

PHILOSOPHY RELIGIOUS EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

ARE 403 THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT
(Notes)

PART A

1.0 Etymological Meaning/Historical Developments

The term Ecumenism is derived from a Greek word Oikoumene which is translated to mean earth world or Land. But with time the term has acquired other interpretations/meaning as discussed below.

The term was first used in the Christian writings in the first century to mean the Roman Empire. By that time the civilized Roman World was the only world known to the early Christians. The Roman world extended as far as France, North Africa, Atlantic Ocean and Asia. Countries that formed the Roman Empire included the present Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Yugoslavia, Greece, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Australia, Turkey, Northern Africa, Syria, Iraq, Jordan and Saudi Arabia among others.

In the New Testament the word was used to denote the world but with no particular political or cultural interpretation.

In the 2nd century the term was used in connection with the then persecuted church. This was the first time the word was used in connection with the church.

The year 325 saw a new usage of the term. The word was used to mean church councils. The decisions by such councils were to affect the whole church. The councils spoke on behalf of the church. The decisions by the councils had to be approved by the ecumenical. They also had to be accepted to the whole church.

Sometimes around the 6th century, the term was used to refer to the authoritative teachings of the great church theologians such as Gregory of Nazianzen, Basil the great, John Chrysostom of Antiochea, Athanasius of Alexandria etc. The church was defining its theology through these people. Their teachings were accepted by the whole church.

The word ecumenical entered a new ecclesiastical usage in the 16th century. The term was used in connection with church creeds especially the Apostles, the Nicece and the

Athanasian creeds. It is from these creeds that the church came to formulate most of the basic teachings/beliefs.

By the beginning of 20th century the term acquired yet another interpretation. It was used in connection with World Missionary councils such as the New York conference of 1900. such council only represented the entire world but also had objectives/agenda that covered the whole world. The use the word here was both geographical and ecclesiastical.

In 1910 another missionary council was held in Edinburgh, Scotland (Great Britain) in which all the protestant churches participated. The council discussed matters that were to influence the whole protestant Christianity. It should be noted that both the Catholic and the Orthodox churches did not participate in both New York and Edinburgh.

In 1919 the need for a permanent ecumenical council of churches was felt – world peace was necessary. Consequently a conference was held in Geneva, Switzerland in 1920. The conference brought together the main Protestant, the catholic an the Orthodox churches. Issues that covered not only the entire church but also the whole world were discussed. The world ecumenical was used in Geneva conference to refer the world wide unity of the churches irrespective of denominational differences. It was felt that the ecumenical spirit must be transcend denominations, nationality, language and class. Ecumenical efforts were to work together towards a better Christian community and a better world.

Thesis – examine the world-wide unity of the church – ecumenical Kenya-ups and downs – case of NCKK, AOIC and AMECEA.

Interfaith relations – NCKK, AOIC, AMECEA, Muslim council and Hindu council.

THE EARLIEST CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY (Ecclesia)

Christ the founder of Christianity is said to have left behind a united community of believers who were to be guided by love towards God and neighbor. He knew that a divided church would be weak. Hence he emphasized on unity – community – Acts of the Apostles. By the middle of the 1st century the Roman Emperors felt threatened by the Christian community mainly for four reasons.

- a) The community was growing much faster than any other religions community in the history of the Roman rule.
- b) The community proclaims an authority higher than that to the emperor (appeared disloyal).
- c) The community denounced the Roman pagan worship.
- d) The community denounced Jewish religion.

Due to these reasons the community was persecuted, first by the Jewish people and later by the Romans. In spite of these, the communities continued to expand or grow during the persecution. Why? Because the members spread the religion as they fled for their lives. Though scattered by the persecution, the Christians were held by common beliefs and practices particularly **baptism** and the **Lord's supper**. They saw themselves as the *ekklesia* or *ecclesia*, a Greek word meaning the whole fellowship of Christ followers-united.

The Roman persecution was brought to an end by the Emperor Constantine in the year AD 313, Christianity was recognized as a legal religion. Emperor Constantine made Christianity the official religion, following this, the relationship between the church and the state was very close for a long time.

After the persecution the unity of the Christian community was threatened, this time by false teachings called heresies from within. The community had therefore to redefine its teachings; (theology philosophy). Creeds were thus formulated to try to maintain unity among the community. Such creeds were later to become ecumenical.

THE EARLY CHURCH COUNCILS

1. The first council of Nicaea (325) (Constantine) the council was held in **325 AD** to deal with the Arianism Arius of Alexandrian school argued that:
 - a) Christ was a created being. Thus he was not of the same substance with the father (not equal).
 - b) Christ had a beginning and hence he was not eternal unlike the father.
 - c) Christ was not fully God and not fully man.
 - d) God is one and indivisible i.e could not share his nature with (his son) Jesus.

Following Arianism a council of Bishops met in Nicaea, Asia Minor. (Modern Syria)

The council maintained that Christ is of the **same substance** with the Father **truly divine** and **truly human** – Nicean Creed was formulated.

The council came up with the Nicene Creed which started that “Christ was begotten from the Father and not made that He is of the same substance with the Father, truly God and truly man”.

2. The Council of Constantinople (381) (called by emperor Theodosius I)

The second council of Constantinople to deal with the problem of the identity of the Holy Spirit. The Trinitarian controversy/heresy denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit. (Associated with Apollinarius). The council affirmed that the Holy Spirit is equal with the father and the Son and that the three are **one**.

3. The council of Ephesus (431) called by emperor Theodosius II)

The council dealt with the Christological problem/controversy as presented by Nestorius and Apollinarius who denied the humanity of Christ saying that Christ was fully divided. Otherwise he would be a sinner. That the womb of Mary could have changed the nature of Christ.

Nestorius on the other hand argued that Christ had two natures i.e. God and man. However, the two natures existed distinct, side by side and not as one. He argued that Mary could not have given birth to God. She therefore, gave birth to Christ the human

being and not the divine Christ (denied the divinity). The council maintained that Christ the divine took human form/became fully human and that the two natures were in full and inseparable.

4. The council of Chalcedon (451) (under Emperor Marcion)

The council dealt with the Monophysite controversy. The view of this controversy was that although Christ had two natures, the **divine nature dominated** over **his manhood**. Thus Christ was fully divine and not fully man. The council taught that in Christ there was no manhood without true divinity no was there divinity without true manhood. The Chalcedonian creed was formulated. The creed stated that “Christ is fully God and truly man, that he is one substance with the father according to his God head and co-substantial with man according to his manhood. That he was begotten of the Father before all ages according to his Godhead and that he was born of the virgin Mary, the God-bearer, according to his manhood”.

5. The second council of Constantinople (553)

The council dealt with the Christological problem.

The Chalcedonian council did not solve the problem about the nature of Christ. The Eastern church (which became the Orthodox Church) insisted that Christ’s human nature was swallowed completely by his divinity. The western church (Roman) maintained the two indivisible natures of Christ. Constantinople II (553) did not solve the problem completely. The controversy almost split the church into East and West. The churches in Egypt, Ethiopia and Syria adopted the monophysite argument that Christ had only one nature, the divine nature and that to present Christ as having two natures would be idolatrous. The council was unable to end the Christological controversy.

6. The third council Constantinople (680-681)

The sixth council dealt with the monothelite controversy which argued that Christ had only one will since he had only one nature, that is, the divine nature. The council maintained that Christ had two wills but the divine will dominated and worked through

the human will. The council, once again, failed to end the controversy. The drift between the East and the West continued.

7. The Second Niceane Council (787)

The council was called to deal with the problem of iconoclasm which had to do with the use of icons or images or relics for religious purposes. The practices were regarded idolatrous by the Eastern Church. Practice was condemned and icons destroyed. The council defended the use of icons/images/relics arguing that they were useful in worship as they mediated the invisible divinity.

The council thus affirmed the use of icons for worship purposes.

Conclusion

It should be noted that all these councils were attempts to keep the church united but with little success. It is these heresies that largely forced the Great Schism between the East and the West.

THE GREAT SCHISM (EAST –WEST)

This is the first major split within the church, resulting into the Church of Rome (West) and that of Constantinople (East).

Causes

1. Heresies between Church of Rome and that of Constantinople – These increased tension and rivalry between the two blocks.
2. Domination of the Eastern Church by the church of West. The West church assumed the role of defending the church against attacks by the East. Rome dominated in decisions that governed the church.
3. Leadership struggles. The 6th century realized 5 patriarchs governing the church 1 in Rome and 4 in the East (i.e. Constantinople Jerusalem, Antioch and Alexandria).
4. Fruitless efforts in the 6th and 7th centuries. The period is described in ecumenical circles as the period of watery union.
5. Violent quarrelling between the Eastern and the Western patriarchs over authority and leadership.
6. Crusades in the 11th and 13th centuries to recapture holy lands from Moslems' control. There were lands associated with the birth life, suffering, death and resurrection of Christ e.g. Nazareth, Jerusalem, Judea, Galilee etc. There was no cooperation between East and the West during the crusades. As a result the church of Constantinople was almost crushed by the Moslems.
7. Bitterness between East and West. After the crusades bitterness between the East and the West was almost permanent. There was no respect and recognition between the Eastern and the Western patriarchs.

Conclusion

Attempts to end the possible split between East and West were fruitless. Thus by the end of the 13th century, the church was already divided into two, the church of the East (Constantinople) and that of West (Rome). The West adopted Latin while the East adopted Greek as the official languages. Ever since the Church of Rome has continued to split, unlike the church of the East.

THE CHURCH IN THE WEST AND THE REFORMATION

After the 1st split the papacy or the Church of Rome became very powerful and rich. Efforts were made to grab power and wealth.

The 14th and 15th centuries reached powerful popes who claimed that all authority must come from them. The churches ruled religiously, politically and economically. As a result, the need to reform the church was inevitable. Notable reformers were; Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, Zwingli John Huss etc.

Causes of the Great Reformation

1. Increased corruption and struggle for authority and leadership. Bishops taught each other to head the church. Many of the bishops were spiritually empty. Church property was mismanaged.
2. Dubious methods of collecting funds such as the selling of indulgences and papal taxes to put up churches. The need to audit church finances was recommended by the reformers.
3. Enforcement of celibate life among the clergy. Celibate life was made compulsory. Consequently some of the clergy ended up with illegitimate children.
4. Conservatism. The church refused to amend the evil ways.
5. The renaissance period. This was a period of great learning. (Some) Church teachings were subjected to critical discussion. The Bible was translated inviting biblical discussion. Church teachings that were not biblical were questioned.
6. Pilgrimages. The practice was said to aid in the forgiveness of sins. The faithful had to enter the church on knees. Luther taught that salvation is by faith alone.
7. Selling of indulgence and forgiveness of sins. The reformers condemned the selling of indulgence for forgiveness of sins. Certificates of forgiveness were issued to those who paid in cash for their sins. The reformers insisted that salvation is by God alone.
8. Luther's 95 thesis or objections. Luther nailed 95 objectives referred to as thesis on the door of the church at Wittenberg and later in Rome. These objected against evil practices by church leaders (bishops). Luther was excommunicated

by a council of the church held in 1521. He left the Roman church to form the Lutheran movement.

Ecumenical Issues in Reformation

Although the reformation struggle divided the church into the Roman Catholic and the protestant churches, the emphasis for one Christian community was ever present in the struggle.

1. Luther's motive saw to reform the church from within rather than to divide the church.
2. The reform based their arguments on the creeds and teaches which were common.
3. There were common or a shared belief, teachings, practices etc e.g. the Lord's Supper, baptism, trinity etc.
4. Some of the reformer felt that the division was a way of preaching the Gospel of Christ who is indivisible, hence a positive move.
5. It was believed that both the Catholics and the Protestants belonged to the universal church of Christ, which is invisible and wider.
6. The reformers called for the establishments of the universal church of Christ.

Ecumenical Response by the Roman Catholic Church.

1. Reformed religions orders e.g. the Jesuits were founded. (The congregation of the Jesuits was founded by Francis Xavier and Ignatius of Loyola in 1540): Such congregations were highly disciplined.
2. Individual Catholic priests called for a physical re-union between the Catholic and the protestant churches. But the church insisted that it was the protestant to re-unite with the Catholic Church.
3. Some Catholics urged the leaders of the church to accept the proposal for a universal council of elders/bishops to head the universal church.
4. Other Catholics recommended that the church examines the raised issues with seriousness because some of them were embarrassing.

5. In 1545 the Roman Catholic Church called the council of Trent to settle the differences but the Protestant church boycotted the council saying they had nothing to do with it.
6. After the reformation, some Catholics denied the infallibility of the people. This is the belief that when Pope speaking from the papacy he makes no mistakes. They also rejected celibacy. They established churches that are led by bishops. These form a conference that works closely with WCC and other ecumenical bodies.

Modern Denominational Conferences

The 19th century was marked by significant expansion of the Christian community. The period realized increased efforts by denominations as well as individuals towards world wide fellowships. Such efforts realized conferences which were to influence future ecumenical efforts. Examples of such conferences are discussed below.

1. Lambeth Conference 1867

- This conference was held in Lambeth, London by Anglican Bishops. Matters discussed included: the possibility of relationships with the Roman Catholic, the Orthodox and Lutheran churches.
- The conference concluded that the Anglican church shall be united by the following issues:
 - i. Authority of the Holy scripture (One holy book – Bible)
 - ii. Universal Creeds e.g. Athanasian Creed; Apostles Creed and the Nicene Creed as well as common basic beliefs.
 - iii. Basic sacraments, particularly baptism and the Lords supper.
 - iv. Governance by a council of Bishops. These were the issues to be considered in future ecumenical discussions

2. The Alliance of Reformed Churches

- This alliance was founded by the Presbyterian Church of America and Scotland. The first meeting was held in 1875 in which 21 Presbyterian churches from all over the world were represented.

- The conferences discussed on:
 - i. Supremacy of the Holy Scripture.
 - ii. Presbyterian principles to govern the church.
 - iii. Adherence of official teachings and practices by all Presbyterian churches.
 - iv. Doctrinal statements that were to be accepted by all the Presbyterian churches in the world.
 - v. The possibility of a wider ecumenical unity discussion.

3. **The Methodist Episcopal Conference**

- The conference met in London in 1881. it was however a product of an earlier conference of Baltimore USA in 1876.
- The conference discussed the following issues.
 - i. Relationships and co-operation within the church (Methodist).
 - ii. Moral issues in the church.
 - iii. Evangelization and conversation of non-Christians.

4. **The Baptist World**

- The first conference by the Baptist church was held in London in 1905 during which the Baptist World Alliance was founded. The alliance had 3 main objectives:
 - i. To express and promote unity and fellowship among members.
 - ii. To secure and defend religious freedom.
 - iii. To proclaim a common faith.

Concluding Remarks

- The 19th century realized further division in the church. Many denominations and congregations were established. The period however had strong ecumenical relations. It witnessed many denominational conferences and resolutions that were to influence future ecumenical efforts.

- Towards the end of 19th century calls were being made for an international Christian movement.
- By then there were congregational unions in Canada, United States, England and Australia.
- As a result of these calls, the first International congregational council was called in London in 1899 and a third one in 1908.
- These efforts were to realize not only inter-congregational but also international councils and conferences.

VATICAN I

INTERNATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL AND CONFERENCES

1. Evangelical Awakening and its Ecumenical Results

Modern evangelical movements that were to realize the formation of Missionary Societies were first initiated by the Baptist Church.

These movements were however a product of the 17th century evangelical awakening or revival, which was started in Germany and Scotland by the Pietism and the Methodist.

Characteristics of the Evangelical Awakening

- a) It brought together Christians of different denominations for the purpose of spreading the Good News of Christ.
- b) The members claimed to have had personal experience of salvation.
- c) They claimed to have been called to redeem the world.
- d) The experienced Christian unity by sharing in the life and ministry of Christ.
- e) They knew no congregational boundaries and no nationalities.
- f) They had special missionary zeal and as such they were later to join missionary societies (such as the Baptist missionary society, the London missionary society, the Presbyterian societies and the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary society among others)
- g) The missionary societies encouraged co-operation and unity in religious and social matters.
- h) The held communal prayers and started communal project especially on education and health.

- i) The efforts by their missionaries saw the planting of Christianity in Africa and in Asia.
- j) The ecumenical spirit among the missionary societies lessened/reduced hostilities among the Protestants and the Catholic missionary societies.
- k) The evangelical awakening not only influenced by Protestants but also the Roman Catholic missionary societies.
- l) The evangelical awakening was also interested in social work to fight diseases, ignorance, poverty, conflicts, war etc.
- m) The awakening finally realized the formation of the Evangelical Alliance in 1845 in London.

2. The Evangelical Alliance

The evangelical awakening brought the realization that an alliance was long overdue. This realization saw the 1846 London conference in which 50 denominations from different continents participated. It was during the conference that the Evangelical Alliance was established.

Achievement of the Evangelical Alliance

- a) Community prayers were held by Christians from different denominations each year for one week.
- b) Ecumenical talks were held during the week of prayer focusing on Christian matters and wider ecumenical participation.
- c) The alliance was an important forum with regard to Christian Education, Social and religious matters were published.
- d) Many of the alliance members participated in missionary societies in various ways.
- e) The alliance defended religious liberty as well as oppressed religious groups and persons.
- f) It was among the most successful alliances in the 19th century.

Weaknesses with the Alliance

- a) If ignored relationship between churches i.e. it was an organization of Christians and focused on individuals. Thus churches remained separated although some of the members were in the alliance.
- b) If lacked central leadership and a clear vision: no clear goals, no clear work plan.
- c) It was by an informal team of individuals who were not to be paid.
- d) If I had little or no support from the churches, people met as individuals.

3. Christian Youth Movements (YCM)

Between 1840s and 1850s there arose in England Christian movements which were to influence ecumenism in future examples: Young Men Christian Association (YMCA), Young Women Christian Association (YWCA) and Christian Volunteers Movement (CVM).

The YMCA was founded by George Williams and others in 1844. Its trade mark, a red triangle, is a sign of unity in mind, body and soul, which the organization strikes for..

The YWCA was founded by women prayer groups in England in 1854.

The students' volunteer movement was founded in 1886 by a group of students in the US to carry out missionary work in America and Europe through institutions of higher learning.

Ecumenical Characteristics of CYMS

- a) They emphasized that the ecumenical spirit must transcend denominations. They advocated for a universal church.
- b) They emphasized Christian community by working together – community work.
- c) The movements were missionary in nature. They united men and women who regarded Jesus Christ as their God and Saviour.
- d) The claimed to be guided by the Holy Spirit.
- e) They claimed to be expanding the kingdom of God to the young men and women.

- f) The movements grew to become world wide. They held international conferences.
- g) They influenced the formation of other youth movements such as the young peoples society and the Christian union, world's Sunday school association.

Ecumenical contribution of the Christian Youth Movement

- a) The movements were by students and for students from all denominations.
- b) They undertook missionary work at home and home abroad besides caring for their own interests.
- c) Mature men and women were motivated to participate in future ecumenical discussions e.g. John Mott the chairman of SVM later became the chairman of the Edinburgh World Missionaries Conference and chairman of the International Missionary Council.
- d) They challenged denominational Christianity as regards ecumenism – showed that ecumenism it is possible if denominational differences are put aside.
- e) The movements were driven by a rich and genuine missionary zeal which had lacked in the earlier movements.
- f) They were successful experiments in the field of ecumenism. They had a true or genuine ecumenical spirits – they removed the psychological obstacles that had played against inter denominational ecumenism.

4. International Missionary Council (IMC)

The need for an international missionary council (IMC) was proposed in the London missionary conference of 1888. The conference consisted of members from protestant societies. Its tasks were:

- To convene missionary conferences regularly.
- To work towards a united missionary conference/society.
- To settle disputes between missions.
- To establish more missionary, Societies to Africa and Asia.

In 1920 an international conference was held in Switzerland during which a committee was appointed to establish an international missionary council.

The council was finally founded in Oxford in 1923. It was to influence the formation of the World Council of Churches.

The council realized the formation of missionary societies such as:

- The Universities Mission to Central Africa.
- The Oxford Mission to Calcutta.
- The Cambridge Mission to New Delhi.
- The China Inland Mission.
- The South Africa General Mission
- The North Africa Mission
- The Christian Missionary Alliance.

The objectives of the International Missionary Council.

- To discuss missionary concerns/problems with a view to provide solutions.
- To coordinate missionary activities of different societies in different countries with a view to uniting the activities.
- To fight for religious freedom.
- To seek for world peace and justice.
- To foster Christian Education through school and publication.
- To convene world missionary conferences regularly.

5. The Edinburgh Conference of 1910

The conference was held by the IMC. It was among the greatest landmarks in the history of ecumenical movements.

It realized the formation of two important organizations; the faith and order commission and the life and work movement.

The Edinburgh conference marked a new sense of fellowship among the participants who realized the oneness in Christ that transcends all barriers.

The conference explored the possibility of inviting the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox churches in ecumenical discussions.

A committee was appointed to convene future meetings and to carry out other ecumenical duties.

6. Faith and Order Conference

There were two major conferences on faith and order.

i). The first conference on Faith and Order

The proposal regarding the conference was discussed in length during the Geneva conference of 1920 (Switzerland). The Geneva conference achieved the following:

- It appointed a committee to prepare for a world conference on faith and order.
- It involved almost all the churches except the Roman Catholic.
- German churches were invited for the first time since the 1st world war (1914-1918). In 1925 another conference was held in Stockholm, Sweden during which the decision to convene a world conference on Faith and order was reached. In 1927 the first world conference on Faith and order was held in Switzerland. (Lausanne). About ten churches were represented. These representatives came from America, Africa, Europe and Asia. The conference dealt with:
 - a. Issues regarding church unity and co-operation.
 - b. The possibilities of collaboration by churches in the field applied Christianity especially in the area of life and work.
 - c. Matters of faith – beliefs and practices – were also dealt with – common faith. Some were for creeds, others were for scripture. The major achievement of the conference was the appointment of a continuation committee and a theological committee on Faith and order.

ii). **The second conference on Faith and order**

The conference was held in Edinburgh in 1937. About 123 churches were represented. The conference reviewed the progresses which had been made by the continuation and theological committees which were appointed in the earlier conference of 1927. The conference looked at 4 main areas/things:

- The Grace of Jesus Christ.
- The Church and the Word of God.
- Church's Ministry and Sacraments.
- Church's Unity in Life and Worship.

On these issues the conference concluded that:

- a) The church is one through Jesus Christ the incarnate word of God, head of the church, the king of kings and Lord of Lords.
- b) The unity of the church is founded on Jesus himself who rules the church through Holy Spirit.
- c) The unity of church is based on the love and grace of God. It is not physical unity but an understanding of the truth about Jesus Christ.
- d) The unity of the church is found in the entire Christian community.
- e) The unity should increase mutual understanding and good will among the Christians. The physical divisions in the church are not according to the will of Christ but man.
- f) That the divided church should benefit from the various denominations through common prayers functions/mission. The continuation committee met again in 1948 in Amsterdam (Netherlands), during which the commission on Faith and Order was established under the world council of churches.

The achievements of the world conferences on Faith and Order

- a) Men and women of diverse confessions met together and successfully discussed religious matters without prejudice or suspicion. The participants shared a lot through discussions and paper presentation.
- b) Denominational problems were discussed. It was realized that the walls of the church went beyond denominations. Participants were able to identify themselves with those

outside their own denominations. Areas of denominational strengths and weakness were explored. Efforts were made to understand the position of the Orthodox of the R.C. churches as regards ecumenism.

- c) There was a more clear understanding that the experience of each Christian denomination is a totality in itself and that the experience in the same.
- d) It was realized that most of the divisions in the church were the results of non theological issues – many of them had to do with personal, economical, political and administrative differences.
- e) The conferences created a closer relationship between Christian scholars and the church leaders.

Short comings/weaknesses

- a) The problem of (faith) dominical faith was not resolved – there was no agreement on a common faith some were for creeds/others for traditions, and others for the scripture.
- b) Dogmatic differences could not be adequately dealt with – (people still belonged to their dominions). People valued their denomination’s teachings more than the ecumenical principles. Denominations were unwilling/not ready to sacrifice their dogmatic differences for the sake of ecumenism.
- c) Some churches regarded the order and the ministry of their church as defined/holy/sacred. Others denied the validity of sacraments in other churches.
- d) Ritualistic differences constrained ecumenical initiatives – i.e. ways of worship, sacraments, celebrations, dressing etc – this some times resulted to tension between denominations.

7. The Movement on Life and Work

The conference on life and work was first held in Stockholm, Sweden in 1925. Its achievements were:

- a) It emphasized on the need to apply the gospel to different the situation wholistic Christianity.
- b) The conference explored the then social needs on possible solutions.

- c) Committee was then appointed to coordinate the activities of the life and work movement.
- d) The conference (focused) strengthened fellowship between churches with special focus on special needs.
- e) The life work movement attempted to unite all socially active organization that were in operation by then.
- f) It encouraged social and Christian ethics and established a center at Stockholm to facilitate the exchange of knowledge an experience and to coordinate social work.
- g) The movement addressed ecumenism under the following topics:
 - The obligations of the church in the light of God plan for the world.
 - The church and the social and the moral ethical problems
 - The church and the industrial and the economic problems.
 - The church and the political international relationships.
 - The church and education.
 - Ways and means of promoting church cooperation and unity.

The movement proposed the formation of social organizations to deal with these objectives. This call realized the formation of NGOs such as Europe Central Bureau for Inter-church Aid, the International Loan Association and the International Loan Association and the International Christian Commission for the Refugees. Today we have very many NGOs yet not much has been achieved – why?

Both the Life and Work Movement and the Faith and Order Commission later to become part of the World Council of Church (WCC).

8. The World Council of Churches

The need for a world council of churches was underlined in most conferences which took place during and soon after the first world war (1914-1918) e.g 1920 International Missionary Conferences at Crans in Switzerland such conferences that were held in 1920s and 30s attempted the formation of such world councils but with no success. Some of the participants did not see the agency of such a council due to the existence of the faith and Order commission and life and work commission.

In 1937 a committee was formed to look into the possibilities of forming a world wide council of churches. The committee found itself caught up in the second world war i.e. (1939 – 1945 the period saw more closer relationship between churches organization. Three main centres were established: Geneva, Switzerland, London, Britain and New York in USA, meetings were held in these centres dealing with issues relating to the war.

These centres provided material Aid to the needy, particularly the refugees and the suffering in Germany and in other countries in which the effects of the Second World War were devastating. The offices were in conduct with prisoner of war mainly through Christian literature and the bible in particular. Emergency committees were established through the life and work movement to deal with emergency cases. The roles of the MCA of the YCWA were also felt in the war period. The world council committee founded inter-church Aid to assist the missionaries and societies in the war torn countries. A lot of money and personnel were devoted to post war problems.

All this time the faith and order and the life and work movements were working as a team with the world council through NY, London and Geneva offices and centres.

It should be noted that the World council of Churches took its form during the war period.

- The period saw genuine cooperation between Christian movements than ever before. Finally in 1948 the first assembly of the WCC was officially established/founded.
- Except the RCC almost all other main line churches were represented in the WCC. It should be noted that WCC was product of the Faith and Order commission, the Life and Work movement and the International Missionary Council. The world council committee had finally realized its goal.
- In 1954 the council had its second assembly in Evaston, USA. The assembly affirmed that is the duty of the church to promote world peace.
- The WCC had its third assembly in New Delhi, India in 1961. the assembly emphasized the mission of the church at all levels.
- The forth assembly was held Uppsala, Sweden in 1968. The theme here was the participation of the church in Gods work of the renewing the human community.

- The fifth assembly took place in Nairobi in 1975. The theme was Jesus Christ frees and unties. Liberation was regarded as an important aspect of reconciliation.
- The sixth assembly took place in Van Cover, Canada in 1983. The assembly emphasized on justice, participation and sustainability in economic, political and social issues.
- The WCC has continued to meet often after every seven years, but most of the activities are now under AACC. The Catholic Church is not member of the AACC (All African Conference of churches)

Tasks

- a) Find out more about the WCC in the recent past.
- b) Visit the AACC offices to trace the history and activities of either AACC or the WCC or both up to the present.

VATICAN II AND ECUMENISM

Since the reformation up to the mid of 20th century the Roman Catholic Church stood outside the international/interdenominational ecumenical/conferences/councils/activities.

However, Pope John XXIII in 1959 called the second Vatican council popularly known as Vatican II during which the degree (official position) on ecumenism was discussed. The council met between 1962 – 1965. Members who participated in the ecumenical discussion were drawn from RCC, Protestants and Orthodox churches. A secretariat for promoting Christian unity was established. The conference discussed on the possibilities of ecumenical missionary churches. It was affirmed in the conference that Jesus worked in Christian communities beyond the physical borders of the church. The Roman Catholic had finally realized the need for ecumenical approaches to Christianity. Until after Vatican II the Roman Catholic Church was never/not fully involved in ecumenical – activities what were the resolutions arrived at during Vatican II on Ecumenism?

1. The concern for unity in trinity is the duty of the universal church. The concern reveals the bond of brotherhood among the Christians which leads to a more desirable unity.

2. The church must seek for new ways of reformation towards ecumenism.
3. That the ecumenical spirit must change the Christians hearts towards self denial and interdenominational love.
4. That private and public international prayer is essential for Christian unity. That the Roman Catholic Church must understand the doctrine of the separated brethren/churches.
5. That meeting between the protestant and the Roman Catholic Christian churches must be encouraged.
6. That the Catholic and the protestant missionary societies are to work as a team-collaborate (never the case). That denominational trading beliefs and teachings should never see an obstacle to Ecumenism.

PART B

ECUMENICAL EFFORTS IN AFRICA

INTRODUCTION

The history of modern ecumenical interaction in Africa can be traced back to the first decade of the 20th Century. We need to note that the circumstances surrounding the 1st world war period compelled the Alliance of Protestant missions to emphasize a type of Christianity that transcended racial barriers.

The major landmark of this was the KIKUYU CONFERENCE OF 1913, which was an important highlight of ecumenism not only in East Africa but also in Africa as a whole.

The Kikuyu Conference

In June 1913 a large number of protestant missionaries of East Africa held a conference at Kikuyu. The church missionary society (CMS), the church of Scotland mission, African Inland Mission, United Methodist church Mission, SDA and others were present in the conference.

The conference emphasized the need for a united native church. The need for such a unity had been discussed before in earlier meetings/conferences. They include:

1. The Maseno Conference of 1908. The conference dealt with problem of influx of different missionary societies in the same region especially in Nairobi, Kikuyu and Kisumu. The conference attempted to solve the problem associated with the overlapping of missionary activities/work – unable to solve them.
2. The second and third conferences were held in Kijabe in 1908 and 1908 respectively. Both emphasized on missionary unity – unity of the missionary societies working together.
3. A 4th and 5th conferences were held in Nairobi in 1909 and 1911 respectively. The conference emphasized on the establishment of a united self-supportive and self-propagative native church (African church) – African Christianity.
4. The 6th conference was the Kikuyu conference of 1913. The conference once again emphasized on the idea of united African church. It should however be noted that

more serious move to unite and Africanize the church were to be realized only after the 2nd Kikuyu conference of 1918 resulted in the formation of the Protestant mission. The conference emphasized on the need to make evangelism, translation of scripture and educational work more effective. The conference once again underlined the need for one united native (African) church.

The major weakness with the conferences.

- a) The African missionaries were not involved in the planning initial deliberation. They were seen as naïve, backward, illiterate, primitive and ignorant, hence they were not invited. Their input did not matter.
- b) The foreign missionaries saw themselves as the authority and the future of the African church. Consequently, the African missed the opportunity to participate actively in the conference.
- c) The RCC did not participate in the ecumenical initiative. Thus it was purely a protestant affair. It should be noted that the relationship between the RCC and protestant church was negative. Until Vatican II in 1965.
- d) The conferences lacked united and clear goals. This was due to the traditions, beliefs and practices which had been borrowed from the mother churches.
- e) The conferences attempted to bring about cooperation between missionary societies and not between churches. The promotion of mutual understanding between African churches was seen as a concern which would result automatically after the missionary societies had established an alliance.
- f) Finally some protestant missionary societies started to pull out due to misunderstanding and failure to realize the fruits of the proposed alliance.

POSITIVE ELEMENTS (CONTRIBUTIONS)

- 1. Church leadership was slowly being placed in the hands of the African clergy. Never the less the churches were expected to follow the traditions and beliefs of the mother churches.
- 2. The conferences minimized inter-denominational hostility to some extent.

3. From the Kikuyu conference developed the Alliance of Protestant Mission (1918) which in 1926 opened the Alliance High School (boys). In 1924 the alliance changed its name to the Kenya Missionary council. Later the council became the Christina Council of Kenya (CCK). Later on it became the National Christian Council of Kenya (NCCCK) – National Council of churches of Kenya.

ALL AFRICAN CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES (AACC)

Several Christian councils were founded in Africa before the Second World War (1939-1945). But it was not until 1955 that the first continental meeting in Africa was organized by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). In 1957, the International Missionary Council met in Accra, Ghana during which the first representative body of the AACC was formed.

The body met in Ibadan, Nigeria in 1958 a year later and in 1963 in Kampala, Uganda. The assembly of AACC was inaugurated. The formation of the AACC in April 20th 1963 was a great achievement for the church in Africa and in the world as regards ecumenism. Like the WCC, the AACC had little or no problem with doctrinal differences – saw themselves as a fellowship of churches, which confesses the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures.

The AACC is an affiliate of the WCC. It however maintains some autonomy. It works closely with the WCC.

The membership of AACC is open to all denominations as well as African Independent Churches. The AACC supports regional and National councils in various African countries such as the NCCCK. It supports many projects in Africa, gives scholarships to African students both at home and abroad etc. **See other notes ***

Some AACC Conferences in Africa (Highlights)

1. The AACC Conference in Kampala (1963).

- John S. Mbiti warned the AACC of the dangers of depending too heavily on the WCC (self-hood/independence).
- Like the WCC the AACC had theological questions regarding the scripture, doctrine and traditions.
- The AACC regarded the Holy Scripture as authoritative over traditions or beliefs and practices. It sought communion with all the churches that confess Jesus Christ as God and Saviour.
- The AACC also affirmed/recognized the Holy Trinity (Father/son/Holy Spirit) borrowing from earlier conferences (WCC) and from the historical Christianity.
- Appreciated and honoured the work of the Uganda Martyrs.
- Emphasized the practice of monogamous marriage as the recognized type of union between man/woman.
- Also addressed the issue of Islam – seeing it as a common enemy that needed to be discussed.

2. The AACC Conference at Enugu (1965) and Ibadan (1969) in Nigeria.

The AACC with assistance from WCC organized two conferences in Nigeria, one in Enugu in 1965 and the other at Ibadan in 1969 to follow up matters discussed in the earlier conference. Suggestions rose to include Muslims in the spirit of ecumenism (unity) – Muslims in Nigeria. However, the WCC did not favour this idea/proposal.

What is the AACC?

The All African Conference of Churches (AACC) is a C..... ecumenical body established in 1963 as a fellowship of Christian churches which confess Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures. It seeks to fulfil a common calling to the glory of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. A total of 168 member churches and associate members including National Council of churches in 39 African countries compose the AACC constituency.

Goals

- To raise the demands of the Gospel to churches and National Christian councils about their life and mission especially in the area of evangelism, service and unity consultation and action.
- To provide a common programme for study and research.
- To encourage closer relations and sharing among African churches through visits, conference and information sharing.
- To assist churches in identifying; sharing and placing personnel and other resources in support of the common task.
- To promote leadership training for both laity and clergy.

AACC Structure

The general assembly which meets every 5 years. One of the units of AACC is the selfhood of the churches – composes four desks committed to the empowerment of the church as the people of God Just structures responding to issues mandated by our faith.

- Christian and family life education.
- Theology and integration
- Youth
- Women
- Another unity is service unit:
 - Refugee and emergency services etc

Background of AACC (History)

In 1969 a theological consultation on revelation took place in Ibadan 20th Century conference – theologians from African universities as well as representative from Geneva came together to discuss Biblical Revelation and African beliefs – outcome was a book (ed) by Kwesi Dickson and Paul Ellingworth called _____

It was affirmed in the conference that the pre-Christian Africans knew of a supreme being, union they worshipped in previous conference (Kampala) there had been discussions on African beliefs with regard to God – idol worshippers, ancestor worshipper etc.

3. The AACC at Kinshasa, Congo, Zaire (DRC) in 1971.

The conference was attended by the executive committee of the AACC. A document referred to as the Kinshasa Declaration was produced during the conference. The document had the following resolutions:

- All churches including the independent movements/churches are part of the universal church of Christ (isolated) and that the ecumenical movement in Africa should seek to unite all churches in Africa.
- That the ecumenical movement is like the renaissance of the Africa personality because it is part of their search for unity, identity, authenticity and liberation. In this view/context ecumenism becomes like a reorganized form of Christianity – questioned by Byong Kato in his book “Theological Pitfalls in Africa, 1987”.
- Salvation must be described in terms of wholistic liberation (freedom spiritual/materially).
- Emphasize must be put on authentic/sincere type of Christian theology that unites the past and the present. The focus of such a theology should be on African Identity and not western culture (de-linking Christianity from western culture)
- Also explored and gave hope to those whose WCC oppressed by poverty, racism, tribalism economic, political – other

4. The AACC assembly in Lusaka, Zambia (1974).

A follow-up of the Kinshasa declaration – churches from all over Africa were represented including the RCC, Orthodox, Independent African Churches – papers were presented and discussed and recommendation made. It was opened by the

President of Zambia, Kenneth Kaunda who called for a genuine Christian cooperation a challenge to African Christianity.

Achievements/Contributions of conference

- Condemned the western anthropologists who had discussed African religion as primitive and a form of idol worship.
- Assembly insisted on the preservation of cultural values (inculturation).
- Condemned racism, tribalism and other forms of discrimination.
- The assembly called for the discontinuation of missionary work by white missionaries in Africa seen as neo-colonialists and exploiters who had killed African culture and unity of the people. “Missionaries go home –moratorium (ban)”.
- Some of the members/participants called for complete withdraw of all white missionaries and their resources from Africa (this did not happen).
- Called for liberation approach to unity – emphasis on liberating the church in Africa an African people in general from foreign domination (was this realized?)

The Headquarter of the AACC is in Nairobi, Kenya, Waiyaki way.

THE CHRISTIAN COUNCIL OF KENYA (CCK)

- By the early 20s (1920s) the Alliance of the Protestant Missions, which had been founded in 1918 seemed, to be quite progressive. But there was the need for a more representative missionary council. The alliance drew members mainly from missionary societies. This need realized the formation of the Kenya missionary council in 1924 (KMC).
- The KMC was to deal with religious, political, social and educational matters.
- It was also to represent the African church in International conferences.
- The Alliance of the Protestant Missions, however, continues to work alongside the Kenya Missionary Council until 1943. When the alliance became part of the council (merged together).

- The Kenya missionary council dealt with issues such as forced labour, illiteracy, female circumcision and discipline among believers (drinking, smoking, tribal rites, marriage rites etc) why not on land issues?
- The members (of KMC) included: The church of Scotland Mission; United Methodist Mission; Church Missionary Society and African Inland Mission among others.
- In 1942, the possibility of a wider and more representative ecumenical council was discussed by the KMC committee. This discussion saw the formation of the Christian council of Kenya in 1943 in Nairobi, Kenya.

Areas of concern by National council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK).

- Participation in ecumenical activities nationally and internationally.
- Promote socio-economic development
- Participates in political elements
- Promotes formal education
- Coordinates religious activities of member churches (.....).
- Peace and justice.

Interdenominational dialogue in East Africa (Dialogue in Ecumenism)

- Since 1960s, Africa has witnessed remarkable increase in discussions on theological matters between scholars and church leaders of different denominations.
- During this time ecumenical bodies such as the AACC, the NCCCK, the AMECEA, the EATWOT and students Christian movements have provided avenues through which African Christians could meet and dialogue.
- Unlike in other forms of ecumenism, the RCC has been able to participate in ecumenical dialogue.
- Priests and Lutheran pastors in Arusha opened theological discussions as early as 1959. Such discussions provided scholars interactions and presentations of papers (theological).
- Another initiative was founded in East African churches Union in Dodoma, Tanzania in 1959, by the protestant churches in Kenya and Tanzania. The union held two

meetings, one in Limuru in 1962 and the other in Arusha in 1963 to discuss/address matters related to scripture; church traditions; sacraments and church ministry.

- However the union died soon after the two meetings due to denominations differences, fear of loss of identity as well as leadership difficulties among other factors.
- Attempts were made throughout the 70s to establish another union but with no lasting results.
- In Uganda ecumenical efforts were largely frustrated by hostilities between the Anglican missionaries and the RCC missionaries. Such hostilities influenced politics in Uganda so much that the Uganda people party was predominantly protestant while the Democratic Party had many catholic followers.
- However in 1963 the first ecumenical discussion took place in Makerere University. The meeting brought together participation from the major theological colleges in Uganda.
- Another conference was held in Uganda in 1973 during which the catholic and the Anglican participants blamed each other for the hostilities the Ugandans were having. Such blames almost brought to an end the ecumenical initiatives between the two denominations.
- Later further discussions were to realize the formation of the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCTC). Its first meeting was held in Entebbe in 1974 during which matters on the Eucharist and scripture were discussed. But the commission did not live long – also died naturally.
- Another ecumenical body which also did not live long was the Uganda Joint Christian Council. This was founded in 1963 by the RCC and the Orthodox Church. The council had its last meeting in 1976.

Task

- Examine how the Roman Catholic church is or has been in Ecumenism (dialogue)
- Examine how the Independent church is or has been in Ecumenism (dialogue).