

**ECUMENISM IN NIGERIA: THE
ROMAN CATHOLIC CONTRIBUTION**

BY

**NNEBEDUM OSMOND EKENE
PG/MA/06/41589**

**DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION,
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA.**

FEBRUARY 2009

TITLE PAGE

**ECUMENISM IN NIGERIA: THE
ROMAN CATHOLIC CONTRIBUTION**

BY

**NNEBEDUM OSMOND EKENE
PG/MA/06/41586**

**A PROJECT REPORT SUBMITTED TO
THE DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION, FACULTY
OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA,
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT
FOR THE AWARD OF MASTERS OF ARTS (M.A.) DEGREE IN RELIGION.**

FEBRUARY 2009

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that the candidate Nnebedum Osmond Ekjene with Reg. No. PG/MA/06/41586 has duly effected all the corrections suggested by the external examiner.

Rev. Fr. Dr. H.Achunike
Supervisor

Date

Rev. Fr. Dr. H. Achunike
Head of Department

Date

APPROVAL PAGE

This project has been approved for the award of Master of Art (M.A)
Degree in the Department of Religion, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Rev. Fr. Dr. H. Achunike

Date

Rev. Fr. Dr. H. Achunike
Head of Department

Date

External Examiner

Date

Dean Faculty of Social Sciences

DECLARATION

Nnebedum Osmond Ekene, a Postgraduate student of the Department of Religion, University of Nigeria, Nsukka with Reg. No. PG/MA/06/41586, has satisfactorily completed the requirement for the course and research work for degree of Master of Arts (M.A) in Religion.

The work embodied in this project to the best of knowledge is original and has not in anyway been submitted in part or full for any other Degree or Diploma of this or any other university.

Rev. Fr. Dr. H. Achunike
Head of Department

Rev. Fr. Dr. H. Achunike
Supervisor

DEDICATION

Dedicated to my parents who continuously pray for my fulfillment in life.

ABSTRACT

Ecumenism is currently a topical issue in Christendom, and is aimed at promoting unity among different Christian denominations. In Nigeria, it began initially among the Protestant missionaries while the Roman Catholics were indifferent. But with the impetus drawn from the Vatican II Council, she later joined the ecumenical movement. This research work is geared towards probing into the contribution of the Roman Catholic Church towards the ecumenical work in Nigeria. It also seeks to determine the efforts of she has made so far in her ecumenical work as well as discovering the challenges facing this work. This research work is both historical and sociological; as a result, it adopts a multi dimensional approach to the study. It combines both primary and secondary sources of data collecting techniques. Textbooks, journals, periodicals and internet sources were extensively used, while oral interviews were also administered to a few and accessible respondents as a guide to the work. Consequently, it was discovered that ecumenism, which began among the Protestant missionaries has been enhanced with the entrance of the Roman Catholic Church into the dialogue in Nigeria. The work also discovers that although the Roman Catholic Church has been doing her best in promoting the dialogue in Nigeria, she has not done enough because of deep-seated denominational biases, rivalry, antagonism and persistent schism, in the country. One implication of these findings is that the Roman Catholic Church has not succeeded in her ecumenical work in Nigeria. And this is a sign that the Christians have contradicted the Lord's injunction of unity for his followers (Jn 17: 21). The researcher, by way of conclusion, enjoins all Christians to desist from their uncompromising denominationalism and unanimously embrace, unity as is taught by our Lord Jesus Christ.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to express my profound appreciation to a number of people who helped in making this work a reality.

I sincerely thank my supervisor, and my role model, Rev. Fr. Dr. H.C., Achunike, for his continued patience, encouragement, fatherly and moral concern towards me. Father Hilary, God will keep you and give you more fruitful years both in academic work and his vineyard.

My special thanks and gratitude also goes to my uncles; Eddy, Celestine, Henry and my Cousin Emeka, whom God used to finance my education.

I equally express my gratitude to my lovely parents Mr. and Mrs. R. Nnebedun, who inculcated both godly and academic discipline in us.

I also appreciate the concern and patience my siblings; Judith, Chidebere, and Tochukwu. God will give you all the land of promise.

Am also indebted to all my lecturers in the department such as; Prof. M.J., Okwueze, who incidentally is the incumbent Dean of student Affairs Department, Prof. U. A. Agha, Prof. N.E., Onwu, Dr. T. Ugwu, my incumbent Head of Department, Rev. Dr. E. Ituma, Rev. Canon Collins Ugwu and Rev. M.Omaka.

I also appreciate the concern show to me by my academic colleagues; Rev. J., Utaji, Rev.S., Oleh, Rev. Fr. Osmond Anike etc.

I am greatly indebted to the staff of the following libraries; Catholic secretariat and Pontifical Mission Societies, Abuja, Institute of Ecumenical Education Library, Thinker's Corner, Enugu, Catholic Institute of West Africa, (CIWA) Library, Port Harcourt, Catholic Diocesan Library, Nsukka Nnamdi Azikiwe Library, University of Nigeria, Nsukka and Religion Development Library. They all made both the environment and materials conducive and available for me to work.

I also remember my room mates in the Postgraduate Hall, University of Nigeria Nsukka.

Bro Walfard Ezemalu, Chika Ikeh, Eddy Inyikalum, Barrister Peter Onuh, Kanayo Onwurafor, Emma Okolo, Engr. G.O. C., Ihezue, and others who in one way or the other contributed in financing my education are equally appreciated here.

Finally, my ultimate appreciation goes to God Almighty, who despite my frailty still understands, considers, and graciously tolerates me especially by giving me sound health (body, soul, and mind) during the course of this programme.

Nnebedum Osmond Ekene
Department of Religion,
University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title page...	...		..	..	..	..	..	..	i
Certification ..	...		..	..	...	..	..	...	ii
Approval page..	...		..	..	..	..	..	...	iv
Declaration ...	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	iv
Abstract ...	...	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	vi
Acknowledgement...	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	...	vii
Table of contents ..	..	.	..	..	..	..	..	...	ix

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1	Background of the Study.	...	..	...	...	...	...	1
1.2	Statement of the Problem	...	...	..	..	..	..	2
1.3	Purpose of the Study..	..	..	..	...	..	..	3
1.4	Significance of the Study...	...	..	..	..	..	...	4
1.5	Scope of the Study..	...	..	..	..	..	..	4
1.6	Research Methodology...	..	...	...	..	..	..	5
1.7	Definition of key Terms..	..	..	..	..	..	..	5
	End Notes to chapter one ..	...	..	...	..	...	...	9

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1	The Non Catholic Views on Ecumenism...	...	...	...	12
2.2	The Pre-Vatican II Period of Ecumenism (1894-1961)...			...	20
2.3	The Vatican II Period of Ecumenism (1962-1965)...	...		...	22
2.4	The Post-Vatican II Period of Ecumenism (1966 – 1989)..			...	24
2.5	The Contemporary Period of Ecumenism (1990 –till date)..			...	26
	End Notes to Chapter Two...	...	..	...	37

CHAPTER THREE: ORIGIN/HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF ECUMENISM IN NIGERIA

3.1	The Origin of Ecumenism in the world ...	...	...	...	41
3.2	The Beginning of Ecumenisms in Nigeria ..	...	...	...	47
3.3	CAN and Ecumenism In Nigeria ..	...	...	...	51

3.4	The Principles of Ecumenical Dialogue..	...	...	...	...	53
	End Notes to Chapter Three..	..	..	...	..	58

CHAPTER FOUR: THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CONTRIBUTION TO ECUMENISM IN NIGERIA.

4.1	The contribution of Roman Catholic Church to Ecumenism in Nigeria	64
4.2	Challenges facing Ecumenism in Nigeria ...	68
4.3	The Prospects of Ecumenism in Nigeria ...	71
	End Notes to chapter four ...	73

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.1	Principal Findings ...	77
5.2	Contributions to knowledge..	78
5.3	Recommendations...	79
5.4	Suggestions for further study ...	82
	End Notes to chapter five	83
	Bibliography...	85

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The concept of ecumenism is no longer new in Christendom. It began formally about 1900, in Edinburgh, with the aim of ensuring co-operation and unity among the Christian denominations.

The ecumenical dreams came on board because the church of Jesus Christ, which from time immemorial was founded on the basis of unity and love has been subjected to persistent schism, proliferation and disintegration. Even at the time the researcher concluded his findings, someone, somewhere is busy erecting and registering a new church - an aberration and a bastardization of what Christianity stands for.

Therefore, as mentioned earlier on, it was this phenomenal breakage that apparently led to the agitation for church unity, a situation whereby Christians from different denominational backgrounds will strive jointly for unity in the essentials of Christianity¹. Efforts in ecumenism are the possible ways of facilitating the fulfillment of our Lord's prayer for unity as in John's gospel (17:21.)

Moreover, as a follow-up to that, this project of repairing the broken walls of Christian unity led to the conference of 1910, which took place in Edinburgh. Although, the move marked the beginning of modern ecumenical movement, it was mainly a Protestant affair because the Roman Catholic church stayed away from the movement.

From then, till the present moment, considerable progress has been made towards accomplishment of the project - Christian Unity. But additional leverage came with the merger of this protestant ecumenists with the Roman Catholics immediately after the historic Vatican II Council (i.e the twenty-first Ecumenical council) convened by both pontiffs subsequently, John XXIII in 1962, and Paul VI from 1963-65².

Back in Nigeria, the initial ecumenical movement began among the protestant missionaries who came with the aim of destabilizing the then Roman Catholic Missionary achievements in the country³. But because of a lack in ideological insight, according to Ekpunobi, the dream was ultimately shattered.⁴

But the renewed zeal for ecumenism in Nigeria finally began in earnest from 1970⁵. With this, there was an enhanced theological and liturgical dialogue between the Roman Catholic and Protestant theologians⁶. Again, this renewed move, affected CAN (Christian Association of Nigeria) – an umbrella organization that looks after the Christians in Nigeria. Truly, it was not meant to be an ecumenical group ab-initio,⁷ but this renewed zeal for ecumenism affected it both in concept, context and nature, and the result was that CAN became almost an ecumenical group.

As a facilitator, the Roman Catholic Church, which incidentally is our focus in this research work, has been in the fore-front of this struggle in Nigeria. Armed with her Vatican II Council's decree (*Unitatis Redintegratio*), she has continued to encourage and enhance the move for Christian unity in Nigeria.

Although, she has been spearheading this ecumenical endeavor in the country, she has not yet recorded any landmark achievement in this area. And this becomes a big puzzle for her to solve. Above all, the researcher still believes that with the modern globalization, and interdenominational relationships, the church of Jesus Christ will ultimately rise above these anomalies and emerge as a religion of one faith and one shepherd.

1.2 Statement of Problem

A serious study of the state of the things in Christendom today reveals that all is not well with the church of Jesus Christ. The unity and love of brethren, which has been the remarkable identity of the early church has been replaced by persistent schisms, divisions and breakages. In fact, the above scenario is captured in the words of the Vatican II Council Fathers,

In so far as Christ founded one church and one church only, the divisions, among the Christian communities

scandalize the world and impedes the spread of gospel. Many Christian Communion present themselves to men as the true inheritors of Jesus Christ. All indeed profess to be the followers of the head but they differ in mind and go the in different ways as if Christ himself was divided⁸.

This, as an incurable case, has almost crippled all the ecumenical moves made in this country. In fact, it is on record that the first ecumenical move made in Nigeria (i.e. by the protestant missionaries) failed because of interdenominational prejudice and rivalry. It then becomes regrettable that despite the renewed effort of the Roman Catholic Church, in the wake of the Vatican II Council, to re-focus the ecumenical agenda in Nigeria, there is nothing yet to show for it.

Against this background therefore, the task before the researcher is to x-ray the contributions so far made by the Roman Catholic Church in the on-going ecumenism in Nigeria.

Although, other Christian denominations also contributed to the ecumenical development in Nigeria, the researcher is of the opinion that the Roman Catholic Church's role should be studied alongside the reasons why the ecumenical efforts seem hindered.

Also the research work will examine the prospects of ecumenism and proffer solutions and recommendations, which will ultimately re-position the Church towards a lasting ecumenism in Nigeria.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this work is to:-

- Identify the factors that gave rise to the emergence of ecumenism in Nigeria.
- Establish the level of Roman Catholic involvement (contribution) in the on-going ecumenism in Nigeria.

- Find out the likely reasons why the ecumenical endeavor has not been fully established in Nigeria.
- Identify the prospects of ecumenism and possibly proffer solutions or recommendations in order to facilitate and redress the problems discovered in the Nigerian ecumenical field.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This work will be of significance in many ways:

- Firstly, it will ginger earnest discussions and interactions among the students of ecumenism in Nigeria.
- Secondly, the x-ray of the problems of ecumenism in the country will arm the Christians with correct attitude which help in pulling down the inter-denominational barriers that hinders Christian Unity.
- Thirdly, it will arm both the theologians and ecumenist currently involved in the ecumenical debate with the rightful issues to be examined or negotiated.
- Fourthly, it will also enable the Roman Catholic Church to objectively understand the point of view of other denominations apart from hers’.
- Finally, the government will be rightly informed about the latest trends in church and society and possibly, be influenced in her policy formulations towards the church as a whole.

1.5 Scope/Limitations of the Study

This research work is centred on the Roman Catholic contributions to the ecumenical endeavour in Nigeria. As a result, the research work is restricted to the Nigerian landscape and the Roman Catholic Church alone.

In order to have adequate representation, five dioceses of Nsukka, Enugu, Awgu, Awka and Abuja were chosen as samples in analyzing the ecumenical efforts within the churches.

Though the researcher tried seriously to cover the designated areas under study, his work suffered some setbacks. In the first place, the research had

inadequate finance which made him to be unable to directly visit the places under study and delayed the completion of the work.

As the researcher relied heavily on oral interviews, he was either snubbed, avoided like a leper, persistently disappointed by the respondents, or not allowed to exhaust his questionnaires and not to conclude his interviews where any of these took place, where the interview holds. As a result, he was unable to cover the chosen places or get enough data from the oral interview.

Therefore, the researcher was made to rely on the available data derived from the available oral interview and written works in generalizing his findings.

1.6 Research Methodology

Every research work adopts certain specific procedure in order to arrive at empirically satisfactory conclusion. The work is both a historical and sociological attempt at establishing the level of commitment and contribution of the Roman Catholic Church to the ecumenical work in Nigeria. It adopts both primary and secondary sources. On the primary sources, oral interview techniques were used. Textbooks, journals, periodicals, bulletins, articles from the library and some internet sources were also used as the secondary sources.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

ECUMENISM: The term “ecumenism” has been variously defined by scholars from diverse backgrounds. According to the *Chambers’ Twentieth Century Dictionary*, it means the doctrines and practices of the Christian Ecumenical movement⁹; it etymologically comes from the Greek “Oikoumene” and Latin “Oecumenicus” meaning the inhabited world¹⁰. A.S., Hornby sees it as a noun that implies the principle or aim of uniting different branches of the Christian faith¹¹. John Hardon’s *Pocket Catholic Dictionary* sees it as the modern movement towards Christian unity whose protestant origin stems from the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference in 1910, and whose Catholic principles were formulated by the Second Vatican Council in 1964¹².

Ekpunobi, in his turn, defines it as the movement of the church towards the visible union of all believers in Christ¹³. The Webster's New World Dictionary sees it as the furthering of religious unity among the different Christian faith¹⁴. It is initially all about meeting other Christians and getting to know them so that they could arrive at a better understanding of their religious positions¹⁵.

Therefore, ecumenism is both a movement, an attitude of openness toward Christians of different traditions in order to learn from their various experiences and deepen one's own commitment to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ¹⁶. From all indications, ecumenism is the condition or practice of unifying different denomination in Christendom as a fulfilment of the Lord's prayer "that they may be one (ut unum sint)" (Jn 17:21). The noun "ecumenism" was introduced in 1937 by the French Dominican, Yves Congar, and then was adopted and confirmed by Vatican II in the Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*¹⁷.

ECUMENICAL: Is an adjective involving or uniting members of different branches of the Christian Church¹⁸. The use of the word "ecumenical" became popular from the 20th Century when the Swedish Bishop, N. Soederblom (1866-1930) gave 'Oikoumene' and the adjective 'ecumenical' the sense it takes today in theology¹⁹. In other words, to be ecumenical implies to be related or involved in ecumenism.

ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH: Is the Christian church that has the Pope as its leader²⁰. It is also seen as the Christian church characterized by an Episcopal hierarchy with the Pope as its head and believes in seven sacraments and the authority of tradition²¹. Again, it is seen as the Christian church over which the pope presides²². Finally, it is a Christian denomination of believers, who are in communion with the papacy and make up the largest Christian church, currently, in existence²³. Its headquarters is in the Vatican City where the Pope resides; it is found mostly in Europe, Asia, Latin America and Africa.²⁴

PROTESTANTISM: Can be defined in two senses. In the strict sense of the word, it is seen as the group of princes and imperial cities, who at the Diet of Speyer in 1529 signed a protestation against the Edict of Worms, which forbade the Lutheran teachings within the Holy Roman Empire. In the broadest sense,

Protestantism is any of the Christian religious groups of Western European origin that broke with the Roman Catholic Church as a result of the influence of Martin Luther, founder of the Lutheran churches, and John Calvin, who is the founder of the Calvinist movement.²⁵ It is also defined as an adherence to the religion and beliefs of a protestant church, or the religion and religious beliefs fostered by the Protestant movement.²⁶ Therefore, from the explanations, Protestantism is the belief in the religion of those Christian denominations that protest against the Roman Catholic teachings and doctrines.

LUTHERAN CHURCH: This is the church group that believes in the religious doctrines and church polity of Martin Luther, who is also the 16th century German theologian, author and leader of the Protestant Reformation.²⁷ Her total population in the world was nearly 66 million by the end of 2003. They are found throughout Europe, North America, Latin America, Africa and Asia.²⁸

EASTERN ORTHODOX CHURCH: This is the second largest single Christian community in the world estimated to number between 225-300 million total members.²⁹ Though it is identified as Eastern Orthodox, its official name is Orthodox Church. She traces her lineage back to the Apostles in the same manner as the Roman Catholic, Oriental Orthodox and Anglican.³⁰ It is derived from the Byzantine Church and adheres to Byzantine rites.³¹ In fact, this was the initial church that separated from the Roman Catholic Church because of quarrels over doctrines and rites. This church would be found in Europe, Asia and North Africa.³²

ANGLICAN CHURCH: This is also known as the Anglican Communion. It is the religion professed by those Christians who are in communion with, and acknowledge to some degree the leadership of the Bishop of Canterbury. It is the church set up in 1559 by the English Crown Parliament after her King (Henry VIII) severed relationship with Roman Catholic Church. This is a worldwide church communion spread throughout the former British Commonwealth.³³ Her cardinal doctrines are the belief in the canonicity of both old and New Testament of the Holy Bible, Apostles and Nicene Creed as the sufficient statement of Christian faith, two sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, the episcopacy and the Church as God's commissioned agent in the world.³⁴

METHODIST CHURCH: The Methodist Church began in England through John and Charles Wesley, who were both clergymen in the Church of England or Anglican Church.³⁵ It is traceable to the 18th century Evangelical revival that took place in England. It is characterized by the concern for social welfare and public morals.³⁶

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH: It is the church that is based on the principles of ecclesiastical government and is led by Presbyters or Presbyteries. It also designates or pertains to various churches having this form of government and professing more or less modified forms of Calvinism.³⁷ It evolved primarily in Scotland before the Act of Union in 1707, and is traceable to John Calvin's Scottish Reformation.³⁸

SYNCRETISM: This is an attempt at bringing together beliefs from several or different and often contradictory schools of thought.³⁹ It is also seen as the attempt at the reconciliation or union of different or opposing principles, practices, parties, denominations as in the late 19th and 20th century discussions between Anglo-Catholics and Roman authorities.⁴⁰ Again, it means combining elements of many religions into one.⁴¹

End Notes to Chapter One

¹ O.A. Onwubiko, *Building Unity Together, In The Mission of the Church: A Theology of Ecumenism*,. Nsukka: Fulladu Pub. Comp. 1999, p.36.

² Chamber's *Twentieth Century Dictionary* 1978, cited in O.A. Onwubiko, *Building Unity Together, In The Mission of the Church: A Theology of Ecumenism*, p.36.

³ E. Ekpunobi, *We Are Closer Than We Think: An Analysis of Contemporary Issues In Ecumenism*, Enugu: Rabboni Publisher International, 2001, p.70.

⁴ O.U. Kalu, *Divided People of God*, New York & Lagos: Nok Publishers, 1978, p.3.

⁵ O.U. Kalu, (ed) *African Church Historiography: An Ecumenical Perspective*, Berne, Switzerland, p.9, cited in H.C., Achunike, *Dreams of Heaven: A Modern Response of Christianity in North Western Igboland 1970-1990*, Onitsha: Africana –FEP Publishers Ltd. 1995, p.89.

⁶ H.C. Achunike, *Dreams of Heavens: A Modern Response of Christianity In North Western Igboland 1970-1990*, Onitsha: African- FEP Publishers Ltd., 1995, p.90.

⁷ H.C. Achunike, *Dreams of Heaven: A Modern Response of Christianity In North Western Igboland 1970-1990*, p.90.

⁸ A. Flannery, O.P, *Vatican Council II: Decree on Ecumenism, Unitatis Redintegratio*, Dublin: Dominican Publications, p.452.

⁹ *Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary* 1978, cited in O.A., Onwubiko, *Building Unity Together, In The Mission of the Church: A Theology of Ecumenism* p.36.

¹⁰ O.A. Onwubiko, *Building Unity Together, In The Mission of the Church: A Theology of Ecumenism* p.36.

¹¹ A.S. Hornby, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, p.370.

¹² J.A. Hardon, *Pocket Catholic Dictionary*, New. York. Image Books 1985. cited in O.Onwubiko, *Building Unity Together, In The Mission of the Church: A Theology of Ecumenism* p.36.

¹³ E. Ekpunobi, *We Are Closer Than We Think: An Analysis of Contemporary Issues In Ecumenism* p.20.

¹⁴ Websters' New World Dictionary: Simon and Schuster in Frequently Asked Questions about DEFINING ECUMENISM" <http://www.catholicdoors.com/gaq/qu.23.htm>, 15/7/2008.

¹⁵ "Theo 244, Church: A Communion of Believers" <http://www.aarweb.org/syllabus/syllabi/g/goosen/module 07.htm>, 15/7/2008.

¹⁶ Richard P. McBrien "Ecumenism" Chicago Studies 12 (1973) p254, cited in H.C. Achunike, *Dreams of Heaven: A Modern Response of Christianity In North Western Igboland 1970-1990*, p.84.

¹⁷ Andre Birmele, "Ecumenism" In Jean Yves Lacoste, (ed) *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology* Vol. I, New York: Routledge 2005, p.472.

¹⁸ Charles Boyer, "Ecumenical Movement" In *The Catholic Encyclopedia For Schools and Home*, Vol 3, New York: Grolier Inc. 1965, p.669.

¹⁹ Jean Yves Lacoste, *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology*, p.472.

²⁰ A.S. Hornby, *Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary*, of *Current English* p.1023.

²¹ *The American Heritage Dictionary of English Language*. Fourth Edition, Houghton Mifflin Comp. 2003 <http://www.the-free-dictionary.com/Roman+Catholic+Church>, 9/9/2008.

²² *Collins Essential English Dictionary*, 2nd Edition, Harper Collins Publishers, 2004 <http://www.the-free-dictionary.com/Roman+catholic+church>, 9/9/2008.

²³ "Roman Catholicism" <http://atheism.about.com/library/glossary/western/bldef-roman+catholicism.htm>.

²⁴ Oral Interviews: Benedict Agbo, St Peter's Chaplaincy, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, December 18, 2008. Benedict Agbo is the former curate of St. Peter's Chaplaincy, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, A Roman Catholic Priest, expert in ecumenism as well as a lecturer, Music Department, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

²⁵ "Protestantism" from <http://knowledge.rush.com/kr/encyclopedia/protestantism>, 23/09/09.

²⁶ "Protestantism" *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, Fourth Edition, Houghton Mifflin Company, from the free Dictionary, <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/protestation>, 23/09/09.

²⁷ The free Dictionary <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/protestation>, 23/09/09.

²⁸ C. S. Meyer, *Lutheranism*, *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p614 in C.P. Ibebuikwe, *Understanding Ecumenism*, Enugu: Snaap Press, 2006, pp.19, 20.

²⁹ “Eastern Orthodox” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/eastern_orthodox-church, 24/09/09.

³⁰ “Orthodox Church” wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/orthodox-church>, 24/09/09.

³¹ “Eastern Orthodox” <http://wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn>, 24/09/09.

³² C.P. Ibebuikwe, *Understanding Ecumenism*, p.12-13.

³³ C.P. Ibebuikwe, *Understanding Ecumenism*, p.31.

³⁴ cf McGraw-Hill, *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. I, New York, London, Sydney, 1967, p.350, in C.P. Ibebuikwe, *Understanding Ecumenism*, p.53.

³⁵ Kenton, R. Renfroe, “The Early History of The Methodist Protestant Church,” <http://www.pointsouth.com/mpc/early-hist.html>, 25/09/09.

³⁶ WordNet 3.0, Farlex Chipart Collections 2003-2008 Princeton University, Farlex Inc., the free Dictionary, <http://www.thefreedictionary.reference.com/browse>, 24/09/09.

³⁷ “Presbyterian” Random House Dictionary Inc. 2009, Dictionary.com. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse>, 24/09/09.

³⁸ “Presbyterianism,” Wikipedia the free encyclopedia <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/presbyterianism>, 25/09/09.

³⁹ Tricia Ellis-Christensen, “What is Syncretism?” <http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-syncretism.html>, 23/09/09.

⁴⁰ The free Dictionary. <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/protestantism>, 23/09/09.

⁴¹ B.H. Kato, *Theological Pitfalls in Africa*, Kisumu (Kenya): Evangel Publishing House, 1975, p.134.

⁴² <http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-syncretism.htm> .

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of the available literature is made here so as to get a clearer picture of the ecumenical efforts made both by non-Catholics and Catholics through the centuries. This is choreographed under the following divides:

- The Non-Catholic Views on Ecumenism
- The Pre-Vatican II Period of Ecumenism (1894 – 1961).
- The Vatican II Period of Ecumenism (1962 – 65).
- The Post-Vatican II Period of Ecumenism (1966 – 89).
- The Contemporary Period of Ecumenism (1990 – till date)

2.1 The Non-Catholic Views on Ecumenism

Writing from his Russian Orthodox Church background, the author (not specified) of “Ecumenism,” in “The Orthodox Faith Website,” states that ecumenism refers to the syncretistic movement seeking intercommunion between all Christian denominations despite their doctrinal differences. He also states that the modern Ecumenical Movement and its main vessel, the World Council of Churches (WCC), finds its origin in the fundamental beliefs of freemasonry, a secret cult promoting a New World Order, with a united religion, a common market, and a single universal government – that of Anti-Christ¹. In fact, the writer is biased in his claims because ecumenism is not syncretistic and occultic, but an authentic attempt by Christians in restoring unity among themselves in fulfilment of the Lord’s Prayer “that they may all be one” (Jn17:21). And it did not originate in Freemasonry (a non-Christian/anti-Christian sect), but rather it began among Christian missionaries who in the mission fields discovered how Christian divisions hinder their missionary efforts. It also began when the Christians saw the need for a united approach to issues affecting the church in the world. Therefore, attributing the present ecumenical initiatives in Christendom as syncretistic and of freemason origin implies interpreting ecumenism as being contrary to God’s will. The researcher believes that ecumenism originated in Christendom, and is an authentic initiative of Christians for their common good.

Another unspecified author of “Ecumenism,” in “Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia,” states that ecumenism in the broadest sense means the unity across the three Abrahamic faiths of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In a narrower sense, it means a greater co-operation among different religious denominations of a particular or single faith. The writer also states that the Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Anglicans, and other Protestant Churches now engage together in ecumenism in order to promote unity in Christendom through ecumenical dialogues, debates, academic lectures, social and spiritual activities. He however, mentions that some traditionalist Christian groups such as the traditional Roman Catholics, traditional Orthodox Christians, and the Evangelical protestants are opposed to ecumenism.² In fact, the author who lodged this article in the website did a seemingly detailed work, but his explanation of ecumenism as unity across the three Abrahamic faiths of Judaism, Christianity and Islam is unacceptable. He would have used a better expression like “inter-religious dialogue” to represent the unity among other religions and not ecumenism. Ecumenism is Christian in context and should be technically reserved for the search for unity among the Christian denominations.

Another unknown author of “Ecumenism,” in the “Talk: Ecumenism,” in the “Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia” sees Ecumenism as a Christian concept, which deals with dialogue and reconciliation with one faith family which is Christianity as against religious pluralism which deals with inter-religious dialogue³. The researcher agrees with the author of this article because notwithstanding his further arguments and counter-arguments on the possibility of merging ecumenism and pluralism, he ended up specifying ecumenism as a Christian concept that has nothing to do with religious pluralism. The truth is that though it may sound similar to religious pluralism, it is Christian both in origin, nature and context.

Another writer in the “Wikipedia” establishes that a sizeable minority of Christians oppose ecumenism. They see it either as a compromise, as an endeavour aimed at a false-pan Christian religious unity, and an apostasy which may ultimately lead to the emergence of anti-Christ.⁴ The argument here is quite

comprehensive because it came from a sizeable minority of Christians such as the traditional Orthodox Christians, traditional Roman Catholics, and some evangelical Protestants whom the researcher sees as the ignorant ones, who were not able to interpret clearly the handwritings on the wall. Ecumenism is neither a compromise of essential denominational doctrines, false-pan Christian religious unity nor apostasy. It is never aimed at paving the way for the emergence of the anti-Christ, but is aimed at promoting unity among the different denominations that make up Christianity. Therefore, the researcher suggests that these anti-ecumenical Christian groups should try to study the ecumenical movements and their works in Christendom thoroughly in order to be able to make good judgment concerning them.

Nikolai, A. Berdyaev in “Orthodoxy and Ecumenism” states that while Orthodox Christians and Protestants prefer spiritual ecumenism, Roman Catholics prefer an ecumenism of a homogeneous world organization, which is visible in outlook. He also states that while institutional ecumenism may not be easily realized between Roman Catholicism, Orthodoxy and Protestantism because of “Papal Supremacy” in Roman Catholicism, it may be realized between Orthodoxy and Protestantism because they have freedom of spirit.⁵ In fact, the author’s work is comprehensive and balanced for he is able to establish the type of unity favoured by each Christian sect and the possibility of such unity. There seems to be no distortion of facts in this work which makes it easily assimilated by all Christians.

Both the New Delhi and Nairobi (General Assemblies of the World Council of Churches) Reports of 1961,⁶ and 1975⁷, states the desired model of ecumenism as that of a conciliar fellowship of local churches, who are fully united. And in this unity, each local church or communion possesses the fullness of Catholicity and Apostolicity, and shares the same Baptism, and Eucharist, and is guided by the same spirit. The World Council of Churches’ stance is quite commendable for based on their proposed model of church unity, each denomination still maintain her distinct identity, though she joins in the conciliar fellowship with others. And this, the researcher, feels may be workable than the

institutional or doctrinal ecumenism, which may require either the return of all churches to the Roman Catholic Church or collective acceptance of all the Roman Catholic doctrines as against their own doctrines.

Emma Ekpunobi, in his work, *We Are Closer Than We Think: An Analysis of Contemporary Issues in Ecumenism*, explains ecumenism under three broad categories such as the linking of all Protestant Churches, the linking of all Protestant Churches and Roman Catholic Church; and finally, as the linking of the above plus other faiths. The author also discusses the formation of the Nigerian Church Union, which is the precursor of the ecumenical movement in Nigeria, and how their relationship with the World Council of Churches enhanced their ecumenical work.⁸ The author's explanations are seemingly comprehensive, but the researcher disagrees with his later stand that ecumenism is the linking of Christianity plus other faiths. This is because that does not technically imply ecumenism but inter-religious dialogue. Ecumenism should be restricted basically to what it stands for – unity among the different Christian denominations and not for unity among different religious sects, which fall into another distinct category.

Benjamin Diara, in his work, *Anglican Spirituality: The Practice of Balanced Christianity*, establishes that the spirit of ecumenism is Christian, and nurses a number of worthwhile concerns in that the Lord's Prayer for unity overrides divisions and that God's mission overrides the pride of individual churches and that there is the need for correction of denominationalism. All these factors resulted in the call for ecumenism.⁹ The author is balanced in his argument because the above reasons and a lot more is the concern of ecumenism and should be the major concern of every Christian in order to facilitate the missionary work of the Church. This is quite clear for this lack of unity in Christendom greatly affects her missionary work.

Byang Kato, in his work, *Theological Pitfalls in Africa*, reviews the evolution of ecumenical work in Africa. In fact, Kato seems to have done an exhaustive and indepth work in his study of ecumenism in Africa. He explained ecumenism, generally, as a "brotherhood" gathering which brings together both Roman Catholics and Protestants, and specifically as drive for Christian unity

which envisages bringing all churches including Roman Catholic Church under one ecclesiastical tent. He further stated that ecumenism is a child of mission fields and that ecumenical conference were subsequently held between 1910 and 1947 which culminated in the formation of a large cohesive body, the World Council of Churches in 1948, which now fosters the ecumenical work in the world. He again stated that the ecumenical work in Africa evolved under that All-African Conference of Churches. He observed that lack of common authentic source of authority exposed them to deviation from the real gospel of salvation and ecumenism to the gospel of liberation from imperialism and apartheid policy, which he claimed may lead to both syncretism and universalism.¹⁰ Apart from the other explanations given by the author, the researcher believes that the issue of deviation of the All African Conference of Christian Churches from the gospel of salvation to the gospel of social liberation must be addressed squarely, otherwise, ecumenism in Africa may ultimately lead to compromise, syncretism or universalism which are all contrary to the Christian creeds.

Peter A. Heers, in his article, “The Missionary Origins of Modern Ecumenism: Milestones Leading up to 1920,” states that the idea of ecumenical movements came up initially among the protestant missionaries for the purpose of missionary advancement. He then highlights the major milestones that have been recorded up to 1920 such as: the Missionary Movements of the 19th Century, the Evangelical Ecclesiology: the Invisible Church, the YMCA, and Student Christian Movements: Inspiration of Ecumenical Generation, the Edinburgh 1910 Conference: the Cradle of Modern Ecumenism, and 1920 Encyclical and Orthodox Participation.¹¹ The author’s position is true because the idea of ecumenism came up firstly among the Protestant missionaries as they observed that their divisions impeded their missionary objectives; hence, a solution have to be sought for, possibly through ecumenical strategy. Again, the author’s use of “milestones” was to show that ecumenism has passed through various stages before its present stage in 1920. Also, as a Greek Orthodox Catholic Christian, Heers wants to convince his church that the time is ripe for them to fully participate in injecting both Orthodox, Apostolic and Biblical truths into the

ecumenical movement, lest they deviate into heresy. On this, the researcher believes that a periodical review of the doctrines of the ecumenical movements may help checkmate these deviations. This job, he agrees, is to be done through a combined effort and not just for the Greek Orthodox Christian group.

Archbishop Vitaly, in his report on “Ecumenism” to the Sobor of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church, analyses the essence of ecumenism, motives and factors that led to the beginning of ecumenism in the Church. He maintains that contrary to the claim that ecumenism began because of the need for unity, as against division in Christendom, and because of the need for a collaborative effort in mission, it was actually aimed at enthroning pseudo-Christianity – a union built on deception, heresy and compromise. He also claims that both the Young Men Christian Association (YMCA), the Young Women Christian Association (YWCA), and the Boy’s Scout (the precursors of the ecumenical movements) were humanistic societies prepared by Freemasonry to infiltrate and adulterate Christendom with false doctrines leading to both false unity and enthronement of the anti-Christ and as a result of this they are not party to any ecumenical movement.¹² These claims by the author have no basis for, according to the researcher, the present ecumenical movements have no hidden agenda or linkage with Freemasonry or heresy. The groups that, finally, merged to form the World Council of Churches (WCC), never came up to propagate heretical doctrines of Freemasonry but to find a way of addressing, both individually and collectively, the issues affecting the church and her mission in the world. Therefore, the researcher maintains that both the author and his Russian Orthodox Church group should be more disposed to study these ecumenical movements in order to have a complete understanding of their role and identity; there is no denomination that can lay claim to absolute purity of doctrine, though few like the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church may be nearer to purity of doctrine. As a result, the Russian Orthodox Church should embrace the moves of other Christians and the ecumenical movements in order to promote the Christian unity instead of discriminating against them.

The researcher maintains that though there may be perceived deviations in the teachings of the ecumenical movements, still they may not be enough reason for any Christian group to shun them, instead, they should encourage them to concentrate on theological bases otherwise they may become problematic.

Samuel Kobia, the General Secretary of World Council of Churches, in his keynote address, “Challenges Facing the Ecumenical Movement in the 21st Century,” at the Inter Church Centre, New York, mentions the challenges facing the ecumenical movement in this present century. He maintains that ecumenical movements are those institutions or church councils that have been involved with promoting ecumenism in Christendom. He states that for them to succeed in their ecumenical work, they have to tackle the problems associated with the shifting centre of Christian population. They also have to ensure that as old movements die, they have to be consistent in their programmes with the new movements. The Christians must ensure adequate support for their individual churches. Again, they must ensure oneness in their decisions and voices, which they give out to the world, and finally, true spirituality is needed for ecumenism to survive in Christendom.¹³ The address seems clear because the author understands the present predicament, which the churches are passing through. And the researcher agrees that such challenges are real and must be jointly tackled by all Christians in union with the ecumenical movements in such a way that the much awaited dream of peace and unity among Christians will be realized.

W.G. Michaelson, in his article, “The Future of Ecumenism in the 21st Century”, states that ecumenism in this era must find fresh forms of expressions that may not condone divisions and be capable of re-directing the church back to her calling. He maintains that doing this implies considering whether to be ecumenically inclusive or institutionally protective. They also have to consider whether they will be driven fundamentally by spiritual vision or organizational momentum. Finally, they have to seek for either incremental change or deep change if the Church is to be re-directed back to her ecumenical calling.¹⁴ This is true because if the ecumenical groups (movements) are able to examine these issues or create fresh forms of expression as against the old forms in dealing with

their individual denominational barriers and biases; if they can understand the real driving force behind their ecumenical calling and focus on qualitative change as against quantitative change, it will bring about the desired success. The reasons given here are obvious because adopting the old forms or methods of expression in this era implies retrogression while adopting new forms will lead to progression.

Furthermore, R.V Sinner, in his article, “Ecumenism in the 21st Century: Theses for Discussion” brings out twelve theses that can enhance the present ecumenical efforts. He specifies that the ecumenism that must succeed must be built on trust, embrace the attitude of honesty, humility and mutual accountability. It must develop meaningful and concrete relationships with visible consequences as well as widen, deepen and foster their relationships. It must also pursue a common goal as well as express their churches’ identity fully in their mission. Again, it must have a functional communication network between their different actors as well as build a network of facilitators. It must also have strong and thorough theological base as well as have strong lay participation. Finally, he maintains that there must be an open participation for all activities of ecumenical movements as well as adequate participation of churches in diverse ecumenical engagements if ecumenism is to succeed in this age.¹⁵ In fact, the author’s twelve theses rhymes with the principles of ecumenism as established in the Vatican II Councils documents on ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio*). And the researcher believes that these are the right steps in the right direction, for once they are adequately applied, the much awaited unity will easily be achieved.

T. Early, in his work on ecumenism in *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Religion*, states that ecumenism calls for a spirit of brotherly love in removing those sources of division that crept into the church.¹⁶ The researcher commends the author for his suggestion about the indispensability of brotherly love in mending the battered or fragmented walls of Christianity. In fact, the research believes that such suggestion is paramount since only combined effort and understanding can solve the problem of disunity among the Christians.

2.2 The Pre-Vatican II Period of Ecumenism (1894 – 1961)

The Protestants began ecumenism through the World Council of Churches before the Roman Catholic Church joined. But the review here includes the work done by the Roman Catholic writers before the Vatican II period.

Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical of June 20, 1894, “*Praeclara Gratulationi*”, established that Christian unity is found only in the return of other separated Christian groups to One Holy, Apostolic Church of Christ, which is the Roman Catholic Church. He therefore extended invitation to the Eastern Orthodox Church in the unity of faith.¹⁷ In fact, the Pontiff was convinced by then that the continuous excommunication of Eastern Orthodox group will further keep the division, even though he still maintained their initial stand that all churches must return to the Catholic Church. The researcher believes that the mood of the encyclical itself was responsible for the inability of the Protestants to comply to the invitation. They saw the role of the Vatican then as that of an impostor. And if unity is to be worked out it must to be by mutual agreement between the churches, and not just by the Roman Catholic Church.

Pope Pius IX, in his Apostolic Letter to All Protestants and other Non-Catholics, “*I am Vos Omnes*” informed the Protestants about the coming Vatican I Council and how they would be opportuned to return to the Roman Catholic Church. But the invitation was not honoured by the protestants because that was not the kind of Christian unity they desired – a situation where they will come under the Roman Catholic domination.¹⁸ The researcher still believes that the nature of the encyclical itself was the reason the desired unity still eluded them by then. This is because there was an element of pride, as mentioned earlier, in the encyclical which implies that the Roman Catholic Church is complete and the only church where others will return to. The researcher rejects this attitude of perfection and maintains that the rightful unity may not entail a return to any visible institutional church, but that of a spiritual unity where individual denominations, still mindful of identities, understands their oneness in Christ and collectively pursue their common goals in the spirit.

Pope Pius XI, in his encyclical of January 6, 1928), “*Mortalium Animos*,” re-iterates that the type of unity envisioned by the Roman Catholic Church is the return of the separated churches to one true church of Christ which is the Apostolic See, set up in the city where Peter and Paul lived and consecrated with their blood. He maintains that unless they return to the Apostolic See, there may never be unity. He further declares that it is anathema (a curse) for Catholics to partake in any meeting with Protestants.¹⁹ The researcher still sees the attitude of perfection displayed in this encyclical, but maintains that Christian unity may not just mean a return to the Roman Catholic Church as is claimed in the encyclical. This does not solve the problem even if it happens. The main thing here is that some of the Christian groups that separated from the Roman Catholic Church like the Orthodox and Lutheran groups may not sanction the ecumenism of return because they felt that there were errors in the Church when they were excommunicated. Therefore, inviting them back to the Roman Catholic Church in the name of unity is almost impossible, though they may agree to negotiate and dialogue. So, this was the circumstances that persistently kept these churches and Roman Catholics apart from each other despite the encyclicals.

Pope Pius XII, in his own encyclical of December 20, 1949, “*Ecclesia Catholica*”, declares that the ecumenical movement was inspired by the grace of the Holy Spirit and a cause of holy joy to the sons of the Catholic Church. Thus the rule of “*Monitum – Compertum*” (a rule that forbids Catholic from engaging in anything with Protestants), was mitigated thereby permitting the Catholics to participate in future ecumenical gatherings with Protestants.²⁰ Although, the Roman Catholic Church was afraid of losing her members to Protestantism, this encyclical was enough proof that she was ready for dialogue with the separated churches. Also the abolition of “*Monitum Compertum*” (rule forbidding Catholic engagement with non-Catholics) was one of the earliest move towards reconciliation made by the Roman Catholic Church. In fact, the researcher believes that this step brought some relief to the groups and enhanced certain processes which finally culminated in the future Vatican II Council’s ecumenical discussion.

2.3 The Vatican II Period of Ecumenism (1962 – 65)

The attempts here are to review the works done by the Catholics during the Vatican II Council era (1962 – 65).

Augustine Bea, in his work, *The unity of Christians*, discusses how the much desired Christian unity can be achieved. He maintains that Christians are to understand the obstacles to this desired Church unity and struggle to address them squarely. And these obstacles according to him are, the perceived lack of unity among the Orthodox Churches, lack of a common voice among the Protestants as regards the ecumenical project. He also mentions the problem of prejudice, misunderstanding, rivalries and distrust existing among the Christians. He then states that these obstacles can be resolved by true Christian attitude both by the Roman Catholics and non-Catholics. He encourages them to have an attitude of charity, mutual love and respect for each other's faith. They are to pray fervently with great humility and faith for the spirit of love, unity and peace to reign among the separated Christian churches. They are to encourage and promote ecumenical dialogues, academic research, and debates between the theological experts of both sides. He states that once the above obstacles are tackled through these seeming solutions, dreams of rebuilding the shattered wall of Christianity will become reality.²¹ As one of the pacesetters of the Vatican II Council ecumenical discussions, the author's work is commendable. This is because, any one that studies the Vatican II Council's documents on ecumenism will understand that the author is among those that prepared the Vatican II Council's document on ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio*).

Pope Paul VI, in his Vatican II Council's document on ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio*), accepted the blame for the breakage of Christendom, and welcomed ecumenism as the work of the Holy Spirit. He invited Catholics everywhere to recognize the signs of the times and merge with the non-Catholics in promoting ecumenism in Christendom. He advised Catholics to be ready to engage both in ecumenical dialogues and academic debates with non-Catholics - a platform where their differences are to be clarified and settled. He also encouraged the Roman Catholics to set the ball rolling by showing right Christian

principles that may promote ecumenical dialogue, such as love, tolerance, openness, respect for others, sincerity and humility.²² As a matter of fact, this encyclical came up at the time when the Roman Catholic Church had seen the need to seek out for other Christians instead of waiting for their return as was her stand initially. The Catholics had initially identified these Protestants as either heretics or schismatic sects. Having seen the need to cut down on some of her strict rules concerning excommunication of Protestants her major priority was on how to forge better ways of accommodating negotiations with Protestants. Therefore, the researcher believes that this Vatican II encyclical was drafted to convince and encourage the Roman Catholics on the need to embrace the ecumenical movements. Again, another important fact about the ecumenical document (*Unitatis Redintegratio*) is that it not only suggested the need for Catholic participation in the ecumenical dialogue and discussions, it also mentions the principles that are to guide such dialogues in order to ensure that the desired success is reached.

Henri Fesquet, in his work, *The Drama of Vatican II: The Ecumenical Council June 1962 – December 1965*, re-interprets ecumenism in two different ways. He saw it as a re-union of separated churches around a centre, which implies Rome, and secondly, saw it as an association, a kind of roundtable of churches none of which can claim to be formal heir of the Church of the Apostles.²³ Really, the author's first explanation has been the initial position of the Roman Catholic Church – that all the protestants have to return to her for ecumenism to be fully realized. But with time, she had a new understanding, which changed her stand from ecumenism of return to Roman Catholicism to ecumenism of spirit – a situation where different denominations agree to come under an association which is more spiritual, and is capable of giving them a common voice, yet each retains her individual identities. Therefore, the researcher believes that Fesquet's second explanation, which claims that "none of these churches can claim to be the final heir of the Apostles" cannot be validated. This is because regardless of whatever damage or adulteration of doctrines done in

Christendom, both the Roman Catholics, Orthodox, and partly Anglicans still have the indisputable and rightful claim to Apostolic succession.

Augustine Bea and W.A. Visser't Hooft, in *Peace Among Christians*, discusses the possibility of peace among the different Christian denominations. They state that Christians should work hard to embrace the peace moves in Christendom. They linked the present ecumenical initiatives such as the ecumenical debates and discussions between Catholic and non-Catholic theologians, joint prayer activities and social actions, and interdenominational visits to the Vatican II Council's document on ecumenism. They also x-rayed the problems facing the Church in her bid to facilitate her ecumenical plans such as the promotion of unity, peace and missionary work in Christendom. They mentioned problems such as irreconcilable denominational doctrines, problem of disunity, rivalry, biases, mistrust, and fear of Roman Catholic monopoly and fear of syncretism. They stated that if the ecumenical initiatives as mentioned above are vigorously pursued and promoted, those problems are to be tackled as well as prospects.²⁴ The two writers want to prove that the present level of advancement in the ecumenical fields today are the brainchild of Vatican II Council's decree on ecumenism. And this is to prove that the document is a workable one. Therefore, Churches have to jointly fight these anti-ecumenical forces both from within and without in order to ensure its continuous workability.

2.4 The Post-Vatican II Period of Ecumenism (1966 -89)

The attempts made here is to review the works done by the Roman Catholics after the Vatican II Council era.

Stan Anih, in *Christian Ecumenism and the Church in Nigeria*, calls for a united effort of both Catholics and Protestants in facilitating the ecumenical moves in the country since both contributed to the present division that exists within Christendom. In order to ensure its workability, he stated that they are to have a common understanding, which will encourage them to vigorously pursue joint prayer sessions and visits, joint social actions leading to social justice and peace, ecumenical debates, discussions and dialogues among the theological

experts from both sides.²⁵ The researcher agrees with the author here because, just as he said, if the Christians are to put aside both denominational pride and biases, and focus on these joint spiritual and social actions, the result will be different in the Nigerian ecumenical field.

Yuri Kryanev, in *Christian Ecumenism*, discusses the socio-political, philosophical and theological implications of ecumenism. He maintains that the ecumenists hoped to find a common philosophical source for all of Christianity. He further states that ecumenism should create a basis for co-operation in practical activity and, consequently, for the formation of a single religious community. This is because they believed that Christian integration would lead to the integration of mankind. He also maintained that ecumenical movement came up to create a single Christian ideology that can help in solving the problems affecting the world such as class struggles, exploitation of the poor, poverty, hunger, economic, socio-scientific, technological, ideological, political and religious crises in the bourgeois society.²⁶ This work was able to indicate that ecumenical movements, came up not just to solve the problem of Christian disunity, but that of societal problems too.

J.A. Hardon, in *Pocket Catholic Dictionary*, interprets ecumenism as the modern movement towards Christian unity whose protestant origin stems from the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference in 1910, and whose Catholic origin and principles are dated back to the 2nd Vatican Council in 1964.²⁷ The author did a balanced interpretation of the term ecumenism by giving it both a Roman Catholic and Protestant background or origin, which makes it easy to digest by both traditions. The 1910 Edinburgh Missionary Conference that led to the formation of the World Council of Churches had seen ecumenism as that of unity in diversity of all Christian denominations, a kind of association where each denomination still retained her distinct identity. This, too, has been the position of the Roman Catholic Church from the Vatican II Council days. Therefore, by pointing to both 1910 Edinburgh missionary conference and 1964 Vatican II Council, the author wants to convince both the Protestants and Catholics of the

authenticity of the modern ecumenism and ecumenical movements in Christendom.

Pope John Paul II, in his encyclical “Pontificum Consilium Ad Christianorum Unitatem Fovendam,” which is a revision of the Church’s “Directive for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism,” asserts that there is an urgent need for certain areas of the decree on ecumenism to be re-touched, fine tuned and revisited so that the church will keep abreast with the latest development in the field of ecumenism. He states that the Catholic Church must reach out in love to the separated Churches. He also states that those involved in promoting ecumenism must foster this unity through prayer, exemplary life, and religious fidelity. Again, he states that the formators are to do their work with maturity, have interior conversion and renewal as well as adequate knowledge of their roles. They must be ready to teach their students the rightful thing about other denominations, the Church’s beginning, history of division in Christendom as well as the essence of ecumenism. He also states that there have to be interdenominational sharing in sacraments and spiritual activities. And finally, that they are to enter into ecumenical dialogue with a spirit of respect for others denominational creeds, reciprocity, understanding and truth.²⁸ In fact, this is an expansion of the Vatican II Council’s document on ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio*). The Pontiff wanted a real/practical approach to this Vatican II Council’s document, and the researcher believes that if these principles and norms are vigorously applied, change will be imminent in the ecumenical fields in Christendom.

2.5 The Contemporary Period of Ecumenism

Related works done on ecumenism are analyzed here.

An unspecified author of “Theo:244: Church: A Communion of Believers, Module 7,” an article from the Australian Catholic University examines the work done by G. Goosen on *A Short History of Ecumenism: Bringing the Church Together*. He agrees that interdenominational interactions on ecumenism is on course in Australia as is seen in their institutions of higher learning, theological

colleges, in their joint bible translations, establishment of joint ecumenical colleges of divinity, production of ecumenical journals of theology, and interdenominational works on social justice. He then states that ecumenism is all about meeting other Christians together and getting to know each other in order to arrive at a better understanding of their religious positions.²⁹ The probable Roman Catholic writer backs up his work with a lot of evidences as a proof of the workability of the Vatican II Council's decree in Australia. But the thing worthy of note in this work is his interpretation of ecumenism as "meeting other Christians together and getting to know each other in order to arrive at a better understanding of their religious positions." Really, this is another way of pushing for ecumenical dialogue - a forum where different parties meet to deliberate and know themselves and their opinions well in order to learn their religious creeds in a better way. Therefore, it implies that the author believes in ecumenical dialogue as a way of resolving of denominational prejudices and differences as is currently done by both the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Pontifical Council for the promotion of Christian Unity (a Roman Catholic Pontifical Council that oversees everything about Christian Unity).

Another unspecified author of the article, "Frequently Asked Questions About Defining Ecumenism," in Catholic Doors Ministry, analyses the response of the Roman Catholic Church to vital issues relating to ecumenism. He interprets ecumenism as a furthering of religious unity among the different Christian faiths. He also states categorically that Catholics believed strongly that Christ bestowed unity on his church from the beginning and that this unity subsists in the Catholic Church, which she cannot lose. He again maintains that Catholics should have permanent renewal of the Church in greater fidelity to her vocation, true conversion of heart, engage in common prayers for Christian unity, and have fraternal knowledge of each other. They should also have continuous ecumenical formation of her faithful and priest, engage in interdenominational ecumenical dialogues and debates and collaborate with other denominations in service to the world. He again maintains that the reconciliation of all Christians transcends human powers and can only be possible by divine grace. He also states that

though the fullness of the means of salvation is found in Catholic Church, other aspect or means of salvation is found in other denominations. He further states that even as the move for sacramental sharing gains prominence in Christendom, Catholics, for now, do not agree to share the Eucharist with non-Catholics. He finally maintains that the blame for separation or division of Christendom should be not on the separated Churches but on the forebears of both traditions.³⁰ In fact the author (unspecified) writes as a traditional Roman Catholic, as is seen in some of his categorical statements. His interpretation of ecumenism as a furthering of religious unity implies that unity already exists in Christendom, though a peripheral one, and has to be deepened. On his stand as regards the refusal of non-Catholics participation in Roman Catholic Eucharistic reception, the researcher believes that such an issue can be settled through the furthering of the ecumenical dialogue among the denominations; after all, we are one and are saved by one Lord.

Pope John Paul II, in his Apostolic Letter, "Crossing the Threshold of Hope," discusses the urgent need for Christian unity. He states that Christians are to be more united by the year 2000 and should be more willing to advance cause, which our Lord prayed about especially now the future of the world is at stake.³¹ The Pontiff speaks as a father, for without unity, the mission of the Church on earth is jeopardized. Thus is his worry; for if Christians celebrate their 2000 years anniversary in division, it amounts to a total disappointment to Jesus himself. Therefore, the researcher agrees with the pontiff that a combined effort of all Christians, irrespective of denominational identities may help address this problem.

Pope John Paul II, in his encyclical of May 25, 1995, 'Ut Unum Sint' (That They May Be One), reviews the whole ecumenical endeavour such as the present ecumenical debates, discussions as well as joint international dialogues between her and the Orthodox Christian Church, the one between her and the ancient churches of the East, the one she had with the Churches of the East, the one she had with the Churches of the West (Protestants). Also he reviews the increased spiritual activities, relationships and social actions carried out by the

church since the aftermath of Vatican II ecumenical council and concluded that it is of the Lord. He further went ahead to enumerate in practical terms, several efforts made by the Church in solidifying this ecumenical struggle. Those personal/official efforts made by the pontiff include: the joint meditation made by Venerable Brother Bartholomew, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople and Pope John Paul II at the Roman Colosseum, on Good Friday, 1994, the visit of Pope John Paul II to the Primate of the Anglican Communion at Canterbury Cathedral, May 29, 1982. Pope John Paul II's visit to Scandinavia and Nordic countries from June 1-10, 1984, the Pope John Paul II's participation at the Eucharistic Liturgy in the Church of St. George, Ecumenical Patriarchate, November 30, 1979. The visit of Pope John Paul II to the World Council of Churches, June 12, 1984, the visit of Venerable Brother, Patriarch Dimitrios I, December 6, 1987 and that of Lutheran Archbishops, Primate of Sweden, and Finland for the celebration on 6th Century canonization of St. Brigitta at St. Peter's Basilica, October 5, 1991. All these and a lot more were the personal and official ecumenical efforts of the Pontiff that made his pontificate an unprecedented one.

Hillary Achunike, in his work, *Dreams of Heaven: A Modern Response to Christianity in North-western Igbo land (1970-1990)*, summarizes the efforts made so far in actualizing the ecumenical dreams in Christendom. He establishes that though ecumenism began initially among the Protestant missionaries, the Roman Catholic Church later joined them after much hesitation. He also states that the joining of the Roman Catholic Church with the World Council of Churches further promoted ecumenical moves in Christendom. Continuing, he states that, from 1970 onwards, informal meetings, conversations, theological debates and discussions have gradually been gaining ground among Catholic Priests and Protestant Pastors. He establishes that mutual invitations to social and religious celebrations, joint prayer sessions, joint Bible translation into many Nigerian languages, under the banner of Bible Society of Nigeria, have been progressing in Nigeria. He concludes by saying that ecumenical dialogue is seriously needed among theologians of both sides on intermarriage and the

Eucharist, and without deeper conversion, ecumenism is useless.³³ In fact, the researcher believes strongly in the author's work and at the same time agrees that many areas still need attention.

Hilary Okeke, in his *Milestones in Ecumenism: Evolutions in Canonical Legislation in Ecumenical Matters*, discusses the journey made so far by the Roman Catholic Church in translating the Vatican II Message of ecumenism into reality. The author, as an expert, buttresses his arguments by mentioning the different rules adopted by the Church such as dropping of the negative attitudes consciously acquired during the era of polemics and apologetics, the abolition of attitudes of prejudice and bigotry against the non Catholics; abolition of attitudes of methodological representation and oversimplification of the position of others in order to refute them. Also, he mentioned that the positive rules such as the one that empower the Catholics to positively cultivate new spirit of self-criticism, which will create a better atmosphere and climate of mutual understanding between Christians. Dialogues were also to be instituted as against initial monologues. The rules concerning sacramental sharing among denominations were also modified. He states that these rules have been adopted by the Catholic Church in order to actualize their ecumenical work.³⁴ In fact, from the author's work, one stands to understand the time it took for each of these rules to replace the old ones, thereby leading to the enthronement of spirit of peace between the Catholics and non-Catholics.

Pope John Paul II, in his recent Apostolic Exhortation, "The Church in Africa", maintains that Catholics should develop ecumenical dialogue with their baptized brethren of other Christian churches in order to fulfil our Lord's Prayer for unity.³⁵ The researcher agrees with the author because without having a developing the spirit of dialogue, each group will still be biased, and that may mean a great obstacle to the ecumenical message, which they all propagate. Ecumenical dialogue as he mentioned is an inevitable role they are to play, for it is through it that their consciences are examined, disagreements are resolved, brotherhood is rediscovered, solidarity in the service of humanity is enhanced, and endowments presents in other Churches are known and appreciated.

Hilary Okeke, in his “African Perspective on Ecumenical Dialogue”, establishes that dialogue with other Christians stands out as a pressing necessity for authentic Christian witnessing in the world. And for this dialogue to be effective, the partners are to first of all enter into it with sincerity and the disposition to learn and not to impose their denominational creeds on their partners. It must be pursued with openness, love and tolerance as well as with mutual sharing.³⁶ Infact, once these are vigorously pursued, there will not only be success in the ecumenical dialogue, but it will ultimately promote unity in Christendom.

Oliver Onwubiko, in *Building Unity Together in the Mission of the Church: A Theology of Ecumenism*, discusses the unity envisaged, which must be built together by different denominations. Having analyzed the “Ecumenism of Return” – the initial model of Church unity proposed by the Roman Catholic Church, that claims that separated Churches must return back to the One, Holy, Apostolic, and Catholic Church for the ecumenism to be effective, he maintains that it may not hold again. The latest stand of both the Vatican II Council, and the World Council of Churches, nullifies it thereby bringing out diversity, an association where each domination agrees with other while still retaining their individual identities. He maintains that with the continued ecumenical dialogue between Catholics and non-Catholics, this peripheral unity will gradually improve to something better.³⁷ The researcher agrees with the author especially as he maintains the type of ecumenism to be pursued is the one that is to be collectively done but not that of a “return to the Catholic Church,” which may never work. This is because even if all come back to the Catholic Church, the division is still deep in their fabrics, and cannot easily materialize into real unity. Although with prayers, and continued dialoguing with basic truths that are held in common the desirable unity may finally come.

Fredrick Omegoha in *Family Apostolate: A New Method of Evangelization* establishes that impatience and intolerance led to the breakage of the medieval Church, but if proper ecumenical dialogue is employed, the desired unity will be realized.³⁸ The researcher agrees with the writer that proper dialoguing between

the Roman Catholic Church and the separated Churches will promote better understanding among them which will pave way for the realization of the ecumenical dreams of the church.

J. Morris and N. Sagovsky, in *The Unity We Have, and the Unity We Seek: Ecumenical Prospects for the Third Millennium*, discusses the type of unity in the mind of the ecumenists. Having analyzed different proposed models of unity, they stated that unity in diversity may be the right option. This is because uniformity of expressions and formulations at all levels and in all situations may not be able to solve the problem, but will indicate a Catholic diversity within a unity of communion. Here the denominational distinctness will be preserved as recognizable traditions like the holy orders in the Roman Catholic Church. They also maintain that the ecumenical dialogue should be pursued as a means to an end but not the end itself. It should be done so that through it, parties involved will have better understanding of both their individual identities, creeds, practices, which will prepare them for real journey towards Christian unity. They suggest that individual churches should enhance their ecumenical work better by dealing with those un-ecumenical practices and dogmas in their midst. They, finally, want the Church to focus on those issues that divide than unite them and work towards resolving them.³⁹ The researcher also agree with the author, that ecumenical dialogue should not be pursued as a formality, but in order for each party to know more about the other. And once this is established it will pave way for real ecumenism to begin.

Walter Kasper, in his work, *That They May All Be One: the Call to Unity*, examines how the Church battles with the work of translating the Vatican II Council's decree into reality. He maintains that ecumenism is aimed at promoting unity among the different Christian denominations in fulfilment of the Lord's injunction that they may all be one. He claims that regardless of how the Vatican II Council's work on ecumenism may be criticized, it is still widely accepted by all. He further states that ecumenism is never against the Church but in favour of her foundational truths and mission. He also mentions the current breakthroughs she has recorded in her ecumenical relationships with the separated traditions of

the East (Orthodox) and the West (Protestants). Again, with clear philosophical, theological and ecclesiological bases, he proves that the dialogue is a “*condicio-sine qua non*” for ecumenical success. He then maintains that with the ecumenical dialogue in vogue, it will remove misunderstanding, rivalries and biases, enhance greater understandings among Christians, deepen what they already have, enhance mutual sharing, and the growth of the already established relationships. He also states that such ecumenical dialogues must be embarked upon with the guiding principles such as love, tolerance, respect for each others creeds, sincerity of purpose, attitude of openness and with no move to intimidate, or monopolize the other parties but with a move to know them more. He, finally, suggests that spiritual ecumenism – the type where Christians in their differences share their spiritual activities like praying together that may enhance divine intervention in the whole ecumenical work.⁴⁰ In fact, the author’s articulations of the nature, purpose, guiding principles of ecumenism as well as its workability proves that he is versed in ecumenical matters as well as one of the designers of the Vatican II Council’s decree in ecumenism.

Pope John Paul II, in his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, states that it is only by becoming real missionaries that the Christians will be able to fight their divisions and antagonisms that have continued to weaken the gospel message.⁴¹ The researcher agrees with the Pontiff because the type of gospel preached within Christendom nowadays are coloured with denominational sentiments. Therefore, if any ecumenical work will succeed in the land, Christians should jettison their biases and focus on the real thing, which is joining hands together to promote unity in Christendom.

Chuma Ibebuike, in his *Understanding Ecumenism*, analyses the ecumenical work as is seen in Christendom today. He states that the idea of ecumenism came up as the Christians saw the need for unity as against division. He also states that ecumenical conferences were subsequently held by diverse Christian societies, which finally merged into a large body known as the World Council of Churches in 1948. He also proves that the breakage and subsequent split of Christendom into fragments occurred because of both doctrinal,

theological, institutional and political mistakes. Again, he maintains that though the Roman Catholic Church never partook in the initial ecumenical conferences, her entrance into the scene enhanced many things such as both bilateral and multi-lateral dialogues as is seen today. He also discusses the latest breakthroughs in the ecumenical dialogues and discussion between Roman Catholics and Orthodox Lutheran, Anglican and Reformed Churches.⁴² Infact, the researcher agrees with the author that ecumenism came up because of the need for unity as against the rivalries, divisions and proliferations of churches. The researcher also believes that the revelation got from this work will further enhance interdenominational relationships.

Raymond Barton, in his article, “Catholics and Methodists: Partners in Dialogue,” analyses the progress made so far in the Roman Catholic-Methodist dialogue. He mentions that conferences were subsequently held in 1976, 1981, 1986, 1991, 1996, 1997 and 2000, which resulted in their joint declaration on the doctrine of justification by faith in 1999. He also states that they have jointly published a lot of things on Christian faith.⁴³ This the researcher agrees, is another landmark record in the present ecumenical dialogues going on in Christendom. This goes on to prove that once the dialogue is allowed to take place, biases and assumptions may easily disappear thereby leaving the parties to understand themselves clearly.

Abbes Georges De Nantes, in his article, “Critique of Pope Paul VI’s *Unitatis Redintegratio*,” declines acceptance of separated churches as “separated brethren.” He states that the whole decree is a play of the devil to destabilize the Church and enthrone heresy and syncretism. He argues that the unity we envisage must be that of repentance and return of the Protestants to the Roman Catholic Church. He also declares that the Roman Catholic Church should not discard her initial stand of being the only pure church; for if she fails to do that, it means she is digging the foundation for syncretism and heresies. He also disagrees with the Vatican II Council’s opinion that the separated churches also have means of salvation in them.⁴⁹ Really, the author’s argument here is baseless, for according to both the Vatican II Council’s document on ecumenism, “*Unitatis*

Redintegratio” and “Ut Unum Sint” (That They May Be One), both Protestants, Orthodox Churches and Roman Catholic Church partly have share in the misunderstandings that lead to division in Christendom. Therefore, no Church has the right to condemn another, but rather efforts should be made for reconciliation as is pursued by both the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches. The researcher believes that even though some denominations may not have basis for existence there may still be elements of Christology and Pneumatology in them, which still makes them Christian. Therefore, efforts should be made in promoting dialogue among these fragmented Christian sects in order to gradually draw them together to a common understanding in Christ. It is only ignorance on the part of the author that makes him feel that the moves for ecumenism is baseless; for if he had been a good student of Church history, he would have felt grievously, the impact of the breakage of Christianity capable of disposing him to appreciate the efforts made so far in the drive for ecumenism.

Cardinal Walter Kasper, in his article “The Ecumenical Movement in the 21st Century – A Contribution from the PCPU” (the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity), enumerates major breakthroughs recorded in the 40-year ecumenical journey embarked by the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches. He remembers how ecumenism began initially among the protestants as well as efforts they made to invite the Roman Catholic Church which after many years of indifference finally joined the ecumenical struggle in the aftermath of the Vatican II Council. He also discusses how Roman Catholic Church’s relationship with the World Council of Churches has continued to grow. Emphasis was also laid on Roman Catholic dialogue both on the bilateral and multilateral dimensions with other churches. He also discusses the resultant effect of such ecumenical dialogues like the exchange of spiritual experiences, joint bible transactions, co-operation in theology as well as interdenominational exchange of visits. He also states that if ecumenical movements must succeed in this present century, they must have clarity both in vision, goals and doctrines; they must also have shared visions and goals. Again, they have been focused on both personal reform (deeper conversion) and institutional reform. They must also

embrace spiritual ecumenism. And, finally, they must have practical ecumenism and not just conceptual (theoretical) ecumenism. In fact, this work is an eye opener to the latest trends in the ecumenical fields today.⁵⁰ This work is a summary of the history of the modern ecumenical movement and will go a long way in helping the parties involved to seek ways of handling them in order to ensure success.

End Notes to Chapter Two

¹ “Ecumenism” The Orthodox Faith”, <http://www.orthodoxfaith.com/ecumenism.html>. 15/07/08.

²“Ecumenism” In the Wikipedia, the free Encyclopedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecumenism>, 15/07/2008.

³“Talk: Ecumenism” In the Wikipedia, the free Encyclopedia [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk: Ecumenism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Ecumenism). 15/07/2008.

⁴ “Ecumenism” Wikipedia, The free Encyclopedia <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecumenism> 02/02/2009.

⁵ Nikolai, A. Berdyaev, 1927, “Orthodoxy and Ecumenism”, in <http://www.chebucto.ns.ca/philosophy/sin-generis/berdaev/essays/orth328.htm>, 30/09/09/.

⁶ W.A. Visser’t , Hooft (ed) *The New Delhi report, The Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches*, London: SCM p.116.

⁷ D.M. Paton, (ed) *Breaking Barriers*, Nairobi, 1975, London 1976, p60, cited in C.P. Ibebuikwe, *Understanding Ecumenism*, Enugu: Snaap Press Nig. Ltd. 2006, p.7.

⁸ E. Ekpunobi, *We Are Closer Than We Think: An Analysis of Contemporary Issues In Ecumenism*, Enugu: Rabboni International 2001, p.22.

⁹ B.C.D. Diara, *Anglican Spirituality: The Practice of Balanced Christianity*, Enugu: Computer –Edge Publishers, 2005, p.132.

¹⁰ B.H. Kato, *Theological Pitfalls in Africa*, Kenya: Evangel Publishing House, 1975, pp.129-170.

¹¹ P.A. Heers, “The Missionary Origins of Modern Ecumenism: Milestone Leading Up To 1920” <http://www.orthodoxinto.com/ecumenism/Heers-TheMissionary> Root of Modern Ecumenisms. Pdf, 15/07/2008.

¹² Archbishop Vitaly of Montreal and Canada, “Ecumenism”, A Report To The Sobor Bishops of The Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia”, <http://www.orthodox.info.com/ecumenism/vitaly.as-px>, 12/07/2008.

¹³ S. Kobia, The General Secretary of The World Council of Churches, A keynote Address, “The Challenges Facing The Ecumenical Movement In The 21st Century”, Delivered at the Inter Church Centre, New York, October 22, 2005, <http://www.nccusa.org/pdfs/Aram/address.pdf>. 15/07/2008

¹⁴ W.G. Michaelson, "The future of Ecumenism In The 21st Century" An Article Produced At Symposium Hosted By His Holiness Aram I, Moderator of The Central Working Committee of The World Council of Churches, New York; October 21, 2005, http://www.nccusa.org/pdfs/the_future.wes.pdf. 15/07/2008.

¹⁵ R.V. Sinner, "Ecumenism In The 21st Century: Thesis for Discussion" A Work Presented To The Continuation Committee on Ecumenism In The 21st Century Held At Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, November 19, 2007, <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/continuations.com....,1/8/2008>.

¹⁶ T. Early, "Ecumenism" in *Encyclopedia Dictionary of Religion* (Eds) Washington DC: Corpus Publications, Vol. A-E, 1979, p.1159.

¹⁷ Pope Leo XIII, *Praeclara Gratulationis*, 1894, C.F Neunera Depuis No 904 in C.P. Ibebuike, *Understanding Ecumenism*, p.78.

¹⁸ Pope Pius IX, Apostolic Letter to All Protestants and Other Non-Catholics, "I am Vos Omnes", Pii IX Pontificus Maximi Acta I, IV, pp436-437. cited in H.O., Okeke, *Milestones in Ecumenism: Evolutions in Canonical Legislation in Ecumenical Matters*, Enugu; Think Limited, 1996, p.77.

¹⁹ Pope Pius XI, "Mortalium Animos" An Encyclical on Religious Unity on January 6, 1928, http://www.papalencyclicals.net/piusII/piI_MORTA.HTM 13/10/2008.

²⁰ Pope Pius XII, "Ecclesia Catholica" An Encyclical on December 1949, <http://www.catholica.culture.org/library/view.cfm?recnum=6331> 13/10/2008.

²¹ Augustine Cardinal Bea, *The Unity of Christians*, New York: Harder and Harder, 1963 pp. 19-53.

²² Pope Paul VI, "Unitatis Redintegratio" An Encyclical on Ecumenism On November 21, 1964, <http://Christusrex.org/www1/CDHN/V13.html>. 15/07/2008.

²³ H. Fesquet, *The Drama of Vatican II Council: The Ecumenical Council, June 1962-December 1965*, New York: Random House, 1967, p.180.

²⁴ Augustine Cardinal Bea, and W.A., Visser't Hooft, *Peace Among Christians*, New York: Association Press and Harder, 1967, pp.37 – 48, 112 -155, 181-198.

²⁵ Stan Anih, *Christian Ecumenism And The Church In Nigeria*, Enugu: The Government Printer, Nd. p.1.

²⁶ Yuri, Kryanev, *Christian Ecumenism*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1983, pp.1245

²⁷ J.A. Haddon, *Pocket Catholic Dictionary*, New York: Image Books, 1985, p.125.

²⁸ Pope John Paul II, “Pontificum Consilium Ad Christianorum Unitatem Fovendam,” A Revision of The Directory for The Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism” presented in His Discourse to The Plenary Session of The secretariat, 1988, http://www.vatican.va/romancuria/pontifical_council/christuni/doucments/rc-pc-chrstu..., 13/10/2008.

²⁹ cf .G. Goosen, *A Short History of Ecumenism: Bringing Church Together*, Sydney: E.J. Divyer 13-42, in Theo 244: Church: a Communion of Believers, Module 7, from the Australian Catholic University, <http://www.aarweb.org/syllabus/syllabi/g/goosen/module07/htm>, 15/07/2008.

³⁰ “Frequently Asked Questions About Defining Ecumenism” in Catholic Doors Ministry, <http://www.catholicdoor.com/faq/qu23htm>, 15/07/2008.

³¹ Pope John Paul II, *Crossing The Threshold of Hope*, (Alfred A., Knopf, New York, 1994) in Matt. C. Abbott, ‘Is Ecumenism’ a Bad Word? In Catholic Culture: Library: Is Ecumenism a bad Word? <http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/libranly/view.cfm?id=5281&CFID=17602467&CFT...30/09/09>.

³² Ioannes Paulus ppII, “Ut Unum Sint” on Commitment To ecumenism” My 25, 1995, <http://www.vatican.va/holy-father/john-paul-ii/encyclicals/documents/hf-jp-ii-enc-2505...>, 05/10/2008.

³³ H.C. Achunike, *Dreams of Heaven: A Modern Response To Christianity In North Western Igboland 1970-1990*, Onitsha: Africana –FEP Publisher Ltd, 1995, pp. 83 -93.

³⁴ H.O. Okeke, *Milestones In Ecumenism: Evolutions In Canonical Legislation In Ecumenical Matters*, Enugu: Think Limited, 1996, p.vii – xv.

³⁵ Pope John Paul II, “Eccle In Africa” No 65, In A.O. Gbuji, “Foreword” H.O. Okeke, *Milestones In Ecumenism: Evolutions In Canonical Legislation In Ecumenical Matters* pp.ii-viii.

³⁶ H.O. Okeke, “African Perspective On Ecumenical Dialogue” In *Bigard Theological Studies*, January –June 1997, Vol. 117, No 1, p.50.

³⁷ O.A. Onwubiko, *Building Unity Together In The Mission of The Church: A Theology of Ecumenism*, Nsukka: Fulladu Publishing Comp. 1999, pp.1-4.

³⁸ F.I. Omegoha, *Family Apostolate: A New Method of Evangelization*, Enugu: Atlanto Printers and Publishers, 1999, p.67.

³⁹ J. Moris and N. Sagovsky (eds) *The Unity We Have And Unity We Seek: Prospects For The Third Millennium*, London: T and T Clark, 2003, pp.167-218.

⁴⁰ W. Kasper, *That They May All Be One: The Call To Unity*, London: Burn and Oates, 2004, pp.6-74.

⁴¹ Pope John Paul II, “*Redemptoris Missio*” *An Encyclical Letter On The Permanent Validity of The Church’s Missionary Mandate*, Abuja: Pontifical Mission Societies, 2008, p.82.

⁴² C.P. Ibebuike, *Understanding Ecumenism*, Enugu: Snaap Press Nig. Ltd. 2006, p.1.

⁴³ R.A. Barton, “Catholics And Methodists: Partners In Dialogue” In *The Catholic Virginian*, January 15, 2007 p.12.

⁴⁴ Abbes De Nantes, “He is Risen” *The Catholic Counter Reformation In The 21st Century*. An Article Produced At our Lady of Fatima Camp 2006, <http://www.crc-Internet.Org/HIR 2008/March 66-3.htm> 1/07/2008.

⁴⁵ Cardinal Walter Kasper, “The Ecumenical Movement In The 21st Century – A Contribution From The PCPCU”, A Presentation At The Event Marking The 40th Anniversary of The Joint Working Group Between The Roman Catholic Church and The WCC, http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/joint-working_grou... 1/8/2008.

CHAPTER THREE

ORIGIN/HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF ECUMENISM IN NIGERIA

3.1 The Origin of Ecumenism In The World

The Church founded by Christ was ab initio indissoluble, but heresies and schisms arose, many centuries after that which threatened the said unity. These heresies and schisms can be best considered as two major separations: Eastern and Protestant¹ as described below.

Firstly, the refusal of Michael Cerularius, the Patriarch of Constantinople, in the eleventh century, to recognize the papal supremacy led to the first schism, which partitioned the once united Church of Christ into Eastern and Western blocs,² by 1054³.

Secondly, the politicization and scandalization of the papal office led to another division that resulted in the election of three different popes at the same time. One resided in Rome, the other at Avignon, and the remaining one also for Rome. Although these antagonistic and scandalous popes were later condemned and deposed in 1415, with the election of a new one on November 11, 1417, it ended up making the Church vulnerable to further schism.

The Protestant Reformation, of 16th century, led by Martin Luther, an Augustinian Monk from Germany, also dealt a severe blow on the united Church of the West by splitting it further into Catholicism and Protestantism⁵.

Worst still, the Church of England's separation from Roman Catholicism in 1559 also caused a terrible division in the remaining Roman Catholic Church. In fact, this incident was caused by the English King, Henry VIII's rejection of the papal decree against his second marriage. Thus, he went ahead to form a new Christian Church called "the Church of England or Anglican Church", in 1559, through the Acts of the English Crown Parliament.⁶

Really, this 19th century Lutheran and later the Anglican Reformations further splitted the Church into many separate denominations, which has continually created factions, rivalry and acrimony among the groups in the once

united christendom. As a result of this, efforts to make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:19) were fragmented, for the European missionaries propagated fragmented Christianity in their missionary fields in Asia, Africa and Latin America instead of the unity in Christ that the message is supposed to bestow⁷

It was therefore recognized that competition between Western missions was a waste of resources and a denial of gospel, and African and Asian Christians had no interest in the historical circumstances which had divided the churches in the West. The missionaries were the first to feel the tragedy of the division having realized the scandal of the division among Christians as they tried to proclaim the same Christ in the cacophony of their divided voices.⁸

Distressed by this problem of disunity and disintegration, these Christian missionaries saw the need for a return to their original foundation, which is unity, and love, and this gave birth to the dream of ecumenism.

Therefore, the stirrings of the modern ecumenical movement lie in the nineteenth Century within groups like the YMCA (1844), the Evangelical Alliance (1846), and the Students Christian Federation (1880), which saw the potential for unity⁴. It was the meetings of the missionary societies in 1888, 1900, and Edinburgh 1910, however that gave birth to the Modern Ecumenical Movement¹⁰.

Seeing that their dreams for Christian unity was about to take shape, the missionary societies of many Protestant groups interested in non-Christian countries sent delegates to this conference at Edinburgh in 1910 to promote a spirit of collaboration in bringing the gospel to the non-European world¹¹.

The conference was an innovation in interchurch relations. For the first time, official delegates from missionary societies were able to meet and engage in sincere discussion of common problems in the missionary field, even though the conference was limited in scope, authority, and representatives.¹² Infact, the 1910 Edinburgh Conference was rightly described as prophetic anticipation of a new movement for the unity of the Churches and as the birthplace of the modern ecumenical movement¹³

In order to ensure that their dream were not stillborn, they agreed not to speak of doctrinal differences but only to seek for unity of action.¹⁴ This is because it was doctrinal differences that resulted in the schisms in the first place. Therefore, they agreed to seek for a united action which may help them in their pursuit of the desired unity instead of doctrinal differences.

It was on this basis that, Charles Brent, an American Episcopalian Bishop of Philippines conceived the idea of assembling a great conference of delegates from all Christian denominations in order to have the forum to compare the different doctrines and work towards unity.

Furthermore, as these delegates, to the Edinburgh conference, made up missionaries from different Christian denominations looked ahead, they saw that some kind of structure needed to take shape, if the goals of the conference were to be achieved.¹⁶ The conference ended in June 1910, with a resolution by Charles Brent to embark on a further plan of convening a great conference that can enhance Christian unity as was mentioned above.¹⁷ By 1921, a continuation committee was formed, and it became clear that three vital issues need to be assessed if the ecumenical dreams are to be realized. These issues include; the missionary task of the Church, the kinds of common service the churches could render to the world, even in their divided state, and finally, the doctrinal issues that were responsible for the ongoing division.¹⁸

The committee for the preparation of the proposed conference was presided over by the Episcopalian Bishop of Chicago, C.P. Anderson, altogether with a zealous layman, Robert Gardiner. An invitation was equally extended to the Roman Catholic Church to help in preparing for the “All Churches Union Conference,” in 1914, which she unequivocally refused.¹⁹

These issues raised above were finally analyzed critically. In response to the first concern, which is the missionary task of the church, the International Missionary Council was established in 1921, to assist various boards in co-ordinating their separate and competing activities, which they had previously. They were also to hold conferences that would make them visualize new ways to use in pursuing the Church’s mission.²⁰ Five conferences were later held by this

International Missionary Council: Jerusalem (1928), Madras (1938), Whitby (1947), Willingen (1952), and Ghana (1957), where they finally agreed to merge with the already established World Council of Churches in 1961.²¹

The second issue, which is about the concern for the church's common service to the world was also critically looked into, and was embodied in a structure called the Commission on Life and Work. The members of this commission reached a consensus on matters to which the separated churches could at least relate. Thus "Doctrine Divides, but Service Unites" became their slogan. Having held her first conference tagged "Life and Work Conference" in Stockholm in 1925, with over 600 delegates from 37 countries in attendance, the Church's roles in areas as International Relations, Education, Economics and Industry were discussed.²² It was headed by Nathan Soderblom, a Lutheran Archbishop and Scholar.

Although, all Christian Communion were invited for the Conference, the Roman Catholic Church was again not represented, for she declined the membership of the conference. The spiritual strength of the conference lay in its insights that "The World is too Strong for a Divided Church"; its weakness was in the avoidance of theological issues.²³

The conference ended with the appointment of a continuation commission that will prepare for the next World Conference. Thus, the second conference of Life and Work took place in 1937 at Oxford where the resolution was passed to merge her with Faith Order Movement to form the World Council of Churches, WCC, in 1948. Although, the Life and Work has been merged with Faith and Order Movement to form the World Council of Churches (WCC), it still remains an agency in WCC.²⁴

Finally, the third structure which pertains to the doctrinal issues responsible for the ongoing divisions were explored. Thus, the members adopting the name, "Faith and Order" held an initial conference in Lausanne, Switzerland in 1927, with (Protestants and Eastern Orthodox) as well. Having highlighted and described the doctrinal similarities and differences without resolution, the delegates convened another conference at Edinburgh in 1937, with 504

Participants including the delegates, their alternates and members of the continuation committee representing 122 churches. The conference was presided over by William Temple, the Archbishop of York.²⁵ Finally, the conference merged the Faith and Order Movement with the Life and Work Movement to form the large and cohesive unit known as the World Council of Churches, (WCC), in 1948.²⁶

The merger of the International Missionary Council with the WCC in 1961, finally sealed the structural reunification of the three areas of concern originating at Edinburgh²⁷. With this merger, both the structure and viability of the WCC was solidified.

Although, the ecumenical endeavor by this time was increasingly becoming real, still it was a Protestant affair, for the Roman Catholics stayed aloof, with the idea that unless these separated churches returned to them, they have no business with them²⁸.

Another invitation was given to the Vatican for another conference in 1914, but it was again turned down²⁹. But on 2nd of November, 1914 the Secretary of the Commission of the Episcopal Church, USA, Robert Gardner, wrote to Cardinal Gasparri, the Vatican's Secretary of State requesting for an audience with the Pope, which was later on granted.

On May 16, 1919, the five Episcopalian delegates met with Pope Benedict (1914-1922), and what served as the report of the meeting was that, the Pope graciously told them that the Roman Catholic Church as the Church of Christ is already one and united. He further maintained that as the Church of Christ, she has continuously preached one faith and one Shepherd. He concluded by telling them that she cannot join them, but may readily accept them whenever they return to her.³⁰

These examples are to prove that many ecumenical contacts were made with the Roman Catholic Church, right from the onset of the movement, but there were many obstacles to overcome. Though initial conferences as mentioned earlier took place without Catholic attendance, an instruction from the Holy See

on December 20, 1949, paved the way for participation of Catholics in future ecumenical gatherings³¹.

After the Stockholm and Lausanne conferences however, Pope Pius XI declared in 1928, that it is unlawful for Catholics to encourage or promote any ecumenical gathering convoked by Protestants. He concluded by maintaining that whoever supports them encourages false christianity³².

Furthermore, the Holy See (now Congregation For the Doctrine of Faith), rejected another invitation to join the 1948 Amsterdam Conference³³. But by 1949, she issued another instruction totally different from the earlier ones. It was this instruction “Ecclesia Catholica,” which gave recognition to the Ecumenical Movement and set guidelines for Catholic participation should they be invited any time³⁴.

Moreover, the rays of hope came as four Catholic Observers were finally permitted to witness the WCC Assembly of 1961, held in New Delhi, India²⁰. during the pontificate of Pope John XIII³⁵. As Pope John XIII called for the Vatican II Ecumenical Council, which was to be constituted by the Church’s hierarchy from all parts of the world, other Christian denominations were also invited as observers. Only the Roman Catholic hierarchy participated in the decision and policy-making processes.³⁶

The Council linked the Roman Catholics to the mainstream of modern ecumenism. By 1960, Pope John XIII established the “Secretariat for Promoting Christianity Unity” as one of the preparatory commissions for the Council. Part of their task was to advice the Pope on the modalities for inviting the participants for the Council³⁷. By 1962, the Secretariat was restructured and placed on the same level as other Conciliar Commissions. With her new positions, she was charged with the responsibility of preparing and presenting to the Council the documents on ecumenism.

During the Council, the Secretariat facilitated the participation of 100 ecumenical observers, among them two observers from the WCC. The presence of these observers created a trustful atmosphere which enhanced various ecumenical dialogues and structured relations with the WCC³⁸. This atmosphere also

enhanced the formation of a JWG (Joint Working Group), after meetings between the first President of the Secretariat, Cardinal Augustine Bea, and the First General Secretary of the WCC, Dr. Visser't Hooft³⁹. The Decree on Ecumenism, prepared by the Secretariat for Promotion of Christian Unity was finally adopted by the Vatican II Council in 1964, and it encourages all Catholics to recognize the signs of the times and help promote ecumenism. It accepted for the first time that the division that occurred between the Catholic and Protestants could be blamed on both sides⁴⁰.

On the close of the second session of the Vatican II Council, precisely on the 5th January, 1964, the Pontiff made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and met with Athenagoras I, the Patriarch of Constantinople and titular leader of the Orthodox Catholics. The move was perceived by Vatican as “a sign of better things to come” while Constantinople saw it as a bigger day than can be imagined. By 1964, Pope Paul VI had already established a “Secretariat For Non-Christian Religions,” in order to enhance understanding between the Roman Catholic Church and non-Christians. It was placed under the care of Paul Cardinal Marella, and was a landmark achievement as regards the move towards Church unity⁴¹.

In fact, it was during the four sessions of the Council (1962-65) that the frosty barriers of the centuries were dissolved, as a result of an atmosphere of lasting, warm and personal relationship, which the participants developed. This phenomena further enhanced Catholic engagement in ecumenism in a number of ways⁴².

From then, till this day, considerable progress has been made, and the institution of dialogue between the Catholics and Protestants is gradually demolishing some of the doctrinal obstacles and misunderstandings that hinder Church unity⁴³.

3.2 The Beginning of Ecumenism In Nigeria

The foundation of what resembled ecumenism in Nigeria was dug in 1911 when the Presbyterians initiated a missionary conference on more practical issues. The outcome of the conference reads:

In order to secure uniformity of discipline within the native churches founded by the different missionary societies, (and) discuss such matters as the relation of the church to marriage under native law, the baptism of women themselves christians, married to polygamous husbands, the definition of spheres of influence in the untouched fields.⁴⁴

Besides, the conference was attended by the Presbyterians, Methodists, and Anglicans⁴⁵. Although the main reason according to Ekpunobi for convoking the conference was to fight denominational competitions,⁴⁶. The truth remains that it was convened in order to break the Roman Catholic monopoly of the mission fields in Nigeria.⁴⁷ During the conference, the issue of organic unity was ultimately discussed - the type that will erase denominationalism. A.W. Wilkie, a participant of the conference declared:

We are not here primarily to establish in Africa, Presbyterianism or Methodism or any other-ism, but to preach Christ and take a lowly place under the guidance of the Spirit of God in the foundation of a Church which shall not be foreign to the Africans⁴⁸.

The missionaries also felt that the there is an urgent need for ecumenism in the land for the denominational gospel they brought to the Africans has created rivalry, division and enmity among the Christians instead of unity and love.⁴⁹ Apart from this, the conference was also stimulated by the World Christian Conference of 1910.

The conference solemnly declares the aim of missionary effort to be the establishment of one Church of Christ. The conference resolves that to attain this unity, there should be mutual and full recognition of the discipline of the churches of Southern Nigeria. That an effort be made to obtain

corporate unity of native churches. That immediate steps be taken for the corporate union of native churches not episcopally ordained⁵⁰.

The argument here is that it is only by agreement that the desired Christian unity would be realized. In order to achieve the unification dream, the union was named “Evangelical Union of Southern Nigeria” by 1923.⁵¹ Moreover, by 1947, another missionary conference was held at Onitsha, with Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians, Qua Iboes, and Sudan United Mission, in attendance. But the Sudan United Mission (the missionary body working in Northern Nigeria, by then) was forced to withdraw from the conference because the colonial policy then could not favor her⁵².

Though they seriously worked for the unification, they could not succeed. But the formation of the World Council of Churches in 1948, and its mandate on the unity of churches, gave them the impetus to continue the struggle. Finally, a date for the inauguration of the Church Union (United Church of Nigeria) was fixed for 11th December, 1965. But before the day came to pass, the event was aborted. In fact, Ekpunobi depicts the scenario in this way;

The inauguration of the united Church of Nigeria was scheduled for 11th December 1965. Some of the guests had arrived in Lagos. Many other guests were on their way to Lagos. The visitors did not know that urgent messages had been sent to their offices regretting an indefinite postponement of the inauguration ceremony. Thanksgiving services were already held for the new united Church of Nigeria in parts of Africa and Europe. Funds close to \$15,000.00 were raised to Britain and North America in Support of the new United Church of Nigeria. Unfortunately, it was still born⁵³.

Despite all the noise about the proposed Church Union, it however failed. Reasons like, lack of clear ideology, inadequate mass education, personality

conflict, ethnic sentiments etc, were given as the cause of the failure⁵⁴. Regardless of the reasons given above, the researcher still believes that the church union initiative failed because of interdenominational antagonism. According to Kalu, these missionaries came together to champion the cause of church unity, but failed to fight the forces of rivalry. Therefore, they ended up fighting or pursuing their denominational interests, which finally killed the vision of the Church Union⁵⁵.

Truly, the initiative failed, but it gave birth to the Christian Council of Nigeria⁵⁶. The Council was made up of various “Protestant Churches notably Church Missionary Society (CMS), now Church of Nigeria, Anglican Communion, Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterian, Qua Iboe, and Salvation Army⁵⁷. The newly formed Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN) provided a forum for member churches to co-operate in various projects relating to pastoral education, joint ownership of schools, and health institutions. And their aims were to foster and express the fellowship and unity of the Christian Church in Nigeria, which will further enhance the realization of its oneness with the church throughout the World. Finally, it aims to keep in touch with the International Missionary Council and the WCC (Article)⁵⁸. Moreover, it was this CCN, that later on changed into CAN in the Northern Nigeria.

As earlier noted, the move for the church union (ecumenism) in Nigeria was orchestrated only by Protestant missionaries at this time, while the Roman Catholics stayed aloof. On this John Baur said:

...No one should be surprised that the African church was slow in its acceptance of ecumenism. For Protestants, the ecumenical movement has been restricted to a search for unity among the Protestant churches, sometimes as a strengthening bond against the so-called Roman danger.”

For Catholics, the prohibition of any participation in worship with heretics - and this meant all Protestants had been so severely inculcated that

ecumenism could only mean - pray for them in order that they may return to Rome⁵⁹.

This was the understanding of the parties - both Catholics and Protestant, even after the Vatican II Council. Therefore, it took a long time for the African Catholics to perceive that Vatican II Council was a new reformation in which Catholic Church accepted the basic ideas of Protestant Reformation.⁶⁰ It was really on this basis that both groups (in Africa) began to see themselves as brothers and sisters from the same lord, and discover that “what unites is greater than what divides them.”⁶¹ With this new insight, coupled with the impetus given to them by both the World Council of Churches and Vatican II Council, ecumenism became a common agenda of both Catholics and Protestants in Nigeria, though their efforts were minimal.

But from 1970 till present, the wind of ecumenism increased⁶². Both formal and informal conversations, meetings and theological discussions began earnestly among Catholic and Protestant ministers⁶³ with the aim to facilitate the desired Christian unity in Nigeria. Before the real ecumenical endeavor began in Nigeria, there has been the existence of a body known as CAN (Christian Association of Nigeria) in the Northern Nigeria among the Protestant Churches. It was made up of both lay and clerical leaders of the Church, who used the platform to pursue a common cause for the Church. But with the ecumenical fragrance already saturating everywhere, CAN became redefined, restructured and reconstituted as a national ecumenical body⁶⁴. It is through this new body that both Catholics and non-Catholics channel their voices together in pursuit of the desired Christian unity in Nigeria.

3.3 CAN And Ecumenism In Nigeria

CAN is an acronym for Christian Association of Nigeria. Although, it began ab-initio among the Protestant groups in Northern Nigeria as an association of both clerical and lay leaders for consultation and common action,⁶⁵ it never

took an ecumenical shape till 1976, when it became a national body,⁶⁶ and on 24 February, 1980, when it became officially inaugurated in Lagos⁶⁷.

On her formation, CAN had the following objectives;

- 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 17:21).
- To promote understanding, peace and unity among the various people and strata of society in Nigeria through the propagation of the gospel.
- To act as a Liaison committee by means of which its member churches can consult together and when necessary, to make common statement and take common actions.
- To act as a watchman of the spiritual and moral welfare of the nation⁶⁸.

At its formation, CAN was only made up of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, (CSN) and the Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN), which includes Christian denominations that belong to the World Council of Churches. But later on, room was made for other denominations simply known as "others".⁶⁹ Gradually, CAN's structure was widened and remodified to have five solid constituent parts:

- The Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (CSN).
- The Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN)
- The Christian Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (CPFN)/Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN)
- The Organization of African Instituted Churches (OAIC)
- TEKAN and ECWA⁷⁰

From her inception, since 1976, the administrative headquarters of CAN was housed by the Catholic Secretariat, till the year 2004, when it was formally transferred to the National Ecumenical Centre, Abuja, with its branches all over the nation⁷¹. With the continued call for deeper ecumenical work in Nigeria, CAN began to increase her momentum in facilitating the spirit of unity among the Christians in the country. She has continued to create opportunities for interaction and co-operation among the Churches in Nigeria⁷². This has been further enhanced with the creation of both the Youth and Women's Wings of CAN,⁷³.

Though they have not been able to hold any real ecumenical dialogue. Apart from this, CAN also engages in both spiritual and practical ecumenical activities at all levels in Nigeria.⁷⁴ Although it has not been able to touch the fabrics of our lives because real ecumenical dialogue has not been allowed due to deeper denominational sentiments, which has refused to die in us.

CAN has been the umbrella body, which has continued to oversee issues bordering the Christians in Nigeria. She has also presented a socio-political forum where she fought the anti-Christian policies of different regimes in Nigeria. She has also been strongly represented in settling issues that border on religion and politics in the country.⁷⁵ Presently, she has continued to seek for better ways of actualizing the ultimate goal of ensuring unity in the Church⁷⁶ but the truth as is mentioned above is that she has not really created any strong impact as regards creating a forum for real ecumenical dialogue to take place in Nigeria. That is to say that although she has tried, much work is still needed i.e. to kick-start the ecumenical dialogue in Nigeria.

3.4 The Principles of Ecumenical Dialogue

Dialogue implies the coming together of two persons or group of persons to iron out issues or discuss issues on a round table conference.⁷⁷ It is etymologically derived from the Greek word ‘dia’ (two) and ‘logical’ (work) or ‘legein’ (verb) to speak or to converse. It, therefore, involves a conversation between two or more persons. It is an exchange of ideas and opinions, which must not necessarily be in agreement with the interlocutor’s views.⁷⁸ But our emphasis in this context is on ecumenical dialogue, which is at the heart of ecumenical co-operation and accompanies all forms of it. It differs to some extent with inter-religious dialogue, even though both are forms of dialogue.

Ecumenical dialogue is a Christian endeavour, which deals mainly with interactions between different Christian denominations with an open mind to understand each other’s creeds, feelings and practices.⁷⁹ But interreligious dialogue focuses on meeting and interacting with people of different religions in an atmosphere of freedom and openness in order to listen to them, understand

their religion and hopefully seek possibilities of collaboration.⁸⁰ This, in other words, implies that ecumenical dialogue deals with the promotion of Christian unity while interreligious dialogue deals with the promotion of collaboration among different religions. Ecumenical dialogue as a Christian concept involves both listening and replying, seeking both to understand and to be understood.⁸¹ The whole endeavour is aimed at clearing the way for the unity of all Christian communions. Here, Christians of all denominations are to embrace this in love and the spirit of Christ.

It is not only an exchange of ideas, but an exchange of spiritual gifts and spiritual experiences (UU5 28). Every Christian can do this in his or her place and manner, for every one is an expert in his or her own way, i.e. somebody who has had an experience and wants to pass it on.⁸² The people involved (i.e. members of different churches and ecclesial communities) are to keep aside their denominational doctrines and dogmas that may cause disagreements and focus on the issues that they hold together as Christians.

Furthermore, ecumenical dialogue does not mean abandoning ones' own identity in favour of an ecumenical "hotch-potch". It is a profound misunderstanding to see it as fostering doctrinal relativism. Thus, the aim is not to find the lowest common denominator. It does not aim at spiritual impoverishment, but at mutual spiritual enrichment. In ecumenical dialogue, one discovers the truth of the others as his or her own truth.⁸³

Again, the goal of ecumenical dialogue is not to convert others to one's side, though individual conversions cannot and must not be excluded. Mutual respect for each other's denominational creed should be exhibited. People's consciences are to be respected and encouraged for conversion to the full truth of Jesus Christ. This is because there is no ecumenism without conversion and church renewal (UR7), and such conversion is not an isolated act once and for all, but a continuing, never-ending process.⁸⁴

Therefore, efforts are to be made in avoiding expressions, judgments and actions which do not represent the condition of our separated Christian communities. Once this is done with truth and fairness, it makes relationship with

them easier.⁸⁵ For instance, the separated Christian communities are now designated “seperated brethren” instead of “protestants” or “schismatic sects” as they were seen initially.

Ecumenical dialogue also allows members of different Christian and ecclesial communities to get to know each other, to identify matters of faith and practice, which they share and points on which they share and points on which they differ. Thus, they seek to understand the roots of such differences and assess to what extent they constitute real obstacles to a common faith.⁸⁶ This is the type of ecumenism done in the international scenes. It is otherwise known as intellectual - ecumenism, a situation whereby experts and theologians of different denominations gather together to intellectualize or discuss issues of common interest in order to bring out areas of convergence and divergence. But, unfortunately, this type of dialogue is not yet done in Nigeria

It has not yet reached an experiential level in the sense that Nigerians are yet to feel the impact of it. Moreover, ecumenical dialogue is done at the existential level in Nigeria, because of seemingly practical ecumenism done in CAN. Such practical ecumenism include, Joint bible translation, exchange of invitations to social and religious functions by priests and pastors, and interdenominational activities.

Apart from this, ecumenical dialogue is also at the socio-political level in Nigeria. Under this level, Christian denominations in Nigeria only gather together under the auspices of CAN to resist the frequent Islamic onslaughts. But because real dialogues is not yet done both in CAN and Islam, Nigeria still remains vulnerable to religious and interreligious violence as can be seen in the recent Boko-Haram Islamic religious riot that claimed the lives of thousands of Nigerians in the North. But because real ecumenical dialogue has not taken place in CAN, religious harmony and peace still elude us.

It is only when ecumenical dialogue becomes experiential and intellectual that real dialogue takes place. Under this situation, joint social action (ecumenical diapraxis) will ensue, and differences which are obstacles to communication are

discovered and addressed in the light of faith which they already hold in common.⁸⁷

Furthermore, for the proposed ecumenical dialogue to effectively take place, certain principles are to be put in place among the parties to the dialogue. In the first place, the manner and order in which Catholic belief is expressed, according to the article No176 of the Principles and Norms on ecumenism in the *Unitatis Redintegratio* (Vatican II Councils Decree on Ecumenism) should in no way be a problem in her dialogue with the Christians from other ecclesiastical communities. Thus, their doctrines should be clearly presented in its entirety⁸⁸

Catholic theologians engaged in ecumenical dialogue, while standing fast by the teaching of the Church and searching together with separated brethren in the divine mysteries, should act with love for truth, charity and humility.⁸⁹ Parties involved in the ecumenical dialogue are to give each other free hands to express themselves and be ready to welcome their negative points if any.⁹⁰ They are to be ready to clarify their personal views and ways of living and acting, and be guided by authentic love and truth.⁹¹

Reciprocity and mutual commitment are essential elements needed for effective ecumenical dialogue to take place once they are together on equal footing.⁹² The attitudes of sincerity and openness are also to be present for the partners entering the ecumenical dialogue. They are to enter into the dialogue with an open heart, which is glaring for all to see and it must be done in and with sincerity so that none will be suspicious of each other's of having ulterior motives.⁹³

One also needs to be clear of his faith before stepping into the ecumenical dialogue. This is because such a forum is meant for people who are versatile and can easily transmit or translate her faith and doctrines if the need arises.⁹⁴ Again, one needs to know the position of his faith as regards ecumenism in order to guard against distortion, misrepresentation or mis-interpretation of his denomination. This is because a partner in the ecumenical dialogue is like an image maker and his discussion and level of presentation is the level he is able to sell his group's image.⁹⁵

In addition to this, a partner in the dialogue must also have a clear respect for other people's creeds. He must understand their point of view before they can easily respect them. And this means that he or she must be ready and disposed to study other people's creeds.⁹⁶ Those that engage in the ecumenical dialogue must gladly acknowledge and esteem the true Christian endowments from our common heritage, which are also found among the Christians of other denominations.⁹⁷

End Notes

¹ Charles Boyer, “Ecumenical Movement” in the *Catholic Encyclopedia for Schools and Home*, Vol.3, New York: Grolier Incorporated, 1965, p.669.

² *The Catholic Encyclopedia for Schools and Home*, p.669.

³ Thomas Boken Kotter, *A Concise History of the Catholic Church*, Image Book, Doubleday & Company, 1979, P.148 in C.P. Ibebuike., *Understanding Ecumenism*, Enugu: Snaap Press Nig. Ltd. 2006, p.13.

⁴ C.P. Ibebuike, *Understanding Ecumenism*, pp.14 -16.

⁵ C.P. Ibebuike, *Understanding Ecumenism*, p.19.

⁶ C.P. Ibebuike, *Understanding Ecumenism*, p. 31.

⁷ R.M. Brown “Ecumenical Movement” in M., Eliade (ed), *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol.5, New York: Macmillan Pub. Comp. 1987, p.18.

⁸ H.O. Okeke, *Milestones in Ecumenism: Evolutions in Canonical Legislation in Ecumenical Matters*, Enugu: Think Limited, 1996, p.66.

⁹ M. Tanner, “Ecumenical Movement” in P.B Clarke, and A., Linzey (ed) *Dictionary of Ethics. Theology, and Society*, London: Routeledge, 1996, p. 271.

¹⁰ P.B. Clarke and A., Linzey (ed), *Dictionary of Ethics, Theology and Society*, p.271.

¹¹ *The Catholic Encyclopedia for Schools and Home*, p.670.

¹² cf History and Records, IX, P8, cited in H.O. Okeke, *Milestones in Ecumenism: Evolutions in Canonical Legislation in Ecumenical Matters*, p.66.

¹³ H.O. Okeke, *Milestones in Ecumenism: Evolutions in Canonical Legislation in Ecumenical Matters*, p.66.

¹⁴ *The Catholic Encyclopedia for Schools and Homes*, p.670.

¹⁵ *The Catholic Encyclopedia for Schools and Homes* p.670.

¹⁶ M. Eliade, (ed) *The Encyclopedia of Religion* Vol. 5, p.18.

¹⁷ *The Catholic Encyclopedia for Schools and Homes*, p.670.

¹⁸ M. Eliade, (ed)*The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol.5, p.18.

- ¹⁹ *The Catholic Encyclopedia for School and Homes* p. 670.
- ²⁰ M. Eliade, (ed) *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol.5, p.18.
- ²¹ M. Eliade, (ed) *The Encyclopedia of Religion* Vol.5, p. 19.
- ²² M. Eliade, (ed) *The Encyclopedia of Religion* p.19.
- ²³ L. Hodgson, (ed) *The Second World Conference on Faith and Order*, Edinburgh, 1937, London: SCM, 1938, p.270.
- ²⁴ C.P. Ibebuike, *Understanding Ecumenism* p.47.
- ²⁵ cf. G. Gassmann, Faith and Order in N. Lossky *et al*, (ed), Op.Cit. p.412, cited in C.P. Ibebuike, *Understanding Ecumenism*, p.44.
- ²⁶ M.D. Lowery, *Ecumenism: Striving for Unity Amidst Diversity*, Mystic: Twenty-Third Publications, 1998, pp.22-23, cited in H.C. Achunike, *Dreams of Heaven: Modern Response to Christianity in North Western Igboland, 1970-1990*, Onitsha: Africana FEP, Pub. Ltd. 1995 p.85.
- ²⁷ *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, p.19.
- ²⁸ *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, p.21.
- ²⁹ Cardinal Walter Kasper, "The Ecumenical Movement in the 21st Century A Contribution from The PC PCU, <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/joint-working-grou...> 1/8/2008.
- ³⁰ <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/joint-working-grou...>
- ³¹ T. Early, "Ecumenism", In *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Religion* (eds), Washington D.C: Corpus Publications, Vol. A-E, p.1157.
- ³² *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Religion*, p.1157.
- ³³ *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Religion*, p.1157.
- ³⁴ <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commission/joint-working-grou...>
- ³⁵ *Encyclopedia Dictionary of Religion*, p.1158.
- ³⁶ *Encyclopedia Dictionary of Religion*, p.1158.

³⁷ <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documnets/wcc-commissions/joint-working-grou...>

³⁸ <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/joint-working-grou...>

³⁹ <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/joint-working-grou...>

⁴⁰ *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Religion* p.1158.

⁴¹ *The Catholic Encyclopedia For Schools and Home* , p.676.

⁴² *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, p.21.

⁴³ A.C. Bea, *The Unity of Christians*, London: Geofrey Chapman, 1963, p.50.

⁴⁴ F.K. Ekechi, *Missionary Enterprises and Rivalry In Igboland, 1857-1914*, London: Frank –Cass, 1972, cited in O.U. Kalu, *The Divided People of God: Church Union Movement In Nigeria 1857 -1966*, New York: Nok Publishers International Ltd. 1978 p.4.

⁴⁵ E. Ekpunobi, *We Are Closer Than We Think: An Analysis of Contemporary Issues In Ecumenism*, Enugu: Rabboni Publishers International, 2001, p.68.

⁴⁶ Ekpunobi, *We Are Closer Than We Think: An Analysis of Contemporary Issues In Ecumenism*, p.68.

⁴⁷ Kalu, *Divided People of God: Church Union Movement In Nigeria 1857 - 1966* p.3.

⁴⁸ *Minutes of the Conference of 1911*, p.77.

⁴⁹ Kalu, *Divided People of God: Church Union Movement In Nigeria 1857 - 1966* p.3.

⁵⁰ cited in C.P., Groves, *The Planting of Christianity In Africa, Vol. II, 1878 – 1914*, London: Lutherworth Press, 1955, p.297.

⁵¹ Groves, *The Planting of Christianity In Africa, Vol. II, 1878 –1914*, p.290.

⁵² Ekpunobi, *We Are Closer Than We Think: An Analysis of Contemporary Issues In Ecumenism*, p.69.

⁵³ Ekpunobi, *We Are Closer Than We Think: An Analysis of Contemporary Issues In Ecumenism*, p.69.

⁵⁴ Ekpunobi, *We Are Closer Than We Think An Analysis of Contemporary Issues In Ecumenism*, p.69.

⁵⁵ Kalu, *Divided People of God: Church Union Movement In Nigeria 1857 - 1966* p.3.

⁵⁶ Ekpunobi, *We Are Closer Than We Think: An Analysis of Contemporary Issues In Ecumenism* p.69.

⁵⁷ H.O. Okeke, *Milestones In Ecumenism: Evolution In Canonical Legislation In Ecumenical Matters*, Enugu: Think Ltd. 1996, p.216.

⁵⁸ Ekpunobi, *We Are Closer Than We Think An Analysis of Contemporary Issues In Ecumenism* p.69.

⁵⁹ J. Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity In Africa: An African Church History*, Kenya: Paulines Publications, Africa, 1994, P.500.

⁶⁰ Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity In Africa: An African Church History*, p.500.

⁶¹ Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity, In Africa: An African Church History*, p.500.

⁶² O.U. Kalu, (ed) *African Church Historiography: An Ecumenical Perspective*, Berne, Switzerland, 1988, p.9, cited in *Achunike Dreams of Heaven: Modern Response to Christianity in North Western Igboland, 1970-1990* p.89.

⁶³ Achunike, *Dreams of Heaven: Modern Response to Christianity in North Western Igboland, 1970-1990*. p.89.

⁶⁴ Achunike, *Dreams of Heaven: Modern Response to Christianity in North Western Igboland, 1970-1990*. p.89.

⁶⁵ Achunike, *Dreams of Heaven: Modern Response to Christianity in North Western Igboland, 1970-1990* p.89.

⁶⁶ H.A. Adigwe, "The Youth Wing of The Christian association of Nigeria – A Call For Unity of Action," An Address Presented At The Meeting of Representatives of The Youth of The Church Groups of CAN By The Director of Education Youths And Women Development, CAN, p.2.

⁶⁷ Achunike, *Dreams of Heaven: Modern Response to Christianity in North Western Igboland, 1970-1990* p.89.

⁶⁸ Constitution of Christian Association of Nigeria, 2004. pp.1, 2.

⁶⁹ Adigwe, Address, p.2.

⁷⁰ Adigwe, Address, p.2.

⁷¹ Adigwe, Address, p.2.

⁷² Okeke, *Milestones In Ecumenism: Evolution In Canonical Legislation In Ecumenical Matters*, p.219.

⁷³ Oral Interviews: Hypolite Adigwe, Pontifical Mission Societies, Catholic Secretariat, Abuja, 15th October, 2008. Hypolite Adigwe is a Monsignor and Priest of Catholic Archdiocese of Onitsha. He is presently, the director of the Pontifical Mission Societies and Department of Mission and Dialogue of the Catholic Secretariat/Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria, Abuja.

⁷⁴ Adewale, Martins, "Ecumenical Dialogue" in H.A., Adigwe (ed) *One God, Many Religions: Let Us Talk*, Abuja: Department of Mission And Dialogue, Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, and Pontifical Mission Societies, 2003, p.103.

⁷⁵ Oral interview: Hypolite Adigwe.

⁷⁶ Oral Interview: Hypolite Adigwe.

⁷⁷ A.S. Hornby, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, 6th Edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, p.925.

⁷⁸ C. Ubaka, "Inter – Religious Dialogue At The Grass Root – Methods And Prospects" in Adigwe, (ed), *One God Many Religions: Let Us Talk* p.78.

⁷⁹ cited in H.C. Achunike, Catholic/Pentecostal Dialogue in Nigeria - The Journey So Far, in *the Journal of Liberal Studies*, Vol.11., Nos 1&2, December 2003, p.273.

⁸⁰ Francis Cardinal Arinze, *Meeting With Other Believers* (Gracewig, Leominster 1997) p.5 cited in H.C. Achunike, Catholic/Pentecostal Dialogue in Nigeria - The Journey so Far, in *the Journal of Liberal Studies*, Vol 11, Nos1 &2, December 2003, p.273.

⁸¹ Pope John Paul II, "Pontificum Consilium Ad Christianorum Unitatem Fovendam", A Revision of the Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism", Presented in His Discourse to the Plenary Session of the Secretariat, 1988, <http://christuni/documents/rc-pc-chrstu...>, 13/10/2008.

⁸² W. Kasper, *That They May All Be One: The Call to Unity*, London: Burns and Oates, 2004, p.169.

⁸³ W. Kasper, *That They May All Be One: The Call to Unity*, p.169.

⁸⁴ cf. Eph 4.24, Pope Paul VI, on Ecumenism (Unitatis Redintegratio) November 21, 1964, <http://www.ourladyswarriors.org/teach/unitiredihtm7/12/2008>.

⁸⁵ <http://www.ourladyswarriors.org.teach.unitredi.htm>.

⁸⁶ <http://www.vatican.va/roman-curia/pontifical-councils/christuni/documents/rc-pc-chrstu...>

⁸⁷ <http://www.vatican.va/roman-curia/portificalcouncils/christuni/documents/rc-pc-chrstu...>

⁸⁸ Isaac, Ikalama, “Ecumenism in the Nigerian Nation-State., A Critical Analysis of the Third Republic”, An Unpublished Thesis, Department of Political Science. Institute of Ecumenical Education, Thinkers Corner, Enuge, Tuly, 1995, p.39.

⁸⁹ http://www.vatican.va/roman-curia/pontifical_councils/christuni/documents/rc-pc-chrstu...

⁹⁰ Isaca, Ikalama, Ecumenism in the Nigerian Nation State: Acritical Analysis of the Third Republic, p.40.

⁹¹ <http://www.vatican.va/roman-curia/pontificalcouncils/christuni/documents/rc-pc.chrstu..>

⁹² <http://www.vatican.va/roman-curia/pontificalcouncils/christuni/documents/rc-pc-chrstu...>

⁹³ Isaac, Ikalama, Ecumenism in the Nigerian Nation State: A Critical Analysis of the Third Republic, p.40.

⁹⁴ Oral Interviews: Hypolite Adigwe.

⁹⁵ Oral Interviews: Hypolite Adigiwe.

⁹⁶ Oral Interviews: Hypolite Adigwe.

⁹⁷ “Decree on Ecumenism- Unitatis Redintegratio”, Proclaimed by his Holiness, Pope Paul VI, on November 21, 1964, <http://www.chisturex.org/www./CDHN/V13.html>, 15/07/20098.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CONTRIBUTION TO ECUMENISM IN NIGERIA

4.1 The Contribution Of Roman Catholic Church to Ecumenism In Nigeria

The Roman Catholic Church has been on the forefront in the struggle for Church unity in Nigeria. She derives the impetus from the Vatican II Council, which encourages the Church to enter into ecumenical dialogue with other churches. She has also formed many commissions in order to enhance this objective.

In order to carryout this task effectively, the Church directs that each Episcopal Conference must set up a Commission of Bishops for ecumenical affairs assisted by experts (Ad Totam Ecclesiam, No7), while local churches or groups of them are required to establish Diocesan Ecumenical Commissions whose duty is to promote ecumenical activity by the Episcopal Conference or of the Local Ordinary (Ad Totam Ecclesiam, No.3)¹

This has been carried out through the activities of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria Committees on Ecumenism and Diocesan and Provincial Commissions, who are daily working to co-ordinate ecumenical activities in each of the nine provinces,² but for now their efforts have not yielded concrete result.

Again, she has been able to give CAN (Christian Association of Nigeria) the leverage needed for her to stand as an ecumenical body in Nigeria. Although CAN was initially formed among the Protestants in the Northern part of Nigeria in order to provide a common bloc³, the presence of the Roman Catholic Church further restructured and repositioned it into an ecumenically focused organisation⁴. Dwelling further on this, Hypolite Adigwe notes that:

Since its inception in 1976, the administrative Headquarters of CAN has been hosted by the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, up till the year 2004 when it was transferred to the National Ecumenical Centre, Abuja (now renamed National Christian Centre)⁵.

The Roman Catholic Church also engages in dialogue with Protestants whom she now designates “separated brethren” in the spirit of Vatican II Council. These debates, dialogues, and reflections are aimed at enhancing ecumenism in the country⁶. For instance, she is currently facilitating contacts with the Anglican Communion in Nigeria.

The Committee on Ecumenism has also succeeded in facilitating contacts with the Anglican Communion in Nigeria. With the consent and co-operation of the CBCN, we are in the process of establishing the “National Anglican/Roman Catholic Commission” (NARC). When in full steam, NARC would be engaged in theological reflections on themes that have been discussed at the international forum for consultation between the two Churches i.e. “Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC). A number of areas have been discussed and joint documents produced by ARCIC, giving expression to the relationship...⁷

Although, the dialogue between the two bodies has been ongoing, on the international scene, it has not been fully operational in Nigeria⁸. The only thing that resembles dialogue in the country is the interactions and discussions at CAN meetings, but ecumenical dialogue is more than that. It should mature to the dialogue between experts and theologians either in the Ivory towers, theological institutes or religious formation houses. Here, absolute care and high level of

preparation is made in order to discover the areas of both convergence and divergence⁹. The researcher sees the Roman Catholic Church as a facilitator of the much expected ecumenical dialogue which has not been seen in Nigeria

The Roman Catholic Church has also contributed to ecumenism in Nigeria, through the instrumentality of the CBCN (Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria). The Bishops have continued to encourage the lay Catholics on the best way to relate with the non-Catholics.

....regard non Catholics in a human and charitable way and establish dialogue with them; socialize with them; do not discriminate against them, avoid criticizing them; prudently encourage associations that favor ecumenism; have special care for children in mixed marriages¹⁰.

Though this injunction was specifically given for the Bishops, it applies to the Catholic Church in Nigeria at large. The Bishops have continued to teach and encourage their flock to effectively help them in carrying out this task without losing their faith.

Furthermore, she has from time to time engaged in joint prayer sessions and interdenominational services with her separated brethren in Nigeria. For instance, the week of prayer for Christian Unity; exchange of pulpit during the Bible week¹¹ and the participation of the Enugu Anglican Bishop in the Mass for the Consecration of the new Catholic Bishop of Enugu Diocese at the Holy Ghost Cathedral, Ogui Enugu on the 2nd May 2009, were all done to enhance the ecumenical work in Nigeria¹².

Again, most of the Catholic prelates and priests exchange visits with their protestant counterparts where they held ecumenical talks with one another. For instance, the newly consecrated Bishop of Nsukka Anglican Diocese recently visited the Catholic Bishop of Nsukka, and held ecumenical talks with him¹³. But the unpleasant incident that occurred during the recently concluded Reinhard Bonke Healing Crusade, at Nsukka, proved that the impact of such discussion had

not been felt. The coordinators of the crusade visited the Catholic Bishop of Nsukka to ask his support for the Crusade, but he rejected and chased them out¹⁴.

Furthermore, the Catholic Church in Nigeria has persistently organized ecumenical conferences both for her clergy, religious and major seminarians as a way of preparing them to be ecumenically minded in their future pastoral assignments¹⁵. Apart from this, annual symposia, seminars and retreats are consecutively held in dioceses in order to arm her episcopal ecumenical workers with knowledge that foster cooperation and joint social action¹⁶.

She has also continued to spearhead the promotion of unity and brotherliness among the different Christian denominations in the country¹⁷. For instance, apart from being one of the backbones of CAN, she was in the forefront of the formation of sub-groups of CAN such as YOWICAN (The youth Wing of CAN), WOWICAN (The Women Wing of CAN), and Education, Youth, and Women Development Wing. She not only spearheaded their formation, she has also at one time or the other provided leadership for these groups where she has successfully articulated plans for the promotion of ecumenism in Nigeria¹⁸. Again, she has encouraged and jointly participated in the translation of the Bible with other Christians under the auspices of the Bible Society of Nigeria¹⁹. This is an element of practical ecumenism, and of course a remarkable work in the journey towards Christian unity in Nigeria.

The Roman Catholic Church has also established ecumenical institutes in the country in order to assist her in facilitating sound academic and theological research on the church's mission and ecumenism. Such institutions are the Institute of Ecumenical Education, Thinker's Corner, Enugu (renamed Bishop Okoye Memorial University) and Catholic Institute of West Africa (CIWA), Port Harcourt²⁰.

She has also included ecumenism or ecumenics in the curricula of her seminaries and formation houses, in order to give her future priests and religious the right formation that will help them in carrying out the ecumenical work²¹.

Moreover, the Roman Catholic Church in Nigeria also enhanced the ecumenical work by negotiating the visit of Pope John Paul II to Nigeria in both

1982 and 1997 respectively²². During this historic visits the Pontiff held ecumenical talks with leaders of various Christian and Islamic sects. And this was a landmark achievement witnessed by both Christians and non-Christians alike.

Till the present, she has been actively involved in seeking for better ways of propagating the message of ecumenism in Nigeria, but she need a vigorous approach to succeed.

4.2 Challenges Facing Ecumenism In Nigeria

Despite the achievement recorded by the Catholic in their ecumenical work in Nigeria, she has persistently encountered difficulties, which has made her work incomplete. These challenges are to be discussed below.

One of such problems is fear of syncretism²³. Many Catholics see ecumenism as a step to syncretism. In fact, a renowned Catholic such as Abbe' George De Nante condemned the Vatican II Council's document on ecumenism "Unitatis Redintegratio". According to him, bringing both Catholics and non-Catholics together for the purpose of unification means joining both real and quasi-church together which is real syncretism²⁴. This often makes the whole effort null and void. Although syncretism does not have only negative connotation, still the argument here is that seeing ecumenism as syncretism makes the people to shun it or view it as evil.

Sequel to this is that some Catholics also see ecumenism as false-Pan-Christian Unity. This school of thought especially the traditionalist Roman Catholics believed that any form of unity that is against a "return to the Catholic faith" is ungodly or a contradiction to the church's interpretation of the Bible²⁵.

In addition to this, the superiority complex among the Roman Catholic Clergy also impedes the ecumenical progress in the country²⁶. Notwithstanding, the efforts of Vatican II experts in convincing the church of the need to accept others as brethren, many of the catholic clergy still rate them as inferior or mushroom churches. This, as a matter of fact, intimidates some of the Protestant Churches that they feel that accepting to be with Roman Catholic means losing

their identity. Therefore, they perceive Catholics as intimidators, and partnering or dialoguing with them cannot bring about ecumenism.

Conservatism²⁷ and intransigence on doctrinal matters²⁸, by the Roman Catholic hierarchy, also hinders the ecumenical action in Nigeria. Change is consistent in life and is not easily accepted by any system. When the Vatican II Council's message on ecumenism came on board, majority of the clergy were reluctant to let go of the old order because they were at ease with it. It was believed ab initio that salvation can only be found in the Catholic Church, but Vatican II Council changed that. But the problem till today is that majority of the Catholic Clergy still refuse to accept to partner with these Protestants.

Continuous denominational prejudice and rivalry has also made the message of ecumenism to be peripheral²⁹. According to Ozigbo,

...Ecumenical efforts in Nigeria had been long though largely cosmic. This was against the backdrop of bitter memories of strife and rivalry in Eastern Nigeria between the Catholic Mission on one hand and all the Protestant Churches on the other, from 1890's right up to the 1960's. The memories of hate, hostilities, mistrust and suspicion were still fresh and raw. They had not been able to make Catholics and Anglicans see themselves as comrades of the same Christian religion³⁰.

In a similar way, N. Ndiokwere maintained that rivalries, unhealthy competition, mutual distrust and skepticism are bane of ecumenism in Nigeria³¹. While H. O. Okeke, concluded that the denominational rivalry is worst between Catholics and Anglicans at least in Eastern Nigeria, where each target the other in their relentless criticism and attacks³².

Instead of seeking a way of unity, each denomination spends time protecting her denominational boundary almost to the detriment of other denominations. For instance, when the 2003 General Elections fell on Easter weekend, the Roman Catholic Church requested the Federal Government to shift

the date because of its significance to Christendom, but Anglicans and other churches convinced the government to go ahead with the elections³³.

The proliferation of Churches in Nigeria has continued to hinder the dream of Christian unity³⁴. The problem here is that despite the evils inherent in proliferation, some protestant groups justify it in the name of church planting. But regardless of their claim, the church has continued to disintegrate thereby making the dream for unity an unrealizable dream even with the relentless effort of both CAN and PFN.

Fundamentalism³⁵, and holier - than - thou attitude among the Protestants especially the Pentecostals hinders the ecumenical work in Nigeira³⁶. In fact, majority of the non-Catholic Churches claim to be living churches while others are dead. They thrive only by destroying other churches through vitriolic criticism. Indeed, outside the call to repentance and acceptance of Jesus as one's personal Lord and Savior, some of these new religious movements/sects have no other doctrines to preach. As a result, there is hardly any basis for meaningful dialogue on doctrinal matters with such groups³⁷. Even the fundamentalists among them believed that unity with the Roman Catholics in ecumenism means paving the way for one religion that may ultimately enthrone Anti-Christ³⁸. Indeed the problem here is that as long as this mindset is not removed, the whole noise about Christian unity will be a wasted effort

Mutual suspicion is another thing that hinders ecumenism in the country. Each denomination avoid the other as one does to a leper. According to H. Adigwe, there is too much suspicion in our approach to the Pentecostals. He maintained that if one approaches a Pentecostal clergyman, his quick impression is that he wants to convert him to Catholicism³⁹, vice versa.

Ignorance of the context of ecumenism also hinders the efforts towards ecumenism in Nigeira⁴⁰. In Christendom today, many are ignorant of the context of ecumenism, even with the level of awareness created by both Vatican II Council and World Council of Churches. As a result, there has been persistent infighting, and character assassination among the hierarchy and lay faithful of both traditions.

Doctrinal differences also affect negatively the move for church unity in Nigeria⁴¹. This is because most of the Christian Churches in Nigeria have doctrines which kick against the unity of the Christians. And the problem is that these doctrines are difficult to change because their churches have their head quarters elsewhere. Therefore, in matters that affect those doctrines, they find it difficult to touch them or if they must, it may take a long time, thereby slowing down the speed of the ecumenical work in Nigeria⁴².

Finally, governmental indifference also draws the hand of clock of ecumenism back⁴³. The government knows that a united Christianity will positively affect the sociopolitical unity of our country. Even the freedom of worship enshrined in our constitution supports the continuous proliferation which is against the spirit of ecumenism. But instead of correcting these anomalies which will enhance Christian unity, the government chooses to stay aloof.

4.3 Prospects of Ecumenism in Nigeria

Although the ecumenical dream of the Catholic Church in Nigeria has not been fully realized, she still looks forward to:-

A future where Nigerian Christians will be more open and receptive to ecumenism and dialogue.⁴⁴ Although, this is not yet observed in the Nigerian Christendom, a more united and rigorous approach will facilitate it. She also believes that with time brotherly love and unity will gradually replace the denominational sentiments, antagonism and rivalry, which is rife in Nigerian Christendom.⁴⁵ Difficult as this may seem, the continuous prayers and enlightenments going on in CAN, may progressively enhance the possibility of this dream.

Again, she looks forward to a future where the present charismatic wind blowing across the mainline churches and other denominations will ultimately pave the way for spiritual ecumenism, for we all drank from the same spirit and one baptism.⁴⁶ She also anticipates a future where those denominational dogmas that hinder ecumenical work in Nigeria are removed⁴⁷ Infact, the researcher believes more work has been done here judging by the level of bilateral

ecumenical discussions going on in the international scenes,⁴⁸ even though it is yet to be seen in Nigeria.

Furthermore, she believes that in the future, valid ministers from different Christian denominations will gradually begin to concelebrate with each other at the same altar, exchange pulpits or visits.⁴⁹ This is already taking place among many Protestant churches in Nigeria, but much effort are still needed if such will be realized between them and the Roman Catholic Church.

She again hopes that validly baptized Christians may no longer need another baptism or proselytization in case they want to change church.⁵⁰ This to some extent now occurs in Europe between the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches where the proselytes are only crismated or blessed before they are admitted into the church instead of repeating the sacrament.⁵¹

She anticipates a future where clergymen from different Christian communions may celebrate at the same Eucharistic table, while the Eucharist is shared to all irrespective of their denominational backgrounds.⁵² This is currently taking place in Europe between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches.⁵³ But it has not taken shape in Nigeria, and even if it will occur here, its spread to all denominations seems as a mirage.

She also hopes that those barriers and rules applicable in mixed marriages will gradually be retouched, modified and removed for real Christian marriage devoid of sentiments to take shape.⁵⁴ This, the researcher believes, may not be easily feasible because the present dogmatic and pastoral rules still make the Roman Catholics shun such marriages.

Finally, the Roman Catholic Church believes that gradually, the real ecumenical debates and discussions may work in Nigeria the type that will alternately usher in joint social action and spiritual ecumenism, and will tear down the denominational wall mounted centuries ago, which will ultimately give way to unity in Christendom.

End Notes

¹ Adewale Martins, “Ecumenical Dialogue”, In H.A. Adigwe, (ed), *One God, Many Religions: Let Us Talk*, Abuja: Department of Mission and Dialogue of The Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria and The Pontifical Mission Societies, 2003, p. 100.

² Adewale Martins, “Ecumenical Dialogue in H.A. Adigwe (ed), *One God, Many Religions: Let Us Talk* p.102.

³ H.C. Achunike, *Dreams of Heaven: A Modern Response To Christianity In North Western Igboland 1970-1990*, Onitsha: African –FEP Publisher Ltd, 1995, p.89.

⁴ Oral Interviews: Hypolite Adigwe, Pontifical Mission Societies, Catholic Secretariat, Abuja, October 15, 2008. Hypolite Adigwe is Monsignor and Priest of the Catholic Archdiocese of Onitsha. He is currently the director of the Pontifical Mission Societies, and Head, Department of Mission and Dialogue, Catholic Secretariat/Catholic Bishop’s Conference of Nigeria, Abuja.

⁵ H.A. Adigwe, “The Youth Wing of The Christian Association of Nigeria A Call for Unity of Action”, An Address Presented at The Meeting of Representatives of the Youth of The Church Groups of CAN, By The Director of Education, Youth and Women Development, CAN, October, 11, 2007.

⁶ Oral Interviews: Jude Anih, Ecumenical Community Secondary School, Institute of Ecumenical Education, Thinker’s Corner, Emene, Enugu, January 28, 2009. Jude Anih is both a Bursar of the above school, as well as an expert in ecumenism/ecumenics.

⁷ Adewale, Martins, “Ecumenical Dialogue” In H.A. Adigwe (ed), *One God, Many Religions: Let Us Talk* p.102.

⁸ H.C. Achunike, *The Influence of Pentecostalism on Catholic Priests and Seminarians In Nigeria*, Onitsha: Africana First Publishers Ltd. pp.55-56.

⁹ F. Arinze, *Church In Dialogue: Walking With Other Believers*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999, pp.215-216

¹⁰ H.O. Okeke, *Milestones In Ecumenism: Evolutions In Canonical Legislation In Ecumenical Matters*, Enugu: Think Limited, 1996, p.222.

¹¹ Adewale, Martins, “Ecumenical Dialogue”, In H.A. Adigwe (ed) *One God, Many Religions: Let Us Talk* p.102.

¹² “New Rendevoouz,” NTA, Enugu, 7pm, Sunday Evening, 3rd May 2009.

¹³ This Information was given to the researcher from a reliable insider from the Nsukka, Diocesan Secretariat.

¹⁴ The Local Organizers of the Crusade visited the Catholic Bishop to seek for his support, but he sent them away.

¹⁵ Oral Interview: Jude Anih.

¹⁶ Adewale, Martins, "Ecumenical Dialogue" in H.A. Adigwe, (ed) *One God, Many Religions: Let Us Talk* p.102.

¹⁷ Oral Interview: Jude Anih.

¹⁸ Oral Interview: Hypolite Adigwe.

¹⁹ H.C. Achunike, "Catholic/Pentecostal Dialogue In Nigeria -The Journey So Far" *In The Journal of Liberal Studies* vol. II, Nos 1 & 2, December 2003, p.278.

²⁰ Oral Interviews: Hypolite Adigwe.

²¹ Oral Interview: Hypolite Adigwe.

²² Oral Interviews: Benedict Agbo, St Peter's Chaplaincy, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, December 18, 2008. Benedict Agbo is the former curate of St. Peter's Chaplaincy, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, A Roman Catholic Priest, expert in ecumenism as well as a lecturer, Music Department, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

²³ H.O. Okeke, *Milestones In Ecumenism: Evolutions In Canonical Legislation In Ecumenical Matters* p.217.

²⁴ Abbes De Nantes, "He Is Risen", The Catholic Counter- Reformation In The 21st Century, An Article Produced At Our Lady of Fatima Camp, 2007, http://www.crc-internet.org/HIR_2008/March_66-3.htm, 15/07/2008.

²⁵ "Ecumenism", Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, <http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecumenism>, 2/01/2009.

²⁶ Oral Interviews: Benedict Agbo.

²⁷ Oral Interviews: Hypolite Adigwe.

²⁸ H.O. Okeke, *Milestones In Ecumenism: Evolutions In Canonical Legislation In Ecumenical Matters* p.217.

²⁹ Oral Interviews: Antolinus Aneke, Institute of Ecumenical Education, Thinker's Corner, Emene, Enugu, January 30, 2009. Antolinus Aneke is a Roman Catholic Priest of Enugu Diocese, an expert in ecumenism, lecturer and head, department of Ecumenism, Institute of Ecumenical Education, Thinker's Corner, Emene, Enugu.

- ³⁰ I.R. Ozigbo, *Igbo Catholicism: The Onitsha Connection 1967-1984*, Onitsha: Africana-FEP Publishers, 1985, pp.85-86.
- ³¹ N. Ndiokwere, *The African Church Today And Tomorrow: Prospects, and Challenges*, Onitsha: Effective Key Publishers, 1994, pp.317-330.
- ³² H.O. Okeke, "African Perspective On Ecumenical Dialogue" In *Bigard Theological Studies*, January- June 1997, Vol. 117, No 1, pp.44-60.
- ³³ Oral Interviews: Antolinus Aneke.
- ³⁴ Oral Interviews: Anotolinus Aneke.
- ³⁵ Oral Interviews: Jude Anih.
- ³⁶ H.O. Okeke, *Milestones In Ecumenism: Evolutions In Canonical Legislation In Ecumenical Matters* p.218.
- ³⁷ H.O. Okeke, "African Perspective On Ecumenical Dialogue" In *Bigard Theological Studies*, p.53.
- ³⁸ "Ecumenism", <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecumenism>. 2/2/2009.
- ³⁹ Oral Interview: Hypolite Adigwe, St. John Cross Parish, Uruagu, Nnewi, July 10, 2004, cited in H.C. Achunike, "Catholic/Pentecostal Dialogue In Nigeria - The Journey So Far" In *The Journal of Liberal Studies*, p.280.
- ⁴⁰ Oral Interviews: Jude Anih.
- ⁴¹ *Bigard Theological Studies*, p.53.
- ⁴² *Bigard Theological Studies*, p.53.
- ⁴³ Oral Interviews: Hypolite Adigwe.
- ⁴⁴ Oral Interviews: Benedict Agbo.
- ⁴⁵ Oral Interviews: Benedict Agbo.
- ⁴⁶ Oral Interviews: Antolinus Aneke.
- ⁴⁷ Oral Interviews: Hypolite Adigwe.
- ⁴⁸ C.P Ibebuike, *Understanding Ecumenism*, Enugu: Snaap Press Nig Ltd, 2006, pp.110-134.
- ⁴⁹ Oral Interviews: Antolinus Aneke.
- ⁵⁰ Oral Interviews: Antolinus Aneke.

⁵¹ Ecumenism- Wikipedia, the free Encyclopedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ecumenism>.

⁵² The researcher has this opinion as an insider that since there has been breakthroughs on the International Dialogue between Catholics and Anglicans, gradually the Eucharist will be concelebrated by the clergies of both tradition. But he believes that the change will gradually come as long as Ecumenical dialogue proceeds.

⁵³ Canon Law Digest, Vol.vi, 17 Note 33, in H.O. Okeke, *Milestones in Ecumenism: Evolutions in Canonical Legislation in Ecumenical Matters*, pp. 149-150.

⁵⁴ The researcher also believes that the issue of mixed marriage will gradually be settled, going by the level of modifications that has taken place on it, from time immemorial.

⁵⁵ Oral Interviews: Hypolite Adigwe.

⁵⁶ J.Y. Lacoste, *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology*, Vol. New York: Routeledge, 2005 pp.473-474.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Principal Findings

This research work made the following findings among others:

That church of God was initially one and indivisible, till the breakage of the Eastern Orthodox Church in 1054, Papal Schisms of (1378 – 1417), the Lutheran and Anglican Churches in 1517 and 1559 respectively. It was these breakages that dug the foundation for the continuous disintegration of modern Christendom.

That the continuous fragmentation of Christendom contradicts the gospel of unity, love and oneness, in the body of Christ, while the scandal of the fragmentation propelled the desire for ecumenism among the Christians.

This work also observes that the dream for Church unity began initially among the Protestants, who collectively held series of conferences that culminated in the birth of modern ecumenism. It observes that the Roman Catholics shunned those ecumenical gatherings despite the invitations they gave to her because of her strained relationship with Protestants. She later attended WCC meetings as an observer since Vatican II Council.

Again this work observes that the impetus she drew from the Vatican II Council made her to join the Protestants to champion the cause of ecumenism. It observes that the Vatican II Council was basically convened to address issues bordering on ecumenism. Thus, they had been working with the World Council of Churches since then to promote ecumenism in Christendom.

This work also observes that ecumenism began in Nigeria among the protestants, who came together to advance their missionary work through collaborative efforts. It observes that despite the efforts of these Protestant missionaries, they failed because majority of their objectives were founded on rivalry and antagonism. It also observes that even with their failure, they later metamorphosed into CAN, which is an umbrella body overseeing the activities of the Christians in Nigeria.

The work also observes that the entrance of the Roman Catholic Church in the ecumenical work in Nigeria in the aftermath of the Vatican II Council, further enhanced the work already done by the Protestant group. It observes that ecumenical work in Nigeria is still peripheral for it has not moved from dialogue to ecumenical praxis (joint social action) as has been the case in international scene. It further observes that eventhough there are few cases of practical ecumenism such as joint translations of the Bible by the Catholics and Protestants, exchange of mutual invitations to social and religious functions by priests and pastors in Nigeria, they cannot be said to be ecumenical dialogue.

It also observes that the joint prayer sessions in the weeks of Christian unity, interdenominational services and crusade done under the auspices of CAN cannot be seen as real ecumenical dialogue.

It observes that real ecumenical dialogue is to begin through debates, discussions by experts and theologians of both Catholic and Non-Catholic Churches. It is in these debates that areas of both convergence and divergence are to be sorted out and addressed. It also observes that once these debates are fully established, it can then progressively metamorphose into ecumenical diapraxis (joint social action).

This work further observes that the reason why this is not operational in Nigeria for now is because of deep denominational biases, antagonism and rivalry rampant in Nigerian Christendom. It believes that these seemingly impossible situations can still be addressed if vigorously pursued by CAN, if she steers clear of sentiments in her regulatory work in Christendom.

5.2 CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE

This study has contributed to the wealth of knowledge and scholarship in the following ways:

It has opened the eyes of the Christians on the problems of Christian division and the need for a united effort in approaching issues pertaining to Christendom. Again, it has x-rayed the latest development in ecumenical work in Nigeria so that armed with it the ecumenical experts involved in the debates will

be better prepared to move the debate forward. Church historians, theologians and seminarians are better armed in research work with the information that can enhance their work in the field of ecumenism.

Furthermore, church leaders stand to benefit from this work, for it will serve as a reference manual both in their church councils and synods as they discuss and formulate their rules and doctrines with regard to ecumenism in Nigeria.

Finally, with the awareness gotten from this work, the Roman Catholic faithful stands to support her mother Church in her ecumenical work in Nigeria. Once this happens, it will gradually pave way for ecumenical dialogue in Christendom though such may seem impossible for now because of deep denominational sentiments, pride, biases and rivalry inherent in Nigerian Christendom. But the researcher believes that even though institutional/political or visible unity may be elusive, spiritual unity may still be realistic in the long run.

5.3 Recommendations

Having attempted an x-ray of ecumenism in Nigeria and having probed into efforts made so far, and their problems, the researcher now makes the follow recommendations:-

In the first place, there must be the avoidance of negative traits that often lead to antagonism. According to Iwe, for religion to be ecumenically focused, it must avoid arrogance, fanaticism, discrimination, etc and emphasize the idea of God, one people, one culture and religion¹. And this means that, regardless of suspicion, skepticism, and prejudice among the churches, each group should jettison her personal biases, selfishness and pride and focus more on ways of having a common understanding² of the meaning of ecumenism

In the second places the interior change of life and conversion is needed in the lives of the Christians if ecumenism will work. Minds must first be renewed, while attitudes are to be developed before the desire for unity can materialize. There must be self-denial, humility, gentility in the life of the Christians, who promote Christian unity. In fact, the more deeper they are with the Word, the Father and the Holy Spirit, the more they grow in brotherly love³.

In addition to this, ecumenism should be accepted not as Catholic or Protestant affair but as a collective affair. For according to Peter Uzochukwu,

Ecumenism is without doubt a common Christian project which no single church can achieve alone. The true value of a church's ecumenical effort is therefore ascertained by viewing them from the other churches lenses. So for local catholic directives and initiatives...to convince the other churches and Christian communities in Africa of the genuineness of the interest and advances of the Catholic Church towards them, their contents and expressions must show sufficient respect for the sensitivities of other communities⁴.

Once this becomes her priority, full-blown ecumenism will be actualized.

Furthermore, the Church should prepare her faithfuls on how to properly engage in the ecumenical dialogue by teaching them the needed skills to enter into such dialogue. One who engages in dialogue with other creeds is like an “ambassador” of his faith. In view of this, the individual must be well grounded on the tenets and practices of his faith⁵. That is to say that both the Catholic faith, the priests and catechist are to be well-informed in order to carry out this work well⁶.

The church should partake virtually in the activities of CAN, as one of her founding fathers from where her contributions will help in making CAN more ecumenically minded⁷.

She should set the pace as the mother-church in restoring order, sanity, and unity in Nigerian Christendom. For According to Achunike:

The Catholic hierarchy in Nigeria has an important role to play in bringing sanity into the Nigerian religious scene... Action is what is required. We have created the awareness of catholic/Pentecostal dialogue in Nigeria. Priests should create an atmosphere of friendliness and good neighbourliness with Pentecostal Pastors of other denominations. This way, a better understanding of Christianity is ensured and our common action as

Christians become saner in our confused and corrupt society that is perhaps heading towards secularism⁸

Catholics should also learn to accept, tolerate and relate with other denominations as their brethren in Christ, not as separated brethren:

Individual Christians and churches have the Christian obligation to see beyond their Church to the larger oikoumene, the Church of Christ and to work for its realization. This task demands that Christians accept other Christians as brothers and sisters, not as enemies or rivals. This basic attitude should influence the teaching, organization and discipline of each church. In this way, the church is ecumenically open to other churches⁹

This implies a fortiori, Christian groups should be able to close ranks in carrying out the great mandate rather than wasting their energies in mutual suspicion and rivalries¹⁰. The Church should be taught about the origins and historical developments of ecumenism¹¹ so that with this knowledge, they will have a better understanding and how to relate with others.

In addition, a sustained ecumenical education from the root known as epistemic healing has to be put in place in the Churches. This type of knowledge is holistic that permeates the moral, intellectual, psychological, mental and physical life of an individual. Once this is applied, the individual's pre-disposition is removed thereby preparing him for real ecumenical work¹².

The Catholic Church's ecumenical experts should be taught the respective doctrines, histories, spirituality, liturgical life, and background of these Pentecostals. This knowledge will help them dialogue and relate better with them.¹³ Both future priests and lay Catholics alike should be carefully guided to the theological studies with ecumenical dimension, which is devoid of polemism. Being grounded in Catholic faith, they should be able to respond well with their partners in dialogue¹⁴.

The manner of presenting or expressing Catholic beliefs should not be injurious in order to give our partners in dialogue freedom to participate and express themselves. And if any issue bordering on doctrines are to be discussed, the discussant should be able to do it more profoundly and precisely for full understanding by the separated Churches¹⁵. More and serious theological debates and discussion should be carried out

by theologians and ecumenical experts of both Catholic and Protestant traditions as often as they can afford the time so as to continually clarify issues bordering on the unity in Christendom¹⁶.

Catholics should be encouraged, as is reflected in her ecumenical norms, to join at prayer with Protestants. And such common prayers certainly may be effective in petitioning for grace for unity and reconciliation¹⁷. There should also be co-operation in social matters among the Christians. Such co-operation should be more explored with the help of science and technology in order to enhance our life and gospel in our world¹⁸.

Catholic ministers should focus more on edifying their congregation with the Word of God instead of castigating or attacking the doctrines of other churches. This is because the attack continues to sow the seed of hatred in the faithfuls and it goes against efforts towards Christian unity in Nigeria¹⁹. The Government should promote the ecumenical effort of the Nigerian Christendom by monitoring the rate at which churches are opened in Nigeria²⁰.

The Church, in addition, should include ecumenism in the Catechism of the Catholic Church or if possible, the existing one should be revised and updated so that the proselytes will ecumenically minded as they grow into matured Christians.

5.1 Suggestions For Further Research

It is the belief of the researcher that there is a great need for further researches to be carried out in various areas of ecumenism in Nigeria so as to unveil areas that still need attention.

In the first place, further research work should be carried out on the contributions of other Christian denominations to ecumenism in Nigeria. There is also the need to carry out further research work on the Roman Catholic/Anglican Ecumenical Dialogue in Nigeria.

Again, further research work should be carried out on the contributions of CAN to the present ecumenical dialogue in Nigeria.

Finally, the impact of the ecumenical dialogue in Nigeria, together with the effects of the proliferation of churches to the ecumenical struggle in Nigeria, should be studied.

End Notes

¹ cited in Isaac Ikalama, “Ecumenism In Nigerian Nation State: A Critical Analysis of 3rd Republic”, An Unpublished Thesis, Department of Political Science, Institute of Ecumenical Education, Thinker’s Corner, Enugu, July 1995, p.64.

² Jeffrey Vanderwilt, *A Church Without Borders: The Eucharist and The Church In Ecumenical Perspective*, Collegeville, M.N: The Liturgical Press, 1998, p.112.

³ Ernest Obodo, *Living In Dialogue Series: Culture, Religion and Ecumenism*, Vol. 1, Enugu: Godswill Prints Enterprises, 2008, p.1212, 122.

⁴ Peter Uzochukwu, “Local and Global Exigencies Within The Ecumenical Movement: Analysis of The Ecumenical Scene In South African Catholicism” in *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology*, Vol. 20, 2008, p.3.

⁵ Joseph D. Bagobiri, “Evangelizing Through Dialogue” a Foreword, in H.A., Adigwe (ed) *One God, Many Religions: Let Us Talk*, Abuja: Department of Mission and Dialogue of The Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, and the Pontifical Mission Societies, 2003, p.7.

⁶ H.A. Adigwe, “Dialogue and Proclamation As The Mission of The Church” In H.A., Adigwe (ed), *One God, Many Religions: Let Us Talk* pp. 71, 72.

⁷ Adewale Martins, “Ecumenical Dialogue” in H.A. Adigwe, (ed) *One God, Many Religions: Let Us Talk* p.103, 104.

⁸ H.C. Achunike, “Catholic/Pentecostal Dialogue In Nigeria-The Journey So Far” In *The Journal of Liberal Studies*, Vol. II, Nos 1 & 2, December 2003, p.281.

⁹ H.O. Okeke, *Milestones In Ecumenism: Evolutions In Canonical Legislation In Ecumenical Matters*, Enugu: Think Limited, 1996, p.228.

¹⁰ L.N. Mbebor, *The True African: Impulses For Self Affirmation*, Onitsha: Spiritan Publications, 2001, p.118.

¹¹ H.C. Achunike, *Dreams of Heaven: A Modern Response To Christianity In North-Western Igboland. 1970 -1990*, Onitsha: Africana – FEP Publishers, 1995, p.91.

¹² Oral Interviews: Jude Anih, Ecumenical Community Secondary Scholl, Institute of Ecumenical Education, Thinkers Corner, Emene, enugu, January 28, 2009. Jude Anih is a bursar with the Institution, as well as an expert in ecumenical matters.

¹³ Ernest Obodo, *Living In Dialogue, Series: Culture, Religion and Ecumenism* p.123.

¹⁴ Ernest Obodo, *Living In Dialogue Series: Culture, Religion and Ecumenism* p.123.

¹⁵ Ernest Obodo, *Living In Dialogue Serie: Culture, Religion and Ecumenism*, p.123.

¹⁶ Adewale Martins, “Ecumenical Dialogue” in H.A., Adigwe (ed), *One God, Many Religions: Let Us Talk* pp.104.

¹⁷ Chuma Ibebuikwe, *Understanding Ecumenism*, Owerri: Snaap Press Nig. Ltd, 2006, p.173.

¹⁸ Ernest Obodo, *Living In Dialogue Series: Culture, Religion and Ecumenism* p.126.

¹⁹ Ernest Obodo, *Living In Dialogue Series: Culture, Religion and Ecumenism* p.126.

²⁰ Oral Interviews: Antolius Aneke, Institute of Ecumenical Education, Thinker's, Emene, Enugu, January 30, 2009.

²¹ Antolinus Aneke a Roman Catholic Priest of Enugu Diocese, an expert in ecumenism, lecturer and head, department of Ecumenism, Institute of Ecumenical Education, Thinker's Corner, Emene, Enugu.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOOKS

- Achunike, H.C. *Dreams of Heaven: A Modern Rresponse of Christianity In North-Western Igboland 1970-1990*, Onitsha: Africana –FEP Publishers Ltd. 1995.
- Achunike, H.C. *Influence of Pentecostalism On Catholic Priests and Seminarians In Nigeria*, Onitsha: Africana ~ First Publishers Ltd.
- Adigwe, H.A. (ed) *One God, Many Religions: Let Us Talk*, Abuja: Department of Mission and Dialogue of The Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, and The Pontifical Mission Societies, 2003.
- Anih, S. *Christian Ecumenism And The Church In Nigeria*, Enugu: The Government Printer, n.d.
- Arinze, F. *Church In Dialogue: Walking With Other Believers*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999.
- Arinze, F. *Meeting Other Believers*, Gracewig:Leominster, 1997.
- Baur, J. 2000 *Years of Christianity In Africa: An African Church History*, Kenya: Paulines Publications, Africa, 1994.
- Bea, A. *The Unity of Christians*, London: Geofrey Chapman, 1963.
- Bea, A. and Visser't Hooft, W.A. *Peace among Christians*, New York: Association Press and Harder, 1967.
- Beinert, W. and Fiorenza, F.S. (eds) *Hand Book Of Catholic Theology*. New York: The Cross road Publishing Comp.1995.
- Diara, B.C.D. *Anglican Spirituality: The Practice of Balanced Christianity*, Enugu: Computer-Edge Publishers, 2005.
- Ekpunobi, E. *We Are Closer Than We Think: An Analysis of Contemporary Issues In Ecumenism*, Enugu: Rabboni International, 2001.
- Fesquet, H. *The Drama of Vatican II Council: The Ecumenical Council, June 1962 – December 1965*, New York: Random House, 1965.
- Flannery, A. *Vatican Council II: Decree on Ecumenism, Unitatis Redintegratio*, Dublin: Dominican Publications,
- Grooves, C.P. *The Planting of Christianity In Africa*, Vol II 1878 -1914, London: Lutherworth Press 1955.
- Ibebuike, C.P. *Understanding Ecumenism*, Enugu: Snaap Press Nig. Ltd. 2006.
- Kalu, O.U. *Divided People of God*, New York/Lagos: Nok Publishers, 1978.

- Kasper, W. *That They May All Be One: The Call To Unity*, London: Burn and Oates, 2004.
- Kato, B.H. *Theological Pitfalls In Africa*, Kenya: Evangel publishing House, 1975.
- Kryanev, Y., *Christian Ecumenism*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1983.
- Mbefo, L.N., *The True African: Impulses For Self-Affirmation*, Onitsha: Spiritan Publications 2001.
- Morris, J. and Sagovsky (eds), *The Unity We Have And Unity We Seek: Prospects For The Third Millennium*, London: T and T Clark, 2003.
- Ndiokwere, N. *The African Church Today And Tomorrow: Prospects, and Challenges*, Onitsha: Effective Key Publishers, 1994.
- Obodo, E. *Living In Dialogue Series: Culture, Religion and Ecumenism*, Vol. I, Enugu: Godswill Print Enterprises, 2008.
- Okeke, H.O. *Milestones In Ecumenism: Evolutions In Canonical Legislation In Ecumenical Matters*, Enugu: Think Limited, 1996).
- Omegoha, F.I. *Family Apostolate: A New Method of Evangelization*, Enugu: Atlanto Printers and Publishers, 1999.
- Onwubiko, O.A. *Building Unity Together In The Mission of The Church: A Theology of Ecumenism* Nsukka: Fulladu Publishing Comp. 1999.
- Vanderwilt, J. *A Church Without Borders: The Eucharist and The Church In Ecumenical Perspective*. Collegeville M.N: The Liturgical Press, 1998.
- Visser't Hooft, W.A. (ed) *The New Delhi Report, The Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches*, London: SCM, 1962.

ENCYCLOPEDIAS

- Eliade, M. *The Encyclopedia of Religion* Vol. 5, New York: Macmillan Pub. Comp 1987.
- Lacoste, J.Y. (ed) *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology*, Vol. I, New York: Routledge, 2005.
- The Catholic Encyclopedia For Schools And Home*, Vol. 3, New York: Grolier Incorporated, 1965.

DICTIONARIES

- Clarke, P.B. and Linzey, A. (eds), *Dictionary Of Ethics, Theology and Society*, London: Routeledge, 1996.

Early, T. (ed), *Encyclopedia Dictionary of Religion* Washington D.C: Corpus Publications, Vol. A-E, 1976.

Hardon, J.A. *Pocket Catholic Dictionary*, New York: Image Books, 1985.

Hornby, A.S. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

JOURNALS

Bigard Theological Studies, vol 117, No I, January-June, 1997

Journal of Liberal Studies, Vol. II, Nos 1&2, 2003

BULLETINS AND DOCUMENTS

Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology, Vol. 20, 2008

Constitution of The Christian Association of Nigeria, 2004.

UNPUBLISHED MATERIALS AND THESIS

Adigwe, H.A. "The Youth Wing of The Christian Association of Nigeria –A call For Unity of Action," An address Presented At The Meeting of Representatives of The Youth of The Church Groups of CAN By The Director of Education, Youths and Women Development, CAN, October 2007.

Ikalama, I. "Ecumenism In Nigerian Nation State: A Critical Analysis of 3rd Republic", An Unpublished Thesis, Department of Political Science, Institute of Ecumenical Education, Thinker's Corner, Enugu, July 1995.

PERIODICALS

The Catholic Virginian, January 15, 2007.

INTERNET SOURCES

<http://www.catholicdoors.com/faq/qu23.htm>.

<http://www.aarweb.org/syllabus/syllabi/g/goosen/module07html>.

<http://www.the freedictionary.com/Roman+Catholic+Church>.

<http://atheism.about.com/library/glossary/western/bldef-romancatholicism.htm>

<http://knowledgegerush.com/kr/encyclopedia/protestantism>, 23/09/09.

<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/protestantism>, 23/09/09

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Easternorthodoxchurch, 24/09/09.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/orthodox-church>24/09/09

wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn,24/09/09.

<http://www.pointsouth.com/mpc/early-hist.html>,25/09/09

<http://dictionary.references.com/browse>,24/09/09

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/presbyterianism>,25/09/09

<http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-syncretism.htm>,23/09/09

<http://www.orthodoxfaith.com/ecumensim.html>.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecumenism>.

<http://www.chebucto.ns.ca/philosophy/Sui-Generis/berdyaev/essays/orth.328.htm>,
30/09/09

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/talk:ecumenism>.

<http://www.orthodoxinfo.com/ecumenism/HeersThe> missionary Root of Modern
Ecumenism. Pdf.

<http://www.orthodox.info.com/ecumenism/vitaly.aspx>

<http://www.nccusa.org/pdfs/Aram/Address.pdf>.

[http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/continuation-
com...](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/continuation-com...)

http://www.papalencyclicals.net/pius_ii/pii_MORTA.HTM.

<http://www.catholicculture.org/library/view.cfm?recnum=6331>

<http://christusrex.org/www1/CDHN/v13.html>.

[http://www.vatican.va/roman-curia/pontifical-council/christuni/documents/rc-pc-
christu...](http://www.vatican.va/roman-curia/pontifical-council/christuni/documents/rc-pc-christu...)

[http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/wbrmy/view.cfm?=5281&CFID=1760246
7&CFT...](http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/wbrmy/view.cfm?=5281&CFID=17602467&CFT...)30/09/2009

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john-paul-ii/encyclicals/documents/hf-jp-ii-enc-2505.

[http://www.crc-internet.org/HIR 2008/march 66-3.htm](http://www.crc-internet.org/HIR_2008/march_66-3.htm)

[http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/joint-working
grou.](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/joint-working-group)

ORAL INTERVIEW

List of People Interviewed

S/N	NAMES	AGES	OCCUPATION	PLACE OF INTERVIEW	DATE	INTERVIEWER
1	Adigwe, Hypolite, A	60+	A Roman Catholic Clergyman, director of Pontifical Mission Societies, and Head Department of Mission and Dialogue, Catholic Secretariat, Abuja.	Catholic Secretariat, Abuja.	15/08/08	Nnebedum, O.E.
2	Agbo, Benedict,	30+	Assistant Chaplain, Nigeria, Nsukka Chaplaincy, as well as lecturer Music Department University of Nigeria, Nsukka.	Chaplaincy office, St. Peter's Chaplaincy, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.	18/12/08	Nnebedum, O.E.
3	Anih, Jude	30+	An ecumenist and bursar, Ecumenical Community Secondary School, Institute of Ecumenical Education,	Bursar's office, Ecumenical Community Secondary School, Institute of	28/01/09	Nnebedum, O.E.

			Thinker's Corner, Enugu.	Ecumenical Education, Thinker's Corner Enugu.		
4	Aneke Antolinus	30+	A Roman Catholic Clergyman, an expert in Ecumenism and Head of Department Ecumenism, Institute of Ecumenical Education, Thinker's Corner, Enugu.	Head of Department's Office Complex, Institute of Ecumenical Education Thinker's Corner, Enugu.	30/01/09	Nnebedum O.E.