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**HOW EXCLUSIVISM OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES IN KISII  
DIOCESE IS A CHALLENGE TO EVANGELIZATION**

Supervisor

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A long Essay Submitted in Partial fulfilment of the Requirement for the  
Bachelor of Arts in Theology

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## **DEDICATION**

This piece of work is dedicated to my beloved grandmother, Eleanor Mogiti who died on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2015.

## **ACKNOWLEDGE**

First and foremost, I sincerely thank Almighty God for having created me with sound mind and having given me this opportunity to serve him in a very special way. Secondly, I thank the Mill Hill Missionary Society which has educated me in all stages of formation studies and especially theology. I am also indebted to give gratitude to my formators and my fellow brothers of my community.

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Fourthly, I cannot forget the entire Tangaza family, lecturers, my fellow students and supporting staff for being there for me especially those moments I most needed your services and companionship.

Finally, my great thanks go to all my family members, friends and all people of good will for all your support to realize this work done. Thank you all very much. God bless you.

## STUDENT'S DECLARATION

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

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Signed .....

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

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## ABBREVIATIONS

Acts	Acts of the Apostles
AG	<i>Ad Gentes</i>
Cf	Confer
Cor	Letter to the Corinthians
Jn	Gospel of John
KAG	Kenya Assemblies of God
LG	<i>Lumen Gentium</i>
Lk	Gospel of Luke
Mat	Gospel of Mathew
MC	<i>Mystici Corporis</i>
OL	<i>Orientalis Lumen</i>
PAG	Pentecostal Assemblies of God
Pet	Letter of Peter
SDA	Seventh Adventist Church
Tim	Letter to Timothy
Tit	Letter to Titus
UR	<i>Unitatis Redintegratio</i>
UUS	<i>Ut Unum Sint</i>
WCC	World Council of Churches



# Chapter One

## General Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

This chapter will give an introduction of the Kisii People and their Christian status. The Kisii People form the Kisii region which is the present day Kisii Diocese.

### 1.2 The Brief History of the Kisii People

The Kisii people commonly known as the Abagusii, is an ethnic tribe belonging to a Bantu group which entered Kenya from the west. They are originally said to have migrated from Congo Zaire.

Before Christianity was introduced to the abagusii, they believed in one supreme God who created the world but did not interfere directly in human affairs. The interference was rather caused by ancestor spirits (*ebirecha*), witches, and impersonal forces. The Abagusii believed that displeased ancestor spirits were responsible for disease, the death of people and livestock, and the destruction of crops.

Today, most people in the Abagusii community claim to be followers of some form of Christianity. A Roman Catholic mission was first established in 1911 and a Seventh Day Adventist mission in 1913. There are four major denominations in Gusiiland: Roman Catholic, Seventh-Day Adventist, Swedish Lutheran, and the

Pentecostal Assemblies of God<sup>1</sup>. Roman Catholic and SDA cover 80% of Christian population and other Christian religions cover the rest.

### **1.3 Geographical Location of Kisii Region**

Kisii is in the south-western region of Kenya commonly known as the south Nyanza region. Its main urban and commercial center is Kisii town. Kisii region has two counties namely Nyamira and Kisii counties. Kisii region is commonly known as Kisii highlands because of its topography. The region is occupied with the Abagusii people as natives of the area, and few foreigners and Kenyans from different ethnic groups of Kenya, who live especially in the urban areas. Based on the 2009 Population and Housing Census, the county population is 1,152,282 comprising 550,464 males and 601,818 females. This population is projected at 1,226,873 in 2012 consisting of 536,062 males and 640,811 females. With a growth rate of 2.1%, the population is estimated to be 1,306,652 in 2015 with 624,171 males and 682,481 females and is projected at 1,362,779 with 650,982 males and 711,797 females by 2017.<sup>2</sup>

### **1.4 Religious Status in Kisii**

The residents of Kisii region are predominantly Catholics and Protestants. “The majority of residents identify with the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) Church and the Roman Catholic Church. Others identify themselves with the Lutheran Church, Pentecostal Assemblies of God (PAG) Church, evangelical and inter-denominational

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<sup>1</sup>WORLD CULTURES ENCYCLOPEDIA, ‘Countries and their Cultures’, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. WIKIPEDIA, ‘Kisii, Kenya’ 1.

congregations such as Redeemed or Full Gospel Church of Kenya.”<sup>3</sup> Recently, there was a Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses built. The town has a mosque for the Muslim faithful as well as a small temple for the Hindu faithful. Both of these constitute the minority religions of the population municipality.<sup>4</sup>

## 1.5 Missionary Work in Kisiland

Missionary work in Kisii land was began by Father Brandsma, a Mill Hill Missionary in 1905. Fr. Brandsma came first to Kisii by the invitation given him by Mr. Northcote who was then a District Commissioner of the area. Fr. Brandsma decided that Kitembe might be a good places to send catechists to instruct.<sup>5</sup> He later extended his journeys through Kisii land. In 1909 he selected Nyabururu to be a good site to establishing a parish, he appointed a Muganda, Michael Butiko, as a Catechist. He erected some buildings at Nyabururu, and kept on visiting the place frequently, as he operated from Kisumu, and sent the Catechist round to the chiefs for catechumens. To cement the relationship between Chiefs and missionaries he sent twelve sons of the chiefs to Mukumu, though it was not all that successful since eight of them ran away.<sup>6</sup> Fr. Brandsma attracted Fr. Jack Wall who became his helper. Fr. Jack was initially appointed in Uganda and had spent some years there since 1902 as a true pioneer of some missions. On 13<sup>th</sup> December 1911 Fathers Brandsma and Wall opened Nyabururu mission. However Fr. Brandsma did not stay for long, he returned leaving Fr. Wall in

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<sup>3</sup>WIKIPEDIA, ‘Kisii, Kenya’,1.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. WIKIPEDIA,Kisii, Kenya,1.

<sup>5</sup> Cf.H.BURGMAN, *The Way the Catholic Church started in Western Kenya*, 58.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. H.BURGMAN, *The Way the Catholic Church started in Western Kenya*, 59.

charge. In a short while, the chiefs of the area came in with building materials. Early 1912, the administrators of the area surveyed and secured twenty acres of land for the mission.

In this same year Fr.Wall received Fr. Nicholas Stam to be his assistant in Nyabururu mission. “The Kisii people were sullen and unco-operative; they did not want to help as porters. It became clear that there was still a big struggle ahead before the hearts of these deeply hurt people could be won.”<sup>7</sup>

The Kisii people were opposed to Christianity while Luos of Asumbi 40km from Nyabururu were considered to be very well-disposed towards Christianity. For that reason Father Wall and Father Philip Scheffer, who was in charge of the new parish agreed that the Luo might be helpful in bringing Nyabururu to life. In that respect, some Nilotic areas were given to Nyabururu and a few unbaptized Catechists were borrowed from Asumbi in order to assist Nyabururu in starting work among these Nilotic clans.<sup>8</sup>

For easy evangelization, Father Wall tried to start a school at Nyabururu for the boys whom the chiefs sent him. This was meant to realize the plan he had with Father Brandsma in a way that people would be made to support their own boys while in the mission. “At first the scheme seemed to work: each boy had his own small garden outside the Mission property as a help towards his food supply. As the number grew- new ones came in from Gwasssi and Butende – it became that evident that their interest

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<sup>7</sup>H.BURGMAN, *The Way the Catholic Church started in Western Kenya*, 61.

<sup>8</sup>H.BURGMAN, *The Way the Catholic Church started in Western Kenya*, 62.

in the Christian Religion was remarkably low.”<sup>9</sup> They were only interested in learning how to write and read, which was a real disappointment to those missionaries of the time.

After a long struggle in evangelizing Kisii people, with the help of a Luo Catechist, called Adrian, there dawned one hopeful sign of the first five Kisii boys preparing themselves for Baptism. According to Fr. Wall the Baganda Catechists had become heart- breaking. This is because they refused to learn the local languages and stuck to “Kitchen- Swahili and Compound Luganda.” On the side the Kisii readers seemed not to have an interest in becoming Christians, and so Fr. Wall felt that he was forcing them. As a result he suggested not to have any of them baptized for one and half years.

Having suspected that Fr.Wall was struggling to the point of losing heart in the mission, the bishop, Biermans, opted to transfer him to a healthier place, Kisumu. On hearing about his transfer he wrote to the Bishop, “I want to put it on record my sincere regret at having to leave what I foolishly fancied would have been my life’s work- the conversion of the Kisii and kindred tribes.”<sup>10</sup> It was quite clear that as far as Nyabururu was concerned, Father Wall was down, but not out.

The mission in Kisii was really a struggle, not only to Fr.Wall but even to his successor, Fr. Nicholas Stam. First of all on his way to Kisii from Budini, Uganda, Fr. Stam, he had to stay in Kendu with the Seventh Day Adventist for some weeks before

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<sup>9</sup>H.BURGMAN, *The Way the Catholic Church started in Western Kenya*, 62.

<sup>10</sup>H.BURGMAN, *The Way the Catholic Church started in Western Kenya*, 63.

proceeding to Nyabururu. At his arrival, all Kisii Catechumens ran away. To Batende boys he gave them permission to come back after two months, but none of them came back. Parents took their sons back, afraid that celibacy could be imposed on them. Stam proving to be a strong missionary, worked tirelessly, making long journeys and learning local languages. He also put up a building at Kitembe and also finished the church in Kisii town. With all his efforts things never worked, from his report to the Bishop in August 1914 he seemed to have lost heart. This is because “all the Catechist failed, all catechumens left; and he does not believe there is any faith remaining in the five baptized Kisiiis.” He felt like giving up on the Kisii side to concentrate on the Luo Region.

All the efforts of missionaries to evangelise Kisii were in vain, because none of the missionaries strived to understand the history of the Kisii, especially on the horrible events which happened in 1905 and 1908. This happened when the white strangers had stepped into their affairs with savage power. “The Kisii had tried to defend their national pride by sending the flower of their young warriors against arrogant intruders, and hundreds of them had been massacred in fights that gave them no chance at all.”<sup>11</sup> This left countless homes without sons, hundreds of households’ properties were destroyed, and all their cattle taken away from them. For sure, Kisii people were deeply wounded and the presence of a white man was a hot nail on their wounds, which reminded them of their humiliation they had gone through.

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<sup>11</sup> H.BURGMAN, *The Way the Catholic Church started in Western Kenya*, 64.

## 1.6 Kisii Area Becomes a Diocese

The whole of Kisii region is now one diocese, Kisii Diocese. It was carved out of Kisumu Arch-diocese in June 1960. Its first bishop was Maurice Otunga, who later came to be Cardinal Maurice Otunga. The Diocese covered three groups of people at its beginning, the Abagusii, the Luo of south Nyanza, and the Kuria of Isebania. In 1993, Homa-Bay diocese was carved out of it, taking away two groups of people, the Luo of South Nyanza and the Kuria of Isebania. The diocese of Kisii at present is divided into 18 parishes, covering only one group of people, the Abagusii with a population of about 500, 000 members.<sup>12</sup>

## 1.7 The Protestant Churches

Christianity is divided into three main branches namely, Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy and Protestant. Some regard Anglicanism as a fourth branch that fits in none of these categories, while others categorize it as Protestant. “Protestantism is a form of Christian faith and practice which originated with the Protestant Reformation, a movement against what its followers considered to be errors in the Roman Catholic Church.”<sup>13</sup>

“The Protestant Reformation began as an attempt to reform the Roman Catholic Church. Protestantism originated from the ideas of several theologians starting in the

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<sup>12</sup> This is a result the censures done in 2013 for the centenary preparation of the beginning of Christianity in Kisii region

<sup>13</sup> WIKIDEDIA, ‘Protestantism’, 1.

16th century, although there could have been earlier cases of which there is no surviving evidence.”<sup>14</sup>

This reformation took place mainly in Germany, Switzerland, and Britain. The Protestants do not want to be part of the Catholic Church because they do not acknowledge the authority of the Pope. They do not consider many traditions and beliefs of the Catholic Church as true, and they emphasize the importance of reading the Bible and holding to the doctrine of salvation by faith alone. The Protestants consist of numerous denominational groups, including Lutherans, Baptists, Methodists, Episcopalians (or Anglicanism), Presbyterians, Pentecostals and Evangelicals.<sup>15</sup>

Eastern Orthodoxy is not Protestant. Rather it “is the continuation of the historical organized church as it developed in Eastern Europe. It differs from Catholicism in its refusal of allegiance to the Pope, its emphasis on the use of icons in worship, and the date it celebrates Easter.”<sup>16</sup> The separation between Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism took place in 1054 AD, when the Patriarch of Constantinople and the Pope excommunicated each other.

## **1.8 The Brief History of the Seventh Day Adventist Church**

The Seventh Day Adventist Church proves to be the most conflicting denomination against the Catholic Church in Kisii region. It is easy for one who has never gone out of Kisii to think that SDA and Roman Catholic Churches are the most

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<sup>14</sup>WIKIPEDIA, ‘The History of Protestantism,’ 1.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. ‘Christian Denominations’, 1.

<sup>16</sup>‘Christian Denominations’, 1.

powerful Christian churches in the world. This is from how the SDA presents itself in the region, but surprisingly it is only dominantly present in the South Nyanza region. This provokes the curiosity to know the origin of this Church.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church had its roots in the Millerite movement of between 1830s to the 1840s, during the period of the Second Great Awakening, and it was officially founded in 1863.

The Second Great Awakening was stimulated by the foundation of the many Bible Societies which sought to address the problem of a lack of affordable Bibles. The spread of Bibles allowed many who had not had one to be able to purchase and study it themselves rather than just hear it preached, and led to the establishment of many reform movements designed to remedy the evils of society before the anticipated Second Coming of Jesus Christ.<sup>17</sup>

In 1798 when Pope Pius VI was arrested by the French General Louis Alexandre Berthier, some Protestant groups sparked their interest in prophecy. The Forerunners of the Adventist movement believed that this event marked the end of the 1260-day prophecy from the Book of Daniel. Certain individuals began to look at the 2300 day prophecy found in Daniel 8:14.

Then in 1831, a Baptist convert, William Miller, was asked by a Baptist to preach in their church and began to preach that the Second Advent of Jesus would occur somewhere between March 1843 and March 1844, based on his interpretation of Daniel 8:14. A following gathered around Miller, that included many from the Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian and Christian connection churches. In the summer of

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<sup>17</sup>WIKIPEDIA, 'History of Seventh Day Adventist', 1.

1844, some of Miller's followers promoted the date of October 22. They linked the cleansing of the sanctuary of Daniel 8:14 with the Jewish Day of Atonement, believed to be October 22 that year. Over 100,000 people were anticipating what Miller had called the "Blessed Hope" by 1844. On October 22 many of the believers stayed into the night watching, waiting for Christ to return and found themselves bitterly disappointed when both sunset and midnight passed without their expectations being fulfilled. This event later became known as the Great Disappointment.<sup>18</sup>

After the disappointment of October 22 many of Miller's followers were left upset and disillusioned. Most ceased to believe in the imminent return of Jesus. Some believed the date was incorrect. A few believed that the date was right but the event expected was wrong. This latter group developed into the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

## **1.9 The Brief History of Christian Unity**

Far back before Vatican II which presents so much about ecumenism there existed the Idea of Christian unity and it was started by non- Catholics. In 1898, Fr. Paul Watson, who was formerly an Episcopalian priest, in collaboration with an Episcopal sister, Lurana White, the Society of the Atonement was founded at Graymoor, Garrison, New York with the mission of stimulating Christian Unity.

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<sup>18</sup>Cf, WIKIPEDIA, 'History of Seventh Day Adventist',1.

In 1908, Fr. Paul initiated the Church Unity Octave, believing that a time set aside for prayer and seminars would accelerated Christian unity. They wished a reunion between the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches.<sup>19</sup> Fr. Paul and Mother Lurana White eventually decided to become Roman Catholics. In 1909, the Society of the Atonement became the first religious community of Christians to be received corporately into the Roman Catholic Church since the Reformation. Fr. Paul was ordained a Catholic priest by Archbishop John M. Farley in 1910.<sup>20</sup> Then later the same idea of Christian unity is taken on board during Vatican II council and was well elaborated in the Document called *UnitatisRedintegratio*, decree on Ecumenism.

### **1.10 Conclusion**

This is the status of theKisii people. As far as Christianity is concerned some missionariesended up branding Kisii people as fierce and unreceptive to the Good News. In the process of evangelizing it was not the fault of the locals to rebel against the missionaries because the locals could not differential between the colonial administrator who were by then British and missionaries who were British as well. Following horrible experiences they had had from the colonial rule, they had all the reasons to rebel against whoever was white. It remained a task of missionaries to read the signs of time and find a strategic approach to evangelize these wounded people. Kisii people do not remember struggles of the early days of evangelization but they are enjoying the fruits of missionary work. They are only facing challenges of divisions

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. FRANCISCAN FRIARS, 'Ecumenical and Interfaith dialogue,' 1.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. GRAMMOOR ECUMENICAL &INTRRELIIOUS INSTITUTE, 'Week of Prayer for Christian unity', 1.

among Churches. What is interesting is that the SDA missionaries accommodated Fr. Stam in Kendu when he was sick on his way to Nyabururu. It shows the relation between both Church missionaries was not bad.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Inter-Churches' Conflict Realities in Kisii Diocese**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Early this year I was privileged to visit a “Peace and Justice office” of the diocese of Kisii with the aim of knowing what the Peace and Justice Commission has to say about the cases of conflicts among Christian Churches and what can be the conflicts’ root cause. There I met Mr. Joseph Angwenyi who has worked with that Commission for twenty years. Currently Mr. Angwenyi is the Chairman of the Commission. He first acknowledged the existence of Christian Church conflicts right from the time of the beginnings of missionary work.

He said the root causes of many inter-Christian church conflicts are theological misunderstanding of each other. For example for SDA teaches that drinking of Alcohol is evil, the use of images and icons in prayer and places of worship is idol worship, honouring Mary as a mother of God and asking for her intercession is worshipping her. Still for SDA, baptism without immersion is not a valid baptism. They also observe Saturday as the authentic worshipping Sabbath according to God’s own rest, as it is written in the creation story. Any other day of worship is against God’s commandment “keep the Sabbath Holy.” The idea of seven sacraments means little in the Christian life of SDA members, for they recognize but two sacraments: Baptism and Eucharist, but not the same way Catholics understands them.

On the other hand, Catholics feel that the SDA is not an authentic Christian Church since it worships on Saturday following Jewish tradition. They also argue that SDAs have a shallow understanding of the Bible, since they take it literally. The Catholic Church does not recognize the Baptism and the Eucharist of SDA since the form of celebrating is not valid. These theological misunderstandings have groomed up sentiments which are provoked to become conflicts when a little disagreement arises. With a conviction that the other practices traditions and rituals which are invalid or which are against the instructions in the Decalogue, one Christian Church feels the other is leading its followers in eternal damnation.

This chapter presents some of these conflicts which have arisen especially between SDAs and Catholics.

## **2.2 Inter-Christian Land Disputes**

There are also a number of conflicts in the diocese over land for churches and religious institutions. The severest I have ever witnessed began fifteen years ago in one of my parish's mission stations. The land in question was said to have been given to two churches by the government to build their churches beside a government primary school. The area is staunchly occupied by the SDA believers, who for a long time enjoyed the monopoly of religious life of the area. For a long time it was assumed that the primary school was an SDA-sponsored school, but was not so on official documents.

The area had a handful of Catholic Christians who prayed in a small mud church, the rest of the land surrounding the small church was left idle. After some time about fifteen years ago the SDA believers started grabbing it, claiming that it was part of their land. The parish priest by then hearing this, convoked a parish mass in Gekong'o. That time I was an altar server. There was a colourful mass which showed that the land had owners, not only those few who used to have prayers in that small church, but a multitude, the whole parish, and even beyond.

However the celebration never ended in peace, for when the SDA faithful saw the gathering, they gathered themselves to come and scatter the praying congregation, which they successfully did, physically. In an attempt to defend ourselves the faithful from the two divides secured minor injuries and the whole celebration was scattered. Catholic faithful on this matter were more gentle at the beginning because they knew they had a right over the land since the title deeds were in the parish. They thought the issue was to be resolved easily. Unfortunately, the leaders from that region were members of SDA, so they were corrupted, and cases over that land were not moving in court. So from that moment, time and time again arose a series of conflicts including personal hatred between Catholics and SDA of the area.

One time five years ago my current parish Priest said 'enough is enough' now that justice over the land never prevailed, he convoked a parish mass, which took place without any problem and at the end of mass he erected a cross in the middle of the land and warned that no one should remove it. However after two days the cross was no more, but found cut into pieces! On hearing that the parish priest was so annoyed. He

quoted an expression which was used in Kenya during the Mau Mau uprising in Kiswahili saying “*Amani haikujilakwanchayaupanga*” which can translated as “peace cannot prevail except by the effect of a pointer of a very sharp machete.” In this spirit he hired men who traditionally used to guard the Maasai- Kisii border using arrows to come and guard the second cross he erected with the Christians of Gekong’o during the mission station mass. These were to guard the place but in hiding.

After few days some three SDA believers were spotted trying to uproot the cross, and they had to receive sharp penetrating arrows in their bodies to an extent of one being at the point of death, but narrowly survived with severe wounds. This horror marked the end of the physical conflicts over that land. SDAs and Catholics of that area as it is being said today, mind their own business. The case was taken to court, but in a way favoured my parish priest. Whether a true peace prevailed, is another question.

MrAngwenyi told me of an incident of conflict which happened in Manga Parish. He narrated that in one of Manga parish’s mission stations, Riokioi, after being given some land from the government to build a church, some SDA leaders came to request for some land also to build their church. The priest in-charge then, Fr. Jeremiah Matogo answered their request and gave them land enough for their church. The land given out to the SDAs was near the temporary set site for Catholic prayer gatherings. So definitely the SDAs set their temporary gathering place for worshipping nearby.

It happened that the Sunday within the week they were given land, they came to dig out the pit latrine for their own church. Along with them was a music system loudly playing SDA Christian songs, disturbing the Catholic community, which was having a

Eucharistic Celebration, and the music sound was unbearable to the extent of the priest going to tell them to reduce the volume of their music. This was the second time the same report was given to them, now that the leaders had gone to them before but in vain. It forced the praying community to dismiss the congregation prematurely. This became the beginning of many conflicts between the two churches over and over a trivial issue that come between could conflict each other.

Mr Angwenyi also narrated to me another incident which happened in the Pentecostal Assemblies of God Church (PAG) of Geteni. A renowned Pastor, Michael Nyakundi, of this particular Church decided to be a politician as well as a church leader, against the norms of their Church. He contested to be a Councilor, a political seat nowadays known as Member of County Assembly. Unfortunately, Nyakundi did not win the contest. Then he opted to continue his work of shepherding his flock as if nothing had happened. He was summoned from the power higher than him in the hierarchy of their leaders and was told to resign. However he did not heed that voice when he sensed how serious the force above him was, and much aware of the influence he had on people of his particular church he was serving, he changed the name of the Church from being a PAG to Kenya Assemblies of God (KAG), but maintained the Church building.

The higher authority had no other power over the building now that the local people owned the church. The PAG mainstream Church had no option than to buy land for the newly formed church, KAG, and persuaded them to move, and supported them realize a new building. Nowadays KAG is equally a Protestant Church just like any

other strong Protestant Churches in Kisii and beyond with its founder Pastor Michael Nyakundi.

There are many such conflicts especially between SDA and Catholics in the diocese, such as in Nyangusu parish where the Christians of the two divides have been fighting in Tongeri and Nyabigongoru mission stations. AtGetare mission station, in Ogembo parish, Masimba Mission station , in Ichumi parish conflicts have been there for quite some time. We can also not forgetNyansiongo and Kebirigo parishes where we still hear of many conflicts talked about.

### **2.3 Public Confrontation Conflicts – Funeral Celebrations**

Funerals celebrations in Kisii area are the most attended occasions. I witnessed an incident in one funeral gathering in the area where there was a severe conflict between Catholic and Seventy Day Adventist believers. This happened on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2016. On this day there was a burial of the younger brother of my parish priest,Fr. Timothy Ong'era, Sengera Parish, but the incident took place in his home parish, Nyansiongo, far from Sengera Parish. The late was baptized as an infant. He was taken from home for baptism by Fr.Ong'era, while he was active in the youth, but later on under the influence of his mother who was by then SDA, though she later died as a converted Catholic after the ordination of Fr. Ong'era. The late from his young age through his youth continued as an SDA believer. Fr.Ong'era revealed that he had had talks with him, and he was in the process of becoming a Catholic a few days before he died.

Having been baptized in the Catholic Church, his brother, the priest opted that he could have a Christian burial animated by the Catholic Church. On the other side the SDA pastors stood their ground and said they were the ones who wanted to animate the burial in their way of worship. There arose a conflict which reached a conclusion after sitting together, that the SDA should animate the open prayer service in their own way while Catholics should come in at a grave side to do the final rite. However, the plans never went as it was agreed, after the SDA animating their part again extended to the final rite at graveside and burial. They refused to put the cross at the grave and it was later discovered that the crucifix which was initially fixed to the coffin was dismantled by some members of SDA after it was found thrown in a maize farm nearby. That brought a lot of tension between Catholics because the SDAs defiled the agreement. Secondly they dismantled a crucifix from the coffin. It was really depressing especially to Fr. Ong'era.

Eventually after the burial and when all SDA members had gone Fr. Onge'ra presided over mass in their compound with friends and family members where he had to erect the cross at the grave. The preaching and readings were so much focused on the enemies of the 'cross' who happen to be the SDA believers at that point in time.

Many conflicts of similar tendency are rampantly experienced in funerals in the Kisii region, and that has caused hatred among family members of mixed Christian denominations and believers of different churches. Another case is of my grandfather who never stepped into any church throughout his life, but at his death-bed he called for a priest for baptism which he received before dying after few weeks. Now that my

father was the only Catholic son of my grandfather out thirteen sons, the majority of them being SDA, they vowed not to see a priest at the burial day for mass. My parish priest having been informed about the whole story he forced his way into the funeral gathering. He was given little time and attention and was forced to have a moment of preaching for few minutes instead of mass.

Still as an altar server in a burial which was under St. Charles Lwanga Cathedral, I witnessed a commotion during the mass celebration. A group of women who were supposedly non- Catholics kept conversing during the homily and laughed loudly whenever something funny arose. They were warned severally, both by the members of the congregation and the priest who was giving the homily, but all their efforts were in vain. I saw at one point a preaching priest boiling with anger going right to where the women were seated and spotted one who was talking at that moment and he gave a weighty slap which left her in a deep quiet as if she was in a comma for a full minute. She finally said with a deep emotions to the priest “are you really a man of God?” She rose up and walked away quietly!

## **2.4 Conclusion**

These inter- Christian conflicts in Kisiiland have become religious poison in the land. They are barriers to those who desire to be Christian for the first time, but they get confused in choosing which Christian way of worship they will follow. Given that there are divisions of those who Worship God through Christ. It becomes a temptation to think that there are more Lords or Masters than one, to whom Christians of these

divides give homage. This becomes a delicate obstacle to evangelization. Hence it calls for ecumenism to address this situation.

## Chapter Three

### Ecumenism as a Cure for Christian Churches' Disunity

#### 3.1 Introduction

Ecumenism can be described as, “the search for the plenitude of the Mystery of Christ in an ever deepening Communion with all Christian communities.”<sup>21</sup> The decree on Ecumenism is particularly important and it represents a major breakthrough in communion. Though it was hotly debated because of the unwillingness of many to embrace the softer language against schism and heresy over the previous strong traditional language. “It accepts that Catholics must take their share of blame for the divisions among Christians and that the living cannot be blamed for the sins of the ancestors.”<sup>22</sup> In the document, when referring to other Christians, they are mentioned as “brothers and sisters” and more emphasis is put on that unity that already exists. It recognizes the unity through Baptism existing in Christian Churches. It highlights the challenge involved to attain full communion, but encourages Catholics to work hard in overcoming it. The Orthodox and other eastern communions are placed in a privileged position as it recognizes them as churches. Others, especially those who came into existence from the sixteenth- century Reformation in the West are referred as ecclesial communities, among them the Anglican communion takes a special place (*UR*, 13).

When His Holiness Pope John XXIII announced the Ecumenical Council of Vatican II, among other tasks to be undertaken by it, he assigned to it, to further

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<sup>21</sup>M.LE GUILLOU, “The Meaning of Catholic Ecumenism” in *Ecumenism and Religious Education*, 5.

<sup>22</sup>P. N.TANNER, *The Councils of the Church: A Short History*, 105.

Christian unity. He had great hope that those who are separated from the Apostolic See, who were even baptized would be “inspired to seek out that unity which Jesus Christ prayed so ardently from his Heavenly Father.”<sup>23</sup> So the Council was indebted to work hard that its decisions for the unity which Christ desired and prayed for could prevail in the world.

### 3.2 Need for Ecumenism in Christian Churches

The Holy Father John XXIII, after election, he spoke of his sincere desire for the union of all Christians, “as we greet the Western Church so we greet the Eastern Church and open our arms and our heart to all those who are separated from this Apostolic See, where St. Peter himself lives in his successors”<sup>24</sup> Again in his first encyclical, *Ad Petri Cathedram*, John XXIII, addressed the separated Christians in this way, “Allow us to express our affection for you and to call you sons and brothers ...we address you, then, as brothers even though you are separated from us.....they will only cease to be our brothers when they cease to say: Our Father.”<sup>25</sup> The Church as we notice from the Pope’s words does not treat the baptized non-Catholics as strangers but looks at them as brothers and sisters who have their home in the Catholic Church in which they are always welcome.

There are a number of reasons why we should embrace ecumenism. One is the great majority of those of our separated brothers and sisters inherited their position from their forbearers, so it is not their fault that they are sons and daughters of separated

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<sup>23</sup>A. C, BEA *The Unity of Christians* , 19.

<sup>24</sup>A. C, BEA, *The Unity of Christians*, 26.

<sup>25</sup>A. C, BEA, *The Unity of Christians*, 26.

parents from our church. This is just as it is not our merit to have been born and brought up in families belonging to the Catholic Church. It is quite obvious that having accepted the faith handed to them by their parents, it is a sincere believe in them that they are on the right path.

The second reason is that, it should not be forgotten that inasmuch as there are differences in doctrines and worship, there is much which is held by our separated brothers and sisters in faith that is common to us. For instance, the Oriental Church has much in common among many: the succession of their bishops from the apostles, valid sacraments especially the Eucharist, where mass is central in the religious life. Even though the Protestant inheritance is not as rich as the Oriental one, they have a number of preserved elements of Catholic doctrine and worship, though the amount can vary with the different forms of Protestantism.<sup>26</sup> Most importantly, it is noted that, particularly in ordinary faithful, there is a sincere piety, and admirable veneration for the word of God contained in the Holy Scripture and a great emphasis on observing the commandments of God in their daily life. With no doubt, it can be presumed that the Lord grants to our brothers and sisters, who publicly bear witness to the name of Christ our Lord, the proper grace to lead a Christian life.

The third reason is that, there has been a noticeable desire of our separated brothers and sisters of longing for unity, and this manifests how divine grace is working among God's people. Augustin Cardinal Bea gives evidence of having received many letters from Protestants which often "bear witness to the power of the grace which has made

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<sup>26</sup>Cf. A. C, BEA, *The Unity of Christians*, 27.

them aware of the good things the Catholic Church offers her members, and which awakens a keen desire to share in these benefits.”<sup>27</sup> The Cardinal goes further to mention the few among others intellectual converts such as Thomas Merton, Bruce Marshall and Sigrid Undset. He attributes these to the work of grace. Cardinal Basil Hume once said:

It is now clearly understood- and this is a development not wholly grasped either inside or outside the Catholic community- that Catholics now recognize that when baptism is validly conferred at any time, inside or outside the visible unity of the Catholic Church, the person baptized is incorporated into Christ, is without doubt a member of Christ’s body.<sup>28</sup>

The unity of Christians needs to recognize and build on diversity of faith not division. Division comes in when some Christians begin to think what they are convinced of is truth, the whole truth and nothing but truth. Hence they welcome in their hearts a sectarian self- righteousness to rule. “Diversity that is compatible with unity is to be encouraged;but division is sinful because it denies the sacrificial love of Christ in overcoming alienation, sin and death.”<sup>29</sup>

An African theologian, AgbonkhianmegheOrobator, says that, “the ecumenical project carefully protects the richness of the differentiated denominational churches not as an encouragement or a justification of division, but to display the many colours of the one Church of God”<sup>30</sup>

### **3.3 Difficulties in Accepting Christian Unity**

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<sup>28</sup> P. AVIS, *Christians in Communion*, 39.

<sup>29</sup>P.A. CROW, *Christian Unity*, 9.

<sup>30</sup>E. O. AGBONKKHIANMEGHE, *The Church we Want*, 285.

There is some intrinsic resistance to unity whichever Christian communities believers find themselves in. It has been observed that the most powerful obstacles to unity are psychological. These are feelings of fear. Individuals fear of losing the beliefs and practices which they cherish in their own traditions. They fear making changes they do not understand and also fear of being uniform. Beneath these fears lies deep feelings of our self-image, our hopes and our goals. “So when a person says ‘I am for unity, but not for uniformity’ that person not only reveals a judgement on a particular ecumenical model, but also says something fundamental about his or her personal pilgrimage.”<sup>31</sup> Unity does not affect the distinct gifts held by Christian traditions and denomination rather it enriches them. Usually one who is under an identity crisis finds it difficult to accept his or her neighbour’s reconciling love. This happens to individual churches in that “if they are uncertain about who they are and where they are going, a future that calls for them to converge naturally looks foreboding, something to fear.”<sup>32</sup>

Another hindrance to unity is Sociological. This effect is felt from the social classes of the society when it sneaks into the churches. Some churches have separated or spilt because of racialism, tribalism, or uncomfortable life experience from a given kind of people in the society or churches.

Other limiting factors towards unity are issues to do with history and theology. Matters on Christian faith and practices have still a strong influences in the division of Churches. There are obvious theological differences that cannot be denied. For instance

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<sup>31</sup>P.A. CROW, *Christian Unity*, 22.

<sup>32</sup>P.A. CROW, *Christian Unity*, 22.

ministry, sacraments, creeds, biblical authority. These form part and parcel of our divided churches and also they are sources for anxiety in the search for unity. <sup>33</sup>If these are not handled carefully, and now that they represent deep issues of faith and life, they will become our defense mechanism for protecting our tradition and then “theology becomes self- serving, not gospel- proclaiming. Theology becomes demonic when people are unwilling to reconsider historical factors or theological positions that once shaped their lives and beliefs.”<sup>34</sup>

### **3.4 The New Testament view on Error**

What names the Churches of the separated brothers and sisters as “Protestants” is the error of teaching either heresies or schism or both. The New Testament treats error, especially that which deals with faith with severity. In the Letter attributed to St. Paul, to Titus, as he refers to one of their poets, who calls them liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons. He orders Titus to rebuke the Cretans sharply, that they may be sound in faith (Tit 1: 12- 13). Paul also, writing to the Corinthians, shows severity should not only be done in words but also in action. He says, “but rather I wrote to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of immorality or greed and robbery, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard- not even to eat with such one” (1Cor 5: 11). He is even harsh condemning incest found among Corinthian Christians, and he pronounces judgment “in the name of the Lord Jesus on the man who has done such a thing. When you are assembled, and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord

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<sup>33</sup>Cf. P.A. CROW, *Christian Unity*, 22.

<sup>34</sup>P.A. CROW, *Christian Unity*, 23.

Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Cor. 5: 4-5). Delivering a man to Satan here no doubt means to subject an individual of this crime to severe punishment.

Paul is warning Christian at Melitus against those who will come after him with a distorted Gospel message, he says, “I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert...”(Acts 20: 29- 31). Paul urges Timothy always to keep the faith and a good conscience. He gave him a consequential reference of those who have rejected the deliberations of the conscience: “By rejecting conscience, certain persons have made shipwreck of their faith, among them Hymenae’us and Alexander, whom I have delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme”1 Tim 1: 19-20).

Jesus also declares woe to erroneous individuals. He says “Woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the man by whom temptation comes!(Mat 18: 7).He says, that for that person, “it would be better for him if a millstone were hung round his neck and he were cast into the sea, than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin ” (Lk 17:2). Jesus again said that whomever does not submit to the church and listen to the church, “let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector” (Mat 18: 17). This means that the person should be excluded from the community of the faithful.

Following the way the disciples were doing their mission as authentic work of the master, keeping faithful to the teachings of Christ. For whatever “they preached was

no invention of their own, resulting from their own personal reflection, but a sacred deposit entrusted to them by Christ.”<sup>35</sup> They understood themselves as authorized witness, who were appointed by God beforehand (Acts 10: 41). They were to ensure that in the transmission of what was handed on to them by Jesus the master, nothing could be altered. This is in accordance with what Jesus said about the law of the Old Testament, “I tell u solemnly, till heaven and earth disappear, not one dot, not one stroke, shall disappear from the Law until its purpose is achieved. Therefore, the man who infringes even one of the least of this commandments and teaches others to do the same will be considered the least in the kingdom of heaven” (Mat 5: 18-19). St. Peter gives more stress to elaborate on what Jesus said, “Yet always you must remember this, that no prophecy in Scripture is the subject of private interpretation. It was never man’s impulse, after all, that gave us prophecy ; men gave it utterance, but they were men whom God had sanctified, carried away as they spoke, by the Holy Spirit” (2Pet 1:20-21).

It connotes that the cause of severity of what the apostles do and say is the passionate love they had for Christ, and so for the faith they have in him. For that reason, they had a conviction that faith should remain unchanged and untarnished. Consequently, the heads of the Church, feel ignited by the fire of love for unity in faith among the souls whom God has entrusted to them, and they feel obligated to tend the flock against false doctrines. So the Church leaders ensure with zeal and charity

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<sup>35</sup>A. C. BEA, *The Unity of Christians*, 23.

that there is love of truth, unity, good care of the souls of the faithful and invitation of those who wander away from the Church.

### **3.5 The Church's teaching about Christian Unity**

#### **3.5.1 Vatican II Teaching about Christian Unity**

The Church earnestly acknowledges that anyone who believes in Christ and has been properly baptized or christened shall indubitably be justified and incorporated into the body of Christ. "They therefore have a right to be called Christians, and with good reason are accepted as brothers by the children of the Catholic Church" (*UR*, 3). If argued from this angle, it is easily inferred that outside the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church, there are elements which can give life to the Church, and these are: the life of grace, the word of God in Holy Scripture, the virtues of faith, hope, and love, along with other interior gifts of the Holy Spirit.

There is no doubt that the life of grace is obtained from liturgical acts which are carried out with our separated brothers and sisters. That in spite of the imperfections inherent in this disunity, churches and communities have significance and consequences in God's system of salvation. "They use the Spirit of Christ as their means towards salvation, the efficacy of which is derived from the bounty of blessings bestowed upon the Catholic Church."<sup>36</sup>

According to the Council, it is the duty of each Catholic Christian to acknowledge and deeply respect the truly Christian qualities intrinsically found in the

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<sup>36</sup>A. C. BEA–A.W. H. VISSER' T, *Peace Among Christians*, 114.

churches of all of its separated brothers and sisters. This can be clearly seen in those Protestants who have borne witness to the point of shedding blood. It goes on saying “Nor should we forget that anything wrought by the grace of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of our separated brethren can contribute to our edification” (*UR 4*). What our separated brothers and sisters show in their endeavors can be a great contribution to the Catholic Church. “Whatever is truly Christian is never contrary to what genuinely belongs to the faith; indeed, it can always bring a more perfect realization of the very mystery of Christ and the Church” (*UR 4*).

Aware with honest and complete recognition of that which our non-Catholics possess that inspires, should not bar Catholics who advocate for unity to honestly recognize what is different from one another. To elaborate on this more, the Decree vividly holds that:

Nevertheless, our separated brethren, whether considered as individuals or as communities and Churches, are not blessed with that unity which Jesus Christ wished to bestow on all those to whom he has given new birth into one body, and whom he has quickened to newness of life- that unity which the Holy Scriptures and the ancient Tradition of the church proclaim. For it is through Christ’s Catholic Church alone, which is the universal help towards salvation, that the fullness of the means of salvation can be obtained (*UR 3*).

Being aware of this does not threaten unity. For the desire of Jesus Christ is that this people should grow in love, be empowered by the Holy Spirit, “through the true teachings of the Gospel, through the keeping of the sacraments by the apostles and their followers, the bishops, with St. Peter as their head, and through their

accomplishments.”<sup>37</sup> The fellowship of Christ’s people is perfected in unity by Christ himself. For it is fulfilled “in the confession of one faith, and in the fraternal harmony of the family of God” (*UR 2*).

It should be noted that unity does not mean uniformity. The Council reminds us clearly that in the course of safeguarding unity, diversity is paramount, appropriate liberty in the various forms of spiritual life and discipline, in various liturgical rites, and even in the theological elaborations of revealed truth should be considered. It gives emphasis saying that, “if the faithful are true to this course of action, they will be giving ever richer expression to the authentic catholicity of the church, and, at the same time, to her apostolicity” (*UR 4*).

The decree gives hope that inspite of the profound differences in religious doctrine and dogma, it will take a gradual process through dialogue, based on Scripture, the mighty hand of God will indeed bring about the unity which our Saviour holds out to humanity (*UR 21*).

What is quite clear and most important from the Decree is that regaining unity is a task of the whole church, faithful and clergy alike, each according to his/her position (*UR 5*). The way forward to attain this unity is the “change of heart and holiness of life, along with public and private prayer for the unity of Christians, should be regarded as the soul of the whole ecumenical movement, and merits the name, “Spiritual ecumenism”” (*UR, 8*)

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<sup>37</sup>A.C. BEA, ‘Unity Among Christians in the Decree on Ecumenism’ in *Peace Among Christian*, 115.

The Decree holds the view that Holy Scripture is, indeed the inspired word of God, meaning God himself speaks to people when Scripture is read. Without doubt our disunited brothers and sisters seek God in the Holy Scripture. They too are inspired by the Holy Spirit as he speak to them in Christ in a way they can understand.

The Decree concludes by hoping that the initiatives taken by Catholic Christians, joined with those of the separated brothers and sisters “will go forward without obstructing the ways of divine Providence, and without prejudging the future inspirations of the Holy Spirit. Further, this Council declares that it realizes that this holy objective – the reconciliation of all Christians in the unity of the one and only Church of Christ- transcends human powers and gifts” (*UR 24*). For this reason it “places its hope entirely on the prayer of Christ for the Church, in the love of the Father for us, and in the power of the Holy Spirit” (*UR 24*).

All are called to the Church, which is actually defined wholly in relation to Christ, summoned to a determination to surpass themselves so that they can discover and manifest more clearly the plenitude that is in Jesus Christ. Catholic Ecumenism lives by search of Catholic plenitude. In this search our brother and sister Christians are taken on board because their communities also partake in the mystery of Christ. It is the duty of Catholics to bear more and more witness on a daily basis to the catholicity of the mystery of Christ.<sup>38</sup> It is in this way of ever-deepening renewal of the Church, “that the

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<sup>38</sup> Cf.M.LE GUILLOU, “The Meaning of Catholic Ecumenism” in *Ecumenism and Religious Education*, 6

Catholic Church goes to meet the Protestants and Orthodox Churches, in order to manifest to the world the authenticity of the Gospel.”<sup>39</sup>

In order to realize ecumenism, divine truth must be sought, that is, the mystery of Christ working within the Catholic Church and within our brother Christians, demanding the renewal of the Church in order to reveal more clearly Christ’s very face. For if one remains indifferent on this idea of uniting with other churches claiming to be a good Christian of a given church he/she will never be a real Christian. For Pope Paul VI, once said, “A real Christian never remains stationary.”<sup>40</sup>

### **3.5.2 John Paul II teachings about Christian Unity**

Pope John Paul II, discussed the topic on Ecumenism in his encyclical on Commitment to Ecumenism, *Ut Unum Sint* and his apostolic letter on Eastern Churches, *Orientalis lumen*. The pope acknowledges that there are doctrines which differ in churches and this divides the churches, but he adds along with that that “the burden of long-standing misgiving inherited from the past, and mutual understandings and prejudices”<sup>41</sup> cannot be underestimated. He continues that this situation is made worse by “complacency, indifference, and insufficient knowledge of one another (*UUS*, 2). He repeats this at the end of *Orientalis Lumen* saying, “One important way to grow in mutual understanding and unity consists precisely in improving our knowledge of one another” (*OL*, 24).

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<sup>39</sup>M.LE GUILLOU, “The Meaning of Catholic Ecumenism” in *Ecumenism and Religious Education*, 6.

<sup>40</sup>M.LE GUILLOU, “The Meaning of Catholic Ecumenism” in *Ecumenism and Religious Education*, 7.

<sup>41</sup>M. O’GARA, *The Ecumenical Gift Exchange*, 30.

The Holy Father, aware of how memories influence people's lives, believes that part of the ecumenical journey includes what he calls "the necessary purification of past memories" (*UUS*, 2). "He believes that Christians of different churches have not known each other well, and that we have misunderstandings and prejudices about each other inherited from the past; they lead to misgiving in the present."<sup>42</sup> He says the bad memories about each other as Christian Churches should be faced and purified, instead of them being ignored. According to him, the first step towards this purification is repentance and conversion. He writes in *Oriente Lumen*, "the sin of our separation is very serious". He continues, "we feel the need to go beyond the degree of communion we have reached" (*OL*, 17). The Pope advocates for conversion both personal and communal. This can only stem from the spirit of repentance. In *Ut Unum Sint*, he urges that there should be a change in the way of looking at things. "This includes repentance for "exclusions which harm fraternal charity", for certain refusals to forgive, for a certain pride, for "unevangelical insistence on condemning 'the other side.'"<sup>43</sup> He stresses that repentance is accompanied by the vision of new horizons, when we discover that there are ways in which the Holy Spirit is working in other churches, and indeed those members in other church possess holiness, and have Christian commitment in them.

The pope centers the whole process of ecumenism on the need of repentance. He notes that Roman Catholics are called by the Spirit of God "to make a serious examination of conscience. This examination of conscience will lead the churches into a

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<sup>42</sup>M. O'GARA, *The Ecumenical Gift Exchange*, 31.

<sup>43</sup>M. O'GARA, *The Ecumenical Gift Exchange*, 31.

‘dialogue conversion,’ ... which includes both repentance, and with its change of attitude, and intent to do the will of the Father.”<sup>44</sup>He sees this as a sure way ecumenical dialogue goal can be accomplished. He continues to say, “only the act of placing ourselves before God can offer a solid basis for that conversion of individual Christians and for that constant reform of the Church... which represent the preconditions for all ecumenical commitment” (*UUS*, 82). The Pope is not talking about only personal sins but also sinful social structures “which have contributed to and can still contribute to division and to the reinforcing of divisions (*UUS*, 34).

In this process of repentance and conversion the Pope noted that common prayers, with Christians of other divides are core to the ecumenical path of unity. For that makes Christians from different divides to realize how more they have in common, than what little divides them.

The Pope perceives the common heritage of holiness of the saints as a motivating sign in the path of unity. He poses an argument that all our churches have martyrs who teach us that “thanks to the power given by the Spirit,” obeying the will of the Father and overcoming obstacles are not beyond our reach (*cf. UUS*, 83). Then, he asks, “isn’t this absolute attachment to Christ and the Father- so absolute”<sup>45</sup> “as to lead even to the shedding of blood- is not this same attachment at the heart of what I have called a ‘dialogue of conversion?’” (*UUS*, 83). A good example which can be given here is the Ugandan Martyrs, where both Catholics and Anglicans preferred to witness to

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<sup>44</sup>M. O’GARA, *The Ecumenical Gift Exchange*, 32.

<sup>45</sup>M. O’GARA, *The Ecumenical Gift Exchange*, 33.

salvation in Christ rather than succumbing to the immorality of the Kabaka.<sup>46</sup> He acknowledges the work of the Spirit as pouring out grace in the lives of the saints in an extraordinary way. He continues to teach that:

If...Communities are able truly to 'be converted' to the quest for full and visible communion, God will do for us what he did for their saints. He will overcome the obstacles inherited from the past and will lead Communities along his paths to where he wills: to the visible koinonia which is both praise of his glory and service of his plan of Salvation (*UUS*, 84).

### **3.6 The Position of Separated Brothers and Sisters in the Church of Christ**

For the non-Catholic Christians in virtue of their baptisms, they bear always the name of Christ on their foreheads as well as having the actual image of Christ in their souls, as baptism imprints on them the indelible character. It is therefore emphasized that heresy or schism does not completely destroy the membership in the Church of Christ. Moreover, they cannot be treated as the non-baptized people. They are children of God through baptism.

All the baptized are in the mystical Body of Christ. This is clearly said by the Holy Father as he prepared for the Council "one great point to be held firmly by every baptized person is that the church remains forever his mystical Body. He is the Head, to it each of us believers is related, to it we belong."<sup>47</sup> According to the teachings of *Mystici Corporis*, our separated brothers and sisters are related to the mystical Body of the Saviour by some unconscious yearning and desire.

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<sup>46</sup> Cf. E. O. AGBONKKHIANMEGHE, *The Church we Want*, 285.

<sup>47</sup> A.C.BEA, *The Unity of Christians*, 32-33.

Our separated brothers and sisters belong to the Church, though not fully. They have a share in the influence of the grace of God. Now that Jesus loves souls and is merciful to them, it is obvious that he cannot abandon them, especially those who sincerely seek him earnestly. Having said earlier, that within them lies an intrinsic desire for unity it follows that the Holy Spirit works within them powerfully too, though not in the full way it works to those visibly united with the Catholic Church.<sup>48</sup> No wonder Pius XII, in his encyclical *Mystici Corporis* says, referring to them, “by the inspiration and help of divine grace they will be drawn to share in that unity and charity of the Church” (*MC*, 5) and addresses them with a most loving heart, the invitation to yield their free consent to the inner stirrings of God’s grace (*MC*, 102)<sup>49</sup>

The Holy Mother Church has deep and tender affection for separated brothers and sisters. This is vividly expressed by Pius XII as he speaks of a heart overflowing with love for them and even evident from the words of John XXIII as he mentioned earlier before the Council opened. Mother Church feels for her separated children with grief, her loving heart is wounded by the estrangement of her children, for away from their mother they miss out enjoying privileges and rights and unnecessarily lose the full participation of grace given to the Church as God’s gift.<sup>50</sup>

### **3.7 Conclusion**

From this chapter it is clear that promoting the Christian Church unity is a compulsory task. One who calls him/herself Christian cannot go free without practicing

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. A.C. BEA, *The Unity of Christians*, 33.

<sup>49</sup> A.C. BEA, *The Unity of Christians*, 33.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. A.C. BEA, *The Unity of Christians*, 34.

this. A Catholic Christians should even initiate the processes of Christian unity when among other Christian believers. For it is indeed scandalous for those under the umbrella of Christianity to have a mark of division along with the claim of witnessing the one who prays before his physical departure from this world that “may they be one...(Jn 17:21).”

## **Chapter Four**

### **General Conclusion**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

In this chapter I will present the importance and an urge to know that evangelization reaches its goal when it is inclusive not exclusive, when it is understood as God's mission not human being's initiated work. Spreading of the Gospel should be carried on with the aim of reaching everyone and bring the kingdom of God on earth. The proclaimers of the Word are not expected to have rivals in the world aiming at one destiny where they think they will be happy as friends.

#### **4.2 The Mission of the Church on Earth**

“The Church on earth is by its very nature missionary since, according to the plan of the Father, it has its origin in the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit.” (*AG* 2). It is God's plan to gather all creation under the name of Christ the Lord (cf. 1:10), in order to bring all humanity and all creation into communion. “As a reflection of the communion in the Triune God, the Church is God's instrument in fulfilling this goal.” (*WCC*, 34). The church is called to manifest the mercy of God to humanity; hence to bring humanity to its purpose. The Church has its core activity to serve the purpose of God as a gift given to the world that all may believe (cf. John 17: 21), not some, meaning evangelization is inclusive not exclusive.

The Church has a mandate from Christ to “preach the Gospel to every creature” (Mark16:16). The solemn command has been received from the apostles to the Church, and she must fulfil it to the ends of the earth (*cf. LG 17*). “Missionary activity is nothing else, and nothing less, than manifestation of God’s plan, its epiphany and realization in the world and in history by which God’s mission, clearly brings to its conclusions the history of salvation” (*AG, 9*).

### **4.3 Who are the Church?**

The Church or Churches spoken here should be ecclesial communities and mainstream Protestants who have authentic doctrines mainly based on the right interpretation of the Scripture. There are so many mushrooming sects which take long hours praying and preaching day and night. They mainly preach the message of doom or Gospel of prosperity. Their founders are either not happy in the union of their churches, and so thought of beginning their own sects with very attractive names. It can also be that their founders claim to have a vision of a new sect which can be more faithful to Christ than the former sects or Churches. Sects of this kind I can make a mistake of calling them Churches, and therefore they cannot have a mandate from Christ to evangelize.

This is because listening to many of them, their teachings and preachings do not concur with Christ’s teaching in Gospel. Some of these sects refuse vaccinations of children or going to hospital when one is sick. They forbid certain food, and some keep on predicting the day of Lord giving it specific dates. Some are like “Oterona” Sect and

use higher witchcraft powers to counter the witchcraft practiced by normal witchdoctors and wizards. In this particular sect there is pure syncretism practiced. For this kind of sect it is not ecumenism which is needed, but a correction of their erroneous teachings, and evangelizing them to come to the right understanding of the true message of Christ. These should be the sects which St. Paul's message of severity over error in his letters, as we saw in chapter three of this piece of work, can be applied.

The Protestants in my diocese, for example the Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians and Lutherans are the churches which preach Christ crucified, like the Catholics, though with some insufficiency in their doctrines. These are the Churches with whom the Catholic Church is called to have an ecumenical dialogue. These show differences in the way they worship, relate and talk about the Catholic Church, but they are not out there to preach against Catholics as their primary aim. They regard Sunday as their day of worship. No doubt, their members can truly be called Christians. Some of their sacraments, especially baptism, are recognized in the Catholic Church as valid.

These Christians along with the Catholics are called to proclaim the Gospel in word and deed, for they acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. They should address those who have not heard, and those who are no longer living in accordance with the Gospel, the Good News of the reign of God. They are to live its values and to be a foretaste of that reign in the world. There is no doubt then that mission belongs to the very being of the Church (*cf. WCC, 35*). "This is a central implication of affirming the apostolicity of the Church, which is inseparable from the other three attributes of the Church- unity, holiness and catholicity. All four attributes relate both to the nature of

God's being and to the practical demands of authentic mission" (*WCC*, 35). An attempt to impair any of these attributes will result in compromising the mission of the Church.

There is a challenge on my side on where I can classify the SDA, whether it is a sect or Protestant, for it strongly presents in its teachings some against the Catholic Church, and it has a large representation in Kisiiiland. For this reason it can earn itself a title to be a Protestant Church. However, from its origins as we discovered from chapter one of this piece of work that it began as a movement whose roots are in the Millerite Movement, which sounds more of a sect than a Protestant Church. The SDA has a number of practice from Jewish work, the Sabbath day which is Saturday, stress of on the Ten Commandments for justification of one's faith, and the cross as a sign of shame among many others. The Strong influence of SDA in management of institutions and their great contribution to the wellbeing of the Kisii people in uncountable spheres tempts me to call it a Protestant Church. SDA believers are ready die for what they believe in. An example is Kenya's new Chief Justice, David Maraga, who during his interview was not afraid to say that he cannot work on Saturday, the Sabbath of the Lord given that he is an SDA believer.

#### **4.4 True Ecumenism for Inclusive Evangelization in Kisii Diocese**

So, in Kisii area and as far as the faith of the Kisii people is concerned Catholics need ecumenical dialogue with the SDA and Protestant Churches. There should be an urgency need for unity of Churches for the sake of effective mission which can be thwarted by the scandal of division. "Diversity is not the same as division. Within the

Church, divisions (heresies and schisms), as well as a political conflicts and expressions of hatred, threaten God’s gift of Communion. Christians are called to work tirelessly to overcome divisions, to prevent legitimate diversities from becoming causes of division, and to live a life of diversities reconciled” (*WCC, 63*). With the cases as presented in chapter two, fights among Churches, Protestants and sects preaching against Catholics and vice versa, and even physical fights cannot help at all. This is because the end does not justify the means. All those conflicts handled through force are not resolved completely. Persistence in conflicts can only split Jesus into parts and those who are many and speak louder can only seem to be having a bigger piece of him. Those who have never borne of the name Christianity would not be ready to convert to embrace Christianity because the ones evangelizing will seem not to have been converted. James E. Wagner, one of the first co-presidents of the United Church of Christ once asked, “How can the Church speak the word of peace and brotherhood to the fragmented life of men and women and nations, while she herself presents to them the spectacle of disunity”<sup>51</sup>

The Vatican II Council taught that the discord and disunity among Christians openly contradicts the will of Christ and provides a stumbling block to the world, and inflicts damage on the proclamation of the Gospel. <sup>52</sup>I strongly feel in Kisii diocese this has been experienced, given that a funeral is one of the biggest occasions where all kinds of people meet, from politicians to Chang’aa addicts in the villages. It becomes an opportunity where the word of God should be preached, so that those who have never

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<sup>51</sup>P.A. CROW, *Christian Unity*, 11.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. M. O’GARA, *The Ecumenical Gift Exchange*, 30.

stepped in any Church may hear the word of salvation. This is because every funeral celebration has special time set aside for the word of God. Unfortunately, some funerals register conflicts on who is to lead the celebrations of the word, or the word of God changes to be a preaching against another Church or sect. This should not be case if the aim of Christianity is evangelization.

It should be taken into account that,

Christian dividedness means mutual impoverishment and, above all, it renders powerless the evangelical message to the world. The Christians claim to announce peace, reconciliation, and unity to the world; but, at the same time, they fight among themselves or at least remain aloof from one another. Visible unity, then, is a primary necessity both for the sake of the Christians themselves and for that of the world. The first adaptation of Christians to the modern world must be to present themselves in it in unity, lest they throw doubt on (Christian) love before they even speak of it.<sup>53</sup>

The Churches should be leading people into the kingdom which will not require religious identity or affliction, a free reality without partiality. “If Churches can deepen their *koinonia* in the midst of the tensions that threaten to pull them apart, can they truly exercise their ministry of reconciliation in a divided world?”<sup>54</sup>The Modern ecumenical Movement had a missionary congress in Edinburgh, 1910, “which pointed to divisions among Christian denominations that are a major obstacle to progress in the field of the foreign missions.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>J. HEIJKE, *An Ecumenical light on Renewal of the Religious Community Life*, 137.

<sup>54</sup>J. MORRIS & N. SAGOVSKY, *The Unity we have and the Unity we Seek*, 160.

<sup>55</sup>J. CLEMSON, *United in Christ*, 111.

It is actually understood in relation to Ujamaa living in Tanzania that, “if Christians live according to their principles, in politics, economics and social welfare, they will be truly the light, the salt and the leaven among people.”<sup>56</sup>

Given that Churches are understood to be means to the kingdom of God, not ends in themselves. There exist a greater structural similarity between the Protestant and Catholic faith than is usually recognized. “It is false to imagine that Protestants are committed only to the Gospels, Catholics only to the church.”<sup>57</sup> It is rather, “Protestants adhere to the Gospels, and therefore to the Church in which the Gospels have their place of origin and their permanent home. Catholics adhere to the church and therefore to the Gospel which is both source book of her faith and central theme of her preaching.”<sup>58</sup>

Avery Dulles, tells us that the existence of faith among our separated brothers and sisters should not be something Catholics will find embarrassing, painful or something which can be minimized or to be glossed over. It should rather be a fact which Catholics should explain on their own theological principles. This is because when well explained, it increases the understanding, love and esteem of Catholicism itself. He continues to say that the Protestant faith, like every supernatural gift they receive, is a bond between them and the Church, which gives testimony that the vital influence of the Church extends far beyond her juridical borders.<sup>59</sup> Dulles continues to tell us that:

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<sup>56</sup>J. MUGAMBI, *Ecumenical Initiatives in Eastern Africa*, 145.

<sup>57</sup>A. DULLES, *Revelation and the Quest for Unity*, 125.

<sup>58</sup>A. DULLES, *Revelation and the Quest for Unity*, 125.

<sup>59</sup>Cf. A. DULLES, *Revelation and the Quest for Unity*, 126.

Wherever Christian faith is found, something of the Church has taken root in human minds. And the Catholic will say that this is a true Church, found in its substantial plenitude in the Catholic communion. This Church, as a supernatural force, is mysteriously at work in all believing hearts, and eagerly looks forward to the day when the Lord of the Church will return to establish, in its manifest beauty, His final, glorious Kingdom.<sup>60</sup>

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

I want to make an assumption that every Church or sect that gathers people in the name of Jesus Christ, is truly proclaiming him who came to save humankind. For I encourage and advocate that since it is the duty of those who bear the name Christian to lead others earnestly to that name, let each Church or sect proclaim the word to the ends of earth in unity in that name, for Jesus told his disciples that “he who is not against us is with us.” Now that those who proclaim the word are not against Christ, though in different ways let them remain united as by what they proclaim.

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<sup>60</sup>A. DULLES, *Revelation and the Quest for Unity*, 126.

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