

LIBERATION THEOLOGY: ITS RELEVANCE TO WOMEN IN THE
CATHOLIC CHURCH IN KENYA, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE
TO THE DIOCESE OF KISUMU

BY

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ABSTRACT

The twenty-second ecumenical council was held in the Vatican in 1962-65. The aim of this council, commonly referred to as Vatican II was to find ways and means of making the Catholic Church more relevant in the twentieth century. Hence one of its main concerns was to revise the position of lay men and women so that they could begin to take a more active part in the life of the church. After more than twenty years, however, the reforms agreed upon by the Council do not seem to have taken root in the consciousness of the majority of the Catholic laity, especially women.

This study has sought to analyze the role of lay women in the Catholic church in Kenya. It is an attempt to examine how the perceived role of women has affected their entire participation and contribution to the Catholic church and to the society as a whole. The study also traces the rise and growth of liberation theology and considers whether that process can be used in helping women in the Catholic church in Kenya to understand their situation better.

The motivation for the study is the growing mood among men and women throughout the world to liberate themselves from all kinds of oppression.

The location for field work was the Catholic diocese of Kisumu which comprises Siaya and Kisumu Districts (See map on page 33). Questionnaires and interviews are the main methods that were used for collecting data. The information given during the interviews was recorded in notebooks and analysed. It was necessary too, to conduct a thorough library research before going to the field.

The main findings of the study are that women are in a subordinate position in the Catholic church in Kenya and that this subordination of women is enhanced and encouraged by the decision-making structure of the church itself and the patronizing and condescending attitude of the clergy. Thus the roles and relations between members of the hierarchy and women, coupled with the attitudes that the clergy have about women and the attitudes that women have about themselves seem to be the underlying factors in the whole process of the liberation of women in the Catholic church in Kenya.

The study comprises four sections. The first section (Chapter One and Two) deals with the nature and scope of the study. The second section (Chapter Three) discusses the particularity of women's oppression and how it is enhanced by religio-cultural forces while section three (Chapter Four and Five) analyzes the rise and development of liberation theology and its effects on Catholic women. Section four (Chapter Six) appraises the position of women in the Catholic church in Kenya and concludes with a few suggestions as to how women can be helped to participate more meaningfully in the life of the church and hence of the society.

CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1.0 Problem Statement

The process of colonization in Africa had many aspects, namely; economic, political, cultural and religious. In 1963, Kenya attained political independence from Britain. The programme of action for the new nation of Kenya, proposed by the KANU government then, as stated in the KANU Manifesto was not only to build a "new Kenya guided by Democratic African socialism and founded upon all that is good and valid in our traditional society"¹, but also to make each Kenyan understand that HE or SHE has a vital role to play in the further development of the nation. In other words the KANU government is concerned with harnessing the skills and aspirations of all Kenyans irrespective of race, tribe, sex or religion in order to eliminate the miseries of poverty, disease and ignorance.

At about the same time, namely from 1962 to 1965, the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church were holding a General Council in the Vatican, that has been referred to in the history of the church as the Second Vatican Council or quite simply, Vatican II. The aim of this council was really to try and make the Catholic Church relevant to the twentieth century. The Church tried to achieve her aim of trying to

1 KANU Manifesto, reprinted in 1979, especially the personal message from His Excellency, the President. pg.(i).

relate the church to the world by urging the Catholic laity, who themselves live and work in the world, to participate more actively in the life of the church. The laity would do so by examining their life and experiences in the light of the Gospel; work in collaboration with the clergy and where possible even advise the clergy.

There is an emerging pattern here. At the election of the first African parliamentarians to the Kenya Parliament², around 1958 and with the coming of independence in 1963 a few women who were caught up in the political and social struggle for independence, started to question their role in the church.³ This new spirit coincided with Vatican II (1963 - 65) one of whose preoccupations was to revise the position of the laity so that they could begin to take a more active part in the life of the church. Up to the time, the laity had been considered mere recipients of the decisions and theologizing of the hierarchy. This meant that women, who actually form the bulk of the laity, were now being asked to participate more fully in evangelization; but did they know how?

This study tries to investigate the subordination of women in the Roman Catholic church. It is an attempt to analyze how this subordination of women in the Catholic church has subsequently affected their entire participation and contribution to the church and the society

2 Although Africans had been nominated to the Legislative Council abbreviated LegCo. since 1944, the first elections for Africans to the LegCo. were held in 1958.

3 This is exemplified in B. Kagia's book Roots of Freedom, 1921 - 63. EAPH, 1975. esp. pg.66. Note how he easily acquired followers to Dini a Kagia after his confrontation with the established church.

at large. Further, this study attempts to trace the rise and growth of liberation theology in the Latin American context. This study then ponders over the question whether that process can be useful in liberating women in the Catholic church in Kenya from the culture of silence in which they are submerged.

1.1.0 Significance of the Problem

Twenty years have elapsed since independence and also since Vatican II. But political decolonization has not always meant cultural and religious decolonization. With the onset of modernization and the emergence of international women's meetings after the declaration of the U.N. Decade for Women in July 1975, women in Kenya were enabled to make a comparative analysis of their situation with that of other women in other parts of the world. This comparative analysis was necessitated by the sharing of ideas and experiences from fellow women all over the world. Apparently, Kenyan women were not satisfied with their situation. Note that this was ten years after political liberation.

Liberation of any kind entails first of all an awareness of one's own social, political, economic and cultural situation. And secondly, it is an attempt to actively reconstruct any system that hinders one from developing one's potentialities to the full so that one can actively contribute to the growth of one's society. Most research work, however, that has been done in the area of women's liberation in this country to date has concentrated on economic and social aspects of life. Not much research has been carried out to determine how religious

structures, beliefs and attitudes affect the life of women. Behavioural psychologists have argued that the systems of beliefs and values held by individuals of a society determine to a large extent the thrust of life of the individuals of that society. In other words, the activities that an individual indulges oneself in are actually determined by the values and beliefs that the individual holds.

Research into the socio-economic aspects of the life of women provides useful information for the struggle for liberation. But it is not enough. It is important also to study the deep seated beliefs and values which in actual fact determine the socio-economic system and the attitudes thereof that are formed and reinforced about women. Lack of detailed information on the religious aspect of the life of women creates a disturbing gap in their story, thus making it difficult to understand their role in the whole process of transformation of the Kenyan society. Women in the church in Kenya need to develop and continue developing the awareness of their own situation, especially if they are to take an active part in the life of the church and society as is required of them by both Vatican II and the KANU ~~government.~~

Secondly, in a country that is developing fast such as ours, we need to harness all our resources, both material and human to put them to maximum appropriate use. Furthermore, it is a country where religion plays a vital role in the lives of the people. David Barret in Kenya Churches Handbook (1973) reports that 83.4% of the total population

of this country are professing christians; and out of those, 40.8% are Roman Catholics. It is therefore expedient that any system - social, cultural, political, economic, religious - that hinders our people, men and women, from developing their talents to the full should not be encouraged.

Thirdly, women form the bulk of our human resources (80% of food produce in this country is from the labour of women); if they are to contribute meaningfully and to their maximum capacity, they must be liberated from any forces socio-cultural, religious or otherwise, that hinder them to develop their persons to the full.

1.2 Scope of Study

The idea of researching into the role of women in the Roman Catholic Church first came to my mind in the first half of 1983. By that time I had been employed as an animator in the Development Education Programme (DEP) which was run by the Catholic Church under the auspices of the Christian Development Education Service (CDES). I was in charge of the Women's Programme at the National level. My duties included, inter-alia, liaising with women leaders in the church, the government and other non-governmental organizations; co-ordinating the various socio-economic and pastoral activities of women groups in the dioceses; and most important, designing and executing training programmes for diocesan personnel, especially the women, so that they would be enabled and encouraged to take an active

part in the shaping of their own lives. The Development Education Programme was geared towards a vision: "(help build) a society based on human values which are found in our traditional cultures and authentic Gospel values, a society which is just and self-reliant, where the basic needs of all are met in mutual care and concern. It is a society where there is a just sharing of resources, where men and women share equally and all participate actively in decision-making". Within the Development Education Programme the transforming process is generally known as conscientization⁴. Four interrelated elements distinguish conscientization from other approaches to development. First, the transforming process is on-going and ever-deepening. It begins with awareness raising, leads to action and is followed by reflection. The integration of action and reflection produces a more profound awareness which animates future action. Second, the process of conscientization takes place with a group. The communal raising of awareness empowers action; reflection combines and enriches each member's perceptions of the action. Third, conscientization is grounded in people's right to participate actively in shaping their own lives, the life of their community and their environment. It is neither doing things for people, nor even doing things with them, but enabling them to shape and control their future. Fourth, although the process may begin in efforts to assuage hunger, extend services or increase income, conscientization ultimately seeks to modify unjust

4 The English translation of the Spanish Conscientizacáo which Freire uses to refer to learning to perceive social, political and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality. See also 4.1 note 7.

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social, economic and decision-making structures which are the root causes of deprivation. Building a society whose structures promote justice is true transformation; the only guarantee of the end of inequality.

It is clear that the Development Education Programme is really a viable response to the call of Vatican II. What then are the experiences that led me to look deeper into the role of women?

First, although Vatican II agreed upon great reforms, some of which are still in the process of implementation and set the stage for others which are now being fought over, it was apparent that many of the major reforms of Vatican II were hardly desired or intended by those planning it at the centre. The reforms of the Council were neither previously desired outside the centre by majority of the hierarchy, nor by a majority of the priests, not even consciously in most places by the laity. This, I inferred from the attitude that I (together with fellow co-trainers) encountered from time to time held by members of the clergy. Some members of the clergy did see the importance of our work; most of them however, did not hesitate to remind us that we were only lay people after all who did not know theology. Worse still, we were lay women! The clergy could get away with their uncompromising attitude because of the supportive structure⁵ of the church itself. The question that one asks is: How can the

⁵ For a detailed explanation of the supportive structure see Chapter 6.

Catholic Church ask its laity to actively participate in the life of the church and at the same time maintain structures that in themselves make this full participation difficult?

The second and perhaps most important experience that led to a deeper study into the affairs of women was the attitude that Catholic women had about themselves. Our efforts to try and get Catholic women actively involved in the activities of their own church revealed that the women already had a "deep seated" image of themselves that was actually negative. They saw themselves in the main as faithful and obedient daughters of the church, cared for by the bishops and priests, working quietly within the structures of church life. The main duty being to be good mothers passing on the faith to the children. It was almost as if Vatican II; that Council that brought onto us a new awareness of ourselves as the church and called on us to realize the significance of our baptism and equality in Christ, had never happened. It was revealing how easily the women could volunteer to do supportive menial tasks like cleaning the church, laying the altar; it was not as easy to get women representatives to sit on the parish or pastoral councils which are kind of decision-making bodies of the church at the grassroots level. It was equally difficult to get women facilitators for the training programme itself even at the national level. This means that women were shunning the responsibility of formulating and thinking through a training programme for church personnel. How then would their needs and aspirations be catered for?

Suffice it to say that when this subservient and pathetic attitude of catholic women is transferred to the other spheres of life, it can be detrimental. Much as the church and the country cherish faithful and loyal citizens, it is important that the faithfulness and loyalty be accompanied by a clear and intelligent mind that is alert to the affairs of the world.

During the training programme, women revealed a very naive level of analysis of issues that affect the society at large. So this writer was led to ask how the subservient and negative image of women about themselves has come about. Can women then be helped to break out of the culture of silence in which they apparently are submerged?

1.3 Literature Review

Women in different countries have only recently begun to listen to one another and to focus the attention of their leaders and current needs which cut across cultural and national boundaries. The treatment of women as a single analytical category assumes that at least for certain purposes there are sufficiently common features in the experience of women within a single society and across a variety of cultures to warrant subsuming other distinctions of fundamental importance such as social class, developmental level, organizational structure or cultural norms. While we are interested in the role women play in the Roman Catholic Church, it is useful to look at the role that women play in major political and economic institutions of

a country and in the existence of laws and governmental policies which encourage or discourage such participation. This is because, as has already been defined, liberation is an all-embrasive process.

Iglitzin and Ross insist that there is a gap between the public and private spheres, between the stated aspirations for women and their daily lives. Women's lives in the home and family remain largely traditional even as their public and political image undergoes drastic change ... there is a "reality gap" between official government pronouncements and legislation and the traditional behaviour and attitudes of a large portion of the population Countries officially encourage more female participation in the government and accordingly most women today have the franchise and are slowly making inroads into previously all-male legislatures and governmental institutions. Nonetheless, the control of decision making and major policy programs, of labour unions and powerful interest groups, of high-level cabinets and ministries remains a firmly entrenched male monopoly.⁶ It is symbolically important that more women hold public office, but that does not mean that the locus of power has shifted much from its traditionally male base. This information is useful to us due to the fact that the Catholic Church is itself an institution whose power is invested in an all-celibate male hierarchy. What does it really mean for the women when an all-celibate-male hierarchy decides in a Council that women should be more active in the activities of the church?

6 Lynne B. Iglitzin and Ruth Ross ed. Women in the World: A Comparative Study (Oxford: Ohio Books 1976.)

How did this traditional power base for men originate? An abundant literature can be found which tries to explain the origin and development of patriarchy which apparently propounds the idea of male superiority.

Deckard gives a good account of the theories that have been advanced by males to subjugate women. For instance, Freud, regarded women as essentially inferior to men and believed they were pre-occupied with penis envy, a misery which a woman could alleviate only by giving birth to a son. According to Freud, women are innately inferior owing to their anatomy. Women do not develop strong super-egos. In the absence of fear of castration the chief motive is lacking in girls which leads boys to surmount the Oedipus Complex. Girls remain in it for an indeterminate length of time; they demolish it late; and even so incompetently. In these circumstances the formation of the super-ego must suffer; it cannot attain the strength and independence which give it its cultural significance ...

In Freudian theory, therefore, normal femininity is attained when a girl represses her own impulses towards activity and becomes passive. A woman who is not passive is neurotic. Taking their cue from Freud, male psychologists, novelists, social critics have gone on to downplay the nature and role of women.⁷

7 B.S. Deckard, The Women's Movement: Political, socio-economic and psychological issues (New York: Harper and Row, 1975). See especially pp.15 - 17.

Perhaps the earliest and most authoritative biological justifications for male superiority comes from Aristotle in the fifth century B.C. In Politics Aristotle maintained that the world is a hierarchy composed of ruling and ruled elements and that women fit naturally into the second category. Aristotle asserted that women lack both the crucial quality necessary for ruling and the deliberative or rational faculty. So, like children and slaves women can only achieve full goodness and virtue in their lives by union with the "naturally ruling element" which is male. The male is naturally fitter to command than the female and women will benefit most by being subject to male "royal authority". Only thus can they attain the limited degree of virtue of which they are capable.⁸

Aristotle based his views on the biological function of the male and female. In the Generation of Animals, he argues that woman has a passive almost negligible role in reproduction; she provides the "matter" for the child's body, the father provides the "soul". The male principle represents form, motion and activity, while the female is equated with matter and potentiality. The superior principle is male and thus the offspring is deficient in whatever faculty the male principle lacks. As Aristotle put it "we should look upon the female state as being as it were a deformity though one which occurs in the ordinary course of nature."⁹ Though a series of scientific discoveries

8 Aristotle, Politics (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948) Book 1 Chapter 5.

9 Aristotle, The Generation of Animals, in the Basic works of Aristotle ed. Richard McKeon (New York* Random House, 1941) Book 1, Chapter 20.

eventually explained the process of cell division and equivalent role of male and female eggs thus discrediting some of Aristotle's conclusions, his views are still relevant to our study due to the fact that the basis of Catholic theology and philosophy is scholarsticism. Scholarsticism for a large part was rooted in Aristotelian logic. Thomas Aquinas who has been regarded as the patron of Roman Catholic philosophy was himself well schooled in the Aristotelian school of thought. It is very probable that Aristotle's views on women as stated above trickled into the thought that went into forming the basic doctrines of the Roman Catholic faith. It is no wonder then that women in the Catholic church have always been regarded as mere recipients of the theologizing of an all male hierarchy.

Coming back home, the status of women in Kenya is incorporated in a larger conceptual framework which views historical change in essentially evolutionary terms as a transition from traditionalism to modernity. All writers on the subject of women in Africa maintain that historical and cultural forces militate against far-reaching changes in women's lives and serve as a continual challenge to women's groups and liberation movements. Achola Pala and Bookman make the point that in Kenya, like in any other developing society in the non-western world, rapid economic, social and political change provides the background against which women are struggling to find their new

roles.¹⁰ The impact of western values and institutions is often ambivalent and many of our authors suggest that under the old pre-colonial ways women had more power and influence than they do today.

Mbilinyi and Wipper point out that the modernisation has not necessarily brought with it increasing sexual equality. The impact of western economic, political, social values may as well have had negative effects on the status of women.¹¹ Rodney adds that in as far as modernization is equated with capitalism, it may indeed have a regressive effect on the economic, social and psychological autonomy of women, weakening their power and authority in those traditional relationships in which women did have significant influence, while largely excluding them from power in the modern sector.¹²

In this study we are concerned with the Roman Catholic Church as one of the agents of modernization. What effect has it had on the status of women?

10 A.O. Pala, The Changing Economic Positions of Women in Rural Areas: Case Studies from Kisumu District, Kenya. IDS Working Paper No.156, April 1974.

Bookman A.N., The Changing Economic Role of Luo Women: A Historical and Ethnographic Approach (mineo) Harvard University.

11 Mbilinyi, M.J., The 'New Women' and traditional norms in Tanzania, The journal of modern African Studies 10, 1 pp.57 - 72.

12 Walter Rodney, How Europe Underdeveloped Africa, Tanzania Publishing House, 1975.

See also other transitional literature.

Deckard¹³ maintains that religion has had a particularly important role in advancing and perpetrating the myth of male superiority. The tenets of all major religions reflect the attitudes and moral values of the male priests and scribes who enunciated them. Muslim, Jewish and Christian religions share the view that woman was solely responsible for the fall of man and each of these religions continues to view women, the descendants of Eve, as a source of danger. Women, sex and sin are inter-connected in religious teachings.

Patriarchalism is evident throughout the Old Testament, beginning with the moral imperfections and weak virtue attributed to Eve. Women were in the Old Testament, considered unclean and impure, refused entrance into the holy place of the temple and denied participation in religious rites. The emphasis was on female chastity and fruitfulness. Women could best fulfil themselves as dutiful wives and loving mothers.

The early Church Fathers admonished women to be subservient and content with their subordinate station in life. Women had no spiritual authority and were ordered to be subject to their husbands in everything. The major christian writers from the first through the eighth centuries added legitimacy and authority to patriarchal practices of the day as they stressed "the mental and moral frailty of women, dwelt upon the vexation of marriage and reviled the body and sexual desires".¹⁴

13 Dechard, Op. Cit., pg.25.

14 Tertullian, Ante-Nicene Fathers IV as quoted in Katherine H. Rogers, The Troublesome Helpmate Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966), pg.15.

The point being made here is that over the ages the Christian religion has rationalized and legitimised patriarchal practices already well established in economic and social structures and in political systems. Male-dominated institutions and male-oriented values and beliefs have lasted so long and have been so universal that they are rooted in widely accepted socialization patterns which begin early in childhood.

So then, what is the challenge of liberation theology? Our literature review will not be complete until we look at the essential points made by liberation theologians. In their writings, Gutierrez, Buthelezi, Cone, Segundo and others who have written on the topic of the theology of liberation, first give the genesis and meaning of liberation theology. They insist that it is a theology that arises out of people's experiences measured against the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It challenges churches every where to be true to their calling to exercise a prophetic ministry in speaking up for the dumb, the voiceless, for those who are too weak to speak up for themselves; to oppose oppression, injustice and corruption and evil wherever it may be found. Liberation theology developed within a framework of a new political consciousness¹⁵. As Boesak says, people became aware of a new consciousness of themselves, of where they were, of the

15 — Gutierrez G., A theology of Liberation, (London, SCM Press, 1974).

Cone J.H., A Black theology of Liberation, (Lippincot, 1970)

Black Theology Black Power, (Seabury Press, 1969)

God of the Oppressed (London; SPCK, 1977).

Segundo, J.L., Our idea of God (Maryknoll; Orbis Books, 1970)

The Liberation of Theology (Orbis Books, 1975)

political, social and economic dynamics in their situations. When people began to understand their situations they started to ask questions they had never asked before.¹⁶ Liberation theology therefore, appeals to the people for a critical awareness of their poor situation and such awareness is meant to lead to action for improving their lot. Indeed, as Freire puts it, one of the most notable aspects of conscientization - that is, the practical raising of consciousness in the light of experience and reflection - is the realization that life (especially in the developing countries) is characterized by the term 'dependence'.¹⁷

The literature on liberation theology then becomes relevant to our study because it gives meaning to what is happening to Catholic women all over the world. Catholic women are beginning to have a new understanding of themselves. This study intends to investigate the conscientization process that is beginning to take place in the women in the Roman Catholic Church. It is hoped that the woman who adheres to the Roman Catholic faith in Kenya should be able to evaluate her position and performance in the light of the liberating message of Jesus Christ. She should then be able to ask herself whether or not she is developing her person to the full or whether she is deliberately being relegated to a position of dependence due to popular cultural atavisms which are being perpetuated in the name of religion.

16 Allan A. Boesak, Black theology Black Power (Mowbrays 1978).

17 Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, (Seabury Press, 1980).

1.4.0 Theoretical Framework

The study will focus on the effects of culture contact and social change upon the society of Kenya, in particular, upon the women from the time of the implantation of the Roman Catholic Church in Western Kenya up to the present time. In traditional African societies (and west Kenyan societies are no exception) cultural patterns were made up of well-knit value systems and ethical premises. It was these that held the society together. The religious values gave strength to the social web and were powerful mechanisms for allaying any threats to the institutions of the society on which christianity subsequently encroached.

Religious life in pre-colonial Kenya was very closely tied up with the economic, social, political and family life of the Africans acting as one big closely-knit kinship group of the family, clan and the entire tribe. No single individual could escape the necessary obligations of the whole communal group in the exercise of all the functions of these different but related aspects of life. The family played an important role in socialization; it is in the family that one acquired values and skills which were part of the traditional cultural heritage. Women had a share in the division of labour characteristic of an African home. Women were an economic asset.¹⁸

18 A fuller discussion of this idea is found in 2.1.2 and 2.1.3.

Furthermore before European invasion, there were not such marked social strata because then society was for the most part classless (except for the interlacustrine kingdoms). Europeans introduced a marked system of stratification when they came in as conquerors and subjugated the Africans. Being the dominant class, their ideas and values prevailed; the Africans were compelled to internalize the culture of the western christian missionaries which was propagated in the name of religion. In this process of acculturation (which was often unilateral) new values were introduced and many African values were lost. This acquisition of new values created social change in the African society. The new values acquired created new aspirations. It was now necessary to have money, receive western education and have better clothes, houses and other conveniences of everyday life, which would satisfy the needs of the newly acquired western values ... At the same time, during this process of social change, western christian missionaries were preaching universal brotherhood and equality among all peoples everywhere; an idea which was taken from Paul's letter to the Christians in Galatia in which he states that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). This equality was interpreted by Africans to embrace economic, political and social fairness.

In actual fact missionary evangelization and the formation of christian churches in Western Kenya, marked the beginning of a process of disintegration of societies in which religious values had diffused

into every aspect of human life and activity. Whereas conversion to christianity fitted the African convert into the new socio-political culture, missionary christianity was ill-equipped (as a religion) to allay the social problems of the incurably religious Africans.

The Catholic Church as an institution was just one of the institutions of missionary christianity that was ill equipped to allay the social problems particularly of the women adherents.

Why is this?

In the first place, the Catholic Church as an institution is propped up by a structure that is based on the principle of inequality. In the power structure of the Catholic Church, lay women are at the bottom of the pyramid from where they passively participate in the shaping of their lives as decided by the all male hierarchy. Secondly the system of theology that is the foundation of the Catholic Church goes back to St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Augustine and other Patristic writers whose views on women were to say the least, very negative. Thirdly, the Catholic Church places a great emphasis on sacraments. Since it neither has a tradition of ordaining women to the ministry nor a supportive system for full-time non-ordained ministers, most women have been made sacramentally dependent on the ministry of male celibate priests. For quite a while talented women who wanted to serve God were often advised to join a religious order where their domestic roles of working for the priest, waiting on him and cleaning

the church were even more emphasised. Only recently the Catholic Church is asking its laity to take a more active part in the activities of the church, but the laity (especially lay women) have been relegated to the lowest position for so long that the only role they know is that of dependence. It is therefore necessary for Catholic women to liberate themselves from their dependant thinking so that they can fully realize their role.

1.4.1 Research Hypotheses and Objectives

From the foregoing considerations, the present study has taken a conceptual perspective that sees the formation of deep-rooted attitudes and values by men and women about the role of women whether re-inforced by custom or the christian religious tradition that lies at the base of the question of women's liberation even in other areas of life: social, economic and political. For the purpose of analysis, in this study, three hypotheses have been put forward.

First, women in the Catholic Church have been subjugated for so long that they are not even aware of it. They have come to view their position, over the ages, as the normal order of things; they view their position as divinely ordained. Secondly, though there has been a change of policy in the running of the Catholic church in the years following Vatican II, whereby the importance of the laity has been brought to the forefront, in reality a lot more needs to be done in the area of conscientizing the people. It is commendable

that the church is pushing women towards participating more actively in the life of the church. Ironically, most women do not really know their role in the church because they have never been given a chance to explore. Thirdly, the few women that are now aware of their situation get even more frustrated and opt to act not too intelligent because they find themselves in a system, or rather in structures, that are not in themselves liberating.

Finally, it has already been stated that values and beliefs emanating from religion and held by a people do have a big influence on the socio-economic, and political activities of that people. This study is actually proposing that the liberation of women needs to be effected by women themselves. Women need to re-examine their values, beliefs and attitudes and then formulate a plan of action that is beneficial to them and the rest of mankind.

The objectives of this research are two-fold:

1. To find out to what extent the women in the Catholic church have in Kisumu Diocese ~~have~~ been helped to understand their situation and what steps have been taken to enhance their participation in the life of the church.
2. To investigate the dynamics of the relationship between members of the hierarchy and lay women.

In so doing, it is hoped that this study will be a viable contribution to:

1. the conscientization process that has begun to take place in the minds of women in the Roman Catholic Church.
2. the on-going universal struggle for the liberation of women.
3. the study of theology in the modern world.

1.5.0 Methodology

Part of this study, especially the section dealing with the origin, growth and meaning of liberation theology was done in the library as can be seen from the literature reviewed. It is only after enough background material was covered that I went to the field to substantiate the assumptions made.

1.5.1 Sampling

The original idea of this study was to review the position of women in the Roman Catholic Church in Kenya. But the Roman Catholic Church in Kenya is divided into sixteen dioceses which cover the whole country of Kenya. That is obviously too large an area for one to carry out thorough research in one academic year. So I decided to concentrate on the Diocese of Kisumu for two reasons. First, the pioneers of the Development Education Programme were from the Diocese of Kisumu. As the saying goes, charity begins at home. How much conscientizing have these pioneers been able to do among their own women before carrying the message to the rest of the country? Secondly, the Bishop of the Diocese of Kisumu also happens to be the Bishop Chairman of the Department of Development and Social Services. In other words he advises the Kenya Episcopal Conference on the social, economic and cultural issues of development that affect Catholic men and women. This coupled with the fact that he is one of the youngest bishops in the country shows that he is expected to be more knowledgeable about women's issues and therefore more sympathetic to the women's cause.

It is important to note however, that what holds true for Catholic women in one diocese can also be said to hold true for women in other dioceses. This is because, although in theory various dioceses all over the world should be autonomous, in practice and especially in this country, there is a great deal of uniformity in the running of the affairs of the church.

1.5.2 Data Collection

Three methods were used to gather information for this work. As previously stated, the idea of carrying out this study was born about three years ago.¹⁹ During that time when I was running the Women's Programme of DEP, the Christian Development Education Service decided to carry out a major evaluation of the overall Development Education Programme. The information gathered then from the women groups and women group leaders has also been used for this paper. More recently, however, questionnaires to gather material for this study were sent to the Bishop Chairman of the Department of Development and social services, the Bishop chairman of the Department of Lay Apostolate and the Director of the Development Education Programme in the Kenya Catholic Secretariat.

Much information required for the study though came from interviews and conversations that I held with the women - most of whom I trained - and their leaders whom I co-trained with at some time or other. As a trainer, I also had the chance to observe whilst

19 Vide Supra pg.5.

participating in the programmes I was, therefore, able to note the experiences that women went through.

1.5.3 Sample Size

The research was carried out in the Diocese of Kisumu which in itself is divided into two deaneries: Siaya and Kisumu. The women group leaders that I interviewed were a mixture from the two deaneries; but the ordinary members of the women groups interviewed were only from Siaya deanery. So in the course of the research I managed to contact about one hundred and forty informants as shown below.

Category	Sampled Target	Respondents	%
Women Group Leaders	30	17	40
Women Group Members	60	120	200
Priests/Bishops in charge of women activities	7	5	71

21

20 For definition of deanery, see Appendix IV.

21 I was lucky to attend meetings of the Union of Catholic Mothers (UCM) in two parishes. The total number of members at the two meetings was 120. This accounts for the large number of respondents from Women Group Members.

1.5.4 Problems Related to the Study

During the course of my research I encountered quite a few problems. The questionnaires that were sent to the bishops for instance, have not been returned. I only received notes of acknowledgment and assurance from the bishops that I would hear from them. I am still waiting to hear from them. This is a gap in our information because the bishops are the policy-makers of the church in this region. Their silence on this issue points to the fact that we do not actually know the official policy of the Catholic Church in this region as concerns women's issues. The second problem was lack of funds. The funds allocated for research are just not enough to enable one to carry out intensive research.

Finally, there does not seem to be enough well researched literature about women in this part of the world, be it in the social, political or religious sphere. Hence most of the literature on women and liberation is from Latin America, Asia, South Africa or North America.

1.5.5 Data Analysis

The method adopted in analysing the data was generally descriptive backed by inferential statistical and graphic interpretation. I made a synthesis of many ideas in order to justify the hypotheses being tested and also to add relevant interpretations and

applications related to the theme of study. In some cases it was necessary to identify and concentrate on case studies for illustrative purposes.

1.6 Operational Definitions

(a) Liberation

The term "Liberation" as formulated in Latin America was first used in the context of socio-economic development to designate a more embracing approach to development than the one hitherto implied. As more and more christians committed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ got involved in the liberation movement the term acquired religious, or theological overtones. Liberation then, has been seen as an all embracing process which involves creating a critical awareness in the people (of their situation) who then commit themselves to transforming and building up a better society for all. In other words liberation aims at awakening and opening one's own eyes; awakening and opening the eyes of others and together with them to construct a new society and with it the new man and the new woman. Hence liberation is not only the concern of women. Throughout this study that is the meaning of liberation. This study sets out to determine to what extent the Roman Catholic church in this country has enabled its female adherents to create a critical awareness of their own social, political, economic, cultural situations? Consequently, how then,

have those women been enabled to commit themselves to transforming and building up a better society for all Kenyan men, women and children?

(b) Salvation

Christians who are involved in liberation struggles find it very difficult to distinguish between salvation and liberation. The act of God in delivering His people from a life of bondage, that is, the Exodus experience is seen as the model for understanding salvation and liberation. But in the Old Testament there is no separation between socio-political liberation and spiritual salvation. Salvation history is seen to involve liberation in all aspects including the socio-political and the whole Bible is seen as set within a liberation process. The creed of Israel is "Yahweh saves" and so from Noah (in Gen. 6 - 9) up to the Bride of Christ in Heavenly Jerusalem (Rev. 21); God is seen at work in the rescue of men and women.

Like the African, the Hebrew made no distinction between religion and life. God was in his battles, the ultimate source of his daily bread, God was in fact, everywhere. That is how the Hebrew spoke of salvation. A number of words are used in the Old Testament to express salvation, and it will be necessary to examine them with some care if we are to discover what relevance the term has in our context. There is, first of all, hayah a word which used statively (qa'l) means "to be alive" but in the causative sense (pi'el and hiph'l)

means "to preserve", "to keep alive" or "to give full and prosperous life"to someone. Seven times it is used in the formula "God save the King" (cf. 1 Sam. 10:24). There is an emphasis here which is constant throughout scripture. It is God who saves. Whatever salvation may mean and it comprises various shades of meaning, it is basically seen as the proper function of God Himself. The word hayah is also used in a non-religious sense, "to spare the life of" (cf. Josh. 6:25) but basically it means to "preserve alive" or, intransitively, "to live".

The second word Yasha and its cognates (Yeshua, Yesha) has the basic meaning of "bringing into a spacious environment", "being at one's ease, free to develop without hindrance." It is the opposite of the verb frasar, "to be in discomfort, in cramped or distressing circumstances." This word is not only normative for the whole concept of salvation in the Old Testament, it also forms part of several of the best-known names in the Bible such as Isaiah, Hosea, Joshua and supremely Jesus.

In this study therefore, we want to find out whether the Roman Catholic church has enabled women "to be at their ease, free to develop without hindrance". Has the Catholic Church in reality created a "spacious environment" for women in which God would carry out his proper function of "giving (them) a full and prosperous life? "

Or have catholic women in fact been subjected to "discomfort and distressing circumstances" because of and inspite of their being members of the Roman Catholic Church?

c. Theology

Theology can be seen as a combination of philosophy - which is an attempt to discover the meaning of humanity and the universe through observation and the careful use of the mind - and religion which also attempts to interpret the meaning of humanity and the universe through revelation and a belief system based on myths which have developed over the centuries.

Liberation theologians, however, insist that theology must begin from the experience of the people and theology cannot be done apart from the actual struggles to unfold a new society.²² Bishop Desmond Tutu does point out that even in the Bible, theologizing does not happen in a vacuum; much less is it the creation of someone who sits in splendid academic isolation and detachment. Almost always theology in the Bible is in response to the needs of a specific set of circumstances. For instance, when the Jewish community

22 In various ways all feminist theologians also make this claim of Valerie Saiving, "The Human Condition: A Feminine View," in Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion, ed. Carol P. Christ and J. Plaskon (1960). (New York: Harper and Row, 1979) pp.25 - 42. See also R.R. Ruether, Religion and Sexism, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974); Walter Burkhardt ed. Women: New Dimensions (New York: Panlist Press, 1977).

was forgetting the universalism implicit in the divine promise to Abraham (cf. Gen. 12: 1 - 3) because of the zealous but necessary teachings of an Ezra or a Nehemiah or the Rechabites that Israel was a peculiar people, a "Ruth" or a "Jonah" was written to counteract this rigid particularism. When Christian Jews were agitated about whether they should still be circumcised, Paul had to write to the Galatians. So the theology that we find in the Bible is an engaged, an involved theology which is also existential for it is concerned with the existence of a specific particular group of believers.²⁰ The ultimate reference point of all christian theology is the man Jesus who is the word of God.

This study is seen as a contribution to the study of christian liberation theology because it speaks of the experiences of women in the Catholic church measured against the Gospel of Jesus Christ who himself, is the manifestation of the presence of God in our lives.

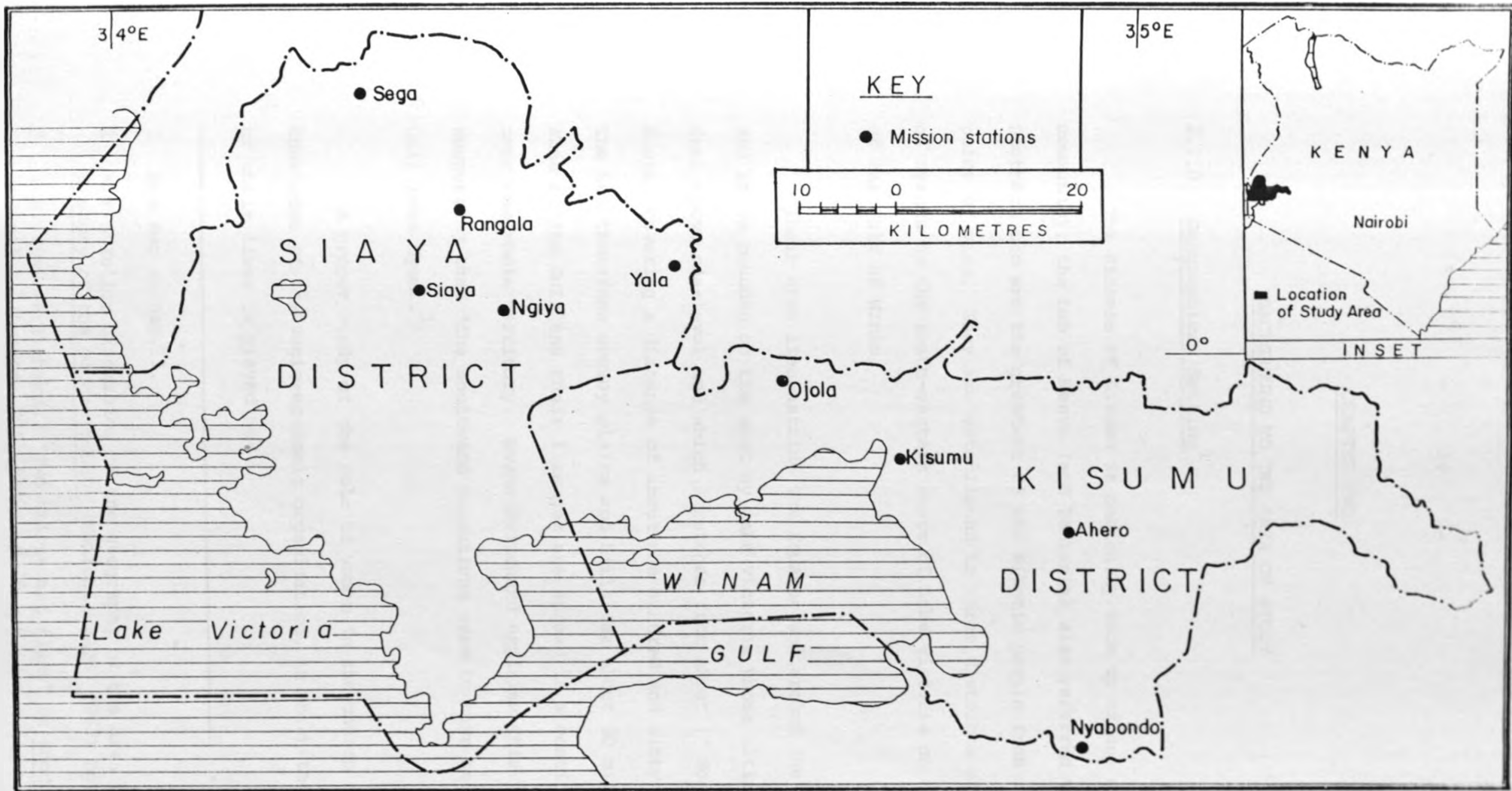
(d) Catholic Women

Throughout this study the term catholic women is used to refer to those female members who profess and practice the christian faith as formulated and expounded by the Roman Catholic Church. Though professing the faith they are not however members of a religious order. In other words, they are lay women, not nuns or sisters.

20 Desmond Tutu, "The Theology of Liberation in Africa" in African Theology en route ed. Kofi Appiah-Kubi and Sergio Torres (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1975) pp.162 - 168.

1.7 Synopsis of the Study

This study falls into four parts. The first part (Chapter 1 and 2) cover the nature and scope of the study. The second part (Chapter 3) deals with the nature of women's oppression not only in religious matters but also in economic and social life. The third part (Chapter 4 and 5) discuss the origins and development of liberation theology and how far it relates to women/ The study concludes with an appraisal of the place and role of women in the Roman Catholic Church in Kenya and gives a few suggestions as to how the church could improve her treatment of women in order for them to find fulfillment as catholic women.



AREA OF STUDY

CHAPTER TWO

BACKGROUND TO THE AREA OF STUDY

2.1.0 Geographical Setting¹

The Diocese of Kisumu is basically made up of one ethnic community; the Luo of Kenya (and Tanzania) also referred to as the Southern Luo are the greatest of the Nilotic people from a numerical point of view. They are established in three districts of the province of Nyanza on the south-eastern shore of Lake Victoria on either side of the Gulf of Winam.

Their area lies astride the Equator and around the Winam Gulf; and it is bounded on the west by Lake Victoria whose altitude is 3726 feet above sea-level and which stretches from about $\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ North to 3° South, covering a distance of about one hundred and sixty miles.² The Luo therefore occupy plains and hills far about 50 miles on either side of the Gulf and their lineages are spread in a continuous fashion over the whole territory. Evans-Pritchard explains this situation by suggesting that "the southward migrations seem to have been across the Gulf from Myoma."³

A proper study of the role of women in the church demands a knowledge of the socio-economic organization, in which the destiny of their lives is played out.

1 See map on pag.33.

2 For a fuller discussion of the geography of the area see Ogot, B.A. History of the Southern Luo, (Nairobi: EAPH, 1967) pp.128 - 134.

3 E.E. Evans-Pritchard, "Two tribes and clans" in Rhodes-Livingstone Journal 7 (London: OUP, 1949), p.25.

2.1.1 Socio-Economic Aspects of Familial Framework

The largest unit to which the individual Luo belongs is "his people". All social relationships are defined in terms of kinship and the bond which unites all Luo is their common ancestor, Ramogi, who directed their migration to the south as far as Kenya although, according to legend, he himself did not reach it. Although the Luo recognize that they have a common origin and belong to a clan and a lineage, their entire life used to be carried out within the framework of the extended family, the basic social unit, and the neighbourhood, the basic geographical unit. The extended family included all the people living at the farm belonging to the head of the family, his wife/wives, sons and their wives and children, sometimes his mother, brothers and unmarried sisters.

The economy of the Luo was based on pastoralism and agriculture until Apamo (i.e. the Rinderpest epidemic) of the early 1890s destroyed the cattle. So the two principal sources of wealth were cattle and after the epidemic which decimated the herds at the end of the last century and forced the Luo to become sedentary, the land. At the turn of the century, the farm constituted an autonomous basic unit at once social and economic. The agricultural system was characterized by a rudimentary wooden-hoe technology, shifting cultivation and the rotation of crops. Farm activities are still essentially directed to the production of food.

2.1.2 The Place of Women

The Luo society is both patrilineal and patrilocal. The women's labour was the critical element in determining the standard of living of the household; marriage thus represented the most significant form of investment for a man. A wealthy man owned vast herds of livestock, stores of food, many wives, servants and children. Women were counted as one of the assets a man would acquire. The period between 1910 and 1922 saw vast changes in the socio-economic life of the Luo of the area under study. There was a need for African labour which ensued an exodus of men from Nyanza. The exodus was precipitated by first, the development of labour intensive plantation agriculture in the White Highlands after 1908; secondly, the construction of roads and railways and thirdly, the need for African soldiers and porters in the first World War.

Apart from the forced labour migrations, there was a spate of voluntary labour migrations beginning in 1912 whereby young men left to look for jobs. Added to the migration was the world depression especially of the early 1930s and the devastations caused by locusts and prolonged by famine of 1931 - 32. Yet more labour migration occurred at the beginning of gold mining in 1934 and also during the war time conscription in World War II.

The long term absence of men had an impact on the sexual division of labour with women and children assuming a greater share of the agricultural work than ever before. The 1930s represent a transition period with regard to the sexual division of labour and it was clearly the women who bore the burden of the transition in the rural areas. They met the problem by adopting labour saving innovations in agriculture and re-investing the labour saved in other economic activities, primarily trade. The changes however did not bring about the sudden and dramatic rise of a group of women "peasant capitalists" in western Kenya. On the contrary the women were forced to innovate in order to cope with a steadily worsening economic situation. Most of them ultimately managed to maintain - although not necessarily to improve - their standard of living.

Important changes also occurred in the social conceptions of agriculture and of its relation to economic security. Cultivating the land no longer seemed a viable means of acquiring wealth, which it had been in the past when men and women together had worked to produce large grain surpluses that would be converted into additional wives, cattle and prestige. One probable element in this new equation was the intensification of rural poverty, which undermined feelings of egalitarianism and communal responsibility. By 1945 a large number of people had come to feel that real economic security lay in formal education and long-term wage employment outside the home. The absence of adult men is even more striking today than it was in 1945 and women continue to cope with the problems referred to. Most women make even greater sacrifices than before to ensure their children's

education, skimping on their own food and clothing in order to invest their savings in school fees.

From the above discussion it can be deduced that the first objective for a Luo woman was marriage because it gave her adult status and the possibility of enhancing her status as a wife and mother. She had a right to the protection of the men of her own lineage until her marriage, after which she came under the guardianship of the men of her husband's lineage. A Luo woman was an economic asset to the husband but that did not mean that she was unimportant. In agricultural matters, for instance, top authority belonged to the first wife of the head of the family. After her husband, she had precedence over all other residents on the farm both men and women. She had to give the signal for work in the fields and no one could work, sow, harvest or make the first beer without her consent. Each woman had her own holding but mutual help was normal and usual between wives of the same husband whenever tasks called for collective effort or in the case of illness-or child birth.

As long as a woman did not give a son to the world, however, her loyalty to her husband's lineage as well as her worth as a wife was open to question. Even after becoming a mother, she sometimes found it difficult to obtain land and especially cattle to support her husband and children, for her mother-in-law and the other women on the farm were her competitors. As Perrin-Jassy has observed, the Luo women lived in a climate of constant struggle and every check to her functioning

as wife or mother could aggravate her situation. If the tension became insupportable she expressed herself by having attacks of spirit possession, by making accusations of sorceries and even by fighting. As a last resort a young woman could leave her husband and go home to her parents, but then the dowry had to be returned. This was usually impossible as the dowry had been used to obtain marriages for the other men of the lineage.⁴

So far we have been discussing the socio-economic aspects of the life of Luo women. This socio-economic life however, was lived within a framework of religious beliefs and values. What then are the religious beliefs and values that governed the system and how did they affect particularly the women?

2.1.3 Religion and Beliefs

The religious life of the Luo was so fused with daily life that it gave meaning to the humblest gesture; it seemed to those who first observed it to be entirely wanting in philosophic depth and spiritual elevation. As a matter of fact, religion was the armour of the social order, the instrument for controlling natural phenomenon, the means of explaining the mysteries of life and death. Beliefs did not constitute a structured and logical whole, however, for the need for a coherent global explanation of the world had not made itself felt.

The organization and functioning of traditional society were inseparable from a vision of the world and religion. These rested upon two fundamental ideas: first, a cyclic conception of evaluation

4 Perrin-Jassy M., Basic Community in the African Churches, (Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1973) Ch.2.

which permitted each generation to attain fulness of being through the ideal development of the family according to the model already described and through an abundance of traditional consumer goods. The second fundamental idea was a simultaneous perception of a fundamental harmonious world order together with a disorder forever endangering the expected normal unfolding of existence. The principle of order manifested itself in all regular cycles such as the alternation of day and night and the return of the seasons and was associated with the idea of an all-powerful creator God, Nyasaye. Nyasaye is considered as the origin of life which he continues to dispense through the sun and the rain. He is the reason for the universal order. He dispenses life, health and wealth to those who are obedient to custom.

Beliefs and practices then relating to the super-natural world used to play a considerable role in Luo society. They served to explain the mysteries of the universe and the laws which govern its functioning; they laid down the norms for the relations between a man and the world and between a man and his fellow men. Generally, what sustained life was considered good and what caused a break in the harmony and continuity of the vital cycle of life was seen to be evil. Adherence of the Luo to beliefs was a means of establishing interdependence among the members of the society and each did depend on the others for security.

To a communion of blood was added a communion of spirits which re-inforced the bonds of kinship and its duties and gave to daily life a spiritual dimension. Believing and living were one. Connections between the world of human beings and the world of spirits

were permanent and every action undertaken in one had inevitable repercussions in the other. This interdependence was the very foundation of society and the absence of regular rituals in a group's relations with God and the higher powers far from indicating indifference in religious matters, attested to the intimacy and permanence of its connections with the spiritual world.

What then was the place and role of women in this system where the organization and functioning of society were inseparable from a vision of the world and of religion?

Throughout Africa women have played a prominent role in spirit-possession cults and ceremonies. In the interlacustrine region-part of which is the area we are studying - of East Africa, the participation of women in other spheres of pre-colonial religious activity was severely limited. Why would spirit-possession cults be popular with women and not the mainstream religious activities? After paying considerable attention to this problem Lewis (1971) observed that the spirit-possession cults provided an anti-male outlet to women. The cults also offered large numbers of women initiates an unusual degree of authority in ritual situations and provided smaller numbers with long-term positions of high status.⁵ He suggests that spirit mediumship cults offered women

5 See Lewis I.M., Ecstatic Religion: An anthropological Study of Spirit Possession and Shamanism (Harmondsworth: 1971).

the greatest avenues for active participation in religious life. It is necessary here to distinguish between spirit possession and spirit mediumship. The former is a form of trance in which behaviour and actions of a person are interpreted as evidence of a control of his behaviour by a spirit normally external to him. Spirit mediumship on the other hand refers to a form of possession in which the person is conceived as serving as an intermediary between spirits and the living. Such possession is interpreted favourably as a sign that a god has chosen a person to be inhabited by him periodically for the good of the community. Spirit mediumship implies communication between the supernatural world and a particular social group for which the medium is an agent.

In studying the Alur who are closely related to the Luo, Southall also noted that possession cults offer women release

"from the frustrations of ordinary life ... married women usually have to live away from their own kin among people who are relative strangers. Their status is inferior, their work monotonous and their diversions few. If in addition they fail to produce healthy children in a society still subject to very high infant mortality rates, they fail in the chief matter which can compensate for their general disabilities and their prospects are correspondingly dim..."⁶

6 Southall Aidan, Spirit Possession and Mediumship Among the Alur in Beattie and Middleton eds. 1969) pp.244 - 45.

See also Frith Raymond, Problem and Assumption in an Anthropological Study of Religion in Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute 89 No.2.

It is not surprising really that the majority of the members of possession cults are women since the cults' primary concerns are usually a number of female problems like sterility, childbirth and marital difficulties.

According to Southall, the cults are actually a form of protest against the dominant sex, offering women both protection from male exactions and serving as an effective vehicle for manipulating husbands and other male relatives, since they play no direct part in upholding the moral codes of the societies in which they appear and they are often believed to have originated elsewhere. This feminist subculture is generally restricted to women and protected from male attack through their representation of being a therapy for illness. It stems from threatening or oppressive conditions (physical or social) that people can combat and control only by 'heroic flights of ecstasy'. In other words cults are an attempt to master an intolerable environment.

The foregoing discussion gives us a glimpse of how the Luo society was organised before imperialist invasion. Kenya, before the invasion of imperialism had various types of socio-economic systems, most of which - like the Luo - were patriarchal. In these patriarchal systems women had defined roles to play and a clear social position.

In the Luo society, like in all pre-capitalist societies, women were in a subordinate position. This is evidenced by remnants of these societies such as the unequal polygamous marriage and the patrilineal system of inheritance of property ... Even in the religious sphere,

women did not really have much of a say except in the feminist sub-culture of cults as has already been stated.

The colonial government saw no reason to change significantly the position of women in Kenyan society. The position of women remained the same at the height of colonialism: that is, subordinate. This was particularly beneficial for the development of a capitalist economy in the sense that while men were forced into leaving rural homes to work on colonial farms, offices and homes the majority of the women remained in the rural home to rear children and to work on small holdings of land to supply the towns with food.

In western Kenya another modernising agent was the church. While the colonial government as an agent of change was not interested as such in uplifting the position of women - what about the Church? Did the women who became members of the Catholic Church find themselves in any better position than the one offered by their society? To answer this question one needs to look at the organization of the Catholic Church. Is the Catholic Church organized in such way as to allow women to find fulfillment in themselves? Before we look at the organization of the Catholic Church a short summary of the introduction of the church to the Luo may be appropriate.

The Congregation for Evangelization or as it is commonly known by its Latin name de Propaganda Fide was created by Pope Gregory XV in 1622. It was an instrument in the hands of the Pope, for furthering the interior reform programme of the church in European

countries that had fallen to Protestantism, and for regaining lost areas whenever possible. In addition, it was responsible for the spread of the Catholic faith in America, Asia and Africa.

For the evangelization of Eastern Africa to be effective, de Propaganda Fide created a vicariate of the Upper Nile. This vicariate was vaguely defined as eastwards of Kampala to a line running from Lake Turkana to Mt. Kilimanjaro. It embraced the whole of Western Kenya⁷ and was given to the Mill Hill Missionaries for evangelization. By 1902, the Mill Hill Fathers were already prospecting for a site in Western Kenya, which had just been transferred from the Uganda Protectorate to British East Africa. However, it was not until 1903 that they founded a mission station at Kisumu, mainly to cater for Goans and Baganda christians who were already working in the town. In 1904 they opened work at Elureko near Mumias. The Mumias mission did not take off well as Mumia's family was decidedly Muslim. During 1905 they concentrated on the Kisumu Mission while prospecting for better sites in the surrounding areas. In 1906, they moved to Ojola from where they carried out expeditions to neighbouring areas.⁸

2.2 Organization of the Catholic Church

To understand the complexities of Vatican administration and that of the Catholic Church, one must be prepared for unfamiliar terms.

7 From 1894 to 1902 the whole of Western Kenya was part of the Protectorate of Uganda governed from the British Foreign Office.

8 For a fuller discussion of the spatial organization of the church see 2.3.

One has to make a leap of imagination and enter another world which turns on its own axis. The length of tradition makes the picture extremely confusing as some elements in the administration of the Catholic church date back to the age of the catacombs. Moreover the Vatican system is not streamlined or co-ordinated with rigorous logic. There are Offices, Tribunals and Congregations which were once important and have ceased to be so with ages. No organization is more inclined by experience to 'let sleeping dogs lie' than the Vatican. Below is a chart: an attempt to summarize something which cannot easily be made into a schema.

THE POPE



Bishop of Rome.
Vicar of Jesus
Christ. Successor of
the Prince of the
Apostles. Patriarch
of the West.

Primate of Italy
Archbishop and
Metropolitan of
the Province of
Rome.

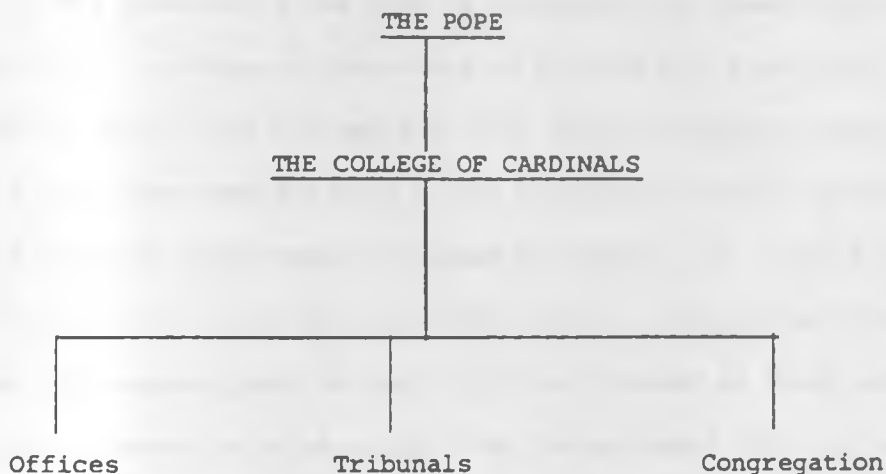
Sovereign of the
Vatican City State

Archbishops and
Bishops of the
Holy Roman Church
throughout the world

Italian Archbishops
and Bishops
Bishops and Clergy
of the Province of
Rome.

The Administration
of the Vatican City
and its Personnel.

The Vatican Court.



Apostolic Chancellery	Apostolic Penetentiary	Holy Office
Apostolic Camera	The Holy Roman	Consistorial Congregation
Dataria	Rota	of the Sacraments
Secretariate of State	The Segnatura	C. of the Council
(Secretariate of		C. of Religion
Briefs to Princes		C. of Propaganda Fide
and of Latin		C. of Rites
Letters)		C. of Ceremonial
		C. of the Eastern
		Church
		C. of Seminaries and
		Universities
		Extraordinary
		Ecclesiastical
		Business
		C. of the Fabbrica of
		St. Peter's.

Note: Letter C. in Column 3 stands for Congregation.

The position of the Pope is guaranteed for Roman Catholics by the text ".... Thou art Peter and it is upon this rock that I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; and I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven ..." (Mt. 16:18 - 19) Catholics believe that by these words, Christ intended to confer upon Peter the supreme power in the church he intended to found and since that church was meant to be permanent they do not doubt that the power so conferred was to be handed on by Peter to his successors. The terms 'bind' and 'loose' are taken from the prevailing terminology of the Jewish Rabbinical schools and connote legislative and judicial authority. The authority is of course limited to the spiritual sphere, being concerned with the kingdom of heaven.

In all that concerns the affairs of the church including such material possessions as may be needful for her spiritual activity, the ultimate authority is the Pope. The departments in which the jurisdiction of the Pope is exercised are indeed manifold. He is in the first place the supreme teacher of the church charged with the mission of defining or precisising the content of the Catholic faith in virtue of his prerogative of 'infallibility'. In addition to his positive pronouncements which are rare enough, there are a number of ancillary activities which the Pope carries out through appropriate Roman departments, such as the condemnation of erroneous views put forward by teachers and writers, the establishment of universities,

the prescription of suitable courses of study, books and other means to the propagation of truth.

Closely associated with his office of teacher is his power in the sphere of worship. The liturgical services of the church, the use of non-liturgical 'devotions', the canonisation of saints, the establishment of new festivals: these are some of the many ways in which he controls the activities of catholics in their public approach to God.

So the governing body of the Roman Catholic Church bearing the name of the Catholic Hierarchy is headed by the Sovereign Pontiff, the Bishop of Rome. He is assisted in the ordinary administration of the affairs of the Church by the sacred College of Cardinals and the Roman Curia. The local rulers of the different regional sub-divisions are Patriarchs, Archbishops and Bishops. In addition to these are the Apostolic delegates, Vicars, Prefects together with other prelates.

Without going into the history of the Ministerial Departments of the Catholic Church, it would be useful to examine briefly their purpose and function for each has a set task to perform and deals with specific matters which, very often, affect millions of catholics all over the world.

The Catholic Church is a tremendous organization with world-wide ramifications and so it needs some form of central machinery, independent of its nature or immediate and final purpose, to enable

it to centralize and co-ordinate its multi-farious activities. This central machinery is housed almost entirely in the precincts of the Vatican and its various components form the Government of the Catholic Church. The executive of the Catholic Church is roughly speaking divided into three: the Secretary of State, the College of Cardinals and the Congregations.

The Secretary of State is in a manner of speaking the political head of the Vatican. He would correspond in a modern civil government to a combination of the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister. The next in importance to the Secretariat of State in the diplomatic-political sphere but before it in the purely religious field is the College of Cardinals. The primary function of the members of the Sacred College of Cardinals is to act as a type of Privy Council to the Pope. The activities of the Catholic church are many and invade numerous spheres. It has been necessary, therefore, as with any other great administration to separate them into individual yet co-ordinated departments which the Vatican calls congregations. Hence the word "Congregation" in this sense must not be confused with its ordinary meaning of members of a church. In this case the Congregations are the equivalent of the Ministries of an ordinary civil government. They are the central and administrative power of the Catholic Church and in certain respects do not differ a great deal from the machinery of a modern state, with its various administrative branches of the government. In the same way as any Ministry in a Civil Government is headed by a Minister each Roman Congregation has as its head, a prefect who is usually a cardinal appointed by the Pope, or in some cases the Pope himself acts as prefect.

The Central Government of the Catholic Church is divided into three main groups, each closely related to the others and under one direction. They are the Sacred Congregation, the Tribunals and the Offices.

What have all these got to do with our study?

The activities which keep the Catholic Church in order, which erect walls against any spirit other than its own, which spread far and wide its own aim of converting to its faith the whole human race, are directed by one congregation which has its headquarters in the Vatican. It is the oldest, most powerful and most colossal Ministry of Information or Propaganda Bureau in existence. This Congregation is called Propaganda Fide and besides being one of the most important congregations of the Catholic Church, it is also an important department of the Vatican State which uses it to keep in touch with the most remote parts of the world. This congregation which is ruled by a cardinal has divided the world into numerous "spiritual provinces" in which it directs its activities. It has jurisdiction over hundreds of them organized into districts, prefectures, vicariates, dioceses. The Diocese of Kisumu which is our area of research is just one of these "spiritual provinces" that are directed by Propaganda Fide.

Furthermore, the Second Vatican Council insisted on the necessity of bishops working together when formulating official policy for the church in their regions. In the language of Vatican II, this

was referred to as the spirit of collegiality. Various episcopal conferences were created to enhance this spirit of collegiality. Episcopal conferences are in essence gatherings of the bishops of a large region held periodically to discuss matters of common interest connected with their apostolic mission. The goal of episcopal conferences is to discuss the problems that the church in their region is faced with at a particular time, and then formulate the Catholic viewpoint. Through a collective statement, they hope to offer uniform guidance to Catholics and enlightenment to non-Catholics.

Our present area of study, that is, the Diocese of Kisumu, is a member of the Kenya Episcopal Conference which has a Secretariat in Nairobi. The Kenya Episcopal Conference is in turn a member of the Association of Episcopal Conferences of Eastern-Central Africa (AMECEA) which comprises of the national Episcopal Conferences of Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia and the Sudan. Finally, AMECEA is a member of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Malagasy, more commonly known by its abbreviation SECAM.

2.3 Numerical Growth of Catholic Women

It was not very easy to get statistics of the number of women baptized in various mission stations because the missionaries did not keep a record of the number of people baptized in terms of their sex. They were interested, instead in whether the person baptized was an adult or an infant. It was suggested to me however, that the number of females baptized would be obtained by multiplying the actual number

of baptisms by two-thirds. For purposes of analysis, this section will be divided into three periods; numerical growth is looked at in relation to the spatial expansion.

The Pioneering Period: 1903 - 1925

The first mission station was opened at Ojola in 1906. By 1912 five stations, namely, Kisumu, Mumias, Ojola, Mukumu and Nyabururu had been established and had a wavering catholic population of three hundred and ninety. The work which was started at Ojola was later dispersed, giving rise to the opening of Asumbi and Aluor in 1913, and Eregi the following year. Thereafter, the opening of mission stations was suspended for a while until Rang'ala was opened in 1920. During this period (1913 - 1924) the number of christians increased from four hundred and twenty to over eight thousand seven hundred, giving an average of about eight hundred conversions per year.

During this early period, the first people to be baptised were men. Women were not involved because there was a belief that women would not keep the sacrament. The men who were baptised, however, were encouraged to invite the girls they intended to marry to the mission to be taught dini. This move led to the first baptism of women. After baptism, the men were usually sent to different parts of the mission field to work as catechists for a period of about one year. The women, on the other hand, were required to remain at the mission station during preparation for baptism. Afterwards, they did voluntary work at the mission station for about six months.

TABLE 2.1

THE GROWTH OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN WESTERN KENYA, 1910 - 1925

MISSION	1910-11	1912-13	1914-15	1916	1917	1918	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925
Kisumu (1903)	220	140	270	300	430	400	NR	450	665	720	1312	NR	1700
Ojola (1906)	50	70	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Aluor (1913)	-	-	205	300	450	1100	NR	1200	1340	1490	1600	NR	1077
Rang'ala (1920)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	504	613	1200	NR	2999
Mumias (1904)	-	32	67	98	155	260	NR	632	1101	984	1599	NR	3335
Mukumu (1906)	120	166	226	420	670	1010	NR	1200	1280	1623	1756	NR	?
Eregi (1914)	-	-	-	30	47	120	NR	185	258	367	382	NR	450
Nyabururu (1911)	-	19	42	19	1	-	NR	185	147	212	382	NR	737
Asumbi (1913)	-	-	22	57	115	246	NR	301	388	480	543	NR	980

BAPTISED CHRISTIANS

SOURCE: Spiritual Returns, Mill Hill Archives, London 1910 - 1925

NR = No Returns

Although, we have stated that the first people to be baptized were men, their numerical growth was surpassed by that of women. How is this? The reason for this was the baptism of women from polygamous homes. The rule was that such women should not be baptized, but in a number of cases, especially at Rang'ala Mission, catechists prepared such women for baptism. During baptism, they used the names of their brothers or cousins-in-law claiming them to be their husbands. In certain cases, different names of the husbands were used by different wives. This loophole could not easily be checked by the missionaries who were only a handful against hundreds of catechists.

Consolidation, 1925 - 1931

This was the period of the Apostolic Prefecture of Kavirondo (1925 - 1931), a period of seven years, which saw the separation of the Kenya mission from that of Uganda. This separation led to the creation of the Apostolic prefecture of Kavirondo under Mgr. Brandsma; it was a period of consolidation and growth to maturity and saw the founding of Kibuye Mission (1926), Nangina Mission (1927), Yala (1929), Eldoret, (1929) and Kibabii (1931). During this period the two missions of Asumbi and Nyabururu had record growth. Nyabururu grew from about seven hundred christians in 1925 to over two thousand christians in 1932. Asumbi had nine hundred and eighty christians in 1925, and over three thousand six hundred christians in 1932. (See Table on the next page).

TABLE 2.11

THE GROWTH OF THE CHURCH IN THE PREFECTURE APOSTOLIC OF KAVIRONDO

DIOCESE AS AT 1978	MISSION	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932
KAKAMEGA	Mimias	3335	3651	4358	5072	5666	-	3686	3336
	Mukumu	?	2200	2727	3107	3553	-	5433	2685
	Eregi	450	1029	?	?	?	-	?	1097
	Nangina	-	-	-	2000	2500	-	3649	5102
	Kibabi	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2022
KISUMU	Kisumu	1700	900	1640	1719	1720	-	193	268
	Kibuye	-	-	1900	2225	2352	-	2514	2870
	Rang'ala	2999	4422	4206	3900	4703	-	7056	7776
	Aluor	1077	1154	1955	1510	1330	-	2357	2145
	Yala	-	-	-	-	56	-	-	607
KISII	Nyabururu	737	-	960	1279	1488	-	1918	2154
	Asumbi	980	889	1168	1874	1958	-	3316	3623

BAPTISED CHRISTIANS

SOURCE: Spiritual Returns, Mill Hill Archives, London

Further Expansion: 1932 +

These years cover the vicariate Apostolic of Kisumu (1932 - 1952) and later on the area was divided into three dioceses. The number of head mission stations rose, during this period. Consequently the demographic element must be seen in the light of the number of christians at the missions which had to be split. By 1932, Asumbi Mission had three thousand, six hundred and twenty three Christians scattered all over South Nyanza. This led to the opening of Nyabondo Mission in 1934. Rang'ala Mission had also overgrown and had seven thousand, seven hundred and seventy six christians. The split saw the opening of Sega Mission in 1934 and the opening of Mbagha three years later. Nangina by 1932 had a staggering christian population of five thousand, one hundred and two. A new station at Port Victoria was opened further south to ease communication and ensure Church nurture.

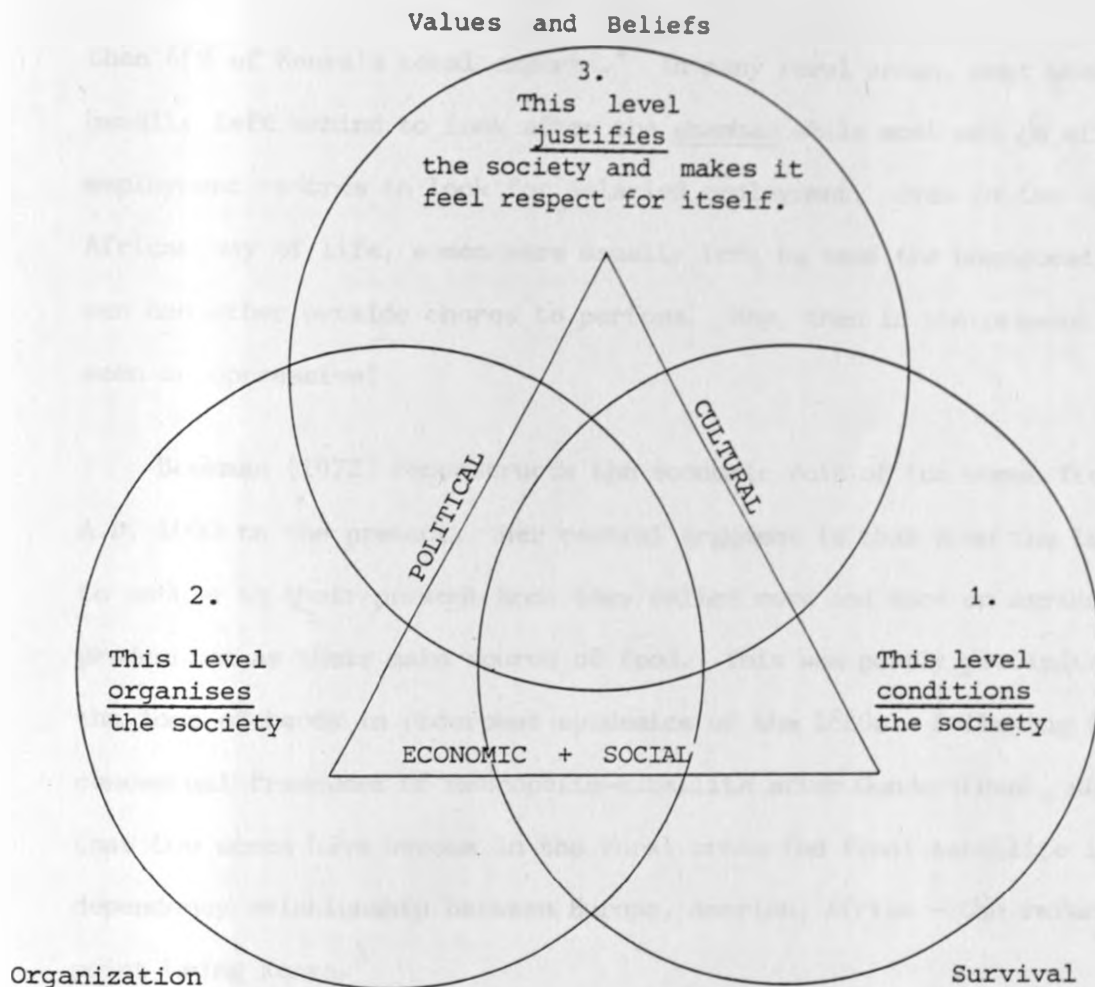
The steady growth of Asumbi and Mimias led to their split and the opening of Rapogi and Butula respectively. More and more mission stations were opened as the number of people joining the Church grew; in 1953 the Church of Kenya became of age and was given her own hierarchy. Three years later the Vicariate Apostolic of Kisumu was divided into two: the diocese of Kisii (which comprised of what is today South Nyanza and Kisii Districts) and the diocese of Kisumu comprising of the rest of Nyanza and Western Provinces. Later, in 1978, the diocese of Kisumu was divided further into the diocese of Kakamega which covers what is now Western Province, and the diocese of Kisumu, comprising of Siaya and Kisumu Districts.

In discussing the numerical growth of catholic women, we have had to go back in history to the planting and growth of the Catholic church in Western Kenya. In order to get a true and clear picture of the numerical growth, it was also necessary to study the spatial organization of a wider area than just the diocese of Kisumu which was created in 1978. From the foregoing discussion, it is clear that the number of people joining the Catholic church has continued to grow steadily. This means that the number of catholic women has definitely risen from what it was at the turn of the century. The question we are asking ourselves is, in what ways has the Catholic church helped to uplift the standard of the numerous women who have become her members? Before, we answer that question, it is necessary at this juncture to try and situate the oppression of women.

CHAPTER THREESITUATING THE OPPRESSION OF WOMEN3.1 The Particularity of Women's Oppression

Although the forces of oppression maintain themselves through an inte-relationship of classism, racism, and sexism there are particular ways in which they affect women: and these ways must be viewed in the context of the socio-political totality in which we live. This socio-political totality is a highly complex structure which is maintained at three integrated levels. At the base is the economic-social level, the foundation of society which deals with production and reproduction, this level determines the other two. (See Fig. 3.I.)

FIGURE 3:1



What follows is an explanation of Fig. 3.I. in relation to the oppression of women. The role of women like that of men in any society is dependent upon how they fit into the production process. Social values and attitudes arise out of the social structure which is based on that process. The structure of world economy is detrimental to developing countries:¹ how much more oppressive is it to women since they are the backbone of the economy, as it were? Here in Kenya agriculture accounts for about 40% of the Gross Domestic Product and forms more

1 Vide Supra, pp.16 - 17.

than 60% of Kenya's total exports.² In many rural areas, most women are usually left behind to look after the shambas while most men go off to employment centres to look for salaried employment. Even in the traditional African way of life, women were usually left to tend the homestead while men had other outside chores to perform. Why, then is the present trend seen as oppressive?

Bookman (1972) reconstructs the economic role of Luo women from about A.D. 1000 to the present. Her central argument is that when the Luo began to settle in their present home they relied more and more on agricultural production as their main source of food. This was partly precipitated by the loss of herds in rinderpest epidemics of the 1880s. Following the conceptual framework of metropolis-satellite after Gunder-Frank, she argues that Luo women have become in the rural areas the final satellite in the dependency relationship between Europe, America, Africa - the reference point being Kenya.³

2. Republic of Kenya, "Report of the Agricultural Education Committee" Chairman Wein (Nairobi, Government Printer, 1967).

1969 census showed that women constituted 51% of the total adult population in Nyanza.

3 Bookman, A.N., The Changing Economic Role of Luo Women: A History and Ethnographic Approach (mimeo) Harvard University.

To understand the oppressive element, however, it is important to study what earlier scholars had found, in their research. For instance, in 1928 Bammann⁴ conducted an extensive review of the division of labour in what he calls the Hoe Culture.⁵ In this culture womens' work is performed all the year round while men's work of clearing bush is largely restricted to a short period of the agricultural year. Also women grow the oldest root crops, kitchen vegetables, spices, new crops; this suggests that in the hoe culture areas, women are both the more innovative and knowledgeable with regard to crop production. Hence women have been primary decision makers where crop production was involved.⁶ Colonial consolidation of economic priorities of the new order precipitated a rapid entry and integration of men into the colonial economy and in turn led to their acquisition of certain skills such as the use of a plough and oriented them to that market.⁷

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- 4 G. Bammann, Sociology of Black Africa, (Praegan Publishers, 1970) This discussion is also found in A.P. Pala, The Changing Economic Position of Women in Rural Areas: Case Studies from Kisumu District, Kenya. IDS Working Paper No.156, April, 1974.
- 5 By the Hoe Culture, he means the farming system whereby the hoe is used as a major farm implement.
- 6 This is inferred from statements that indicate that a man does not have a right to despose of crops as he pleases but to seek his wife's consent.
- 7 It is true that access to cash through employment would be of great benefit to men and women; it is also clear that channels of that access are rigidly controlled by unequal access to training facilities which was the main feature of the colonial period in Africa and continues today.

Consequently the sector in which most women possess skill and decision making power was neglected and thus stagnated. Thus women continue to use backward techniques of cultivation which become less and less productive with increasing population pressure on land and as commercial agriculture competes with production directed exclusively toward consumption by the family.

In discussing the negative character of the social, political and economic consequences of colonialism, Walter Rodney⁸ has tied up the deterioration of social conditions and bargaining power of African women to stagnation in the development of African societies caused by colonial exploitation. The sum total of such a sequence of events as has taken place on the continent of Africa since the invasion of the continent by Europeans has brought African women into a state of greater dependency on their men folk particularly because (1) their training has lagged behind that of men therefore their access to cash is severely restricted; (2) the new bureaucratic structures set up by the colonial administrators deprived women of a large part of their bargaining power which had hitherto accrued to them through norms of obligation and expectation in the pre-colonial social systems; (3) in situations where agriculture is highly commercialised there is competition between crops grown exclusively for sale and those

8 Walter Rodney, How Europe Underdeveloped Africa, Bogle L'Onverture/Tanzania Publishing House, 1975.

grown largely for home consumption which has in many African societies been women's responsibility. The effect of this development is to marginalize women in the rural areas making them the final satellite in the countryside in relation to local satellites of European metropolises. In other words colonialism distorted the position of women in society by re-inforcing the exploitative tendencies of pre-existing social forms while at the same time setting up bureacracies in which womens' entry was effectively barred by lack of training and anti-feminist attitudes that the colonialists had acquired in capitalist society.

At the second level of the socio-political totality is the political-juridical organization. Herein lies the power to systematize and legitimize the distribution of resources through means such as laws pertaining to property relations, marriage and taxes. Obedience to the law depends on the people's knowledge and the functional benefits of it. The average Kenyan woman is generally ignorant even of the civil and political rights which present legislation in Kenya grants her. Given her limited education (or lack of it) she directs herself more by custom and by the Christian morality she has been taught than by her own knowledge of her rights. In some cases women may have some knowledge of the law but they lack the means to seek legal assistance for the protection of their rights.

As Gutto has noted, law and social practice are dialectically related and hence a discriminative legal status based on sex plays a significant role in shaping the socio-economic behaviour in role allocation by sex in society.⁹ The legislation operative in Kenya today has its origins in Britain. Reforms have been made but their effects in real life are still to be seen. It has generally been said that the Government of Kenya does not discriminate against anybody and women and men are offered equal opportunities for advancement. Gutto however, shows that women in Kenya are in law and practice less privileged in the vital areas of decision-making than men. Perhaps this explains their subservient role in society?

Gutto further states that Personal Laws like Religious Laws are specifically exempted under S.82 (4) (6) - of the Constitution - from being challenged in court whenever they incorporate any form of discriminative laws. This protection is extended to customary laws. Under these conditions then existing or newly established tribal, religious or common laws and practices that discriminate against women qua women are legally valid in Kenya. He cites, inter alia, the contractual legal capacity to show how the constitution as the Supreme Law of the nation legalizes laws that provide for unequal treatment of the sexes.

9 See Gutto S.B.O., The Status of Women in Kenya: A Study of paternalism, inequality and under-privilege, IDS, Discussion Paper No.235, April 1976.

The laws governing contractual legal capacity arose from pre-industrial English society where women were regarded as chattels and had no proprietary capacity and were incorporated into English Common Law. These laws were later received and adopted in Kenyan Law.¹⁰ Many women in Kenya have broken out of their ascribed subordinate socio-economic roles and are well equipped to and in fact do provide for their families.¹¹ Admittedly a large majority of women still lag behind a large majority of men in proprietary control but it can be argued that the law ought not to reflect the prejudice that all women are inferior to all men. Such laws only help to create societal opinion that all women are by virtue of their sex incapable of utilising a full and independent contractual capacity. This may lead to policy formulations that give women under-privileged roles in society and hence are a source of inequality.¹²

That brings us to the third level of the socio-political totality: a level which helps people in power to maintain and perpetuate the dominant values and norms of society, that is, the ideological-cultural level. Here the assumption that society, as it is, is good for people

10 By virtue of a series of Orders - in - Council, copied and enacted by our own independent parliament under the Judicature Act (No.16 of 1967), Section 3 (c).

11 Recent studies show that out of a total of 1.7 million households in Kenya, 29% were under direct female headship. See UNDP.ILO Report on Employment, Incomes and Equity, pg.37, in which a rural population analysis is given.

12 Refer to, for instance, the Affiliation Act which was rejected by our male dominated parliament. This shows that in the minds of the law makers, prostitution is seen as a moral offence committed by women only. Secondly women are portrayed as malicious, immoral, conniving blackmailers, irresponsible that begs the question: what then are women good for?

is legitimized through religious, ethical and philosophical forms. It is in the home that woman is formed and structured in her specific role as wife and mother. The woman who does not have to realize herself in the 'consecrated life'¹³ does not have any other choice but to try to realize herself in marriage as wife and mother. After all, custom and the whole process of socialization dictates that a woman is only fulfilled when she has a man to look after her in marriage. It is the family and the social communications media which are charged with bombarding women with the message of the sublimation of women. Admittedly the roles that a woman plays as a mother, wife and primary educator of children are commendable but society ought not to reflect the prejudice that a woman can only be fulfilled as a human person if she captures a successful man to look after, and tend his offspring.

Another of the factors which have caused women to be kept on the sidelines with the consequent deterioration of their own personality reality has been the educational barriers imposed by the system. Although legally women have the right to an education, in reality one needs to ask what kind of education is offered. The great majority of our peasant women can neither read nor write; - the 1969 census revealed that out of a total population of 10½ million, 7,972,287 were illiterate: and out of these 54.4% were women¹⁴ - their schooling is

13 By this we mean, devoting one's life to the service of God in a convent.

14 See Kenya Population Census, 1969.

limited to courses in dressmaking, arts, crafts and housework in accordance with the system's traditional roles of wife and mother. Even politicians are emphasizing that domestic and home science courses be taught to girls in schools. That may be desirable but should it be taught as the subject for women? Up to date technical and vocational secondary schools have excluded female membership through administrative policy.¹⁵

In the Judaeo-Christian tradition which we have acquired, we come up against the male-oriented character of the authors of the Old Testament. From the beginning to the end they present us with a masculine model of God; one who is domineering, who is to be feared, who seeks vengeance and justice, a jealous and all-absorbing God. This attitude runs through the whole organization of the ecclesiastical life such that "women are not destined to play a part in the hierarchical functions of the church nor the didactic or priestly offices."¹⁶ So from childhood through the whole process of socialization the women's personality is limited by education and prejudice. Growing within the limits of a mental prison bound by official, familial and religious limits of what is permitted and what is prohibited; her wings of thought and initiative have been cut so that she remains in a state of 'innocence and grace'; of eternal adolescence.

15 Kenya has adopted a new system of Education (the 8.4.4. system) which is hoped will be less discriminative and more beneficial to all.

16 For a full discussion of the Judaeo-Christian tradition and the effects it has on women see Chapters 1 and 6.

3.2 Basis of a Theology of Liberation for Women

On the basis of what has been stated on the particularity of women's oppression we posit that Kenyan women can utilize the methodology and orientation of liberation theology as it has been formulated in Latin America, to articulate the relationship between the people of God and their God.

Segundo posits that persons who begin to do theology should first of all have questions from their present life that are so basic as to cause reexamination of their systems of ideas and answers about such things as life, death, knowledge, society and politics. Secondly, these questions or suspicions when carried to an examination of theology should be able to affect both the questions we ask for scripture and the interpretations we give to scripture.¹⁷ In other words in so far as Biblical studies are canonical studies they are related to and inspired by their sitz im Leben in the Christian church of the past and the present. Women's reflection upon their experience as women in the community in the light of the Bible is just one example of such an ecclesial contextuality and of theological commitment of Biblical studies in general. Women's reflection helps them to perceive fresh and creative insights in that tradition they receive in and through the church to which it is entrusted and in which it is embodied.

17 Segundo, J.L. The theology of liberation, Orbis Books Maryknoll, 1975.

What this indicates is that women begin with a sense of discomfort, of suspicion. They feel that something is not as it appears to be. Something is wrong. When they follow up their suspicions and begin investigating the theology which has been handed to them, they can begin to understand that there is an ideology which benefits the ruling forces. They can then begin asking new and basic questions which unmask theology from the old ideology, hence making new theological hypotheses and new interpretations of scripture.

St. Paul recognizes that Christ with His liberating message broke with the myths and customs of the Hebrew people and gave women the place they deserved as persons created in the "image and likeness of God" (Gen. 1:2). He wrote "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Gal. 3:28): Knowing the Gospel accounts that tell us of the attitudes of Jesus toward the women of His time, one realizes that it is He who initiated the elevation of the status of women. He allowed women to hear His teachings and accepted women's company as He travelled "from town to town and village to village, proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom of God .. With Him were the Twelve and a number of women Mary known as Mary of Magdala, Joanna, Suzzana and many other women who used their own resources to help Jesus and his disciples." (Lk.8:1 - 4). In many ways the Gospel stories show us Jesus breaking the stereo types of women's role and place. He - a Jewish rabbi - enjoyed the friendship and company of women like Martha and Mary (Lk.10:38 - 42); held a theological

discourse with the Samaritan woman through whom many others were led to faith in God (Jn.4:1 - 42); appraised the faith of women as is seen from His encounters with: the widow whose son he raised from the dead (Lk.7:11 - 17) the woman with the haemorrhage (Mt. 9:20 - 22) and the sinful woman whom he met in Simon's house (Lk.7:36 - 50). In not condemning the woman who was caught in adultery (Jn.8:3 - 9) Jesus showed how wrong and biased the Jews were in being quick to blame women for the evils of the social system which they themselves had set up. Jesus initiated the appearance of the new family, giving death to the traditional family when someone advised him "your brothers and sisters are outside and would like to see you", and he responded. "my mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and practice it" (Lk.8:21).

Clearly the attitude of Jesus to women was bold and surprising by the standards of his day when woman was considered in culture as an object of pleasure, a desirable possession especially for the labour that she provided. In a culture that subordinated and humiliated women Jesus showed the greatest esteem, respect and sensitivity to women's suffering. Breaking through the religious and social barriers of his time Jesus re-established woman in her full dignity as a human person before God and men.

What did Jesus wish to show by all these? He presented a new image of women incorporating them in history, recognizing their human dignity and their rights; he broke with all discrimination that

negates women and their realization as persons. If Mary the mother of Jesus, in the New Testament is the model of the New woman, that model has been obscured by patriarchal views of woman as a false image of innocence, beauty and submission. The meaning of Mary as the New Woman is yet to be discovered. Hence liberation is not only the concern of women. Liberation is to awaken and open one's own eyes; to awaken and open the eyes of others and together with them to construct a new society and with it the new man and the new woman.

The above argument then begs two questions - firstly can women be organized to form a theology of their own? Secondly, what is the relationship between the liberation of women and liberation in general?

3.3 Relationship Between Women's Liberation and Liberation in General

Women's liberation was a live and explosive issue in the emerging socialist (liberation) movements at the end of the nineteenth century. This was not so much because people dutifully sat down and read Marx and Engels. Most of their writings which dealt with the oppression of women was not widely available until a relatively late date. In various ways, however, women themselves put considerable pressure on the new movements and were able to put their case within the general arguments for reform.

In Russia, for instance, where the revolutionary movement was deeply committed both to women's emancipation and personal cultural transformation, Cherny Chersky's novel, What is to be done? published

in the 1860s was the central text for a generation. It was the story of an emancipated heroine in a lofty free union and co-operative sewing workshop. Women played an important and frequently heroic part in the general movement and a separate bourgeois feminist movement only developed long afterwards.

In America the feminist movement came out of the anti-slavery campaign and two tendencies emerged. There was a group that restricted its demands to the vote and were willing to settle for a compromise total suffrage. There was another group based in New York - led by people like Elizabeth Cody Stanton - who not only refused to compromise over the franchise but connected emancipation with change in marriage, clothing, morals and the organization of labour.

In Europe the "woman question" caused some argument. In Germany for instance, Bebel's book Woman and Socialism published in 1879 had an important effect. Bebel argued that the liberation of women was inseparable from the release of all human beings from oppression, exploitation, want, and misery in a hundred shapes ... the so-called women's question was therefore only one side of the whole social question only in connection with each other can the two questions reach their final solution.¹⁸ He believed that the relationship of exploitation and domination connected with capitalism and within which women were subordinated could only be dissolved by a fundamental change in the social structure.¹⁸

18 A. Bebel, Women in the Past, Present and Future, Falling Wall Press, London 1885 pg.1.

In France, the utopian philosopher, Charter Fourier made a similar statement in 1805 but went even further in postulating a "general principle" that social progress and changing eras are linked to increases in women's freedom and social decadence is accompanied by a decrease in that freedom. By changing eras he meant what we would now call social change.

According to him, then, the study of women's position was vital because it would indicate the trend of social change as a whole. Social change is usually synonymous with social structure. It is clear that the position of women represents a coherent structure in which all the elements are integrated: ideology, role in the family, role in society, economic role, sphere of activity, sphere of forbidden activity and so on.¹⁹

In Asia, Africa and Latin America the struggle for liberation has always been one against colonialism, economic dependence and a cultural take-over which has often led to loss of identity. The national independence movements in these continents have created impetus for the active involvement of women. It is only when national liberation struggles have become revolutionary movements that the real problem of women's liberation has even begun to be considered.

For instance, in Vietnam, the oppression of women resembled that in China in many ways. It was centred around a system of forced marriages, women could not inherit property and they owed their allegiance to their fathers, their husbands and finally to their eldest sons.

19 See Rowbotham S., Women, Resistance and Revolution (Penguin Ltd., 1975) pg.340.

Confucian ethics supported male authority and condoned the subordination of women. With colonialism came poverty and famine. As always women experienced not just economic exploitation but their own specific oppression. It was then impossible to isolate the 'woman problem' from the expulsion of French invaders. The Vietnamese have a long tradition of resistance. Their history is one of continuing colonization and continuing rebellion in which suffering and martyrdom recur with an aching regularity. The course of war has directly affected the lives of the women just as much as the men. Gradually women have been drawn into a situation of complete equality in suffering, and with them have come the children.

In Algeria the decision to involve women in the struggle for independence was taken in 1955. It was a product of urgency and necessity. Political activity in which women were involved changed their relationship to their families. Hence a cultural emergence of women was quite inseparable from the development of the Algerian society.

And in Cuba, women took part in all the rebellions against slavery and Spanish colonialism. The demand for equal rights came with the war against Spain in the 1860s. As a first step, the Federation of Cuban women was set up in 1960 after the revolution. The federation began a drive against illiteracy. This was partly to enable women to enter into production and partly to enable them to participate fully in political

and social life. The desperate needs of the Cuban economy mean that the emphasis on women taking part in production is as much because their labour is needed as it is part of the liberation of women. Women in Cuba face the particular subjection of a group colonised within a colony. Their liberation therefore requires a great act of revolutionary cultural creation which is only possible through the possibility for human growth which comes through a conscious combination of the efforts of both men and women.

The foregoing discussion clearly shows that liberation is a multi-faceted process. Liberation of a people, as has already been stated, cannot be effected until one looks at every aspect of a people's life. Ipsa facto Catholic women in Kenya do not live in a vacuum. To speak of liberation theology and Catholic women, one must also speak of the socio-economic and political system in which those Catholic women live. In order to understand this "all-embrassiveness" of liberation it is necessary at this point to go back to the home of the present movement of liberation theology: Latin America.

What did the term "liberation" mean to the Latin Americans and all those who were engaged in formulating the theology of liberation? What does it mean to us?

CHAPTER FOUR

DEVELOPMENT OF THE THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION

4.1 The Concept of Liberation

Liberation theology arose in Latin America as a christian reflection in the context of the Liberation movement in that continent. The term "Liberation" belongs in the socio-economic context of development. It was first used in this context of socio-economic development to designate a more embracing approach to development than the one hitherto implied.

The approach advocated by the developed countries then was the transfer of capital from 'rich' nations to 'poor' ones in a bid to try and bridge the gap between the poor and the rich. Underlying this "Aid for Development" approach was the vaunted notion that the economic process without undergoing any substantial modification could turn the underdeveloped countries into modern, prosperous societies once it reached what economists call(ed) the "take off point": then it would accelerate cumulatively and come to resemble more and more the process in developed countries.

This approach was in reality a carry-over from the first world war periods. After World War I, during the period that is commonly known in history as the Great Depression, the United States of America - under the Marshall Plan of 1929 - gave grants to Western European

countries that were willing to stay out of communist influence and become allies of the United States in the struggle against communism.¹ This transfer of capital was meant to revive the economy of Western Europe.

Later on, after World War II the same process was repeated under the auspices of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD). The United States then controlled and greatly influenced the institutionalization of the World Bank as a specialised international agency handling a large portion of finance capital. The role of the Bank was twofold: first, to provide finance for reconstruction of war torn Europe and Japan and second, to provide finance for development of underdeveloped countries.² However, unlike Western Europe and Japan the underdeveloped countries did not show signs of much improvement. This approach in fact, escalated the problem and made the gap even wider. The reason for this was the basing of development solely on economics to the neglect of social, cultural and political factors.³ It dawned on the people in the developing countries that underdevelopment was a structural, not a functional phenomenon. That is to say, underdevelopment resulted from the way economic and political

1 The Communist 'takeover' in Poland scared the West which feared more takeovers elsewhere.

2 Such as the countries that form Latin American Sub-continent, Asia and Africa.

3 Note also that the developing countries did not get the same favourable terms: interest rates were higher and protectionism in the West increased.

relationships in the world are structured. The realization of this fact gave rise to a new understanding of development which was hence seen as what Gutierrez calls a 'total social process'.⁴ Integral development of this nature aimed at restructuring relations.

* Hence liberation theology in the Latin American context is a reaction against the developmentalist theories and models formulated by the United States for Latin America in the decade of the 60s.⁵ The term liberation signified an approach in development ... "that aims at the emancipation of 'Third World' countries from oppressive socio-economic and political structures."⁶ So the liberation movement, taking inspiration from the writings of Karl Marx in which he sought to create a new society free from the unjust structures of capitalism started as a social revolution aimed at changing the status quo of the Latin American society. Liberation has been seen as a process which

4 Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, (SCM 1974) pg.24.

5 For a good discussion on theories of underdevelopment one can read: Andre Gunder Frank, Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America, (Monthly Review Press, 1967); H. Bennisstein Underdevelopment and Development: The Third World Today (Penguin 1973) P.A. Baran, The Political Economy of Growth (Penguin 1973); Samir Amin, Accumulation on a World Scale: A critique of the Theory of Underdevelopment Vol.1 (Monthly Review Press, 1974) pp.5 - 10. In their writings, all the above contend that foreign aid has played a major role in the underdevelopment of what are known today as the poor and backward or developing countries.

6 Gutierrez, Op. Cit. pp.88 - 92.

involves creating a critical awareness (conscientization)⁷ in the people who then commit themselves to transforming and building up a better society for all.

4.2 Elements of Latin American Liberation Theology

Although the term "Liberation" belongs in the socio-economic context as has been earlier stated, Christian laity and theologians too have been and are concerned with the liberation of mankind. Many of those involved in the liberation struggle in Latin America are Christians. They do not doubt that there is a God. They do not even doubt that God is living and powerful - He is a God of righteousness and goodness. It is precisely because they believe in this God that they try to justify Him and His ways to a down-trodden and perplexed people so that they can be inspired to do something about their lot. As Gutierrez states, liberation theology is:

not an ideology to justify pictures already taken ..., it is an attempt at reflection based on the Gospel and the experiences of men and women committed to the process of liberation in the oppressed and exploited land

7 Paulo Freire explains the concept of conscientization explicitly in his works, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, (Seabury Press, 1970) Education for Critical Consciousness, (Seabury Press 1973) and Cultural Action for Freedom (. For a deeper discussion on the implications of conscientization on the women in Kenya, see Chapter 6 of this study.

Similarly, Moltmann whose theology has powerful social implications emphasised the divine immanence relying heavily on the Hegelian concept of history.¹⁰ This led to a re-thinking of the concept of revelation and the relationship between history and revelation whereby history was seen as a revelatory of God. It also led to a re-evaluation of the temporal order and its relationship with the spiritual order. The two were seen as inter-connected, hence the right of the Christian to a critical appraisal of the temporal order was asserted.

In Catholic circles there has recently been a shift from the traditional way of doing theology. The emphasis on "salvation of souls" that was dominant among early scholastics has today been replaced by an emphasis on salvation of the whole person. After Trent (1545 - 63) and Vatican I (1869 - 70) the Catholic Church preached a Christianity that was "concentrated a little too exclusively on the spiritual salvation of the individual in the life beyond."¹¹ Consequently missionary activity has been based on theological winning of souls for Christ; and any missionary involvement in the temporal order was regarded

10 I am not saying that Jurgen Moltman is a liberation theologian but his views in the Theology of Hope (Harper & Row, 1967) that namely dissatisfaction with the present (even to the extent of finding it Godless) will motivate people to seek a better future - have had a strong appeal in the struggling developing world. See James Cone, Black Theology and Black Power (Seabury Press, 1969) pp.20 ff.

11 From a speech delivered by Cardinal Josef Frings of Cologne to the Fathers of Vat. II (1962) in Robert Kaizer Inside the Council. The story of Vatican II (London: Burns & Oates, 1962) pg.205.

as a sideline, a means to achieve what was intended but not as a necessary part of missionary endeavour.* During the Second Vatican Council (1962 - 65) however, the Fathers of the Church saw the mission of the Church as that of saving not only souls but the whole person; and that means the person in all the complexity of their spiritual and temporal, individual and social nature. Therefore, within the second half of this century, emphasis has been placed on the whole person as the focus of evangelization: hence the involvement of the Gospel message in the temporal order. In their encyclicals,¹² Popes John XXIII - who initiated the Second Vatican Council - and Paul VI - who directed the Council safely to the end - have contributed a great deal to this new shift in theology. Their pastoral pronouncements dwell a lot on the dignity and rights of man (used as a corporate noun) not only in the spiritual sphere but much more so in the social, economic, political and cultural spheres. Paul VI, in fact, who sees development as the new name for peace stipulates that development is not so much to have more but to be more.¹³

Turning to the Bible, Liberation theologians have picked the Exodus account as their central theme. The act of God in delivering His people from a life of bondage is seen as the model for

12 The encyclicals referred to here are: John XXIII, Pacem in Terris, 1963, Mater et Magistra 1962. Paul VI, Populorum Progressio 1967, Gaudium et Spes, 1965, For a deeper discussion on papal encyclicals and their significance for women in Kenya See Chapter 5.

13 Populorum Progressio 14.

understanding salvation and liberation. In the Old Testament there is no separation between socio-political liberation and spiritual salvation. Salvation history is seen to involve liberation in all aspects including the socio-political and the whole Bible is seen as set within a liberation process. And the whole life, work and teaching of Jesus Christ, "God with us" bear witness to that process, for He, following in the prophetic tradition has been sent to :

- ✓ Preach the Good News to the poor,
- give the blind sight
- give liberty to the captives .. (Lk 4:18 ff)
- Cf. Is.61:1 - 2.

Liberation theology, therefore, appeals to the people for a critical awareness of their poor situation and such awareness is meant to lead to action for improving their lot.

4.3 The Role of the Church in Latin America Liberation Movement¹⁴

After the Second Vatican Council (1962 - 65) Latin American bishops met in Medellin, Colombia (1968) and in Puebla, Mexico (1979) to implement the resolutions that had been made at the council, and re-examine the pastoral work of the church. At Medellin, the bishops

14 Owing to the socio-cultural history of Latin America in which Spanish Conquistadores played a big role, the majority of the population is predominantly Roman Catholic. Latin America is the home of 42% of the Worlds 810 million Catholics.

referred to the unjust social, political, economic conditions as institutionalized violence. At Puebla they clearly viewed the countries in which they lived where there was frequently no respect for such fundamental human rights as life, health, education and work as being in the position of permanently violating the dignity of the person. They saw the growing gap between the rich and the poor as a scandal and a contradiction to Christian living. Their duty was to proclaim the liberation of millions of human beings, to help bring this liberation forth in the world and bear witness to it.

So in the spirit of Jesus Christ the Latin American Church made a preferential option for the poor remembering the words of Jesus to the disciples of John who had gone to ask him for his credentials.¹⁵ Jesus presented and identified himself in the synagogue at Nazareth by solemnly reading the words of Isaiah as quoted by Luke:

"The spirit of the Lord is upon me
 he has sent me to preach the
 Good News to the poor
 and set the captives free" (Lk.4:18ff).

So in Latin America the socio-economic and political conditions forced the official Church out of its comfortable cocoon and necessitated her to play her prophetic role. In Peru, for instance, after Medellin and at the beginning of the Revolutionary military Government, the 36th Annual Episcopal Assembly

15 See Lk. 7:22

addressed itself to the Peruvian person in his/her socio-economic and political context. The Bishops provided a doctrinal basis for the Revolutionary Government by affirming that from a christian perspective, the social reforms proposed in the Development Plan were meant to promote the idea of- elevating the way of being a human person; of announcing the liberation of the oppressed.¹⁶ To attain this goal the church resolved not only to make people aware of the unjust structures but also to capacitate them to react against the structures and create and promote new social structures that would answer the needs and aspirations of the people. Evangelization then for Latin American bishops became "to proclaim the word of the Good News and to contribute to giving that word its historical and social effectiveness in the transformation of the world."¹⁷

16 The aim of the 1968 Revolution was "to bring about a more just society without privileges, free from all economic, social, political and cultural marginalization and discrimination which would make possible the complete and integral development of the human capacities of each person and secure an authentic national culture." National Development Plan, 1968 - 75.

17 Bishops of Peru, 1973.

Note also that the Southern Andean Bishops sent out a Pastoral letter entitled: Accompanying Our People, in 1978, which echoed the same sentiments as those expressed by the Peruvian Bishops.

4.4 Background to African Liberation Theology

The expression liberation theology came to Africa via the southern part of the continent, under the catch title 'Black Theology',¹⁸ which was first used in the United States. There were many parallels then between the situation of the black man in America and in South Africa, for instance, the growing mood of Blacks against a dehumanizing system based on the fact of their Blackness.

When the term Black Theology was coined in the United States, it was as a theological response by Black theologians to the emergence of Black Power. It was a contribution of Black theologians to the theology of liberation from a Black American perspective. The popularity of the expression liberation theology in the rest of Africa, however, was boosted by the holding of the first conference of Third World Theologians in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, in 1976 where Latin Americans played a major role.¹⁹ Poor economic and social conditions in Africa have led Africans to the search and adoption of this theology which is committed to the cause of the poor in their struggle for a better humanity and a better society.

18 Concept discussed thoroughly by B. Moore (ed.) Black Theology: The South African Voice, C. Hurst and Co., 1973, pp.2 - 3 and best exemplified by James Cone, Black Theology, Black Power, Seabury Press, 1969 and A Black Theology of Liberation.

19 See S. Torres and V. Fabella (ed.), The Emergent Gospel: Theology from the Underworld of History, Orbis Books, 1977 which is the report of the conference.

It should be noted however, that there was already a quest for African theology, which was a form of liberation theology, though not articulated as such. This is exemplified in the writings of theologians like Prof. T. Mbiti and Prof. B. Idowu.

Africa is a land of poverty, hunger, malnutrition, starvation and disease. Most of Africa's population live in the rural areas at barely subsistence level. It is a land of unemployment and over-crowding in the cities. Like other developing countries, Africa suffers from the political and economic domination of the Super Powers. The modern science of economics supports the general view of African leaders and scholars that Africa's poverty is to be traced basically to the structure of our world economy. It is not the result of laziness on the part of Africans or of natural factors but results from the fact that western countries control world economy to their own benefit and to the disadvantage of Africa, Asia and Latin America. There is therefore, need for a change in the world economic structure so that human beings may share equally in the benefits of the earth.

At the political level, international politics repeats the same oppressive pattern. African, Asian and Latin American countries are used as pawns of the Super Powers as they struggle for supremacy. The struggle goes on without much respect for the rights of other nations and without sensitivity to the humanitarian needs of the world population and the result is ultimately increased suffering for the ordinary people.²⁰

20 Note also that the problems in contemporary Africa can be traced back to the invasion of the continent from the West since the sixteenth century and particularly since the partition of Africa in 1884.

Although we have stated that the expression, "liberation theology" came to Africa via the southern part of the continent under the catch title of Black theology, this is only part of the truth. We have also stated that the popularity of the expression liberation theology" in the rest of Africa was boosted by the holding of the first conference of Third World Theologians in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania in 1976 where Latin Americans played a major role. It is important to note, however, that the theology of liberation movement - though not articulated as such - can be traced back to the liberation struggles against colonialism and neo-colonialism.

For instance, in her assessment of the reasons for the rise of the Kimbanguist church in Central Africa, Andre Droogers concludes that it is impossible to understand fully an African prophetic movement unless it is seen in the context of resistance against colonial power structures.²¹ Hence in the situation of colonial dominance in Zaire, Kimbanguism was a reaction transforming passive oppressed objects into active resisting subjects. The supposed superiority of the white colonisers had provoked a strong self awareness on the part of the Africans.

21 Andre Droogers, "Kimbanguism at the Grass Roots," in Journal of Religion in Africa, Vol. XI No.3 by E.J. Brill (Leiden, 1980).

Similarly Audrey Wipper and James Shimanyula looked upon the Cult of Mumbo and Dini Ya Msambwa here in Kenya as protest movements, which were in reality of "the reaction of a peasant people rejecting both Christian missions and the colonial government but with the new goods of western society featuring prominently."²²

Bildad Kaggia is of the same opinion. He saw the rise of sects as the result of a people resenting the way they were patronised in matters concerning religion.²³ Numerous sects began to appear in revolt against the European dominance in religion. Although the European church leaders professed christian brotherhood, in practice they regarded African christians as inferior brothers. Africans saw the same mentality in the churchmen as in the government officials.

The point being made here is that the theology of liberation cannot be done in a vacuum. It strengthens Boesak's contention that liberation theology has developed within a framework of a new political consciousness.²⁴ In other words people became aware of a new consciousness of themselves, or where they were, of the political, social and economic dynamics in their situations. When people began to understand their situations they started to ask questions they had never asked before. Here in Africa, this happened between the late 50s and early 60s. People began to question the political systems of the world and this led to the fight for political independence. How did the social and religious institutions respond to this new consciousness of the people about themselves throughout the world?

22 Wiper, A. Rural Rebels, A Study of Two Protest Movements in Kenya (OUP, 1977)

23 Bildad Kaggia, Roots of Freedom, (EALB, 1975).

24 Boesak A.A., Black Theology, Black Power, (Mowbrays, 1978).

CHAPTER FIVEWOMEN IN POST VATICAN II CATHOLICISM5.1 Factors Leading to Vatican II

One of the ways in which the Catholic church reacted to this worldwide awakened consciousness of the people about themselves was by holding a General Council, in order to review the church's situation vis-a-vis that of the world. A general council is usually convened in connection with some big crisis facing the church in a particular period. The most recent of the general councils was the Second Vatican Council (1962 - 65) which has been of great interest to both Catholics and other Christians because, essentially, it differed in content and purpose from the two councils that immediately preceded it.

The Council of Trent (1545 - 63) with its Counter-Reformation mentality of Catholicism concentrated mainly on the supreme power of the Vatican and the centralised papal view of the church. In fact one of the enduring consequences of Trent was a deliberate strengthening of the responsibilities of the Pope. This was intended to ensure that in future, response to heretical revolt - such as the one that had been offset by Martin Luther - would be central, prompt and powerful. Following in this spirit, the first Vatican Council (1869 - 70) was responsible for the doctrine of papal infallibility and the centralised power of the hierarchy.

The thrust of the Second Vatican Council, however, shifted from too much concentration on papal and hierarchical power to the lay people who form the church; their rights and duties. This was mainly due to a new awareness in the Catholic laity about themselves. The concept of Aggiornamento in the mind of Pope John XXIII meant a throwing open the doors and setting out on a journey of discovery. John XXIII deliberately looked for the distinctive characteristics of the twentieth century; a concept and approach which in Vatican II became "discerning the signs of the times".¹ What are these signs of the times that necessitated the convening of a general council? They are the following:

1. Theological Renewal

This represented a shift from Scholasticism especially by the French Dominican theologians, like Yves Congar, M.D. Chenu and others who had supported the worker priest movement.² Further the second half of the nineteenth century was marked by a return to Biblical and Patristic sources of Catholic doctrine and by emphasis on the mystical and dynamic rather than the institutional aspects of the church.³

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- 1 Due to his life times varied experiences, John XXIII came to the papacy more attuned to the world outside.
 - 2 The worker-priest movement was an attempt by less than 100 Catholic priests, predominantly French and Belgian to live as industrial workers in order to make a reality of religious catholicism; a reality of the modern world. This in the 1950s meant to live in an oppressive and violent atmosphere of class bitterness and poverty.
 - 3 This new emphasis is exemplified in the works of the German/Swiss theologians - Karl Rahner, and Hans Kung.

2. Growing Contact with the Other Christian Churches

Since 1910 the Protestant Churches, largely under the influence of the missionaries among them, had been watering the seeds of good-will and common purpose that existed among their various bodies. They understood, far sooner than most Catholics, that the rips and tears in the seamless robe of Christ were a shock and a scandal to people everywhere.

Slowly the ecumenical movement gained momentum as the first two conferences of Protestants and Orthodox from around the world, held in Stockholm in 1925 and in Lausanne in 1927, show. The movement continued, progressing little by little into theological exchange. The Orthodox had a big influence on the Protestants.

In 1937 there was a Faith and Action Conference at Oxford and a Life and Work Conference at Edinburgh. Four catholic priests who attended sent a detailed report to Rome on the positive influences at work.

Then came the guns of war. Those guns, together with the action of the Chancellor of the 3rd Reich, Adolf Hitler, gave the ecumenical movement the force it needed. In Germany, Catholics and Protestants (and Jews) learned to help one another, to live and pray and die together. In that experience many got a preliminary ride on the vehicle that would carry Christians down the road to unity.

In 1945 the Life and Work and the Faith and Order Movements fused into something tentatively called the World Council of Churches (100 of them at first) and it planned its first meeting for Amsterdam in 1948.

At the next World Council of Churches meeting in Chicago in 1953, official Rome still forbade Catholic participation, but the flow of events had its own logic. Contacts between churches multiplied. The Dutch bishops set up an Ecumenical Conference of their own (headed by Monsiguar J. Willebrands). Books were written, ideas began to expand. Biblical scholars, both Catholic and Protestant, began to find, in their historical and sociological research a common understanding. Consequently, the Catholic Church created a Secretariat for Promoting christian unity on March 25th, 1960. It was headed by Augustin Cardinal Bea and its duties were mainly to draft conciliar proposals impinging on unity and secondly, to move into the world and establish cordial relations with all christians and all faiths.

3. The Success of Christian Democratic Governments.

The third force of change, was political in nature. All over Western Europe and North America, oligarchic governments which in many places had been sanctioned by the church were now replaced by democratically elected governments. Leaders were emerging, who apart from being loyal to the constitutions of their governments, were also good christians. The idea of christendom was by now remote.

Hence a series of compromises to govern relations between church and modern secular states evolved.

In France, for instance, during World War II the shades of political catholicism were briefly revived under the Vichy regime. Nevertheless, the crisis breaking the link between Catholicism and politico-religious reaction had snapped years before with the condemnation of the Action Francaise in 1926 by Pius XI. The idea of an alliance between the Throne and Altar against the forces of the Revolution might linger on in the mentality of the church and in some textbooks. But with the abandonment of the temporal power of the papacy - after over a century during which the church had fairly consistently worked for the restoration of christendom - the way was clear for the speedier growth of social and cultural Catholicism which finally broke through to the consciousness of the whole church in the 1960s.

In the United States of America, the election of John F. Kennedy to the presidency seemed the crowning proof that there need no longer be the slightest doubt about the possibility of combining religious allegiance to Rome with impeccable patriotism. It remained for John XXIII, however, late in the day to formally put on record in Pacem in Terris that democratic forms of government were most in accord with the dignity and freedom of man. Secondly, the vehement committment of the American bishops to the cause of religious liberty at the Council reflected, in part, their awareness of the continuing

suspicion in the United States that the Catholic's allegiance to Rome had at least some anti-democratic implications.

4. The Liturgical Movement

This movement asked for an end to the period of ecclesiastical colonization. The movement pressed, instead, for the recognition of a healthy pluralism within the unity of the Church. This would be exemplified in the adaption and incarnation of the liturgy especially in the cultures of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

5. The Social Awareness of Many Catholic Laymen and Bishops

Men and women all over the world were increasingly having the rank of citizens in independent nations. As modern states organized themselves juridically through written documents called constitutions, which included a charter of fundamental human rights, people became increasingly conscious of their dignity as human persons. This awareness prompted them to claim their rights not only in the political sphere but also in the socio-economic field as well; and they looked to the church for guidance. Cardinal Suenens of Brussels explains it thus:

"The Council (should) aim at making the church the real light of the nations ... must say something about the very life of

human person social justice ...
 social responsibility ... practical duty
 of rich (nations) to those who suffer from
 hunger ... international peace and war in a
 way that can help and enlighten the world."⁴

So, the social documents of the aggiornamento articulate the efforts of the Church to address the needs and issues of today's world. They manifest a new awareness that it is an essential part of the Christian mission to humanize and thereby christianize⁵ political, social, economic, cultural and technological life. This study is carried out in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council. This is an age where women are becoming increasingly aware of their dignity as human persons. Consequently they are re-examining their role not only in the socio-economic life of the society but also in the cultural and religious spheres.

At this juncture, we would do well to examine the document the post Vatican II Popes and see in what ways they proposed that the Catholic Church should respond to this new awareness in women about themselves.

4 In a speech addressed to the Council Fathers on December 4th, 1962. See Robert Kaiser, Inside the Council: Story of Vatican II 1962 - 5, (Burns and Oates, 1963) pg.218.

6 It is possible to have a system that claims to be Christian and yet it is inhuman cf. the Apartheid system in South Africa. On the other hand one can be a humanitarian without necessarily being a Christian.

5.2 The Role of Women in the Teaching of Pope John XXIII

In his encyclical Pacem In Terris⁶ which was the Papal declaration of human rights and dignity, Pope John XXIII who convened the Second Vatican Council,⁷ to open up the windows of the church to let in fresh air from the outside world, asserts that each person is naturally endowed with intelligence and free will to be the foundation from which human rights flow. These rights are universal, inviolable and inalienable. The dignity of the human person, he adds, is esteemed far more highly in the light of revealed truth because God created human beings in His own image and likeness, endowed them with intelligence and freedom and made them lords of creation (Gen. 1:27ff).

This encyclical echoes most of the rights stated in the United Nations Declaration⁸ fifteen years before and balances this with respective duties.⁹ Of women, John XXIII specifically states that they have the right to working conditions in accordance with their requirements and their duties as wives and mothers.¹⁰

6 Written in April 1963.

7 The Second Vatican Council was convened by Pope John XXIII in 1962 and lasted till 1965.

8 See The United Nations charter on Human Rights (United Nations Publications, New York, 1973).

9 For example, the right of every man to life is correlative with the duty to preserve it; his right to a decent standard of living, with the duty of living it becomingly; and his right to investigate the truth freely with the duty of pursuing it even more completely and profoundly. (Pacem in Terris, 29).

10 Pacem In Terris (19).

No other Pope before John XXIII had been so supportive of the rights of women as such. Pope Leo XIII in Rerum Novarum of 1898 talked about appropriate working conditions for workers and Pius XII (1952) talks of the vocation of women in religious life. Apparently, none of them comes out with a clear, strong supportive statement of the rights of women as John XXIII does, albeit in economic and social life.

John XXIII, of course, realises that this dignity becomes meaningful only in the existential situation of real societies. These rights become operative when they are demanded, and the demands arise from a collectively growing consciousness experienced by human groups. He looks for the signs of the times, the distinctive characteristics of the age - as already expressed above - and among these he places foremost the conscious demands for human dignity and rights. For women he says:

" ... since women are becoming even more conscious of their human dignity, they will not tolerate being treated as inanimate objects or mere instruments but claim both in domestic and public life, the rights and duties that benefit a human person."¹¹

¹¹ Pacem In Terris (41).

5.3 Degree on the Apostolate of Lay People Vatican II

(Apostolicam Actuositatem)

It is obvious that the views of John XXIII influenced very much the decisions taken on the apostolate of the laity in the Church. The Second Vatican Council is a 'special' Council for Catholics as has already been stated because it is in this Council that recognition of the importance of the laity in the mystical body of Christ, the Church, was made. The Decree on the Apostolate of lay people affirms the fact that in the Church there is diversity of ministry but unity of mission such that, though,

Christ has entrusted the office of teaching, sanctifying and governing in his name and by power to the apostles and their successors
 the laity are made to share in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ by virtue of their baptism and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit in confirmation.¹²

So, being participators in the function of Christ as priest, prophet and king, the laity have an active part of their own in the life and action of the church. There then arises for each of the faithful, the right and duty of exercising them in the Church and in the world

12 See Austin Flannery (OP), Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents, (St. Paul's Publications, 1975), pg.693.

for the good of all human beings and the development of the Church in the freedom of the Holy Spirit who breathes where he wills (Jn.3:8) and at the same time in communion with others in Christ. The Decree further affirms that the laity have a special and indispensable role in the mission of the church following in the footsteps of the men and women who assisted Paul in the proclamation of the Gospel.¹⁴

Notice here the special reference made to women. In fact if the word women would be substituted for laity, the statement would read ... "following in the footsteps of the men and women who assisted Paul in the proclamation of the gospel, women (laity) have a special and indispensable role in the mission of the church." Notice also the shift of emphasis from the role of women in socio-economic life to life in the church. Despite these statements, there has been an inability and unwillingness of priests to work closely with women.¹⁵ The question one must ask is: Why has this been so?

5.4 The Role of Women in the Teaching of Pope Paul VI

Pope Paul VI, like his predecessor, John XXIII, continued to pay tribute to the role of women in the social, political, economic and cultural affairs of the states in which they find themselves. Participation of women in all those areas in accordance with their

14 Cf. Acts 18: 18 - 26; Rom. 16:3.

15 As will be shown in Chapter 6.

nature seems to be a running theme in most of his encyclicals and papal addresses.¹⁶ He declares that women have specific qualities like intuition, creativity, sensibility, a sense of piety and compassion; a profound capacity for understanding and love. These qualities would enable them to bring specific contributions of great value to the life of the community and offer the possibility of making a direct contribution to the renewal of social institutions in particular where marriage, the family and the education of children are concerned. Pope Paul VI, however, did not clearly state what he thought the role of women in the church should be. It was the synod of Bishops - Nov. 30, 1971 - who in the 2nd General Assembly meeting to discuss 'Justice in the World', urged that women should have their own share of responsibility and participation in the community life of society and likewise of the church. They then proposed a mixed commission of men and women, religious and lay people of differing situations and competence to discuss the issues relating to justice and peace in the world.

16 See for instance Gaudium et Spes which is the Pastoral Constitution on the church in the Modern World, written in 1965; To The Peoples of Africa, the message of His Holiness Pope Paul VI to the peoples of Africa given in 1967; especially Section 36; Octogesima Adveniens, an Apostolic Letter marking the Eightieth Anniversary of "Rerum Novarum" written in 1971 and Reconciliation - the Way to Peace, which was the message of His Holiness Pope Paul VI for the Celebration of the Day of Peace. (January 1, 1975).

5.5 The Role of Women in the Teachings of Post Vatican II Popes

During the years that succeeded the Second Vatican Council the next influential man in Catholic circles, after Paul VI has been the Polish born John Paul II.¹⁷ The attitude and hence the teaching of John Paul II on women has been baffling. During the first year of his pontificate¹⁸ while addressing a congress of five thousand Italian women, the Pope asked the women to meditate on the attitude of Jesus to women which he said was bold and surprising by the standards of the day when women were subordinated and humiliated in accordance with the culture. Quoting extensively from Pope Paul's Gaudium et Spes, he told the women that Jesus showed the greatest esteem and respect for women and was sensitive to their suffering. Breaking through the religious and social barriers of his time, Jesus, re-established woman in her full dignity as a human person before God and men.¹⁹

These sentiments made the Synod of Bishops,²⁰ meeting in Yaounde, Cameroun, in 1981 realise that they needed to mobilize all human resources of the people of God, through appropriate structures

17 Pope John Paul I, the successor of Paul VI reigned for only 33 days. Consequently, he did not leave any encyclicals or pastoral letters.

18 That is, in April 1979.

19 See Lk. 10:38 - 42; Jn. 4:1 - 42; Lk.7: 11 - 17; Jn.8:3 - 9; Mt.9: 2- - 22; Lk.7: 36 - 50; Mt. 28:8.

20 The same bishops who met in the 2nd General Assembly (1971) to discuss Justice and Peace. This time they were joined by a few priests and laity.

and organizations in order to make effective the presence of Jesus Christ in the society. They saw that the role of women in lay structures is indeed indispensable and they encouraged all women to become fully active in the structures as well as liturgical life of the Church. The Bishops appealed to local Church leaders to assist in this process of restoring women to their rightful place and especially support women's organizations.

Pope John Paul II is a widely travelled man. While in Britain in 1982, he paid tribute in history to Margaret Clitherow who gave her life in York and Mary Ward who taught the Gospel of Jesus Christ to English exiles and hoped that "these holy women will inspire women today to take their rightful place in the life of the Church as befits this equality of rights and particular dignity". In December of the same year he asked Italian women to ponder on the permanent female presence in the history of salvation.

In Genesis 2 man reaches fullness of his personal being and escapes from his original solitude when placed by God opposite woman. By accepting to be the mother of Jesus, Mary made it possible for God's salvific work to be carried out. (Cf. Lk. 2:38f.). On the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit - the sure sign of God's ever presence with us - descended on the apostles; they were "together with the women and with Mary the mother of Jesus ..." (Acts 1:14).

But John Paul II is a man of contradictions. Of late, all his statements on women have only one thing to say: Motherhood. The question of ordination of women, as far as he is concerned does not even arise;

it is beyond discussion. A lot of women are perplexed: what is their role in the Church if they find themselves not called to the vocation of marriage or that of sisterhood?

Considering the statements and apparent good intentions of the high ranking officials of the Catholic Church, there seems to be no discrimination or oppression of any kind in the Catholic Church. Popes and Bishops, who are decision makers in the church have again and again, to the point of repeating themselves, called for due recognition of the rights and dignity of women in accordance with their nature not only in the Church but also in the social, economic, political and cultural lives of the societies in which they live. In view of this, then, does any talk of liberation of women in the Catholic church in Kenya or anywhere else for that matter, make sense? Does the need for liberation arise? Do women feel/see the need for liberation? In what ways?

CHAPTER SIXAN APPRAISAL OF THE POSITION (ROLE) OF WOMEN IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN KENYA.

In this chapter an attempt is made to answer the questions that were raised at the end of Chapter Five. We have already indicated that though the term liberation was first used in the socio-political-economic realm, it acquired theological undertones due to the involvement of committed christians in the liberation struggle and their committment to the liberation movement as a whole. We have shown that the society in which we live has perpetuated and institutionalised the subjugation of women in all fields of life - social, economic, political and religious. The church is very much conditioned by the life in the society. The liberation of women in the church therefore can only be effected with the liberation from other forms of subjugation. We have also indicated the attitude of post Vatican II leaders of the Catholic church towards the liberation of women. In this chapter, an attempt is made to analyse whether the good intentions of post Vatican II popes have been practical in real life. In other words is any talk of liberation meaningful at all to women in the Catholic Church in Kenya?

6.1 Catholic Women - A Culture of Silence?

This writer argues that women in the Catholic church have been subjug for too long to the extent that they are not even aware of it. They have over the ages come to regard their subordinate position in the church as ordained by God; that is, the way things should be. What is the basis for this argument?

Paulo Freire¹, who is regarded in some circles as one of the seminal thinkers of our time provides us with a very practical method of breaking through apathy and developing a critical awareness of the causes of problems. While studying and working with the poor and hence the oppressed in Latin America, Freire came to the conclusion that the ignorance and lethargy of the oppressed is a direct product of the whole situation of economic, social, political domination and of paternalism of which the oppressed are victims. Rather than being equipped and encouraged to know and respond to the concrete realities of their world, the poor and oppressed are kept "submerged" in a situation in which such critical awareness and response are practically impossible. This situation in which critical awareness and response are practically impossible, Freire calls the "culture of silence" and he cites the church² as one of the major instruments for the maintenance of the culture of silence. Freire further observes that until the oppressed concretely "discover" their oppressor and in turn their own consciousness, they nearly always express fatalistic attitudes towards their situation; a fatalism which when superficially analysed is interpreted as docility, that is, a character trait. But according to Freire, docility is not a character trait as such. In other words,

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- 1 I have chosen Freire's approach here because it is the approach that we used quite effectively in our Adult Education Programmes. It is therefore an approach that I have studied in depth and found it both effective and efficient as a method for transforming society.
- 2 In this case Freire is referring to the Catholic Church which is dominant in Brazil where he was working. Latin America is the home of 42% of the world's 810 million catholics.

docility is not an essential characteristic of a people's behaviour but the fruit of an historical and sociological situation which is often related to a distorted view of God. As long as the oppressed remain unaware of the causes of their conditions, they fatalistically "accept" their exploitation as the will of God. They are apt to react in a passive and alienated manner when confronted with the necessity to struggle for their freedom and self-affirmation.³ Freire's insights into the different levels of consciousness represented graphically would look thus:

3 What is discussed here can also be found in Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Penguin Books, 1972) (Chapters 1 - 3).

FIGURE 6.1

FOUR LEVELS OF AWARENESS

LEVEL	THE COMMUNITY SITUATION TYPICAL ATTITUDES - ACTIONS	TYPES OF ASSISTANCE	
<p>Closed or Broken Consciousness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Naive - Dependent - Alienated - Suppressed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Closed/Broken Societies - Culture of silence. Fatalism/Resignation 'It must be the will of God' - Magical explanation for happenings/curses/witchcraft. - Unquestioning acceptance of explanations of those in power. - Unchanging repetition of activities to meet basic needs/traditional rituals. 	<p>Approaches that re-inforce Present Situation</p>	<p>Approaches which contribute to Transformation</p>
<p>Awakening Consciousness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Alert - Rebellious - Critical of people & events but not questioning established system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Awareness of inequality, injustice but dealing with symptoms, not root causes. - Signs of limited change. 	<p>Regrouping of people around local leaders who take over actions initiated by the community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Searching for causes of injustice. <p>Developing new patterns of decision making involving a process of joint planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enabling different groups to express their rights, expectations and reasons for action.

FIGURE 6.1 (CONT.)

<p>Reforming Consciousness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Start of struggle to improve functioning of the system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Moving from perception to analysis. 'Why do the rich get richer while the poor get poorer?' 'Why do some have so much power?' - Little questioning of pyramid structure of authority or of some ruling class value. - Struggle for power not change of structures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Large organizations with centralized authoritarian patterns of work which impose ideology on others not challenging them to think for themselves. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Action/Reflection cycle leading to constant evaluation of values, aims, strategies. - Relate struggle to process of history
<p>Liberating and Transforming Consciousness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deep questioning of old values and expression of new values. - Creative development of new types of structures expressing these values. - Personal/group involvement - guarding against new patterns of oppression. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Efficiency over-emphasis on technology. - Allowing tribal, racial or cultural differences to divide those who basically share the same interests. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Constant reflection on personal/organizational life. - Try creative new experiments. - Get rid of authoritarian structures. - Encourage participation at all levels.

Source: Reprinted from Guidelines for Development edited by Harvey L. Perkins, by permission of Christian Conference of Asia 480, Lorong 2, Toa Payloah, Singapore 1231, p.53.

In 1982 the Catholic church in Kenya, under the auspices of the Christian Development Education Service (CDES) carried out a major evaluation of their Development Education Programme⁴ (DEP) whose fundamental goal is conscientization.⁵ The major evaluation revealed that women are more concerned with problems related to basic needs than men. Of the total number of respondents, 42% of the females saw their problem as lack of basic needs as opposed to 30% of the male respondents. A further analysis revealed that women had an unbelievably naive way of looking at reality. Majority of them were in the Closed/Broken consciousness level of awareness, with only a few in the Awakening Consciousness level. The actions proposed by the women in response to the socio-economic problems and causes identified suggested very little or no change at all, such as:

"Most times I can do nothing"

"As a christian leader we should avoid
people with such injustices"

"Pray that the government debates about it
and brings change"

"Work hard"

"Be law abiding and respectful of government
leaders".

4 By then this writer was working with the Christian Development Education Programme (CDES) and was in charge of the Women's Programme at National level.

5 The English translation of the Spanish Conscientizacáo which Freire uses to refer to learning to perceive social, political and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality.

This is tantamount to endorsing an unjust situation because one believes that the way things are is ordained by God and what can one do except resign oneself to what there is and pray that things might change. The question one must ask is why should female members of a church which has advocated for social justice, a church whose head has consistently spoken out on behalf of the poor and against social injustice be so naive? Is this docility an essential characteristic of Catholic women or is it as Freire says, the fruit of an historical, sociological situation arising from a distorted view of God?

Further, when this writer was researching for this study, she experienced this fatalism on the part of the women. One of the respondents, a priest seemed to delight in this necrophilic behaviour of the women. In his own words "..... women here are generally ignorant they are too busy looking for means to satisfy the basic needs of their families to bother about the fairness or unfairness of the policies of the church. Women do not want to empower themselves for fear of ostracization. But somehow their docility is to our advantage; at least we can always count on their loyalty. If they were to be critical of all the policies that we make, some of us would have no jobs"⁶ And this is an attitude that priests have even after the Second Vatican Council and the subsequent synod(s) of Bishops asked all clergy to encourage all women to become fully active in the structures as well as the liturgical life of the church

6 He is also the Development Co-ordinator of the Diocese of Kisumu. This interview was given on 6/11/1984.

6.2 Do Women Know Their Role?

The theology of liberation is based on a method which breaks the culture of silence. To exist humanly is to name the world as Adam and Eve were commanded to do in the Garden of Eden. When the power to name is denied, consciously or unconsciously, the victims of that denial are alienated. They have no way to understand or articulate their experience and have available only the definitions (names) offered by their oppressors. This, of course, means that one ought to be able to clearly identify how one fits in the scheme of things.

All the forty women group leaders who were interviewed for this study answered, "I do not know" or "I am not sure" when asked what they saw as their role in the church. The implication here is that although women are involved in numerous socio-economic activities, they actually do not know their role in the church. The question was then altered to "What do you do?" In response they gave an array of the activities they are involved in which can be divided into three categories:

1. Economic activities: These are income generating activities such as handcrafts, bee keeping, pottery, putting up and running small kiosks, growing vegetables, tomatoes, onions etc. for the market, and buying and selling cereals.

2. Psycho-social activities: These are activities that are very valuable to the community though not tangible and not measured in monetary terms. They include services such as recognising one another's problems, helping one another with funeral arrangements and having the expenses paid for on harambee basis, working together, home visiting, showing love and concern to the handicapped, the widows and others.

3. Pastoral activities: These are church related activities such as guiding and counselling, supporting vocations to the priesthood, cleaning the church and helping bring back lapsed christians.

Looking back at Fig. 6.1 it can be seen that all the activities involved in are typical approaches of people who are in the Closed or Broken Consciousness level of awareness. In other words, the women interviewed, inspite of (or is it because of) their being loyal catholics are submerged in what Freire calls the culture of silence. This means that they are unable to critically appraise the socio-religious situation. The only transforming/aspect which the writer found was the challenging of an age old custom of inheritance of widows which the women found oppressive.

Most of the groups visited were started in the early seventy's; that is in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council. In most groups too, the initiative to come together as Catholic women and try to

formulate ways of bettering their lot came from the Father-In-Charge (Parish Priest). As has already been explained, the writer noted a considerable dependence on the priest who is seen as the advisor, the god father and in some cases the financier of the groups. It is commendable indeed that women come together to look for means and ways of uplifting their standard of life without pathetically waiting for their husbands to think for them. It is also admirable that in their endeavours, the women keep in touch with their clergy. However, too much paternalism from the priest can be very oppressive as will be discussed under the next sub-section. It can keep women in a permanent state of dependence and hence deny them the opportunity to name the world as evidenced in the following words:-

"Here we actually rely on the priest for everything to be on the safe side You see, we do not want to do wrong things, so we wait for the priest to advise us.

Asked what the group did, with their finances the same respondent said:

The priest takes it to the bank for us. We do not know those complicated procedures.⁷

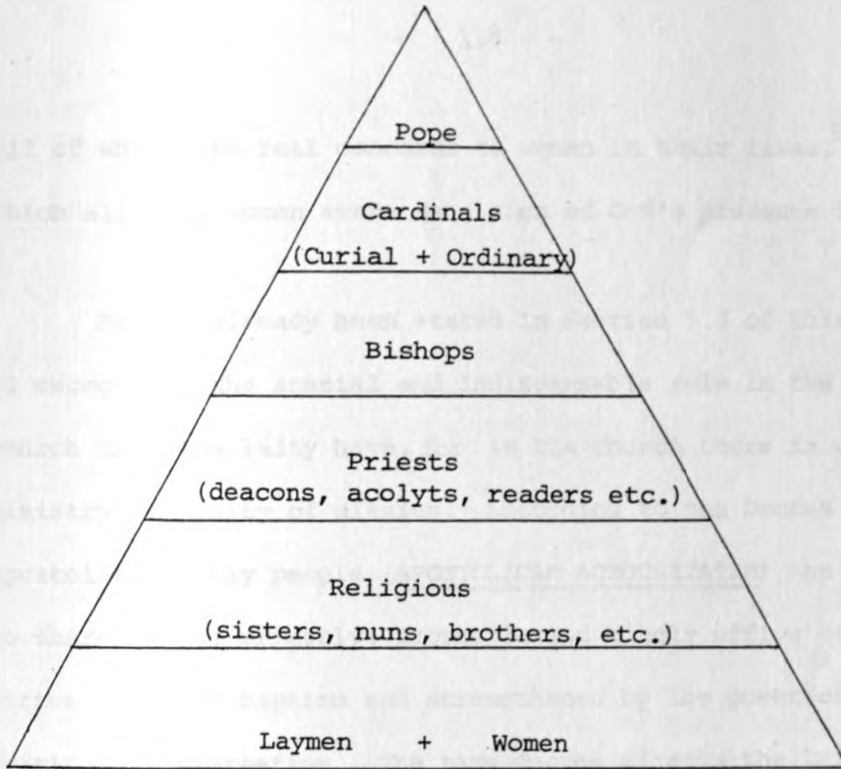
7 Interview given on 28/10.1984 at Ukwala Parish. Interviewee did not wish to have her name footnoted.

The underlying implication in these statements is that women are not confident enough to take charge of their own lives. So they wait for the all knowing priest to decide their fate. Is that the ideal relationship that the Catholic Church wants between the clergy and laity? Can women not be helped to make decisions for and by themselves?

6.3 Structures of the Catholic Church - Liberation or Oppressive?

Paulo Freire says it is illusory for one to believe that the hearts of men and women can be transformed while the (social) structures which make those hearts sick are left intact or unchanged. Admittedly, institutions are necessary for the smooth running of society. In time, however, those institutions can be dangerous; they acquire a life of their own, require stability and protection to grow and so gradually become rigid and eventually begin to support the status quo. The Catholic Church is structured thus:⁸

8 See also 2.6 for a detailed account of the organization of the Catholic Church.



At the base of the pyramid are the laity, who even literally speaking are really the base of the church. The point to note however is that all members of the hierarchy are male; and it should be added they are all supposed to be celibate. Yet they make the decisions and policies that must be followed by the laity. The question that springs to mind is whether decisions which concern the lives of men, women and children should be made exclusively by male celibates. This is problematic in areas such as sexual ethics, birth control, abortion, divorce, the whole question of marriage, the unmarried mother and others,

all of which are real concerns to women in their lives.⁹ Can structures which alienate women serve as a sign of God's presence in our world?

As has already been stated in Section 5.3 of this study, Vatican II recognised the special and indispensable role in the mission of the church that the laity have, for in the church there is diversity of ministry but unity of mission. According to the Decree on the apostolate of lay people (APOSTOLICAM ACTUOSITATEM) the laity are made to share in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ by virtue of their baptism and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit in confirmation. The same decree directs the laity whether coming from their own accord or in response to an invitation to action and direct co-operation with the hierarchical apostolate to act under the superior direction of the hierarchy, which can authorise this co-operation besides, with an explicit mandate. The hierarchy's duty is to favour the lay apostolate, furnish it with principles and spiritual assistance, direct the exercise of the apostolate to the

9 While researching for this study, the writer came across a case of institutionalised insensitivity to women. In preparation for the forthcoming Eucharistic Congress (which will be held in August 1985) in one parish, an elderly man was asked to divorce his second wife though they had stayed together for many years and she was at an advanced age. This was a sign that he is a faithful Catholic ready to attend the Congress whose theme is the Eucharist and the Christian family. This means that in the mind of the clergy, the successful holding of the Eucharistic Congress is more important than the welfare of this elderly woman. But is the Eucharistic Congress really the need of this woman? This is only one case, there could have been many more in other parishes which this writer did not get to hear of.

common good of the Church and see to it that doctrine and order are safeguarded.¹⁰ In other words, it is for the clergy to pass judgement on the authenticity and good use of the gifts of the laity, certainly not with a view to quenching the spirit but to testing everything and keeping what is good. On paper, these are excellent intentions. However, in practice, they can be and have been problematic. The reason has been the character and the level of awareness of the clergy.

The Diocese of Kisumu has twenty one mission priests; half of these are conservative catholics. They are missionaries in the worst sense whose occupation is winning of souls with emphasis on sin, hell-fire and eternal damnation. In thought and deed they behave as if they never heard of Vatican II. These priests are less likely to take seriously suggestions made by lay men, even more less lay women on how to run their Church. An interview with one of the Deanery Women leaders revealed that in some parishes, the clergy accused women of being materialistic and engaging themselves in worldly activities. She said:

The priest does not think much of our activities. He thinks all we are interested in is money, money, money He says that we are not even proper Catholics because we are wives of polygamists.

10 Flannery, Op. Cit., p.363.

11 Interview given on 28/10/84 at Ukwala Parish . Interviewee did not want to be footnoted.

A deeper analysis revealed that the priests were actually angry at the women for deciding to open their own post office savings account rather than let the priests keep their monies for them. This research suggests that priests actually like to patronise women and keep them dependent on them.

Another factor which is a pointer to the difficult relations that exist between priests and lay women is the training of the priests. What is it that our priests have been taught which makes them uncomfortable in the presence of women?¹² Our priests are well read in the writings of the ages of early Church Fathers and Scholasticism. St. Paul held that God commanded woman to be totally subject to man as a punishment for bringing sin into the world and tempting Adam to eat the forbidden fruit. He tries to prove the inferiority of women from the story of creation (cf. 1 Tim 2:11 - 15).¹³ The early Church fathers deepened and broadened this idea that Eve was left to bear responsibility for the fall of man.¹⁴ It is important to note that the Patristic

12 This attitude is not very prevalent in the younger priests.

13 Paul neatly glossed over the fact that there are two accounts of creation one of which views the creation of women as co-equal with that of man cf. Gen. 1:26 - 2:4.

14 A very brief review of the writings of Church Fathers as regards women will be found at the end of this Chapter. See also George Tavard, Women in Christian Tradition, (University of Notre Dane Press, 1973); E. Clark and H. Richardson, Women and Religion, (Harper and Row, 1977) ch. 5 - 7; Rosemary R. Ruether, "Mirogynism and Virginal Feminism in the Fathers of the Church," Religion and Sexism, pp.150 - 184.

writers were obsessed with woman as the eternal seductress. They seemed to have little confidence that men would be any more successful than Adam in resisting woman's wiles. The emphasis on celibacy stemmed from the strong ascetic influence on the early Church and the concomitant assertion that chastity was the most perfect expression of the christian life. The Fathers projected all their fears that men could not or would not live up to the celibate ideal, onto women who as the daughters of Eve were destined to repeat forever the betrayal of mankind. In the Middle Ages, Catholic philosophers incorporated portions of ancient philosophy particularly, Aristotelianism into Christian theology.¹⁵ Aristotle's views on women reinforced the negative attitudes toward women and originated in the Patristic period. In deceptively scientific terms, Aristotle stated as fact certain ideas that were embedded in Christian thought on theological grounds. For instance, in The Generation of Animals, Aristotle explained the process of reproduction and carefully differentiated between the male and female roles. According to Aristotle the mother's function is completely passive. She supplies the matter for the child's body and serves as an incubator until the time of birth. The father on the other hand plays an active role, initiating the process with his semen and giving the child his form of soul. Since all matter moves from incompleteness toward its form and since the human form comes from the male, all children should logically speaking be boys. There are however cases of deviation or deformity and woman is

15 The convergence of theology and philosophy, of revelation and science made the ideas all that much more persuasive and increased their hold on the medieval mind.

one of them., albeit, one required by nature for the preservation of the species. Given this biological doctrine it is not surprising that Aristotle regarded the domination of man over woman as part of the natural hierarchy or that he allotted her, in keeping with her lower position, a smaller portion of either reason or moral virtue.¹⁶

Medieval literature abounds with the tales of female saints and holy maidens who willingly faced disapproval fortune and death to preserve their chastity. In the case of male saints and holy figures, temptation came to them not in the form of particular threats to their celibacy as the women faced but as the more diffuse danger that came from living in a world inhabited by women whose very existence bred sin and corruption. Jerome, Anthony, Benedict and early hermits literally fled into the wilderness to avoid them. Origen castrated himself to escape danger.

Later on as the celebration of the Eucharist which is the powerful unifying centre of Catholic life began to be viewed not as a love-celebration but as a sacrifice, the notion of ritual purity¹⁷ in

16 This discussion is also found in Harris, B.J., Beyond her sphere: Women and the professions in American history,

See also Maryanne Clife Harowitz, "Aristotle on Women" *Journal of the History of Biology* a (fall 1976) pp.183 - 213 for a complete scholarly discussion of Aristotle's views on women.

17 Benard Prusak's analysis is that women became scapegoats for evil in the Patriarchal world because of the awe and mystery surrounding procreation and birth. Males rationalized their sexual-procreational dependence on women by making them subordinate, then justified this denoting them as the source of evil. This elaborated in the formulation of Jewish law, in which women were unclean and able to contaminate men (especially priests) during menstruation and after giving birth. Jewish women thus spent a good portion of their lives in an unclean state. This impurity was viewed as an excuse for denying women a role in Jewish religious life: not only were they barred from the priesthood they were denied admission to the sanctuary because they might be menstruating! These concepts were not original to Israel, but were continuations of ancient myths identifying women with chaos, darkness, mystery, earthly matter and s

the sacrifice re-surfaced in Christianity and coupled with the sentiments that have just been discussed above gave rise to a priesthood that was to be perpetually celibate, whereby male priests had to avoid contaminating contact with women who are by nature impure - and this state is unchanged by baptism! So women are to be excluded from a central role in worship and therefore from exercising authority in the Church, an exclusion which has effectively silenced the voice of Catholic Women to this day. One priest was of the opinion that:

Women are o.k. as members of the congregation; as people you preach to and minister to but sharing the priesthood with women, NO WAY!¹⁸

Anga yawa!

Liberation is not only the concern of women. Liberation is to awaken and open one's own eyes; to awaken and open the eyes of others and together with them to construct a new society and with it the new man and the new woman as evidenced in the relations that Jesus himself had with the men and women who accompanied him and listened to his teachings.

In the 1982 Major Evaluation that has already been referred to elsewhere in Section 6.1 DEP members were asked what they see as the role of the Church in the process of earthly transformation, given

18 Interview given on 6/1/85 at Kibuye Mission. See also Appendix C3.

The teams and grassroots leaders from the Diocese of Kisumu particularly were most supportive of the Church as it is. Two women however emphasized that:

"Since people are recognising that the Church belongs to all Christians and not just to the priests, sisters and bishops, there should be greater openness within the Church. There should also be more consultation between the clergy and the community.²⁰

Early 1985, this writer was trying to find out the reason for this apparent apathy on the part of Catholic women. She attended four masses and noticed that even when the women were asked to help in functions of the Eucharistic celebration, like distributing communion, they were reluctant to do so. Asked why, some responded:

".... you mean we can do it?"

"But that is the Holy Eucharist, we cannot touch it just like that"

"The sisters (nuns) should do it"

"But we are not ordained".

20 Interview given on 8/3/82 during the Major Evaluation of the Development Education Programme.

Others answered cynically "That is the job of the priest, he is ordained to do that. Ours is to listen and receive ..." The question one asks is why women do not want to empower themselves, at least in the spirit of Vatican II.

6.4 Suggestions

Several explanations can be given as to why women are reluctant to empower themselves in the spirit of Vatican II.

A. Community Life and Information

In a bureaucratic structure such as the Catholic Church, communication is usually top-down though occasionally the hierarchy may consult the laity if only to give the latter the illusion of participation in decision making. As has already been stated, Catholic women have been on the receiving end of decisions made by the hierarchy for so long that they have tended to regard it as the normal order of things. Nevertheless, the flow of information is short circuited along the line. All but one of the women interviewed for this study had not seen, let alone read and studied the documents that we have discussed in Chapter Five. Secondly, Catholic women are caught up in their own socio-economic woes, they barely have the time to stop and reflect on what is handed down to them from the top. How can this be corrected?

1. The Pope is after all, the spiritual head of all Catholics and his insights can only be meaningful if they are known and understood by all Catholics. In the Diocese of Kisumu there are a number of small Christian Communities (Duols). These small Christian communities which are mostly comprised of women could go a step further from being prayer groups to study groups. This would enable Catholic women to inform themselves and also reflect on the policies of their Church.

2. These small Christian Communities can also serve as decision making bodies for the parishes.

3. These small Christian Communities can also serve as advisory bodies at the grassroots level to the Justice and Peace Commission. This way women would be enabled to articulate the various issues of injustice that affect them and suggest ways as to how the Church could assist them.

B. Ministry and Worship

The Church cannot afford to continue preaching the equality of all human beings and races in Christ and yet allow its practices to be a living contradiction to this truth. In this context, how can the Catholic Church better help members to see themselves and their Church as agents of a liberating God who demands not only charity but also social justice?

1. It is an imperative for the Church to regain a wide concept of ministry which is not narrowed by the jurisdictional inhibitions of those who cannot recognize a ministry unless it is institutionalized by the formal authorization of a bishop. Since ministry responds to a variety of charisms and personal abilities, the Church should guard against the institutionalization of all the ministries of the Church. The Catholic hierarchy is always tempted to admit other ministries only if they have been institutionalized and brought within the hierarchical system and made into instruments of the hierarchy. Hence the feeling that the only ministry worth exercising is an ordained one; and only men can be and are ordained!!

2. The Catholic Church would do well to de-mystify both the role and function of a priest. In a Church that places so much importance on Sacraments, there should be a way of organising itself in such a way that all members participate fully in sacrament life. In this respect there is a need to re-consider the whole institution of priesthood. Following the teachings of the Council of Trent, Catholics have spoken of the institution of the priesthood at the Last Supper.¹⁸ However as R.E. Brown points out, the

18 Trent "If anyone shall say that by the words 'Do this for a commemoration of me' Christ did not institute the apostles, priests, let him be anathema. (Denzinger-Schonmetzer 1752).

Fathers of Trent did not distinguish between the Jesus of historical ministry and the developed Christological picture of Jesus presented in the Gospel accounts of the ministry written thirty to sixty years later: thus they did not speak simply of Jesus but of Christ but Catholics would have to acknowledge that the divinity of Jesus was recognised after the Ressurrection and that eventually it was this fuller appreciation of Jesus as the Christ, the son of God, that was made part of the Gospel accounts of his ministry. Therefore, the institution of priests by Christ as taught by Trent which cites words reported by Luke and Paul (but not by Mark and Matthew) may imply more than was apparent at the historical Last Supper.¹⁹

3. The Catholic Church is faced with a situation whereby the number and morale of priests is declining whilst the population of Christians is increasing. This calls for a rethink of the whole concept of ministry. Women are today called to every side of the ministry - Kerygma, Diakonia, Koinonia - It is a shame for the Christian community and for men and women that they should still largely be confined or feel themselves confined to one or two traditional forms of insitutionalised work. In this respect, the possibility

19 See Raymond E. Brown, Roles of Women in the Fourth Gospel, (Gaba Publications, 1975) Reprints Noll142.

of women priests cannot be overlooked. No convincing argument has been found against the ordination of a woman. In the past generation of Christians, the question hardly arose because of a whole pattern of society and the position of women in it. Today, however, the question cannot be overruled, not only because of growing changes in the world but also because of changes that have already taken place and/or are now rapidly taking place within the Church.

C. Structure and Organization

We recognize that living in community always involves the exercise of authority and the structuring of life together. We are convinced that as Christians we have, in the life, ministry and teachings of Christ and the demands of the Kingdom of God, a particular understanding of power and authority and of the structuring of the Church's life. The structures of the Church should be those which enable each individual to use their talents to the full. As has already been indicated the structures of the Catholic Church make it virtually impossible for women to participate fully in the life of the Church, because they are based on the principle of inequality. How can this be rectified?

1. Some of the suggestions that were made in Section A and B also apply here such as the empowerment of small Christian Communities. The formation of Small Christian

Communities is in itself a structural revolution.

The small Christian communities should enable corporate decision making by the whole people of God as well as provide for maximum participation for people in the life of the Church. Thus empowerment involves more than decision making; it involves the preparation of Christian women and men for Christian life, witness and ministry.

2. The structure of the Catholic Church needs to be liberated from anti-Christian cultural values and reshaped by the values of the gospel. It should not impose importations from another culture and context.

3. The structure of the Catholic Church should be in-built checks and balances against the concentration of power in persons and roles. Consequently, the Church would do well to put less stress on uniformity and unquestioned obedience to Rome. While it is essential that the unity of faith be maintained, the docility to Rome remains strong in some senior hierarchs. Some local hierarchs, clergy and people are so Rome oriented that they may do next to nothing if they are not clearly directed from Rome. This is problematic especially since Rome may not be conversant with the particular and specific problems affecting women here in Kenya. Hence directives from Rome become to say the least, oppressive but they cannot be challenged due to the structures of authority and power. Needless to say,

this is not really the spirit of Jesus, for whom the criterion for primacy in the kingdom of God, as distinct from the Church, is not ecclesiastical authority or power but total dependence on God whence the model of the little child (cf. Jn 18:1 - 4).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study has sought to examine the role of women in the Catholic church in Kenya by identifying and analysing the dynamics of the religious organization of both the traditional Luo society and the Roman Catholic Church.

The method adopted for this study has been both analytical and synthetical. It is analytical in the sense that an analysis of oral and documentary evidence has been made to support the central argument that lay women in the Catholic Church have been relegated to a subordinate position. Over the ages women have been made to accept their subordinate position as God given and they have perpetuated that image of themselves. In order to participate effectively in the church and other spheres of life, Catholic women need to liberate themselves from a negative view of themselves and then work towards transforming the attitudes of the clergy and the whole structure of the Catholic Church.

This study is synthetical because an attempt has been made to synthesize many ideas, in order to justify the hypotheses being tested, and to add relevant interpretations and applications to the theme of study.

Broadly a number of issues have been raised in the study. First the origin of the subordination of women has been traced to the patriarchal system of society. Both the socio-economic and the

religious systems that are operative in society were set up and propounded by men, for the advantage of man.

The traditional Luo society which we have studied was both patrilineal and patrilocal. This means that the place, role and value system of women was defined by men. The interplay between political, social and religious forces made it impossible for women to have any decision-making roles even in religious matters. Consequently, a female sub-culture of cults emerged, as has already been described, as a protest movement against male dominance.

Our analysis of the organization of the Catholic Church revealed that the Catholic church continued this oppressive pattern of women. The Roman Catholic system has been similarly set up and propounded by men. Decisions that affect the lives of men, women and children are made by an exclusively male and celibate clergy. Apparently the only new element the Roman system has provided as far as the question of women is concerned is a new technique of praying to God and a more sophisticated form of oppression.

An appreciation has been made, however, of the fact that the Catholic church, as one of the modernizing agents made it possible for women to break out of the traditional set up - as to whether this has been for the better or for the worse is another matter.

Finally, it has been appreciated too that the aim of the Roman Catholic church really has been to preach the Good News to all peoples - following in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ - so that all men and women may come to know the one and true God who gives life and gives it abundantly (cf. Jn 10:10). Developments towards this goal have been analysed by studying the liberation movement in Latin America which houses one third of the world's 810 million Catholics and the role of the Catholic church in that movement which has sought to remove the political and socio-economic structures that make it impossible for men and women to have the "abundant life".

Further we have also looked at the various encyclicals written by the Popes during and after Vatican II. These encyclicals reveal the progressive vision that their writers have of the world at large and the church specifically, particularly the recognition they make of the importance of women and the specific mention they make of the importance of including women in the various power structures that be. Nevertheless, the roles and relations between members of the hierarchy and women, the attitudes that members of the hierarchy have about women and the attitudes that women have about themselves, seems to be an underlying factor in the whole process of the liberation of women in the Catholic Church in Kenya.

In the course of the study a few hypotheses were put to the test and conclusion reached. The assertion that women in the Catholic church do not even know their role, inspite of their being asked to be more active in the church, leads one to ask: How is it that women who are

in the majority and the more faithful adherents to the Catholic faith do not really know their role? In the light of this realization then what does the Catholic hierarchy mean when it urges women in a general council such as Vatican II to participate more in the life of the church without defining what that participation should be? As has already been described, our research revealed that majority of Catholic women do not really know their role in the church. Further, they are not even eager or encouraged to explore and venture into areas that have for a long time been considered the domain of the clergy.

Liberation theologians affirm that the process of liberation cannot even begin to take place until one is able to name one's world. Unless a people become aware of their position, they cannot tell what is wrong with their system and therefore are not able to participate meaningfully in the process of transformation.

To help us understand better the hypotheses that Catholic women have been subjugated for too long, they are not even aware of it; we adopted a schema on the levels of consciousness from Paulo Freire who himself has worked with the oppressed in Latin America. Freire explains the process of liberation by dividing human consciousness into four levels as can be seen on the schema on pages 109 - 110. We have already seen that majority of Catholic women in the Diocese of Kisumu are at the first level of consciousness. They have an unbelievably naive way of explaining the causes and effects of the goings on around them

that they attribute everything to the will of God or witchcraft. In other words Catholic women are really ignorant of the socio-economic forces that are at play in the society. It should be remembered that the whole process of liberation necessitates one to make a critical analysis of one's situation. They have been kept that way by the patronizing attitude of the members of the hierarchy. They have become mystified and submissive. Freire maintains that submissiveness or docility, a word that men have so much used to describe women, is not a character trait. It is a result of an oppressive social and economic system that has kept people submerged in a culture of silence. One then wonders how Catholic women have been so effectively kept submerged in this culture of silence.

The answer lies in our third hypothesis, that the structure(s) of the Catholic church is in itself oppressive. The organization of the Catholic church has already been described in Chapter 2. It is evident that it is an organization that requires blind obedience to the policies and rules that are laid down by the hierarchy in Rome. This becomes problematic especially when male celibates lay down rules of governance on issues that affect women and require blind obedience from those very women who may be more knowledgeable than the law makers in Rome. The current debate going on in Kenya about family planning and birth control is such an example. Catholic women in this country are in two minds as to whether to obey the wishes of their country's leaders or those in Rome. All in all, the rigorous running of the Catholic church amounts to spiritual totalitarianism.

We have already stated that there have been Popes who are well intentioned like John XXIII, and John Paul I. But the Latin American experience teaches us that good intentions are not enough. While a change of heart is a very necessary step in the process of liberation, it is also important to go to the root cause of the problem. For a structural problem such as the oppression of women in the Catholic church, it is necessary to create new structures that will not be alienating and oppressive; structures that will enable men and women to participate actively in the shaping of their destiny so that they can have the "abundant life" that is the gift from God.

In conclusion we want to say that this study has been an attempt to contribute to the universal struggle of the liberation of men and women from all kinds of oppression. It is not an exhaustive study of the position of Catholic women in Kenya. It is hoped that more researchers and scholars will throw more light on the question of women in religion. Liberation is a continuous process. It was started by the Lord Jesus Christ himself who quoting from Isaiah declared his mission as being:

..... to bring good news to the poor
To heal the broken-hearted
to announce release to captives and
recover of sight to the blind; to set
free the oppressed and announce that the
time has come when the Lord will save his
people ... (Isaiah 61:1 - 2 cf. Lk.4: 18 - 19).

APPENDIX I

PATRISTIC AND SCHOLASTIC WRITINGS ON WOMEN

Every woman should be overwhelmed with shame at the very thought that she is a woman. St. Clement.

Women should dress in mourning to expiate the sin of Eve and should wear veils to avoid tempting men...You are the gate of hell, you guided that which broke the seals of the forbidden tree; you were the first who violated the Divine Law: you were the one who corrupted him whom the devil did not dare to corrupt; you finally were the reason that Jesus Christ had to die.

Tertulian, De Cultn Fem. 1.1

..... When she is referred to separately in her quality as a helpmate, which regards the woman alone, then she is not the image of God, but, as regards the man alone, he is the image of God as fully and completely as when the woman too is joined with him in one.

Augustine, De Trinitate, 12.7, 10

Woman is said to be a misbegotten male, as being a product outside the purpose of nature considered in the individual case, but not against the purpose of universal nature woman is a frustrated man and the soul of the female is not infused until fifty days after conception

Thomas Aquinas, 1, 99, 2 ad 1.

The gravity of a sin depends on the species rather than on circumstances of that sin. Accordingly we must assert that if we consider the condition attaching to these persons, the man's sin is the more grievous because he was more perfect than the woman.

Thomas Aquinas, II, II, 164, 4.

APPENDIX II

The following is a statement issued by Roman Catholic participants in Forum '85 addressed to the Vatican Delegation to the UN Conference.

At Forum '85, Roman Catholic Women from every continent have participated in workshops, dialogues and informal gatherings, to examine the themes of the Decade on Women: equality, development and peace. In this process, we shared a common experience of discrimination against women in our Church. We are of the same mind on the following points:

- (1) The Church encourages women to take their place in the world but not in the Church: Women are not allowed to preach; women are excluded from decision-making, especially when the issues affect women directly; women theologians are not invited to serve equally with men on theological commissions.

- (2) We, women of the Church, can speak for ourselves. It is offensive that the head of our church's delegation to the UN concluding conference on the Decade for women is a man.

- (3). We ask that women be included equally with men, in the synod scheduled for this fall and in the synod on the laity in 1987.
- (4). We ask the Vatican to join those nations that have already ratified the Declaration on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women. We concur that the failure of the Roman Catholic Church to uphold the human rights of women within its own structures and practices undermines the call of church for justice in our world.

Appendix III

Sample of the questionnaires used

Questionnaires were sent to two groups of people, namely, Women Group Leaders and members of the clergy who are in charge of women activities. In some cases I had to meet the respondents in person and request for an interview. Some respondents, for instance, the Development Coordinator of Kisumu Diocese had not replied because he did not understand my reasons for singling out women. So I had to try and convince him that my motives were honourable. Similarly, the Vicar-General could not respond because the kind of information I was asking for would have required him to dig into files dating back to the beginning of the century and he did not have the time for the exercise. Nevertheless, the interviews turned out to be a very viable source of information in addition to the questionnaires. The questionnaires were designed to bring out the facts about women's position as well as their attitudes and perceptions.

A. Questionnaire for Women Group Leaders

Section 1. Personal Information

Name

Age

Occupation

Section 2. General Information

1. When did you become the leader of this group?
2. What made you take up this role?

3. What kind of assistance have you received from the parish priest (father-in-charge) in the course of your work?

4. Do you feel that the church hierarchy in this diocese has been supportive of your work in general?

Yes _____ No. _____

Please explain your answer.

Do you have any other comments on the relationship between yourself and members of the clergy?

Section 3: Decision-Making

1. What kind of activities is your group involved in? Mention 5 in order of importance.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

2. Do you initiate the activities or do you usually wait for direction from the priest?

never	rarely	sometimes	usually	always

1	2	3	4	5

3. Who decides what you should do as the leader of the group?

4. Members of the clergy are _____ receptive to my ideas

never	not usually	usually	nearly always	always
1	2	3	4	5

Section 4: Level of Awareness

1. What do you see as the role of women in the church today?

2. What do you think of the documents of Vatican II?

3. What do you think is required of you in the church as a Catholic woman?

4. Are you satisfied with the level at which you are participating in the life of the church?

Yes _____ No _____

Give reasons for your answer.

What are your suggestions for improvement?

B. Questionnaire for clergy in charge of women's activities

Section 1: Personal information

Name

Clerical Position

Age

Year of Priestly ordination

Section 2: On women

1. What do you see as the role of women in the church today?
2. In the documents of Vatican II and other encyclicals such as Pacem in Terris, Gaudium et Spes, Octogesima Adveinens, the Holy Fathers teach, among other things, that women be allowed to actively participate in the life of the church.
How has your diocese (the church in Kenya) responded to this?
(Give practical illustrations)

3. The synod of Bishops that met in Yaounde (1981) advised that appropriate structures which enhance women's participation in the church be created.

Does this diocese (the church in Kenya) consciously create and enhance structures that allow women to be actively involved in the life of the church? Give examples.

4. Who decides on what women groups should be formed, where they should be formed, what activities to be involved in and what assistance (financial or otherwise) should be given?

5. In my opinion, the Catholic Church in Kenya is not discriminative to women as such; but in most cases women are ignorant of what is required of them as Catholic women.

Would you agree?

Yes _____

No _____

Give reasons for your answer.

6. If your answer to question 5 is yes; what do you recommend be done in order to correct the situation?

7. Do you ~~ever~~ feel that women in your diocese are excessively dependent on members of the clergy?

Yes _____

No _____

Do you have any other comments on the relationship between women and members of the clergy in your diocese?

8. What is your position on the ordination of women to the priesthood or diaconate?

9. If women were ordained to the priesthood what would you envisage as appropriate supportive structures in which they would work?
10. Are you satisfied with the role women are playing in the church at the moment?

Yes _____

No _____

What suggestions do you have for improvement? (Give 5)

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Section 3: Population

What is the size of the Diocese in terms of:

- a. Africans
1. No. of priests
- b. Expartriates
- a. Male
2. No. of Christians
- b. Female
3. No. of parishes
4. No. of small Christian communities (Dnols)

C. Guiding questions for Women Group Members (Interview)

1. When was this group formed?
2. What are the reasons that led to its formation?
3. Have those reasons been realised to date?
If yes - in what way?
If not - why not?
4. Who initiated the formation of the group?
5. What kind of activities are you involved in as a group?
6. Who decides what activities should be carried out? On what basis are the decisions made?
7. How do you as a group arrive at the decisions of what should be done?
8. What are some of the hindering and helping forces in the carrying out of your activities?

(a) Hindering

b) Helping

9. Do you receive any support from the parish priest? What kind?
10. Do you generally feel that members of the clergy have been receptive to your ideas?
11. Are you satisfied with the role you are playing in the church at the moment?
12. What do you see generally as the role of women in the church today?

APPENDIX IVSAMPLE ROLL OF INFORMANTSA. Women Group Leaders

A1. Margaret Amol (several times)

Margaret Amol is the co-ordinator and training officer of the Women's Programme in Siaya Deanery. She has been actively engaged in the activities for the advancement of women almost since she left school in the late seventies. She does not belong to any religious congregation of nuns but she has devoted her life to the cause of serving the church and the betterment of women generally as an unmarried lay woman. Ms Amol is a member of the Grail Movement; an international movement founded by women whose pre-occupation is to work and provide opportunities for the betterment of women all over the world. Says Ms Amol: "It is not enough to be just a woman in the Catholic Church; you are expected to be either attached to some man as his wife, or to a religious congregation as a nun which is regarded by the church as a higher station of life than marriage. The ordained clergy do not know what to do with women like us who do not seem to belong anywhere".

A.2. Rose Ogwel. (5/10/84 and 6/10/84)

Like Ms Amol, Rose Ogwel is a member of the Grail Movement, so ipso facto, she is involved in the advancement of women not only in the church but also in other spheres of life. Secondly, she is

the co-ordinator and chief training officer of the Women's Programme in the whole diocese of Kisumu.

3. A.3. Dorsilla Onyango (12/10/84)

Unlike the other two, Ms. Onyango is a married woman. She is the Diocesan representative to the Kenya National Council of Catholic Women and hence the chairperson of the Council of Catholic Women in the Diocese. She expressed her feelings and insights into working as a woman in the traditional catholic structures.

4. A.4. Galdencia Achieng (12/10/84). She is the co-ordinator of Women's programme in Kisumu Deanery.

5. A.5. Mary Anino (12/10/84)

Ms. Anino is the secretary to the Council of Catholic Women Organization in the diocese of Kisumu. Apart from working for the Catholic Women Organization, Mary is a teacher and has a full time job as a headmistress of a primary school.

6. A.6. Justine Obiero 11/10/84

Ms. Obiero is the treasurer to the Council of Catholic Women Organization in the diocese of Kisumu. She also has a full time job as a teacher.

7. A.7 Margaret Banda (11/10/84)

She is a community health worker for Segwa and Ukwala parishes. She deals mostly with women in her job.

9. A.8. Margaret Oula (12/10/84)

Ms. Oyula is a very active women. Apart from her involvement with women groups activities in the diocese, she too is a teacher and has a full time job as headmistress of a primary school. She is also the netball coach for the entire district of Siaya.

B. Women Group Members

9. B1. Mary Anne (30/10/84)

The oldest member of one of the women groups in Segá Parish. She once belonged to a religious order but she dropped out. Now in her late seventies, she lives in the mission and relies entirely on the assistance of members of the Union of Catholic Mothers (U.C.M.) who feed her, clothe her and make her feel that she still is an important person in the eyes of God. She is a typical example of a displaced woman; there was a tinge of bitterness against the organization of the church as she told her story.

10. B2. Perpetual Anyango (28/10/84)

Ms. Onyango is a very young women. She is the co-ordinator of the Girls' Education for Life Programme (GELP) which is a project of the Grail Movement in Siaya Deanery. Though she is young and has not worked within the church structures for long, she already feels that somewhere along the line things are not all that good. She says, "these priests think we cannot do anything by ourselves except mess up our lives."

11. B3. Cecilia Auma (30/10/84)

She is the chairperson of the Union of Catholic Mothers (U.C.M.) in Segá parish. Cecilia is satisfied generally with the whole setup of the Catholic church. She says that she would not feel comfortable anywhere else other than in the Catholic church.

12. B4. Cecilia Sewe (30/10/84)

She is a nursery school teacher. Cecilia is also a village community health worker. Village community health workers usually have at least ten homes to supervise. The job is mainly voluntary.

13. B5. Gertrude Aketch (30/10/84)

She is a farmer and a member of the village health committee.

14. B6. Jane Ogolla (30/10/84)

Ms. Ogolla is a nursery school teacher and a village health worker.

She is employed by Segia parish.

15. B7. Bertha Auma (30/10/84)

Bertha Auma is a housewife but she finds time to engage in diocesan activities.

16. B8. Hellen Nyanjaya (30/10/84)

Ms. Nyanjaya is a devoted mother and housewife.

17. B9. Herenia Abiero (30/10/84)

She is a housewife and also a member of the village health committee.

18. B10. Veronica Owako (30/10/84)

Veronica is a member of the village social welfare committee and a housewife.

19. B11. Margaret Apondi (30/10/84)

She is a housewife and a member of the women's group in Ukwala parish.

C. Members of the Clergy

20. C1. Fr. John Mak'Opiyo (Several times)

He is the Development Co-ordinator of the whole of the Development Education Programme (DEP) in the Diocese of Kisumu. He has served as a priest for sixteen years and therefore is able to assess the position of

women vis-aviz the clergy. It is from him that I learnt of the attitude that the priests have towards women. In his own words..."it is good for us; we like to keep them that way because if women were seriously to begin questioning their role, they would create a power structure that we cannot compete with..."

On the other hand Fr. Mak'Opiyo also pointed out that "women do not want to empower themselves because (1) they are ignorant and (2) fear of ostracization by other members of the community." He noted that women have actually been oppressed for so long that they do not even know their oppressors...they are fighting one another instead of fighting the real oppressor.

21. C2. Bishop Silas Njiru

He is the Bishop of the Catholic diocese of Meru. He is also the Bishop Chairman of the Lay Apostolate department of the Kenya Episcopal Conference. He did not actually respond to the questionnaire that was sent to him for this study. But I worked with him when I was National Training Officer of the Women's Programme and I found him very supportive of women's programmes and sympathetic towards the women's cause.

22. C3. Fr. Marcelus Auja

He is one of the youngest priests in the diocese and has been ordained only three years. Unfortunately, he is the epitome of the typical Catholic clergyman. He told me "Women are O.K. as members of the congregation; as people you preach to and minister to ... but sharing the priesthood with women, NO WAY!"

23. C4. Fr. Bernard Verhy (6/1/85)

He is the Vicar-General of the diocese of Kisumu. He was kind enough to let me go through the files and records of the diocese in trying to help me map out the growth of the Catholic church.

24. C5. Bishop Zacchaeus Okoth

He is the bishop of the diocese of Kisumu as well as the chairman of the Department of Development and Social Services in the Kenya Catholic Secretariat. He did not respond to my questionnaire, neither did he consent to an interview but he referred me to his assistants in the Kenya Catholic Secretariat for any information I might need.

Note: This sample roll is only meant to give the reader an idea of the type of people interviewed during this research. Giving a mere list of names and dates will be rather long and boring. At the same time, many of the informants were not willing to have their names mentioned. Further, it was not possible to get the names of all those who participated in the group interviews. The outstanding informants are mentioned in the text and footnoted accordingly.

APPENDIX V

GLOSSARY

- Apostolate - the whole process of the Mission of Christ and participation in it by ordination and mission; baptism and confirmation, vocation and special gifts.
- Lay Apostolate - Unordained who practice close imitation of Christ.
- Encyclical - a formal pastoral letter written by the Pope for the entire church on some theological, moral or social subject.
- Church - a whole community of believers or faithful christians. In this thesis it refers to members of the Roman Catholic Church.
A Church is also a house of prayer.
- Diocese - territorial district governed by a Bishop. It is often comprised of several parishes.
- Parish - an area assigned by a bishop to a resident priest. Where there are more than one priest the one in charge is also known as parish priest or father-in-charge.

- Hierarchy** - literally means administration of sacred things.
In the Christian church it signifies the presiding officer. In common usage it refers to the bishops within a national territory.
- Vicariate** - a missionary field under the jurisdiction of a Vicar Apostolic.
- Vicar Apostolic** - titular bishop in an area where the normal hierarchy has not been established. He performs the spiritual functions of a diocesan bishop and has delegated powers.
- Deanery** - for easier administration, a diocese is usually divided into smaller regions. One of these regions (usually comprising several parishes is called a deanery.)

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The people interviewed and/or given questionnaires included:

Women Group Leaders

Women Group Members

Members of the Clergy (Priests and Bishops)

Others (a few lay men).

Although I have mentioned some of the informants in the footnotes, most of my good informants were not keen that I mention their names. A select sample of those who had no objection regarding my listing their names appears in Appendix III.

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