

CONTEXTUALIZING THE CHRISTIAN CONCEPT OF GOD AMONG THE BAGANDA IN UGANDA

A thesis submitted to the school of mission and theology (Stavanger) in partial fulfillment as a requirement for the award of a master's degree in Global Studies

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Figure 1

Photograph of a Baganda Traditional Shrine (*Esaabo*-prayer place). Inset is a cross to signify Christianity meeting the traditional religion in Buganda.

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List of Abbreviations

ATR.....African Traditional Religion

WCC.....World Council of Churches

NMS.....Norwegian Missionary Society

CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.0 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 Statement of the problem

For many centuries, the Christian gospel has been spread to the rest of the world in a western European cultural context and this was mainly spearheaded by the first Christian missionaries especially in Africa. The Biblical writers were also influenced by a particular culture from which they came and none¹ of the writers is told to have been an African; the missionaries were also western, influenced by their cultural backgrounds and experiences.

Christianity was made known to a people who were considered ignorant, illiterate, and ‘pagan’-Africans without a consideration of their background, context, experience and cultures. The way the gospel was presented to the Africans created resistance from some followers of the traditional African religion, some refused to accept it and talked ill about the tactics they used to win Africans to Christianity. The hatred grew stronger when mission work turned into colonialism in some places. With the coming of missionaries, they opened the way for the arrival of colonial powers and the African could not differentiate what were purely a Christian act and a colonial one². As Martey asserts that, ‘Western Christianity condemned the African background, culture and belief systems; and in so doing has not only thrown out important African values in Africa, but also invited unnecessary resistance from many Africans and making others give up the Christian faith yet others have began to question this African Christianity. African Christians have learned how colonialism drained African societies of their very essence, trampled African culture underfoot, undermined African institutions, confiscated its lands, smashed its religions, destroyed its magnificent artistic creations and wiped out extraordinary possibilities (Martey 1993:8).

¹Imasogie 1983:68,231, The suspicion is heightened by the awareness that all theological formulations, having bear the imprints of the cultural and contextual heritage of the theologians...the current theological formulations, having been forged in the North Atlantic context, have not taken cognizance of certain important data, namely the typical African world view and the resultant traditional religions.

² Mbiti (1969:231): that time, Britain, Europe and the united states increased their interest in Africa...for our purposes here we must note that Christian missionaries from Europe and America penetrated into the interior of Africa either shortly before or simultaneously with colonial occupation.

The gospel also seemed foreign to them, most of the teachings were against African culture and beliefs, and the African culture was regarded as pagan, barbaric and primitive. They also told the Africans to give all that they had that the lord will repay them in heaven. It could be that some of those missionaries had not known and studied well Biblical interpretation and the African cultural values that they could not manage to fit the gospel to this context. This made it difficult for most African peoples to accept Christianity for fear of losing their cultural identity as well as their property. Perhaps the missionaries intended to spread a gospel relevant to the people but the need for material wealth from Africa made them stray a way and also they could have been influenced or forced by their imperialistic racist masters.

In their invasion of African traditional practices and cultures, the missionaries came loaded with western cultures and values. It seemed as though the Africans did not know God and neither did they have any form of worshipping the creator. Unbelievably, some missionaries openly uttered statements that portrayed how African beliefs were undermined. For instance, in 1867, the explorer sir Samuel Baker presented the following report about Africa, ‘without any exception, they are without a belief in a Supreme Being, neither have they any form of worship or idolatry; nor is the darkness of their minds enlightened by even a ray of superstition; Their mind is as stagnant as the morass, which forms its puny world’ (Ray 1976:3). The missionaries thus had to preach and teach the Africans how to worship the ‘only true’ God. Coming from such a context, and unaware of the presuppositions that shaped his perception of the African self understanding, the missionary could not be expected to be emphatic in his feeling towards the African world view and cultural backgrounds. The Christian God was presented as the only true God, worthy of worship and the only source of salvation through Jesus Christ his only begotten son and those that do not believe in him would not have everlasting life. The African God and gods (*Lubaale’s*- the Kiganda name for gods) were destroyed and a “white God” named Jesus was given to save their souls in heaven. The African temples and shrines were destroyed and replaced by the Christian church.

Surprisingly enough, most of those who accepted Christianity would in most circumstances be seen shifting back to the African shrines, customs, beliefs, values, heritage (*ebyobuwangwa*-the traditional *Kiganda* name for culture) and practices yet

others combine the practices of both Christianity and the Traditional Religion; a religious concubinage took place between Christianity and traditional religions. The end result is what we can call half caste Christians, those who do not have a belonging, those who are Christians when in church but ‘witches’ outside church. Magesa analyzed something about this concubinage when he says, ‘Many African professors, ministers of government and members of parliament have been known to revert in secret to diviner and medium in order to know what lies ahead, while at the same time vigorously protesting in public that diviners are relics of by gone primitive times and that they possess no mystical powers’ (Magesa 1997:9). If this trend is not checked, it poses a threat to the universal Christianity. We therefore ought to find a proper approach that will enable an African Christian practice Christianity just like a European, but in a way that is understood to him, using what is available to him, speaking the language he understands, using idioms and anecdotes in the Bible that he knows. What should be done should be as Shorter proposes that until there is a place in the world church for an African theology, for African rites and for church structures of African inspiration, an African Christianity will never be a reality (Shorter 1977:22).

In this thesis, I will deal with the concept of contextualization of the Christian gospel in Africa; but the concept contextualization is a very wide topic to accomplish in a single master’s thesis, I will therefore concentrate on the contextualization of the Christian concept of God in Africa with the case of the Baganda in Uganda. From the above background, we can rightly say that there is need to redefine and redirect Christianity in Buganda such that it fits within the cultural setup of the people. We need a kind of Christianity that is understood by the adherents, a kind that is indigenous, local and yet universal-in line with the universal Christian beliefs and dogmas. The Africans need to worship God in a way they understand him, using their languages, customs, belief systems and traditions yet forming part of the universal church. In this same way, Fernando observes that, The greatest challenge before the church is making Christ known to every creature; those who have been exposed many have only a superficial knowledge (Fernando 1987:9). It is therefore the reason I feel I should investigate into this and find out the proper possible way of making Christianity African, indigenous, local and

universal especially among the Baganda in Uganda. Just as the final communiqué of the Pan African Conference of third world theologians declared,

We believe that African theology must be understood in the context of African life and culture and the creative attempt of African people to shape a new future that is different from the colonial past and the neo colonial present. The African situation requires a new theological methodology that is different from the approaches of the dominant theologies of the west. African theology must reject, therefore, the prefabricated ideas of North Atlantic theology (Kubi Appiah 1979:11).

Many issues are involved in this phenomenon of contextual theology and with the African situation in mind, I will in connection with the phenomenon of contextualization talk about issues like indigenization, universalism, African theology, syncretism, and dialogue in my discussions.

However, before we look at what contextualization means, let us first look at the contents/beliefs/dogmas of Christianity. Christianity is at least three basic things; it has to do with a set of beliefs, a way of life and a community of people (fellowship). Different Christian groups place different weights on these aspects, emphasizing one aspect at the expense of the other, like the conservative Catholics and Anglicans emphasize beliefs yet the Pentecostal Christians put more weight on fellowships and way of life, however, these aspects always work together. They are all based on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and the Bible is regarded as their inspired Holy book for instructions.

Christianity in summary is based on the Trinity, the belief in God the father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Christianity teaches about the belief in one Supreme God, who created the universe and all that is in it. God is believed to be active in history, guiding and teaching the people on what is right and wrong. It also teaches about the belief in Jesus Christ as the son of God. Christians see Jesus Christ as in some sense embodying God, he is God incarnate-that God manifested Himself to the world in flesh through Jesus Christ the messiah. The Holy Spirit is also acknowledged by Christianity and is known for giving power to the Christians to face the world and he is also a comforter. On addition to the Triune teaching, Christians also believe in eternal life after death and that this will be offered to those who would have done according to the will of the Father (God) while on earth. The different practices and ways of worship by the Christians in

different parts of the world largely stem from and depend on the above beliefs and the differences in the ways of worship and Christian practice lies in the cultural differences. Christians always recite the Holy creed which summarizes their faith (I believe in God, the father, son and the Holy Spirit).

1.1.1 Contextualization defined

It is of paramount importance for us to know what the term contextualization means and what it will be referring to in this thesis, as this is the core of this research. In my own simple terms, the term contextualization as used in a theological manner means, making the gospel indigenous, local and humane. It means communicating the gospel in understandable terms appropriate to the audience. I would use the word humane because I believe that if the gospel is just imposed on someone in a foreign culture, context and tradition, it means that the receiver is seen as inhuman³ because all humanity have a belonging, a culture and belief system which they follow. In this thesis, I will propose some ways in which the gospel ought to be presented to a people of a foreign culture.

The terms contextualization and indigenization will be used interchangeably in this thesis. To indigenize means to transform things to fit the local culture. The adjective *indigenous* is derived from the Latin compound *in, de, genus* (within, from, to beget) which means, produced, growing or living naturally in a particular region or environment. It refers to that which is native or born from within, in contrast to *that* which is foreign or alien. In theology, it is widely used to refer to making the gospel be understood in the language and thought forms of the local people and to efforts to make the church autonomous in its organization.

Etymologically, the term contextualization was invented by linguistics in the 20th century as a technical term meaning recognition of the various phonemes by determining their lexical and grammatical functions. Among theologians, it was rooted in dissatisfaction with traditional modes of theological education. Leaders in the world council of churches and the ecumenical movement sought to address the ‘widespread

³ As Ray asserts that what underlies this early perspective is the view of Africa as a savage ‘other’ world, the reverse of European civilization (1976:3)

crisis of faith' as well as 'issues of social justice and human development'. What this meant was the development of a '*contextual or experiential*' approach to theology which gives preference as a point of departure for systematic theological thinking, to the contemporary historical scene over against the Biblical tradition⁴. As Ray noted that most early accounts by European travelers and missionaries renders many people to question the authenticity of the Christian gospel. It reveals the cultural bias of the authors who wrote them and of the public for which they were written. They were based on inaccurate information and cultural prejudice, making African religions appear to be a morass of bizarre beliefs and practices (1976:3).

Contextualization takes place when the presentation and outworking of the gospel is done in such a way as to be appropriate to the context in which it is found. It becomes necessary when we work with a person of a culture different from ours. As a point of caution, contextualization should be distinguished from syncretism. Syncretism takes place when, in the presentation and outworking of a religion, elements essential to it are dropped or elements incompatible with its beliefs are incorporated with it. It may mean in the simple terms to 'compromise' with the teaching of a particular religion.

In as much as many Africans and other scholars are crying for the issue of contextualization, there is need for the scholars, missionaries and the African converts to beware of the original message, how to interpret it correctly in the local culture and not loose the original meaning of the texts and gospels. This is so because some cultural values and beliefs are so contrary to the Christian beliefs (as we will see from the Ganda beliefs). Now, the question is, what values should be maintained, to what extent and who is to determine? Is it possible to communicate the gospel to a foreign land in a way that suits their cultural beliefs and practices? Since the gospel is originally presented in a western culture, should it be changed to suit the Baganda culture? As Gehman suggests that there are also areas where the Christian church may use the traditional culture for the glory of God. He suggests that there must be a healthy balance between form and freedom, liturgy and spontaneity (1989:221). However, in so doing, we should be careful as we may turn into syncretism (blending of two or more religious belief systems into a

⁴Rev. Ralph Allan Smith: *The Trinity and Contextualization*, from, www.berith.org/essays/trin_contxt/01.html, 12.01.2008.

new system, or the incorporation into a religious tradition of beliefs from unrelated traditions).

1.2 Motivation

From the above background, through my experience as an African and having been born and lived in the Buganda region for a long time, I have experienced many rituals and practices in African tradition, the way they worship and the attributes they offer to God and I have always asked myself why they do so and how their kind of worship can be used for the betterment of African Christianity. There has been a tendency by some Christians looking down upon the traditional African Christian ways of worship and practices; some have even preached against them that unless they follow the western way-using the western modes of worship, hymns, values etc, they will not go to heaven. They act as if Africans do not have anything to offer to the practice of Christianity and the building of the universal church of Christ.

Some of those customs are related to the western Christian traditions and practices (determinant of Christian teachings and practices) yet others are seen as contrary to Christianity in the sight of the African Christians and missionaries⁵, but what we need here is how to make it all look Christian and fit the universal Christian beliefs. This has encouraged me to investigate about this phenomenon of contextualization and find out whether we can make the gospel of Jesus Christ sink into the minds and ways of life of the African peoples, whether the African Christians can practice Christianity that fits the universally accepted understanding of Christianity while using the African customs and cultural backgrounds. I also want to identify some issues, practices, beliefs and customs that are contrary to general wellbeing of humanity and also identify those that can contribute to the Christian development and enhance the understanding of Christianity in Africa in a way understandable to them.

The kind of double game played by some African Christians and pretence is also one of the main reasons that attracted me to investigate into this phenomenon. I would like to find out why they do it, yet they accepted Christianity and they are expected to live a

⁵ Mbiti (1972:147), the way they see Christianity is itself affected deeply by the traditional religiosity.

Christian life. Perhaps if the gospel is made contextual, indigenous and local, they might stop the game and practice the universal Christianity.

1.3 Purpose and aim

The main purpose of this thesis is to make a contribution to the existing body of knowledge concerning African traditional religion in general and the concept of contextualization or indigenization of the Christian gospel in the African context. The aim is to investigate and analyze the relatedness between these two traditions and how they can work together in an African context in a healthy manner that can enable African Christians to practice the same kind of Christianity and worship like the rest of other continents and cultures, yet practicing it in an African cultural manner, language, context, expressions, customs and belief systems. Perhaps Shorter brings the point closer when he noted that,

The most important thing that should be said about African Christianity is that it is Christian....the church in Africa is prevented from carrying out a conscious dialogue with African religious traditions because it is shackled by alien structures. It is prevented from becoming officially aware of its identity and of the currents beneath its surface because an equation has been made between 'universal' and 'western' (Shorter1977:22).

It is particularly important to establish the truth about ATR and African Christianity, critically examining its negative and positive beliefs and customs as well as examining western Christianity too. As such we can see what should be upheld or thrown away and therefore we can find a proper way of fitting Christianity within the African context such that it can be practiced by the African Christians in a way that they are used to. There is need for the African Christians and Traditionalists alike to practice out their religions from an informed point, as this might also help the intending missionaries to present the gospel to a foreign land in a way that suits their cultures and ways of life.

The aim of this study is to investigate and find out how the Christian gospel especially the doctrine of the belief in God and worship can be made contextual, indigenous, local and African. This will be reached at by having an African context

which gives a clear picture of what ATR believes in and how Christianity is being practiced by them. With the help of ideas from my personal experience among the Baganda and the information gathered during my research, coupled with views from different scholars of religion and theologians, I will seek to find out the proper way of dealing with these two traditions such that the African Christians can feel at home while practicing Christianity as well as being part of the universal Christian church.

1.4 Methods and approaches

In this thesis, I intend to use qualitative methods since the data which will be used in analyzing the concept of contextualization of the Christian concept of God in Africa with the case of the Baganda were collected through field research among the Baganda in Uganda using interviews, formal and informal conversations and collection of documents. In so doing, I will present three different views of different theologians who have done a great deal on this topic. Their views will be tested on empirical grounds using the data from the Ganda ways of life and customs.

However, theological methods will be the main methods used in this thesis since I am writing in the field of Systematic Theology and Dogmatics. I will employ the critical historical interpretation methods while analyzing the ways in which the Christianity is practiced and understood among the Baganda, how the western Christians look at ATR and the way Christianity is practiced in Africa. This will also be employed while examining the views of the theologians, Mbiti, Idowu and Karl Barth in relation to Christianity and ATR in Buganda.

The historical methods will be used to study and analyze briefly the historical development of the theological thinking in African tradition especially the Baganda basing on their cultural backgrounds and religious experiences. This will give us the picture why the Africans behave, worship, act and think the way they do and as such help me in testing the theologian's view of ATR and Christianity.

A descriptive approach will be used here when looking at the history of the Baganda, their cultural setup, economy, rituals, their understanding of God and how they practice Christianity. I will also apply this method while describing some Baganda attributes of

God, the names they call him and how they view God and why they refer to him that way.

1.5 Sources

Both primary and secondary sources deem important in this thesis. The primary sources will be the information obtained during my research among the Baganda in Uganda. The information here was obtained through field study among the Baganda in Uganda using interview guides and informal conversations and also my personal experience with the Baganda. The respondents' names will not be included in my bibliography because most of them asked me not to include their names due to their religious beliefs. This information will guide us on what is on the ground and how Christianity should approach such a setup.

The secondary sources will be the information from the already existing literature especially the documents and the big bunch of literature from other scholars in the same field. The internet data about the concept of contextualization, the definition, the etymology and also about the Baganda since there is little or no written literature about the Baganda in Uganda.

1.6 Disposition

The thesis will be divided into six chapters. Chapter one will be a general introduction which will contain the background of the study, statement of the problem, motivation, purpose and aim, method and approaches, sources and disposition.

In chapter two I will include therein, the Christian understanding of God as interpreted from the African context. In this chapter, I will present perspectives of three different theologians⁶ whose ideas will help us into analyzing the African traditional way of life and the way Christianity is practiced in Africa.

The third chapter will be a presentation of the Baganda and their world views. I will present their religious organization, economic, cultural and geographical setup. I will also

⁶Gehman adds that, in many ways, there is a continuum, a series of theological viewpoints as in a line, stretching from those who emphasize an extreme form of exclusion (that God has not granted revelation to other peoples and nations, but only to the prophets and apostles of Judeo-Christian faith) to an extreme form of pluralism which sees all religions as adequate revelations from God by which men may be saved (1989:245).

present the African traditional understanding of God and practice of Christianity and how this will enable us evaluate the theological perspectives presented in chapter two in giving us a clue on how we will advocate for the contextualization of the concept of God. This presentation will depend on my experience among the Baganda as well as the information obtained during field research.

Chapter four will contain an analysis of the Christian concepts about God basing on the theological views presented in chapter two. In so doing, I will analyze their views in accordance with the African traditional understand, culture and their practice of Christianity which will give us a clue on how to contextualize the Christian gospel among the Baganda.

The fifth chapter will be an evaluation of the ideas and views given in chapter four giving my personal opinion of how contextualization of the Christian gospel especially the ATR Christian concept of God, can be made possible among the Ganda. In this chapter, I will base my evaluation on the theological view points as well as the African traditional understanding and practice of Christianity arguing how culture and religion affects the way an individual practices his religion. I will also show how faith is crucial in a person's religious life and daily life, especially an African. The issue of how God revealed himself through Jesus Christ and whether he reveals himself to other people of different cultures, has also been a major theological point for many decades and I wish to say something as that issue pertains. The theological view points and the Ganda understanding will show us how much we should work towards enhancement of contextual theology in Africa

The last chapter will contain the conclusions about the whole book, a summary of some important ideas and the recommendations to the readers.

CHAPTER TWO: THE CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING OF GOD IN AN AFRICAN CONTEXT

2.0 Introduction

African theologians have dealt much on this propagation or contextualization of the Christian gospel in Africa in which they aim not only at serving their identity as Africans, but also to facilitate that also the traditional religious beliefs systems and customs become accepted and recognized by Christianity. They contend that just as the western based theologians enhance Christianity by its western foundations, the African theologians also want to enhance African Christian theology by using their own tradition.

In this chapter, I will present three theological views on ATR and Christianity. There are many African theologians who have tried to lift up the voice of Africa, like Mbiti, Shorter, Mugambi, Bediako, Muzorewa, Dickson, Gehman, Idowu, and Martey and in this chapter I will present the views of two of those theologians. I find that Mbiti has done so much as far as African theology and contextualization is concerned and as such his views should not be underestimated; in the same way, Bolaji Idowu's theology which advocates for a unity and continuity between African traditional religion and Christianity, is also important for my analysis of the Ganda traditional beliefs and African Christianity. But also, since am dealing with two different traditions ATR and Christianity, we also ought to hear the voice of some Christian theologians who have in a way helped or whose views can be used to analyze the African Christian situation that can lead us to contextualization of the Christian gospel in Africa. And as such, I find Karl Barth's theology on Dogmatics, a Swiss reformed theologian, one of the most important Christian thinkers of the 20th century, relevant for this study.

2.1 Views of some theologians in reaction to African Christianity

There are many theologians who have advanced their views as concerns ATR and Christianity, but their views differ in what they emphasize. Some agree to continuity between the two religions, others think all religions as different from each other yet others argue for a relativistic position. As Gehman contends, "in many ways there is a

continuum, a series of theological viewpoints as in a line, stretching from those who emphasize an extreme form of exclusivism (that God has not granted revelation to other peoples and nations, but only to prophets and apostles of Judeo-Christian faith) to an extreme form of pluralism which sees all religions as adequate revelations from God by which men may be saved (Gehman 1989:245)”. There are those who stress the continuity between Christianity and other religions, those who emphasize discontinuity and those who teach a relativistic position between Biblical continuity and discontinuity. In the following chapters, we will look at whether their views are relevant for the contextualization of Christianity in Africa after knowing what the Baganda as a case study practice and believe in.

2.1.1 John Samuel Mbiti

He is a Christian religious philosopher, born 1931 and an ordained Anglican priest. Most of his writings concern the basic philosophy of African theology. He is one of the proponents of the continuity between Christianity and ATR. He does not deny the existence of differences between these two religions neither does he deny the revelatory character of Christianity or the centrality of Jesus Christ. Below are his African theological views. He asserts,

Christianity has spoken too long and too much; perhaps it has listened too little. For too long it has passed judgment on other cultures, other religions other societies, while holding the attitude that it is itself above criticism. The time may have come for western Christianity to be more humble in its approach to other religions and cultures if it is to be effective here in Africa. Christianity has to approach this traditional background with an open mind, with a readiness to change it and be changed by it (Mbiti: 1972:156).

His primary objective is theological. He is attempting to lay the basis for a distinctive African theology by blending the African past with the Judeo-Christian tradition. His great enthusiasm in ‘Africanizing Christianity’ while done in good faith, poses a threat to the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints (Kato 1975:57).

He begins with a touch statement saying, ‘the time has come when the church in Africa should look carefully at the relationship between Christianity and traditional religions’ (1972:144). Mbiti notes that there are many people now who are interested in traditional religions and culture and that the majority of those interested are mainly the Christians and those who are exposed to Christianity. According to Mbiti, many people are advocating for ATR in place of Christianity and Islam yet others are confused and need people who can enlighten them. Mbiti proposes that the church ought to act in reaction to peoples pleas. As Shorter complements, ‘the church needs the African theological contribution for her own theological health. This contribution is not going to destroy or alter the universal tradition but it may operate as a corrective (1977:31)’.

Mbiti informs that Christianity has Christianized Africa but Africa has not yet Africanized Christianity. Christianity has to come to terms with the theologies and systems of beliefs of the religion-based cultures of Africa, if it is to be Africanized at all; without which, Christianity will be living in a vacuum. In his own words, he says, ‘energy, effort, wisdom and grace should now be concentrated on Africanizing Christianity in our continent; for until we do that, we may well have to face the risk of de-Christianization if not a near extinction of Christianity in Africa in the next century’(Ibid: 144).

He says that the church in Africa has not been sufficiently prophetic to prepare itself for possible situations in the future. The Christian leaders, pastors and educators, should smell the spirit of the times, take it seriously and project our planning, efforts and preparation toward the future as the case might demand.

He adds that concerning Christian presence in Africa, the voice of prophesy has been silent or, at most, feeble. He cautions that if we don’t deepen Christianity at the point of African religiosity, then where else is it to find accommodation?

For mbiti, Christianity is a universal and cosmic faith. It was universalized on Calvary and Cosmicized on the first Easter Day. He therefore reminds us that our duty now is to localize this Universality and Cosmity. He points out that Europe and America have already westernized it, the orthodox churches Easternized; so in Africa we must, *Africanize* it. It belongs to the very nature of Christianity to be subject to localization; otherwise its universality and cosmity becomes meaningless.

He adds that the Europeans used evangelization to proclaim Christianity's Universality and Cosmity; but Africanization is an act of localization; making the universality of the Christian faith into a language understood by the Africans. He illustrates this by reminding us about what took place on the day of the Pentecost where, though there were many people who had come from different areas and speaking different languages, they could understand one another. Mbiti says that this was the beginning of the localization of Christianity and evangelization and localization worked hand in hand.

He goes on to say that ATR should be considered as a preparation for the Christian gospel. The old nonsense of looking at African background as devilish and fit only to be swept away by Euro-American civilization, is or should be gone by now. He brings us to understand that western civilization is not Christian, though it does incorporate a lot of Christian influence in its background and history. African religious background is not a rotten heap of superstitions, taboos, and magic; it has a great deal of value to it. He therefore asserts that, 'on this valuable heritage, Christianity should adapt itself and not be dependent exclusively on imported goods'.

Mbiti proposes that in order for the churches and theological institutions to sort out what is valuable preparation for the gospel and also make wise judgments on what is for Christianity and what is against it, they should make it a point to study the African background, understanding it well, in the totality of its cultures, languages and problems. He is the first one to admit that because of the religious outlook of Africans, their history constitutes the history of their religion (Mbiti 1969:5)

However, Mbiti tells us that Christianity and traditional religions are to a great extent compatible. In matters of belief, there are clear areas of common ground like God, continuation of life after death, spiritual beings, the works of God, among others, yet there are also areas where these two religions overlap like magic, witchcraft, sorcery and divination which features in ATR and there are also other issues which lie in between, for instance the issue of polygamy in Africa and that of just wars by western Christians.

He points out that ATR may be compatible with Christianity but much is lacking with it to fit in the shoes of Christianity. He in fact asserts that Christianity is a fulfillment of ATR. He gives an illustration that ATR has a connection with many practices of the

OT but with the NT, we find that African religiosity in all its richness is utterly silent and ignorant. Traditional religion is fulfilled in Christianity.

He proposes that African religiosity should then be on the listening and receiving side from the NT but with the OT, a certain amount of give-and-take or mutual enlightenment can be carried out.

He adds that Christianity must judge and save ATR, fulfillment does not mean saying only yes, it also says no; in order to preserve, it may be necessary to prune it as well and ATR need a lot of pruning if their best values are to be preserved and taken up in Christianity.

Mbiti contends that only Christianity has the legal credentials to pass the right judgment on traditional religiosity; and unless Christianity does that in Africa, it will find itself wrapped up in a lot of religiosity or syncretism. He utterly declares that, 'we must give Christianity the opportunity and freedom to remove deadness and rottenness from our traditional religiosity. If there was nothing to be judged or be saved in Africa, then there will be no need for Christianity (1972:152)'.

He goes on to say that the individuals who cry out or write in the papers that we should have our ATRs instead of Christianity, simply do not realize the rottenness of their sincerity. They are just afraid of the knife that Christianity will bring with it as it deepens its roots in Africa.

In his view, ATR can enrich Christian presence in Africa. On this view, he adds that the localization of Christianity cannot be carried out effectively without reference to traditional religiosity. The traditional background, he says can assist and even determine in some cases the working out of methods of communicating the Christian message.

On addition, he says that a sympathetic study of the relationship between Christianity and ATR may be of mutual academic benefit to both since there is a similarity between these two traditions. In particular the OT can shine in a new way if interpreted in the light of the knowledge of ATR and also the NT can help enrich ATR and as such, we can rightly talk about African theology and contextualization.

2.1.2 Bolaji Idowu

He is a well-known clergyman, a professor, author and first indigene of Ikorodu to head the Methodist Church of Nigeria, born 1913. He also stands in solidarity with those who stress continuity between ATR and Christianity. His main theological work is presented by Kato in his book, *“Theological pitfalls in Africa, 1975, pages 96-104”*. He teaches that all worship is valid before God, that the impulse to worship also comes from God and thus the resulting practice of worship is Yahweh’s (Kato 1975:96, 97).

He has argued for a more monotheistic interpretation of ATR. His basic premise is that there is only one God who reveals himself in different ways to all races and creeds; that this God reveals himself ‘in the way which each understands’. He asserts,

Surely, God is one, not many; and that the one God belongs to the earth and all its fullness. It is this god, therefore, who reveals himself to every people on earth and whom they have apprehended according to the degree of their spiritual perception, expressing their knowledge of him, if not as trained philosophers or educated theologians, certainly as those who have had some practical experience of him (Idowu 1962:31)

According to his understanding, the supersensible world eludes our human ability to comprehend it, even though man feels a compulsive need to understand it. As feeble and poor as our minds may be, we can only search out the ultimate reality as best as we can. Our ability to comprehend spiritual reality varies. He contends, ‘It is to each according to his own ability. To the reflective, contemplative or speculative, the method of abstraction may lead to the goal of spiritual satisfaction. But they are minority. To the remaining majority, fundamental truths can only be grasped when they are presented in descriptive patterns-in pictures; in something concrete, at least palpable’ (Ibid p.65).

He uses the Biblical scriptures to express his African theological views but his use of scripture gives an impression that he does not take the context seriously. His well known expression is that of his use of Micah 4:3-5, where he explains it that all worship is valid as a worship of Yahweh. He claims, ‘here in defining “total peace” as the end of religion, Micah adds startlingly the acceptance and understanding of each people in the religious context in which they lived. This would be as already asserted, because Yahweh was in control everywhere, and maybe that he would like to have added that, therefore,

every impulse to worship at all, and the resulting practice of essential worship, was of the everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth.’

He also twisted John 4:23,24, that says ‘but an hour is coming and the hour is now when the true worshippers shall worship the father in spirit and truth, for such people the father seeks to be his worshippers. God is spirit and those who worship him must worship him in truth and spirit’ Idowu explains it that total humanity is one brotherhood under one fatherhood of one God; meaning that anyone who worships, worships God because we are all the same.

He adds that all people are God’s children by creation but because man sinned and lost the privilege of being God’s child, God is no longer a father to everyone in the same sense, but their creator and sustainer, as according to Romans 8:14-17. He is only father to those who have received him and those that do according to his will.

He calls for mutual understanding between religions. He recognizes all religions, epistemological relativism and the end of all religions. To this view, he says, ‘it is especially vital that we must come to a clear understanding and sincere appreciation of that which other persons with whom we are being brought into contact hold dear, what really ‘makes them tick,’ that is their basic beliefs, their religions’ (Kato 1975:99).

He recommends that although differences exist between religions, they are still heading in the same direction. He adds that, a Christian should understand that his faith is only ‘*one homo religiosus*’ as meeting another ‘*homo religiosus*’. He says that there will be no need for Christians to evangelize the non Christians if they hold such an understanding. To him, all religions are the same and they all disclose the same God. All religions reach God and they have fellowship with him although along variant lines and under different conditions. There is no need for missions, spending time, money and precious lives to do what ‘other vehicles’ are already doing, although somewhat less perfectly.

He further argued that it is impossible for one to know assuredly not only the matter of other religions, but even one’s own religion; including Christianity. He adds that “in the study of religion, the first rule in the scholar’s high way code should be *caution*.... It will thus be a straining influence to know that no scholar who is worth the name should create the impression that his own is the last word on the subject of religious

studies. The limit of research is not yet reached and may never be reached by finite man. We live in a universe where reality is constantly revealing itself, where new facets of it are being discovered from time to time. The days of absolute certainty in regard to the universe and human beings are gone, and this is in consequence of the disillusionments which have made foolish the wisdom of the 'oracles of the past,' even during their own life time" (Idowu 1973,16).

He went further to say that it is possible for one to know the tenets of one's faith by the scripture of that faith. One could know other faiths only empirically. He stated, "it may be categorically stated that it is perilous to make statements about the tenets of any religion unless this is verified from its scripture. This goes for a religion like ATR whose scripture is enshrined in oral literature and are only just being collected: it is necessary whatever sources there are rather than to resort to the usual, obnoxious guess-work⁷."

On his skeptical side, he argues that, 'since the days of absolute certainty' are gone, and the 'reality is constantly revealing itself,' man cannot agree with Paul when he said in 2Timothy 1:12, (I suffer...but am not ashamed; I know whom I have believed and he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day). He considers such statements eccentric. If explains this that if the absolute confidence the Christians have in God is gone, then it sets man drift around like a moving vehicle without a steering wheel or a sailing ship in troublous waters without a radar. He proposes that Christians instead should wait for the oral literature of ATR to be collected before making a value judgment on it. He adds that, Christians should not say that unbelievers will go to hell. "Pure religion should in fact kill such egocentricity in man and give him the grace to live and let others live (Ibid, page 100), man should not judge anyone, but God judges through the scriptures and only the scriptures that have a direct revelation from the triune God".

Idowu sees an end to all religions. He argues that if no one can be sure of his religion, let alone the religion of other people, then no one can be sure of where everyone is going. He adds that all religions will produce 'the paradise lost.' He believes in the condemnation to come.

⁷ Idowu, Orita, Ibadan journal of religious studies, IV/2, 96.

To Idowu, all religions are ‘staircases that lead up to God.’ He says that the last judgment will depend on one’s individual works on earth; all religions are human effort to build up the tower of Babel.

2.1.3 Karl Barth

He was the father of the dialectical renewal of the European theology. His main theological work is “*Church Dogmatics*” in which he presents “*the revelation of God as the abolition of religion*” which is relevant for this study. He contends that,

Religion is unbelief, that all of mans religion is vain, even at mans best.
For in religion, man seeks after God, rather than God seeking men.
Man talks to God rather than God revealing Himself to men. Man’s attempt in religion is futile (1980:40).

He asserts that a theological evaluation of religion and religions must be characterized primarily by the great cautiousness and charity of its assessment and judgments. It must observe, understand and take man (for whom Jesus Christ was born, died and rose again, and whom has in Christ his Lord) in all seriousness as the subject of religion.

He added that, a truly theological treatment of religion and religions will need to be distinguished from all other forms of treatment by the exercise of a very marked tolerance towards its object. However, this tolerance must not be confused with the moderation of those who have their own religion or religiosity and are zealous for it.

It must also not be confused with the relativism and impartiality of a historical skepticism which does not ask about truth and untruth in the field of religious studies; that truth can only be known in the form of its own doubt about all truth.

He adds that religion and religions must be treated with a tolerance which is informed by the forbearance of Christ, which derives therefore from the knowledge that by grace God has reconciled to himself Godless man and his religion.

Barth considers religion as unbelief. He argues that religion only aims at reminding man of God’s judgment; it does not involve any human renunciation of human values, and contesting of the truth, the good and the beautiful. He in fact says that there is no true religion per se; it is only through revelation by grace to man through Jesus Christ.

However, he recommends that we cannot abolish religion. Religion can just as well be exalted in revelation, even though the judgment still stands. It can be upheld and concealed in it, justified by it, and be sanctified.

On the point of revelation in relation to religion, he says that revelation contradicts religion, just as religion contradicts revelation. Revelation is the act by which God reconciles man to himself by grace. It is the radical assistance that comes to the unrighteous and the unholy, the damned and lost. This especially happens at the point when man is unable to help himself.

Man was created to be the image of God; obedience toward God and not to sin, to salvation and not destruction, but he goes to this state by his faults. However, he can change his situation through revelation in Jesus Christ. Even though, he can declare himself as holy and righteous and saved but he should keep renewing his faith daily with Jesus as his intercessor towards God.

Karl Barth however, gives his stand point that though we can say that religion and revelation are incompatible, this may not apply to Christianity. The Christian, he says, is not guilty of idolatry and self righteousness, the Christian believes in it through faith and thus Christianity is a *true religion*. Put differently, “(Christianity), against all other religions, including their mystical and atheistical self criticism, it is in itself the true and holy and as such the unspotted and incontestable form of fellowship between God and Man” (1980: 44).

On the other hand, he argues that at the beginning of knowledge of truth of the Christian religion, this religion too stands under the judgment that religion is unbelief, and that it is not acquitted by any inward worthiness, but only by the grace of God proclaimed in his revelation. He asserts in his words that ‘for contradiction against grace is unbelief and unbelief is sin, indeed it is the sin. We can therefore speak of the truth of Christianity only within the doctrine of *justificatio impii* (Barth 1980:49)’.

In justifying his view on the truth of Christianity against other religions, he says that all people are sinners even the Christians but although Christians are sinners as the rest, they are endowed with sufficient grace to forgive their sins. He says that the Christian cannot avoid confessing that he is a sinner even in his best actions as a Christian; as a symptom of the truth of Christianity (Ibid, p.50).

He ends his theological views concerning the revelation of God and abolition of other religions, by saying that Christianity is just like any other religion and as thus, it is unbelief, but the truth of Christianity lies in the fact which as the righteousness and the judgment of God confronts it as it does all other religions, characterizing and differentiating it and not one of the others as the right and true religion (Hick 1980:51).

CHAPTER THREE: UNDERSTANDING THE BAGANDA

3.0 Introduction

In this chapter, we will explore the world views/the life worlds of the Baganda. We will come to know who the Baganda are, their history, identity, social organizations and spirituality. I will emphasize their understanding and practice of Christianity and their religious beliefs generally. Their kind of worship and how they worship will also be treated in a special manner as these will help us evaluate the African Christian situation and what the theologians as well as the western Christians interpret their way of life in our bid for contextualization of the Christian message in Buganda. I will base my argumentations and presentation from the information obtained during my field research among the Baganda. It should also be noted that there is limited written material concerning the Baganda and for that matter, I will depend so much on the oral data and my experience with the Baganda coupled with some internet sources. This presentation is an eye opener towards the evaluation of the theological viewpoints presented in chapter two towards a contextual theology in Africa and Buganda for this case.

3.1 Location and historical background of the Baganda

The most important thing among the Baganda is that their organization be it politically, economically, socially and culturally strongly has a religious significance behind it. Because to them, religion is part of their lives and that God leads them in all their decisions.

Buganda is one of the biggest kingdoms of Uganda. It is located in the south-central region⁸. The native members of Buganda are called the Baganda people. The Baganda speak Luganda language and their culture and custom is called *kiganda*. Sometimes the generic term *Ganda* is used for all the above (especially by foreign scholars). There are about three million Baganda (singular *Muganda*). The Baganda make up the largest Ugandan ethnic group, although they represent only about 16.7 percent of the population⁹.

⁸ See map of Uganda showing Buganda region in the appendix.

⁹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buganda>. 11.02.2008, page 1.

The Luganda language is widely spoken in Buganda and to some people; it appears as though it is a national language, and English is used in schools and offices. This is because most people in the country can communicate in Luganda, but though it is the case, people have refused to endorse it as the national language. They prefer that we all speak our languages and use English in offices.

The most important historical feature among the Baganda worth mentioning is their strong attachments and love for the *King*. Many Baganda can go against the governmental law if it is contrary to the Kings orders. The Kabaka is seen as a cultural as well as a religious leader. The Baganda are known for their unity and solidarity and they are always willing to do according to the king's orders. For instance, currently, there is a debate going on in the government about whether the government should pass a law concerning the Buganda land¹⁰ but the king is against it and as such, most Baganda Members of Parliament (MPs) have voted against it. This can also explain why the Buganda were at first hesitant to Christianity when the first Christian missionaries came to Uganda.

One of the most powerful appointed advisers of the *kabaka* is the *katikiro*, who is in charge of the kingdom's administrative and judicial systems - effectively serving as both prime minister and chief justice. The *katikiro* and other powerful ministers form an inner circle of advisers who can summon lower-level chiefs and other appointed advisers to confer on policy matters¹¹. It should also be noted that these divisions are imitated from the hierarchical structure of the ATR where God the creator is approached through the spirits, ancestors and other divinities. In Buganda, the Kabaka cannot be touched or reached by a common man but is reached through the servants as is with ATR where God can not be reached but through the divinities.

¹⁰ (<http://www.newvision.co.ug/D/8/20/606935/baganda%20MPs%20on%20land%20bill>, why is Buganda so unique when it comes to land? Friday 29th February 2008): Why is Buganda unique when it comes to land? Why the disquiet? The answer could be traced to 1900. Since that time, most of the great issues in the kingdom have revolved around land. Of course land issues are crucial everywhere but there are circumstances that make them more contentious in Buganda.

¹¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buganda>, 11.02.2008 page 3.

3.2 Economic Organization

Buganda is the main economic center of Uganda with almost all the economic activities taking place there. The development in Buganda region is more significant than the rest of other cities in the country and to them; they attribute it to God; that it is God who blesses them. The capital city, Kampala is also located in Buganda region with almost about six (6) million people from all walks of life and tribes and ethnic groupings.

It accommodates the biggest industries in the country but also people carry out small scale farming and small businesses like selling of household items along the roads. The traditional Ganda economy relied on crop cultivation. In contrast with many other East African economic systems, cattle play only a minor role¹². The Ganda staple food bananas (*matooke*) and this is being favored by the fertile soils and climate which leads to better produce and good quality¹³. In fact, to a Muganda, there is no food other than matooke and if you invite him to your home and don't offer matooke, he will say that you made him go hungry without food. Women used to do the agricultural work, while men often engaged in commerce and politics but of recent, men and women can do the same type of Job.

3.3 Cultural setup

Culture is a very important aspect among the Baganda. The Ganda culture is an example of a true typical African culture. Culture is taught to the children from childhood. In fact to them, everything is associated to the Baganda, say, if you talk about medicine/herbs; they refer to it as *Kiganda* medicine though it is produced by a person from another tribe. This is because most civilizations and developments began in Buganda, even missionaries started in Buganda and it is because of their strong attachments to African culture that you can hardly find a true "Christian" among the Christians.

¹² Ibid, page 2

¹³ This crop does not require shifting cultivation or bush fallowing to maintain soil fertility, and as a result, Ganda villages were quite permanent (ibid), p.2.

A man is the head of the family and his orders are unquestionable. But we must note that only a man with children especially boys, has a stronger say in society and in the home. A childless marriage is seen as a curse and the blame is normally put on the wife and certain rituals must be performed to purify her and if she fails to conceive, the man is allowed by the elders to marry another wife. Many Baganda women normally say, '*obufumbo ye'mwana*-literary translated as, marriage is children' and many rituals are carried out from the time of conception to birth as a sign of thanksgiving to the ancestors and God.

On addition, polygamy is common, even among the Christians, and this is mainly enforced by the cultural beliefs that a man with one wife is 'weak', so for him to fit in society, he has to marry at least more than one wife. Even though someone is not having many women at home, it is common that they have others somewhere (concubines-normally called *spare tyres*).

Respect is another aspect among the Baganda. The elders determine the rules and the young ones must follow without question and the little ones are not allowed to speak in the presence of elders except if asked too and this is taught to the young ones from an early age. In the olden days, a man would beat his women and children as a sign of love for them. This became normal in society that if a woman would not be beaten, she suspected her husband of not loving her and she would provoke him to anger that he beats her to show love. The religious significance behind this is that when misfortunes come ones way, then the gods need to be appeased to put things right. They express this that '*akwagala y'akukuba*-the one who loves you is the one who punishes you'.

Girl children are not very important to a Muganda and in the olden days, when formal education was introduced, girls were not allowed to go to school. They were only a source of wealth to the family in form of dowry and brie price and they normally could get married at a young age, as long as they get their first menstrual period. Indeed, the women could not be made religious leaders and they could not make any decisions or even attend meetings with men.

3.4 Religious organization

There is no African society without a belief in God. What differ from one locality to another are the different names¹⁴ referring to the gods of their community. The Kiganda names of God differ depending on the particular functions they assign to a particular god. You need not explain to a Muganda about God; in fact, during my research, when I asked my respondents of their views about God, many would reply, “God, what God do you mean? God of which function; Rain, harvest, protection etc?” to support this view, Desmond Tutu poses an interesting joke when says, “don’t most of us, for instance find the classical arguments for the existence of God just an interesting cerebral game, because Africa taught us long ago that life without belief in a Supreme Being was just too absurd to contemplate?” (Parratt 1987:47).

3.4.1 Buganda’s indigenous religion

The Baganda, just like any other African society had a traditional religion before the manifestation of Christianity and Islam. The main features of this religion are; belief in God, spirits, divinities, ancestral power and belief in life after death. In as much as much of these beliefs are similar to those of Christianity, they differ in their approaches and it is because of this that there have always been disagreements between these two traditions.

Religion in Buganda is taken for granted because to them, they live everyday by it; they are born with it and will die religious. There are no atheists in Buganda because wherever and whenever one is, he is religious. In connection with this, Werner points out how in the minds of many majority of Africans, the universe is conceived of as being directed, not by blind forces but by an intellectual being (Werner 1933:18). They have a concept of the Supreme Being who is known under many names depending on the many clans and needs of the people. Among the names they refer to him are *katonda* (creator), *Lugaba* (giver), *lissoddene* (one with a big eye), etc

The reality of their God does not come within the scope of their immediate experiential knowledge. They realize the limitations of the Human mind when confronted

¹⁴ Bolaji 1976:148, In Africa, we speak of multi-sided concept of God. That is because in each locality, the concept of God usually takes its emphasis and complexion from the sociological structure and climate.

with the infinite and the uncreated. To this view, Brun adds that, regardless of their degree of intelligence, men left to themselves, usually form not only an inadequate, but a wholly debased notion of God (1962:1 and 5).

The occupants of the spirit world¹⁵ can be considered to be on three levels; at the top is a supreme creator, *Katonda*. The name means creator of all things and Lord of Creation, the superior one, and is referred to as “the father of the gods”, the Lubaales and the ancestors/living dead. Though the Baganda had many objects of worship, there was but one God, *Katonda* associated with *Lubaale*, to whom they would offer sacrifices to appease *Katonda*. Although worship could be conducted any where depending on the situation, they had shrines (*amasabo*) as their main places of worship. There are three main *masabo*’s dedicated to *Katonda* at *Namakwa*, *Buzu* and *Bukule*, and these were the main places of worship before the coming of the missionaries in the 1800s. His priests came from the *Njovu* (Elephant) clan. However, little is known of this supreme god and he was not expected to intervene routinely in human affairs¹⁶.

Kiganda tradition had it that whenever there was a national or community need, say drought, famine, a particular sickness, the king had to offer sacrifices to *Katonda*. To find out the causes of the misfortune, the religious leaders with their agents, had to invoke the spirits (*kubandwa*), this would be done by the whole community coming together, celebrating and drumming. In the process of jubilations, the spirits can begin to speak using one of the agents and if one of the community members was the cause, they would punish him either by stoning him to death or be made to pay a fine to the community. However, some of the spirits would cause death, say when the community had ignored the problem for a long time, they would request for the death of someone important in society before they begin to speak and if they could not offer sacrifices immediately or work on the problem, many other people would die in the community. But the benevolent ones would bring good luck and success. They are thus more like the Saints of Christian belief than “gods”.

What should be strongly noted about Kiganda traditional Religion is that, though the spirit world is highly venerated and the occupants of this world treated with awe, they

¹⁵ Gehman 1989: 124, the spirit world is alive with a variety of spirit being.

¹⁶ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buganda>. 11.02.2008, page 4.

are not on the same level. They believe in only one God who is approached through the lesser spirits. Gehman adds that, “these spiritual beings are said to be ministers of God, some of them are said to have created the world. To distinguish them from the Supreme Being and the lesser spirits, they are called divinities (1989:124).

The lesser spirits were the departed ancestors (*mizimu*), especially those who cannot be remembered by the living ones. Those that can be remembered are the living dead. These spirits took aboard around mountains, rivers and forests, mostly benevolent but some known to be viciously harmful if not kept happy (*misambwa*). It is believed that the way of life of an individual determined his life in the spirit world. Those who were God on earth became the good spirits and those who could do bad things also lived a bad life in the spirit world as well as became malevolent spirits. However rituals would be performed to stop the harm of the bad spirits. Rituals aimed at ensuring the goodwill of these spirits were part of everyday life. Every household contained a shrine to the family’s ancestors, usually a small basket to which small offerings of money and coffee beans were made regularly. Major enterprises, such as the building of a house or the clearing of a piece of land, required a greater offering, maybe of a chicken or a goat. Again, this was usually a family effort with no outside help from any form of clergy.

The ancient Baganda were thus like the followers of major modern religions in honoring their gods and praying for their help. They differed, however in the relationship they saw between the gods and the rules governing ordinary behavior and morals. The difference can also be seen in the way the Ganda interpreted everything in a religious sense and religion led their whole life, even their ethical conduct was believed to be God given. The kingdom had an elaborate and carefully observed code of conduct governing personal and family relationships, cleanliness, the crafts, warfare and government, a code which was observed not because the gods ordained it but because it was the right thing to do. To this day the Muganda considers the statement “*eyo ssi mpisa yaffe* (that is not our custom)” a major censure. Most of them are against the western values and they utterly declare as one of my informants said, “*Abazungu bononye eby’obuwangwa byaffe. Baatuletela obugwenyufu* (the white men have disorganized our culture. They brought us bad manners)”.

All in all, the notion of Katonda is central in Ganda beliefs. The Ganda look at life through that notion. The notion of Katonda is found in their prayers, invocations, farewell phrases whenever they visit one another, blessings etc. they always use the phrase, '*mukama yebazibwe*-thanks to God', whenever something good happens.

3.4.2 Christianity in Buganda

Bunyoro-Kitara and Buganda was one and the same Kingdom but their relationship soured due to the coming of missionaries. The King of Bunyoro did not like the idea of their coming and so when the Kabaka of Buganda welcomed them, Bunyoro had to separate from Buganda. The Christian missionaries arrived in Africa many years after Christianity had been there but not openly declared or practiced in most places like in Uganda. It was being silenced with the traditional religions. This is because Christianity was already in other parts of Africa like in Egypt and it is also strongly taught that since an African man (Cyrus) helped Jesus carry the cross, Christianity began there with him. But many Christians believed that Africa and Ugandans in particular were ignorant of Christianity.

This history has been taught to Ugandans for decades, that *Kabaka* (king) Muteesa I asked H. M. Stanley to invite English missionaries to introduce Christianity in Buganda where it never existed at all before¹⁷. This invitation was published as a letter in the *London Daily Telegraph* of November 15, 1875, but some people argue that Christianity already existed in Buganda long before the English missionaries came to Buganda only that it was being silenced by the strong ATR beliefs and illiteracy.

The Kabaka was used as a stepping stone by the missionaries to reach the rest of Uganda. This was because Buganda had control of other kingdoms and this would make it easier for the missionaries to reach the rest of the kingdoms. The power of the kabaka impressed British officials, but political leaders in neighboring Bunyoro were not receptive to British officials who arrived with Baganda escorts. Buganda became the centerpiece of the new protectorate, with a degree of control over the other kingdoms like Busoga and Bunyoro. Many Baganda were able to take advantage of opportunities

¹⁷Gifford 1998:112, Mutesa displayed an interest in Christianity, and it was Stanley himself who asked the missionaries to evangelize the kingdom in a famous letter to the daily telegraph of 15, November 1875.

provided by schools and businesses in their area. Baganda civil servants also helped administer other ethnic groups, and Uganda's early history was written from the perspective of the Baganda and the colonial officials who became accustomed to dealing with them.

With the coming of the missionaries to Buganda, they built school, teaching people how to read and write. The Baganda could now then read the Bible on their own and this to a greater extent made Christianity visible in Buganda.

The missionary activities however raised the issue of what was to be made of the religio-cultural background of the evangelized Baganda. It was a point of whether the cultural background could be eliminated or considered. As Kwesi assessed,

Christian evangelization as it was carried out by European missionaries in the early days of missions in Africa, and also by those African preachers whom the missionaries had trained as their co-workers tended to assume the destructiveness of African religion and culture (1984:90).

Many of those who converted to Christianity were in a dilemma. They were faced with two opposing forces, those of Christianity and ATR. They wanted to be Christians yet the ATR culture was also pulling them on the other side. On one hand, Christianity never let them go without its don'ts as well as the ATR. There are hardly any African Christians who can genuinely denounce the roots of African traditions from their practices whether directly or indirectly. If one persists to be a strong Christian follower, his relatives may act on his behalf, even without his consent, or else social functions like marriage and funeral might make one practice such customs and in some cases, those who refuse to take part may be ex-communicate from the clan. Should we call them Christians, Traditionalists or both? Should African Christians continue practicing such rituals?

A Muganda Christian believer is in a vicious circle. He visualizes his cosmology with the interaction of the present Supreme Being (God), the superhuman being, the ancestors, gods, spirits, divinities, etc. he is not only confident the creator but also to those African powers when he stands as a Christian. Even when he is praying, deep in his heart, he sees the ancestors, spirits and divinities through the person of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. As Mbiti emphasized, one may add that an ontological balance must be

maintained between God and man, the spirits and man, the departed and the living (1990:59).

It should be noted that to a Muganda Christian, his Christianity/religion does not end in the church on Sundays. With the intimate religiosity and cultures of the African peoples, he does not find fulfillment in going to church, singing hymns and reading the Bible alone. He needs much more than that which 'Christianity' does not offer. They therefore want a place to get fulfillment; this is found in their traditional 'churches'/shrines. According to many of my respondents, they argue that Christianity does not offer what their religiosity requires. They go to the traditionalists to be enriched. As the well known African theologian professor Mbiti (1990:30) asserts that, 'Africans are notoriously religious. Wherever the African is, there is his religion: he carries it to the fields where he is sowing seeds or harvesting a new crop; he takes it with him to the beer party or to attend a funeral ceremony; and if he is educated, he takes religion with him to the examination room at school or to the university. If he is a politician, he takes it to the parliament where he is'.

3.4.3 Ganda attributes of God

The attributes are those words or phrases ascribing traits, properties, qualities or characteristics to Supreme Being. Such attributes are mostly anthropomorphic, because the divine being cannot be made comprehensible in abstract terms. No one will ever put a faith on a non-personal, non-living entity. Man finds satisfaction in a divine who lives, acts, directs, hears, sees, controls, saves, blesses, commands, rules, judges and who does all that a person of highest authority will do (Omosade 1979:45). They are expressions used to define something and in this thesis, I will refer to them as the way the Africans understand, believe and what they ascribe to 'their' God.

Just like any other African society, the Ganda attributes of God range from the natural attributes or eternal attributes to physical and yet others are ascribed due to the functions they attribute to God. One important aspect that has been a point of contention and discussion between western and African writers on African religion is the issue of whether Africans worship one God (monotheism) or many gods (polytheism). In the same vein, Gehman also claimed that the Supreme Beings of the pastoral Nilotes of East

Africa represented the fullest survival of this original monotheistic concept. Many western writers present ATR as a polytheistic religion which seemingly is against some African writers and the Africans themselves (1989:189). This issue will be dealt with below among the attributes of God among the Ganda.

3.4.3.1 The transcendence attributes

To begin with, the Ganda associate the Supreme Being to a male figure though he is in a spirit form and unseen. In ATR, the concept of God is intimately engrossed in the different names that each tribe or people have for God, thus, the names by which the Supreme Being is known and addressed in various African tribes explicitly revealed their conception of Him¹⁸. The transcendent attributes are those that are associated with the eternal nature, character and form of God. He is regarded as the transcendent one, the extraordinary. He is exalted above all the other things, the one up high, He is without limitation and beyond human comprehension, no one can search and understand the ways of God, he is above and beyond. According to one respondent, she was quoted saying,

'Katonda ye'byona mubyona, sisobola mugelagelanya kukintu kyona. Nze y'ankuma, yamanyi obulamu bwange. Yeyasalawo mbelewo munsu eno era ayinza okuntwala wabanga ayagadde. Siyina kyensobola muwa wabula okumusinzanga bulijo'. This literary means that, God is all in all, I cannot compare him to anything, he is my protection and he knows my life. He decided that I be born in this world and he can decide to take my life away. I have nothing to repay him but to worship him all the time (oral message).

To believe that God created the heavens and the earth is widespread all over Africa. The names attributed to God reflect this basic understanding. He is known as the excavator (*omukabazi*), molder (*omubumbi*), creator (*mutonzi*), originator (*mutandisi*), inventor (*mulowoza*) and architect (*mubazi*), among the Ganda. Many traditional stories and theories narrate the order and procedure which God followed in placing man upon the earth; but we shall not elaborate those theories in this thesis.

To the Ganda, there is only one God (*Katonda*) who is pure spirit, the source of all life and reality. To deny the existence of *Katonda* is seen as an untenable position.

¹⁸ <http://www.renewtheology.org/paperMorounOdebode1007.htm>, 18.02.2008.

Anyone taking an atheistic position is seen to be not only immature but spiritually without wisdom.

ATR traditional belief in God is both its great strength and its major weakness (Gehman 1989:189). It is their strength as it is what gives them the urge to stand¹⁹ against or argue in favor of ATR. They believe their God is their fighter and judge who can help them in times of war and misunderstandings. He is their source of wisdom that can help them make proper judgments about any issues arising in their societies; but is their weakness as it is upon this same background that many theologians have argued against the validity of ATR. Various authors object to any suggestion that the God of ATR was omniscient. They claim that omniscience is a Greek thought, not a traditional African thought. To them, this is a reading into ATR what is not there.

In reaction to what those theologians say, the Africans really believe in an active God who is always there with them in all their daily activities. He answers them when they pray to him and indeed prayer is a very strong weapon for them to God. They believe that their prayers reach God through the ancestors and other divinities.

To them, though God may take up temporary abode in a particular place on earth while on a visit, He is truly everywhere and he can answer peoples prayers from every place on earth.

God is a spirit and everlasting. He has no beginning or end. He was and he is and he will be. He is invisible, he has no body, and he can even be compared to anything that is created in this world. God is not created and to them, there has never been any idol worship in Africa. There is only one invisible true God who is reached through the ancestors.

God is holy and awesome. He is sinless and entertains no evil. But he is also kind and merciful. He forgives those who sin and ask for repentance through the religious leaders and by appeasing the gods through sacrifices. To the Africans, misfortunes, death and sufferings are caused by God's anger towards the sinners.

¹⁹ Ibid pg 189, but we do find universal confidence in the Supreme Being who knows everything about people and their activities and from whom we can hide nothing. We may deceive the ancestors but we cannot deceive God.

3.4.3.2 The functional attributes

On the other hand, there are also some attributes that are directly related to the works of God. Apart from him being called a creator, he is also the protector (*engabo*), the savior (*mulokozi*), the provider (*mugabilizi*), the sustainer (*abesezawo obulamu*) of life and the security guard (*mukuumi*).

They recognize the continual involvement of God in the maintenance and operation of the world. God is the one who provides food, sunshine, rain, children, health and protection. These are gifts from God and they appreciate them through sacrifices and thanks giving ceremonies. They also believe that if God is not appeased from time to time, he can decide to take it away, so they always pray and offer sacrifices²⁰ to God to appease him.

As a supreme ruler of the earth, He is known as the king, Lord, and Judge. His will is absolute and he rules with power. To them, God is involved in this world. People can and do call upon him for help in times of dire distress. The Muganda praying for help always clearly understands that the assistance of the spirits and gods is but an aid to personal effort. As one respondent put it, “*Lubaale mbeera, nga n'embiro kw'otadde*” (pray for deliverance from danger, but start running too). This means that though, they visit the shrines (*essabo*-place of worship for the traditionalists); it is not that they don't believe in God's power. It is only that they want some sort of assurance from 'His' agents. During my research, one pastor of an Anglican congregation narrated to me a true story about the time he visited a shrine and he said that he went there to get therapy. In fact he said that by the time he came out of that place, he was already healed of his sickness even before he carried out what he was told to do.

All in all, like any other African society, the Ganda Traditional religion encompasses a lot but for this thesis since we are not dealing with ATR, we should understand them at that stage. What may be not mentioned here about ATR may not be particularly pertaining Buganda traditional religion but is very important for us study. The Ganda believe in a very strong, powerful, mighty, providence God who works

²⁰Gehman 1989: 193, anyone could pray or offer sacrifices but in many places, there were religious specialists who officiated for the community. These were elders known for their experience, character and wisdom. Their age enabled them to be much closer to the living dead and the spirit world.

through his agents, the ancestors and other spirits who are invoked by offering sacrifices and praying.

CHAPTER FOUR: AN ANALYSIS OF THE AFRICAN TRADITIONAL UNDERSTANDING OF GOD AND CHRISTIANITY

4.0 Introduction

Having looked at the position of the African Christians, the Baganda and their religious practice and some theological view points, we should then turn our attention to the analysis of those ideas, in particular, we will find out whether the views of those three different theologians agree with the African/Ganda beliefs and practice of Christianity and as an end result, we will find out who of them is near to the reality of the Ganda. We will raise questions as these, Are their views relevant to the Ganda beliefs and practice of Christianity? Do these theologians' interpretation of ATR and African Christianity portray the clear image of what is on the ground? Whose ideas can help us make the Christianity contextual in Buganda?

This analysis is meant to help us find out a clear way of how to deal with this issue of contextualization. In the following chapter, I hope to offer my personal view point but before I do that, I wish to analyze what other writers in this field of study have tried to present to the world as am not digging on virgin land. Their shortcomings and failure to make the gospel contextual in Africa/Buganda will give us a starting point for disqualifying, praising or correcting their views. In our bid for the contextualization of the Christian gospel and making of African theology, there is need for us to put together different perspectives from both Christianity and ATR. We need to ask ourselves whether Christianity and ATR have something common that need to be upheld, whether Africans should have their own form of Christianity based on African beliefs or an amalgamation of the values from both traditions and or throw away anything African and only take on Christianity as it was presented to them by the first missionaries. We should also ask ourselves whether the west/Europe should be the basis for Christianity and if the current theologians have done something relevant for the different African tribes and cultures in order to make the gospel local.

4.1 Analysis of Mbiti's position as presented above

Thanks to Mbiti for pioneering the work of Africanization/contextualization of the Christian Gospel and enlightening the minds of many people about African theology; but we can see that some of his teachings do not tally with the Ganda Christian practices and forms of worship. Mbiti is of the view that ATR is a preparation of Christianity in Africa. I will agree with Mbiti on many aspects as concerns this study but some of his teachings need question. This is partly true because we can see that Christianity in Africa found so many similarities with the traditional religions and culture showing that ATR had paved way for Christianity. As for this thesis, we will focus more upon the similarities as it will be that what is common between the two which will help us contextualize Christianity in Buganda. However, differences should also not be underestimated as these can help us evaluate a particular culture, beliefs and rituals, examining why and how they do their practices.

Christianity having been paved way for by ATR shows us that ATR practices and ways of worship should not be completely ignored but looked upon as a starting point for Christianity in Africa. Yes, I can agree that ATR needs cleansing as Mbiti proposes but in the same way, as I will argue out the question of faith and belief in the following chapter, Christianity too, looked at from the ATR side will demand a cleansing by ATR culture in a dialogical manner which will end up into contextual theology. What we have to put in mind is that all people perceive their position as the correct one and the others as wrong. If we recall what we saw about the position of the traditionalists in Buganda, they believe that they are following the only true God, the creator and that all their worship is dedicated to God. It is thus difficult to make them understand other positions except if you transform what they already have to suit the situation. Shorter might be right when he argues that 'dialogue is possible in so far as Christianity, seeking to penetrate African culture, is conscious of the religious tradition that underlies it. It is also possible in so far as ATR, in its uncritical eagerness to appropriate foreign elements, becomes conscious of Christianity as a distinct religious system' (Shorter 1977:6).

On the other hand however, we should be cautious on this position of ATR paving way for Christianity in Africa. We have seen in chapter three above that there are some customs practiced by the Baganda that are contrary to the practice of Christianity, if we

should take all their belief systems without question that they were all preparing way and that they are true in themselves, then we might tend towards syncretism. It has been a common practice in Africa and the rest of other areas in Asia where Christianity did not originate from, to mix their beliefs with Christianity or practice them both—we have seen this even among the Ganda.

I will not agree with Mbiti as concerns the Baganda on the way he elaborates the concept of God in Africa. Reading through most of Mbiti's works, he portrays an African kind of worship that needs not any assistance from Christianity. From the way Mbiti proposes for Black theology and contextualization especially from his book, 'concepts of God in Africa (1970:224),²¹' it is as though Africa and her people are endowed with all that they need to worship their God. We have also seen it above that before Christianity was introduced in Africa/Uganda, they had a well developed system of worship, and they lived their entire life by worship and could die religious. We should then be careful in our bid to make Christianity contextual among these people, if we are to indigenize Christianity; Christianity stands a big challenge, to meet the needs of such a people with their kind of innate worship. No wonder, Mbiti, argues that the Africans are notoriously religious.

Mbiti's idea of Christianity accepting change and changing others should be upheld as far as the Ganda Christians are concerned. Mbiti says that Christianity should not criticize other religions but be open, ready to change and be changed, which is right and relevant for the present situation among the Baganda, but he also argues that it is only Christianity that has the legal credentials to pass judgment on traditional religiosity, forgetting that the Traditionalists also think that they have the right to judge other religions on their grounds.

I agree that Christianity as one of the religions, presented by a Christian, has the right to pass judgment basing on his arguments, but if we consider others as a people with their different cultures, their locations, rationality and race, they should also be given the chance to make their points known and where there is need for correction, all the

²¹ Kato (1975:71): the problem in Mbiti's presentation is the absence of hardly any reference to evil attributed to God in ATR's. Every thought about God seems to be pure. Even the medicine men, mbiti observes, "are generally given bad publicity by foreign writers who simply harp on their preconceived notions, which do not match the facts"

different religious traditions should listen to one another. His kind of argument takes us back to the time of the missionaries and colonialists where the former missionaries used their faith to condemn the rest instead of presenting the gospel of Christ to those who 'did not know' him. It could be one of the reasons most Africans, Ganda for this case are playing a double game or denouncing Christianity completely. They cannot imagine being judged by a so called 'white man's religion (Christianity)'. I would suggest that instead of passing judgment, condemning and criticizing, Christianity instead should use what is available to the Ganda and help them accept Christ using what they have. For instance, the Bible can be translated in their local languages (Luganda) and hymns sang in a language they understand. On the other hand, both Christianity and ATR ought to learn from each other. There is much that Christianity should learn as well as ATR say for instance, if Christians adopt the kind of worship, faith and consistence in their worship, from the Africans, it can help them improve; as well, the adherents of ATR should analyze well what they believe in, the truth in it, not just following teachings blindly, Christianity can teach them about their Jesus and the truth in him.

Mbiti's theological aim is to blend the ATR beliefs with the Christian beliefs, but these two traditions are based on different cultures, values and beliefs and as such, it might be impossible if not difficult to put together these religious teachings without interfering with the teachings of the other. Besides, this kind of blending can easily lead to syncretism and as such, this poses a threat to either religion. From the above chapter, we have seen among the Ganda that culture to them is part of their religion and actually many have confused the Ganda culture with their religion. It would then be a mistake and an impossibility to make these two religious traditions mix their belief systems. I would propose that instead of blending their teachings let Christianity be practiced in the African way such that the Africans will still be using what is already known to them. Like Turner highlights that, it does not seem to help much to speak of African theology but how Christianity can best be practiced within Africa and in this case, Buganda. Turner warns that, the term (African theology) is viewed with suspicion because the interest in traditional religion associated with it calls up in the minds of many a return to paganism. The phrase 'an African theology' has about it, therefore the quality of a slogan of vindication. It refers first to the attempt to find points of similarity between Christian

notions and those drawn from the traditional religions of Africa. Second, it refers to the hope that the systematic theology expressed in the language and concepts of traditional religion and culture, may one day be written. The phrase implies in its popular usage an attempt to amalgamate elements of Christian and elements traditional belief (Turner 1971:55). Let us not speak and write to please the readers but to propose that what can be applied in the real world.

Closely related to the above, Mbiti's theology seems to be against the Africans resorting back to their ATR beliefs but a blending of both ATR and Christianity, which is applicable if contextualization of Christianity will be realized, but he leaves his readers in a dilemma. It is as though the ATR has nothing good and thus needs cleansing, abolishing or condemnation. He argues that it is only Christianity that has the legal credentials to judge other religious traditions but such arguments are so subjective in that they can create divisionism among people. No wonder Agbeti is afraid about Mbiti's universalism. He contends that,

Contradiction is not his worst problem but it is his universalism that poses a threat to Biblical Christianity in Africa. His great enthusiasm in 'Africanizing' Christianity, while done in good faith, poses a threat to the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3). Although he claims that the uniqueness of Christianity is in Jesus Christ, this unique faith is subjected to scrutiny by the power of ATR. He writes that 'by coming to Africa, Christianity lends itself to be judged by traditional religiosity, to find out whether or not it measures up to the religiosity which in effect it claims to have and disseminate' (1972:147).

I agree with him on the above point on the grounds that I am a Christian, of course I have to say Christianity should be the basis for judgment of other religions, but what about the rest. In disqualifying their positions, we need to give them strong evidence as well as being guided by the power of the Holy Spirit. Having seen that ATR prepared the way for Christianity, ATR should therefore also have a place in judging some Christian ways of worship and cultures. Since Mbiti, argues for ATR preparing for Christianity let the ground that is prepared be used for the visitor but not to let the visitor decide what he wants. He also says that ATR is rotten and needs cleansing by Christianity. I would think

that he is proposing for Christianity in Africa such that we deal away with ATR; but how possible can it be on the side of the Africans?, a big group of people following a religious tradition that has been passed on from generation to generation? I would propose that instead, he gives a proper procedure of how Christianity can fit in the African context without abolishing all that is African. Just as Shorter notes, John Mbiti writings are by no means clear about the possibility of African traditional religion making a contribution to Christian theology. Enthusiastic as he is for a theology of a living African church, he nevertheless asks himself: how far can we, or should we, regard African religiosity as a *praeparatio evangelica*? The most he can say for the present is that the study of African traditional Religion is 'a background which cannot be ignored (Shorter 1977:23).

His idea that there is need for Africanization of Christianity since Christianity has already Christianized Africa and that if not, then Christianity will be standing in a vacuum or else come to extinction is true for the Ganda situation because as we have seen in the previous chapter that some people have decided to give up or ignore western Christianity because it has not been made African. If the kind of Christ preached to the Ganda is likened say to the *Lubaales* (gods), perhaps people could use Jesus Christ as their advocate to God instead of seeking after those gods. In so doing the journey towards contextualization will be on the move.

It has also been noted from experience among the Ganda that the African Christians in Buganda are determined to extend the gospel to the rest, using their traditionally known beliefs. Many of whom have preached to traditional leaders and as such many have turned to Christ but still worship in their traditional shrines reason being that they feel it better to worship in their locally made places of worship. Indeed some of them argue that the modern church buildings are western ways of neo colonialism. The only problem with the Ganda as far as Christianity is concerned is the way they practice their faith. Many of them profess Christianity but their practices may not be that what is expected of a Christian in the eyes of the Europeans.

The above argument is true because even many of my respondents were telling me they are Christians, but some of them never go to church or read the Bible, even for those who go to church; many go because they are afraid of hell as taught as it is widely taught in Christianity. But ask them about the '*jaja*'s (African God's and worship)', they

will narrate to you everything about it reason being that they have been born, raised and lived with it, Christianity has not yet sunk deep in their minds and daily actions. I think if the first Christian missionaries and African theologians (Mbiti) made the gospel incarnate within Africa, the questions arising now against ATR would have been dealt away with. Anyone can easily attest to this view that there is a growing number of 'Christians' in Africa (Buganda); the kind of Christianity which best suits their traditional ways of life. Many of whom go to church on Sundays, believe in Jesus as their savior but in times of disaster and sickness, they consult their traditional local leaders for they believe that their gods/spirits will get angry with them and punish them if they don't appease or consult them²². This belief is heightened by the high illiteracy levels and the concept of fear that has been carried on from the elderly to the young ones for generations that failure to please the god's results into punishments.

Mbiti is advocating for a universal Christianity; a kind of worship that suits all people irrespective of race, skin color, descent and culture. I totally agree to his view, only if the gospel is rephrased and redirected in Africa. If the Ganda say, read a *Luganda* Bible version, teach the sermons in their language, make some Biblical teachings local, for instance, the verse that says that God will wipe away their sins and they be as white as snow, most Ganda have never seen snow, it is the better if they can use phrases like, making them become as white as Cotton because they know what cotton is, Christianity then can remain universal yet local.

I agree to his view of ATR being a preparation for Christianity because in all cultures and traditions, before Christianity was introduced, they had their own cultures and beliefs and so Christianity was made to fit in those cultures. We have also seen that there is a lot in common between these two traditions, showing that Christianity had fertile grounds in Africa/ Buganda. Unfortunately, the first Christian missionaries in Africa failed to reconcile these two different traditions, making the gospel fit in the local cultures and traditions. In as much as Christianity was welcomed in Africa and Buganda for this matter, it should lend its belief systems to change and be changed by the

²² Imasogie 1983: 68: For many sensitive pastors/ theologians in Africa have noticed that in times of existential crisis, the average African Christian reverts to the traditional African religious practices. In some instances, pastors/priests (theologians if you please) have themselves fallen victim to this almost irresistible reaction to existential confrontation.

traditional religiosity such that Christianity can become African, local and indigenous. Just as McGavran argues it that, by coming to Africa, Christianity lends itself to be judged by traditional religiosity, to find out whether or not it measures up to the religiosity which in effect it claims to have and disseminate (1972:147).

A point of caution however, there are some African Christians who have tended to take Christianity at face value without question. They tend to question and criticize the way the traditionalists worship. Many of them think that the only way a person can be Christian is to do as the 'Whiteman' does, but in many cases is not applicable in Buganda because the Whiteman and the African are influenced by independent cultures and practices. Many of them however have not been taught the study of systematic theology and they only practice what they read in the Bible-f they can read anyway, and what was presented to them by the missionaries who, some of them were also ignorant of other cultures and presented the gospel only in view of their own. I agree with Mbiti that if people/ theologians are interested in this subject, they should study the African background, cultures and history because there is something in African tradition that can enhance Christianity.

Neither the Christian ways of worship nor ATR culture is self sufficient. Because of the commonalities between and among religions in the world, it is of paramount importance that all religions listen to each other, and as such, the criticisms and loopholes found with it can be solved. We have realized that Christianity is the same whether in African context or western. The difference lies in the manner in which it is practiced and upheld. There are also some traditionalists who believe that there are some African traditions that should be abandoned, say, the practice of twin killing, human sacrifice etc which used to be common practices among the Baganda, Christianity can then help them stop such acts by presenting Jesus Christ to them, just as Tillich says that there is only one point from which the criteria can be derived and only one way to approach this point. The point is the event on which Christianity is based and the way is the participation in the continuing spiritual power of this event, which is the appearance and reception of Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ. (Tillich 1980:109)

Not considering the contradictions, loopholes and failure to make the Christian gospel incarnate in the African tradition and Uganda, I appreciate Mbiti's theology and if

it is developed further, making it practical and local, it is a very good basis for the concept of contextual theology or Black theology as he calls it to be a reality. Mbiti should be credited for being an eye opener for other scholars in the field of African religiosity. He realizes the negative side of ATR and proposes that Christianity should fulfill it, judge and condemn where necessary, basing on both the OT and NT.

4.2 Analysis of Bolaji Idowu's African theology

Bolaji's theology of continuity is in line with what Mbiti argues about ATR being a preparation for Christianity in Africa. However, they differ in the way they look at the idea of making the Christian gospel fit in the African tradition. Idowu is of the view that ATR is self sufficient and that there is no need for Christianity to intervene, correct or cleanse. Having seen what the Ganda believe about God and their ways of worship, we can rightly argue that Idowu ought to put his theology in context; he should have studied well the African situation before concluding about Africa. I think like Mbiti says, there is need for all religious traditions to be ready to change and be changed by another in a way that does not affect one of the religious beliefs and practices. He should ask himself whether there is any serious observation in the behavior of the African Christian that suggests a need to re-evaluate the presuppositions of the traditional Christian theological approach looking at how the African Christians understand and practice Christians.

We have also seen in chapter three that culture and religion seems inseparable among the Ganda and if Idowu argues that all religions are same is irrelevant for the situation in Buganda. We have seen that the African culture is different from the Christian western culture and as thus this affects the way of worship and practice of Christianity in Africa. It is true that the difference basically lies in the way of worship than the content, since they both worship the same God and if all that is done is attributed towards god through Jesus Christ; but in circumstances where the African cultural beliefs out ways the Christian beliefs, there is need for Christianity to come in and help them change and practice the kind of universal Christianity like practiced by the rest of the world.

In connection to the above point, I believe it is like his kind of argumentation that has led to many Africans practice a double game or become syncretic because they want

to please both traditions requirements. I propose that he encourages people to practice Christianity in an African way and cultural practices using what is locally known to them but not confuse and mix the beliefs of both. All people have the right to worship the way they want to but there is need for a guiding principle and correction from others, change and be changed. In this case, having studied all religious traditions and philosophies, with their shortcomings, Christianity comes close to reality, though it as already seen, should be ready to change and be changed by the good teachings in ATR for instance, a Christian ought to live by his religion, act in accordance to his religion wherever he may be just as the Traditional Africans are found of as we have seen the case of the Ganda.

Arguing that all worship is valid and is aimed towards God, may be misleading in this current multi religious world especially among the Ganda because their cultural practices and ways of worship can easily be confused for polytheism as seen above. In order for the society to be orderly organized in religious matters, there is need for a guiding principle as well as recognizing each other's cultures and ways of life. At least in all traditions, continents and cultures, we find many varying beliefs depending on the age groups, education level, etc but there is need for a common understanding between people of the same community. It may also lead to disorder in society and could be one of the reasons as to why there are many religious wars and misunderstandings even between family members among the Ganda. This is much experienced by people living in Mixed marriages which are common today given the increasing rate of polygamy in Buganda. This is because everyone thinks he is right and there is no need for another person to correct, criticize or condemn some bad things with his practice. Christianity then should be looked at as a guide in the African situation and how they can worship God in a way that is universally accepted and acknowledged.

We will all agree that there are many powers in the world which force people to worship or to whom people worship and the Ganda situation is a case in point. We have seen that many of them claim to be worshipping the almighty creator God but there could be other powers behind their worship. On the other hand, as we will see the power of faith and culture (next chapter), these factors, may influence someone to worship other beings for fear of the outcomes, there is therefore a need for the people to be guided on the ways of worship and how best they can practice Christianity in a local context but

doing it in accordance to the universal Christianity. We also know that the devil is real and he also has agents and those who worship him. This belief is in both Christianity and ATR- there are evil spirits that cause deaths and others misfortunes and this is a reality in Africa as seen from the Ganda. In Africa, Such spirits and their worshippers can be punished by the rest of the community members and so if Christianity sees something wrong with ATR, they can correct them; but they should also listen to ATR. Idowu seems not to be considering those other powers. He underestimates the power of those forces and their worshippers.

Examining the ATR ways of worship, one can rightly say they are polytheistic except if explained very well to him. Indeed, most scholars prefer calling it African Traditional Religions because of the many different practices that differ from one tribe and region to another²³. Take for instance, some people believe in forests, mountains, rivers, etc as their agents to God. I would take that as polytheism because if they believe in one God, then they should pray to him alone. This kind of monotheism that Idowu talks of is what Mbiti calls ‘deadness and rottenness that Christianity should remove from ATR’ (Mbiti 1972:152). Christianity should therefore come in to correct, put right or even criticize ATR where possible.

If Idowu claims that, man cannot not fully comprehend the supernatural world, and that he cannot explain his religion fully to another person, then all worship is vain. If someone cannot explain to the other what he believes in, then he might not be sure of the God he worships. The kind of ‘valid worship’ he talks of should be known to all people and all people should be able to explain it in ways that all people understand. ATR as we know it has been made known to all people and they have in most cases advocated that their beliefs be recognized by Christianity. Christianity is also mission minded, the Christians are commanded by God to extend the gospel to all creatures, and they are thus free to preach to others about Christ but not pass condemnation. It is thus important that both ATR and Christianity make their beliefs and dogmas known to the people such that people will have to decide what is appropriate on their own and practice it in a way that they understand.

²³ (Mbiti 1969:1), we speak of ATRs in the plural because there are about one thousand African people (tribes) and each has its own religious system.

Idowu's use of Biblical scriptures to justify his position need question too. He seems to be taking scriptures literally without looking at the context of it, the people to whom it was written, when and how it was written. From the ATR practices as seen from the Ganda situation shows us that the African literature though orally known can be used as a basis to make Christianity contextual in Africa as we have acknowledged that they both owe their worship to the creator and the differences lie especially in the way they approach God. Besides, the Bible is not the only source for Christianity and their practices, he should not therefore use the Bible in arguing against ATR, the whole idea lies in the way the people, the adherents and evangelists understand, approach and look at other people's cultures and belief systems. The point is not to look at what is good or bad, true or false but what should be emphasized is how Christianity can be practiced by the Africans in a an African context better. He also says that it is not possible to know the tenets of other faiths but only empirically. He should then be taking the Christian scripture empirically without considering the African context. As Agbeti asserts that, the material for African theology is not primarily the Bible. Just as one has to go to the OT itself for material on OT theology, so the sources of material for African theology should be Africa and its ATR. The Bible will then be used to support what is already found in the traditional religions (Kato 1975:54).

I wonder what kind of God Idowu talks about; a God who allows confusion, disorganization and disorder. There are lots of differences between different religions and if God has revealed himself to all people differently, and that they are all heading to the same goal, religion then is useless and there will be no need for evangelism and mission. It could be true that God reveals himself to different people but he should be revealing the same thing to all but in a way and culture, language and setting he is used to. The adherents should therefore accept advice from the rest; emphasize similarities and work for a common good.

He is also against Christians being confident in God that God can leave them and they will be left in a vacuum. I think Idowu's 'God' could be different from the mighty, omnipresent omniscient, creator, God who is everywhere and always at work with his people to help them in their daily life, the one acknowledged by both ATR and Christianity. If he doubts 'his God', then his worship could be directed to nonexistent

God but not the creator, Yahweh. The very reason why some African Christians react towards the way some missionaries and evangelists despise ATR and their practices is because they say that ATR is not worshipping the almighty God which seems to them unrealistic. The Ganda for instance live their entire lives with God and he is always there to help them all the time. I think his point here is the way Christianity is being practiced in Africa where it is not fitting in the African cultural practices. Had Christianity been brought home and natural, then even Africans could easily be confident in Christianity.

He says that Christianity should not judge other religions and that judgment should be left to God who judges through revealed scripture from the triune God, but he does not tell us what scripture is revealed from God, since all religions have their own scripture in one form or the other. In Buganda for instance, they believe that *Katonda* the creator, revealed ATR to their ancestors. Since all religions seem to have been revealed by God and there is a lot of similarities amongst them, then they ought to work together and be practiced in context. Christianity in this case should be practiced by the people in understandable ways to them and their cultures; judgment about which culture or way of worship is Ok should be left to God. I agree with him that judgment should be left to God who will judge all people according to his own standards. Whether it will be the Christians or ATR or Hindus to go to heaven, all is left to him. On the other hand, criticisms are not necessarily bad, on the contrary they can help improve or change. As a universalistic theologian Tillich puts it that, 'receiving external criticism means transforming it into self criticism (1980:116). Through criticisms, one can realize his weaknesses and change or can be helped to change.

All in all, Idowu and Mbiti seem to agree that there is no need for any other faith/religion in Africa, because the Africans have a self sufficient God, a God who fulfils all that they would want. For Idowu asserts, God is one, not many, and to that God belongs the earth and all its fullness. It is to this God, therefore, who reveals himself to all people on earth and whom they have apprehended according to the degree of their spiritual perception, expressing their knowledge of Him (1962:31) and for Mbiti, reading through his '*Concept of God in Africa*' one cannot but wonder why he is advocating for African Christianity and for what reason the missionaries came to Africa. The Bible and Christianity seem almost superfluous in the face of such a comprehensive work and our

work as new researchers in the field as vain. African understanding of God seems to be complete and does not need any further light from elsewhere; that it should be studied and understood the way it is.

Some Traditionalists from the case of the Ganda, seem to be agreeing to the above point of view but, critically analyzing and following the trends as they are in Buganda, there is need for an external force that can help them realize, understand and change some of their ways of worship such that Christianity in Buganda will become universal and yet local.

3.3 Analysis of Karl Barth's theology

Karl Barth's protestant Christian theology seems to be too complicated for the ordinary man to comprehend and as thus unrealistic for the African Traditional *Muganda*. He seems too abstract and philosophical in his argumentation. He is like trying to create his own world different from the normal one in which we live. He does not give room for other people and other faith to express their feelings and views. His basic idea that religion is unbelief seems unrealistic for the Baganda because to them, religion is part of their whole life, it is their driving force in society, it is what determines their future and how they will live in the next world-the spirit world after death. In other words, he is trying to mean that outside the church, there is no salvation (*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*), but I wonder what standards he uses to measure Christianity against the rest of other great world religions like Judaism and Islam? Does salvation depend on a particular religion or a person? There is a belief in salvation in both traditions, ATR and Christianity, but which religion leads to the true salvation? To the Africans, a person must have lived according to the teachings of the society and followed his religious laws in order to have a better life in the next life. Perhaps Barth was not aware of how religion is valued among the Africans. To them (Africans), religion is what constitutes a person's belief in God and attainment of salvation in eternal life after death. In Hicks words, "any credible religious faith must make sense of the context and a credible Christian faith must make sense of it by relating it to the universal sovereignty and fatherhood of God (1980:172).

As we have seen in the preceding chapter, ATR was a preparation for Christianity meaning that religion had existed even before Christianity was made known to Africa.

Religion has existed since mankind and if he is to disqualify it, I see it as though he is living in his own world. Religion has been and will always be. Besides, is not Christianity a religion that he says is the only true and unspotted one? Indeed, Tillich is aware of this when he says that, if Christianity rejects the idea that it is a religion, it must fight in itself everything by which it becomes a religion (1980:116) If he says that in religion, man seeks after God not God seeking man and that man talks to God not God revealing himself to man; I think, Barth's definition of religion might be different from the contemporary accepted definition "a belief in a supernatural power". In my view, people follow a particular religion because they feel God's call. There is in fact a certain power that enforces people to follow what they do and leave the rest; I would call this a revelation from God. Man cannot talk to God if he (God) has not revealed himself to them. The African traditionalists say that they experience God's presence; he answers them and also punishes them when they sin against him. As the theologian Kung argues that 'a man is to be saved within the religion that is made available to him in his historical situation. Hence it is his right and duty to seek God within that religion in which the hidden God has already found him' (1976:110). I believe that if Christianity is to become African, it should be made to fit in the African traditional understanding of religion.

In the Ganda perspective, it is through religion that one reaches God, but if Barth advocates for religion as unbelief and that all mans attempt is futile, is like Barth is advocating for atheism. This means that man should not labor in religion to seek after God but sit to wait until God reveals himself to them. And how he reveals himself to them, Barth did not tell us. The African traditionalists, God will judge them according to their works, those who do good (in religion) will not be condemned. Indeed, they believe that a person who does good things will go to heaven immediately he dies. And so is Christianity; the Christians are urged to do good and do according to his will. Of course God is a good God but he deserves the worship and service; Christianity, unless it reaches the religiosity of the African peoples, it might not become contextual.

He argues for a theological evaluation of religion(s) in a cautious and charitable manner yet he first argues against religions. Barth assumes that all human beings have known about Jesus Christ and that they should be evaluated on the grounds of Jesus Christ and Christianity. I propose that instead of judging the Africans, it is better to make

Jesus Christ known to them, having seen that many of their belief systems are similar to those of Christianity; it is then easier to make Christ African and thus Christianity contextual and local. On addition, ATR for instance does not have written documents but their literature is passed on from generation to generation by word of mouth. I would propose that an evaluation of religions be based on humanitarian grounds, putting into consideration other peoples beliefs and practices, feeling with, understanding why and how they do things and appreciate them.

Karl Barth seems to be too negative in his description of other religions and Humankind. He is too narrow in limiting revelation to the Biblical tradition and in so doing; he excluded the non Christians especially the African traditionalists. I wonder what sufficient grounds he uses to limit revelation to Christianity alone. I think people cannot be that stupid to follow something blindly without asking themselves where it came from. Perhaps they follow what they believe in because that is what has been made known to them. If Christianity is also made African, perhaps they will practice it in an intimate manner. Besides, how can God allow billions and billions of people to follow their different faith if he had not revealed it to them? To some Africans as already seen, Christianity is a religion of the white man and ATR is for Africans as Islam is for the Arabs. It is thus hard and difficult to convince such a mind to change except make Christianity become original, indigenous and local.

Karl Barth's theology does not give any room for other theologians and scholars to dig deep in this area. His answers are final and amen. His research is the final one. God only revealed himself in Christianity and Christianity has the legal right to judge the rest of other religions. In his view, I assume he says that all advocates of African theology/black theology are wasting their time. ATR like Christianity as seen from the case of the Ganda believe that their worship is aimed towards God and the end result for a person who has practiced his faith well is eternal salvation just like the case of Christianity. The point then should be to make Christ known to them in a humane manner.

Barth's argument that religion only aims at reminding people of their sins and God's judgment and that as thus religion is unbelief. His view is somewhat vague. I believe the aim of all men to follow a particular religion is to a give a hope of eternal life

through the continual confession of sins and forgiveness as it is widely acknowledged by the African traditionalists. On the other hand, when one is reminded of his sins, he can repent when there is still chance. Even in Christianity, they are taught to keep renewing their faith daily in order to avoid going to hell and God's Judgment. Barth's theology should be redefined and redirected towards an understanding of a contextual theology in an African setting.

Barth separates religion from revelation and he says that revelation contradicts religion and vice versa; but I think religion cannot stand alone without revelation as revelation cannot be out of religion. God reveals himself to people through a religion. In fact man has a tendency of running to God for help when in trouble when he feels that he cannot help himself. The Ganda are well known for this, many of them turn to their gods (*Lubaales*) when in trouble and in times of crises. This means that God reveals himself to man through a religion. In almost all religious traditions, they believe it was first revealed to somebody by God. To the Christians, God revealed himself through Jesus Christ and to the traditionalists²⁴, through the ancestors and the spirits. Christianity in this case should be redefined to suit the African situation, culture and practices.

Barth does not put context into consideration. He would want all people to be the same and alike irrespective of their differences. Even the greatest Christian theologian Luther said 'I endeavored to make Moses so German that no one would suspect he was a Jew' (Baiton 1955:255). This means that Christianity can be practiced by the Africans changing its values. Like Hick says, "It is a function of philosophy and theology to make explicit and consistent what our experience has led us to accept implicitly. And when we do this here, we find that religious pluralism challenges some of our traditional dogmas. It does not require that any of the basic Christian dogmas ideas be abandoned, but that they be understood afresh in non-traditional ways" (Hick 1995:125). This calls for a contextual understanding of religions and cultures.

In justifying Christianity against all the other religions, Barth was somewhat too inconsiderate and so subjective. If he says that Christianity is the only true religion, the unspotted and holy one, he seems not to have studied its doctrines very well. Christianity

²⁴ Mbiti 1969:35, It is a paradox that they know him; he is not a stranger to them, and yet they are enstarned to Him; He knows them, but they do not know him. So God confronts men as the mysterious and incomprehensible, and as indescribably and beyond Human vocabulary.

(Bible) teaches that man sinned and fell short of the Glory of God. This one alone disqualifies his statement of Christianity being the unspotted religion. Besides, does he mean to say that all Christians are justified and are going to 'heaven'? And what measures does he use to show the trueness of Christianity against other religions? I believe that we should not put religion/ faith at the forefront but present Christ since he is the core. Just as Ajith says that, the most important part of any evangelic effort is the presentation of Christ. He is the central message we have to proclaim to the world. The old saying 'Christianity is Christ' is still true (Ajith 1987:69). If Christianity is to be practiced in a universal manner even within an African setting, such statements should be avoided and Christ be preached such that the people will have to replace what they believed in about their gods and spirits for Christ and as such, Christianity will be understood by all people irrespective of cultural differences.

He aims at incorporating as many people to Christianity by assuring them that as long as they are in Christ, all is done, they just have to wait for heaven. He seems to be more concerned with the number of people attending church than the people themselves; who are the centre of any faith. To Ralph, Those who are interested in church growth are sometimes accused of being more interested in quantities of the church members than in their quality. This is despite the fact that the very phrase church growth implies an additional dimension of emphasis beyond conversion, since it focuses not on how many raise their hands at an evangelistic service but on the incorporation of new believers into church life (1972:175). I believe that Christianity is much more than just confessing Christ but to practice according to the will of the Lord Jesus Christ.

3.4 Final analysis of the above theological views

The above theological views which are of great importance for the evaluation of the Baganda beliefs and practice of Christianity can be summarized in the following ways: Mbiti advocates that ATR is a preparation for Christianity and that Christianity should help condemn some African beliefs which are rotten and need cleansing, while Idowu is of the view that there is continuity between ATR and Christianity and that Christianity should not Judge ATR because the truth is already known to them yet Barth is of the opinion that religion is unbelief and that all mans attempt in religion is unbelief.

We have seen the Ganda practices and understanding of Christianity and their ATR beliefs. It has been realized that cultures are inseparable from their religion and as such, religion is lived and died with. In fact, their belief in the three world-womb world, earthly world and spirit world signifies how religion is part of their lives. To them, from the time of conception, an African becomes religious, that's why rituals are performed when a woman conceives, gives birth and even when a person dies.

From the analysis given above, while considering the African/Baganda ways of life, culture, ways of worship and practices, Idowu's theology of continuity is unrealistic for the Ganda since there is need for guidance of the Baganda practices and ways of worship as we have seen above. Barth also seems to be speaking a language which has never been heard by the Ganda when he talks of Religion being unbelief, yet religion is part of a Muganda's life. Therefore, I am of the view that Mbiti's theology comes closer to the reality of the Ganda since as we have seen, ATR shares some beliefs similar to Christianity and Christianity comes to Africa in a foreign cultural background that should be made to fit in the African situation. We also saw some African practices like twin killing which ought to be changed or dealt away with; Mbiti proposes that ATR needs to be cleansed by Christianity yet he also makes it clear that all religious traditions should be ready to change and be changed and in this way, he is advocating that even Christianity should accept change, condemnation and criticism from ATR where need be and therefore, this can lead to a very successful contextual theology among the Baganda. He is in short arguing that the church and Christianity should become incarnate and indigenous accepting others cultures and values and be ready to change and be changed by the local cultures. Like the Bishops in Asia jointly affirmed their faith with the African colleagues in this clear statement,

The local church...is a church incarnate in the people. It is native, springing out of the local culture, with a reverence for ancient customs and traditions, speaking the local languages, dressed in local clothing, expressing immortal truths in the language that the common people can understand and love. The church must be local in its songs, in its way of life. As God became one of us-to make us his own-his church in Asia must be Asian, like the Asians in all things except sin²⁵.

²⁵ Asian Bishops, as quoted by Bede McGregor, "commentary on *Evangeliu Nuntiandi*," in *Doctrine and life*, special issue (march/April, 1977)

CHAPTER FIVE: AN EVALUATION OF THE AFRICAN CONCEPT OF GOD

5.0 Introduction

We have looked at the three theological views and their evaluation on the grounds of the Baganda in Uganda and we have realized that there is something missing with it to make the gospel contextual in Africa. Even professor Mbiti who seems to have done so much has not been able to sufficiently make Christianity incarnate in the lives and minds of the African peoples. In this chapter therefore, we will look at my proposed approach to contextual theology religious pluralism, cultural differences. In here, we will see the relevance of contextualizing the gospel and how it can best be done; we will look at the question of revelation and faith/religion, the phenomenon of culture and how they influence ones faith. We will discuss how cultures determine the way someone worships God and how they can prevent someone from accepting another religion. The concept of revelation of God, how he reveals himself to people, to whom he reveals, how to identify Godly revelation and the like, will also be dealt with in this chapter in our bid for contextual theology among the Baganda in Uganda. As such, we will find out that it is only contextual theology that can help people of diverse backgrounds and cultures to practice Christianity in a way that suits them.

It is true as already seen above that Christianity is accepted by many Africans as one their religions and indeed many would want to be referred to as a ‘Christian’ whether he is one or not. David Barrett has demonstrated this through his statistical study of the remarkable church growth in Africa where he affirms that ‘Christianity has been accepted by Africans from the earliest days as a genuine religion, with roots firmly in African soil’ (Barrett 1973:168). But the manner of expressing the gospel varies from people to people and culture to culture. The manner of worship, the expression of praise and gratitude, the ways of communicating the gospel will also differ just as we have seen difference between the worship of the western Christians and the African traditionalists.

Today, there is a cry in African for a genuine authentic African Christianity and expression of worship; one which is truly rooted in the lives of the indigenous peoples. As we have seen above, in order to avoid and prevent concubinage Christianity in Africa,

there is need for the re expression of Christianity in Africa. The gospel ought to be expressed in a culturally relevant way such that people can grasp it. There is also a very serious need for the recognition of people's belief systems and their daily way of living in our bid for the contextualization of the gospel. The gospel must become alive in Africa to the people by clothing in Biblical message and Christianity in general in an African culture and life-ways.

5.1 The question of faith and belief

While evaluating the African concept of God, I would like to discuss the phenomenon of faith and belief, examining how it affects people's ways of worship, understanding and knowledge. In Biblical terms, "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1 KJV)". It is the phenomena of faith that has led to differences in religions and the divisions and sects even among people of the same religion. It is also the main reason why people refuse to take on another religion even when convinced about the truth in the other religion. People can develop faith in something because of experience, influence from the community, one's culture and personal choice due to say, education and knowledge. On addition, like according to Martin Luther, faith is not a human achievement, nor our effort or merit. Faith is like an empty hand that has nothing to give, but only to receive what God gives him by grace (Strohl1962:184).

Every individual has something he believes in and when it comes to religious matters, people tend to follow a religion that is next to them, something that is within their cultural arenas. It is therefore important for missionaries to be ware that they do not preach the gospel/ their religions to a people who are willing to take on what they say. It is very difficult to change one's belief; it really takes the grace of God. Faith/belief is something natural, something within us, it is like love. Changing religions is not like changing clothes, it takes an inner choice, and it is a gradual process. Take for instance a Moslem or Hindu or African traditionalist being told to change his religion for another. Faith can also be enhanced by the community whereby in some places, people are forced to accept a particular religion, others are afraid of being despised by others in the same area.

The Biblical understanding of faith is that of commitment and the resulting salvation. Faith in Jesus Christ, following him, accepting his witness to himself, accepting him as the savior and his power brings salvation. This is the same thing among all traditions, people believe that by having faith in something and doing according to its commandments or rules, they will be saved on the last day. Indeed to some traditions, someone receives salvation on death if he has been doing good on earth.

It is therefore very important that the missionaries and any intending evangelist to put into consideration the aspect of faith on the side of the receiver. As already seen, faith is something that is intimate to a person, what someone believes in and cannot easily be changed. Everyone can agree with me that it is because of this aspect that Christianity in Africa, though seen on the surface as a major religion claiming many millions of people, but what is done outside the church can only be explained by the person concerned. It may be said that Christianity was equated, in the minds of these Africans, with western education and civilization which could be embraced intellectually without existential involvement. In other words, the word did not become flesh in the African environment and consequently the eternal Christ could not be existentially apprehended.

Many people accepted Christianity because of fear; Christianity was presented to them with aspects of fear, indeed, the current preachers and evangelists impart that fear among people that if they do not accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, they will go to hell. Yet they also believe that if they do not do according to the demands of their traditional spirits, they will be punished, by the gods. As such they have to play a double game to appease both. Hillman contends that, “Your role as a missionary should be to present the tenets of your faith to the other but not to ‘crucify/condemn’ their beliefs. Just present to them and the choice should be theirs either to accept your faith or remain with their own. Freedom is a human right which should be upheld even when preaching to someone of a different faith from yours. “The key to a proper understanding of the Christian world mission is Jesus of Nazareth, particularly how his humanity and the events of his life are interpreted” (Hillman 1993:30).

5.2 The cultural aspect

All people have a particular culture to which they belong. It could be a group culture, community, continental or national or even personal. An individual can belong to different cultures at a particular time. It for instance difficult to tell which culture the Kampala youth belong. Many of whom have copied the American culture but they still practice it in the Ugandan way. They have adopted it but they do not belong to them. They still remain Ugandans. Just like the phenomenon of faith as seen above, culture is equally an important aspect in one's life. Every culture comes with its own demands, rules, forces, fears and threats or punishments. The African culture for instance presents a lot of fear among the adherents. Failure to do according to the cultural demands, automatically leads to punishment, misfortunes and can escalate to the whole society in question.

Peoples understanding of culture differs from society to society²⁶. Indeed, in common usage, many people tend to associate culture to religion. People tend to dress, behave, talk and interact according to their culture and this is also can portray their religion. Say, for instance, Moslem women dress in long dresses covering their heads and many Christian preachers tend to dress decently especially in coats and ties. Moslems do not eat pork yet Christians do. We will accept that most of these practices came from their cultural arenas. This means that the culture of a people embraces its economics, politic, legal systems, and all the other social systems and arrangements setup to ensure the welfare of the community. More all in Africa like in Buganda, this is inseparable from religion. Religion is a regular accompaniment in a person's life.

Culture according to Bennett's definition 'the learned and shared patterns of beliefs, behaviors and values of groups of interacting people' (1998:3) assures us that culture is learned through interaction with others, your community members, your peers, friends and family members and this is also the case with religious practice. It is developed from our routines either as a family or group of people. Geographical location has a great influence on ones faith, what religion he will follow as well as the culture he

²⁶(McGavran 1974:38): Cultures comprise tens of thousands of components. Each is an extraordinary complex aggregate of many different ways of thinking, feeling, speaking, and acting. Most of these ways are determined by the climate and geography, the number of people who live in each square mile, and the state of the technology.

will be identified with. In the same vein, Paden adds that, interpretations of religious diversity have been conditioned by both geography and psychology. If ones horizon is only the Mediterranean, then the religions of that area will set the boundaries for comparison. We compare ourselves with what is visibly around us or with what-in our perception-went before us (Paden 1988:15).

The cultural aspect has been one of the contending issues throughout ages in the area of contextual theology. Many ideas and questions have been raised as to whether culture is religion, whether culture affects religious practice, and how culture affects the individual believer. Many Christian missionaries did not put this aspect into consideration and as such the consequences for the failure of recognizing other people's culture, have been passed on to this generation especially in the African context. This question has always been a matter of central concern among Christians today. What is the proper attitude toward the world, toward other cultures, other religious traditions and their adherents? Should the posture the church assumes relative to other faiths be one of respect, recognition, and conciliation or of repudiation, rejection, and confrontation? Should Christianity seek to transform other religions from within or attempt to displace them from without? Should it ally and link itself to or set itself off in isolation from them?

Something interesting is that even Jesus Christ declared it that he did not come to do away with our cultures/laws but to fulfill it, meaning that cultures are central phenomena to ones faith. Like Dupuis reminds us that, what should be noted immediately is the intention of continuity and discontinuity in the attitude and the religious design of Jesus. He does not intend to overcome Judaism and replace it by setting up a "new religion." what he seeks is to establish adoration of God "in spirit and truth" (John 4:23) by all Human Beings (Dupuis 2002:20). I believe all people who can worship God In spirit and in truth and follows the ways of the Lord will attain eternal life. What evangelists should emphasize is the core of the gospel and how it can be made indigenous to the people not how people live and their cultures.

On addition to the above, I would say that even Jesus was aware of the cultural differences and was in a way warning the missionaries (Christians) to beware of other people's cultures, not to condemn, criticize or rebuke but to correct, and preach the

gospel according to context. If we are to follow the way our Lord Jesus Christ led his life on earth and how he preached the gospel, he encouraged all people of all cultures and backgrounds to worship God. Perhaps Dupuis is right when he notes that, with regard to the parable of the great banquet, (Luke 14:15-24, Mt 22:1-14)... The participation of all in the banquet symbolizes the participation of all in God's salvation. For Jesus, therefore, the faith and conversion that lead to salvation do not entail moving to any different religion, but mean conversion to the God of life, love, and freedom, that is, to the God of the reign of God, of all Human Beings. The banquet becomes a banquet for the people—even the outcasts and foreigners (Dupuis 2002:23). Hillman advises that, "What God has done through Jesus Christ once and for all in the historico-cultural terms of one particular people, the church must do among all peoples who, with their richly varied experiences and myriad cultural achievements, stand symbolically for, and indeed constitute—today, yesterday and tomorrow—the whole of humankind in its spatio-temporal extension" (Hillman 1993:32).

Christianity also is faced with this cultural challenge. Christianity was launched within the Greco-Roman culture. The test for Christianity is thus whether it should survive in the same cultural background in all areas and to all peoples or it will be acculturated and polarized by the multitude of the different cultures it faces. As Christianity flows into new cultures at home and abroad in Africa, it has to make adjustments which accord with the plain meaning of the scriptures. In connection with this, Wolfhart has asserted, 'The question concerning the truth of the Christian faith cannot be answered by the mere assertion that Jesus Christ is the truth, but only with regard to the whole of the reality that we experience. Only in this way is the unity of the truth, which is essential to it, guaranteed. If the Christian proclamation should abandon the consideration of the totality of reality experienced by its hearers, then it would neglect 'Christian solidarity with the godless', and could no longer raise a well founded claim to be speaking about the absolute truth. As a result, the Christian proclamation would gradually become fit for display in a museum' (Wolfhart 1971:2).

However, such adjustments should be made in harmony with what the scriptures teach. As it is very difficult to differentiate culture from religion, Christianity in Africa, should adapt to the cultural setup of the Africans. But this also poses a threat to

Christianity because the Christian values might be distorted with the many differences in cultures where many of the cultural values do not match those of the Christian tradition. On the other hand, people might resort to syncretism if they are both to work. McGavran warns that Christianity must object to any adjustment to a culture which will keep its adherents from sharing in the best knowledge, the best religion, and the most powerful tools available to men today. The Biblical principle that we are all one in Christ must be preserved in making adjustments to culture (McGavran 1974:22).

5.3 The phenomenon of revelation

Revelation is the act of disclosing, making something obvious and clearly understood through active or passive communication. In this case, revelation has to do with God making himself known to man. This has been a point of tension throughout history among the world religions as to whom does God reveal and how, what shows God has revealed etc. as we have seen above, to Karl Barth, revelation is only from God through Jesus Christ and Christianity is the only divinely revealed religion which is spotless and without blemish. Indeed, most Christians believe that the Biblical scriptures contain all revealed truth necessary for salvation. It is largely due to such assertions that all trials towards contextualization of Christianity in Africa have been in vain. This is because, where the Africans (as seen with Idowu) believe that God reveals to all people differently and that he revealed to the Africans through their gods and the divinities, Christianity says, that is all useless. But if we are to make Christianity African, incarnate and local, such thoughts about who and whom is revelation meant for should not be emphasized.

I would like to emphasize that revelation is something personally²⁷ experienced. This experience can be shared with others and others as well can experience the same. Bouquet noted that, it is only our experience that can interpret what theologians have called revelation, and test its validity. Much as we may wish to, we can no more eliminate experience than we can jump out of our skin (1933:29). Let us appreciate all

²⁷ Idowu (1973:55), the significant point here is that revelation presupposes personal communication between the living being who reveals and the living person to whom revelation is made. It would appear that man is a necessity in this situation; for, without a personal mind to appreciate and apprehend revelation, the whole process would be futile.

people the way they are and accept that God, who create them all, different from us, worshipping in a way different from us and having a different culture can also practice Christianity in their own revealed way that can make them feel at home and that can make Christianity natural to them instead of just throwing something foreign to them.

I think the point of revelation cannot take us anywhere but how best we can practice Christianity. We have seen above that most theologians are emphasizing useless things which instead lead to divisions and widening the gap between Traditional religions and Christianity than emphasizing the unity and proper approach to understanding each other. Having seen what the Ganda believe about God as a loving, all knowing, mighty God, the creator who s always with them and they have to give their worship to him, Christianity ought to enter through that door, encouraging them to practice Christianity as though God have revealed to them a *Lubaale*/god/spirit called Jesus Christ through whom they can approach God. As such, Christianity will become incarnate in Buganda and the people will feel free to worship God through Jesus Christ.

One other important point to put into consideration is that the God worshipped by the Christians in Europe and America is the same God worshipped in Buganda though he is approached through different means. The fact that there exist differences in cultures and what is emphasized in these different localities, God could have revealed Himself to these people in those different ways. Idowu makes some important statement for us here, he argues, we find that in every age and generation, there is a direct contact of God with the Human soul, the personal awareness of God on the part of man through God's own initiative. What man knows of God what he discovers about God, comes as a result of this self-disclosure. Man may of course, by his own rational mind interpret what is revealed to him and he may rationalize it. But first of all, he has the truth revealed to him in ways which he may be able to describe or not (1973:56). The point then is to make the gospel universal, making what is revealed to a European Christian make sense to an African and vice versa. The similarities should be emphasized at the expense of the differences through a dialogical understanding. In this case then, as we have see that there are areas in the practice of African Christianity that ought to be changed by western Christians and missionaries and also western Christianity should be ready to accept the

cultural differences and as such suit properly within the African setting otherwise, there might be a clash of civilizations in Africa.

The reason as why there are many denominations within Christianity today is largely due to this issue of revelation. Many of those so-called pastors claim that God has revealed to them about something and that they should establish their own church, fine, the many different churches could not be a problem but what is emphasized and preached there should correspond to the universal teachings of Christianity. If an African Christian for instance claims to be a Christian on Sundays but in times of crisis²⁸ running to consult the *Jaja's/Lubaale's*, then, such practices should be condemned, criticized and rooted out (Mbiti uses the term, rotten practices of ATR) by western Christianity and be changed.

On the other hand, this phenomenon of revelation is very difficult to grasp. it is such a difficult phenomenon to understand. Every tradition claims to have been revealed²⁹ by God. Unfortunately, there is no particular way to define what has been revealed by God and what is from man. I think this point should be left to God or else something should be put in place that determines what is revealed from God, if such is done I believe even the current looming pastors and false prophets can be dealt a way with. Kato warns that, Christianity cannot claim monopoly of revelation or salvation, some claim though it may be glibly referred to as being unique (Kato 1975:51). The ultimacy of the Christian revelation can be illustrated, not as a super naturalistic presupposition, but only if it can result from an unprejudiced understanding of the total process of faith and understanding. Christians should tell the world about the truth in their claimed revelation and if those who see the truth in it can take accept it. As I have said that the question of faith and choice of religion should be left to the individual actor who should choose according to his faith internal, no one should be coursed to change his faith, this should be done by the individual himself. He should choose by himself and as

²⁸ Idowu 1973:206, Every African, may wish to be regarded as connected with one or the other of the two 'fashionable' religions, most are at heart still attached t their own indigenous beliefs. It is now becoming clear to the most optimistic of Christian evangelists that the main problem o f the church in Africa today is the divided loyalties of most of her members between Christianity with its western categories and practices on one hand, and the traditional religion on the other.

²⁹ Bouquet 1933:85, Religion and revelation condition one another; as God by revelation becomes more intelligible, man in religion becomes more intelligent; the objective content further develops the subjective capacity.

we have seen like among the Baganda, the society can have a great influence of one's beliefs. You will find that a group of people living in a particular locality have something similar they believe in. People should stop judging others on outward expressions; a person may believe in something different yet practices another thing, Christians then should be careful when judging others on grounds of revelation. Perhaps the fore fathers of Christianity would have been right when they declared,

But if some men do not know the father of our lord Jesus Christ, yet acknowledge the Creator, or seek the unknown God in shadows and images, then God himself is not far from such men, since he gives life and inspiration to all (Acts 17:25-28), and the savior wills that all men should be saved (1 Tim 2:4). Those while guiltlessly ignorant of Christ's gospel and of his church, sincerely seek God and are brought by the influence of grace to perform his will as known by the dictates of conscience, can achieve eternal salvation (*De ecclesia*, 11.16).

My point here is that Christianity should acknowledge ATR and other traditions, accept their views and help them perfect what they have in a Christian manner. Am not saying that all religions are right, but all adherents of any particular religion claim to be following the truth. We have seen above that the Traditional Africans believe in a powerful all knowing creator who can be reached through the ancestors. Christianity should thus help them know and accept Christ and use Christ in place of the ancestors to reach God.

CHAPTER SIX: GENERAL CONCLUSION

It is impossible to accomplish any project without any huddles. But through them all, I have been able to accomplish this thesis within a very limited time.

The main focus of the study was to analyze the concept of contextualization of the Christian concept of God in Uganda particularly among the Baganda tribe. It was discussed in the thesis that the first Christian missionaries either distorted or did not fully understand the gospel of Jesus Christ and many of them were not very prepared for evangelization in Africa. Some of them had their other intentions of having a share of the colonies yet those who aimed at mission work could not interpret the gospel well to fit the African culture. As a consequence many Africans could not accept Christianity and even those who accepted would not meet the western cultural requirements that were brought with Christianity. We found out that many of them (Ganda) are Christians on Sundays and during fellowships, have Christian names, but during times of misfortunes, sicknesses and other cultural matters, then turn back to their traditional religions.

The reasons for the above we found out, is that the gospel was not made indigenous, local and the missionaries did not consider the African context, culture and ways of living while preaching the gospel. Couples with illiteracy and belief in superstition, many of the Africans could not interpret the Bible for themselves; they looked at the Whiteman, the educated, as having been endowed with all knowledge. They thus followed blindly without question.

The African culture, language and all their social systems were to be changed and a new kind of life in Christianity was introduced to them. They were made to worship in foreign languages like Latin and they had to sing foreign hymns.

The first chapter comprised of the general introduction, the motivation for the study, the scope of the study and the disposition for the thesis. The case study of Buganda was used and a field work was carried out among the Ganda. The information that was obtained from the field formed a great part of chapters three, four and five.

In chapter two, we have also looked at the theological views of Mbiti, Idowu and Karl Barth. Their views were presented in detail; those that were in line with the thesis. These theologians were chosen among all the rest because their views seemed relevant

for the topic in discussion and also the space and time could not allow for a discussion of all theological views and theologians. On addition, their views were particularly relevant for the concept of contextualization of Christianity in this case study of the Baganda and Africa in general.

Chapter three entailed a presentation of the Baganda. We saw their social, cultural, religious and economic organization. We also looked at their traditional religion and the extent of Christianity among the Baganda and how it is practiced and understood. This presentation depended on the research carried out among the Baganda and also my personal experience with them. This gave us a background for the next chapters, four and five on how to analyze the theological views in chapter two and hence propose the most appropriate view in chapter five.

Chapter four was an elucidation of the theologians' views that had been presented in chapter two and this was done in relation to chapter three-the general understanding of the Baganda as well as the normative opinion of the end of the thesis, that's what ought to be the proper method of approaching and practicing Christianity in Baganda.

Chapter five carried my personal opinion on the whole topic of contextual theology among the Baganda in Uganda. We looked at the question of faith, trust and belief, the phenomenon of culture and revelation and how all these factors affect an individual in his religious life. We realized that religion is more of a personal affair than a community matter and as such, faith which is unseen, eternal and internal is at work than the physical outlook. An individual faces many forces as he tries to practice his faith. But we also realized that individuals practice religion in a social context, through interaction. The community also contributes to ones formulation and practice of his religion. All the above factors put together helps one reach his goal. Force cannot make one practice religion and those who are forced to do so may either play a double game or do it for the sake of it. We saw that because Christianity was forced to the Africans by the missionaries, many of them just accepted it but would return to their ATR in times of disaster and misfortunes.

We realized that religion is inseparable from hermeneutics. All religious symbols, literature and rituals have to be interpreted according to the context and by the individual in interaction. If they are interpreted according to their cultures and setup, the gospel then

becomes local, indigenous and personal than foreign and this helps one understand the situations and God personally.

We have seen that the needs and problems of the people are essentially the same but what differs is their expression of those needs and this is heightened by the differences in cultures and beliefs. The teachings of the scriptures and Christianity should be applied and related to the particular cultural context (Buganda) in which the African church finds herself. In this sense many theologians have wrestled with different kinds of problems but the problem of making an African Christianity is still a nail in the head. We have realized that Africa must take the unchanging 'truth' of Christianity and apply it to her needs, and in this sense, develop an African Christian theology where people will be able to worship the creator in understandable ways, using their language, traditional clothes, cultures and ways of life.

While finishing this paper, I would like to end with this statement which will sum up all that this thesis was all about,

A mixture of religions destroys the concreteness which gives it its dynamic power. The victory of one religion would impose a particular religious answer on all other particular answers. The end of the religious age-one has already spoken of the end of the Christian or the protestant age is an impossible concept. The religious principle cannot come to an end. For the question of the ultimate meaning of life cannot be silenced as long as men are men. Religion cannot come to an end, and a particular religion will be lasting to the degree in which it negates itself as a religion. Thus Christianity will be a bearer of the religious answer as long as it breaks through its own particularity
(Tillich 1980:120-121).

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Appendix A: Interview Guides

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR KAGOYA MIRIAM ON THE TOPIC, *CONTEXTUALIZING THE CHRISTIAN CONCEPT OF GOD AMONG THE BAGANDA IN UGANDA*

Note: Dear respondent, this interview is part of a research to investigate about the above-mentioned topic. You are therefore kindly requested to respond to these questions as honestly as you can. Your responses will be used for the purpose of this research only and will be treated confidentially.

AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS LEADERS

1. Name.....
2. Age.....
3. Religious affiliation.....
4. Profession.....
5. Address.....
6. Education.....
7. Marital status.....
8. How would you define religion?
9. What are the teachings of your religion?
10. What do you know about the teachings of Christianity?
11. Do you think they have some similarity with the Christian teachings?
12. What do the Christians say about your beliefs?
13. Do you think it is possible to incorporate those beliefs with the Christian beliefs?
14. In what ways do you think Christianity and ATR can work together without conflicting one another?
15. Would you like to become a Christian?
16. Give reasons for your answer.
17. How do you think we can make Jesus African and so Africanize Christianity to suit your beliefs?
18. Do you think practicing Christianity in the African context can distort ATR beliefs?

**INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR KAGOYA MIRIA ON THE TOPIC,
*CONTEXTUALIZING THE CHRISTIAN CONCEPT OF GOD AMONG THE
BAGANDA IN UGANDA***

Note: Dear respondent, this interview is part of a research to investigate about the above-mentioned topic. You are therefore kindly requested to respond to these questions as honestly as you can. Your responses will be used for the purpose of this research only and will be treated confidentially.

CHRISTIAN PASTORS

1. Name.....
2. Age.....
3. Religious affiliation.....
4. Profession.....
5. Address.....
6. Education.....
7. Marital status.....
8. How would you define religion?
9. What are the teachings of your religion?
10. What view do you have about ATR?
11. What do the Traditionalists say about Christianity?
12. Do you think there are any teachings of ATR that are similar to the Christian beliefs?
13. Do you have some Christians in your church who practice ATR along side Christianity?
14. If there are any of such Christians, what do you hope to do or what have you done about it?
15. What do you think are the reasons why those Christians visit the shrines (worship the African gods) yet they are Christians?
16. What do you think can be done to make Christianity sink deep into the hearts and minds of the African peoples?
17. Do you think it is possible to practice Christianity in the African context?

18. How do you think we can best do this?
19. Do you think practicing Christianity in the African context can distort the Christian doctrines?

**INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR KAGOYA MIRIA ON THE TOPIC,
*CONTEXTUALIZING THE CHRISTIAN CONCEPT OF GOD AMONG THE
BAGANDA IN UGANDA***

Note: Dear respondent, this interview is part of a research to investigate about the above-mentioned topic. You are therefore kindly requested to respond to these questions as honestly as you can. Your responses will be used for the purpose of this research only and will be treated confidentially.

PROFESSORS

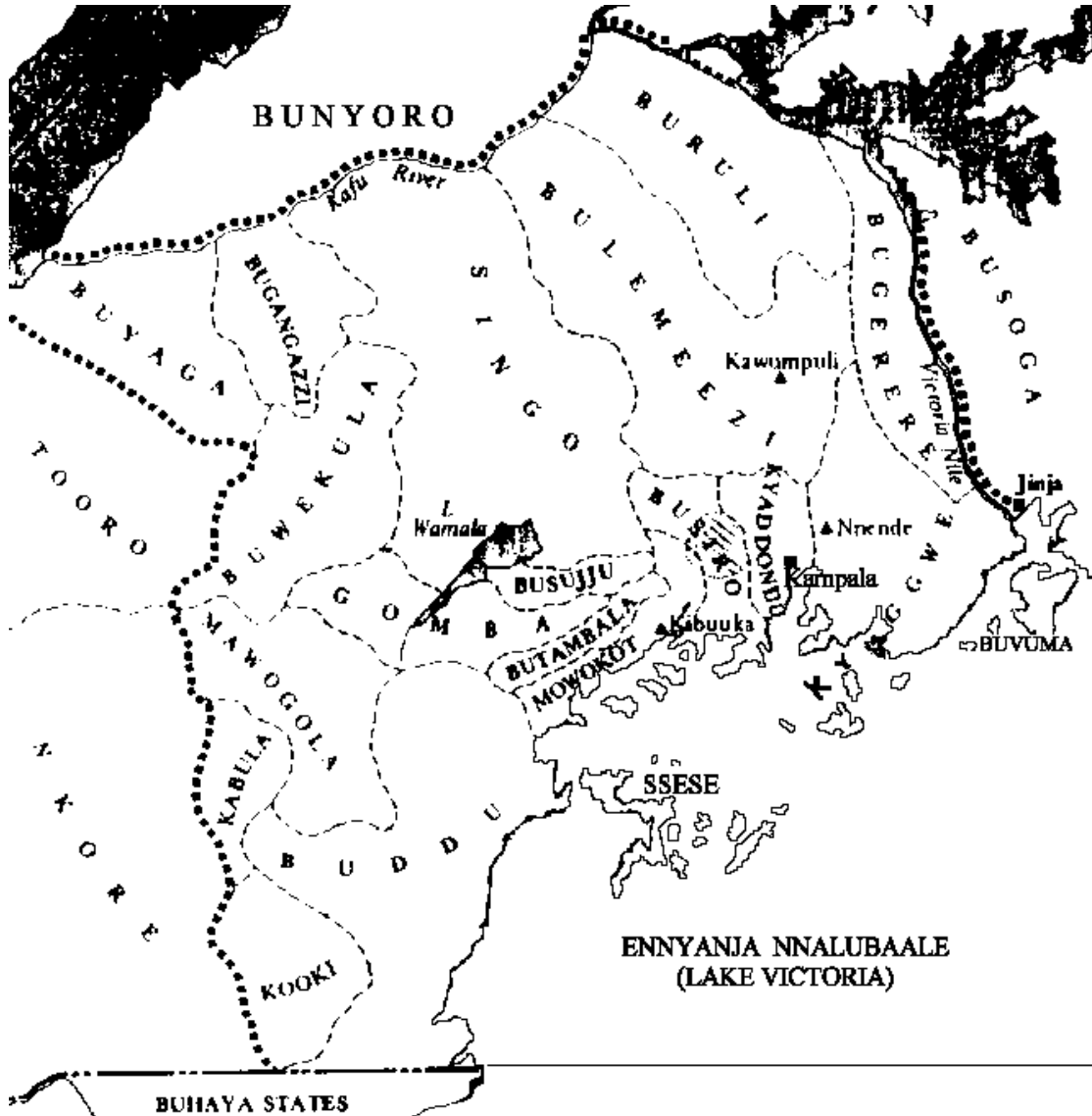
1. Name.....
2. Age.....
3. Religious affiliation.....
4. Profession.....
5. Address.....
6. Education.....
7. Marital status.....
8. What subjects do you teach?
9. How would you define religion?
10. What are the teachings of ATR?
11. What are the teachings of Christianity?
12. Do you think it is possible to have an African Christianity?
13. Do you think it is possible to practice Christianity in the African context without distorting its doctrines or the ATR doctrines?
14. How can we best incorporate the ATR teachings with those of Christianity?
15. Do you think some people in Uganda (Buganda) practice Christianity and ATR as well?
16. Give reasons for your answer.
17. Why do you think some people could be practicing both religions?
18. What do you think can be done to deal with this issue?

Appendix B: Map of Uganda



Map of Uganda showing the different regions and their counties. Buganda is located in the central region.

Appendix C: Map showing Buganda region



This is the map of Buganda region showing the counties and Part of Lake Victoria. The capital city, Kampala is found in Buganda.

Appendix D: Location of Buganda on the Ugandan map



The red shading shows the location of Buganda on the Uganda Map. Part of the region is covered by Lake Victoria and River Nile.

Appendix E: Photograph of a traditional Buganda shrine



This is how a traditional Baganda shrine looks. It is always built behind the house. They are normally grass thatched and the people never use shoes while in the shrine for it is considered a Holy ground-like in ancient Jewish traditions.

Appendix F: Preparing for sacrifices



The children taking chicken for slaughter to the gods-*Lubaales* to appease them, for blessings.

Appendix G: Photograph of interview with a respondent



This photograph was taken in July 2006 during my research carried out in Uganda. In this photograph, I was interviewing one of the professors (in Religious Studies) at Makerere University, Kampala.

Appendix H: A traditional Medicine man inside *Esaabo*/shrine



This photograph was also taken during my research among the Baganda in July 2006. He is one of the Traditional Healers (*omusawo omuganda*). He was in his shrine (*Esaabo*) and in it are traditional medicines.