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Emmanuel Duke Orok and Stella E. Osim

The Ecumenicity of Ugandan Martyrologic Events

Ekumenska razsežnost ugandskih mučencev in z nji-mi povezanih dogodkov

Abstract: When people are united in their suffering for a common cause, that which binds them together is always stronger than their differences. The bond is even sturdier when religious motives define their common convictions. For this reason, during martyrdom, those who are persecuted create peculiar religious identity through their common belief in God. This identity generates a socializing bond which makes them resolute in their united witness to the subject of their faith. This was the case with the nineteenth-century Ugandan martyrs who died during the reign of the morally debased King Kabaka Mwan-ga. The novelty of this work consists in accentuating the ecumenicity of the Ugandan martyrdom that came into prominence, *inter alia*, through the Roman Catholic processes of canonization. It is so because there is no research work that has highlighted the fact that Anglicans and Lutherans were equally put to death in their defence of the Christian beliefs and morality alongside the Roman Catholics. For this reason, this work underlines how an inclusive narrative of the East-African Christian witness to the truth of the gospel brings out the ecumenicity of the Ugandan martyrologic events. Theoretical frameworks of deterrence and group memory were used in the understanding martyrdom and common witnessing in Uganda. In their united witnessing to the Christian faith, the Ugandan martyrs overcame the shackles of denominational divide that could have weakened their common resolve to stand for Christ. Therefore, Christians in contemporary African continent are called to re-receive the spirit of united witnessing to Christ as exhibited by the Ugandan martyrs since this will go a long way to: healing the wounds caused by denominational rivalry, controlling the tendency of tearing one another apart because of ethnic interests, sustaining common witness to truth and justice, encouraging all those suffering for their belief in Christ (no matter their denominational rootedness) to stand firm, and strengthening the spiritual bond that connects together all believers in Christ.

Keywords: martyrdom, Uganda, Cristian witness, deterrence and ecumenicity

Povzetek: Ko ljudi povezuje trpljenje za skupni cilj, ki vzdržuje njihove medsebojne vezi, je takšno trpljenje vselej močnejše od njihovih medsebojnih razlik. Povezanost je toliko trdnejša, kadar njihova skupna prepričanja opredeljujejo verski razlogi. Na tej podlagi mučenci, ki jih preganjajo zaradi vere, oblikujejo posebno versko istovetnost preko skupne vere v Boga. Takšna istovetnost poraja družbeno vez, ki jim podeljuje odločnost v njihovem združenem pričevanju o verskih zadevah. To se je odražalo v primeru ugandskih mučencev iz 19. stoletja, ki so umrli v času moralno izprijenega kralja po imenu Kabaka Mwanga. Novost pričujočega dela je v poudarjanju ekumenske razsežnosti ugandskega mučeništva, ki jo je med drugim izpostavil katoliški proces kanonizacije omenjenih mučencev. Doslej ni bilo izdano nobeno raziskovalno delo, ki bi osvetlilo dejstvo, da so bili zaradi obrambe krščanske vere in morale poleg katoličanov umorjeni tudi anglikanci in luterani. Prav zato pričujoče delo poudarja, kako vključujoča pripoved o krščanskem pričevanju vzhodnoafriških kristjanov v prid resnici evangelija odraža ekumensko razsežnost z njimi povezanih dogodkov. Za razumevanje mučeništva in skupnega pričevanja v Ugandi sta bila pritegnjena teoretična okvira odvrčanja od nasilja in skupinskega (kolektivnega) spomina. V njihovem združenem pričevanju za krščansko vero so ugandski mučenci premagali zidove ločevanja med posameznimi ločinami, ki bi lahko oslabili njihovo skupno odločitev, da se izpostavijo za Kristusa. Od tod sledi, da so kristjani na sodobni afriški celine poklicani k ponovnemu sprejetju duha združenega pričevanja za Kristusa, kakor so ga dosegli ugandski mučenci. To ima dolgoročne posledice: celiti rane, ki jih je povzročilo tekmovanje med ločinami, blažiti težnjo k izključevanju drugih zaradi etničnih interesov, gojiti skupno pričevanje za resnico in pravičnost, spodbujati vse trpeče k veri v Kristusa (ne glede na njihovo pripadnost tej ali oni ločini) in krepiti duhovno vez, ki združuje vse verujoče v Kristusa.

Gljučne besede: mučeništvo, Uganda, krščansko pričevanje, odvrčanje od nasilja, ekumenska razsežnost

1. Introduction

The human person has the capacity to recall important events in life: positive or negative. It is also true that human beings have the tendency to forget certain realities or occurrences in life. But memory of important live events can hardly be erased from the annals of history when its narratives are kept alive through memorials. In the light of ecumenical witnessing to the faith, Oliver (1952) opines that the experiences of Joseph Mukasa, Charles Lwanga of Mu-Ganda (the place of ethnic Ganda) and other East African Christians are of great relevance for the memory of Christianity, the Church in Africa (as well as other parts of world) and for the celebration Christian faith's unicity. For this reason, this work examines how common Christian imagination bereft of denominational biases as regards faith, witnessing to Christ, and suffering for the truth united the East-African fol-

lowers of Christ in moments of great tribulations, especially, under King Kabaka Mwanga. In view of doing justice to this research, this paper treats: the etymology and theoretical frameworks of martyrdom, martyrdom in Christianity, East-African socio-religious background as means towards a better understanding of the historical context of the protagonists of this events and their companions. In addition, this study examines the ecumenicity of the nineteenth-century Ugandan martyrologic events as well highlighting how Roman Catholics, Anglicans and Lutherans bore united witness to Christ. In conclusion, this investigation indicates the relevance of united witness of Ugandan martyrs for contemporary African Christians regarding robust fellowship in the one Christian faith.

2. Martyrdom: Etymology and Theoretical Frameworks

Martyrdom is a socio-religious reality that marks the lives of those who are bound by certain faith convictions. The word *'martyrdom'* is of Greek origin: *martus*, *martureo*, *marturia*, *marturion*, etc. In all its variants, the Greek noun *martus* connotes *'witness to facts'* in a purely legal sense. In this respect, a martyr is one who can speak from personal experience about something or event or persons known to him or her as a defence. The verb *marturein* connotes coming forward as a witness or to testify. That being so, Strathmann (1976) states that generally, the term (*marturein*) means: witnessing to facts or demonstration/confirmation of the veracity and factuality of an event or assertion that concerns a person. Therefore, those who indirectly demand this witnessing from religious persons by opposing their ways of life and oppressing them hold on to religious and moral values that are in contradistinction to the ones undergoing persecution. Furthermore, in attesting to the truth of their religious convictions, martyrs suffer all sorts of deprivations and they ultimately sacrifice their own lives as it was the case with the nineteenth-century Ugandan Christians slain for the sake of Christ. Thus, sacrifice and self-offering to the God of Jesus Christ, especially at difficult times, make these religious attitudes to be listed among the essential dimensions of Christian spirituality (Platovnjak 2016, 245). And the Ugandan martyrs exemplified these virtues in their lives.

Prohibition of religious expressions, like worship, free association of believers, etc., are strategic means of suppressing the truth convictions that martyrs stood for. This form of repression has been used since the era of the Roman empire in view of subduing the spread of Christianity (Rives 2011, 200). Where repression of religion is a statecraft, as it was the case in Roman empire and nineteenth-century Uganda, the regulation and restrictions of faith-praxis positively influenced the desire and yearning for the Sacred in fervent Christians. Often, it turns out to be the Autumn of religious faith that awaits a blossoming Springtime – a spiritual rejuvenation – depending on how the situation is managed by those under persecution.

As a theoretical framework, deterrence theory is closely related to the phenomenon of suppression, oppression and martyrdom. In deterrence, restrain stra-

tegy or practice is used in stopping someone or people from doing something that is unwanted by the state or the person at the helm of affairs. In the same vein, Huth and Russett (1998) infer that deterrence could come through frame ups, false accusations, punishments or denial of one's freedom or human rights in view of dissuading one from following his or her convictions. King Kabaka Mwanga used various deterrence strategies in punishing those who worked in his court because of their ties with Christian religion that informed and strengthened their moral convictions. Faupel (2007) indicates that using the deterrence strategy Mwanga began to be hostile to the European missionaries and Christians in his kingdom on the pretext that they were forerunners of war and destabilization in his kingdom. Yet, the more the King banned his pages and courtiers from attending church celebrations on Sundays, the stronger was their resolve to hold on to the Christian faith and moral convictions.

From sociological perspectives, Castelli (2004) observes that martyrdom works within another framework, namely: group memory theory that links individual memory with the memories of the social group that one belongs to. Hence, in every martyrologic event, there is this connection between those who are ready to suffer for their faith and the narratives of persecution for the sake of Christ which are recorded in the history of Christian religion. For the group memory theory, martyrdom thrives where those persecuted are united in their convictions and their memories are processed through formulated mythical narratives meant to inspire them and the future generations. Thus, Koessler (2003) observes that during persecutions, the narratives of witnessing to the values of the gospel as bequeathed by Jesus Christ inspires those who suffer for the truth and remind them that they are undergoing all the trouble because of God. In addition, Mitchell (2002) gives an elaborate description of Christian martyrologic deaths as that which keeps alive the community's religious memory of the faith, defined by the particular contexts of the believers in Christ, their non-violent submission to persecution and the divergent inclusiveness of Christians marked with the sign of the faith. In Mitchell's view, the aspect of memorial is deeply connected to the identity of the community since it helps the Christian people to tell and re-tell their faith-story at all times. Within these dynamics of narratology, the religious imaginations of the community are kept alive and these bind the people together, especially, in moments of trials and persecution. This explains the experience of Ugandan martyrs whose faith was nurtured by the narratives of belief in God preached to them by Christian missionaries from France, Britain, Scotland and Germany. So, the narratives of martyrdom are beneficial to each generation as they read their struggles in the light of the persecutions faced by their forbearers. The effects of these narratives are overwhelming: they become catalysts for the spread of religion, reason for resilience and the anchor of hope as regards the present and after life. In these stories, the memories of valiant soldiers of Christ live on through the witnesses of persecuted Christians.

In all forms of martyrdom, the primary motive of the martyrs' self-sacrificing death is their love for Christ, Christian convictions informed and formed by their

faith in God. So, for Allen (2013) this religious or Christian component of martyrdom defines the commitment of every martyr and strengthens him or her to stand firm to end. Consequently, for the Ugandan martyrs, it was not the vileness of King Mwanga and his lieutenants that made them heroes and heroines of the Christian faith. No! It was their faith in Jesus Christ and adherence to the truth of the gospel that made them martyrs. This accentuation on the Christian faith of the martyrs exalts the primacy of religious beliefs in every martyrologic event and of course that of the Ugandan Christians in lieu of the persecutor(s). The corollary of the motivation for Christian ultimate witness through death is their torturer's motifs for being inhumane to other human beings. The leitmotifs of King Mwanga's persecution of his pages and courtiers were political and anti-Christian. According to Budde (2011), these reasons were unfounded; they were only the pretexts for the King's reaction concerning his deep sense of insecurity as it was the case in other instances of state-sponsored Christian persecutions.

3. Martyrdom in Christianity

The dogmatic foundation for martyrdom is the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ: his suffering, death, and resurrection. That being so, for Christians, martyrdom is a wilful acceptance of suffering and death for the sake of one's belief in the person of Jesus Christ, his teachings and what he stands for. Therefore, Christian understanding of martyrdom is Christological and at the same time Trinitarian. McBrien (2002) supports the assertion that martyrdom has Christological roots because Jesus of Nazareth, the anointed One of God, accepted death, innocent though he was, for the salvation of humanity from eternal damnation and the reconciliation of creation with God the Father. The Trinitarian roots of martyrdom consist in this truth: God the Father of Lord Jesus sent his Son into the world so that through him all might be saved (See, Jn 3,16). And at the end of his earthly ministry, Jesus said to his disciples: »But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.« (Acts 1,8) As the consequence of the gift of the Holy Spirit, Christians become fearless as they bear witness to Christ. With this economy of salvation, the Trinitarian character of being a witness, to Christ, stands out.

Christian martyrologic witnesses are very profound in their convictions. These holy ones are more than witnesses. They are not just simply witnessing to Christ and the gospel. The martyrs are not merely exemplary and typical followers of Christ. Hence, Gregory (2001) avers that the martyrs are new saints in heaven and are instantly available as intercessors for potential supplicants and troubled faithful of Christ. So, Christian understanding of martyrdom is faith based and without the grace of God as well as firm convictions concerning the teachings of Christ, it is difficult for someone to be a true witness. This otherworldly perspectives to life inform and shape the views of the martyrs on the materiality of exi-

stence that is ultimately evident in their lives. For Christian martyrs, there is another home for them in heaven when all forms of materiality associated with them is destroyed: their properties, life and relations. Consequently, the martyr's mind is formed to receive the hope of the resurrection not as a means of escape from the reality of suffering but as the very reason to rejoice when confronted with violent hostility, following the example of Christ (Kowalski 2003, 58). Thus, the hope of being re-united with Christ strengthens the martyrs' fortitude before their cruel executioners. For the sake of this Christian hope, Ugandan Christian martyrs joyfully submitted to being tied to the stakes and burnt alive as witnesses to the truth of the gospel. This is more than mere human heroism. It is the grace of God that made this ultimate witness possible through them.

As it was in the early Roman empire, the Ugandan martyrdom was state-sponsored persecution. Under state-sponsored martyrdom, Christians and the Church are perceived as the enemy of the state. In the imperial Rome, (especially during the reign of Emperor Diocletian) many edicts were promulgated against Christians and the Church as means of deterrence and oppression (Tripp 2011, 21). Furthermore, in state-sponsored martyrdom, civil institutions are used as instruments for the repression and persecution of Christians. This was equally the case in the nineteenth-century Uganda.

For Cunningham (2011), in all martyrologic events that have taken place in the Church, from the beginning of Christianity till date, it is hard for someone to determine the accurate statistics of how many Christians died in various epochs of persecution. The reasons for not having precise statistics of Christians martyrs at the moments of persecution are many and they point to the mystery and the graciousness that surround every martyrologic event precisely as God-sustained reality. On a related note, within the logic of grace, there is always an overflow of everything, thereby defying statistical exactitude. And this can be taken as a hermeneutical principle that explains the inability of determining the accurate statistics of Christian martyrs during the times of persecution. This was also the case for the Ugandan martyrs, ipso facto, no one say with certainty the statistics of Ugandan martyrs. Nonetheless, the available records point to the ecumenicity of this martyrologic event.

4. East African Socio-Religious Context

The second half of the nineteenth-century Africa saw the expansion of colonial interests as well as missionary activities on the 'Black' continent. The explorers of the then world took back information to their countries that new people, new areas and more resources have been discovered in East and West African sub-regions. While Geographers were eager to know more and manufacturers were extremely delighted because of new opportunities to increase their wealth, this news triggered the interests of Christian missionaries who saw this as an opportunity for evangelization (Marsh and Kingsnorth 1963, 93). Later on, the arrival of

missionaries with Abolitionists' agenda was met with stiff opposition because the kings and local chiefs saw this as foreign intrusion and diminution of their authority. The Abolitionists saw the end of slave trade as means to an end, namely, ending all forms of slavery and proclaiming the fundamental equality of all human beings. But the indigenous ruling class was very slow to accepting this new social equality promoted by the Germans, French, and Britons who carved niches for themselves around Congo, Bugunda, and Lake Victoria (Marsh and Kingsnorth 1963).

The good thing is that the British geographers, missionaries, and manufactures/merchants affirmed the relevance of traditional institutions and their authorities despite the influence of the Abolitionists who found themselves among the aforementioned groups. This is so because the goodwill of the chiefs was the first condition as regards the ultimate success of whatever projects they (foreigners) had in mind (Oliver 1952, 67). Consequently, Marsh and Kingsnorth (1963) indicate that the social life of the nineteenth-century East Africans was transformed by the developmental projects of the British Government: schools were opened, hospitals were built, roads were constructed not only to transport the goods to the ports but to ease movement throughout the region and significant change in the socio-economic life of the people was the introduction of commerce through the use of money.

Furthermore, the Bugandan people saw a close link between religion and politics. This was partly because the acceptance of a superior nation's religion can in the long run, *ceteris paribus*, guarantee the sovereignty of a weaker nation. For this reason, when King Mutesa (the father of Kabaka Mwanga) failed to gain the support of the French via Catholic missionaries from France, he turned to the Evangelicals from Britain so that the incursions of the Turks and Egyptians from the North of Africa would not wipe away his kingdom. As a result of this, an author opines (Faupel 2007) that Metusa's desire to be baptised and become a nominal Christian was for political gains and the security of his kingdom. This political intrigue explains why Roman Catholic, Anglicans, and Lutheran missionaries flourished among Bugundan people. And these socio-political realities paved the way for ecumenicity of the nineteenth-century Ugandan martyrologues.

Prior to mid-nineteen century, the clans of Buganda had a monotheistic approach to religion. Faupel (2007) writes that the Bugandans, Charles Lwanga's tribe, were traditionally monotheistic; they worshipped the One who created all things under various names: Katonda, the Creator, Mukama, the Master, and Seggulu, the Lord of heaven. Belief in the supernatural being united them under one people and one traditional religion. Nwaigbo (2010) avers that this understanding of the One God as the creator of things: both material and spiritual, remains the common thread that links various concepts of the Supreme Being in African traditional religions. But the arrival of Islam, Christianity and other imported tribal religions changed this monotheistic landscape.

Around the second half of the nineteenth century, the Church Mission Society in Britain had already started intensive missionary work in Unyamwezi and Bu-

ganda, the two prominent British colonies around Lake Victoria. The Evangelicals were there before the Roman Catholic Mission started in 1778 during the reign of Mutesa otherwise known as Mukabya (Faupel 2007, 26). The Rev. T. Wilson remembers him as a murderous maniac and had little good to say about him. Still, Père Siméon Lourdel, one of the White Fathers missionaries, worked hard towards Mutesa's reception of baptism. Despite all this, the political face of religion in the region made Mutesa to be more anxious of European religious power that will guarantee him more protection. He is even known to have been a Catholic, Protestant and Muslim! (31). Sometimes, denominational differences can generate attitudes of superiority and rivalry among Christian missionaries and this could be detrimental to collaborative spirit and ecclesial ministry. Nonetheless, this was minimized in the face of persecution; the martyrs of Uganda were united in their witness to Christ and readiness to die for their Christian beliefs. The ecumenical character of Ugandan martyrdom challenges contemporary Christians, in Africa who are often divided by ethnic variances and religious ideologies, to be humble in their self-assessment as well as being of appreciative of the Spirit's fruits in other ecclesial communities so that they can bear united witness to Christ.

5. Ecumenicity of Ugandan Martyrologic Event

Ecumenicity is the noun of the adjective ecumenical that comes from the Greek word *,oikoumene'* which means the entire inhabitable world. It connotes denominational diversity and inclusivity among those who profess their faith in Jesus Christ (Conradie 2011, 20). Consequently, from the connotations of the term *,oikoumene'*, Malmenvall (2017) avers the ecumenicity of salvation as laid out in the works of Oscar Cullman (Lutheran), Georges Florovsky (Eastern Orthodox) and Hans Urs von Balthasar (Catholic). And this is clearly the work of the Holy Spirit who unites all in the one faith. Concerning the nineteenth-century Ugandan martyrdom, the denominational difference spread them between Roman Catholics and Protestants (Anglicans and Lutherans). However, the inclusivity of their witness consisted in the fact that they defended the same faith, belief in Jesus Christ, for which reason King Mwanga and his partners considered them enemies of Bugandan kingdom.

Unfortunately, apart from the moral bankruptcy of King Mwanga, he held twisted political perceptions of Christianity and misinformed understanding of Christian allegiance. Thus, he saw Christianity as a means of colonization and threat to the stability of his kingdom, ipso facto, the pages and court attendants were dissuaded from attending Sunday Christian worship. Faupel indicates that Joseph Mukasa, one of the leading men in the royal court defied the command of the King by going for Mass on Sundays. The offense of Mukasa was not just being faithful to his Christian duties but also encouraging many pages in the royal court to do the same by instructing them in the ways of God. He equally discouraged them from falling preys to Mwanga's unchaste behaviours. Hence, Mukasa's uprightness

was considered a crime by King Mwanga (2007, 99). Accordingly, Gostečnik et al (2016) are correct to observe that with the help of religious encouragement, those who experience traumatic suffering because of their belief become psychoanalytically robust, and by that very fact, fearless before persecution. This is exactly what Mukasa and Charles L'wanga did: they encouraged the courtiers and pages who were persecuted because of their faith to remain in the path of God. Moreover, the steadfastness of Mukasa and other courtiers mirrors the connection between religion and morality. In the same vein, (Iwuagwu 2018) argues firmly that the complementarity of religion and morality provides the strength of character needed when the chips are down. That being so, Mukasa paid the price for his faith as he told his executioners: »I am going to die for my religion. You need not be afraid that I will attempt to escape.« (Faupel 2007, 132) This declaration by Mukasa, one of leading Christian men in the King Mwanga's court, confirms martyr-motive of Christians who willingly accepted death rather than succumbing to latter's demand.

It is important to note that little or no attention has been paid to the ecumenicity of the nineteenth-century Ugandan martyrologic chronicles. This is partly because they were overshadowed by the personalities of Charles Lugajju Lwanga and Joseph Mukasa, their Catholic compatriots and Roman Catholic faith. The fact that proto-martyr of the nineteenth-century faith struggle in Uganda was Joseph Mukasa, an ardent Catholic, who did not only challenge the King as regards his vices but also confronted his fellow courtiers-collaborators with the cruel regent, made its martyrologic narratives Catholic-centred (Faupel 2007).

The persecution of Christians by the morally debased King Kabaka Mwanga, who governed the Bugandan nation reached its peak with the burning to death of more than one hundred Christians (Roman Catholic and Protestants alike) because of their faith convictions. But records show that the 21 Protestant martyrs who were killed under the reign of King Mwanga's persecution are as follows: Joseph Lugalama, Mark Kakumba, Noah Seruwanga, Moses Mukasa, Muddwaguma, Elias Nbwa, David Muwanga, Omuwanga, Kayizzi Kibuka, Mayanja Kitogo, Noah Walukaga, Fredrick Kidza, Robert Munyagabyanjo, Kiwanuka, Giyaza, Mukasa Lwa Kisiga, Lwanga, Mubi, Wasswa and Kwabafu (Faupel 2007, 249). While the 22 Catholics martyrs were: Charles Lwanga, Matthias Mulumba, Joseph Balikuddembe, Denis Ssebuggwawo, Potian Ngonde, Andrew Kaggwa, Athanasius Bazzekuketta, Gonzaga Gonza, Noe Mwaggali, Luke Bananakintu, James Buzabaliwo, Gyavira, Ambrose Kibuka, Antole Kiriggwajjo, Achilles Kiwanuka, Kizito, Mbagu Tuzinde, Muggaga, Mukasa Kriwawanvu, Adolphus, Ludigo, Bruno Serunkuma, and Jean-Marie (as well as Muzeyi, Musoke, Muddembuga and Jamari) who were canonized by Pope Paul VI in Rome on 18 October, 1964. (Faupel 2007). There were other Roman Catholic converts to Christianity, though not mentioned, who were killed on account of their faith. It is pertinent to note that the non-inclusion of female Christian martyrs in the official Ugandan martyrologic chronicles does not mean that they were not there. The above listed Christians and other believers from the Roman Catholic, Anglican and Lutheran traditions bore united wit-

ness to Christ and because of this, they were tortured, beheaded or burnt to death between November 15, 1885 to January 27, 1887. By the same token, the courageous witnessing of these martyrs was as a result of their »commitment to God on a daily basis« (Peterson 2002, 177). Without this uncommon commitment to Christ, martyrdom is difficult.

6. Conclusion

According to Fink (2001), the premature death of witnesses to Christ occasioned by suffering, torture, starvation, hostility and violent attacks point to the fact that the heroic sanctity of martyrs is primarily the work of divine grace in the lives of frail human beings. From historical accounts, this is the case as recorded in the annals of Christian martyrdom. The records of the violent death of these Ugandan martyrs adds to this faith narrative. This resonates with the observation of Prijatelj (2014) that violence experienced by groups of persons shapes their identity and the memory of those who remembers them. This is common experience of Christians as recorded in the Bible (Acts 5,41; 8,1-4) and other narratives on martyrdom.

The work of John Faupel (2007) *African Holocaust: The Story of Ugandan Martyrs* stands out to this date as the most detailed text on the Ugandan martyrologic events. The uniqueness of this piece consists in its historical approach to the matter. However, the distinctive contribution of this research to the Ugandan martyrologic narratives lies in drawing out the ecumenicity of this East-African faith struggle during the reign of King Kabaka Mwanga, who was responsible for the persecution and death of many Christians. This rediscovery of the ecumenicity of Ugandan martyrologic events can enrich the faith in the African continent when adequately re-received by contemporary Christians. It will go a long way to healing the wounds of denominationalism, which are sometimes, fuelled by ethnic divides that is on the increase across the continent (Haynes 2007). The fruits of this lived ecumenicity are many: unity in faith expression, tenacity concerning bearing witness to the truth, encouraging suffering Christian communities in moments of trials, strengthening the spiritual bond that always unites Christians, etc. All these and more characterized the ecumenicity of the nineteenth-century Ugandan martyrologic events. Finally, this research maintains that the witness borne by the Ugandan martyrs remains for contemporary Christians a great lesson concerning the possibilities that are latent in believers who are opened to the Holy Spirit who unites all flesh in their diversity and does great things among those persecuted because of their belief in Christ.

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