the Trinity and Christian extremists preaching Christian supremacy over Islam. When asked why Christians and Muslims in Tanzania take this exclusive position, one respondent gave religious instruction as being the prime reason behind the Christian-Muslim conflict in Tanzania. From the findings, religious instruction in Tanzania leads to prejudice. Religious instructions for young Tanzanians in both Christianity and Islam have generally presented the other negatively.

Muslim-Christian Relations in Tanzania. Tanzania is one of the very few countries where Christians and Muslims have lived peacefully for centuries, and a number of theories have been

312 For detailed account of the Christian-Muslim relationship in Tanzania see, F. Wijzen. & B. Mfumbusa, "Seeds of Conflict: Muslim-Christian Relations in Tanzania," in: J. Gort, H. Janssen & H. Vroom (Eds) Religion, Conflict and Reconciliation: Multifaith Ideals and Realities, Currents of Encounter 17 (Amsterdam/New York: Editions Rodopi), 2002.

advanced to explain this. First, there is a claim that the introduction of Ujamaa (a sort of Africanized socialism) played an important role. Its philosophy was building a society based on equality, living together, communal ownership of the means of production, and working together. This indirectly weakened the strong feeling of one's affiliation to a particular religion. Tanzanians became accustomed to referring to themselves as Tanzanians rather than Christians or Muslims. Second, right from the beginning the Tanzanian government declared itself secular, so religion had no opportunity to influence state matters. Third, the first president of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere, never deliberately promoted any religious group while he was in power, and upheld the philosophy of equality. Fourth, the government had a good relationship with religious governing bodies. Religious leaders, such as the cardinal, bishops, shaykhs, pastors and priests, have traditionally been highly respected because of their functions. On government social occasions, religious leaders were invited and at times the government would consult them on various matters.

The peace enjoyed between Muslims and Christians began to fade from the beginning of the past two decades. The decline in their good relationship is marked by Muslims starting to attack Christian teachings in public, and some Christian groups retaliating. Some Muslims also began complaining that the government mistreated them, claiming that the government was controlled by Christians. Among the complaints was that the government favored Christians by giving them good leadership posts and promotion in higher education, while Muslims were refused permission to establish an Islamic court and implement the Sharica. The behavior of some Muslims sparked off the latent tension, which has been rapidly increasing since that time.

In 1986, the former president of Tanzania, Ali Hassan Mwinyi, attacked religious intolerance in public during the inauguration of a mosque in Moshi. Thereafter, public rallies organized by so-called Islamic Bible scholars were characterized by anti-Christian preaching and occasional Bible burning in Dar es Salaam and other major towns. In 1989 many Tanzanians were shocked by the press alleging that the Tanzanian government had joined the Islam Organization in Africa (IOA). To make the matter worse, Tanzania was elected to a committee to stimulate the spread of Islam in East and Southern Africa. The shock was due to the fact that the mission of this organization contradicted the entire philosophy of the secular state. The organization's objectives were:

- i. To promote the unity and solidarity of the umma in Africa.
- ii. To promote peace, harmony, and human development.
- iii. To support, enhance, and coordinate dacwa work.
- iv. To promote the Sharica and its application.³¹³

In the 1990s, Christians in Bukoba and some parts of Tanzania started preventing Muslims from participating in some social activities such as weddings and burial ceremonies. Some Christian extremists boycotted Muslim shops and some went to the extent of burning clothes decorated with pictures of the great mosque of Mecca or Arabic words.

313 See, www.islaminafrica.org.

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In January 1993, another shock hit the Tanzanian community when it was revealed that Zanzibar, the part of Tanzania with the highest percentage of Muslims, had secretly joined the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), whose mission is to promote Arab–African solidarity. This was interpreted by some Christians as a step towards declaring Tanzania a Muslim state.

In 1993, members of a particular group within Islam, the Council for the Dissemination of the Koran in Tanzania (Balukuta), which was formed in 1991 for the promotion of Qur'an recitation and is now banned, launched a jihad against pork. A booklet promoting this jihad was written and spread by an organization based in Iran. This led to attacks on pork shops in Dar es Salaam on Good Friday 1993.

In April 1993, the Tanzanian Episcopal Conference (TEC) issued a statement blaming the government for the way it was condoning the activities of Islamic extremists. The TEC complained that Muslim extremists belittled and ridiculed the religious beliefs of other religions. President Ali Hassan Mwinyi (a Muslim), responded a year later by asking the bishops not to interfere in politics. During the following year, religion became a heated issue in parliament. A group of 55 members of parliament wanted to establish a government of Tanganyika within the union. The basis for their argument was that Zanzibar had joined the OIC unconstitutionally. In response to this, a parliamentary commission to investigate the matter was formed and the commission advised Zanzibar to withdraw from the OIC. In July 1993 a secret letter written by Professor Ali Kigoma Malima, by then a minister advising President Ali Hassan Mwinyi, in which he proposed the reduction of the numbers of Christians admitted to universities, became public. Malima's argument was that Christians had been favored under Nyerere but it was now time for the Muslim president to do the same for Muslims. The same ideas were later expressed by Aboud Jumbe, former president of Zanzibar and vice-president of Tanzania, in his famous book *The Partnership: Tanganyika–Zanzibar Union: Thirty Turbulent Years* (1995), where he used the 1978 secondary school admission figures to demonstrate the imbalance between Muslims and Christians joining government secondary schools. Muslims are presented as a minority compared with Christians who joined secondary education that year.

In 1998, Muslim preachers at a mosque Mwembechai, a suburb of Dar es Salaam, instigated riots under the cover of fighting for Muslim rights. The rioters burned vehicles and destroyed properties worth some millions of shillings. In the process of curbing the violence, three Muslims were shot dead by the police. During the same year, the Embassy of the United States of America in Dar es Salaam was bombed, leaving eleven dead. Investigations revealed that some local Muslims in collaboration with the al-Qaeda group were responsible.

In the year 2000, another shocking event happened in the Island of Pemba. After the general election, members of the Civic United Front (CUF) refused to accept the results and on 26 January 2001 demonstrated to oppose them. The demonstrations were so violent that twenty members of CUF were killed and one policeman was beheaded. About 2,000 people took refuge in Mombasa, Kenya. For the first time in the history of independent Tanzania, citizens were

leaving as refugees because of violence. The entire saga was interpreted by the government as a move toward toppling the democratically elected government, whereas some Muslims interpreted it as a religious issue, arising from Muslims being mistreated in their own country.

The way forward

Every individual likes to live in a peaceful environment where she/he is loved, valued and appreciated for what she/he is and does. One of the roles of religion is to preach mutual love and peace. Paradoxically, some adherents of Christianity and Islam seem to be doing what is contrary to the role of religion. They have been champions of hatred and conflict between Muslims and Christians, as in Tanzania. This is a sign that something has gone wrong in both religions, as shown during the analysis of the interviews with religious teachers and training manuals. It is therefore imperative to make some recommendations on how to rectify this situation. Since conflicts are between the two religions, and between the government and the two religions, our recommendations will take into account the three groups: that is, recommendations for Christians, for Muslims and for the government.

Each group seems to have a different role to play. For Christians in Tanzania, being the majority and owning a number of educational institutions, including universities and major seminaries, have a greater opportunity to initiate movements towards living harmoniously with Muslims. There are four suggested steps that can be followed in order to attain this goal. The first step is to include the teaching of Islam in all parts of the religious curriculum. This should be done in both catechetical schools and other education centers in order to ensure that every Christian knows at least something about Islam. While the teaching of Christianity, especially in catechetical schools, is intended to inculcate the Christian faith and commitment to one's religion, the teaching of Islam in those schools should focus on understanding the Muslims' faith. The subject should be approached positively, that is, teaching Islam as another way to salvation. Regarding theological differences between Islam and Christianity, learners should be informed that differences are due to historical factors caused by human weakness and the social environment in which each religion grew. By 'human weakness' is meant lack of capacity to understand things as they are. This situation leads people to misuse religion to achieve selfish goals. For instance, some people have murdered others in the name of religion, committed suicide in the name of religion, amassed enormous wealth and built empires using crooked means justified by religion, converted people by force and killed or granted second-class status to those who resisted. All these are contrary to the essence and role of religion, which is meant to liberate humanity and create good conditions in which people can live happily.

The social environment in which a religion grows has a fundamental role to play in influencing that religion. Islam, having arisen in the Arab world, must necessarily differ from Christianity, which developed primarily in the Western world, because the two societies have a different worldview and cultural background. Therefore, differences between religions should not be a reason for judging one religion to be inferior to another but should rather present a situation to study and appreciate.

When considering the specific differences between Islam and Christianity, the teaching of Islam should present the positive aspects that can be traced in it. The religion of the other should be taught as we teach the culture of other races or communities. Today, sincere sociologists and anthropologists reserve their judgment as to whether one culture is inferior or superior to another because each culture is good for its own people, and religion can be similarly viewed.

Second, Christian institutions of higher education should open their doors to Muslim experts, especially in the departments of religious studies. This would give an opportunity to Christian students and others to learn about Islam from an insider's perspective. Christians would also learn by working with Muslims. One of the sources of prejudice is that we do not know well the people we are prejudiced against. Working together would lead adherents of both religions to a better understanding of the other.

The third step is for Christian donors to be open to Muslims by giving them the opportunity to enjoy scholarships awarded by Western Christians. This would not only foster a sense of care, good relations and trust between Muslims and Christians, but also create a balance in education. If the system of sponsoring Christian students that is administered through bishops and other Christian religious leaders continues, the educational and economic gap between Muslims and Christians will continue to widen. This has been one of the causes of the conflict because, if employment and leadership posts are awarded on the basis of qualifications, it is mainly Christians who will continue to enjoy such opportunities. The fourth step is to initiate dialogue between Muslims and Christians. Rules and principles of dialogue should be adhered to in order for dialogue to be fruitful.

The first three steps are to prepare Christians to know about Islam and gradually develop positive attitudes about Muslims and their religion. They are a way to prepare Christians for entering into dialogue with Muslims. From our observation, it is not good to begin dialogue in a situation where people do not know each other and when people are still prejudiced against each other. This has been the reason why some people enter into dialogue with the expectation of converting or winning others over in theological arguments. Dialogue should therefore be the last step in deepening our understanding and learning from one another.

Muslims, like Christians, as suggested above, should include the teaching of Christianity throughout the religious curriculum. The teaching of Christianity should avoid a polemical approach and present Christianity as another way to God. Commentaries found in some editions of the Qur'an, especially those used in schools, should be edited in order to remove sections that present Christianity as folly. The differences between Islam and Christianity should be presented as natural and necessary, and to be tolerated, as suggested in some teachings of the Qur'an (Q 2.262; 5.69; 22.17). The idea that history and social background account for differences between religions should be emphasized.

Survey work done in Tanzania has shown that most Muslim institutions of higher education have departments dedicated to the teaching of religion. We therefore recommend Muslim-Christian

that they should employ experts from the various religions taught, so that they are presented from the believers' perspective. This would help to reduce prejudice and to lead the students into a better understanding of the religion.

Muslim complaints against the government seem to lack some empirical evidence. For example, the complaint about imbalances in education does not consider some historical causes. Most of the early schools were mission schools in which, apart from teaching secular subjects, the teaching of Christianity was compulsory. Staunch Muslims were therefore reluctant to send their children there for fear they might be being converted to Christianity. Also, the complaints ignore some social-economic factors that might have contributed to the imbalances. For example, missionaries

favoured converts to Christianity by giving them opportunities for study and even employment. Unfortunately, some of the champions of these complaints are learned people who once held sensitive posts in the government, and this makes lay Muslims inclined to take the complaints at face value and believe that Muslims really have not been given equal opportunities in leadership and education. This leads them to forget that the first president of Tanzania, who was a Christian, took steps to nationalize the education sector so that every Tanzanian could get an education. He also started the Universal Primary Education (UPE) program for the benefit of every Tanzanian. So, we recommend that Muslim parents in Tanzania, instead of focusing on unfounded complaints, should struggle to send their children to school, cooperate with Christians to start schools, and concentrate on fighting against our common enemies: poverty, disease, injustice, ignorance and corruption.

Muslims have been demanding the establishment of an Islamic court of law that would be used to implement Islamic law. This demand contradicts the principle of a secular state. However, since what is needed is to enforce justice, the same efforts could be put into influencing civil courts to observe justice and fighting against corruption. The move for Tanzania and Zanzibar to join the OIC and IOA was mistaken because it too contradicts the principles of a secular state. However, it would be a good move for the Muslims in Tanzania, under the umbrella of BAKWATA (the Islamic Association of Tanzania), to join the Islamic organizations for the purpose of learning something good from them and at the same time being witnesses to Muslims outside Tanzania on how to live peacefully with other religions. It is our conviction that a good number of Muslims in Tanzania live according to the Sharica without imposing it on others, and this does not impair the spirituality of Islam.

Finally, Muslims in Tanzania could initiate dialogue with Christians. The aim of dialogue is to learn from others and at the same time to witness to them about one's faith. This could be the beginning of minimizing prejudice and taking a new turn enabling Muslims can respect and love Christians and vice-versa.

The Tanzanian government made the right move in declaring itself a secular state. A secular state policy is the right policy for a community that is multi-religious, like Tanzania. We therefore recommend that the state should adhere to and respect the principles of a secular state. History

has created imbalances in education and, of course, this does not favor the community of Tanzania, but creates chaos. Some measures should be taken in order to create a balance. For example, the state should encourage Muslim parents to send their children to school, help in constructing good schools if necessary in some areas that have a high Muslim population, and sensitize and encourage Muslims to create education trust funds that can be used to support parents who are not able to send their children to school.

A fundamental mistake made by the government has been to allow religious groups to start their own schools, which incorporate elements of following the philosophies of their own religion, and this has hindered some parents of other religions from sending their children to these schools. This creates more imbalances in education because Christians have more and better schools than Muslims. We therefore recommend that the government put in place a system whereby anybody can easily join such schools without jeopardizing their faith, or else nationalize all schools that are religiously oriented.

Experience has revealed that under the influence of certain types of religious instruction, some people behave inhumanly. Examples of such cases can be found in Algeria, Afghanistan, Morocco, and Northern Ireland where Muslims and Christians have been engaged in murdering colleagues. Other examples are events like that of 11 September 2001 in the US, the Bali bombing in Indonesia, the bombing of the US embassies in Tanzania and Kenya, and many other terrorist acts organized by Muslim militants. To avoid such events we recommend that the government establish a commission made up of moderate believers and knowledgeable members of each religious group, with a remit to oversee the religious activities and the teachings of each religion to ensure that no religion teaches doctrines that may endanger peace.

Finally, we are recommending the government to encourage joint ventures for developmental activities. For example, instead of Muslims starting schools alone, they could invite Christians to join them. This could lead the two groups to know each other and ultimately reduce prejudice. The government could also encourage, and if possible finance, dialogue between Muslims and Christians, which would also help minimize conflict.

Conclusion

A large percentage of Tanzanians undergo religious instruction before they are fully integrated into their respective religions, so changing the form of religious instruction to one that encourages respect and love of the other could help society achieve a new shape. It is evident that religious instruction leads people to develop prejudice against the other religion because each religious group tries to win the hearts of its own believers and at the same time attract potential new converts by presenting itself as the only authentic religion and other religions as faulty. This approach is now seen as outdated because each religion contains some elements of truth.

The question of peace in both Islam and Christianity is fundamental. This is clear in the Muslim greeting *al-salaḥmu calaykum*, 'Peace be upon you'. Christianity follows this practice during the Eucharistic celebration: the priest, before starting the mass, wishes the congregation peace and

this is frequently repeated during the mass. These were also the words used by Christ when he appeared to his disciples after his resurrection. From this common element in both religions, we need to cooperate and live in peace by extending it even to non-members of our group. Religions are like weapons that can be used either for good or for evil. As a weapon, religion can lead people to live comfortable lives here on earth and later to enjoy the life to come. If we handle religion very well we can tear out the roots of corruption and all forms of injustice. On the other hand, religion, like a weapon, can be misused and end up creating hell for some people and heaven for others.

The second is the exclusivist position. People who hold this view do not only acknowledge that their religious tradition contains the truth but also that other religious traditions have some form of truth. For instance, Christians who hold this view believe that Muslims although reject Christ, yet because of their submission to God whom they call Allah, they are unknowingly included in Christ's salvation history. This means that with time Muslims will eventually find their way to salvation through Christ. And Muslims who hold this view believe that eventually Christians will find their way to salvation through the Qu'ran and the teachings of Muhammad his prophet.

The third is pluralist position. People who hold this view say that all religious traditions contain truth. Though there may be superficial differences among them in practice they are fundamentally the same and should be given equal respect. Christianity and Islam in this case, are valid ways to approach God. This however, does not mean that people have to reject their religious beliefs. What it means is that Christians and Muslims have to accept the fact that each other's tradition also contains valid truth claims, which have to be respected.

The three positions are reflected differently by the two religious traditions in East Africa. For instance, the Pentecostals and some few Evangelicals hold firmly to an exclusivist position and are always very active in their activities to convert Muslims to Christianity. Due to the era of inter-religious dialogue, an exclusivist one is slowly replacing the exclusivist position held by the Pentecostal and Evangelical Churches. For instance, in Uganda the Christian church and the Muslims have set up the Inter-religious Council whose major objectives are:

- i. To develop an awareness that Uganda is a country where there exists religious pluralism.
- ii. To create a platform for the two religions in Uganda to express their religious views on social and economic grounds.
- iii. To act as an instrument of reconciliation due to the past history of religious wars.
- iv. To show that it is and should be possible for Muslims and Christians to cooperate and work alongside one another.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, some Muslim fundamentalists in Tanzania became violent in their preaching against Christianity. This turn in events brought moderate Christians closer to

moderate Muslims and the two groups, formed a joint committee to work together on various programs of common interest. Since 1997 the two groups:

Have worked to bring consensus on the Zanzibar conflict, meeting the president and other government and party leaders several times on the issue. In April 2001,..they called a conference of all the political leaders of the ruling and opposition parties to talk about unity, peace and forgiveness within the framework of democratic competition. This aimed at blocking moves to divide people politically on religious lines.³¹⁴

The joint committee has adopted a critical view of the Christians and Muslims who strongly adhere to their exclusivist positions and urges them to open up dialogue that would lead to a better understanding of one another.

The concern for Muslim-Christian dialogue in East Africa where Christians are a dominant majority is relatively new. But as Christians and Muslims continue to gain great influence in East African societies each religious community is forced to consider others as equal partners. This religious situation requires a serious consideration of the conditions of the possibility of a genuine inter-religious dialogue if peace is to prevail in East Africa. The question one has to ask is why should Christians and Muslims engage in an ecumenical encounter? The answer to this question rests in the mission of the Christian church. Throughout history, the Christian church has taught that God is at work reconciling the world to Himself through His Son Jesus Christ. With the coming into existence of the World Council of Churches, the Christian church has not only tried to understand but also to put into practice the fundamentals of what it teaches. Today the World Council of Churches calls upon the Christian church to relate to people of other faiths such as the Muslims.

In order for the Christian church to realize her vision, the World Council of Churches, meeting in Chiang Mai in 1979 came up with a document known as “Guidelines on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies.” The 1979 guidelines were widely circulated and since that time, the ecumenical movement has facilitated inter-religious dialogue in many countries. Member churches have more than ever before sensed the need for genuine relationships with people of other faiths. There are several factors that facilitate the dynamic ecumenical encounter between Muslims and Christians to take place in East Africa and the major ones are:

- i. African culture. The African culture which Muslims and Christians in East Africa share is well known for its spirit of tolerance, cooperation and harmonious exchange of ideas. This therefore qualifies it to be a bridge between Muslims and Christians in their search for inter-religious dialogue. As a bridge, African culture constitutes a good foundation and a vital starting point for any meaningful Muslim – Christian dialogue in East Africa.
- ii. Islamic actions. There is grassroots dialogue with the participation of Muslims in some Christian religious events and there are many cases that reveal the openness of Muslims in East

314 Kilaini, “Ecumenism in a Multi-Religious Context,” in The Ecumenical Review 53, 3(July 2001): 361.

Africa to inter-religious dialogue. For instance, in 1969, Muslims in Kampala assisted at the blessing of the cornerstone of the Basilica of the Martyrs of Uganda by Pope Paul VI.

In their encounter with Muslims, many Christians in East Africa have come to experience the meaning of what it means to belong to a common humanity before God. This experience is rooted in the African traditional understanding, which is also supported by the Christian teaching that God is the creator of all that exists. For Psalm 24:1f says:

The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters.³¹⁵

In this encounter Christians should bear in mind the fact that God is not a stranger say to the Muslims. Muslims are people who live by faith and therefore Christians are expected to open themselves to the witness of Muslims, which is made in words as well as faithful devotion to God.

The need for Christian-Muslim dialogue in East Africa is because of the major elements the two religions have in common. These are:

- i. Christianity and Islam teach that there is one God who is the source of all that there is. And that all human beings are created in the image of this one loving, just God. They all teach that belief in this One God has ethical consequences concerning oneself, other people and the environment.
- ii. Christianity and Islam are both universal religions that are meant for all of humanity. Both religions recognize God's love for all of humankind and His providential acts in human history.
- iii. The two religions teach that God acts through human beings like Muhammad, Jesus, Moses. He also acts through events such as hijrah, exodus.
- iv. Christianity and Islam all teach that God has revealed himself to human beings through scriptures, namely the Bible for Christians and the Qu'ran for Muslims and through the prophets.
- v. They are all missionary religions and foreign to the East African scene.

The four above, mentioned common elements provide Christians and Muslims in East Africa fundamental reasons why they should engage in dialogue.

Christians entering into dialogue with Muslims in East Africa are likely to start with several disadvantages and these are:

- i. The heritage of colonialism. Christians and Muslims in East Africa are in a region that is a former colony of Britain and many Muslims are still bitter about the way they were treated by the Christian colonial administrators.

315 Holy Bible (NIV).

ii. Distorted image and ignorance about the two religions. Many Christians do not have the correct view of Muslims. In most cases the Christian's image of a Muslim is a distorted one so is the Muslim's image of a Christian. Christians and Muslims in East Africa need to learn about each other's religious beliefs.

iii. In spite of the call for tolerance and respect towards the people of the Book, which the Qu'ran frequently makes, Muslims have generally condemned Christians as polytheists. Christians have likewise often condemned Muslims as people without spiritual values.

iv. Both Christians and Muslims have failed to accept each other's faith on their own terms. For instance, Christians accept Muslims as people of faith but have not yet accepted Islam as an authentic religious tradition. Muslims have accepted Christianity as a revealed religion but have not yet accept the Christians' doctrine of the trinity and the Bible as the word of God.

However, what Christian-Muslim dialogue has been able to achieve in East Africa today, is the formal recognition of the two religions' historical and theological kinship as a result of their common Abrahamic ancestry. Due to the common ancestry, Christian and Muslim communities should continue to strive for the mutual acceptance of the legitimacy and authenticity of the religious tradition of the other as a divinely inspired faith. The Christian-Muslim dialogue in East Africa has also achieved a mere formal courtesy and polite indifference. The two religions however have to move to the level of mutual recognition and acceptance. Although fruitful Christian-Muslim dialogue has to be guided by mutual recognition and acceptance, this dialogue must not stop at the level of accepting and recognizing the other as a good neighbor and fellow human being but rather as spiritual partner. To reach this level, Christians and Muslims have to exhibit genuine respect of the faith of the other. This mutual respect is the only fundamental basis for creative existence of Christians and Muslims as equal partners. When Christians and Muslims see each other as partners and not as opponents they let the two religions speak for themselves. At this level Christians cease explaining Islam on the basis of the Christian world-view and likewise Muslims cease explaining Christianity on the basis of what the Qu'ran says about it.

For the Christian-Muslim dialogue to move forward, Christians and Muslims should truly admit, first that God's love extends equally to all human beings regardless of their religious identity. Second, that God speaks to each individual through his or her religious identity. This awareness leads to the building of links between Christian and Muslim communities. It also helps to explain to Christians and Muslims the sensitivities that are needed in dealing with one another so that when for instance, visits to each other's worshiping places are organized; they end up in cementing relationships rather than generating religious wars.

Christian-Muslim dialogue has begun to yield fruits in East Africa. For instance, in Uganda there have been sessions on Islam and Christianity organized by the Inter-religious Council where Muslim and Christian youth have known one another. Through those sessions the Christian and the Muslim community is likely to discover what each believes. However, these contacts are useful only if youth from the two religious traditions work together without ever discussing

religious beliefs. Today, it is not rare at state functions in Uganda, for a priest and a Muslim to be invited to pray and bless the occasion. However, it should be mentioned that in East Africa, especially in Tanzania there exists both Christian and Muslim fundamentalists who still speak of crusades and jihads. There is also a well-organized group of Muslim scholars who try to blame all problems in East Africa on the Christians, and try to incite Muslims to liberate themselves from Christians.

In all the three states Christians and Muslims are given the necessary freedom to express their respective identities without being prejudiced or discriminated. East Africans have found themselves in similar circumstances and are gradually shifting from a situation where they were of the view that all other religious traditions except their own were false, to a position where respect and tolerance has been shown toward one another in all spheres. In a country like Uganda the new democratic dispensation has also been stimulating the development of religious pluralist attitudes via the introduction and implementation of religious education in primary and secondary schools. The present religious environment prevailing in East Africa offers the Christians and Muslims a great opportunity for inter-religious dialogue.

While the inter-religious dialogue remains an essential part of the Christian church's mission in East Africa, the various Christian denominations are duty bound to proclaim without compromise Christ as the Way the Truth and the Life. The African Roman Catholic bishops said:

As Christians, we cannot speak of God's activity in other religious traditions without referring to Christ as the foundation and norm for the revelation of who God is.³¹⁶

This fundamental statement calls the Christian denominations in East Africa to affirm their faith in the fullness of salvation brought by Christ alone and to approach Islam in the spirit of harmony and peaceful co-existence. In the light of this call there is a general apprehension that Christian-Muslim dialogue will either affect the proclamation of the Gospel or create unnecessary tensions and confusion. The Christian-Muslim dialogue can be actualized in East Africa, among others, by holding inter-religious prayer meetings, by carrying out common work programs, by having common celebration of main religious festivals of the two religions and lastly by developing an attitude of learning and accepting good values from each other.

5. Christianity and African Traditional Religion in an ecumenical encounter

Aylward Shorter says:

The Churches in sub-Sahara Africa...could afford to antagonize the adherents of ATR's. It was felt that they had no future within or outside the Church, and a relentless war of annihilation was fought against them. Dialogue with ATR's appeared laughable under these circumstances. Now, it is realized that the concepts and practices of ATR's have survived the onslaught and that they are entrenched in various forms of Christian syncretism.³¹⁷

316 Aylward Shorter, The African Synod: A Personal Response to the Outline Document (Nairobi: St Paul Publications-Africa, 1991), 76.

317 Shorter, The African Synod, 82.

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East Africa has three main religions namely, African Traditional Religion, Christianity and Islam. African Traditional Religion is the oldest of the three religions. African Traditional Religion has neither sacred books nor expert theologian or a hierarchy to explain its doctrines yet it is still a strong religious baseline of every African. It is primarily found in, among others, oral sources, names of people and places, religious rituals, and myths. It has no written sources on which its authority may be based and yet it is very much alive, it is lived, it is experienced, and it is integrated and present deeply inside Christianity. African Traditional Religion forms the religious culture of Africans and cannot simply be ignored. On this point John S. Mbiti says:

Wherever the African is, there is his religion: he carries it to the fields where he is sowing seeds or harvesting a new crop; he takes it with him to the beer party or to attend a funeral ceremony; and if he is educated, he takes religion with him to the examination room at school or in the university; if he is a politician he takes it to the house of parliament. Although many African languages do not have a word for religion as such, it nevertheless accompanies the individual from long before his birth to long after his physical death.³¹⁸

The nineteenth-century Christian missionaries tried to eliminate it but to the surprise of many Christians today African Traditional Religion has not been eradicated nor has its religious and spiritual experience been kept at bay. Although it is estimated that by 2025, its adherents will have declined to 9.2% in the whole of Africa, African Traditional Religion is “solidly entrenched in the lives of millions of people and, therefore, cannot be ignored.”³¹⁹

Christians in East Africa have inherited prejudices developed by past colonial theology and the feeling of having a superiority over African Traditional Religion. It is only of recent that there has grown respect of African Traditional Religion among African Christian theologians. African Traditional Religion is no longer considered to be a symbol of primitivity as was the case in the previous years. But even then, it is a religion of weakness because after being defeated by the European powers, it is without economic and political authority and survives only as a simple way of life. It is seen by many Christians as a symbol of poverty and under-development.³²⁰

There are some Christians in East Africa who think that African Traditional Religion is the foundation of their Africanness and should be taken into account in the building of African Christian theology. But there are others who consider it to be inappropriate for the modern society since many of its visible aspects are gradually disappearing. They considered its role in the religious dialogue only to provide some positive elements to Christianity and then disappear. This attitude poses a major obstacle to Christianity–African Traditional Religion dialogue and puts Christians in a hypocritical position in which they want to be in dialogue with African Traditional Religion without accept that it is equal to Christianity. Shorter makes a correct observation when he says:

318 John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 2.

319 Chidi Denis Isizoh, Christian Motivation for Dialogue with Followers of African Traditional Religion, at <http://www.afrikaworld.net/afrel/index.html> 30/01/06.

320 In order to destroy their structure, missionaries burned down traditional shrines and persecuted the traditional priests.

The refusal to take ATR seriously has bedeviled evangelization in Africa and has led to a form of schizophrenia among Christians-an unresolved syncretism which impoverishes both Christianity and ATR, instead of mutually enriching them.³²¹

Method Kilaini gives a realistic conclusion on Christianity and African Traditional Religion in an ecumenical encounter when he says:

African traditional religion is part of African culture. Most Christians south of the Sahara are still as much part of the African traditional religion as they are part of their culture. Any evangelization that ignores this cultural reality will be only surface deep. Dialogue with the African traditional religion, then, is not dialogue with another hierarchy, but with a culture. It has to be studied with openness, and its positive elements adopted.³²²

For fruitful discussions on Christianity and African Traditional Religion in an ecumenical encounter to take place, the churches in East Africa should recover African cultural values that were discarded as pagan. Religious peace in East Africa depends on the way in which the adherents of African Traditional Religion and Christianity relate to each other.

6. Theological education in East Africa

Churches in East Africa inherited a model of theological education and ministerial formation that was based on a series of traditions from the West. During the missionary era, the training of church ministers in the East Africa was connected to structures whose aim was the creation of an African ministry that had a European approach to the gospel. As the number of Christians and churches increased in East Africa there was need to train church ministers on a regular basis. This was done in two ways. First, there was the training of missionary personnel that usually took place abroad and second, the training of African church ministers that was done in East Africa.

As regards the training of the African church ministers, the dominant models were apprenticeship and residential institutions. People who served as domestic workers or interpreters at the mission centers were given skills in church management for a few weeks and later ordained or commissioned as church ministers. As the literacy level of Africans improved, the missionaries decided to open residential institutions. The residential institutions that were set up for the training of African church ministers followed the curriculum that was not only designed from abroad but also ignored the African cultural values. For instance, students in theological institutions were never introduced to the African heritage that missionaries termed alien and pagan. Joshua Sempebwa says: “An African who followed his/her people’s customs was condemned as heathen and anti-Christ”³²³

321 Shorter, The African Synod, 89.

322 Kilaini, “Ecumenism in a Multi-Religious Context,” in The Ecumenical Review 53, 3(July 2001): 364.

323 J Sempebwa, African Traditional Moral Norms and their Implications for Christianity: A Case Study of Ganda Ethics (Netherlands: The Steyl Press, 1983) 186.

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The residential institutions model during the missionary era had many advantages namely, it:

- i. Offered consistent supervision in formation of ministerial leadership.
- ii. Created a very good environment for academic excellence.
- iii. Encouraged personal and communal devotion life.
- iv. Helped practical work to be carried out in a consistent manner that in the end created progressive development.

Of recent it has been realized that the theological institutions' curricula in residential institutions model never responded appropriately to the many challenges the Region was facing although a very good job was done at that time.

Due to the good job done at that time, the church in the Region is not on the decline. In terms of Christian population, there is a visible numerical growth of church membership. The church ministers are dealing with a vibrant and a well informed modern church congregation. The different theological institutions are realizing that they must train enough church ministers to pastor these churches. Although the church in the Region has realized this need, the kind of theological education and ministerial formation strategy espoused especially by the mainline churches is based on an inherited pattern from the missionary era that produces a pastor for yesterday's congregation and not for today's congregation.

Today, Christian churches and Christian groups in East Africa train their church ministers in a variety of ways. However, what is common to most of them is that the training of their church ministers takes place in some form of theological institution. The common ones are:

1. Unaccredited Bible Schools. In most cases these are in-house Bible Schools where short-term programs are conducted by an experienced pastor(s). The quality of such schools is usually too low to be accredited by a credible institution. There are many of these unaccredited Bible Schools in East Africa.
2. Theological colleges/seminaries. These usually have reasonable infrastructure and well qualified staff. They are both for theological education and ministerial formation. In most cases these are residential institutions. Some of them are denominational while others are ecumenical. In the 1960s, when most of the churches in the Region became independent, there was an effort to create ecumenical institutions. But most of these institutions have returned to denominationalism. What one sees in East Africa today are not only various church traditions going about their business of training church ministers separately but also competing with one another. Tharcisse Gatwa says, "these divisions that were exported by Europeans to Africa, a past into which Africans should no longer identify with, are being perpetrated today."³²⁴

It has been argued that theological education and ministerial formation in residence if done very well enhances spiritual development in the context of community life which is a vital component of congregational life. Students for church ministry are trained in an

324 Tharcisse Gatwa, "Theological Education in Africa: What Prospects for Sharing Knowledge," in *Exchange* 32/3 (July 2003): 204.

environment that nurtures fellowship. In the normal circumstances, residential education is believed to be balanced with ministry in the local communities during the field-placement period. Second, churches and the residential institutions take a careful selection of candidates for ministry, followed by a number of years of training, to produce a church minister.

Has the residential-only model sufficiently covered the present needs of the grassroots-level mission and ministry in the Region? The answer is no. The residential model is inappropriate in the present situation for the following reasons:

- a. There are no clear means of interaction with the context in which the church ministers in training will serve when they come out of the theological college/seminary. In the last analysis, this model removes students in training from their real environment.
 - b. The residential institutions have become very expensive to maintain as Ogbu U. Kalu says “indeed, when Protestants decided on founding seminaries the tendency was to mobilize their resources and eschew denominational competition.”³²⁵ The question is how are these institutions going to survive financially in an economically depressed times when the pressures of globalization are widening the gap between the rich and the poor institutions?³²⁶ The way forward is perhaps theological education and ministerial formation by extension. One of the reasons for this method of theological education and ministerial formation is that “it is more economical than the traditional form of theological education and ministerial formation in the sense that it does not need many lecturers, large teaching spaces and large libraries.”³²⁷
3. Private Christian universities. In the recent past a new phenomenon has emerged in the East Africa namely, the growth of denominational private Christian universities. The church has seen its involvement in university education as the way of regaining its voice in the fundamental area of national higher educational life. Most of the Christian universities in East Africa have either the Faculty of Theology/School of Divinity and Theology, or the Department of Religious Studies. The church in East Africa has realized that the best way of maintaining a Christian identity in an academic context is having a Faculty of Theology/School of Divinity and Theology or the Department of Religious Studies in a Christian university. For such universities, the symbol of a Christian university is the Faculty of Theology/ School of Divinity and Theology or the Department of Religious Studies. Apart from being integrated to the life of the university, in some

325 Ogbu U. Kalu, “Elijah’s Mantle: Ministerial Formation in Contemporary African Christianity” in International Review of Mission 94/373 (April 2005): 270.

326 Unfortunately, the church with her training institutions in the Region finds herself for the most part among the poor.

327 Byaruhanga, “Ecumenically Structured Theological Education by Extension: A Quest for Quality Theological Education in Eastern Africa,” in Bangalore Theological Forum 39/1(June 2007): 131.

cases these theological faculties/schools or departments function as theological colleges/seminaries. The goal of these universities is to train indigenous church leadership with a Christian touch.

The advantage with this new development is that a university environment can stimulate critical thinking on theological issues as well as stimulate interdisciplinary methods of research and analysis on non-theological issues easier than in the denominational or non-denominational theological colleges/ seminaries. However, Christian universities as an avenue for theological education and ministerial formation are being challenged to define themselves or justify their place in the church.

In a region such as East Africa which is characterized by divisions on so many fronts, the church has to act as a home for unity. This means that church institutions in East Africa need to explore the possibility of having a method in which they can have less theological education and ministerial formation programs run denominationally and have more of those programs run ecumenically. This is because training church ministers for East Africa is an act of communion rather than one of competition.

The present situation of the church in East Africa

Since the introduction of modern Christianity in Africa, the Christian Church in East Africa has remained heavily dependent upon its ministers and church workers for the vision and inspiration in both her worship and mission. This trend is likely to continue for a long time. While this trend is likely to continue for a long time, Christian theological educators have to bear in mind the fact that the East Africa of yesterday is neither the East Africa of today nor will it be the East Africa of tomorrow. There are various great changes that are taking place in East Africa. For instance, although the East African countries are underdeveloped, they are rapidly becoming socially and intellectually complex. As a result Christian theological educators have a responsibility not only to the students whom they teach but also to the Christian church and society at large. Christian theological educators have to take notice of the demands of the time and realize the greatness of their responsibility.

The church in East Africa is faced with two major problems. First, the many numbers of Christian converts with too few pastors and other church workers who have had quality theological education. Taking Uganda as an example, Philip Jenkins in his book entitled "*The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*" puts the number of Christians at twenty-four million in 2025. He says:

In religious terms, Uganda represents one of the triumphs of the missionary movement, in a country where Christianity was newly planted in the mid-nineteenth century. Today, about 40 percent of the population is Protestant, 35 percent Catholic . . . If we assume no further expansion by means of conversion, then the Ugandan Christian population should grow from 17 million today, to 24

million in 2025, and to 43 million by mid-century.³²⁸

Taking Uganda as a case study, the rate at which the Christian population in Africa as a whole is growing, is not proportional to the rate at which pastors and other church workers are trained in theological colleges and seminaries. Jonathan Hogarth, Kiranga Gatimu and David Barrett put it this way:

Black Africa today has a church, which has grown extraordinarily fast. But from another viewpoint it is not so happy: this church has too few pastors equipped to tend it. It is this that presents us both with a challenge and an opportunity today in Africa. There are many sheep but few shepherds.³²⁹

The easiest alternative would be to ask missionary agencies in the world to send men and women as missionaries to East Africa. Even if there were to be men and women from outside Africa for missionary work in East Africa, one respondent from Tanzania said “no foreigner could ever hope to acquire the knowledge and character which an African possesses as a part of his or her very being, and without which it is impossible to present the Gospel with fullest effect to the African population.”³³⁰

The church in East Africa needs pastors and other church workers who are aware of the current trends in society’s needs and who can think theologically and creatively. And yet today it is common knowledge that there are too few well-trained pastors and other church workers in East Africa. What one finds in East Africa is a very big number of experienced men and women in the church ministry who cannot access quality theological education and who cannot be accommodated in the traditional Bible Schools, Theological Colleges/ Seminaries or Universities. Commenting on the place of the Bible Schools and Theological Colleges/Seminaries in the life of the church, Hogarth, Gatimu and Barrett further, say:

Bible schools and theological colleges have had an indispensable place in the life of the church but they are unable to cope with training the numbers of leaders needed by the church today. *This is because* the current system does not allow many evangelists and catechists already engaged in the ministry to get access to the training they require.³³¹

Secondly, individual Christian denominations in East Africa are incapable of supporting the few residential Bible schools and colleges/seminaries. As a result, many congregations in East Africa are served by men and women of low quality theological education. The majority of Christians in East Africa end up not being taught properly and therefore are not properly grounded in their Christian faith. Christian community, which is not properly taught and therefore not properly grounded in the essentials of the Christian faith, is a great threat to the existence of Christianity

328 Philip Jenkins, The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 91.

329 Jonathan Hogarth, Kiranga Gatimu and David Barrett, Theological Education in Context: 100 Extension Programmes in Contemporary Africa (Nairobi: Uzima Press, 1983), 1.

330 Tanzanian church leader interviewed by the author on July 24, 2009.

331 Hogarth, Gatimu and Barrett, Theological Education in Context, 3.

on the African continent. The Christian Church in East Africa can meaningfully address this challenge by promoting ecumenically structured theological education extension. This is the only way through which many evangelists and catechists already engaged in the church ministry can access quality theological education.³³²

The role of the Association of Theological Institutions in Eastern Africa

Ecumenical theological associations have influenced the development and implementation of theological education curricula in east Africa. The most influential association has been the Association of Theological Institutions in Eastern Africa (ATIEA). In the early 1950s, the lecturers in theological colleges in the region felt the need for co-operation on matters concerning theological education. In January 1960 the Association of Theological Institutions in Eastern Africa was founded. The six founding members of the Association of Theological Institutions in Eastern Africa were: Bishop Tucker Memorial College, Mukono-Uganda (now Uganda Christian University), Bulawasi College-Uganda (now Uganda Christian University – Mbale Study Center), Lutheran Theological College, Makumira-Tanzania (now Makumira University), St. Philip's College, Kongwa-Tanzania, St. Cyprian's College, Ngala-Tanzania and St. Paul's United Theological College, Limuru-Kenya (now St. Paul's University).

The six founding members were later joined by the Baptist Seminary of East Africa, Arusha-Tanzania, the Mennonite Theological College, Musoma-Tanzania, Mekane Yesus Seminary, Addis Ababa-Ethiopia, Kima Theological College, Kenya Bishop Gwynne Theological College, Juba-Sudan, Katigondo National Seminary -Uganda, St. Mark's Theological College, Dar-es-Salaam-Tanzania, The United Church of Zambia, the Departments of Religious Studies, Makerere University-Uganda, Kenyatta University and the University of Nairobi Kenya also became members.

The purpose of the association was to:

- i. Promote true Christian fellowship, understanding and co-operation between various theological institutions engaged in training Christian ministers in East Africa.
- ii. Foster the study of theology and other related subjects.
- iii. Improve the standards and methods of education for Christian ministry in East Africa.
- iv. Provide a forum for discussion and exchange of information of common interest and a means for coordinated action whenever this is deemed desirable within the scope of the association.³³³

Association of Theological Institutions in Eastern Africa was responsible for setting standards for quality theological education in Eastern Africa. For instance in 1961, it initiated a three year Makerere University Diploma in Theology course and in 1978 it initiated a Bachelors of Divinity Degree course. These courses were taken by theology students of both Catholic and Protestant member institutions. The association's activities included:

- i. Promoting closer ecumenical relationships with the churches from where its member institutions drew students for ministerial formation and training.

332 For more information on the institutions and Associations that promote Theological Education by Extension in Africa, see "Introduction to the History and Development of TEE in Africa." The Anitepam Journal 32 (November 2001): 34-35.

333 Association of Theological Institutions of Eastern Africa Handbook 1984-1985, p. 1.

- ii. Organizing biennial theological conferences for lecturers from member institutions.
- iii. Publishing books on important theological themes.

According to the Chairperson of Association of Theological Institutions in Eastern Africa, the association's relevance to these institutions has tremendously diminished there is therefore need for another approach to theological education in East Africa.³³⁴

What is Theological Education by Extension?

Theological education by extension is the process of taking theological training from the lecture rooms of theological colleges, seminaries and universities out to the learners. It is an ideal method of training pastors and other church workers without uprooting them from their local environment. This new approach to African ministerial training has to dismantle the colonial as well as the postcolonial Christian theological education system.³³⁵

The result of theological education by extension is the creation of a cadre of leaders who are capable of taking over responsibilities of all the ministerial functions in the church and in the society without going through the normal lengthy and costly process of theological training. When a theology student cannot come to the lecture room, theological education by extension takes the lecture room out to the student. This is what Lucy K. Kithome and Kiranga Gatimu call decentralized and democratized theological education.³³⁶

Theological education by extension, to a lot of people, has become an ideal alternative to residential training of pastors and other church workers due to several reasons and the major ones are:

- i. It is more economical than the traditional form of theological education in the sense that it does not need many lecturers, large teaching spaces, and large libraries.
- ii. It is convenient for those students who have commitments that cannot allow them to join residential theological colleges. Theological education by extension, if properly carried out is likely to produce enough highly qualified and suitable pastors and other church workers who are capable of keeping-up with the growth of the church in Africa. This is possible because those who are already serving the church in various ways have the opportunity to train for their work. They are not to be taken out of their surroundings rather they are to study as they continue with their social and economic activities; unlike in the traditional colleges/seminaries and universities where one is taken away from his or her social and economic activities.
- iii. The lesson materials motivate the learners to begin to think, contextualize and read further. For instance, the theological education by extension student will use the study of theological

334 Interview with the author on May 3, 2010.

335 For detailed information on this point, see "Commonwealth of Learning and Asian Development Bank, Designing Open and Distance Learning Materials, 1999."

336 For detailed background information on this point, see Lucy K. Kithome and Kiranga Gatimu, "The Niche Markets in Distance Education at Tertiary Level and their Impact on Theological Education by Extension (TEE): Towards the 21st Century," *Africa Challenge: All Africa Journal of Theology* I (January 2001): 7.

studies to effectively address the issues of the local community. When the students of theological education by extension learn new things, they immediately apply them to their local situations. They do not wait for placement as in residential programs. In this way field experience makes them eager to learn.

iv. It helps the learners to understand the people among whom they live and work. One of the most essential factors in any education system is motivation that is closely related to meaning. One of the major problems of traditional theological colleges and seminaries is that the students have a difficult time relating what they study to their own lives, needs, concerns and purpose. In theological education by extension the students have greater interest in their studies because of their practical and immediate involvement in the ministry. Their studies are meaningful because they relate to present issues, live questions, and immediate needs.

Through theological education by extension, the church in Africa is likely to have pastors and church workers who have tools that can help them formulate a new theological approach to the new realities in Africa and not just repeat the old stuff. In this new approach to African ministerial training one has to find a clear way of applying both the content and the form of the curriculum to a given situation. In the process of applying the content and form of the curriculum to a given situation, the Christian message does not change rather it is understood against one's given experience. Theological education by extension makes African ministerial education contextual in the sense that it enables a student to arrive at rational answers to contemporary challenges. The theological educators in the theological education by extension build their programs around certain areas of discussion and emphasis that are not necessarily relevant in the inherited Western models of theological training. Although the same subject matter may be covered using both approaches, in theological education by extension approach, the people's contexts always decide what particular areas of the program should most be emphasized. John Pobee in his book, *"Towards Viable Theological Education"* clarifies this point when he says:

Authentic theology includes the education of the ear to hear the cry of the people, of the heart to heed and to feel, of the tongue to speak to the weary and the broken a word that rebuilds them and kindles in them a fire of hope, and the hands to work with the lowly to build a human world which the wealthy, the mighty and the clever have shown themselves incapable of envisioning and fashioning.³³⁷

Theological Education by Extension in an Ecumenically Structured Setting

Since the introduction of modern Christianity in East Africa, there have been men and women with great desire to see divisions eliminated and unity among Christians restored. Their argument has been that believers' oneness is grounded in Jesus Christ's prayer as recorded in the Gospel according to St. John 17: 20-21a:

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.

In his prayer, Christ does not invite Christians in East Africa only to see something of the

337 John Pobee (ed.), *Towards Viable Theological Education: Ecumenical Imperative, Catalyst of Renewal* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997), 31.

character of the inner life of the Triune God but also to share visibly in that life. The quest for unity among God's people in East Africa should therefore not be characterized by conformity but rather by what various Christian denominations hold in common. Since Christ wills believers to be one, Christians in East Africa are therefore called to manifest the oneness that Christ willed in witness and service to the world.

Although all members of Christian traditions in East Africa read with understanding Jesus Christ's prayer as recorded in John 17: 20-21, there is very little energy put forth in putting it into practice. What one sees in the Christian Church in East Africa today are not only various Christian traditions going about their business of training pastors and other church workers separately but also competing with one another. Since the nineteenth century training programs for the Christian ministry have been run denominationally. As a result the very few denominationally trained pastors and other church workers are expected to be the directors of all church ministries in society instead of encouraging a shared ministry. In a continent like Africa which is characterized by divisions on so many fronts, the Christian Church has to act as a home for unity. However, unity in the present context does not mean a return to a more harmonious kind of church one finds in the early church. Unity in this context neither means having all pastors and other church workers act alike nor having a monolithic church structure. Rather it means together as Christian theological educators, pastors and church workers making the Christian faith real and visible in their ministerial formation programs.

Church leaders and theological educators need to explore the possibility of having a method in which the church in East Africa should have less ministerial formation programs run denominationally and have more of those programs run ecumenically. The church in East Africa cannot afford to run theological education programs as though they were exclusively Anglican, Presbyterian, Catholic or Baptist. Theological education is an act of communion and not one of competition. No Christian tradition in East Africa can afford to run theological education programs in isolation. Kithome and Gatimu say that:

It is no longer prudent to venture alone. There is, need for denominations to collaborate and pool resources together in giving theological education.³³⁸

Although there are differences among Christian traditions in East Africa that have to do with their individual and ecclesiastical memories and with the ways in which they perceive the world, the word of God meets men and women as they are and where they are regardless of their denominations. Ecumenically structured theological education in East Africa is therefore no longer a luxury, but a necessity. However, this can only be possible if the index of modern East African church is her capacity not only to tolerate but also to encourage the coexistence of diverse Christian traditions. One of the people who encourage the coexistence of diverse religious traditions is Chris Athur. He says:

There are no undiscovered religions existing beyond the horizon of an uncrossable ocean or desert, the catalogue of human faiths lies open and effectively complete

338 Kithome and Gatimu, The Niche Market in Distance Education at Tertiary and their Impact on TEE, 13.

for anyone to view. In such a situation . . . traditions that were once separate and self-contained are brought into unavoidably close contact and can no longer merely ignore or casually reject each other or at least not with any credibility.³³⁹

According to Arthur, God himself seems to make use of variety in his creation. Again from the everyday experience Christians know that God interacts with men and women in many types of experience suited to their differing needs. This example provides a theological justification for the quest for ecumenically structured theological education in East Africa. In this quest, the many different traditions of piety and devotion that have been available in the past have to continue. Each Christian tradition has a certain integrity that cannot be mixed with other traditions without loss of its distinctive character.

It has become fashionable today in East Africa to denounce denominationalism as a very bad arrangement. But in this book the author's argument is that for several centuries denominationalism coped well with the demands for Christian diversity. Gordon Kaufman says:

Although denominational differences in perspective and mode of life have often led to regrettable consequences, they should not be regarded as wholly unfortunate. For the denominations are living witnesses to the importance of the insight into Christian faith which each knows. Within the limits of human finitude such divisions, with the resultant conversations and struggles, may well be the essential sociological expression of the necessity to correct the one-sidedness of every interpretation and every tradition so that the fullness of the whole Christian faith is not lost.³⁴⁰

Although in this book I want to defend denominationalism as a good arrangement on the one hand, on the other hand, I would like to urge every Christian theological educator in East Africa to look beyond it if the quest for ecumenically structured theological education is to be fruitful. If Christians are to look beyond denominationalism, this must be in such a way that the diversities of the several traditions are maintained. For instance, the many different traditions of piety and devotion that have been available in the past must continue as the church looks for ecumenically structured theological education. Stephen Sykes seems to support this point of view when he says:

If God's work is to be done in a world of vastly differing patterns of personal and social life, we must expect men to be called to live in different traditions of piety and devotion. To attempt to conform all Christians to a uniform ideal would be a gross mistake and danger.³⁴¹

It is important to note that each Christian tradition has a certain integrity that cannot be mixed-up

339 Chris Arthur, The Globalization of Communication: Some Religious Implications (London: World Association for Christian Communication, 1998), 36.

340 Gordon D. Kaufman, Systematic Theology (New York: Scribners, 1968), 58.

341 Stephen W. Sykes, Christian Theology Today (London: Mowbrays, 1971), 33.

with other traditions without loss of its distinctive character. Any quest for ecumenically structured theological education therefore, raises for consideration the fundamental nature of the church and its ministry. Christians in East Africa have to support the idea of ecumenically structured theological education because this is the only mode of theological education that is sufficiently open in its nature and capable of respecting the integrity and autonomy of each of the participating traditions.

There is no doubt that the quest for ecumenically structured theological education has to do with the integrity of the church, its nature and mission, and with faithfulness to Jesus' command as recorded by Saint Matthew:

Then Jesus came to them and said: all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.³⁴²

What unites all Christians all over East Africa is their faith in Jesus Christ and the ministry, which they have received. Jesus Christ never saw a denomination, since denominations never existed at that time at least in the modern sense of the word, until long after his time. One of the most important elements in the life of Christ, which could and should be applied to the quest for ecumenically structured theological education in East Africa, is the combination of need and deed. There was always a crowd around Jesus during his earthly ministry. The reason why they were always around Jesus is because they were needy. Their very need itself made a plea, an appeal to Jesus Christ for help. Theologically, the need expressed by Jesus' congregation called forth his deed. In response, he satisfied their needs.

Need should be one of the major driving forces behind every ministry in the Church. Sometimes other motivations get mixed-up with the central good of meeting a need such as religious pride, opportunism, and indoctrination. But, if a Christian's life is any good, it can and should bring critical attention to bear on people's needs. Christian theological educators in East Africa have to identify the real needs of the local people and respond accordingly. In the context of the quest for ecumenically structured theological education in East Africa, the real need of the local Christian community where the number of converts is growing faster than the rate at which pastors and other church workers are trained, is the accessibility to well trained church ministers. The church in East Africa cannot adequately meet that need unless there is a change in the way in which pastors and other church workers are trained. Emilio Castro says:

We are called to present the witness of a united church, which can symbolize, anticipate and serve the reconciliation and unity of all humanity and the whole creation.³⁴³

342 The Holy Bible New International Version, Matthew 28: 16-20.

343 Emilio Castro, A Passion for Unity: Essays on Ecumenical Hopes and Challenges (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1992), 1.

Christians in East Africa are confronted with the challenge of change, which is built on the principle that says “need necessitates the deed.” Once Christians in East Africa become aware of the need for change, they will be obliged to make some type of response. Three types of response are likely to occur during the quest for ecumenically structured theological education. The first and the easiest response could be to ignore the need for change by continuing to have the same negative attitude towards people of other Christian traditions. For instance, there are some Christian theological educators in East Africa who believe that they are the true orthodox Christians and go on to warn other Christians against their involvement in ecumenically structured theological education. One of their arguments is that ecumenically structured theological education denies one of the important traditional marks of the church namely “one” in favor of a number of them such as koinonia, which claims to be of equal status. There are those who call themselves fundamentalists while others call themselves conservatives. While most of the fundamentalists say that ecumenically structured theological education is one of the Roman Catholic Church’s plots to bring every Christian under the Pope’s authority, some conservatives argue that ecumenically structured theological education dilutes the Christian faith. This is because in the process of looking for common ground one ends up compromising the ideals of his or her Christian tradition.

The second response could be to resurrect the old negative attitudes that do not immediately apply in the present situation or choose to go in the opposite direction. These two types of response would lead to:

- i. The training of church ministers denominationally.
- ii. Lack of quality theological education.

The third response could be to train pastors and other church workers in an ecumenical setting. This response would lead to ecumenically structured theological education. The way, in which theological education is conducted today in East Africa, shows that there is a deep contradiction between the profession of Jesus’ command on one hand and lack of understanding and charity towards fellow Christians on the other. I am aware that this kind of behavior does not arise from any conscious hypocrisy. Nor is it deliberate malice, for most of the people who find themselves in this kind of situation are committed Christians. The only problem is their genuine religious convictions. John Macquarie says “religious convictions are so central that the very existence of an alternative set of beliefs can be seen as a threat to one’s own security.”³⁴⁴

Ecumenically structured theological education should be looked at from the point of view that distinguishes between diversity and division. Diversity in many cases is simply difference and the difference could be as a result in which Christian denominations are ordered. Diversity in the church is not only legitimate, but also something good. Unfortunately, diversity has often passed into division and in this case ecumenically structured education has been impossible. While

344 John Macquarie, Christian Unity and Christian Diversity (London: SCM Press LTD., 1975), 2.

diversity is to be maintained in ecumenically structured theological education, divisions are to be overcome. This is because the kind of ecumenically structured theological education needed in Africa is a program whose objective is to equip men and women to proclaim Christ's message of reconciliation and call the Christian community in Africa to fulfill the mission of the Triune God.

In summary, ecumenically structured theological education by extension offers a locally trained, deeply engaged, well-equipped team of pastors and other church workers appropriate to the East African context. Theological Education by Extension in an ecumenical setting is a blessing that offers new possibilities in the quest for quality theological education in East Africa today.

General conclusion

Ecumenism in East Africa is being challenged on three fronts: fraternal dialogue among sister churches to find a common direction in propagating the word of God; dialogue with Islam, a religion believing in one God but with a different theology; and an approach and dialogue with the African Traditional Religion which though it has no books, theologians, hierarchy or institutions, is a strong baseline of thought for both Christians and Muslims. Ecumenism has two approaches to dialogue, through life witness and through the "experts". The approach of life witness is open to all. In this, one must first live one's beliefs to the full; only then can one approach others with respect and love. Here persons of different religions do not discuss philosophy or theology, but try to find a common way to live together as brothers and sisters, and here the life witness approach has a special place.

The second approach is that of expert dialogue, and discussion. The experts of the different religions must study and sensibly spell out possible fields of religious cooperation. In summary, the ecumenical effort cannot end with inter-Christian dialogue but must go beyond to inter-religious dialogue. And this will bear more fruit for all namely, Christians, Muslims, and those practicing African Traditional Religion.

Since the 1900s, there has been a continuing quest for unity among the various denominations in East Africa. But this quest has been within the context of institutional ecumenism and the discussions have been between churches and often at leadership level. In most cases institutional ecumenism is practiced by the elite and for quite long it has had a limited impact in unifying the divided church in East Africa. As Kobia says:

Today the fragmented church in the region is a far cry from the united church that was a stated objective as far back as 1908.³⁴⁵

For quite long, it has been the mother churches in Europe and North America which have devised models of ecumenism. The models of ecumenism they devise for East Africa were developed when Europe and North America composed the heartland of Christianity. With the moving of the heartland of Christianity to the majority-world, the models devised by Europe and North America have become foreign to the East African situation.

345 Kobia, "Denominationalism in Africa," in The Ecumenical Review 53, 3(July 2001): 299.

In terms of interfaith dialogue, Africans need to come up with those models that result in such unity as described by the World Council of Churches that met in New Delhi in 1961. The New Delhi Assembly said:

We believe that the unity which is both God's will and his gift to his Church is being made visible as all in each place who are baptized into Jesus Christ and confess him as Lord and Savior are brought by the Holy Spirit into one fully committed fellowship, holding the one apostolic faith, preaching the one Gospel, breaking the one bread, joining in common prayer, and having a corporate life reaching out in witness and service to all and who at the same time are united with the whole Christian fellowship in all places and all ages in such wise that ministry and members are accepted by all, and that all can act and speak together as occasion requires for the tasks to which God calls his people.³⁴⁶

The kind of unity needed in East Africa is that which is visible in the communities where Christians stay rather than leaving it to the far distant ecumenical organizations.

African Christian theologians always work in a situation of tension with their church leaders who are more interested in converting as many people to their church as possible instead of preaching the gospel of inter-religious dialogue. There are some religious leaders who are not yet convinced that African traditional religion should be taken seriously. Despite the need for dialogue, many church leaders do not have the correct view of Islam or African Traditional Religion.

Many church leaders too consider inter-religious dialogue to be one of the components of Christian mission. For them dialogue is a simple tool for the growth of the church. There is therefore need for the Christian denominations in East Africa to lay new strategies that would lead to genuine dialogue and avert any further fragmentation. The new strategies should be as a result of constructive and creative exploration of local as opposed to foreign initiatives. The good news is that the degree of commitment to the ecumenical task at the local level throughout the Church in East Africa is growing in intensity and extension. Many Christians feel an impetus to overcome the state of division between them. Spiritual ecumenism - conversion of mind and heart to Christ, joint prayer for unity - is attracting more and more attention. The Christian church in East Africa has some ecumenical light and insight which it is likely to bring to the Church Catholic.

Christians in East Africa are called continually to reexamine their relationships by finding ways of working together in more suitable patterns. They should remember that the ecumenical movement has produced a number of institutions in Africa in general and East Africa in particular through the years as we have seen in the previous chapters. Each of these institutions arose to meet the needs

346 "New Delhi Statement," in Michael Kinnamon and Brian E. Cope, The Ecumenical Movement: Key Texts and Voices (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997), 88.

Methodology

This study sought to investigate the history and theology of the ecumenical movement in East Africa and therefore is based on qualitative research. The main sites selected for field-work research included Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, and later extension into Rwanda and Burundi.³⁴⁷ As important as it was to get views from theologians and lay Christians, it was as vital to get views from other important stakeholders namely, the non-Christian religious leaders. Therefore the

347 Rwanda and Burundi are now members of the East African Community.

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interview respondents selected for this research consisted of Christians, both clergy and laity and a few non-Christian religious leaders.

While Christian theologians are included among the people interviewed, in the process of collecting the data, they were granted a special status due to the responsibility they hold. They were followed by the clergy, and the laity.

During this exercise, both individuals and focus groups were interviewed as follows:

- i. Christian theologians.
- ii. The laity.
- iii. College and University students of theology.
- iv. Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, Africa Chapter.
- v. National Christian Councils.

Data collection techniques:

- i. Interviews: Given the nature of the topic, interviews were the key technique in data collection. The researcher used people who were and are well versed with the history and theology of the ecumenical movement in East Africa as key informants. The second category was church leaders in the region because they were part of the history of the ecumenical movement in the region. The key informant interviews were based on a checklist of issues pertinent to this research.
- ii. Participant observation. I attended a broad spectrum of joint services and events by the various Christian traditions both in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania.
- iii. Questionnaire. A questionnaire was distributed to different role players in East Africa who were requested to give their views on the themes that have shaped the history and theology of the ecumenical movement in East Africa.
- iv. Secondary data. The researcher depended heavily on secondary information in the form of books, journals and circulars from church traditions that exist in the region.

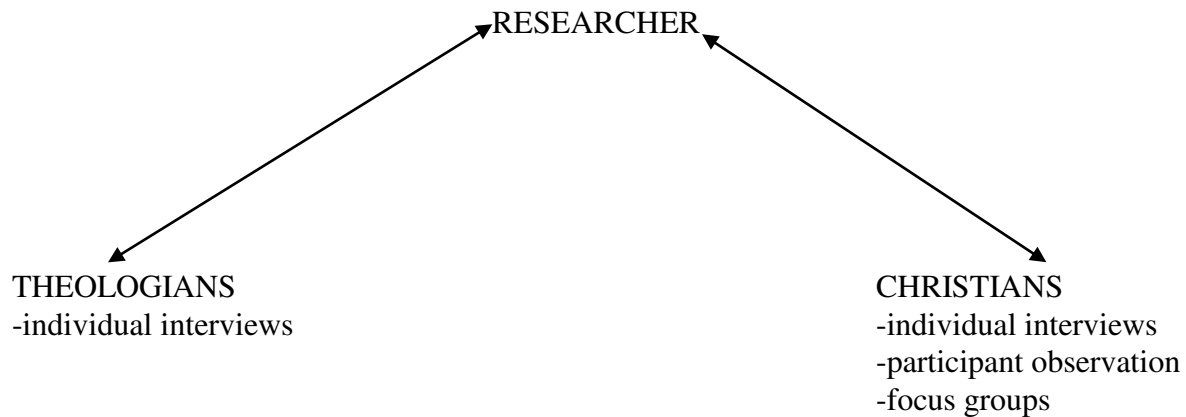
Commentary

These interviews convey an alert analysis in the perception of theologians and church leaders of what ecumenism means to them. Many respondents displayed a thoughtful understanding of the value of church unity in East Africa. They were very clear as to why and how unity should be achieved. Their desire for church unity was evident in their articulation of the role Christians play in the quest for church unity.

The figure below summarizes the research procedures with the triangular design intended to confirm findings and to increase the breadth and depth of information about the history and theology of the ecumenical movement in East Africa.

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Participant observation



Sources and methods to explain the history and theology of the ecumenical movement in East Africa

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