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ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE AS CREDIBLE MEANS OF EVANGELISATION

A Long Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirement for the Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies

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DEDICATION

**To my parents who are members of the Assemblies of God
and to all people of goodwill who tirelessly work for the
cause of Christian unity!**

EPIGRAPH

“Yes, the destiny of evangelisation is certainly bound up with the witness of unity given by the Church ... At this point we wish to emphasise the sign of unity among all Christians as the way and instrument of evangelisation. The division among Christians is a serious reality which impedes the very work of Christ”

Evangelii Nuntiandi, 77.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am greatly indebted to all who opened my eyes on the reality and challenge of Christian unity. Sincere thanks to all my friends and relatives who supported me thus far. We have shared and celebrated the gift of life together. Thanks to all the sponsors and benefactors.

My heartfelt gratitude to all my friends who challenged me and inspired me. Indeed thanks for instilling in me *La Joie de Vivre, La Joie de Croire* (living joyfully, believing joyfully!). God abundantly bless and reward you!

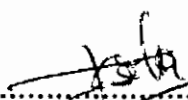
I express my thanks to Fr. George Kocholickal, sdb, who taught me the course of ecumenism and ecumenical dialogues, and who kindly accepted to assist me all along the research. Thanks to the Tangaza Family!

Special thanks to all my brothers Missionaries of Africa with whom I shared my life.

"How can I repay the Lord for all the good done for me? I will raise the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people" (Ps 116, 11-14).

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this long essay is my original work achieved through my personal reading, scientific research method and critical reflection. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts in Religious studies. It has never been submitted to any college or university for academic credit. All sources have been cited in full and acknowledged.

Signed:..........
Luc Regma KOLA, m.afr

Date:.....*10th Feb. 2006*.....

This long essay has been submitted for examination with my approval as the college supervisor.

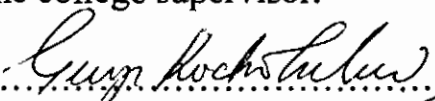
Signed:..........
Fr. George KÖCHOLICKAL, sdb

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Divisions have been a problem in the Church since the earliest days, and the call to reconciliation and communion has also been present in the Church since its beginnings. In our time, however, 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 serious infidelity to the will of Christ and to the mission of the Church: "I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me.... So that they may be one, as we are one" (Jn 17, 20-22). 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.

Many African countries just celebrated one hundred years of evangelisation. It is quite amazing and astonishing to notice the multitude of Christian churches in some African cities and towns, as it is the case in Kampala. As part of my missionary formation I was in Uganda for my apostolic training. I was rather challenged by the rivalry and open dissensions between the different Christian denominations in all spheres of life.

As I prepare myself to start my ministry as a missionary in Africa, the theme of ecumenical dialogue among different Christian churches challenges me. It calls me to be more actively an agent of Christian unity. But why bother about ecumenical dialogue and the credibility of evangelisation? My own background motivated me to reflect on the task of

evangelisation and my mission as a Missionary of Africa in a continent that is sometimes torn by religious rivalries. I come from a family where my parents are members of the Assemblies of God (Protestants), and some of my brothers and sisters are Catholics (my elder brother is a Roman Catholic priest since 1991). I was born in Côte d'Ivoire where like in any other African country there are many Christian denominations. But I never experienced rivalries or dissensions among the Christians. On the contrary members of the same family, like mine, went to different Christian churches but they always lived in peace, harmony and mutual understanding. They never allowed the religious divisions to take over the family unity and values.

In order that the mission of the Church in the world may be more credible, and that humanity may ultimately be reconciled in Christ, we propose to examine the ecumenical situation in Uganda. This essay is an attempt to look at the ecumenical dialogue in the light of Christian disunity.

The first chapter describes the pastoral situation and method of evangelisation at the time of first evangelisation in Uganda. Though the analysis shows that there have been great rivalries and divisions between the Anglicans and the Catholics who first evangelised Uganda, there is still hope for ecumenical dialogue between the Christians as shown in the consolidation.

The second chapter examines the ecumenical dialogue in evangelisation, evaluating the positive achievements, identifying the negative factors and proposing further positive actions based on the catholic principles. We also look critically at the missionary ecumenism based on Vatican II and the importance of ecumenical dialogue.

The third chapter studies the ecumenical dialogue as a credible means of evangelisation. It takes into account the mission and common witness, and collaboration

between churches. The challenge is that dialogue is a new way of being church for all Christians: the concrete ways of dialogue between Christians especially at the grassroots.

St Paul still challenges Christians of all denominations:

All the same, I do appeal to you, brothers, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, to make up the differences between you and instead of disagreeing among yourselves, to be united again in your belief and practice. From what... people have been telling me, my dear brothers, it is clear that there are serious differences among you (1 Co 1, 10-13).

Chapter I

PASTORAL SITUATION AND METHOD AT THE TIME OF FIRST EVANGELISATION IN UGANDA

Among the Martyrs of Uganda, all one in the witness of their death and their blood, were several who were not Roman Catholics. Who is to say these were not canonised along with the others? A great sign is seen in Africa!

Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*.

PASTORAL SITUATION AND METHOD AT THE TIME OF FIRST EVANGELISATION IN UGANDA

1.0 Introduction

Uganda, or more precisely the Kingdom of Buganda, is the only African country that in the 19th century became virtually a Christian nation. In 1875 the first Christian visitor arrived and by 1900 Christianity was the established religion. What are the reasons for this unique feature in our African church history? Evidently not a host of missionaries with an elaborate strategy: in the decisive years there were at most one or two, and sometimes not even one present from either the Church Missionary Society (CMS) or the White Fathers (WF).

We will look at the Buganda favourable background, then the spread of the Gospel throughout Uganda by lay apostles and finally we will study the important contribution of the catechists and lay people during the time of first evangelisation in Uganda.

1.1 *The Favourable Buganda Background*

We have to focus a little more on Buganda because events in this part set the pace for the conquest of the rest of Uganda and the social forces that emerged.

The Buganda monarchy was highly centralised in its king and deeply ingrained in its people. There were still the 26 clans with their heads, the *bakungu*, the owners of the land, but their power was checked by as many *batongole* or district chiefs, and the ten most powerful *ssaza* or county chiefs, both categories appointed by the kabaka or king. The kabaka's chief administrator and chief justice was the *katikkiro*, responsible only to the king.¹

Life was centred on the *Kabaka* who was a kind of half-god with divine power over his people. The veneration of the Creator God *Katonda* had long since given way to the cult of the *balubale*, ancestor spirits, which like gods intervened in people's lives. *Katonda* himself remained a benign God, who "did not kill", i.e. did not demand human sacrifices.

¹ John Baur, *2000 years of Christianity in Africa: An African History 62-1992*, 233.

Christianity restored the image of this loving Creator God but challenged the royal divine claims.

1.1.1 The Muslims

They were the first foreigners to appear in Buganda. They came in 1844 as traders and messengers of their faith. While his father Suna had them expelled, Kabaka Mutesa called them again and became an eager student of Arabic and the Quran. "He was quite impressed by this 'religion of the Book' and invited his people to follow the new faith, building mosques for them. After some years they were more faithful than the king himself and dared to criticise him for refusing circumcision – in his eyes a mutilation contrary to his sacred kingship. After the English explorer Stanley's (about whom we shall see later) visit they feared that he was about to desert the true faith, and they became even more insistent".² Yet Stanley promised not only missionaries of another religion of the Book but also the connection with Britain, a more powerful country than Zanzibar. Hence Mutesa felt strong enough to have a showdown with the Muslims, and had also a political reason for this: in 1874 Egypt had sent Gordon Pasha to claim the sources of the Nile. Could not Bugandan Muslims and Zanzibari collude with their Islamic brothers in Egypt? So he purged his court by having seventy chiefs burned, while countrywide perhaps one thousand Muslims were killed and some one hundred fled to the coast. "These Muslim martyrs should be seen as forerunners of the Christian ones as they died for the same conviction that there is a universal religious authority to whom even the kings are subjected".³

1.1.2 Henry Morton Stanley

He was the first to bring to the Kabaka's court the good news of Christ. He arrived in April 1875. After it became clear to Mutesa that the White man's greatness depended on the Bible, he called his chiefs and asked them to decide either for Muhammad or Jesus, the Quran

² John Baur, 234.

³ John Baur, 234.

or the Bible. It was easy for them to find out what their king wanted and therefore they opted for the Bible of the Christians. Whereupon Stanley made his over-optimistic missionary appeal in London's Daily Telegraph, reporting that the king was ready for the Gospel, and promising that "in one year you will have more converts than all other missions united can number".⁴ This appeal to Christendom to evangelise Buganda met with an immediate and enthusiastic response. Within three days of its publication, the CMS received from an anonymous benefactor an offer of five thousand pounds for a mission to the Great Lake. Smaller donations kept pouring in. By 23 November, eight days after the appeal was published, the Committee of the CMS had already decided to undertake the Uganda mission. Almost as readily as gifts came offers to serve in the new mission, among them that of Alexander Mackay (a British engineer and stout Calvinist), who was to play a leading and not always happy part in the early history of the Uganda mission.

1.1.3 The Church Missionary Society (CMS)

The CMS answered Stanley's call by sending a religious-technical mission, one priest and seven laymen, under the leadership of Alexander Mackay, engineer and stout Calvinist. The first two missionaries arrived on 30 June 1877. Mutesa agreed to Bible lessons and in turn asked them to make gunpowder. He saw in these British missionaries a welcome way to balance the Arabs. On their side, the CMS were full of hope to establish the Anglican Church in the Bugandan Kingdom.

1.1.4 The White Fathers (WF)

The White Fathers arrived on 17 February 1879; and were in fact not just competitors to the Protestant CMS but they had been sent to fulfil Lavigerie's⁵ grandiose plan of a

⁴ J. F. Faupel, *African Holocaust*, 11.

⁵ "I am the servant of a master whom no one was ever able to confine in a tomb", said Charles Lavigerie. The man who spoke these words was one of the most influential personalities in the Catholic Church of the late 19th century; the leader of the French Catholics, the counsellor of the Popes and the main strategist of the Catholic Missions in Africa. As archbishop of Algiers, he founded the Society of the Missionaries of Africa (M.Afr.) for priests and brothers and the Missionary Sisters of our Lady of Africa (MSOLA) for sisters. On account of their habit they were soon known as White Fathers (WF) and Whites Sisters.

Central-Africa Christian Kingdom. In fact it was a double caravan which moved out of Bagamoyo towards the interior and split at Tabora, one part going to Lake Tanganyika, the other to Lake Nyanza-Victoria, the two regions being two of the four Central-African vicariates still to be created. Fr. Lourdel, who with Bro. Amans went ahead to ask the Kabaka's permission to stay in his kingdom, had himself introduced to Mutesa by Mackay. Mackay was a gentleman, but also an irreconcilable enemy of Catholicism. Hence he presented the Catholic missionaries to Mutesa as idolatrous and coming from France, a country notorious for killing its kings.⁶ Thus "the battle of the Reformation was renewed", commented Mackay's sister, writing the biography of her missionary brother.⁷

The Anglican missionaries wrote a letter to Mutesa demanding the expulsion of the Catholics from his kingdom. He was told that otherwise he would lose Queen's Victoria's friendship for good. But the king welcomed the Catholics most happily because they represented a third political power, France, which could become useful to him. Moreover, he enjoyed the prospect of inviting the two missions for religious disputations, for thus he could preside over them as judge. In July and August he listened especially to the instructions of Fr. Lourdel, who pleased him well but refused to procure the French protection for his country.

In July 1880, Mutesa declared Islam the state religion. It meant that Christianity was definitively out of the question and that at heart he had remained faithful to the gods of his fathers. Until Mutesa's death things remained quiet. But his toying with the various religions had accidentally unleashed a quiet revolution that now took its course. The number of people from the king's court, especially the pages, who came to read and to hear the Good News, increased. In 1882 the WF withdrew entirely to the southern shore of the lake, where they founded Bukumbi mission. Prominent lay leaders emerged who gathered the Christians into prayers groups: Joseph Balikuddembe, at the court, Andrea Kagwa around the capital and

⁶ John Baur, 235.

⁷ See Matheson E. M., *An Enterprise so Perilous (An Emphatic Study of the White Fathers' Mission in East Africa by an Anglican Missionary)*, 52-55 in John Baur, 235.

Matia Mulumba at Mityana. The number of Catholic catechumens more than doubled to well over five hundred.⁸

1.2 Persecution Under Kabaka Mwanga, 1885-1886.

After Mutesa's death, eighteen years old Mwanga was chosen as his successor. Much impressed by Fr. Lourdel, he called back the White Fathers at once. They returned in a triumphal procession organised by Mwanga himself, and hopes for the Catholic mission were high. However at the beginning Mwanga was under the influence of the Arabs and the leader of the traditionalist chiefs. Consolidating their own position, they instilled in Mwanga the fear of an imminent British aggression, exemplified by the German occupation of the Tanzanian coast, which took place in the first year of Mwanga's reign. Therefore he was suspicious of Mackay when this missionary, travelling to the south, refused to be accompanied by an official from his court; hence he burned three of his young Christians on 31 January 1885.⁹

The persecution was by no means systematic or general. The main victims were the pages on whom Mwanga's outbursts of anger fell after he had discovered that even Mwafu, his most beloved playboy, had become a catechumen. Some thirty of them were condemned to death, together with their leader Charles Lwanga. The day of the great holocaust was June 3, when thirty-one were burnt alive on the pyres of Namugongo, mainly pages. At the end of the persecution one hundred or more had died. The Catholic Church had twenty-two of them beatified in 1920 and canonised in 1964.¹⁰

Many of the martyrs died with the word "Katonda" on their lips, thus being witnesses of the absolute sovereignty of the Creator God. Their courageous testimony brought forth a

⁸ Yves Tourigny, *So Abundant a Harvest*, 34-38. See also Faupel, 43-46.

⁹ The names of these Anglican protomartyrs were Joseph Lugalama, Mark Kakumba and Noah Seruwanga. To travel unaccompanied to the southern shore of the lake was suspicious because it lay beyond the control of the Kabaka. John Baur, 236.

¹⁰ A list of 23 Anglican (some not quite sure) and 22 Catholic known martyrs is found in Faupel 216 and 218.

new wave of conversions, and soon the Katikkiro told Mwanga that there were so many Christians that their extinction would be impossible.¹¹

1.2.1 *The Wars of Religion: 1888-1894.*

1.2.1.1 The Muslim War

After the persecution, Mwanga remained as unpredictable as ever. He made two Christian leaders, a Protestant and a Catholic, commanders of new regiments. Under them two Christian parties developed, each mustering some one thousand men. The Muslims counted less but they received a lot of arms from the Arabs; they were the most dangerous party. Mwanga's plan to get rid of all foreigners leaked out. Therefore the Christians joined forces with the Muslims to have Mwanga replaced by his eldest brother Kiwewa. Then the Muslims unexpectedly opened fire on the assembled Christian chiefs, who fled to Ankole. Kiwewa, who refused circumcision, was replaced by his more compliant brother, Kalema. Thus *Islamic rule* was established and lasted about two years. All missions were plundered and the missionaries expelled. They took refuge at the southern end of the lake. A penitent Mwanga joined the White Fathers, ready to follow catechism classes. Eventually, a Catholic-Protestant alliance restored Mwanga to the throne after a ten-month war. The Muslims however remained a threat.

1.2.1.2 The War Between the Catholics and the Protestants.

Buganda was now in the hands of the Christians but at the same time the tragic heritage of the Reformation in Europe began to play its role. "While on Sesse Islands waiting for the final assault, they had drawn up a document, promising not to betray or kill one

¹¹ "There were no women martyrs, because at the court all women were involved in polygamy, and in the countryside the few Christian leaders had in time their wives and daughters brought in security. However, there is the outstanding story of Princess Clara Nalumansi. Baptized in the Anglican mission she married a Catholic, following him into his Church. When she was appointed guardian of one of the royal tombs she had the audacity to cleanse it from all Balubale fetishes. While this irreverence caused a national outcry, Mwanga was rather shocked by the fact that Christianity could make a woman act so independently. In August 1888 she was found dead. It was said that the Kabaka had feared the Christians might enthrone her, following the example of the Queen of England". John Baur, 237.

another even if one side should become stronger.”¹² This promise reveals both some underlying fears and the will for Christian unity. There were many factors that contributed to the war between the Catholics and the Protestants. The basic one was the conflicting Catholic and Protestant teaching, which wanted to establish only one religion. It found a parallel in the innate Kiganda conviction that the monarchy should only have one religion; that of its monarch, as the Kabaka had once explicitly told Mackay. Consequently there was mutual mistrust, each believing that the other side would aim at absolute control: the Catholics with the help of Mwanga, the Protestants with the help of England. But then it was as much a political as a religious confrontation. Protestants and Catholics became political parties.¹³ “When the first missionaries came, they helped to bridge the gap between different tribes... but because they were divided they created hostility between members of the same clan. The consequences of mixing politics with religion caused more problems, which took a long time to remedy. In Ankole, for example, the Protestants called themselves ‘*Ekyomugabe*’, which means that they followed the king’s religion. Catholics were called ‘*Ekya Nyamitanga*’, or ‘*Murezu*’, meaning the followers of those who first settled at Nyamitanga, or the religion brought by the ‘long beards’. There was very little social communication between Catholics and Protestants. Even minor things became very important as ‘identification marks’: Catholics called Jesus ‘*Yesu*’ and Mary ‘*Maria*’, while Protestants used the name ‘*Yezu*’ and ‘*Mariam*’. Culture was mixed with theology, and even different political parties for Catholics and Protestants resulted from this – the UPC (Protestants) and the DP (Catholics)”.¹⁴

¹² John Baur, 238.

¹³ This is a fact implied by the very names they were given: *Bangereza* and *Bafransa*, “the English” and “the French”. John Baur, 238.

¹⁴ Muhumuza, B. in Hearne Brian, *Seeds of Unity*, 7. With reference to the above quotation, in fact the UPC was nicknamed ‘United Protestant of Canterbury’, and the DP became ‘Dini ya Papa’ (the Pope’s Religion)! Whereas of course the initials stood for the Uganda People’s Congress and the Democratic Party.

The competition for political offices connected with large grants of land became often more important than the religious issue. After the Muslim war the offices had been equally divided between Protestant and Catholic chiefs. But this “ecumenical” arrangement did not work because there was a greater influx of catechumens into the Catholic Church, mainly on account of the Kabaka being on its side: there were two thousand Catholic catechumens in comparison to a hundred and seventy Anglican ones.¹⁵ The tension grew so high and as was bound to happen, the hostility culminated in a civil war¹⁶ that broke out on Sunday 25 January 1892.¹⁷ *The Battle of Mengo* took place.¹⁸ When the Catholics stormed down from Mengo Hill to meet the enemies on the opposite Namirembe Hill, Captain Lugard (an English soldier who came in the name of the Imperial British East African Company) opened fire with his machine gun and secured a Protestant victory. Taking Mwanga with them the Catholics withdrew to Buddu County.¹⁹ Lugard promised a fairly equal division of the country if only Mwanga would come back. He came, but then the Protestant chiefs refused any division of Buganda. “The CMS missionaries told Lugard that he had now to rule the country through the Protestant chiefs. He resisted and eventually, on 30 March 1892, gave Catholics Buddu, the greatest county. But he also gave the Muslims three small counties because he believed, as he said, in a “triangular constellation of power”.²⁰

Both Catholics and Protestants were disappointed with the situation and appealed to the British government. In 1899 Mwanga, who meanwhile joined the Muslims, was captured

¹⁵ John Baur, 239.

¹⁶ “As events unfolded, it was deplorable that both parties were deprived of their most influential leaders who would have been able to instill moderation in their followers. Honorat Nyonyintono, the only Ugandan who was loved and respected by both sides, had fallen on the battlefield in 1889. Mackay died early in 1890, Fr Lourdel in May 1890.” John Baur, 238.

¹⁷ A study in depth of the causes and events of the Civil War of 1892 is found in Gale, H. P, “Uganda and the Mill Hill Fathers”, Chapter II, 51-87.

¹⁸ Lugard took an irrevocable step, which precipitated the outbreak as he issued guns and powder to the Protestant party. He opened fire on the “*Bafransa*” Party with a Maxim gun. The appalling gesture was to lead to the utter devastation of the three Catholic missions: Rubaga was burnt to the ground, Ssesse plundered, and Kiwala (Villa Maria), Buddu, pillaged. Cf Tourigny, 55.

¹⁹ When things settled down, after three months of destruction and bloodshed, the Catholics were reduced, in April 1892, to accept a treaty which confined them to the province of Buddu and forbade missionaries to preach the Gospel freely outside that area. Treaty of 15 April 1892, in Rubaga Archives, 2.7.

²⁰ John Baur, 239.

and deported to the Seychelles.²¹ His one-year old son Daudi Chwa was proclaimed Kabaka and having a Protestant mother, the new Kabaka was brought up as a Protestant.

The whole troubled era ended in the Uganda Agreement of 1900. The counties were increased to twenty: the Protestants received eleven, the Catholics eight and the Muslims one. The office of Katikkiro was given to the Protestant leader Apolo Kagwa, while the Catholic leader Stanislas Mugwanya had to be satisfied with the office of Chief Justice. The arrangement lasted till Independence and thus perpetuated the predominance of the Protestants established after the Battle of Mengo. Uganda politics continued on religious lines, even after Independence, up to the take-over by president Museveni in 1985.²²

1.3 The Spread of the Gospel Throughout Uganda by Lay Apostles (1894-1914)

However much the Catholic and Protestant confrontation is to be deplored, it also had the positive side effect of precipitating the conversion of Buganda, making it the first Christian country south of the Sahara. Within a short time the controversy had shifted from traditional faith or Islam or Christianity to Protestant or Catholic. The two churches counted in 1890 only 2000 members each. Twenty years later, their share was well over 40% in Buganda and some 7% in the rest of Uganda.²³

The Protestants had the advantage of a majority of Baganda chiefs whose services were commonly used to establish the British administration and who propagated their own church. The advantage of the Catholics lay in the greater number of their missionaries. One beneficial consequence of the religious wars was that the WF had gained the insight that they needed to share their mission field with non-French missionaries in order to correct the fatal equation of 'Catholic is equal to French'.²⁴

²¹ Mwanga died on the Seychelles Islands in 1903; he had been baptized by the Capuchins of these islands. In 1910 his body was transferred to his ancestral tombs at Kasubi. Cf John Baur, 240.

²² John Baur, 240.

²³ John Baur, 240.

²⁴ The Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Vaughan, agreed to send his English *Mill Hill Fathers* whom he had founded as St Joseph Foreign Mission Society of the Sacred Heart in 1867. Cf John Baur, 241.

In 1894 the territory of Northern Uganda was given back to the Verona Fathers' Vicariate of Central Africa. Thus the WF could concentrate on Buganda and the three western kingdoms while the CMS had to spread its forces over the whole of Uganda and the Western Kenya.²⁵

For both Catholics and Protestants the lay apostles played a most important role. The WF regularly set out for a new foundation with some Buganda catechists or sent them ahead.

In the Anglican Church, the lay evangelists played an unparalleled role. They set out with the Bible in their hands.

1.3.1 In the Toro Kingdom.

In 1894 a group of four volunteers within the Anglican Church, founded the Church in the Toro kingdom (now Fort Portal). Apolo Kivebulaya, the most outstanding Muganda missionary, joined them. Besides the Batoro he evangelised different tribes in the Congo and became famous as the Apostle of the Pygmies, whom he served till 1933. Some of the first Catholic catechists to Toro were Baganda Sisters, forerunners of the Bannabikira.²⁶

1.3.2 In the Bunyoro Kingdom (Hoima).

There was more resistance here because its king Kabalega had joined Mwangi's rebellion and was exiled with him to the Seychelles. The WF were wise enough to start in Hoima with Banyoro catechists trained elsewhere. In 1907 the news that Kabalega had been in the Seychelles broke much resistance and aroused the interest of the old people in the new religion. Although the Catholics found the leadership in the hands of Protestants here and in Toro, they were soon numerically ahead.²⁷

²⁵ The Mill Hill Fathers arrived in 1895 and were given Nsambia Hill as Episcopal residence, within two miles from both the WF Rubaga and the Anglicans Namirembe cathedrals. They were going to evangelize in the area of the Anglicans with the approval of the British government, which this way hoped for a better ecumenical understanding. John Baur, Footnote 12, 241.

²⁶ John Baur, 241.

²⁷ This suggests that the chiefs were not everywhere the decisive factor in religious adherence. John Baur, 241.

1.3.3 In Ankole (Mbarara)

The social difference between the ruling Bahima and the local people, in Ankole called Bairu, was still very strong. The resistance of the old chiefs against the new order was broken only when their leader Igumira was deported for political reasons. Then, in 1902 the Anglicans were able to baptize King Kahaya together with the pro-Christian Chief Mbaguta. The WF decided to approach the Bairu at once and had the same success as the Anglicans.²⁸

1.3.4 In Eastern Uganda

The spread into Eastern Uganda was spearheaded by the African evangelists of the revival movement. Among the Iteso, Bukedi and Bugisu towards Mt Elgon there were Baganda groups who were settled by the Muganda general Kakungulu. By 1899 the race started between the CMS and the Mill Hill missionaries: they proceeded fairly equally and with about the same moderate success.

1.3.5 In Northern Uganda.

The story began when Chief Awich of the Acholi (Gulu), who had come into contact with the British, asked for teachers from the Hoima CMS mission school in 1903. Chief Odora of the neighbouring Lango tribe (Lira) followed this example. The Verona Fathers came from the Sudan to Omach in 1909. While the CMS regarded the Ugandan north as a backwater, the Verona Fathers, coming from still further north, saw in it their most promising field and poured in all their available resources. A flock three times larger than that of the Anglicans was their reward.²⁹

The essential story of the conversion of Uganda lays in the lay movement that took its start at the court of the Kabaka, spread over the whole of Buganda Kingdom and extended

²⁸ Their catechist Yohana Kitagama was the Catholic counterpart of the saintly Apolo Kivebulaya. He was the first to bring Christianity to the Bakiga in the populous mountain district of Kigezi (Kabale) in 1912. This humble hinterland was soon as Christian as proud Ankole itself; it has given to the Anglican Church some of its best bishops. John Baur, 242.

²⁹ John Baur, 242.

into the other kingdoms from where neophytes again carried the good news to the neighbouring tribes.

1.4 The Consolidation

1.4.1 In the Anglican Church

The greatest task of consolidation was for the CMS mission to give to the enthusiastic movement of lay evangelists a firm structure in order to build a solid, lasting Church. Their Baganda chiefs did not even see the need to separate ecclesial from civil authority. Bishop Tucker had a clear vision of a self-governing “native” Anglican Church, recognised by the government as the official Church of Uganda. But this vision did not materialise as government officials would deal only with missionaries, and the missionaries neither believed in the African’s capacity to run the Church properly nor were they ready to work under them.³⁰ Bishop Tucker recognised the church council of elders, and began to ordain the best among those who had withstood the persecution. The revised form of his proposed church constitution was accepted in 1909. It gave African clergy and missionaries an equal vote, and reserved a veto for the bishop only. Bishop Tucker resigned in 1911. Upon this, Olivier wrote: “Nowhere else in eastern or central Africa was there such an advanced church constitution”.³¹ And Taylor commented: “The greatest service which Bishop Tucker rendered the Uganda Church was to believe in it”.³²

Tucker had at an early date carefully planned for the training of a lay elite. In 1898 Mengo High School was founded and became the pride of the Anglican Church, being called the ‘Eton of Africa’.³³

1.4.2 In the Catholic Church

Buddu was the ideal area for the consolidation of the Church structures. It was the county to which majority of the Catholic chiefs were restricted as a consequence of the

³⁰ John Baur, 242.

³¹ Olivier, R., *The Missionary Factor in East Africa*, 221.

³² Taylor, J. V., *The Growth of the Church in Uganda. An Attempt at Understanding*, 81.

³³ John Baur, 243.

religious wars. Excluded from mainstream politics in Kampala, they began to build up their own Christian Buganda Kingdom in this largest of all counties. "Their new Kabaka was Christ the King, the Queen Mother Our Lady, the royal court was the church, and around the church they had built their own houses of residence, just as they had done at the court of Mengo".³⁴ Together with the ordinary people they followed the instructions of the four-year catechumenate, and instead of their former Lubale amulets, they proudly wore a rosary and a cross. The Christian homes of these chiefs and their followers were the ground upon which the first purely African Church, the future Diocese of Masaka was built. The architect of this Church was Bishop Henry Streicher. He gave to Christian in Buddu the three major pillars of the future diocese: priests (he built Katigondo Seminary in 1911), Sisters (Mother house of the Bannabikira) and Brothers (the centre of Bannakaroli or Brothers of St Charles Lwanga).

1.5 Prominent Catechists and Lay People

One could not insist enough on the outstanding role played by the catechists during this era of consolidation. Wherever the missionaries could not establish a mission, a catechist was provided to look after the needs of the local Christians and catechumens. Even the opening of new territories to the Gospel was sometimes the work of a catechist. "These catechists were missionaries in the true sense, having left their homes to go out and learn a new language in order to be able to preach the Gospel".³⁵ The same could be said of many other lay people, men and women, who were often the real precursors of the missions in their region. Such was the role of St Matthias Mulumba in Mityana and others when the missionaries were absent.

However the most overlooked lay people may have been those thousands of humble women who prepared the children at home before sending them to the catechumenate. In fact these women were "home catechists", and many later became "village catechists". In time of

³⁴ John Baur, 243.

³⁵ Yves, Tourigny, 88.

distress, as was the case during the years of the sleeping sickness epidemic, it was among devoted women that the missionaries found their courageous assistants in the care of the sick.³⁶

The two sister churches in Uganda had been first in fomenting religious rivalries. With the advent of Independence they gave the lead in religious cooperation. On 1 October 1962, the eve of the country's independence, the Archbishops Leslie Brown and Joseph Kiwanuka issued a joint Anglican-Catholic statement. It culminated in the appeal "to show towards one another more charity, respect and understanding than in the past. It is time, we think that the rivalry of the past should be forgotten. We should concentrate on the future in which, instead of magnifying the differences that divide us, we turn to the truths which all Christians hold in common and which should inspire us to work together to serve our fellow-men."³⁷ The following year their proposal "to work together to serve our fellow-men" made a concrete beginning with the formation of the Uganda Joint Christian Council (UJCC).

³⁶ Yves, Tourigny, 88.

³⁷ Yves, Tourigny, 167.

CHAPTER II

ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE IN EVANGELISATION

“ ‘Believers in Christ... cannot remain divided. If they wish truly and effectively to oppose the world’s tendency to reduce to powerlessness the mystery of Redemption, they must profess together the same truth about the cross.’ ‘The destiny of evangelisation is certainly bound up with the witness of unity given by the Church. We wish to emphasise the sign of unity among all Christians as a way and instrument of evangelisation’ ”

Ut Unum Sint [Hereafter *UUS*], nn.1 & 98.

“Division openly contradicts the will of Christ, provides a stumbling block to the world, and inflicts damage on the most holy cause of proclaiming the good news to every creature.”

Unitatis Redintegratio [Hereafter *UR*], n. 1.

ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE IN EVANGELISATION

2.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter we saw how the stress on division between the Anglicans and the Catholics affected the evangelisation of Uganda. Luckily enough the churches understood that their bitterness and division towards each other was detrimental to the credibility of their mission. Therefore they agreed to work together and made a concrete beginning with the formation of the UJCC.

Mission and unity are inseparably linked; mission in unity remains the goal to which the Church aspires. Visible signs of commitment to the goal of unity include collaboration, cooperation and networking among the churches and mission agencies in the same area, across cultural and denominational boundaries, and across national and regional boundaries.

In the following we will define some key terms, then analyse the catholic principles that guide ecumenical dialogue and the strengths and weaknesses of the process of evangelisation in Uganda. We will also study the missionary ecumenism according to Vatican II and the importance of ecumenical dialogue.

2.1 Definitions

2.1.1 *Ecumenism*

The word "ecumenism" is derived from the Greek word *oikumene*, meaning the whole of the inhabited world (Acts 17, 6; Mt 24, 14; Heb 2,5). In traditional Catholic usage it means a general or universal council of the Church; but in modern times it is also used to indicate the various efforts to unite all Christians, and it carries overtones of sympathy toward separated brethren and toward unitive efforts.³⁸ The term ecumenical in theology today refers to the movement, which seeks to achieve external unity among the world's denominationally divided churches. A more modern, comprehensive meaning has since been developed: "ecumenical" means the entirety of the church, which, looking back to its common original

³⁸ B. Leeming, *Ecumenical Movement* in Catholic Encyclopedia Vol. 5, 96.

tradition and looking forward to its hope, seeks a commonality in doctrine and in the life of faith. The ecumenical movement consists of those churches, which “together seek to know Christ.”³⁹

2.1.2 Dialogue

Dialogue is a mutual opening of persons to each other, arising from the desire to learn from another faith and to be enriched by it. Dialogue of this kind must be differentiated from testimony to the convictions that an individual or a community adheres to in faith.⁴⁰ Dialogue is at the heart of ecumenical cooperation and accompanies all forms of it. Dialogue involves both listening and replying, seeking to understand and to be understood. It is a readiness to put questions and to be questioned.⁴¹

2.1.3 Evangelisation

Evangelisation is derived from the Greek verb *euanglizein*, the most basic New Testament meaning of which is the proclamation of the inauguration of the reign of God in the person and ministry of Jesus and a call to repentance and faith (Mk 1, 15).⁴²

Evangelisation refers to the process of spreading the gospel or the extent to which it has been

³⁹ Such a cooperative attitude includes at the outset several features: a) the limitation of ecumenism to Christians or to Christian churches; b) the recourse to a tradition (which at least in the beginning was a common one) of the apostolic witness and its basic interpretation in the primitive church; c) a principled openness toward the insight that one does not possess the whole truth in all its aspects –that is, an openness toward changes in one’s own doctrine and way of life; and d) the conviction and the hope that the efforts for exchange between, and finally the unity of, the parts of the church are God’s will and are even presaged in the unity of God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Cf Dietrich Ritschl, *Ecumenism* in Karl Muller, Dictionary of Mission, 120.

⁴⁰ “The motives of dialogue are multiple. First, dialogue helps dissolve centuries-old misunderstandings and polemical clichés. It brings to light true similarities and authentic differences, which unite and divide the two communities. Dialogue promotes real understanding. Second, dialogue serves to improve relationships between people. Dialogue puts a stop to all who misuse religion in order to justify large or small wars... Dialogue refines our perception of God, who does not desire such conflicts, and unmasks those who hide their own motives for conflict behind what they allege to be divine authorization. Third, dialogue frees people from fear of one another. The person who dialogues dares to enter into strange territory and discovers others in their humanity. Dialogue can break the vicious circle of fear and siege mentality. It encourages people not to put with a religiously polarized world. Through dialogue one sees the practicability of working together with those of other faiths in humanitarian, economic, political, intellectual, and spiritual matters. In the fourth place, dialogue can contribute to the deepening of one’s own faith. Someone of another faith can become an icon through which “my” God comes to me in a strange form and so leads my faith to its full potential. Finally, wherever dialogue brings believers nearer to each other, they become the authors of unity, because believers are the firstborn of a world which should become as much a unity the last things (Omega) as it was in the first things (Alpha)”. Ulrich Schoen. *Dialogue* in Karl Muller, ed. Dictionary of Mission, 110.

⁴¹ *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*, n. 172.

⁴² David J. Bosch, *Evangelism, Evangelisation* in Karl Muller, Dictionary of Mission, 151.

spread. It is an invitation: people should turn to God because they are drawn by God's love, not because they are pushed to God for fear of hell. The Church (i.e. the community that evangelises) should be a radiant manifestation of the Christian faith and have a vibrant lifestyle. Therefore if the Church is to impart to the world a message of hope and love, of faith, justice, and peace, something of this should be visible, audible, and tangible in the Church itself (see Acts 2, 42-47; 4, 32-25). Evangelisation is calling people to become followers of Jesus.

2.2 The Process of Dialogue

Ecumenical dialogue allows members of different Churches and ecclesial communities to know one another, to identify matters of faith and practice which they share and points on which they differ. They seek to understand the roots of such differences and assess to what extent they constitute a real obstacle to a common faith. When differences are recognised as being a real barrier to communion, they try to find ways to overcome them in the light of those points of faith, which they already hold in common.⁴³ Where there is just one partner Church or Community in the dialogue, it is called bilateral; when there are several it is described as multilateral. Dialogues may be carried on by groups of lay people, by groups of clergy, by groups of professional theologians or by various combinations of these.

2.3 Catholic Principles that Guide Ecumenical Dialogue.⁴⁴

The fundamental principles and basic attitudes of ecumenical activity in the Catholic Church are contained in the documents of Vatican II and in some Encyclical letters. They provide a clear and coherent theological foundation for the full and unequivocal participation of the Catholic Church in the modern ecumenical movement. The principles are the following:

⁴³ *Directory on Ecumenism*, n. 172.

⁴⁴For this section of our work, I mainly based myself on George Kocholickal, *Ecumenism and Ecumenical Dialogues: Lecture Notes for the use of Tangaza Students only*, 2002, 16-7.

- ❖ Objectively, the Catholic Church has all the Gifts of Christ meant for our salvation (= Faith or Gospel, the Sacraments, and the unifying leadership of the Successor of Peter and the successors of the Apostles).⁴⁵
- ❖ Subjectively, the Catholic Church has often failed to appreciate and live these gifts in their fullness, and is always in need of purification and reformation (UR 6, LG 8).
- ❖ Unity and diversity: the search for unity, and therefore a re-united Church must respect freedom and diversity in spiritual life, in Church discipline, in liturgical rites and even in theology (UR 4, 9).
- ❖ Hierarchy of truths: in Catholic doctrine there exists an order or hierarchy of truths, since they vary in relation to the foundation of the Christian faith (UR 11, UUS 37).
- ❖ Sin of disunity and present day Christianity: one cannot accuse the present day Christians for the sin of disunity (UR 3). Our religion and denomination are often an accident of birth.

Present day ecumenists stress both the bond of union that already exists as well as the situation of pluralism of our contemporary society. In fact the multiplicity in discipline, liturgy, theology, and spirituality is seen as expressive of the catholicity of the Church (cf. LG 23, AG 22, UR 4, EN 64).

2.4 Weaknesses of the Process of Evangelisation

In Uganda as has been already mentioned, there was rivalry from the very beginning of the Christian mission. Despite occasional friendly gestures, people like Alexander Mackay and Simon Lourdel had little understanding of one another or of their respective traditions. These two great pioneers in the words of Dr Pirouet, “were in a position to dominate the early

⁴⁵ The Petrine ministry is to be understood as a ‘means of salvation’, in the sense that it is a ministry for the unity of the Church and its perseverance in the true faith.

years of the Uganda missions”, and they were both “particularly vehement protagonists of their own churches and particularly prone to religious argument”⁴⁶. Cardinal Lavigerie did show some concern about trying to preserve peaceful relations between the Catholic and Protestant missionaries, but the spirit of competition proved too strong. When Lavigerie heard in 1880 about the religious disputes, which had taken place at Mutesa’s court between Mackay and Lourdel, he was very displeased. “Don’t you realise”, he wrote, “that such disputes will be harmful both to the Africans and to you? The Protestant ministers in Uganda are bringing you into disrepute in all the Protestant mission publications of Europe, and you are needlessly exciting the animosity of all the Protestants of Africa, who have until now been courteously inclined to you and to all your missionaries.”⁴⁷ Dr. Pirouet goes on to claim that these negative attitudes generally prevailed; the Anglicans thought that the Catholics were deliberately thwarting the Anglican missions, while the deep-seated Catholic suspicion of what they saw as Anglican power-seeking (partly due to the Anglican concept of a national church) did nothing to smooth matters over. This attitude of mutual suspicion was so coloured by culture and politics that, many years later, a Catholic student could write, in an essay on ecumenism in Uganda: “The consequences of mixing politics with religion caused more problems, which will take a long time to remedy... Culture was mixed with theology, and even different political parties for Catholics and Protestants resulted from this: the UPC (Protestants) and DP (Catholics)”⁴⁸.

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 other of the missionary churches, usually through no direct choice of their own, but much more because of accidents of birth or geography. This is one among the many reasons for the birth of

⁴⁶ L. Pirouet, *The Historical Background to Religious Tension in Uganda*, Paper given to the Kampala Ecumenical Discussion Group, October 16th 1971, quoted in Mugambi ed. 135.

⁴⁷ L. Pirouet, quoted in Mugambi ed, 135.

⁴⁸ B. Muhumuza, quoted in Brian Hearne *Seeds of Unity*, 5.

independent churches in Africa today. It is extremely difficult to counteract these negative attitudes, but these 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 hostilities are outdated, and when the genuine theological reasons for division among the churches are being gradually overcome.

2.5 Strengths of the Process of Evangelisation

Despite this heritage of division, there is a solid basis on which to build a more constructive and unifying policy. The common witness among Christians is an important factor leading to understanding. In Uganda, for example, despite all the religious and political problems, there has also been a strong interest among many Christians in trying to work for Christian unity. We have already seen something of the two initiatives of the Uganda Joint Christian Council and of the Kampala ecumenical study group. The aim of the Council, founded in 1963, was described as “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 the Ugandan Christians to forget the past and work together for a better future.”⁴⁹

The ground for more positive attitudes to ecumenism in the African scene is already present in the traditional concerns for peace, harmony and unity in the community. To support these concerns there is a constant willingness to forgive and to restore harmony in society.

There is much ground for hope in the positive traditions of Africa for a new approach to ecumenism. One that is based more on the values of harmony and solidarity brought to their fulfilment in a deeper understanding of the Gospel and Christ and of the Church, than on efforts to insist on the differences between the churches. The African extended family with its strong sense of unity that transcends denominational distinctions also offers great possibilities for ecumenism at grass-root level.

⁴⁹ Mugambi, 137

2.6 Missionary Ecumenism Based on Vatican II

The Roman Catholic understanding of ecumenism is contained more dynamically in Vatican II's *Unitatis Redintegratio* (UR; 1964) than in statements issued before the council.

The quest for Christian unity is a missionary responsibility, for the Church is called to be a sacrament of Christ and of the unity of the triune God who is present within the Church (n. 2). The decree is remarkable for a variety of reasons. It describes the ecumenical movement as one of seeking the restoration of Christian unity rather than a return of non-Catholics to the already existing unity of the Catholic Church. It acknowledges the ecclesial reality of other Christian communities, which share the same Sacred Scriptures, the same life of grace, the same faith, hope, and charity, the same gifts of the Holy Spirit, the same Baptism, and many other common elements which constitute the Church. And it admits, finally, that both sides were to blame for the divisions that ruptured the Church at the time of Reformation (nn. 3, 20-23).

The immediate path to unity is through reform and renewal (n. 6). "There can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without a change of heart" (n. 7). This change of heart (which the Council links with "spiritual ecumenism") may express itself at times even in joint celebration of the Eucharist. Although it is not simply a means of unity to be employed indiscriminately, eucharistic sharing may at times be necessary for the gaining of the grace of unity (n. 8). In the meantime, ecumenism also requires theological collaboration, dialogue, and joint study, as well as cooperation in social action (nn. 9-12).

2.7 Importance of Ecumenical Dialogue

A certain hesitancy, still noticeable in the documents of Vatican II about ecumenical dialogue, has disappeared in subsequent church pronouncements especially due to the forthright commitment of Pope John Paul II who, in his many visits to Churches throughout the world has consistently sought dialogue with other Christian Churches and with the leaders of other religions.

Open and sincere dialogue is therefore the Church's way of entering into and cooperating with God's own ongoing dialogue with humanity, which was begun in creation, God's declaration of love for humankind with whom he wishes to share his own life and happiness.⁵⁰ This dialogue reached its climax in human history in the incarnation, life, death and resurrection of Jesus and the sending of the Holy Spirit, which is the supreme sign of how much God loves the world (Jn 3: 16). That dialogue has been carried on through all ages and continues today through the religions of the world. As Pope John Paul II has said, "By dialogue we allow God to be present in our midst, for as we open ourselves to one another, we open ourselves to God."⁵¹ The Pope insists that ecumenical dialogue is "a work desired by God, ...an integral element of the Church's evangelising mission."⁵²

2.8 Conclusion

There can be little doubt that there can be no true evangelisation, and certainly no new evangelisation in Africa, that does not centre around dialogue with other Christians and dialogue with other religions. The Catholic Church in Africa has been slow to understand this, even though as long ago as 1963, with prophetic insight, Pope Paul VI declared, "Dialogue is a new way of being Church."⁵³ In a continent in which religion has so often been divisive, must we not say that dialogue is the way of being Church in Africa in the years ahead? Can we avoid this conclusion once we have realised, as Vatican II has brought home to us, that the mission of the Church in Africa is to bring about communion, namely to be the sacrament, sign and instrument of communion with God and of the unity of all the people of Africa.

⁵⁰ That hesitancy remained, however, even in the highest places in the Church, is evident from the need Pope John Paul II felt to explain and defend his action in meeting the leaders of the religions of the world at Assisi in October 1987 in his annual address to the members of the Roman Curia at the end of the same year (see *Documentation Catholique*).

⁵¹ See the informative article of Archbishop Jean Jadot, then at the head of the Secretariat for Non-Christian Religions, *The Growth in Roman Catholic Commitment to Interreligious Dialogue since Vatican II*, in the Bulletin of the Secretariat 54 (1983), 205-220.

⁵² Address to the Pontifical Secretariat for Non-Christians, April 28, 1987, in Bulletin of the Secretariat, 66 (1987), 224.

⁵³ Encyclical letter, *Ecclesiam Suam*, 1963, no. 63.

Dialogue is not a hidden strategy for Christian conversion, a subterfuge to draw people to change their religious allegiance. Its purpose is to create a new relationship of communion between peoples who are beginning to recognise that God calls them out of a state of enmity into fellowship, harmonious and constructive living together in tolerance, to building together a more just and peaceful society. For where there is communion between people, the Kingdom of God is already present among them. Dialogue reaches out to the mystery of God active in others.

CHAPTER III

ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE AS A CREDIBLE MEANS OF EVANGELISATION

“Division openly contradicts the will of Christ, provides a stumbling block to the world, and inflicts damage on the most holy cause of proclaiming the Good News to every creature” (*UR, 1*).

“As evangelisers, we must offer Christ’s faithful not the image of people divided and separated by unedifying quarrels, but the image of people who are mature in faith and capable of finding a meeting-point beyond the real tensions, thanks to a shared, sincere and disinterested search for truth. Yes, the destiny of evangelisation is certainly bound up with the witness of unity given by the Church... At this point we wish to emphasise the sign of unity among all Christians as the way and instrument of evangelisation. The division among Christians is a serious reality which impedes the very work of Christ.” (*EN, 77*)

ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE AS CREDIBLE MEANS OF EVANGELISATION

3.0 Introduction

The Protestant-Catholic dialogue, initiated by Vatican II, was basically a Catholic event and appealed to the Protestants in a much lesser degree. Many evangelicals, such as African Inland Missionaries, or Seventh Day Adventists, would have nothing to do with it at all. Some Catholics got weary: "Should everything come from our side"? Others, more enthusiastic, were disappointed by Rome itself, when the Pope insisted on greater inner-Catholic unity before major steps towards intercommunion should be made.

Thus we should not be surprised that the African Church was slow in its acceptance of ecumenism. For Protestants the ecumenical movement had been restricted to a search for unity among the Protestant churches, sometimes even as a strengthening bond against the so-called "Roman danger". For Catholics the prohibition of any participation in worship with heretics, and this meant all Protestants, had been so severely inculcated that ecumenism could only mean to pray for them in order that they return to Rome. It took a long time to perceive that the Second Vatican Council was a new Reformation in which the Catholic Church accepted the basic ideas of the Protestant Reformation.

There should be a change of heart, a dialogue for learning from one another, common witness and service to all people, and a prayerful longing "to attain that fullness of unity which Jesus Christ desires".⁵⁴

It was on this basis that in Africa Catholics and Protestants began to recognise themselves as brothers and sisters of the same Lord and to discover that "what unites us is greater than what divides us".

⁵⁴ Decree on *Ecumenism*, nn.3-12, 19-24.

3.1 Mission and Common Witness

One of the main concerns of the Second Vatican Council was “the restoration of unity among all Christians” so much so that it seemed from the first announcements of the Council that Pope John XIII, a great and prophetic figure, wanted a truly ecumenical council, with all the churches represented, so that unity might become a major concern of all the churches. The World Council of Churches (WCC) is the visible expression among the Protestant, and also the Orthodox, churches of the same concern. The WCC meeting in Nairobi reformulated its constitution to read, “The World Council of Churches is constituted for the following functions and purposes: to 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, and to advance towards that unity in order that the world may believe”⁵⁵.

At the same Nairobi Assembly of the WCC, Archbishop Moeller, representing the Roman Catholic Church, said:

“Struck by the challenge which the modern world offers to the Church and by fear and anxiety with which countless people seek a meaning for life, we are convinced that what still divides us is ultimately less important than the gifts we hold in common, and that the witness we can even now give together to the content of the Gospel is deeper and more impelling than those factors which still necessarily limit it. With you we want to engage in an ecumenism which is wholehearted and joyous and which tries faithfully to come to grips with the urgent task of expressing the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the flesh of a specific, concrete humanity”.⁵⁶

This statement simply echoes the persistent and courageous calls of the then Pope, Paul VI. In his *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, for example, he wrote that divisions among Christians not only harm the credibility of the churches, but even the credibility of Christ himself.⁵⁷ In the common declaration of Paul VI and of Archbishop Donald Coggan⁵⁸, the same point is made even more strongly, “Our divisions hinder this witness, hinder the work of Christ, but

⁵⁵ David M. Paton, *Breaking Barriers: Nairobi 1975*, (the official English report on the Nairobi Assembly), SPCK, London, and Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1976, 317-18.

⁵⁶ Press Release from Nairobi Assembly of the WCC, “Text of Remarks to Monsignor Charles Moeller”, dated December 6th 1975; Mgr Moeller was the head of the sixteen Catholic observers, and the official Vatican spokesperson at the Assembly.

⁵⁷ EN, 77

⁵⁸ *The Common Declaration of Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Donald Coggan*, Thursday 28th April 1977. The full text can be found in AFER, 1977, n.4, 246-49. The passage quoted is from nn.7-9 of the Statement, 248-49 of AFER.

they do not close all roads we may travel together. In a spirit of prayer and of submission to God's will we must collaborate more earnestly in a 'greater common witness to Christ before the world in the very task of evangelisation' (*EN 77*). It is our desire that the means of this collaboration be sought: the increasing spiritual hunger in all parts of God's world invites us to such a common pilgrimage".

At the Assembly of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) in Nairobi in 1981, the General Secretary had a special message for the Roman Catholic Church in Africa. He said, "We wish a more concrete dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church. We very heartily and fraternally welcome its delegation to this Assembly. We note with joy the increasing number of Christian Councils with Catholic membership in Africa... But on the continental level, we must not be satisfied with occasional courtesy meetings: the young African churches were not present in the great schisms that took place in the history of the church. We are all heirs to a fact, the fact of division: there is no reason to justify or perpetuate it. We are convinced that the churches of Africa are called to play a leading role in the dialogue for Unity; therefore we call upon our brothers and sisters of the Roman Catholic Church to join us in a common witness to the love of Christ who said: 'If you have love for one another, then everyone will know you are my disciples' (Jn 13, 35)".⁵⁹

Pope John Paul II has continued the emphasis on the urgency of the need to work for unity among Christians. He has often spoken of the "intolerable scandal of Christian divisions" and in his first visit to Africa he had this to say:

"Because of this one Baptism, in which we profess one basic faith that Jesus is Lord and that God raised him from the dead, ... we stand together before the world of today with a common responsibility which stems from obedience to Christ. This common responsibility is so real and so important that it must impel us to do all we can, as a matter of urgency, to resolve the divisions that still exist among us, so that we may fulfil the will of Christ for the perfect unity of his followers... Without full organic unity, Christians are unable to give a satisfactory witness to Christ, and their division remains a scandal to the world, and especially to the young churches in mission lands. Your presence here testifies to a deep insight: that especially in the young churches of Africa, in a continent that hungers and thirsts for God –a longing that can

⁵⁹ Rev. Maxime Rafransoa, General Secretary of the AACC, August 4th, 1981 quoted in Mugambi, 150.

be fulfilled only in Christ –the common apostolic faith in Christ the Saviour must be held and manifested, for in Christ there can be no division. Your presence, together with the sincere ecumenical efforts, which are developing, show our common desire for full unity. For truly the credibility of Christ himself is linked to Christian unity... This task is, I repeat, an urgent work. We can do this adequately only when we are completely united in faith and when we speak his word with one voice, a voice that rings with that warm vitality which characterises the whole Christian community when it lives together in full communion”.⁶⁰

This emphasis from both the WCC (and AACC) and the Vatican points towards the urgent need for a truly local ecumenism. In 1975, the Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian Unity (SPCU), now Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU), issued a document giving guidelines on this very topic, “Ecumenism at Local, National and Regional Levels.”⁶¹

3.2 Collaboration Between Churches

There is a need for the churches to review the pattern and degree of their present commitment to the ecumenical structures at local, national, regional and global levels, and ask themselves whether these structures are functioning as means towards unity or as a substitute for unity. There is little doubt then of the importance attached by all the churches in their official statements to common witness and collaboration in bringing the Good News of Christ to the world.

In Uganda, the divisive policies of Idi Amin succeeded in increasing the traditional hostility between Catholics and Anglicans, despite many efforts to heal the ancient wounds (some of which are already mentioned above). One result of this was that the very strong statement of the Anglican bishops in 1977, denouncing the rule of Uganda by the gun, was not signed by the Catholic bishops (also because they felt that certain remarks in the statement, notably about forced conversion to Islam, were exaggerated).⁶² Nonetheless, there was close cooperation between the two episcopates immediately prior to this declaration, which was the immediate cause of the murder of Archbishop Luwum, the Anglican primate.

⁶⁰ Address of Pope John Paul II to leaders of other Christian Churches, Nairobi, May 7th, 1980. Text in AFER 1980, n.4, 360-76

⁶¹ Full text published in AFER 1975, n.6, 360-76.

⁶² Mugambi, 155

In fact, Cardinal Emmanuel Nsubuga, who has been deeply convinced about the need for ecumenism in Uganda, was present with the Anglican bishops when Archbishop Luwum was taken away to his death. In September 1981, Christian and Muslim leaders made a common statement to the government, accusing it of indifference to the murder of many innocent civilians by the armed forces. The statement was signed by Cardinal Nsubuga, by Archbishop Sylvanus Wani (Church of Uganda) and by the chief kadhi of Uganda, Sheikh Kassim Mulumba. They offered some constructive suggestions including more discipline in the army, and a round-table conference in a neutral country between the government and its opponents.

The statement issued by the above religious leaders reminds us of one of the primary concerns in contemporary ecumenism: the need for the churches to express their common witness in situations of social injustice and of oppression of every kind. The Bangalore Faith and Order Conference of 1978 put this point at the centre of its agenda, and insisted that ecumenism cannot be simply a matter of academic theology, but must lead to common action by the churches on behalf of the poor of the earth, so that the Church becomes more truly the "voice of the voiceless".⁶³ This seems to offer a new direction to ecumenism in Africa: not so much in its insistence on the need for the creative presence of the Church in social issues but more in the way that this kind of common witness points to the need for theological reflection on the things that still keep the churches divided. It is clear that when the churches keep silent in matters of serious social injustice, or when they do not seem to be able to give joint witness on such occasions, then their credibility is greatly reduced. When the late President of Kenya, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, told the AMECEA study conference in Nairobi, 1976, "The Church is the conscience of society, and today society needs a conscience. Do not be afraid to speak. If we go wrong and you keep quiet, one day you may have to answer for our mistake".⁶⁴ Here he was presenting all the churches with a challenge to develop ecumenical programmes for

⁶³ Commission on Faith and Order of the WCC, *Sharing in One Hope: Bangalore 1978*, the official report of the conference, Faith and Order Paper n.92, WCC, Geneva, 1978 in Mugambi, 155.

⁶⁴ Text in AFER, 1976, n.5, 312

social awareness and analysis. Ecumenical teams of competent Christians should be formed for such programmes, and should play an important role as an advisory body to church leaders, so that any statements that are made are soundly based as well as truly ecumenical.

In recent years the UJCC has been very prophetic and has effectively challenged the structures that oppress human rights. "In the entire history of Uganda the church leadership, of the main denominations, has remained in dialogue with government leaders to ensure that justice and peace prevail. Even in days that were regarded as most dangerous, Bishops' Conferences did not succumb to intimidation; even if they wanted to, their flock kept pressing them to use their position and say something. It was not easy and sometimes the price was very high, including harassment and arranged accidents for people who were labelled vocal."⁶⁵

Another telling example of the collaboration between churches in Uganda is the prophetic action taken by the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI) founded since 1998. ARLPI is an organisation founded by the religious leaders in Gulu, northern Uganda. The religious leaders have worked together under this organisation. "On 22nd June these religious leaders met in Gulu and lamented about the international community's lack of concern over the deadly conflict in northern Uganda. The religious leaders have jointly tried to mediate for peace since last year... Partly in protest against those against peace, but largely in solidarity with the suffering children of northern Uganda, the region's top clergy decided to go and spend several cold nights in the open –sleeping with the children."⁶⁶ These children are the most vulnerable victims of this ruthless war that has raged for seventeen years, forcing so many to sleep in the cold, mainly at the Bus Park in Gulu.

The Church's mission in the world (and particularly in Africa) is to proclaim the Kingdom of God which is both coming and yet in some way mysteriously present among us;

⁶⁵ Alex B. Atuhaire, *Will the Church Step Back From Museveni's Red Line?* in Sunday Monitor, 15th June 2003 (26-7), 26.

⁶⁶ Carlos Rodriguez, *God Joins the Children on Gulu's Cold Streets*, in The Monitor, Saturday 28th June 2003, 5.

and it is to do this, not only by the words it speaks, but also, and especially, by the witness of its life as a new community, a community of justice and love, committed to dialogue, reconciliation, and liberation in Africa.

3.3 Dialogue is a New Way of Being Church for all Christians

The new way of being church that is dialogue is imperative in Africa in the context of so many religious divisions, wars, violence, poverty and suffering of all kinds. These issues affect peoples of all African countries, races, cultures, religious denominations and social standings, and present in their turn an urgent call to dialogue between people of good will everywhere for their solution. Dialogue is a key means towards achieving the unity of all humankind. For Christian witness is integral to the practice of dialogue in its various forms which have been so well described in the important magisterial document, *Dialogue and Proclamation*,⁶⁷ as follows:

3.3.1 The Dialogue of Life

It is the dialogue where people strive to live in an open and neighbourly spirit, sharing their joys and sorrows, their human problems and preoccupations.

3.3.2 The Dialogue of Action

It is the dialogue in which Christians and others collaborate for the integral development and liberation of people.

3.3.3 The Dialogue of Theological Exchange

It is the dialogue where specialists seek to deepen their understanding of their respective religious heritages, and to appreciate each other's spiritual values.

3.3.4 The Dialogue of Religious Experience

It is the dialogue where persons, rooted in their own religious traditions, share their spiritual riches, for instance with regard to prayer and contemplation, faith and ways of

⁶⁷ Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, *Dialogue and Proclamation: Reflections on Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel*, Paulines Publications Africa, Nairobi, 1996, 42.

searching for God or the Absolute. A fitting example for this kind of dialogue is the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity from 18-25 January each year. If this week were well prepared with the involvement of many different churches, then it would become a time of grace and conversion for all, and a strong stimulus towards reconciliation and unity.

Three of those ways of dialogue are possible for all Christians; only (3.3) is reserved for the experts. Christians in Africa should be strongly encouraged to think of their call to mission in terms of those three forms of dialogue. In doing so, they are at one and the same time proclaiming and witnessing to the Kingdom of God; for where there is communion and fellowship the Kingdom of God is already present among them.

3.4 Conclusion

The mission of the Church in Africa should include being with the people, responding to their needs, with sensitiveness to the presence of God in the various cultures and other religious traditions, and witnessing to the values of the kingdom through presence, solidarity, sharing and word. The Church's mission will be through a dialogue of life, of action and of sharing religious experience especially with Africa's poor, with its local cultures and with its various religious traditions.

The way the Christians will be living together and their way of relating with other Christians and with the followers of other religions through the forms of dialogues described, will be their first witness to Christ and to the Kingdom. They will try to live like him in the midst of their neighbours, with the same care and concern Christ showed, building relationships of communion with them, respecting their freedom of religion, and working with them for development, peace and justice. Is not this the kind of witness given by the early Christian communities, recorded in the Acts of the Apostles (see 2,42-47; 4,32-35; 5,12-16)? Tertullian in the following century describes how the people of Africa exclaimed in astonishment when the first Christians arrived among them, "See how they love each other."

Is not this the witness that Pope John Paul II had in mind when he chose as the theme of the African Synod, “You shall be my witnesses” (Acts 1,8), and to which he constantly returns throughout his Post-Synodal Exhortation?⁶⁸

Many parts of Africa already have fitting instruments for an evangelisation of this kind, namely, the Small Christian Communities, which have been well called ‘The Church in the Neighbourhood.’⁶⁹

⁶⁸ *Ecclesia in Africa (EA)*, 51

⁶⁹ See R. Mejia, *The Church in the Neighbourhood*, Nairobi: St Paul Publications, 1998.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The evidence of this essay indicates that the very idea of ecumenism is new to many people who do not understand its meaning and value, largely because they have been raised and instructed when the atmosphere between the churches was frankly competitive and confrontational. Despite many positive findings, we can note that fear, mistrust and lack of openness still exist between the various churches.

The analysis in chapter one revealed that the rather prevalent feelings of suspicion and hostility, particularly between Catholics and Protestants, feelings that are based on fear and ignorance and are manifest in prejudices, must be taken seriously in pastoral programs. Therefore through carefully planned sessions, Christians could be led to overcome religious prejudice by working and discussing together with members of other churches. This would also lead to a clarification of many ideas of Christians about their own tradition and church.

The study of the second chapter challenged us to help Christians to understand the meaning and aims of the ecumenical dialogue and thus to motivate them to take an active part in it. Without clear support from their top leaders, many ordinary church members and local church leaders are slow to get involved in ecumenical activity in their areas, and even feel that they are being disobedient or disloyal if they do get involved. In a situation where belonging to a church contributes a great deal to one's personal security and sense of identity as Christians, the leaders of the churches have a particularly important role in leading their people to discover their basic identity as Christians, an identity that in some way transcends the identities of the individual churches. In this regards, the initiatives of the UJCC and

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ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|--------|---|
| AACC | All Africa Conference of Churches |
| AG | <i>Ad Gentes</i> |
| AFER | African Ecclesial Review |
| AMECEA | Association of Members of Episcopal Conferences of Eastern Africa |
| ARLPI | Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative |
| CMS | Church Missionary Society |
| DH | <i>Dignitatis Humanae</i> |
| DP | Democratic Party |
| DP | Dialogue and Proclamation |
| EN | <i>Evangelii Nuntiandi</i> |
| ES | <i>Ecclesiam Suam</i> |
| LG | <i>Lumen Gentium</i> |
| MSOLA | Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa |
| PCPCU | Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity |
| SPCU | Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian Unity |
| UJCC | Uganda Joint Christian Council |
| UPC | Uganda People's Congress |
| UR | <i>Unitatis Redintegratio</i> |
| UUS | <i>Ut Unum Sint</i> |
| WCC | World Council of Churches |
| WF | White Fathers |

ARLPI are stepping stones in bringing Christians of various churches together. An attitude of friendship and collaboration instead of hostility should be promoted. Such leadership, in general, appears to be lacking.

We have seen above that ecumenical education and formation at all levels is a great need for the credibility of the evangelisation. Thus there is the need for training in the theory and practice of ecumenism for all engaged in the ministry today. For that reason it is a challenge to a theological institute such as Tangaza to develop a greater interest in ecumenism; so that the future ministers and agents of evangelisation trained at Tangaza do have an ecumenical mind and approach in their mission and ministry. An important conclusion of this essay appears to be then that education for ecumenism is badly needed at all levels of the churches' hierarchical and leadership structures. This points once more to the great need to develop methods and structures for training –and for re-educating –the leaders of the churches, so that the ecumenical dialogue, an important sign of the times and an urgent priority for the mission of the Church, may take deep root in the fertile soil of Africa.

An active participation in the ministry of ecumenical dialogue will be a sign of commitment to transform the church in Africa. The Church's mission will be an ecumenical dialogue of life, of action and of sharing religious experience especially with Africa's poor, with its local cultures and with its various religious traditions. Through those forms of dialogue and witness a new unity could be expected to grow among the people of the neighbourhood transcending religious differences. Moreover the Church herself will appear as a Church of communion.