EDUCATION ON EARLY CHURCH HISTORY

(FROM CHRIST TO 451 AD)

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CHAPTER ONE
THE FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

Once upon time, Christ started one church and the church was catholic. Many years after Christ had died and all his first apostles and those who saw him and worked with him, there came the protestant movement, which led to the numerous churches we have today.

Every family needs to know its history, the meaning of the family name, the places, its ancestors have lived in and the progress of its members throughout the years. One should be proud of one's family and its knowledge of the past gives us a sense of belonging.

The history of the early church, its geographical development, work and the message which the early preachers preached is recorded in ACTS OF APOSTLES. It is the primary source of our knowledge of primitive church history. The book of ACTS was written during the time of the Roman Empire. The Empire embraced one Great (Mediterranean) sea reaching from the Euphrates with Italy at its centre and Rome at its heart, Palestine was but a very small part of the empire.

The major people in the Roman world were; the Romans, the Greeks, and the Jews. All these people had tremendous effects on the new faith Christianity. The Roman empire contributed so much to the spread of the gospel in and outside Palestine.
The network of good roads, standing Army, Pax Romana, and the use of Greek language, Religious tolerance, and good administration provided by the Roman Empire contributed in no small measure for the smooth take off the church.

For those who think that the Catholic Church is new to Africa a surprise may be in store. St. Augustine was from North Africa and he was a leading figure in the church around 390 AD. Again, one of the great spiritual movements like that of monasticism came from Egypt. There are many interesting things to learn about our church in the pages ahead.

THE BEGINNINGS
THE FOUNDATION THE CHURCH ACTS 1-7:

By the time of the ascension of Jesus into heaven, the apostles and other believers numbered one hundred and twenty. The group waited patiently in Jerusalem for the gift of the Holy Spirit. In the interim period, Peter, the leader of the group supervised the election of a successor to Judas Iscariot, who had hanged himself after betraying Jesus in order to maintain the original number of twelve apostles. Two candidates Joseph and Mathias were selected. After prayers had been said, lots were cast to enable Christ himself to appoint his apostles. The lots fell on Mathias and he was elected as the twelfth apostle. (ACTS 1).

In line with the O.T. the apostles agreed to choose a candidate who might have been:

i. A companion of the Lord from the days of John the Baptist to the day of Christ's ascension.

ii. A witness of the resurrection. Bansabas and Mathias then met the criteria and emerged as the candidates to the post. The Church cast lots and the latter chosen to replace Judas Iscariot.
THE CHURCH AT PENTECOST:

The church in Jerusalem with a number of one hundred and twenty (120) was more of a "House caring church" still obeying of the Holy Spirit on the Pentecost day.

On the day of Pentecost, when the harvest festival was celebrated to mark the end of one agricultural year and the beginning of another, the apostles received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

It was on the Pentecost day that the Father fulfilled His coming (Luke 24:47) Acts 1:6 with the descent of the Holy spirit on the believers who were gathered in the upper room waiting.

Signs that accompanied the coming of the Holy Spirit,

i. Sound of a mighty wind.
ii. Tongue of fire.
iii. Speaking in tongues.
iv. Boldness and preaching of the gospel.
vi. Healing and miracles.

The results of the Spirit's coming (Acts 2:5-13)

i. The people resident in Jerusalem heard it.
ii. The disciples spoke and were heard and understood in different languages.
iii. The people were amazed (15 nations came together) (find out and write them down correctly).
iv. Some people believed they were drunk with wine, while the scene there attracted others thereby becoming a good congregation or audience for Peter to address.
v. Boldness and preaching of the gospel.
vi. Healing and miracles.
PETER'S SERMON ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST:

Peter defended the believers' action saying that it was too early for one to be drunk with wine. He explained that the actions of the believers was the fulfillment of the promise of the Father as contained in the book of Joel (ACTS 2:16 of cf. Joel 2:28-32).

In summary, the contents of the sermon could be seen as follows:

i. Christ was crucified.
ii. Christ was resurrected.
iii. Christ ascended.
iv. The Holy Spirit descended.
v. Christ Jesus was declared Lord of all (2:34-36).
vi. The door of salvation was open to all (2:38-40).

THE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM ACTS 2-7:

Consequent upon hearing the message of Peter on the day of Pentecost, three thousand (3000) people were converted and added to the already existing one hundred and twenty (120) believers in Jerusalem with Apostle Peter as the leader.

We are concerned with the problem of whether Jesus of Nazareth actually founded a church or not. In discussing this problem, the scriptures form a sole authority. The scripture shows that Jesus of Nazareth began his Ministry thirty (30) years after his birth. He gathered around him twelve companions who were later regarded as religious tug in the minds of the Jews. A year before his death, he founded his church and these twelve were entrusted with the task of propaganda. (spreading the goodnews).
At the inauguration of his church, he appointed Peter one of these tugs as head of his church (Matt. 16:18, Jn. 21:17). By the act Matt. 16:18 and Jn. 21:17, Jesus laid the foundation of his church and the walls of this church were raised to completion on the day of the Pentecost (Acts 2:22). Membership of this church also enlarges on this day. This church began practicing a specie of communism in Acts chapter four.

THE WORLD OF THE EARLY CHURCH

The human world did not go unprepared for the coming of Christ. The fullness of time (Gal. 4:4-6) presupposes a period of historical religious and ideological development during which mankind was prepared for the coming of redeemer. During the period, man was to learn by experience the evil and misery of sin and the necessity of a divine liberator.

The hotness of this preparation also fostered the spread of the gospel message.

THE ROMANS:

1. Owing to the mights of the Roman Empire, many nations were conquered. Some of these conquered nations were governed directly by Rome as provinces while some remained subject to them as allies. Owing to political arrangements, old barriers between different lands were broken down.

2. Excellent roads, abundant ships; the fact of pax Roman and orderliness in the Roman Empire made travel easy and usual throughout the empire.
3. Language problem was also solved. In the days of Alexander the Great, Greek was the common language of the East and Latin of the west. Consequently, there were no serious linguistic obstacles for the spread of common ideas and beliefs.

Religiously, there was religious syncretism; hence, there was no one state religion for the empire. The common religious feature of the religions of the empire was Empire-worship and paganism was the order of the day, which was nothing short of public immorality. The gods of such pagan religions did neither inspire nor elevate both the moral and the spiritual tones of those who believed in them. Sin lust and cruelty prevailed.

The human mind rebelled against these and lost faith in pagan cults but hoped for a divine liberator.

Jews:

They were the first to develop and maintain peculiar idea of monotheism. From various reasons and in various circumstances, they came into contact with great empires of the world like Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, Persia, Macedonia and Rome.

In spite of these contact and dispersion, they preserved their monotheistic knowledge and worship, of their one God they all held as righteous and father of all nations. This latter became the Christian God.

When in 63BC the promised land (Palestine) had become a Roman province, the hardship that was faced as a result of their constant revolts against the Roman authorities shifted their thought and hopes to an expectation of a Messiah—Christ—whose coming the prophet had foretold. Though they expected a national hero than a mere religious reformer, all the same they expected a liberator, the Christ.
The fulfillment of Jesus' work of preparing his bride, the church, for himself is described in the book of Revelation. Christ, the Lamb of God, weds his bride, the church, at the end of time...... the marriage of the Lamb has come and his bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to be clothed with fine linen bright and pure...... for the fine linens is the righteous deeds of the saints (Rev. 19:7-8).

This is what God is doing in human history. He is forming a people a bride for his son Jesus Christ, and purifying the church so it will be ready when Christ comes again in Glory. We know that is not yet complete, although we can see the righteous deeds of the saints, we also know that there is still sin in the church, for Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners (Lk. 5:32). Yet in spite of the event sin and weakness in the church, Christ still loves it enough to die on the cross for his people, the church.

PLATO: Among many themes Plato (one of the early Greek philosophers) philosophized on the world of ideas. His world of forms was an attempt he made in finding a solution to his problems of change of flux posited in world of philosophy by Heraclitus. According to the theory of forms, the material world is a carbon copy or photo copy of the real world existing in the world of forms. The world of forms is changeless, stable, and perfect. The platonist theory of forms provided a perfect concept origin for the Christian concept of heaven. In his moral teaching, Plato taught that the pursuit of virtue happiness is to be attained. This happiness is to be attained. This happiness is come to four the basis for which heaven is to be sought.
JEWSH FACTIONS IN JESUS'TIME

There were many factions among the Jews during the time of Jesus. These were the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the scribes, the zelots, the Essenes, the Hellenists, the Diaspora Jews.

THE PHARISEES: They provided religious leadership for the masses, and were the chief rivals of the Sadducees. They were laymen rather than priests and believed in the resurrection of the body and in a future life with rewards and punishments. Above all, they lived by the law, the Torah, spending their lives in its study and elaboration, hence they were lawyers. The law was both written and oral. They believed that the law should be open to new interpretations. The Pharisees were ardent nationalists and therefore opposed foreign influences, whether Greek or Roman. They were chiefly concerned with the outward observance of the law, in which spiritual attitudes played little part. It was especially this aspect of their behaviour that brought them into conflict with Jesus. The Pharisees had right doctorines but their lives contradicted their teachings. Therefore Jesus could say: the scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses seat; so practice and observed whatever they tell yoy but not what they do, for they preach but do no practice what they preach (mit. 23:2-3). The great Apostle Paul was a Pharisee. He was proud "I am a Pharisee, attitudes and behaviour and became and an ardent follower of Jesus Christ. The Pharisees disappeared from the scene with the destruction of Jewish state.

THE SADDUCEES: They were the aristocratic nationalists, a priestly class associated with the temple high priests. They came from priestly families and were lawyers. They were conservative
in both religion and politics, opposing any rebellion or rioting and disagreeing sharply with those who taught doctrines like the resurrection which were not based on the five books of the Old Testament (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy), the only ones accepted as authoritative. They are chiefly known as denying the doctrine of the resurrection and the existence of angels and spirits. They also believed that the soul perished with the body. Thus there was for them no future life. Though generally opposed to Christianity, some of them did embrace the new faith of Christianity. The Sadducees lost influence and gradually disappeared after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

THE SCRIPES: They supplemented the theoretical interpretation of the Torah given by the Pharisees with practical moral teaching and by handling legal matters. They are legal experts who could be Pharisees or Sadducees. Because they dealt with everyday affairs, marriages, temple taxes, religious practices, they were enormously influential. They controlled the higher schools and provided most judges in Jewish courts. They bitterly opposed Jesus (Mark 2:16) and persecuted early Christians (Acts 4:5, 6:12).

THE ZEALOTS: They were an anti-Roman subversive group, resorting to violence and assassination campaigns especially against Jewish collaborators. Simon the Apostle is identified as zealot in Luke 6:15.

THE HELLENISTS: They were Jews who adopted Greek ways and spoke Greek. They tended to be educated, more sophisticated and wealthier than other Jews. The Apostle Philip was Hellenist, as was Stephen the first martyr and many early disciples (Acts 6:1-6).
THE ESSENES: They were followers of an unknown teacher of Righteousness who rejected the compromises and corruption of the Hasmoneans of Maccabees. They lived in the desert in communities, practiced baptism and expected the arrival of the Messiah to be soon. For that reason, they did not marry and lived a monastic life. John the Baptist may have lived among them.

THE DIASPORA: This was the name given to the communities of Jews who lived outside Palestine. In numbers, Diaspora Jews were several times those in Palestine and their communities formed a base for the entry of Christianity into Roman Empire. Deportation of prisoners of war, but especially commerce, spread Jews in all directions from Palestine. It is estimated that during the time of the early Roman Empire, there were about two and half million Jews in Palestine. There were one million in each of the areas of Egypt, Asia Minor and Mesopotamia, in addition to one hundred thousand in Italy and North Africa. Inseparable from the Diaspora Jews was the synagogue. Together they establish a natural base outside Palestine for the mission proclamation of the gospel. The most important of the Diaspora cities was Alexandria in Egypt. There, the Jews occupied whole quarters of the city. There the Old Testament was translated into Greek language in 150B.C, thus making it available to the Greek speaking world. The version of the Old Testament is known as the Septuagint. There, also Jewish intellectual life found its greatest spokesman in the famous Jewish philosopher, Philo about 20B.C to 42 A.D. (IDAHO SA 2004).
Characteristics of the Early Church in Jerusalem

i. Converts were made on daily basis.

ii. They continued in the “Apostles teaching and fellowship”.

iii. Breaking of bread from house to house.

iv. Regular prayer meetings.

v. Miracles, signs and wonders were performed Acts 3:1-3.


viii. Reverence (2:43).

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two conferences agreed that their work should be coordinated, and in 1938, a provisional committee was named to establish a "body representative of the churches". Formation of the World Council of Churches, which was to have come about in 1941, was delayed for seven years by World War II. In 1961, the Missionary Stream of Protestant ecumenical endeavour joined with the service and doctrinal currents of the International Missionary Council merged with the World Council of Churches.

The impulse to unity was almost solely by Protestants until 1920, when the ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople issued an encyclical summing all Christians to reunion. Eastern Orthodox Churches have been members of the World Council since it was constituted.

Ecumenism continued to flourish among Protestants and the Orthodox; for example, in 1950, the National Council of Churches was formed by 29 denominations in the U.S. The Roman Catholic Church, however remained uncompromising in its rejection of the movement. From the Roman Catholic viewpoint, church unity could mean nothing less than the return of schismatic "sects" to the "one true church". An encyclical issued in 1928 by Pope Pius XI had re-emphasized this position, and as recently as 1954, Roman Catholics were forbidden to attend the second assembly of the World Council of Churches.

BRIEF HISTORY OF ECUMENISM

Ecumenism or ecumenical movement is the quest for church unity, which loomed large in 20th century Christianity. After the stimulus of the Edinburgh Mission Conference of 1910, the concern to confront divisive issues of doctrine, polity and practice gave birth to the faith and order movement, of which the leading midwife was the American Episcopalian, Bishop Charles H. Brent (1862-1929).
After the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910, it was followed by a preliminary meeting at Geneva in 1920, and the First World Conference on Faith and Order was convened in Lausanne in 1927. Whereas Edinburgh was a gathering of missionary societies, Lausanne was formally an inter-church assembly, with some 90 churches represented. The next milestone was the Second Faith and Order Conference at Edinburgh in 1937, when representatives of 123 churches met under the Presidency of William Temple (1881-1944), Archbishop of Canterbury. Both of these conferences discussed ministry and sacraments among other central themes.

The Edinburgh assembly endorsed a proposal for a World Council of Churches (WCC), which came into being, after delay occasioned by World War II at Amsterdam in 1948. The faith and order commission became one of the main agencies of the WCC, reporting to its plenary assemblies at Evanston (1954), New Delhi (1961), Uppsala (1968), Nairobi (1975) and Vancouver (1983). Membership multiplied from 147 churches at Amsterdam to 301 at Vancouver.

THE BEST TIMES

Agreed statements have been carefully and painstakingly reached on classic points of controversy, which divided the church into East and West and into Protestants and Roman Catholics. These points include:
1. Justification by faith;
2. The sacramental life of the church;
3. The Eucharist as presence of Christ and as Christ's sacrifice;
4. The nature of the church as a visible society;
5. The role of the bishop of Rome and;
6. The place of the Bible in the Church's life.
Theology that focused on these controversies is no longer necessary in our colleges and seminaries. An ecumenical approach has been enriching our understanding of our relationship to God and of God's presence in history.

Protestant appreciation of Catholic Sacramental life has grown immensely in recent years, while the Roman Catholic view of the church has expanded in a way that would have brought joy to the world/images of:

1. Pope Paul VI kneeling to kiss the feet of the delegate of Athenegoras, Ecumenical Patriarch of Eastern Orthodox Christians;
2. Paul VI taking off his Episcopal ring and giving it to Archbishop of Canterbury;
3. John Paul II and Archbishop of Canterbury Runcie jointly renewing their baptismal promises at Canterbury Cathedral and singing a common declaration to pursue the resolution of issues still preventing the full union of their churches;
4. John Paul II and the present ecumenical patriarch, Demitrios I, giving a common blessing from the balcony of St. Peter's;
5. The bishop of Rome (1986) preaching from a Lutheran Pulpit, praying in a Jewish Synagogue, visiting the World Council of Churches and gathering with World Religious Leaders to pray for peace at Assisi;

An entire generation of Roman Catholics has grown up that cannot remember what it was like before the Second Vatican Council.

In the United States, a 1984 survey showed that 71 of the 180 Catholic dioceses held full membership in councils of churches. The figures are presumably higher now.
SCRIPTURAL BACKING FOR ECUMENISM

The most fundamental and compelling reason why members of all churches in every place in the whole inhabited world should live as members of a common household is that God wants all of the followers of Christ to live in love and harmony.

The body is one and has many members, but all the members, many though they are, are one body; and so it is with Christ...you then are the body of Christ. Everyone of you is a member of it. (1Cor. 12).

There is but one body and one spirit, just as there is but one hope given all of you by your call. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and father of all, who is overall, and works through all, and is in all (Ephesians 4:4-6).

Let there be no factions, rather be united in mind and judgment....Has Christ been divided into parts? (1Cor. 1:10-13).

There shall be one flock and one shepherd. (John 10:16).

I pray...that all may be one as you, father, are in me and I in you. I pray that they may be one in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. (John 17:20-21).

EMERGENCE OF ECUMENISM IN NIGERIA

The study of the church union movement encapsulates the essential aspects of the presence of Christianity in Nigeria.

In Nigeria, common problems bred the need for cooperation:
1. All suffered from the inhabitable climate,
2. Poor communication, and
3. Unwelcoming receptions in areas plagued by tribal wars and slave trade,
4. The early missionaries considered competition by the various evangelical bodies to be undignified and wasteful.
In 1905, representatives of the Church of Scotland, the Niger Delta Pastorate and the Church Missionary Society met in Calabar. They discussed the delimitation of spheres of mission work and the avoidance of overlapping. These measures ensured that missionaries in the East seldom met for the fifty years. When they met more frequently in later years, they focused easier on cooperation.

In Western Nigeria, this was not so. Here, there was cutthroat competition between Anglicans, Methodists and the African Independent Churches. The last two bodies, contained men who had broken away from the Anglicans to protest against the shabby treatment they had received from the younger generation of White Missionaries who had succeeded Bishop Crowther. Thus, in the West, both African and Missionary Church Leaders sometimes paid lip service to the need for cooperation and unity, but never tried to complement it.

5. Another impulse behind the drive for cooperation in the early 1900's was the Edinburgh Conference of 1910. It was a landmark in the history of missions. It was dominated by a new spirit in mission work with emphasis on cooperation with other labourers in the vineyard.

6. Later an external force heightened the need for common action among the Protestant bodies. This was the energetic Roman Catholic insurgency within the preserved enclaves of the various signatories' 1905 accord. The Roman Catholics used a very expensive tactic to penetrate the area, namely schools and charitable institutions. A recent study of the Anglican and Catholic penetration into Igbo land has shown that schools were founded as part of an embittered, expensive competition,
6. Ethical issues that arise from different adaptations of the common Christian moral tradition (Sexual ethics) or from radically new features in the social situation (nuclear deterrence, in vitro fertilization etc).

THE EFFECTS OR DIVISIONS AMONG CHRISTIAN BODIES IN NIGERIA
1. Buried truth
2. Church, viewed as a business enterprise
3. Sectarianism
4. Religious hatred/wars
5. Ambiguity of the message
6. Religious intolerance
7. Disunity
8. Political bigotry/violence
9. Rampant injustices
10. Disharmony

ACTION IDEAS FOR ECUMENISM
1. Gather together congregational leaders in your neighbourhood for a retreat or a daylong meeting to discuss joint activities in worship, education or service,
2. Encourage joint Bible studies,
3. Celebrate with other congregations,
4. Exchange preachers where practicable,
5. Sponsor joint studies on issues such as hunger, economic justice, racism and human rights,
6. Hold a mission fair, sharing ideas from various denominational mission programmes,
7. Share audio-visual and Christian literature resources with congregations in your community.
8. Plan leadership training in evangelism, stewardship or advocacy with other congregations.
9. Initiate common service project to respond to needs such as housing, unemployment, transportation, handicap, care and refugee families.
10. Form community task forces on problems such as drug abuse, runaways, child abuse, etc.
11. Pray for each other, pray for the unity of the church.
12. Hold joint workshops on faiths and traditions from other cultures.
THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN BRIEF

World Council of Churches is an international organization of more than 320 Protestant, Anglican, Old Catholic, and Orthodox churches that promotes ecumenical fellowship, service and study. It was founded in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, in August 1948. The council is defined in its constitution as "a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus as God and Saviour according to the scriptures and therefore seeks to fulfill together their common calling to the glory of the one God, father, son and Holy Spirit."

Principal authority in the World Council of Churches is vested in an assembly of delegates, which meets every seven years. Between assembly meetings authority is exercised by a 150-member central committee, which is elected by the assembly and normally meets once a year. A permanent secretariat, headed by a general secretary, administers the programmes of the council. The decisions of the council are not binding on the member churches. Council headquarters is in Geneva, and an office is also in New York City. Major subdivisions of the organization include four program units focusing on unity and renewal; health, witness and education, justice, peace and creation; and sharing and service. Offices of communication, intra-religious relations, and ecumenical relations are attached to the permanent secretariat.

In 1947 prior to its formation in 1948, it restated the purpose of the Council as an organization which 'seeks to promote unity among its members and to serve them as an organ whereby they may bear witness together to their common faith and cooperate in matters requiring united action.' But, the statement continues, the
Council will not in any way control or legislate for its member bodies, and disavows the intention of establishing 'a single unified church structure dominated by a centralized administrative authority'. In brief, the council is not a super church.

The study commission appointed after the World Conference of 1937 could hold only fragmentary sessions during the war, and they met, the projected preparatory studies in preparation for the 1948 Assembly by International Commissions of scholars and administrative leaders, under the four headings: The Universal Church in God's Design; God's Design and Man's witness; The Church and the Disorder of Society; and the Church and International Affairs. The latter assigned to the newly created commission.

Expressing concern that the World Council, as a young and inexperienced movement, might be distracted from its main purpose by the many practical responsibilities laid upon it, Dr. T. Hooff said: 'Our first and deepest need is not new organizations but the renewal, or rather the rebirth of the actual churches... The Council can only live as it moves forward; our staying together is not just staying were we are but a common pilgrimage toward the same goal.'

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH AND ECUMENISM

Change came in 1959, when Pope John XXIII proposed the calling of a second Vatican Council to complete the work of the First Vatican council of 1870. Renewal and Reunion were high on the agenda, and the world followed the proceedings closely. The pontiff created a Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity. Breaking precedent, in 1961, he permitted Roman Catholic observers officially to attend the third assembly of the World Council of Churches.
Also through his influence, when Vatican II opened in Saint Peter's Basilica in 1862, Protestant and Orthodox observers were accorded places of honour and included in all working sessions the 2500 Roman Catholic Bishops who attended the four council session (1962-65) dealt with Christian unity. Their decree on ecumenism, promulgated in 1964, spoke not of "schismatic" but of "separated brethren," and it deplored sins against unity committed over the years by Roman Catholics and Protestants alike.

On the death of Pope John, in 1963, his successor, Pope Paul VI, made known his intention to continue ecumenical advances, describing unity as "the object of permanent interest, systematic study, and constant charity." The policy was emphasized by several major gestures. In 1964, the archbishop of Canterbury, head of the Anglican Communion, visited Pope Paul and in 1967 the pontiff visited the Orthodox patriarch in Turkey.

At the close of Vatican II, a joint working group was established between the Vatican and the World Council of Churches. Numerous official dialogues were started in many countries between Roman Catholics and Protestants. Significantly, the joint working group declared in 1967 that not two but only one ecumenical movement exists.

Furthermore, at the fourth assembly of the World Council in 1968, a Jesuit theologian spoke of Roman Catholics as partners with other Churches," and broadened the possibility of Roman Catholic membership in the world council that had not occurred by the end of the 1980's, but the Roman Catholic church continued to have a good working relationship with the World Council, regularly sending observers to its sessions.
AN ERA OF CHANGE
Ecumenism is changing. Consolidation of protestant churches has progressed rapidly. During the 1980s, the ecumenical movement was characterized by increasing consensus on doctrinal questions that had once been highly disputed, and by growing cooperation at all levels. This was due largely to the bilateral dialogues that took place between the various Churches, Anglican, orthodox protestant, and Roman Catholic during the 1970s.

In areas such as peace, international development studies and disaster relief, the Roman Catholic Church and World council of churches pooled their resources. Furthermore, in the U.S., the urban crisis caused Christian churches to join with Jewish groups to achieve racial justice.

Ecumenical leaders make clear that they are not seeking a Christian unity that would gloss over basic theological differences. There remain many obstacles, such as the ordination of women, papal authority, Mariology, contraception and even a general fear of "bigness". Ecumenists leaders make believe, however that much progress can result from a continuing stress on the many points on which the churches agree.

The Pentecostal churches and Ecumenism.
AZUSA STREET ECUMENISM
One of the least well-known facets about the Azusa street revival is it's multi racial environments. This is especially remarkable given the segregationist mentality prevalent in North America during the first half of the twentieth century. From 1906-1908, the Azusa street mission drew persons from several races, ethnic groups cultures and nationalities together in Worship. Blacks
and whites were found worshiping and singing together, tarrying before the Lord and praying for one another, "mingling and even touching in the mission," one participant recollected that Azusa street, "the colour line was washed away in the blood," what happened at Azusa street, in other words was unprecedented. The result was not only a transformation of hearts, but also a tearing down of barriers to the experience of genuine Christian unity such that "there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all (Col. 3:11cf. 1Cor. 12:13 and Gal. 3:28 which adds "male or female").

In short early Pentecostals did understand the ecumenical significance of the Pentecostal experience of the spirit. Thus the founding of classical Pentecostal denominations like the Assemblies of God brought together individuals from a variety of backgrounds: Keswick Reformed, Wesleyan Holiness, revivalist, Baptist, African American, and so on. Their motivation was common mission in the power of the spirit whether such be with regard to the taking of the gospel to foreign lands, social, publication or educational projects, and the cultivation of Pentecostal faith. This also explains why the Assemblies of God as well as other early Pentecostal groups saw themselves as movements rather than denominations.

Since then Pentecostal relationships with the mainline churches have come a long way what remains, however, is the longstanding reluctance among Pentecostals to be associated with structural efforts at church unity especially those derived from organized ecumenical activities such as those of the National council of churches (NCC) and the WCC.
GLOBAL ECUMENISM AND GLOBAL PENTECOSTALISM

This unique ecumenical Pentecostalism is by no means confined to revivalist phenomena either. In fact, Pentecostalism in its global forms has now reached such proportions that recent estimates believe the number of Pentecostals and charismatic to exceed 500 million. The startling fact is that very small percentage of these are of the classical type of Pentecostal penbecostalism found in North America, infact, Pentecostal boom is taking place in such faraway places as Latin and south America, sub-sharan Africa, and even inland china. These have not been indoctrinated into the Assemblies of God sixteen Fundamental Truths, or any like statement. Rather what makes people embrace the Pentecostal message is their experience of the power of the spirit of common faith, in the global Pentecostal context, is not predicated upon the spirit's presence and activity.

The same goes for our relationship to and participation with the ecumenical movement. The point is not avoid the ecumenical movement since, in a very real sense, Pentecostals have always been ecumenical even though most of us have not realized this before. Rather, ecumenical Pentecostalism should emphasize discerning participation. As a global movement, it has another choice. There is no place left to withdraw to, Pentecostal mission, whether we like it or not includes the ecumenical dimension.

The majority of Pentecostal churches have chosen not to participate in any ecumenical organization. This comes, in part, because of their restorationist perspective on the history of the church that views existing churches as having fallen away from God's intentions through compromise and sin. Another reason is the way so many existing churches have marginalized and rejected the
Pentecostals when they attempted to share their testimonies of what God had done in their lives. As a result, sectarian thinking has dominated much of the movement, which in many cases developed an eschatological position that feared ecumenical contact. In 1947, Pentecostals representing all but the oneness groups gathered in Zurich, Switzerland for a Pentecostal world conference. Many leaders hoped to establish an organization for Pentecostals of Scandinavia and Brazil. Since that time, Pentecostal leaders have gathered in Pentecostal world conferences where a small presidium has discussed items of mutual interest and concern. In 2004 the PWC formally took the name Pentecostal World Fellowship.

The emergence of the National Association of Evangelicals in the USA and the World Evangelical Fellowship (now Alliance) in the 1940s, the testimony of the Latin American Pentecostal churches that joined the WCC, and especially the pioneering work of Pentecostal David du Plessis, have created a Pentecostal openness to limited ecumenical contact. Since 1972, Pentecostals have been in dialogue with the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity of the Catholic Church. Since 1993, they have been represented at the annual meeting of the Secretaries of Christian World Communions. An international dialogue was established between Pentecostals and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in 1995, and another between Pentecostals and the WCC, through the Joint Consultative Groups authorized at the Harare assembly in 1998. A new dialogue has been established with members from the Lutheran World Federation in 2005.

Today in Nigeria, there is tremendous consciousness on Pentecostal ecumenical movement. This is evident in the fact that
most people are united in the ecumenical spirit of singing, clapping swaying and dancing. It is very common to find Pentecostal worshipers form a single congregation at healing crusades and revivalist movements.

ALADURA CHURCHES AND ECUMENISM

The Church of the Lord (Aladura) is an African Initiated Church founded by the first Primate and Late Prophet Dr. Josiah Oluncowo Ositelu in 1930 in Ogoré, Shagamu, Ogun State, Nigeria. "Aladura" in Yoruba means "owners of prayer", "Prayer Fellowship" or "The praying People". Also known as Aledura Churches, they emphasize the power in praying and believe in faith healing and various elements associated with Pentecostalism. Most of the founders of the churches were associated with Anglicanism, though some Methodists joined the movement as well. The churches despised the power of traditional African Religion, because they deem that power to be basically malign. Therefore they sometimes burn cult images as "idols" and oppose both polygamy and witchcraft. Unlike Kimbanguism, the churches tend to avoid politics and focus instead on the "holiness movement."

The six tenets of the church can be described as:

- Pentecostal in Power
- Prophetic in Ministry
- Biblical in Pattern
- Evangelical in Mission
- Ecumenical in Outlook and
- Social in Responsibility
Affiliations

- World Council of Churches (WCC) 1975
- All African Conference of Churches (AACC) 1975
- Organization of African Independent (Initiated) Churches (OAIC) 1978
- British Council of Churches (BCC) 1978
- Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) 1984
- Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN) 1984
- International Ministerial Council Of Great Britain (IMCGB)
- Founding member of the International Ministerial Council of Germany (IMCOG) 1994
- Afro-Caribbean Churches in the UK (ACCUK)
- Founding members of the Council of African Christian Communities in Europe (CACCE) 1999
- Founding member of the International Convent Of Christian Congregations, Rhein-Main, Germany (ICCCRC) 1999

In 1996, the Church hosted a WCC Consultive Meeting with African Instituted Churches.

THE ADELEKE ADEJOBI FOUNDATION

The AAF is established, among other things:

* To act as an independent, interdenominational research and policy analysis centre
* To engage in all forms of theological intellectual pursuit
* To promote and encourage theological excellence and ecumenism among the various Christian religious sects nationally and internationally.
The Adeleke Adejobi Foundation (AAF) was inaugurated on September 15, 1995 by family and friends of the Late Primate at the Nigerian institute of International Affairs (NIIA), Victoria Island, Lagos, to immortalize and sustain the ideals of Most Rev. Apostle(Dr) Emmanuel Owoade Adeleke Adejobi, the second primate of The Church of The Lord (Aladura) worldwide.

His ideals found expression in his zeal in proclaiming the word of God worldwide with his deepest love and concern for humanity. His specialties were theological scholasticism and ecumenism which he pursued with passion. He actualized the earlier by establishing a Theological Seminary-Aladura Theological Seminary now renamed after him as Adejobi Memorial Theological Seminary (AMTS), and the latter by his roles, and his significant and notable impact on the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN), the Organization of the Independent African Churches (OIAC), the Nigeria Association of Aladura Churches Inc (NAAC) at the national level and the All African conference of Churches (AACC), the West African Association for Theological Institutions (WAATI), and the World Council of Churches at the international level.

As can be deducted from the array of Christian bodies which he belonged as a strong functional effective member and leader. Adejobi’s concept of Christianity and evangelism went beyond denominational, national and regional vision. It was global, in accordance with the commission of our Lord Jesus Christ, “Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nation” (Matthew 28:20), to satisfy His (Jesus) professed aspiration, “that they all may be one, even as we are one” (John 17:21), to have a united church. In pursuance of this aspiration, he used The Church of the Lord
(Aladura) as his base. In this regard, as dictated by modesty, rather than depending on the testimony of the AAF, some clips from the testimony of a credible third party, the World Council of Churches (WCC), given through its General Secretary, shall suffice how far he succeeded in achieving this divine and glorious objective.

In 1992, Dr. Emilio Castro the then General secretary of the World Council of Churches gives a testimony on the evangelistic and ecumenical activities of Dr. E.O.A. Adejobi. The following is an extract from it: Dr. Adejobi’s evangelistic fervour knew no geographical boundaries. Canon Burgess carr testifies that the ‘sierra Leone Diocese’ of the church was closely associated with the expansion programme of Dr. Adejobi, and was a member of the AACC and of the committee of churches that planning to establish a council of churches in Liberia. He was also close to the branches in Ghana. He pastured members that migrated to Britain and North America and whose “ethnic” chaplaincies have now grown into international congregation.

This broad geographical vision was accomplished by a vision of the unity of the church which found demonstrated in the WCC...

“...The ecumenical vision is what inspired his church into applying for membership of the WCC. It was a uniquely joyful moment such as rarely seen in western churches when the church of the Lord was admitted into membership of the WCC at the 5th assembly of the council, held in Nairobi in 1975.

Testimonies that came to the WCC. On the ecumenical outlook of he church of the Lord include reference to Dr. Adejobi’s personal commitment to ecumenism. Rev. Russell T. Hall of Lagos Presbyterian church wrote “The church of the Lord has a loose fellowship arrangement with the Apostolic church, and seraphim...
the church of the Lord in Nigeria is becoming more open to contacts and associations with the other Christian churches... more truly ecumenical in attitude and practice... Dr. Adjobi wrote, published, promoted theological education, invited ecumenical faculty (Mennonite and Presbyterian). The church had its own press and was to expose its members to ecumenical formation in Bossy.

His words were accompanied by action. He led the church of the lord into membership of the Organization of African Independent (Instituted) Churches and became the first president at its inception in November 1978. He stimulated in Nigeria the formation of the Association of Aladura churches (ISOKAN), comprising the Holy Order of Cherubim and Seraphim, the Christ Apostolic church, the celestial churches, and all Pentecostal churches in Nigeria. He worked fervently to get the members of the Association of Aladura churches to show active interest in the WCC and opened correspondences in support of the application of the celestial church of Christ and the application of Anglicans to remain as a separate Diocese within WCC. At the central committee in Moscow, he was instrumental in obtaining invitations for the head of the Eden Light of Jesus and two other leaders of the church of the Lord to "come and see the WCC for themselves".

THE CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA (CAN)

Christian Association of Nigeria is an Association of Christian Churches with distinct identities, recognizable church structures and a system of worship of one God in the trinity of the father, son and Holy Spirit, which makes Christ the centre of all their works and which promotes the glory of God, by encouraging the growth and unity of the churches and by helping them to lead the nation and her people to partake of Christ's salvation and all it's fruits.
It's motto: "That they all may be one" (John Xvii:21).

The Association's logo shall be two circles: the inner circle enclosing a map of Nigeria in which is placed an opened Bible with a cross in the background, the two circles containing the name of the Association and its motto.

THE BIRTH OF CAN

The political and religious scene in northern Nigeria the realities of Sardauna's conversion campaigns and the conviction by the Northern Christian Association of the underground operations to overrun Christianity led to the need for the spread by NCA to other parts of the country. Christians all over the country were afraid of being marginalized by the ruling class which was dominated by Moslems. Sarduna's policies affected Christians in the economic, religious and political spheres. Christians suffered from what one might call democratic misery and there was a very great fear of the extinction of Christianity. Further more Christians discovered as others have done elsewhere, that by persisting in their confessional conflicts the church, might be neglecting their proper tasks of evangelization. These factors called in question the need for a pastoral responsibility towards the sheep by its shepherds, thus arousing the need for a platform to articulate these grievances.

After the Nigerian civil war (1967-1970) there were various things which Christians especially the main line churches had together as common concerns. The issues were the taking over of schools, hospitals, suspicions over missionaries as agents of destabilization leading to the denials of visas to missionaries, the imposition of tax and the import duties on gifts to the various
churches from abroad which were initially tax free. Etc. These common concerns added more insight to the problems Christians shared in common what pushed them to act together were difficulties which they thought they could be better handled if they were united.

On the other hand the government was also interested in Christians having a common voice and forum through which dialogue between both could be articulated. This led to a meeting of Christian leaders at the suggestion of the Federal Government in February 1976 under the chairmanship of the then chief of Army staff in the person of Brigadier Shehu Yar' Adua.

OBJECTIVES OF CAN

The Objectives of Christian Association of Nigeria shall include the following:

A) To serve as a basis of response to the unity of the church, especially as contained in our Lord's pastoral prayer: "that they all may be one" (John XVII: 21)

B) To promote understanding, peace and unity among the various peoples and strata of society in Nigeria. Through the propagation of the gospel.

C) To act as a Liaison committee, by means of which its member churches can consult together the and when necessary, make common statements and take common actions.

D) To be a watch-dog of the spiritual and moral welfare of the nation.

Membership:

To qualify for the membership of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), a church or a church-group shall have been registered under COMPANIES AND ALLIED MATTERS DECREES 1990 (Formerly known as land [perpetual succession] Act. Cap. 98).
Membership of following of the Association comprises the following:

1. The catholic secretariat of Nigeria (CSN).
2. Christian council of Nigeria (CCN)
3. Christian Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (CPFN)/Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN)
4. Organization of African instituted churches (OAIC)
5. TEKA/ECWA Fellowship

Each state Branch of the Association shall be free to establish a youth wing (abbreviated YOWICAN) and/or a Women’s Wing (abbreviated WOWICAN).

Each wing shall forward bye Laws through its stated Branch, to the Executive committee, for consideration and approval.

THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

It is an international organization of more than 320 protestant, Anglican, Old Catholic and orthodox churches that promote ecumenical fellowship service and study. It was founded in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, in August 1948. The council is defended in its constitution as “a fellowship of churches which confesses the Lord of Jesus Christ as God and savior according to the scriptures and therefore seen to fulfill together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Principal authority in the World council of churches is vested in an assembly of delegates, which meets every seven years. Between assembly meetings authority is exercised by a 150 member central by the committee which is elected by the assembly and normally meets once a year. A permanent secretariat, headed by a general secretary, administers the programs of the council is not binding on the member churches. Council headquarters is in Geneva, Switzerland and an office is also in New York City.
1. The council aims at addressing itself to the theological basis of the Church and its unity according to the scriptures.
2. It aims at relating Christianity to real human situation and problems as could be seen in their attitude to Church and Culture and thereby to resolve them.
3. As a Christian organization it attacks political oppressions and religious bigotry in politics as in Sudan.
4. It extends charity to the oppressed and the down trodden all over the world.

ACTIVITIES OF THE WCC
1. The Council controls the excesses of the politicians like Idi Amin of Uganda. The also are opposed to apartheid (as in South Africa).
2. They protect the oppressed of the world.
3. They promote education and health services in developing countries like those of Africa and Asia. They support theological Colleges and Universities with high calibre staff.
4. They send missionaries to developing countries and spread the gospel through their publications called "International Review of Missions", "Faith" and other Newsletters. They also distribute Bibles in various languages where they are needed.

THE CHRISTIAN COUNCIL OF NIGERIA (CCN)
The Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN) is also a fellowship of all autonomous Churches in Nigeria, like in WCC. The Roman Catholic Church and many separatist Churches do not belong to the Council.
body. The main members of CCN are the Anglicans, the Methodists and Presbyterians.

ACTIVITIES

What the WCC does at the international level, the CCN tries to do at the grass root level. They own hospitals and theological Colleges in common. They have a publishing and printing company called Daystar based at ibadan, this press publishes Christian Literature.

The cherubim and seraphim have been recently admitted into the Christian council of Nigeria (CCN) through which it has become a member of World council of churches.

It is the national arm of the WCC in Nigeria. It was first formed in caliber in 1911 under the inspiration of Bishop Tugwell of the Anglican mission. The council was aimed at working together in Nigeria for the propagation of the gospel. It was also their intention to divide the missionary areas for effective work. The churches under this umbrella are united together in their belief in Jesus as the Lord and saviour.

In 1928, they adopted a program of exchanging pastors and pulpets aimed at pressing the idea of church union home to the members. The idea of an organic church union which was expected to be Launched in Dec.11.1965 did not take place because of selfish theological and economic reasons. However the CCN is still existing and working together in many autonomous churches.

AIM

The CCN aims at sharing and exchanging their priest and pulpets. They also aim at Co-operating in charitable need and establishment of social institutions link Colleges and hospitals.
CHAPTER THREE
THE NEED FOR RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

WHAT IS INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE?

Dialogue is a word that is often, mis-understood and in some cases even held suspect. This is so because there are those who see it as one of those tricks used to seduce someone into accepting the faith position of the dialogue partner. Advanced learner’s Dictionary definition has fallen short of fraternal dialogue which is our major concern. In very simple terms, is all about “you talk, I listen, and you talk and I listen”. The purpose of dialogue is attempting or trying to understand one another with a view to dissolving suspicions and promoting mutual respect.

We must note that dialogue is not an easy exercise. One of the major problems with dialogue is that which has to do with language and communication. Whereas we sometimes find ourselves using the same words, we often mean different things and thus we sometimes speak without communicating. Words such as prophet, revelation, and inspiration of the scripture e.t.c. are some time grossly Mis-understood by the other and we have therefore tended to judge and Mis-judge on the basis of our understanding of some of these key religious concepts. Dialogue is therefore the war to mutual understanding.

Inter-religious dialogue is that part of dialogue which concerns itself with two persons or groups, they come together to dialogue with the purpose of enriching, deepening and broadening their own religions and witness. It is a meeting of heart and minds between followers of different religions. It is a walking together towards truth and a working together in projects of common concern. It is a religions partnership without complexes or motives. It is a
a relationship at the deepest level of man which involves all that is human since all share and from one community form the one stock which God created for people, the entire earth (cf. Acts 17:26), and since all share a common destiny, namely: God. Inter-religious dialogue is therefore concerned withness to God. Each partner thus desires to communicate to the other what is specific and personal in his or her authentic religious experience with respect and sympathy. It is also a dialogue of love, for, where there is no love of God; there can be no inter-religious dialogue. It is this love which is involved in the dialogue that brings together people of different religious convictions into a meaningful personal relationship, it is possible that conversion can take place even though it is not the aim of inter-religious dialogue.

Inter-religious dialogue does concern itself with the effort of trying to write several religious into one in an attempt to compromise on a common denominator acceptable to all: this will be error of syncretism which is an attempt or an effort to produce a compromise faith.

To be fruitful, inter-religious dialogues presupposes that the participant should possess such mental attitudes as respect, listening, sincerity, openness and willingness to receive and work with others. This dialogue presupposes that freedom to compare their religion with that of the other, discuss them in a free atmosphere for mutual enrichment and also to change one's religion if the person is really convinced that it is God's will.

In inter-religious dialogue, the right of everyone to practice their religion should be left intact and unchallenged. It will be out of place for participants in inter-religious to dialogue to even temporarily suspend their inter-religious belief. The Second Vatican Council declares that:
The human person has a right to religious freedom. Freedom of this kind means that all men should be immune from coercion on the part of individuals, nobody is forced to act against his conventions nor is anyone to be restrained from acting in accordance with his convictions on religious matters in private or in public, alone or in association with others.

From the foregoing, inter-religious dialogue is completely against any coercion to conversion and should be undertaken in a spirit of love and respect for the dignity of the human person.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Christians form between 33 and 35 percent of the total world population. Catholic form about 18%. The remaining 67 or 80 percent are mostly followers of religions which are not Christian. Jesus entrusted a mission to his church. "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptize them in the name of father and son and of the Holy spirit, and teach them to observe all commands I give you" (cf Mt 28:19-20).

This command is an invitation to all christens to make every effort to witness to the truth of the Gospel and to and invite all into the full fellowship of the church, always respecting that religious liberty which is at one and the same time the holy gift of God and the necessary foundation of all religious conviction. Inter-religious dialogue is a part of this witness on the part of all Christians and is no opposed to it.

Inter-religious dialogue there from is an integral part of the mission of the church. Closely united with men in their life and work,
church. Disciples by virtue of their mission, hope to render to others the true witness of Christ and to work for their salvation, even where they are not able to proclaim Christ fully. While inter-religious dialogues is part of the church. These two senses, of understanding inter-religious dialogue form the whole gamut of the mission of the church.

THE BASES FOR INTER-RELIGIONS DIALOGUE

We can point to four main bases for inter-religious dialogue. Religious dialogue. This will include the sociological, the unity of the human race, and the relation of all human being to Christ and the universal motivation or human inclination towards God. We shall now examine each and see how it forms a base for inter-religious dialogue.

1. **The Sociological Basis**

   The president of the secretariat for non-Christian Religions has observed that: there are de facto many religions in the world. There are not only Christians (33 percent of the world population), Buddhists (6 percent), Jews (0.5 percent), Muslims (16 percent), Traditional Relational Silkhs, Jainists, Shintiost's Baha'i, Zoriastrians, etc. these religions are the ways of the life of a greater part of humanity. The are the living expressions of the souls of the vast groups of people. The Catholic Church respects and esteems these non-Christian religions.

2. **The Unity of the Human Race.**

   This unity lies in the fact that the entire human family has only one origin and that is God who is the father, son and Holy Spirit in the mystery of the most blessed Trinity. (Acts 17:26). Every human being bears in himself or herself some final goal which is God himself.
3. **The Relation of all Human Beings to Christ.**

It is in Christ that people find the fullness of their religious life. It is in him that God has reconciled all things to himself (Cf. 2 Cor. 5:18-19). God wants all men and women to be saved and come to the knowledge of truth. Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and man (cf 1 Th. 4:42). He is the only saviour of all mankind (Cf Th. 4:2).

4. **The Universal orientation Towards God.**

The soul of every individual is always in search of the divine. This general or universal orientation summons all mankind to inter-religious dialogue. Nothing less than God can satisfy the human soul in this search and towards contact with the church.

From the above motioned bases, inter-religious dialogue becomes binding to all those who profess Christ especially in Nigeria.

**FORMS OF INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE**

Inter-religious dialogue can take different forms depending on local circumstances and the orientations of the participants, it ranges from:

1. **THE DIALOGUE OF LIFE:** This dialogue as with the one of ecumenical dialogue ensues at the level of daily life. Pope John Paul II described it as: "The dialogue between ordinary believers, a harmonious and constructive sharing in the situations of daily contacts. This is truly a basic form of dialogue and one which lays the foundations, stadium, for other more specialized encounter."
In this dialogue, people of different religious persuasions live and work together and enrich each other through the values of their various religious, without the necessity of any formal discussion. A dialogue such as this can take place in the school, hospital stadium, market place and any public place where people meet.

2. THE DIALOGUE OF SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT: The dialogue of social engagement deals with human promotion and the integral liberation of humankind. In this dialogue therefore, various believers can co-operate in the carrying out of development projects, in defining the family and its values, in joint projects to help populations suffering from drought, famine or stark poverty, in looking after refugees and especially in the promotion of justice and peace. (Arinze F. 1990).

In other words, effort should always be made to translate one's vision of faith into practice according to the ethical norms of one's religious since religion makes a special appeal to one's conscience.

The promotion and articulation of the politics of peace out of religious convictions should be fostered. The dialogue of social engagement involves the struggle for peace which is built on four pillars, namely: Truth, Justice, Freedom, and Love. The followers of the different religions should therefore engage together in an ongoing assessment in works of justice, respect of human rights, action as far as is possible in order to remedy those unacceptable state of affairs of injustice within the society in which they find themselves.
3. THE DIALOGUE OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Inter-religious dialogue can also take the form of the communication of religious experience.

This communication of religious experience can be carried out without compromising one's faith. It requires sincerity and honesty. It does not and should not admit any syncretistic and eclectic shortcut. It is a communion that goes, sometimes beyond the level of words. That is to say, in our endeavour to meet the spiritual insights of the other, we reach out beyond the concepts on which it is carried and express to the religious experience itself. It is true that words concepts and symbols are indispensable but by their nature inadequate vehicles of conveying religious experience for in the effort to convey the religious experience they betray it.

Raimundo Panikkar had this type of religious experience in mind when he said:

I left as a Christian I found myself a Hindu and I returned as Buddhist, without having ceased to be a Christian.

(R. Panikkar 1971).

4. THE DIALOGUE OF SPECIALISTS

This dialogue is based on the theologies of the different religious and can be called “dialogue at the theological level”. It involves the exchange of ideas and information's on the beliefs and practices of the people of dialogue.

It is a dialogue of specialists or experts in their theology. This dialogue aims at deepening and enriching the various religious heritages of the partners in the dialogue.
In this type of encounter, the partners seek mutual understanding through sincere discussions. They begin to appreciate each other's spiritual values and cultural categories and promote communion and fellowship among people. The Christian in this manner of dialogue can work for the evangelical transformation of cultures.

In inter-religions dialogue therefore, we get to know our partners not as objects but people also made in the image of God like ourselves. It is not a congress of philosophy nor is it simply a theological symposium. These can only be seen as tool for the mutual understanding. The inter-religious dialogue must be free from particular and general apologetics. In it, one must face the challenge of conversion.

It is not merely an ecclesiastical Endeavour; it is a religious encounter in faith, hope and love. Inter-religious dialogues is also not an effort at uniting several religions into one, nor is it a reduction of living faiths to a lowest common denominator.

Having seen what inter-religious dialogue is and what it is not we, proceed to discuss the bases for dialogues with Moslems from the point of view of the Catholic Church. This is relevant in light of the fact that the Islamic religion is one of the major religions in Nigeria that bargains for supremacy and attention.
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THE AIMS OF CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM DIALOGUE

Christian Muslim dialogue should always aim at providing a positive alternative to destruction especially in situations of tension and strife. For instance, the situation in Lebanon, the Philippines, the Arab world and one in Nigeria call for dialogue if people must be in peace with one another.

Tensions between religions normally occur where one or the other community lives as a minority group in which the societal and political life is dominated by the other. In Nigeria every leader has always insisted on being identified as a religious person to the degree of supporting the seeds of suspicion, tension and violence.

Wherever Christians and Muslims live in peace, dialogue between them should aim at addressing common problems for the good and peaceful co-existence of the society.

For example, in the city of Faisalabad in Pakistan, Christians and Muslims collaborate in the operation of a center for the treatment of leprosy. In a number of countries, young Muslims belong to catholic action groups or associations, where they join young Catholics to reflect on problems facing them and what action they can jointly take.

Another aim of Christian Muslim dialogues is also to discover how God has been lovingly and mercifully active in their lives as believers. The Catholic Church as we have pointed out believes that the Holy spirit works outside the as we have visible boundaries of the church and thus the same spirit can stir the hearts of Muslim brothers and sisters into a meaningful spiritual dialogue with their Christian friends.
b. Total membership of the council was fixed at fifty (50), twenty five member to be named by each of the Muslim and Christian sides.

c. It was also decided that the inaugural meeting of the council would be held in Abuja on Monday, 29th September, 1990 and

d. It was also agreed that short position papers embodying the ideas of each of the two groups on how the council would function should be presented during the inauguration.

Two members, Justice Bashir Sambo and Most Rev, Dr. J.O. Onaiyeken were mandated to make all necessary arrangements for the inauguration. The president, Olusegun Obasanjo was contacted and he inaugurated the council on the 29th September, 1999.

The objectives of the council are: promoting dialogue, mutual appreciation of each other’s relationship and joint action. Areas of concern for the council are; promoting good relationships, intervening to prevent and/or resolve religious conflicts; undertaking advocacy, mediation and conflict resolution. Activities of the council involve joint study, discussion plan; projects, publications, mutual interactions and reciprocal hospitality.

The hope is that with a common mind and with common action, the resources of the main religions practiced in the country can be deployed for the good of all of us.

This council meets almost quarterly and discussions are on towards establishing branches in all states and local Governments of the Federation so that dialogue towards peaceful co-existence can be intensified.
To my mind, this is a step in the right direction. That the two great religions in Nigeria are now talking to each other is something we should all support and encourage. In his inaugural address, His Eminence, Sunday Mbang, prelate, Methodist church of Nigeria and president of CAN said:

There are people in this nation who may consider what we are doing today belated probably this should have been done many years ago. But God's time is always the best. My concern is not about our inability or reluctance to start, but the result of what we have started. Almighty God wants this council to bear fruit that will endure. Nigerians are looking to us to help change the polluted suspicious and uncertain atmosphere which has held up progress, well-being, peace, and prosperity in our land. As religious and opinion leader of this great nation, our people are waiting anxiously for a new dawn through this council as we together wage an uncompromising war to eradicate and exterminate corruption, fear hatred, suspicions and uncertainty wherever they are found without fear or favour. Our people except' us through this council to bring about a rebirth in our nation where no one will feel unwanted, where all Nigerian. This I believe, we can do with the help of God. But as I have argued before, first and foremost, of allow God to mould us and uses us. With God in the boat, we cannot fail (Sunday Mbang 1999) said The Sultan of Sokoto in his address on same day that for the council to succeed it should:

1. Honestly and sincerely try to understand the true teaching the two religions their special peculiarities and personal mannerisms through seminars discussions, pamphleteering etc. these special peculiarities should be understood, respected and accepted.
2. Try very hard enlighten their respective followers understand and abide by what they consider to be the true teaching of their religions which they should abide by. Both sides should ensure that their followers should desist from uttering provocative and inciting pronouncements likely to cause breach of peace and break down of law and order. Government too should direct law enforcement agencies to promptly enforce existing laws that safeguard such dangerous utterances.

3. Form standing committees to very carefully study all areas of potential social conflicts and try to resolve the issues before they explode. Where the conflicts have already surfaced, the committees should try to nip them in the bud in addition, take or recommend necessary measures to thwart future occurrences. The council should decide the number and membership of such committees.

4. Avoid discussing potentially explosive matters until such a time that reasonable mutual confidence and trust are clearly seen to have been established. Later, all issues could be brought up for discussion.

5. Meetings of the council, and those of its standing committees should be fixed as soon as possible, to cover a whole year. Every effort must be made to ensure that the meeting dates are honored.

Where for any reason a meeting could not hold, all efforts must be made to hold it within one month.

This is expected to ensure that the council and its committees are active at all times.
That we have to dialogue if we must live in peace with one another is non-negotiable. That inter-religious dialogue is an imperative on us as part of our prophetic calling and mission is not in doubt.

DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

NEGATIVE APPROACHES
1. Indifference.
2. The Polemical approach
3. The Sanctuary approach
4. The compromising approach.

POSITIVE APPROACHES
1. A recognition that dialogue can take place only between persons and not systems.
2. There must be a form of revolvable relationship in dialogue.
3. A willingness to share lives together i.e. to belong to the world of the other person.
4. Frank/open statement of beliefs and practices.

SCRIPTURE IN DIALOGUE IN NIGERIA POINTS TO BE KEPT IN MIND FOR A MUSLIM CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE.

SCRIPTURE/WORD
1. Islam is a religion of the book explained by the habit of God:

   Both Muslims and Christian believe that their scriptures are the word of God. This implies that their faith is based on revelation. However, their notion of the Word of God differs for the two. By it, the Muslims means a book, for the Christians the books is only a mode of transition of the word which is Christ himself.
2. The mode of inspiration for both books: Christians believe the formation of scriptures was an active collaboration between God and man in which God respects human freedom culture and traditions. The Muslims believe that the word came to Muhammad merely by dictations.

3. Literary Style: The Bible as we know it contains many types of works. The Koran however contains only one Literary style e.g. prophecy.

4. Different View of History: In the Bible history is progressive promise fulfillment in the Koran, truths of revelation from the beginning are complete and unchangeable. For the Muslim prophets were sent to specific communities by God.

MUSLIM VIEW OF THE KORAN

1. Uncreated Word of God: from the beginning Q5:22"--surely this is a glorious Koran inscribed on a preserved tablet" revealed to Moses -Torah David psalms Jesus Gospel finally to Mohammed in the Koran all represent the eternal scriptures well guarded on a table.

2. The Koran is The Focus of Attention and ultimate criterion for judgment Q5:48-49" we have revealed the book with the truth. It confirms the scriptures which came back before it and stands as guardian over them.

3. The Koran is an Object of Respect because the book is stamped with divine power and recitation of the word alone is meritorious.
MUSLIM VIEW OF THE BIBLE

1. Some ask why have four gospels, then which is right, may be the Gospel according to Barnabas was the authentic.

2. How can the Torah revealed to Moses contain an account of his death?

3. Is there a habit that can trace every book back to the person of Christ?
WHAT IS INTRA-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Intra-religious dialogue is a form of dialogue in which adherents of same religious dialogue with them selves. It is common knowledge that all established religions have various sects and divisions among them. This often gives way to divergent doctrinal understandings differences and methods of approach. It therefore important that for reasons of intra-religious harmony adherents of same religion should dialogue with them selves from time to time and thus seek understanding and avoid conflicts.

A very important form and example of intra-religious dialogue among Christians is what is known as Ecumenical dialogue. Here we attempt to examine it further:

ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE

Ecumenical dialogue is that dialogue which is established between the "Christians of different churches or communion. The principles and themes of this dialogue are different form those inter religious dialogue. Ecumenical dialogue is thus not un-connected with inter-religious dialogue.

The decree on ecumenism recommended dialogue between competent experts. From different churches and communities in a religious spirit and suggests that each explain the teaching of his communion in greater depth and bring out clearly its distinctive features. This it is hoped will dispel mis-understandings and possibly lead to the security of some doctrinal agreement. Dialogue should not be seen as an attempt to persuade others of the truth of
one's own faith. Dialogue then is like a balm that gradually heals the
wound of our division. In dialogue, ways of collaboration for the
common good, for prayers in common etc. can be created and
articulated.

In our contemporary worlds man seeks for dialogue as a
privileged means of establishing and developing mutual
understanding, esteem, respect and love, whether between groups
or individuals for this reason, modern man is eager to use dialogue
at all levels of his life, political social, economic, educational and
religious. In the same trend, dialogue has become an indispensable
means for the meeting and witnessing of individual Christian
churches and ecclesial communities at the levels both of thought
and action.

In the light of this awareness, the second Vatican council has
stressed the importance of dialogue between the Catholic Church
and the other churches and ecclesial communities. This then is what
ecumical dialogue the dialogue which takes place between
Christians of different confessions.

THE NATURE OF ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE

Dialogue exists between individuals and groups from
the moment when each party begins both to listen and to reply, to
seek to understand and be understood to pose questions and to be
questioned in turn, to be freely forth coming himself and receptive to
the other party concerning a given situation with the aim of
progressing in unison towards a greater community of life.
Reciprocity and mutual commitment are essential elements of
dialogue.
In dialogue, communication plays an important role. Human communication is fraught with problems and difficulties for meanings are in people. Sometimes people are not understood the way they intended. Sometimes where we are understood, we often fail to get people to think or behave in the way we would wish. The reason is because when we communicate we always have four main objectives, namely:

1. To be received heard or read
2. To be understood
3. To be accepted
4. To get action-like change of behaviour or aptitude towards us.

Often, when we fail to achieve any one of these objectives we become frustrated and this leads to resentment. To guard against this partners in dialogue must both learn to listened and charity without the slightest intention of hurting the other. In this reared, then choice of words, clarity of expression and organization are recommended.

THE AIM OF ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE
1. Through ecumenical dialogue Christians aim at advancing together in their sharing in the reality of the mystery of Christ and his church. This is to enable Christians discern the common elements in their different ways of approaching the revealed mystery and of translating it into their thoughts life and writings.

2. Through dialogue, Christians must learn to give common witness to the mission which Jesus Christ confided to his church. The mission of the church to evangelise in hampered when Christians do not speak with one voice especially on doctrinal, moral and social issues.
3. The world poses the same questions to all churches and looking for answers to the unresolved riddles of human existence and thus asks questions such as: What is man? What is the meaning and purpose of life? What is upright behaviour and what is sinful? Etc. In the light of the above, the catholic church urges her sons and daughters to enter into dialogue with Christians of other Ecclesial communities so that together they can listen to these questions through dialogue and being attentive to the Holy spirit seek appropriable responses to them in service to the world.

4. Within the internal life of church a large number of Christian communions are faced with questions on the laity, the ministry, the liturgy, catechetic, the Christian family, the sacraments, etc. It is important that Christians should apportion these questions trinity through the medium of dialogue.

**BASES OF ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE**

The bases of the ecumenical dialogue are rooted in a number of doctrinal and pastoral factors which we shall briefly examine.

a. **Common Baptism:**

Those who believe in Christ are Christ's disciples since they are all born through the same womb of the baptismal font. They are thus mystically tied together through the death and resurrections of Christ. Baptism is the first basis of ecumenical dialogue since all who have been testified by faith and baptism are incorporated with Christ.
The division of Christians is against the will of Christ. The preaching of the gospel therefore should stir the heart of each, the desire for openness to reconciliation. Sympathy draws people together and implies an attitude of suffering with the other. This sympathy is a kind of understanding where by one take off his heart and puts in the body of the other person and vice-versa. This is the kind of attitude or spirit that is conducive for dialogue.

The other necessary conditions that should be taken into consideration are those of:

b. Tolerance
c. Sincerity of purpose and
d. Accommodation.

BEST APPROACH TO DIALOGUE

1. No use dwelling on points of difference or trying to harmonies
2. Try to understand the logic of the Muslim concerning the gospel and Koran.
3. Explain that for the Christian the word is Jesus himself.
4. The message is not falsifies since the oldest scrolls are preserved.
5. During a dialogue meeting in Triopli in 1976 experts from both religious came up with the declaration that each side should accept each other view of its scriptures the way they are.
6. Remember that there are more than one way of looking at secretory for the believe it is the word of God for the atheist it is mere literature exercises does both presuppose truth, only biblical theology dose always accept and follow the rules of interpretation and recognize that some one else can interpret that in a different.
b. **The Mystery of Salvation:**
   Catholics and the separated brethren alike enjoy the spiritual good of the mystery of salvation inside their churches and Ecclesial communities. Though separated from catholicons, they also carry out many liturgical according to conditions of each church or community.

c. **Pre-relation as a Common Reference Point:**
   Christ as the sum total of revelation of God is the common point of our ecumenical dialogue; the witness of Christians is centered on Jesus and has meaning only through a relationship with him.

d. **Renewal**
   Church renewal has a notable ecumenical importance. The church being institution of frail men and women here on earth is continually in need of renewal. Christians are called to aim at perfection.

   In the effort towards renewal all communions in like manner are normally led to enter into dialogue in order to question themselves on their own faithfulness to Christ's will. Renewal which is common to all communions forms another basis for ecumenical dialogue.

**FUNDAMENTAL GUIDELINES: DIALOGUE**

1. Each partner must have the belief that the other is speaking good faith.
2. Each partner must have a clear understanding of the faith of the other. This implies:
3. His willingness to interpret the faith of the other in its best light rather than its worst.
4. Continual willingness to revise his understanding of the faith of each other.
5. Each partner must have a clear understanding of his own faith.
6. Each partner must accept responsibility in humility and patience for what his group has done, and is doing, to foster and perpetuate division.
7. Each partner must forthrightly face the issues, which cause separation as well as those, which create solidarity.
8. Each partner must recognize that all that can be done with the dialogue is to offer it up to God.

PROBLEMS AND OBSTACLES TO DIALOGUES IN NIGERIA.
1. Some Moslems think that dialogue is a subtle way of converting Moslems to Christianity.
2. Nigerians on the whole have been known for patience and tolerance in religious matters. It is often foreigners who start religious disturbances. This was true of the metasine riots and the recent problems in Borno State when schools became closed for a while. These could be obstacles to effective dialogue.
3. There is always the fear of domination in Government of one group over the other.
4. In certain states one religion gets domination over the other, especially in schools and their curriculum.
5. Many invited Muslims abstain from religious dialogue.
6. Muslim dominate areas do not allow freedom of expression on religious matters.
7. Holier than thou attitude.
9. Influence of other Islamic countries sending in money to sponsor fanaticism.
10. Illiteracy.
11. Poverty

CONCLUSION

Religious dialogue of all kinds is open ended and essential for national unity in a multi-religious nation like Nigeria and must be taken seriously by all stakeholders. Religious should be an element of national unity rather than that of division. We must all pray for national unity.
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