

A Proposal For Grace

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Modern theologians of the West have described ecumenical concern as a receding issue in a milieu of weariness over the ecumenical agenda.^[1] However, it is not the case that Christians in developing nations can afford such ennui in the face of political divisions that have fallen along religious divides and have hindered development. In modern Uganda, critical tensions dividing north from south may be traceable to historical tensions between the Roman Catholic Church and Protestant/Anglican denominations. This paper calls for Catholic-Protestant reconciliation in modern Uganda by drawing attention to a neglected historical connection between Ugandan religious tensions and current regional conflicts. Having acknowledged the damages that denominational divisions imported by the Christian West have inflicted in this developing nation, Ugandan Christians are poised for the possibility of resolving their historical conflicts with grace.

The Ugandan Situation

In the British House of Lords on March 10, 2006, Anglican Bishop of Winchester urgently called for the British government to alleviate “the humanitarian and cultural disaster currently engulfing northern Uganda.” The region had been called a disaster zone because of its dire need for international assistance. The Bishop’s report referred specifically to the civil war resulting from the rebel forces of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), which carries out a regional reign of terror. At the time, the rebel forces of Northern Uganda had displaced over one million people from their homes, and were abducting and torturing children to force them into sex slavery and military service.

While the nation's political and economic hub in southern Uganda enjoyed relative peace and prosperity, northern Uganda was suffering one of the worst humanitarian crises in its history. Uganda's international appeals for aid to the North against the marauding LRA hinted strongly at disabled intervention by the resourceful South, and demonstrated the history of hostile separation between the tribes of the two regions.^[2] In this way, the historical/geographic divide between northern and southern Uganda had become a contemporary story of long-standing tribal divisions and regional non-cooperation. Although each Ugandan region represents dozens of distinct, and often hostile, tribal communities, and although the North/South divide results in part from the colonial and topographical division that splits the country neatly in two, Ugandan historians have suggested that the regions' mutual disdain results from historical religious tensions.^[3]

Ugandan historian Phares Mutibwa sketches the relationship between religious and political hostility in Uganda. According to him, Anglican British missionaries and explorers were the first Christians to arrive in Uganda in 1877 and were welcomed by the Ugandan king as harbingers of advantageous political power.^[4] Just two years later, in 1879, the first Catholic missionaries arrived and presented their own theological case to the court of High King Mutesa I. The French Catholic priests of the Society of Notre Dame d'Afrique were immediately countered in their missionary efforts by the doctrinal rebuttals of the Protestant British, such that the court of King Mutesa I became a battlefield for the two missions.^[5] The ensuing conflict between personalities and doctrinal claims would become disastrous for Uganda.^[6] From the outset, European Christians such as Stanley Livingstone had relied on the impressive nature of a seemingly univocal Christian confession to impress the Ugandan Kabaka.^[7] When Catholics entered the British colonial matrix, the cursory Anglican catechesis at Mutesa's court disintegrated into theological diatribe, to the frustration of the baffled king who quickly became indifferent to "the two religions."^[8] By Mary Stuart's account in *Land of Promise*, it was this hostility between the Anglican and Catholic traditions that led to Mutesa's ultimate rejection of the new-found European religion. Mutesa consequently initiated a harsh pogrom against Ugandan proselytes. Though the efforts of both the Catholic and Anglican missionaries persisted, the persecution of Ugandan Christians would follow in the years ahead, a period remembered by Ugandan Christians through the often memorialized Martyrs of Uganda, 22 Catholics and 10 Anglicans put to death by King Mwanga II between 1885 and 1887.^[9]

Although the fundamental disagreements between the Christian missionaries originally inhered in theological differences, over time these doctrinal disagreements became politically charged as proselytes began to take opposing sides in support of their religious instructors.^[10] This religious/political divergence degenerated into a civil war for political sovereignty between the Catholic and Protestant factions in 1892. The civil war ended in triumph for the Protestant factions, which were aided by British support.^[11] This victory prompted the initial declaration of the Ugandan British Protectorate in 1894. The triumphant Baganda tribe of the south, as allies of the British, would then rise to elite power under British rule; thereafter, power and influence were disposed and enjoyed according to religious affiliation.^[12] Catholics, who were in the majority numerically, were relegated to second place.^[13] Now we find in modern Uganda a ruling Protestant political and cultural elite in the south, where the British left them, with smaller Catholic communities interspersed throughout the nation, particularly in the relatively impoverished and disenfranchised north.^[14] Despite such power differentials, the Christian population in Uganda tends to divide roughly into two neat categories: fifty percent Anglican/Protestant, fifty percent Roman Catholic.

In sum, modern political conflicts in Uganda may be traceable to their origin in early religious tensions as reinforced by colonial power distributions.^[15] The historical resentments that have divided and disabled Uganda are now reflected in small, significant incidences of denominational animosity at the local level: a young Protestant insists on offering petitions in a prayer meeting on behalf of “unsaved Catholics;” in his Sunday sermons an evangelical pastor utters witty diatribe against mysterious Catholic practices; Pentecostal school teachers refuse to present the stories of the Catholic Ugandan martyrs to their students;^[16] Roman Catholic clergy have been noticeably absent at national days of prayer for reconciliation, though the meetings are otherwise populated by every Protestant in the vicinity.^[17] Perhaps most grievous are the untold accounts of violent skirmishes between Catholic and Protestant school children on account of their divergent denominational identities.

In times of crisis that call for reconciliation at the root causes of political separation,^[18] we see the need for a new kind of ecumenism in Uganda,^[19] one that doesn’t depend solely on slow official dialogue or haphazard doctrinal compromise, but which emerges immediately

and practically from individual commitments to the practice of grace. Uganda is an urgent context where Christian disunity can kill.

The Case for Grace

John Howard Yoder's work stands as a Protestant watershed in Christian reflection on the enactment of Christ's peace in the world. However, even as Yoder laments the negative impact of ecclesiastical division on the church's mission field,^[20] he seems to falter somewhat at the "radically different" premises dividing Protestants and Catholics. Such Protestant hesitation at the formidable bulk of magisterial teaching is not uncommon, since Catholic doctrine often seems to present an insurmountable threat to popular Protestant interpretations of the Christian tradition. One Protestant commentator urges that "if we are required to forget what Jesus so explicitly taught in order to have peace between denominations, it would be better to go on fighting."^[21] Certainly many conservative Christians avoid ecumenical gestures in order to avoid contamination by liberal thought and sloppy doctrine, or out of fear of the mysterious conclusions and practices of the doctrinal other. It remains, however, that the quest for unity among confessing Christians is neither a liberal penchant, nor the prerogative of the church's elite; rather, the quest for Christian unity and reconciliation is the normative duty for every Christian. Having been scripturally mandated by Christ, Christian unity is a non-negotiable; let them be brought to complete unity, so that the world may know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me" (John 17:20-24).

Both contemporary Catholic and Protestant theologians have responded to the Biblical mandate for ecclesial unity. Pope John Paul II states that "Christ calls all His disciples to unity. ... It is the will of God."^[22] Yoder also presents the Biblical basis for ecumenical relationships as a Christian duty, with particular reference to the ecumenical concerns of the early Church described in 1 Corinthians 3 and Galatians 2.^[23] Yoder notes that St. Paul, though aggrieved by matters of doctrine, instructs the entire church to overcome doctrinal differences solely out of the practices of Christian love. Yoder concludes that "Christian unity is just as clearly a Biblical imperative as are evangelization ... and nonconformity to the world."^[24]

As representatives of their respective traditions, Yoder and John Paul II urged that just as it

is the duty of the Christian to seek brotherly relationships with all who confesses Christ, so it is also incumbent on Christians to recognize that their interdenominational relationships require not only polite mutual recognition and intercommunication; true reconciliation also involves striving toward the unity of disciplined discipleship.^[25] For instance, Protestant theologians who identify themselves among Yoder's progeny argue for a praxis of reconciliation from the ontological union of the church; as those who know themselves to be in Christ, Christians regard others as from Christ and in Christ as part of the uniquely Christian construal of the world, and thus the Church has the ministry of reconciliation as its defining mission.^[26]

In this regard, John Paul II expresses a common concern in the encyclical *Unum Sint* for the serious impact of the church's division in troubled contexts: "Division in the Church contradicts the will of Christ, provides a stumbling block to the world, and inflicts burdens on the most holy cause of proclaiming the good news to every creature." This practical concern is shared by Protestant theologian John Milbank, who, echoing Augustine, describes the church's mandate to act as a "political counter-society in troubled times, by maintaining an ontological priority of peace over conflict, such that difference may become the foundation not for violence but for harmonious peace."^[27] Milbank laments that insofar as the Church fails in this mission, it relegates both Christianity and the world to ceaseless exhaustion and possibilities of violence.

Other Protestant ecumenists have pointed out that the persistence of strife within the church causes a crisis of credibility, particularly in developing nations where divided Christianity cannot offer a united front against external pressures. Pope Paul VI urged particularly that just as Christian cooperation "vividly expresses that bond which already unites Christians, and sets in clearer relief the features of Christ the Servant,"^[28] such cooperation should be "intensified in the use of every possible means to relieve the afflictions of our times."^[29] Decades later, John Paul II urged that "no Christian community can exempt itself from this call."^[30]

In light of these Christian mandates—combined with the fact of ecumenical failures—theologian Miroslav Volf calls for the exercise of grace. Here, Volf's solution for dealing with clashing doctrinal claims may be derived from his proposals for dealing with "clashing justices, where, as with denominational clashes, we encounter both universalistic

affirmations, the postmodern claims of plurality, and the communitarian location of doctrinal truth within a tradition.”^[31] Volf’s Christocentric alternative to such ideological disjunctures is to propose that agreement on truth depends on the will to embrace the other. In this way, Volf’s proposal involves not so much the specification of correct doctrine, but rather a way for Christians to seek peace in the “givenness” of plurality. Volf suggests that the central issue is not whether God’s truth is universal, or whether God will infallibly judge people for their conformity; rather, the ultimate question is whether Christians who purport to uphold God’s doctrines can judge between denominations and persons within them with the same divine infallibility. Volf recognizes that they cannot.

Nonetheless, to appear to relativize standards of truth, even for the sake of conflict resolution, is particularly problematic in conservative cultures such as traditional Uganda. Volf’s solution to both the seeming futility of relativism on the one hand and the rigid construals of exclusive dogma on the other is to consider all claims within the fundamental tradition of grace. I propose that the solution is to engage ecumenical proposals with rigorous attention to the essential tradition in which all Christian doctrines are situated, in order to align ourselves more closely with all the central tenets of Christianity. The central tenet within the Christian tradition is the grace that is given through Christ. As Volf puts it, the ecumenical Christian must identify both herself and the doctrinally estranged other within the whole narrative of God’s relationship with humanity, centered at the point where Christ enacts the coming reign of God “by receiving sinner and enemy into His very self.”^[32] Grace is the bedrock of Christian belief for both Protestants and Catholics, and in as much as Protestants and Catholics cling to Christ’s grace as the central tenet of their respective systems, they may not deny its power by refusing to extend this grace to one another. By extension, Christians must cultivate and implement a culture of grace, particularly in light of the exigencies of the Ugandan situation.

Commitment to a culture of grace necessarily precludes even small manifestations of hostility and their far-reaching impasses. A culture of grace particularly resists small moments of personal animosity: the moment a Protestant voices her opinion that Catholics are “unsaved,” thereby excluding them from her fellowship; the moment a Protestant ministry refuses to appropriate local Catholic resources to reach out to the Ugandan poor; or the moment a Catholic refuses to step foot in an inter-denominational prayer meeting. Instead, a culture of grace calls Christians to unite with one another in love until they can

confess the same things.

With regard to the small gestures that build a culture of grace, John Paul II particularly lamented that Christians dangerously underestimate the threat of misunderstandings, prejudices, indifference, and insufficient knowledge of one another. As an antidote, the Pope proposed “a calm, clear-sighted and truthful vision enlivened by divine mercy, capable of freeing people’s minds, precisely with a view to proclaiming the Gospel to every people.”^[33] A key problem in Christian disunity is the tendency of Christian communities to simply overlook the existence, beliefs, and history of the other in their teaching and behavior, as if the other did not exist; such neglect can easily lead to the dangerous compulsion to vindicate one community by summarily denouncing or degrading the practices of the other, even though those practices are not fully understood.

Such practices of hostility in Uganda, as elsewhere, are radically incommensurate with the basic Christian concept of grace that is embraced by all Christian denominations. The remainder of this essay lists suggestions of “grace-full” ways of thinking and behaving, in order to address particular instances of damaging sectarianism. The alternative to hostile practices is the renewal of a practical emphasis on the Christians’ common hope in the unmerited grace of Christ, which attributes uprightness even to the evildoer and regards the wrongdoer as if he had got it right, while transforming him into a friend. The gracious alternative to inter denominational hostility is for Christians to act toward other Christians on behalf of the Christ who invites his enemy into himself.

The Christian Disposition Toward the Enemy

The duties of grace in situations where denominational reconciliation is urgently needed for humanitarian rescue cannot develop over lengthy processes; rather, individual Christians must begin to respond immediately to the demands of Christ’s grace in very real crises. I suggest that the overarching mandate in the Ugandan context of long standing animosity and immediate needs is not for Christians merely to re-name the perceived adversary, but rather to behave toward the doctrinal enemy according to the love and service demanded for the enemy by Christ himself.^[34] The obedient response to Christ’s embrace of the enemy on the cross is to practice Christ’s grace by embracing the radical other; such an embrace may require that Christians choose to behave as though the historically perceived sin of the

estranged other were no longer immanent. The practices of this embrace must take concrete shape in the behavior of individuals. These practices include: 1) a renewal of language, 2) hospitality and blessing for the enemy, 3) conversation, and 4) catechesis.

Renewal of Language. The renewal of language in Uganda might proceed with a deliberate commitment to bless the other verbally, and to eschew all verbal demonization of or flippant terminology for the other. The demonization of another immediately violates the Christian mandate to speak the truth and inevitably introduces sheer emotionalism into the conversation. The statements on ecumenism by John Paul II specifically forbid the “words which do not respond to the condition of separated brethren with truth and fairness, thereby making mutual relationships with them more difficult.”^[35] In a similar vein, Volf urges that the will to embrace the other in conversation is absolutely indispensable for arriving at dialogical truth.^[36]

Fundamentally, the strong link between language and the practices that proceed from it requires Christians to submit to a graced language since our very humanity is shaped by our language and the communities of discourse in which we participate.^[37] A graced language will submit to the Biblical significance of language as properly creative and redemptive, on the theological models of the creative and gracious action of God speaking the cosmos into being, of the divine Word as the definitive instance of God’s self-communication to humanity, and of the communicative action of Jesus. As Protestant theologian Joe Jones notes, a graced language humbly recognizes that humanity cannot fully find itself apart from the sincere gift of itself, such that dialogue with the other becomes an indispensable step along the path toward self-realization in Christ. In submission to God’s own grace and self-gift in language, Christians must refuse to abuse the gift of language by using it as an instrument of lies, falsehood, closure, alienation, suspicion, or enmity when speaking about their fellow Christians.

Blessing and Hospitality for the Enemy. Volf asks for “small steps of living together, even while we do not yet understand each other’s language.”^[38] While the commitment to a graced language is a critical first movement of love toward the enemy, the redemptive renaming of the enemy through our language implies the additional step of also construing a newly graced anthropology, where, as in John Calvin’s model, “true knowledge of humanity cannot be separated from true knowledge of God... (and) Jesus Christ is the normative

revelation of true humanity.” As such, Christ is to be recognized and served even in the enemy.

With regard to practical acts of service, Ugandan priest Bagumisirizia emphasizes that service is the best opportunity for Christian laity to participate in the movement toward Christian unity and communion; such acts of service are also primarily important for Christian discipleship because the Christian is called to be shaped by God’s will for unity in his church. Through acts of service that create openness to the enemy, the Christian definitively imitates Christ by making space in himself for the other, and by freely pursuing the benefits of the other.^[40] From a commitment to view the other as partner in an interdependent, mutual embrace of God, both benefactors and beneficiaries infallibly become religious partners in their cooperative participation in grace.

With regard to practical service, clergy such as Bagumisirizia have proposed the usual compendium of pastoral reconciliation programs based on ecumenical projects,^[41] but additional refinement of the ecumenical processes in Uganda should address the traditional values of the Ugandan culture for an “enculturation” of reconciliation. As Bagumisirizia explains, “in the process of seeking to build communion, it should be easier if we start from the known experience of the virtues already practiced in people’s lives. We need to bring the vision of God into what people do traditionally as acts of love towards each other.”^[42] Ugandan theologian Emmanuel Katongole points out the particular efficacy and theological relevance of “greeting” in the Ugandan culture where African etiquette emphasizes the dynamics of courteous greeting with great care. This practice implies an invitation to common worship where such greetings can be made.^[43]

Conversation. Having adopted a renewed language, and engaged in service that recognizes the dignity of the other for the sanctification of the self, the Christian is ready to engage in conversation with others. Yoder emphasizes the practice of conversation as a particularly appropriate means for establishing friendly relationships rather than merely minimizing differences among denominations. Furthermore, conversation is an appropriate means of building unity while grounds for actual communion may remain tenuous. Furthermore, Yoder points out that a commitment to conversation in general avoids the strictures of the overly simplistic checklists of denominational beliefs (and the arbitrary criteria represented in those checklists) that are too often used when Christians select their conversation partners.

Within the practice of conversation, Yoder does not presume mere dialogue, but also urges Christians to embrace other aspects of Christian obedience, such as good will, charity, and hospitality; conversation requires both a personal commitment to open one's self to the other, and a pastoral commitment to sustain such conversations within and among Christian congregations.^[44] Conversation also demands mutual forbearance, and a recognition of one's own need for God's mercy. Finally, conversation demands humility—"If in fact we have something to learn just as surely as we have something to teach, then the need for conversation becomes all the more clear."^[45]

In this regard, Alister McGrath offers a vision of ecumenical conversation as exemplary of a new brand of "street level" ecumenism, which he anticipates to be a necessary antidote to the dangers of exaggerated misunderstanding and misrepresentation between Catholics and Protestants.^[46] In other words, personal relationships can safeguard against the stalemates often encountered by larger-scale ecumenical gestures. Such ground-level conversations can become enriching: "By engaging in frank dialogue, communities help one another to ask themselves whether they express in an adequate way all that the Holy Spirit has transmitted through the ages."^[47] Ultimately, the goal of conversation is the exchange of love that finds its most complete expression in common prayer and in the church's Eucharist.

Catechesis. The most far-reaching proposal ventured here refutes relativistic notions that dogmatic statements must be relaxed in order to foster mutuality among denominations.^[48] Rather, I propose that for the sake of authentic unity,^[49] Christians must reconcile on the basis of rigorous attention to particular doctrines and catechesis, if only for the sake of undoing superstitions and misconceptions that result from mere ill will and ignorance about basic Christian belief.^[50] Adequate catechesis can particularly highlight any doctrinal misconceptions that implicate other traditions, and can strongly reinforce both the central role of grace in Christian doctrine and the importance of the unified church in historical Christianity. For instance, increased awareness of the church's honoring of Trinitarian baptism among all denominations might at least reduce the mutually demonizing language of "saved," versus "unsaved," among baptized believers.^[51]

Conclusion

The cultural emphasis on a communal identity in Uganda can lend itself to the flourishing of a robust and liberating ecclesiology.^[52] Katongole especially points out the need for a renewed ecclesiology as political and social re-imagination to counter those traditional divisions of residual tribalism that are identifiable in political and religious affiliations in Africa.^[53] Ecumenical efforts in Uganda should especially exploit their unique shared history of martyrdom in which Anglicans and Roman Catholics died together for their Christian faith in a hostile nation.^[54] In many other ways, the Ugandan situation presents a critical locus for a new ecumenism, engaged through concrete gestures, motivated by devotion to the Savior who embraces his enemy. In a culture of greeting, welcome at common worship in the name of the self-giving, other-serving Trinity becomes a peacemaking gesture of obedience. Kindness towards Roman Catholics in the words of Protestant leaders becomes expedient out of concern for necessary humanitarian cooperation. All the while, authentic commitment to doctrinal integrity remains vitally necessary, in as much as the commonalities of basic Christian doctrine are assaulted and misrepresented on account of historical resentments. Grace is the bedrock of Christian belief for both Protestants and Catholics, and in as much as Protestants and Catholics cling to Christ's grace as the central tenet of their respective systems, they may not deny its power by refusing to extend this grace to one another—particularly not in cultural contexts where Christian disunity can kill.

Do we see present signs of hope in Uganda that indicate that such a modest proposal for grace might work for reconciliation and consequent national development? Even as political tensions between the north and south are gradually relaxing as a result of successful political negotiations, the underlying nexus of potential unity in a predominantly Christian population is strengthened by every small gesture of grace and solidarity exchanged between Protestants and Catholics, both in Uganda and abroad. Today, a Catholic donor sends money to support the outreach of evangelical young Ugandans among refugees of a formerly hostile tribe in northern Uganda; or, perhaps a Protestant orphanage adds a story of the young Catholic martyrs of Uganda to its library bookshelves. Perhaps a Protestant European diplomat in Entebbe will prayerfully attend a Catholic Mass; perhaps an Anglican bishop in Kampala will consult the Catholic catechism on a point of doctrine. The necessary gestures of real reconciliation are small and personal, as is appropriate for the Christian's "political" task of personally welcoming and embracing the alienated other in the name of the Savior.

1. 1. Alister McGrath, "What Shall We Make of Ecumenism?" in *Roman Catholicism: Evangelical Protestants Analyze What Divides and Unites Us*, edited by John Armstrong (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 199.
2. 2. Fr. Christopher Basimoungu, unpublished interview, Darien, Connecticut, May 14, 2006. Although Anglican priest Fr. Christopher Basimoungu argues that the Ugandan government has indeed taken adequate military measures to address problems in northern Uganda, these measures have proved to be ultimately unsuccessful because of deeper problems arising from cultural alienation and hostility. The soldiers from southern Uganda who enter northern Uganda often do not know enough of the indigenous language or culture to work effectively in the north. In this way, attempted military assistance from the south fails because of prior neglect in acculturation.
3. 3. "... religion became a divisive rather than a unifying force right from the very beginnings of colonialism in Uganda" (Phares Mutibwa, *Uganda Since Independence: A Story of Unfulfilled Hopes*. (Trenton: Africa World Press, Inc., 1992, 2). The situation in Uganda could be described as a mirror image of the religious/political tensions of the Thirty Year's War between Catholics and Protestants, where "the conflicting regions had managed to sort themselves out geographically, such that most people resided in territories of only one religion" (Harold O.J. Brown, "Unhelpful Antagonism and Unhealthy Courtesy" in *Roman Catholicism: Evangelical Protestants Analyze What Divides and Unites Us*, edited by John Armstrong. Chicago: Moody Press, 1994, 164).
4. 4. Eager to consolidate British power against Egyptian interests in Uganda, Stanley Livingstone recorded in his journals the account of his "work as a Christian teacher." He said, "Nothing occurred in my presence but I contrived to turn towards effecting that which had become an object to me, viz., his conversion. ... I have indeed undermined Islamism so much here that Mutesa has determined henceforth to observe the Christian Sabbath" (Stanley Livingstone, quoted by Mary Stuart in *Land of Promise: A Story of the Church in Uganda*, London: The Highway Press, 1958, 29-31).
5. 5. Phares Mutibwa, *Uganda Since Independence: A Story of Unfulfilled Hopes* (Trenton: Africa World Press, Inc. 1992), 2.

6. 6. For purposes of this essay, it is hardly necessary to do more than merely list those areas of doctrinal disjuncture within the Church. McGrath lists four sixteenth-century “misunderstandings” of agreed topics that are tragically skewed by confused language: God’s initiative in the Christian life, the work of Christ in founding the Christian life, the role of good works, and the role of the community in the Christian life. Even the troubling understanding of justification, McGrath suggests, can be reconciled by clearer language and reference to the scriptures and the Church Fathers (McGrath, *Ecumenism*, 202). McGrath acknowledges seriously divisive issues only in the relatively smaller sphere of “the nature of justifying righteousness,” and “the question of assurance” (204). Other scholars for the most part concur, with the additional note of other such practical concerns in the Bible as sole religious authority, the nature of pure worship, the identification of the sacraments, and the nature of the pastoral teaching office in the church (W. Robert Godfrey, “What Really Caused the Great Divide?” *Roman Catholicism: Evangelical Protestants Analyze What Divides and Unites Us*, edited by John Armstrong, Chicago: Moody Press, 1994, 79).
7. 7. This fact is evidenced by Stanley Livingstone’s relief when a French delegate from the Equatorial governor arrived at court: “The religious conversations which I have begun with Mutesa were maintained in the presences of (Bellefonds), who, fortunately for the cause I had in view, was a Protestant ... the remarkable fact that two white men, who had never met before, one having arrived from the southeast, the other from the north, should nevertheless know the same things, and respond in the same words ... charmed the popular mind, and was treasured in Mutesa’s memory as being miraculous.” (Stanley Livingstone, *Journal*, quoted in Stuart, 31). Livingstone’s ensuing agenda for “pious, practical” missions in Uganda, required “[a] practical Christian tutor ... tied to no church or sect ... (belonging) to no nation in particular” (Stuart, 32). Accordingly, the British explorer Speke, on a similar political/evangelistic bent, would call for a de-emphasis on potentially confusing catechesis and instead called for a missionary who was “a jack of all trades ... a man that can turn his hand to anything ... and not the mere preacher.” (Stuart, 38).
8. 8. Stuart conveys this language from the journal of Mackay, the Scottish Protestant missionary stationed at the Court by The Church Mission Society: “I stated as clearly as possible that our authority was the word of God only, that the Romanists had the

Pope as their head, while we had only one head—Jesus Christ” (Stuart, 42, 44).

9. 9. The Martyrs of Uganda were canonized as saints of the Roman Catholic Church in 1964.
10. 10. “Along with these new doctrines (of Catholicism and Protestantism) were imported into Uganda the national antipathies of Britain and France, which were themselves ancient, and still subsist in some subtle forms today. This fact contributed substantially to the rapid transformation of religious faiths into political parties or factions” (S. R. Karugire, *A Political History of Uganda*, Nairobi, Kenya: Litho Ltd., 1980, 65, also quoted in Bagumisirizia, 94). Also, Catholic historian Bagumisirizia adds that “religious faiths were rapidly transformed into political parties” (Bagumisirizia, 97). Stuart notes that it was the lack of accord between Roman Catholics and Protestants that forced the most influential Ugandans to seek European colonial protection (Stuart, 54).
11. 11. Bagumisirizia, 96. Bagumisirizia elaborates on the “massacre” of Catholics and the destruction of Catholic property, including the razing of the Catholic cathedral to oust them from the capital city of Kampala (97).
12. 12. Mutibwa, 2. This pattern would be reproduced throughout the history of the British protectorate.
13. 13. Predominant Protestant political power would remain the norm in Uganda through modern times: “The rivalry and antagonism between the Protestants and the Catholics would not disappear merely because of independence; indeed, the way in which independence itself was achieved, and the first post-independence government formed, meant an intensification of ill-feelings between those two major branches of Christianity.” The presidents, as Protestants, “were not a neutral force in the religious squabbles that were to emerge,” and furthermore, “the British government (being closely linked with the Anglican Church of Uganda) had their own preferences for whom they would leave in control of Uganda.” (Mutibwa 2, 27, 56).
14. 14. “The close association of the [Anglican] Church of Uganda with the government strengthened the relationship between the two parties, while the Catholic party was pushed to a distance and discriminated against. ... Naturally, the exaggerated support given exclusively to the Protestants by the government made the Catholics mistrust and dislike the government agents, with the unfortunate consequences of lack of unity and communion in Buganda and eventually (throughout) all of Uganda”

(Bagumisirizia 95).

15. 15. “[Opposed] political parties and interests were started on both tribal and religious bases. This method eliminated some people automatically and thus undermined unity and communion” (Bagumisirizia, 99).
16. 16. Such hesitancy with regard to the Ugandan historical narrative sadly reflects reluctance to reconcile. Protestants and Catholics commemorate the Protestant and Catholic martyrs, who were united in death, at separate memorial occasions held at separate memorial sites; though the Anglican youth died for their faith hand in hand with their Catholic brothers, modern Anglicans honor “their” young men separately from the Roman Catholic commemoration of “their” saints (Fr. Christopher Basimoungu, unpublished interview, Darien, Connecticut, May 14, 2006)
17. 17. Ugandan theologian Emmanuel Katongole of Duke University offers poignantly relevant commentary on the Ugandan situation by way of reflecting on the Rwandan internal conflicts. These conflicts resulted in genocide because the Church was willing to remain silent on the serious dangers of “the distinctively modern” problem of antagonistic identities that were “wired into the imaginative landscape of nation-state politics” (Emmanuel Katongole, “Tribalism and the Rwanda Genocide,” in *A Future for Africa: Critical Essays in Christian Social Imagination*, Scranton: The University of Scranton Press, 2005, 96, 105). Here Katongole argues that the church and its mission became locked in the political imagination of a tribalized society; rather than transcending the polity as an alternative community of primary allegiance, the church merely succumbed to external pressures (106).
18. 18. Keith Clements points to the connection between denominational division and the inability to address problems in the wider culture: “As the Charta Oecumenica goes on to make clear, this is inseparable from the wider needs of reconciliation in [nations]. In view of numerous conflicts, the churches are called upon to serve together the cause of reconciliation among peoples and cultures. We know that peace among the churches is an important prerequisite for this, ... peace within the churches, too, we might say.” (Keith Clements, “Ecumenism and the New Paradigm of Healing,” *The Ecumenical Review* 55, July 31, 2003: 5). Urging for a renewal of the predominant New Testament sense of “healing” as a model for reconciliation among denominations, Clements considers the urgency of the church’s reconciliation relevant to the mission of the church in society: “Healing brings into the picture

certain depths and dimensions of reconciliation which we are otherwise liable to miss, and these depths and dimensions are beginning to register in our consciousness because of the changes we are experiencing in our contemporary world and the societies we live in” (6). Similarly, Clements refers to a paradigm shift in which Christians move from the paradigm of seeing “separate or alienated entities which need to be brought into some kind of new relationship, to the paradigm which begins with the realization that we are at significant levels already bound together in one body in this world. ... It can be fractured, or infected, or disordered as through a cancerous growth—yet it is still one body” (10).

19. 19. “The official dialogue between Protestant and Roman Catholicism has probably gone as far as it can go, and it would be unrealistic to look to it for further progress. ... But I do expect an unofficial ecumenism to grow in both its extent and influence, with individual exploration while generally remaining publicly loyal to their churches. ... This will probably lead to a growing warmth between individuals, despite the substantial official doctrinal divides between them. Ecumenism is yesterday’s idea and is widely seen as a spent force. But the kind of ecumenism that seems to be emerging at street level is of a very different kind. It could well be a major force in the shaping of the evangelical future in particular. It is imperative that we understand this new ecumenism”(Alister McGrath, *Ecumenism*, 58).
20. 20. “When young missionaries began to reach the field, their enthusiasm was soon dampened by their discovery of the problem of division of the churches. Converts on a Methodist mission field would be told to baptize their children; if they moved to a Baptists mission field a few villages away, rejoicing that they would find fellowship there, they would be told they should not have baptized their children ... In America these differences had not been taken too seriously; on a mission field they became much more troubling to the converts, and a source of offense for unbelievers” (John Howard Yoder, *The Ecumenical Movement and The Faithful Church*, Scottdale: Mennonite Publishing House, 1958, 5).
21. 21. Brown, *Antagonism*, 169.
22. 22. John Paul II, *Unum Sint*, 1. The pope continues, “For this reason God sent His Son that by dying and rising for us He might bestow on us the Spirit of Love. On the evening of the sacrifice of the Cross, Jesus Himself prayed to the Father for His disciples and for those who believe in Him, that they might be one, a living

communion” (6). Perhaps most poignantly, John Paul II urged that Jesus himself at the hour of his Passion prayed “that they may all be one.” This unity, which the Lord has bestowed on his Church and in which he wishes to gather all people, is not something added on, but stands at the very heart of Christ’s (and the disciple’s) mission. It is not some secondary attribute of the community of His disciples; rather, it belongs to the essence of this community. God wills the Church because he wills unity, and an expression of the whole depth of his agape (9). John Paul II continues: “Ecumenism ... is not just some sort of ‘appendix’ which is added to the Church’s traditional activity. Ecumenism is an organized part of her life and world, and consequently must pervade all she is and does; it must be like the fruit borne by a healthy and flourishing tree in its full stature” (20).

23. 23. Yoder also engages Acts 6, 1 Corinthians 1 and 11, Galatians 1, and Acts 8, 11, 15, and 21.
24. 24. Yoder, 35. “For the Apostle Paul, the unity of all believers, including the attempt to maintain unity with those who seek division, whose doctrine is wrong and whose view of the Church distorted, was the will of God. The essence of the Lord’s Supper is lost by division (1 Cor. 11); the essence of the Gospel is the destruction of the barrier between Jews and Gentiles (Eph. 2:3); the essence of discipleship is to follow Christ in the humility which enables unity (Phil. 2); the purpose of the various ministries in the Church is unity (Eph. 4, 1 Cor. 12). Jesus had said that the unity of the believers was necessary if the world were to accept him” (Jn. 17), (Yoder, 23-24).
25. 25. “This is the basic duty, also the responsibility before God and His plan, which falls to the believer through baptism to become members of the one Body of Christ, a Body in which reconciliation and communion might be made present. How is it possible to remember that we have been “buried” through baptism in the Lord’s death, in the very act by which through the death of His Son, God has broken down the walls of division?” (*Unum Sint*, 6).
26. 26. Jones, 175.
27. 27. John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*.
28. 28. Decree on Ecumenism, quoted in *Documents of Dialogue*, by Hiley Ward (Englewood: Prentice-Hall, 1966), 104.
29. 29. *Decree on Ecumenism*, 104.
30. 30. *Unum Sint*, 16.

31. 31. Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 197.
32. 32. Volf, 208.
33. 33. *Unum Sint*, 2.
34. 34. “A combination of moral clarity that does not shy away from calling evildoers by their proper names, [while holding] deep compassion towards them, that is willing to sacrifice one’s own life in their behalf, was one of the extraordinary features of early Christianity. It should be the central character of contemporary Christianity” (Miroslav Volf, *A Voice of One’s Own: Public Faith in a Pluralistic World*, 13).
35. 35. Furthermore, John Paul II held that “it is necessary to pass from antagonism and conflict to [recognizing] each other as a partner. When undertaking dialogue, each party must presuppose in the other a desire for reconciliation, and for unity in truth. For this to happen, any display of mutual opposition must disappear. Only thus will dialogue overcome division and lead us closer to unity” (*Unum Sint*, 29). In the same way that Christians believe that God’s grace declares us to have arrived in his mercy when we have only just begun, grace in dialogue demands that we attribute to our conversation partner the position at which we want to arrive. Volf adds the urging for “hermeneutical hospitality” for each other’s traditions as conducive to better understanding,qua seeing the other as a companion rather than a combatant in the struggle for truth (Volf, *Voice*, 17).
36. 36. “The will to embrace—love—sheds the light of knowledge by the fire it carries with it. ... [I]f there is any right in “their” causes and actions, only the will to embrace them will make us capable of perceiving it because it will let us see both them and ourselves with their eyes. Similarly, the will to exclude—hatred—blinds by the fire it carries with it” (Nietzsche, quoted in Volf, *Exclusion*, 216).
37. 37. Joe Jones, *Grammar of Christian Faith I* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 17. Jones states further: “Language is a living dynamic process of actions and interactions among hearers and speakers who are trading on, and sometimes stretching, given social practices and conventions regarding the meaning of the tokens they are using as signs. ... [I call these] communicative transactions: meaning is being conveyed. ... Christian discourse itself shapes, expresses, and conveys some of the distinctive passions and feelings of Christian faith”(5). And “Having language and communicating are, therefore, essential to personal being, without which we would

not have human persons” (304).

“Just as Adam came into relationship to the other living creatures by virtue of naming them (Gen. 2), so too language is the basic medium for human knowing, understanding, and having a cosmos and social world. Through language humans have possibilities of being open to God and to other humans, to acknowledge them, to hear them, to see and identify them, to address and be addressed by them, and to conduct life in relationships with them. And it is by virtue of language that humans can have relationships to other creatures” (Jones, 305).

“Language, theologically understood, is a gift of God intended for good and truthful communication and understanding between God and humans and among humans. Language is intended by God to build up human life and community” (Jones, 305). Protestant theologians Volf and Jones have both employed the Genesis 11 narrative of the Tower of Babel to elaborate on a graced theology of language, in that Babel symbolizes the peril of language that does not communicate truth, goodwill, and love, but rather utter confusion and estrangement come among persons and societies. In contrast, Volf points out, Acts 2 can be understood as the Pentecostal recovery of language for communicating truth, understanding, love, and hope among diverse people (Jones, 305 and Volf, 226). In this way, we see that the renewal of language as the first act of the newly formed church, where God enables confessional unity from many languages and traditions within the one Church: “When the Spirit comes, all understand each other, not because one language is restored or a new all-encompassing meta-language is designed, but because each hears his own language spoken. Pentecost overcomes the confusion and the resulting false scattering, but it does so not by reverting to the unity of cultural uniformity, but by advancing toward the harmony of cultural diversity” (Volf, 228). Again, Volf states, “As in our own day culture clashes with culture and justice struggles against justice, we should seek inspiration from [the Pentecost narrative]. We need the grand vision of life filled with the Spirit of God. ... [W]e can and will communicate with one another while we each speak our own languages ... but along with the grand visions we need stories of small successful steps of learning to live together even when we do not quite understand each other’s language (Volf, 231).

39. 39. Jones, 294.
40. 40. As Volf puts it, “Faith in Jesus Christ, who made our cause his cause, frees us from pursuing our interests only and creates in us the space for the interests of others” (Volf, *Exclusion*, 215).
41. 41. Bagumisirizia recommends practices that are pastorally oriented, “[So] there will always be need that pastors from the two churches supervise them together” (Bagumisirizia, 122). He also suggests the following in particular: a religious printing press that would employ both Anglicans and Roman Catholics, “[so that they may] learn to work together;” joint schools (since almost all schools in Uganda were started by missionaries for their own converts, out of fear of exposure to a faulty catechism); official contacts/planned ecumenical activities, social events, joint prayer meetings, as well as farming and brick making projects (95).
42. 42. Bagumisirizia, 119.
43. 43. Emmanuel Katongole, “Racism: Christian Resources Beyond Reconciliation,” *A Future for Africa: Critical Essays in Christian Social Imagination* (Scranton: The University of Scranton Press, 2005), 220, 222. Katongole continues, on par with his theme of the need for a more robust ecclesiology in Uganda: “Through the greeting we receive and offer within Christian worship, we can begin to see each other not as strangers in competition for limited resources, but as gifts of a gracious God. ... for then we would already have discovered ourselves within a new imagination ... on the road to a new and revolutionary future, which worship both signals and embodies. ... Part of this new future consists in discovering that there are more determinative, and far more interesting stories we can tell about ourselves and about others” (Katongole, *Racism*, 228).
44. 44. “When we ask how Paul could go so far and sacrifice so much for the cause of unity without also losing true doctrine and pure life, the answer is that such matters were dealt with on an individual basis and locally (Acts 20:28, Gal. 5:10, Phil. 3:15, 1 Cor. 5). ... Not only was discipline applied locally; it was applied individually ... to one person at a time (Matt. 18; Yoder, 24). ... This command of Christ is not respected when whole groups are excluded from fellowship, be it because they are [misguided] (Gal. 2), because they are lacking (1 Cor. 11), or on any such denominational basis. ... Close communion applies to one person at a time, excluding only those who themselves have refused correction” (Yoder 24).

45. 45. Yoder, 37. Volf adds that “reversing perspectives may lead us not only to learn something from the other, but also to look afresh at our own traditions and rediscover their neglected or even forgotten resources” (Volf, *Exclusion*, 213).
46. 46. McGrath, 215. McGrath predicts that “unofficial ecumenism will grow in extent and influence through individual exploration of the other traditions while generally remaining publicly loyal to their traditions: ... a growing warmth between individual Protestants and Roman Catholics, despite the substantial official doctrinal divide between them.”
47. 47. *Unum Sint*, 16.
48. 48. Commentators such as O. J. Brown have relied on an ignorant laity and “the experience” of social cooperation in “confronting a common enemy” in the counter cultural “co-belligerency” that Francis Schaeffer called for in the 1960’s, thinking that “there are no doctrinal disputes in foxholes” (Brown, 175). However, such cooperation is most fragile since even the most basic motives for such common action will be expressed in contrary terms.
49. 49. “It is of course essential that the doctrine be clearly presented in its entirety. Nothing is so foreign to the spirit of ecumenism as a false irenic which harms the purity of doctrine” (*Decree on Ecumenism*, quoted in Ward, 103). In the face of fears of ecumenism as inevitable doctrinal dilution, John Paul II also insists that unity cannot be “a question of altering the deposit of faith, changing the meaning of dogmas, eliminating essential words from them. Accommodating preferences, or suppressing certain articles of the Creed under the pretext that they cannot be understood. The unity willed by God can only be achieved by the adherence of all the content of revealed faith in its entirety. ... A ‘being together’ which corrupts the truth would be opposed both to the nature of God who offers His communion to the very need for truth found in the depths of the human heart” (*Unum Sint*, 18). In sum, “the more purely Christians strive to live and believe according to the Gospel, the more they are fostering and even practicing Christianity, and can achieve depth and ease in strengthening mutual brotherhood to the degree that they enjoy true communion with the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit” (*Unum Sint*, 20).
50. 50. McGrath tells Protestants: “We owe it to Roman Catholics to take the trouble to get them right, instead of perpetuating, whether by accident or design, inaccurate stereotypes of their beliefs” (McGrath, 215). Pope Paul VI also had urged that “we

must get to know the outlook of our separated brethren. ... Study is absolutely required for this, and it should be pursued in fidelity to truth and with a spirit of good will (*Decree on Ecumenism*, II.9-11, quoted in Ward, 103).

51. 51. I suggest that an exemplary model of generous language can be found in Vatican documents and statements on her relationship with “separated Churches and Christian communities.” For instance: “Though we believe they suffer from defects, they have by no means been deprived of significance and value in the mystery of salvation. For the Spirit of Christ has not refrained from using them in the scheme of salvation, which they derive their efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth enjoyed by the Catholic Church. ... Indeed, the elements of sanctification and truth present in other Christian communities constitutes the objective basis of communion, albeit imperfect, which exists between them and the Catholic Church ... to the extent that these elements [of sanctification] are found in other Christian communities, the grace of Christ is effectively present in them ... for there are many who honor sacred Scripture, ... who show a true religious zeal, ... who lovingly believe in the Father Almighty and in Christ, Son of God and Savior. ... They also share with us in prayer and other spiritual benefits. ... In some real way they are joined with us in the Holy Spirit, for to them also are gifts and graces operative among them with Christ’s sanctifying power, and some indeed He has strengthened to the shedding of their blood. In all of these disciples the Spirit arouses the desire to be peacefully united, in the manner determined by Christ, as one flock under one Shepherd” (*Unum Sint*, 11-13).
52. 52. The Protestant Christian communities in Uganda would particularly benefit from a return to the strong ecclesiology of Luther and Calvin: “For Luther, one is saved by faith and is made a member of the invisible church, the body of Christ, by that same faith. Hence, it is impossible to be saved without at the same time being brought into the church by one’s faith. Calvin taught a kind of practical necessity of belonging to the church in order to be saved, for it is within her that one hears the Gospel, and it is at her breast, to use Calvin’s picturesque image, that the babe in Christ must be nourished and taught” (Brown, *Roman Catholics*, 165).
53. 53. Katongole urges that “since tribalism is connected with the issue of political imagination, the urgent Christian challenge of responding to tribalism is one of political re-imagination. Such a task is possible to the extent that the church is able to

conceive of itself as a 'wild space' within which alternative forms of social existence can be engendered" (Katongole, 110). Citing 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 and 12:12-13, Katongole urges that "only a community that understands itself as a wild space within the nation is able to ... stand as a witness and an alternative to the politics that would have us live as tribes, each set against the other ... (Katongole, 112-113).

Furthermore, "such ecclesial communities are an alternative to the tribalism of the world, and can therefore offer the visible hope that the waters of baptism can be, and in fact are, much deeper than the [animosities of tribalism]" (Katongole, 114).

54. 54. Jones in particular allows for the role of a robust martyrology in the development of the church's proclamation (Jones, 656). Katongole also refers to the example of young martyrs who died together in unity as the model by which modern Ugandan Christians "have no excuse for not seeking to live out ... a hopeful future" (Katongole, *Racism*, 114). John Paul II also refers to the "courageous witness of so many martyrs [that] gives vigor to the [ecumenical] call. ... These brothers and sisters of ours, united in the selfless offering of themselves for the Kingdom of God, are the most powerful proof that every factor of division can be transcended and overcome in the total gift of the self for the sake of the Gospel" (*Unum Sint*, 1).