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LUO FAMILY SPIRITUALITY

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STUDENT'S DECLARATION

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Signed.....GEORGE OBUOL OFEM cap......
17th. Feb. 1997

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PREFACE

This work is an essay which is to be presented at the Tangaza College, (Theological Centre for Religious), the Constituent College of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, CUEA, Nairobi, in March 1997, marking the end of a four-year Theological training at the same College. It is a study of the Luo Community of Nyanza Province, Western Kenya, as regards their Family Spirituality, an important area of their religious and spiritual world.

In doing this work, I was greatly assisted by the generous selfless co-operation of the people and institutions of higher learning in getting the raw-materials I needed for presenting this work. The assistance I got enabled me to gather rich information from the people I personally interviewed during my field research and also from books which treated the same topic. Therefore, from the information given, I too applied my own personal critiques according to my observation which I considered could justify the claims I put forward and I believe, can make the family image for a better change in the future.

For practical reasons, it is not possible to thank all the individuals who, through co-operation and encouragement, helped me to carry out this research; although, the key helpers have been included in the list of informants in the text below. To all of them, I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the co-operation, which sometimes, involved personal sacrifices and physical hardships but without which I would have achieved very little.

METHODOLOGY

From June, 1996, I begun my research by finding out what had been written about Luo family spirituality. I first went through the class notes on the African cultural studies which gave me the first lay out of the materials. I then realized that the African cultural studies treated in class, were for general knowledge about the Africans at large, therefore, I failed to get specifically what the subject talked about the Luo family and spirituality in particular. I first got into contact with the home library, (Capuchin Friary), where I managed to gather a few materials from

provided me with a wide range of literature on the African religious perspective.

Apart from books there was also a great deal of information that I gathered from those I interviewed about the topic. I used to go personally to their residential places or some visitations which some of them kindly did in my request.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First of all, I am deeply grateful to Mr. Joseph Wasswa a lecturer at Tangaza College, Pastoral Department, who has been very kind and critical in coaching me in this work and also Rev. Dr. Kitururu, head of Social Arts and Religious Studies at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, CUEA. Special thanks also go to Mzee Ignatius Agunda of Maria Legio Church, Lang'ata, Bogani Road, Nairobi. He gave me a first hand information of he knew as an elder concerning some healing aspect in the Luo community and his own experience in his Church. In the same note, I would also like to thank Agneta Nyamwala, a Catholic woman who during my interview with her, remembered with pains how a local priest disappointed her when she had sought some healing session with him when her daughter was possessed making her recourse to the traditional healer.

A lot of encouragement also came from friends, Mr. Alfred K. Wasike, of the National Bank of Kenya, Nairobi, who was very resourceful in giving me mutual support, by himself visiting me for the same purpose and discuss orally the matters of the topic. James Odipo Otiti, of East Africa Industries, EAI, was also moved by the same topic when I briefed him of my intention in writing an essay on the Family Spirituality. He has been so good to me also in sharing with me his own family experience in line with traditional practices and the way he is struggling to reconcile those beliefs with Christian values.

Lastly, I thank my religious community, Capuchin Friars, Formation House, for their patience with me in providing time and permission to go out and conduct the research whenever it was arranged. Finally, in a special way, I acknowledge with great concern the technical assistance provided in this work by Bro. James Kimani, OFMcap.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Today, I feel that any genuine Church minister can not administer well his pastoral duties without due regard to the Family. I have objectively observed with keen interest in my pastoral encounter with different families both in the rural and in the urban settings, how families, the most important and basic institution in African society, are gradually losing their original and traditional values which over the centuries have been cherished. To discuss this delicate topic, I am not going to put a blame on anybody else anywhere as being the cause of the social and cultural mess the family is currently, undergoing. However, my aim in this particular issue is an attempt to call to mind the Church's pastoral concern in collaboration with the family. The aim again in this project is not necessarily to suggest an ideal perfect family, but rather, my concern is to objectively look at the family from the general point of view viz-a-viz the particular family which is the subject matter of this essay, namely; the Luo Family and spirituality.

In this essay, the Objective is to assess the meaning of spirituality and how it is integrated in the family with the hope to offer practical suggestions, within the pastoral context, in the restoration not only of healthier families but also meaningful healthier Luo community at large.

In the relationship between the Church and the family, there are already some loopholes which pose a great misunderstanding between the two institutions that need to be reconciled and possibly put in order for a better understanding to prevail. For instance, there has been, and still is, a dispute from the part of the Church (Both from the Western missionaries and from the African Christian converts themselves), on whether the African ancestral spirits are good and real or they are evil and therefore, superstitious. Because, the position of the Church so far, in this matter has been one of rebellion against any claim for the ancestral spirit and its manifestation thus, those literally

possessed suffer isolation because the Church has no spiritual solutions to them, hence they find their way out (if their plight is ignored) to move to African independent Churches (AICs) for remedy or alternatively, to visit the traditional healers.

Whereas, the Luos maintain that spirit is life, and where there is one, there is the other. Therefore, my aim is to try to show how the Luo blend this reality with the Family.

On the other hand, central to this concept is also the healing aspect which has a very deep meaning in the psycho-dynamic and Luo spiritual world view. The core of the Luo religious spirituality revolve around healing. It is with this in mind that I am going to show and suggest some pastoral techniques on how to go about it.

Sacrifices and prayers mark the basis of family spirituality for the Luo and as a matter of fact, this reality poses challenges to Christianity and often the cause of crisis of Christian faith. For the Luo spirituality is something for daily life and it is meant to form the whole person not just one particular dimension as Christianity seem to present, ie. Salvation of the soul, but the healing process aims at the psychological, social, physical and environmental, then it is a real healing.

To react to this Phenomenon, I am going to strongly suggest some pastoral recommendations which hopefully should shed some light in handling the marriage and family problems and crisis in their religions and spiritual development.

CHAPTER 1

UNDERSTANDING OF FAMILY IN GENERAL

Introduction:

This Chapter will consider the family from the point of view of its general outlook. We shall also start by giving some meaning of the family as it is understood from its particular context and then the general understanding from the African perspective. Some brief discussion will be held to determine family's internal stability and the mutual co-operation as important pillars making the family remain firm. The core of the chapter will focus on the nature and the structure of the family and will argue on some pertinent philosophical issues about the family whether or not the family deserves to be called natural society. Marriage between two opposite sexes which marks the beginning of human family will specifically be discussed to justify its function from both its technical implication and the African idea of it.

Definition:

A family can be defined as a man and woman who through marriage become husband and wife and subsequently parents. On top of that the African concept of family also include any member of the house-hold who can either be a relative or house-helper. In the same context, family can be described as a group of people living together in the same particular house-hold with a biological father and mother. The characteristics of such a family is usually considered in terms of common sharing of goods, human resources of talents, ideas, joys and sorrows.

From the cultural point of view, family, therefore, includes both close and extended relatives with a common ancestor. Among the

Luos, this unit fairly embodies a larger perspective of the family area whose members usually, are referred to by the same common name 'joka ng'ane' (the family of so and so) or in another form, 'nyikwa' ng'ane' (the descendants of so and so). The latter form refer to the larger unit which usually refer to a clan.

This pattern forms a particular symbolic identity based on social and moral values which give a dynamic force to the social relationship with others in the same community.

Stability and the family: Love between married couple requires that the marriage lasts until the death of one of the partners. When married people have reached advanced age, hardly any reason could justify a separation. Life together could not have been too intolerable. Members of the same family cannot help being together in joy or in sorrow and to co-operate with one another in building up the same family structure. Therefore, factors which make the family separate are naturally not encouraged. The mutual co-operation between family members is so strongly felt that no family for whatever reason, would throw out any of its members in times of difficulties and stress.

Nature and Structure of the Family:

The family or domestic society, consists of two components: a horizontal component, the union between husband and wife, **conjugal** society and a vertical component, the union of parents and children called **parental** society.¹ These are not really two distinct societies, but two aspects of the family. Accidentally, a family may have one component only, but this not the usual case. The bond between husband and wife is a moral one consisting of definite rights and duties guaranteed by a free and binding formal agreement for the good of all concerned. This is achieved by their living together in mutual love.

Marriage may be considered as the act of getting

¹ Milton A. Gonsalves, **Right and Reason, Ethics in Theory and Practice**, 9th Ed. (Columbus: Merrill Publishing Company, 1986) p.318

married (wedding). The first is the marriage agreement in which the man and the woman on the basis of their personal love relationship exchange vows or promise publicly and formally to love, honour, and cherish one another exclusively and permanently. Traditionally, this public and formal agreement has been spoken of as the marriage contract in which the man and woman give and receive rights and duties toward each other concerning cohabitation and sexual intercourse. In more recent discussion, the term **covenant** has been proposed as preferable to contract because of cultural changes that have occurred.²

Marriage today is not arranged by parents to political or economic consideration, but is rather arranged by the couple and based primarily on mutual love. By their covenant they cannot commit themselves to one another to grow in their union of love. Viewed as a contract, marriage is an agreement based on justice; viewed as a covenant, it is one based on love, but clearly involving justice. As a state, marriage is a society or lasting union of a man and a woman resulting from such a contract or covenant. The state of marriage traditionally implies four conditions.³

First: There must be a union of **opposite sexes** since marriage has to do with reproduction of the human race, this requirement is obvious. Marriage is not necessarily between only one man and only one woman, though monogamy is considered the ideal.

Second: Marriage is a **permanent** union. It must last at least as long as is necessary for the fulfilment of its purpose and the discharge of its obligations, and hence, is intended to involve lifelong permanence. When covenanted, it is more fragile but is nonetheless a commitment to one another to grow in their union of love throughout their lifetime.

Third: It is an inclusive **union**. The partners agree to share sexual relation only with one another so that extra marital acts of sex are a violation of justice or mutual love. Whether we think in terms of contract or covenant, adultery is then a violation against

² Ibid., 318

³ Ibid., p.318

marriage.

Fourth: Both **contract** and **covenant** guarantee its permanence and exclusiveness. Mere living together without a free and binding agreement to do so does not constitute marriage, even though the partners actually remain together for life. The contract or covenant makes the difference between marriage and concubinage.

Also we must distinguish whether marriage is natural or conventional. Those who hold that marriage is merely conventional may advocate the abolition of the convention in favour of freer relations between the sexes, or they may think that on utilitarian ground it is an excellent convention by all means to be maintained.

On the other hand, the prevailing and the traditional conviction is that marriage is no mere convention but a natural institution. Thus our human nature inclines us toward the continuance of human race, because by our very nature, we have the sexual power and inclination for reproduction. Our sexuality inclines us among other things to produce in a sexual manner. People may marry for variety of motives, for love, for companionship, for money, for position. The idea of begetting children may be very subordinate, perhaps only tolerated rather than desired, in the minds of many people; it need not be psychologically uppermost in their minds. People eat mostly for the pleasure of food and rarely think of its necessity for sustaining life; yet they recognize on reflection that sustaining life is the objective purpose of eating. The same may be said for sexual intercourse, it may be done for a number of subjective reasons, such as pleasure or attraction to love, but its objective, natural purpose is to sustain human race. Our sexuality urges strongly to reproduce, so strongly that most humans follow their inclinations without reasoning logically about the need for us to reproduce if the human race is to continue. The continuation of the human race was one of the major reasons observed by African marriage concept.

The Idea of Marriage in Africa:

In traditional African society, the idea of marriage was not only for the sake of security and the rearing of children as some authors have tended to emphasize but also included the elements of companionship and mutual assistance between men and women. However, there can be no doubt that in traditional African society, stress was laid on procreation and continuation of life as the dominant reason for marriage. J.S. Mbiti observes: " We must note that marriage and procreation in African communities are a unity: without procreation, marriage is incomplete"⁴. Jomo Kenyatta writing about the Gikuyu society adds: "Marriage is one of the most powerful means of maintaining the cohesion of Gikuyu society and of enforcing that conformity to the kinship system and to the tribal organization without which social life is impossible"⁵. Marriage was not an option, it was an essential stage in which every member of the society had to go through. Marriage for African societies was a central rite of passage signifying the focus of existence, Mbiti again observes:

For African peoples, Marriage is the focus of existence.

It is the point where all members of a given community meet: the departed, the living and those yet to be born.

Marriage is a drama in which everyone becomes an actor or actress and not just a spectator.

Therefore marriage is a duty, a requirement from the corporate society and a rhythm of life which everyone must participate⁶.

As in all societies, marriage in traditional African society was a process comprising of the important steps of courtship and

⁴ J.S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, (London: Heinemann, 1969), p. 225

⁵ Jomo, Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya*, (London: Secker and Warburg, 1938), p.164

⁶ J.S., Mbiti, p.133

betrothal, socially approval agreements and finally the ceremonies and the establishment of a conjugal relationship with rights and obligations.

It is often wrongly asserted that marriage in traditional African Society was arranged by parents and elders and that the marrying partners did not have significant initiatives in their marriage. The correct situation was that young people did not have many opportunities for courtship even though it was often very discreet, and in fact initiated to get married. In all cases, however, they always sought the approval and consequent involvement of their parents or family members were also common but should not in actual fact be regarded as the norm⁷. It is correct to say that all marriage relationships could not be effected without a consensus between the partners concerned and their respective parents and elders.

The next stage of marriage process was the exchange of gifts mainly from the man's side to that of the girl. This custom which has been called "bride-price" or "bride- wealth" was not regarded as the selling or buying of the girl but as an essential element in the establishment of a serious and binding marriage contract.

Roles in the Family Life:

Man's Role:

In marriage a man plays three different roles, he is: man, husband and father. In any society, adult men are expected to carry out certain duties. For instance, in many African societies, single adult men were expected ot behave maturely, defend the community against attacks and do their share in heavy manual labour: clear bushes, erect buildings, etc. They were all expected to marry and raise families. As a husband, he was expected to protect his wife, care for her and provide for her. As a father a man is the chief authority over the children. He should present a respected yet loved figure of authority. He is the custodian of discipline in the

⁷ D.W. Waruta and H.W. Kinoti, Eds. **Pastoral Care In African Christianity**, (Nairobi: Action Publishers, 1994), pp. 88 - 89

family.⁹

Woman's Role:

In marriage the woman also plays three different roles: woman, wife and mother. As an adult the woman is expected to have a stable character that portrays such feminine characteristics as gentleness, patience, kindness, decency. Her feminine roles includes: Child care, cooking, housewifery. As a wife her duties are outlined in the Bible as follows: Submission to the husband (Eph.5:22). The wife is required to respect her husband as the head of the home but this respect does not indicate an inferior status. Male and female are equal before God. The duties of motherhood are related to the birth and nurturing of children and care of the home.⁹

Children's Role:

Children have a duty to express their love and appreciation to their parents for the many sacrifices parents make to meet the children's needs and take care of them. There are many ways through which to do this:

- by being thankful to their parents in what parents do to them.
- by appreciating life as a gift from God through their parents
- by being obedient and cooperative and living harmoniously with all the members of the family.

Parents Roles:

The fundamental role of the parents is to give the education necessary for their children and to ensure especially, the protection and stability of family life. Authority, stability and life of relationships within the family constitute the foundations for freedom, security and fraternity within society. Family life is an initiation into life in society.

⁹ Jane, Kiura, *Family Life*, (Nairobi: St. Paul's Publications - Africa, 1993), p. 29

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.31

The family should live in such a way that its members learn to care and take responsibility for the young, the old, the sick, the handicapped and the poor.¹⁰

CONCLUSION

We began with a description of a family as existing today and through most of history. In former time the word family was extended in two different ways: It included all blood relatives whether they lived together or not. On the other hand, it also meant all who lived together in the same household, including servants and other non-related persons.

Another important aspect pertaining to the family is also the nature and structure which stem from marriage, the beginning of human family and the expected roles the members of the family ought to play. Thus, the nature of the family can be considered from its natural point of view since by nature man and woman are designated to form and grow in the family relationship. And to make this reality, marriage must take place depending on various cultures and how it is expressed. That is some societies practise a monogamous marriage, others opt for polygamy.

In the next Chapter we are going to restrict ourselves in discussing the Luo Family.

¹⁰ **The Catechism of the Catholic Church**, (Nairobi: St. Paul's Publications - Africa, 1994), p. 516

CHAPTER 2

LUO FAMILY

Introduction:

In this chapter, we are going to see what family really means to the Luo and how the nature and structure are traditionally envisaged with specific roles for both nuclear and the extended family. And finally, we shall be introduced to the spiritual aspects which occupy the Luo religious beliefs and activities.

Meaning And Definition.

Luo family consists of small extended lineal members. It includes parents children, grandparents, uncles, aunts, brothers and sisters. The father is the centre of authority, respect and fear - a status in which also his brothers and even eldest son may share. The mother is the focus of love and indulgence. Her brother is one of the best persons for her children, to visit in time of need. It is very much in line to send children to go and live for some months with relatives and those children are counted as members of the families they happen to live in .

Like some Africans, Luo families also recognize the role played by some departed members. In other words there is always a continuous link between the departed and the family members also are still living. The living may benefit directly or indirectly from the protection accorded them by the departed. This type of protection is realized mainly in times of crisis e.g. when there is a natural disaster such as epidemics, famine and long droughts. The traditional belief maintain that such disasters come as a result of the community's failure to observe certain rules believed to be pertinent to the society's well-being. This would be like interfering with the established social orders and things maintained to hold the community together in different dimensions

of life.

In cases where such problems persisted, according to elders, there was a need for ritual act referred to as 'dolo', a sacrifice given to the dead. Sacrifices helped to strengthen the life force and restore order once that order had been disrupted. An animal or a chicken had to be slaughtered and the departed, especially the spirit of the ancestors were invited to come and accept the offering. All creatures including the departed, all beings and all inanimate objects were linked together in the sacrifice. To achieve this the head of the family had to consult the clan elder who would present the matter to the diviner who would also provide the prescription on what to be offered to save the situation.

Nature and Structure:

Most of the Luos preferred to marry more than one wife. To them, having more than one wife did not indicate that there was lack of love, though love was not the only element in any case which was stressed in a traditional Luo marriage. Mboya maintained that a girl's character was equal importance.¹¹ Therefore, when a young man was ready to marry, he asked his relatives and friends to help him find a girl. Their concern was not so much to find a beautiful girl, although it was also considered, but to look for a girl of good character. They investigated whether the girl was well mannered, whether she knew how to cook and dig, and finally, whether she is the type of a girl who could welcome guests without reservation.

Since a woman was important in the community, the young man and his relatives avoided the type of girl who could be easily persuaded by other men. The next thing they looked for was the background of the girl's parents. What people feared most was witchcraft. It became difficult for the daughter of a witch to be married since witchcraft was believed to be hereditary.

¹¹ Henry, Okello, Ayot, **A History of Luo-Abasuba of Western Kenya**, (Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1979), p.178

When all the requirements were fulfilled, the young man asked the girl in question for her hand in marriage. Sometimes the girl had not met him before but this did not worry her if there was somebody who could tell her all about the man. In these cases, the love which existed between the couple developed not before but after marriage had taken place. However, this type of love among the Luo was not individualistic in approach; it was the type of love which the head of the family extended to everybody in the home. It could very well be called responsibility. Those who extended an individual love to their wives never married a second wife.

In the homes where there was only one wife, there was a kind of alienation and because of this, the husband could not afford to stay away late in the evenings. Most of these people with single wives are said to have avoided extended journeys which could keep them away for many days. They seem to have been excluded from the community functions as well. Furthermore, those who had one wife and did not have grown-up daughters, or whose daughters were married had to prepare meals when the wife was sick, a very unpopular chore among the Luo men. The man who had only one wife, therefore, usually felt a personal love for his wife, and sometimes such a woman was not popular in the community for she was often regarded as a dominant personality with control over her husband. Traditionally, the man was expected to be the head of the family, when the woman took his place, his position in the community was reduced and he never felt secure among other men who often mocked him.

Polygamous Marriage:

In the Luo society, some families were polygamous. The reasons behind polygamy in the society were: Prestige, infertility of the wife, misunderstanding between couples, multiplication, economic

prosperity¹² etc.

Many girls themselves favoured polygamy. This sometimes depended on their background. If a girl was from a large home where there were many occupants she would often urge her husband to marry another wife as soon as she settled in her husband new home. Sometimes such a woman, helped her husband to find a wife. Some of them persuaded their own sisters to marry their husbands. The sororate marriage was very common where an elder sister was unable to have children of her own. It was believed that the stability and security of a woman depended very much on the children she had, especially male ones. The two sisters would then share in taking care of the children with the elder sister taking more responsibility. Also polygamy was favoured taking into account that if the wife died in a monogamous marriage, the husband would remain without a wife to take care of the family. However, when a husband died, the wife's case was not serious since her in-laws were always ready to take care of her.

Finally, the wealth of a man was measured by the number of wives, children and cattle he had. If a man had many cattle he married many wives. In such a home there were many children, and the women and children together cultivated large piece of land. It followed that there was plenty of food to feed everyone. Again with many daughters at home, one was apt to get many cattle in payment of dowry. The rest of the Cattle provided milk, meat and ghee; and famine was almost unknown in a home where there many people. Above all, there was no loneliness in such a home, and beer which was a source of leisure was made in turns by different women at home and was always available. Porridge was also provided for travellers who might call to ask for water to drink. Such happy homes were the result of many wives and were honoured in the community at large.¹³

In the polygamous family, every child learns from the very beginning to share everything with the others. They shared their

¹² J.J. Ongong'a, **Luo Religious Beliefs and Activities**, Spearheaded Nos. 78-83, (Eldoret: Gaba Publications, Kenya, 1983), p.27

¹³ Ongong'a, Op.Cit., p.28

games and food. Children playing at a mother's door expect like everyone else, to be fed by her. If a child is reluctant to share food with the rest he is punished and denied food until he learns one of the greatest social values - Sharing.

Stages of Individual growth in the Society.

Right from the moment of birth, a Luo is incorporated into the clan by a naming ceremony and then passes from the stage of corporate existence to another. At marriage, one becomes a father or mother. At physical death, a person is incorporated into the family of the ancestors. In every stage therefore, one's role is well defined according to age, genealogical seniority and the expected contributions that accrue from each status. Apart from the occasions of death, the Luo communal awareness include.

First: Social awareness - When members come together for marriage and naming ceremonies.

Second: Security sphere - It was the responsibility of young warriors to go out together to defend and protect the interest of the group.

Third: Economic purposes - During weeding, harvesting, putting up and repairing a house, People came together and worked as a group each member playing his appropriate role.

Fourth: On religious grounds - The agnate gather for the family sacrifices. Otherwise, on the occasion of catastrophe such as epidemic or draught, members of the clan gather together and offer sacrifices and pay homage to the ancestors asking them to intercede on their behalf. In this mode of togetherness, the suffering of one member is tantamount to the suffering of the whole group. Nobody suffers misfortune in isolation, even crime committed by a lineage member has a repercussions on the whole group. The religious significance goes beyond the Luo religious alone. It can be useful to any religion whose members are aware that evil can be controlled most successfully only on a communal basis.

Responsibilities and Roles of the Nuclear Family:

Individuals in the home had contributions to make to the community. Everyone had responsibilities and a role to play. Duties in every home were divided between children, young men, girls, women and elders.

The most important job for boys was to look after the cattle in the fields where they never stayed idle. Girls helped in cooking and taking care of babies. Among other things, they drew water from the lake and fetched firewood. They were also vested with the responsibility of teaching the babies how to sit up, eat and walk.

Parents' Duties:

The most important figure in the Luo community is the male head of the home. His duties include keeping discipline at home. In so doing he promoted understanding and good relationship between his family and the entire clan. He encouraged the brave and cared for the weak. In most cases he used diplomacy to keep discipline and diplomacy failed, the children and wives were physically disciplined whenever it was necessary. However, he restrained to give physical punishment to his daughter-in-law, married daughters and grown-up sons. In these case, punishment by word of mouth or warnings were sufficient.

The father was the superior and an example both in his household and the community. If he was a peaceful loving person his family usually followed his example. He avoided being quarrelsome and cruel since this was apt to influence his family and make them disagree.

Politeness, nobility and honest were qualities desired in a good home. Therefore, the members of the family who had been punished in order that these ideals could be maintained never thought of themselves being hated. The punished woman never thought that she was not love any more by her husband. If there was a big misunderstanding between a man and his wife, an attempt at settlement was made within the home first; If it was not solved,

the case was taken to the girl's parents. At every stage each person was given ample time to state his or her grievances. If there was no case to answer on the side of a woman, she was advised to go and cook a very good meal for her husband and the quarrel was considered over.

In the case of a mother, she was depended very much on her economic contribution to the family. In the Luo house-hold, a mother had several important duties. Among other things she was responsible for cooking, cultivation, harvesting, looking after children, weaving and making clay pots she used for cooking. Also she was to increase man's wealth by begetting great number of children. Without children her marriage was vulnerable and helpless.

Role of the Extended Family:

Traditionally, it was the role of the parents to look after the social, spiritual and religious well-being of their children. It was a sacred trust for which parents sacrifice. On the other hand, this role was not entrusted to parents alone. Other members of the extended family played their parts too.

For example grand-parents played major role in child formation. At night, the children gathered together in her house where they received moral instruction through stories and proverbs. The stories conveyed moral and spiritual training to the youth, and each story had its own significance in the social set up. For example, the children were told stories of a proud girl or a boy who saw a lame person and instead of being sympathetic she or he only laughed at the fortunate person. Later on the girl also became lame. Such stories evoked children's sympathy and taught them moral lessons.

Most of these stories originated from the grand-mother's own experience in life, although some of them had been passed down from previous generations.¹⁴

¹⁴ Ayot, Op. cit., p.181

CONCLUSION

Luo family consists of parents, children grandparents, uncles, aunts, brothers and sisters, and all the members of the extended family. According to the Luo, marriage is a natural inalienable obligation and right, which enhances not only the individual's growth in the family but also perpetuates the whole community to a higher level of existence, namely, the clan and the entire human race through progeny. It is for this reason that Luo concept of multiplication in society is necessarily entails polygamous marriage which was important for the survival of the family name, the clan and the entire community. While it is true that not all marriages were polygamous but the ideal family situation was for everyone (man) to have more than one wife. Polygamy was considered advantageous in terms of its social and economic implications: prestige, cheap labour, security etc. Roles and responsibilities are undertaken both by the nuclear and extended family in safeguarding the interest of every member of the family. This family organization, therefore, I consider it still very important and for a proper family in the Luo society to maintain its original image, it would be useful to keep the traditional practice. Because due to the social changes currently taking place in Africa with regard to a more flexible interaction with the other foreign cultures, is one of the major contributive factors that is making the nature and the structure of the family change. Such changes include:

- The increase of single parenthood and disintegration of family values, e.g. loss of respect to parents and elders.

- The breakdown of the kinship system due to the growth of urbanization forcing many people to engage in practices they could never do in their traditional social environment, e.g. commercial sex workers.

- Marriage and procreation were issues concerning not only the individual but also the whole community. Today these have lost their values and importance to such an extent that each person

wants to do whatever he or she likes.

- The value of children has also lost its meaning in modern society and certain foreign ideologies have been adopted in this regard, i.e., having only one or two children and at times the couple choose even to have none. The whole argument to this mentality is that children are an added burden to life.

The spiritual role of the family was so important in society that everything said and done had religious influence and implication. Today, spiritual realities are interpreted to be superstitious and backward.

However, I would appeal to the community to study and review its stand in accordance with the signs of the time. It doesn't help either to stick too much on the past practices at the expense of today's changes. Neither does it make sense to acquire only what is offered by the new changes at the cost of our traditional heritage. Therefore, the understanding of our own identity is necessary here where again respect for human life and dignity are attained at its highest level.

The concept of the Luo interrelationships involving gods and ancestors can never be understood unless one considers the complexities and family standpoint in relation to the religious and cultural world-views which form the basis of the Family Spirituality. In the following chapter we are going to discuss more in detail, the Luo Family Spirituality in its concrete significance. In the next Chapter we are going to discuss in an elaborate manner the Luo family spirituality in its concrete significance.

CHAPTER 3

LUO FAMILY SPIRITUALITY

Introduction:

This chapter is an attempt to describe Luo family Spirituality in connection with other religious beliefs and practices which form part and parcel in the Luo religious world-view. We are also going to see some of the characteristics of the family spirituality and its connection with Christian spirituality.

Description:

Luo family spirituality is the relationship between the family and supernatural forces which animates beliefs and practices and help the individuals to reach out towards supersensible realities. It is the relationship between human beings and the invisible, in as much as the relationship derives from a particular vision of the world and in its turn, affects the way of relating to self, to other people and to the universal as a whole. In this sense, spirituality is not restricted to any one religion and culture, but can be found variously to all religions and cultures. It is determined in the first place by the basic world-view of the persons or peoples concerned. It is also shaped by their life context, their history and various influences that enter people's lives.

Characteristics of Family Spirituality

Family Spirituality moves towards relationships which embrace the living and the departed members of the family. It is an expression of life which is transmitted from one generation to another. On the other hand, however, we cannot understand Family

Spirituality in isolation. Any affair, whether spiritual, social, or economic, is better understood in terms of a larger community which is the umbrella of the traditional family. Thus we can talk of family in relation to the community spirit which is expressed in responsibility for one another's welfare. Rites in connection with birth, puberty, initiation, marriage and funeral are the concern both for the family and the whole community and hence joys and sorrows are shared. Care for one another's children and property and mutual aid in cultivating, planting and harvesting expressed in mutual work parties unite the community. On this note let us consider some of the elements with regards to Luo traditional religion.

Traditional Religious Outlook

The unity of Luo religious beliefs is based on the fact that life is not artificially divided into "sacred" and "secular" but rather reality is seen in terms of a unified whole in which everything seems to have meaning only in relation to religion. This unity between life and religion is described by Aylward Shorter:

"Obviously the religion of an African people is the product of an innumerable interacting elements, environmental, economic, sociological, historical, psychological, etc. but none of these taken together or singly can account for everything in the ultimate form taken by that religion. Religious experience of an individual and the mutual affirmation by a community of common insight."¹⁵ In the traditional religious pattern, some elements may be distinguished although there is a good deal of overlapping:

First: **The Supreme Being** called **NYASAYE** (he who is beseeched) is a personalized high God who apart from being the creator, is an unfathomable force that controls everything, especially life, and guarantees the well-being of people who obey the customs of the tribe. His power and presence is felt in everything that fills men

¹⁵ Aylward, Shorter, **African Christian Theology**, (London: Geoffrey Chapman Publishers, 1975), p.33

with awe: the sun, moon, large rocks, large animals, and the miracles of nature. He is remote receiving little direct worship, although rainmakers and diviners may approach him to overcome other powerful supernatural forces. Among other praise names by which he is known are **NYAKALAGA** (the God who is everywhere) **JACHECH** (creator) and **WERE** (the precious one). There is no pantheon of natural gods but the sun god **WANG' CHIENG'** is evoked by elders daily at sunrise and sunset. Respect for God presupposed respect for family rules and order that makes the family maintains harmony and lasting peace and well being of every member of the family.

Second: **The Ancestors** are important supernatural agencies in the daily life of the Luo. Apart from being the focus of unity for the clan, or the subtribe, they form also one of the ways by which evil can be explained. Through dreams and divinations, their demands can be ascertained. Generally they want sacrifices, which can only be performed by the elders; thus the senior men have great authority over almost every aspect of life in the home and a powerful disciplinary force over the young, a wholly conservative influence. The dead man's soul (tipo) after it has joined the spirits (juogi) in the sky may return to the earth to enter a new born child, to help his descendants or to plague them as devil (jachien)¹⁶. Any offense against the ancestors was at the same time offense against God, since, the network relation within the physically living community would offend the ancestors and offending the ancestors would arouse the wrath of God.¹⁷

As far as the traditional Luo community was concerned, this relationship could not be broken, because breaking it would mean the destruction of the whole community. This special link however, included also puberty, initiation, marriage, procreation, old-age, physical death, entry into the community of the living dead and

¹⁶ The plural "jochiende" is used for the spirits of the dead, while "juogi" is more restricted to the evil spirits.

¹⁷ Jesse, N.K., Mugambi, Nichodemus, Kirima, **African Religious Heritage**, (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1991), p.27

gradual entry into the world of spirits.

The family is related to the ancestors in a special way. They appear to the living members of the family in a dream and can demand some sacrifice be done in their favour, eg. slaughtering of certain animals such as goats or a bull. And the failure to observe any of the demands might call the wrath of ancestors causing them to punish the individuals or the community as a whole by inflicting illness and some times even death.

Third: Ancestral Spirits: According to African religious beliefs, the world was inhabited by spiritual beings with whom peaceful and harmonious relationships must be maintained at all times. These beings were believed to affect the daily life of the community positively or negatively depending on whether or not the members of the community managed to meet that obligation.

A spirit might enter the life of an individual causing him or her to behave in an extra-ordinary or abnormal way. If such behaviour were noticed, the suffering individual would be taken to a diviner to have the suffering diagnosed. The diviner might attribute the spirit possession to the failure from the part of the patient or his relatives to maintain a harmonious relationship between the living and the dead.

The ancestral spirits of the Africans are sometimes gentle protectors of the living who, in turn, regard their dead with pious affection. It has been pointed out that African spirits played a major role in traditional Africa the part assigned to the police in modern states. Since law and order are essential to the maintenance of social life, African ancestral spirits may be considered to have fulfilled a social need. People in traditional Africa hardly knew anything of crisis of identity said to afflict some 20th. century urban dwellers.¹⁸

Spirit activity provided a convenient explanation for all these things: when unexpected things kept on happening e.g. rain fell out of season or fail to come in season, cattle died or human beings ruined. Spirits in this respect may be regarded as

¹⁸ Jac, Hetsen, and R. Wanjohi, "Spearhead", No.71, (Eldoret: Gaba Publication, AMECEA Pastoral Institute, 1982), p. 20

fulfilling a useful explanatory function in traditional Africa.

There might even be real truth in ascribing the onset of disease to a particular relative. Some mental or even bodily disorders do seem to originate in a sense of having failed in one's duties to a deceased relative. Scientific medicine can provide no cure for such a feeling of hopeless guilt, but ancestral spirits can be used to offer prompt relief: you could make up even to the dead by carrying out certain prescribed rites. In this respect, there can be no doubt that the medicine-man of traditional Africa, had at his disposal a therapeutic technique far superior to anything available to the scientific psychiatrist. The ancestral spirits relevance to the family can be explained from the fact that respect and obedience given to them were highly maintained. The family was careful enough not to offend the spirits whom were feared could turn against the family because offending them meant offending God directly.

Types of Spirits:

Free spirits called **juogi** usually live in people whom they possess but can return to their homes which are believed by Luos to be in trees, rivers, the lake or even the sun. The cure for this type of spirit- possession which affects usually young girls and young wives that suffer from the strains of fertility or miscarriage which in turn induce hysteria, can be lengthy and expensive. the diviner-expert uses various means: natural, (along rest, herbal medicine) shaking of guards, wearing of goat skin, an assurance to the patient that he is possessed by the diviner's own spirit, hence follow sacrifices and invocations.

Good Spirits

All the spirits who give the person possessed powers to cure those who have been possessed and made sick by the spirits, were always considered good spirits. Basically, good spirits originated from the ancestors whose lie in the community had particularly, an outstanding moral quality. A good ancestor was considered to be a

family man who managed so well his house. Having children, a natural value for the Africans was highly recommended and failure to have offspring was bad luck in life - something regrettable. However, it was not even enough to have children, what was even more important was the fact that the family had to be well coordinated with the whole community in order to give it good and positive image. In this context, the head of the family knew where and when to say something about his family, i.e. secrets of the family were never revealed to the strangers.

Those elders who died as heroes were another category of the ancestors whose exemplary life were emulated by youngsters and therefore, their spirits were considered good and newly-born babies were named after them. Among such people were warriors, rulers, medicine-men / women, seers and statesmen.

The spirits were controlled by the experts who claimed to be able to cure any disease brought to them. The basis of the disease as we have seen above, was hysteria, and it is in this aspect of healing that the Luo beliefs best illustrate how the concept of unity of mind, body and spirit is appreciated and made relevant to the experience of the people.

Bad spirits

A person who does not behave properly towards relatives and the community in general, faces the danger of being disowned by the community or being punished severely. Any such consequences would lessen or destroy his or her chance of becoming favourable member of the living-dead. Criminals and outcasts, when they die, are regarded negatively as they were when physically alive, and are often forgotten very shortly after their physical death.¹⁹ Their relatives would not like to sustain the memories of a criminal or outcast who has embarrassed them in the face of the community; nor would the community keep in mind a person who had been an enemy of the established laws and customs.

¹⁹ Mbiti, Op.cit. p.112

Other Luo Cultural Beliefs and Practices:

Magic:

Magic provides both explanation of the evil, and a means by which it can be cured by him. Magic is an inevitable logic from the African's experience from his world: everything that happens has to be explained; if it has no human cause, it is ascribed to extra-human agencies. Magic helps to discover why evil happens and how it can be forestalled or overcome. However, the dangers, fears, suspicions, that result from magic act as powerful deterrents against bringing hostility into the open and engaging in petty quarrels; thus peace is presumed and magic shows its social benefits. The power of an evil magician (*janawi*) is greatly feared; yet the diviner and the medicine-man (*ajuoga*) are respected in traditional society though they may be guilty of fraud and conscious of it.

Dangerous and anti-social are those that are considered sorcerers (*jajuok*) and witches whose inherited or innate powers are increased by magic; a representative of this class is the women-with-the evil-eye. This woman inherits her power from her parents (mother) and has little choice about using it. When she looks at a child who is eating, that child will suffer from stomach ache. The piece of food which the child was eating, when the witch, *jasihobo* looked at him must be removed from the point in the stomach where it has stuck. The diviner is called, he takes a razor blade, makes a small cut over the stomach or spot where the food is suppose to be lodged, sucks with his\her mouth and spits out a piece of food which he claims to be the cause of the pain.

Hence too easily accusations are made of being witches out of fear or jealousy, against those who bring themselves in conflict with their rest of society, whether for economic, or social reasons e.g the landless, the petty thieves, and especially barren wives

Sickness, real or imagined, is very prevalent among the Luo especially Malaria due to the nature of the environment which is infested with mosquitoes, stomach pains due to nervous disorders or

constipation as a result of their diet. Traditionally no clear distinction is made between mental and physical disease.

Every disease, the result of social as well as physical forces, requires the restoration of the disturbed order before it can be cured. Caused by hostile persons the (*janawi*) or the (*jajuok*) or by spirits, ancestral or free spirits or by personal sins, it needs for its cure, apart from natural remedies, the prognosis and help of an *ajuoga* (the diviner or medicine-Man of the *jabilo* who combines the qualities of a diviner, magician, doctor and prophet.

Types of magic

Magic is sometimes divided into good (or white) and bad (or black) magic. The suggestion behind this distinction is that there is no moral objection to magic when it is allegedly employed for harmless, or even useful purposes. Thus the interpretation of wearing of amulets to ensure fertility or ward off disease, or the use of medicine to promote good crop production is unobjectionable. Only when magic is used to harm other people and thus, become "sorcery" can it be called bad. In itself, magic is morally neutral.

Witchcraft

In the common set up in the rural areas, the issue of witchcraft can be such an awesome weapon in the war between members of the same house-hold. For example, the daughter-in-law and her mother -in-law, may accuse each other for unfounded reasons based on witchcraft. The mother-in-law may accuse her daughter-in-law rightly or falsely of practising witchcraft. The latter may allege that a few months after marriage, her daughter-in-law went to her parents' home and came back with a cooking pot which she has never used and that since then, strange things are happening in the homestead. When she gets to hear about the accusation, the daughter-in-law will snigger at them and counteract that her m

other-in-law dislikes her because she has refused to be party to her weird nocturnal activities.

In fact, in the Luo community, once an individual has been accused or suspected of practising witchcraft or sorcery, he or she was condemned or even ostracised by the community because sorcery and witchcraft have never been accepted because against life which sacred and therefore, cannot be compromised. For this reason, witchcraft and sorcery are generally considered bad in the community and can never be justified for any moral reason.

Medicine-man (jabilo)

He is a ritual expert greatly sought after and respected in the society. His function in most cases, was from father to son. He or she is considered to have a very deep relationship with the African sacred world because it is he or she who mediates between the profane world and the sacred one. Because of this role the society owes him or her great respect. They intercede for the society and are considered to have the power to appease the gods on behalf of the society. He or she can heal the disease that is considered caused as a result of not being in good terms with the supernatural being, "Nyasaye".²⁰ Rituals do not cause harm to the community. They are functions that make the profane world live in constant harmony. Hence, the medicine-man has this duty and responsibility in the society. He or she is obliged to perform purification rituals and ceremonies in order to cleanse away taboos brought about by contact with prohibited situations. According to the beliefs of people, illness in African society is often attributed to the breaking of a taboo or machinations of malicious or sometimes displaced ancestral spirits. Other causes may be the "evil eye" witchcraft, possession of by evil spirits or a curse by a sorcerer or even offended neighbour. It is generally believed that the victim himself may not be the offender, but may suffer

²⁰ Ayisi, E.O., **An Introduction to the study of African Cultures**, (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, Heinemann, 1992), p.76

from the mistakes or offenses committed by a kinsman (a grandfather or mother). Luos believe that it is the later grandchildren who will suffer the consequences of the bad behaviour you indulge in now. (nyikwayi ema chieng' none gigo). Most Africans regard illness as a misfortune which involve the whole person. This has a direct bearing in the relationship of the patient with the spiritual world and with the members of the society. The unfortunate division, therefore, between mind and body, spiritual and physical, sacred and secular, has reduced the expected impact on modern medicine on the African population in terms of their understanding of wealth and disease.

Even though most Africans recognize natural causes of certain illnesses, this does not preclude the simultaneous role of the supernatural forces. Every misfortune like any other good fortune involve two questions: the first is how it happened and the second, why. The "how" is answered by the common sense of empirical observation, but the "why" is not easily explicable. Belief in witchcraft and other supernatural powers explains why particularly persons at particular time and place, suffer particular misfortunes, death, accidents, disease, barrenness, etc. It is the "why me" question that the Africans ask to which they seek an answer where they link social problems to divine actions. To combat these problems therefore, the cause must be found and uprooted.

For common people however, religion is largely the means of reinforcing life of proper precautions against powers which might destroy them. Nevertheless, it is apparent that both literate and illiterate members of the community seek traditional medicine. However, it is worth noting that some of the patients expect instantaneous, almost mechanical recovery, they do not seem to wait long enough to complete the course of therapy in health institutions before taking the same episode of illness to traditional medicine-men. It is sufficient to note that most of the complaints taken to traditional healers are related to illness, infertility and abdominal pains. It is common that the bulk of female patients suffer from infertility and abdominal pains while mental illness is shared between the sexes. These, and many other

problems afflicting the family are the reasons mainly why visiting traditional healers is obvious. Also as a matter of fact traditional healers enjoy high esteem and good reputation in the community. This is motivated by their human approach to healing process which is holistic, i.e., in a sense that the suffering well-being is generally considered: the physical, emotional, spiritual, the psychological and the social dimension. This entails that he knows particularly well all his clients.

Role of the Medicine-man

Strictly speaking, there is no much difference between the medicine-men and the traditional healer. If any, it will depend on who specializes on what, because one does not necessary need to be a medicine-man in order to be a healer, but the reverse is possible. However, the role of haling may differ from one community to another although the common ones include: curing the sick, conferring of blessings, counteracting other witchcraft or dispelling misfortune, communicating with the spirits of the dead and manipulating them. In doing this, the healer combines the role of the doctor and of the priest at the same time. The patient or his or her part is asked to co-operate if the cure is to be effective. For instance, he may be asked to offer some sacrifices or perform various activities in order to appease the spirits of the ancestors.

The important factor to note here is that in the African society, disease and misfortune are religious experiences and therefore, demand a religious approach to deal with them effectively. Yet, the healer's success is measured in terms of his ability to establish the cause of the problem and the ability to either counteract or punish it. Unless this is done, for an African, it does not matter to him or her whatever the treatment is applied to the problem from which he or she suffers.

Luo Family Spirituality in relation to Christian Spirituality

One of the roles of the parents we saw above, is that they have to give good examples of life to the members of the family, in matters of relationships: with God and the community and to preserve moral prescriptions. That is, to disobey moral imperatives is to disrupt life, to threaten the well-being of the family which also would mean to move away from peace and order towards chaos. Christian spirituality also emphasize the fact that the parents have the duty to nurture their family in faith. Certainly, the concept of ancestorship which the family highly esteem significantly paves way for the Christian understanding of the communion of saints.

Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed at length what I considered the core of the topic, namely, Luo Family Spirituality. I gave the meaning of spirituality and its implications in the practical daily living of the people. I have shown that for the Luo, spirituality is at its centre, the focal reality which combines both religious and the social aspects of life and human destiny as J.J. Ongong'a observes:

"Right from the moments of his birth, a Luo is incorporated into the clan by a naming ceremony and then passes from one stage of corporate existence to another. At marriage one becomes a father or mother, at a physical death a person is incorporated through funeral rites into the family of the ancestors. In every stage therefore, one's role is defined according to age, genealogical seniority and the expected combinations that accrue from each status."²¹

The analysis of the role played by the family in promotion to the spirituality in the context of morality and human life, has been spelt out more clearly. The spiritual role which underlies the

²¹ J.J., Ongong'a, Op.Cit., p. 28

relationship between the family and the ancestral spirits is of vital importance in describing the Luo family Spirituality. Thus this fact is acknowledged from the healing point of view which, as a matter of fact, gives the true meaning of the Family Spirituality.

With the progress of human sciences, the modern society gives no preference to the relation between the individual and the "community" of the living-dead. Problems that made people have recourse to the spirits and the ancestors are nowadays being squarely dealt with by both psychologists and psychiatrists respectively. This has weakened the role of the traditional healers who enjoyed reputations by the clients who went to them with the similar problems psychologists are handling through counselling and other therapeutic means.

However, those who are not accessible to these available scientific means of treatment, do either visit the traditional healers or join some religious sects with the aim of healing and attaining peace of mind. According to me, we should never condemn anybody who chooses to use any of the means of healing.

In the last chapter we are going to have some pastoral recommendations dealing with some suggestions on how the Family Spirituality ought to be taken seriously from the pastoral dimension of the Church and what ought to be done in order to reconcile the traditional spirituality with Christian spirituality.

CHAPTER 4

PASTORAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

Introduction:

In this chapter I would like to point out some recommendations which I consider will enhance the pastoral activities in evangelizing the Luo community. Suggestions will be offered as well for the family spirituality, a very important force in the traditional set up and in the Church. This is because, in order to understand Luo spirituality, one has to approach the issue from the traditional religious backgrounds and only then is it possible to marry it with christian spirituality which for the Luo still remains alien. However, a Luo is still not contented with the type of Christian spirituality suggested to him from the Western spirituality. Syncretism will still have to emerge for the Luo i.e. borrowing from the ancestral spirituality which is original to him, and adding a bit of Christianity.

Suggested Pastoral concern for the Luo family:

A lot can be suggested towards the pastoral concern for the Luo family, which by the way, is not different or peculiar to any human family. But whatever can be said in favour of this family is nothing but love. Love is above all community-oriented, the centre of a network of personal relationships through which the true exchange of sharing of goods and talents are possible in the family.

In the Luo family, the ultimate desire is for life, a life that is full and abundant. This goes well with the words of Christ in John's Gospel: I have come that they may have life and have it more abundantly. (Jn. 10:10)

To address Luo family matters nevertheless, one will not be taken seriously if he goes against their concept of life (Ngima)

which goes in line with human conditions of nearness and sympathy. That is, love in practise, not love which is preached and remains in the pulpit but the type of love which transcends mere rhetoric. This love for Kayoya is essentially what makes human being noble.²² For Kaunda and Senghor, love is associated with the human presence. It is the stuff of life, the power that works a fundamental change in people and makes them superior beings.²³

For a Luo, love interpreted as a human presence is very much fitting taking into consideration to their religious and cultural world view. Human presence is, for example, so much appreciated in all family events that takes place. In happy moments, say, marriage ceremony, all the immediate relatives are invited to come and participate in the feast. Failure to do so would create some impressions of dislike in the relationship. In sad moments, on the other hand, relatives are not invited but are all accepted to physically come along and pay their last respect to the deceased person and also to spend a few more days with the bereaved family. To them the physical presence is more important than just writing a condolence message. It is under these circumstances that Luos are particularly known for their sumptuous feasting and joy. These are the moments in life that Luos will feel they are together in solidarity and whatever, they have, they share it in common and always conscious of their community spirit of celebrating life together.

Thus, pastorally oriented individuals who would take interest and patience in learning more about Luo way of life with regard to Christianity, will be tactful enough to combine Christian values with some cultural elements which will not seem to be incompatible with the Gospel way of life.

The pastoral agent that finds his or her way to the Luo land should also take some initiatives in his or her pastoral programme to pay visit to the families, and do some on-going catechises in

²² Alex's Kagame, *Bantu Philosophy*, Paris, 1976, p.210

²³ Keneth, Kaunda, *Letter to my Children*, (London: Ebenezer Baylis and Sons Ltd., 1973, p.17

view to promote the family spirituality and bring family closer to Jesus the family man who is actively with them in all their life.

Dialogue with the Families:

I would again strongly suggest that as a means to evangelize the Luo family some dialogue is required in the area of pastoral concern. It is important that the interest of the family and those of the Church be safeguarded and protected because family patterns are so closely knit that any interference with one section certainly affects the social structure. A dialogue with the Luo family would be primarily and simultaneously a dialogue with its own culture. It is because of this close connection that it is opportune to select and to know which pattern of cultural phenomena is more important for those entering into a dialogue with the Luo family. Dialogue in this connection would motivate the people, pastoral representatives and families, to come to terms with their real concrete situations. Often in the pastoral care of the families people will love to ask not philosophical problems nor theological speculations but rather they will come to share their burdens and tragedies.

There are many people who feel that all the elements of hope and courage in their hearts have died. Too many persons are defeated by everyday problems. They are looking for God's mercy and strength which they are to get only in the Church and not anywhere else. They are also searching for a word of hope and friendly support²⁴ everywhere they can find it.

Their direction of life, convictions and anxieties, their fears and helplessness are especially to the great majority of families, being focused to have consolation and fulfilment in the Church. This would suggest the reason why in the area of dialogue care must be taken that the Church should not betray those whom the Lord, the Good Shepherd, has entrusted under her care.

²⁴ Kizito Sessana, Fr. Kizito's Notebook, (Nairobi Koinonia, Jan. 1996), p.135

I would also suggest that before any fruitful dialogue however, the basic values which are permanent must be distinguished from those that are transitory or subject to change without detrimental results to the social structure. This requires a study of the past history in relation to the present in order to see how the cultural elements of the past have influenced the present, and their possibility in the future. A procedure like this demands patience, especially as regards the Luo religious beliefs which are a part and parcel of the culture.²⁵ And therefore, as regards dialogue in general and with the Luo religious beliefs in particular, it must start from the major social institutions of the groups such as: the family and moving on to the entire community.

Suggestions for the Formation of Seminarians Concerning Families:

According to Pope John Paul II, he asserts that, today the family and life must be placed "at the centre of the New Evangelization" and they must become the subject of serious and systematic study and reflections in Seminaries, in houses of formation, and in institutions.²⁶

As can be seen from many official documents of the Church and from different Congresses and discussions which have taken place recently on this subject, the task awaiting future priests in the field of the ministry are, with respect to the past, much more delicate, more demanding, and above all, more complex. This means on the one hand, proclaiming the newness and beauty of the "Divine truth about the family towards the perfection of charity and on the other, confronting situations of crisis and the spreading of doctrines, conceptions of life, and customs which are contrary to

²⁵ Ongong'a, *Spearhead*, p.25

²⁶ John Paul II, Address to the Bishops Presidents of the Latin America, *Catholic International*, Vol.6, No.12, 1995, p. 570

the Gospel and the true good of human person.²⁷

In short, the spirituality and material needs of Christian families today are notably increasing and therefore, need the assistance of pastors properly trained in the local cultural milieu who are not only sensitive to family problems, but also experts in the realities of life and doctrinally sound.

With regards to a more properly doctrinal, dogmatic and spiritual aspects, there is a widespread impression that, on the one hand, teaching is not balanced enough especially in moral theology, and on the other, that there is lacking a clear perception of its objectives and of the principles of an authentic theological research.²⁸ This lacuna has blinded the intellectual competence of modern theologians and has positioned them to be more powerful rather than simplistic, throwing the families back as to the periphery since they are often considered to be theologically less informed.

The gravity and complexity of the serious ethical, medical, juridical and economic problems in the present-day situation of the family reveal increasingly how future priests' preparation for the apostolate in this field, depends to a great extent, on the quality of the intellectual formation which they receive in the seminaries. Ecclesiastical studies are not everywhere at the required level; however, in the first place, the study of philosophy created to solve serious problems, philosophy nowadays is called upon more and more to contribute to the solution of fundamental anthropological problems, as well as to the interpretation and application of scientific data.²⁹

Besides the difficulties mentioned, it must also be remembered that new possibilities and new perspectives which are emerging in this area, be given due pastoral consideration in this area of formation. On the contrary, not only new impetus should come from

²⁷ **Episcopal Commissions for the Family**, 18th March, 1993

²⁸ **Catholic International**, Vol.6, No.11, Nov. 1995, p.518

²⁹ **Ibid.**, p.518

above but also from below: ie. From Parishes and from associations which bring the seminaries into contact with families and their problems. Therefore, an increasing number of refresher courses and courses of instruction for formators and seminarians are to be organized with the help of working in the pastoral care of families and of various apostolic groups, drawing attention to the help expected from the priestly ministry in this field.

In order to render this formation more complete and more effective with regards to marriage and the family in the world today, priests need an authentic pastoral spirit and true competence. To this end, this aspect of the formation programme must be accurately revised and if necessary, qualitatively be improved. Each step which is undertaken in this direction must be guided by a clear vision of the scope and the aims of this sacred ministry: because the internal building up of families demands that the future priests learn to be, above all, a man of prayer.³⁰

In the study curriculum, it would be wise for future priests to inevitably choose the topic of marriage and the family so that they must occupy a primary and truly central place in theoretical and practical pastoral formation.

Where candidates for the priesthood attend faculties of theology, it is necessary to provide for an appropriate spiritual formation both for themselves and for the families, which should not only be rendered as the object but also be considered the acting subject of apostolic endeavour, and if such chances are provided, this ought to be more and more apparent in order also to give time for ongoing formation which is essential for formation of any kind.

In all these situations mentioned above about the family background in relation to the customary norms, one would ask, what can happen if things do not work that way? The answer could be to say that Luos, like Africans else where, are people who value life in its real sense and therefore, beliefs and disciplines reinforce in different life situations were there to safeguard the community

³⁰ Ibid., p. 521

and it's property. But unfortunately these dimensions have never amused Western spirituality which for the Luo, has been seen only to be one sided, i.e. emphasizing only one aspect of human reality, the salvation of souls. That is why in order to understand well the Luo religious and family spirituality, one has to be well acquainted with these vital aspects, because through them the concept of God and man, the world and spirits, the good and evil are expressed and actualized. In addition to that, some pastoral suggestions should be recommended, since family is such a very important institution both in the society as well as in the Church. The Catechism of the Catholic Church which states that :

The family is the original cell of social life. It is the natural society in which husband and wife are called to give themselves in love and in the gift of life.³¹

After considering family in the light of its natural right to exist then the Church in Africa should create ways in evangelizing family at the grassroots level. This is so because the family has inalienable right to be evangelized following the command of the Lord to his disciples to go out to the whole world and preach the good new to all peoples baptizing in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.³²

The Gospel is clear in this respect. But evangelization does not mean to go and wage war with people to whom you are sent, neither is it a permission to go and condemn and harass people for the sake of the Gospel because of their traditional beliefs. That is why the Church must find ways and means to make it for families to realize that God loves them and indeed he wants them to be saved despite their traditional affiliation and cultural identity. To do that would require some pastoral initiatives in the area of training the future pastoral agents: Catechists, Religious and Priests since they are the ones mostly entrusted with the formation of Christians to a larger extent. In the course of their training

³¹ The Catechism of the Catholic Church, p. 516

³² Mt. 28:19

they should be exposed to the new realities and changes taking place in society and consequently, new insights should come out and be applied to address the concrete issues affecting the families here and now in Africa.

Formation of Pastoral Personnel:

To better understand the psycho-dynamics behind the African Christians, the formation of the pastoral personnel should be contextualized in the African perspective in order to meet the spiritual and physical demands of the people. Human beings made of psycho-somatic entities need to be liberated and be made conscious for the kingdom of God, the final destiny of all.

The evangelizers we have had so far, have been adequately prepared to carry out the missionary activities reach even the remotest regions with the Gospel of the Lord. However, much as they have done that, we admit a lot more have been wanting. That is African cultural milieu. Anything African in the life of Christianity has been put aside by western missionaries claiming that Christianity in Africa in No way can be compared with Western Christianity because the former is only a hundred years old and therefore, junior to the latter one which is almost two thousand years old. This superior mentality in Christian approach cannot help anything good in Africa except confusion and prejudice which are of no good to anybody anywhere.

The Church in Africa requires more of a genuine witness to the love of God who, despite our weakness, sent his only son to the world, not to condemn it but to save it; (Jn. 3:19), and a witness to actualize the saving mercy of Christ in every event of our life that showing our cultural superiority.

There has been a general observation in the life of many Christians in Africa of visiting the traditional medicine-man. When some Christians do this is still a mystery. However, the actual fact is quite obvious that Christian answers given to certain problems have not been satisfactory to the average African Christians. Because, for example, some family matters are too

sensitive and delicate that need immediate practical solutions here and now (as a pastor), thus to tell the suffering person to come after a week after, over the same issue, is too demoralizing. The practical case I met in my interview with one of the Christians in Hawinga village of Alego, Siaya, revealed this to me: a child of Agneta Nyamwala (a girl) and Sospeter Andere (not true names) both Catholics, became ill with what seemed to be a possession of the evil spirits according to the parents. Both Nyamwala and Andere visited the parish to meet the priest in order to pray for the child and exorcise her, but to their disbelief, only to be told by the priest to come the following day since he had to rush for shopping. On hearing this, the desperate parents (with a crying child) decided there and then to go to visit, instead, the traditional healer who was available and attended to them promptly and soon the child got better and lives till now.³³

Today, the family of Nyamwala and others in the same village, will be very reluctant in having related problems be referred to the Church and be entrusted to the pastoral care of the priest.

Nevertheless, had the priest done something despite the hurry, for example, even at least say some three Hail Marys, in favour of the possessed child, of course the situation would have been different.

However, the incident happened which involved the family; Father, mother plus their child. People who are not strangers to one another or people who have just met by accident in front of the priest, but the family who prays together and stays together. And now how, after this bitter experience, can they be told that the family is - or should be - the sanctuary of life: the place in which life - the gift of God - can be properly welcomed and protected against the many attacks to which it is exposed,³⁴ and can develop in accordance with what constitutes authentic human growth? John Paul II is right in describing the family as being

³³ Agneta Nyamwala, " My Pastoral Interview with her, " December 1996, Hawinga Village Alego, Siaya, Kenya.

³⁴ International Catholic Review, Washington.DC.Spring, 1996, p.96

the place where human life may most easily be understood.³⁵

The underlying principle in this chapter is that care should be taken in training programs of the pastoral agents to achieve an overall training which is coherent and solid, a training which will take our clergy to a "higher scientific standard in sacred sciences and in other appropriate subjects," some of which I have already mentioned above, namely, the african cultural studies and some pastoral oriented subjects, eg. Pastoral psychology, anthropology, etc.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.96

CONCLUSION

In the fourth Chapter, some suggestions were put forward as part of pastoral recommendations in the formation of future priests. Reasons were given for such suggestions as the basic support for the families which as Pope John Paul II put it, " Family and life must be placed at the centre of the new evangelization ."³⁶ But since family is a concrete human reality where life is transmitted and both traditional and Christian values must be given priority, therefore, dialogue is required in this context where the Church and the families must feel integrated in all aspects. However, dialogue proposed in these matters would be to discern some positive values of African cultures also highlighted by the synod fathers as being truly a providential preparation for the transmission of the Gospel. They further noted that Africans have a profound religious sense, a sense of the sacred, of the existence of God the creator of the spiritual world.³⁷ These and other positive cultural values are geared towards the family as their specific role to promote this spirituality wherever they are. Moreover, open to this sense of the family, the underlying factor for the African family is love and respect for life which many times are threatened by the external forces which also attempt to introduce new models of the family life contrary to the African understanding of the family.

On the other hand, I feel that Family Spirituality once more be strengthened at the levels of relationships with the "sacred" so that beliefs and practices be integrated into human spiritual growth and of his well-being. It is important therefore, that the whole family be made aware of its right to belong to the larger human community. It must be known that family cannot survive independently from the community and, therefore, spiritual, social

³⁶ John Paul II, Op.Cit., **Catholic International**, p.517

³⁷ John Paul II, " Homily at the Opening Liturgy of the Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops, " Rome, 10th April, 1994

and economic support need to be provided whenever it is necessary. The Church's task in promoting the pastoral care for the family should be to encourage and take into consideration the positive values the family hold and to evaluate them in order that they be integrated into the Christian Spirituality.

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