

Kefa O. Moibi - BIBLICAL TEACHING  
ON UNITY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR  
NATIONAL UNITY IN KENYA

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NAIROBI EVANGELICAL GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

BIBLICAL TEACHING ON UNITY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS  
FOR NATIONAL UNITY IN KENYA


BY

KEFA ONSANDO MOIBI

A Thesis submitted to the Graduate School in partial  
fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree  
of Master of Arts in Christian Education

Approved:


Supervisor:

  
DR. SAMSON O. OBWA

Second Reader:

  
DR. SAMUEL NGEWA

External Reader:

  
DR. ELIE BUCONYORI

July 12, 1997

022766

Student's Declaration

BIBLICAL TEACHING ON UNITY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS  
FOR NATIONAL UNITY IN KENYA

I declare that this is my original work and has not been  
submitted to any other College or University  
for academic credit.

(Signed)



Mr. Kefa Onsando Moibi

Date: July 12, 1997

## ABSTRACT

This is a study that sought to establish a clear biblical teaching on unity from selected New Testament passages and then drew implications of the same on national unity in Kenya. Opinions of some national Christian education directors were also obtained concerning their views on the biblical teaching on unity and its implications for national unity in Kenya since they are the people who oversee the teaching ministry of the church.

Statistics show that between 50-79% of the Kenyan population are Christians. It is also stated that one of the objectives of education in Kenya is national unity. On this basis and the fact that unity is a biblical concept, it was assumed that with proper teaching and understanding of the latter, there were definite implications for national unity.

The findings indicated that the biblical teaching on unity is unity in diversity as exemplified by the imagery of the body. Though the body has many parts, each with a different function, each part works for the common good of the whole body. This kind of unity in diversity if taught and practised will enhance national unity in Kenya.



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DEDICATED TO MY WIFE MERCY NJERI AND  
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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This is a Bible-based study on unity and its implications for the nation of Kenya. Since unity is a biblical concept, the researcher sought to do a biblical study on the subject and then draw from it implications for national unity in Kenya, for national unity is one of the objectives of education in Kenya. Because the study was basically a library research, the researcher visited the libraries of the following institutions: Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology, Nairobi International School of Theology, Daystar University (Valley Road Campus), University of Nairobi (Kikuyu Campus), Kenyatta University, and the Catholic University of East Africa. In these libraries the researcher sought for literature dealing with the subject of unity.

The researcher also interviewed national directors of Christian education departments in the following churches that have their headquarters in Nairobi: The Africa Inland Church, the Church of the Province of Kenya, the Deliverance Church, the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, and the Kenya Assemblies of God Church. The purpose of these interviews was to find out whether



biblical teaching on unity was actually being taught. From the biblical study on unity and the interviews, deductions have been made for national unity in Kenya.

To facilitate the interviews, the researcher got a letter of introduction from the Academic Dean of the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology seeking permission to collect data for the study from various Christian education directors of the selected churches (see Appendix B). The same letter introduced the researcher to the various libraries that were visited. Findings and interpretation of data were made, leading to the conclusions and recommendations at the end of the study.

#### Statement of the Problem

Our being in Kenya, a nation for which one of the objectives of education is national unity, is a reality that Christians in Kenya cannot ignore. It is assumed that education will foster a sense of nationhood and promote national unity (Eshiwani 1993, 26).

The Kenya Education Commission Report Part I of 1964, emphasized that the answer to national unity lay in a policy consciously directed toward training Kenyans in national unity. It is from this point that the researcher has been provoked to do a study in which biblical teaching

concerning unity is expected to bring positive contribution to the understanding of this national goal of education (National Council of Churches of Kenya 1983). Unity, being a biblical concept, makes this study legitimate since such a study may have implications for national unity.

Being aware that The Kenya Education Commission Report Part I of 1964, noted that the main divisive influences are tribe, race, and religion, the researcher hoped to discover if there was evidence to support these assumptions in view of the fact that Christianity is the main religion within Kenya. Going by the statistics in The Thompson Chain-Reference Bible (New International Version), Kenya is one of the world's nations with between 50-79 per cent of its population being Christians. This means that more than half of the Kenya population are Christian. It was, therefore, assumed that the majority of Kenyans have had some biblical teaching on unity and may be aware that tribe, race and religion are the enemies of unity. It was also assumed that unity was a concern for Christian education teachers.

#### Significance of the Study

From the study of sociology, it is said that for every social institution to cohere, unity is paramount. Where

there is no unity, institutions disintegrate. Nations are torn apart and organizations, churches and even families break down. The National Council of Churches of Kenya publication entitled "A Christian view of politics in Kenya." says:

Today in Kenya, leaders must take care to see that unity is not spoilt by biased decisions in job distribution and educational opportunities. We are still far from being satisfied with the way leadership positions in Kenya are distributed. A person of high calibre and long experiences is wasted merely because he has no political backing. These things militate against unity among all tribes (The National Council of Churches of Kenya 1993, 43).

Thus, unity is necessary for national cohesion and must be upheld by responsible behavior. Jobs and leadership positions must be distributed equally. Unity is necessary not only for Kenya as a nation but also for Africa as a continent. This is the reason for the existence of the Organization of African Unity (O.A.U.). The whole world recognizes the value of unity and as such the world body called the United Nations Organization (U.N.O.) was created. Unity is cherished by all but the question remains: What is the biblical teaching on unity and its implication for national unity in Kenya?

Jesus Christ, the greatest teacher the world has ever known, prayed for unity of all believers in Him (John 17:20,21). Paul, in responding to the Corinthian Church division wrote to the same church that none could lay any



other foundation other than the one already laid which is Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:10-15). Paul's desire was to see unity within the Corinthian Church. In the Great Commission of our Lord the target is all nations, being united in Jesus Christ through baptism:

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age (Mt. 28:19,20, NIV).

The disciples Jesus Christ is seeking should be baptized into the unity of the Godhead. In other words, they should exhibit the unity that is possible within the Godhead as they live their lives here on earth and in doing so let the world know that Christ was sent by the Father who loved the world just as He had loved Christ Jesus His only Son (cf. John 17:23). This unity is possible because Christians are taught to obey Christ's commandments of loving God and their neighbors (Mk. 12:30-31).

Everybody seems to be seeking after unity. In Kenya, it is said that unity is strength, therefore, if as a nation Kenyans become united, it is believed they will be a power to reckon with. The question still stands: What is the biblical teaching on unity and its implication for national unity in Kenya? National unity is the cry of Kenyan educators and that of the Government. This makes the research significant.

Coleman and Tomka observe the following:

...if the Church is to be the sacrament of unity, it must also accept the practical consequences, and oppose all forms of disunity... Nationalism is a challenge to the Church (Coleman and Tomka 1995, X).

The believers in Christ can "oppose all forms of disunity" if there is proper biblical teaching concerning unity. The Church, and for that matter the Christians, need the right biblical teaching concerning unity for them to know their role in national unity.

#### The Purpose of the Study

This study seeks to accomplish the following:

1. To establish a clear biblical teaching concerning unity from the following selected passages: Ephesians 4:1-16; and Acts 2:1.
2. To get the opinions of some denominational Christian education leaders concerning unity for they are the ones who oversee the biblical teaching ministry of their churches.
3. To draw implications of the biblical teaching on unity for national unity in Kenya.

#### Delimitations.

The study focuses on Ephesians 4:1-16 and Acts 2:1 in order to establish biblical teaching on unity. On the basis of the biblical teaching on unity, implications for national unity are drawn. The opinions of some selected

Christian education leaders that have their national headquarters in Nairobi were sought concerning what they perceived to be the biblical teaching on unity and its implications for national unity in Kenya.

### Limitations

The opinions of the denominational leaders in this research were collected from five denominations that have their national head offices in Nairobi. Their perception of unity may have been influenced by their denominational backgrounds and their urban setting. But since this was not the focus of the research, these factors were not considered. An exegetical study of the selected passages which was not done could have enhanced this study.

### Definition of Terms

Unity: Oneness, harmony, agreement (Lockyer 1986). Unity is not found in uniformity or in organizations. It is found... wherever believers focus together on the Lord, expressing their common commitment in prayer and worship. It is in and through the believers' union with Jesus that unity exists, and it is in their common commitment to Jesus that He shapes them in harmony with others in the community of faith (Richards 1985).

Christian Education: is a Bible-based, Holy Spirit

empowered (Christ-centered) teaching-learning process that seeks to guide individuals at all levels of growth (Dladla 1992,10).

Biblical Teaching: In this study this concept will mean the teaching in the Bible or teaching of the Bible (Stein et al. 1996). In other words it is what the Bible says to its readers in its context.

#### Assumptions

In this study it is assumed that:

1. Biblical teaching on unity may have effects on national unity.
2. Unity is a concern for all Christian education teachers in the Church of Christ.
3. As a result of education given since independence, the teaching on unity has permeated the Kenyan society.
4. The majority of Kenyan Christians have had biblical teaching on unity.

#### Methodology

In carrying out this study, biblical approach was consistent with the evangelical view of the Scriptures. Unity is a biblical concept that Christian educators cannot overlook as they teach in a nation with one of its objectives being education for national unity.

This study was basically a library research. The researcher purposed to discover the biblical teaching on unity and then drew implications for national unity in Kenya. To reinforce the library findings the researcher interviewed national Christian education directors of some selected churches that have their national headquarters in Nairobi (see Appendix C). These were selected on the basis of their convenience and manageability of the research within time. These interviews were intended to discover what opinions these directors had concerning biblical teaching on unity and its implications for national unity.

In doing the interviews, the researcher asked the interviewees permission to record the interview proceedings for accuracy. The interview, according to Best and Kahn (1989,201), is an oral questionnaire, often superior to other data gathering devices for the following reasons:

1. People are usually more willing to talk than to write.
2. Certain types of confidential information may be obtained that an individual may be reluctant to put in writing. This is possible after the interviewer gains rapport or establishes a friendly, secure relationship with the subject.
3. The interviewer can explain more explicitly the investigation's purpose and just the information he



wants.

4. The interviewer can clarify questions which otherwise will be misinterpreted.
5. One can evaluate the sincerity and insight of the interviewee.
6. It is possible to seek the same information in several ways at various stages to establish the truthfulness of the response.
7. The researcher may stimulate the subjects' insight into his or her own experience, thereby exploring significant areas not anticipated in the original plan of investigation.

For the interview procedure a checklist is in Appendix A and was followed to guide the researcher during the sessions.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### A. Key factors promoting national unity

##### 1. Marriage

Sharkey and Welch (1979,26) observe that marriage is a contract or covenant involving two families or communities. Usually two families or communities which were not closely knit together were, within the African tradition, brought together as two young people forged a marriage relationship. As the two communities celebrated the marriage by eating together, they were bound as members of the same family. Among the Gusii people, from whom the researcher comes, it was wrong for people who had shared the same meal to fight and spill one another's blood. Marriage, therefore, started and enhanced coming together as a family. If there was any issue among the communities or families that now have been brought together by a marriage relationship, members forgave one another and were reconciled one to another. From this point on, these communities or families could come together as a community to solve any problem that faced them as a community or family. This was so because now they had become one community through marriage. Mbiti says:

Marriage is not just an affair of two individuals alone; it brings together families, relatives, and friends from each side of the partnership. This is the case both in our traditional life and in the changing type of life. You do not just marry one man or one woman: you marry the relations of your partner, whether they are blood relatives, friends, colleagues in work, members of the same club or church.... The traditional African sense of kinship makes the individual a child, a brother, sister, father, mother, cousin or a relative of hundreds of other people. In the village, you are a son or a daughter not only of your own parents but also of many other people who by the web of kinship are like your own mother or father.... The radius of kinship extends very wide, and on getting married you bring together the many hundreds of other people who fall within the radii of experience (Mbiti 1973,44).

This traditional view of marriage is an important factor in the pursuit of national unity. This is so because according to Mbiti: "Marriage also breaks down social barriers where these exist. This applies particularly to tribal, racial, and class barriers" (Ibid., 45).

From the Kenya Education Commission Report Part I (1964), it is said that the three main divisive influences are tribe, race and religion. These are the barriers that marriage is able to bring down. In this respect marriage becomes one of the key factors which, if encouraged across cultures in Kenya, may be very influential in the pursuit of national unity.

Marriage across cultures finds more meaning in an environment, or rather in a society, that has been exposed

to biblical teachings, as among Kenyans. From the Bible it is said that the Israelites were forbidden to marry outside of the Israelite community. In the Christian context however, all believers in Christ are children of God. As such, believers can marry within the community of believers where the barrier of tribe or race has been broken through faith in Jesus Christ (cf. John 1:12). Similarly, Romans 10:12 says, "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him." Jews and Gentiles alike need a Savior, "for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23, NIV). These references clearly demonstrate why all believers in Jesus become the children of God whether they be Jews or Gentiles. It is therefore important to encourage and support believers who want to marry cross-culturally if they sense the leading of God to get into such a marriage. Such a marriage will play an important role in uniting different communities within the nation. Proper biblical teaching makes it possible for members from different ethnic groups to establish a marriage relationship without reservation.

## 2. Language

Another important factor in the pursuit of national unity is language. For instance, in Gen. 11:1-9, an account is given in which a common language played a vital role in

uniting people:

Now the whole world had one language and a common speech... They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly..." "come let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth... The Lord said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other"(Gen. 11:1,3-4,6-7, NIV).

In this incident, the power of a common language in bringing people together to accomplish a task is evident. The striking thing here are the words of the Lord concerning the people's coming together. The Lord said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them" (Gen. 11:6, NIV). Thus, language unites people and gives them such power to do anything they plan to do. No wonder Kenya as a nation has come up with Kiswahili as a national language and English as an official language. In Kenya's educational institutions English is the language of instruction. It is also used in the offices and especially in the writing of government documents. This has been done purposely to break down the tribal and racial barriers that easily divide people within the same nation. English goes a step further to give every Kenyan who has gone to school an international outlook for Kenyans are not alone in the world as a



nation. Kenyans need the services of the international community as much as they require theirs. Similarly, Kiswahili gives Kenyans a national and, to some extent, an African outlook. As such, Kenyans can come together under any one of these languages in their national endeavors as a united nation. Language, therefore, becomes another factor in the pursuit of national unity in Kenya.

It is unfortunate that recently, in Kenya, thirty years after independence, tribal clashes erupted. This was witnessed in 1992, just before the General Elections. People speaking the same language rose up against those who did not speak their kind of language, after living together peacefully for many generations. The need for uniting Kenyans under a common language for national unity thus is an urgent matter. Ethnicity or, rather tribalism, still plagues most African countries, Kenya included. During the tribal clashes one wonders where the Christians were when Kenyans experienced such tribal animosity.

### 3. The School and Education

The Report of the Presidential Working Party on Education and Manpower Training for the next Decade and Beyond (1988) has the following:

Kenya continues to face challenges which require unity and solidarity to overcome them. Unity is vital and instrumental in achieving stability, development, progress and the enhancement of the quality of life

of all people in Kenya. Since independence various policies have been formulated to achieve the objective of fostering national unity. These include the establishment of a public educational system with national curricula, national teaching services, national examinations and certification, as well as national schools and training institutions to which students are admitted on a national basis. In order to fully realize this objective education should develop nationalism, patriotism, positive attitudes towards the society, tolerance, open discussion, accommodation of the views of others and of being mindful of other people's welfare. Schools should also enhance unity by mixing students from different parts of Kenya, organising excursions, and travels to various parts of the country and organising national programmes that bring together students from all parts of the country (Kamunge 1988, 11-12).

The school and education are other factors that are intended to create national unity. But, with the kind of progress that Kenya has made in the area of education one wonders why ethnicity continues to be a problem in our country. People are still not mindful of other people's welfare as evidenced by the rising rate of corruption and crime. The editorial of The Weekly Review of January 26, 1996, had this to say:

...the government has come to realize that corruption is not made up of isolated actions carried out by isolated individuals. Corruption involves a conspiracy, at least between the corrupted and the corrupter... it also involves a conspiracy among corrupt public officials working in different parts of the public service on the one hand, and similar conspiracy amongst corrupters in the private sector (Kisero 1996, 4).

Also, according to The Weekly Review of November 1, 1996, the rate and intensity of crime in Nairobi and its

environs has increased.

According to the Kamunge Report (1988), schooling and education were expected to develop learners to accommodate the views of others, develop positive attitudes towards society, develop patriotism, nationalism and preparing them to be more caring. This was to be reached by mixing students from different parts of the country in the various government schools. This is seen happening in Kenyan schools during the extra-curricular activities and during their time in school together. But the question is, why even after many years of schooling and educational development in Kenya, do we read about corruption and crime increase? It can be assumed that schooling and education have not achieved the above aspirations.

The researcher does not doubt the role that education in our institutions of learning has played especially in bringing different ethnic groupings together in one institution of learning. In these institutions, they have been expected to easily break the barriers between one another by speaking a common language, namely Kiswahili or English. Some of the young Kenyans have even had to establish marriage relationships across tribal barriers. They have had to learn that people from different ethnic backgrounds are human beings as themselves. However, the

concern of the researcher is to find out the biblical teaching on unity and its implications for national unity in Kenya. This is because if it becomes the basis of other factors for unity, the results will be lasting.

### B. Key Factors Hindering National unity

In this section sin, politics and religions were considered as the main factors that hinder the development of national unity in Kenya.

#### 1. Sin

The New International Dictionary of the Bible Pictorial Edition (1987) defines sin as:

...that condition and activity of human beings that is offensive to God their Creator. However, it is only as they are conscious of his holiness that they are truly aware of their sin (1 Kings 17:18; Psa. 51:4-6)...sin is a revolt against holiness and sovereign will of God. Therefore, it is both a condition of the heart/mind/ will/affections (Isa. 29:13; Jer. 17:9) and the practical outworking of that condition in thoughts, words, and deeds that offend God and transgress his holy law (Gen. 6:5; Isa. 52:12-13) (Tenney 1987).

Sin separates or, rather, severs relationships. The relationship between God and Man is severed as well as the relationship between man and his fellow men. Adam and Eve had to hide themselves from God after they realized they had transgressed God's command by eating the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden (Gen. 3:1 ff.). This sin did not only affect God's relationship with the two in



the garden, but also the relationship between the two. It should be observed here that the relationship between the two and creation was also affected. A nation that entertains sinful acts will not attain national unity unless the problem of sin is resolved through national repentance, as we read:

...if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn away from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land (2 Chr. 7:14).

The solution to sin is true repentance even for a nation such as Kenya, otherwise sin will not be restrained.

## 2. Politics

Reading through the editorials column of The Weekly Review of January 5, 1996, entitled "Year of Unity", the editor advises the East Africans to learn from the European Community experience as they try to move towards integration. From this column it is said that integration takes time. For Europeans it took more than a generation to get to where they are today and they started off with much more in their favor than the East Africans have going for them. The implication then is that for us in East Africa it will take as long, if not longer, to get the same degree of integration as the European union. Even so the reading encourages East Africans that it is never too early to get started on the road to its integration. This



should be an encouragement to Kenyans as they work towards national unity today.

From the examples of the European Community the same editorial column says that politics always intruded into the search for European unity. From this example Kenyans should also understand that in their search for national unity politics will always be an intruder hindering the progress of the search for national unity. For the European Community it is said that:

The late French President Charles de Gaule dreamt of a united Europe made up of strong national entities and was morbidly afraid of any arrangement that could erode the sovereignty of France. For many years he opposed the entry of Britain in the Community because of that fear. Successive British Conservative governments have been circumspect about the European Community for similar reasons of national sovereignty (Kisero 1996, 3).

In Kenya, during the era of political pluralism, many political leaders have tried to come together to form an alliance of political parties but have not attained it (cf. Ibid., August 23, 1996). Each party appears to be mainly composed of one ethnic group for fear that should they be united with others, they might be swallowed up in the process and thus be seen to be succumbing to the other tribal party leaders (cf. Ibid., January 10, 1997). Politics continues to be a dividing factor among the people of Kenya today.

While reading The Weekly Review of May 2, 1997, the following words caught my attention.

Ordinarily, one's tribe, race, colour, or religion should not account for much in a modern and a civilised society and any form of discrimination based on any of these attributes is outlawed in the Kenya constitution. However, since the reintroduction of multipartyism in 1991, the tribal factor has reared its ugly head in Kenyan politics and is bound to claim many a victim in the next polls (Kisero 1997, 14).

Tribalism continues to be used as a weapon by politicians relegating others in a bid to aspire to a political office.

### 3. Religion

Christianity is the main religion within Kenya and yet with it came many denominations. The Christian Church, divided into many denominations, has played a role in dividing Kenyans. Protestants and Catholics are divided doctrinally. Protestants are divided among themselves, doctrinally as well, sometimes along flimsy lines, for example, baptism. Independent Churches broke away from mainline denominations. African Indigenous Churches appear to have nothing to do with other Christian Churches. Apart from Christianity there are other religions, namely: Islam, Hinduism, Jainism and Sikhism (Barrett et al. 1973,225). In mentioning these religions we should not forget African Traditional Religions which by 1973 had 3 million persons that professed and practiced traditional

tribal religions (Ibid.,224). This situation is exacerbated by the freedom of worship that the government of Kenya has accorded its citizens. Under this freedom of worship cults of every kind have found their way into Kenya. Some of these are: Free Mason Movement, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and Christian Science. In such a situation, national unity becomes hard to achieve. But given time and proper biblical teaching on unity, Kenyans could grow to understand national unity and its value. The founding father of Kenya, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, said, "United we stand, divided we fall." Now, in the face of these religions and cults, Kenyan Christians have to mature to the level of not seeing one religion or cult as being the enemy of another but rather being a challenge to their mission of evangelism. The Lord God that lives and has revealed himself in human history and who Himself is unity in Trinity desires that all come to unity in Him. This can be achieved by taking the teaching ministry of the Church seriously. This is the reason Christ prayed for unity or oneness of all believers in Him (John 17:20-21). Christians should seek to understand unity even in the midst of other religions and be able to propagate it.

## CHAPTER III

### BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF UNITY

The Bible teaches about unity in several places, for example in Romans 15:5; Colossians 3:14; 1 Corinthians 12:12; John 17:20-23; Ephesians 4:3, 13 and Acts 2:1. In this chapter the researcher will focus on Ephesians 4:1-16, and Acts 2:1 as representative passages. In this study the words oneness and togetherness, as used in the English translation of the New International Version, are viewed as alluding to unity. Thereafter, implications of the biblical teaching on unity will be drawn for national unity in Kenya.

It should be noted also that the context within which these texts are found will be studied so that proper teaching of the text will be established. Other passages including 1 Cor. 3:1 ff.; 12:31; 13:4-8,13; Acts 1:4-5; Luke 24:49; and John 17:20-23 will also be referred to only in passing and as they relate to Eph. 4:1-16 and Acts 2:1.

Concerning the historical background of the Epistle to the Ephesians, Craig S. Keener says:

Racial or cultural division between Jew and Gentile was a major issue in the Ephesian church (Acts

19:17), and Paul was one of the best qualified writers of antiquity to address both sides intelligently (Keener 1993, 538).

It is always easy for people within the Church and even in the nation to be divided along racial or ethnic lines. This is not a new thing for the Bible records incidents of division especially among the Jews and the Gentiles. Division along ethnic lines continues to be as commonplace as already observed in the literature.

Concerning the portion where two of the texts in Ephesians under study lie, David and Sue Burnham have written:

In this section, Paul emphasized unity that proceeds from within the organism of the body of Christ. The purpose of the unity is that the Body can be built up to maturity and as a result, influence the world (Burnham & Burnham 1978, 39).

Like David and Sue Burnham the writer has taken Paul to be the author of this epistle in which he urges the Ephesians to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. Unity is a quality that the saints in Ephesus exhibit and Paul is exhorting them to maintain it but not without effort (Eph.4:3). The kind of unity to be kept is that of the Spirit. The Spirit is one of the persons of the Trinity. As such the unity that exists among the persons of the Godhead has been manifested and has to be maintained among the Christians in Ephesus who are also faithful in Christ Jesus. This unity signifies the presence of the one God in three



persons as expressed in the verses following our text: "There is one body and one Spirit..just as you were called into one hope when you were called..one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all" (vv.4-6). This unity among the believers is the one Jesus prayed for in John 17:20-23. This deduction is made on the belief that Jesus is one of the members of the Godhead and hence will only pray for the unity that the Spirit knows exists among them. This is the unity that will become a testimony to the world through the believers that Christ was sent by the Father and that it was Christ, as well as the believers in unity, that are loved by the Father.

In the passage under study the phrase "... through the bond of peace," peace is the agent by which the readers are bound together in the unity of the Spirit. A bond according to the Random House Dictionary of the English Language is, something that binds, fastens, confines or holds together. This can either be "a cord rope or ligament." It is also something that binds a person or persons to a certain line of behavior." An example given by the above dictionary is the "bond of matrimony." The bond of matrimony binds together two people from different backgrounds to live together as husband and wife in a mutual love relationship, no matter what their backgrounds

are. In this case then, peace is the binding factor for the Ephesians to a certain line of behavior that has resulted in the unity of the Spirit.

Peace can also be described as "a state of mutual relationship between people or groups especially in personal relationships (Stein 1966)." Thus, it is a state in which there is a realization of interdependence; a state where no one feels self-dependent to the extent that one alienates oneself from the rest of the group, hence threatening the unity that is existing and needing to be upheld whatever the cost.

In this epistle, Paul is pointing the saints in Ephesus to the unity of the body of Christ (Eph.4:12). This body, though one, has many parts, each working for the good of the whole body (cf. 1 Cor. 12:12-31). This is unity in diversity: many parts each with its unique and varied contribution and no one part/member disregarding any of the other body parts. This is because without one of the body parts, the whole body suffers or, rather, falls short of the contribution of the missing part. Here there is a sense in which if any of the parts alienates itself it dies because alienating or separating the body part is against the natural body mechanism. Death becomes the result of a part that separates itself when it desires to

work alone against the natural processes of the body. The natural way is the one where the members are united in service to the whole body and hence one another.

In the preceding verses (i.e., vv 1,2), the author is urging the readers to live a life worthy of the calling they had received by being completely humble, gentle, patient and bearing with one another in love. From verse 2b, one would understand why the leaders have to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. In a situation where the readers are being urged to bear with one another in love, a warning is inherent declaring that it is not going to be easy to live together in unity if the readers would not bear with one another in love. As body parts with varied contribution, it is easy for some parts to think that they do not need others, especially those that look weak in terms of their contribution to the body.

The phrase "... in love" (Eph.4:2b), is to be understood as referring to divine love; a gift of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 13:13), which when exercised, would make it possible for a community of believers to live the most excellent way (cf. 1 Cor. 12:31b). With love in practice, a community of believers is able to bear with one another (cf. 1 Cor. 13:4-8) and thus the unity of the Spirit will

be maintained, though requiring a conscious effort to guard it. Maintaining the unity of the Spirit was not going to be easy unless the Ephesians Community allowed the Ministry of the Holy Spirit to take place in their midst.

From the many diverse parts of the body, Christ has singled out apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers, to prepare the rest of the members for the works of service in building the body (cf. Eph. 4:11-13). Those singled out have been given specific and different gifts in order to prepare God's people for works of service. He has done this purposely so as not to threaten the unity of the body since each person with his/her gift needs others for the common good. These specific offices will require the ministry of each other for the body to reach the faith and the knowledge of the son of God and become mature (Eph. 4:13).

In verse 13, unity in the faith is to be grown into by the members of the body. Unity in the faith is the objective of the body. In Christ all the members of the body will find a common denominator and thus unity in the faith and maturity of the body. At this stage the body of Christ will be whole, united in the faith and mature. Then, the body will not be tossed back and forth by the waves, and

blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming (Eph. 4:14).

In this body where truth is spoken in love, growth into Christ who is the head will be realized (Eph. 4:15). The truth spoken in love is truth that is aimed at building the erring member rather than tearing down that member, hence disfiguring the body of Christ.

From Christ, who is the head, the whole body joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part/member does his/her part (Eph.4:16). The supporting ligaments are the points of contact that bring the Ephesian community together as members of the body of Christ. This is the unity of the body of Christ with members that know their particular role in the body as the Holy Spirit has apportioned to each of them. However, members who do not know their part or role in the body of Christ are just like the Corinthian church which was addressed as worldly and as an infant in Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 3:1 ff.).

From these texts the Ephesian saints already had the unity of the Spirit which Paul exhorts them to maintain by a conscious effort as well as by drawing such ability from the head who is Christ, a member of the Godhead. As such



it can be suggested that the unity among the Ephesian community members is proceeding from the unity within the Trinity. This is so because the Ephesian saints draw their spiritual nourishment from the Word of Christ which enhances their faith in Him (cf. Rom. 10:17). Yet, in verse 13 unity in the faith is a future reality that a healthy body grows into. The Ephesian saints are exhorted to maintain it by making every effort so that they could grow into maturity in unity. Unity for the Ephesian saints had begun and needed to be guarded by all means in order to attain maturity (cf. Eph. 4:12-13).

Now turning to Acts 2:1 passage, scholars attribute the authorship of the book of Acts to Luke who is also taken to be the author of the gospel of Luke for both books are addressed to Theophilus and have similarities in their literary style, vocabulary, and theological ideas (Lockyer 1986, 15). It is also argued that Luke was writing to the Gentiles whom he wanted to know the truthful and triumphant course of the Gospel. Luke also defends the Christian faith from suspicion of sedition or superstition (Ibid., 1986, 15-16). In this respect it can be argued that Luke was writing to defend the Christian movement against suspicion that it was going to threaten the social and the political order of the day.

In Acts 1:4b-5, Jesus met with His disciples after the resurrection and told them: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized in the Holy Spirit."

An examination of Acts 2:1 indicates that all the believers were together in one place when the day of Pentecost came. One may be persuaded to think that the disciples were only together physically in one place. True as the case was, there was more than the physical togetherness in the upper room. They were together waiting to be clothed with power from on high, that is, to be filled with the Holy Spirit (Lk. 24:49). When the Holy Spirit came, there was no discrimination. Both the eleven and Matthias who had replaced Judas, Mary the mother of Jesus, his brothers, a number of women who had followed him and a group of unnamed believers were gathered for prayer when the Holy Spirit came on them with visible and audible signs (Tenney 1985, 240). It is also argued the Holy Spirit fused the believers into one group, giving them a unity that they had not previously possessed (Ibid., 1985, 240). Here the Holy Spirit brought unity among the first believers in Christ Jesus. This is actually seen in Acts 2:44-46 where the believers' unity continued as they lived together as a body that cared for

the needs of its members. In Acts 4:32, it is said that the believers were one in heart and mind, as they shared everything they had. It can be suggested that these are incidences, after the day of Pentecost, that signify the unity that the Holy Spirit began on the day of Pentecost. Lockyer observes thus:

Pentecost was a reversal of the Tower of Babel, where language became confused and nations were separated by misunderstanding (Gen. 11:1-9). At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit gathered persons from every nation into one united fellowship. From Pentecost onwards, the Holy Spirit directs the unfolding drama of the growth of the Church (Lockyer 1986, 17).

From the above quotation, it is evident that the Holy Spirit is the one who brings unity and not the efforts of men. Therefore, Kenyans who aspire to work together towards unity should allow the ministry of the Holy Spirit in their midst, otherwise unity would be a fairy-tale.

From an examination of the biblical teaching on unity based on Ephesians 4:1-16 and Acts 2:1 the following conclusions can be made:

1. The Bible teaches unity in diversity. Diversity is a state where individual qualities and abilities are retained as people engage these for the common good of the whole church and the society at large.
2. Unity is a gift of the Holy Spirit and not an act of man. This is given to all who believe in

Christ just like the hundred and twenty in Acts 2:1.

3. Man's part is to guard the gift of unity by nurturing it into maturity.
4. Unity is progressive in the organism of the body. It is brought into being by the Holy Spirit and grows to maturity as believers work hard to maintain it.
5. Lack of proper teaching and understanding of unity leads to factions within the body of Christ resulting in broken unity (cf. 1 Cor. 3:1 ff.).
6. God gives special gifts to the church to enhance unity.

#### Findings Based on the Opinions of Christian Education Directors.

Six Christian education directors from five different denominations that have their national offices here in Nairobi participated. In carrying out the interviews, a six-item interview check-list was used. The directors were each interviewed in their offices and for clarity the researcher recorded the proceedings of the sessions. As the researcher read out the questions of the interview (see appendix A), each director responded, having had time

to go through these questions well in advance of the interview. All the five denominations targeted as stated in the introduction were reached.

The Presbyterian Church of East Africa, the Africa Inland Church and the Kenya Assemblies of God each had an established Christian education department with clear objectives. The Church of the Province of Kenya was at its formative stage of establishing a Christian education department. Rev. Kabanga Kimemia and Ms Martha Ngugi, who have been given the responsibility of starting the Christian education department, have observed that they would appreciate the input of a school like Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology (NEGST) in the formulation of the department's goals and objectives. This was so because NEGST has an established department of Christian Education.

The names of the directors interviewed, the dates they were interviewed and their denominational affiliations are in Appendix C. The directors of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, the Africa Inland Church, and the Kenya Assemblies of God churches, said that they have various ways where they are making an attempt to achieve their objectives. Basically, their objectives are targeting at equipping their followers by way of educating them to



grow in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men (cf. Luke 2:52, a text around which their objectives are drawn). This they do in their Sunday School classes, Bible study sessions, Seminars, and Camps which target all the groups represented in their churches, namely, children, youth and adults. Other groups they minister to specifically include singles, widows and widowers, young couples and those that are engaged. In ministering to these groups they aim at meeting specific needs of the various people that comprise their congregations and reach the wider community around their local churches.

The Kenya Assemblies of God and Africa Inland churches have East Africa School of Theology and Scott Theological Colleges respectively. The church of the Province of Kenya and the Presbyterian Churches have jointly established St. Paul's United Theological College. The Deliverence Church has a one year diploma College known as The Deliverence Bible Training Centre at Eastleigh in Nairobi. All these institutions admit students from various demoninational backgrounds. These institutions train students and expect them to go back and serve in their churches. The Church of the Province of Kenya and the Africa Inland Church have Church Army and AIC Girls, Kessup Secondary Schools repectively where they have established chaplaincies to minister to those who attend these schools that are open

to the entire community. In such denominational schools they have opened avenues through which they minister to the spiritual needs of the students.

In regards to their views on biblical teaching on unity, all the directors interviewed indicated that they teach and hold the view of unity in diversity. They all pointed to the imagery of the body as the best biblical illustration of the biblical teaching on unity. One of them went further to indicate that currently there is more co-operation among the various denominations than ever before. One example cited was the interdenominational evangelistic crusades that have been created with the aim of reaching the rest of the country for Jesus. This is happening throughout the country, especially in the urban settings. Another area is the birth of the fellowship of pastors and bishops that meet for fellowship and prayer once a month in the city of Nairobi. More and more, the city ministers are realizing the need for one another in their ministry to the people of Kenya.

On the implications of the biblical teaching on unity for national unity in Kenya, the directors observed that with proper instructions on biblical unity, there will be positive implications for national unity in Kenya. These positive implications are expected because the Christians

form the greatest part of the Kenyan population. Kenya, as a nation, has one of its objectives for education the achievement of national unity. Ms Martha Ngugi, one of those interviewed, warned that as long as unity remained a word on the lips of the Kenyan society, unity might never be achieved. She also observed that Kenyans need to go a step further, especially the Christians who are salt and light of the earth (Mt. 5:13-16). They should translate unity into action: they should be ambassadors of unity in the way they live and do everything that concerns them.

Evangelism must go hand in hand with discipleship. This was one of the observations made by Rev. Pius Tembu of the Kenya Assemblies of God during the interviews. 'Those converts who believe the gospel preached to them must be taught the principles for living within the body of Christ,' he said. This, he further observed, 'is necessary so that they will be able to positively contribute to the healthy growth of the body into maturity in the unity of faith.' Rev. Tembu continued to say that one of the main principles is the unity of the body of Christ with different members but all working towards the growth of the body. Diversity within the body must be taught and encouraged in order to have a proper view of unity that the Bible teaches. Converts should not seek to be stereotypes of other members of the church but rather

to be themselves as they serve and obey the Lord in the body.

On the hindrances to the development of national unity, all the directors argued that sin was the greatest hindrance. It manifests itself in tribal, racial, religious and political leanings and gender discrimination, to name only a few.

#### Discussion of the Findings

In view of the opinions of the Christian education directors interviewed, one comes to the conclusion that these directors have a clear understanding of the biblical unity. The question remains as to whether those that work under them have this understanding. If they do, (and assuming other denominations will follow the example) then there is hope to see a more united Kenya than that Kenyans have had before. This is due to the fact that up to three quarters of the Kenyan population are Christians. However, the impact of the three quarters of Christians is negated by current practice as has been demonstrated by the tribal clashes.

In the past, when Kenyans have had the ugly incidents of tribal clashes, it could be argued that the type of biblical understanding of unity given here was not obeyed

by many who participated in the clashes. This is also seen in the current political groupings. It is also possible that the majority of Kenyans who are Christians have not grasped the principles of being members of the body of Christ. In other words, growth in the biblical understanding of most Kenyans may be very shallow. If this be true, it becomes a challenge to the Christian education departments of the Kenyan churches countrywide. The ugly incidents of fighting and quarreling are not only in the society at large but are evident within the church.

If sin is the greatest hindrance to the achievement of national unity in Kenya, then there is a question as to whether the three quarters of the Kenyan society really understand the cure for this hindrance. The cure should be the preaching of the gospel for response. In other words, the way the gospel has been preached in the past would be questioned. In this respect a study of the past might help in making adjustments to the way the gospel has been preached and taught. If it had been properly taught and preached, better results could have been achieved as far as unity is concerned.

It is the Holy Spirit who draws and convicts people of their sin. If this is the case, then Christians have not allowed the Holy Spirit to do that which men cannot, that



is, convicting men of sin and drawing them to repentance and subsequent conversion, hence becoming members of a united body of Christ. It is at this stage that unity has to begin.

Since the realization of unity is a process as observed in the selected passages studied, it could be suggested that Kenya is in the process of achieving national unity. Therefore, with proper biblical teaching going on in Kenyan churches the Holy Spirit is likely to bring about unity. This unity has to be preserved by the Christians. The Church has to work hard to see to it that the unity that the Holy Spirit has brought into being is nurtured to maturity as Kenyan Christians allow Him to demonstrate through them how they ought to live.

#### Implications of the Biblical Teaching on unity for

#### National unity in Kenya.

The Christians in a nation are light and salt (Matt.5:13-16). As such the Christians should be able to fulfil the demands of the Great commission (Matt. 28:19-20), the essence of which is to call wayward men and women back to God who loves them so much and has sent His only son on their behalf for the remission of their sins (John 3:16; Heb. 9:22b).

As the unsaved people believe in the message of salvation that the church bears, as she obeys the Great Commission, they become members of the body of Christ that is expected to grow to maturity. By believing in Jesus, they will become united and become one as the Father and Christ are one. As such this will eventually be reflected in national unity.

In the unity of the Christian community, the Holy Spirit will single out apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers (Eph. 4:11) from amongst the united believers in order to prepare the rest of the members for works of service in building the body into maturity and unity in the faith in Christ Jesus who is the head of the body.

In a country with about three quarters of its population being Christian, it would be a negative indicator if the biblical teaching on unity did not influence national unity. In such a situation either there has been no proper teaching on the concept of unity or the Kenyan Christians have not understood it. I believe that with proper biblical teaching on unity among the Christians, who comprise the majority of the Kenyan population, it is possible to move towards the achievement of national unity. This is a possibility because the biblical teaching on unity when grasped and practiced by the majority, the

Christians should appreciate one another's differences as they learn to be interdependent as members of the same body whose head is Christ.

God loves Kenyans for they are part of the world ( cf. Jn. 3:16) and as Kenyan Christians demonstrate the same love which is a gift of the Holy Spirit ( cf. 1 Cor. 13:13), it is expected that they will live the most excellent way (cf. 1 Cor. 12:31b). With this love in practice among the majority of Kenyans who are Christians, it is expected that they will be able to bear with one another (1 Cor. 13:4-8), hence maintaining unity. As noted from our study, unity is not the work of men nor is it the work of bare education but rather, the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Kenyan society with different tribes and various races represented is to be viewed positively by the Kenyan Christians. This is the variety that God has given them for the common good. However, the Kenyan Christians should encourage all the different tribes and races in Kenya to live in unity in diversity as they teach the Word of God to those that embrace the Gospel.

In the area of the different religions represented in Kenya, the Kenyan Christians have to view them in terms of their Christian mission to the world, that is, the

fulfillment of the Great Commission. Hostility and resentment of Christianity to/by other religions is bound to occur, but this should not be taken personally by the Christians; it should be viewed as a rejection of the Gospel. However, as Christians faithfully proclaim the Gospel, some from the non-Christian religions may be converted and become members of the body of Christ and so enhance oneness in Kenya.

Unity is going to be grown into (Eph. 4:13). Christians in Kenya are expected to progressively grow into unity as they exercise humility, gentleness, patience and bearing with one another in love. During this process there may be conflicts. Some errant members of the body will think they do not need others but this study has reminded Kenyans that this is unhealthy for the body; in fact it is an unnatural operation of the body. The natural way is that the body requires all the members for it to operate, otherwise if any of the body parts is sick the rest of the body is also sick. What is meant here is that the Corinthian state of worldliness and infancy is possible among Kenyan Christians (1 Cor. 3:1 ff). Even then, unity is a possibility for infancy is one stage to maturity given the right environment and nurture.

the selected Churches indicate, the Christians in this country have had some form of unity. This is proven by the current joint evangelistic crusades being staged and the birth of the fellowship of bishops and pastors especially in Nairobi and some other urban settings throughout the country, as reported by the Christian education directors. This kind of unity should be nurtured in order to grow to maturity and finally influence the rest of the country in terms of national unity by emphasizing and starting such fellowships and joint evangelistic crusades throughout the country among the already existing ones like the Evangelical Fellowship of Kenya and the National Council of Churches of Kenya.

Christians are called by this name because of their faith in Jesus Christ. As such, Christ should be the object of unity and as His word is taught, faith in Him is created (Rom. 10:17) and Christians will become one in Him. In faith upon the word of Christ, like the hundred and twenty in Acts 2:1, Kenyans will have the Lord of unity on their side. This should be a motivating factor for Kenyan Christians to consciously work hard towards and to maintain the unity as they aspire to grow to maturity in it (Eph. 4:13).



## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was to find out biblical teaching on unity and then draw implications of the same for national unity in Kenya. It has been observed from the selected passages in the New Testament and from the findings of the Christian education directors interviewed that the Bible teaches unity in diversity. This is a state where individual qualities and abilities are utilized for the common good. It has been noted that sin is the greatest hindrance to national unity in Kenya. Sin then manifests itself in diverse forms including tribalism, racialism, religious fundamentalism, gender discrimination, and political antagonism. However, as the Kenyan Christians obey the Great Commission and by teaching the biblical concept on unity, it is expected that the biblical position of unity in diversity will be grasped. This will then be reflected in national unity because the majority of Kenyans are Christians. Some of the other factors that enhance national unity as observed from the literature review include: cross-cultural marriages, common Language, the School and education.

### Recommendations to the Church

Based on the findings of the selected Churches, three out of the five churches had established Christian education departments with clear objectives. This means that some Churches either do not have or have young Christian education departments. A good example here is the Church of the Province of Kenya which is at the formative stages of establishing the Christian education department. The education department of the Church is crucial for it will equip the members of the Church with proper biblical understanding as they live and influence the world around them. Therefore, it is recommended that Churches that do not have an education department of the Church should seek to establish one in order to ground their members with the proper biblical knowledge and practice.

The Church should take the biblical teaching on unity seriously because the Church is part of the nation that is aspiring to achieve national unity. As part of the nation, Christians are expected to be salt and light for it is in that context where their christianity is tested. In short, the Church should not shy away from issues of national importance for these also affect its members.

Those who teach in the Church should apply biblical teachings to every day life experiences of their members.

### Recommendations for further Research

Further research can be made on a wider perspective throughout the country to find out the sentiments of the Christians in this country concerning their understanding of this concept of unity from a biblical perspective and how it influences their view of national unity.

It will be important if a research finding out the qualifications of those who teach the Bible in the various Churches within Kenya will be conducted. This is because without proper teaching, especially in biblical interpretation, biblical concepts such as the concept of unity will be distorted. In doing such a study, the qualifications of overseers and deacons in 1 Timothy 3:1 ff. should be sought for in those who teach. This is because those who teach in the Church must uphold the biblical standards as stated in 1 Timothy 3:1 ff.

A field research on this topic may be done that will include more denominational Churches that are represented in Kenya to give more representative opinions on the topic.

Other biblical aspects of unity such as love and peace may also be studied in order to find out their effects on national unity.

## APPENDIX A

### Interview Check List

1. What are the goals of the Christian Education Department of your Church?
2. What is your Church doing to achieve these goals?
3. What kind of training do you offer to Christian educators of your Church?
4. What is your Church's view on the Biblical teaching on unity?
5. What do you think are the implications of Biblical teaching on unity for the national unity in Kenya?
6. What do you suppose to be the factors that hinder the development of national unity in Kenya? Why?



# NAIROBI EVANGELICAL GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

P.O. BOX 24686, NAIROBI, KENYA

A Project of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa (AEA)

TEL: 254-2-882104/5, 882038

FAX: 254-2-882908

10th February, 1997

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

The bearer of this letter, Mr. Kefa Onsando Moibi is a student at Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology and is doing research towards the completion of the Master of Arts in Christian Education programme. The research is on "*Biblical Teaching on Unity and Its Implications for National Unity in Kenya*".

The school will very much appreciate whatever assistance you can give to his research.

Sincerely,

Earle A. Bowen, Jr.  
Academic Dean

ACADEMIC DEAN  
N.E.G.S.T.  
P.O. Box 24686  
NAIROBI, KENYA



APPENDIX C

	Name	Church Affiliation	Date interviewed
1.	Mrs. W. Ndumu	Africa Inland Church	21-3-97
2.	Rev. Kabanga Kimemia	Church of the Province of Kenya	21-3-97
3.	Ms Martha Ngugi	Church of the Province of Kenya	11-3-97
4.	Rev. J. Thumbi	Deliverence Church	3-3-97
5.	Rev. John K. Mwirichia	Presbyterian Church of East Africa	4-3-97
6	Rev. Pius Tembu	Kenya Assemblies of God	11-3-97

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## CURRICULUM VITAE

### Personal Data

Name : Kefa Onsando Moibi

Date of Birth : April 10, 1967

Place of Birth : Kisii District, Kenya

Father's Name : Moibi Getanda

Mother's Name : Susan Masese Moibi

Marital Status : Married

Spouse's Name : Mercy Njeri Onsando

Number of Children : 1 - Faith Onsando

### Educational Background

Riabigutu Primary School 1974-81

Cardinal Otunga High School, Mosochi 1982-87

Pan Africa Christian College 1990-95

Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology 1995-97

### Professional Experience

Teaching : 1. Mobamba High School 1988-89

2. Nyanturago High School 1989-90

3. St. Catherine's Mountainview Academy 1995

Ministerial : 1. Director of Christian Education in

Riabigutu PAG Assembly 1988-90

2. Assistant Pastor Tatu PAG Assembly 1995