

**THE IMPACT OF THEOLOGICAL AND
CULTURAL VIEWS ON THE EXPERIENCES OF
CLERGYWOMEN IN SELECTED DIOCESES OF
THE CHURCH OF THE PROVINCE OF KENYA "**

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B.ED ARTS

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF
PHILOSOPHY IN RELIGION**

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ELDORET, KENYA

OCTOBER 1996

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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to assess the influence of theological and cultural views on the experiences of clergywomen in the Church of the Province of Kenya (C.P.K.) dioceses of Maseno South, Maseno West and Maseno North. It further seeks to determine how these views have influenced both their role as clergywomen and their relationships with clergymen and the laity in the dioceses.

The study is based on the hypothesis that the roles of clergywomen differ from those of clergymen because of gender and that theological and cultural views about women in these dioceses have the greatest impact on the roles and the relationships of clergywomen in the dioceses. If both hypotheses are correct, then it would imply that the ordination of clergywomen in the dioceses has not been taken as seriously as that of clergymen and the present clergywomen need either to surrender to the theological and cultural dictates and withdraw from priesthood, or to make a concerted effort to be accepted.

This study is descriptive and analytical. It provides an ethnographic background of the clergywomen under study and the history of the ordination debate in the Anglican Communion with particular reference to the debate in the selected dioceses, with a view to establishing the various views raised for and against the ordination of women. In addition, the work provides an interpretation of data collected from field research. The fieldwork involved oral interviews and administration of questionnaires among clergywomen, a sample of clergymen and the laity in the dioceses, selected by a random stratified method of sampling.

One finding of the study is that clergywomen are comparatively small in number in comparison to clergymen in the selected dioceses, and the ordination of women to priesthood is relatively slow with very low chances that women will be ordained in the near future. A second finding is that the disparity of the clergy in terms of gender renders a comparison of their roles difficult. However, it was found that a majority of clergywomen work in para-church institutions as opposed to parishes and that some clergywomen who work in para-church institutions have a preference for their current jobs. The main finding is that contemporary issues in the church and society have a significant influence over the experiences of clergywomen rather than cultural and theological issues. This implies that problems related to the priesthood of women in the dioceses cannot solely be attributed to the theological and the cultural background of the dioceses.

The main conclusion of the study is that clergywomen are generally accepted in the dioceses and should not feel inhibited by persistent theological and cultural views that are often expressed by clergymen and the laity.

The study recommends that clergywomen should be more assertive in their roles and face the challenges of priesthood with confidence. One way of best achieving this is for them to pursue further education to enhance their chances of promotion in both administrative and clerical offices. A further recommendation is that the dioceses embark on an education and communication programme among the clergy and the laity to portray a positive image of woman in an attempt to eradicate theological and cultural views that hinder women from participating in church life as leaders.