EDUCATION ON ECUMENISM AND RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

BY

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to

1. Late John Chor Kajo
2. My students all over the world
3. My teachers and colleagues in the teaching profession
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My special thanks go to the almighty God who made it possible for this work to be put together. My Bishops most Rev. Athanasius Usuh and Most Rev. William Avenya for their constant support, in my academic endeavours. My brother priests for their constant encouragement and the authors whose works I used with presumed permission and here demand their forgiveness.

The staff and students of the College of Education Kastin-Ala who demanded for this work, hold a special appreciation. All who will make use of this work to propagate the faith and enhance religious tolerance, May the good Lord bless you all.
PREFACE

Despite a plethora of books on Ecumenism and religious, dialogue the need to write more books cannot be daunted. While the subject matter remains relatively stable, the authors and their methods of presentation are dynamic and varied. This course shall examine.

1. What ecumenism is
2. The need for Ecumenical movement
3. The history of ecumenism among Christian bodies
4. Ecumenical associations in Nigeria
   - The world council of churches
   - The Roman Catholic church
   - The Pentecostal churches
   - The Aladura church the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN)
5. This course also examines the effects of divisions among Christian bodies in Nigeria.
6. The need for Dialogue between traditionalists, Moslems and Christians in Nigeria is also examined: along with these, will be:
   - What is inter-religious dialogue?
   - What is intra-religious dialogue?
   - Basis for inter-religious dialogues
   - Forms of intra-religious dialogue (types)
   - Aims of dialogue
   - Principles of dialogue
   - Problems/Obstacles to dialogue in Nigeria.

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INTRODUCTION

A multi-religious country like Nigeria has great need for dialogue among adherents of various religions in-order to maintain the peace and tranquility that society needs to move forward. Nigeria has three major religions, namely: Traditional, Christian and Islamic religions. Since traditional religion does not go out looking for converts, issues of crisis and clashes are normally between Christianity and Islam both from within and from without. Seeking education on ecumenism and religious dialogue which is concerned with the exchange of ideas and opinions in an encounter that takes place on equal terms among religious groups with mutual confidence and frankness and without ulterior motives is a sure way of ensuring societal stability. Dialogue should never be seen as an attempt to persuade others of the truth of one's own faith. It is like a balm that gradually heals the wound of our division.

As we prepare our children in schools for future and effective leadership, Education on religious dialogue must be a priority.
CHAPTER ONE
NATURE AND MEANING OF ECUMENISM

WHAT ECUMENISM IS?

According to Vidler (1961:257), "The word" Ecumenical' means worldwide, it has traditional as well as modern application. Traditionally, it was applied to those creeds and council of churches that were universally accepted. In distinction from Local creeds and synods. In its modern application... 'Ecumenical' denotes an ideal of university. It points to what the separated churches of Christendom have in common despite their divisions and to their will to attain the unity they ought to display".

In a more etymological and perhaps broader sense, Gbodi (1989:5) said "Ecumenism comes from two Greek words "Oiikkos" (household) or Oikomine" (inhabitable earth). Ecumenism may therefore mean a house or house-assembly".

Vidler had limited the meaning and application of the 'ecumenical' applying the etymological definition of the same, I will not hesitate to remove that definition from the narrow frame into which Vidler has fixed it in order to project it out to embrace the entire realm of religiosity.

Thus, ecumenical in this context would mean, the desires, the strive and efforts to attain the ideal unity religious systems ought to attain and display. To achieve this, religions will have to come together to a 'house-assembly' in order to dialogue.

The meaning and application of the term 'ecumenical' in this write up does not rest with what is ecclesiastical only but with what is religious as such.
Ecumenism in the Nigerian sense therefore would mean the coming together in a house-assembly of Christianity and its various denominations with traditional religion and Islam in order to attain desired unity and harmony and thus positively evangelize the world.

THE NEED FOR ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT:

The World Missionary Conference of 1910, held in Edinburgh, marked the beginning of modern ecumenism. From it flowed three streams of ecumenical endeavour; evangelistic, service, and doctrinal. Today, these three aspects are furthered through the World Council of Churches, constituted in 1948; in the early 1980's it included more than 295 churches in more than 90 countries.

The evangelical concern of modern ecumenism brought about the formation, in 1921 of the International Missionary Council, comprising of 17 national mission organizations. It coordinated mission strategy and aided new churches.

The service efforts made by Christians across denominations and national boundaries came to fruition in 1925, in Stockholm, when the Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work was convened to study the application of the gospel to industrial, social, political and international affairs. This movement proceeded under the slogan "Service unites but doctrine divides".

The movement toward doctrinal ecumenism resulted in 1927 in the convening of the First World Conference on Faith and Order. The conference concluded that "God wills unity... (and)... however we may justify the beginnings of disunion, we, lament its continuance". A Second Conference on Faith and Order met in Edinburgh in 1937, the year in which another Life and Work Conference met at the University of Oxford. Delegates to the