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EAST AFRICANA COLLECTION

4 THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE  
ANGLICAN CHURCH IN UGANDA, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO  
NAMIREMBE DIOCESE. 4

by

*S. Namusoke*

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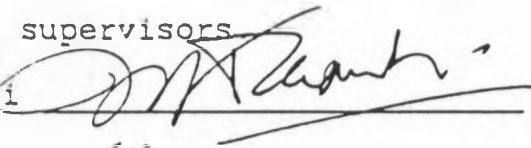
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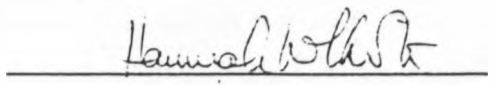
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Dedication.

Dedicated in the memory of my late father who taught me many things, some of which did not have any clear meaning at that time, but are coming to a reality now, one by one.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are so many people that I am grateful to for their contribution to the success of this work. I am sure I cannot put on record all their names.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study on the role that women play in the administration of the Anglican Church in Uganda, with particular reference to Namirembe diocese. It analyses the participation of women in the church's administration and the factors that affect it.

This study was carried out mainly because of the increased awareness of the importance of women in the development process throughout the world, as well as the increased concern about the minimal participation of women in the decision-making bodies - both in governments and non-governmental organizations. In the church, the on-going debate on the ordination of women to priesthood reflects this concern.

The basic objectives of the study were mainly to find out whether women's participation in the administration of the church has been influenced by the Bible, which is the basis of the church; and also by African cultures in which the church was planted. It was also intended to find out how the nature of the administrative structure has influenced the participation of women within it.

The field research for this study was carried out in

Namirembe diocese, with the intention to find out people's views about the role of women in the church, particularly in administration. Three categories of people were interviewed - the clergy, lay-women and lay-men. Some church records were also studied and some meetings attended with the purpose of ascertaining the actual participation of women in the church. All this, together with the literature studied, led to the findings of this study.

The findings are basically three. The first is that Kiganda culture has had a strong influence on the role of women in the Anglican church in Uganda. The traditional view that women's subordinate role in matters of leadership is God-given is very prevalent in the church today, where it is often backed up by usually one-sided literal interpretations of Bible passages which concern women. This aspect is clearly dealt with in chapters three and four of this study.

The second finding is that although women are very active in the church as members of the congregations, and as the ones most responsible for the economic sustenance and social life of the church, they are lacking in the decision-making bodies of the church. This is considered in chapter five, in which the role of women in the Anglican Church in Uganda, both in

history and today, is discussed.

Thirdly, the nature of the administrative structure of Church of Uganda (which is dealt with in chapter six) is such that women have little chance to participate in its administration. This is because many of the church's administrative bodies are open to priests more than the laity for participation. There are no women priests in Namirembe diocese.

The suggestions for further action arising from this study all revolve around a call for change in outlook. The church in general, needs to change its attitude towards women's role in the church. The leadership, in particular, needs to change the administrative structure so that women's chances for participation in church leadership are enhanced.

#### OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

##### Administration

The definition in Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English is adopted. Here the term is defined as "the control or direction of affairs", and "the act of putting something into operation, especially by

someone with the official power to do so."<sup>1</sup>

It may therefore be of a government, business, a community, an organization or a movement.

Administration involves making decisions and ensuring that they are implemented. It also involves ensuring that disputes and complaints are handled in a particular given manner.

In this study the term leadership will be used in the same way as administration, since it carries the same meaning - to direct, govern or control.

### Clan

Michael Nsimbi describes a clan as "a group of people formed a long time ago, including people of the same blood, and with the same fore fathers".<sup>2</sup>

A clan is a social group of great importance in social structures of many African societies. The Kiganda society is one of them. A clan is based on a

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<sup>1</sup> "Administration", Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, Essex: Longman Group limited, 1978.

<sup>2</sup> M. Nsimbi; Amanya Amaganda Nennono Zaago (Kiganda names and their origins); Kampala: 1956 p. 170. The translation of this description is quoted from F.X. Kyewalyanga: Traditional Religion, customs and Christianity in Uganda, Aachen: Feiburg in Breigau, 1976, p. 19.

clearly defined concept of blood relationship - one belongs to it by right of birth.

In the Kiganda culture, people of the same clan call each other brother and sister. It is therefore a rule that such people do not marry each other. Each clan in Buganda has its distinctive names by which its members are identified. These names are taken from birds, beasts, insects, fish, flowers, and so on.

Other distinguishing signs for a clan are 'Omuziro' (the totem) and 'Omubala' (the rythm of the clan drum).<sup>3</sup>

### Culture

The definition of culture as given by the Vancouver Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) is adapted in this study. It was defined thus:

"Culture is what holds a community together, giving it a common framework of meaning. It is preserved in language, thought patterns, ways of life, attitudes, symbols and presuppositions; and is celebrated in art, music, drama, literature and the like. It constitutes the collective memory of the people and the collective heritage ....."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> F.X. Kyewalyanga, *ibid*, p. 19.

<sup>4</sup> "Gospel and culture", *International review of missions*, vol. LXXIV, No. 294, April 1985, p. 154.



Buganda

This was a kingdom situated in now central Uganda. Its history dates as far back as the 16th century. It became part of the Republic of Uganda in 1967 when kingdoms were abolished in the region.

Baganda - The people of Buganda. The singular is Muganda.

Luganda - This is the language of the Baganda.

Kiganda - In the context of this study, the word denotes anything that pertains to the Baganda's culture; for example, Kiganda dress, Kiganda drum, Kiganda religion, Kiganda music or Kiganda food.

Assistant bishop

This is a priest or bishop appointed by a diocesan bishop of the province (of the Church of Uganda), in accordance with the provisions of the provincial constitution. He is commissioned by the diocesan bishop to perform episcopal duties in his diocese.

An assistant bishop has no right of succession to the office of the bishop of the See in which he is assistant. His appointment may be terminated by the newly elected diocesan bishop, should he find such appointment unnecessary, and can satisfy the provincial synod that this is so.

An assistant bishop is however eligible for election as a diocesan bishop or bishop suffragan of the diocese.

### Bishop suffragan

This is a priest or bishop appointed by the diocesan bishop of the province (of the Church of Uganda), in accordance with the provisions of the provincial constitution. Unlike the assistant bishop who is commissioned, the bishop suffragan is consecrated, and his appointment does not come to an end with the election of a new diocesan bishop. If he himself is not elected to the office of diocesan bishop, he continues to serve in the diocese as suffragan.

### Role

This is a part played by someone in any activity or undertaking.

### Church

The term carries three different interpretations in this study:

1. Ecclesia, the community, body or assembly of christian believers.
2. The term refers to the institution itself; the organization known as the church. This interpretation is called to mind when one speaks of 'The Church of Uganda administration'.

church administration', or 'the leadership of the church'.

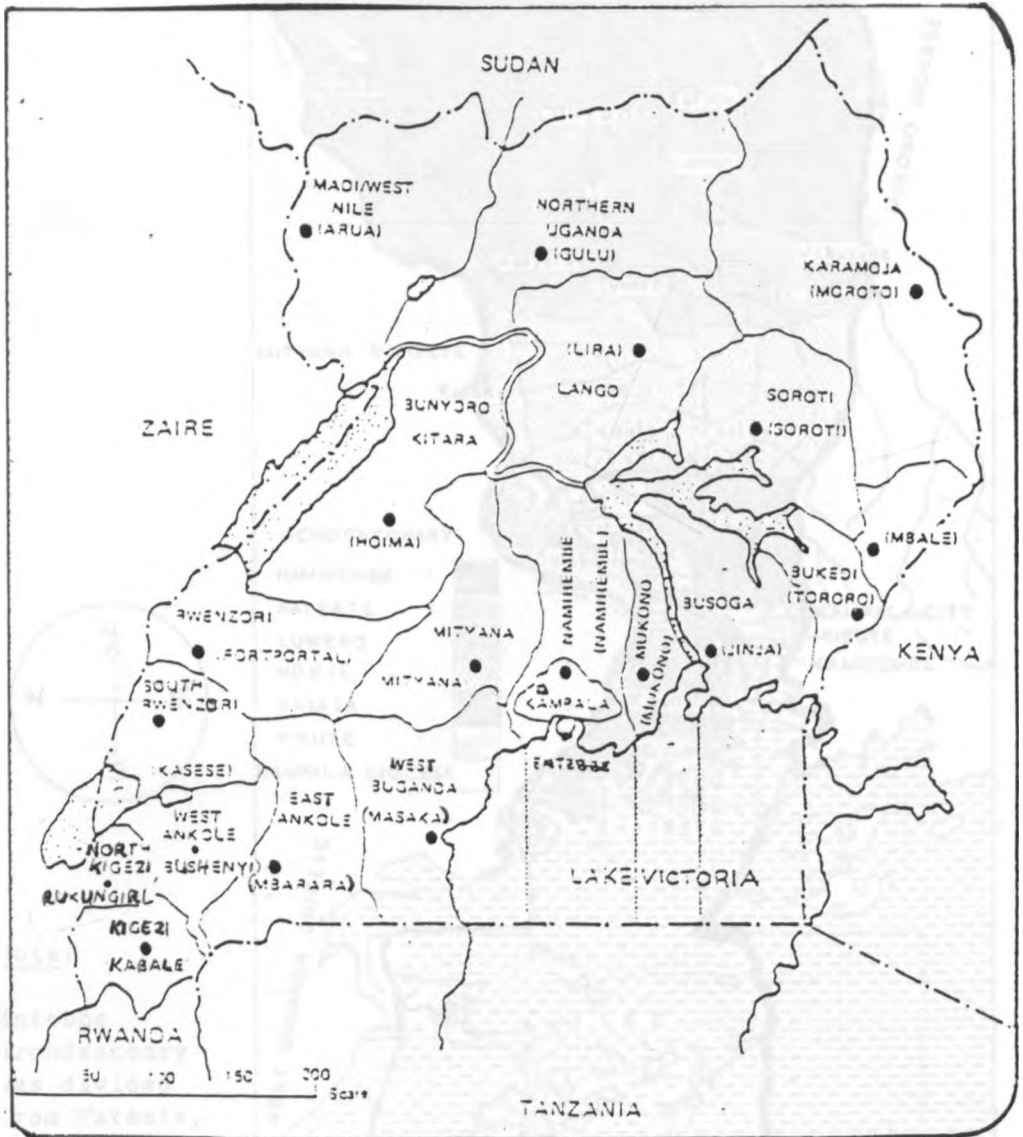
3. It can also mean the building in which the Christians gather for worship.

#### ABBREVIATIONS

CMS	Church Missionary Society.
RSV	Revised Standard Version (Bible) All Bible quotations in this thesis are from this version, unless otherwise stated.
CWF	Christian Women Fellowship.
MU	Mothers' Union.
FU	Fathers' Union.
WCC	World Council of Churches.
BTTC	Bishop Tucker Theological College (Mukono).

All abbreviations of the books of the Bible used in this thesis are those given in the RSV Bible.

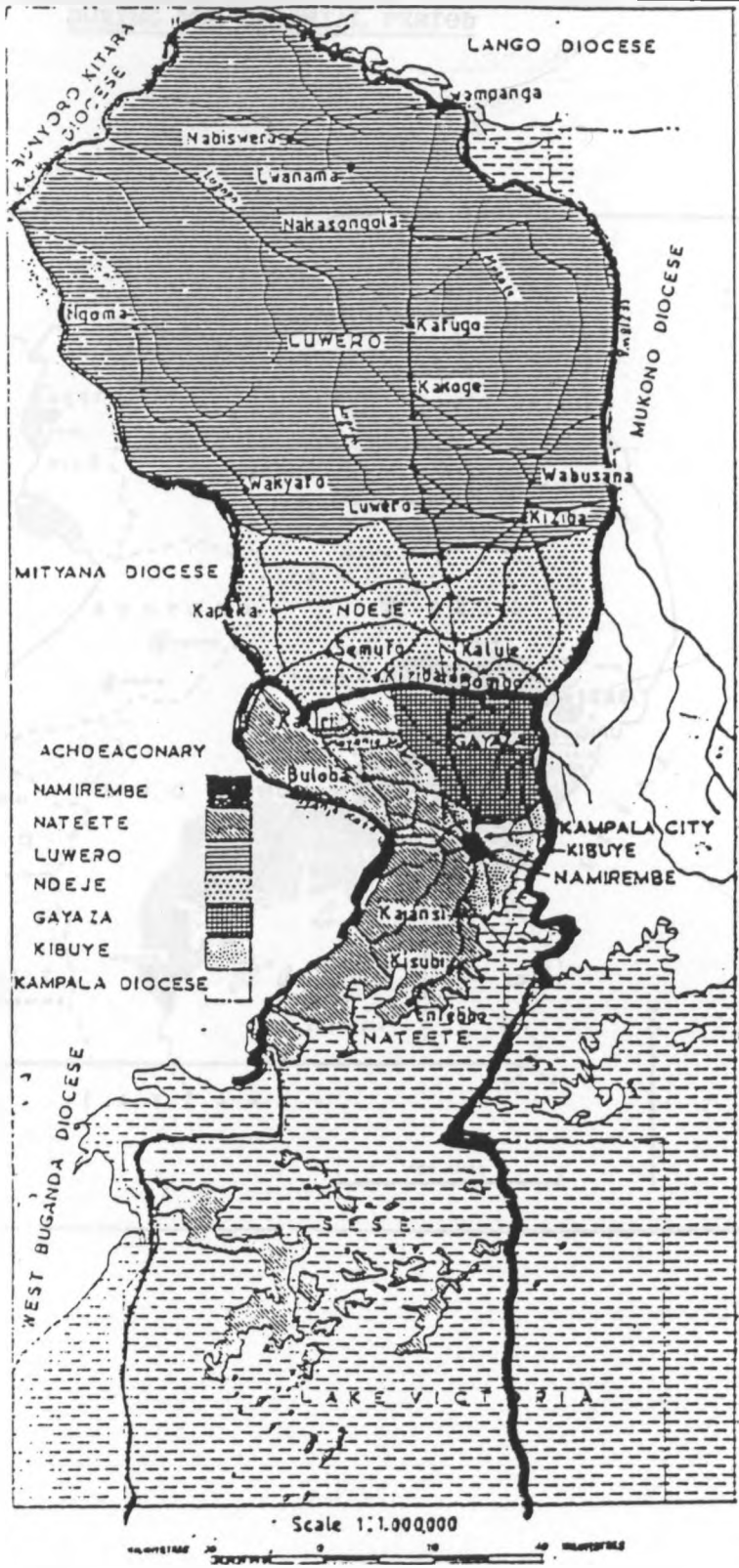
MAP 1: THE DIOCESES OF THE PROVINCE OF THE CHURCH OF UGANDA  
AS AT 31st DECEMBER, 1986.



Source:

The church of Uganda: Census and data as at 31st May 1988;  
produced by the Planning, Development and Rehabilitation  
programme, Church of Uganda, Namirembe, 31st May 1988.

MAP 2: THE ARCHDEACONRIES OF NAMIREMBE DIOCESE



Note:

Entebbe Archdeaconry was divided from Nanteete, while Nakasongola was got from Luwero to make the number of eight Archdeaconries today.

Source: Namirembe Diocesan office

MAP 3: MAP OF UGANDA SHOWING KINGDOM AND DISTRICT BOUNDARIES DURING THE COLONIAL PERIOD



Source

C. Gertzal: Party and locality in Northern Uganda, 1945-1962, London; The Athlone Press, University of London 1974.



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study is on the role of women in the administration of the Anglican Church in Uganda. It has four objectives. Firstly, it is intended to investigate the nature of the administrative structure of the Anglican Church, in order to find out how this structure enhances or hinders women participation. Secondly, the study attempts to find out what the Bible says about women in administration. This is necessary because the Bible is the basis for action in the church. Finding out what the Bible says about women in administration helps in ascertaining whether the Bible has influenced the role of women in the church. Thirdly, the study investigates the role of women in the African traditional culture - particularly the Kiganda culture. Since the church was planted and lives in a society which already has a culture, this study seeks to find out the influence of this culture on the role of women in the church. Fourthly, the study attempts to create an awareness, especially



among the members of the Anglican Church, of the significance of women participation in the administration of the church.

## 2. RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

There are several factors which have rendered this study significant. First of all, there is an increasing awareness of the importance of women in the development process in the whole world. According to the United Nations figures, women represent 50% of the adult world population.<sup>1</sup> They are also the backbone of the world's overall food production. This is particularly the case in Africa, where the rural women are estimated to be producing as much as 80% of the food on the continent.<sup>2</sup>

This realization of the important role of women in society led the United Nations to declare the year 1975 the International Year for Women, and the decade 1976 to 1985 as the United Nations Decade for Women. The main purpose of the year and the decade was to

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<sup>1</sup> "World population prospects: Estimates and projection as assessed in 1982" United Nations, in "Peace, justice and the integrity of creation", Women in a changing world, no. 21 (April 1986) p.21

<sup>2</sup> Ruth L. Sivard: Women .... a world survey, Washington: word priorities 1985, p. 5.

draw the attention of the international community to the problems and needs of women, as well as the injustices that women face in the male dominated society. The theme of the decade was, "Equality, Development and Peace."<sup>3</sup>

The church itself has been to the forefront in the attempts to improve the conditions of women and enhancing their participation in development. For example the World Council of Churches declared the years 1988 to 1998 as the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women. This decade is a follow-up of the United Nations' decade for women. The Ecumenical Decade has, among its five objectives, the following: (a) Empowering women to challenge oppressive structures in the global community, their country and church; (b) Affirming, through shared leadership and decision-making, theology and spirituality, the decisive contributions of women in churches and communities.<sup>4</sup>

The World Council of Churches' involvement and follow-up of the United Nations decade for women is based on the conviction that Christians all over the

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<sup>3</sup> UN Chronicle, vol. 22, no. 7, New York: July/August 1985, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> "Ecumenical Decade 1988-1998: Churches in Solidarity with women": WCC Sub-Unit on women in church and society: WCC Geneva (undated) p. 1.

world have a contribution to make towards the enhancement of women's participation in the development of society. This study is one of such contributions.

Secondly, women's minimal participation in decision-making bodies and organs has become an issue of concern world-wide. For example, in 1984, the international non-governmental organizations' planning committee carried out a survey to evaluate the achievements of the United Nations decade for women through out the world. This survey revealed four importance aspects, namely: (a) that during the decade, an awareness of women's needs and problems had been created; (b) that the diverse roles of women in society were more appreciated; (c) that a more positive view about women in general was achieved; (d) - and most important for this study - that there was no change or improvement made on women's participation in decision-making and planning of activities.<sup>5</sup> In other words, even after the United Nations' decade, women were still poorly involved in the distribution of international, national and local resources. In some cases they were not involved at all.

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<sup>5</sup> "UN decade for women", Women in a changing world, no. 19 (May 1985), Geneva: WCC, pp. 3 & 5.

This assessment was also echoed in the delegates' conference of the United Nations member-countries which was held in Nairobi from 15th to 27th of July 1985.<sup>6</sup> In his opening statement to the delegates, the United Nations' secretary-general, Javier Pérez de Quéllar, noted that there had been remarkable improvement in legal equality between men and women in many nations' legislations and international instruments. However much still remained to transform this 'legal' equality into 'actual' equality, whereby women would be enabled to "participate fully and on equal terms with men in all spheres of society and at all levels of decision-making".<sup>7</sup> The secretary-general was, in effect, pointing out the limited participation of women in decision-making and the contradiction between paper-policies and real practice as far as this issue is concerned.

The awareness of the role of women in decision-making is of particular importance to the church. Since its inception in Uganda 113 years ago, the Anglican Church has not had a woman Bishop, or provincial secretary, Diocesan secretary or even as Archdeacon. Moreover, the on-going debate in the church all over the world about the ordination of women to priesthood

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<sup>6</sup> The conference was to mark the end of the United Nations' decade for women.

<sup>7</sup> UN Chronicle op cit p. 2

also points to the need to enhance women participation in the administration of the church.

The significance of this study also lies in the fact that while some research and writing has been done on women's roles and problems in Uganda <sup>8</sup>, hardly any of it has been done from a theological point of view. Most of the published works deal with the political, economic, social and legal aspects on women.

This therefore means that there is little material available to help one assess how the beliefs and attitudes of the people affect their role in the church and society. In this case there is need to find out the beliefs and attitudes of people towards women participation in the administration of the church. This is because the beliefs and values of an individual contribute much to that persons actions and behaviour. This in turn affects the individuals contribution to church and national development.

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<sup>8</sup> For example, Mary I.D. Maitum, "Women, the law and convention: A Ugandan perspective" in G.S. were Women and Development in Africa, Nairobi; Gideon Were press, 1985, pp. 151-164; Christine Obbo, African Women: their struggle for economic independence London: Zed press 1980; W.W. Kalema: "The status of Women and the law of Marriage and Divorce". A report by the commission of inquiry, (The Kalena Report), Entebbe: Government Printers, 1967.

At this time of national rehabilitation and development in Uganda, the full participation of all the country's people is essential. Since women are the backbone of the country's agriculture-based economy it is imperative that all factors that hinder their full participation in national development are removed, while those which improve their contribution to society are encouraged.

### 3. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study was done in Namirembe Diocese of the Anglican Church in Uganda. However some women clergy from Kampala Diocese were also interviewed, since Namirembe Diocese does not as yet have any female clergy.

Since the research could not be carried out in the whole province of the church of Uganda, Namirembe Diocese was chosen, because of its centrality and accessibility. Kampala Diocese, though more accessible than Namirembe, was not chosen because it is too small to be representative of the Province. For example it has only fifteen (15) parishes, compared to Namirembe with over eighty (80) parishes.

For the analysis of a traditional African society,

the Ganda (Kiganda) society was chosen, for two main reasons. First, when Christianity was brought to Uganda, it was first introduced in the Kiganda society. Secondly, Namirembe Diocese is itself in Buganda region, with the biggest part of its membership being Baganda. In addition, the main language of communication in the Diocese, according to the Diocesan constitution, is Luganda.<sup>9</sup>

Reference is however made to places and people outside Buganda, especially in connection with women in the history of the church. This is because such women were not confined to one geographical area—particularly the evangelists. Moreover, the dioceses as we have them today did not exist then. Uganda was only a diocese of the Province of East Africa until 1961 when it was made a province in its own right.

#### 4. LITERATURE REVIEW

Considerable literature has been published on women in liberation theology, which shows the world-wide concern about women participation, role and status in the church.

Reading through this literature, one sees that there

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<sup>9</sup> Article II(x), Namirembe Diocese Constitution.

is a consensus among theologians, that inequality exists between men and women in the church and society. This inequality stems from the way the Bible has been interpreted through generations of different cultures. It also stems from the desire to perpetuate traditions and cultures which consider women as the 'lesser' or 'weaker' sex.

In a book edited by L.M. Russell, it is argued that the way the Bible is interpreted determines the way people behave towards others.<sup>10</sup> Sharon H. Ringe says in this book that the phrase, "the Bible is the Word of God", is interpreted in different ways by different people. For those who interpret it to mean that God dictated the Bible verbatim to its writers, they have often used it to assert the superiority of men over women. Consequently they have influenced the role of women in the church.<sup>11</sup>

In the same book, Biblical scholar E.S. Fiorenza, argues that the Hebrew society was patriachal in nature. The male was superior in the political and religious circles. Women were totally dependent on their fathers as daughters, and their husbands when

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<sup>10</sup> Letty M. Russell (ed.); The liberating word: a guide to non-sexist interpretations of the Bible, Philadelphia: Westminster press, 1976.

<sup>11</sup> Sharon H. Ringe; "Biblical Authority and interpretation", in Letty M. Russell (ed.) *ibid*, p. 23



they married. With references from the Bible, such as Judges 19:22-30 and Genesis 19:1-11, Fiorenza indicates that women were in fact, on some occasions, treated unfairly in favour of men.

This cultural condition was prevalent during the New Testament period as well, both in the Jewish society and her surrounding world then. Walter Miller, in the book, Greece and the Greeks: A survey of Greek Civilisation, (N.York: The MacMillan Co. 1941, p.74), writes that in the Graeco-Roman world, women were believed to be "an inferior sort of being, unfit in intellect and character to take any part in public life".

There is an attempt in Russel's book, to interpret patriarchal traditions, in order to indicate that the formulation of 'the Word of God' depended on the culture of the time. The reader must be aware of this in his or her attempt to interpret the Bible to fit the new time and situation. The writers in this book argue that the core of the Bible message - stripped of the culture of the time - reveals both men and women as equal.

This idea is also emphasised in a book edited by John

Pobee and B. Wartenberg-Potter.<sup>12</sup> In this book the Christians are challenged to re-read the Bible with 'new eyes' so that they can respond to life situations as they are today. Examples are also given of women in history, who have taken the initiative and broken tradition in order to liberate themselves from the bondage of their cultures.<sup>13</sup>

There is great emphasis in J. Pobee and B. Wartenberg-Potter's book, on the point that Jesus did not discriminate against women as the church and society tend to do - in his name. Further the book points out that the church has at times perpetuated women domination by men through a one-sided interpretation of the Bible. For example the church does not have provisions for preventing excessive cruelty to wives. Instead it encourages them to endure suffering under subjection to their husbands.<sup>14</sup>

The above two books are considered useful for this

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<sup>12</sup> J. Pobee and B. Wartenberg-Potter (eds.); New eyes for reading: Biblical and Theological reflections by women in the Third World. Geneva: WCC 1986.

<sup>13</sup> Some of the examples given are the story of Sarah and Hagar (Genesis 16: 1-10 and 2: 18-20) and that of the woman with a homorrhage (Mark 5: 25-29) pp. 3-17, *ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Bette Ekeya; "Woman, for how long not?", In J. Pobee & B. Wartenberg-Potter, *ibid*, p. 63.

study because they indicate the necessity for the church to re-examine its values and its interpretations of the Bible. This will enable the church to respond appropriately to the issues and problems facing the world today.

Writers on the subject of women in Africa seem to agree that traditionally both men and women contributed to the upkeep of the family and society, with all of them sharing in the labour functions.<sup>15</sup> Some of these books show however, that there was clear role differentiation in several societies. Administration was usually for men.<sup>16</sup>

The literature on women in Uganda today deals mainly with political, social, economic and cultural aspects. In a book written by Christine Obbo,<sup>17</sup> the conflict between culture and social change is pointed out. The expectations of African cultures as far as women are concerned are also mentioned. Obbo clearly shows that these expectations usually come into conflict with those of women who desire to move away

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<sup>15</sup> Ruth L. Sivard; Women.....a world survey Washington: World priorities 1985.

<sup>16</sup> Such books include, M. Hay and S. Stichter (eds.); African Women South of the Sahara, New York: Longman 1981, chapter 9, p. 143.

<sup>17</sup> Christine Obbo, African Women; Their struggle for economic independence, London: Zed press 1980.

from such cultural labels to be individuals in their own right. Her study (carried out in Uganda in the 1970's), further indicates that women's participation in power and authority is hindered by the men in power. Such men use the excuse that women's morality should be protected. Obbo puts it that

"The weight of moral pressure, often backed by law, is exerted on women in order to reverse or hinder possible changes in the power and authority relationship between men and women".<sup>18</sup>

Maxine Ankrah's paper on the role of women in resolving conflict is important for this study, since it dwells on the hinderances to women's participation in society. Here, Ankrah notes that the means for active participation at the disposal of women are limited by both customs and operations of the legal systems. Both of these function to reinforce one another to the disadvantage of women.<sup>19</sup>

As far as the Anglican Church in Uganda is concerned, the available literature does not deal with women with any particular consideration. The role of women missionaries, for example, tends to be overlooked. This is to the extent that most of the women

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<sup>18</sup> Christine Obbo, *ibid*, p. 15.

<sup>19</sup> Maxine Ankrah; "The role of women in resolution of conflict". A paper presented to the international seminar on internal conflict, 21st-26th September 1987, Makerere university, Kampala.

mentioned are either given as companions to their husbands, or referred to in terms which imply that they were more-or-less assistants in missionary work. They were not responsible for determining priorities for the missions. The books that mention Ugandan women evangelists show that these women too were never active in the administration of the church. They (women) worked under the white missionaries, and at a later time under the male African converts.<sup>20</sup>

Generally, the contribution of women to the establishment and development of the Anglican Church in Uganda has not been described fully by writers of the church's history. Therefore the roles of women like Hana Kageye, Edith Pike, Mrs. Katherine Cook and Julia Kibubura, can only be inferred from the references made about them.

Many organizations, such as the United Nations (UN), the World Council of Churches (WCC), International Labour Organization (ILO), have made publications, magazines, books and journals, giving facts and figures about women. These facts and figures show that all over the world, the role of women in organizational, national and international

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<sup>20</sup> Books such as T. Tuma & P. Mutibwa (eds.): A century of Christianity in Uganda (1877-1977): contributors, 1978; M. Pirouet; Black Evangelists, London; Rex Collings 1978.

development is important, although usually overlooked. They also indicate the need to involve women in administration now, more than ever before. This is because where women have had the chance to be involved in high positions of decision-making, they have made a remarkable contribution by their emphasis on equality, development and peace.

There is also much emphasis by these organizations, on the fact that traditional, social and religious practices, strictly designate women to a subordinate status. These factors contribute to women's inability to move up any of the development ladders - be it economic, political, social or administrative ladder. Even though countries have tried to liberalize the law to provide equal rights for women, the process is slow. Moreover, there is a big gap between constitutional rights and reality in those countries where the traditional social and religious practices are given preference over the constitutional law.<sup>21</sup>

##### 5. THEORETICAL FRAME OF REFERENCE

This study is undertaken from a theological point of view. It emphasises the influence of cultural and

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<sup>21</sup> Ruth L. Sivard, op cit, pp. 32-33.

religious beliefs on structures in the church and in society.

Culture and religion both influence the way people think and behave. They determine their reaction towards social change and new policies. Considering society in general, the political, economic and social structures have been influenced by the cultures and religions of the people. Therefore there is a need to give this theological perspective more consideration than has always been the case in academic circles.

This study takes into consideration particularly the influence of two cultures on the role of women in church administration. These cultures are the Jewish culture, in which Christianity was first established; and the Kiganda culture in which the Anglican Church in Uganda was first implanted. A knowledge of how women were viewed in these cultures contributes to one's understanding of women's role in the Anglican Church today. This is because these cultures were vehicles by which Christianity was delivered to the people in Uganda.

Some analysis on women in leadership in these two cultures is made. The knowledge of how women were viewed as far as leadership was concerned helps in

ascertaining how these cultures have influenced women's role in administration of the church. Particular consideration is given to women in leadership in the African traditional religion.

In the final analysis the study is intended to find out to what extent the Bible and the Kiganda culture have influenced the nature of the role of women in the administration of the Anglican church.

#### 6. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The hypotheses being tested in this study are:

1. Men dominate the administrative roles in Church of Uganda.
2. The Bible has been used to justify the present subordinate role of women in the administration of the church.
3. African culture has contributed to male domination of the administrative structure of the church.
4. Most women are not bold enough to stand up for a change in the roles they play in the church.
5. Those women who are bold, and would want to see a change, lack support from the existing church structures to enable them to participate actively in the administration of the church.



## 7. METHODOLOGY

The research was carried out in Namirembe Diocese of the Church of Uganda, between the months of August and September 1989. There were a total of 130 responses from all the eight Archdeaconries of the Diocese.

Although the dioceses are autonomous in as far as some aspects of administration are concerned, they are based on the same administrative structure and theological principles. For this reason it is possible to generalize about the Church of Uganda from results obtained from one diocese.

### Sampling and sample size

The stratified random sampling method was used to get respondents. This is the method whereby the population is divided into sub-groups or strata. Out of each of the sub-groups a separate sample is chosen. In the case of this study the population was divided according to three categories - lay-men, lay-women and the clergy (both men and women). Any member of Namirembe diocese could then be interviewed according

to the category in which that person belonged. Other methods of sampling, such as quasi-random sampling, cluster sampling, or simple random sampling were not possible (though they would have been more efficient) because there were no sufficient records of membership in most of the churches. These records would have been necessary for such methods of sampling.

The targetted total number of informants was 150 people in the following categories and numbers: 60 lay-men; 60 lay-women; and 30 clergy - both male and female. Of all the 150 people, 130 responded; 59 lay-men, 44 lay-women, and 27 clergy. Of the clergy, only three were women. It is to be noted that Namirembe diocese does not as yet have any women clergy. Therefore for purpose of analysis, the three women clergy interviewed were obtained from Kampala diocese.

There were twenty non-responses; ten questionnaires were not returned by the respondents, five were returned unfilled, while the remaining five were returned but rendered useless because of the inconsistencies in them.

The smallest number of respondents from a single Archdeaconry was four people (from Ndejje and Luweero Archdeaconries). Namirembe Cathedral Archdeaconry

had the biggest number of respondents - forty eight.<sup>22</sup> The reason for this difference is that Namirembe Cathedral Archdeaconry is within the city-centre, and therefore more accessible, as compared to the far - off Ndejje and Luweero Archdeaconries.<sup>23</sup>

Respondents were contacted directly by the researcher, who either interviewed the respondent with a questionnaire guide or left a questionnaire to the respondent to fill in at a later time. In case of the latter, the researcher went back to collect such a questionnaire.

#### Data collection

The main sources of data were questionnaire - interviews, library materials and the meetings attended. The questionnaires were filled in by either the interviewer or the respondent. If the respondent was willing to answer the questions at the time of the visit, then the researcher would carry out the interview and fill in the questionnaire. In cases where the respondent preferred to answer the questions at a later time a questionnaire was left

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<sup>22</sup> See Appendix 8 - Number of people interviewed according to their Archdeaconries.

<sup>23</sup> See map of Namirembe Diocese. Map 2.

behind to such a person. This would mean a re-visit to get the filled questionnaire. About 65% of the responses (100 questionnaires) were got through direct interviews, using the questionnaire as the interview guide.

The interviews were carried out mainly during the evening hours - usually between five and nine o'clock. Only a few people were found at their places of work. It was generally very difficult to find people at the earlier times of the day because most people did not work in offices. Some were farmers, drivers, fish-mongers and other self-employed people. Such people had no fixed places of work and were therefore very difficult to trace during day-time. For those who had offices, their addresses were difficult to find.

There was a chance to give out questionnaires to some members of the Diocesan council during the meeting which took place from 21st to 24th of August 1989. Some data was also received from the churches' records - both the congregational and parish churches. However this source of information was scarce. Only a few copies of the past general meetings and committees were available for this study. Such records were nevertheless useful in judging women's attendance of church meetings in the

recent past. Records dating back even to the 1970's were difficult to find in the congregational and parish churches.

Observation of women participation was carried out in both the local and main churches. This was mainly in church meetings and services. At the Diocesan level, two administrative council meetings were attended - the Diocesan council meeting held from 21st to 24th of August 1989, and the synod council meeting held from 31th of August - 1st of September 1989.

#### Problems encountered

A few problems were encountered during the research for this study. First, there was the problem of availability of respondents. It has already been mentioned that most of the interviews were carried out in the evenings when people returned from their places of work. The disadvantage of this time was that many women were not available, or did not have time to sit down for an interview. At such a time many would be involved in preparing meals and attending to children. This partly explains the lower number of women respondents compared to that of men and clergy. Women who asked that questionnaires be left with them either did not fill them in, or gave

them to their husbands to fill them in. In the latter case, this could be seen from the way their answers turned out to be similar to those of their husbands. This rendered such questionnaires useless.

Secondly, there was the problem of getting records. As already mentioned, many churches did not have records. In some cases they had been destroyed during the 1980-1985 civil war, while in others they were simply not kept. As a result much of the record information could not be got. For example the most recent population figures of the church could not be relied on. This is because, in the provincial census carried out in 1986 by the Provincial planning, Development and Rehabilitation (PDR) office, some Archdeaconries of Namirembe did not bring in their population figures results. A good number of parishes had been 'war zones' in the previous years and therefore many of their inhabitants had fled. At the time of this census many had not returned. All this put together rendered the census programme results very un-reliable and inexhaustive. The only census records that could be got are just estimates. There is even no indication of when the census from which they were derived was taken.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> The Church of Uganda: Evangelism and Development, 1985 PIM consultation; Uganda Bookshop press, (undated).

There was also the problem of respondents not feeling free to talk while the interviewer recorded the information. In such cases, one would be forced to record such information later. With this procedure, some vital information could sometimes be forgotten. There were no easy-to-carry tape-recording facilities available for this research.

Walking long distances was also a problem, especially in the villages. More still, in some instances re-visits had to be made, either to pick the questionnaire or to interview a person on appointment. There was no guarantee that such a person would keep the appointment. In fact some of the re-visits were fruitless. However in churches where the researcher went round with the parish-priest responses were usually good. In such cases the people saw the research as of great benefit to them. The problem here was that many parish-priests were too busy with their official work to go round their parishes with the researcher.

Fifthly, some respondents wanted to be paid for their information. This was true in some of the visits which the researcher made without the parish-priests. Such people saw the research as of economic gain to the researcher.

## CHAPTER 2

### RELIGIO-CULTURAL SETTING

#### 1. THE RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL BACKGROUND OF BUGANDA.

##### Within Buganda

Buganda, as it is known today, was a kingdom North-West of Lake Victoria. It existed from the 16th century up to 1967 when it was abolished and made part of the Republic of Uganda.

The Kingdom was bordered by other kingdoms; Bunyoro in the North, Ankole in the West, and the smaller kingdom-like states of Busoga in the East, (see map 3.) It was estimated by the explorer Henry M. Stanley in 1875, to be lying between latitudes 32°, 49 minutes East, and 0°, 32 minutes North.<sup>1</sup>

Since its establishment, the kingdom of Buganda was ruled by the Bakabaka (kings), beginning with Kabaka (king) Kintu. In all there were a total of thirty-five Kings.

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<sup>1</sup> H.M. Stanley; His letter to the Daily Telegraph and New York Herald on April 12th 1875; Great Britain central office of information (Ref. Division) "Uganda" (undated), p. 2.



There are various myths to explain the origins of the Baganda.<sup>2</sup> According to historians, however, Kintu might have migrated from South Ethiopia among the Galla people. On his entry into Buganda he was followed by a group of people of different clans. These clans still exist in Buganda today and form a basis of identity for the Baganda. —

The kingdom of Buganda enjoyed a clearly defined hierarchical system of administration, with all power and authority vested in the Kabaka (king) as the sovereign.<sup>3</sup> Below the Kabaka was the Katikkiro (prime minister) who was in charge of day-to-day running of the government. He also acted as the chief justice.

The kingdom was divided into masaza (counties) each headed by a powerful and influential saza chief with a unique title reflecting his responsibilities towards the Kabaka.<sup>4</sup> Appointed by the Kabaka and responsible to him through the prime

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<sup>2</sup> For example the Ganda mythology. This gives Kintu, the first king of Buganda, as having come from the sky with his wife Nambi and her brother Inaiumbe.

<sup>3</sup> The kingdom of Buganda, Uganda society Kampala 1956, p. 2

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix of saza chiefs in Buganda. (Appendix 10)

minister, the saza chief exercised administration through minor chiefs. Each saza was subdivided into several sub-countries (Magombolola) each headed by Omwami ow'egombolola (sub-country chief). The sub-country was in turn divided into parishes (Emiruka). Each headed by Omwami ow'omuluka (a parish chief). The smallest unit of administration was the village (Ekyalo), headed by Omwami Ow'ekyalo (a village chief).

Despite their elaborate administrative structure the Baganda did not have women as chiefs. Oral traditions and historians like John Roscoe<sup>5</sup> have stressed a deeply rooted objection, among the Baganda, to female administration. This topic is discussed further in chapter 3.

Foreign political influence in Buganda started in the 1840's with the coming of the Arabs. Although the Arabs were mainly concerned with trade, their trading in guns with the king of Buganda was later to be of great influence to the politics of the kingdom. However direct political influence started in 1890 when the Imperial British East African Company which was based in Zanzibar, came

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<sup>5</sup> John Roscoe, mainly in his book, The Baganda: An account of their native customs and beliefs (2nd Ed.) London: Frank Cass & Co. 1965.

to Buganda. The company represented British interests, and had Captain Lugard as its first fully accredited agent in Buganda. By the time of its withdrawal from Buganda in 1893 the Company had been able to lay a good foundation for the continuation of British political control of the kingdom. Thus when on 31st of March 1893, the company's agents left Buganda, they were succeeded by the imperial government agents.

In 1894, Buganda was made a protectorate of the British Government. On 10th of March 1900, the Buganda Agreement was made between the British, government and the king of Buganda, then king Daudi Chwa II. With this agreement the frontiers of Buganda as they are today (see map of Buganda-map 4) were fixed. The kingdom then acquired twenty counties as compared to the original twelve it had. The extra eight originally belonged to Bunyoro and Ankole kingdoms.

From 1900 upto 1962, the kingdom of Buganda, and other parts of present-day Uganda, were under British colonial rule. In 1962, the country received its independence and the Kabaka (king) of Buganda, then Sir Edward Muteesa II, became the first president. However the political unrest of the period between 1962 and 1967 culminated into

the abolition of all the kingdoms (Buganda included), and the declaration of Uganda as a republic, in 1967. Muteesa II was the last king of Buganda.

As far as religion is concerned, the Baganda were a very religious people, even before the coming of outside religions. They believed in a supreme god, Katonda, and the spirits. The spirits were subordinate to the supreme but above human beings, and were the mediators between the two (god and the people).

Religion in Buganda, like in all African societies, permeated all aspects of life. In other words, it was not possible to separate the religious from the political, or social, or economic aspects of the life of an individual or community. For instance, on the installation of a new king, religious ceremonies were performed to ensure his protection and guidance by the gods. Likewise when a child was born, gifts of thanks had to be presented to the ancestral spirits and protection for the child and family was sought.

There were always religious leaders who mediated between the ancestral spirits and the people. These leaders included the priests (Bakabona),

medicine men and women, and mediums (Mmandwa). These mediators were always chosen by the spirits themselves and they could be men, women or children. The people did not play a part in the choice of a religious leader and they could not reject him or her. Thus in Kiganda traditional religion both men and women had equal chances of being selected to be religious leaders. They equally received the respect of the people, irrespective of their social status or sex. This aspect is also discussed further in chapter 3.

Foreign influence on Buganda's religion also began with the coming of the Arabs in the 1840's. Besides the trade in arms and cotton cloth, the Arabs introduced Islam. Some Baganda were converted to the religion, and for ten years (1867-76) the king himself (Muteesa I) observed the month of Ramadan every year. However Islam did not spread far into Buganda. The reason was that this religion demanded that the converts be circumcised; a practice which the Baganda hated. More to this the Arabs were more committed to trade than to spreading of their religion.

The first christian missionaries arrived in Buganda in 1877. These were Church Missionary Society (CMS) missionaries and they founded the

Anglican Church. In 1879, they were followed by the catholic missionaries from France - the White Fathers (WF) who founded the Roman Catholic Church.

Many Baganda were keen to learn the religion of the new-comers - the missionaries. In fact by the 1880's some of them had been converted and baptised. Of the converts, a good number of them were chiefs and the chiefs-to-be — the pages.<sup>6</sup> This was because the missionaries started their work at the king's court where they had easy and direct contact with the chiefs and king's servants.

Since Buganda had a hierarchical system of administration and a high sense of loyalty by the Baganda to their leaders, christianity easily found its way to the peasants through the chiefs. As long as the chiefs accepted Christianity as a form of progress, the peasants were ready to accept it too.

When Mwanga succeeded his father as king in 1884, he was not impressed by the rate at which his subjects were being converted. More still these

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<sup>6</sup> Pages were boy servants to the king. Those who found favour with the king were made chiefs.

converts began to question some of his life-styles and behaviour in the light of christian teachings. This, coupled with news of the advancing British political agents from the coast, led Mwanga to doubt the intentions of the christians - both the missionaries and converts. This culminated into the murder of Bishop Hannington in Busoga (1885) and the burning of twenty-two christians at Namugongo (June 1886).

There is no need to go into the details of the religious political strife that ensued from 1886 onwards. Suffice to say that foreign religious influence greatly affected the political and social events that took place in Buganda from that time up to this day.

#### Buganda and her neighbours

It has already been mentioned that in 1875, Sir Henry Stanley estimated that Buganda kingdom lay between latitudes 32°, 49 minutes East, and 0°, 32 minutes North. Since this time however, the kingdom extended further to include other areas.

Most of what came to be known as Buganda kingdom after the 1900 agreement was conquered and annexed

to the nuclear kingdom from about the 18th century onwards. The nuclear kingdom consisted of only the counties of Busiro, Busujju, Kyaddondo and parts of Kyaggwe. (see map 4). According to Roland Oliver, this nuclear kingdom extended within a radius of 25 miles from Kampala.<sup>7</sup>

The main rival of Buganda at the time of her expansion was Bunyoro, her neighbour to the North. Time and again there were wars between the two kingdoms. Bunyoro had been bigger in the 17th century, extending to include Kyaggwe, Singo, parts of Bulemezi and Gomba, which later became part of Buganda. However Bunyoro was later weakened by succession disputes from within and the increasing power of Buganda.

By the end of the 18th century, Buganda had completely subdued Busoga and made it a tributary state, while Buwekula had voluntarily surrendered itself to Buganda in order to escape the power of Bunyoro. Buddu had also been conquered by force.<sup>8</sup> Buganda's expansion in the 19th century was helped

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<sup>7</sup> R. Oliver; "Discernable developments in the interior, C 1500-1840" in R. Oliver and A. Matthew (eds.); History of East Africa, Vol. 1, Oxford: Oxford University press/1963 pp. 187-188.

<sup>8</sup> Margaret C. Fullers: The Eastern Lacustrine Bantu, London: international African Institute 1968, p. 15



by two main factors. First, Buganda was centrally situated as compared to the Kingdoms of Bunyoro and Ankole. This accorded her better connection with the Arab traders from the coast who supplied her with guns.<sup>9</sup> Secondly, in 1894 Colonel Colvile gave some of Bunyoro's counties to Buganda as a reward for Buganda's cooperation with the British to suppress Kabalega's opposition to British rule. These counties included Buyaga and Bugangazi.

In 1900, when the Buganda Agreement was made, the counties of Sese islands, Koki, and the counties of Kabula and Mawogola which had been part of Ankole kingdom, were made part of Buganda.<sup>10</sup> With this agreement, the boundaries of Buganda were fixed to comprise of twenty counties (see map 4.). It was also forbidden of Buganda to carry out war-like operations or to levy tax on any territory outside its borders.

Buganda was very instrumental in bringing about social, administrative and religious change in her neighbouring area. This was especially so after the arrival of the missionaries and colonialists.

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<sup>9</sup> John Roscoe: The Northern Bantu, London: Frank Cass & Co Ltd, 1966, p. 4

<sup>10</sup> M.C. Fullers, op cit p. 65.

In the first instance, through the Buganda Agreement, the Buganda traditional system of administration was allowed to remain intact. This system was then exported as a model in other areas of the protectorate. For example in the non-kingdom areas, the traditional systems of administration were gradually dismantled and reorganised on the Buganda model as much as possible. Such was the case in Acephelous societies like Bugisu, where appointed administrative chiefs replaced the traditional local chiefs as the local administrative and judicial authorities.<sup>11</sup> Baganda men were also employed as chiefs in these areas, as well as in Kigezi, Ankole and Bunyoro. When Semei Kakunguru captured areas in the North-East, he too introduced the Buganda system of administration and Baganda chiefs in Bukedi and Teso.<sup>12</sup>

The significance of Baganda chiefs as far as Christianity was concerned is that many of these chiefs were christians. Wherever they went they introduced and encouraged the spread of their faith - be it protestant or Roman catholic. This

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<sup>11</sup> D.A. Low: Buganda in Modern History, London: Werdnefelds & Nicolson, 1971, pp. 229, 230.

<sup>12</sup> T. Tuma & P. Mutibwa (eds.) op cit pp. 47 & 48.

was mainly so in the eastern parts of the country-  
-Busoga, Bugisu and Bukedi.

The Baganda were also significant as evangelists in areas outside Buganda, especially in the western and eastern regions of Uganda. They were a very useful force, since there were very few white missionaries. It is estimated, for example, that by the end of 1892, there were twelve Baganda Anglican evangelists in Busoga. Even more, the achievements of Apolo Kivebulaya, Peter Nsubuga, Mako Luyimbazi and Sedulaka Zibunamakwata in Ankole and Toro were very commendable.

However, since there was a spirit of rivalry between the two christian groups (catholics and protestants) in Buganda, it is no wonder that these divisions were replicated in all the areas to which the evangelists went. This rivalry became manifest in the social and educational spheres, but was more manifest in the political circles. D.A. Low notes, for example, that the political unrest in Kigezi in the 1950's as well as the Bukedi riots of the 1960's were not much different from the religious wars of Buganda, between the two christian groups and muslims.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> D.A. Low op cit p. 230

The Baganda influenced other areas socially as a result of their own desire to copy the white people's ways of life. This led to easy and quick spread of the European ways of dress, language and other life styles within Buganda itself. This way of life was looked at as modernization by the Baganda themselves and by their neighbours. Since they achieved this 'modernization' before other areas they became a model of civilization and modernity to other areas. Consequently many people were ready to emulate the Baganda's way of life.

This aspect was very crucial to the spreading of Christianity. Since the Baganda were a model of modernity, the new religion they preached could also have been adopted by some as a way of modern life.

## 2. THE CHURCH OF UGANDA IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION

The Anglican Communion consists of regional churches, provinces and dioceses all over the world, which are bound together by mutual loyalty as expressed in the Lambeth Conference of 1930

(Resolution 49).<sup>14</sup> The church of England is the mother-church of the communion.

Since the fellowship comprises of particular regional and national churches, the churches promote, within each of their territories, a national expression of the Christian faith, life and worship. They are bound together, not by a central legislative and executive authority, but by mutual loyalty maintained through the common counsel of the Bishops' conference.

Worship in the Anglican Church is liturgical. It is regulated by the book of common prayer, although it varies in the degree of ritual between churches (or provinces). Moreover the prayer books of the various churches can be freely revised and changed as the churches may find necessary to fit new liturgical developments. The creeds in use are the Apostles', the Nicene and the Athanasian creeds. The scriptures, interpreted by tradition, are the authority in the Anglican Church.

The clergy within the communion are of three orders: deacons, priests and bishops. Only the

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<sup>14</sup> S.F. Bayne, "Anglican Communion" in P. Kevin, T.C. O'Brien, Sister C.M. Aherne (editors): Encyclopedic Dictionary of Religion Washington; corpus publications 1979, p. 173

bishops can ordain, confirm or consecrate. A bishop is given consecration at the hands of other bishops.

The Anglican Church as it is today began in England, around the 5th century. Christianity in England was introduced by the Romans, and it was somehow well established in the 4th century. But due to the Anglo-saxon invasions of the 5th century onwards, England was cut off from the rest of the continent. This led the church in England to remain isolated from the main church. Consequently the celtic church developed rituals and organizations which differed from those of the continental church. The Roman ones were later re-established. The middle-age's clashes between church and state in Europe affected England too. Here they culminated into the breaking of relationship between the Church of Rome and the Church of England. This break was led by the king of England - king Henry VIII. In the Act of Supremacy of 1534, the king was declared, "the only supreme head on earth, of the Church of England".<sup>15</sup> The period that followed 1534 up to the beginning of the 18th century was full of conflict in the Church of England; between those

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<sup>15</sup> W.H. Harris & J.S. Levey (eds.); The New Columbia Encyclopedia, London and New York: Columbia University press, 1975. p. 810.

who wanted it to be part of Rome and those who wanted it to be independent of Rome - in doctrine, canons and worship.

Nevertheless, some notable developments came about. The first is that during the reign of Edward VI, the first and second books of common prayer, produced by Thomas Cranmer, were adopted in 1549 and 1552 respectively. The second is that during the reign of James I, the king James, or authorised version of the English Bible came into existence in 1611. Thirdly, after the overthrow of the Roman Catholic king James II in the revolution of 1688, the Bill of Rights of 1689 declared that the monarch must be protestant. The Act of settlement of 1701 required him or her to be a member of the Church of England. Fourthly, in 1701, the first Anglican missionary society - the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) was founded for work overseas. This society did much of its earlier work in America.

In 1799, the Church Missionary Society (CMS) was founded. It grew out of the evangelical movement at that time which had resulted from a revival within the Church of England. The evangelicals (or low church) emphasised the Bible and preaching. They became the leading church in England

throughout the 19th century.

Beginning with the 20th century, the Church of England worked on the revision of the canon law and the prayer book, building churches, ministering to the industrial-world and involvement in the ecumenical movement. Outside England the Anglican Church continued to expand through the various missionary societies that came up.

The Anglican Church of Uganda (or Church of Uganda) was established by the Church Mission Society (CMS) missionaries in 1877. The first of these missionaries to arrive were Rev. C.T. Wilson and Lieutenant (Lt.) Shergold Smith. These were followed by others in the subsequent years.

When the Roman Catholic missionaries from France arrived in Buganda in 1889, the stage was set for religious competition. There were now four religious factions: the Muslims, who had arrived forty years before the Anglicans; the Kiganda traditional religionists; the Anglicans; and the Catholics. Each of these four parties was competing to win the kings favour against the others. This situation was confusing to the Baganda, especially as far as the Church



Missionary Society and White Fathers missionaries were concerned. These two groups did not seem to tolerate each other. Moreover, each of them claimed their brand of Christianity to be more valid than that of the other.

Despite the conflict, Muteesa I, the king of Buganda then, allowed all the religious factions to stay in his territory albeit under suspicion. His successor, Mwanga, was less tolerant. He particularly felt threatened by the presence of the christian missionaries and converts. As a result he turned against the converts of both missions, many of whom he persecuted between 1885 and 1887. Twenty-two of them were burnt alive at Namugongo on 30th of June 1886.

Mwanga's killings did not succeed in wiping out Christianity. Instead many more people came to the missionary stations to be taught the new religion and to be baptised. As a result of the increasing numbers, the first cathedral, with a seating capacity of about 4000 people was built by the Anglicans at Namirembe Hill in 1892.

The years that followed Mwanga's persecutions saw an increase in the numbers of converts. But the European missionaries were not impressed by the

spiritual life of these converts. They complained that many of them still followed their old lifestyles. As a result of the dissatisfaction, Pilkington advised his fellow missionaries that special services be held to enrich the spiritual life of the church. This resulted in a great spiritual revival in December 1893.

Pilkington's revival was very crucial to the expansion of the Church in Buganda and beyond. It was from it that the Baganda came up with renewed zeal to evangelize other areas besides Buganda. By 1894 the CMS had as many as eighty-five stations with 131 teachers. Some of these stations were outside Buganda.<sup>16</sup>

After the revival other developments in the church during that decade included the Luganda translation of the Bible in 1896. Translations in other local languages have followed since. In 1897, the Diocese of Uganda was formed out of the Diocese of the Eastern Equatorial Africa. In the year that followed, Bishop Tucker Theological College was started at Namirembe.

The Diocese of Uganda was divided into two

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<sup>16</sup> A.R. Tucker (Bishop); Eighteen years in Uganda and East Africa, Connecticut: Negro University press, 1911 p. 143.

dioceses in 1926. The other diocese was named the Diocese of Upper Nile, which comprised of the eastern and northern regions. In 1960 the Diocese of Uganda was further divided into the dioceses of Namirembe, West Buganda, Ankole-Kigezi, Rwanda-Burundi, and Rwenzori. At the same time the Upper Nile Diocese was divided into three dioceses; Mbale, Northern Uganda and Soroti.

The province of the Church of Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Boga Zaire was officially inaugurated on the 11th of April 1961. Bishop Lesley Brown was made the first Archbishop. The first Ugandan Archbishop was Eric Sabiti who succeeded Bishop Brown in 1966.

The Francophone province of Rwanda, Burundi and Boga Zaire was made a separate province in 1980. Today the province of the Church of Uganda consists of 20 Dioceses, 20 Bishops, 6 Assistant Bishops over 2,000 pastors and an estimated number of more than 4 million members.<sup>17</sup>

The diocese of Namirembe is one of the oldest dioceses in the province of the Church of Uganda. When it started in 1960, its first bishop was

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<sup>17</sup> "The Church of Uganda: Evangelism and Development" 1985, PIM consultation: Uganda Bookshop press p. 2.

Bishop Leslie Brown. He was succeeded by Bishop Dr. D. Nsubuga in 1966, who retired in February 1985, to be succeeded by the current Bishop, M. Kawuma.

Since it was created, Namirembe diocese has had three dioceses formed out of it; namely, Busoga and Kampala dioceses formed in 1972, and Mukono Diocese which was formed in 1984.<sup>18</sup> The diocese is, however, still very large, covering parts of Mpigi and Kampala districts, Luweero up to river Kafu and the Sese islands in Lake Victoria. Its approximate size is 19,583 sq. km.

The diocese has eight Archdeaconries, with about 80 parishes. Its approximate population is two million members. By 1985, the diocese had 32 canons of the church, 54 clergy, four of whom are women deaconesses, 150 lay-readers and 21 other lay catechists.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Plans are under way to create a new diocese out of Namirembe - Luweero Diocese.

<sup>19</sup> This is according to the report on the partners in Mission (PIM). Consultation of 1985, which was held from 5th to 18th February that year at Bishop Tucker Theological College, Mukono.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN AN AFRICAN SOCIETY

#### 1. WOMEN IN TRADITIONAL AFRICAN SOCIETIES: A GENERAL OUTLOOK

In referring to the African societies, it is important to take into consideration the fact that these societies have undergone tremendous cultural, religious, social and political change during the last two centuries. This resulted mainly from Africa's interaction with other cultures and religions, especially the European cultures, Christianity and Islam. Consequently many of the African social structures today are very different from what they were before outside influence. In this chapter it is the original structures, beliefs and religions that are being referred to. It is because of this that the chapter is written in the past-tense.

Whereas traditional African societies had diverse customs and beliefs, each society with its peculiarities, there were general trends that could be observed in several aspects of the lives

of the African people at that time. It is in this sense that one can talk about the traditional African societies as if it were one group of people. Among such aspects that can be studied from a general point of view is the role and position of women in the traditional African society, in relation to social life, religion and administration.

In general terms, women were important members in any traditional African society, since they were responsible for both its welfare and continuity. Because of this status, women were looked at by society as an asset. The more women a man had, the more prestigious he was.

African women were very important in the production of wealth. They were the source of labour in planting, weeding and harvesting of crops. Since agriculture solely depended on human labour, the collective labour of many women guaranteed a man more farm produce. This produce was used as food for the family and the surplus bartered for other family necessities.

The main importance of women lay in child-bearing. In many societies a marriage was not regarded as permanent until the wife proved capable of bearing

children for the clan. Children were a status symbol; dowry was paid for girls on marriage, while through boys one's clan was continued. Because of this great importance attached to boys, women were expected to produce sons, otherwise their husbands were forced to look for other women in order to get male off-springs.<sup>1</sup> It was believed that by having a son one was assured of 'living' after his death.

As a result of the importance attached to children, a barren woman was regarded by society as a failure by society. In a desperate desire to gain dignity especially from the clan, some women were usually forced to bring their own sisters or nieces to bear children on their behalf. Barenness was never blamed on a man but on a woman.

In religion, many societies had more taboos observed by women than there were for men. For instance many foods were denied women on religious grounds while the men ate them. The Mbuni women of Chad were not allowed to eat chicken, eggs or game meat; Luo women in Kenya were denied chicken, eggs, milk, rabbits and mutton, while for the

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<sup>1</sup> D. Maillu, Our kind of polygamy, Kenya: Heinemann 1988, p. 7.

Baganda it was taboo for a woman to eat chicken, eggs and some game meat. Many of these foods are the high-protein foods, lack of which adversely affected the health of women in the society.

Women in their monthly periods were regarded, in most cases, as polluted and therefore likely to anger the gods if they participated in religious ceremonies. In Buganda for example, a woman in this state could not enter the temple of the gods.<sup>2</sup> Even those who had special duties in the temple would be substituted by others during such a period.

However, women in some societies had leadership roles in religion. In such cases women were particularly involved in fertility rituals. Since women gave birth to children, they were believed to have special capabilities of inducing fertility of the land, people, and livestock. Among the Loredu of South Africa, the queen was responsible for bringing rain when needed and for guaranteeing the fertility of both the soil and population.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> F.X. Kyewalyanga; Traditonal religion, customs and Christianity in Buganda, Aachen: Freiburg im Breigan 1976, p. 121.

<sup>3</sup> Hay and Stitche, op cit p. 189.



Many of the religious mediums and members of the spirit-possession cults were usually women. According to Margaret Strobel, some scholars have argued that this was due to the oppressive nature of society to women. Many such societies were hierarchical, with women at the bottom of the ladder, and subordinate to the males. Participation in these religious roles therefore allowed them greater social and physical mobility than what the ordinary woman had.<sup>4</sup>

The above argument is debatable, because in African traditional religion, it was the gods, other than the people, who chose the mediums. One would not decide on what role to play in religion. At the same time one had no right to refuse a religious role given by the gods. Therefore the argument that while society regarded women as inferior to men, the gods saw them equals, is more likely.

— In politics and decision-making some societies accorded women a substantial amount of direct power. Such power would be in selecting leaders to represent women interests, as in the case of the Igbo of Eastern Nigeria; in holding public office,

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<sup>4</sup> M. Strobel; "Women in religion and secular ideology". in Hay & Stichter, *ibid*, p. 90.

as was in Swaziland where on the death of a king, the grandmother or the mother of the dead king held the office until a new king was chosen. The queen-mother of the Asante of Ghana held a public office, since she was a representative of a matrilineage and not women interests.<sup>5</sup> Among the Sherbro of Sierra Leone women were chiefs, just as men were. Direct power also lay in women as individuals wielding resources for a desired end, for example, rain-makers had the power to bring rain.

In order to understand better the role of women in decision-making in the traditional African societies, it is imperative to distinguish between power and authority. Power is the ability of 'A' to get 'B' to do something that 'B' would otherwise not have done. Authority, on the other hand, is the culturally accepted belief that one has a legitimate right to power. In other words, power means some kind of force applied, while authority means a right to do something.

African women often had power; that is, they could get men (or other people) do something they wanted to be done. This power was often influential or

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<sup>5</sup> Jean O'barr, "African Women in politics", *ibid.* p. 144.

manipulative and indirect. It included such strategies as evoking of the supernatural or using their sons to ask other people to do what they would otherwise not have done if the women directly asked them to. Only in a few cases were women accepted as leaders. They did not have authority.

On the overall however, women in traditional African societies had responsibilities other than power or authority. Even in cases where they had some power, it was never equal to that of men. Men owned everything - land, livestock and the shelter for the family - which enhanced their power. Women on the other hand, were responsible for the welfare of the family, though they had no right to land. They grew food on the men's land and were entitled to it as long as they remain attached to the men.

The belief that women, out of their own making, are incompetent and unsuitable to engage in wise decision-making was very prevalent in many societies. Some of them even have myths to emphasise this belief. For example in Gikuyu, there is a myth which tells of how, at one time, women used to enjoy political power. But before long, they began to misuse their power.

Consequently the men planned a coup' to overthrow the women. They worked out the plot in such a way that they impregnated the entire female population on one night, and then called for war nine months later. The women were not in a position to defend themselves and so they were defeated, bringing an end to their reign. Since then women have been politically subservient to men.<sup>6</sup>

## 2. WOMEN IN THE TRADITIONAL BAGANDA SOCIETY

### Social life

Right from childhood, a Muganda girl's training was oriented towards marriage and family welfare. Girls were taught the art of cooking and tilling the land, and mastery of these two was of great importance.

Girls were married at the age of fifteen (15) years. In customary law, marriage was a contract between the suitor (especially if it was a chief or the king) or his clansmen and the clansmen of the girl's father. In most cases a girl did not know her future husband until the day of Okwanjula

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6 *ibid.*

(introduction).<sup>7</sup>

The actual marriage consisted in the performance of the marriage contract - the girl's clan receiving the omutwalo (bride wealth) and they, in return, handing over the girl to the suiter's clansmen. The bride wealth was initially to symbolise the union between the families and clans. However over time, it became a form of sale stamp or seal, whereby, once it was paid, the wife was bound to stay with her husband against all odds. This was especially so when the parents could not afford to pay back the mutwalo, or were simply unwilling to do so.

The traditional Kiganda marriage exhibited unequal treatment between men and women. In the first instance, it was always the man who married a woman. Like in many other African societies, it was the man or his family who looked for a wife and paid the bride wealth. The woman on the contrary, was always expected to wait for a suitor to come by. She had no chance to look for or choose a husband.

Secondly, since the man paid the dowry (bride

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<sup>7</sup> This is the ceremony on which the suitor is officially introduced to the relatives of the girl and bride price decided upon.

wealth), he owned the wife; not the other way round. A man could therefore afford to 'own' as many women as he could afford to pay dowry for, unless of course, he was a person of bad behaviour.

Thirdly the Baganda were traditionally polygamous. A man was free to marry as many women as he could afford. Kings and chiefs had several women; since they had a lot of property from which they could pay bride wealth.

Women were not allowed to have more than one man for a husband. It was very scandalous for a woman to commit fornication or adultery. If a woman did so, her husband would ask for compensation from the man with whom she committed the crime. On the contrary a wife would not get any compensation if her husband committed the same crime.

Several aspects of life in Buganda portray a parallel between women and property, with women being used as a currency in the discharge of justice, privileges or appreciation. For example a peasant man caught in adultery with another's wife was fined 10 women, 10 goats, ten cows, and ten pieces of barkcloth. If a man caused death of another without intent, he was fined twenty women,

twenty cows, goats and pieces of barkcloth.<sup>8</sup> Women were also given away as presents and tokens. A Muganda man could give a present of a woman to the Kabaka (king) in order to obtain clemency.<sup>9</sup> When pleased with the services of a chief, the Kabaka rewarded him with a wife, among other presents. Chiefs could also extend similar tokens to peasants in their areas of jurisdiction.

Women given away in this manner were treated in almost the same way as slaves, except that the husbands could not sell them to a third party.<sup>10</sup> In case they were given away as girls to the Kabaka or a chief, they were kept in the official court until they were old enough to become wives.<sup>11</sup>

Being a patrilineal society, the Baganda are closely knit around the clan concept, to which they have a strong sense of belonging. Each clan, headed by Omutaka (a clan elder) is characterised by its own set of names, a totem and a drum rhythm.

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8 J. Roscoe; The Baganda: an account of their native customs and beliefs (2nd edition) London: Frank Cass and co. 1965: p. 263 ff.

9 *ibid*, p. 86

10 *ibid*, p. 92

11 Kyewalyanga, *op cit* p. 59.

In the traditional society each clan had particular roles it performed in the king's palace.

A Muganda belongs to the clan of his or her father, and as such, takes one's name from that clan's set of names. Thus when a woman married, she only formed a new family but was never intergrated into the clan. She retained her maiden name and remained a member of her father's clan.

In Luganda a woman is called 'Omukyala' from the verb 'Okukyala', which means 'to visit'. This implies that the Baganda society considered a woman as a visitor to the clan. This view was exemplified in the fact that women married into the clan did not participate in its decision-making.

The Baganda society also gave more privileges to men in administration of justice. If a man speared and killed his wife, especially on suspicion of adultery, he would not be punished by the law of the land. In such a case, if it was proved that the murdered wife had not actually committed adultery, and that she was wrongly punished, the woman's relatives would only fine the husband. Ironically, more severe punishments were imposed



on men who committed what today appear to be lesser crimes. For example, if a man stole a goat, chicken or food, he was bound to loose one or more of his limbs, eyes or ears.<sup>12</sup> The right explanation for this difference could be that in the case of killing his wife for whom he paid dowry, a man was inflicting punishment on his own property. Yet in the case of stealing, the crime was committed against somebody else's property; hence a heavier sentence.

In social life, wives of kings and chiefs enjoyed less opportunity to interact with outsiders than wives of peasants, although both categories had limited or no freedom at all to do so. In either case, a husband's consent was sought before the woman could go out to visit.

Wives of the Kabaka and chiefs lived in women's quarters within an official court fenced by a high reed enclosure. All the gardens were fenced inside the enclosure to keep the women within bounds and to keep off intruders.

In such circumstances, the wives would only meet outsiders (especially men) with the explicit permission of the husband. In case of going out to

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<sup>12</sup> Roscoe, op cit, pg. 264.

visit her relatives, a royal wife was escorted by at least two pages, (bagalagala) who made sure that no man talked to her on the way, or even crossed her way. It was often arranged that one of the pages would go ahead telling travellers to clear the way until the royal wife passed.<sup>13</sup> Wives of peasants were freer in this respect; not only because their husbands could not afford the luxury of escorts, but also because this privilege was not extended to peasants. It was a royal prerogative.

Yet the kings' and chiefs' wives enjoyed more leisure time than the peasant women. Since the Kabaka and chiefs had many servants and slaves, their wives had more time to spend on indoor games like chess (Omweso). Wives of peasants spent long hours in the fields, and the rest of their day was spent on cooking and collecting water or firewood. They used the little spare time left for talking to women neighbours or telling stories to their children.<sup>14</sup>

There was little chance in the Baganda society for men and women to mix together. The society had

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<sup>13</sup> *ibid*, p. 94.

<sup>14</sup> Michael Nsimbi "Village life and customs in Buganda" in The Kingdom of Buganda, Uganda society publication, 1956 p. 31.

well defined roles based on gender,<sup>15</sup> which limited interaction unless on selected occasions. But even during such occasions as funerals, weddings, or beer parties, women and men mixed more with those of their number than vice versa. During burial ceremonies, for instance, women cooked while men dug the grave. During beer parties, men sat and conversed in the compound while women served them with food and beer. On such occasions women were expected to show maximum humility and etiquette, talk in low voices and behave gracefully.

Baganda women were always expected to show respect to men and older people by kneeling down when talking to them, greeting or serving food. This was always the case with husbands. Whenever the husband returned home, the wife had to kneel down to greet him. Similar respect was extended towards other male members of the clan, for their authority was never challenged.

#### Role differentiation in traditional Buganda

In day-to-day life, the Baganda differentiated

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<sup>15</sup> These are discussed in the next section of this chapter.

roles according to sex. Men and women alike had particular roles they played in family work and community welfare. It is important to note that this differentiation always started at childhood. The major activities of women revolved around agriculture. They were responsible for growing food and preparing it.<sup>16</sup> Since this was the major role for women, ability to dig was a pre-requisite for getting a man to marry. When looking for a woman to marry, a man always gave much consideration to a girl's ability to cultivate the land.

In married life, a woman was responsible for ensuring a continued availability of sufficient food for the family. Failure to provide enough food was blamed on her, often on grounds of laziness, and such a woman could not stay long in a marriage. In order to help women engage actively in agriculture, men were supposed to provide their wives with a hoe and a piece of land. In instances where a man failed to provide these, then there was enough ground for a woman to call on her parents' intervention.

This role differentiation therefore demanded that women master the art of cultivation at childhood.

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<sup>16</sup> M.Nsimbi, op cit p. 28.

It was considered a matter of bad up-bringing for a woman to be lazy, not to know how to dig or to complain of hunger in presence of her husband, since she was meant to be the source of food.

Role differentiation also demanded of men to keep off women's roles. If a man was known to be in the habit of preparing his food, or to harbour such interests as cooking, then no family would even want to give to him its daughter in marriage. This forced parents to discourage boys from frequenting the kitchen, lest they developed an interest in the technicalities of cooking. They were rather encouraged to spend time with their fathers to learn men's skills.

Women were the ones responsible for the good up-bringing of children and their general welfare. A mother was always blamed for a bad-mannered child, although the credit for good manners always went to the husband. Women were also particularly responsible for the training of their daughters in preparation for marriage. They had to teach them to be obedient and respectful to men, and other family duties as were necessary to make one a good wife.

The Baganda women were also charged with preparing

salt, usually from certain weeds known as olusa, which were mainly found in swamps. They engaged in pottery, making cooking pots, water pots and other wares needed in the home. They made baskets for carrying raw food from the fields to the home, and cooked food from the kitchen to the house. It was women's work to cut grass for thatching the house as well as for spreading on the floor. They also made mats for themselves to sit on, as men usually sat on stools.

Baganda men too had various roles, different from the women's. Before the introduction of cash crops which required heavy labour, men hardly engaged in agriculture. Their main daily activity in traditional Buganda was making the barkcloths.<sup>17</sup> This industry was exacting, more so because the barkcloth was used for a number of functions.

The barkcloth provided material for dress, for both men and women. It was also used as bed-linen and for wrapping dead bodies in preparation for burial. It was very important as a currency for payment of dues and exchange of commodities. For example, it was given to a mother as part of a

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<sup>17</sup> Back-cloth (Olubugo), is a fabric made from a Mutuba tree. The process involves peeling off the cortex of the tree and flattening it with a series of specially designed wooden hammers until it becomes smooth and brown.

man's dowry. In most cases it was the barkcloth which was used in payment of taxes to the king by peasants. The kingdom also traded in barkcloth in exchange for other commodities from Karagwe and Nyamwezi in Tanzania.

Because of its importance, men spent long hours producing enough barkcloth for home use and for commercial purposes. Boys were also encouraged to spend much of their time with their fathers in order to learn the skills of producing the main source of income at that time.

In addition, men were black smiths as well. They made spears, knives, hoes and axes. They made needles for basket work and sewing barkcloth. They also forged bells for children and dogs. Men engaged in woodwork too, from which they produced canoes, troughs for brewing beer, wooden pounding mortars, handles for knives, hoes, and axes. Some men, engaged in pottery too to produce household kitchen ware although such men were few.<sup>18</sup>

The role of administration in the Baganda society was mainly reserved for men, with the king's

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<sup>18</sup> M. Nsimbi, op cit p. 27-88.

mother and the Lubuga (god-wife)<sup>19</sup> to the king as the exceptions of women leaders. Only men were appointed as chiefs. Their duties involved collecting the king's tax and ensuring the construction and maintenance of the road network in Buganda.

Men were also responsible for fighting for the kingdom. The king frequently sent men to invade neighbouring tribes, either to capture livestock, women and slaves, which were a status symbol, or to defend the kingdom in case of attack.

A Muganda man was also responsible for building a house for his family. The women supplied the grass, but it was the men who did the actual construction. The houses of the chiefs were built by the people in their areas of jurisdiction, while the king's palace was built by men from all

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<sup>19</sup> This was a female relative to the male heir. (In the case of a king she was always a half-sister) who was installed at the same time with the heir as his wife. Such a woman, being a relative, was only a symbolic wife during the mourning and installation ceremonies, and did not have any marital relations with the heir. The English word 'queen' used by Roscoe to mean Lubuga is misleading, because the Lubuga to the king never became his real wife. A king always got other wives. A more appropriate interpretation of Lubuga is 'God-wife', when used in the sense 'God-mother' and 'God-father' are used in Christianity.



over the kingdom. The chiefs would send their groups of men each and collectively they would construct the palace.

From the above account one can note two important aspects of Buganda's role differentiation. Firstly, there was a balance of work and participation for both sexes. Almost each sex had its own defined roles, but these roles were mutually complimentary for the sustenance of the family and the community.

Secondly, considered from the point of view of production, it can be observed that men engaged more in the production of goods of more permanence and wider distribution than women. Thus while women spent most of the time producing food and other house-wares, men crafted, among other things, spears, boats, bear troughs, barkcloth; many of which were used even outside the home.

It can be argued that the permanence and distribution variables in the process of production based on sexually differentiated roles contributed to the perpetuation of the inferior position of women in the Baganda society. Since the food women produced was always consumed, it would appear, at the end of the day, as if women

were not big contributors; after all little of their produce remained to prove otherwise. The Luganda saying "Oguwedde teguba muka" which can be interpreted to mean that something which got finished long ago cannot easily be remembered as having been good, carries this view.<sup>20</sup>

### Women and administration in Buganda

It has already been mentioned in chapter 2 that the Baganda had a deeply rooted objection to female administrators. Women were instead expected to portray a high degree of humility and submission to men. A woman who manifested authoritative or masculine tendencies was referred to as 'Kyakulasajja', or a woman with qualities of a man. This tendency was often despised and blamed on bad upbringing.

Within the royal family however, the offices of the Namasole (queen-mother) and that of the Lubuga (god-wife) were superior to even that of the saza (county) chief, and ranked only below the

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<sup>20</sup> The saying literary refers to beer - the beer, which was drunk sometime ago, cannot be easily remembered as having been sweeter than that which one may be taking at that moment. The saying is used in reference to other aspects of life too.

Kabaka's. Their powers over their estates and the people therein were absolute.

While the mother to the new king automatically became queen-mother (Namasole), the god-wife (Lubuga) was selected from among the new king's half-sisters and she was installed during the king's coronation. She too, took the title of Kabaka, though she was never heir to the throne .

The Lubuga always had her own palace, which was built on a hill adjacent to the Kabaka's palace. This was because since she too was referred to as king, and no two kings, according to tradition, resided on one hill, the two palaces had to be built on separate hills. Protocol also demanded that like the king, the Lubuga also be carried shoulder-high and be referred to with the masculine title of 'ssebo' (sir).

She remained celibate, and if she outlived the Kabaka, she changed her name to Nalinya and became almost a commoner.

The Lubuga had her own estates to which she appointed chiefs with titles similar to those of the king's chiefs. She held her own court in which she tried the people under her jurisdiction (in her estates), but consulted her brother in some

cases.

The queen-mother too shared in royal prerogatives. She had her own estates, court and servants, and was the overall authority over those in her enclosure. The queen-mother derived her power and honour from the fact that she was mother to the king. When the king died she too became more-or-less a commoner.

In addition to the queen-mother and the Lubuga, the king's wives were also in charge of various offices, but only within the royal court - the palace. They carried names reflecting their seniority and office in the palace. The first wife, Kaddulubaale, was chosen for the new Kabaka by his father. She was responsible for the royal fetishes (amayembe) and royal amulates (ensiriba). The third wife, Kabejja, was particularly in charge of the fetish Nantaba.<sup>21</sup> The fifth wife was responsible for cutting the king's nails and hair and ensuring that they were kept properly in a house specially built for that purpose.

A king usually had several wives. Each of the

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<sup>21</sup> This was the wind spirit, endowed with powers of fertility and production, Roscoe, op cit, p. 237.

wives had much power over her attendants in her enclosure, but their power was not equal to that of the queen-mother and the Lubuga. The first wife (the queen) like all other wives of the Kabaka, was eclipsed by the Lubuga (god-wife) and the queen-mother. This partly explains why some historians like John Roscoe refer to the Lubuga as queen. This is a misunderstanding. It also explains why other historians talk of the king of Buganda but never the queen.

Some observations can be made on the position of royal women in the administration of Buganda. Firstly, the queen-mother, the Lubuga (god-wife) and the princeness were, as already mentioned, referred to in male terms. In other words, they were honorary men by virtue of their being members of the royal family. Maleness in Buganda was a symbol of authority and superiority. The royal women's superiority lay in their relationship to the king, and so they were in effect upgraded to the authority-commanding level, hence, they were "sirs" with all prerogatives, including leadership. These women were not highly regarded as women per se, but in relation to the King. This is why when he died they left office and became almost as good as commoners.

Secondly, although the Queen-mother and the god-wife ranked next to the King in order of importance, they were not in the main stream of the administrative hierarchy. Their power was limited to their own estates and enclosures and it never radiated throughout the kingdom like that of the Kabaka. Moreover they were not part of the administrative council, the Lukiiko, which was the governing body of the kingdom. It comprised of the Kabaka, the Katikkiro (prime minister), the Kimbugwe (the chief who was in charge of the King's umbilical cord) and the saza (county) chiefs.<sup>22</sup>

The third observation is that while royalty elevated these women above other women in Buganda, the same royalty deprived them of many rights. For instance, except for the Kabaka's wives, all other royal women were not expected to marry. The Queen-mother was not allowed to re-marry after getting into office.

The roles of women in Kiganda traditional religion:

Both men and women had significant roles to play

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<sup>22</sup> J. Roscoe, *ibid*, pg. 233-234.

in the sacred aspects of Kiganda traditions. Sacred here refers to all the people and places of worship - temples, objects of worship and veneration, and rites and ceremonies that relate to religion.

Women in traditional Kiganda religion could be priestesses (Ba Kabona), mediums (Emandwa) medicine women (Abalaguzi), vestal virgins and wives of the gods.

As priestesses, women, like priests, looked after the temple. They were responsible for the safety and good conduct of its servants. The chief priest or priestess received all people who came to consult the gods, and was also the interpreter of oracles given through the medium. She made sure that the grass used as a carpet in the temple was in good order, and that the fire was kept burning. Priestesses, however, were less common than priests, but priestess Nakaima of Mubende Hill in Mubende district, (North-West Buganda) is the most well known example.

Women were also mediums. These were the link between the people and a particular god. They were chosen by the gods or goddesses themselves to be their mouth-pieces. When a woman was chosen to be

a medium, she had to observe the laws of chastity for the rest of her life, and was regarded as a wife to the god she served. Female mediums would not perform any temple duties when in their monthly periods, because they were considered unclean.

Among the recorded female mediums was that of god Mukasa, the god of plenty, whose chief temple was on Bubembe Island in Lake Victoria. Once chosen as a medium of Mukasa, one remained in office until death. The medium was not allowed to marry or even talk to any man except Semagumba, the chief priest of god Mukasa.

Women could also become medicine people. Like in all African traditions, the religious was part of all aspects of life. Therefore healing too had a religious dimension. Though sometimes not directly dealing with the temples and gods, medicine people were regarded as belonging to the religious class, and were greatly respected by the people and their power to heal and exorcise ghosts was usually acknowledged by many. They were generally responsible for the health and welfare of the people. Their medicines usually included herbs, ordinary grasses of the jungle, fetishes (Mayembe) and amulates (Nsiriba).



The role of vestal virgins in Kiganda religion was also a very significant one. These were young girls who were dedicated to gods as offerings by their parents.<sup>23</sup> In most cases such parents would have prayed to the gods for children, promising in return to devote the children to the service of the gods. The duties of vestal virgins included, among other things, to keep the sacred fire burning continuously in the temple; to see that no sacrilegious objects were brought to the temple; to provide water and firewood for use in the temple; to ensure that new grass for covering the floor of the temple was supplied when necessary; and to guard the sacred pipe and tobacco used by the medium before giving an oracle.

Vestal virgins (Abawala Abawonge), just like the mediums and priestesses, were sacred, and if any man attempted to defile them he was put to death. They remained in the temple enclosure until the age of puberty, when they would be given away into marriage by the god concerned, and then be replaced by younger girls. Girls above puberty were unsuitable as vestal virgins because during their monthly periods they were not allowed to enter the temple.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Sir Apollo Kagawa; Empisa z'aBaganda (Customs of the Baganda), Kampala 1934, p. 183.

<sup>24</sup> F.X. Kyewalyanga, op cit p. 121.

It is to be noted that there were other women who were offered to the gods but not as vestal virgins. For instance, god Kibuuka, the god of war, had two resident princesses in his temple enclosure. These princesses - called Nagalemedde and Namirembe - were always replaced when they died. There was also a third woman and (not a princess) whose title was Nakitajja. It was also a custom that every third child of the wives of a priest or officer in the temple was given to god Kibuuka. This god sometimes gave away as wives to servants such girls offered to him.

In other instances women were also offered to gods as sacrifices in order to avert a pestilance, a famine or a misfortune, or to appease a god. If someone was in prison, his relatives sometimes gave a beautiful girl to the gods, among other things; while on certain festivals women formed part of the King's offerings to the gods. Such women were usually offenders, but sometimes they were innocent people caught on the order of the gods.

In the religion of the Baganda, women could also

become wives of the male deities (Ba Lubaale)<sup>25</sup>. According to tradition most deities were once human beings, but some of them were natural phenomena, for example, Lubaale Musisi was earthquake. Sir Apollo Kagwa has explained that Ba Lubaale were spirits of persons who gave evidence of supernatural powers, or had performed heroic or strange things during their life time which made them very famous even before their death.<sup>26</sup>

Wives of gods were also sacred, and in fact some of them were goddesses themselves. Nalwanga the chief wife of god Mukasa, the god of plenty, was a goddess; Nagaddya a princess and wife of god Nende, a war god, was herself a goddess and was always consulted during times of scarcity of rain and food. Other wives of Nende included Nabweteme and Nakilwadde. God Kibuuka had ten wives, while Nakato is said to have been god Buddo's first wife. According to oral traditions, when Nakato gave birth to a child, she caused the sacred well, Nansove, to spring forth on Buddo Hill.

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<sup>25</sup> There were also female deities, and both male and female deities were called Lubaale.

<sup>26</sup> Sir Apollo Kagwa; The customs of the Baganda, translated by E.B. Kalibbala, Columbia 1934, p. 216. Also quoted in F.X. Kyewalyanga, op cit, p. 103.

There were some female goddesses who were not wives of gods. The goddesses Nagawonyi, the goddess of hunger was one of them. Her temple was on Mubanda Hill in Bulemezi.<sup>27</sup> She was consulted during scarcity of rain. She was always approached through female messengers who begged her to have mercy on their dying children and intercede for them to god Musoke and god Gulu who had command of rain and food. There was also goddess Nabuzaana, the patroness of women. She was particularly appealed to when women had problems related to child-bearing. Her temple was on Luwunga Hill on the Bunyoro frontier and her priestesses went through out the country to administer midwifery on women.

In addition to these specific notes, women also played religious roles as wives. When a woman married into a clan she identified herself with its gods and she served them. In the home, she served her husbands fetishes (mayembe) with water or beer daily. This was especially so in the case of Kings. Kings in Buganda were sacred, and so their spirits were worshipped and generally considered on the same level as the gods. When a

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<sup>27</sup> Mubanda Hill of Bulemezi (North Buganda), differs from Mubende Hill (of North-West Buganda) on which priestess Nakayima referred to earlier lived.

King died a temple was built for his spirit and his widows were responsible for taking care of it. They had their houses within the temple enclosure and some of them slept in the temple itself. The Queen (Kaddulubale) of the late King and some other widows held offices in the temple. These offices were continuous, and if a widow died or remarried, members of her clan replaced her with a young woman as the wife of the King. The Lubuga (called Nalinya after the King's death) was the chief guardian of the temple, with her residence nearby. She too was always replaced (by a princess) when she died.

It can therefore be concluded that in matters of religion, women in Buganda, as in many African traditional cultures, were very active, not only as participants but also as leaders. They were mediums priestesses, goddesses and vestal virgins. These women, just like the men, were accepted by the people as the ones who had knowledge, and as the link between human beings on one hand, and god, spirits and other deities on the other. Many such leaders were skilled and trained to the point of what one today would call professional.

3. CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN  
ADMINISTRATION IN UGANDA

Effects of the colonial period

It has already been noted that women in Buganda were active as leaders only in religion but never as administrators of society in general. However women's chances to participate in any leadership role were further eroded at the advent of the missionaries and colonialists.

In the first instance, the first missionaries to Uganda, as in the rest of Africa, condemned traditional cultures and religious practices as evil and barbaric, and demanded as a matter of urgency, that all converts to Christianity disassociate themselves from such practices. For the native women this meant that the only dimension of life in which their personality was uplifted to an equal level with that of men was being discarded as evil. It also meant that women's leadership role in religion was no more, because Christianity which replaced the African traditional religion, emphasised, at least from the superficial point of view, male leadership and female subordination in religion and society.

Secondly, the education system introduced by the missionaries did not increase women's chance to take part in society's leadership. The education given to girls was not that which would fit them better in the changing world, but that which "was designed to make them useful wives and good mothers."<sup>28</sup> Thus, girls' schools concentrated upon teaching family and home management-related subjects like cookery, sewing and child health care. Such training aimed at fitting the girls better into their culturally-set roles. The boys' training on the other hand, was geared towards enabling them "to take their proper place in the administrative, commercial and industrial life of their own country."<sup>29</sup> While men were being trained to be leaders in all sectors of life, women were being trained to remain in their traditional 'place'.

The coming of colonialists had an effect on the already minimal and indirect right of women to property. This was more so in relation to women's accessibility to land. During the pre-colonial period, women were entitled to land for

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<sup>28</sup> A.B. Lloyd, Day spring in Uganda London; CMS 1922; p. 55.

<sup>29</sup> A.P. Mcgregor; King's college Buddo: The first sixty years, Oxford: Oxford university press 1980: p. 1.

agricultural purposes by virtue of their position as wives or daughters for the clan. Since the right to dispose of land lay in the clan rather than an individual, women were protected by the clan, and could not be easily alienated from land.

When the colonialists came, land was institutionalised as a valuable property through consultation and registration. In the Buganda Agreement of 1900, land was privatized; which meant that any man "who held land in free hold could do what he wished with his property, and the security of the peasants living on the land was no longer guaranteed."<sup>30</sup> Moreover certain traditional clan lands were swallowed up in private estates as a result of privatization.

The implications of privatization were that all decisions pertaining to land were removed from the corporate to the individual owners. Land rights were shifted from the collective to the individual, thus weakening the authority of the clan over its members. Land was now registered in the name of the man, and so were all rights to decisions regarding its use. He could also dispose

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<sup>30</sup> "The Kingdom of Buganda, Kampala", The Uganda Society, 1956. p. 9.



of it at will. For women, this implied that they could no longer be protected by the clan as far as accessibility to land was concerned. This minimized women's power and ability to participate in decision-making as far as the use of land was concerned.

More still, the introduction of commercialized crops meant that women had to labour in both subsistence and cash-crop sectors, while the men, the owners of the land, enjoyed the sale of crops. When labour migration by men to the urban centres began, many African men transferred with them all the decision-making powers concerning land to the urban centre. Women remained at home, more-or-less as mere labourers with no power or authority over the land they were tilling for the support of their families and for earning capital.

The rural-urban drift also meant for the woman, that while there was division of labour in the pre-colonial period, with roles distinguished according to sex, now she had to take up some of the man's traditional roles. In addition to her own traditional roles she was now responsible for repairing the house, day-to-day administration in the home and protection of the family.

The outcome of all these factors was that while the role of a woman in society became broader, her increased social and economic dependence on the man reduced further her ability to participate in decision-making. She did not have any bargaining power in face of the man's increased economic and political power.

#### Women and administration in Uganda today

The persistent social and political upheavals in Uganda in the past two decades have been a resocialization process, in that women, over time, began to question rather than merely accept the inherited gender ideologies and roles. The structural changes which have taken place have also led to the national male leadership to change their view about the roles appropriate for women.

However this change in attitude began in the 1980's. Before this time the pre-occupation of women through their organizations, for instance, was largely with themselves and the personal progress of each member. They were not concerned about understanding and contributing solutions to the problems of society as a whole, let alone decision-making.

There is evidently a great difference between today and the 1940's when the National Council of Women (NCW) was formed. At that time the council, founded by white missionaries' wives and a few educated elite in 1947, took the position of not getting involved in issues that went beyond the status and welfare of women. Such a position contrasts with the one depicted in the December 1985 women's memorandum<sup>31</sup>, for instance. In this memorandum, the women expressed concern that as an underprivileged group, they had not been able to penetrate the power structure, even though they formed a bigger part of the country's population. They also demanded that they should be consulted whenever there are important national issues, so that their views can also be taken into consideration.

Further more, women also played a very significant role in the National Resistance Movement (NRM) struggle for liberation. Many were valuable contributors of information necessary for planning and taking decisions; others were educators of the people in the movement about justice; still others were soldiers in the battle field. This shows that there has been tremendous change in the general

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<sup>31</sup> The memorandum (4 pages) was submitted to the prime minister of the then ruling military council. 1985.

outlook of the role of women in society. Women's participation in such roles of importance in the army has helped, if nothing else, to revolutionize the minds of the people, making them aware that both men and women can play any role in society without restricting themselves to culturally-dictated ones.

However women participation in decision-making and administration is still minimal, especially when seen against the total population of women in Uganda. There are several causes for this. First is that the traditional beliefs that men are superior to women and should therefore rule are harboured by many people. Such people feel that the present attempt by women to get into all sectors of life has made women 'big-headed' and difficult to keep under male-control which, according to them, is what God intended to be the order of society. Very often women are reminded through music, theatre and even talks, that they are supposed to be subordinate to men, and should not attempt to challenge male supremacy.

Thus at the most abstract level, people feel that their beliefs in gender differences are natural other than created over a period of time. Challenges to such beliefs are therefore seen as

rebellion against the creator in favour of cultural imperialism, while defending them can be interpreted as contributing to progress.

As a result of such beliefs, some women who manage to get into administrative or decision-making roles tend to be inconfident of themselves as able participants on an equal level with men. They are further demoralized by both men and women who frequently refer to them as 'men-like women'. Consequently such women begin to apologize to society, and to men particularly for reaching where they have reached; sort of indicating their doubt as to whether they are not going against god, nature and even themselves when they encroach on men's roles.

Minimal participation of women in decision-making also results from the fact that the laws of the country are still bound to the traditions and customs of the African society. Mary Maitum in "Women, the law and convention: A Ugandan perspective", explains that "the fact that there are still some laws in Uganda which are generally discriminatory helps to perpetuate the concept of women as inferior beings because the status of women in Uganda is intrinsically bound up with

traditions and customs.<sup>32</sup>

Maitum clearly illustrates that many Ugandan laws are still discriminatory against women especially in matters to do with marriage, divorce and succession to property on death. For example the customary marriage decree formulated in 1973 legalized subsequent marriages or unions, giving men the privilege to take additional wives. This privilege was not extended to women. -

In addition, the fact that Uganda is one of the countries that have not yet adopted the 1979 United Nations convention on the Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.<sup>33</sup> is in itself an indicator, that equality for women in Uganda as far as the law is concerned is still more of by word than by practice. In a situation where a group of people are subject to an inferior position by law, their participation in society is generally hindered, and their bargaining power in decision-making is reduced.

Thirdly, the economic dependence of women on men

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<sup>32</sup> Article in G.S. Were (ed.); Women and Development in Africa, Journal of E.-Africa Research and Development, vol. 15, 1985, Nairobi G.S. Were press 1985.

<sup>33</sup> Ruth, L. Sivard, op cit p. 31.

also retards their participation on an equal level with men, in the decision-making, be it on national or family level. Many women as compared to men, have not gone far in education and their economic earning are limited. In such cases women are forced to live with men, even under severe conditions, in order to get economic security. In a situation like this the woman's abilities are usually crippled by her husband's imposition of his supremacy.

One can therefore say that the situation as it is in Uganda today as far as women participation in decision-making is concerned, differs from that of the traditional, the colonial and the immediate post-colonial period. Yet this is only in the sense that as a result of the few exemplary women in decision-making and leadership roles, both men and women are getting increasingly aware that women are capable of participating in all roles of society, given chance. But the traditional hurdles still exist, to the extent that even when people have realized the abilities of women, only a few are ready to accept them as equal participants and contributors to society's development with men. This is reflected even in the national laws which have remained in favour of men than women in some aspects.

By way of conclusion to this chapter, it can be noted that African customs and traditions have tended to favour men more than women in matters to do with leadership. It is men who are elected as leaders of the home, the village, clan and society. Although in some cases women have been allowed to play a significant role, such women have been only exceptions other than the rule. The general principle governing relationships between men and women in the African society has been that of superiors and inferiors. This trend is still evident in many African societies today.

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## CHAPTER 4

### THE BIBLE AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN

Many christians of all ages profess the Bible as the 'Word of God'. With all its implications, (which are not dealt with in this study) many people have used the Bible message as a means of achieving their own end - both constructive and destructive. The Bible is, for instance, used as a means of stiffling opposition, enforcing set opinions, defining church membership and deciding the roles and positions of members in the church and society.

As far as women are concerned, throughout the history of Christianity, the prevalent view has been that the Bible relegates women to a second place in the membership of the church. They are subordinate and inferior to men. Those who subscribe to this view argue that in all social interactions recorded in the Bible, men led while women followed. Women were always parts of men; never individuals of their own.

This chapter is an attempt to re-examine the stories and teachings in the Bible about women - first in the Old Testament, then in the New Testament - in order

to understand the participation and roles of women in the societies of their time. It is also in order to understand what the Word of God itself reveals as the role of women in the church. It is essential however that in each case, a brief look is taken on the way women were perceived in the culture of the time - the Hebrew and the Graeco-Roman societies respectively.

## 1. WOMEN IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

### Women in the Hebrew society

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The Hebrew society was patriarchal in nature. This means that all its social systems were controlled by men. It also implies that descent was traced through the male lineage.

The position of women in this society was lower than that of men. They depended on men in all their life time — on their fathers as daughters and on their husbands when they married. Male members, even boys, were regarded as more important than women.

Hebrew women were important only as mothers. In fact, according to Hebrew law, they were to be

honoured (Exodus 20: 12); feared (Lev. 19: 3); and obeyed (Deut. 21: 18), just like the fathers. This was so because they ensured the continuity of the society. They produced boys who prolonged the family line, and girls who were given away in marriage or sold as slaves. Because of the importance attached to motherhood, barrenness was regarded as a misfortune or divine punishment to women (Gen. 11: 30) Exodus 23: 26; 1 Sam. 1: 6; Gen. 30: 1).

Hebrew law regarded women as less significant than men. They were considered to be of weak minds, and so could not be taken seriously in matters concerning the law of the land. For instance, women were never witnesses or signatories to contracts. In addition, whereas a man's vow could be taken as binding, a woman's vow could be nullified by her father (if unmarried), or by her husband if married:

"But if her husband makes them null and void on the day that he hears them, then whatever proceeds out of her lips concerning her vows, ..... shall not stand: her husband has made them void, and the Lord will forgive her." (Numbers 30: 12, RSV)".

In marriage, the Hebrew law allowed a man to divorce his wife if he 'found some indecency in her', (Deut. 24: 1). In this case he would give her a bill of divorce. Women had no right to

divorce their husbands on grounds of indecency. A man could take a concubine, just as freely as he could acquire property or wealth.

There are instances in the Bible where women are categorised together with land, houses, slaves, oxen and asses as part of a man's possessions (Exodus 20: 17, Deut. 5: 21). Women called their husbands ' Lord ', just as the slaves called their masters.

Women and their role in the religion of Israel

There are women in Israel's history who, though they were living in a male-centred culture, contributed a great deal to the deliverance and later development of their society. Some were significant as leaders, prophets and judges, while others, through their personal faith and knowledge of God, facilitated the accomplishment of God's plan for his people, Israel.

The faith of Israel was particularly shaped by the exodus event - the experience of God's deliverance of the Israelites out of Egypt. This exodus account begins with the story of Moses, the man that God used to redeem his people.

The background of Moses' role as a redeemer was laid by women who were ready to act against the law of king Pharaoh. Pharaoh had felt threatened by the increasing number of Israelites and had ordered the Hebrew midwives - Shiph'rah and Pu'ah - to kill all the male-born children (Exodus 1: 15). By defying Pharaoh's order the midwives became the instruments of God's first triumph over Pharaoh, since it is from this initial victory that the great deliverer came.

In the history of Israel, there were people who were always called upon by God to speak on his behalf to his people, Israel. They counselled the people about his ways to ensure that they kept the law. In this sense such people were leaders - always leading people back to God.

Since in the Hebrew society women were believed to be of inferior mind and body, it was not acceptable by society-reasoning that women be leaders. Yet in the Bible there are examples of women who were God's spokeswomen in the community. These women must have been counted worthy by God to lead his people and to speak on his behalf to them; just like he chose the men.

Among such women was Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron (Numbers 26: 59). She was both a leader and a prophetess. Some scholars assert that Miriam's leadership was restricted to only women and did not extend to men as well.<sup>1</sup> This assertion is based on Exodus 15: 20, in which it is recorded that after crossing the Red Sea, the people of Israel were celebrating and rejoicing when

"Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron . . . . and all the women, went out after her with timbrels and dancing. And Miriam sang to them". (Exodus 15: 20-21, RSV).

The assertion may be true, but this passage is not enough proof for it. Moreover, Miriam was considered on the same level with Moses and Aaron in leadership, because in Micah 6: 4, God speaks through prophet Micah about this period of Israel's history saying:

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<sup>1</sup> Such scholars include Mrs. M. Beaching, commentary on Miriam, in J.D. Douglas (et al); New Bible Dictionary, 2nd Edition, London: Inter-varsity Fellowship 1962: p. 184.

"I sent you Moses to lead you, also Aaron and Miriam".

Miriam was therefore identified as one among the leaders of Israel.

Nevertheless, the assertion made about Miriam cannot be made of Deborah. (Judges 4: 4ff).

Deborah is clearly given as a leader of the entire community of the Israel people. She was a prophetess as well as a judge. She was a prominent judge, for it is said that she "was judging Israel at that time". This means that she was either the only judge or the main one at that time, judging all the tribes of Israel.

According to F.F. Bruce,

"..... it was probably because of her judicial and charismatic renown that the Israelites had recourse to her in the straits to which they were reduced under Sisera's oppression."<sup>2</sup>

Deborah was definitely the authority above Barak the commander of the army. (Judges 4: 6, RSV).

It is important to note that the judges of this time were more of military leaders than judicial ones, because whenever the people cried out to the Lord He raised up judges who saved them "out of

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<sup>2</sup> F.F. Bruce, article on Deborah; J.D. Douglas, Ibid.

the power of those who plundered them". (Judges 2: 6, RSV).

They are also referred to as 'deliverers' or 'saviours'<sup>3</sup>. They were therefore leaders in battle and rulers in peace. In the case of Deborah, her leadership ability and prophetic insight were used by God to deliver Israel from her enemies.

The story on Huldah's role in the reformation of Judah shows clearly how women as well were highly regarded as people chosen to speak on behalf of God.<sup>4</sup> In this story, it is recorded that the temple of God was undergoing repairs when a book of the law was found. On discovering that the people of Israel had not been following the law and that God was about to punish them, king Josiah found it necessary to inquire of the Lord what to do.<sup>5</sup>

It is clear that the king did not specify for the five men he sent which prophet to go to. In addition the five men knew, just as Josiah did, that the matter at hand was a very serious one, affecting all the people of Judah. The only way

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<sup>3</sup> In Judges 3: 9, 15, the RSV uses saviour, while the New English Bible uses deliverer.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Kings 22: 3 ff.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Kings 22: 3-13



out was to find out whether the book they had found was genuine and what the people were supposed to do.

The fact that men went to a woman to validate the book of God shows that Huldah must have been a woman of undoubtable competence. Otherwise, there could have been no reason for Jewish men to consult a woman, since under the culture of the time women were insignificant and inferior. Huldah's competence is also showed by the fact that although Jeremiah and Zephaniah were also prophesying during this time, they were not consulted on this important issue.<sup>6</sup>

The prophecy of Joel emphasises very clearly that God desired that all His people, under his anointing prophesy:

"And it will come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy....."  
(Joel 2: 28-29, RSV).

Prophet Joel prophesied probably around the 4th or 5th century B.C., after the return of Israel from

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<sup>6</sup> Zephaniah prophesied around c. 640 B.C. onwards, while Jeremiah was prophet between 626-587 B.C. Both were in Judah. Josiah's reforms were around the year 625 B.C..

exile.<sup>7</sup> At this time there was increasing subordination of women to men. They were also being excluded from any real role in worship and all other religious roles in the community. They, like slaves and children, could only relate to God through their 'masters' - the husbands and the fathers.<sup>8</sup>

Joel's prophecy is significant in that it was one of change. In "those days", God was going to mediate his message through all His people. The possession of the Holy spirit was going to be the universal hall-mark of God's children.

Joel's prophecy was seen as fulfilled on the day of pentecost, when the spirit of God came down on Christ's disciples in the upper room (Acts 2: 5-17). Peter, explaining to the amazed crowd, said:

"but this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel....." (Acts 2: 16-17, RSV).

It can therefore be said that although in the

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<sup>7</sup> This is according to recent scholars, e.g. R.K. Harison in his book Introduction to the Old Testament (1970), pp. 874-882. Old scholars like J.A. Motyer, in his commentary on prophecy and prophets: (New Bible Dictionary 2nd edition 1982: p. 977) place him around the 9th century, during the reign of the boy king Joash.

<sup>8</sup> Joanna Dewey, "Images of women", in L.M. Rusell, op cit, p. 68.

culture of the Hebrew society women were inferior to men, God used women in the same way he used men. At a time when their significance was declining even the more, God gave women new hope through Joel - that time was about to come when they would be empowered with the spirit and would go out to proclaim His message to His people.

## 2. WOMEN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

### The cultural background

The position of women seems to have deteriorated even more in the culture of the time of the New Testament. M. Beaching notes that "as time went on there was a tendency, under rabbinical teaching, to make the man more prominent, and to assign to women an inferior role."<sup>9</sup>

Rabbinical teachings were teaching traditions within Judaism that were developed in the first century A.D., and continued to determine the life of the Jewish communities. These teachings were probably responsible for the well-known prayer in the synagogue liturgy, in which the Jewish men thanked God for, among other things, having made

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<sup>9</sup> M. Beaching; "Woman"; In J.D. Douglas, op cit pp. 1258-1259.

them not women.

Women were not permitted to learn the law (the Torah) or the written will of God. This was ensured by the fact that the schools that were attached to the synagogues were open only to men and boys. One rabbinical writing in A.D. 90 emphasises this discrimination:

If a man gives his daughter a knowledge of the law, it is as though he taught her lechery", and,  
"Better to burn the Torah than to teach it to a woman"<sup>10</sup>

Women were also considered generally unclean, and could therefore not mix with men. In Herod's temple, built about 19 B.C., the women's court was first from the entrance, while the men's was further inside. While men could pass through the women's court to enter theirs, women were not allowed to go into the men's court.

The position of women among the non-Jewish people - Romans and Greeks - was no better than that of the Jews. Viola Klein says that:

"In ancient Rome, a woman's legal position was one of complete subordination, first to the power of her father or brother, and later to that of her husband, who held paternal

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<sup>10</sup> J.J. Jeremias; Jerusalem in the time of Jesus, London: Fortress press, 1969, p. 373.

power (patria potestas). In the eyes of the law, women were regarded as imbeciles....." In Greece wives were secluded in their homes, had no education and fewer rights, and were considered by their husbands as no better than chattel"<sup>11</sup>

The common belief at the time of the New Testament, therefore, was that women were inferior to men, both in mind and character, and unfit to take part in public life. Slaves were to some extent better than women. This is because while slaves had a possibility of buying their freedom back, the women were doomed to their position of subordination all through their lifetime, with no legal way to end this unfair and oppressive relationship.\_

### Jesus and women

#### Women as Jesus' disciples

In many instances today, it has been argued that women leadership in the church is unbiblical because Jesus did not choose women to be among his disciples. Since the disciples were to be the future leaders of the church, Jesus' exclusion of women from among his twelve is an indicator that he did not consider them worth of this role.

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<sup>11</sup> Viola Klein; "Women, status of", Encyclopedia Britannica, Macropaedia, p. 909.

This argument is true only in as far as it considers the twelve as having been the only disciples of Jesus at his time. However there were other people who, though not among the twelve were very important in the spread of the good news about Jesus.

In general terms, a disciple is one who accepts and promotes the teachings of another. The gospel writers, through the parable of the sower and that of the master who gave talents to his servants,<sup>12</sup> are in agreement that a true disciple of Jesus is one who hears the word of God and acts upon it.

When discipleship is defined as above, it becomes clear that the first disciple of Jesus was Mary, his mother. In Luke, Mary is portrayed as a young maiden who accepted the challenge of the Holy spirit at the annunciation (Luke 1: 28-38), and as one who ponders God's word in her heart and responds with great courage and determination (Luke 1: 39-55). Although she was troubled, Mary believed at once. She did not even grasp the full meaning of the angel's word, but she accepted it as God's word.

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<sup>12</sup> Matthew 13: 15-23; Luke 8: 11-15; Mark 4: 13-20; and Matthew 25: 14-30; Luke 19: 12-28 respectively.

Quite often Mary is depicted mainly as a 'virgin' and 'mother', but rarely as a disciple. Yet for Jesus, physical motherhood, important as it is, is not the basis of his mother's greatness. For Jesus discipleship has priority over family ties. This is well illustrated in Luke 11, verses 27-28:

"A woman in the crowd said, 'Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked!'. But he said: 'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it'".

Thus Mary's significance lies more in the fact that she qualified and formed part of Jesus' family of discipleship through her obedience and response to God's word. She is therefore a model for Christians, not so much of motherhood, as of faith and discipleship.

Some women were also among the disciples of Jesus as he went round the cities and villages preaching. Such women were those who had recognised the power of Jesus and had decided to follow him.<sup>13</sup> Many of these women must have left their traditional roles as mothers, wives and daughters for the sake of the good news.

Jesus' women followers cannot have been mere

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<sup>13</sup> Luke 8: 1-3 (RSV).

curious followers of a teacher, or cooks and cleaners. They too must have been serious disciples who paid attention to the teachings of Jesus, for at the empty tomb, an angel reminded the women:

"Remember how he told you while he was still with you in Galilee...." (Luke 24: 6-7, RSV)

Henceforth the women set out to go and tell the eleven disciples that what Jesus had told them had come true - He had risen.

Women were the first ones to be entrusted with the apostolic mission - to go and tell the others that Christ had risen and was alive. Apart from the gospel of Luke, other gospels record that the risen Lord even appeared specifically to Mary Magdalene (according to Mark and John), and 'the other Mary' (according to Matthew)<sup>14</sup> The fact that female, other than male disciples were chosen to bring the news of Jesus' resurrection, signifies Jesus' ushering in a new era, in which women were to be regarded as of equal importance with men.

Since the Jewish, Greek and Roman cultures regarded women as incapable of acting as

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<sup>14</sup> Mark 16: 19; John 20: 11-18; Matthew 28: 1 and 9.



responsible witnesses, it is no wonder that the eleven disciples did not believe the women when they told them that they had seen the risen Christ.<sup>15</sup> Christ had truly made women the original source of the credibility of the Christian faith.

Therefore on the road to Emmaus He rebukes the two disciples as,

"O. foolish men, and slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken" (Luke 24: 25,RSV).

These disciples had not believed the women either.

The story of the Samaritan woman in John 4: 7-41 is also one of a woman who became a disciple of Jesus. After understanding who Jesus was, the Samaritan woman "left her water jar, and went into the city, and said to the people, 'come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?'" (John 4: 28-29, RSV). The people who came got to know Jesus as a result of the woman's message. She in fact opened the way for Jesus' two-days' ministry among the people of Samaria (versus 40-42).

It is probably the Samaritan woman that Jesus credits for the preaching and spreading of the

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<sup>15</sup> Luke 24: 11, Mark 16: 16-11.

news to Samaria, when he tells the disciples:

"I sent you to reap that for which you did not labour; others have laboured, and you have entered into their labour." (John 4: 38, RSV).

This woman was the sower of the seed whose fruit the twelve disciples would reap, since the people of Samaria had believed her words about Jesus. When Jesus tells the disciples to lift up their eyes and see the white fields ready for harvest (verse 35), he is referring to the people of Samaria who were coming down to see Jesus after the woman had told them about him.

Jesus did not despise the Samaritan woman as incapable of spreading the gospel. He instead saw her as having done the hard work of sowing. Women would never get such credit in the cultures of the time. To Jesus, she too was befit to be a disciple of his.

As disciples who were committed to their teacher, women were among the last to remain at the cross of Jesus.<sup>16</sup> They watched his burial (Luke 23: 55), and were the first to the tomb on the third day (Luke 24: 1; Matthew 28: 1; Mark 16: 1; John 20:1). One bishop, thinking of these women's

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<sup>16</sup> Luke 23: 49 ff (RSV).

dedication, was compelled to say:

"Which stands better in a crisis - man or woman? The best way to arrive at a conclusion, is to go to the greatest crisis the world ever faced, namely, the crucifixion of our divine Lord. When we come to this great drama of calvary, there is one fact that stands out very clearly. Men failed .... on the other hand, there is not one single instance of a woman's failing him."<sup>17</sup>

Women were also empowered by the Holy spirit to go and witness for Jesus. After his resurrection, Jesus had promised his disciples that they were to receive the power of the Holy spirit, after which they would be his witnesses to all the world (Acts 1: 8). This Holy spirit was the one that the prophet Joel had prophesied, for when Peter stands to explain the event in the upper room he says:

"but this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel ...." (Acts 2: 16).

According to Joel's prophecy, the Holy spirit was to be poured out on all flesh (Joel 2: 28). Thus this prophecy was fulfilled in the upper room because together with the male disciples were women too, one of whom was Jesus' mother, Mary. (Acts 1: 14).

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<sup>17</sup> These were bishop Fulton Sheen's words, quoted in E. Dean; The Bible's legacy for womanhood, Old Tappan, N.J.: Rexell 1969, p. 223.

With all these examples of women who were dedicated to follow and serve Jesus during his ministry, one cannot say for sure, that Jesus did not have them even among those he specifically called to follow him. This possibility is better understood when it is seen in the light of the fact that the gospel writers themselves belonged to a culture that emphasised female inferiority in all aspects of life.

It is possible, therefore, that the calling of women as disciples of Jesus could have been one of the things that were not taken seriously and therefore not recorded; after all, John in his gospel says that there are "many things that Jesus did" but were not recorded.<sup>18</sup> Each of the gospel writers had his set objectives and a particular message he wanted to convey as he wrote. None of them seems to have had the objective of conveying the message that Christ's coming had made both men and women equal.

The gospel writers could have left out deliberately, those stories of women that seemed to contradict their culture. Women participation in public life was, by cultural standards, unacceptable. The gospel writers cannot have been

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<sup>18</sup> John 21: 25, and 20: 30.

immune to such human cultural biases as they wrote the gospels.

Jesus' teaching about women and his treatment of them

Women were among some of the people that Jesus encountered in his public ministry. Since women were not highly regarded in the Jewish culture, Jesus' treatment of them and his teachings concerning their status often led to doubts and complaints among the Jewish people.

On several occasions, Jesus went against the law in his relationship towards women. In his encounter with the Samaritan woman, for instance, Jesus broke the Jewish law which forbade a man to speak alone with a woman not his wife. Worse still, the woman was a Samaritan.<sup>19</sup> It is no wonder that the disciples were surprised. (John 4: 27). Yet this 'unlawful' behaviour of Jesus was illustrative of the fact that in the new era he was ushering in, all barriers between sexes, races and classes were no longer necessary. \_

The story in Mark 3: 31-35 also reveals Jesus' disregard of the Jewish culture in as far as it

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<sup>19</sup> R.R. Ruether; New woman, new earth, New York: Seabury Press 1975: p. 64.

related to women. Jesus instead teaches of a different relationship between women and men, and between women and God. When he includes 'sister' and 'mother' (women), equally with 'brother' (men) among his relatives, Jesus is implying that being Gods relative was conditioned or based on doing God's will only - for both men and women.

This aspect in itself was revolutionary as far as Judaism was concerned, because women were never taught the Torah (the will of God). Thus Jesus' telling them to do the will of God was far beyond the beliefs of the time, since they were not even supposed to learn it. Contrary to the popular belief, Jesus takes it for granted that women, just like men, can do the will of God. He even openly teaches them along with men (Luke 10: 38-42).

Jesus' refusal to go to his mother when she called him further shows the need to put the will of God as a priority over and above the stereo-typed cultural roles about women. Whereas in the Jewish law women were honoured only as mothers, to Jesus motherhood per se was not a source of honour. As J. Dewey puts it:

"In Jesus' teaching, the biological role of mother does not in itself give a woman status or honour. What is important for any woman, as for any man, is to do the will of God, and

in so doing, she, like her brother, is a true relative of Jesus."<sup>20</sup>

Jesus further illustrated that womanhood has priority over motherhood. To the Jews the reverse was true; in fact the individual's femininity was the cause of her inferiority in society. But Jesus himself had great esteem for his own mother as a woman. For example in John's gospel Mary is given as having been present at the beginning and at the end of Jesus' public ministry. This was at the wedding feast at Cana (John 2: 1 ff) and at the foot of the cross (John 19: 25 ff), respectively. On both of these occasions, Jesus addresses his mother not as 'mother', but as 'woman'.<sup>21</sup>

In a book edited by Raymond Brown, Mary in the New Testament; (Claretian, 1984), it is noted that the title 'woman' was not a common or known way of addressing one's mother in Israel of Jesus' time.<sup>22</sup> Jesus used the term to address other woman too. But it would be wrong to conclude that this

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<sup>20</sup> J. Dewey; "images of women" in Letty M. Russell, op cit. p. 65.

<sup>21</sup> John 2: 4 and 19: 26.

<sup>22</sup> The book is referred to by sister Virginia Pabella; Article "Mission of Women in the Church of Asia: Role and position" in Park sun Ai (ed.) In Gods image, Dec. '85/ Feb. '86, Singapore: The Christian conference of Asia.

was Jesus' way of addressing women in general; because although he addresses Mary Magdalene as woman (John 20: 15), he also addresses her by her name (John 20: 16). Yet still it cannot be said that this was a disrespectful form of address for Jesus, for there is nowhere in the bible that Jesus is given as despising or portraying a negative attitude towards women. The only people given as having been criticised by Jesus are the religious authorities (Luke 11: 42) and Peter (Matthew 16: 22).

The best conclusion here is that Jesus used the term 'woman' in a respectful manner. When he uses it to address his mother, he is affirming that he not only values her womanhood, but also that being woman has priority over being mother in this new order of things. Jesus puts his mother's womanhood as independent of her being mother. This was a radical re-definition of womanhood in a society where it (womanhood) was almost considered as 'a necessary evil' for reproduction.

Jesus also rejected the popular belief that women's role was only a serving role. In traditional Judaism, the place of women was in the kitchen, and only men were allowed to study the Torah with the Rabbi (teacher). In the story of



Martha and Mary (Luke 10: 38-42), Mary is encouraged to sit at Jesus' feet and learn, just as the male disciples did. The traditional concept of a woman's place as Martha knew it was rejected by Jesus. He instead showed her that women too had a right to sit with and learn from the teacher:

"Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken from her"  
(Luke 10:42, RSV)

Elsewhere in the gospels, Jesus illustrates that being a faithful good servant will mean washing other people's feet (John 13: 14). It will also mean feeding the hungry, giving the thirsty a drink, visiting the sick and probably doing all the other things that women do as their daily roles in the church. At another instance, Jesus called on his disciples to desire to serve other than being served (Luke 22: 26; Matthew 20: 25-28). But this does not mean that Jesus was reinforcing the role of women as the serving class. He was instead condemning the ruling-class' concept of hierarchical power for men, and advocating for a role transformation between men and women, rulers and ruled.

With this transformation, "the ministry of the church was not to be modelled on hierarchies of Lordship, but on the diakonia (or ministering) of

women and servants, while women are freed from exclusive identification with the service role and called to join the circle of disciples as equal members".<sup>23</sup>

Service to God in this new dispensation would require both men and women to listen to the voice of God, and going out to participate on an equal basis and as a team for the glory of God. This is service directed to God and not to human authority. It is demanded of all, for Jesus cautioned:

"Whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave" (Matthew 20:25-28, RSV).

Jesus' high and genuine regard for women can be noted in many other teachings of Jesus recorded. For instance, he at times contrasted the faithlessness of the social and religious establishment with the faith of the poor widows and outcast women (Luke 21: 1-4; 7: 36-50). He does his first miracles for women<sup>24</sup> and at the critical moment of his disappointments, he refers to his feelings as those of a mother-hen (Matthew 23: 37; Luke 13: 34). In addition, his stricter

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<sup>23</sup> Rose Mary R. Ruether op cit, p. 66.

<sup>24</sup> Matthew 8: 4 ff; Mark 1: 30-31, Luke 4: 38-39; John 2: 1-11.

attitude towards divorce of women can be taken to have been in order to provide women with greater respect and security in marriage. Women could be divorced even unreasonably, according to the culture of the time. In such cases they would be left without any means of support, since marriage was their only source of support.

From the foregoing one can conclude, firstly, that Jesus held women in high esteem and as equals with men. He considered them as individuals of dignity; contrary to the cultural conceptions. To him the importance of any individual lay in that person's obeying the will of God. On several occasions Jesus had to break through traditions to illustrate these aspects.

Secondly, Jesus considered both men and women as equal, and there is nowhere in his teachings that he condemns either to an inferior position. Through his balanced relationship between men and women Jesus illustrated the importance of both as his disciples.

## Paul and women in the church

### Women-leaders in the early church

Since there were women in the upper room on the day of pentecost (Acts 2: 4), it is right to assume that they too went out with the twelve disciples to spread the gospel. Although the Bible does not directly refer to the activities of these women after pentecost, they must have been among the first evangelists in the early church.

Yet even without direct reference to these women, the book of Acts and Paul's letters have several references which show that there were women in the early church who were prominent as leaders, both in the local churches and among travelling evangelists. The way Paul refers to Phoebe, for instance, indicates that this lady was a prominent church-leader. She is described in leadership terms by Paul - as a 'deacon' of the church of Cenchreae, (Romans 16: 1-2).

Faith and Roger have noted that "the word 'deacon' is in masculine form here, emphasising the nature of the office rather than the gender of the person. It is the same word that Paul uses to describe himself and other apostles, and is

usually translated 'minister'".<sup>25</sup> Paul counted Phoebe as one and equal with the apostles as far as the church work was concerned.

Paul also requested the believers in Rome to "Assist her in many matters in which she may have need of you", and further describes her as a 'helper' of many people. (Romans 16: 2). The word translated here as helper usually means 'leader of a party', 'champion', 'protector'.<sup>26</sup> This shows that Phoebe was nothing like a mere serving girl or slave but a prominent leader in the church. The fact that she is from the church of Cenchreae and yet being recommended to the Church of Rome shows that Phoebe was a wide-travelled church-leader.

In the same letter to the Romans, Paul addresses Priscilla and Aquilla as among the church-leaders. It is worth noting that three times in the Bible, Priscilla is mentioned before her husband,<sup>27</sup> in this husband-and-wife team, which headed the church in their home at Corinth and later at

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<sup>25</sup> Faith & Roger Forster; "Women's spiritual gifts in the church.", in K. Keay (ed.) Men, Women and God, Hants: Marshall Morgan & Scott, 1987, p. 55.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Acts 18: 18; 18: 26; Romans 16: 3.

Ephesus.<sup>28</sup> This suggests that Priscilla was more prominent than her husband in matters of the church; otherwise it was not common in the culture of the time to address a woman before her husband.

It is very likely that both Phoebe and Priscilla continued to have great influence in the church, because even Chrysostom, (writing around the 4th century) who had a low opinion of women could not help to say of these two women:

" These were noble women, hindered in no way by their sex ..... and this might be expected for in Christ there is neither male nor female"<sup>29</sup>

Another woman of prominence in the church was Lydia, mentioned in Acts 16: 14-15. Lydia was converted when in the city of Philippi after Paul preached to a group of women he found praying (Acts 16: 13). She was baptised, after which she invited Paul, Luke and Silus to her house. A

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<sup>28</sup> In a letter to Corinth from Ephesus, Paul tells the Corinthians that Aquilla & Priscilla sent them greetings. (1 Cor. 16: 19).

<sup>29</sup> E. Dean: The Bible's Legacy of Womanhood, Old Tappan N.J.: Revell, 1969: p. 223. Also quoted in Kari Malcolm; Women at Crossroads Illinois: Inter-varsity Press 1982, pp. 68-69.

church was founded in her house of which she became the leader. She was therefore the leader of the first church founded on the European continent.

Years later Paul writes a letter to the church that was founded in Lydia's home - the letter to the Philippians. In this letter Paul also mentions two other women:

"I entreat Euodia and I entreat syntyche to agree in the Lord..... for they have laboured side by side with me in the gospel" (Philippians 4: 2-3, RSV).

It is most likely that these two women had disagreed on some spiritual matter that Paul was compelled to plead with and to ask that they be reconciled. More important though is that these women seem to have been very active in the church and were at the forefront for its growth.

Again in Romans 16: 6, Paul sends greetings to "Mary who has worked hard among you." This hard-working is most unlikely to have been confined to just being hospitable. Since all the people included in the list of greetings were active members in the church, it is most likely that Mary's hard work was also to do with teaching and

preaching.<sup>30</sup>

It is not clear whether Junian referred to in Romans 6: 7 - also referred to as an apostle - is a man or woman.<sup>31</sup> According to Kari T. Malcolm, in the original Greek manuscripts the name which is interpreted in the Bibles today as 'Junias' is written 'Junian', which is the accusative term for either the feminine 'Junia' or the masculine 'Junias'.<sup>32</sup> Most scholars prefer to say that the term is masculine, since Paul refers to the person as an apostle. But Crysostom, (who was nearer to the time that Paul lived than modern scholars) assumes that Junian was a woman, for he writes of her

"Oh! how great us the devotion of this woman that she should be counted worthy the appellation of apostle."<sup>33</sup>

As already mentioned Crysostom had negative attitudes towards women. Therefore it is not

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<sup>30</sup> H.L. Marshall; The challenge of New Testament Ethics, London Macmillan 1966, p. 331.

<sup>31</sup> Whereas in the RSV bible Andronicus and Junias are referred to as 'My kinsmen' by Paul, yet in other versions like King James Version (KJV) and the Good News Bible the inclusive terms 'my relatives' and 'fellow-Jews' are used.

<sup>32</sup> Kari T. Malcolm op cit, p. 69.

<sup>33</sup> Nicene and Post Nicene fathers, 14 vol; Grand Rapids: Eerdonans 1975, vol. 11 p. 555 quoted in Malcolm T, Ibid, p. 69.



likely that he could have considered Junian to refer to a woman unless he was certain that the name is a feminine other than a masculine one.

There are other women too who were very active in Paul's time. For example Acts 17: 4 seems to give women as having been among the earliest disciples in Thessalonica. In Luke 17: 34, Luke mentions a woman called Damaris, who probably started a church in her home, like many women were doing at that time. In Acts 12: 12, there is mention of the prayers that were being held in the home of Mary the mother of John, while in 21: 8-9 Luke also talks about the four prophesying daughters of Philip. Paul in the letter to the Colossians, greets 'Nympha and the church in her house'. (Col. 4: 15, RSV).

#### Paul on women participation in the church

The contention in the church today about how much and in what roles women should participate in the church, stems mainly from Paul's writings on this issue. The examples that have been considered in the preceding section show that Paul worked along with women and appreciated their contributions in the church. Yet some of Paul's statements in the

Bible about the role of women and their participation in the church seem to be inconsistent with this view.

This is the dilemma in the church today. Did Paul recommend women leaders in the church or he preferred them to be silent? If he recommended women leaders, what do passages like 1 Corinthians 14: 34-35 and 1 Timothy 2: 11-15 mean, for example? If he preferred them to be silent, why does he seem to commend such women like Phoebe and Priscilla other than rebuke them for being leaders in the church?

In the attempt to assess Paul's view on the role of women in the church, it is better to note first that Paul's greatest word about women in relation to men is that

"..... there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."  
(Galatians 3: 28).

In this statement Paul was affirming that the gospel is available to all humanity, without regard to sex. For the Christians, the old grounds for discrimination which have found their justification in the Old Testament are no longer valid. Therefore man is no longer superior to woman. As H.L. Marshall puts it:

"Paul stood for the essential unity and solidarity of mankind, and was led to the recognition of that truth by the realisation that as a matter of fact, spiritual experience was completely independent of all those distinctions of race and class and sex which are normally so sharply drawn."<sup>34</sup>

Three other passages are very crucial to the understanding of Paul's attitude towards women participation in the church. These are: the already noted 1 Corinthians 14: 34-35, and 1 Timothy 2: 11-15; as well as 1 Corinthians 11: 2-6.

1 Corinthians 11: 2-6 is concerned primarily with the issue of women veiling their heads during public worship. While this passage may seem to be a rather irrelevant concern for the church today, it was very significant for Paul, to the extent that he devoted it as much space as that to his instructions regarding the Lord's supper.<sup>35</sup>

The possible reasons for Paul's concern for women to veil their heads are varied, just as the interpretations of the whole passage are. Grosheide says for example, that:

"The reasoning behind such action was that if a woman, like a man engages in praying and prophesying, she may also wish to be like a

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<sup>34</sup> H.L. Marshall, op cit, pp. 325-326.

<sup>35</sup> 1 Corinthians 11: 20-24.

man in the manner in which she prays or prophesies. But in so doing she degrades herself."<sup>36</sup>

In other words, Grosheide believes that Paul was telling the women to affirm the anatomic differences between the sexes rather than merely imitate men. Thus to Grosheide Paul does not want women to pray and prophesy at all in public worship. However this view is difficult to reconcile with verse 5 and 13, which leave no doubt that women took part in christian worship, prayer and prophecy.<sup>37</sup>

L. Marshall's argument on this passage differs from Grosheide's. According to him Paul felt that the christians ought to be warned about the social environment whose certain characteristics were incompatible with christian morality. Probably some women in the church of Corinth, in their desire and enthusiasm for liberty in Christ, were defying some of the culturally observed rules about feminine modesty by appearing in church bare-headed like men.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> F.W. Grosheide; The First epistle to the Corinthians, Grand Rapids Mich.: Eedmans, 1953, p. 253.

<sup>37</sup> R.E.O. White; Biblical Ethics, Atlanta: John Knox press 1979 p. 172.

<sup>38</sup> Marshall, op cit p. 333.

This argument seems very likely, especially when one takes into consideration the nature of the society of Corinth at that time. Appearing bare-headed was in itself, not an issue. But the church in Corinth was amidst a community full of sexual immorality, with lots of prostitutes who went around with their heads uncovered and their hair cut short to give them a masculine look. On the other hand, no modest Greek woman ever appeared in public unveiled. Paul's ruling was therefore wise. If the christian women ignored the rules of etiquette in this matter they would be considered by outsiders (non-christians) as women of loose morals and would therefore be a disgrace to the church.

However Paul's argument with which he follows up this ruling does not coincide with his view of equality of sexes. Verses 3, 4 and 9 indicate that Paul retained some of his culture's idea of subordination of women to men.

The reason for this could be that Paul was trying to "become all things to all men, that I might by all means save one". (1 Corinthians 9: 19-23). In other words, Paul might have thought it unwise to try tackling all social injustices at once, lest

those who believed in the law be put off. For the sake of the gospel Paul had to make many concessions which may look like inconsistencies. When he acts like a Jew at one time and like a Gentile at another, it does not mean he is double-minded. His main aim is to win people to Christ through all possible means.<sup>39</sup>

On the other hand, Paul's seeming contradictions might have been, as Marshall suggests, a result of his reverence to the Old Testament. In Marshall's words:

"Paul's reverence to the Old Testament as the word of God led him to regard as still valid all the Old Testament teaching about the position of women."<sup>40</sup>

Be that as it may, the very fact that Paul spends so much time discussing 'how' and not 'whether' women should participate in worship indicates that he recognizes complete spiritual equality of men and women. Since a woman could receive the Holy spirit as a man, she could as well exercise her spiritual gifts by preaching, teaching and prophesying just like men could.

Had this been the only mention in Paul's epistles

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<sup>39</sup> Kari Malcolm; op cit pp. 59-60.

<sup>40</sup> Marshall op cit, p. 334

of women's role in worship, the situation would have been straight forward. As it is however, one must take into account the passage of 1 Corinthians 14: 34-36, which appears to hold a different view about the role of women in the church. This passage commands that women should not speak in church, 'for it is shameful.' (verse 35). They are instructed that if they have any questions, they should ask their husbands at home.

Many attempts have been made to ascertain the true meaning of this passage and its implication to the christians today. J.C. Lambert for example explains it thus:

"And if to his injunction as to the silence of women in the church (1 Corinthians 14: 34ff) the apostle appears to limit the prophetic freedom of the first christian days (Acts 2: 4, 17), we must remember that he is writing to a church in the midst of a dissolute Greek city, where christian women had special reasons for caution in the exercise of their new privileges".<sup>41</sup>

While this reasoning may help explain Paul's call for christian women to veil their heads, it does not provide adequate reason for the passage of 1 Corinthians 14: 34, and the reason why this passage contradicts the other Corinthian and

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<sup>41</sup> J.C. Lambert; 'Women' in Hasting's Dictionary of the Bible, p. 1041.

Pauline passages which allow women to talk in church.

Orr and Walther try to reconcile the contradiction by translating the word used in this chapter as 'wife' rather than 'woman'; thus implying that it refers to only married women, while chapter 11 refers to unmarried ones:

"The intent of the command then is to interdict situations in which wives publicly contradict what their husbands say or think, or embarrass them by an interchange of words."<sup>42</sup>

The problem with this argument is that it neglects the fact that wives are still women (the same word used in both passages) who are clearly recognized as having the right to speak in worship in chapter 11.

New Testament scholars like Anderson Scott, J. Weiss and Robin Scroggs explain the problem by saying that verses 34-35 were not written by Paul but were a later addition to the text. The main reason given for this argument is that these verses seem to break the connection between verses

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<sup>42</sup> F. Orr and J. Walther (Eds.); The Anchor Bible, New York: Double way Co. 1976, pp. 312-313.



33 and 36. L.H. Marshall subscribes to this view when he says:

"For one thing it interrupts the sense, for verse 36 is the natural sequel to verse 33. Further, seeing that Paul claimed freedom from the law, it is hardly likely that he would appeal to the authority of the law in such a matter as this."<sup>43</sup>

Marshall further appeals to the fact that the passage contradicts 1 Corinthians 11: verses 5 and 13 in which Paul acknowledges the right of women to speak in public worship. Scholars in this camp are of the view therefore, that verses 34-35 were probably interpolated into the authentic epistles of Paul from the pastoral letters when the Pauline collection was edited. The editing took place a generation after Paul's death.

Yet other more recent exegetes like Catherine Kroeger and Richard Kroeger have a different view. These scholars consider the passage to be authentic Pauline. They then proceed to explain that in this passage, Paul was dealing with a problem specifically of this time, where the women, having got the liberty (in Christ) to talk in public while prophesying, were now going to excesses of making noise in the church and putting the whole church in chaos. These women were

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<sup>43</sup> L.H. Marshall, op cit, p. 334.

attending such gatherings for the first time (since under Jewish law they were not allowed), and so needed to be guided and told how to behave. They had to be silent in order to listen.<sup>44</sup>

The Kroegers further state that the Greek word 'Sigaó' translated here to mean 'silent' (v. 34) is the same word used in Acts 12: 17 and 15: 12, where the people were expected to be quiet in order to listen attentively to someone talking to them. At the same time, the Greek word 'Laleo' which is translated 'speak' was, in Greek literature of that time, also used to mean gossip or prattle.<sup>45</sup>

This therefore means that Paul implied that women should not be allowed to gossip or make unnecessary talk in the church. They had to listen (just as men did), and if they had any questions they would ask their husbands at home. The women were probably shouting out their questions in the middle of the preaching, interrupting and distructing everybody's attention.

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<sup>44</sup> Kari Malcolm, op cit, p. 73-74.

<sup>45</sup> Catherine C. Kroeger, Richard Kroeger; "Pandemonium and silence at Corinth", The Reformed Journal (June) 1978, p.10, from Kari, T. Malcolm, ibid.

Thus in 1 Corinthians 14: 34-36, Paul is not condemning women to complete silence but only warns them against excesses. As Malcolm puts it:

"Paul was not taking away the freedom to pray and prophesy which is implied in 1 Corinthians 11: 5, but he is dealing with excesses which occurred as a result of the freedom. In the process of determining the letter of the law in 1 Corinthians 14: 34, we should not miss the spirit of the epistle, which expresses freedom while trying to correct libertinism."<sup>46</sup>

Paul, in other words, commands for order and discipline whereby the christian women must be ready to be silence and listen to others. He even recommends this silence to men as well (1 Cor. 14: 28, 30). Only in silence can God's word be heard and absorbed.

Another passage widely quoted as barring women from any public ministry and leadership in the church is 1 Timothy 2: 11-15:

"I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet woman will be saved through bearing children, if she continues in faith and love and holiness with modesty." (RSV).

If this passage is taken as barring women from public ministry and leadership, then Priscilla,

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<sup>46</sup> *ibid*, pp. 74-75.

Phoebe and all other women who were active in the church must be charged as having been disobedient to Paul. However such charge becomes ungrounded when one considers that these women were 'co-workers' of Paul, and he in fact commended them and their ministry.

Further still, interpretation of this passage literally would make it very difficult to explain or justify Paul's seeming contradiction here of his earlier assumption that women can pray and prophesy in church, which appears in 1 Corinthians 11: 4-5. It would also contradict his teaching in Galatians 3: 27-28, that in Christ there is no male or female but all are one.

Therefore if it is taken that Paul allowed women in ministry, then an alternative interpretation of 1 Timothy 2: 11-15 must be sought. Many scholars including Catherine and Richard Kroeger, agree that the passage must be interpreted in relation to its context, keeping in mind the prevailing social and cultural factors at the time this letter was written.

According to the Kroegers, the word 'Authentein' which is interpreted here as 'authority', though not used elsewhere in the New Testament, is used

in the Greek literature of the New Testament period, to mean "to involve someone in soliciting sexual liaisons" rather than as "to usurp authority, domineer or exercise authority over."<sup>47</sup> They argue that this view is not out of place when the problem of sexual immorality in the early church is taken into consideration. For example, both the churches of Perganum and Thyatyra were condemned for teaching sexual immorality (Rev. 2: 14, 20); in 2 Peter 2: 14, Peter condemns people within the church who were leading others into sexual immorality. Later on Clement of Alexandria complained about christian groups who had turned the communion service into a sex orgy, and he calls people who participated in this form of religion "authentai". Such situations where so-called christian groups combined sexual immorality with christian worship were common in the Graeco-Roman period.

The reference to Eve, according to the Kroegers, is probably to counteract the heresies of that time which taught that women possessed superior intellectual and spiritual knowledge, and that Eve was created first and gave life and knowledge to

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<sup>47</sup> C. Kroeger & R. Kroeger; "Ancient heresies and a strange Greek Verb". The Reformed Journal (March) 1979: pp. 12-14 from K. Malcolm, *ibid* pp. 78-79.

Adam. Such female heresies and other spiritual cults had Ephesus as their center. It is therefore likely that Paul's letter was referring to these.<sup>48</sup> In effect, Paul was telling the christian women not to involve or seduce men into sexual immorality as the cults of the time demanded, but to be silent.

Thus although the Kroegers' conclusions are yet to be accepted by some scholars, they cannot be completely rejected. It is likely that Paul was trying to correct a situation which had got out of hand at that time. In any case, if one interprets Paul's teaching here literary and as applicable to all contexts, then one must be ready to do the same with other passages like Colossians 3: 22 for instance. This verse interpreted literary would mean that Paul was telling slaves to remain obedient to their masters, and therefore he encouraged the existence of the slavery institution. This would in turn mean that even in the world today slave-like systems should be left to exist since they were supported by Paul. Many christians usually realise at this point the danger of interpreting scriptures literary.

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<sup>48</sup> Richard Kroeger and Catherine Kroeger, "May women teach?" The Reformed Journal, (October) 1980. p. 17, from K. Malcolm, *ibid*.

From the foregoing analysis about Paul and women, it can be said that his statements about women are most disturbing. Yet his appreciation of women leaders in the church shows that Paul did not see anything wrong with women taking part in that role. He saw them as 'co-workers in Christ'. From the analysis of these major verses on the issue, one can conclude that Paul dealt with the local situation in the churches by requesting that the conventions of the time be observed. Meanwhile he laid down a principle that God shows no partiality:

"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, RSV).

With this principle, Paul intended to cut away all foundations of all institutions of domination and to lay a model for future action. The apostles could not solve all the problems of the time, but they prepared the way for a much broader and grander work than they themselves were permitted to perform. It is the job of the church today, now that women participation in leadership of the church has become a major issue today, to put into practice the theological justification of the equality of women and men; a principle lived by Jesus, and formulated by Paul.

CHAPTER 5

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE ANGLICAN CHURCH IN UGANDA

1. WOMEN IN THE PLANTING AND CONSOLIDATION OF THE CHURCH

The CMS women missionaries

The Church Missionary Society missionaries who arrived in Uganda in 1877 were all men, and they embarked on evangelisation as their initial task. Later on however, the need for women missionaries in order to facilitate missionary work was felt. This need was well-put in Baskerville's notes when he wrote about the church council which was about to meet on 13th May 1892:

"We need to discuss the advisability of appointing female elders for the better instruction of women.... In the absence of lady missionaries, it is impossible for us to do what should be done for the women..... I feel confident that the church cannot be firm and strong here unless the women are taught to be good christian wives and mothers, and this can scarcely be done until we have lady missionaries here to teach them."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Baskerville's Journal, June 10th 1892, in M.L. Pirouet: "The expansion of the church of Uganda, from Buganda into Northern and Western Uganda, between 1591-1914."



As a result of this need, the wives of missionaries started teaching classes of women and girls. Missionaries' wives had not come as missionaries themselves, but more of companions to their husbands.

The first women missionaries arrived in Uganda in 1895. They included Miss Elizabeth E. Brown (later married E.F. Rowling in 1898), Miss Jane Chadwick, Miss Furley L. Markan and Louisa L. Pilgrim.<sup>2</sup>

As Baskerville's notes quoted seem to indicate, the main role of female missionaries was to help do work among women, which was rather impossible for men to do. In chapter 3 it was mentioned that women in Buganda lived under restrictions by their husbands as far as relating to other men was concerned. The chiefs and king's wives who lived in enclosures were never seen unless with the husbands' permission. Since such women had many people within their enclosures it was significant that they be reached by the evangelists. Their evangelization meant that all the people within the enclosure would also be evangelized.

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<sup>2</sup> Bishop A.R. Tucker; Eighteen years in Uganda and East Africa Connecticut: Negro University press, 1911, p. 169.

Though preaching and evangelism were the central element of missionary work, it also consisted of taking care of the physical and educational needs of the people. Women missionaries were more involved in schools and hospitals than in direct evangelism. The reason for this could be that since by the time they arrived there were some Baganda women who had gone out to preach, the women missionaries chose to concentrate on the professional roles in which African women at that time did not have experience.

In the medical field, Timpson Kate (later married to dr. A. Cook in 1900) stands out prominently. She arrived in Uganda in 1896, and later served as a matron in the newly established Mengo Hospital.<sup>3</sup> She opened the first midwife's training school at Mengo in 1919. Through this school a good number of Ugandan girls qualified as midwives and worked in other welfare centres that were being set up. This move greatly helped in reducing the death-rates of mothers in labour. In 1928, Mrs. Cook opened the first nurses training school at Ndejje which was later transferred to Mengo in 1934. Three students from the school - Agnes Kamulegeya, Ada Lubinga and Faith Ndibulage - were the first

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<sup>3</sup> Mengo Hospital was established in 1897 February, by Dr. A.R. Cook.

Ugandans to take nursing qualifications in Britain. Two became midwives and one a registered sick children's nurse.<sup>4</sup>

Mrs. Dillistone too was active in the medical field. She pioneered the work at Ngora Hospital in 1908, by first giving simple medical treatment to the people in the area. A year later Bishop Tucker chose the site for the hospital, but the building did not begin until 1922. Meanwhile in Nabumali, the arrival of Miss Pilgrim, a qualified nurse, (in 1905) saw the beginning of permanent medical services there. Margaret Laing's great efforts, along with Earnest Hunter, led to the beginning and development of Kumi-Ongino Leprosy centre,<sup>5</sup> while Mrs. Skeen's determination led to the setting up of a 35-bed dispensary at Iganga.

Much of what was accomplished in the training of church-workers during the early years of missionary work is owed to the CMS missionary women. They were involved in the training of women and girls to ensure continuity and indigenization of the church. Most outstanding of the women missionaries in this area were Ruth Hurditch (later Mrs. Fisher) and Edith Pike, who trained

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<sup>4</sup> Tom Tuma, op cit, p. 91.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 93.

women church workers in Toro. They arrived in the region in 1901, and started conducting daily classes for women, teaching them the bible. In February 1902, the first ten women were sent out to church centres, two more taught at Kabarole, while thirteen more were licenced by the end of the year. Among the women trained by these two ladies were Ketra Balya, wife of the first African to be consecrated bishop of East Africa; Zipora Kamuhiigi and Lea Sere, whose husbands were ordained in 1907; Miriya Tigwezire and Loi Kiiza, whose husbands were chiefs and members of the church council; as well as Damali, a queen of Toro, who helped in teaching catechumens at Kabarole.<sup>6</sup> Hana Kageye also went through miss Pike's training. Many of the other women trained either became teachers or went out into evangelization missions.

Several girls' schools were established and developed on the impetus of women missionaries. Generally, missionaries saw it as their duty to nurture, through education, the growth of the converts to christian maturity, and not just stop at baptism. Schools were meant to be the main centres of 'civilization', although initially they

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<sup>6</sup> M.L. Pirouet; Black Evangelists, London: Rex Collings 1978: p. 60.

were basically used as instruments of evangelization.

Such schools established by the women missionaries included Gayaza High School, founded in 1906 by Allen Alfreda, for the daughters of chiefs; Nabumali girls' school, started by Miss Pilgrim and Miss Morris in 1906, and Kyebambe girls' school in 1908.<sup>7</sup> Later in the 1920's, Miss Florence Allshorn helped to establish a teachers' class of about 20 to 30 girls at Iganga. Many of the girls trained from these schools went into teaching themselves, but a good number of them usually abandoned their work on getting married.

The Church Missionary Society women were also responsible for the beginning of Sunday schools in the Anglican Church in Uganda. These schools have up to today remained largely under the care of women in the church. They were developed to help in training of children of christian parents. They trained them in worship and in understanding the faith at their own level. The earliest of these schools were at the key missionary stations — Namirembe, Iganga, Gayaza, Ndejje. More were put up in other areas as the church continued to grow.

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<sup>7</sup> T. Tuma, op cit p. 54

It should be noted, however, that Sunday schools were pioneered by the wives of missionaries, who were more-or-less doing it as voluntary work. They were not missionaries officially but were considered as helpers of their husbands in their missionary stations. As such, it is no wonder that Sunday-school education, important as it is, was not built within the official church structure.

Mothers' Union, the largest women's organization in the Anglican Communion throughout the world, was introduced in Uganda by Church Missionary Society women. This was under the leadership of Mrs. Weatherhead who, during the first ladies conference in July 1906, read a paper on Mothers' Union, and recommended that classes for christian mothers be started in the church in Uganda. Henceforth, missionaries' wives undertook the work, establishing branches in other areas. Mrs. Skeens started a branch at Iganga, while Mrs. Mathers did the same in other parts of Busoga and later in Mbale in 1922. Mrs. Kitching and Mrs. Lawrence also worked in the then Upper Nile diocese.<sup>8</sup> The main concern of the organization was to strengthen and preserve marriage and christian family life.

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<sup>8</sup> *ibid*, p. 106.

The role of indigenous women in the planting and  
consolidation of the church

Ugandan women, despite their culture, saw themselves as equally responsible for the spread of the gospel as the men were. One Muganda lady, writing (in 1919) to her former school-mates at Gayaza High School, encouraged them to put evangelism as the first priority in their lives:

"I entreat you not to go back - think of this - she who wants to be married soon is not likely to be strong in the work."<sup>9</sup>

In the letter also was the challenge to women not to think that missionary work was for men alone but to work together with them in order to sustain the already planted church:

"Well friends, what do you think? Is the country able to go forward with men only? Not at all; all are needed together ..... see how the English men and women are nearly equal in everything they do. Let everything we do help our school and nation."<sup>10</sup>

Before the arrival of missionary women, bishop Tucker and the Church Council appointed some leading christian women to help in the teaching of women and girls, and to take care of their private life. These women were: Mrs. Sarah Duta; the wife

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<sup>9</sup> Lloyd, A.B.; Day Spring in Uganda, London: CMS 1921, p. 56.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid*, p. 57.

of Zakaria Kizito; Rudia and Kawa, both cousins of Mwanga; as well as Aida, Loi and Sarah Bweinde.<sup>11</sup> According to Lloyd, these and other native women played a very significant role in the evangelization of their fellow women, so that by the time the English women missionaries arrived, they found at least 16 of them engaged in teaching and conducting women's baptism and confirmation classes.<sup>12</sup>

Many women went out of their regions to preach the gospel. Rebecca Alibatafudde went to Ankole where she spent much time preaching to Bahima ladies. Sebuliba Rachael (also Lakeri), a member of Ngogwe congregation went out with three other women in 1903, to evangelise the islands of Lake Victoria, on which the whole population was being wiped out by sleeping sickness. In 1904, she returned to Mengo to report about the mission and then went back. She too contracted the disease and died in Mengo Hospital.

From outside Buganda, indigenous women active in evangelical work were found in Ankole and Toro. In the book Black Evangelists, Margaret Pirouet gave

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<sup>11</sup> Bishop A.R. Tucker; op cit, p. 157, and T. Tuma, op cit, p. 23.

<sup>12</sup> A.B. Lloyd, op cit p. 59.



a list of 46 names of Anglican catechists from Toro.<sup>13</sup> Most outstanding of these were women like Hana Kageye who worked in Ankole from 1902, among the ruling-class Hima women. These women were otherwise unapproachable by both the white missionaries and the male African catechists because of their customs which demanded veiling and seclusion of all married Hima women. Since Kageye had lived in Ankole before, she knew the customs of the people. Because of this she was able to teach the Hima women how to read, sewing knitting and mat-making, on addition to the christian faith. She also generally improved the welfare of the Hima women.

Kageye led many women to christianity who later became influential in the spread of the church. The first Ankole converts to be baptised were both her pupils - Malyamu Kacibala and Keziya Kinkuhaire. Malyamu was active in teaching and preaching to Hima women too. Esther Mbaitamu, the queen of Kahaya, was also Kageye's convert. She too became active in visiting and preaching to the neighbouring villages. In 1914 Esther Mbaitamu was made in-charge of a baptist class in Mbarara, after the Mutooro woman who was in charge left.

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<sup>13</sup> M. Pirouet, op cit pp. 73-75. These catechists were licenced between the years 1902 and 1905.

When Kageye went back to Toro, she helped in a girls' boarding school—looking after the general welfare of the girls and teaching them knitting, sewing and other handcrafts.

The majority of women converts in Toro contributed mainly to the spread of the church within their own districts. Victoria Kahiju, the queen-mother of Toro, for instance, ensured that everyone in her enclosure was baptised and attended church. She was baptised in 1896. She built a large church on her estates at Ngoma, where the congregations sometimes became bigger than at Kabarole. Ketura Balya, Lea Sere, Loi Kiiza and Miria Tigwezire, all contributed greatly to the evangelization and development of the church in Toro.

The story of women's role in evangelism in the church in Uganda cannot be complete without mentioning the two important women of Ankole who, because of their political positions, facilitated church advancement. One of these women was Kishokye, who was the chief of Ibanda towards the end of 1890's. She accepted the missionaries into her chieftaincy, though reluctantly, in 1901. Kishokye did not commit herself to christianity as such, but as a chief, she contributed to church growth by allowing the missionaries to work within

her territory, even though this was for fear that if she did not do this Kahaya (the King of Ankole) was going to depose her.

More important though was Kishokye's sister and successor, Kibubura. She was baptised Julia in September 1904. She was confirmed as the chief of Ibanda chieftaincy by the protectorate government, thereby becoming the first woman in the protectorate to hold such a position. She was the christian leader of her people, and was personally responsible for the upkeep of the church at Ibanda until her death in 1961.

Although evangelism was their major role, indigenous women participated in other roles too. As more and more schools were put up by the Church Missionary Society missionaries, there arose a serious shortage of trained teachers, especially in the girls' schools. It was no longer reasonable therefore, for women to go out in mission merely as gospel preachers. It became necessary to have them trained so that they would be able to be in charge of teaching academic work.<sup>14</sup>

Particular names are difficult to single out in this area, but there is no doubt that native women

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<sup>14</sup> A.B. Lloyd; op cit p. 60.

were involved in teaching. For example bishop Alfred Tucker in his book already referred to, mentioned that "many native women teachers have been trained" for the teaching of girls<sup>15</sup>, while Eugene Stock in The History of the Church Missionary Society also talks of the problem of inadequate supply of school mistresses, "owing to the early age for marriage".<sup>16</sup> Moreover girls' teacher training schools, such as the one established by miss Florence Allshorn in Iganga, were put up in other areas too.

Ugandan women, as already alluded to, participated in the medical field under the leadership of the Church Missionary Society pioneer of nursing in Uganda, Mrs. K. Cook. As more welfare centres were opened up in other parts of the country other than Buganda, the necessity of nurses and midwives became more apparent. Consequently, other training centres were put up in Iganga, Toro and Hoima.

Thus in way of summing up the role of women in the Anglican Church at the time under question, some observable aspects need to be mentioned here.

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<sup>15</sup> Bishop A.R. Tucker op cit, p. 321.

<sup>16</sup> E. Stock; The History of the Church Missionary Society, Vol. IV, London: CMS 1916, p. 91.

Firstly, women were very significant in the planting of the church in Uganda as evangelists, teachers and medical personnel. One can confidently say that without their work and commitment, the story of missionary activity would have been different today. Their importance was particularly felt in their work among fellow women who were otherwise out of reach for the male missionaries and evangelists.

Secondly, all women in mission -- both the CMS and native -- were lay-women. Their leadership roles, like most of their work, were limited only to their activities among women. For example they taught and became headmistresses in some of the girls' mission schools, they were catechists, they led Sunday schools and Mothers' Union, but they were never heads of missionary stations or hospitals.

2. CHRISTIAN WOMEN ORGANISATIONS AND THEIR ROLE IN  
THE CHURCH IN NAMIREMBE DIOCESE

The Christian Women Fellowship (CWF)

The fellowship was started by missionary women in Uganda. It was originally known as the Christian Women Association (CWA). When it started the association did not receive enough support within the church, and shortly afterwards it died out. It was only in the 1980's that it was revived as the Christian Women Fellowship.

All christian women are eligible to membership in the fellowship - both married and unmarried women. The patron saint of the fellowship is Mary Magdalene, a woman whom Jesus saved from the possession of seven demons and she later became his disciple (Luke 8: 2, RSV). She therefore signifies the discipleship of women; just as Mary was in close relationship with Jesus, so can other women be.

The fellowship's year ends on 22nd of May, the date recognised in the church as the day of Mary Magdalene. On this date new members are officially initiated into the fellowship.

The Christian Women Fellowship has three main objectives; namely:

1. building and strengthening the members in the foundation of the church through reading scriptures, prayer and preaching,
2. to unite all christian women in the service of the church;
3. to endeavour to fulfil the members' responsibilities as christians, to the church and society and be good examples to others.

Along with these objectives the members pledge to attend Sunday services, to pray and to encourage the people they live with to love prayer, to uplift the physical and spiritual life of the people they live with, and to participate in voluntary activities.

In order to realise its objectives the fellowship organizes courses at the diocese level, in which women from each Archdeaconry are trained. These women are responsible for training women in their areas, and also to ensure the implementation of the objectives. The chairladies of each Archdeaconry are also given a yearly programme which works as a framework and guideline to the achievements of the fellowship's objectives.

It is up to the members of each Archdeacounry to

fit in the diocese's framework their intended projects for the year, but above all they must ensure the objectives of the fellowship are not lost. For example, each church at the grassroots level must ensure that in each month there are days set aside for bible study and prayer. The rest of the days may then be used according to the activities the members may want to engage in; for instance, knitting, poultry, cookery, having seminars on desired topics, voluntary work activities or any other projects.

During the research for this study, the diocesan chairperson of the fellowship said that the main role of the fellowship in the church is to help, especially young women "to straighten up their lives" in relation to Jesus Christ.<sup>17</sup> Young women are encouraged to live up to the standards of christian morality through the various bible studies, prayer sessions, and discussion groups. Through these they learn what it is to be a christian woman in the home, church and society.

The fellowship helps women to be self-supportive by training them in self-help projects, for instance, butter making, chicken-rearing, new

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<sup>17</sup> the chair person is Mrs. Grace Kigonya. Interviewed on 25th August 1989, Kampala.



methods of cattle-keeping, handcrafts and any others which are money-generating, for the individual and for the church. Such projects are appropriate to the members of the fellowship because, according to the chairperson, most of them are either school leavers who have no jobs or people with low income jobs. The projects instil a sense of importance in such women and free them from the traditional belief and the sense of complete belonging to men. They also save them the desperation to cling to a man merely for economic support.

A good number of the members of Christian Women Fellowship are either unmarried, or single mothers who seperated with their husbands or single mothers who have not married<sup>18</sup>. Such women are usually looked down upon in society. However through their membership in the Christian Women's Fellowship, they are helped to regain their self-esteem through the equal treatment they receive with the other members of the fellowship.

According to Mrs. Grace Kigonya, the fellowship has significantly improved on women's attitude towards themselves. When they have just joined the

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<sup>18</sup> There are of course married women and single women without children in CWF.

fellowship, many women find it difficult to contribute in seminars, discussion groups and preaching. But over time they realise their capabilities and participate actively in the fellowship and the church in general.

Christian Women's Fellowship enhances women's knowledge of their role in the church and society through organizing seminars and talks in which guest speakers are invited to speak to the members on topics of interest. Such speakers may be from the church, government, Family Planning Association, the Women Lawyers Association or social workers.

As a result of its membership, (which is mainly single women) the CWF received serious opposition when it had just began. This was mainly from some members of the clergy and those of Mothers' Union, who saw the fellowship as a group of bad women. They saw the fellowship as a threat to the stability of their homes since it was composed of women who were not morally upright. However according to Mrs. Kigonya, this kind of fellowship is the best safeguard for other families because through it the women are made aware of their christian-living obligation. If such women are left out, she says, they are more likely to

interfere with other families without a sense of guilt and responsibility to God, and with a desperation for economic protection. These needs are well taken care of in Christian Women Fellowship.

In addition, some of the members interviewed during the research for this study felt that the fellowship accorded them a good opportunity to participate in the church. Many such women usually want to serve the church, but because they are not married, or have committed a 'visible' sin, they are condemned to deservice in the church for good. This draws them even further away from Christ. Through this fellowship they get a channel to serve the church and society, especially through voluntary work.

CWF women voluntary work includes activities such as visiting the sick taking care of the church, arranging flowers and attending to guests to the church. Mrs. Kigonya, who has also been a voluntary warden of Namirembe Cathedral, commented that the churches are yet to learn and recognise the importance of voluntary workers in the church. Christians, especially the church leaders ought to show more appreciation to voluntary work, and where possible, offer incentives and awards to

such people for their commitment.

Because of its activities and the role it plays in the church, Christian Women Fellowship is gaining more acceptance in the diocese and in the Church of Uganda as a whole. The ill feelings about it are getting less and less, though not completely eliminated. The bishop of Namirembe, Bishop Misaeri Kawuma has also done a great deal in clearing the bad impression about the fellowship. This he did by writing to the various parishes explaining to the members the objectives of the fellowship to which he is the diocesan patron.

#### Mothers' Union

Mothers' Union is the largest women's organization in the Anglican Communion world-wide. It was founded in England in 1876 by Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Summer, and since then it has spread throughout the world. In Uganda, the union was established in 1906 during the first Ladies' conference held that year between 7th and 8th of July. It was started by missionaries' wives under the initiative of Mrs. Weatherhead, and was affiliated to the world-wide Mothers' Union in 1914. It has about 1500

branches in the country, with about 75.000 full members. Namirembe diocese alone has over 1100 full members and many more partial members.<sup>19</sup>

The main objectives of the union are the following:

1. To uphold the sanctity of marriage.
2. To awaken in mothers of all classes, a sense of their great responsibility in the training of their children.
3. To organize in every place a band of mothers who will unite in prayer and seek by their own example to lead their family in purity and holiness of life.
4. To try and help all those whose homes have got problems.

The celebrated day of Mothers' Union is 25th March, also called "Ladies day". On this day new members are officially admitted into the union. A special service with the celebration of Holy Eucharist and a feast for all diocesan Mothers' Union members are held at the diocesan headquarters - Namirembe Cathedral.

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<sup>19</sup> 1988 Figures provided by the chairperson M.U., Namirembe diocese, Mrs. Milly Kanakulya. Full members are those who have paid their membership fee, while the partial ones have not paid the fee but usually attend meetings of the Union.

According to Mrs. Kanakulya, <sup>20</sup> the activities of Mothers' Union are oriented mainly towards christian family life. They include, cookery, needlework, handcraft making, Bible study, marriage counselling, visiting the sick, helping the bereaved and running nursery schools. Guest speakers are also invited by the different branches of the union to give talks on topics relevant to the family, for example childcare, family planning and child immunization. Through yearly seminars, some members are trained in leadership of Mothers' Union branches in order to adequately serve the big number of members throughout the diocese.

In the interview with Mrs. Kanakulya, the researcher was informed that although the membership of the union is growing, there is somehow a lack of initiative in the members to participate in the union's activities. She attributed this to lack of time, for most members are employees who are usually not available for most of the hours during the week.

Mrs. Kanakulya was nevertheless confident, that

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<sup>20</sup> Mrs. Milly Kanakulya was interviewed on 28th August 1989, Namirembe Mothers' Union office.

the union has helped women to gain confidence in themselves as capable participants in the activities of the church. By bringing them together members learn from each other, sometimes through discussing their common concerns and collectively working out solutions where necessary.

As stipulated in the objectives, the purpose of Mothers' Union is mainly to strengthen and preserve marriage and christian life. However, this purpose has often been interpreted by some members to mean being in conflict with single women, very often members of Christian Women Fellowship. Such young women are seen as dangers to other people's marriages.

One respondent commenting on this issue said that the fact that Mothers' Union is threatened by other women outside its membership, shows that the union is not confident of its role in the church and society. If its members are concerned with preserving marriage, they ought to develop systems or methods within the union itself, which will ensure that husbands to the members (and other Christian husbands) realise the importance of faithfulness to their partners. According to this respondent, "the single women are not at fault,

the married men are.<sup>21</sup>

Before the revival of Christian Women Fellowship in the 1980's, attempts were made to include the single women in Mothers' Union, but did not succeed. The argument of the Mothers' Union members was that "if single women, and even wives of polygamous husbands can become members of Mothers' Union, where is the superiority, prestige and uniqueness of a christian marriage?"<sup>22</sup>

The paradox of Mothers' Union is that it is a women's association which seeks to uphold the sanctity of an institution (marriage) that involves both men and women. In its attitudes towards sexual morality, Mothers' Union has for a long time followed the traditional African views, where the chastity before marriage and fidelity after marriage have always ranked higher in the system of merit for women than for men. It is women who are believed to be the custodians of society's morality, and are therefore blamed in cases of immorality, but never the men. It is hoped that now with the existence of Fathers' Union in Church of Uganda, the men will be made

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<sup>21</sup> Married Respondent, Name Withheld-Makerere University, interviewed December 1989.

<sup>22</sup> T. Tuma, op cit p. 106.



aware of their responsibility in preserving the sanctity of marriage and morality of society.

Generally however, the two women church organizations - Christian Women Fellowship and Mothers' Union - contribute tremendously to the development of the church - both materially and spiritually.

Financially the organizations make an annual contribution to the church. Each of them gives a certain percentage of its membership fee collections to the church. Contribution is made to all levels of the church structure - the Parish, Archdeaconry and diocese levels. Through the sale of crafts, cards, calendars, bread, wedding cakes and other items, the members raise funds both for individual and church support. They have also supported the church through their voluntary activities like washing the church linen, being ushers and church wardens, visiting the sick, arranging flowers, making mats and table clothes for use in the church and preparing food on church functions.

The women organizations have greatly sustained the church spiritually through their devotion to prayer, bible study and discussion groups. These

organizations are, in short, responsible for the life of the church since they are concerned with the spiritual, social and economic upkeep of the church.

## CHAPTER 6

### WOMEN IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH

#### 1. THE ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF CHURCH OF UGANDA

According to the constitution of the province of the Church of Uganda, the archbishop of the province, who is also the bishop of the diocese of Kampala, is the top-most leader of the Church of Uganda.<sup>1</sup>

The highest administrative body of the province is the Provincial Assembly. It consists of three houses: the House of Bishops, the House of Clergy and the House of Laity. The House of Bishops consists of all the bishops of the province - Diocesan bishops, Assistant and Suffragan bishops. The House of Clergy comprises of all clerical representatives from each diocese of the province elected from the clergy of the province, while the House of Laity is composed of lay communicant representatives from each diocese of the province. These representatives must be of or above the age

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<sup>1</sup> The Church of the Province of Uganda, Provincial Constitution, 1972, article 9 (a).

of twenty-one years.<sup>2</sup>

These three houses (or the Provincial Assembly) have the final authority in matters concerning the spiritual discipline of the church in the province. The assembly also has power and authority to make canons, rules and regulations, which are regarded as of full authority only with the consent of the three houses.<sup>3</sup>

For the smooth-running of the province, the assembly forms committees to which it delegates some duties. Most important of the committees is the Provincial Assembly standing Committee. It consists of the Archbishop as the chairperson, the Dean of the province, the Provincial Secretary, the Provincial Treasurer, one Bishop nominated by the House of Bishops, two representatives nominated by the House of Clergy, seven representatives nominated by the House of Laity and any other members (less than six members) that the assembly may deem necessary.

The Standing Committee is charged with, among

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid, "On the constitution of the provincial Assembly", article 5 (f) - (i).

<sup>3</sup> Consent is considered achieved when the majority of the people (if voting together) or two-thirds of the members of each house support the motion, Ibid article 5 (f) (iii).

other things, examining policy proposals for submission to the Provincial Assembly and implementing the decisions of the Provincial Assembly. It also coordinates the church activities between the dioceses.

Other committees formed by the Provincial Assembly include, for instance, the Provincial Board of Finance which, among other related issues, conducts the financial affairs of the church; the Provincial Tribunal, which handles appeals from the dioceses; the Theological and Liturgical Committee, which looks into theological interpretations and liturgical forms to ensure that the church of the province, while it retains communication with other churches of the Anglican Communion, it also formulates indigenous liturgical forms to fit the local situation. The Assembly also has boards of mission, education and communication.

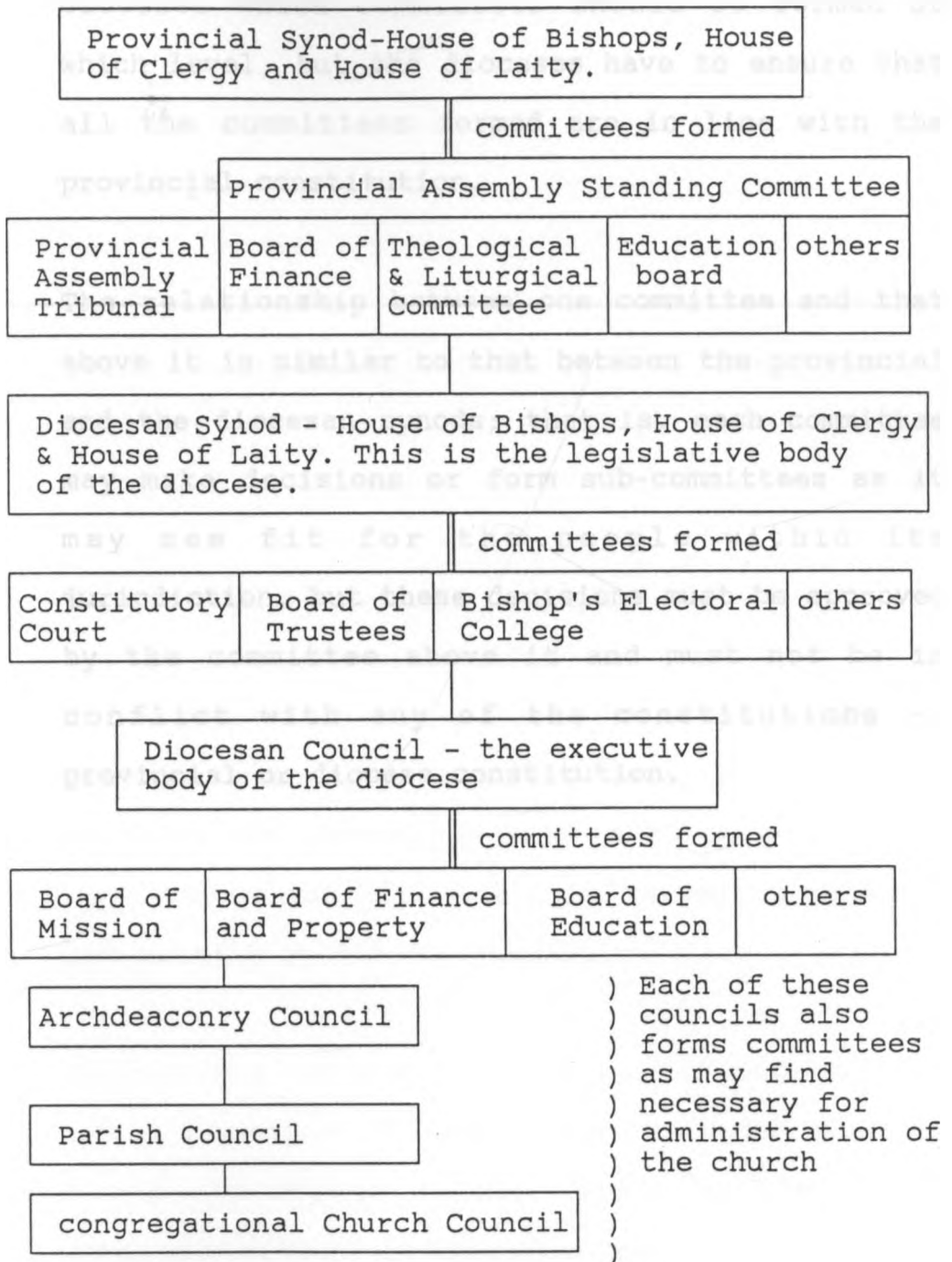
On the whole the Provincial Synod deals with matters of common concern to the whole province, as well as those which affect the communion of dioceses with one another, and the province with other provinces. Matters concerning only the members of the church in a diocese are dealt with within the respective dioceses.

The Provincial Assembly (or Synod) recognises the synodical government of each diocese. Each diocese has its own constitution which must however be approved by the provincial assembly, and also be consistent with the provincial constitution.

Following on the next page is a figure to illustrate the hierarchy of the administrative structure in Church of Uganda.



Figure 1: The hierarchy of the administrative structure of the Province of Church of Uganda



Note:

The Archbishop is the head of the province and chairperson of the Provincial Synod. He is elected by the bishops of the province from among their own number. In Church of Uganda, there is no female bishop. Therefore there cannot be a female Archbishop as yet.

Note on the figure:

The Provincial Assembly does not dictate to the dioceses which committees should be formed at which level, but the dioceses have to ensure that all the committees formed are in line with the provincial constitution.

The relationship between one committee and that above it is similar to that between the provincial and the diocesan synods; that is, each committee may make decisions or form sub-committees as it may see fit for the people within its jurisdiction, but these decisions must be approved by the committee above it and must not be in conflict with any of the constitutions -- provincial or diocese constitution.



## 2. THE ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF NAMIREMBE DIOCESE

### The diocese as an administrative unit

The provincial constitution of the Church of Uganda provides that the Bishop of a diocese shall always be the overall leader of the diocese. He would also be responsible for the general supervision and pastoral care of the diocese.<sup>4</sup> This provision is given in the Namirembe diocese constitution as well.

Namirembe diocese is divided into eight (8) archdeaconries, each under the leadership of an Archdeacon. Each archdeaconry consists of several parishes which are headed by Parish priests. The parishes are themselves made up of congregational churches which are sometimes headed by priests, but usually by the lay-readers.

Christians in the diocese participate in the administration of the church through councils which are formed at all levels of the church administration-ladder. Membership to these councils is through election of representatives by the people, right from the lowest level - the

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<sup>4</sup> Provincial constitution, op cit, article 14 (d).

congregational church level.

The top-most church council in the diocese is the Synod. It is the supreme legislative body of the diocese, headed by the Bishop. It makes canons and regulations governing the diocese, and its decisions are subject only to the powers of the Provincial House of Bishops and the Provincial Assembly. This council too, like the Provincial Assembly, consists of three houses of membership: the House of Bishops, House of Clergy and House of Laity.

The House of Bishops is made up of the Bishop of the diocese, the suffragan and assistant Bishops in active service. The House of Clergy comprises of all the parish priests, one from each parish. The third house - the House of Laity - consists of elected communicant lay-members from the parishes as well as four lay members nominated by the bishop. In addition to these three houses the Synod also has ex-official members.<sup>5</sup>

From among its membership the Synod appoints management boards (committees). Such boards

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<sup>5</sup> Diocesan constitution, Namirembe; article II (I)-(II). The ex-official members in this case are the diocesan trustees and members of the diocesan council.

include the Bishop's Electoral College which advises the Synod on nominations of names of persons to be appointed Bishop, suffragan or assistant Bishop; the Consistory Court, which adjudicates on disputes and accusations arising and concerning members of the clergy; and the Board of Trustees to whom all land, property, funds and endowments of the diocese are entrusted.<sup>6</sup>

The Diocesan Council follows the Synod in the hierarchy of administration, it is the highest executive arm of the administrative structure. It is responsible for implementing Synod's decisions, and has powers to examine policy proposals for submission to the Synod. It also makes regulations concerning the settling of disputes arising within the diocese, except those disputes which fall under the jurisdiction of the consistory court.<sup>7</sup>

For better implementation of policies, the Diocesan Council forms up different boards to which specific duties are assigned. Such boards include the Board of Finance and Property, Board of Mission, that of education, the Administration

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid, article III (4) (iii)

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, article IX.

Staff Board and the Planning and Development Board. It is upto the council to prescribe the composition, functions and powers of each board. Other boards can also be formed as the council may find necessary for better execution of its duties.

The Diocesan Council comprises of the Bishop, the suffragan Bishop the assistant Bishop, the Dean of the cathedral, all archdeacons and canons in active service to the church; three priests from each archdeaconry; five members from the House of Laity representing each archdeaconry; two Bishop's nominees; three women and two youth elected by Synod; the chairperson of lay-readers of the diocese; the presidents of Mothers' Union, Fathers' Union and Christian Women Fellowship.<sup>8</sup>

Added to the above who are voting members, are the non-voting members of the council. These include: all diocesan departemental heads; diocesan trustees; diocesan chancellor and the chairpersons of all diocesan boards.<sup>9</sup>

Following under the Diocesan Council is the Archdeaconry Council. This one is responsible for ensuring that all decisions and orders from Synod and Diocesan Council are fully implemented within

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, article VIII (1).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, article VIII (ii).

the archdeaconry. It may also set up boards if it finds it necessary for better implementation of decisions and policies. However, the decisions of this council are not effected until they are approved by the Diocesan Council.

The membership of the Archdeaconry Council consists of the Archdeacon as the head; the parish priests within the archdeaconry; one elected member of laity from each parish; appointed representatives of Mothers' Union, Fathers' Union, youth and Women Christian Fellowship; one representative of lay-readers from each parish; a representative of church wardens from each parish; all synod representatives from the archdeaconry.<sup>10</sup>

The Parish Council comes under the Archdeaconry Council in the administrative hierarchy. It is mainly responsible for electing parish lay-representatives to the Archdeaconry Council and Synod and to ensure that all Synod, Diocesan and Archdeaconry councils' decisions and orders are fully implemented within the parish. Its decisions always have to be approved by the archdeaconry council before they are implemented.<sup>11</sup> Its membership is made up of the following: the parish

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid, article XII (ii).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, article XIII (iv)

priest as the chairperson; all unretired clergy within the parish, leaders of the youth, Mothers' Union, Fathers' Union and Christian Women Fellowship; two church wardens, one elected lay-communicant member from each sub-parish; and any synod member within the parish.<sup>12</sup>

#### Participation of women in the church hierarchy

In order to understand the role of women in the administration of Namirembe diocese, it is fitting to examine the diocese's councils given above, so as to find out which categories of the structure are open to women for participation.

Namirembe diocese has about eighty (80) parishes in its eight archdeaconries.<sup>13</sup> Some archdeaconries have more parishes than others. The exact number of parishes, sub-parishes and congregational churches in the diocese are difficult to ascertain because of lack of exhaustive and reliable church records. However, for purposes of analysis, this study assumes - in this section only - that there are eighty parishes in the eight archdeaconries.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid, article XIII (ii).

<sup>13</sup> These are the figures estimated by some members of the diocesan council who attended the council's meeting which took place

On average this is ten parishes in each archdeaconry. The study further assumes that there are ten sub-parishes in each parish. It is also assumed, again for purposes of analysis in this section, that for all categories open to both men and women for participation, the number of women is either equal to that of men, or the women are more.

With these assumptions, the composition of each of the councils is analysed in tables 1 up to table 4.

Table 1

(1) Composition of the Parish Council

Category	Level of women participation	Comments	No. of women compared to men	
			female	male
(a) Parish-priest (chairperson)	Women can't be in this category			1
(b) All unretired members of the clergy within the parish	Deaconesses (only four sofar in Namirembe) can be here		4	4
(c) Parish secretary	Women can be in these categories, just like men	Assume both the secretary and treasurer are female	1	
(d) Parish treasurer			1	
(e) Lay-readers	They are rarely in this category	Assume the lay-readers are equal, one from each of the 10 sub-parishes	5	5
(f) Youth leader	Can be in any of these categories, except FU	Assume that in these categories (except for FU) all are female i.e. 1 youth leader 1 MU, 1 CWF representatives, 2 wardens, 1 synod member, 1 lay communicant		
(g) Representatives of MU, FU and CWF				
(h) Two church wardens				
(i) One lay communicant from each sub-parish				
(j) Synod member			7	1
		TOTAL OF MEMBERSHIP	18	11



Table 2

2. Composition of the Archdeaconry Council

Category	Level of women participation	Comments	No. of women compared to men	
			female	male
(a) Archdeacon (chairperson)	So far no women here			1
(b) All parish priests within the archdeaconry				10
(c) One elected member of laity from each parish	Women, just like men can be here	The representatives in this category are equal to those in (b). Assume the male equal to female	5	5
(d) Specially appointed members of MU, FU, Youth en CWF	Women are exclusively in CWF & MU. They can be youth but not FU.	Assume the youth representative is female	3	1
(e) Representatives of lay-readers from each parish	Women can be here, though very rare	Assume the males equal to the females	5	5
(f) One representative of wardens from each parish	Women can be here	Assume the males equal to the females	5	5
(g) All synod representatives from the archdeaconry	Women can be here	These are elected from the parishes, one from each. The number here is equal to that in category (a) or (b) Assume also that males equal females	5	5
TOTAL OF MEMBERSHIP			23	32

Table 3

## 3. Composition of the Diocesan Council

Category	Level of women participation	Comments	No. of women compared to men		
			female	male	
(a) The bishop	Women cannot be in any of these categories			1	
(b) The suffragan and/or assistant bishop				1	
(c) Dean of the cathedral					1
(d) All archdeacons					8
(e) All canon in active service			Assume they are five (5)		5
(f) Three priests from each archdeaconry					24
(g) Five members from the house of laity to represent each archdeaconry	Women can be here	The representatives in the house of laity are from each parish. Since there can be more than 5 parishes in an archdeaconry, some members of the house of laity are not on the diocesan council. 5 laity x 8 archdeaconries = 40 people. Assume the number of males is equal to females	20	20	
(h) Two members appointed by the bishop	Women can be here	Assume that all these are female	2		
(i) Three women elected by synod			3		
(j) 2 Youth elected by synod	Women can be here except in FU	Assume both of these are women	2		
(k) Chairman of lay-readers in the diocese				1	
(l) Presidents of MU, FU & CWF				2	1
		TOTAL OF MEMBERSHIP	30	61	

Table 4

4. Composition of the Synod of the diocese

Category	Level of women participation	Comments	No. of women compared to men	
			female	male
(a) House of bishops	None here			3
(b) House of clergy	Presently no women here	There are no women parish priests in Namirembe diocese (none is ordained priest). The house consists of parish priests, one from each parish - 10 parishes in each of the 8 archdeaconries		80
(c) <u>House of laity</u> (I) elected laity from parishes within the diocese	Women too can be in these categories	There are 80 parishes; one member from each. Assume men are equal to women representatives	40	40
(II) Four bishop's nominees		Assume all bishop's nominees are women.	4	
(d) <u>Ex-official members</u> diocesan council members*				
(1) Dean of the cathedral	Women are not in these categories			1
(2) All archdeacons		Eight archdeaconaries		8
(3) All canons in service		Assume they are five (5)		5
(4) 1 chairman of lay-readers in diocese	Women can be here except in FU			
(5) Presidents of MU, FU & CWF			2	1
(6) 2 Youth elected by synod	Women can be here	Assume both of these are women	2	
(7) Three women elected by synod			3	
TOTAL OF MEMBERSHIP			51	138
* All diocesan council members are ex-officials of synod. But those included here are those who do not fall in any of the categories a-c above. That is, those who come to synod only as ex-officials from the diocesan council.				

It is to be noted that the numbers of women in the preceding tables are exaggerated, especially in the categories of lay-readers and youth representative. During research for this study it was found out that in actual fact there are so few women lay-readers in Namirembe diocese that they cannot be equal to men in number. It was also found out from the copies of past Diocesan Council meetings that were made available for this research, and from the two council meetings attended, that members elected as youth representatives and the House of Laity in general are usually men, with only very few women. For instance, in the Diocesan Council meeting held from 21st-24th of August 1989, out of about 100 people who attended, there were only twenty women. The record of the Diocesan Council meeting held from 18th to 20th of January 1989 also shows that out of 46 members of the House of Laity, only 18 were women.

The figures in the table are exaggerated for a purpose - to show that even if women were very actively participating in all the categories open to them, there would still be an unbalanced representation of women in the administrative structure. This is because most of the categories

with big numbers of people are not open to them.

An observable trend also emerges from the tables, which trend confirms one Diocesan Council participant's observation, that at the grassroots (in the sub-parish and parish levels), women actively participate and are elected on committees; "but somewhere in the middle, they get stuck and do not make it up to the higher levels of the administrative structure."<sup>14</sup>

Consider, for instance, the figures of the Parish Council (Table 1). Here women are more than men in total because the categories open to them are also many. Such categories become less on the archdeaconry level (Table 2), because women are neither archdeacons nor parish priests. This automatically gives a difference of eleven (11) male members over the females in the total of the Archdeaconry Council. The difference is in spite of women's eligibility to selection in the other remaining five categories.

The gap becomes wider at the Diocesan Council level, the executive arm of the administration

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<sup>14</sup> Rev. N. Kaweesa, then Principal of Namugongo seminary made this observation during the Diocesan council meeting held from 21-24th of August 1989, Namirembe.

structure. On this council (Table 3) six categories are closed against women participation, leading to a difference of about 31 males more than women. This difference is also transferred to the Synod Council (table 4), which is the legislative council of the diocese. On this council also are some closed categories, leading to a difference of 87 males more than women.

Thus women are more on the lower level of the administrative ladder - the Parish Council. Note that this council has among its responsibilities "to ensure, that all synod, diocesan and archdeaconry councils' decisions and orders are fully implemented within the parish"<sup>15</sup>

### 3. HINDERANCES TO WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH IN UGANDA

From the above analysis one can see that women's chances to participate in the administration of the Church of Uganda are at the parish level, which level deals with ensuring implementation other than making decisions. Yet even on this level women are, in reality, poorly involved in "ensuring implementation". During the research for

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<sup>15</sup> Diocesan constitution, article XIII (iv) (b).

this study, three main factors were identified as contributing to this trend. These are: the way the Bible has been interpreted in the church; the cultural influence on the members of the church; and the nature of the administrative structure.

#### The way the Bible has been interpreted

In chapter four of this study, an attempt was made to find out what the Bible teaches about the role of women in the church, particularly in its administration. Needless to say, the Bible passages analysed in this chapter (chapter 4) have been interpreted differently by different scholars and christians. In many cases some interpretations, as Betty Ekeya says,

"have only confirmed to the woman that her apparent low-status is in accordance with the divine will and the natural order from the beginning."<sup>16</sup>

It is also true that in the course of transmission of tradition, the church today has failed to recognize the role of women in the Bible. The traditional biblical interpretations of their position and role in the church are generally not

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<sup>16</sup> B. Ekeya; "Women, for how long not?" in J. Pobee & B. Wartenberg-Potter (ed.); New eyes for Reading, Geneva WCC, 1986: p. 64.

clarified, or are simply ignored. Likewise many women who appear in the Bible as true models of suffering discipleship and serving leadership, such as Mary Magdalene, are often ignored by preachers. The fact that the first people to be entrusted with the apostolic mission were women is usually skipped. Christ's love for the woman who washed his feet is usually not seriously dwelt on and instead preachers concentrate on her sinfulness.

As a result of this neglect of the role of women as depicted in the Bible, the church today, according to one female christian interviewed during the research for this study, is more concerned about what role a man or a woman should play instead of what role an individual has been called to play as a disciple of christ.<sup>17</sup> In this way, many people have been left out of service in certain roles because of their sex other than lack in ability. Many undevoted male deacons have been ordained priests, while on the other hand some women have been left out of priesthood because they are female, thus denying them the chance of serving God fully.

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<sup>17</sup> Name withheld - interview carried out at Namirembe Cathedral, 21st of August 1989.



### The cultural influence

The Anglican Church in Uganda, like the church all over, is a product of her time. As such it is influenced by the culture of the people in which it was planted. This aspect was confirmed during the research for this study, when many respondents gave culture-related issues as the reasons why women do not participate fully in the administration of the church.

According to one respondent, "the traditional place of women in the African society has been unconsciously transferred into the church."<sup>18</sup>

As already indicated in chapter 3, in most African societies, women were subordinate in their homes, families and clans. This is still the case in the lives of many African women.

Such women who are treated as subordinates will assume the same role even in church. Because of the long-lived subordinate role in society, they tend to accept, without question, their position as the God-intended one for them. They even take for granted the view that administration is an

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<sup>18</sup> Male respondent interviewed August 21st 1989. He is a member of Namirembe Cathedral.

area for men.

The truth of this view was revealed in the research whereby in answer to the question "Are you satisfied with the level at which you participate in the church?"<sup>19</sup>, the majority of women answered that they were. Yet when asked the activities they participate in, most of them gave the home-related activities like sweeping the church, organizing for visitors and arranging flowers; all of which are not administrative tasks. In addition, all cases interviewed that sit on church committees like finance, building or education, on the local church and parish councils, gave figures which indicate that such committees are dominated by men, with only a few women on some and none at all on others. This means that many women take this minimum participation as their 'rightful place'. Over a long time many of them have believed the cultural values that women are weak and incapable of being administrators.

On the other hand, there are some women who are aware that they ought to participate in the administration of the church. However, such women also have a low self-image. Much as they would

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<sup>19</sup> Question number 9 on the lay-women's questionnaire.

want to see women on the administrative bodies of the church, they tend to despise themselves individually, and instead wait for others whom they think are "as good as men", or "act and think like men" to do it. This attitude results from the fact that the culture which taught women that they are weak, inferior and fragile did not prepare them for other tasks other than those which keep them under close supervision by men.

The majority of men interviewed for this study said they were not satisfied with the level of women participation in the administration of the church. Many of them, however, blamed it on the women themselves - their inferiority complex, lack of confidence, much involvement in family affairs and pride. They argued that such things (and other various reasons) have kept women from coming up to show their capabilities; and since people base on ability more than sex to choose leaders, women are less considered because they seem to be less capable.

In such an argument one has to consider the fact that men have also contributed to the women's situation by the way they assert their superiority, which prevents women from exploiting their potentials. Many men will be reluctant to

vote or elect a woman on any committee other than one to do with women affairs. According to one respondent this is because "traditionally people despised women, thinking that they are naturally unable to do anything sensible. So they elect very few on the committees."<sup>20</sup> A reverend canon's view also carried a similar message:

"Although modern people cover up their attitudes towards women in order to be polite and to conform to European culture, the truth is that we men depise women, however much she may be educated. Besides, her behaviour as a woman does not change. For example she remains emotional, weak at heart, gossipping, etc."<sup>21</sup>

Another male respondent also admitted that there were few women on the church committees, but to him

"that is how it is supposed to be, because women are emotionally weak, they loose their tempers very quickly and cannot manage laborous jobs."<sup>22</sup>

The above respondents' views reflect the cultural bias that women are inferior to men in every way.

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<sup>20</sup> Name withheld, interview carried out on 23rd of August 1989, Kalambi church, Bbira parish.

<sup>21</sup> Interview carried out on 21st of August 1989, Namirembe church offices.

<sup>22</sup> Name withheld, interview carried out on 15th of August 1989, Namugongo parish.

There are also some women who find it practically impossible to participate in the church's administration because of their family duties. Traditionally women were responsible for most of the duties in the home. This is still the case today. In many homes, the wife works for about 16 hours in a day, which leaves her with no time for church duties. In such a case the woman will only be able to sometimes take part in roles which are more-or-less Sunday routine, such as sweeping the church, arranging flowers and laying out vestiments, which she can do on Sunday morning shortly before the service begins.

In other instances husbands prevent their wives from taking part in church activities on grounds that they get involved in immorality, or that they are supposed to stay at home looking after the children. Such possessiveness usually goes unchallenged and it consequently interferes with women's contribution to the development of the church.

The church has also fallen prey of the cultural trap, whereby sexual immorality in society is blamed almost entirely on women. This is illustrated by the way some christians tend to look at single mothers. Many of these women find

themselves in a situation of a broken marriage, or an unfortunate liaison with a man. This state of single motherhood is considered by some christians as a permanent sin. Therefore such women are given little or no encouragement to get back to the church. Instead fingers are pointed at them as persons who must be avoided. As a result such women loose confidence in themselves as members of the christian community, and for all practical purposes, cease to participate in church life.

During the research one such respondent informed the researcher that since she became a single mother, the church seems to have condemned her permanently, even though she herself felt she had repented. She cannot be allowed to be a member of any church committee, since she is not a communicant.<sup>23</sup>

The seriousness of this issue is vivid in the reaction that the Christian Women Fellowship received from some members of the christian community when they (CWF) decided that it was their duty to get such women back to the church.<sup>24</sup> When a man sins he is more easily accepted than

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<sup>23</sup> A female respondent interviewed on 6th of September 1989, Gayaza parish church.

<sup>24</sup> This has been discussed in chapter 5.

when a woman does. Very often one hears christians, both men and women, say of sexual immorality, "for men it is culturally acceptable, but for women it is unheard of ". In this case they will refer to African traditional polygamy as an excuse.

This research also revealed that as a result of a culture in which women are significant only through men, single women have not been taken seriously in the church, especially in matters to do with administration. Many people tend to look at them with suspicion. In most cases, especially as the lady approaches her late twenties, people tend to relate her singleness to bad behaviour. She is regarded as an undevoted christian, even when there are no grounds for alleging so. In this matter christians tend to disregard the special role of a single person in the development of the church, which Paul wrote about in 1 Corinthians 7: 34-35, 39-40.

There is also in the church the culture of money. The rich have always had a bigger say in the church than the poor. Some people are chosen on the committees more because of their money than their commitment. As one respondent put it, "so a poor woman on the committee will be despised for

being both a woman and a poor person"<sup>25</sup>. Since many women do not have so much money, they are left out of participation in administration in those churches where the congregations look at money as a very important determinant.

### The nature of the administrative structure

As the analysis in section 2 of this chapter shows, the nature of the administrative structure of Namirembe diocese is such that it is mainly composed of the clergy - priests, canons and bishops, which the women are not. The furthest level of church ministry that women in Namirembe diocese have been is deaconess, with only four so far ordained to this level. The rest of the women are commissioned workers.

It is to be noted that although deacons and deaconesses are clergy, the house of clergy in Namirembe diocese consists of parish priests, one from each diocese. This leaves out deacons and deaconesses, since they are not priests.

In addition to that, the role and position of

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<sup>25</sup> Female respondent from Gayaza parish, name not given. Interviewed on 6th of September 1989.



commissioned workers in the administrative hierarchy is very ambiguous and undefined, especially to the laity. While the clergy fit them in the category of laity (which they are), the laity on the other hand think they are among the clergy. This ambiguity is manifested also in the fact that the title "Commissioned worker" has no clearly defined interpretation in Luganda, the main language of communication for the diocese. Many laity, if asked what these women are in Luganda, they would say that they are "Abawule abakyala", meaning "female priests"; which they are not! The lay people are not aware of this.

Because of the confusion as to where they belong, commissioned workers are in most cases not elected by christians as their representatives on the church councils. Many people think they belong to such committees as members of the clergy. Consequently, commissioned workers are not active in the administration of the church. In decision-making they are usually observers.

Many priests and church administrators also confessed that they find a problem handling commissioned workers. "Where do we put them?", is usually the question. Some priests believe that to solve this problem, priority in training of women

for ministry should be given to those who are already in a profession - teaching, nursing, doctors or social workers - so that after their training from the theological college, they are taken up by the church as workers in their areas of profession, but not necessarily as church ministers or priests.

This view is all right in itself, since the church needs nurses, doctors, social, workers and the like. But the problem is that it is based on the assumption that women cannot become priests. Its propounders do not seem to envisage a situation where women are ordained to priesthood as easily as the men are.

#### 4. THE WOMEN ORDINATION DEBATE

##### Historical highlights of the debate in the Anglican Communion: The Lambeth Conference

The debate on the ordination of women into full priesthood remains unresolved, especially in the Anglican Church. The Anglican Church, in issues of faith and doctrine, refers to scripture, tradition and reason, but looks to scripture as the overall authority. Therefore all who argue for

or against ordination of women base their arguments on these three authorities. In this section an attempt is made to review the chronological developments of the debate within the Anglican Communion since 1968.

The Lambeth Conference of 1968 asked all its member churches to study the issue of ordination of women to priesthood, and to report their findings to the Anglican Consultative Council which had just been formed. The council was to sit for the first time in Limuru, Kenya from 23rd of February to 5th of March 1971. The Lambeth Conference had however noted that theology did not provide a clear 'yes' to the question but that it also failed to provide a clear 'no'.<sup>26</sup>

The Church of England, the mother church of the Anglican Communion, has been pivotal in this debate. Its general synod in 1975, after much debate and consultations, expressed the view that there are "no fundamental objections to the ordination of women to the priesthood".<sup>27</sup> Yet even

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<sup>26</sup> The time is now. Anglican Consultative Council, first meeting, Limuru, Kenya, 25th of February - 5th of March 1971; London: SPCK 1971.

<sup>27</sup> M. Langley; "The Ordination of Women" in K. Keay (ed.); Men, Women and God; Hants: Marshall Morgan and Scott, 1987: p. 82.

then it did not give a legislation to ensure that women in the Church of England are ordained.

In the Lambeth Conference of 1978, it was agreed that each province should take a decision about its women as it found it fit - whether to ordain them or not - depending also on whether or not the province itself was ready to take it up. The conference, drawing from the fact that some Anglican provinces had ordained women as priests, also agreed to respect each other's decisions on the issue.

The Province of the Church of Uganda responded coldly to Lambeth's decision. Although in 1983 a national conference was held in which it was agreed that women could be ordained, only the late bishop Festo Kivengere, then of North Kigezi diocese, was ready to ordain women. He ordained three women as priests - Margaret Byekwaso, Grace Ndyabahika and Debora Micungwe, making Uganda one of the four provinces in the Anglican Communion to have women priests. Others were USA, Canada and New Zealand.

In 1986, the issue became a crisis and the communion was threatened by schism. The Church of England synod which sat in July that year, for

example, had three main points to consider to that effect: whether women ordained abroad could serve as full ministers when they visited England; whether women could be admitted into the diaconate; and the possibility of a law allowing the priesting of women. The reasons for and against each of them were given. Finally the synod voted against allowing ordained women from abroad to practice as full ministers in England, but approved women's ordination into the diaconate. Thus the first women were ordained in 1987 as deacons, but the debate on the terms of admitting them in full priesthood continued.

Yet the 1988 Lambeth Conference saw the conflict at its climax. The provinces of New Zealand and USA had arranged to consecrate women as bishops, and they threatened to quit the Anglican Communion if the conference objected. On the other hand the conservatives were threatening to dissociate themselves from those churches which ordained women as priests or bishops.

In view of this threat of division, the presiding Archbishop, Robert Runcie, led the conference to resolve that the provinces accept the differing degrees of communion. Briefly, the resolutions made were that:

- (1) each province respects the decisions and attitudes of other provinces whether in favour or against ordination and consecration of women to the episcopate, maintaining the highest degree of communion with provinces which differ;
- (2) the bishops exercise courtesy and maintain communications with bishops who may differ, and with any woman bishop, ensuring an open dialogue in the church to whatever extent communication is not impaired;
- (3) the Archbishop of Canterbury, in consultation with primates, appoints a commission to; firstly, provide for an examination of the relationships between provinces of the Anglican Communion, and ensure that the process of reception includes continuing consultation with other churches as well; and secondly, to monitor and encourage the process of consultation within the communion and offer further pastoral guidelines;
- (4) in any diocese where reconciliation on these issues is necessary, the diocesan bishop should seek continuing dialogue with, and make pastoral provisions for, those clergy and congregations whose opinions differ from those of the bishop in order to maintain unity of the diocese;

(5) the conference recognises the serious hurt which would result from the questioning by some, of the validity of the episcopal acts of a woman bishop and likewise the hurt experienced by those whose conscience would be offended by the ordination of a woman to the episcopate. The church therefore needed to exercise sensitivity, patience, and pastoral care towards all concerned.<sup>28</sup>

In addition the conference affirmed the office of the bishop as an instrument of unity, both within the diocese and in interrelation of dioceses. Thus in view of this, the conference urged that much as each province has an autonomous constitution, provinces should refrain from consecrating a woman as bishop, in order to avoid further impairment of communion, both within and between churches.<sup>29</sup>

These resolutions were, however, not binding as such. Provinces could choose to follow them or not. For example in 1988, the general convention

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<sup>28</sup> Lambeth Conference. Resolution no. LC 88/01, from Mande Wilson; "Women and the Church of Uganda; A study of attitudes and social change." A paper presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the B.D. Degree of the Association of Theological Institutions in E. Africa, May 1989.

<sup>29</sup> Lambeth Conference Resolution no. LC 88/02, *ibid.*

of the Episcopal Church of USA reaffirmed the policy introduced in the 1970's that women would become bishops. Consequently Reverend Barbara Harris was elected the first woman bishop in the world in the Anglican Church. Needless to say, this sparked off conflict from within and outside the church in the USA.

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Namirembe diocese and the ordination of women

In the Province of the Church of Uganda, women are ordained as priests in some dioceses, while in others they are ordained only to the level of deaconess. But the debate as to whether or not women should be ordained as priests still goes on.

In the Namirembe diocese synod meeting held 31st to 1st of September 1989, women ordination was on the agenda, as a recommendation from the Diocesan Council. The council, held in August from 21st to 24th, had recommended to synod that women be encouraged to participate in the activities of the church. Some members had expressed the view that if women were ordained, it would go a long way to facilitate their participation in the church.

The participants who supported this were concerned



about the unfair consideration of women who train for church ministry, as compared to their male counterparts. Both men and women, it was noted, go to the same colleges for training. They do the same courses and sit for the same exams. Yet when they come out of college, the men are ordained deacons and later after a period of service (usually two years) they are ordained as priests. By contrast the women are sent out from college as commissioned workers. They are supposed to be tested for at least two years, (but usually more) to see if they are morally fit to be ordained. After this period they can apply to be ordained as deaconesses. Men do not apply to be ordained.

The reasons given for this difference in treatment are many, but the most common one is that women are morally weak, and therefore more likely to fall short of their moral obligations than the men. Backing up this argument, one Reverend canon interviewed during the research gave two examples of commissioned workers who "fell in love with men and . . . . have spoilt the ministry."<sup>30</sup> To the reverend canon, women in church ministry have defiled their role, unlike the men.

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<sup>30</sup> Interview carried out on 10th of August 1989 at Namirembe church. Respondent's name withheld.

This argument however was challenged in the Synod meeting by a female member, who reminded participants that sinning does not have to be by a man or a woman, but by an individual. There are members, even married priests, she noted, who fall short of their moral obligations, but the church does not seem to consider this as serious as when it is done by a woman. She further commented that the argument that women need a period of probation in order to be sure that they really want to be ordained, was merely an excuse which did not make sense to many christians, because when such women choose to go for the theological training, they obviously want to be in full service to the church. She therefore suggested that if the rule of probation is to be applied at all, it should be applied to both men and women equally.<sup>31</sup>

The regulations concerning women ordination are obviously very demoralizing to women who would want to participate fully in serving the church and its administration. A commissioned worker, for example has authority only to lead a service, preach and take readings. She cannot baptise or conduct holy communion, unless she is only

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<sup>31</sup> Name withheld, representative from Gayaza Archdeaconary. Synod meeting held 30th-1st of September 1989.

assisting a priest.

One commissioned worker interviewed said that the situation is even more complicated when one is single. The church administration, according to her, seems to trust married women for ordination (as deaconesses) other than single ones. They seem to look at marriage as an insurance for women against sexual immorality. "In short, they do not seem to take us seriously, and this hurts and affects our work."<sup>32</sup>

On the whole, the reasons given by those against ordination of women to priesthood are many. Besides those discussed in the Namirembe Synod meeting referred to above, respondents interviewed during the research gave many more, but the most commonly given were five:

- (1) Biblically, man is the head of woman.
- (2) A priest is an image of Christ. Since God became incarnate in Christ as male, it follows that the priest who represents Christ to the church must be only male.
- (3) culturally and naturally women are inferior to men and so cannot be leaders over men.
- (4) It is not yet time - the church is not yet

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<sup>32</sup> Name withheld; interview carried out on 3rd of September 1989, Namugongo seminary.

ready.

(5) Jesus did not have female apostles.

The reasons above are not unique to Namirembe diocese, for they are given in many other congregations and christian denominations in the country and all over the world. It is therefore fitting to consider their counter arguments.

It should be noted first of all, that in this debate leadership and feminity cannot be reconciled, according to those who take literally the biblical order that man is the head of woman, and make it applicable for all times and cultures. On the other hand for those who take the maleness of Christ in the incarnation literally relevant, priesthood is Christ-like only if it is in the male image.

In other words to these two categories of people the mere fact that one is not male means that 'naturally' it is impossible for that person to be a priest because God does not allow her to be a leader over men or to be a representative of God to men. Thus being of the female sex precludes one from being able to exercise authority in the church and from imparting grace to the christians.

Yet for those who support women ordination, taking the headship of man over woman literally contradicts the fact that Jesus himself went out of his way to accord women a dignity and intergrity of personhood which manifested them as equal with men. In addition, Paul in his letter to the Galatians set forth his great manifests of christian liberty, in which he abolished all inherent inequalities of race, sex and class, and instead declared all people as equal before God (Gal. 3: 28).

The counter-argument for the second reason is that if God became incarnate in Christ to represent humanity, then it is his human nature and not his maleness which is important for salvation, otherwise the female sex would be excluded from the realms of salvation. Both male and female were created in the image of God (Gen. 1: 27). It is this image, not the maleness, which is symbolised in the priest as she (or he) represents Christ and Christ's body, the church.

The women-ordination camp believes that the third reason above is more of a cultural nurture than nature. Nature does not dictate that men lead and women serve and follow. This belief in instead learnt through cultural indoctrination over time.

But since Christ transcends culture, his example, and Paul's proclamation of liberty for all in Christ must prevail over culture if life is to be lived to its fullness.

As far as the fifth reason is concerned, many christians have argued that the fact that Christ had no female apostles does not hold enough to prevent their ordination into priesthood because the New Testament shows that Jesus had many women followers among his disciples. These women were the first witnesses and announcers of his resurrection. Many other women, for instance Phoebe and Priscilla, are recorded in the Bible as having been prominent leaders in the church.

The fourth argument against women ordination (given above) is, according to the supporters of ordination, a delaying tact for a people who are not ready to surrender their cultural values (male superiority values) and allow all humanity to share in the fullness of Christ on an equal basis. In the Namirembe Synod meeting for instance, the topic was not conclusively discussed. Instead it was decided that the issue be suspended for Synod discussion, but meanwhile be taken back to parish level. The suggestions of the parish would then be discussed in the Archdeaconry and Diocesan

councils, and then finally back to synod.

According to one Synod participant however, there is always a tendency in the church administration not to follow up such sensitive issues. To this participant this was just a scape-goat method, because this topic had been discussed before but no conclusive decision was ever reached. The same decision is always taken.<sup>33</sup>

One parish priest also expressed concern that those who object to women ordination to priesthood did not do so from biblically-based or church tradition sound reasons, but more from cultural conservatism and pride. To him this was a sign that the church, especially its leaders, are not ready to listen to the voice of God when he is saying something. This priest believes that the increased participation of women in both church and society is a sign that times have changed. It is only those in 'responsible positions' who are not ready to accept the change, so they suppress it.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> The observation was made by a priest who also attended the synod meeting on 1st of September 1989 (Name withheld).

<sup>34</sup> Name withheld on request. The priest was interviewed on August 28th, 1989, Namirembe Cathedral.

The priest further noted that as a result, the church has turned into God, deciding who should be ordained into service (on the basis of sex) other than examining the character of the individual to see if such a person, male or female, is capable of serving God honestly. According to him "they are looking at the church as their own institution to be governed by human rules, regulations and traditions. They forget it is God who calls, not the church."<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.



## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### CONCLUSION

This study has endeavoured to expound the role that women play in the administration of the Anglican Church in Uganda, particularly in Namirembe diocese.

In doing this the role of women as given in the scriptures was analysed. This was necessary, since the Bible is the basis of the church. The analysis revealed that though the cultures of both the Old Testament and New Testament times regarded women as of lower status than men, God worked through them, and he used them in the same way he used men. Just like men they were administrators and leaders of God's people. Examples of such women have been given to illustrate this fact.

In order to understand better the hypothesis that the Bible has been used to justify the present subordinate role of women in the administration of the church, some controversial passages on the role and position of women in the church were reviewed. This showed that some Bible texts have

been given a one-sided literal interpretation, without considering the time and context in which such texts were written. Such interpretation is partly responsible for the present position and role of women in the church today.

Culture as an aspect that influences people's beliefs and actions was also taken into consideration. By assessing the position and role of women in some traditional African societies, and the Baganda people in particular, it was found that this culture, just like the Jewish culture, regarded women as weak and subordinates of men. They were owned and lived under the shadow of men. Their importance lay only in their productive capabilities - of both children and food. They never participated in administration or leadership of the whole society, except in religion. Here they could be mediums, goddesses, vestal virgins and priestesses.

The fact that African women's leadership role in religion was not recognised in the church was also noted in this study, indicating that this was because when the missionaries came to Africa, they declared all African religious practices evil and needing to be abandoned by all who wished to be Christians. These religious practices were

replaced by Christianity embodied in a patriarchal culture which did not respect women in leadership. This brought an end to women's participation in religious leadership.

Cultural values and customs (which have existed as long as humanity itself) have led to women's negative self-evaluation and a low self-image, as well as the church's failure to realize and appreciate the potential in women as administrators. Although they are no longer as insignificant in the church as they were even in the early 1980's, women's progress from the stereo-typed roles of church ushers, attending to the sick, laying out vestiments and arranging flowers, to full and equal participation with men in the church's administration is very slow.

The hypothesis that men dominate the administrative roles in Church of Uganda, was tested by analysing the administration hierarchy of Namirembe diocese. It was found that except on the Parish level, women's chances to participate on the high levels of the hierarchy were very limited. These levels include the Synod, Diocesan council and the Archdeaconry Council. This situation is particularly accounted for by the fact that at this level the system is dominated by

priests, which women in Namirembe diocese are not.

The implication of this hierarchy is that although women form a big part of the church's population, they hardly participate in its decision-making about the priorities of the church. They have little say in deciding on the location and funding of projects; putting up a new church, parish or archdeaconry; how much money should be given to which department in the diocese; or who should be given a scholarship from diocesan funds. All this is in spite of their being the backbone for the success of many of these activities.

This study shows that all through the history of Church of Uganda women have been very active. They contributed to its initial growth as teachers, medical personnel and as evangelists. Today women's participation through Mothers' Union and the Christian Women Fellowship has been very crucial in sustaining the church financially, socially and morally.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

It is clear at this point that the level at which women participate in the administration of the church is very limited and therefore needs to be changed. In order for the change to take place, the Christians must be made aware of the present position and role of women in the church today. In particular, the imbalanced nature of participation in administration between men and women should be brought to the consciousness of the church members. This is in order to enable both men and women to appreciate and participate meaningfully in the process of change.

Women should be the heralds of this process of change, since they are in the disadvantaged situation. As the proverb "the one nearer to the fire knows better how hot it is" suggests, men are unlikely to initiate change because they are the advantaged.

Women should therefore draw-up programmes of orientation and continued education. This can be done through their church organizations - Mothers' Union and Christian Women Fellowship - which can organize seminars and study groups to help christians, both men and women, reflect on issues

which have otherwise been taken for granted. For example during the research, there were many christians who said they would like to see women taking part in the high levels of the church's administration. But many of these christians may not even be aware that the nature of the constitution of the diocese does not allow women to participate. Many more christians have not read their diocesan constitution.

The seminars and study groups would engage in studying and analysing the constitution in order to find out which roles women in the church have chances to participate in. They would also involve in re-reading various Bible texts, in order to find out the role of women in the churches as it is prescribed in the Bible. Thorough study would especially be made on those passages which have been used as a sanction to deter women participation in the leadership of the church. The existing Bible-study groups in the church would be particularly useful in this area.

Men too would benefit from these programmes, since many of them are either not aware of the nature of the administration structure, or believe that the way it is is sanctioned by God. For women, apart from becoming aware of the situation, they would

be helped to gain confidence and a positive self image.

In this way, both men and women would realise that when Jesus calls Christians to a life of service, He does not require women to engage in only the parochial roles of cooking, arranging flowers, and so on, but to use all their other skills for the service of God. The skills of the church's female lawyers, accountants, theologians and those in other professions relevant to the church, can be useful if such women are put on the church committees and councils.

Further more, the church ought to adjust its structures, so that whereas there is complementarity and division of labour in the church, there are also equal chances for both men and women to participate in the different roles of the church. For example, both men and women could equally have chances to participate in the administration of the church, the spiritual upbringing of its members, as well as maintenance of the church. The selection of members should be based on ability and not sex.

In addition to this, the church ought to fall out of the cultural trap of over-emphasising marriage as

a pre-condition to good service, and instead realize the importance of single people in church ministry. In the case of women, it is very significant for the church to stop viewing them as needing to be part of men in order to have a place and role to play in the church. Here Paul's very often ignored words about the quality of the service of unmarried people should be taken seriously:

"And the unmarried woman or girl is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit; but the married woman is anxious about worldly affairs .... . I say this .... not to lay any strain upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord." (1 Corinthians 7: 34-35, RSV).

The church therefore needs to re-examine itself in its service role to God, along the following lines: are we allowing each christian to put to full use all the talents that he or she received from God?; are we not quenching the Holy Spirit when we deny others the chance to full service to God because of their sex, social status or any other category that we may think is important to us, and not necessarily to God?; are we not putting ourselves in the place of God when we refuse to recognize the people he has called to service and instead put those who may sometimes not even bring glory to his name, just because they belong to the categories we believe in?



This study also suggests that as the Christians wait for the debate on the ordination of women into priesthood to come to a conclusion in those dioceses which have not yet accepted it (including Namirembe diocese), the Anglican Church as a whole should think about possibilities of changing the composition of its administration structure, so that it has more laity than it has now. This would give women more chances of taking part in administration at the higher levels of the hierarchy. This, combined with the conscientization programmes already considered above, would encourage women to participate more boldly in the church's administration.

In addition to this, since women can be ordained as deaconesses, more chances should be created for the participation of this category of people. Presently the House of Clergy in Namirembe diocese as per the constitution, comprises of only parish priests. (one from each parish). This could be changed to include deaconesses and deacons as well, since they too are clergy.

Finally, this study was carried out with the belief that it is now time for the church all over the world, but the Anglican Church of Uganda in

particular, to realize that since women form a big part of the christian community, to deny them the right to participate fully in the affairs of the church is to spiritually impoverish the whole human race. This is because we are "one body in Christ, and individually members of one another". (Romans 12: 5, RSV).

Christians should therefore as a church, struggle to break away from the rules of patriarchy and role stereo-typing. This will allow men and women to develop their respective and collective futures on the basis of equality, mutuality and complementarity which, while it confirms our differences in sex, also denies superiority of one over the other. In this way the church will be letting the gospel transform culture for the good of God's Kingdom and the fulfilment of humanity in Christ. It is only by doing this that the church will be the salt and light to society for development.

May God be the light of the church as she seeks fulfilment in him.

APPENDICES:

APPENDIX 1

Questionnaire for Lay-men

1. AGE ..... SEX ..... MARITAL STATUS .....  
POSITION IN THE CHURCH.....CHURCH.....  
PARISH .....DIOCESE.....
2. What activities of the church do you, as a man,  
participate in?
3. What activities do the women participate in?
4. Are you a church elder? Yes No  
If yes, on which council do you sit as an elder  
of your church?  
(i) Church council (iv) Synod  
(ii) Parish council (v) Others (Please  
(iii) Diocese specify)
5. How many women are on the committees you have  
mentioned?  
(b) About how many men are on the same  
committees?
6. What do you consider to be the qualifications for  
being an elder in the church?

(i)

(ii)

(iii)

7. Do you think women have these qualifications?

Yes                      No

8. In electing church elders, who do you prefer?

Men              Women              Any, as long as one is capable

9. Do you think women participate fully in the administration of the church?

Yes                      No

(b) If Yes, how?

(c) If No, what do you think is the reason for their not doing so?

10. As a member of the church do you think women should be involved in church administration?

Yes                      No

(b) Why?

11. The church does not discriminate women as such, but in most cases, women are ignorant of what is required of them as Anglican women. Do you agree or not?

(b) If you agree, what do you recommend should be done to correct the situation?

12. Women today are ordained as priests. Therefore one can say they can also become Bishops. Do you agree with the statement?

Yes

No

(b) Give reasons for your answer.

13. What is your personal view about women ordination?

(a) it has enriched the church

(b) it was a mistake - its against the Bible

(c) it has led to a decline of membership in the church

(d) it is against our culture

(e) others (please specify).

14. Have you ever been asked to contribute any suggestion as to how the church should be run?

APPENDIX 2

Questionnaire for Lay-Women

1. AGE ..... SEX ..... MARITAL STATUS .....  
POSITION IN THE CHURCH .....CHURCH .....  
PARISH .....DIOCESE .....
2. What do you think is your role in the church as a woman?
3. What activities do the women mainly participate in in your church?
4. Are you a church elder?    Yes                    No  
(b) If Yes, on which council do you sit as an elder of your church?  
(i) church council                    (iv) Synod  
(ii) Parish council                    (v) Others  
(iii) Diocese                            (Please specify)
5. How many other women are on the same committees (Councils)?  
(b) How many men are on the same committees?
6. In electing church elders, who do you prefer, men or women  
Men            Women            Any as long as one is capable.







APPENDIX 3

Questionnaire for Clergy

1. AGE ..... SEX ..... MARITAL STATUS .....  
POSITION IN THE CHURCH .....  
CHURCH ..... PARISH ..... DIOCESE .....
  
2. What do you consider as the qualifications for an  
elder in the Church?  
(i) .....  
(ii) .....  
(iii) .....
  
3. Do women have the qualifications you have  
mentioned?  
Yes ..... No .....
  
4. What activities of the church do the women in  
your church mainly participate in? .....
  
5. Do you have any women's groups in your church?  
Yes ..... No .....  
(b) If Yes, name at least two (2)
  
6. Who started the groups you have mentioned?  
(Tick the right answer).

- (a) The women themselves
- (b) The Pastor of the church
- (c) The Bishop
- (d) The church committee

7. Who decides what activities these groups should be involved in:

(Tick the right answer)?

- (a) The Bishop
- (b) The women themselves
- (c) The Pastor of the church
- (d) The church committee

8. Who decides what assistance (money or advice) should be given to the women's groups. (Tick the right answer).

- (a) The Bishop
- (b) The financial committee
- (c) The church committee
- (d) The women committee

9. Do women participate actively in general meetings in the church?

Yes  No

(b) If No, Why is this so?

10. Do you think women participate fully in the administration of the church?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

(b) If Yes, how?

(c) If No, what do you think is their reason for not doing so?

11. About how many men and women do you have on the following committees in your church?

	<u>MEN</u>	<u>WOMEN</u>
(i) Financial Committee		
(ii) Church elders		
(iii) Building committee		
(iv) Youth committee		
(v) Administration committee		

12. There is a feeling that some of the church leaders make women not participate in the church by the way they preach, and their attitudes to women.

What is your opinion on this issue?

13. Women today are ordained as priests. Therefore one can say that they can also become bishops. (Tick the right answer).

(a) Do you agree or disagree

Agree

Disagree

(b) Give reason(s) for your answer.

14. What is your personal view about women ordination into priesthood.

(Tick the right answer).

- (a) it has enriched the church.
- (b) it was a mistake - it is against the Bible.
- (c) it has led to a decline of membership in the church.
- (d) it is against our culture.
- (e) others (please specify).

15. Do the members of the church contribute to the policies of the church.

Yes

No

- (b) If Yes, how do you ensure their contribution?
- (c) If No, Why not?

16. For Women Clergy

As a woman clergy (priest) do you feel accepted by:

- (i) The male members of the church?
- (ii) The female members of the church?
- (iii) If No, what do you think is the reason?

APPENDIX 4

Responses on the question of women ordination and  
female bishops.

	Men	Women	Clergy	% over the total no.
For:				
Ordination of women	40 (68%)	38 (86%)	16 (59%)	72%
For: women bishops	26 (44%)	30 (68%)	14 (52%)	54%
Against:				
Ordination of women	19 (32%)	6 (13.6%)	11 (41%)	28%
Against: women as bishops	33 (56%)	14 (31.8%)	13 (48%)	46%

Most of the people who supported women ordination also supported women becoming bishops. However, there are those who felt that women should be promoted only to a certain level - say the archdeaconry level - and not be made bishops. Some of the reasons given here include:

- (a) They would fail to reconcile their official duties with their family responsibilities.
- (b) Women are too weak and emotional to manage a bishop's office which has a lot of work.
- (c) Since women are despised in society as the

inferior sex, a woman would not command respect as a bishop from the christians. \_

(d) A pregnant bishop would look very funny.

#### APPENDIX 5

##### Women's response to question 9

Responses to the question "Are you satisfied with the level at which you are participating in the church?" (Question number 9 on the lay-women's questionnaire).

Out of the 44 female respondents:

26	said	yes;	approximately	59%
17	said	no ;	approximately	39%
1	Abstained	(skipped the question)		2%

APPENDIX 6

Responses from the clergy and Lay-men

Responses to the question, "Do you think women participate fully in the administration of the church?"

Question no. 9 on the lay-men's questionnaire, and no. 10 on the clergy's questionnaire.

Response	Lay Men	Clergy
Yes	22 (37%)	11 (41%)
No	33 (56%)	14 (52%)
Abstained	4 (7%)	2 (7%)
Total	59	27

Note:

The percentages are worked out over the total number of respondents in each category.

APPENDIX 7

Some of the factors to which respondent's attributed women's low level of participation in the church

Of those who said they were not satisfied with the level of women participation in the church and its administration (from all the three categories of respondents), the following were some of the factors to which they attribute this lack of participation:

- (a) The cultural setting.
- (b) Family problems (too much work for the women).
- (c) Women themselves are to blame - their inferiority complex, pride, lack of confidence.
- (d) Male dominance in the church and its administration.
- (e) Ignorance of what is expected of them in the church.
- (f) Others.

Note: Most of the respondents gave more than one reason. Therefore the percentages below are worked out over the total number of responses, not the total number of respondents.



Category	Lay-women responses	Lay-men responses	clergy resp.	Total	% out of the total number of responses
(a)	1	10	4	15	19%
(b)	0	7	2	9	12%
(c)	5	18	4	27	35%
(d)	6	4	4	14	18%
(e)	2	0	0	2	3%
(f)	3	7	1	11	14%
Total responses	17	46	15	78	100%

APPENDIX 8

Number of people interviewed according to their Archdeaconries, and the period the interview was conducted.

Archdeaconry	Lay-men				Lay-women				Clergy				Overall Total from each arch-deaconry	%
	Early August	From 21st August	Sept.	Total Lay-men	Early August	From 21st August	Sept.	Total Lay-women	Early August	From 21st August	Sept.	Total clergy		
Cathedral Namirembe	18	3	2	23	11	2	4	17	8	0	0	8	48	36.9
Gayaza	2	5	2	9	-	2	-	2	-	-	1	1	12	9.2
Nateete	-	2	4	6	-	1	4	5	-	1	1	2	13	10.0
Mengo/Kibuye	-	4	2	6	-	4	1	5	-	-	-	0	11	8.5
Entebbe	-	3	-	3	-	2	-	2	-	2	-	2	7	5.4
Ndejje	-	2	-	2	-	2	-	2	-	-	-	0	4	3.1
Luwero	-	2	-	2	-	-	-	0	-	2	-	2	4	3.1
Others	4	2	2	8	6	1	4	11	4	7	1	12	31	23.8
Total of people interviewed in each period	24	23	12	59	17	14	13	44	12	12	3	27	130	100.0%

Note: Respondents in the category of "others" include those who did not indicate their parishes, and those who labelled parishes whose archdeaconries cannot be ascertained from the records that were available for this research.

APPENDIX 9Names of some of the respondents to the questionnaires of this study.Clergy

Name of the respondent	Age	Position in the church	Parish	Archdeaconry	Date of interview
Rev. Can. Nsereko, Y	67	Asst.vicar Namirembe cathedral	Namirembe	Namirembe	16.08.89
Rev. Can. Ssemmondo	58	Diocesan treasurer	Namirembe	Namirembe	21.08.89
Rev. Mrs. Karibwigye	-	Deaconness	All Saints	Diocese of Kampala	21.08.89
Rev. Musana	49	Parish priest	Bbira	Nateete	23.08.89
Rev. Mrs. Kisebo	43	Parish priest	Kamwokya	Kampala, Kampala Diocese	14.08.89
Rev. Mpalamyi S.	46	Bishop's chaplain	Namirembe	Namirembe	23.08.89
Rev. Can. Kityo (the late)	62	Archdeacon	Kibuye	Mengo/Kibuye	24.08.89
Rev. Can. Musajjakawa	60	Retired parish priest	Gayaza	Gayaza	04.09.89
Rev. Wamala S.K.	50	Parish priest	Nsangi	Nateete	21.08.89
Rev. Kaweesa Nelson	34	Acting principal Namugongo seminary	Namugongo	Namugongo	14.08.89
Rev. Kalungi J.	34	Secretary for planning & development diocesan office	Namirembe	Namirembe	10.08.89
Rev. Can. Baddokwaya	-	administrative secretary bishop's office	Namirembe	Namirembe	10.08.89
Rev. Mugula George	47	Parish priest	Nansana	Nateete	23.08.89
Rev. Nsubuga, Livingstone	40	Parish priest	Bunamuaya	Entebbe	04.09.89
Rev. Kisitu Ben	31	Parish priest	Bombo	Ndejje	23.08.89
Nsonga Samuel	36	Parish priest	Nkumba	Entebbe	23.08.89

Lay women

Name of the respondent	Age	Position in the church	Parish	Archdeaconry	Date of interview
Nayiga Joyce	-	Member	Namirembe	Namirembe	05.09.89
Ntege Hilda	26	Member	Bbira	Nateete	10.08.89
Tendo Justine	29	Member	Kyanja	-	20.08.89
Nambi Lydia	26	Member	Kavumba	-	06.09.89
Nanyonjo Sarah	30	-	Bulange	Namirembe	20.08.89
Mrs. Nyenje Jeniffer	35	Secretary, congregational church council	Namugongo	Namugongo	15.08.89
Mrs. Sewava	-	Leader of congregational church wardens	Namugongo	Namugongo	20.08.89
Mrs. Kaweesa	29	Member	Namugongo	Namugongo	20.08.89
Mrs. Mukasa	-	Member	Namugongo	Namugongo	15.08.89
Nankya Ruth	70	Member	Kabowa	Mengo/Kibuye	06.09.89
Tezigatwa Sarh	58	Member	Namirembe	Namirembe	22.08.89
Sanyu Ruth	-	Member	Nateete	Nateete	22.05.89
Nsamba Aida	37	Congregational church warden	Namirembe	Namirembe	07.09.89
Mrs. Ntege R.N.	65	Warden/elder	Bbira	Nateete	10.08.89
Mrs. Kalibbala, A.	53	Archdeaconry chairperson of CWF	Namate	Entebbe	23.08.89
Nanyonga, J.	-	Member	Busega	Nateete	03.09.89
Mrs. Sekitoleko	-	Congregational church warden	Katwe	Mengo/Kibuye	24.08.89
Mrs. Musoke, E.	-	Member	Ntebbe	Ntebbe	22.08.89
Mrs. Kanakulya, M.	29	Diocesan secretary Mothers' Union	Mpererwe	Gayaza	28.08.89
Kibirige Margaret	40	Church warden	Semuto	Ndejje	23.08.89
Mrs. Nsonga Juliet	27	Member	Nkumba	Entebbe	24.08.89
Mrs. Walusimbi, N.	42	Archdeaconry chairperson M.U.	Masooli	Gayaza	24.08.89

Lay-men

Name of the respondent	Age	Position in the church	Parish	Archdeaconry	Date of interview
Owino Abraham	28	Member	Namirembe	Namirembe	10.08.89
Kamya	77	Retired layreader	Namugongo	Namugongo	18.08.89
Kigozi	60	Member	Kabowa	Mengo/Kibuye	24.08.89
Sematimba P.	37	Member	Bunamwaya	Entebbe	10.09.89
Semakula Godfrey	28	Member	Namirembe	Namirembe	20.09.89
Kasujja Samuel	46	Lay-reader	Kabowa	Mengo/Kibuye	23.09.89
Sajjabi	35	Member	Kavumba	-	23.09.89
Kafeero Ellis	38	Member	Namirembe	Namirembe	30.09.89
Bwanika Laban	43	Congregational church treasurer	Bbira	Nateete	24.08.89
Nyenje Godfrey	40	Member	Namugongo	Namugongo	19.08.89
Kazibwe Daniel	32	Congregational church warden	Kasubi	Mengo/Kibuye	-
Kasango Tony	40	Leader of congregational wardens	Kyanja	-	16.09.89
Kalanzi Godfrey	20	Member	Gayaza	Gayaza	13.09.89
Musoke	56	Member	Namugongo	Namugongo	18.08.89
Musoke-Sserwanga I.	48	Secretary, congregational church council	Kira	Gayaza	20.08.89
Senninga Nathaniel	33	Member	Gayaza	Gayaza	04.09.89
Ssempebwa Ernest	71	Lay-reader	Kkungu	Gayaza	23.08.89
Kasulle C.G.	63	Lay-reader	Masulita	Ndejje	24.08.89
Musoke Kutta Besweri	58	Member	Timuna	Luweero	24.08.89
Mande Gad H.	29	Lay-reader	Kasubi	Mengo/Kibuye	23.08.89
Ssenoga C.W.	53	Lay-reader	Nateete	Nateete	23.08.89
Kiwanuka	69	Lay-reader	Kkungu	Gayaza	23.08.89
Lukwago	46	Lay-reader	Munyonyo	-	24.08.89

Note:

1. For questionnaires that were filled in by the respondent, the date of interview is the date indicated by the respondent as one on which he or she filled in the questionnaire.
2. Only a few respondents gave their names. Since there was no obligation for one to indicate his/her name, many respondents opted to remain anonymous.
3. Female clergy from Kampala diocese were interviewed because there were no women clergy in Namirembe diocese.

APPENDIX 10

The saza (county) chiefs of Buganda, in order of importance.

- |           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Katikiro  | - The prime minister and chief justice.   |
| Kimbugwe  | - The keeper of the king's umbilical cord.  |
| Kago      | - Chief of Kyadondo.  |
| Sekibobo  | - Chief of Kyaggwe.   |
| Pokino    | - Chief of Buddu.   |
| Mugema    | - also called the king's father, (Nakazade), was also the " <u>Katikiro</u> of the dead". He was the chief of Busiro. |
| Kangawo   | - Chief of Bulemezi.  |
| Mukwenda  | - Chief of Singo.   |
| Kitunzi   | - Chief of Gomba.   |
| Kaima     | - Chief of Mawokota.  |
| Katambala | - Chief of Butamba.   |
| Kasujju   | - Chief of Busujju.   |
| Mujasi    | - Commander in chief.   |
| Gabunga   | - Admiral of canoes and saza chief of Sese islands.   |

Note: This order of importance is given by Michael Wright in Buganda in the Heroic Age, Nairobi, London, New York: Oxford University press, 1971. Roscoe however gives a different order in his book already indicated in the text.

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