

Ecumenical development with the coptic churches argumentative essay

[Experience](#), [Belief](#)



In the many developments that are taking place in the religious world, ecumenism is one of the most significant of them all. Church leaders are coming together with common goals that enable them to best serve and worship God, among other many activities. The main goal of contemporary ecumenism has been for all the Christians in the world to be brought together into unity amidst diverse and pluralistic expressions of the faith. This interdenominational union is rooted in the belief that all Christians are bound together by Christ and His existence should not be the cause of division and differences in the beliefs of various denominations, but rather the point and reason for unity. This paper attempts to describe, compare and illustrate ecumenism as depicted in the traditional churches and Coptic churches. In addition, there will be a look at the dialogues that have been with Roman Catholic participation in ecumenism and the role of the Second Vatican council.

When it comes to the topic of ecumenism, the Catholic Church is the leader of this activity that aims at uniting all churches into one. In the process of ecumenism, the activities that the members of the church do are considered in the contribution towards this course. Missionary work is an example of such an activity because, according to the Catholics, words without actions are nothing. Therefore, by following the guidelines of the Bible, incorporation of missionary activities in ecumenism promotes the work of Christ in uniting all Christians. Although dialogue is the main form of working towards the unity of churches, the deeds done act as a seal to the talks that church leaders engage in.

In the missionary work, one of the things that are considered is destination

or location of the work. Catholics, for example, choose a location, where their communion is not present, or if present, than by a very small percentage. In order to achieve ecumenism, they are well versed with their own doctrines first, before trying to understand the doctrines of their separated brethren. By doing so, they hope to achieve a mutual ground of their beliefs and ways that allow each communion to accept the other as it is. The gathering together for prayer aids this process very well, following the scriptures of the bible; where two or more are gathered, the presence of the Lord is among them (Matthew 18: 20 English Standard Version).

Ecumenism goes to very far extents to accommodate other non-Christian religions, contrary to the basic belief that it is only among Christians. An analysis of the various religions of the world reveals that each of them has a supreme being, who is thought to be only one in the universe. The difference is only the ways, in which the Supreme Being is worshipped, honored and thanked. The Church takes upon itself a duty to respect the other religions and their ways of worship. In doing so, they consider it one step forward towards ecumenism. Dialogues between the church and the followers of other religions are carried out with love and prudence and in witness to the Christian faith and life, enable the different religions to recognize the good practices and ways, both spiritual and moral, that distinguish socio-cultural beliefs.

One thing that emerges common between the various religions is the many unanswered questions, whose answers are sought from their supreme beings. In Hinduism, for example, the people come up with inexhaustible myths and beliefs, and through philosophical inquiry try to solve their divine

mystery. From the anxiety of their human condition, they seek truth and answers through ascetical practices, profound meditation and pleas to God. More or less in the same way, the Buddhists recognize the insufficiency of the ever-changing world and teaches its people how to achieve supreme illumination. The Catholic Church recognizes the truths of these other religions and does not reject their ways because through the unanswered questions, God finds a way to reconcile everybody to Him, or in other words ecumenism.

In a bid to illustrate ecumenism, race is not a dividing factor, but, rather, a unifying factor in the unity and togetherness of the people under one Supreme Being, God. The ways in which the various religions spread is a sign of ecumenism, for in any region of the world, there is more than one religion. Christianity, being the most widely spread, is deemed as a sign of ecumenism to bring all the people under God in one common dominion. God has given welcome to everyone, regardless of the race and time, who does right. Since the religions of people end up having different races of people, it is an indication of an automatic development of ecumenism, and if it were not so, then each and every race would have a common religion.

As stated earlier, the way in which the religions spread is not a factor to be considered in ecumenism. The Catholic Church believes that Christ is the unifying factor of all humankind. If that is the case, then it is true by analysis that the sons of the most highly worshiped beings in most religions are the unifying factors of these people. Taking that as the basis of ecumenism, it is true that the possibility of all humankind to come together for a common worship is not farfetched.

Even though catholic churches can be considered to be all the same by some people and that for their union, nothing seems to cause indifferences, that perception is not true. Still, there is certain part of truth in it, because of the several similarities between the Eastern and Western Catholic churches. These churches have, however, come up with rules and regulations that govern their relations with each other and their separated brethren. The Eastern churches, mostly comprised of the Coptic churches, have an interesting background history. Before, the Coptic Church was independent of the Catholic Church until the year 1442 on February 4th, when the Coptic Orthodox delegation signed the document for the formal union with the Catholic Church and the bishop of Rome. Ecumenism best describes the ceremony, in which one church decides to join another. Though the union did not last for long (as the act of union was not supported in Egypt and had no concrete results), it is clear that some believers remained in the Catholic Church and consequently, convinced others to leave their churches to join them.

In as much as there was a divide, the Coptic Catholics adopted some of the practices of the Catholic Church, and without knowing, it was only drawing the two churches together once again. For instance, Syriac Catholics started to say the rosary, and other churches dropped the monastic traditions, beginning apostolic communities based on the Latin pattern. Their union is best described with interfaith pluralism, whereby the two churches are not completely united under one religion but, rather, strive to gain greater mutual respect and co-operation alongside toleration. The eastern Coptic churches developed this relation as a way of creating commonness with the

western Catholic Church.

According to the decree on the catholic churches of the eastern rite that was solemnly promulgated by his holiness Pope Paul VI on November 21, 1964, if a member of the Eastern Catholic Church decides to join the catholic union, not much is expected from him/her except a confession, which is demanded by the Catholic faith. In the same document, there are rules or, rather, guidelines, which guide the entry of a new member of the Catholic Church. According to them, all the Catholics have to esteem and acknowledge the truly Christian endowments from the common heritage. At the same time, there are mild conditions, which make sure that the faith of that believer is not lost and the doctrines he has learnt are also preserved as a way of ensuring that there is closeness to the Lord. These conditions involve preservation of various forms of spiritual discipline and life in the different liturgical rites and theological elaborations of the revealed truth. As for the pastoral hood, there is agreement between the Eastern churches and the western churches on matters concerning the taking of sacraments. The rules in the agreement maintain the discipline of the sacraments, for the purpose they were created.

All the above is a comprehensive description of ecumenism; how it happens, the basis or arguments for churches to come together and how far it has gone since it started. After the description, there are comparisons between the ecumenism in traditional churches and Coptic churches. Traditional churches were the first to endeavor in ecumenism. The Roman Catholic Church maintains that the pope is a symbol of ecumenism. The role of the pope is to sell out the Catholic faith to heretics and schismatics and Benedict

XVI offers a nice, reverent traditional Latin Mass to attend next to them in his ecumenical, One-World Church. The only difference is that they believe in only one church of Christ, not ecumenical but Catholic. Traditional churches, however observed religious liberty, allowing people to leave a religion whenever they pleased. This was supported by Pope Pius IX in his Syllabus of Errors where he stated, “ 15. Every man is free to embrace and profess that religion which he, led by the light of reason, thinks to be the true religion.” But according to *Dignitatis Humanae*'s teaching on religious freedom, that was a contradiction. The *Dignitatis Humanae* states that, “ This Vatican Synod declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom. This freedom means that all men are to be immune from coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and of any human power, in such wise that in matters religious no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs.”

Pope John Paul II acknowledges that it is upon the duty of the Catholic Church to unite all the other churches. In his acknowledgment, he mentions the challenges that they are likely to face in the process, but he says that it is also the will of God that all divided humanity be reunited under the one true God. In order to convince the other churches to come together as per the likeness of God, the Catholic Church takes it upon itself to admit its weaknesses and faults. They in turn, however, urge all Christians to be deep in prayer because that is one of the unifying factors that ecumenism requires in order to be achieved.

Even though they are aware of the challenges they will face, they still forge ahead as they have in mind that the lord is with them and supports them for

they are doing a worthy course. The role of the pope is one of the most supported ventures in ecumenism. The work of Pope Paul VI is one that the second Vatican Council supported. His role in the activities of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity was and has been seen to bear fruits. For example, he approved the set up a special office for the Catholic-Jewish relations within SPCU, which brought new understanding of the Catholic-Jewish relationship. It is also imperative to note the support accorded to him by the representatives of all Christian churches and communities in an effort to unite the Christian churches.

Like everything else, ecumenism is faced by problems that the Catholic Church faces in its endeavors linked to unifying churches of the world. The most obvious is criticism from other churches. The rejection syndrome engulfs the process of ecumenism, suffocating it and almost stopping even its attempt ever again. Some of the churches that have been approached with requests to attend dialogues aimed at forging the best ways forward have vehemently decreed the request. Their overzealous claims have been that they will be misleading their members and make them subjective to certain rules they are not accustomed to.

The first ecumenical endeavors were replied with negative results and this contributes to the fear that some churches have when ecumenism is mentioned to them. Some of negative results included rupture in the Church, confusion of ideas in questions of faith and morals, indifferentism and harmful to the cause of the Gospel. The problems have been overcome with time due to the persistence that the Catholic Church has had. There have been successful dialogues with the Church leaders but there have been also

dialogues that did not end too well for the Catholic Church. In spite of all that, there are still strong efforts being directed towards achieving a long time vision, that the churches of the world will one day have unified together to worship one God.

Ecumenism, the bringing of different faiths together into one is one of the most prolific functions that some churches have bestowed themselves with. Why do some churches concern themselves so much with this matter? Why are some churches not even thinking of endeavoring in this activity? These are some of the unanswered questions in that are in the minds of critics of the church. One church that has come out boldly to preach and advocate for ecumenism is the Catholic Church and as discussed above, its appearances have been all over. There are accusations flunked upon the Catholic Church as to why they are so much interested in expanding their dominion over the religion of the world. Are their intentions clear? Are there any suspicions over their undying effort to achieve their goal. One thing is very clear despite the talks of men; the faith of a person is what counts. That is according to Christianity. That it does not matter whether one is a protestant, a catholic or an Adventist, the deeds are true desires of a person are well known by the God they worship.

The Roman Catholic Church, being one of the oldest churches in the world has close to 1.3 billion members. Perhaps that is the reason as to why there is so much effort towards ecumenism. That is, however, not a confirmed allegation. The fundamentalism of the church is one of the most believed in due to their complete reproduction of descendants of the iconic figures in the bible. This could justify the role that it is playing in ecumenism.

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