A missional-Theological Response to Environmental Crisis in Malawi.

By
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Title

A Missional Theological Response to Environmental Crisis in Malawi
Declaration

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Date: April 2022
Abstract

The title of this study is A Missional Theological Response to Environmental Crisis in Malawi. The title considers the contextual nature of the term mission and the need to understand the position of the church given the theologies of the other faiths in its context as they all seek to respond to ecological degradation and crises. The title generalizes mission as the activity of God intended to save all the people and the universe. Thus, the adjectival term missional is not limited to the church alone. To the contrary, Warneck argues the church alone has a mission because it has Christ. While Hoekendijk opposes Warneck and declares the church is only a cog in the wheel that drives mission. Bosch asserts that the church is only the servant under the Cross of Jesus in God’s plan for salvation for people and all creation. Thus, a successful missional theological response to environmental crisis should consider adopting a multidisciplinary, multisectoral and multidimensional approach.

The study aims to uncover gaps in the churches’ practice and actions towards environmental care in Malawi. It seeks to recommend how a missional theological response could assist in filling such gaps in the challenges of environmental degradation and crisis. The study argues that a missional theological response of the church, embedded in missio Dei (Stewardship, Diakonia, Koinonia), can influence church Martyria (witness), stewardship evangelism, and ensure full participation of all stakeholders in Earth keeping. The study follows volatile weather conditions, global warming, and prevalent climate change events in Malawi.

Although churches have always responded strongly to the socio-political, progress, and development issues in Malawi as a dimension of their mission for many decades, sources in the public domain show no significant church contribution to the challenge of environmental degradation. The study investigates factors influencing the church’s response and involvement in the environmental crisis. The study queries: What is the missional theological church response to the challenge of the crisis in Malawi? Have the churches been part of the solution or the problem? What resources do the churches have to respond to the crisis? To what extent do the mainline churches consider environmental care and therefore have a missional policy, theology, dogma, doctrine, or budget for the environment? How do the mainline churches see the link between mission and environment?

The study’s objectives include defining concepts related to environmental degradation and Earth keeping in Malawi. To explore and outline the main issues associated with the crisis in Malawi. The study investigates the causes of the current environmental conditions and their impact on society. The study examines the apparent responses of the churches to the crisis in Malawi. Finally, the study
engages with the research findings, concludes, and makes a recommendation in light of the environment in Malawi.

The study uses Bosch’s concept of *missio Dei* as the main framework, and Guder’s concept of missional expands the discussion to explain the churches’ contextual concerns in society. The study uses a mixed-method which is sometimes known as methodological triangulation. The actual methods triangulated are self-administered interviews, discussion groups, participant observation, and participant participation. The data collected was manually processed using themes and codes to obtain a numerical picture of the research. There were some challenges the study encountered as limitations, most of which are associated with finances and research funding, time management due to Covid-19 and its related effects. Another challenge regards terminologies on the terms mission and missional. Both terms were understood and used in the context of the Chichewa concept of “Utumiki” (serviceability or servanthood). Therefore, both terms are engaged in the contexts like; “Utumiki in Koinonia,” “Utumiki in Martyria,” “Utumiki in Leitourgia, Utumiki in Evangelism,” and “Utumiki in Stewardship.”

The study covering seven chapters intends to fill the gap in the literature, particularly concerning contextual faith action and practice (missional) as a successful response to the challenge of environmental crisis. This study enables a sustainable ecclesiastically coordinated contextual faith in ecological care and crisis management. All stakeholders are thus, gathered by the church to identify and address challenges brought by warming, climate change, biodiversity degradation and together improvise for the common goals and actions to their environment. The study outcome indicates the potential of the church to reverse ecological and biodiversity challenges.

While it could bring all stakeholders together, the church faces internal conflicts, political and geopolitical influence, institutionalism, identity, power, and authority. The church in Malawi is therefore not entirely missional. Nevertheless, the church’s position in society provides opportunities for a collaborative response to contextual challenges. The church is trusted and is the last hope for Malawi society to deliver a successful missional theological response to the challenges of the environmental crisis for a sustainable life and livelihood of the Earth and all that dwells on it. Until the church in Malawi is fully missional theological, the ecological crisis will continue to remain a challenge for society. The church should engage a multisectoral, interdisciplinary, and multidimensional approach to contextual issues. The study presents the (TAP) to ensure a balanced missional theological response. The TAP explains how the church could bring all stakeholders to address challenges in the ecological system.
Opsomming

Die titel van hierdie studie is A Missional Theological Response to Environmental Crisis in Malawi. Die titel oorweeg die kontekstuele aard van die term sending en die behoefte om die posisie van die kerk te verstaan gegee die teologieë van die ander gelowe in sy konteks, aangesien hulle almal poog om te reageer op ekologies agteruitgang en krisisse. Die titel veralgemeen sending as die aktiwiteit van God wat bedoel is om al die mense en die heelal te red. Die adjektiewe term missionaal is dus nie tot die kerk alleen beperk nie. Intendeel, Warneck voer aan die kerk alleen het 'n missie omdat dit Christus het. Terwyl Hoekendijk Warneck teëstaan en verklaar die kerk is net 'n rat aan die wiel wat sending aandryf. Bosch beweer dat die kerk slegs die dienaar onder die Kruis van Jesus is in God se plan vir redding vir mense en die hele skepping. Dus, 'n suksesvolle missionale teologiese reaksie op omgewingskrisis moet dit oorweeg om 'n multidissiplinêre, multisectorale en multidimensionele benadering aan te neem.

Die studie het ten doel om gapings in die kerke se praktyk en optrede ten opsigte van omgewingsorg in Malawi te ontbloot. Dit poog om aan te beveel hoe 'n missionale teologiese reaksie kan help om sulke leemtes in die uitdagings van omgewingsagteruitgang en krisis te vul. Die studie voer aan dat 'n missionale teologiese reaksie van die kerk, ingebed in missio Dei (Rentmeesterskap, Diakonia, Koinonia), kerk Martyria (getuienis), rentmeesterskap evangelisasie kan beïnvloed, en volle deelname van alle belanghebbendes in aardbewaring kan verseker. Die studie volg wisselvallige weerstoestande, aardverwarming en klimaatsverandering.

Alhoewel kerke vir baie dekades nog altyd sterk gereageer het op die sosio-politieke, vooruitgang en ontwikkelingskwessies in Malawi as 'n dimensie van hul missie, toon bronne in die publieke domein geen noemenswaardige kerklike bydrae tot die uitdaging van omgewingsagteruitgang nie. Die studie onderzoek faktore wat die kerk se reaksie en betrokkenheid by die omgewingskrisis beïnvloed. Die studie vra: Wat is die missionale teologiese kerk se reaksie op die uitdaging van die krisis in Malawi? Was die kerke deel van die oplossing of die probleem? Watter hulpbronne het die kerke om op die krisis te reageer? In watter mate beskou die hooflynkerke omgewingsorg en het daarom 'n missionale beleid, teologie, dogma, leerstelling of begroting vir die omgewing? Hoe sien die hooflynkerke die verband tussen sending en omgewing?

Die studie se doelwitte sluit in die definisie van konsepte wat verband hou met omgewingsagteruitgang en aardbewaring in Malawi. Om die hoofkwessies wat met die krisis in Malawi geassosieer word, te verken en uiteen te sit. Die studie onderzoek die oorsake van die huidige omgewingstoestande en hul impak op die samelewings. Die studie onderzoek die oënskynlike reaksies van die kerk op die krisis in Malawi. Laastens, die studie betrek die navorsingsbevindings, sluit af en maak 'n aanbeveling in die lig van die omgewing in Malawi.

Die studie gebruik Bosch se konsep van missio Dei as die hoofraamwerk, en Guder se konsep van missionaal brei die bespreking uit om die kerk se kontekstuele bekommernisse in die samelewings te verduidelik. Die studie gebruik 'n gemengde metode wat soms as metodologiese triangulasie bekend staan. Die werklike metodes met getrianguleer word, is selfgeadministreerde onderhoude, besprekingsgroep, deelnemerwaarneming en deelnemerdeelname. Die data wat ingesamel is, is met die hand verwerk deur temas en kodes te gebruik om 'n numeriese beeld van die navorsing te verkry. Daar was 'n paar uitdagings wat die studie teëgekoms het as beperkings, waarvan die meeste
verband hou met finansies en navorsingsbefondsing, tydsbestuur as gevolg van Covid-19 en die verwante uitwerking daarvan. Nog 'n uitdaging is terminologieë oor die terme missie en missionaal. Beide terme is verstaan en gebruik in die konteks van die Chichewa-konsept van "Utumiki" (diensbaarheid of diensbaarheid). Daarom is beide terme betrokke by die kontekste soos; "Utumimiki in "Koinonia," "Utumiki in Martiria," "Utumiki in Leitourgia, Utumiki in Evangelisasie," en "Utumiki in Rentmeesterskap."

Die studie wat sewe hoofstukke dek, het ten doel om die leemte in die literatuur te vul, veral rakende kontekstuele geloofsaksie en praktyk (missionaal) as 'n suksesvolle reaksie op die uitdaging van omgewingskrisis. Hierdie studie maak 'n volhoubare kerklik gekoördineerde kontekstuele geloof in ekologiese sorg en krisisbestuur moontlik. Alle belanghebbendes word dus deur die kerk bymekaargemaak om uitdagings te identifiseer en aan te spreek wat deur verwarming, klimaatsverandering, agteruitgang van biodiversiteit gebring word en saam te improviseer vir die gemeenskaplike doelwitte en aksies vir hul omgewing. Die studie-uitkoms dui op die potensiaal van die kerk om ekologiese en biodiversiteitsuitdagings om te keer.

Alhoewel dit alle belanghebbendes bymekaar kan bring, staar die kerk interne konflikte, politieke en geopolitieke invloed, institusionalisme, identiteit, mag en gesag in die gesig. Die kerk in Malawi is dus nie heeltemal missionaal nie. Nietemin bied die kerk se posisie in die samelewing geleentheid vir 'n samewerkende reaksie op kontekstuele uitdagings. Die kerk word vertrou en is die laaste hoop vir die Malawiese samelewing om 'n suksesvolle missionale teologiese reaksie te lewer op die uitdagings van die omgewingskrisis vir 'n volhoubare lewe en bestaan van die Aarde en alles wat daarop woon. Totdat die kerk in Malawi ten volle missionaal teologies is, sal die ekologiese krisis steeds 'n uitdaging vir die samelewing bly. Die kerk behoort 'n multisektorale, interdissiplinêre en multidimensionele benadering tot kontekstuele kwessies te volg. Die studie bied die (TAP) aan om 'n gebalanceerde missionale teologiese reaksie te verseker. Die TAP verduidelik hoe die kerk alle belanghebbendes kan bring om uitdagings in die ekologiese stelsel aan te spreek.
Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to Hallice Dickson Pembamoyo, born on March 3, 2000, and died on May 27, 2012. Hallice, at a tender age, loved the natural environment and was always present to help dad cultivate the garden and harvest crops. Hallice, your love for the environment is always fresh and often strengthens us with the conservation of natural resources. May your soul and the souls of those who departed before you rest in peace and rise in everlasting glory.
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Figure.1 Map of Africa showing position of Malawi in the continent
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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACM Anglican Council in Malawi
ACSA Anglican Church of Southern Africa
AIDS Artificial Immunodeficiency Syndrome
BBC WST British Broadcasting Corporation World Service Trust
CADECOM Catholic Development Commission
CCAP ACM Anglican Council in Malawi
CPCA Church of the Province of Central Africa
CO² Carbon dioxide
CONGOMA Congress for Non-Governmental Organisations in Malawi
DC District Commissioner
EAD Environmental Affairs Department
ECM Episcopal Conference of Malawi
EU European Union
GDP Gross Domestic Product
GVH Group Village Headman
HIV Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IEA International Energy Agency
IPCC Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IPPG Institutions and Pro-Poor Growth
MAM Muslim Association in Malawi
MAM Muslim Association of Malawi
MCC Malawi Council of Churches
MDGs Millennium Development Goals
NAPA National Adaptation Program for Action
NASW National Association of Science Writers
NEAP National Environmental Action Plan
NEP National Environmental Policy
NEPAD New Partnership for Africa’s Development
NSO National Statistical Office
PUS Public Understanding of Science
PPP Private-Public Partnerships (Malawi government land redistribution)
PPP Plant Preserve Protect
SADC Southern African Development Community
SDA Seventh Day Adventist
T/A Traditional Authority
TAP Traditional religions Applied sciences and Permaculture
UK United Kingdom
UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WESM Wild Environmental Society of Malawi
WSSD World Summit on Sustainable Development
**Definition of selected terms in environment crisis**

**Access**

According to the Malawi National Environmental Act (MNEA 2017), the word access means “obtaining, possessing, and using biological and genetic resources conserved. Access includes obtaining traditional knowledge whether derived from products, intangible components or parts thereof for purposes of research, bioprospecting, conservation, industrial application or commercial use.”

**Biodiversity (biological diversity)**

The term “biological diversity means the variability among living organisms from all sources including terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecological systems and the ecological complexes of which they are part, and the term includes diversity within or between species and of ecosystems” (MNEA, 2017:5).

**Climate change**

Climate change is the change of weather conditions on land and in the atmosphere “…which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the atmosphere in addition to natural climate variability observed over a comparable period” (MNEA, 2017:6).

**Crisis**

In this research, the word crisis refers to a critical condition in the ecosystem, which (Conradie 2005:5) terms as the “perennial danger” hopeful emanating from human “…modernity’s dangerous preoccupation with homo faber.” Hefner (1993:37) states that crisis arises from “…the view of the human person as an agent of self-realization, an achiever, or a technological operator.…” Thus, the crisis is related in causes to human interaction with the biophysical environment. In other words, an ecological crisis occurs when changes to the setting of species or population are disturbed by mainly human actions, leading to a critical endangering of the situation or condition of plant and animal life.

**Degradation**

The word “degradation” in the Malawi National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP, 2006) describes the process in which the beauty or quality of nature is destroyed or spoiled. Environmental degradation, therefore, is the deterioration of biodiversity in an ecosystem through depletion contamination of natural resources such as air, water, trees, and soil, the destruction of ecosystems, and the extinction of the biodiversity species.
Deforestation

Deforestation refers to an act (FAO, 2013) of depleting forest cover to less than 10%. If the damage has not dropped to 10%, the forest cover change is named “forest degradation.” Deforestation is a “human-driven and natural loss of trees that often affects wildlife, ecosystems, weather patterns, and enhances climate change.”

Ecology

According to Larry Rasmussen, 1994, ecology refers to “the knowledge of the systematic interdependence of human and non-human upon which the life of the oikoumene (Earth household) depends” (cf. Wright, 1996; Rasmussen, 1994:118). In simple terms, ecology is the branch of biology dealing with the relations of organisms to one another and their physical surroundings as they share space and time on planet Earth. In other words, ecology studies the interaction between human and non-human beings in their environment.

Ecosystem

The Malawi National Environmental Act 2017 (MNEA, 2017) defines an ecosystem as “a complex dynamic connectedness of plant, animal, and microorganisms in a community, and their non-living environment interacting as a functional unit.”

Ecological theology

Ecological theology, therefore, “…is an attempt to retrieve the ecological wisdom in [theologies] as a response to environmental threats and injustice…” (Conradie 2001a; 2001b; and 2005:1). In the words of Conradie, ecological theology, therefore, seeks to offer a critique and provide opportunities for a renewal of some of the theological theories, concepts, and practices in response to the 21st-century environmental challenges felt heavily in Malawi and possible in the entire African continent.

Environment

The term “is derived from the French word ‘environner’ which means surrounding or nearby.” Mackean D.G., in his book “Introduction to Biology” (Mackean & Hayward, 2014), defines an environment as a whole surrounding of an organism. Environment, according to MNEA (2017:7-8), “means the physical factors of the surrounding of the human being including land, water, atmosphere, climate, sound, odour, taste; the biological factor of fauna and flora; and includes the

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Thus, the term environment does possibly include what happens in; space, habitat, location, situation, scene, minerals, culture, politics, and the economy, to mention some. The environment can be human or non-human, surrounding an organism.

Earth

The “Earth, our planet, is…a single oikos…the word oikos being the root of oikoumene…the whole inhabited world…” (Conradie, 2005:7). Those studying cosmology, astrophysics, biologists, ecologists, ecofeminists, and others, have their views regarding the Earth and how it came into being. But it is common knowledge that the Earth is one of the created features in the universe. According to (Conradie 2005:6), the Earth is “…our one and only God-given home. We belong to the Earth. It is a simple fact of life that we have emerged here, on this planet, and we are adapted to live here…” The Earth is God’s oikoumene inhabited and exploited by human and non-human communities.

Forest

The most widely accepted definition of forest is (FAO 2013) any land with greater than 10% coverage of trees over 5 m high. Trees are significant for their various roles that hold the Earth together and champion gas interchange among living things on Earth.

Government

The term government refers to the political and socio-economic structural systems regarding the operations of the three arms of the state (Executive, Parliament, and Judiciary). In this case, the term government refers to civil society, non-governmental organizations, and public management concerning the environment. The term government includes the processes and development of management policies, protection, and biodiversity conservation.

Missional

The word missional is an adjectival term. The word comes from the term mission. In Practical Theology and Missiology, the term denotes contextual action of the church in martyrria, diakonia, koinonia, leitourgia, evangelism, and stewardship. The term is used chiefly by (Guder and Barrett, 1998:11-12; 2015:9-9) to describe the nature of an action-oriented church. A missional church focuses on being church-centred (institutional) to contextual (people) centred. The missional church remains within God’s plan for the redemption of the world and people. In other words, by participating in God’s mission, the church becomes a missional church (cf. Bosch, 1991:1).
(1998:11-12) states that the church must be biblical, historical, contextual, incarnational, and pointing to a better future to be a missional church. A *missional* church is no longer a traditional institutional organization with authority and power over people. A *missional* church is a church for the people, by the people, with the people, and for the people. In short, it is a people-centred institution.

**Mission**

Bosch (2011:392) describes mission “as primarily and ultimately the work of the Triune God in the salvation of the world and the entire creation. Mission has its origin in the heart of God.” While mission “is the heartbeat of the church, the term primarily refers to the activity of God or the involvement of God in human action and history.” Therefore, the term mission or missional cannot be confined to church and Christianity because God’s mission is to save people and the universe.

**Missio Dei**

The term *missio Dei* simply “means God’s mission or the mission of God.” Bosch (2011:390-393) “understands mission as God’s attribute which is more than a church activity.” Bosch considers God a missionary God, the author, and originator of the mission. Thus, God’s mission is ultimately an outreach towards the universe’s salvation, and God does it alongside the Son and the Holy Spirit. Wright also asserts that “in the same breadth *missio Dei* should constantly be ‘informed’ by scriptures to ensure privileged participation of God’s people in response to God’s invitation to save the entire creation” (cf. Wright, 2006:22-23).

**Nature**

Nature is “the usual physical, material world or universe in the broadest sense, and nature can refer to the phenomena of the physical world and life in general. Although humans are part of nature, human activities are a separated category from other natural phenomena” (Goyal, 2019). The term nature is “derived from the Latin word natura and, in ancient times, literally meant birth” (Goyal, 2019). In ancient philosophy, natura is the Latin translation for the Greek word physis (φύσις), which is originally related to the intrinsic characteristics that plants, animals, and other features on the universe develop on their own (cf. Goyal, 2019:61).

**Oasis**

An oasis is a patch of vegetation in the desert. Communities have traditionally planted palm trees around the oasis to keep the desert sands and heat from their crops and prevent evaporation. The underground water sources called aquifers do produce most oases. In some cases, natural springs
bring groundwater to the surface, and other oases are artificial (wells) tapped from the aquifer. In some settlements, these (oasis) wells can be centuries old. When people maintain oases diligently, generations are likely to retain access to their life-giving water (see Abd El-Ghani et al., 2017:204).

**Preservation**

In environmental science, an area is protected (preserved) and managed to conserve a specific type of habitat, its flora, and fauna, which are often rare or endangered. Although the terms conservation and preservation are different, they are often used interchangeably. “Conservation protects the environment through sustainable use of natural resources while preservation protects the environment from harmful human activities. Preservation and conservation are both processes that protect the environment, but their approaches differ somewhat” (Spooner, 2012:145, see Rydén, et al., 2003).

**Reserves**

A nature reserve, also known as a nature sanctuary, a biosphere reserve, a nature conservation area, is a protected area that is important for flora, fauna. The reserve ecology or other geographical features attract interest for conservation. Where reserves are managed for conservation purposes, they provide opportunities for tourism or study (Spalding et al., 2010:52; Spellerberg & Sawyer, 1999:170).

**Response**

The term response in this study refers to strategic missional and theological initiatives that are well-informed as to what individuals can offer a sequence of crisis intervention processes, groups, or church communities, at what times, and under what circumstances to intervene to various challenges with necessary interventions effectively.

**TAP**

It is a newly coined word and used in this study. It is not a water tap, but an acronym that stands for Traditional religions, Applied sciences, and Permanent cultures with a philosophy of koinonia of all stakeholders in the fight against the environmental crisis. TAP is, therefore, a philosophy that takes cognizance of the contextual interconnections and application of knowledge from Scripture (Traditional religions); Applied science; Permanent cultures as a tool or model to combat global warming, climate change, and the associated challenges in Southern Africa.
Theological
The word theological is an adjectival term derived from “theology,” a Greek word for *theos* that means God, and logos translated as *logic of, or study of*, wisdom. Therefore, theology describes the divine’s conception, description, and meaning of the wise and spiritual reflection. According to Taliaferro and Meister (2016:2), theology as a field of study involves an inquiry into historical and contemporary theological concepts and theories.

Permaculture
Permaculture is a synthetic term from two words: “permanent and culture” (Mollison, 1978). The philosophy behind Permaculture was first practiced in Australia more than three decades ago by Bill Mollison and David Holmgren. In his many years as a wildlife biologist, Bill Mollison saw first-hand the cause of human destruction in natural systems (Mollison, & Holmgren, 1981). Mollison also had the opportunity to see how natural ecosystems work and keep them in balance. Permaculture is a design science that seeks “to create stable and productive ecosystems. The term refers to the wholesome system that provides for human needs and harmoniously integrate various land uses for the benefit of both the Earth and all its inhabitants” (see Pembamoyo, E., in Todd et al., 2017:66).

Philosophical
Philosophical comes from philosophy, and the root term—philosophy- is a combination of two Greek words for *love* (Philo) and *Sofia* (wisdom). Every living person has a philosophy, so long as they have some concept of what reality is or is not, what is valuable or important in life and society (cf. Taliaferro and Meister 2016:2).
Maps and Location of Malawi

Malawi in Africa

Figure 1 Map of Africa
Figure 2 Map of Central Africa showing Malawi
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Chapter one

1. Background and study focus

1.1 Introduction

Malawi continues to struggle with the adverse effects of environmental degradation and warming. The current terrestrial, aquatic and atmospheric conditions present several challenges for sustainable living in Malawi (SEOR, 2010). Hostile weather conditions such as strong winds, floods, heatwaves, and prolonged drought cause diverse challenges, including soil erosion, siltation, biodiversity decline, pest and diseases outbreaks. Such weather conditions make sustainable life and livelihood difficult and have severe socio-economic, political, and religious consequences.

This study, therefore, seeks to investigate the missional theological response” of the mainline churches, namely, the Anglican Church, the Church of Central African Presbyterian (CCAP), and Roman Catholic Church, to the challenge of environmental crisis. According to Guder (1998), the concept missional simply denotes the other end of the ecclesiastical spectrum, with some roots in the concept of missio Dei. The idea reinforces a contextual form of the church’s stewardship and evangelism. Unlike the traditional missio Dei church, a missional church thus accepts a positive adherence to the ecclesiastical contextual concerns. A missional church seeks to exercise effective social responsibility and justice in a society where it exists. At the same time, the theological concept considers Bosch’s concept of missio Dei (1991) and its interface with ecological theology. More about a missional theological church response to the environmental crisis is discussed in chapter three.

The environmental crisis is the core of ecotheology with broader implications for the church, as it seeks to participate in missio Dei. The ecological crisis has critical implications related to poverty, health, gender, economy, and politics. These aspects are crucial to the country’s socio-economic development plan as set out in the country’s Development Strategy (see State of Environmental Outlook Report, 2010). The (SEOR, 2010) states that a healthier environment is key to sustainable livelihood—the “Abundant Kingdom of the Gospel” (John 10:10) just as it is indicated in the socio-economic plan of Malawi’s Growth and Development Strategy (see SEOR, 2010).

Although the study focuses on the mainline churches’ response to ecological challenges, African Traditional Religions and Islam are also considered precisely because these faiths interact with the churches almost at all levels and on various modes of society. These religions constitute a critical primal dimension in which the churches engage in mission. Otherwise, the church response is less

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missional if it does not consider its contextual relationships with other religions and stakeholders in the society where it is placed.

1.2 Problem statement

Since 1992, churches in Malawi have played a critical role in advocating for human rights through public statements (see Tengatenga, J., 2006). The churches in Malawi are well known for responding strongly to the socio-political issues as a dimension in their mission since the 1990s (as is well documented in the public and private domain). However, so far, primary and secondary sources available in the public domain mention no significant churches’ missional theological response to an ever-increasing socio-economic and political challenge of environmental degradation in Malawi.

The failure in the public domain to mention the significance of churches in environmental protection and preservation seems to suggest the existence of a gap regarding the churches’ mission and, late alone, a missional theological response to issues of the environment in Malawi. More fundamentally, this raises an underlying critical issue: how churches in Malawi understand the term missional-theological and, therefore, respond to their missional calling specifically regarding the contextual challenges, particularly the environmental crisis.

The term missional-theological highlights the significance of the church in its context. Thus, the church’s public role needs to be understood because the churches in Malawi constitute a more significant part of Malawi’s population. The fact that 90% of Malawians are Christians³ (and churches) suggests that churches are not irresponsible for the problem, and therefore could be part of its solution. It could well be recommended that within its prophetic power, authority, and population, the church in Malawi may be part of those to provide ecosystem and biodiversity healing, reconstruction, reconciliation, and hope to society. Through missional, churches interventions would possibly stop degradation and avert environmental crisis including global warming and climate change.

It is well documented in the Malawi State of Environmental Outlook Report, 2010 (MSEOR, 2010) that the country is currently undergoing a long-term rise in temperature, which is causing variation in climatic conditions. The unstable weather conditions heavily affect the country’s economy, which is chiefly dependent on agriculture and fisheries. The environmental crisis mainly arises from degradation, particularly natural resources, including forests (see pictures 9.2.1 p.330). The degradation of forests leaves most parts of the land bear and exposed to direct sunshine, which causes high land and water temperatures—global warming is the source of climate change.

According to the (MSEOR, 2010), Climate change is also primarily caused due to the worldwide increasing emissions from greenhouse gases to the atmosphere. The (MSEOR, 2010) also asserts that the extreme weather conditions in Malawi and many countries are primarily caused by unsustainable human activities, practices, and values (see also the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change IPCC, 1992). Beliefs and the prevailing of unprecedented relationships between human and non-human environments also significantly contribute to ecological destruction and biodiversity loss (MSEOR, 2010). More severe in the degradation is deforestation, which enhances erosion of top fertile soil and causes sedimentation in lakes and rivers in Malawi. Siltation of the top rich soil in lakes and rivers enables the growth of alien species of plants called Water Hyacinth (Anamasupuni) unfavourable for aquatic life.4

Global warming, which causes climate change and deforestation, is intensely interlinked. According to the Malawi National Environmental Management Act (MNEMA, 2017), over 60% of Malawi’s forests have disappeared, and nearly 25% of the remnant is not in good condition to offer desired forestry products. The destruction of Malawi’s forests coupled with charcoal production for energy is one of the largest single sources of environmental degradation and therefore causes droughts and various environmental crises. Forests’ destruction is against the well-known fact that vegetation cover is one primary source of the best carbon filter in the atmosphere (see Busch, 2016).

Forests play a critical role in mitigating climate change. Forests act as a carbon sink—soaking up carbon dioxide that would otherwise be free in the atmosphere and blocking sun rays from bouncing back to the sky (cf. Bush, 2016). In other words, the sunlight retained on the surface increases the warmth in the temperature of the Earth, which causes climate change. Deforestation undermines the ability of the land (topsoil) to resist runoffs during rainfall (MNEMA, 1996; 2017). Thus, deforestation exposes the land bare, causes floods, and sweeps the topsoil and garbage into lakes and rivers. Bare ground increases the rate of evaporation, increases runoff speed, causes severe floods, and is prone to droughts (see appendix 9.2.1 p.331).

The Industrial waste dumps and gases from the consumer-oriented society of Malawi and other parts of the world reinforce a natural phenomenon called the greenhouse effect. A layer of gases is formed in the atmosphere, reducing the amount of sunlight radiating back into space, thus warming the Earth (see IPCC, 2007). As an agricultural society, Malawi uses synthetic farm inputs, usually not good for the soil and human bodies (National Environmental Policy, 1997; 2004; 2015). However, despite

synthetic chemicals and hybrid seeds, food insecurity and malnutrition threaten many Malawians’ sustainable living and livelihood, particularly in rural areas.

The ever-increasing consumerism and dumping of waste (picture in the appendix) upsurges water and air pollution (Malawi National Environmental Vision 2020, in 2000). High energy demand and continued dependence on non-renewable sources of power plunge the country into frequent power interruption and electricity load shedding and enhance charcoal production and increase deforestation. Poverty and high population growth continue to augment human activities that cause environmental degradation. Notably, over-fishing has dwindled the fish caught in the lakes, rendering joblessness and youth migration to other countries to look for piece work opportunities. There is an increase in the number of humans being trafficked, and in most cases, women and girls are the victims of these circumstances caused by the challenges in environmental crisis (Malawi Environmental Country Profile, 2006).

Studies conducted in the Department of Climate Change and Meteorological Services (DCCMS) in 2007 show an increase in the long-term Earth temperatures for the country. According to the recent March 2019 report of the Ministry of Environmental Affairs Natural Resources Energy and Mining, the current environmental challenges are likely to continue for a long time. The weather patterns are already noticeable through the current erratic rainfall patterns and extreme weather conditions.

The DCCMS revealed climate patterns and increased temperature intensity since the 1980s. These changes have contributed to the rapid deterioration of the natural environment in Malawi. As a result, environmental degradation has caused severe crises. Such crises enhance food insecurity amid poverty, rapid population growth, migration, inequality, unemployment, diseases, and illiteracy. In many ways, government and civil society have sought to contain the effects of these crises, including policy development and various kinds of aid and relief interventions.

The government’s environmental policy of 1996, the environmental Act of 1997, and numerous other documents by civil society sought to engage the grassroots level to address environmental challenges. Such efforts have been implemented in the environmental co-management projects under the Malawian government’s decentralization of environment and resource management. However, a critical analysis of the approaches and interventions regarding the decentralization process of environmental management does not involve all stakeholders. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate whether a missional theological response of faith communities could change the approaches and address the challenge of environmental crisis in Malawi?
1.3 The main research question
In the light of environmental challenges facing Malawi at present, this study intends to investigate the church’s response regarding environmental crisis by raising a question: *What is the church’s missional theological response to the challenge of environmental crisis in Malawi?* In this question, the term missional theological response refers to an approach to mission other than the traditional institutional understanding of the term mission. It does not refer to an institution with centralized power and authority tied around a mission station at a designated place. It refers to a multidimensional, interdisciplinary, multisectoral approach. This approach has the characteristics and ability to involve all stakeholders, religious faith, beliefs, and practices in environmental preservation and protection-- ecological justice.

1.4 Sub questions guiding the study
Aligned together with the main research question are further questions controlling and guiding the investigation:

1.4.1 What factors influence the churches’ *response* to the environmental crisis, and how have the churches been involved in mitigating the factors involved in the environmental crisis?
1.4.2 Have the churches been part of the solution or the problem regarding the environmental crisis in Malawi?
1.4.3 What resources do the churches have about responding to the crisis of the environment in Malawi?
1.4.4 To what extent do the mainline churches consider responsible for promoting environmental care and therefore have a missional policy about the environment?
1.4.5 How do the mainline churches see the link between mission and environment (creation)?

1.5 Aim/Goal
The study’s main aim is to uncover ‘gaps’ in the missionary practice of the churches in Malawi and recommend how such gaps can be filled by engaging a *missional theological response* to address the ongoing challenges of environmental degradation in Malawi. On another level, this study intends to highlight and recommend the importance of the missional response. The response is a potential tool with a significant contribution that can make a difference in the preservation of the Earth. The missional response is essential in caring for the people, promoting equitable resources to develop a healthy and sustainable ecological system and biodiversity in Malawi.

1.6 Research hypothesis
This study seeks to argue that the *missional theological response* of the church embedded in *missio Dei* (*Stewardship, Diakonia, Koinonia*) can change and influence effective church *Martyria* (witness).
The missional response is potential in ensuring the full participation of all stakeholders in Earth keeping (preservation). It is vital in developing a sustainable ecological paradigm (missional ecotheology) that has all it requires to slow down and eventually address environmental degradation in Malawi and possibly the entire Southern Region of Africa.

### 1.7 Objectives

1.7.1 To select and define concepts related to environmental degradation and Earth keeping in Malawi.
1.7.2 To explore and outline the main issues associated with the environmental crisis in Malawi.
1.7.3 To investigate the possible causes of the current environmental conditions and their impact on the society in Malawi.
1.7.4 To explore and examine the mainline churches’ apparent responses to the environmental crisis in Malawi.
1.7.5 To engage with the research findings, conclude and make a recommendation in the light of the environmental crisis and the church’s response in Malawi.

### 1.8 Theoretical framework

The study uses Bosch, (1991) as lenses within the concept of *missio Dei*, particularly regarding God’s plan for the salvation of people and the entire creation. The study also engages Guder’s concept of *missional, which discusses the church’s concern for the peripheral and marginalized society* where it is placed. The study is mainly concerned with the church’s response to environmental degradation in Malawi. Therefore, it uses the concepts of ecotheology as the church to seek to “Greening itself” with Green Theology, Green Belt, (cf. Gerald Darley, 2021; Rachel Mash, 2014; Wangari Maathai, 2013).

To support the hypothesis, the study explores ecological wisdom from interdisciplinary and multisectoral perspectives (Conradie, 2008) as necessary dimensions of missional church response to contextual issues. The study also considers claims that environmental challenges faced now are religiously, politically, and economically conditioned (cf. Kaoma, 2010).

To be precise, in the light of Kaoma’s argument, the current environmental challenges are influenced by the legacy of European missionaries, capitalistic tendencies of colonialism disguised in the Western and Eastern religious beliefs, practices, traditions, and values (see Kaoma, 2013). These beliefs and cultural practices were passed on wholesomely to the colonized territories worldwide (cf. Budd L. et al., 2000). The idea that the natural world exists solely for human use, for the Malawian, is a product of Christianity and Islam. These two foreign religions are popularly known for developing and progressive ideas to promote modernity in Third World countries. This modernity is also affected by the Enlightenment and Industrialisation championed and enhanced by Protestant missionaries’ work ethics and theories of 18th century Christianity. Kaoma, (2015) asserts that the Western European
worldview, rooted in the Protestant Reformation, the Enlightenment, and eighteenth-century economic theories, still dominate the recent mission activities in the 21st century.

Although Christianity receives blame, a critical analysis of mission through the lens of David Bosch’s concept of *missio Dei* suggests that Christian mission can be instrumental in changing the current human perceptions of nature as a source of raw materials. It is apparent in the title of his book, “Transforming mission…” which can mean the mission with the ability to transform society or the mission that is being transformed (translatability nature of mission) towards new contexts (see Lamin, 1989). Within Bosch’s understanding, *a missional theological response* to the environmental crisis has the potential to reverse the Western Protestant’s conception of workaholic ethics that regards Earth as the source of capital investments for development and progress.

Thus, *a missional theological response* to the environmental crisis within the *Missio Dei* framework, and considering *missio Dei as Creatoris Dei*, has the affinity and attraction to establishing and enhancing partnerships. It is potential for an interdisciplinary and multisectoral approach, as is the incarnation and atonement—all meant for the salvation of entire humanity and the universe. Besides its instrumental *missio Dei*, it seems to relate well to the Ubuntu philosophies that value the importance of the concept of (togetherness) and treat nature as a sacred part of the single fabric of the same life for the human and non-human environments. Thus, through *missio Dei’s* inclusivity, *a missional theological response* to the crisis can easily adjust itself to adopt the TAP (see p.xvi) as a contextual tool to work as the church seeks to reverse environmental degradation in Malawi.

Although this study focuses on the mainline churches, the environmental crises, predominantly global warming, and climate change, “is by definition something that has to be addressed together” (see Conradie, 2008:8). There is possibly a great need to tackle environmental crisis from a multisectoral and interdisciplinary approach because “there are no Catholic lakes, Protestant rivers or Muslim forests” (cf. McDonagh 1990:192) in Malawi. Therefore, the study examined to what extent the institutionally traditional church envisages the importance of unity of purpose (interdisciplinary approach) in addressing the environmental crisis in Malawi.

1.8.1 Conceptual and theoretical grounding of the study

In *missio Dei*, Bosch (1991:401) asserts that mission flows from the heart of God, who embraces and subsumes church activities in the world (1991:10, 379,399). Thus, God includes church within God’s plan to redeem people and all creation. In this regard, the study intends to examine the issue of environmental crisis as it cuts across the two concepts of (*missional* and *missio Dei*) and with what Conradie in (WCC Assembly, 2013) called “Creation Theology.” Conradie (2006) refers to creation
theology or ecological theology to retrieve Christian ecological wisdom in response to environmental threats and injustices. Although considered a response to the environmental crisis, ecotheology, from its early day in the church between 1910 and the 1960s (Pihkala, 2016), investigates God’s involvement in creation.

Therefore, speaking about God’s involvement in creation is to justify the church’s participation in ecological care as an obligation in missio Dei. It is also a point that missional, ecotheology, and missio Dei are critical concepts within which the church’s response to the current environmental crisis is conceptualized. They are lenses through which the study is carried out. Put it differently, the issue of environmental concern in Malawi must be analyzed from the nature and roles of a missional church. The nature and functions of a missional church shape a theological response focused on ecotheology—as a critical dimension within the paradigm of missio Dei.

In other words, a missional theological church, other than being institutionally traditional, originally from the West, is a people-centred church—dealing with contextual issues (Guder & Barrett, 1998). A missional church realizes that mission is not something it does, but rather what it is—its nature (cf. Barkley, 2018). This missional ontology is rooted in the fact that mission flows from the heart and action of the love of God (Bosch, 1991). That is, “God sent His Son, and the Son sent the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit and the Son” sent the church to be a sign, instrument, and prophecy of the kingdom of God (Newbigin, 1954; 1951; Bosch, 1991; Guder, 1998). In other words, the missional church gets its “missiones-ecclesiae” authority to respond to contextual issues of society when it remains under and within the purpose of the Cross of Jesus Christ (Bosch, 1991).

To speak of the ecclesiastical response or “role” (missiones-ecclesiae) in God’s mission for society is to talk about the church’s position, power, authority, and goals as it takes part in God’s mission as merely a vital participant (Hoekendijk, 1950). Thus, if God calls the church to partner God in mission, it cannot do it alone. Similarly, if a church cannot do it alone, so will the government or civil society. Therefore, the term missional response has some indications to a call for more than ecumenism and multidisciplinary instead involves a multidimensional approach as the church takes part in God’s redemptive work. For Hoekendijk (1950; 1965), the church with its essential missions is just an appendix in God’s redemptive work of the entire creation and humanity, and it cannot do it all alone.

Quite often, the missional aspect of the church is perceived and practiced considering church institutionalization. As an institution, yet church claims it has evangelism and stewardship duties for its society. Hoekendijk is famous for arguing that “evangelization and churchification (institutionalization) are not identical, and they are often each other’s bitterest enemies.” Hoekendijk,
in his book “Missio Dei…” published in 1965, explains the difference between *missiones-ecclesiae* intended for churchification and *missio Dei* whose main aim is evangelization for the salvation of humanity and creation. In summary, the church’s missional nature (role and missions) is derived from its mandate as an essential participant in God’s action (*actio Dei*) to save people and all God’s creation (cf. Hoedemaker, 1995).

The theology of the notion *actio Dei* has come far and has thus continued to define and express the nature of a *missional* church. If the church remains and works within missional theological parameters of *actio Dei*, the church will successfully take care of the environment. Several others also have attempted to discuss the term *actio Dei* to describe a missional church in the context of the modern church’s involvement in issues concerning society. The nature and function of a missional theological church come from the work of the Holy Spirit when the church remains under the Cross. Under the Cross, the church is purified and constantly guided by the Holy Trinity.

In other words, the church “incarnated” or “enfleshed” by the Triune God - the *actio Dei* ensures that contextual issues such as hope, justice, peace, joy, and love in the church are extended to the world and the entire creation of God (See Leeman, 2010). Thus, the term “enfleshed” as used by Leeman or “incarnated” better explains the nature of a “*missional theological response*” of the church as it crosses denominational barriers towards the cross-cultural contextual issue in a society where it is placed. The term enfleshed describes the church wrapped in the love of God (kenosis) that enables its systems, values, traditions, and practices to cross the institutional, doctrinal, and hermeneutical barriers. The term involves issues regarding denominational identities, hierarchies, racial, etc., to be inclusive as the church provides a diversified approach to contextual issues in society.

Speaking about crossing barriers and using the diversified approach suggests the need for an alternative vision” regarding the church’s prophetic role, moral vision, and moral discernment in dealing with contextual issues in society (Birch & Rasmussen, 1978). To be precise, it emphasizes the need for the church’s engagement with government (colonialism) and with and engaging all stakeholders in society. This approach makes the church a missional and theological church and an “alternative community” (Conradie, 2008:55-77).

To state it differently, a *missional* church (people centred) is an alternative community enabled and empowered by the Holy Spirit to take part in the redemptive work of the *action Dei* (c.f Verstraelen, eds., 1995:443). By implication, an empowered or “enfleshed” church is not an institutional, doctrinal, denominational, powerful, and authoritative church. Instead, it is the collection of individual members

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who are enabled by way of incarnation through Christ’s kenotic love to participate in the saving action of God in the community they live in (cf. Neill, 1964). This study, therefore, was set to determine whether the church in Malawi is missional and to investigate whether it envisages environmental crisis as a dimension of missio Dei in the community to which it is called and mandated to participate together with other stakeholders. Does the church in Malawi understand the environmental crisis as part of its missional obligation? Differently, the study examines the interface or a mark between being a missional theological church and the safeguarding of ecology and the Earth, which in most cases is treated as worldly.

According to DeWitt, one of the “five marks” of doing global mission in the twenty-first-century demands church to strive towards safeguarding the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the Earth” (Walls & Ross, eds., 2008). The safeguarding of the integrity of the creation is necessary because the Earth is our only home (cf. Pope Francis Laudato Si, 2015). But the question still to be answered is whether the church in Malawi envisaged safeguarding the “integrity of creation, sustain and renew the life of Earth” as its roles. The church is enfleshed into the Western Industrial Revolution, the institutional nature, power, and authority. Besides institutionalism, the effects of colonialism enforce the church’s participation in the destruction of ecology and biodiversity. The church partially considers preservation as part of its nature and missional mandate.

1.8.2 The missional theological nature of the church and environment

The study, therefore, aims to investigate how churches in Malawi, from a missional perspective, address the issue of environmental crisis. Speaking about a missional theological response of the church to the environmental crisis is to advocate for an ecological theology. Conradie, (2006:3) defines ecological theology as contextual theology that attempts to retrieve the ecological wisdom in Christianity as a “response to environmental threats and injustice.” Regarding the term missional church, (Guder & Barrett, 1998) refers to a comprehensive post-Christendom re-envisioning of the nature of the church. In Christendom, Western culture was generally perceived as Christian.

Thus, missionaries were involved in exporting the Western understanding of the gospel, their culture, and civilization to non-Western countries (see “Theology and Identity” or “Gospel and Culture” Bediako, 1992; 1996). The collapse of Christendom helped the church see that Western culture is not Christian. Thus, Christianity outside Western countries was a renewal of non-western religions (Walls,

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6 The terms and use of the concepts regarding the “five marks” of mission was first introduced by the Anglican Advisory Council of the Lambeth Conference (ACC6) as early as 1984.

7 In Malawi, the missionaries preceded the British colonial administration (Debenham 1955:130). But it is equally true that Dr David Livingstone as an explorer for the British Government. Livingstone appealed to the British government send missionaries, government officials to establish Christianity, trade, and government (Blood, 1955).
In a missional ecotheology, the church, whether from a Western or African Christian perspective, is concerned with how contextual issues and contextual wisdom from Christianity, Traditional religions, and Philosophies can assist in developing sustainable and resilient ecological systems and biodiversity.

Concerning retrieving ecological wisdom, Conradie seems to suggest a rediscovery, re-investigation, and renewal of the Christian history, and possibly of the non-western ecological thoughts (through an interdisciplinary approach) with new Christian lenses as an “alternative vision” for an “alternative community” (Conradie, 2008:55). Both notions suggest the need for a “shift” from the way people understand, talk about, alternative community (church) and what is called to do in missio Dei in its context (see Kwiyani, missio Africanus an African appropriation, a call re-imagine mission in African... 2018). A call for the alternative community in the 21st-century church to consider the environmental crisis a concern.

Thinking alongside Kwiyani’s discussion of missio Africanus is Mante, (2004), who suggested earlier on the development of inclusive methodologies of doing theology. Mante has already started to perceive the importance of interdisciplinary and multidimensional approaches in church missions. Thus, environmental theology to the 21st-century church concerns is with the 20th-century emergent issues of economic and women liberation. At the dawn of the 21st century, the study of theology began to consider the need to create space and freedom around the discussions of inculturation, deculturation, decolonization, ecology, and other contextual issues (cf. Mante, 2004:24). Ecology as a recent contextual area of concern assists the community through the church to attain a desired “new Earth” and address challenges the community (mainly women and children) face following environmental degradation and all its challenges (cf. Ruether, 1975).

Three decades down the line into the 21st century, global warming exerts pressure. Theology is still expected to provide people with an ecotheological hope, focusing on ecological justice and addressing environmental challenges. Thus, Smith, (1997), Dean-Drummond, (2004), Conradie, (2005), advocate the development of theology with an ecological ethos that affects almost all aspects of life and has implications for ethical sub-disciplines such as social, political, economic, medical, sexual, or personal ethos. Such theology, undertaken from the backdrop of a missional church, particularly global warming, should emerge as the next wave of contextual theology on similar levels with other Christian theologies such as liberation, black, feminist, women’s theology (cf. Conradie, 2006:3).

Like many other missional theologians, Walls, (2002) highlights the need for a Christian mission theology to recognize the importance of “cultural landmarks” on the map of society where the church
exists. Walls asserts that the Tabernacle Ark was made from the Egyptian fabric when Israelites left Egypt to the Promised Land. This implies that missional theology must transcend the church’s traditions, institutional identity, powers, and authority to recognize the importance of the local thought systems of other players in society. Thus, the church must work with other stakeholders to protect and preserve ecological systems and the biodiversity on the planet.

Therefore, in Walls & Ross (2008), DeWitt suggests “To Strive to Safeguard the Integrity of Creation and Sustain and Renew the Life of the Earth” as one of the five marks of doing mission in the 21st century. To safeguard the integrity of creation means and demands that the church’s mission and theology begin to engage contextual issues in an “interdisciplinary” and multisectoral approach (see Conradie, 2008; Dean-Drummond, eds., et al., 2018). Therefore, this study examines the missional theological responsibility of the church to the challenge of environmental crisis in Malawi from colonial to the present time? More about the missional-theological response and nature of the church is discussed in chapters five and six.

1.8.3 Colonial church, government, and the tobacco estate led economy

In most cases, the missionary church and the imperial government were connected and implemented policies from sending governments together. In Nyasaland, the British government and church intensified tobacco, tea, and coffee. Massive estates were opened, and according to Wood, (2015), imperialism in church and government thus affected the environment in former colonies worldwide. The imperial administration and agricultural-led (tobacco estate) economic plans by overseas powers aimed to enrich their homelands without considering the long-term environmental or political consequences for the colonies (Davis, 1982). The industrial revolution fuelled the need to extract colonial resources, farmland, and everything, which led to unfair treaties and policies between the imperialists and the local indigenous leadership (see Mulwafu, 2004; UNDP Reoprt 2010).

Land and natural resources were essential for progress and development to both the missionary and colonialists. To illustrate the unfair land distribution, the National Forestry Landscape Strategy (NFLRS) 2016 states that between 1891 and 1894, Nyasaland’s first Commissioner General, Harry Johnston, issued seventy-three land claims licenses to Europeans covering 1.5 million hectares. The colonial government thus gave fifteen percent of the total land area or about 45 percent of the total arable land area in Nyasaland to Europeans. European-owned estates, therefore, covered about half the total size of the entire fertile Shire Highlands. By the early 1930s, Nyasaland had a more significant proportion of its arable land under European (missionary or colonists) control than Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, or Northern and Southern Rhodesia (NFLRS, 2016).
The colonial government promoted inequality which broadly defined relations between colonialists and the Malawians during colonialism. There was a concern for cordial relationship between the White estate owners and Black small farmers during and after colonialism. The tobacco estate-led economic strategy affected the relationship, labour system, taxation, forests, and land distribution in Nyasaland and independent Malawi (cf. Smalley, R. 2013 in Land and Agriculture Commercialisation in Africa Working Paper 055). Similarly, the tobacco estate-led economy increased poverty among the local farmers as the locals failed to match their White counterparts in farming inputs and equipment.

The White and Black farmers opened new crop fields that contributed to deforestation. Some of the local farmers, stricken with poverty, and those who did not have synthetic farm inputs, turned towards charcoal production. Therefore, environmental degradation and crisis increased rapidly (Green, E. 2007).8 Worse still, the failed tobacco-led economy and broken social relations established under colonial rule forced their way into a class of post-colonial African leaders who continued with it in church and parachurch institutions (see Pachai, 1972).

The colonial church was institutional, hierarchical, and very paternal towards the African and the traditional thought system and lifestyle. While it built schools, churches, and various institutions, the colonial church supported the colonial government’s industrial revolution and enlightenment policies, most environmentally challenging. Besides institutionalism, the church’s agricultural, architectural, socio-economic development, education, and medicine were all based on capitalism, a design emphasizing resource exploitation, competition, and was dependent on natural resources as the source of capital raw materials (see de Wet, P. 2008).

The church and the colonial government’s character, beliefs, and practice are associated with Christianity exploiting nature as the source of natural and capital. Christianity, therefore, contrasted sharply with the indigenous religion’s thought system and Ubuntu that venerated and avoided exploitation of natural resources (see Ranger, T. 2006).9 Ubuntu values humanity’s relationship with the natural world, and local and religious leaders respect and revere nature. Contrastingly, the church-like colonial government was interested in maximizing economic resources in Africa.

In South Africa, Southern and Northern Rhodesia missionaries and the colonists got precious minerals. From Nyasaland, they got cheap labour (neo-slavery), agricultural products, ivory, fish, game, and hides (cf. Freund, 1984). The industrialization developments needed space, and they introduced red bricks that complement the flue-curing of tobacco, demanding to clear forests for wood. Industrial

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farming and development progressive zeal of the continent had a long last impact on the environment. In 1912, the Chief Forest Officer\textsuperscript{10} warned that more extensive afforestation was very important if the supply of fuel for the future was to be ensured. Therefore, tree seedlings were distributed to the White tobacco farmers in 1912 to increase fuelwood plantations. By 1914, the Director of Agriculture of Nyasaland\textsuperscript{11} had prescribed eucalyptus as undoubtedly the fast-growing tree species suitable for wood fuel boom for Nyasaland.

Walker, (2004) states that the colonial Director of Forestry ordered the Chief Forest Officer to establish eucalyptus fuel plantations in the villages to stop the rapid deforestation. However, White farmers who had depleted the natural forest for tobacco processing accepted no responsibility. As usual, indigenous Malawians who were falsely accused of causing degradation provided labour in the government’s project of wood fuel plantations. It is conveyed that later the tree project. The project was extended to the local small farmers’ homes as early as 1914 to increase fuelwood within the shortest period. Free seedlings were given to small farmers to plant trees in and around their villages.\textsuperscript{12}

The villagers and local small farmers showed some resistance to the tree planting project, which was introduced at the recommendation of the Director of Agriculture and Director of Forest in the Nyasaland government (Kishindo, 2004). In other words, local farmers in the villages realized that the European farmers essentially caused deforestation (see Wood, 2015). However, the European farmers denied the responsibility and blamed local farmers only because the locals should provide human power in the eucalyptus plantation project. Eucalyptus trees grow faster because they use over 25 litres\textsuperscript{13} of water every day. Research has proved that eucalyptus planted in most hills and along rivers in Malawi led to a severe drop in water table levels in most mountains, hills, and perennial rivers. Some rivers, such as Domasi, Likangala, and Naisi in Zomba, dried up as eucalyptus trees grew.\textsuperscript{14}

Thus, Malawians faced a double burden following the colonial-imposed eucalyptus project. They had to provide labour to plant fast-growing gum trees for fuelwood, the same plant species that used a lot of water from the ground and enhanced drought. The blue gum project is evident in the report of the Department of Agriculture on Native Agriculture, 1931-1939. The report unveils how the colonialist initiatives to rectify their wrong ecological decisions Europe took destroyed the environment and forced local Malawians into eucalyptus-gum plantations. Besides cheap labour gum trees changed the land and water table levels and increased environmental challenges in society. The Agricultural Report

\textsuperscript{10} An Outline of agrarian problems and policy in Nyasaland 1955 Annual Report of the Forest Department Nyasaland Protectorate in 1911.
\textsuperscript{11} Agronomic series Bulletin 1926, Nyasaland Department of Agriculture accessible, National Archives Zomba, Malawi.
\textsuperscript{12} Agronomic series Bulletin 1926, Nyasaland Department of Agriculture
\textsuperscript{14} Interviews by Permaculture secretariat in affected areas in the Permaculture Network Newsletter for December 2008.
with paternal undertones suggests that if the natives of Nyasaland were left to their agricultural strategies and economic procedures, they would starve within a few years. The report further indicates that a complete disregard for maintenance of soil fertility will deplete the natural ability of the arable land in a brief period. The report finally asserts that, unless Europeans teach natives the basic principles of agricultural sciences, the agricultural sector will face serious environmental challenges.

A critical analysis of the *Nyasaland Department of Agriculture and Forestry Reports* between 1912 and 1959 (National Archives in Zomba) projected severe environmental challenges. These challenges resulted from the White farmers’ acquisition and opening of new agricultural lands, and vast amounts of hardwood forest trees cut down for tobacco curing. But the blame mainly was shifted to the indigenous farming practices (see Pembamoyo, E., in Levasseur eds., et al., 2016:66). It is not confident that the White farmers and the colonial government thoroughly understood the indigenous farming methods. However, the native farmer has always been the “victim” of the deliberate “mistaken identification” of the causes of environmental challenges. The local farmer was always blamed in disguise of the colonial government and the colonial church’s socio-economic and ecological corruption (cf. Schmidt, 1990; Boisen, 2012).

1.4.4 The post-colonial church, state, and ecology

The first African political leaders who took over from the colonialist followed similar agricultural policies that were not friendly to the ecology. Despite populist rhetoric, “the post-colonial African leaders showed interest in establishing themselves at the top of the existing hierarchy as colonial rulers” (cf. Lwanda, J. 1998). For example, the thirty-year regime (1964-1994) of Hastings Kamuzu Banda did not only silences other political and church leaders from opposing his agricultural views but even encouraged and supported a few elite local tobacco farmers. In silence, the society and local leadership realized and discovered the continued classism in land allocation, nepotism, inequality, and continued poverty. Banda inherited and continues with ecological domination, authority, and power as a legacy from colonialism.

During the 1970s and 1980s, the government of Kamuzu Banda converted even more land from the already crowded customary areas into tobacco estates. Banda issued leases to his favoured and loyal party members and smallholder tobacco farmers (*Malawi National Forestry Act 1997*). By adopting the tobacco estate economic policy, Banda worsened the situation already plagued by severe poverty, hunger, illiteracy, and disease, which slowly contributed to severe environmental degradation.

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Consequently, Malawi’s daily basic supplies started to decline by 18 percent between 1970 and 1995.\footnote{Malawi National Archives, Zomba, \textit{Nyasaland Forest Department Annual Report 1909 to 1940} accessed (24 March 2019).} Adversely, the remnant forestry products, such as timber, wild fruits, particularly charcoal production, remained the only option for survival at household levels.

As the colonial farmer and the colonial church, the church during Kamuzu Banda mostly sided with the government. The Malawi government drew policies that victimized the local farmers and their agricultural systems (\textit{Nyasaland Land Commission}, 1971 in Zomba Archives). The policies in Agriculture, land, forestry, education, medicine, and trade like during the White supremacy favoured a few elites as they extracted natural forest resources for the benefit of the devoted, loyal members and most for the benefit of former colonial masters abroad (cf. Mukherji, eds., et al., 2004). The church, then under the local leadership, was mainly forced to be loyal to Kamuzu.

The colonial government left shortly after self-government in 1963. But the degradation of the forest continued eventually under President Banda’s regime. Banda continued with agricultural methods adopted from Industrial Revolution, and native farmers were assisted in engaging fully in the European Industrial farming methods and inputs. The colonial techniques and use of synthetic inputs possibly continued to deplete the soil alkalinity in Malawi. Banda held high and promoted tobacco farming to boost the country’s economic self-sufficiency through local small farmers. A renowned Permaculturist, Patterson Majonanga at MOET in Mangochi, asserts that the pursuit of the European techniques poised by Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution (use of chemical inputs and hybrid crops and animals) that the environmental degradation continued severely in Independent Malawi.

After independence in 1964, the colonial paternalistic tendencies of coercion and mistreatment of the native resumed following the authoritarian rule of Banda. President Banda was \textit{Mchikumbi No.1} (lead/model farmer), and everyone had to learn from him. He enforced strict androcentric agricultural methods on the local farmers. Banda introduced agriculture extension services that followed Industrial farming methods, which, equally like the European’s underestimated all other available local indigenous farming methods and techniques.

Kishindo, (1998) observed, under Kamuzu Banda, “the government research and extension services worked on the assumption” that the agriculture field assistants were the only ones with good farming knowledge. These government workers were the best for the farmers to listen and follow their instructions. The system and practice implied no need to understand the local farmers’ methods.
Kishindo strongly asserts that “resistance to change” provides a complete explanation for the limited adoption of Banda’s agricultural practices and techniques.

To state it differently, like the imperial farmers and government, Banda ignored and failed to capture the importance of the wisdom of the indigenous farming. Like the colonial imperialists, Banda could not envision the significance of the church and religious, environmental care. Banda, therefore, failed to tap from the wisdom and methods of the locals and interdisciplinary and multidimensional approach in agriculture and ecology. The local farmers’ resistance highlighted by Kishindo is a statement of protest to Banda’s grossly adoption of foreign agricultural techniques and an expression of resistance. The resistance further indicates the existence and availability of other fundamental indigenous “non-western methods of agriculture” that the indigenous people perceived could slow down environmental degradation in Malawi (see Pembamoyo, E., in Levasseur eds., et al., 2016:71).

However, upon noticing early “signs” of a possible environmental crisis, President Banda, who included the Minister of Natural Resources in his portfolio, stepped up efforts to persuade small farmers to plant many trees. Thus, once again, the local farmer engagement in the growing of flue-cured tobacco was forced into addressing the White farmers’ destruction of the natural forests. President Banda persuaded the indigenous farmer to plant more trees like the colonial government without conceding his adoption of foreign agricultural methods. Banda personally inspected Malawi’s highly publicized National Tree Planting Day every 1st January.

After the Banda regime, in the multiparty era, efforts to review policies were ripe. A new environmental policy was drafted and approved in 1996. In 1997, the Forestry Act was developed and promulgated as a law in Malawi. In 1998, the first draft of the National Environmental Policy was introduced and revised in 2004, 2010, and recently in 2016 (PDF policy docs available online). Where forestry or environmental policies and laws are properly applied, such policy documents are likely to have lasting positive consequences that fell outside the scope of their initial objectives.

For instance, the Malawian government forestry department at Mkombera Hills near Songani in Zomba and Sungusya Hills near Malindi in Mangochi engaged community forestry governance. The forestry management decentralization policy in Malindi--Sungusya hills initially was intended to prevent deforestation, soil erosion, and siltation in the fish breeding area in the southern end of Lake Malawi. Implemented by villagers around, Mkombera and Sungusya hills, the policy has enabled regeneration and attracted learning trips and tourism. The restored forests currently contain various products such

18 National Archives in Zomba Malawi, Report on Fishing Industry by Nyasaland Government 1956 to 1966
as mushrooms, fruits, and smaller wildlife. Beehives are hung in some parts for honey production (Researcher’s tour to conduct pilot interviews and discussion group 19th Feb. 2019).

However, despite the development and revision of policies and acts, many people in other parts of the country did not adopt co-management in the decentralization policy for various reasons. Forests continue to deplete, and society is experiencing severe changes in annual weather conditions. Malawi’s climate is volatile and often concentrates on severe environmental crises such as serious water table drops, soil erosion, severe droughts, floods, and cyclones. The government continues to attempt to address environmental degradation but does that alone. Other stakeholders, particularly the church, do not seem to feature high in developing and implementing government policies. But historically, in the one-party system, the nationalized but still independent church perpetuated government policies and continued as government partners pursuing imperial progress and development legacy.

Nevertheless, the early indigenous churches, primarily those emanating and with connections to the Zambezi Industrial missions of Joseph Booth, were different. During colonialism, they justified and identified themselves as the defender of the truth, justice and criticized government policies on racism, segregation, nepotism, and paternalistic tendencies (see Perry ed., 1996). For these reasons, John Chilembwe (see Shepperson & Price, 1958) led the indigenous, colonial church 19 into the first struggle for liberation and freedom as early as 1915 (cf. Sindima, 1992).

However, the colonial church and government played a role in the socio-economic—agriculture, education, health, and infrastructure development of Malawians. Colonial policies towards growth and progress caused land, soil, water, and forests degradation. The colonial legacy continued to affect the post-colonial church and government (cf. Wallman, 2018). However, there is no record to indicate the colonial indigenous and missionary church engaged in ecological preservation and protection despite the presence of natural trees around old mission stations in Malawi.

Therefore, it is asserted that the post-colonial and post-independence church has not changed much and has remained an institution of androcentric power and authority (cf. Phiri, 1997). Thus, the church has continued to encourage paternalism and abusive treatment on both the human “Mothers” and on “Mother Earth” (see Moyo, 2002). Moreover, the post-colonial and post-independence church has continued to catalyze European progress and development (civilization, industrialization, and enlightenment). The church has provided a great deal of work in education, health, agriculture, and technical services (cf. Jere, 2018), all of which affected the environment somehow.

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19 National Archives in Zomba Malawi, Nyasaland Department of Agriculture and Forestry Reports 1959, Accessed on (24 March 2019).
However, given human rights, governance and politics, the church has remained significant in the fight for integrity and good leadership (Gundani, 2018). During the dictatorship of Hastings Kamuzu Banda, the post-independence church, particularly the Roman Catholic Bishops, and specific individuals like Henry Masauko Chipembere, son of an Anglican priest, became watchdogs and strengthened the liberation struggle against Banda’s dictatorship (cf. Ross, 1996b; Mbaya, 2014). The church opposed injustice, detention without trial, nepotism, regionalism, corruption, house tax and encouraged dedicated stewardship and responsible citizenship.

Thus, under the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) church has always brought Malawians together as a God-fearing nation and therefore encouraged citizens’ accountability, faithfulness, love, transparency, and provided hope for political freedom and change (see comments by (Hussein, 2011). But in all such efforts, it is hard to find the church or PAC’s contributions towards ecological injustice and environmental degradation. Therefore, ecology and ecosystem preservation and protection seem to be the only area where the colonial, post-colonial, and post-independence church has a small and still voice hard to be heard in the public sphere.

In a democratic Malawi, the church in society has continued with (progress and development) to fight illiteracy, poverty, hunger, and disease. The church has attempted to respond to HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis, politics, corruption and demanded good governance, onus, diligence, and decentralization (cf. “A moment of Truth” Newell, 1995). But new challenges have and continue to emerge in society. These include challenges related to high population growth, waste dumping, pollution, droughts, and floods. More recently, Malawian humanity has been confronted with unstable weather conditions that are dehumanizing and quite devastating. The present situation in the environment has reached a crisis. Surprisingly, the prophetic guidance and action the church renders in development and progress do not seem to be available and accessible as the church attempts to address the environmental crisis.

The failure to name and include the contribution of the church and other faith groups in government policies and the public domain concerning environmental crisis possibly designates a challenge in the church’s environmental stewardship. More fundamentally, it raises an underlying critical issue: how churches in Malawi understand and respond to their calling in God’s mission, specifically about the ecological degradation and environmental crisis. Furthermore, it raises whether the church has a

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21 See Malawi Environmental Management Act (MEMA) of 1996, the 1996 Malawi Forestry Policy (MFP); the Malawi Land Policy (MLP) of 2002, the Malawi National Environmental Policy (MNEP) 2004, the Malawi Water and Sanitation Policy (MWSP) of 2005; and the 2008 Malawi Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (MBSAP).
theology, prophetic teaching, and practice specifically designed to address environmental and biodiversity concerns in society.

According to Kalipeni, (1992), the precursors for an ecological crisis in Malawi are identified in the agrarian society’s lack of a workable population policy and population control plan. In other words, rapid population growth has caused several challenges, including environmental crisis (cf. IPCC Report No.31, 2008). The uncontrolled population growth is directly related to issues and factors causing poverty and diseases that influence unemployment, conflicts, and immigration (UN Report on International Organization for Migration, 2019).

Kalipeni further asserts that the Mozambican freedom war and internal conflicts also led to ecological challenges such as increased land shortage and demand for trees for fuelwood22 (cf. Sangala News Reporter for Malawi Times of May 2015). Consequently, deforestation by both Mozambican refugees and Malawians who learned charcoal production skills from the Mozambican refugees increased the shortage of arable farming and grazing land in Malawi (cf. Barnett 2003). Kalipeni asserts that the ecological consequences following deforestation, overuse of farms and overgrazing, were erosion, degradation pollution, and severe drought following the decline in water table levels (1992). Interestingly, the government and civil society accuse religious scriptures of promoting reproduction to subdue the Earth (Gen. 1:27-28 or Quran 2:30). Therefore, in the discussion of ecological crisis, government and civil society hardly name church or religion as a possible partner in addressing the environmental crisis.

1.4.5 Traditional religions and environmental crisis

Traditional religions will include Islam, Christianity, and the indigenous religions at some point in the discussion. After many generations of practicing Islam and Christianity, some Malawians consider them their traditional religion. Historically, Islam and Christianity are foreign and arrogantly differentiated from Indigenous or Native religions (Kimutai, 2017). Christianity and Islam thus mostly have had conflicts with Native beliefs, especially regarding land and forest use (the home of ancestors), where the latter’s intentions evolve into the ethos of civilization and modernity (cf. Lamba,1985; Mulwafu, 2004). There is not much recorded about the eco-theological influence of the Native religions in Malawi. But oral traditions, practices, and beliefs still have some traces of preservation and degradation management stories. In other words, the missionaries of Islam and Christianity did not find an ecotheological knowledge vacuum as they arrived in Malawi.

Therefore, there are two single tribal-based detailed contributions of Native religions authored by James Amanze (2002) and Joyce Mlenga (2016). Amanze’s book about “Bimbi Cult” remains the only full detailed contribution concerned with the Native religious practices in the environment in Malawian agrarian society. But similar efforts are attempted by other theologians such as Isabel A. Phiri, (1997), Fulatta L Moyo, (2002). They recognize the contribution of Native religions to the importance and preservation of ecology (the environment) in Malawi. But so far, no documented evidence provides a critical analysis of Native religions’ impact on environmental degradation.

Some Malawians still find Native religious faith and practices appealing despite the Christian Islamic influence and conversion. Some Malawians believe that the cosmos is inhabited by human beings and other non-human organism features such as the land, forests, plants, and animals (Pembamoyo, E., in Levasseur T. eds., et al., 2016). Human and non-human environments are highly regarded in intersubjective relationships (cf. Ikeke 2013; Maarif, 2015). Thus, everyday behaviours and practices include and consider the importance of biodiversity and ecological conservation and preservation (cf. Asante, 2017). In traditional beliefs and practices in Malawi, ecosystems are highly valued, and apart from clearing for cultivation and human residence, the forests (particularly graveyards) are generally preserved and protected from endangerment.

The pursuant of development and progress by both government and church have continued to endanger the environment. Malawi is faced with continued acute ecological degradation and environmental crisis. Nevertheless, everyone’s knowledge is that human and non-human environments on Earth depend on a healthy ecosystem with balanced biodiversity. Present Malawi faces challenges in its biodiversity and ecological system. What has been the church’s missional response and role so far to ensure that the remnant ecology is preserved and protected? What is a missional response of the church to the challenge of the environmental crisis in Malawi? Does the church matter in the fight against degradation? Can the government and civil society alone successfully deal with the ecological crisis in Malawi?

1.9 The theoretical point of departure

The UN General Assembly of 1994, which repealed the ‘Stockholm 1972 environmental decisions,’ states that “all individuals are entitled to live in an environment of a quality that enables their dignity and well-being.” This principle is derived from the UN Charter adopted in 1945, which states that humanity is both a creature and moulder of their environment, giving them bodily sustenance and providing the opportunity for their intellectual, moral, social, and spiritual growth. For similar reasons, resolutions, scriptures, including the Bible, state that humanity should utilize the environment entirely as God’s stewards (Gen. 1:28).
According to the *Malawi National Environmental Act* (MNEA) of 1997 Revised 2017, Article II (1), it is resolved and legislated that each person must take necessary and appropriate measures to protect and manage their environment for their benefit. Similarly, Steven Harper states that “humanity’s relationship with the natural environment is more one of being than having. We are nature: we do not have nature.” The environment/nature is crucial to humanity’s well-being. Yet, the *Malawi National Environmental Policy* (MNEP) of 1996 revised in 2004 and 2010 shows a worsening deterioration of the natural environment.

The degradation in Malawi is causing a significant loss of the top fertility soil, challenges related to soil erosion, severe water depletion, pollution, and loss of biodiversity (MNEP, 2004:1). *The Malawi Environmental Analysis* report claims that the country faces an environmental cycle of natural resource decline and degradation (2019:1). While the government, civil society, and religious groups are attempting alone to address the natural resource decline and degradation, the challenge of environmental degradation seems to increase. Others continue to blame degradation on religious faith, teaching, and practices. Like many years ago (1967), Lynn White had declared “that Christianity as the most anthropocentric religion the world has ever seen” in destroying the Earth’s essential resources. White asserts that “Christianity bears a huge burden of guilt” for possibly the escalating effects of ecosystem degradation and ecological crises.

On the same grounds as White, Conradie, (2011:6) wonders why Christianity could not prevent such wide-scale environmental destruction the Earth faces now. Consequently, because of Christianity’s seemingly failure to avoid environmental degradation, Conradie, therefore, suggests a Christian confession of guilt and not just a confession of faith as a more appropriate response to the crisis (2011:7). Besides admitting guilt, humans should check on how they relate to the non-human environment. Even the story we tell ourselves about who we are in the universe and our experiences will have to change or face extermination on Earth (cf. Benyus, J.).

### 1.10 An overview of churches involved in the study

The phrase *missional response* to an environmental crisis goes beyond the conceptions of the church in line with its western origins as mainstream or mainline. The expression identifies the church according to the purpose of *missio Dei*. Warneck and Schmidlin argue that the church is central in *missio Dei* (see Verkuyl 1978:27). They argue that although other religions may have some hints about

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truth and intimacies about salvation, only the Christian faith has a church and that the inherent task of the world mission belongs to it (see Verstraelen eds., et al., 1995:443). They claim that if the church were to give up its mission, it would cut off its lifeline. Warneck and Schmidlin’s position is a challenge by Hoekendjik. According to Hoekendjik, the kingdom or universe, and not the church, or mainline or mainstream categorization of the church, is central in God’s mission. Thus, the “missionality” and “theologicality” of the church’s response to ecological crisis depends on the church’s ability to cross categorized boundaries to include other stakeholders in the mission. The churches’ western origins and connections with missionaries are far less critical in missio Dei.

Attention is given to other religions such as Islam and Native religions with which the selected missionaries churches interacted and affected the environment. However, for the sake of focus, churches involved in this study are Anglican, the Presbyterian, and the Roman Catholic, and to a less detailed extent, the Zambezi Industrial Mission. These mission churches came to the then British Central Africa (BCA), later (Nyasaland), and henceforth (Malawi) in the late nineteenth century. The churches originated from the European context of the nineteenth century, which underwent the social upheaval of the Industrial Revolution, the Revivalism in England, Scotland, and France.

The French Revolution that began in 1789 ended in the late 1790s with the ascent to power of Napoleon Bonaparte (Latourette, 1953). Napoleon is famous for territorial expansion and establishing the long-lived Concordat with the Papacy. The three mainline churches influenced by colonialism in Malawi now constitute (33.7%) of the total (77.4%) of the entire Christian population in Malawi (National Statistics Office “NSO” Report, 2018:20), and consequently, have a larger and Christian solid constituency in Malawi.

Geographically, Malawi consists of a narrow strip of land and a large body of water formerly called Lake Nyasa, now Lake Malawi (see Fig.2 on p.xx). The country shares borders with Tanzania in the north, Zambia in the west, and Mozambique in the east (cf. Melorose & Careas, 2015). Under British

27 Both the Industrial Revolution and the French Revolution caused major social transformations from the end of the 18th century. The revolutions laid the foundation for the modernization journey for Great Britain and France. The revolution had different effects and consequences in different economic, political, and social spheres. The agricultural implements and inputs enhanced quality and quantity of production and lowered the cost of food and raised the standard of living. On the other hand, small farmers and many peasants were rendered jobless and they lost their land to wealthy landowners. https://www.history.com/topics/france/french-revolution accessed on [28 December 2019] at Stellenbosch.
rule in 1891, Malawi was named “the British Central Africa Protectorate in 1907 and later Nyasaland” (Nyasaland 1907-1964 Report).

The British Protestant missionaries who evangelized Nyasaland came from two different backgrounds. The first missionaries to arrive in 1861 were the Anglicans, and they belonged to the missionary society called “the Universities Mission to Central Africa” (UMCA) formed in 1857 in England (Anderson-Morshead, 1955). The UMCA arrived at Magomero in Zomba from Britain via Cape Town. Arising from Revivalism in England, the UMCA stressed Episcopacy and priesthood of sacerdotal as its linchpin. The UMCA stressed sacraments and ritualistic in its liturgical services (see Booty, et al., 1988).

The first Scottish missionaries to arrive in Malawi in 1875 were from the Free Church of Scotland established in the UK in 1843 (see Ross, 1996). In the following year, 1876, the arch-rival sister Church of Scotland also arrived in Malawi. Later, the Dutch Reformed Church missionaries from South Africa came to Malawi in 1884. In 1924, the two Scottish churches and the Dutch Reformed Church formed a union of the ‘Church of Central Africa Presbyterian’ CCAP (Pachai, 1972). Later the first Roman Catholic missionaries of the White Fathers (Pères Blancs) arrived in Nyasaland in 1889 (Linden, 1974:16). This first Roman Catholic attempt relates to the Portuguese imperial ambitions against the British already around Lake Nyasa.

The Zambezi Industrial Mission of Joseph Booth (Klaus, 1994), which is why it is included in this study, suggests a critical impact in the subject of environmental degradation, arrived in Malawi in 1892. The initial joint mandate of all the western missionary churches was to bring civilization (progress and development) to the tribes through Christianity, end slavery and teach Christian morality to the tribes in Nyasaland (cf. Linden, 1974). Progress and development by the European standards treated Earth as the source of conventional raw materials—one primary source of environmental degradation. The more complex interaction between Christianity and other religions and their effects on the environment is conceptualized in chapter two and the historical background in chapter three.

1.11 The missionality of the mainline/mainstream churches

The study is concerned with “a missional theological response to the environmental crisis,” particularly of the mainstream (mainline) churches to the challenge of the environmental degradation in Malawi. To speak about a missional theological response is to make a claim about the contextual nature of God’s mission and how that ensures the church’s attractiveness to multidimensional and

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interdisciplinary approaches to contextual issues. Thus, while the focus of this study is on the missional theological nature of mainline churches, namely Anglican, the Presbyterian, and Roman Catholic, the other missionary churches and religious faith groups with impact on environmental degradation Malawi are also examined.

The focus on the *missionality* of the church underlies the hypothesis that environmental degradation increases. After all, the hypothesis argues that the church in Malawi has not been fully missional in its approach to contextual issues. In the words of (cf. Guder, 1998:109), the missional church concept, understood from the mainline church perspective, confronts changes in how church missions are taken. The missional theological nature justifies the study’s hypothesis that environmental degradation is a challenge that cannot be handled by the government, civil society, and the church, each on its own. It also justifies the assumption that a missional church is strategically placed in the community to bring together all stakeholders to successful environmental care.

In the view of Bosch, (1991), the term *missional* means an emphasis on the other side of the ecclesiastical spectrum, with roots in the concept of *missio Dei*. *Missio Dei’s* primary goal is the salvation of people and the whole creation of God. *Missional* responses like what Bosch calls (*missions-ecclesiae*) are tasks carried by the church to fulfill *missio Dei’s* goal. *Missio Dei* crosses denominational or religious barriers. *Missional* responses ensure the church’s missionality and allow it to become an essential participant in *missio Dei* (see Hoejendijk, 1950 accessible on https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1758-6623). The missionality of the church is thus guided by the examples of the contextual birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ as expressed in (Phil. 2:5-11). God, therefore, sends Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit, to embrace the missional responses of the church as *missio Dei* tasks to save people and the entire creation of God.

To put it in another way, the concept of *missional* reinforces a contextual change in the church’s approach towards stewardship and evangelism in today’s plural society (cf. Janssen, 2010:129). Unlike the traditional *missionary* church, the *missional* church accepts a positive adherence to the ecclesiastical contextual concerns for social responsibility and social justice in its society (cf. Guder, 1998:109). Regarding the term *theological*, consider Bosch’s concept of *mission theology*, primarily as the church seeks to subsume itself into God’s mission (cf. Bosch, 2011:531).

Thus, the concept *theological* in this study explores the interface between *mission theology* and *ecological theology* (ecotheology) as the church seeks to take part in God’s plan and purpose for mission in its context. Such contexts are unique and have various environmental theological

worldviews underlying them as their substratum. In other words, a *missional theological response* of the church is contextual and concerned with implications of ecological degradation on ecology, ecosystems, and the biodiversity where people live.

### 1.12 Research design and methodology

A research design is a plan, structure, and inquiry strategy intended to answer research questions or problems. According to Yin, (2011:75), research “design is a blueprint” or a detailed plan for completing a research study with the operational variables so that it can be measured by selecting a sample that the researcher wants to investigate. Research design seeks to answer research questions and sub-questions objectively, accurately, and economically. Within the task of research, designs involve methods and methodologies. According to Dawson, (2008:14), “a research methodology is the philosophy or general principle that guides an inquiry.”

Babbie & Mouton, (2001:75) also assert that research methodology focuses on individual “steps in the research process” and helps identify the most objective procedures to be used. Research methodology is simply a systematic way to solve the research problem (Rajasekar, 2013). While on another level, research methods can be understood as all the techniques used to conduct research (see Khotari, 2004). That is to say that the scope of a research methodology is greater than that of research methods. Research methodology discusses the logic behind the methods used in the research study and explains why a technique and not others were used. The methodology can evaluate research results by the researcher or other interested parties.

The study about the church’s response to the environmental crisis largely falls within the social sciences category and is therefore deemed descriptive and qualitative. However, the study also engages statistics, and consequently, it is an empirical study. The study analysis requires quantitative statistics, theories, and concepts. In other words, the study is descriptive and statistical and is both qualitative and quantitative and therefore attracts methodological triangulation, sometimes known as Mixed Methods (see Cassim, Teaching Tool kit 2014).

Arguably, methodological triangulation allows research to embrace diversity (Agerfalk, 2017). In another way, it is contestable; even in pure natural science (empirical studies), not all data can be reduced into numbers (cf. Terrell, 2012). Quantitative research cannot be done objectively and systematically unless empirical data is qualitatively described. However, Cassim (Teaching Tool kit

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2019) states that qualitative and quantitative methods triangulated in the research are costly but enrich and widen the research output.

Thus, mixed-method (methodological triangulation) helps explore and explain complex human behaviour using various techniques to offer a more balanced conclusion (Noble & Heale, 2018). Therefore, “methodological triangulation” is chosen as the most appropriate research methodology for this study. An inquiry into a church’s missional-theological response to environmental degradation involves literature review, Internet searches, self-administered questionnaire interviews, discussion groups, participant’s participatory, and other data collection techniques. Secondly, the study is qualitative and quantitative, empirical, and descriptive, and therefore, the use of different data collection and analysis approaches is crucial. Detailed discussion regarding design, methods, and methodologies is presented in chapter four.

1.13 Thematic data interpretation

This study interprets generated data using a grid of themes such as:

1.13.1 People’s perceptions of the environmental crisis (biodiversity crisis) and its impact on life.
1.13.2 The reason, factors, and causes of the environmental crisis,
1.13.3 Challenges, strength, weakness, threats, and opportunities in Earth-keeping and stewardship of the Malawi people,
1.13.4 Quantity in the percentage of responses compared to the total number of respondents,
1.13.5 Assessment and categorizing reasons why given forms of activities are necessary as responses to the crisis.

1.14 Research impact

The environmental crisis in Malawi has been widely discussed within areas of advocacy and awareness, and less is done in terms of practice given protection and preservation. For example, Fulata Moyo and Martin Ott (2002) edited a book, Christianity and Environment, concerned with raising awareness and environmental degradation advocacy. Chakanza, (2004), in Research in African Traditional Religion, raises six points is in terms of ecological awareness of traditional religions in Malawi. Isabel Phiri, (1997), in part, discusses the impact of the environment on the religious experience of Chewa women.

Chitheka, (2015)34 also discusses the Nkhoma CCAP Synod and Chewa’s view of the environment in his master’s degree submitted to Stellenbosch University. Claude Boucher, nicknamed (Achisale) at

34Chitheka (March 2015, Thesis, Stellenbosch) asserts that “there is lack of concern in matters of environment and ecotheology in churches in Malawi...”
KuNgoni in Dedza in Bhebe, (2002), has written on life cycles associated with God’s relationship with the Chewa as an agricultural people and their environment. The Government of Malawi and the civil society have widely reviewed and published legislation and policy on environmental management.

There is less contribution on what could be done to address the environmental crisis challenge, yet environmental degradation still threatens sustainable living and livelihood in Malawi. The gap in literature particularly concerning a *missional-theological response* to the environmental crisis is still present. Yet churches are well known for their prophetic role and contribution to socioeconomics and politics in Malawi. Churches have attempted to offer denominational and institutional-based responses in the face of the ongoing environmental degradation.

Therefore, this study intends to enable a sustainable ecclesiastical coordinated and multisectoral/interdisciplinary action to respond to ecological degradation and the crisis. Unless all stakeholders are involved, degradation will continue, and biodiversity will face extinction challenges. The study develops and recommends the adoption of TAP in the church’s response to ecological care. The TAP is an acronym that stands for Traditional religions, Applied sciences, and Permaculture designs. It is a tool designed to enable the church to bring various stakeholders to respond to the environmental crisis in Malawi.

That is, the study within the “*missio Dei*” framework examines the church’s *mission-theological response* to the environmental crisis through (TAP) as a philosophical tool. Its primary purpose is to bring all stakeholders together on one platform to respond to the ecological crisis. TAP is a step further from the partnership and interdisciplinary approach. It calls for a multisectoral approach in planning and executing a sustainable response to the challenge of environmental degradation.

Through TAP, the study aims to develop and recommend an environmental response based on coordinated, accountable, and transparent *stewardship* and *Diakonia* of all stakeholders on the *oikoumene*. It seeks to promote community action—the church’s participation in the peripheral or marginalized society (stakeholders) to sustainable ecological management. In other words, the study seeks to increase interdisciplinary solidarity, partnership, and efficiency in ecosystem management of “... the poor peoples with antiquities” of the southern continents, especially Malawians (cf. Bühlmann 1976:23). A response that will foster trust, hope, commitment, joy, partnership, and develop a multi-dimensional approach that will promote resilient eco-theology practices and ensure ecological justice. A response worthy for building sustainable ecosystems and biodiversity must be aware that the environment for the “Africans denotes life in totality” (Gitau, 2000:4).
1.15 Motivation for the study

The interface between theology and ecology increased over the years following my involvement in Permaculture in Malawi since 1996. In 2005, Kwame Bediako, my supervisor for master’s in applied theology and missiology, liked my interest in ecological theology. Still, he projected and warned that ecotheology would face challenges by the growing socio-economic gap between the rich and poor. Bediako further raised Christianity’s missiological, historical, and theological influence on Africa’s traditional religious ecological ideologies. The interest grew stronger following several international permaculture convergences (IPC) conventions.

In 2009 I presented an imaginary story from the chapter (Genesis 51) the IPC9 in Lilongwe (the first IPC ever in Africa). This fictitious chapter depicted human self-destructive activities that corrupted creation, and the biodiversity slowly moved toward extinction. Some participants who do not believe in God did not like the religious aspect of (Genesis 51) in the Permaculture Movement. The positive remarks the story of (Genesis 51) received from the permaculture audience in IPC9 assisted me in investigating the connections between permaculture and a missional theological response.

To keep my other audience that did not like the concept of God in the IPC9 in Lilongwe and the Permaculture Movement, I chose to call God the Supreme Power, the Causing Agent, or the power in the Big Bang. Several participants liked the connections I made between religion and permaculture. During the IPC10 in Jordan in 2011, Bill Mollison, the founder of the Permaculture Movement, showed interest in the interface between Permaculture and faith that I pursued. Bill was then health cautious, he wanted to see the results of this effort, but unfortunately, he passed away on September 24, 2016 (see my photo with Bill in Aman 2011 in appendix 9.2.3 p.33).

In 2011 the Rev. Anne Bayley, interested in my theological interest in nature, religion, and permaculture, involved me in her book project “More and better food.” Bayley later helped edit my manuscript on religion, food, and ecology that appeared as a chapter in a 2016 book, edited by Todd Levasseur. Professor John Mbiti, during his visit to Stellenbosch University in August 2016, appreciated the connections between mission theology and permaculture. He encouraged me to explore the interface between the missionary theological contribution in development and progress that might have contributed to the current environmental crisis in Malawi (see picture with Mbiti in the appendix 9.2.4 p.333). Professor Mbiti advised that the study should reflect on the missionary’s contributions to the environmental crisis in Africa.

During my presentation on “Faith, Practices and Global Warming ...” at the conference held at Hope University in Liverpool in 2018, some participants argued some unscientific elements in my
presentation. I queried if the heatwave present at that time could be the prophetic “signs of the times” fulfilled. Some participants argued “End Times” message was unscientific, counter-modernity, and regressive to development in the modern world. So far, there is hardly missional theological literature in African Christianity contributing specifically to environmental degradation and stewardship. However, my former professor at the Akrofi Christaller Institute in Ghana, Andrew Walls, who attended the presentation, acknowledged my contribution and indicated that the church’s missional theological response in ecology is an area that needs thorough investigation in African Christianity in the 21st century. Similar remarks were also made by Professor Lamin Sanneh (may his soul rest in peace and rise in glory) during the same conference in Liverpool (see photos with Walls and Lamin in Liverpool Global Warming Workshop in 2018 in appendix 9.2.2 p.333).

1.16 Research ethical issues and limitations

This research involved collecting data from various participants in society. Therefore, approval to conduct the study was granted to the researcher by the Research Ethics Committee (REC) of the University of Stellenbosch. Letters of consent (get keepers) to conduct research and interview people in the Anglican Church in Malawi were given by Bishop Fanuel Magangani, the Chairperson of the Anglican Council in Malawi. The Moderator of General Synod Church of Central African Presbyterian in Malawi, Rev Chingota, and the Archbishop of Blantyre Bishop Thomas Msusa for the Episcopal Conference (Roman Catholic Church) in Malawi also gave their consent. Selected District Commissioners (DCs) also granted gatekeeper permission as attached in (appendix 9.1.4 p. 324).

There were some challenges regarding time, procedures, and process to obtain clearance from the REC. According to Hendricks, “the ethics review process possibly seems to be too bureaucratic and that it imposes natural science principles on the social sciences” (2018:1). However, as Gelling (2016) asserts, the REC plays a vital role in balancing the risks and benefits of proposed research projects for both the researcher, their audience, processes, and research project outcome (Gerrish & Lacey, 2013:116). Although Research Ethics Committees and their operations are often deemed bureaucratic (see Haggerty, 2004:291; Bryman, 2012:131; McCormack et al., 2018:127), they help researchers understand vital issues that research ethics committees will consider in their deliberations.

The REC typically focuses on the potential risks for research participants, researchers; the requirement for freely informed consent; and the potential of the study to generate valuable findings. Following the REC observations, the questionnaire was revised and perfected to the researcher’s advantage. The support given by the REC ensures that good ethical research analysis “contributes to the good reputation of an institution for which the research is conducted” (Bryman, 2012:131). Malouff and Schutte, (2005) emphasize that research ethical review processes though too bureaucratic, ensure that
methodologies are ethically sound when conducted. Malouff and Schutte further stress that the REC prevents poor designing and prevents potentially harmful studies.

Another challenge with limiting factors is the issue of language, terminology, and vocabulary regarding the term mission, especially the use of adjectives (missional) in the research. The term mission in Malawi is widely regarded as the place associated with the church of the former foreign missionaries. The term mission refers to various organizations’ strategic planning processes that explain their main reasons and functions. The church and its parachurch organizations operate on the stipulated vision and mission. In rural areas, the term mission refers to where the churches’ central administration institutions are situated.

The challenge increases when the term missional is involved. A close meaning in the vocabulary of most of the local Malawian (in Chichewa) adopted for the study was “Utumiki ndi ntchito za mpingo,” (servanthood and acts of the church). The term mission and missional does not exist in the vocabulary of the local languages in Malawi. Therefore, the “meaning-based translation” is accepted for the sake of communication and considering its importance, as explained by Mildred Larson. 35 The term missional focuses on stewardship, evangelism, and Diakonia, represented by one work, “Utumiki” servanthood in the Chichewa language. Thus, for Utumiki to have meaning, it has to be put in a context such; Utumimiki in Koinonia, Utumiki in Martyria, Utumiki in Letougia, etc. All set in a context and understanding of the term missional church.

Another challenge was encountered given focus. Although the study refers to other religions, other fields of study such as science and sociology and mentions other countries in Africa, the research is limited to the contribution of Christianity to the environmental crisis in Malawi. The study is particularly limited to the three main churches: Anglicans, Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, and to a bit of extent, the Zambezi Industrial Mission for its early missionary industrial contributions, which impacted equally on the environment in Malawi. These denominations are established across the country and form the largest population of the faith community in Malawi (see Ross, 2017). The study pays attention to these churches because of their association with early missionaries and their roles, influence, and involvement with early colonial policies and, to some extent, impacted the environment (cf. Moyo & Ott, 2002:35). These churches also participate in various national socio-economic and political development sectors in Malawi. These churches provide primary and secondary education, manage health institutions, and offer university and tertiary education in Malawi (see Kalinga, 2012:43; Kalilombe, 2018:90).

1.17 Prior study: An overview of the literature surveyed

There is literature on ecology and climate change from a Christian point of view, and there is also literature on ecological theology and Earth conservation. Still, there is no literature specifically on the church’s *missional theological response* to the environmental crisis. Regarding ecological theology and Earth conservation Conradie, (2008) explains this better in his book “The Church and Climate Change” in the six manifestations of the church. Conradie firstly illustrates his use of “and” in the book title. First, the term denotes that church is one social institution within the context of the civil society confronted with a series of challenges (2008:10).

Secondly, according to Conradie, the word “and” also indicates how climate change may be taken as an added auxiliary function, which poses a challenge to the church’s self-understanding. In other words, the church may understand itself as separate from the society as an independent local congregation, a worshiping community, a denomination, an ecumenical movement, a parachurch organization, and the church as a life of believers. It is hard to find a record of the environmental crisis in church records and the pastoral letters (cf. Moyo & Ott, 2002:35). This suggests a gap in the literature regarding the church’s missional response to the environmental crisis.

Thus, this study seeks to examine the *missional response* in the light of the lives of believers if it envisages environmental crisis has a severe impact on the lives of both human and non-human environments. From the literature available on the public domain, the leading causes of the environmental crisis in Malawi include forest degradation, soil or land degradation, water, and air pollution (NEAP, 2010). The main issues in the problem include floods, droughts, soil erosion, high ground, and atmospheric temperature, decreased water levels in the lakes and rivers, and deforestation (*Malawi National Environmental Policy “MNEP,”* 1997).

The environmental crisis enhanced by the sweltering temperatures in the atmosphere and on land has caused global warming and climate change (Revised *National Environmental Policy “RNEP,”* 2016). Climate change has influenced several factors, such as migrating people and animals seeking suitable conditions elsewhere (RNEP, 2016). By implication, human and nonhuman environments have shifted their boundaries considerably, propelling environmental interaction and creating conditions ideal for spreading diseases and viral infections.36

According to the Malawi Country Environmental Outlook Report (2019), the environmental crisis through droughts, scorching, humid conditions, and intense storms such as Cyclone Idai and Brighton

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are the potential to cause property and life damages. The weather experts, the National Meteorological and Hydrological Agency (NMHAM), assert that the ominous conditions caused by the environmental crisis in Malawi are likely to continue for a long time. The (NMHAM) and the Department of Climate Change and Meteorological Services (DCCMS), in 2014, argues that frequent extensive dry heat periods and high temperatures are likely to occur to a greater extent each subsequent year.

In most cases, environmental degradation is closely linked to the factors that propel people's poor relationships and moral decay. Clement Chimenya, in the Permaculture Network Newsletter in Malawi, edition 58th in April (2008), states that a hungry society raises angry and violent people. Comparatively, anger causes bitterness and enhances lawlessness and disorder. People would do anything to bring food on their own and children’s plates. Women and children often suffer from hunger and poverty from environmental crises (cf. Des Jardins, 2012:233).

Contrastingly, hunger and poverty compare sharply with the gospel message of koinonia, as expressed in the kenotic (self-emptying) love of the Triune and the true purpose of the Incarnation - the building of a kingdom with abundant life (cf. Greenway & Monsma, 2000:1). In talking about kenotic love, Bowers (in Swart et al., 2012:20) discuss the term and the structure of community life. Community life ushers the golden rule - love your neighbours like yourself and strengthen the call to rely on others for success on common goals. The concept of kenosis thus works well with the concept of “Umunthu” of “I am because we are and are God” (cf. Tutu, 2004:25; Khoza, 2006:6).

These Umunthu/Ubuntu terms are central as the gospel attempt to find a place among the poor, hunger and the marginalized in the community (cf. Cunningham, 2003:63; Meyer, 2012:45). If these were considered, policy development and implementation by the department of environment would become an interdisciplinary obligation for all stakeholders. But one thing is evident if Malawians do not find lasting solutions, the ecological crisis will continue. Life in Malawi will have to change (see Meinhardt & Patel, 2003:55). An adjustment/adaptation will be required urgently before some species (particularly the more prominent species) in the ecology disappear (cf. Botzler & Armstrong, 1998:320). It is high time the church possibly took its public role seriously and encouraged other stakeholders, predominantly politicians, to take the present environmental crisis seriously.

In Malawi and possibly many countries in Africa, the political leadership is primarily interested in and spends a lot of income on security compared to environmental degradation. In the recent bilateral talks with the global north, the global south leadership is interested primarily in strengthening national security. The entire African leadership is interested in developing military power instead of

safeguarding the Earth’s biodiversity. This is clear in the Russia-Africa SOCHI 2019 Summit, between African leaders and Russia; see pictures in the appendix.

It is evident in the summit pictured\(^\text{38}\) above, interest is channeled towards nuclear energy, oil, gas, agriculture, and diamond trade, and these took centre stage in the summit. While at the same time, environmental degradation, which is essential for sustainability, receives less attention. The budget for environmental protection is the least in many forums, yet ecological crises have become the ‘common problem’ for humans and nonhumans. In Shrinkhal’s (2019) words,\(^\text{39}\) the peculiar nature of current environmental problems is that anthropogenic selfish choices cause them more than natural phenomena.

Shrinkhal further claims that: “mindless consumerism and economic growth have started to demonstrate pernicious effects on Mother Nature. Despite this, the pace and desire for economic development [and progress] have never ceased.” The economy determines environmental policy (cf. *United Nations Environment Programme Staff*, 1980:126). Emphasis was ever placed on the role of science and technology as a catalyst for integrating ecology with the economy (Bührs, 2009:143).

Humans seem not to realize that people’s prosperity and success and the decline of the natural world are interlinked and are currently moving towards a possible evolution (see Hill & McDonagh, 2020:62). Signs of the times? Nobody, perhaps, seems to be able to read and interpret the signs in modern times as signs towards evolution or signs of the times.

But it is possibly clear that:

> “We have by now witnessed [closer to five] decades of environmental conscientising, outcries, statistics, analyses, programs, and movements...We are confronted with daunting statistics about deforestation, the extinction of species, global warming, population growth, and insurmountable waste dumps...we have not been able to turn the tide of consumption, pollution,...deforestation, over-fishing, and the exploitation of nonrenewable resources...” (Conradie, 2003:122).

Everyone can see the changes human action is causing in the environment. The conditions in the atmosphere, water, and air pollution are just a few examples of the damages caused by human greed in pursuit of raw material (see Van den Berg, 2014:132). But no substantial coordinated efforts are given to resolve the challenges. There are still conflicts on whether climate change and environmental degradation are related (Trump and Paris Agreement, 2015). The NASA (*National Aeronautics and Space Administration*) climate scientists (Joao Teixeira March 2020) disagree on possible connections


between climate change and extreme weather events such as hurricanes, heavy downpours, floods, blizzards, heat waves, and droughts.\textsuperscript{40}

The Earth's temperatures keep rising gradually so that every year is hotter than the previous since 1880. According to NASA Report February 2019,\textsuperscript{41} world global temperatures have changed since the 1880s,\textsuperscript{42} breaking the first record in 1934. The second hottest year in history since 1880 was 2015. The world temperature has kept rising each preceding year, and the hottest ever recorded in history was in 2019. As a result of the recent high temperatures, agrarian societies such as Malawi have suffered from severe droughts. High temperatures have caused the water table and sea levels to drop. In Malawi, Lake Chilwa has been a victim of constant droughts-related challenges for nearly two decades.

On the world scale, Global rising temperatures are related to several challenges, including climate change fatalities that are generally linked to high fire danger temperatures, declining air and water quality, extreme weather, and vector-borne illnesses.\textsuperscript{43} All these challenges affect the habitats of humans, animals, and plants. Global warming increases the melting of glaciers in the Arctic regions, causing sea levels and floods to rise.\textsuperscript{44} The melting of ice in the Arctic circles can reignite the ancient virus and bacteria, posing severe global health challenges that have never happened before.

The environmental crisis is potential for causing migration and human trafficking as people try to look for favourable conditions elsewhere (cf. Menezes & Nicol, 2019:270). As people and animals migrate, chances of conflict, intolerance and the spread of infectious diseases are likely to increase (cf. Listorti & Doumani, 2001:143). Droughts and floods can affect agriculture and thus exacerbate poverty and inequalities and increase exploitation. In addition to climate change, high global temperatures can also increase conditions for breeding insects such as grasshoppers/locusts that usually affect farm crops (see Sivakumar et al., 2013:131). High temperatures rise to water and air pollution, increasing the rapid multiplication of insects that spread diseases, including malaria (see Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, Vol. 16, No. 6, 1960:226).

In light of the current life-threatening and frightening world of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century, the study investigates a missional theological response in Malawi to the challenge of environmental crisis. The study takes into consideration Conradie’s expression that: scientific discourses, experiments, inventions, or discoveries will remain at the ecological level without the contributions of prophetic and narrative

\textsuperscript{40}https://climate.nasa.gov/blog/2956/how-climate-change-may-be-accessed on [29 March 2020] at Stellenbosch.
forms of moral discourses of church theologians from many disciplines involved in the careful process of analysis and evaluation of evidence of environmental degradation (2003:13).

1.18 Chapter outline

Chapter 1: Background and focus of the study
This chapter serves as an introduction to the study. It, therefore, contains a detailed description of the research problem, a brief historical background of Malawi as a nation, conceptual and theoretical grounding of the problem, and other key terms in the discussion of the environment, the layout of chapters, and conclusion.

Chapter 2: Conceptual framework and theoretical foundations
The chapter seeks to conceptualize theories and terms discussed by various environmental scientists, ecotheologians, ecofeminists, practical theologians, and missiologists.

Chapter 3: A historical background
This chapter discusses the historical background of environmental degradation, the historical contribution of the colonial government, the Anglican Church, Roman Catholic, and the Presbyterian Church. The chapter also discusses the early ecclesiastical developments and other religious values and traditions and their contributions to issues concerning environment and nature. In addition, the chapter examines Joseph Booth’s industrial initiatives, resistance to colonial farming methods, and the early detestation of Malawians to the White domination.

Chapter 4: A Missional-theological response to the environmental crisis in Malawi: Research methodology, data collection, and presentation
This chapter summarizes the methodology used to collect and present data regarding the causes and impacts of the current decline of ecology, ecological systems, biodiversity, challenges, and the magnitude of the environmental crisis in Malawi. This involves presenting the research data, coding, and summarizing discussion groups and individual face-to-face interviews following the research conducted in Malawi.

Chapter 5: A critical analysis and discussion of the research findings
This chapter examines in detail the responses given by participants in discussion groups, individual interviews, observations, and participant's participation. This includes investigating church policies and documents in the three main churches: the Anglican Church, the Presbyterian Church, and the Roman Catholic Church in Malawi.
**Chapter 6: Towards a missional-theological response: Reflection and engagement with the research outcome for the sustainable and resilient environment**

This chapter provides a debate and an in-depth reflection on the research findings as interpreted in the data analysis. The chapter deals with alternative and new initiatives that lead to sustainability and resilience in ecology and ecosystems.

**Chapter 7: Conclusion and recommendations**

In this chapter, a summary and recommendations are made based on fieldwork, pilot project (participatory) outcome, and a reflection of ecological activities that may or may not take place in main churches. The chapter compares the results based on the missional theological nature of the church and its response to environmental degradation within the framework of missio Dei informed by an interdisciplinary and multidimensional approach.

**1.19 Conclusion**

This chapter introduced the topic of *A missional theological response to the environmental crisis in Malawi*. The chapter provided a detailed description of the primary purpose, research question, main objectives and discussed research design and methodology, problem statement, and the background of the environmental degradation. The chapter also presented the experience on colonial, post-colonial, and post-independent governance in connection with ecological and biodiversity management and how they could affect the environmental crisis. The chapter provided an overview of the research impact, motivation, ethical research issues, and chapters breakdown. In the next chapter, the focus is on conceptualization. The next chapter discusses ecological concepts and theories within the framework of ecotheology and missio Dei given environmental degradation and crises.
Chapter two

2 Conceptualization

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter focused on the background of the problem, the primary purpose of the research, and what entails a *missional theological response* to the environmental crisis. The chapter also discussed the research question, main objectives, research design, and methodology. It presented the historical background regarding the management and decline of ecology and biodiversity considering the colonial and post-colonial economic and dominating political policies. This chapter focuses on conceptualization. The chapter discusses ecological concepts and theories within the context of a *missional theological response* to the environmental crisis through lenses of ecotheology and the purpose of *missio Dei*. The study follows the recent severe ecological degradation and problems in Malawi and Southern Africa. The main aim of the chapter is to lay the theoretical foundations of the analysis. It explores how environmental degradation continues to threaten the Earth’s capacity to preserve ecosystems amidst theories and concepts based on *missio Dei*, missional church, and eco-theological perspectives. In the presence of feasible civil policies, church practices, and doctrines, environmental degradation threatens the Earth’s sustainability and biodiversity.

2.2 Concepts and theories

Challenges regarding variability, definitions, and meanings of concepts and theories usually arise among social and natural sciences scientists. (cf. Heinen, 1985; Sutton & Staw, 1995). However, theories and concepts are essential to understand the phenomenon of the environmental crisis in Malawi. Concept and theories seek to explain how ecological crisis becomes an issue and at the same time how the phenomenon (environmental crisis) can be understood and approached academically and its bearings on the praxis. The study of concepts and theories provides a conceptual framework. A researcher can analyze and facilitate the effective development of a research field and its applicability to practical problems in a context (cf. Gay & Weaver, 2011).

2.2.1 General concepts in the discussion of environment crisis

One common and familiar concept in the environmental crisis is the *Carbon footprint*, a term used as the metaphor for the total impact or result something has in the end. In the case of Malawi, the agricultural estate-led economy dependent on wood fuel for curing tobacco, steam power, charcoal production, mission steamboats that used hardwood have a Carbone footprint of deforestation, soil

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erosion, and siltation in rivers and lakes. Another concept also quite famous is Climate change. The term used alongside climate change carbon footprint means the total greenhouse gas emissions expressed in comparison to the equivalence of the value of its product. According to Todorov, (1986:259), “climatic change is perhaps the most complex and controversial issue in the entire science of meteorology.” There is no unanimous opinion, policy, and agreement among climatologists on the definition of the term “climate, let alone climatic change, the climatic trend of fluctuation” (1986:259).

However, the simple, acceptable, and general understanding is that a tremendous change in the Earth’s temperature, weather, and climatic conditions of the atmosphere leads to environmental crises worldwide (cf. Oeshlaeger, 1994; Gitau 2000; Ashby and Pachico, 2012). Since 1996 Malawi has begun to register extreme variation and inconsistencies in weather conditions in the atmosphere and land that affected its agriculture-based economy (NEAP, 2006). When unstable weather conditions began, little was known about how to resist and deal with the challenge in Malawi. In addition, many smallholder farmers in rural areas where farming is the primary source of income struggled to figure out what to do and how to adjust to the new changing weather conditions. In other words, Malawians were unaware that the challenge would continue and required adaptation.

Thus, another crucial conceptual representation in climate change discourse is ‘Adaptation.’ This concept is based on understanding the reality of climate change and how human beings can adjust, adapt, and prevent environmental degradation and climate change. In other words, it carries the idea of adjustment, practical steps, process, and ‘outcome’ towards climate change by human beings. Human activities are the main determinants of environmental degradation, climate change, ecological and biodiversity crises (cf. IPCC, 2013 Report 15-Chapter3-Low-Res pdf). Adaptation is mentioned in almost all policy and Act documents as mitigation. Still, surprisingly, the challenge of the environmental crisis keeps increasing in Malawi and manifests itself in different forms every time.

Another general concept is carbon dioxide. Through the combustion of fossil fuels (oil, natural gas, and coal), other sources release and continue to do so a massive amount of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Charcoal producers, industries, and manufacturing companies are involved in sensing carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Other producers of carbon include historic steam engines and Dover-stoves commonly used in missionary stations and colonial government houses. As various human activities add carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, the natural forest growth that removes it from the atmosphere (the best natural carbon filter) is challenged by deforestation, the wanton cutting down trees. According to the (NEAP) of March (2006), deforestation is the primary cause of the environmental crisis. Deforestation enhances global warming and allows runoffs to remove the top fertile organic matter (soil erosion) to cause sedimentation in lakes and rivers.
Therefore, global warming and climate change follow human self-destructive actions and how humanity relates to nonhuman environments on the Earth. In Malawi, charcoal production is called green gold mining. Deep forest areas with wider biodiversity in Chikwawa, Mulanje, Thyolo, Chiradzulo, Zomba, Mangochi Machinga, Ntchewu, and Balaka are deforested. Slowly Dzalanyama forest reserve, which the Malawi Defense Force is attempting to protect, is rapidly degrading. Human activities have not spared the beautiful natural environment which the Western (Christian) and Eastern (Islamic) missionaries, including David Livingstone, discovered in Malawi (cf. Ross, A., 2005). These areas have lost their forests for charcoal production, a large producer and emitter of carbon dioxide. Carbon dioxide is good for vegetation growth, but much of it accumulates in the atmosphere because of degradation. This concentration of gases in the sky affects the temperatures and causes warming and unstable weather conditions, for which the call for a missional response of the church is justified.

2.2.2 Missional, missio Dei, and church

Regarding the concept of missio Dei, this study seeks to understand the (missionality) of the church considering the environmental crisis in Malawi. The issue of the missionality of the church is discussed on two levels: The missional nature of the church given its participation in God’s mission as “an important steward” and partner in the redemption plan of God for people and the creation (cf. Hoekendijk, 1952). Secondly, the missionality of focusing on the environmental crisis is a missional challenge to the church in Malawi. In other words, the ecological crisis in this part of the chapter is discussed from the conceptual understanding of the nature of a missional church within the concept of missio Dei in relation to the challenge of environmental degradation in Malawi.

The nature of a missional theological church is always to be under the saving mission of the Cross of Jesus Christ. Under the Cross, missio Dei takes up (subsumes) the “missiones ecclesiae” within missio Dei itself (Bosch, 2011:531). This implies that God embraces and purifies the church to participate in God’s plan of salvation. In missio Dei, the church is aware that God is the primary author of the mission, and the church is just an essential participant in the mission. Through the church, missio Dei is considered as “liberation and emancipatory action—a transformative service which is known as “Diakonia” (Spindler 1987:120). Therefore, the church’s efforts to fight environmental degradation in Malawi depend on its willingness to take on diaconal roles under missio Dei. The church should step out of its traditional and institutional barriers to work with all stakeholders in the community.

Missio Dei helps the church cross doctrinal and traditional identities to become missional in theology and dogmatic issues. As such, the church is scripturally and spiritually guided to work with all the other stakeholders in its context. Missio Dei assists the church in developing ecumenical partnerships...
and engaging in interdisciplinary, multi-sectoral, and multidimensional approaches to deal decisively with contextual issues. Missio Dei ensures a clear understanding that the “church is because others are.” In other words, missio Dei assists the church in understanding and defining itself along with missional theological characteristics as an alternative community.

Speaking about diakonia, Bosch asserts that missio Dei is about diakonia and koinonia intended for building up “God’s transformed” (oikoumene) kingdom (cf. 2011:389; 531). To put it in another way, missio Dei embraces the traditional institutional church and turns it into a missional—a people centred church. The missional nature of the people-centeredness gives the church the potential to exercise its Diakonia, martyrria, and stewardship mandate in contextual realities of its society (cf. Guder, 1998). Missio Dei places the missional theological response of the church to the environmental crisis on a strategic point where the church manifests its nature and witness as it seeks to build God’s kingdom.

God does not, however, need human power to build the kingdom, and God only seeks to reunite with God’s creation. Through the Incarnation, God fulfills the Atonement and sets it an example for the need for “togetherness” against “exclusion of the other.” Thus, missio Dei allows the church to work together ecumenically with other denominations to address its community’s socio-economic, political, cultural, and ecological challenges. More importantly, the terms Diakonia, oikoumene, and fellowship are fundamental to missio Dei and the church’s missional nature and key to its involvement in ecotheology. The concepts are also important as the church seeks to fit itself into the cultural framework of Ubuntu philosophy. Ubuntu values interdependency and companionship of variables in each environment, “I am because we are” (cf. Tutu, 2004:25; Khoza, 2006:6) in other words, always counting upon others as partners (see “Together Towards Life” cf. Keum 2013).

2.3 Environment

The term environment is derived from the French word “environia” meaning to surround. Environment as a concept means the response and the behaviour of a system in the natural world as a whole or a geographical area, significantly as affected by human activity. The term can also refer to an organism’s condition or circumstance (cf. Horswill, 1997). The term refers to abiotic (physical or non-living) and biotic (living) environments. Ordinarily, the term refers to materials and forces surrounding living organisms, and the environment controls the lives of the surrounding organisms.

\[\text{ cited in this book in 2000, “The Environmental Crisis: A challenge for African Christianity” Gitau calls all people and religions to reflect critically on the damage humanity has caused on planet Earth and the risks impending. Gitau urges participants to keep measuring the technological achievements of this age against their negative impact on the Earth environments.}\]


\[\text{https://necsi.edu/environment accessed on [28 May 2019] at Stellenbosch.}\]

\[\text{https://necsi.edu/environment,}\]
including humans. The concept environment can also mean habitat, territory, domain, oikoumene (Greek term οἰκουμένη) which can mean a house or kingdom.

The concept “environment” also refers to the natural condition or setting in which an organism lives. For example, a “home environment” or an oikoumene relates to where people live (literally the inhabited Earth). The Earth is our typical home and must be protected (Pope Francis-Laudato Si, 2015). The term environment also indicates the relationship and interaction of objects in the “surrounding” (cf. Hayward & Mackean, 2002). Individuals, entities, elements, and the ecological system rarely occur in isolation; instead, they interact to varying degrees with their surroundings (Marten, 2001).

In most cases, enhanced by progress and development, humanity interacts unjustly with the nonhuman environments in their surroundings. While a joint effort to preserve the non-human environment is not present among stakeholders, it is unavoidable and commonly asserted that as degradation increases, so does habitat loss and biodiversity. Therefore, pathogens easily cross from animals to humans and spread rapidly in their new hosts and habitats (Green & Mescus, 2008:11). Research indicates that the outbreak of animal-borne and other infectious diseases such as Ebola, Sars, Bird flu, and now Covid-19 is on the rise as nonhuman environments are degraded and as threatened organisms leave to seek new homes and hosts to interact with (Ennaji, 2019:2).

2.3.1 Nonhuman environment

The non-human environment is also known as the “Inanimate World,” which simply means the lifeless world (Kriel, 1989:2). It consists of various physical objects such as land /Earth, minerals, atmosphere, climate, water, or rain (Malawi National Environmental Act, ‘MNEA,’ 2017:7-8). In the case of Malawi, nonhuman environments most importantly include water bodies, vegetation cover, and mountains terrestrial. It is recorded that the population of organisms in water bodies such as Lakes Malawi Malombe, Chilwa, Chiuta, Kazuni, and Shire River is affected, and fish populations are depleted (State of Environment Outlook Report for Malawi, ‘SEORM,’ 2002:62). In forests, especially in Mount Mulanje, Zomba, Chiradzulo, Malosa, Machinga, the Lilongwe plains, Dzalanyama and Kirk ranges, the hills and mountains in Northern Malawi, including Nyika and Viphya plateaus are all threatened in many ways (Briggs & Bartlett, 2006:27).

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50 https://necsi.edu/environment
Mountain deforestation is severe because it fosters soil erosion and sedimentation, rich in phosphorus and other minerals. Such minerals promote the growth of alien plant species in lakes and rivers (Geographical Survey Paper 1935:63; Owen et al., 1990:60). Mountain deforestation affects agriculture heavily when all the rich topsoil good for the growth of crops is swept away into the lakes and rivers. The topsoil eroded enhances siltation and plant growth and buries shallow lakes and rivers. The shallower the water levels in the rivers and lakes, the more disposed they are to direct sun rays, heat waves, and evaporation. For this reason, Lake Chilwa keeps facing drought challenges annually and may sooner or later dry up completely (cf. Ntokotha, 1978:75 Garson, 1960:52; Van Zegeren, 1991:1; Munyenyembe, 1998; Chiotha, 2017).

In Lake Malawi, which covers about a quarter of Malawi’s land and provides income for many people, siltation is slowly becoming a huge challenge. Siltation enhances the growth of strange water plants known as water hyacinth, locally named namasupuni or scientific name Eichhornia crassipes (Journal of Society of Malawi Vol.51-52, 1998:45; Kapila, 2000:14; UNEP Report 2000:81). These plants and other debris flow out of Lake Malawi and Lake Malombe through the Shire River, and they cause electricity generation challenges at Nkula and Tedzani Falls. Power generation capacity is vital to a rapidly demographically expanding Malawi (Navarro & Phiri G., 2000).

Debris and namasupuni in water, commonly believed to be a source of life, pose challenges to the country’s economy and religions, health, and well-being. According to Mbiti, (1975:109), from a religious point of view, water /rain (a nonhuman environment) is the symbol of life and an epitome of wellbeing for people, animals, and plants in society. Kriel also asserts that water is a “livelihood ... water is a life force of the earth ...” (1989:5). Thus, if the life forces in the ecosystems are disturbed, living and non-living organisms (human and non-human) suffer in many ways. The environmental degradation in Malawi thus has caused various serious challenges annually (MNEA, 2017). There is either drought or flood in one or several parts of Malawi, while other parts of the same country are experiencing different extreme weather conditions.

Thus, human behaviour in the environment has disrupted the ability of the ecological systems for self-preservation and protection (MNEA, 1996). Following the failure of the ecological system to protect itself naturally are the life-threatening consequences, such as outbreaks such as coronavirus diseases, or devastating weather conditions, flooding, droughts, and extreme temperatures (Levasseur et al., 2016). Deforestation severely disturbs Mother Nature in many ways. It attracts a deficiency in oxygen supply and carbon dioxide filtration. Deforestation enhances the reduction in the soil’s capacity for water absorption and moisture retention (storage) rate. Deforestation has affected agriculture and enabled heat waves, dry spells, misuse, and abuse of freshwater (Jain & Sharma, 2005:480). Thus, as
Deforestation continues, Malawi will likely have less oxygen and more carbon dioxide available in its space, land, and water, negatively affecting human and non-human sustainability. In addition, forest degradation has caused water degradation in the form of pollution, inconsistent alkalinity levels in soil and water. Thus, forest degradation has become a good agent of harmful conditions linked to poor sanitation good for diarrhea, cholera, dysentery, malaria, and many others (cf. NEAP, 2006).

Consequently, constant deforestation continues to cause the runoff that erodes topsoil, and fewer nutrients are left for plants and other microorganisms’ healthy growth. Bare grounds make the land agriculturally unproductive, a significant challenge to the economy and the “rapidly-growing” Malawi population (Chilanga et al., 2017:4). Water is supposed to be the epitome of life, but by eroding topsoil, which contains nutrients into rivers and lakes, water has become an agent and cause of disasters. Since 1997, rainfall has been unpredictable, and too much rain could be received at once. Such a downpour often causes floods that claim lives and destroy property. Famine emanating from droughts-related factors has been persistent. All related challenges are thus due to human action disturbing the ecosystems of Mother Nature (Cf. SEORM, 1998:29).

2.3.2 Nature

The concept of nature is theologically and biblically defined as the whole creation of God (cf. John1:3; Job. 12:7-12). God’s creation includes living and non-living organisms on Earth (cf. Soper, 1995). Van der Walt states that “nature is understood as a divine creation because it includes the environment” (2003:425). Conradie states that the term “nature” is notoriously complex, as evidenced in the famous debates on “the nature of nature” (2003:426). It indicates how difficult it is for different people and different disciplines to define the concept of nature. In other discussions, nature is characterized as the total “environment” comprised of the atmosphere, lithosphere, hydrosphere, biosphere, and anthroposphere. Environment as a concept in ecology is used interchangeably with nature. Nature usually refers to “things not made by a human,” such as weather, landforms, minerals, fossil fuels, water, and forests. These are generally called “natural environments,” they provide a variety of biodiversity and ecosystem services for which humanity is just an oikonomos—a steward (Rasmussen, 1994:118).

The natural environment is where all basic human needs, such as food, water, shelter, clothes, and others are. Fauna and flora “…depend entirely on a healthy natural environment for wealth and wellbeing.” However, the natural world in Malawi is currently faced with critical environmental

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58 http://www.gwentwildlife.org/node8195/node8195
issues such as deforestation, soil erosion, high land, and atmospheric temperatures, volatile weather conditions, “…acid rain, and ozone depletion” (cf. Conradie, 2011:11). Most of the challenges facing nature emanate from the people’s failure to “turn the tide of consumption, pollution, increasing population, deforestation, overfishing and the exploitation of non-renewable resources” (2011:11). Thus, the state of the natural environment is far from what it might have been during colonial and post-colonial Malawi and possibly far from what it was at the creation— “behold all that God created was good” (cf. Gen. 1:31; Quran 32:7).

2.3.3 Creation
The concept of creation simply “refers to the action or process of calling something into existence” (see Schneider, 2001). Among Christians, Muslims, and Traditionalists in Africa, the creation of the universe is considered an act of God. In the agrarian society of Malawi, creation is highly respected (cf. Mbiti, 1969; Amanze, 2000; Schillebeeck, 2014:127). “At the beginning,” God created or called into being all things out of nothing (see Gen.1:1ff; Quran 54:49). God’s creative act was free and for infinite reasons (Aquinas in Summa contra Gentil Vol. 13-14, 1918-1926).

It implies that the “cause of all things exists only in the will of God who created things out of nothing—ex nihilo” (Aquinas Summa Theologiae Vol. 4-5, 1888 -1889). Ex nihilo is a “Latin phrase meaning ‘out of nothing.’ The phrase ex nihilo means that God created the cosmos out of nothing.” The work of creation is further attributed to the Godhead (Gen. 1:1; 1:26); to the Father (1 Cor. 8:6); to the Son (John 1:3; Col. 1:16-17); to the Holy Spirit (Gen. 1:2; Job. 26:13; Psa. 104:30). Therefore, “Creatio ex nihilo marked a major redefinition of the material cosmos by the late second century Christian apologists,” Tatian and Theophilus of Antioch (Hunt, 2003:132).

Tatian and Theophilus expand the discussion of creatio-ex-nihilo to the concern regarding the notion of pre-existence of the material cosmos (the matter). They argue that it compromises the divine omnipotence (Tatianus Syrus ‘Clark,’1866). In the anthropology and imago Dei discussion, a concern is thus raised regarding a person’s soul as “created” from “nothing.” This implies that the soul and not the body are created in God’s image. This, therefore, separates the body (matter) from the soul (Tatianus Syrus ‘Clark,’1866). It implies, therefore, that all living and non-living things, flora, and fauna according to their numbers (population groups) and species not only exist but share in God’s existence (Summa Theologiae ST I.3.4:102).
However, the *imago Dei* nature of the human soul is not a warrant for domination and exploitation of that which is *matter*. *Imago Dei* nature makes human beings only important stewards of God’s creation to take care of what God created for their benefit and of all that God created. However, among some charcoal producers in Chingale, west of Zomba, it is asserted that the *imago Dei* nature of humans means authority and control so that no government or any other source has the right to prevent them from cutting down trees. Therefore, the charcoal producers claim that forests are God’s and accessible for all. No policy and action are thus required. God is in control, knowing what to do if all the trees are entirely cleaned. After all, Muslims and Christians are waiting for Jannah and the Kingdom—New Jerusalem (Interviews on 19/09/19).

### 2.3.4 The kingdom

The term “kingdom” has different meanings in different disciplines. The term kingdom is derived from the “Latin word: regnum, plural regna which simply means an order, family, gender, kind, group, or tribe” (Ueberweg, 1871). Biblically, the notion of a kingdom demands a comprehensive understanding of the term (*Regnum Dei*) that highlights many aspects of theology (Robertson, 2004). In Old Testament theology, the term kingdom referred to an establishment of God’s people in the order of kings beginning with Saul. While in the New Testament, it refers to a group of believers in a realized (imminent) or future (eschatological) reign of God—the kingdom or the New Jerusalem.

In biology, especially in the study of taxonomy, the order of all forms of life in a single related group is called a kingdom (cf. Verma & Pandey, 1991:103). Taxonomies/kingdoms are divided into smaller phylum groups (Haeckel, 1866). It is still disputed how many taxonomic ranks there are in the universe. Some biologists assert six kingdoms, namely *Animalia, Plantae, fungi, protista*, archaeabacterial, and eubacteria, while others group the two bacteria into *monera*. However, each group is called a kingdom or a colony (see Valentine, 2004).

In sociology, the kingdom is an ideal (though progressively approached) social order in which the relationship between people and a ruler is that of children, and (therefore) with one another, that of siblings (cf. Small, 1896:367). As in biology and sociology, a kingdom in terms of demography is a form of life in a single related group of people under the authority of a king or queen whose government is a monarchy. A monarchy is primarily a form of government in which a single person is a sovereign ruler. Lesotho, for example, is a monarchy—kingdom with a king as a sovereign ruler. A kingdom is an empire in which a king has jurisdiction; figuratively, an atmosphere of power or influence on their subjects and the whole environment. The United Kingdom, a nation that colonized many countries during imperialism, is an excellent example of a monarchy (cf. Ayim, 2010:48).
However, the concept of the kingdom was not new to the Malawians. Before colonization, Nyasaland, Malawi was organized in tribal kingdoms (Hammond, 1970; Turner 1971:346). The Kafula, Bathwa, or Mwandionerapati (Bushmen, short people-usually unorganized and are mainly hunters), the original occupants of Nyasaland, were organized into kingdoms (see Kamwaza, 2007). The Akafula were displaced by the Maravi and fled to other parts of Eastern Zambia still in kingdoms (Kalinga, 1985). The Maravi were usually more organized into maternal kingdoms in an empire (Sindima, 2002). The Maravi, Ngoni, the Ngonde, the Yaos, and the Tumbukas were at the coming of the British colonialists some of the well-organized kingdoms in Nyasaland (see Pike 1968; Weller, 1975).

The traditional kingdoms in Nyasaland were religious and had developed significant connections with the environment (Phiri, 1987; Pachai, 1979; Morris, 2016). Forests were highly valued as the source of traditional medicines, a home of ancestors and the living dead. Certain trees, animals, and precious materials were obtained from the forests with permission from the king or the elders. But the British territorial expansion, Christian and Islamic values, and the philosophy and practices behind development and progress (modernization) dismissed African values for the forest as primitive. Thus, the capital values they attached to the natural world had various lasting environmental challenges that started to show up in the British colony of Nyasaland as early as 1911 (see Government Printing Office Report, Zomba,1956). The Department of Forestry and Agriculture predicted severe deforestation soon for the colony (Department of Agriculture and Forestry Reports, 1912, Zomba National Archives).

2.3.5 Colony and colonialism

A colony is a settlement established by a group of people who leave their native country or kingdom to form in a new land a state subject to, or connected with, the nation of their origin. Colonialism is a system of government seeking to extend or retain its authority over other people or territories, generally with the aim of economic domination (cf. Gunn eds., et al., 1975:1-3). Dominance in colonialism is closely related to power and authority in patriarchy and paternalism (see Mill, 1978:9; Kleinig, 1983:19). Colonialism enhances a complex set of cultural, ethnographic, political, and economic processes and ideologies different from indigenous people's (see Chrisman, 1994). The colonizers thus imposed their religion, economics, politics, and other cultural practices on indigenous peoples (Ruether, 1975:9; Oduyoye & Vroom, 2003:1) and, in most cases, a blessing from Western Christian missionaries (cf. Gitau, 2000).

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Chief Chindongo of Ntonda\textsuperscript{61} in Mangochi (real name Elasto M’baya) asserts that missionaries not only disrespected the values but also gave the people’s land to fellow “Azungu” (Whites) following blind and unfaithful treaties with local elders. He asserts that the Whites targeted mountains and forests for hardwood to run their steamboats and trains before discovering marasha (coal). Chindongo further accuses his ancestors of selling their land rights and values for sugar salt, and pieces of cloths. Chindongo’s argument was raised in a Parish Church Council of 12\textsuperscript{th} September 2013 at Mchenga Anglican Parish (Parish Minutes Book).

The council then resolved to secure a lease for Mtonda Primary school, which faced severe encroachment. Chindongo’s argument about missionaries’ “sell-out” concurs with what Stambuli, (2002) calls the legacies of colonial land alienation (cf. Kandawire,1977; Chirwa, 1998; Chinsinga, 2008). Chindongo Chief Katunga’s in Nsanje district similarly argues that the colonists’ railway project in Nyasaland was designed mainly to serve the capitalists’ plans and connect Europeans (Azungu) to the seas to send looted natural resources to their homelands (Interviews 12\textsuperscript{th} Nov. 2019).

Before colonization, the Africans took care of the ecology, more essentially because of the connections with rainfall and rain making (see Phiri 1997:68; Mvula et al. 2014). Fairhead & Leach, (1998) also argue that indigenous people in West Africa maintained their forests or even planted trees where there were no trees to maintain an ecological balance in nature. The forests in Bunda, Chilenje, Nsinja, and Phirilongwe Hills, for example, are highly recognized for their importance in religious rituals and shrines (Schoffeleers, 1999:197). In colonialism, all efforts and instances of African stewardship and ownership of the environment were deliberately ignored. Liberalism and capitalism were introduced to promote the misconception that African values were destructive (Fairhead & Leach, 1998).

2.4 Eco-theological concepts

2.4.1 Ecotheology

The term ecotheology comes from “the combination of two terms, ecology, and theology” (Haeckel, 1869). The term ecology was coined by the German zoologist Ernst Haeckel (1869). Haeckel applied ecology to the “relation of an animal to its organic and inorganic environment” (McIntosh, 1986; Costanza, 1997). The term ecology comes from the Greek word “oekologie, or oikos, meaning ‘household,’ ‘home,’ or ‘place to live.’” The term is also known as bioecology, biono/mics, or environmental biology, which study the relationships between organisms and their home, surrounding, or environment.\textsuperscript{62} Many scholars have since Haeckel attempted to define the term in many ways.

\textsuperscript{61} Chief Chindongo Interviews conducted on (24 July 2019) at Ntonda Primary school in Mangochi.

Ecology is a science of community (Clements 1916). In 1927 Elton considered ecology the science of interrelationships between living organisms and their environment.

The term ecology is also defined as a scientific study of interactions that determine the distribution and abundance of organisms (Krebs 1972). Smith, (1977) considers ecology as a multidisciplinary science which deals with organisms and their places to live and focuses on ecosystems. Ecology as a discipline seeks to address the interaction between human and nonhuman environments and their distribution on the Earth. In brief, ecology is concerned with human affairs such as population growth, food insecurity, global warming—climate change, species extinction, and social and political issues affecting the ecological system.

Ecology fused with theology has attracted numerous definitions. Etymologically the term theology is derived from the Greek concept of theologia. Theologia is made from two terms Theos which means ‘God,’ and logia which is ‘utterances,’ or simply ‘word’ mainly as logia are related to logos. According to Daniel L. Migliore (2004), theology is faith-seeking understanding. But theology on its own and defined alongside Migliore (2004) is an active continuous process of figuring out things about God and God’s creation.

The concept of theology as “faith seeking understanding was first introduced by Anselm of Canterbury around” (1033 and 1109) in his book Proslogia.63 Richard Hooker and English theologian (1554-1600) states that theology is the science of things divine. According to Aurelius Augustinus Hipponensis—Augustine of Hippo (354-430), one of the Early Church Fathers, theology is defined as reasoning or discussing the Deity. Taliaferro and Meister, (2016:2) assert that theology as a field of study also involves an inquiry into historical and contemporary elements. Thus, the environmental crisis in Malawi is justified as a pertinent issue in ecotheology as the historical and modern obligation of a missional theological church.

Therefore, the historical inquiry of theology in ecology or environment includes the critical examination and interpretation of a text, tradition, value, belief of sacred scriptures, or oral practices concerning the relationship between human and nonhuman environments in creation. In other words, an eco-theological inquiry of the environment involves “...articulation and study of different concepts or narratives about God or the divine…” concerning the environment as part of the entire theology of creation (cf. Taliaferro & Meister, 2016:2). Thus, ecological theology (ecotheology) is concerned mainly with economic, theological, moral (social), ethical (political), and environmental or ecological

Ecotheology interfacing the missional church, therefore, seeks to render appropriately just and valued services to the entire ecosystem and biodiversity—ecological justice for the benefit of society (cf. Deane-Drummond, & Kaiser (2018). It intends to respond to and reverse the accusation that “Christianity has often been complicit in ‘ecological destruction” (cf. Lynn White, 1967).

Thus, “Christian ecotheology offers both a Christian critique of environmental destruction and an ecological critique of Christianity” (Conradie, 2014). Ecotheology encourages an ecological reformation of the Christian tradition to keep the Earth and preserve ecological systems and biodiversity for the benefit of the Earth and its inhabitants. However, the ecology and preservation discussion may not be new in Malawi’s religiosity. Before the arrival of Arabs and Europeans with their religions, the local inhabitants religiously considered ecology high in their lives. They believed a balanced and healthy ecology was a community's source of well-being. Ecology, therefore, was to be used with care and most often under the custodian of the chiefs or elders. When administering ecological issues, these elders often spoke with the Creator through various mediums. The Arabs and Europeans despised and condemned the local ecological views (cf. Tylor 1887; Taylor 1963; Walter, 1973). But, in missionary teaching and practices, ecological care is still a challenge, and ecological degradation and crisis continue severely in Malawi.

2.4.2 Ecotheology, Earth keeping, and missio-Dei

Gottlieb, (2006:3) asserts that “religion[s] have told us how to think about and relate to everything on Earth that we did not make ourselves…..” Almost all the world religions, Bahai, Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, and Judaism, address the issue of the creation of the universe and agree that nature is the creative act of God (see UNEP UN Report). The creation story in (Gen.1:1ff) stands as proof that the Bible is to some extent concerned about the environment—nature and humanity is God’s steward to keep it. There are over one hundred verses about Earth keeping to this effect in the Bible. The following biblical passages state that humanity is on the Earth to take care and look after it (Gen. 2:15). Such verses as “…bloodshed…pollutes land” (Num. 35:33), “let there be nothing wasted…” (John 6:12), and many others show the concern of Christian scriptures towards ecological care to keep the natural integrity of the Earth.

Even though the Hebrew language from which most Bible stories are translated has no word specific for ‘nature,’ the immediate equivalent for nature is the Greek word phusis, phusikos (fuvsi) which is concerned with “the being” concerning God. This implies that nature helps people perceive God as

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66https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment
the singular Creator who brought the created world into being. Secondly, ‘nature’ is primarily understood as the essential character of a spiritual being that indwells and manifests itself in human behaviour (Van Dyk 2009:186). For this reason, Peet Van Dyk, (2009) thus argues that based on philosophical and theological reasons, the conclusion could be reached; that nature and the environment do not appear prominently in biblical and, therefore, mission theology (2009:186-204).

However, the Bible’s fundamental interest in nature is entirely focused on God as Creator (creation theology) and teaching that heaven and Earth are God’s creations and humanity is a steward to subdue them. According to the literature available primarily on the contribution of (Denis M’Passou) and a few others, stewardship to most Malawians, from the missionaries’ teaching and practices is concerned with the Christian’s “trustworthiness in managing” donation or resources already exploited from the Earth (M’passou 1998:89; cf. Hedrick, 2009:3). Stewardship is more about accountability, transparency, and commitment to using the economic resources to support *missiones ecclesiae* in *missio Dei* instead of ecological care or Earth keeping.

According to Douglas John Hall (1988), the term *steward* is “an important biblical symbol that has come of age, but only if we allow our view of it to be expanded.” The concept of stewardship must involve care for the Earth—not only as a necessary response to environmental degradation and scientific warnings but also because stewardship characterizes who Christians are. It also defines the purpose of Incarnation and who Jesus Christ is in *missio Dei* theology, what he does together with the stewards through a missional church (Hall, 1988). Hall sees Jesus as the preeminent Steward who defines and fulfills the steward’s role and enables those who are “in Christ” to participate in the purpose of God (*missio Dei*) in saving people and the universe.

Earth keeping for a steward enables humanity to sacrificially participate in the purpose of kenotic theology (Phil.2:11). Through Earth keeping, “*missio-Dei* is regarded as the deliverance and emancipatory action…a transforming service… also known as *diakonia*…” (Spindler 1987:120). Thus, Christianity’s involvement in ecological stewardship is a mandatory obligation within the missional aspects of the church, engaged in *ecumenism, diakonia,* and *koinonia* as central theories and concepts in *missio-Dei*. Thus, as the church seeks to participate in *missio, Dei* considers and takes ecological stewardship as part of God’s mission to preserve the Earth and all that dwells in it.

In other words, stewardship is one missional dimension in Earth keeping. However, (Bauckham 2010) challenges modern stewardship efforts to fix the Earth. Sharing the story about Gaia- (Earth) or Greek goddess associated with the Earth, Bauckham refers to current Earth keeping as mere drudgery. He argues that humanity cannot take care of Gaia, which has existed for over four billion years before. In
the ecosystem, humans who are “latecomers” (cf. Conradie 2005:30) are only beneficiaries or victims of a health or degraded ecological system. The best humanity can do is to step aside and let Earth do (her) own repair services.

In a different understanding (in a Permaculture way), Bauckham appears to suggest “regeneration” as the best Earth-keeping method for building resilient ecosystems and biodiversity for sustainable living on planet Earth. In other words, Bauckham promotes stewardship of inaction as a new theological virtue. This contrasts sharply with the theological understanding of stewardship by action depicted in Genesis, where humankind must maximize and subdue the Earth’s resources. In Malawi, the benefit of inaction is evident at the Sungusya hills near Malindi in Mangochi and at the Nkombera hills at Songani in Zomba, where non-action has enabled forest regeneration. Without human influence, the Earth can therefore fully recover by itself. Thus, the extinction of humanity from the Earth’s surface does not in any way affect its existence.

2.4.3 Inaction in Earth care (keeping) as a theological virtue

Earth care is an ethical concern that considers that human beings though highly advanced in technology, are latecomers on the planet. Thus, the nonhuman environments created before humans could survive on their own and thrill back to their original state before humanity was introduced in the ecosystem. Here the best example is in the food chain or web; all elements are essential contributors except human beings who are merely beneficiaries. However knowledgeable human beings are, they cannot fix what Gaia has fixed herself for billions of years (cf. Bauckham, 2010:5). It is possibly challenging to fix environmental damages caused by human beings. In an attempt to fix Gaia, Permaculture since 1994 still struggles to promote the “Care for the Earth.” Earth keeping is a slow process, always with very little success over a long period. For example, at Tanthwe House for June Walker, Earth Care practices started in 1980, but significant changes were only noticed in 2004.

In other words, it takes time and is too demanding to fix the Earth. Bauckham thus, asserts that, although stewardship or Earth keeping is essential, the ethical responsibility of humanity is to keep away from the Earth and let it fix itself (cf. 2010:5-13). Thus, the moral integrity of humanity in keeping the Earth rests on upholding the trustworthiness of God’s character of love and the fact that humanity is only a responsible steward. The realization that God has absolute power and authority over the entire creation enhances the development of virtues such as justice, wisdom, faith, hope, temperance, courage, and love towards what God has created (Koster, & Conradie, 2019). Thus, inaction as an ethical development generates a moral character in the theology of Earth keeping (ecotheology) and other theological virtues such as Earth care, People care, Fair share, and Equitable distribution of available resources.
Where the theological virtues are undertaken responsibly, stewardship should not be understood as a license for the subjugation of the Earth for personal benefit. This means that the peoples’ stewardship roles “must be exercised in the light not only of the immediate beneficial situation but of the near and distant future as well” (Wright, 2017:49; Neuzchartz, 1973:18). Thus, inaction is not laziness (cf. Berger, 2012:5; Barnes, 2020:212); stewardship in silence (inaction) realizes that a pause is a voiceless stave is still part of the same verse in music. For the reasons of inaction stewardship, God the Creator in the creation process rested, and yet God remained God in all that God created. Inaction is thus a theological virtue. In many traditional African religions, Earth conservation is a theological virtue that generates morality in honour of God’s creation. Earth keeping is done in many ways, including inaction—keep away (Schoenfeld, 1972:36; Pasternack, 2006:289).

2.4.4 Environmentalism as a theological “moral obligation.”

Environmentalism is more than the historical movements that started in the 1940s and associated or advocated the care for the environment. Environmentalism is more concerned about the relationship between humans and the environment in the ecosystem. Environmental challenges occur when humans exploit the ecosystem for development and progress goals from a theological or socio-economical perspective. In the words of Haq & Paul (2013), a new form of environmentalism that can address theological and socio-economic challenges is required for a new age of global challenges. Global challenges require global environmentalism that addresses ecological, spiritual decay, habitat, and energy insecurity. This environmentalism shall deal with climate change’s effects on local communities from a multisectoral and “interdisciplinary” perspective (Conradie, 2008). As a movement, environmentalism must cross barriers to become a moral obligation in various disciplines and ecotheology.

Therefore, environmental morality, or simply environmental ethics, is a philosophy, religion, and sociology discipline. Environmental morality studies human beings’ moral relationships and the value and moral status of the environment (Bevington, 2012). As a discipline, Environmental morality seeks to recover the challenge of environmental ethics from anthropocentrism (human-centeredness). Anthropocentrism is primarily embedded in the traditional Western practices that take the natural environment as only matter and mainly the source of raw materials. Environmentalism ensures that all that God created returned to the original goodness.

Christians do exercise environmental morality through the practice of ecological virtues and through “moral decision-making in every area of their public life” (Conradie, in Scriptura 82, 2003: 122-138). To state it differently, with environmental morality, it is possible to hope for a better sustainable
ecological system on Earth if the church’s mission takes profound ecological virtue of moral decision-making and public concern. That is to say that a different world is genuinely possible so long as environmentalism in the church's mission “remains as a moral ‘action in hope’” for a better equitable, poverty-free society (cf. Bosch, 1991:498) where environmental care is the priority of the missionese-ecclesiae. Environmentalism understood from the nature and practices of the missional church could enable Malawians to build an environmentally thrilling God’s kingdom on the Earth.

2.4.5 Environmentalism, church “power and authority.”

In the effort to ensure that a missional theological church participates fully in an interdisciplinary and multisectoral response to escalating environmental crises, issues of church power and authority must be discussed. It is argued that “power indicates possession of the ability to wield coercive force, permissive authority or substantial influence”(Helander, E. & Niwagila, 1996:130). If “power involves control, thus power also ensures the authority to command” (Chikanda, E., 2014). The power and authority of the church are derived from the church’s willingness to occupy its rightful position in God’s mission. The church’s proper position is under the Cross of Jesus (Bosch, 2011:531). The Cross is the only place where the church will “ever be safe and constantly purified to undertake” its prophetic roles in society in humility and simplicity. But under the “Cross of Jesus” in the current environmental crisis implies a place of challenges. Thus, the context—a landscape where the church’s power and authority have been exercised before has drastically changed ecology. Therefore, this study seeks to understand whether the church’s power and control, influential in politics, could be significant in challenging the environmental crisis in Malawi.

Bosch states that “the Cross is the place of humiliation and judgment, but it is also a place of refreshment and new birth” (2011:531). He asserts that “under the Cross, church power and authority become paradoxical as is in the gospel.” Under the Cross, the “church is transformed its power and authority is redefined along with the purpose and saving power of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ” (see Kirk, 1999:197). Thus, in the gospel, Jesus is almighty powerful and has the authority of the Creator but poses himself as weak and vulnerable so that he died hopelessly stretched on the Cross. Yet, he is also the Lion of Judah, who acted with such authority and power to transform the lives in his contemporary society and through church continues in subsequent generations to this day’s believers.

According to Oduyoye, power and authority are given with and by the grace of God. They must be used for the benefit of society as the church participates in God’s mission to save people and the Earth (cf. Oduyoye, 1995:29-31). Oduyoye and many others, particularly Ruether, highlight how the church power and authority have and, to some extent, continue to exploit women in much the same as Earth.
In other words, church power and authority in God’s mission is given not to control and dominate but to help people discover and fulfill steward roles to one another, ecology, and the entire biodiversity.

In figurative language, church power and authority are given to enable the church to coerce (so to speak) all stakeholders in society to reconstruct a “new Earth” (Ruether, 1975; Coward et al., 2000:217). Supported by church power and authority, people should be able to “take back that which was stolen, build back that which is demolished, and heal that which was made crooked” in the environment (cf. John, 2016). Saving power and authority of the Cross of Jesus are integral factors of the *missional church*, parachurch groups, organizations, and guilds that seek to participate in an ecumenical spirit to the recreation of the environment caused by human greed and exploitation.

In other words, the church embraced by the saving power and authority of the Cross wisely offers an inclusive missional theological response to environmental issues. The term “wisely” points to the possibilities of external manipulations and greedy forces such as neoliberalism and capitalism that continue to pressure the environment. By implication, therefore, the missional theological response of the church to the environmental crisis entails issues of power and authority (the capability to act or of producing an effect, to wield coercive force or influence) society to deny manipulation. Foucault, (1998:63) asserts that power is multidimensional.\(^6\) This suggests that the church’s response to environmental crisis depends on its willingness and initiative to use its power and authority to coerce all stakeholders into a multidimensional reaction to environmental crisis challenges. In another way, ecclesiastical power and authority should enable the church to cross its institutional boundaries to allow the contribution of other religions, including primal or traditional beliefs, beliefs, values, and morals, without synchronizing them in the process.

### 2.5 Primal eco-theological theories and concepts

#### 2.5.1 Traditional theories about the Earth

According to the African traditional religious worldview, it is generally conceived that the creation of the Earth is associated with the mysterious work of the “Supreme Being.” The belief in the Supreme Being is present in religious rituals of many Africans who affirm their connectedness to the Earth and other people through ancestors (LenkaBula, 2008:386). In most African societies, traditional theories about the Earth are expressed as Botho or ubuntu concepts. *Ubuntu* or *Umunthu* is African philosophy’s central social and political organization concept. According to LenkaBula, *Ubuntu/Umunthu* rituals, symbols, and practices are concerned and closely related to protecting and

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\(^6\)Foucault asserts that “power is wielded by people or groups by way of episodic or sovereign acts of domination. Power is everywhere’ and comes from everywhere…” (Foucault 1998: 63).
preserving ecological biodiversity and their ecosystems. The Umunthu rituals demonstrate an understanding of the indigenous’ ontology and connectedness to the Earth, plants, land, animals, and marine creatures (2008:386).

Regarding the care and nurturing of the Earth and all dwell on its surface, Ubuntu concepts, are understood as the means through which to ensure fairness, love, humility, justice, wisdom as gifts to enhance the good life of the Earth and its inhabitants are bestowed on men and women alike. The concepts are gifts from the Supreme Being who is gender-neutral and, as such, given various gender-neutral names in different places in society. Therefore, these Umunthu concepts demand utmost intergenerational concerns, commitment, and compassion from the daily relationships between one another and their environment (Musopole, 1994; Sindima, 1995; Kaphagawani, 2000; Chigona, 2003).

Besides their concern for creation care, Umunthu concepts embrace and encourage healthy relationships between human and nonhuman environments for their co-existence, sustenance, and support (LenkaBula, 2008:384). Thus, based on mutual relationship with nonhuman environments, the Umunthu concepts oppose human conduct and character that heighten ecological degradation. The concepts are summarised in the idea that people are part of the Earth or creation destroying the Earth invites our destruction (see LenkaBula, 2008:384). In other words, when the natural environment is destroyed, people and all living things will die.

In the light of the unfair human relationship with the Earth, Fuluta Lusungu Moyo (Thesis UKZN, 2009) discusses the concept of Earth subjugation concerning domination women go through in society. Moyo describes the spiritual interconnectedness between the Earth’s and women’s bodies supporting birth and life. This is likewise in plants and animals despite their subjection to sexual exploitation and domination. Moyo highlights “the power of women’s bodies and how apart from bringing life, like the Earth, these same bodies bring down even the strongest men.”

Similarly, women are the primary source of human power, so that Malawi’s tobacco estate-led economy depends on them. Among Malawians, women do most agricultural work, and agriculture is the primary source of the economy and staple food. By implication, therefore, women’s power feeds the entire Malawi. Similarly, the power of the Earth as the woman produces and sustains life and sustains the economy. Among the Ghanaian, Earth is given a woman’s name (Onyame). This female name implies that Onyame provides all women and Mother Earth do to their children (cf. Agyarko, 2013:53).

The concept of Earth as Mother ensures Earth to go through hardship besides her unique role in fostering life. Given the women’s bond with the Earth that gives life, many other Africans suffer the
same consequences of exploitation for which women still struggle for liberation. In other words, women seek protection and freedom from the “anthropocentric and androcentrism—the predominance of masculine and macho” (Smith, 1997:20); in the same way, the Earth seeks liberation, protection, and justice from androcentrism and exploitation.

Ecotheology and ecofeminist theology thus have the same sentiment as the liberation theology in the African church struggle (see de Gruchy J.W., 1979). The church has always been identified as the voice for the voiceless. The church is still struggling to establish a proper structure for the complete liberation of human mothers. However, the church is expected to advocate for the total liberation of Mother Earth from the growing anthropocentric challenges that subject women as the footstool for men and the Earth to various environmental crises.

Because Mother Earth and women give life, the Earth and women cannot be the footstool but essential partners, and both are co-creators with God. In the creation theology of the Church Fathers, God is inseparable from God’s creation. Thus, if the Earth is Mother because it gives life, then God, the author of life, is the great Mother. Perhaps this could be why God has female names in other traditions such as in Ghana (Bediako, 1995:56). Like the human Mother deserves good care, including balanced meals for a healthy delivery, the Earth expects good care to deliver a balanced ecology, ecosystem, and eco-biodiversity.

In an excursion on (13th to 15th August 2019) at Chisala Women Agriculture Centre in Mzuzu, one women facilitator likened the demands of well-treated fertile soil in agriculture to the Malawi Government’s program's needs *Uchembere Wabwino* (Safe Motherhood). Thus, where the environment is well cared for, climatic conditions are, and the Earth receives good rainfall, enough sunshine and water levels are maintained in its crust, the Earth delivers health. The concept of *Earth as Mother* denotes that the Earth-like Women Mothers is the first point of attachment and contact of life. Mother Earth needs to be revered, respected, and protected if the Earth will sustain its life and that of its inhabitants.

#### 2.5.2 Water is life, and life is water

A common Malawian adage depicts water as life (madzi ndi moyo) in much the same way as life is water. Thus, life flows from the uplands of birth to the lowlands of death (Discussion Group). Therefore, there is a need to give life its utmost care, for once it is lost, like water on the ground, it is possibly complicated to collect it back. Additionally, the concept of *life as water* indicates that life is

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68 An anonymous lady in a Focus Group discussion on (17 July 2019) at Mnjale CCAP near Liwonde in Balaka.
more than the act of breathing in and out of gases in living creatures. In an interview with Anglican youths at Namgunda in Chilipa Parish near Shire River in Zomba, one participant described “Life” as a character in building a reputation. In other words, environmental destructiveness is a character (life) that people must let go down the same way as water that flows down the river and never comes back.

According to Van der Walter (2003:425), life is the precious gift that God has given to humanity and all creatures that inhabit the Earth. Since life is from God alone, life should be preserved and not harmed. It should be noted that humanity is the child of the Earth because humanity and all other forms of life come from the Earth. God breathed life into the Earth and made human beings living organisms that form part of the entire living creation of God (cf. Makkhado & Si Dean 2001). The Malawian Chewa concepts of life remind people that the Earth from which life came is the LORD’s, and “Anthu ndalendo oyenda ngati madzi amunsinje padzikoli” which means ‘human beings are visitors, flow like river water on the Earth’ (Interviews in Kasungu on 17th August 2019).

It is scientifically asserted that that water is made up of molecules. The “water molecule is one of the most versatile structures ever known and understood.” Water “consists of two atoms of hydrogen and one of oxygen (H₂O), has remarkable and therefore the highest solvent.” By switching “from solid to liquid to gas, water absorbs large amounts of energy in the form of heat, releasing equivalent amounts when it goes from one form to another” (Nelson, 2003; Geological Survey “U.S.,” 1972). Water is “an inorganic, transparent, tasteless, odourless, and almost colourless chemical, which is the main constituent of the Earth’s hydrosphere and the liquids of most living organisms” (Malaw National Environment Act, 2017). Water is essential for all life forms, though it contains no calories or organic nutrients. According to the McGill University Water Project, 2013 Water is Life! Freshwater is needed for the survival of all living organisms on Earth.

Fauna bodies are composed “up by 60% of water, and some may not survive for more than a few days without water.” About “97% of all the universe’s water is found in the sea, covering about 70% of the Earth’s surface” (Mazingaliwa, 2005). The seawater contains a large amount of salt in the solution, which means it cannot be used as it is. Only “the remaining 3% is fresh water. Three percent of the available fresh water, less than 1%, is available for life on Earth, with the remainder in the form of ice at the poles, within the Earth’s crust as groundwater, and in the atmosphere as water vapour.” These

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69 Namgunda is an outstation of the Anglican Parish of Chilipa interview on (23 October 2019) at Masaula in Zomba.
70 https://www.livescience.com/why-is-water-needed-for-life accessed on (12 December 2019) at Stellenbosch.
71https://www.livescience.com/why-is-water-needed-for-life
74 http://www.waterwise.co.za/export/sites/water-is_Life.pdf
percentages show that minimal freshwater is available on Earth in human usage form. Thus, making it accurate that water is life, or given the Malawi adage, life is water. They were possibly emphasizing the McGill University Water Project that living organisms and the Earth all need water for their survival. By water that Chiuta Namalenga gives the Earth and its inhabitants enjoy and use water/rain, which is life (Mbiti 1969; Schoffeleers, 1992). And, that water is everywhere so that the Earth is the water planet and Earth is covered by more water than the land (see Olien, 2005).

2.5.3 Namalenga, Mphande, and Chiuta (Creator, Lightening, and God)
God is not only the giver of rain but the author of life among traditional Malawians. God is a Supreme Being and is called by various names in different regions and cultures (cf. Mitchell, 1977). God is the Creator (Namalenga) who authored all things from invisible things and the Hunter (Chauta) with a big bow in God’s hand (Interviews with Chindongo village headman 16th June 2019). Among many tribes in Malawi, God the Chauta is mighty and scary as (Mphambe) the Thunder or Lightning (cf. Nyirongo, 1997:11). God is Chisumphi the Whirlwind and Chauta the Great One with the Bow in God’s hand (cf. Wendland & Hachibamba, 2007).

The importance of God as the Creator among many societies is demonstrated by the presence of numerous names (Maker, Potter, Designer, Originator) in basically every region and every local language for God (see Mbiti 1975:44). In some Malawian societies, people ascribe the creation of the universe and send their prayer petitions to Namalenga (Village headwoman Ngomano interviewed 16th June 2019; cf. Dicks, 2012). Ngomano (whose birth name is Agnes Msiwira) asserts that Namalenga created everything out of things that did not exist “zinhu zosaoneka” invisible things. Ngomano asserts that she learned from the elders as she grew up that the Light is the in-charge in creation. She states that Darkness always runs away, fearing to be exposed by Light. Namalenga is the source of light or the Light itself. Light (God) is necessary for the growth and life of all animals and plants.

The God who is the source of light (Parrinder, 1968:33) is among other Africans the Lightening (Mphambe), the Fire, the Sun, symbols that also signify the faithfulness or holiness of God throughout scriptures (John 8:12; John 1:5-9; Mat. 5:16). However, Mphambe (the Light) as a concept refers to God beyond the symbol of light but “Lightening” and Thunder roars. Thus, lightning refers to a robust and fierce God whose people are terrified by God’s roar. God’s voice (howl) shakes the Earth and all its inhabitants. That is the purpose for which people must revere, respect, and obey Mphambe. Thunder and lightning announce the coming of rain, and as such, Lightning and Thunder (Mphambe) though fearful, give people hope for rain. Rain (water) is significant for bringing joy, happiness, and life to the planet and animals on Earth (Interview with Chief Kachoka “Bernard Mgunda” near Lake Chilwa on 2nd November 2019; cf. Mbiti, 1969).
Chief Kachoka states that Chiuta, or Chauta, is a hunter and a food collector, lived among people before humanity misbehaved. Chiuta relocated to heaven. While in heaven, Chauta’s left eye turned into the moon and the right, into the sun. The sun and moon’s radiation produced stars, and each one of the stars is assigned to a new human born on the planet. Chiuta returned to the Earth the grasshopper (locust) on which Chiuta rode on Chituta’s way to heaven. The locust’s eyes are thus compounded to conceal Chiuta’s dwelling place. Therefore, stars seen at night falling away from heaven announce to Chauta the death of an individual on Earth. The star falls to the ground/Earth, where the body that belongs to it will be buried until the next world. The new body and the star join with many others buried before (ancestors) and “wait” for the day that Chiuta will open the grasshopper’s eyes to take them to where Chiuta the Hunter dwells. Therefore, no one is permitted to cut down trees or kill animals where stars and ancestors are buried (Narrated by Chief Kachoka on 2nd November 2019).

This narration illustrates strong connections between God and creatures and shows the importance of peaceful interaction, coexistence, and responsibility on both sides, people and the Creator, to ensure sustainable living on Earth. By referring to the ancestors as those who were “buried before” and “are waiting,” Kachoka meant the ancestors still live in the underworld (Mother Earth’s womb—tomb), suggesting reunion or reattachment with their original point of attachment—Earth. In Christianity, the dead are buried in the “womb-tomb” of the Earth (Earth to Earth and ashes to ashes), with the hope to rise when the Sun, light of the world (Jesus) will rise in the Eastern gate of Jerusalem to judge the world (cf. Anglican burial rite ACSA Prayer book, 1989:542).

Mother Earth poses as the first connection of living organisms in this and the next world. Mother Earth also is the home for the leaving dead, the ancestors who are crucial in times of difficulties such as disaster, crisis, diseases, and hunger (cf. Gehman, 1989:190). Thus, the Supreme Being, Chiuta, Mphambe, Namalenga is actively involved in peoples’ lives (cf. Westerlund, 2006:119). God is believed to be an All-powerful, Almighty Creator and Provider (cf. Nyirongo, 1997:11). God is the light, life, rain, and water source. The Creator has the power and is creative enough to make and stop the rain, catch the strong wind, and expel locusts and outbreaks (Chief Kachoka 2nd November 2019; cf. God’s creative acts in Mbiti, 1975:50).

2.5.4 Uta-wa-Leza and ng’amba (Rainbow and drought)
The bow of Rain (Uta-wa-Leza) appearing in the sky rainfall signifies that the Creator is stopping the downpour. In contrast, the “rainbow” in South Africa implies a nation where people of different ethnicity and origins should live in peace and harmony. Biblically the “rainbow” denotes God’s reconciliation and promise that the Earth will not be destroyed by floods again (Gen. 9:13-17).
Traditionally, suppose a heavy shower is persistent. In that case, it is a sign that something is wrong, and consultations with the ancestors and prayers for ng’amba (cease-fire/rain) are expected immediately (cf. Hedges, 2014: 201).

Based on the rainbow story in (Gen. 9:13), a group of CCAP women (Umanyano) in Karonga in a focus group discussion on (September 14, 2019) asserted that the current cyclones, heavy rainfall, floods, and droughts have emerged following the wrath of God for people’s unpleasant activities and behaviour on Earth. The women further argued that the unstable weather conditions, the high world temperatures (high fire danger conditions), the faster drying up of the floods that immediately caused severe drought and natural disasters are a sign of the times in the direction of Armageddon (cf. McGuire, 2005; Clegg, 2010).

Biblically, Christians believe and are waiting for the eschatological kingdom that will follow a rapture. The Incarnation and Atonement teach about the importance of realized eschatology (John 10:10), people have life. They have it in its fullness, and (Mark 1:15) the kingdom is at hand the main objective of the missional church in environmental care. Nevertheless, the universe of scientists has existed for billions of years and survived previously scorching temperatures that caused the extinction of dinosaurs on Earth. Armageddon can, therefore, be the extinction of humans and all species that cannot possibly withstand the changing conditions caused primarily by unfriendly human interaction with the nonhuman environment that changes the soil texture, fertility, and constraints on planet Earth.

2.5.5 Padwale, nthaka, and chinyezi (Rocky, fertile, and squelchy)

The concept of “padwale” is a pastoral concept that values the importance of a fertile environment for growing crops and the rearing of animals. “Padwale sa dzala mbewu koma pa nthaka n’pachinyizi” literally means that “no plant grows on the rock but fertile and moist soil.” The concept of “Padwale and pa nthaka” corresponds to the biblical parable of a sewer, sometimes called the parable of the soil. In the parable found in all the Synoptic Gospels (Matt. 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-20; and Luke 8:4-15), Jesus tells a multitude about a farmer who sows seeds and does so indiscriminately. In the parable, all the soils are given a chance to produce from what is sown. But the soil texture, rocky or fertile, determines the health and growth of the crop planted. Most unproductive land/soil now turns into rocky (padwale) conditions unnaturally, resulting from human exploitation and domination in the ecological system (cf. Clegg, 2010).

Chief Tenganani (born Foster Chindebu) of Nsanje on the concept “padwale and pa nthaka” referring to unproductive land of many parts in Malawi now, holds people who dwell in the highlands accountable. Chief Tenganani of Chikwawa faults the highlanders for deforestation in the hills and
The chief states people cut down trees wantonly and have stopped listening to God. Tengan asserts that Chizumphi (God) tells the elders what plants or trees should be planted near home to prevent wild animals, snakes, and insects from harming people. Some forest, land, and water species must always be protected to avoid interaction between humans and nonhumans to keep society from natural disasters and diseases. Therefore, biodiversity loss has caused the migration of organisms and the spread of viruses, conditions, and pests.

For that matter, Chief Tengani claims that following deforestation, not only the ancestors’ tombs are bare, but the soils have also hardened (padwale), and all these have angered Chizumphi. Tengani argues that Chizumphi the Whirlwind is breathing fire (cyclones), drying up the deforested areas in the highlands. Thus, the heat from the sun causes droughts and turns the soil into a large surface of rocky soil so that the unpredictable (climate change) and a minimal amount of rainfall each time turn into severe floods. Thus, floods are affecting the lowlands of the Shire Valley more than any time before. Tengani asserts that if Mbona and the other religious leaders (Christians and Moslems) in the area had not been immersed in politics, it would have been a better medium to act, offer sacrifices and offer prayers Chizumphi to intervene (Interviews on 23rd May 2019).

2.6 Islamic eco-theological theories and concepts

2.6.1 God: The concept of tawhid

The concept of tawhid in Islam asserts that “the only god is Allah who is Creator of the universe and the basic principle of reality and existence” (Nasr, 1978:5). This fundamental principle implies no reality outside the Absolute Reality (Nasr, 1978:5). Thus, Nasr asserts that God is the ultimate source of light—knowledge. Understanding nature scientifically and intellectually can only be so realizing that all knowledge—light illuminates from Allah. Thus, all scientific efforts are ignited from the same light that radiates from God and is lit to offer further ‘lights’ for humanity (Nasr, 1978:7).

2.6.2 The Earth and sense of the sacred

According to (Nasr 1978:5), “Islamic wisdom of the sacred has played an important role in the rediscovery of human responsibilities of which the environment is one of them.” The Quranic verse: “whithersoever you turn, there is the face of God understood as a manifestation of a profound wisdom of the sacred and the spiritual” (Nasr, 1978:9). Historically, “the verse was revealed to assist those unable to ascertain the direction for qibla” (1978:4). The Quran replied that “whithersoever you turn,

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75Cf. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, stating that global warming is a fact, and that most of the rise in temperature since 1950 is most likely (with a better than 90 percent confidence) to have been caused by human intervention.
there is the face of God.” It suggests that the reverence of God is not only for what is sacred, but it is also the reason why creatures exist upon Earth (1978:5).

2.6.3 Creation: God the creator

Islam teaches that Allah is the Creator (Quran 13: 2-4; 21:79). Human beings are expected to preserve the environment for various reasons, including that; the environment is God’s creation. Creating this Earth and its natural resources signifies God’s wisdom, mercy, and power. Therefore, the knowledge that God is the Creator serves to develop human awareness and understanding of God as Creator (cf. Quran 13: 2-4). The need to keep the creation is an act of obedience, reverence, dedication, and service to the Creator.

2.6.4 The concept of qiurma

As an act of obedience to the Creator, the Islamic faith asserts that the natural environment must be protected, which some Muslim scholars claim deserves protection ‘Qiurma’ (Nasr, 1978:12). Another strong theory is tied around the concept of (khayr) goodness. Nasr states that Islam proclaims that Allah created all things in the natural environment, and everything was good (1978:12ff). Therefore, Muslims are expected to protect the environment only when it is understood that such protection arises out of an act of “goodness.” The Quran states that “He [whoso do good] An atom’s weight Will see it. And whoso do ill An atom’s weight Will see it” (Quran 99:7-8). It simply means that doing good with the environment is more than just an act of obedience. It is also an act of worship with a reward and is usually monitored by the invisible justifying environments.

2.6.5 The concept of justice (adl), and kindness (ihsdri),

Nasr (1978:15) states that relationships in Islam are based on the concept of justice (’adl), and kindness (ihsdri), and less importance on material or economic pursuit. Nasr asserts that the Quran steadfastly highlights this concept: God enjoins justice and kindness (Quran 16:90). This possibly implies that no other creature can exercise justice and compassion but human beings. Thus, Islam expects human beings to protect the environment based on their exclusive ability to exercise justice and kindness, crucial aspects of stewardship (Yazeed Said, 2013). Regarding the Godly given responsibility of stewardship, Nasr states that God has entrusted only human beings with “onerous and burdensome responsibility” (cf. Quran 33:72) of looking after the Earth.

Thus, it asserted that no other creature apart from human beings would accept the Earth trusteeship because it is onerous and burdensome (Nasr, 1978:15). The Quran (33:72) states: “Lo! We offered the trust Unto the heavens and the Earth and the hills, But they shrank from bearing it And were afraid of it, And [hu]man assumed it, Lo...” The Quran refers to “man” assuming steward when every creature
was afraid, simply referring to male and female humanity. Beyond these concepts and theories in Islamic teaching, ecological challenges are increasing, even in parts such as Mangochi, Machinga Salima, and Balaka, where Muslim men and women occur in large numbers.

2.7 Ecofeminist theological theories and concepts

2.7.1 The feminist’s views of the natural world

Ruether (1975) draws the readers’ attention to how sexist language and ideologies exclude women as qualified stewards in protecting and preserving nature or Earth and equate to women's reproduction role and subjugation of the Earth (Harper, 2001). By implication, women suffer male domination in much the same way as the Earth suffers human androcentric exploitation of human beings. Although ‘Mother Earth’ sustains life, her resources are exploited just like women are subjected to androcentrism in society (see Palacios & Lojo, 2009).

Ruether, (1975) suggests an alternative way (ecofeminist theology) to treat both women and Earth—the liberation of both ‘mother earth’ and ‘mother human’ for the benefit of society. Thus, in other words, ecofeminist theology and ecotheology are both part of the “liberation and reconstruction theologies in Africa” (cf. Mugambi & Vähäkangas eds., 2001). The ecofeminist theories in social sciences and theology shift assumptions, analytical lens, and topical focus away from the masculine subjugated experience of women to a more appealing and inclusive guide (cf. SEP, 2018).

Thus, ecofeminism as an environmental theory aims to understand the in-depth nature of gender inequalities and sexual role assignment between “human mother” and “Mother Earth” in both church and society (cf. Sylvester, 1994; Phiri, 2001:87; Disch & Hawkesworth, 2018). The feminist theory (feminist philosophy) sheds light on social challenges, trends, and issues. Ecofeminists engage various approaches to highlight otherwise overlooked or misidentified problems by the theologically and missiologically dominant male perspectives. In a missional theological church, feminist theories are possibly approved by the actions of Christ, who challenged inequality, oppression, and injustice towards women (see Oduyoye, eds., et al., 1992:115).

By implication, feminist theory seeks to promote the pursuit of equality, justice based on the imago Dei dignity between men and women (cf. Claassens, & Klaas, 2013:2). Thus, the same principles of equality and justice must apply to the relationship between Mother Earth and human beings. The feminist theory, therefore, contains a variety of divergent concepts, which stem from the belief that society is patriarchal, structured by approving the rule of men and subjugating Mother Earth and

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women in the same way (cf. Nussbaum, 2000:5). While the church in Malawi is still struggling to ensure justice and equality between men and women, the church’s fight for eco-justice remains a field worth exploring.

2.7.2 The feminine nature of the Earth

Merchant, (1980) argues that the prevailing metaphor of “Earth as Mother” modernized and perpetuated the scientific revolution, thus promoting gender inequality in the social and political sphere. Olwig (1993) argues otherwise that the union of male and female in sexual cosmology is part of the reason and how the natural world should evolve because all life is naturally not as the androcentric human abusive type of nature. Chauvinism and all its language challenges and theories seem to promote gender stereotypes and hierarchies between men and women and promote socio-economic, cultural, religious, and political injustices between men and women on one and between humans and Mother Earth on the other hand. According to Sherry Ortner, (1974), the more women are considered closer to nature, the easier they become subjugated. Just like nature itself is subdued, subjected, and plundered of all its natural resources, women suffer chauvinism in many ways.

Therefore, nature for the androcentric society is either a “virgin” landscape waiting to be tested, domesticated, or as mortal material to excavate by machines. The idea of nature as a virgin has been embedded in the languages, practices, and treatment given to Earth and women. According to Aaron Dorman, (2018), in an article “#MeToo, Said Mother Earth,” states that “there is one prominent victim of abuse whose continued pummelling has gone under the radar: Mother Earth.” Dorman asserts that “Not only has our planet been exploited for years by powerful men who lie and intimidate to avoid repercussions….”

Dorman, therefore, gives an example of influential leaders like Donald Trump in America in whose rein and time of power “Earth’s defenders have been mocked mercilessly and slandered as liars.”

Although not like Trump, and despite being a powerful woman in control, while ecological injustice increased, for the sake of voters and political loyalty, Joyce Banda in 2007 condemned the church and Department of Forestry in Zomba for expelling charcoal producers in the Zomba and Malosa mountains. Banda argued charcoal producers would not be chased before the government and the church had alternatives (Youth Department) and minutes of institutions on 24 November 2007).

2.7.3 The order of creation and domination

Alongside the dualistic and hierarchical anthropologies, Rosemary Radford Ruether (1992) raises a comprehensive discussion regarding three creation concepts, namely “order of creation,” “destruction,” and “domination.” Ruether examines how patriarchy still pervades cultures and social structures, particularly the Western and once colonized worlds. Ruether discusses how male domination over females and nature are interconnected. Arguing that these theories must be challenged, develop potential ways to heal relationships between men and women, and between humans and the planet in the hope of a New Earth. In simple terms, we dwell in a paternal world where patriarchy is a system of the Earth, and women experience discrimination, subordination, physical and spiritual violence, exploitation, abuse, and oppression (see Wood, 2013:155).

Like Mother Earth, women and children suffer more than men from ecological injustices (UNCED report, 1991: 88-89; cf. Gottlieb, 2004: 418). Like Mother Earth struggles to support life following environmental degradation, women struggle to produce food and other households for their families with very little or no necessary farm inputs. Women suffer the consequences of poverty, hunger, and disease more than men (Warren, 1996:60). Mother Earth and women suffer far more significant environmental disadvantages than men (NWSA Journal 1997:2).

Warren (1996:38) argues that “If dominant and destructive relationships with the Earth are related to gender, class and racial domination, then a healed relationship with the Earth can not only take place through technological” solutions. Social rearrangement requires establishing just and lovingly interrelated relationships between men and women, races and tribalism, the rich and the poor, and equitable access to essential commodities and resources. To emphasize a point, Warren states that “we must speak of eco-justice,” as if the Earth or nature was not unrelated to essential human needs. In other words, we must ensure that the Earth as women is always in good health and is made ready to produce sustainably.

2.7.4 Women, nature, and health

The health of every living organism’s first point of attachment is crucial for a healthier life of that organism. A well-balanced environment can produce more beneficial and sustainable products. In other words, the call for greening the Earth is linked to the need for a healthier natural environment (see Barton, et al., 2016; Selhub & Logan, 2012). However, the trend is that the health of women and

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78 According to Plato and Aristotle, women are passive households and are considered primarily responsible for the care and upbringing of children (see Du Bois 2007:1). The man is therefore the normative and representative expression of the human species, and the woman is not only secondary and auxiliary to the man but does not have the full human status in physical strength, moral self-control and spiritual ability (see Ruether 1985:65).
nature is that of suffering, exploitation, and subjection from such androcentric social relationships. In most societies, while they associate or relate women and characters with important life-giving roles, very little is done to consider the exploitation, domination, and vulnerability to diseases and degradation that women and nature endure ensuring that life is delivered well in society.

Stone, (1974) raises a question, Should Trees Have Standing? Thus, under British Imperialism, many countries adopted laws that subjected women and children to the same way nature prevented them from exercising full rights in society. But at the same time, the imperialists had developed natural rights (see Boyd, 2011; 2012; 2017). Thus, the capitalistic greed and the imperialists’ androcentrism led to the exploitation of nature, much like women and children. Although subjected to ill-health, women hold central and vital religious roles in most parts of society and are highly respected for their role as the first point of attachment in human life.

Like forests provide a shelter for the leaving dead and habitats for the ancestral spirits (cf. Phiri 1997), women offer shelter and habitat in their wombs for the unborn. As health forests provide other services, including climate regulation, controlling floods, purifying air, water, soil, and supporting rainfall processes, healthy women give birth to a healthy nation. Yet women and girls are prone to exploitation, subjugation, poverty, ignorance, and disease in Malawi (Gender and Poverty Reduction in Malawi UN Report, 1985), and yet the church teaches that men and women are created in the image of God, and they are both co-creators with God.

Consequently, a healthy environment like a healthy mother provides health services and sustainable livelihood on Earth. Hence, the current environment crisis follows the injustice in the relationship between human and nonhuman environments, which causes global warming and climate change (see Mordecai, 2012). Additionally, as the globe warms, environmental-related outbreaks are likely to spread into new habitats, carrying with them infectious diseases including “malaria, dengue fever, chikungunya, and many other viral diseases.”79 In other words, poor environmental conditions have become one of the major factors that enhance and cause the spread of disease as their primary hosts to relocate to find new healthier environments in Mother Nature.80 Unhealthy environments make mother nature suffer in so many ways as the human mother always suffers. The feminization and suffering of nature are reflected in the constant agony of women and girls in Malawi (Semu, & Kadzamira, 1995:16; Moyo 2002; Nankhuni, 2003).

80 https://earth.stanford.edu/news/how-does-climate-change-affect-
2.8 Science and creation

Theories and concepts in science, like in theology, attempt to explain the truth regarding nature. They seek to provide a stabilization matrix for a cohesive society (International Balzan Foundation, 2010). Thus, in pursuit of the truth, scientists and theologians seek both the universal intent because of shelving aside private interests to promote a single-minded discovery of the public truth (Rolston III, 1987:17). In Islam, Seyyed Hossein Nasr gives an example of the Law of a Path dealing with the inner aspect of things. In this example, the Law is the circumference of a circle whose Path is the radius, and the truth is the center. That is to say, scientific theories and concepts are intended to provide a path to discover the inner truth at the centre. Regarding the origins of the universe, scientists submit to the Big bang theory as the leading explanation for the universe’s existence.

At its simplest explanation, the Big bang theory states that the universe started with a small singularity, then inflated over the next 13.8 billion years to the cosmos known today.\(^{81}\) However, this claim is only supported by mathematical formulae and models. It is alleged that current scientific instruments cannot allow scientists to measure the exact birth of the Big bang—the universe’s origin.\(^{82}\) In other words, as the environmental crisis in Malawi escalates, science does not seem to be able to suggest a possible future big bang that could turn the tables of environmental degradation upside down or enable ecological systems and biodiversity regeneration.

2.8.1 God, being, and science

According to Thompson (2012:2), what started in 1849 by a once dedicated theologian and parish priest Charles Darwin, who said “science has nothing to do with Christ, except insofar as the habit of scientific research makes a man cautious in admitting evidence,” has continued to the day of Steven Hawking. Hawking shares in what many scientists argue that there is no scientific evidence of a Creator, and many of those who think God exists is trying to cope with what they think is a meaningless existence.\(^{83}\) Most scientists, therefore, assert that there is no need for God because evolution and the Big bang explain how and why the Earth and humans exist. Such scientists consider the belief in God as something unenlightened (Thompson, 2012:2). Despite such a complete dismissal of the Creator God and the presence of a few scientific extremisms, the church’s development and progress plans still contain science as a topic in the mission schools’ curricula are drafted.

Do some scientists often ask questions about what it means to have faith in a God? What is so good about having faith when you do not have evidence? What is the real advantage to having faith in a

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\(^{82}\)https://www.space.com/25126-big-bang-theory.html?\_ga=2.8611446

\(^{83}\)John Michael Thompson, 2012. Scientific Theories of God proof that God exist, Brighton Publishing LLC, Arizona
God? Why is having faith in a God something we want to encourage people (see Thompson 2012:2)? However, other scientists hold a different view. Natalie Angier, David Sloan, and others affirm that “We have learned to trust science, but we don’t want this to be all there is, so we find hope in our religious faith.”84 They further stated that “…religion is the worship of God—not scientific proof of God—so we are caught between two very conflicting worldviews.”

Nevertheless, Natalie and many of their colleagues still struggled to answer the questions, “Is there a God? How did the universe come into existence?” This is an area in which the study seeks to explore the possibility of interdisciplinary, multidimensional, and multi-sectoral approaches. It examines how the other disciplines might assist in the church’s *missional response* to the environmental crisis in Malawi.

2.8.2 Science and creatio ex nihilo

The early Christians adopted the doctrine of “creation out of nothing” and the Jewish scriptures that the church today has accepted (cf. May, 2004). But Steven Hawking, who passed away on 14th March 2018,85 died holding on to a different view. Hawking argues that “…it is impossible for God to exist in our universe…” and that “…the universe was spontaneously created out of nothing, according to the laws of science.” Hawking further contends that: “If you like, you can say the laws are the work of God, but that is more a definition of God than a proof of [God’s] existence,” thus, “If you accept, as I do, that the laws of nature are fixed, then it doesn’t take long to ask: What role is there for God?”86

In life, Hawking strongly advocated for the Big bang theory—the idea that the universe began by exploding out of an ultra-dense unique smaller atom.87 The Big bang theory contrasts sharply with the Christian, Islamic, and traditional views and values regarding the creation and the Creator. Despite being people-centred, and considering its role in *missio Dei*, a missional church, it strongly believes in the existence of Creator God and ex-niholo. However, the Big Bang’s scientific claims warrant exclusion and do not make the church the only player in God’s plan for the salvation of the Earth and its people (cf. Warneck, 1888; Schmidlin, 1918; Klaus, 2015). The church can not justify the neglect of ecumenism and interdisciplinary approach in preserving what might have been created by (still mysterious) a Big bang.

85 Stephen William Hawking CH CBE FRS FRSA was an English theoretical physicist, cosmologist, and author who was director of research at the Centre for Theoretical Cosmology at the University of Cambridge at the time of his death 2019. https://www.livescience.com/63854-stephen-hawking-says-no-god.html
2.8.3 The history of the Big bang

Interestingly, the Big bang theory, like the discovery of planets by Galileo Galilei in the 17th century, was initiated by the churchmen—priests. A Belgian priest named Georges Lemaître (1894-1966), who first suggested the Big bang theory in the 1920s, theorized that the universe began from a single primordial atom or the cosmic egg. The big bang idea received significant boosts from Edwin Hubble’s. Hubble (1889-1953) observed that galaxies are speeding away in all directions. This theory, called Hubble’s Law, states that the greater the distance of a galaxy from us, the faster it recedes. Many scientists, mainly with a church background, have subscribed to the Big Bang’s scientific theory.

With Isaac Newton’s three laws of motion and gravity, no concrete explanation has been given to who or what caused the Big bang. Nevertheless, for many years from Claudius Ptolemy's (85-165) famous ideas about Earth-centred cosmology, Nicholas Copernicus engaged theories about a sun-centered universe in the 16th century. Thus, from this speck of a Big bang, all the matter, energy, and space emerged that the universe would ever contain. To Hawking and the Big bang theorists, the combined laws of gravity, relativity, quantum physics, and a few other rules (laws of nature are fixed/scientific ex nihilo), explain everything that ever happened or ever will happen in our universe. Hence this study seeks to explore an interface between science and faith and how both would be useful in a missional theological response to the environmental crisis challenges in Malawi.

2.8.4 Laws of motion and gravity: who/what is the ultimate centre of control in nature?

Above all, what is not captured clearly from all scientific theories is how the universe came into being. Where was the Big bang from, how was it contained, and is it still considerable, in motion, or expanding? Who caused or caused the being in the Big bang, fauna, and flora? Further questions are raised as to how the theory of cosmos egg, or matter, can be explained concerning the biblical ex-nihilo creation in (Gen. 1:1)? The theorists of the cosmos egg, the law of motion and gravity, and the Big bang, despite their continued denial of the existence of a Supreme being, remain the legacy of missionaries and are taught in all, including church and Islamic schools in Malawi.

To the Malawians, science and faith both come from missionaries as tools. Apart from holding on to a controversial relationship with religion and indigenous world views, from the earliest day scientists to the time of Ibn Al-Haytham, to Galileo Galilei, throughout the Medieval to the time of Isaac Newton and Steven Hawking, science has attempted to civilize, enlighten, and promote human progress and

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89https://www.khanacademy.org/partner-content/big-history-project
development. They encouraged and spread foreign religious values, capitalism, foreign agricultural practices, governing policies, all in the attempt to bring civilization to the primitive while possibly enhancing environmental degradation and crises in Malawi.

2.9 Civilization and ecology

Civilization is a commonly discussed term, and it is used by politicians and scholars in various fields and disciplines. The current definition of civilization and its contents “traces the concept's origins in the eighteenth century” (Mazlish, 2004). The term civilization was first coined in the middle of the eighteenth century and denoted the state of being conditioned into civility or polite society—state or civitas (Mazlish, 2004). The concept of civilization accumulated additional meanings such as the “process of acquiring culture or refinement, the sum of cultural assets at a certain level of development, and the identity of a group with the same culture and level of civility.”

Civilization, therefore, can be defined as a social construct that has gone through stages of refinement since its inception in Mesopotamia, Meroe, Egypt, the Graeco-Roman world, and Western Europe. It has gone through phases of improvement under its various users in politics and scholarship. Later, the term “civilization” in the nineteenth century was developed and used for considering “advanced” groups, against or opposed to “savagery” and “barbarism.” According to Kreis (2015), the word civilization has come to refer to a shared culture or mindset worldwide (see Kreis, 2015). The UN declared the year 2001 as a year of discourse on civilization. A critical analysis of the concept of civilization is thus regarded as the epitome of human achievement, the result of modern progress and development.

For some, the term civilization is a dehumanizing, external term with threats and brings with it the mechanization of life and challenges traditional beliefs, values, and morals (Mazlish, 2004: xi). After the Enlightenment, Western Europe regarded the rest as uncivilized, and the African they named the most primitive and the animist (Taylor 1969). To the missionaries in Malawi, civilization meant introducing industrial progress and developments. However, as the missionaries arrived in Malawi around the 1860s, Industrialisation by the the1840s had already influenced climatic changes in Europe.

Ferguson (2012) argues that as part of progress and development, the West developed six “killer applications” associated with the concept of civilization. The six killers are competition, science, democracy, medicine, consumerism, and work ethic. These six killers are inextricably linked to uncivilization and barbarianism (cf. Bowden, 2013). Thus, people in the western world measure and

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weigh the impact of the Enlightenment alongside the worldview associated with civilization. Civilization, therefore, is possibly linked to several causes of ecological degradation and, hence global warming and climate change (Praeger, 1995).

Civilization, especially capitalism, is regarded as a concept intended for economic monopoly by Western Europeans, Americans, and, more recently, the Eastern Asian (Chinese) against Africans. The poor of the world are overwhelmed by the more affluent nations greedily hide behind civilization while looking for natural resources. They intend to dominate and use their power, authority, and money to control the poor. Bohlin, (2014:7) mentions that Western Europe and the Eastern display often-uncontrolled greedy for power, resources, and control have led the world to severe environmental degradation. This is despite the knowledge that the radical questions about the future of humanity on Earth depend entirely on the interconnectedness and healthier relationships between humans and the biosphere. This is contrary to the economic ambitions and goals of the G8 countries (cf. Field, 2001:69). They control the market and price of precious minerals, and their currency is stronger than the countries where gold comes from.

It is common knowledge that humanity is part of and not separated from the natural environment. Therefore, the prosperity of humanity depends on healthy ecosystems and possibly not on the level of industrial wealth and the pursuit of fame, power, and authority. The world’s expense in pursuing power is far greater than the world budget for afforestation. Yet, the first world countries still confine themselves to minor repairs to a social system (industrial civilization propelled by quantum technology) that rapidly increases ecological destruction (Marshall, 2012). Can the missional theological response to the current environmental challenges offer society an alternative approach to reducing environmental injustice and promoting resilience and ecological biodiversity?

2.9.1 Ecological injustice and civilization

The term “injustice” is an adjectival word that comes from a Latin phrase that means “not right,” and injustice is the opposite of justice, a fair and righteous act. Injustice can be general or specific, like the injustice suffered by poor people everywhere or an individual act of injustice committed by some unkind persons. Injustice is a quality-of-life practice related to unfairness or undeserved outcomes, and the term may be applied to unfair events or situations in the environment. The sense of injustice is a universal human feature, though the exact circumstances considered unjust can vary from event to event or from culture to culture.

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Eli-Haggar, (2007) argues that the environmental crisis occurred because of (injustice) crimes committed by humans against nature. El-Haggar seems to resonate with some Malawians who equate the ecological crisis to the injustice committed in the natural environment and the European negligence of traditional measures for preserving nature by associating human behavior with crime. In the symbolic speech of Walls, (2002), the failure of the missionaries and colonists to acknowledge that the tabernacle ark of the Israelites was made from Egyptian materials—the failure by the early missionaries to engage Ubuntu philosophies in the use and protection of nonhuman environments.

To reverse the conditions, Conradie, (2011) seems to suggest that not only a confession of faith and guilt is necessary, but rather pastoral conduct guided by theological reflection and analysis of the “significant sign of the times” (cf. Conradie, 2008). The environmental crisis may also be addressed through interdisciplinary and multi-sectoral approaches. Engaging primal, modern, and scientific worldviews in protecting and conserving biodiversity is essential for widening environmental knowledge and care. If the current environmental situation is not controlled or remedied, the land and atmospheric temperature are expected to rise to 1.1°C above the pre-industrial average (Fiona Harvey 2019). The temperature rise has severe challenges to sustainable livelihood on planet Earth. Just as almost the whole world is hopeless and climate challenges are on the rise, Conradie, (2008:11ff) argues that the church’s position in society, despite all the accusations, can help to raise awareness and participate in the reversing of the effects of the current and rapid deterioration of the environment.

2.9.2 Environmental justice

Environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people to develop, implement, and enforce environmental laws, regulations, and policies. Environmental justice focuses primarily, though not entirely on human health, while green or ecological movements concentrate on our treatment of nature. According to Deane-Drummond 2006, environmental justice can be discussed in three categories, namely, Legal justice, or general justice between the individual and state, Distributive justice, which is between the state and the individual. The third category is Commutative justice which is justice among individuals. Drummond also broadens the “scope of justice to include the non-human community as recipients of justice…” in other words, the general environment, which is the whole surrounding of an organism, is also a recipient of justice.

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Like any other kind of justice, environmental justice is the virtue that enables a deeper appreciation and significance. It opens the possibility for transformation to let peoples’ inner attitudes match outward practices. Justice is a moral virtue “…that connects with the virtue of prudence, the first of the cardinal virtues, and temperance…” (Drummond, 2006), which are both relevant to the discussion of environmental degradation, Ecological theology sometimes called ecotheology. Thus, following any injustice done to the environment, especially regarding water/rain, plants, and animals, aquatic and terrestrial starve and finally die.

In rain/water scarcity, drought, or floods, the human community assumes has done something wrong before the Creator, and the elders always call for prayers. Mbìti asserts that in some traditional Africa, “prayers are made together with sacrifices for rain…And people prostrate themselves before God…rain is connected with the people’s moral life, just as it is connected with their physical life…” (Mbìti, 1975: 109). In moral and physical life cases, thus justice, specifically about the environment, is therefore essential.

Traditionally, as the rain pours down from the sky, heaven is therefore conceptualized as the dwelling place of Chauta (God), the supplier of rain. According to Mbìti, God in many “…African societies is therefore referred to as Rain-giver, Water-giver, and the Source of Rain, etc.” Mbìti, 1975:111). There is a close connection between the sky and thick forests as both dwelling places of ancestral spirits who are deemed to be people’s mouthpiece to the supplier of rain. In the words of Mbìti, If God were not the God of rain and dwelt in the sky and thick forests, the Malawian would have little to do with such a God. Malawi is an agricultural community. In the supply of water from the sky, animals and plants experience the “…love, providence, and the care of God…” for people and the entire biodiversity in the ecological system in Malawi (cf. Mbìti, 1975:111).

Ecological degradation in Malawi is taking place along with a historical interaction between religions and science, as they are both trying to help the Malawi agricultural community. Thus, religion and science were brought to Malawi by the church. This implies that the church that has raised science and faith under the same roof for development and progress agenda can bring them together to address the ecological challenges encountered in the church’s efforts in development and progress.

2.9.3 The greenbelt agricultural, conflicts, and ecological injustice
Malawi’s environment started facing challenges in the 1960s (NEAP, 2010). Close to this time in world history is the famous ‘green belt agricultural philosophy’ of the twentieth century. The colonial government intended to feed the growing African populations and fully exploit African precious
human and nonhuman environments for sending agents or government in Western Europe (Water, 1993:58).

For Malawi, based on colonial exploitation, clear marks of environment degradation were enhanced by the tobacco estate-led economy, which continued in independent Malawi. The promotion of chemical aided food security and industrial, agricultural chemicals and synthetic seeds and fertilizers degraded the soil, water, air and changed annual weather conditions and patterns in Malawi. Thus, the church teaching on stewardship informed by principles ethics of Permaculture, the church is likely to stand in as an alternative community leading by examples in the preservation and proper utilization of nonhuman environment in Malawi.

The environmental degradation in Malawi grew worse towards the middle of the 1990s as the civil war in Mozambique ended and refugees returned to Mozambique (NEAP, 2010). Malawians discovered that the refugees had depleted much of huge natural forest for charcoal production and the opening of new gardens/crop fields. Spouses from intermarriages between Malawians and Mozambican refugees increase to some extent the population. Spouses and relatives who had been taught skills in charcoal production continued depleting the forests. Deforestation made Malawi’s landscape bare, unprotected and exposed to soil erosion even after a slight rainfall. The systematic extermination of vegetation in settlement areas and soil erosion caused in due course is defined by Nwaigbo, (2011:374) as:

> The posterity of all lifeforms on earth is threatened by ecological crises, due to [hu]man’s failure to care for the earth and could lead to the decimation of the vitality on earth,...a process in which humans destroy the complex network of organisms and plant life that constitutes the pedestal bearing of the ecosystem. Such excessive interference with the natural order of the ecosystem has a devastating impact on the future of humanity.

Eventually, there is always acute hardship more often facing women and children. Environmental degradation causes ecological injustice, as people seek economic support from natural resources. Ecological injustice causes suffering perpetuates poverty, hunger, disease, and consequently promotes migration of organisms, human trafficking, high immorality, and mortality rates. Charcoal production enhances migration or nomadic life. Charcoal producers chase, capture, eradicate, and move to new

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95Basic Permaculture principles: Work with Nature, Not Against It, See Solutions Inherent in Problems, Produce No Waste, Each Element Performs Many Functions, Each Function is Supported by Many Elements, Use and Value Renewable Resources and Services, Integrate Rather Than Segregate, Use Small and Slow Solutions, Use and Value Diversity, Reduce Your Ecological Footprint, Cooperate, don’t compete, Start Small and Learn From Change. Permaculture Ethics: Care for the Earth, Care for People, Distribute the Surplus and the controversial one Population control. (Mollison 1979; Holmgren, 1992; Morrow,1997).

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forest areas. In the new areas, they acquire new spouses and have new babies. Dakin (2004:185) states that such behaviour enforces “catastrophic events and “the population growth...”

Alongside Dakin, (2004), the NEAP, (2010) cites that ecological injustice as the cause for the rapid loss of forest cover in the past forty years (1976-2006) and is likely to have a long-term impact on sustainable living in Malawi. Ecological injustice increased at the dawn of multiparty democracy; freedoms were claimed without responsibilities. Multiparty democracy led to market and trade liberalization in Malawi, which resulted in the abuse of specific trade policies, rules, and regulations. New guidelines with freedoms and human rights were introduced, which affected consumption, environment, and waste management. Environmental degradation has certainly had adverse effects, particularly regarding the human relationship with planet earth (cf. Okonkwo, 2011:34).

2.9.4 The Malawi Young Pioneer (MYP) and ecological injustice

The MYP played both positive and regressive roles in environmental degradation in Malawi. The MYP was potential for agriculture; thus, vast lands were cleared off for crop fields in many parts. Besides farming, red bricks were promoted and used in all its centres across the country, which meant more trees were cut for baking bricks. The Youth week, with its development and progress agenda, became famous. Still, its efforts were mischannelled into politics more than social development through the Malawi National Youth Movement of the Malawi Congress Party (Department Information, 1972:110).

The MYP movement was established in 1963 with two divisions; the green shirts, known as Malawi Young Pioneers, and the red shirt, Malawi Youth League, all in support of Kamuzu Banda's political philosophy of four cornerstones; unity, loyalty, obedience, and discipline (cf. Carver, 1990:15). By 1989, there were MYP training bases in each of the 24 districts and had instructors in all secondary schools to provide basic military training to pupils (Chancellor History Papers, University of Malawi, 1972:18). The MYP opened significant cash and food crops fields and used industrial farming methods and synthetic farm inputs (Zomba National Archives Min. of Education Report 1973:100).

Besides MYP, Kamuzu Banda inaugurated Youth Week—a “self-help” week initially held by the Young Pioneers in parades. They demonstrated their skills in various areas of economic activity to underline their contribution to national development and their loyalty to Kamuzu and his government. Over time, Youth Week was extended to a month-long event. Other members of Malawian society, school children and later university students, had to work hard in various local projects, classroom construction, footpaths, bridge repairs, established tree nurseries, and tree planting exercise inputs (Zomba National Archives, Min. of Education Report, 1973:100). Youth Week would be necessary
for planting and preserving forests in Malawi. But very little is recorded about the Malawi Young Pioneer and Malawi Youth Movement of the Malawi Congress Party regarding conservation given environmental degradation.

2.9.5 Wood energy project, national tree planting day

In the period between 1911 and 1940, the government of Nyasaland noted a high rate of deforestation and established Village Forest Areas (VFAs). The VFAs received technical support from the Forest Department Malawi National Energy Policy MNEP, 2003:34). To promote afforestation, sales of forestry products were apportioned so that 75% went to the Native Authority (NA) and 25% to the central government. But the villagers were not impressed with strange tree (exotic) species with several setbacks in agriculture and an unfair share of the proceeds earned, and the program was unsuccessful (MNEP, 2003:34). Between 1940 to 1964, the Department of Forestry shifted its focus from VFAs to industrial plantations for national self-sufficiency in timber. Forest guards were withdrawn from the Native Authority areas to forest reserves. Colonial funding was discontinued so that the NAs were weakened and no longer controlled the VFAs (MNEP, 2003:34).

Later, the agricultural expansion workers took over the tree planting project from the Department of Forestry. The agriculture extension workers had little interest in advising VFAs, and there was a decrease from more than 5 000 in 1964 to 1 200 VFAs in 1985. The global energy crisis in the 1970s prompted several governments in Africa, including Malawi, to create wood energy sources (FOA, 1985:109). To compensate for the loss of forests to the tobacco estate economy, the Kamuzu government did not only build Malawi College of Forestry at Chongoni in Dedza (Proceedings of Tree Pest and Diseases, 1991:41; State of Environment Outlook for Malawi, 2002:66; Briggs, 2010:122). Kamuzu instead introduced the Wood Energy Project.

The Wood Energy project aimed to improve timber and wood fuel supply for domestic and commercial uses (Wood Energy Appraisal Report, 1979:43). The Forestry Department reclaimed tree planting and reinforced World Forest Day on 21st March as the National Tree Planting Day (MNEP, 2003:34). Due to climate change, the day was changed to 21st January. With the advent of the multi-party system from 1994, Tree Planting Day is observed annually, but forests decline. Environmental degradation still poses challenges for sustainable living in Malawi (MNEP, 2003:34).

2.9.6 Eco-civilization

An eco-civilization is an evolving paradigm that seeks to represent an advanced stage of development of human civilization that follows industrial civilization. Eco-civilization is primarily characterized by its focus on harmony between man and nature (Li & Yang, 2015:8). It is recognizable now more than
before that the ecological deficit of the industrial civilization is expanding rapidly (Angang Hu, 2014:48). Thus, eco-civilization is developing due to the dissatisfaction with the deterioration of the environment caused by industrial civilization (Chumakov et al., 2015:211).

The whole of modern civilization is anti-ecological, and its global expansion has caused the global ecological crisis (2015:211). It is asserted that the wilderness (ecology) has been the essential ingredient of the American (and Chinese) industrial civilization intended to replace the primitive small-scale agricultural civilization with large-scale agricultural production (Nash, 1972). Jiahua Pan, (2015) states that former environmentalists in the Soviet Union in 1984 coined the term ‘Ecological Civilization.’ Three years later, the term was incorporated in China as a sustainable development concept, and it was first used in 1987 by Qianji Ye, (1909-2017), an agricultural economist.

The first time the concept ‘eco-civilization’ was used as a technical theory in English was in 1995. The concept became more common in Chinese political discussions in 2007. In April 2014, the term was adopted and used by the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAC) and the International Organization for Ecological Safety Cooperation (IESCO). The world-renowned ecological writer and activist David Korten has expanded ecological civilization’s vision to a global context. As such ecological civilization vision includes, among other things, granting legal rights to nature, shifting ownership of productive assets from transnational corporations to nation-states. The concept has enhanced self-governing communities and prioritized life-affirming, rather than wealth-affirming, values. Ernst Conradie takes eco-civilization a step further to suggest and call for a multidisciplinary approach to respond to global climate disruption, social and ecological injustices. Broadly construed, ecological civilization involves a synthesis of economic and social, educational, political, agricultural, and other societal reforms toward sustainability.

2.10 Environmental degradation and ecological justice

2.10.1 Environmental, protection, and preservation

Signs indicating worldwide environmental degradation started as early as the 1870s and had become absolute in the 1970s. However, the United Nations’ Universal Declaration for Human Rights (UDHR), adopted in 1948, failed to refer to environmental protection and preservation. Nevertheless, ecological degradation remained a human concern, and that human health is dependent on the health

of the environment. Thus, advocacy for the rights to a healthy environment began in the late 1960s and was featured in 1972 as an issue of justice in the UN Conference (Ramlogan, 2010). Thus, environmental justice encompasses preserving ecological quality, sustaining the ecological well-being of the environment (Picolotti, & Taillant, 2010). The main concern for environmental justice is to protect, preserve and conserve (improve) the ecological environment for present and future generations.

The Malawi government endorses and adheres to (environmental justice) internationally accepted principles of the 1972 Stockholm Declaration and the 1992 Rio Declaration adopted by the United Nations Conferences (NEAP, 2006). Malawi is also a signatory to the following environmental conventions: Convention on International Plant Protection. The Government of Malawi adopted a National Environmental Policy (MNEP) in 1996 to provide guidance and set standards for developing sector policies in the environment and natural resources. It provided an overall framework against which relevant sectoral environmental policies were revised and adopted to ensure sustainable development principles (MNEP, 1996). Thus, ecological preservation or protection as a justice issue provides the practice of keeping both security and enforcement of orders to safeguard the natural environment (MNEA, 2017).

Although the government is attempting and has documents regarding environmental protection, owing to the colonial mission legacy in Malawi, the church’s voice in the debate about environmental conservation is hardly heard in the existing discourse (Bishop Francis Kaulanda interview October 23, 2019). Thus, the interface between the health of nonhuman and human environments in the church in Malawi has only recently begun to be appreciated (Br. Patrick Mzumara Mzuzu Roman Catholic Diocese 19th November 2019). Both Christian and Muslim missionaries, in general, did not actively promote protection, conservation, and mitigation of natural resources (cf. Bell, 1968:186). The presence of remaining natural trees in old mission stations indicates that the missionaries, to some extent, comply with environmental justice. However, the absence of the church’s contribution in policy development and implementation of ecological challenges possibly suggests why in the presence of national policies and legislation, injustice in the environment remains a challenge for Malawians.

2.10.2 Mitigation and preservation
According to Mugambi (2001:2), environmental damage has recently been a worldwide theme for live theological discussion. Environmental education is necessary at all levels of the church’s teaching and practice in society and theological education and training of church leaders. There is a need to develop a syllabus that should include awareness information, prevention, mitigation, and sustainability of
ecology, ecosystems, and biodiversity (Kumbikano, 2005). Therefore, it becomes clear that Mugambi picks up a gap in the Christian education system for the inability to include environmental issues in syllabi. Mugambi’s observation that the church’s failure to take the ecological problems is possibly profound and explains the challenge in the missionality, nature, position, and role of the church in missio Dei. Mugambi, (2001) further asserts that the church’s theological education, mitigation, and training concerns for environmental management are incomplete if it does not include the causes and remedial lessons in environmental degradation. Regarding the root causes of degradation, Mugambi asserts that the global ecological crisis is rooted in both microeconomic and international corporate practices.

Mugambi, like Conradie (2008), agrees that the life of large populations is compromised by the degradation of the environment and suggests it should be the church’s concern to work with other stakeholders (an interdisciplinary approach) to address the challenge of environmental degradation. Mugambi argues that most causes of ecological degradation are exacerbated by the greed of industrialized nations (2001:3). Thus Mugambi further suggests that the missional theological church response to the environment should include prophetic messages against the systematic exploitation of the poor by the rich. According to Bauckham, (2010:4), the ecological degradation as we face these days is rooted in “generally well-meaning scientific-technological projects whose benefits seemed obvious but whose catastrophic effects were not foreseen” in the exploitation of natural resources.

Rob Clobus, (1992:3) attributes the factors in the worsening weather conditions to some Western colonial attitudes, industrialization, high technology, and economic monopoly. In the words of (Conradie, 2005:1), environmental threats, although they escalate worldwide, are contextual and thus demand contextual reactions. Contexts are different and are endowed with a varied experience that should be involved. The missional theological church response to the environmental crisis should therefore endeavour to bring together varied knowledge and philosophy in their context from various fields such as Traditional religions and possibly Permaculture. According to Ruether, there is a “need to bring from our heritage the language100 [and wisdom] to critique… the violence done to…people and to the earth…” (1992:12).

100Cf. Sanneh (1989); Bediako (1995), and Walls (1996), discussions on the translatability nature of Christianity, importance of languages, and cultures. In the “reinvestigation” Conradie (2005), and “Renewal of Non-Western Christianity to allow the ancestors and spirits come and protect our remnant forests.
2.10.3 Disaster preparedness and management

Disaster preparedness and management refer to a comprehensive understanding of natural systems coupled with the application of management tools.\textsuperscript{101} The process includes a risk assessment to make a significant contribution to a reduction of risks and mitigation of any impacts of environmental degradation and crises (cf. FAO, 2008). Disaster or crisis preparedness and management rise out of a clear need to reinforce the importance of environmental concerns regarding the disaster management cycle of prevention, preparedness, assessment, mitigation, and response (Coppola, 2006). Historically environmental degradation awareness recording started in 1884. According to NASA reports,\textsuperscript{102} it was freezing by 1884 in Africa, except West Africa. In 1890, West Africa was extremely hot and the rest of Africa very cool. From 1894 Central East Africa began to warm. In 1897, the entire region from South Africa to Angola experienced extremely high temperatures, and the area cooled in 1903. Between 1904 and 1914, Africa recorded freezing temperatures, except for West Africa. However, by 1919, the temperature in West Africa dropped slightly. In Central East Africa, conditions became warmer and warmer until 1931.

NASA reports further state that between 1931 and 1940, the whole of Africa, except that the West, Central, and North, cooled again. The condition was a bit cool in all of Africa, except in North Africa and typical Southwest Africa until 1950. The temperature changed only slightly in the North and South of Africa, but the rest of Africa was cool between 1950 and 1960. In 1969, almost all of Africa had very calm weather. In the whole world, it was only Alaska, northern Europe the island, and along the equator mainly west of Mexico and islands northeast of Australia. From 1970, the temperature fluctuated as it continued to rise and never dropped. Today (October 2019), the meteorologists call the “extremely high fire danger conditions.”

In Central East African countries, including Malawi, some signs illustrated by unstable weather conditions started prevailing in the 1970s and increased in the 1980s (see 1.2 \textit{p.2}) and reached high levels from 2007. These warm temperatures are given different interpretations among people from different backgrounds in the SADC and Malawi. Details of the public perception and understanding of the current weather events are given attention in the research data presentation overview (4.8 \textit{p.175}). But an interpretation based on the themes and cause factors is that environmental degradation is the exhaustion of the Earth's natural resources such as land, air, water, and soil following global warming and climate change (NEAP, 2010). Malawians have ever since struggled with environmental disasters and risks.

According to the Malawi National Disaster Risk Management (NDRM), the process of disaster and risk management involves integrating environmental concerns into planning for relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction, and development (NDRM, 2015:3). However, disaster risk management The first phase of disaster management is mitigation. Mitigation involves taking steps to make a situation less severe (NDRM, 2015:3-5). Firstly, prediction of a possible occurrence of environmental crisis, then monitoring what circumstances might intensify the concern if it happened. Finally, steps are taken to prevent cases from coming together. In other words, if it cannot prevent foreseen disasters, through a missional theological church, society can at least attempt to prepare to avoid making the environmental crisis in Malawi worse.

2.10.4 “Hope” for a just environment

The term “hope” comes from the Old English term “hopa” (noun), hopian (verb), of Germanic origin; related to Dutch hoop (noun), hopen (verb), and German hoffen (verb). The Hebrew and Greek equivalent of the current English word “hope” has the meaning related to a solid and confident expectation, and this meaning stands in contrast to “wishful thinking.” The Indo-European root of the word “hope” has the same sources from which the word “curve” (to bend) comes. Hope is an optimistic state of mind based on an expectation of positive outcomes concerning events and circumstances in one’s life or the world at large. As a verb, its definitions include expect with confidence” and “to cherish a desire with anticipation.” However, in the Bible, hope is the confident expectation of what God in strength and faithfulness has promised. It is “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1). It is an act of faith that circumstances or the eyes cannot move because an unseen God is seen in His faithfulness.

Therefore, the root of the word “hope” gives us the connotation of a change in direction, going differently. According to Hope International Agency, putting the Indo-European root and the Hebrew and Greek equivalent together yields a meaning of the word “hope” as a confident expectation that a desirable change is likely to happen. Biblically God’s abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1Pet. 1:3-5). While effects of environmental crisis continue to exert pressure, Malawians, like pedagogies of hope (Freire, 1970/1993), look forward to an environmentally sustainable Malawi.

105 http://hope-international.blogspot.com/2011/04/meaning-of-hope

107 https://www.patheos.com/-the-biblical-definition-of-hope/
Encouraged by Moltmann and Russell Botman, this study hopes for environmentally better Africa. Alan Boesak argues that hope comes to life only when we genuinely face reality in the struggle for justice, dignity, and the life of the Earth (see Boesak, 2014). According to (“Laudato Si,” 2015), today, the creation is threatened by excessive lifestyles and a lack of respect for the sacredness of creation and human dignity. Pope Francis calls this lifestyle a “culture of waste.” People are driven by an economy that puts profit and unrestrained consumption against the good of communities and the environment. It is still the hope of this research for a transformed Malawi in which sustainable living effort is the goal of every woman, man, and youth.

2.11 Conclusion

This chapter highlighted various theories and concepts about the environmental crisis in Malawi. The theories and concepts have been discussed as a lens through which the ecological crisis in Malawi is framed. A concept thus provides a way to name what is observed and explain relationships between the practical terms. A theory allows observers to explain what they see and introduce change. A theory is thus a tool by which observers can identify a problem and plan a way to change or remedy the situation.

Theories and concepts discussed so far reflect on the interaction between human and non-human environments and how theories and concepts provide light and guidance on the challenge of environmental degradation and crisis in Malawi. The discussion reveals how conflicting religious theories and concepts affected the environment in Malawi. It also uncovers how modernity in the pursuit of scientifically guided development and progress dominated over beliefs, traditions, values, and perpetuated injustice to the indigenous theories and concepts and the environment in Malawi. The next chapter examines the history of Christianity, colonialism, and independence and how these contributed to Malawi’s current volatile environmental experience.

108 In his inaugural speech as the first Black Rector and Vice Chancellor of Stellenbosch University, Prof Russel Botman 2007, announced his vision for the university as a “multicultural university with a pedagogy of hope for Africa.” Among the themes related to MDGs he included in his speech “hope” for the “Promotion of a sustainable environment and a competitive industry.”
Chapter three

3 Historical background of the environmental crisis in Malawi

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, ecological concepts and theories were discussed within the context and framework of a *missional theological response* to the environmental crisis through the lenses of *ecotheology* and *missio Dei*. The discussions focused on how concepts and theories reflected on the recent events of the challenge of environmental degradation and crises throughout Southern Africa, especially Malawi. This chapter explores how historical events in the pre-colonial, colonial, post-colonial, independent, and post-independent eras affected the environment. These include government policies, methods of agriculture, economics, religious beliefs, interaction, attitudes and values, and education systems that have influenced changes in the biodiversity, ecology, and weather conditions (climate) in Malawi.

The chapter examines how the Anglican Church, Roman Catholics, the Presbyterian Church, the Zambezi Industrial Mission of Joseph Booth, and the other earlier denominations affected the environment. The chapter also examines how colonial government policies contributed to the increase or decrease in the deterioration of the environment in Malawi, formerly known as the British Central Africa Protectorate and Nyasaland. The chapter further studies how Christianity and Islam’s participation in development and progress as they introduced industrial revolution and enlightenment technology clashed with primal religious attitudes, values, and beliefs about the Earth and how that enhanced the current climatic conditions and ecosystem challenges Malawi.

3.2 Malawi-Nyasaland in Africa

3.2.1 The geographical location of Malawi

Malawi is a closed country in Africa, surrounded by Mozambique in the East and South, Zambia in the Northwest, and Tanzania in the North (NEAP, 2006). Lake Malawi, formerly Lake Nyasa, covers almost the entire Eastern border of the country (Pachai, 1972; Červenka, 1973:73). The country is in the Great Rift Valley and is surrounded by mountain ranges, high plateaus, and rich fertile plains in the Central region. The Mulanje Plateau, the third-highest in Africa, is in the Southeast, the Zomba Plateau in the South-eastern region, and the Nyika Plateau in the Northern part of Malawi (Schoffeleers, 1992:41). The country is known as ‘the Warm Heart of Africa,’ a distinction earned by its friendly people, its position on the map of Africa, and its beautiful landscapes (Ross, A.C., 1996:14). Malawi simply means flames of fire (see Maps on page xix).
Phiri, (2004:13) asserts that the name Malawi has a connection with the Phiri Clan of the Maravi people. Phiri states that when the Phiri Clan of the Maravi or Bantu people approached the countries that are now part of Malawi, North-western Mozambique, and Eastern Zambia, they saw at a distance flame of fire, or what looked like fire (Maurel, 1993:6). These flames made a vivid impression on the people, and consequently, they called the land Maravi or land of flames (cf. Njoloma, 1991:4).

The great lake they saw before them they named Nyanja ya Nyenyezi, the lake of stars (cf. Pike & Rimmington, 1965: vii; McCracken, 2000:29). David Livingstone, a British explorer, and missionary visited the area in 1859 and found a peaceful society with a beautiful environment and wildlife (Anderson-Morshead, 1955; Blood, 1957). Malawi’s favourable climate and topography convinced Livingstone, who concluded that it would suit future European settlement. Livingstone was convinced that Malawi would be developed as a base for introducing civilization, which would assist in the fight against the slave trade and help in the proclamation of the Christian Gospel in this part of Central Africa (Anderson-Morshead, 1955).

3.2.2 The land cover—Topography and demography

Malawi’s total land area is 118 484 square kilometres, of which 49% is agricultural land (Mduluza 2007:91; USAID report, 2010). Malawi’s water resources comprise 21% of its territory and include Lake Malawi, the third-largest freshwater lake in Africa, Lake Chilwa (Salt inland lake), Lake Malombe, Lake Chiuta, Lake Kazuni, and numerous rivers, wetlands, and marshes (Donda, et al., 2014:42). The country has two main drainage systems: The Shire River and the Lake Chilwa Basins) and two main aquifers (FAO 2006). About 36% of the total land area of Malawi is classified as forest land (Malawi National Forestry Act ‘MNFA,’ 1997). The most important types of forests are woodlands, closed evergreen mountain forests, riverine forests, montane grassland, and semi-evergreen forests (Malawi National Forestry Program, ‘MNFP,’ 2001: 31). National forest percentages ranged from 18.2% to 35.7% and cropland ranged from 40.5% to 53.7% (MNFP, 2001:31).

Malawi is one of the ten most densely populated and poorest countries in Africa, with a population that quadrupled, from one million at the arrival of Europe to four million at independence and more than 19 million in 2018. Thus, Malawi has a population density of 158 individuals per km² (FAO Report, 2018). About 80% of the population lives in rural and 20% in urban areas (Education, World Bank Report, 2010:1). The rural area is in severe poverty, and more than 50% of the population lives below the poverty line (World Bank Report, 2018).

Poverty undoubtedly causes more than dependency and puts the natural resources in Malawi under pressure (Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, IMF, 2007:37). Previous estimates, therefore, indicate
that significant deforestation occurred in Malawi, from 45% of land in 1972 to 25.3% in 1990, and there is a record of further loss of forests of 18,572 km² (Satellitbild, 1993). The forest loss in 1993 was also followed by an additional loss of 6,690 km² by 2008 (see MARGE, 2009; Lepers et al., 2005; Kalipeni, 1994). As a result, from 1990 to 2010, Malawi lost 17% of its forest cover, which translates into the highest in the Southern African region (Chiotha eds., et al., 2018).

3.2.3 The early inhabitants
The earliest people in Malawi were aKafula, (300-1500AD), the fierce and dangerous short people (aBathwa) who were nomadic skilled hunters and painters (Rangeley,1963; Pachai, 1972:26; Sindima, 2002:6). The archaeological evidence indicates that the Kafula (the pygmy and stone ages people) occupied the shores of Lake Malawi more than 1500 years before the Maravi arrived (Randall, 1971:65; Velar 1995:44; Sindima, 2002:6). The Kafula remained nomadic hunters and food gatherers until they were displaced by the Maravi people from the Congo region around 1480AD (Briggs & Bartlett, 2006:4). The Maravi was politically and religiously organized peasants in an empire of maternal chieftains (cf. Kaplan 1977:95; Phiri KM., 1983). They occupied the area west of Lake Malawi to the Luangwa River, south to the Zambezi, and east to the Indian Ocean coast of Portuguese East Africa (Linden, 1972). Thus, the Maravi people arrived long before the arrival of the Arabs and Europeans in Malawi, and there is no record indicating that their practices had severe impacts on environmental degradation.

The Maravi settled in agricultural communities dependent on the various products of the naturally balanced ecological system. These peasants had displaced the original occupants, the Kafula, who lived in the country long before the Maravi came (Schoffelleers, 1973). By the time Arabs and Europeans arrived in Malawi, other tribes such as the Yao, Tumbuka, Ngoni, and Lhomwe were already traders and peasant farmers. Before the arrival of the Arabs and Europeans, Malawi was well covered and is described as one of the forestry agricultural countries of sub-Saharan Africa (Fyle, 1999:42). Today, the remnant forests are proof of the much more extensive blocks that existed before western ideas of development and progress they are being cleared up to open large-scale farms (McClenaghan, 1996).

3.2.4 The next inhabitants: aKafula and aBathwa
The Kafula and the Bathwa, the first occupant of Malawi, were the Stone Age nomadic hunters. Still, the Maravi people, the next occupants, were an organized Iron Age community of peasants (Lewycky & White, 1979:34). The arrival of the British settlers to Nyasaland in the 19th century led to the introduction of new agricultural systems and cash crops such as cotton, coffee, and tobacco (see Randall, 1971:207; Feder, 1997:38; Sindima, 2002:27). Before colonialism and in the post-colonial
period, agriculture remained the dominant economic activity, involving 84% of the workforce (NEAP, 2010). Agriculture used 59% of the total land area (FAO, 2013).

Agriculture, therefore, is frequently cited as a significant cause of deforestation in Malawi (Palamuleni et al., 2011; Davies et al., 2010; Kamanga et al., 2009). Besides agriculture, in rural areas in Malawi, 97% of the population has relied on forests for fuelwood as the primary energy source (NEAPS, 2010). Therefore, following prolonged and intense demand for energy, fuelwood has led to land cover changes through successive waves of forest degradation (Abbot & Homewood, 1999). The introduction of flue-cured tobacco demanded wood for various purposes, including tobacco curing that attracted large quantities of fuelwood (cf. Fisher, 2004).

In addition to agricultural reasons, the commercial use of forests has been listed as one of the leading causes of deforestation (Feder, 1997). Given forestry products commercialization, Malawian timber is cheaper on the international trade than timber from many other sub-Saharan countries, and thus, promoting rapid deforestation (NEAP, 2017). The commercialization, the internationalization of marketing, and their relationship to natural resources are foreign and known to the Malawians only after the arrival of Europeans and Arabs, as the duo introduced Islam and Christianity into the country (Greenline Member Interview 12th Nov. 2019).

The Greenline Movement was formed under former forestry officer David Chitedze in 1988, concerned with environmental degradation in Zomba and Malosa. The Movement is responsible for the preservation and proper utilization of natural resources in Zomba Malosa Forest reserves, also argues that the commercialization of charcoal production, famously known as “Malawi’s Green Gold” (Kambewa & Utila, 2008:13), contributed highly to deforestation. Charcoal production is new to Malawians and was only introduced by the Mozambican refugees early 1990s (Campbell, 1996; Raimundo 2009). Charcoal production has caused deforestation more than clay-brick baking (Greenline Member Interview 12th Nov. 2019).

3.2.5 The pre-colonial state of the environment

Like many countries in Central Africa, Malawi was well covered in densely miombo woodland forestry (cf. O’Toole & Bailey, 1989). The mountains, the valleys, the forests, the fertile plains, the grasslands, rivers, and lakes were all beautiful with thrilling wildlife and ecosystems (Year Handbook Guide 1946:441). Therefore, when David Livingstone first saw the landscape was impressed and thought it would be a good place for the next home of Europeans to introduce the gospel, trade, power, and civilization (United Empire Journal Vol. 30, 1939: lxiii). This possibly exerts more weight on the
exploration ambitions of Livingstone and perhaps explains better the interests of the missionaries and colonists regarding their monopoly in the exploitation of Africa’s natural resources.

The interest in natural resources in Malawi came. At the same time, historically, the industrial revolution (commerce and civilization which Livingstone proclaimed) had already begun putting pressure on the European environment as early as the 1770s (see Kelly & Thomas, 2009:373). It may not be surprising that environmental deterioration increased following the arrival of missionaries in the 1860s and the introduction of British control in 1891. In 1897 the Nyasaland government decided to introduce game and forestry reserves. Lake Chilwa (Chidyamphiri Island) and Chiromo Marshes, all densely covered with bush and forests, were declared national reserves (Morris 2016:231-234). The state of environmental degradation continued and was noticed by the colonial government between 1911 and 1913. This was when the impact of Industrialization in Nyasaland started to show severe environmental degradation (Nyasaland Department of Agriculture 1931 Report).

Nevertheless, the Nyasaland government introduced forest preservation policies so that between 1913 and 1929, thirteen more places were declared forest reserves. Ndirande Mountain was declared a reserve in 1922, Chiradzulo mountain in 1924, and Michesi in Phalombe in 1929—the only place to be involved in a severe landslide in 1992 (see Report on the Nyasaland Protectorate 1952:72; Linden, 1974:189). At the time of this study, most of these and more sites declared by the Nyasaland government as forest reserves, including mountains, stand almost bare. From 1923, the colonial government increased efforts to plant exotic forests of pine, cedar, and gum trees in Mulanje and Zomba to address the challenge of environmental degradation (see Morris, 2016:34; Browne, 1968:1317).

However, by 1932 the government began to saw and exploit the cedar for timber trade, and degradation increased (Overseas Business Report, 1962:8). Mulanje and Zomba mountains are the sources of the perennial river flowing into Lake Chilwa. Lake Chilwa thus has dried up ultimately six times and experienced severe recessions in 1879, 1900, 1914-15, 1922, 1931-32, 1934, 1954, 2008, and 2018 (cf. Mvula, Kalindekafe & Kishindo, 2014:38; McLachlan et al., 1972). In 1934, the District Resident of Zomba walked on foot (on the dry bed of Lake Chilwa) from Kachulu to Chidyamphiri Island. It is alleged that at Chidyamphiri, he found only one “mphiri” (one puff alder) scientific name (bitis arietans of the anamalia kingdom) that survived the drought (Hammer, 1986:67). Most areas formerly covered in the famous miombo (brachystigia woodlands) were heavily degraded. Soil erosion was enhanced, so that the government employed Paul Topham as the first Soil Erosion officer in 1937 (The Empire Forestry Handbook, 1938:49; Clements, & Topham, 1940:37).
Although the colonial government set up forest reserves and introduced policies, environmental degradation and deforestation continued. However, the blame for environmental degradation was heaped on the Africans (see Morris, 2016:334). To find a scapegoat, both the colonialists and the missionaries falsely blamed the African religious, cultural values, and primitive agricultural practices for environmental degradation (see McCracken, 1997; Mulwafu, 2013). They also accused the Africans of primitive hunting methods, despising traps, snares, dogs, and fire (Morris, 2016:334). And yet, the Europeans used guns and instituted gun licenses to allow their fellow Whites to hunt even in the reserves and were engaged in severe international business of sawing and selling wood and timber (cf. Morris, 2016). The Europeans steam engines, especially trains and boats, into the Nyasa, Zambezi, and Shire rivers, which demanded hardwood for fuel before coal was discovered.

It is important to note that places where European industrial development and progress first took part were also the first places hit the hardest by geohazards. The droughts of 1934, the Napolo (an avalanche) in 1946, and the famine of 1949, for example, hit Zomba the harder (Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2012:1). The severe floods of 1992 hit Mount Michesi in Mulanje and Phalombe and Malosa Chilema in Zomba (Chiotha, 1997: 38; Morris, 2020: 209). Zomba was possibly ahead of all other districts, and Mulanje turned into a rural growth centre in European progress and development.

Therefore, the European accusation regarding religious and cultural practices in Africa as possible factors for environmental degradation is debatable. In the words of Lynn White, 1967, the blame for the ecological degradation could be pointed at Christianity and Islam. Both Islam and Christianity regard the environment as the source of raw materials to be fully exploited for the wellbeing and prosperity of humans. Islam and Christianity influenced the environmental values and traditions of the indigenous people in Africa. Despite the intense and rich ecological claims in Islam and Christianity's teaching, theories, concepts, and practices, their hunger for industrial raw materials over the years since their arrival contributed to severe environmental degradation in Africa (see chapter 2 pp.46, 64).

3.3 The global ecological degradation timeline

According to archaeologists, the Earth has existed for nearly 4.5 billion years (see Kronenburg, 2013:280; Poldervaart, 1955:626). However, the consensus among archaeologists acknowledges that the Earth has undergone the geological time of changes and conditions (extremely hot or extremely cold) under which physical and biological changes have taken place (cf. Thierstein & Young, 2004:99; Monroe & Wicander, 2014:414; Jardine, 1855:184). Physical changes caused by very high temperatures have continued to promote the formation of landscapes in many ways. These included the creation of continents, mountains, rivers, seas, and oceans (see Cullen, 2005:19). From the high
melting temperatures since its inception, the universe cooled. The first life forms came into being through natural processes (science attributes their cause to natural and biological processes and the Supreme Being) until the dinosaurs (see Fastovsky & Weishampel, 2005:30). It is argued that the collusion between the asteroid and the Earth obliterated the 200 million dinosaurs’ rule on the Earth’s surface (see Doumit, 2010:224).

Later, about 30 million years ago, the cooler and drier conditions made it possible for climatic conditions that necessitated the extinction and presence of the extreme huge-sized fauna and flora marking the end of the dinosaur era (see Anderson et al., 2013:17). Thus, a cooler and much drier new climate became ideal for the development of Savannah, prairies, and grasslands, which in turn promoted the increase in large herbivorous mammals as well as their predators (Whitney & Club, 1989:74). It was until 6 million years ago that forms of humans began to appear on the world stage (cf. Gamble, 2013:227).

Nevertheless, during the 6 million years on Earth, humans have induced the Earth’s rapid evolution, invented tools, created civilizations, and adapted and adjusted quickly to the Savannah environment (see Becker, 2010:324). Pure natural catastrophic conditions, however, have since emerged and continued to affect human life, just as human species themselves have influenced conditions that cause severe environmental challenges and disasters (cf. Brauch et al., 2008:706). Nevertheless, thirty thousand years ago, when climatic conditions made possible the established and innovative life of people (civilization), the use of natural resources has drastically increased (cf. Oxman, 2001:109).

The birth and spread of Christianity and its introduction as an official religion in the Roman Empire in 313AD was another step in the spread of Roman civilization, which would initiate a new global environmental story (see Noble et al., 2013:175). In Western Europe, at the end of the heavy Icy Age and the beginning of the Medieval Warm Period (Little Ice Age) from 900 to 1300AD, development and progress innovations tremendously increased (see Nunn, 2007:13). The weather was suitable for agricultural development and primal production inventions.

In about 1800AD, the Industrial Revolution began in Western Europe, so that by 1850 rapid demographics were noticed—the world population reached one billion (Hudson, 2014:133). In 1870, the first environmental problems developed; the modern nature conservation movement was launched (see Cubbage et al., 2016:137). Humans thus began to generate a potentially unstable climate with high temperatures, exacerbated by greenhouse gas emissions, as early as the 1900s (see Mulvaney, 2011:192). This implies that by the time foreign missionaries arrived in Malawi around (1840 Islam)
and (1861 Christianity) and started to follow ideals of industrial development and progress, signs of climate change were already on the world stage.

3.4 The early religious, environmental impact in Nyasaland

Although the focus of the study is Christianity, particularly the mainline or mainstream churches (Anglicans, Presbyterians, and Roman Catholics), the impact of other religions such as Islam and traditional beliefs on the environmental crisis is also considered. The nature and practice of a missional theological response to the challenge of the ecological crisis are incomplete if it excludes the other critical players in contextual issues. It is possibly unfair and incomplete to talk about the impact of foreign missionaries on the environment without talking about Islam and indigenous religions in Malawi. Muslims were the first foreign religious missionaries in Malawi with equal influence on the indigenous spiritual practices, beliefs, and traditions in areas they occupied in Malawi. Christianity and Islam were the agents of foreign education, medicine, commerce, development, and progress, and both contended traditional religions on beliefs, values, and attitudes regarding the environment.

3.4.1 The impact of early attempts of the spread of Islam in East-Central Africa

The adherents of Islam claim the great mission of Islam was to spread their religion, expand territorial control and establish trade links based on progress and development in Africa (see Bone 1982). Thus, the early attempt of Islam to bring development and advancement to Africa is traced from the East African coast, through the Indian Ocean, where Islam entered but soon faced the challenge of Christianity between the 15th and 17th centuries (Martin, 1968:31). The Arab traders established a settlement at Tete along the Zambezi in 1530 AD and made trade ties in the interior of Malawi before 1505 (Bone, 2000). However, the spread of Islam in Malawi was reinforced by the expansionist efforts of Salim Bin Abdallah, who made converts of traditional religious leaders in the 1840s (Chakanza & Mijoga, 1993). Abdullah’s main interest was to establish trade territories and political control related to the Kilwa Sultanate on the shores of Lake Nyasa, now Malawi (Bone, 1982).

Through trade and establishment of Islamic education centres, the Arabs influenced the local population to adopt Islam in Mangochi and Salima, Nkhotakota, and to some extent in Mzuzu and Karonga in the North (see Chakanza & Ross, 1998:55). More important, however, was the choice made by a large part of the Yao, a prominent tribal group, in the Eastern part of Nyasaland to become Muslims (Bone, 1982). Therefore, the Swahili Arabs of Kilwa promoted their culture, language, religion, and built centres for trade and Islamic education, and led to rural growth centres and farms (cf. Yust, 1951:307). Islam spread in three phases in Malawi (Hazen, 2002:8). The first phase began at the arrival of coastal Swahili, some Arabs, and some Indians around the 1870s (Bone, 2000). Like
Christianity, Islam is famous for clearing grounds for development and progress, infrastructure development, and indigenous environmental wisdom and care domination.

3.4.2 The second attempt at the spread of Islam and its environmental impact

The second attempt of Islamic mission to Malawi and its impact, coinciding with the establishment of the Nyasaland British Protectorate from the 1890s to about 1920 (see Chakanza, 2000). This second attempt is also critical due to Muslims' response to the threat of European cultural and religious domination. Muslims withdrew from Christian-related institutions, including education centres. They attempted to own similar centres, which meant more land and forest areas were to be cleared bare, increasing environmental degradation. Because of power, control, and authority Islamic teaching influenced the locals to reject the British rule, which they associated with Christianity. The British Commissioner then (Alfred Sharpe) demanded that the Muslim Yao chiefs acknowledge his authority. Momentously they chose the former and led their people in a determined armed resistance till they were eventually 'pacified' in 1895 (Lipschutz, & Rasmussen, 1989:94). Thus, Islam continued to dominate Yao, who found it closely linked to their traditional religious and cultural practices (see Bone, 2000).

The Arabs established education and trade centres along the shores of Lake Malawi. The trade-in ivory, hides, wood, along with development and advances in Islamic education, infrastructure development, and to some extent, slave trade, had lasting consequences not only on the traditional religions in Malawi but also on the nonhuman environment – the ecological systems (cf. Religion in Malawi, Issue 1-8, 1987:14). Construction of the new trade, religion, and schools using red-baked bricks caused severe deforestation (cf. Morris, 2016). New crops and new farming methods introduced by the Arab and Christian missionaries all demanded climate adaptation and tree clearing - possible causes of environmental degradation (cf. Chiotha et al., 2018).

The Qur’an states that God did not omit anything from the Book (Qur’an 6:38). This absolute statement means that the Qur’an contains a complete and comprehensive methodology of ways and laws for proper conduct (Marian, 2007:356). It is argued that the Qur’an, therefore, has 5800 verses to purify the souls through ethical behaviour and about 400 verses of legal principles (Marian, 2007:356). Like many other Abrahamic religions, Islam believes and endorse theological theories and concepts that consider God the Creator of the universe and humankind. However, it is said that the Qur’an has everything that humanity needs to live a meaningful and valuable life concerning the creation of God (Marian, 2007:356). Humans are the careers of all that God created (see Chapter 2 .6.3 p.62). However, in the presence of such religious beliefs, values, traditions, and a robust ecological scripture about stewardship, the degradation of the environment in many parts of the
country, including those occupied by Muslims, has ever increased (see Sneed, 2000:14). The third attempt occurred during Bakili Muluzi (see 3.12.4).

3.4.3 Islamic teaching amidst environmental degradation in Malawi

Since its inception, Islam has influenced Malawi’s political-religious and socio-economic status of many Malawians in many ways (cf. Mchombo, 2004; Mphande, 2014:107). However, one remarkable attempt captured from Qur’an is its strong effort to address corruption. Corruption remains a critical factor in society's socio-economic sector, a chief contributor to environmental degradation in Malawi. The Qur’an states that corruption has appeared throughout the land and sea by (reason of) what the hands of people have earned (Qur’an, verse 30:41).

It implies that under the light of the above verse, deforestation, fires, high temperatures, droughts, floods, soil erosion, storms, and cyclones destroy cities, pollution in the atmosphere and seas, and space settlements and croplands are a result of corruption caused by human hands. Nevertheless, Islamic exclusive environmental ethics, knowledge, zeal, and scriptures have failed to foster resilient and sustainable ecological care. Islam was unable to serve the ecosystem and biodiversity in precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial Malawi, and hence environmental degradation still poses a challenge to the country. Although Islam was the first foreign religion, its missional theological response to the environmental crisis cannot be justified.

3.5 Christianity and the environment in Malawi

The Malawi Christian history followed the 1857 Livingstone’s addresses at the University of Cambridge and Oxford:

I beg to direct your attention to Africa. I know that I shall be cut off in that country now open in a few years. Do not let it be shut again! I go back to Africa to open a path for commerce and Christianity. Do you carry on the work which I have begun? I leave it with you! Thus, an explorer now LMS missionary employee

Livingstone championed the establishment of an Anglo-Catholic mission in 1858 (Hughes, 1889:84).

The first Christians to arrive in Malawi followed the footprints of David Livingstone, a missionary and explorer. Livingstone was born on 19th March in 1813 in Blantyre in Scotland (Blaikie, 1880:241). Livingstone trained as a medical doctor at Glasgow University and then worked for the London Missionary Society (Lamba,1982:74). Livingstone, perhaps more than any other man as Hastings Kamuzu Banda, would shape the future environmental course of events in Malawi (cf. Sindima, 2002). When Livingstone first arrived in Malawi was convinced that the only way to combat slavery was by opening Africa to Christianity, commerce, and colonization (Monk, 1860:165). Livingstone motivated the first missionaries by sharing the beautiful environmental outlook of Nyasaland, fertility soil, wild
game such as elephants, antelopes, and many other animals (cf. Horace Waller, 1874; Ross, A. 2005). This implies that Livingstone possibly had the knowledge of degradation following the industrial revolution and enlightenment back home, therefore motivating homeland fellows for new areas of opportunities for industrialization. Thus, Livingstone called on the universities in Britain and led the Universities Mission to Central Africa (UMCA) to Magomero in 1859 (see Schapera, 1961:302; Mbaya, 2014).

The UMCA was initially called the Oxford and Cambridge Mission to Central Africa. Later, the University of Durham and Dublin was joined and changed to the (UMCA) Universities Mission to Central Africa in 1860 (Sykes & Booty, 1988:435). As it is seen, this was a highly educated team of missionaries who were possibly already aware of the consequences of industrial revulsion on the environment by the 1860s back home. The UMCA was set up to respond to Livingstone’s appeal to bring Christianity, civilization, and commerce to central Africa to stop the slave trade and save the indigenous from the overwhelming primitive lifestyle in the area (cf. Sykes & Booty, 1988). Like in Islam, traditional environmental wisdom and care were referred to as primitive lifestyles replaced by European standards and values.

Livingstone’s report is considered overstated by Muslim scholars. They contend that Malawians were not as primitive as described in the statement. Islamic education had already been underway in several trade centres in the south, centre, and northern part of the country (Bone, 1998). This already presents conflicting ideas regarding progress, development, and civilization between foreign missionaries and indigenous Malawians. Thus, the church that would come to central Africa, particularly Malawi, arose from a territorial power expanding Christianity and the growing institutionalism coupled with nationalism and the ineffective and inefficiency ambitions of the unifying role of the Western Empire109 (Sykes, & Booty, 1988:5).

Sykes and Booty, therefore, assert that, as elsewhere, in the Western Empire, particularly Britain, the royal and priestly authorities had often crushed, and strains had appeared periodically between the ideals of a united Western Christendom and that of the English kingdom. However, with such a socio-economic and religious conflicting background, the UMCA established a mission station at Magomero but was shortly characterized by various health, agricultural, public relations, and administrative challenges (Goodwin, 1865:349).

109 It was a Christian faith that was influenced by the medieval ideals of Christianity most effectively symbolized by the papal office politically and religiously united (1988:5). It intended to develop a Christian world that would be governed by dual hierarchies of civil and ecclesiastical government influenced by the Greco-Roman dualistic philosophies of Christendom reflecting eschatological God’s kingdom (cf. Sykes & Booty, 1988:5). It is not surprising therefore that when conflict started at the mission station with the local Mang’anja chiefs and the slave raiders, the missionaries immediately appealed for a protectorate from the British government.
Mackenzie fell ill and died in 1861 and was succeeded in 1863 by Bishop Tozer (Sykes & Booty, 1988:435). Tozer moved the mission to a slave trade centre in Zanzibar (Andover Review Vol. 1, 1884:394). Many years later, the UMCA—Edward Steve and William Percival Johnson returned to work at Likoma in Malawi (1988:435). At Likoma, the mission continued as an agent of civilization, industrialization, and institution of power, authority, and domination. The missionaries ruled over the natives and their traditional values and beliefs (see Mbaya, 2004). This was the case with the subsequent western-oriented missionaries to Malawi see details in 3.7.1. From Likoma, the Anglican church spread as an institution of supremacy loyal to the Crown of Britain through the colonial office in Zomba.

3.6 Colonialism and environment in Malawi

3.6.1 Colonial land tenure and policy

The land is a resource on its own, and it is the home for other valuable resources which attract special interests for ownership (see Duffield & Hewitt, 2013:176). Land struggle in contemporary Africa has a long and contested history, and land rights have been the source of many disputes and the instigator of violence and clashes. The land has been a popular subject on the agenda of those wishing to access or enhance political power” (Report on Nyasaland Protectorate, 1956:30; Linden – 1974:1; Maxon, 1989:78). Today, “the history of land ownership denotes power, authority, social, political, and economic processes” in Malawi, in Africa and on the entire planet Earth (Liversage, 1945:37).

However, power, authority, and political influence on land in “pre-colonial Africa were exercised through the ability to control people rather than land because the land was abundant, whereas population was scarce and thinly dispersed” (Report on Nyasaland Protectorate-Colonial - Issue 281, 1952:41). Land ownership is about rights or “tenure to occupy a homestead, to use the land for growing annual and perennial crops, to make permanent improvements, to bury the dead, and to have access for gathering fuelwood, poles, wild fruit, thatching grass, and various raw materials” (Hannay, 1953:50). On political levels means the rights to transact, give, mortgage, lease, rent, and bequeath areas for exclusive use (cf. Report on Nyasaland Protectorate, 1962:59). In both circumstances, land tenure means the “rights to exclude others from the right and to enforce legal and administrative provisions on a portion of the land to protect it from others” (cf. Schoffeleers, 1992:311).

Malawi's land tenure policies are misguided and deeply rooted in Malawi’s colonial and postcolonial history (cf. Mulwafu, 2000:44). Land appropriation and treaties were made in favour of the colonialists (Pachai, 1973:100). Since the beginning of British rule in 1891, colonial “Nyasaland” pursued an estate-led pattern of economic development (The Rural Africana Report, 1967:34). After
independence in 1964, this pattern was intensified under the thirty-year postcolonial regime and administration of Hastings Kamuzu Banda (see Konczacki et al., 1990:106; Jere, 2006:7).

The estate-led “economic strategy accounts, in large measure, for the country’s history of severe and chronic poverty and land misappropriation to the disadvantage of the natives” (cf. Walker, 2004). Walker states that “many of the early European estate owners had been granted vast areas of land and cultivated only tiny portions of their holdings ‘as little as 1-2 percent’” (cf. Walker 2004). This imbalance in the acquisition of land largely explains the root of environmental degradation and defines the relationship between Europeans and Malawians throughout the colonial period.

3.6.2 The tobacco estate economy and environmental degradation

The precolonial and independent Nyasaland led an economy highly dependent on tobacco farming (Nyasaland Department of Agricultural Report, 1962:7; Morris, 2016:146). Tobacco processing and curing used a lot of wood. Thus, “colonial, and postcolonial governments in Malawi displayed an abiding fear of fuelwood shortages and remained fixated on compelling small farmers to plant trees for fuelwood in the early 1980s” (see Walker 2004:5). Walker further asserts that only a few farmers were willing to plant trees for firewood alone. The World Bank resolved to support the wood energy project that began in 1986 specifically promoted growing multi-purpose tree varieties (Deren, 1991:317). However, in practice, the government encouraged the fast-growing tree—blue gum (Eucalyptus saligna). Many estate owners planted giant blue gums for use in industrial tobacco farming. Towards the millennium, Malawians discovered that blue gums grew faster because they used a lot of water and had turned many wet areas dry (cf. Marcar, 1995:8). The project was abandoned when it had already contributed to severe environmental challenges.

3.6.3 Thangata and tenant system

Thangata is a land tenure system where White farmers, through treaties made with traditional leaders or government, possessed huge hectarages of land (see Liversage,1945:37). The colonial Land Act gave Europeans powers to permanently occupy vast arable lands areas for grazing and permanent settlement (Shillington, 2013:910). The indigenous inhabitants of these lands became tenants to the foreign (new owners) landlords. The tenants paid in labour or a portion of their yields to use the land (which formerly belonged to them) for their crops and dwelling hats. The White’s social prestige, economic and political power depended mainly on the possession of land for the tenancy system (Liversage,1945:37). Estate owners used their political influence to lobby the government to stimulate the flow of wage labour through taxation (Shillington, 2013:910). The Malawian thus had no land and had to work in colonists’ farms for a wage or as a tenant and paid tax.
Therefore, the Malawians had to continuously switch from shifting cultivation to the same piece of land, resulting in leaching of soil fertility and soil erosion. Therefore, prone to seeking settlement in the leased European farms land as tenants (Thangata). Thangata created the feudal land tenure system with advantages to European farmers. The natives and their families had to settle on the colonist farm for labor, cash, or crop produces (cf. Arrighi, 1967; Moyana, 1975).

3.7 The missionary, colonist, and environmental crisis

Christianity is a let comer to Malawi. By the time the missionaries arrived in Malawi, Islamic education and religion had already rooted in the life of some Malawians among the Chewa, Yao, and Tumbukas (Bone, 1998). However, Christian missionaries viewed Islam as a threat and demanded that Muslim children convert first before receiving Western education (McCracken, 2012:100). The conflict between the two foreign religions (Islam and Christianity) was also based on political ambitions and the adherents' commitment to sending the government home. Their interest in gold, ivory, hides, and other precious materials led to trade and economic monopoly and exploitation of natural resources (Ebony Magazine, 1976:148; Spencer, 1994:124).

The Portuguese strongly assumed King Solomon got his supplies of gold from central East Africa (Smith, 1985:83; Johnston, 1898:541; Gluckman, 1959:304). The Portuguese arrived before the British and claimed land ownership on the East coast of Africa—Portuguese East Africa, now Mozambique. Thus, through Vasco da Gama in 1498 and 1505, Portugal established its first settlement in Mozambique (see Edmunds, 2007:185). Gaspa Bucarro claims were the first European to visit and write about Nyasaland in 1616 (see Pachai, 1973). The Portuguese trader Candido José da Costa Cardoso also visited the lake in 1846.

3.7.1 History of mainline/mainstream Christianity and environmental crisis in Malawi

According to Pachai, David Livingstone discovered the lake for the British in 1859 and asked the Yao, and he named it Lake Nyasa (nyasa is the Yao name for lake). Livingstone’s discovery of Nyasaland led to the settlement of the first missionaries (UMCA) in 1861. In 1885, after the mission had moved to Zanzibar in 1863, Likoma Island became ideal and central for the UMCA evangelization of Nyasaland mainland, Zanzibar and Tanganyika, and Mozambique (see Mbaya, 2004).

3.7.2 Anglican Diocese of Likoma

As briefly stated earlier on, the Anglican Church in Malawi grew out of the work of the English missionaries from the University Mission to Central Africa (UMCA) at Magomero between Zomba and Chiradzulo in Southern Malawi in 1861 (Mbaya, 2014). Following the loss of many missionaries
due to poor living conditions and malaria at Magomero, the mission moved to Zanzibar in Tanzania between 1861 and 1862. The mission returned to Nyasaland, and this time worked on Likoma Island started after leaving the Island of Zanzibar in 1885.

The missionaries on Likoma Island in 1885 brought about changes in the island's life in many ways. The missionaries instituted a new socio-economic, religious, and political life for the local population (Diocesan Achieves at Malosa). European buildings constructed using red bricks such as St. Peters Cathedral, St. Andrews Theological College, St. Michaels Teachers College, and the Likoma medical centre all changed the outlook and environmental prospects of Likoma and the surrounding area. The missionaries had to deal with traditional African views, beliefs, and practices in many ways, especially in culture, tradition, religion, and politics. However, the missionary at Likoma (institutionalized) became the centre of European power and authority because the missionaries on the island obeyed and executed the government regulations from Zomba and church orders of the UMCA office in London. Following politics, socio-economic issues, and nationalism, the diocese as an institution of power, development, and progress moved to Mpondas and later to Malosa as the Diocese of Nyasaland.

3.7.3 Anglican Diocese of Nyasaland later Diocese of Malawi
Bishop Gerard Trower, in 1908, successfully convinced the Archbishop of Canterbury for a change in his See’s name from Likoma to Nyasaland Diocese. Frank Oswald Thorne is thus famous for several controversial changes from 1936 to 1961. Donald Seymour Arden CBE (Citizen of the British Empire) ruled from 1961 to 1971 as bishop of Nyasaland. At Malawi’s independence in 1964, Arden became the first bishop of the Diocese of Malawi and the last UMCA missionary (UMCA) bishop in Central African. Arden fostered and strived to localize progress and development in European terms until retirement. Although Arden planted many fruit trees and preserved the natural environment around the mission, there is no record of such being part of the mission environmental care interventions.

When the Diocese of Malawi split in 1971, Arden became bishop of Southern Malawi and Josiah Mtekateka the first indigenous and Bishop of Lake Malawi (Tengatenga, 2010). In that year, Arden became Archbishop of the Church of the Province of Central Africa and held both positions until his retirement in 1980 (Mbaya, 2014). In his retirement, Arden influenced many organizations, including MACS (Malawi Association of Christian Support), to form the Dioceses of Northern Malawi and Upper-Shire. Arden and all Nyasaland bishops are remembered for pursuing western industrial

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111 http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/4420/Mbaya.pdf?sequence
112 http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/4420/Mbaya.pdf?sequence
development and progress and their efforts to recreate African leadership alongside western ideology and thought system.

3.7.4 Diocese of Southern Malawi

At the division of the Diocese of Southern Malawi (DSM) in 2002, Bishop James Tengatenga decided to head the South’s most diocese. Its office headquarters is in Limbe, and the bishop lived in a rented house until the diocesan house was completed in 2003 (cf. Tengatenga, 2010:16-19). Bishop James had served the diocese until 2013 when he resigned. Bishop Alinafe Kalemba succeeded Tengatenga as the diocese's current bishop from 2013. Thus, the former single archdeaconry (Blantyre Archdeaconry) split into five archdeaconries: Blantyre, Chikwawa, Chiradzulu, Mulanje, Nsanje, Phalombe, and Thyolo. The Diocesan Headquarters are still in Limbe, a fast-growing town on the outskirts of Blantyre.

Within the parameters, goals, and traditions of the Anglican Worldwide Communion, and the entire Anglican community in Malawi, the DSM seeks to be a leading church that proclaims the Gospel of Christ in word, deed, and service. Therefore, the DSM intends to work and advocate for justice, peace, equality, integrity, and human dignity. Like all other dioceses under the ACM, the Diocese of Southern Malawi’s development goals are thus, modeled in line with the goals of civilization, industrial revolution, all aimed at exploiting in full the Earth’s natural resources for the benefit of people (cf. Dashmishra, 2011:66).

Realizing the challenge of environmental crisis, the DSM has introduced the cement block project as an income-generating project through the youth department. The project discourages red brick production, a legacy of colonial and missionary development and progress. The red brick project uses enormous wood fuel—The Barefoot Architect (cf. Lengen, 2008 Beckerman,1995:13). However, cement blocks are not without environmental consequences. The production process and transportation of cement pockets and blocks from where they are manufactured have a severe carbon footprint on the environment (Nazari & Sanjayan, 2016:164).

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113 The division was due to the growing workload in a single vast diocese under one pastoral leader. Two proposals were made to divide the diocese and elect a suffragan bishop. Thus, the old northern part would concentrate on responding to Islam and growing the church among the Yaos and a few Lhomwe in the eastern part (Tengatenga, 2010). The diocese would also see to the evangelism of a few Nyanja or Chewa in Mwanza and Nichewu parts of diocese. While the Southern, the Diocese of southern Malawi which, became a new diocese with and old name was entrusted with evangelizing the Lhomwe belt, the Mang’anja and Sena in the Lower Shire.


Regarding environmental preservation, the diocese launched the tree planting season on Saturday, 18 January 2020. Rev Patrick Mapundula urged participants to take care of God’s creation (Gen. 1) which God deemed suitable, and people should maintain the creation’s goodness for the people’s sustainable livelihood. At the launch, the diocesan environmental officer, Rev Canon Raphael Mponda, appealed to the participants to look after the trees they planted because growing trees grow the people. Here the emphasis is on the importance of carbon dioxide and oxygen in the process of gas interchange between flora and fauna and the claim that the environmental crisis follows human activities and relationship with the environment (see Chapter 2 pp.44;58).

However, the Diocese of Southern Malawi still promotes the European institutional ethos of progress and development by providing health care (medicine), education, food security, and socio-economic empowerment to women and the youth. Thus, the diocese runs six primary schools, one secondary school, has one health center still under construction, and offers various community intervention programs as part of its mandate to provide pastoral and social services to society in Southern Malawi. All these interventions are agents of environmental degradation and, therefore, the crisis in one way or the other.

3.7.5 Diocese of Lake Malawi

The Anglican Diocese of Lake Malawi (ADLM) was calved out of the former nationwide diocese of Malawi in 1971 (Tenatenga, 2006). Before the official division, this part of the diocese had been served by suffragan Bishop Josiah Mtekateka from 1965 (Tengatenga, 2006). Bishop Nathaniel Peter Nyanja was consecrated as the first diocesan bishop in 1978. Bishop Francis Frank Kaulanda currently serves the See consecrated in 2010. In fostering progress and development, the diocese has constructed (53) congregations and has several diocesan institutions that work under thematic areas of health, education, and social services. There are two hospitals in the diocese, namely, St. Anne’s and St. Andrew’s hospitals, and five health clinics.

The diocese has one hundred (100) primary schools with a total enrolment of (61,778) pupils (Diocesan Secretary Rev. Emmanuel Makalande Interview 6th October 2019). There are four secondary schools and a higher education institution upgraded as the only Anglican University in Malawi with St. Anne’s Hospital as a proposed constituent Nursing College. The diocese has six orphanage centres and a lay training centre. While the diocese contributes to national development,

120 http://www.anglicandioceseoflakemalawi.org/about/
almost all its infrastructure is constructed using red kiln burnt bricks, and the diocese has participated in environmental degradation.

The Diocese of Lake Malawi also works with the community in interventional programs. These other “intervention” programs at the church levels include mitigating some of the challenges. The diocese has adopted some Permaculture principles and assists farmers in raising hybrid goats, developing demonstration gardens, engaging in reforestation, and agroforestry. Examining the programs and services rendered closely, Lake Malawi Diocese is aware of the environmental crisis church and society caused. The diocese is also possibly mindful of the importance of multidisciplinary, multisectoral, and ecumenism to address the challenges. Like every diocese in the ACM, Lake Malawi Diocese makes and implements independent programs. The autonomy of dioceses poses challenges for ecumenism and a cohesive missional theological church response to contextual issues.

3.7.6 Diocese of Northern Malawi

The Diocese of Northern Malawi (DNM) was erected from the Diocese of Lake Malawi in 1995, enhanced mainly by the ethnic pride of the Likoma Islanders (see Mbaya, 2008). Soon after the division, the DNM embarked on church planting and now covers all the six districts in the Northern region of Malawi. The diocese has (32) church congregations, five of which are in the Likoma and Chizumulu Islands. At the same time, Usisya, a semi-island parish, is almost engulfed by mountains, and it is difficult to reach, especially during the rainy season. Its first bishop, Jackson Cunningham Biggers, retired in 2000 (Mbaya, 2008). Fanuel Emmanuel Magangani consecrated in November 2010 is the current bishop (Tengatenga, 2010). This is the only Anglican diocese in Malawi with a convent for nuns. Influenced by the colonial legacy on civilization and development to the alleged “animistic Africans,” the diocese fights ignorance, disease, poverty, and hunger through its various institutions.

The Diocese of Northern Malawi participates in several partnerships with other stakeholders and the government to foster education in its society, including church elders and clergy training. The diocese delivers health services through its hospitals and health centres and embarked on several community programs such as water and sanitation, ensuring a successful fight against the spread of HIV through Prevention, Treatment, Care, and Support. The DNM had revived the printing press once at Likoma before taking the former to Zomba Government Press (Visit the new Press House 18th October 2019). Given the episcopal bishop’s authority and power in the Anglican ecclesiology, Bishop Magangani is developing the diocese of Northern Malawi through independent institutions and

121 http://www.anglicandioceseoflakemalawi.org/about/
123 http://www.nmalawianglican.org/ministry/index.html
projects. Diocese of Northern Malawi offers these interventional responses to contextual issues with complete autonomy.

### 3.7.7 Diocese of Upper Shire

It is the first Anglican diocese in Malawi with a new name; all the dioceses in Malawi are curves out of it. The diocese was named Upper Shire in 2002, but the study tells its history since the retirement of the last UMCA mission bishop, Donald Seymour Arden, who arrived in Malawi in 1961 (Tengatenga, 2010:6). Arden and all his successors in Dioceses, Upper Shire, continued the missionaries’ legacy by aligning development goals alongside concepts and theories of European capitalism, emphasizing enlightenment, industrialization, and civilization to the poor. The primary purpose is to eradicate poverty, educate illiterate people, administer European medicine, and better farm and rearing animals (Malosa Bishop’s House Development Paper).

Therefore, to this end, the Diocese of Upper Shire pursued progress and development through agriculture, health, education, and tertiary education. The diocese has two hospitals and (18) health centres, two national secondary schools, three conventional secondary schools, (13) day secondary schools, (36) total primary schools, a nursing college, a shared theological seminary, and an ecumenical lay training centre (*Diocese Development Bord 2002 Strategic Plan Paper*, accessed on 21st October 2019). Like all other dioceses, Upper Shire is autonomous, has institutional power and authority, and is only answerable to its diocesan synod. Nevertheless, the diocesan bishop has avoided the Synod due to several administrative and financial challenges.

### 3.8 The Scottish missions in Malawi

Motivated by David Livingstone’s appeal for a mission, trade, and civilization in Central Africa, the Free Church of Scotland formed the Livingstonia mission. The mission shortly relocated to yet a naturally environmentally rich place in Livingstonia in the northern part of Malawi. The mission went ahead of its splinter sister to establish its mission station at Cape Maclear in Mangochi Nyasaland, now Malawi (cf. British Library-Archives, Historical summary by Hastings Zidana, 2014). Cape Maclear until now is endowed with the remnant natural environment protected by national parks and game reserves.

#### 3.8.1 The Livingstonia Mission

Like many contributors to church history in Malawi, McCracken, (2000) emphasizes the importance and influence of missionary explorer Livingstone, whose work is widely recognized as the causal influencer of the advent of Christianity, the introduction of commerce, civilization, and the abolition of the slave trade in Malawi (2000:303). Named after the explorer, Livingstonia mission was formed
by the Free Church of Scotland (FCS) in 1875 (see Tanser, 1958:101). In 1875 a mission station was established towards the southern end of Lake Malawi at Cape Maclear in Nyasaland (now Malawi). The mission clue was led by Lt. Edward Young and a young doctor named Robert Laws (an inland leader). Among the entire missionary entourage were six other Europeans and four ex-slave members (Laws, 1894:13).

Following unfavourable conditions, the mission moved to Bandawe and later to Mlowe where Laws took over from Lt. Edward Young in 1878 for the next five decades (Nyasaland Journal Vol., 13-15, 1960:23.) The Livingstonia mission station at Mlowe was set up on a beautiful site overlooking the lake and the green-covered mountains around the station and across Tanzania (Chancellor College Papers by Elmslie 1972:10). At Mlowe, the environment was good, and there were forests for wood and a good supply of water.

Mlowe gradually developed into a small town with a church, hospital, post office, school, and workshops (McCraken 2008: 345). Mlowe's mission was naturally beautiful, healthier and it provided opportunities for farming and supply of timber (Nyasaland Dept. of Agriculture Report, 1924:5). Thus, Laws quickly designed and built a road to link to the lake. Livingstonia's mission is remarkable of its distinctive red-brick buildings (Church Quarterly Review Vol. 61, 1906:298). Like all other missionary stations, the Livingstonia mission station is known for its European-based academic contribution (Thompson, 1995:223; Fiedler, 2006:4).

The Church and Society, an arm of the church, have continued to lead in democratization. The local leadership that took over in 1958 continued with the vision of the explorers and missionaries on offering a Christianizing civilization, commerce, industrial enlightenment to the African, influenced by Eurocentric ambitions for colonialism and capitalism (see Thompson, 1995:223; Mlenga, 2012). Thus, the church has been providing education, agriculture, and health, all aimed at improving society's livelihoods and envisaging a society of self-reliant communities. The church acknowledges the impact of the European Development plan as the main factor of the environmental degradation in Malawi. The church has involved affirmative intervention through projects and programs that include afforestation (Malawi News Agency ‘MANA’ of 23rd January 2019).

3.8.2 The Blantyre Mission

Blantyre's mission of the Church of Scotland was established in 1876 by Henry Henderson (Macdonald, 1975:86). Henderson was guided by Tom Bokwito, an Anglican convert (see Tengatenga,
2010), who accompanied him and arrived at chief Kapeni’s area. Kapeni permitted missionaries to start their work and gave Nyambadwe hill between Ndirande and Soche Mountain the site for the mission. They opened the Blantyre mission on 23rd October 1876 (Pachai, 1972:190). The place seemed to be suitable because the population was numerous and friendly. Like their sister church, the FCS, Blantyre Mission was founded after Livingstone’s appeal to end slavery and promote legitimate trade and Christianity in Central Africa (cf. Ross, 1996). Henderson returned to England for various reasons, and his cousin of Dr. Stewart of Livingstone mission, and Mr. Stewart, a civil engineer, took over from Henderson in 1877 (Cole-King, 1973:193; Phiri, D.D., 2004:140). Stewart is known for several developments he led, including laying the foundations of the church, garden, waterways, and building the road from Blantyre to Lower Shire at Katunga and Matope in the Upper Shire (The Missionary Herald Vol. 75, 1879:448).

In 1878, missionary leadership was controversial (known for harsher punishment to freed slaves) Duff McDonald until 1881 (Africa-Quarterly Journal Issue No. 1, 1880:31; Lamba, 1975:43; Oceana Publications, Vol.16-17, 1971:15). McDonald championed the establishment of mission stations in Zomba and Domasi (Ross, 1996). However, his relationship with the people made him notorious and replaced David Clement Scott (see Hastings Matemba, 2011). David Clement Scott’s ambition to get the church to the Africans is remarkable. Thus, several African leaders were trained, including Harry Matecheta, who ordained a deacon in 1904 and minister in 1911 (Ross, 1996). Blantyre’s mission made progress under Scot and Heatherwick because of its infrastructure growth, which changed the faces of “bush places” in many rural areas into towns.127

The Church and Society, an arm responsible for social, political, and economic development, aims to reduce environmental degradation, deforestation, and the depleting of Mulanje Cedar and the famous miombo forests in the two regions. It has over 800 congregations spread into many presbyteries across Malawi’s Southern and Eastern region and has many manses, schools, health institutions, and industrial work-related infrastructures. Most of its structures are constructed with red bricks baked by firewood. The Mission has contributed to stewardship, evangelism, education, agriculture, and medicine. By implication, as church cleared bushes into rural growth centres, it also contributed to environmental degradation (cf. Page et al., 1991:263).

3.8.3 Nkhoma Synod


2007:48). Before, there had been connections between Scotland and the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa through the Murray family, just like John Knox and John Calvin (the fathers of reformed tradition) had been students together (cf. Hall, 2005:157).

Thus, when the Free Church of Scotland occupied the northern part of Nyasaland in 1875, the Church of Scotland occupied the South. Thus, the Central region of Nyasaland was not explored by missionary work. Therefore, the two Scottish missionaries in Nyasaland requested that the Dutch Reformed in Cape Town come to Nyasaland and start missionary work in the Central region (Nyasaland Education Department, 1930:4; Pachai 1972:145; Latourette, 1958:476). Thus, Rev. A.C. Murray and T.C.B. Vlok arrived in Nyasaland and established a mission station in the Chewa land of Chief Chiwere in Dowa District on 28th November 1889.

The missionaries put their tent near a river called Katawa (Murray, 1897:154). The river was called Katawa because there were a lot of birds called Katawa nesting and sheltering their young ones in the M’bawa trees in the area. They later move to Kaso Hill, a beautiful place on the western part of Mvera (Lantern Vol. 17, 1967:93; Du Plessis, 1930:307). Over time, Vlok and Murray decided that Kaso hill was a suitable site for translating the Holy Bible from Hebrew and Greek languages into Chichewa. It is asserted that the mission is called Mvera from a folk story that women in the area found the soil very suitable for pottery (Pretorius, 1957; Lamba, 1984). In the Chichewa language, ‘Dothi Lomvera,’ literally means (listening soil) soil good for pottery, later concerning the Chewa people as good listeners, listened to the Word of God as ‘Anthu Omvera’ (see Online PDF Kongwe Strategic Plan 2013:5).

The local names that the Dutch Reformed missionaries found in Nyasaland had deep meanings (cf. Chuks-orji, & Baird, 1972). Thus, Kaso in Chichewa simply means extremely attractive. Kaso hills in the 1880s had an incredibly realistic, greener outlook that attracted birds, other wildlife, and tourists (see Pachai, 1972). The listening spirit of the people compared to dothi lomvera expresses deep traditional values the local population attached to their land or Earth (Barlee, 1861:2). Anything that listens is alive and has characteristics like those of living beings. Equating dothi/soil/Earth to a listening person qualifies why soil/Earth is compared to a woman—Mother Earth in most African societies (cf. Chambers Journal, Vol. 60, 1883:123). Among most Bantu communities, women are described and held highly as good listeners or can quickly become good listers (cf. Maxey & O’Connor, 2008:111).

Without andro-centric abuse of this quality (women as good listers), women like good soil receive the seed in their womb, grow, and nurture it to its accurate outlook that it deserves (see Belter, 2009:52;
The cultivation of m’bawa and natural greenery around Kaso Mvera and Katawa speak more of Dothi Lomvera as fertile soil where anything put in it is likely to be nourished in healthy and grow into what it is expected. It is not surprising that the Dutch Reformed Church missionaries concluded that people associated with Dothi Lomvera are listening to people ‘anthu omvera.’ This means that the people in the area adhered to the demands of their environment, and as a result, they were as healthy as their land (environment). This equally applies to the locals’ readiness to receive the Word of God and natural resources care (see Kongwe Strategic Plan 2013:5).

However, missionaries’ presence and engagement in civilizing the locals changed the outlook of Mvera and all other earlier and subsequent mission stations over the years. The missionaries introduced fair trade, erected modern schools, hospitals, houses, opened vast mono-crop fields, and constructed roads. The magnificent architectural work of the missionaries stands testifying for the quiet environment destroyer (the red bricks) in all the earlier and new mission stations in the synod. Thus, despite its rich natural knowledge and heritage, in pursuit of European progress and development, the areas around Nkhoma Synod are faced with environmental degradation. However, among many interventions of the Church and Society, the church’s development arm addresses the challenge of ecological crisis mainly through synod-led afforestation programs. Nevertheless, like all other members of the CCAP, Nkhoma Synod provides services in its hospital and ten health centres, a Nursing College, secondary and primary schools, Theological education, Lay training, social services in orphan care, and disaster management.

3.9 The Amalgamation of the Reformed Churches in Malawi (CCAP)

In the light of a missional theological response, amalgamation would mean advancement towards multisectoral and multidimensional strength. But the amalgamation, in the case of the CCAP, portrays the institutional and denominational power and authority. This is an antithesis to the aspects of a missional theological response. However, the amalgamation formed what is the term the Church of Central African Presbyterian (CCAP) developed following the union of five Synods, namely, Zambia, Harare, Livingstonia, Nkhoma, and Blantyre Synods (Pauw, 1980; Ross, A C., 2018:65). The Free Church of Scotland arrived in Mangochi in 1875 and later settled in Mzimba. The Church of Scotland came in 1876 and established its headquarters in Blantyre. The Cape Town Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa started a mission station at Mvera and later moved to Nkhoma. These three denominations decided to form the CCAP (cf. Phiri, 2007:49). Initiatives to join efforts to develop the Reformed Church Doctrine on work and worship began in 1911 between Livingstonia and Blantyre Synods (Matemba, 2011). But the union did not start until September 1924, when the two synods had ordained twenty-eight African ministers and had many African Church Elders and Deacons.
Two years later, the Dutch Reformed Church—Nkhoma Synod joined the union of the CCAP.

The amalgamation now known as the CCAP General Assembly comprises five synods: Livingstonia, Blantyre, Nkhoma Zambia, and Harare. The CCAP General Assembly’s headquarters is in Lilongwe in Malawi, and it is led by the Moderator assisted by the vice Moderator. The Assembly has a full-time Secretary General with executive powers in its office structure. Two deputy Secretary Generals are assigned to assist the incumbent Secretary-General. The Deputy Secretary-General is responsible for the development and education, administration, relief and development, health, communication, and advocacy. (See the Constitution of the CCAP General Assembly, 2002:1-11; The Constitution of the CCAP 1956 and 1958:4-5).

The amalgamation (General Assembly of the CCAP in Malawi) faces hierarchical structures tensions owed from the technical influences of European church and civil government systems. The amalgamation fostered development and progress from a western civilization perspective. Today, the amalgamation faces regional and identity challenges due to its conflict background. Zgambo (2018) suggests that the conflicting background of the Presbyterian or Reformed churches in Scotland, Germany, and Holland continued to manifest in their various mission fields abroad. Matemba (2011) observes that the ‘scandal of the CCAP disunity’ as a family is very painful when perceived from the church’s social [missional theological] task in the community.

It is likely that where people fight for autonomy, a missional theological response to contextual issues is affected and internal responses. It is evident in the development desk of each of the synods that no programs or projects related to community response to environmental crisis are undertaken or discussed from the General Synod perspective. Matemba asserts that the discord in the General Synod exists concurrently with extreme rising levels of youth unemployment, poverty, inequality, nepotism, tribalism, and varied effects of the HIV & AIDS pandemic to which the church is expected to respond.

The challenges of poverty, inequality, hunger, and disease raised by Matemba are crucial in discussing environmental degradation. Malawi’s environmental degradation is highly perpetrated by poverty and unemployment (NEAP 2010). Above all, hunger, corruption, political group affiliations, abuse, violence against women and children, relatives seizing the deceased property increasingly disturb societies the amalgamation would have assisted. Besides challenges associated with the lack of koinonia in the CCAP General Synod, it is difficult to trace any objectives or office ranks assigned or intended to specifically address the challenge of environmental crisis in its levels and the ranks of either synod in Malawi, Zimbabwe, or Zambia.
3.10 The Roman Catholic missions in Malawi

The Roman Catholic (RC) Church traces its origins from the social upheaval that gripped Western Europe and the church during the late 18th and 19th centuries (The Catholic Almanac, 1977:431; Mbaya, 1997). In the wake of the RC revival in the 19th century, the White Fathers, under the leadership of a French cardinal Charles Martial Lavigerie (White Fathers), arrived at Mponda in Mangochi in 1889 (see Garvey 1994:28). The second attempt of the RC was led by Pierre Bourget of the Montfort Fathers, who arrived at Nzama on the 25th of July 1901 (cf. Amanze, 2002:193; Chakanza & Ross, 1998:124).

In all the two attempts, the need to grow an authoritative, aggressive, yet triumphant, and the centrally organized church is poised to conquer the common enemy (Evil) in the world (The Sphere, 1906:248). Secondly, to establish a doctrinally entrenched and authoritative, aggressive church that would conquer the enemy (the Protestants) in the world (see McMahon, 2002:176). White Fathers returned to Nyasaland on the 13th of September 1902 and settled Mua (Anderson, 1969:11). The White Fathers thus established mission stations at Likuni, Kachebere, and Nguludi, which they handed over to the Montfort Missionaries in 1904. These RC initial objectives ignited conflicts, weakened relationships, and compelled the Blantyre Church of Scotland to force Catholics down to Chikwawa and other areas (cf. Phiri KM., 2004:134; Pachai, 1972). This marked the start of ecumenical, koinonia, and stewardship challenges between RC and the so-called Protestants in their new missionary ground—Malawi (cf. Journal of Ecclesiastical History Vol. 52, 2001:171).

3.10.1 The Diocese of Blantyre

The Archdiocese of Blantyre is one of the eight dioceses in Malawi under the Most Reverend Thomas Luke Msusa, born on 2nd February 1962 at Iba Village, Mangochi District. The Archdiocese was originally the Nyasa Vicariate established in 1897 (Pachai, 1972; The Catholic Directory of Southern Africa, 1966:287). Later in 1903, the whole Southern Region and Ntcheu District formed the Shire Prefecture Apostolic and became a Vicariate Apostolic on 14th April 1908 (see Moir, 1991:131). In 1952 the Shire Vicariate was divided; the Northern part became the Vicariate of Zomba, whereas the southern part became the Vicariate of Blantyre. It was promoted to the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Blantyre in 1959 (Lamport, 2018:478; Kalinga, 2012:450). The suffragan dioceses under this metropolitan See are Mangochi, Zomba, and Chikwawa. It covers seven highly populated Phalombe,
Mulanje, Thyolo, Chiradzulu, Blantyre, Mwanza, and Neno districts. There are now 41 Parishes divided into eight deaneries.¹³²

In exercising its role in the mission, especially as an agent for development and progress, the Archdiocese of Blantyre has well-established and organized development commissions.¹³³ One such arm of the church is the Catholic Commission for Peace and Justice (CCJP), established in 1995 as a faith-based NGO. Its main aim is to promote the “common good” (Moni Magazine Issue 436-447, 2001:8). The CCJP seeks to level the playing field in political, economic, and social progress and develop Malawian society (Moni Magazine Issue 436-447, 2001:8). The Commission fulfills its mandate by consolidating democracy, promoting human rights, and good political and economic governance through increased community participation (Moni Magazine Issue 436-447, 2001:8). Another essential organization responsible for developments in the Archdiocese is the Catholic Development Commission (CADECOM), responsible for sanitation, clean water, and ensuring equitable access and distribution of essential needs in society.

The CADECOM of Blantyre Archdiocese is working on projects to empower communities in food security, have clean water, and improve sanitation to reduce hunger and poverty among smallholder farmers in society.¹³⁴ However, farming with hybrid seed and synthetic inputs has environmental challenges, including soil fertility degradation. The hybrid seeds subject local people to lose control of their local varieties, which are often resistant to pests and disease (cf. Wells, 1983:8). Hybrid seeds can strain farmers’ financial buying capacity because hybrid seeds are made for a profit by the manufacturers. The new hybrid seeds are a challenge in adaptation and a threat to the biodiversity and ecological systems, which are critical themes in the challenge of environmental crisis (see Reddy, 1993:277).

The Archdiocese of Blantyre is committed to the provision of quality education through an Education Commission responsible for the overall management of educational matters and educational institutions.¹³⁵ The commission has set various objectives, including equipping pupils and students with appropriate skills with the hope of building a happy and better future. The archdiocese has many primary, secondary, technical schools, university colleges and provides accommodation for clergy and workers in most of its institutions.¹³⁶ A well-organized health commission (CHC) is registered as a

¹³³ http://www.archdiocesebt.mw/index.php/social-
¹³⁴ http://www.archdiocesebt.mw/index.php/social-
¹³⁶ http://www.archdiocesebt.mw/index.php/social-services
faith-based organization inspired by gospel values and the church’s social doctrine that promotes integral human development.  

The CHC manages three hospitals, seven health centres, and two training colleges for midwife-technician nurses. The presence of well-organized structures in the church’s mission indicates the commitment to the French Revolution and industrialization ideologies of the civilization of the primitive poor in their colonies in all sectors of life. The archdiocese has discovered that the use of red bricks in its construction projects and the clearing of forests, given infrastructure development and progress, has caused the environmental crisis and has embarked on afforestation.

3.10.2 Diocese of Lilongwe

The Vicariate of Nyasa was erected on 12th February 1897, covering the whole of Malawi. The name was changed to Likuni on 12th July 1951, and finally, it became Lilongwe Vicariate on 20th June 1957. The Lilongwe Vicariate was raised to the status of Diocese on 25th April 1959 (Africa Ecclesiastical Review Vol. 1-2, 1959:215). Lilongwe was made a Metropolitan Circumscription on 9th February 2011 and covered seven districts of the Central Region of Malawi: Dowa, Kasungu, Lilongwe, Mchinji, Nkhotakota, Ntchisi, and Salima. The Lilongwe Archdiocese is the mother Diocese and therefore acts as the headquarters for policy and worship in Malawi (Interview with General Secretary Rev. Henry Saindi 12th October 2019).

The Archdiocese is the hub for all dioceses in Malawi and hosts the entire secretariat for all development commissions. The Archdiocese of Lilongwe upholds the Dignity of the Human Person and Sanctity of Life as a fundamental value because the human being is God’s creation. God created humankind in God’s image (Gen. 1:27). This “inalienable dignity of every human is what is at the foundation of human rights and corresponding responsibilities” (Ike & Igboaja, 1992:35). Other rights and their corresponding responsibilities include “the right to life and the corresponding duty to respect and defend it; the right to a worthy standard of living and the corresponding duty of creating a conducive climate for social development; the right to worship God according to one’s conscience; economic rights; and political rights” (cf. Ike & Igboaja, 1992:35).

The classical definition of the principle of subsidiarity principle is found in the encyclical Quadragesimo Anno released by Pope Pius XI on the fortieth anniversary of Rerum Novarum in 1931 (see Burgess, 2006:174). Thus, the Lilongwe Archdiocese, therefore, ensures there is solidarity, the
principle of solidarity follows from the very notion of society (solidare means to fit firmly together) in its commitment to the common good (see Keys, 2006:14; Hodgson, 2004:69; Aquinas, 1949; Aristotle, 1847). The Archdiocese also ensures *Liberation and Preferential Option for the Poor*. A Preferential Option for the Poor is a commitment by individual Christians and the Christian community at every level to engage actively in a struggle to overcome the social injustices which deface our world (see Himes & Cahill, 2005:323; Gutierrez, 1988:49).

The term “Poor” is understood to refer to the people who, because of their status, suffer oppression and powerlessness (cf. Freire, 1970:56). The Archdiocese ensures that, in every economic, political, and social decision, a weighted concern must be given to the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable. The Archdiocese also seeks to promote the *Integrity of Creation and Stewardship*. That is to say that all people are created by God and are a part of the enormous creation (Priest & Burris, 2012:42). This implies that the people’s commitment to the common good requires responsible stewardship of the Earth and its resources. Thus, all people are to be respected and allowed an equitable share of the Earth's resources as co-creators in the continuing development of the Earth (cf. Atkinson & Ros, 2014:140).

The archdiocese also adheres to the principle of *love, justice, and peace*. Love and justice are crucial, especially the love of neighbour is an absolute demand for peace and facilitate human development (Ecumenist Journal, 1984:36). Action intended for justice and participation in the transformation of society is a constitutional dimension of the Christian proclamation of the Gospel. Peace is the fruit of justice. Promoting peace and creating necessary conditions for peace depends not only on an effective government but also on the commitment of the Christian obligation in the proclamation of the gospel (see Kumhera, 2017:12).

According to Rev. Henry Saindi, the Archdiocese of Lilongwe and the Secretariat is at the ‘Capitol Hill’ (government headquarters) of the RC Church in Malawi (Interview October 2019). If the church in Malawi viewed its true *missional nature* ecumenically and considered the importance of an interdisciplinary approach, the Roman Catholic principle of the *integrity of creation* and the promotion of *love, justice*, and peace would help change the environmental landscape of the crisis in Malawi. The church regrets using kiln-baked red bricks in its institutions across the country and has considered complying with *Laudato Si* (Pope Francis, 2015) to begin to rebuild the planet our home.

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3.10.3 Diocese of Mzuzu

The Prefecture Apostolic of Northern Malawi was a division of the Vicariate Apostolic of Malawi erected on 18th May 1947. The diocese then was raised to the status of North Nyasa Prefecture on 3rd March 1961. It is divided into three deaneries with four parishes in the North, eight parishes in the centre, and six parishes in the southern deanery currently under the leadership of Bishop Ryan. The main goal of Mzuzu Catholic Diocese is to be a family of God’s Kingdom transformed by the gospel of Christ.”

The church’s goal to become a family is built on the vision concerned with the proclamation of the gospel through pastoral care and social-economic development. The intention is to transform people’s lives as a family committed to being good disciples of Jesus Christ and stewards of God’s creation (cf. Rodin, 2013:93; Hightower, & DeMarco, 2008:163). The values enhancing this vision and mission for Mzuzu Diocese are related to the promotion of the “Dignity of the human person, equality and inclusiveness, transparency and accountability, love, and compassion with the preferential option for the poor, stewardship of and for God’s creation and, the dignity of work and rights of workers.”

In line with the vision and mission statements of social development and progress, the diocese wants to promote sustainable socio-economic development among individuals, families, and communities in the diocese of Mzuzu. The desire to become a family in Mzuzu Diocese, five strategic objectives are lined up as follows: To improve the efficiency and effectiveness of all commissions in the diocese, to improve sustainable livelihoods in the diocese, to promote human rights, justice, and peace, including child and women protection in the communities. The diocese serves to improve the quality of health delivery services and accessibility in the region and improve access to and quality of education at all levels in the diocese. Therefore, these objectives are carried out by the diocese's CCJP, CADECOM, Education, and Health Commissions. The diocese provides potable water through its commissions by drilling boreholes, agricultural and food security services through small-scale irrigation projects, livestock production, and household levels.

Regarding community-managed disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation, and mitigation, the diocese is engaged in environmental rehabilitation activities such as tree nursery establishment and afforestation programs (see pictures in the appendix). Thus, in Christianizing Malawians through

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146 https://www.ecmmw.org/new/dioceses/dioceose-of-mzuzu/
147 https://www.ecmmw.org/new/dioceses/dioceose-of-mzuzu/
149 https://www.ecmmw.org/new/dioceses/dioceose-of-mzuzu/
civilization, commerce, and development, the diocese has 262 school institutions. Among these are a Technical College, Nursing College, College of Health Science (training counselors and mental health professionals), five secondary schools, and many primary schools scattered across the diocese.\(^{150}\) Through the CADECOM, the diocese promotes industrial agriculture, forestry, water, and sanitation.

The Commission for Justice and Peace promotes gender equality, equal access to education, good governance, land rights for women, para-legal services for rural justice. The diocese operates (Tigawane FM Radio) and serves as a communication cartel for all parishes. The diocese is planting trees, but infrastructure development in most dioceses is still using red bricks. In agriculture, the diocese of Mzuzu is highly advanced in afforestation. However, using modern agricultural inputs, industrial farming leaches the soil and increases the decline of soil degradation and water pollution in the farming industries (see Nagle, 2008:7). Industrial agriculture thus becomes one of the most significant contributors of greenhouse emissions on land and in the atmosphere, which poses environmental challenges and crises (see Ritzer & Dean, 2014:317; Shiva, 2006:104).

3.10.4 Diocese of Chikwawa

The Diocese of Chikwawa was formerly created as a Suffragan See of the Archdiocese of Blantyre on 22\(^{nd}\) March 1965, having previously formed part of the same Archdiocese. The diocese is situated in the Southern part of Malawi, which comprises Nsanje, Chikwawa, and Blantyre, and Thyolo. The diocese's current Bishop is Peter Martin Musikuwa, appointed on 16th April 2003 and consecrated on 28th June 2003.\(^{151}\) Formerly the diocese was led by Bishop Eugen Joseph Frans Vroemen in 1965 and Bishop Felix Eugenio Mkhori from 1979 to 2001.\(^{152}\) The Chikwawa Diocese under the Social Development Directorates such as CADECOM, CCJP, Education and Health Commissions, working following the Catholic Social Teaching, especially targeting the marginalized, the excluded, and the poor households and most rural communities of the diocese (see McCarthy, 2009; Contemporary Catholic Social Teaching; 1991:143).

Through its commissions, the diocese has reached out to the community in good governance (Political), Economic and Corporate Governance: Promotion of active citizen participation; Peace Building; Conflict Management Resolution and transformation.\(^{153}\) The diocese has engaged society on Eco-justice and good governance, livelihood improvement and empowerment, disaster risk reduction and entrepreneurship, agriculture, food nutrition, food security, and community resilience.

\(^{150}\) https://www.ecmmw.org/new/dioceses/dioce-of-mzuzu/
\(^{152}\) https://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/dioce/dchkw.html
to climate change. The diocese has led in environmental and natural resources management through climate change mitigation and adaptation; soil and water conservation, promotion of renewable energy, gender and women empowerment, gender equality, women leadership, reduction of gender-based violence projects.\textsuperscript{154}

Regarding the provision of health, the diocese has fought against infectious diseases such as HIV and AIDS, provision of various primary care, and advocacy on various health issues. Regarding education, Chikwawa Diocese, in its 12 parishes, split into three deaneries, providing early childhood development, youth formation, inclusive education (special needs education), primary and secondary school education, and offers tertiary education in various colleges. In almost all its building projects, the diocese uses red bricks.

3.10.5 Diocese of Zomba

According to the Apostolic letter “\textit{Qui Divini}” of May 15, 1952, the Zomba Vicariate was entrusted to the Montfort Fathers. Rev. Lawrence P. Hardman was appointed the first vicar of the Zomba Apostolicum.\textsuperscript{155} Zomba was later established as a diocese in 1959 and officially consists of the current diocese and all the congregations of the present Mangochi diocese.\textsuperscript{156} The diocese’s vision is to strive for a Trinity-led community dedicated to Holistic Evangelism and Development for All. The diocesan vision is linked to the mission that seeks to bring about the kingdom of God in the diocese through teaching, from the values of the gospel as contained in the sacraments and social doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church, integral human development, and the promotion of a spirit of financial self-reliance.\textsuperscript{157} Zomba Catholic Diocese has the CADECOM, the CCJP, Education and Health Commissions that run social development and economic programs like all dioceses.

In the widespread expression of government officials, the diocese of Zomba supports the government in education, health, safety, and food relief, to name a few (Interview with an officer of CADECOM who sought anonymity). There are two historic National Secondary Schools, popularly known as Box 2 (Zomba Boys Catholic Secondary School) St Mary’s Girls Secondary School, many community day secondary schools and elementary schools, technical centres at Thondwe, and Namitembo, Nankhunda minor seminar and St Peters Major Seminary. The diocese is engaged in providing socio-economic services through its various commissions. The diocese, through multiple guilds, including the Catholic Women’s Organization (CWO), has been trying for many years to plant trees in their different

\textsuperscript{154} https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Chikwawa-Diocese

\textsuperscript{155} http://www.gcatholic.org/dioceses/dioceze/zomb0.htm Accesses on [28 November 2019] at Zomba.

\textsuperscript{156} http://www.gcatholic.org/dioceses/dioceze/zomb0.htm

\textsuperscript{157} http://www.zombadiocese.org/ Accesses on [28 November 2019] at Zomba.
congregations. The Vicar General for Zomba Diocese, Monsignor Vincent Chilolo, the guest of honour during the ceremony on January 19, 2019, applauded the women for the great initiative taken and appealed to all Catholics across the Diocese to participate in tree planting as one way to try to reduce the impact of climate change (Participant observer and Interviews on 19th January in Zomba).

One participant (anonymous) at the tree planting inauguration admitted that the continued use of red bricks in the diocese’s infrastructure projects was retrogressive to effort in tree planting exercise. However, the participant raised concern about the cost of cement blocks, which would be ideal for serving many trees used in kilns to bake clay bricks. However, while cement blocks would be an alternative, evidence has shown that cement blocks are also environmentally hazardous in the long term. They also encourage fossil fuel burning in many ways (see Braus & Wood, 1993:48). Nevertheless, suggesting alternatives “Barefoot Architect” covers the building in various climates, step-by-step practicalities of constructing buildings that suit local environments (Lengen, 2008:235; Cramer & Yankopolus, 2005:47).

3.10.6 Diocese of Mangochi

The Fort Johnston Apostolic prefecture was erected on 29th May 1969. The prefecture covered Fort Johnston (Mangochi) Kasupe (Machinga) District, particularly areas north of Shire River. The prefecture was entrusted to the Italian Montfort Missionaries (see Moni Magazine, Issue 279-290, 1988:14). Bishop Alessandro Assolari was the first Prefect Apostolic appointed on 18th October 1969. The Prefecture Apostolic was then erected into a diocese on 17th September 1973.

The diocese now covers parishes in Mangochi, Balaka, and Machinga Districts. The diocese is further split into five deaneries which constitute twenty-four parishes altogether. At the death of Bishop Assolari, Bishop Luciano Nervi was appointed in 2004, and Rev. Luigi Gritti served as the leader during an interregnum from 2005 to 2006. Bishop Thomas Luke Msusa was appointed and served as bishop from 2006 to 2007 when Bishop Alessandro Pagani succeeded him from 2007 to 2014. The incumbent Bishop Montfort Sitima was appointed in 2013 and installed as bishop of Mangochi Diocese on 22nd February 2014.

In addition to the spreading of Christianity, the diocese of Mangochi has attempted over the years to prepare Malawians across the diocese in the Western Europe kind of civilization, enlightenment, and education (cf. Ott, 2007:226). Through various institutions, the diocese continued to offer primary and

159 http://www.dioceseofmangochi.org/  
160 http://www.dioceseofmangochi.org/  
161 http://www.dioceseofmangochi.org/
secondary education in the three districts and has a technical college, university, a famous bookstore in Balaka, a radio and a television station in Mangochi and Balaka, and offers health services across the diocese.\textsuperscript{162}

By implication, the Maangochi Diocese and the Islamic Development Agency contributed to the deterioration of the environment to develop the area. The diocese is known for its work in areas strongly influenced by Islam (cf. Dicks, 2012:507; Chisoni, 2002:136). It is asserted that Malawi Islamic Agents towards the 1980s had successfully obtained funding from external Islamic development agents to counter-reaction to Bishop Assolari’s building of model schools and church buildings in Mangochi, Balaka, and Machinga (cf. Time Magazine, 2005:818). Both the Roman Catholic and Moslems in Mangochi built beautiful buildings with firewood-baked clay bricks, and both did or recorded very little in afforestation or programs on environmental care.

3.10.7 The Diocese of Dedza

The Holy See has erected the Vicariate Apostolic of Dedza on 30th April 1956.\textsuperscript{163} It was in 1959 that Dedza became a Diocese. The diocese covers Dedza, Ntcheu, and part Salima in the Central Region of Malawi.\textsuperscript{164} Before, the District of Dedza was part of the Likuni Vicariate, while the District of Ntcheu belonged to the Zomba Vicariate. Bishop Cornelius Chitsulo became the first incumbent until 1984, when Bishop Chisendera took over up to 2000. Sainte-Marie became bishop of Dedza in 2000 and was succeeded by Bishop Kanyama in 2007 until he died in 2018.\textsuperscript{165} In 2019 Rev. John Chithonje took the leadership of the diocese of Dedza as an Administrator until the next bishop will be appointed and consecrated. Dedza Diocese has three deaneries comprising of seventeen parishes, and the CADECOM, CCJP, Education, Health, and Social Development commissions serve in the diocese to achieve its spiritual and social goals.\textsuperscript{166}

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Dedza, like all other dioceses in Malawi, seeks to build a resilient God’s Kingdom where human dignity and the common good are promoted. The diocese ensures its goals are achieved through development and progress.\textsuperscript{167} Thus, development and advancement for Dedza Catholic Diocese mean promoting Western European education, civilization, the industrial revolution, and technologies. The diocesan development indicators are physical infrastructures, quality, and human achievements because of education, health standards, and sustainable livelihood

\textsuperscript{162} http://www.dioceseofmangochi.org/
\textsuperscript{164} https://www.ecmmw.org/new/dioeceses/diocese-of-dedza/
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attained through the church’s sound socio-economic interventions. In other words, development and progress are understood as bringing about socio-economic changes that allow people to achieve their full human potential.

The diocese is aware of the destruction human actions have caused to sustainable living on the planet. Thus, the diocese is engaging initiatives through appropriate commissions to address environmental challenges. In an interview with Nicholus Phamba (21st November 2019), the diocese, through CADECOM, is implementing programs in various thematic areas, including Environment and Natural Resources Management, Climate change and agriculture, and many other initiatives to enable society to successfully monitor and evaluate human factors in the recent environmental crises. The diocese, therefore, is engaged in afforestation projects in all its seventeen parishes in three deaneries.

3.10.8 The Diocese of Karonga

Pope Benedict XVI erected the Diocese of Karonga with the territory taken from the diocese of Mzuzu on 21st July 2010. The new diocese of Karonga covers part of Rumphi District (the whole lakeshore part of Rumphi District plus Jalawe area, which is at the top of Chiweta escapement) and the two districts Chitipa and Karonga. This area had five parishes when the diocese was created: Karonga (St. Mary’s Parish), Chitipa (Kaseye Parish), Chitipa (Mughese, St. Matthias Parish), Chilumba (St. Anne’s), Kasantha (St. Steven’s Parish). Karonga Diocese is in a disaster-prone area, and since 2010 the diocese has been affected by a series of disasters. Some of the disaster events have led to the loss of life and property (cf. Kalinga, 2012:412).

Karonga has the CADECOM office engaged in various development projects like other dioceses. The CADECOM coordinates society and politics, economic and corporate governance, promoting active citizen participation, peacebuilding, conflict management resolution and transformation, eco-justice, and extractive governance. Other programs include Livelihood improvement and empowerment, disaster risk reduction and entrepreneurship, agriculture, nutrition, food security, and community resilience to climate change enhancement.

The diocese is involved in environmental and natural resources management through climate change mitigation and adaptation, soil and water conservation, promotion of renewable energy. There is a particular concern notably for gender and women empowerment, particularly on gender equality, women leadership, reduction of gender-based violence. Karonga Diocese is active on health issues

169 https://www.karongadiocese.org/overview/
170 https://www.karongadiocese.org/overview/
171 https://www.karongadiocese.org/overview/
in its health facilities. The diocese is highly recognized for its contribution to education at all levels from early childhood development, youth formation, inclusive education (special needs education, primary and secondary schools, and tertiary education.

Regarding media, the diocese has the Tuntufye FM community radio, which assists in spreading the gospel and socio-economic programs across all the ten parishes. The diocese provides health services in two community hospitals and several health centres. The diocese is attempting to achieve sustainable livelihood while, like many other dioceses, facing setbacks through the red bricks used in its infrastructure projects.

3.11 The Industrial missions and environmental degradation

3.11.1 The Zambezi industrial mission

The historical background of the Zambezi Industrial Mission (ZIM) is closely linked to Joseph Booth, an English missionary in Central Africa (see Brelsford, 1960:576). Booth was born into a strongly religious family in 1851 in Derby, England. In 1880 Booth emigrated to New Zealand, becoming a farmer (Langworthy, 1996:17). In 1887 he further moved to Australia, establishing himself as a successful small capitalist entrepreneur (Leng & Davis, 1933:151). While in Australia, Booth became a member of the Baptist Church and was convinced that it was his calling to be a missionary in Africa. When Booth arrived in Nyasaland (Malawi) in 1892, he founded the Zambezi Industrial Mission ‘ZIM’ (Langworthy, 1996:17). Booth had hoped to develop into a network of self-sustaining communities where there would be no colour discrimination (Langworthy, 1996:341).

Other industrial missions connected to his legacy are the Nyasa Industrial Mission and the Baptist Industrial Mission. Smoothly Booth organized and supported other missionary activities with similar industrial capitalistic goals, including the African Christian Union, the British Christian Union, and the British African Congress (The Booths, 1998:11). From the 1890s he Booth strongly supported the training of Indigenous Africans for church leadership (Shepperson, 1972:3). Booth is also associated with the founding of the Baptists Convention, the Seventh Day Baptists, the Watchtower Movement, and the Seventh Day Adventists (Longwe, 2013:9; Day, 2008:7).

The Zambezi Industrial Mission was beneficial to the natives around the Kabula area. In Malawi Booth, purchased a piece of land at Mitsidi in Blantyre from a native chief Kuntaja on which he built a mission. Sir Harry Johnstone, the then Governor of the Protectorate, decided to allocate several plots of land, each containing a thousand acres, to Booth, on the sole condition that the plots should be used

172 https://www.karongadiocese.org/overview/
as industrial centres (Langworthy, 1996:499). Thousands of natives benefitted from Booth’s centres since they learned different technical jobs and earned a good wage compared to other White missionaries and farm owners (1996:499).

As time went by, the Industrial Mission built more out-stations such as Dombole, Ntonda, and Chiole in Ntcheu district, for education and other missionary activities, including technical and leadership qualifications to prepare managers for the outstations on industrial lines (cf. Nkhoma, 2006:5). From 1892 to 1929, about one hundred men and women were sent out for industrial missionary work (cf. Sanford, 1992:292). Most of these early indigenous missionary workers did a lot to establish coffee plantations, proclaim the gospel, introduce industrial centres, and teach other natives the dignity of labor (Church Missionary Review Vol. 49, 1898:47; Lamba, 1982:48).

The Zambezi Industrial Mission taught technical training in brickmaking, carpentry, blacksmithing, tinsmithing, building, and many others. Mission houses, schools, and hospitals were erected. Stores were opened at each mission to cater to the needs of the rapidly growing community of the natives (Baptist Missionary Magazine Vol. 79-80, 1899:128). However, Booth is accused of being a “religious hitchhiker” for promoting one denomination after another. Booth’s radical political views (Chakanza, 1987:135).

In the time of primarily unquestioned White supremacy in the African colonies, Booth not only believed in giving Blacks responsible roles but came to demand full equality and even independence for Africans. His outspokenness landed him into trouble with the established White missionaries and government of Nyasaland, and in 1899 he was deported (see Phylon 1953:13). Booth was later allowed back into the country after promising not to engage in anti-government propaganda (Religion in Malawi Issue 1-8, 1987:6). The authorities feared his views and schemes to empower Africans; the government finally refused him re-entry to Malawi in 1907 (Religion in Malawi Issue 1-8, 1987:6).

Booth spent time in South Africa, Basotholand (Lesotho), Britain, and the United States of America while supporting his many pro-African missions in Nyasaland. The authorities were increasingly frowned upon for his activities, suspecting increased political descent in Africa. Booth influenced several important Christian figures in Africa, including Elliot Kamwana, Charles Domingo, John L. Dubbe, and John Chilembwe (Hanley, 2002:19). Booth’s conscience and faith in his mission led him to advocate for Africa’s religious, economic, and political independence with his famous idea ‘Africa for Africans’ (Langworthy, 1996). One of Booth’s converts, John Chilembwe, took to America for theological training.
Upon his return from America, Chilembwe founded the Providence Industrial Mission in 1900, and 1915 led Africans to revolt (Phiri, 1976:53). Harmoniously, both the colonial church and colonial government unfairly assisted poor Africa to exploit the natural environment for their political and socio-economic benefit. However, due to his attempt to set the Africans on an equal level with the White natural resource exploiters, Booth is considered one of the essential missionaries and social activists in Malawi’s colonial Industrial and Capitalistic history.

3.11.2 Providence industrial mission
The Providence Industrial Mission was a Black capitalist mission initiative started by a native named John Chilembwe (see Makondesa, 2006). He was born in January 1870, was a Yao born in Chiladzulu, and went to the Scottish missionary school in Blantyre for his early education. Chilembwe joined Joseph Booth in 1892 (see Langworthy, 1996). Chilembwe studied at the Baptist institution, Virginia Theological Seminary in Lynchburg. In 1900 Chilembwe returned to Nyasaland and, supported by the National Baptist Convention Inc. in America, started his Providence Industrial Mission station at Mbombwe in Chiladzulu. Chilembwe aimed to fulfill its mission through involvement in industrial enterprises. His policy was to develop self-reliant people he encouraged to take up farming and other industries.

However, his dream was to be continued by his followers as Chilembwe did not survive an uprising he started in 1915, which also significantly affected his mission. Chilembwe was greatly concerned with the “Thangata system—a labour tenancy low wages, long work hours, practiced in the African land grabbed European Estate (Zeleza, 1976:193). Chilembwe’s policy was to develop a self-reliant society, through farming and other industrial activities. He started African-owned coffee and cotton farms and built a church near James Bruce’s tobacco estate at Magomero (Pachai, 1978:100). Bruce’s tobacco estate brought about conditions that eventually led Chilembwe to fight against certain European discriminatory practices (White, 1989:131). The goals of Chilembwe (industrial farming) were equally environmentally hazardous. In other words, Chilembwe and Europeans all competed in maximizing gains from natural resources (land and forests) and had little or no intentions on environmental care (cf. Marcus, 1997:644).

3.11.3 Churches of Christ
Joseph Booth influenced George Hubert Hollis and George Hills to move to Malawi as the first Churches of Christ (CoC) missionaries in 1907 (Brelsford, 1960:585). Booth’s interest in the CoC rose out of its association with primitivism, especially its stand on the teaching of baptism by immersion and congregationalism (see Miller, 1835:6). In October 1905, Booth attended a service in the Church
of Christ in Birmingham, and he presented the mission’s proposal to the Foreign Missions Committee of the CoC but was rejected.

By March 1907, Booth was in Cape Town, once again attending a CoC, but his relations soon soured with that congregation. In June of the same year, Booth was in Bulawayo, trying to convince CoC missionary F.L. Hadfield to cooperate in a mission to Nyasaland (cf. Klaus, 2016:85). Here again, Booth failed to win CoC support when Hadfield declined with an all-too-common reason that there were not enough funds for his work in Rhodesia, let alone for a new outreach to Nyasaland.

Convinced for mission by Booth, George Hollis and his wife Helen arrived as official missionaries of the British CoC in Blantyre on 21st October 1909. Hollis would remain until 1915, playing a part in advancing the work into new areas and training Malawian workers (Brelsford, 1960:578; Williams et al., 2013). The other missionaries who joined him in these early years, such as Mary Bannister, seemed to have shared his affection for the Malawian people and commitment to cooperating closely with them (see Chimphamba, 2004). After Hollis returned to Malawi in 1909, twenty Europeans followed him to open Namiwawa Mission in Zomba, while others had scattered to Angoniland and elsewhere looking for work (see Watters, 1948:119).

Thus, Joseph Booth is highly respected for promoting merchandised—business-oriented churches. He is remembered for his ideas for fair wage and education of the indigenous, church leadership, and industrial economic principles. In other words, Churches of Christ (Gowa Mission) introduced industrial initiatives. They engaged new concepts, theories, values, beliefs, new crops, and chemicals and opened huge single monocropping coffee, cotton, and tobacco farms. The new crops and farming methods affected the environment and were also contrary to ecology and biodiversity preservation (cf. Leakey & Slikkerveer, 1991:241).

3.11.4 African traditional religions, industrialization, and the environment

African traditional religions (ATR) refer to many African descent and origin faiths (cf. Olupona, 2015). In community life, ATR relates to ecology, economics, theology, culture, and societal management as it impacts the worldview of the indigenous people. It deals with the people’s cosmology, ritual practices, symbols, art, and society. According to Mugambi (1995), Africa's cultural and religious heritage is based on God, a concept that, according to Christian missionaries, does not exist in traditional religions. Thus, industrial-oriented activities of the church often dismissed ATR.

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values and practices. At the same time, it seemed to have failed to take African environmental thoughts and concerns seriously (cf. Warmback, 2012:23; Conradie, 2011:8).

Nevertheless, African environmental, religious thoughts, values, and practices have many standard features with Christian and Jewish traditions regarding ecological stewardship as the people’s responsibility for their wellbeing and an obligation from God. However, liberalism and capitalism in (foreign faiths) Christianity and Islam have given birth to Western Europe and America’s often-uncontrolled greed leading to the destruction of the environment (cf. Bohlin, 2014:7). The neo-Christian evangelism has engaged the acquisition of power and authority in colonies, suppressing and forcing the poor to excavate their precious resources for the benefit of colonialists (cf. Bohlin 2014:7). The neo-Christian evangelism has thus conflicted with primal religions and cultural worldviews, particularly views regarding the value of nature. But Christianity, without Western cultural influence and capitalism, can resonate with African ideas concerning nature and ecosystems conservation.

According to Van der Walt (2001:66):

...some Eastern worldviews [in Christianity] regard nature as divine and to be revered, sometimes even worshipped. In Africa (with its holistic, organistic worldview) humanity is deemed as part of nature and should [be] treat it with respect. Any intercession should be made with caution. In the Enlightenment era nature is viewed more or less as an object. Nature is to be conquered, used, and even exploited to the benefit of the humanity.

Van der Walt seems to argue what enlightenment offers as development activities have assisted humans in destroying biodiversity. Amanze, (2009:129), like Asante, (1985), states that human actions have caused environmental degradation. Human activities have caused deforestation, eradication of wildlife; as well as urban and rural pollution of water and air. Referring to the present state of the environment on the Earth, human activities have caused global warming, over-grazing, and soil erosion (due to poor agricultural practices). New farming methods and inputs have promoted capitalism and personal gains over communal. Contrastingly most African Traditional views emphasize community life and the promotion of Ubuntu which includes environmental care.

The term Ubuntu is common for Africans. In Malawi, it is named Umunthu. In Ngoni/Nguni (isiZulu), the word is derived from a famous axiom, “Umuntu Ngumuntu Ngabantu,” which translates as, ‘the person is a person because of other persons’ (Tutu, 2004:25). In Chichewa, “Kalikokha nkanyama” means alone is an animal, not a person. For the Africans, the community is as important as religion because religion is mainly concerned with others. Faith is not about competition or individualism, and theology is concerned about communal life. To be human in African religions means to belong to the
community, and to do so involves (*koinonia*) participating in the beliefs, values, traditions, and rituals of one’s community (see Mbiti, 1990:2). Together as community members, we should be mindful:

“…that particular trees, forests, and mountain forests contain spirits. They develop, like in the case of animals, taboos around the cutting and destruction of certain trees, shrubs, and forests. Forests identified as sacred groves are protected and are traditionally called rambatemwa. This means woodlands that cannot be cut. The ancestral spirits rest there. They are the passage and habitat of mhondoro (ancestral spirits in the form of animals). The Shona consider it morally wrong to cut trees in these places. Firewood and building material are gathered from places other than these sacred places” (Daneel, 1998:208).

Thus, nature in African traditional religiosity is essential (Mbiti, 1990:15). Taringa explains the conceptualization of nature in African world views (2006:196). Taringa states that: “God is the explanation and sustenance of both human and all created things, Spirits consist of extra-human beings and the spirits of men long since dead, the ancestors, Man—both the living and those yet to be born, Animals and plants or the remainder of biological life, phenomena, and objects without biological life.”

Thus, one would substantiate the historical claims that “to the African, religion is everything and is everywhere” (Taringa 2006). Healy also states that “wherever the African is, there is his religion; he carries it to the fields, where he is sowing seeds or harvesting the crop.” An African takes religion “with him to the beer party or to attend a funeral ceremony; and if he is educated, he takes his religion with him to the examination room at school or university. Healy further states that “if he is a politician he takes it to the house of parliament” (Healey, 1981:25). Mbiti, (1990:2) describing religion from an African’s perspective also asserts that “religion to the Africans is how one lives your daily life; what you do; what you say; and how you say it.” Mafico, (2011:57) similarly states that “African culture and religion is intrinsically the same thing.” Thus, Africans do not live without religion. Life is guided by religion, and religion is how one interacts with nature and other people on the Earth (Nürnberg, 2007:54).

For the African, “to be alive means existing in relationships with other people and things, life is the communication of communion” (Wakarega, 2009:140). Thus, the community's co-existence with other things (nonhuman environments) contrasts sharply with the Western Christian view on ecology. Historical evidence indicates that the Africa community includes everything, the living and non-living (animate inanimate) spirits, animals, plants, and people. Essien, (2013:239) argues that “the dead are regarded as the living dead and are part of the environment in which Africans live.” Community includes the ancestors who are the cornerstone of ecology. A society cannot thus conveniently avoid
its responsibility towards the ecosystem and the biodiversity because they all owe the Creator stewardship or Earth-keeping roles.

The Western missionaries’ abuse and exploitation extended from the African ecological view to the African people who had to be upscaled to a level of the European standard of an entire human being: Thus, all effort was conducted through western education as Balia and Etherington state:

“…mission schools taught the rudiments of literacy and numeracy essential to the functioning of a modern capitalist society. They also aimed to instil the habits of regular and disciplined industry required in modern workplaces. However, it has yet to be demonstrated that these practices were in any way crucial to the transformation of African and Asian societies. Societies where Christian missions were absent or a negligible presence – for example, Japan and Thailand – managed modernization perfectly well without them. In contrast, in some heavily missionized colonies such as South Africa and Southern Rhodesia, modernizing white supremacist regimes scorned the products of mission stations as useless or subversive” (Balia, 2007:210, & Etherington, 2011:183).

Sharing the same view as Balia is Kenneth Kaunda, who asserts that the advent of Christianity has had a complicated effect on the multifaceted African worldview. In other words, Christianity partially disrupted and partially enlarged the African world views (cf. Mwangala, R.M. 2009). Kaunda further states that it is therefore sufficient to say that one experiences within themselves the tension caused by the clash of these two worldviews, which they never fully reconcile. Concerning reconciliation between Western Christianity and Africa Christian life influenced by ATR, James Amanze discusses Bimbi’s traditional religious views. The Bimbi cult in Malawi has an intricate historical system of agricultural rituals such as rain-making ceremonies, a distinctive unwritten theology, extensive liturgical observances, an organized spirituality, and an inherited priesthood.

Amanze illustrates how traditional beliefs and practices still impact rural people living in an agrarian society with subsistence economies at the mercy of ecological forces. Therefore, it is clear that the diverse influence of the Bimbi cult on community life has continued for many years to shape the adherents’ understanding of God, themselves, and the natural world around them. Amanze argues that unless a fully-fledged, diversified, and technologically enlightened industrial society is developed with high respect for ecology and biodiversity. The Bimbi world views will continue to influence the life of the Malawian agrarian societies. To propose a diversified approach to the diverse influence of the Bimbi Cult is simply recognizing the need for Christianity and science to begin a dialogue with some of the practices in African traditional religions.
3.11.5 Science, religion, and industrialization in Malawi

The history of science in Malawi has it that science and faith came together in a spirit of enlightened philanthropy package of Christianity and Islam’s missions (cf. Dick, 1850:67). Among the first missionaries in all the denominations were theologians and scientists in their various specialized fields as natural and social scientists, botanists, geologists, navigators, and engineers (cf. White, 1989:190). Although scientists and theologians today appear to be antagonists, it is historically evident that the two disciplines were studied together in ancient and medieval learning (cf. Brown & Brown, 1986:174). The only difference is that science includes experiments, observation, and measuring (cf. Erduran & Dagher, 2014:72). Religion or philosophy raises fundamental questions about the nature of human thought, the heart of the universe, and the connection between them (see Baker, 2009:11).

To the Malawian, the missionaries who introduced the steamboats, for example, Chauncy Maples, had theologians, doctors, nurses, and mechanics training and serving people inside and ashore. The steamer sailed in Lake Malawi (Schofield & Schofield, 2014:4). Similarly, the steam engines and railways were scientific developments introduced to the Malawian society as part of the same package to enhance commerce, civilization, and Christianity in Central Africa (Chambliss, 1881:258).

From its ancient day to present Malawi, Science has struggled with how to get more and more out of less and less (cf. Thurs, 2007:74). Thus, although it is becoming expensive, science society seeks to explore hybrid seeds, animals, and synthetic farm inputs and farming methods to improve livelihood in Malawi. To ensure this religion and science have remained together, the church in Malawi has included science in the church school syllabi (see Banda, 2018:256). Thus, science and religion have affected Malawi’s ecological system and biodiversity (cf. Ross, 2018:13). It can also be concluded that sustainable, resilient, and balanced food sovereignty for Malawians is dependent on the health interaction and continued interdisciplinary relationship efforts between the theologians and scientists as they both endeavour to serve society (Levasseur eds., et al., 2016:77). The missionaries brought Malawians to new religions and science (Muslims and Christians). They might do well if they extended their working partnership to include the traditional world views and practices (cf. Religion in Malawi-Issue, 1-8, 1987:18).

3.12 Government, politics, and environmental degradation

During its colonial years, Nyasaland served as an essential source of labour for the mines and plantations in Rhodesia and other neighbouring countries. This was at Nyasaland’s economic development (cf. Vaughan, 1987; Mkandawire, 1999). Ellis et al., (2003) state that Malawi’s economy has been profoundly shaped by the agricultural estate system and its effects on land distribution.
Poor Malawians often forgo working on their land (if they have any) as laborers for wealthy farmers or estate owners. This agricultural wage labour or ganyu, (piece work) weighs down the economic power of the poor and has remained a crucial source of income for much of Malawi since the colonial time (cf. Dorward & Kydd, 2004). The implies that most Malawians spend time and effort on ganyu and have little time for their crop field and mostly fire as a quick method to clear their fields (cf. Pamphlet on Fire Vol.10, 1910:2 accessible online).

3.12.1 Colonial’s exiting plan, self-rule, and independence

According to Peter Walker (2004:89), since the beginning of British rule in 1891, the colonial “Nyasaland” pursued an estate-led pattern of economic development. Walker further argues that Nyasaland had few resources of interest to the British Empire and received little investment in growth compared to its resource-rich neighbours such as Zambia and Zimbabwe (2004:89). Thus, the colonial government laid down policies that subjected Malawians to be providers of labour to the colonial farmers who were both economically advantaged and landowners. The early European estates received large land areas and cultivated only small portions of their possessions.

According to Walker, unused land has a source of lasting resentment among peasants in overcrowded villages, mainly under the control of chiefs or village chiefs (2004:5). The colonial authorities explicitly defended these inequalities in the 1950s to create a landless class to provide labour to the states in Europe (Walker, 2004). Such efforts have a long history of turbulent relationships between estate owners and peasants. The colonial perpetuation of inequality and land grabbing enhanced the challenges of African women already suffering as ceremonious custodians of the land in society. Fulata Moyo, (2009:1) argues that; “The greatest threat to security … lies in the unequal land ownership patterns in countries where poor people’s livelihoods depend on farming.”

In other words, the paternal possession and exploitation of land by the European farm had a double impact on women who usually suffered similarly to Mother Earth. The suffering of women in terms of land ownership and use continued from the colonial period through to post-independence and democratic Malawi. Moyo, (2009) “I deal with the experience of women in Southern Malawi who sing and dance barefooted and with bare breasts [poverty stricken], but still at one with Mother Earth, they continue to praise the power of their bodies and how apart from bringing life, these same bodies bring down the oppressor.” In the language of Moyo, the oppressor (colonialists) was “brought down” but possibly before there was a proper exit plan. The land inequalities initiated by the colonial church and colonial government increased further by the tobacco estate-led economy Kamuzu Banda. The tobacco economy continued to exert pressure on the environment.
3.12.2 The thirty-one-year government of one-party rule

The thirty-one-year-old regime (1963-1994) of Banda inherited and strengthened the inequality and poverty from the colonial past. While poverty struck harder on the local Malawian, during the 1970s and 1980s, Banda converted even more land into tobacco estates, mainly through the issuance of leases to local tobacco producers in Malawi (see Anders, 2009:132). This increased pressure on the remnant forest as the poor opted for forestry products for survival (Forestry Centre for Research, 2007:24). Regarding Banda’s renewal of the colonial expansion of the tobacco industry to the local citizens and the imposition of strict environmental rules, by 1993, the area controlled by tobacco estates grew to 173 percent above the peak under colonial rule (Walker, 2004:92).

Walker states that “…the failed economy and social relations established under colonial rule have been inherited by a class of post-colonial African leaders who, despite populist rhetoric, are showing interest primarily in positioning themselves on top…. “ Many African post-colonial leaders fail to provide the solution to the challenge of the environment (cf. 2004:91). Although environmental challenges increased annually, intending to support the rural poor masses, Kamuzu Banda allowed for the establishment of Chitukuko cha a Mayi mMalawi (CCAM), which opened new farms by the mid-1980s and contributed to the deforestation (see Madimbo. 2016:47).

3.12.3 Environment and multiparty democracy

The first five years of multiparty were characterized by a multiparty democracy euphoria, which led to the destruction of wood plantations and increased deforestation by charcoal production on both private and habitat areas in Malawi (Mauambeta, et al., 2010:3). For example, Ndirande Timber Plantation in Blantyre disappeared within two years of the multiparty system of government in Malawi (Mauambeta et al., 2010:3). During Kamuzu Banda’s regime, the open questioning of the president’s wisdom and plans (inherited in this case from the colonial conservation officers) was unheard of. Any attempts by anyone could lead to severe punishment.

However, Kamuzu’s regime came to an end. But at the beginning of the multi-party democracy, trade liberalization was interpreted as the freedom to do what everyone loves, the exhaustion of the reserved forests, and catching fish in protected areas in lakes in Malawi (cf. Chitezi, Greenline Movement, 2010). The end of Banda’s regime in 1994 did not result in a significant change in government control of the environment. Still, it could be argued that it ended an era of absolute state power, management, and environmental policy formulation. Kamuzu’s regime at least realized that the tobacco estate economy was the cause of ecological degradation and yet introduced a forced tree planting campaign in the 1990s. However, in Malawi, the story of deforestation as a firewood crisis has remained alive.
and worsened at the dawn of multipartyism. Bakili Muluzi’s regime enhanced human rights, freedoms, and market liberalization. Electricity and gas prices went up, and most urban people resorted to firewood and charcoal for energy. The regime was coupled with the third wave of the spread of Islam in Malawi, which led to new lands for infrastructure development.

3.12.4 The third attempt at the spread of Islam and favourable political conditions

The third period, from 1964, is known for the emergence of a new generation of Muslims with an education system that prepared them for today’s world (Carver, 1990:56). The most significant step for Malawi’s Muslims in the third period of its spread in Malawi was the decision of President Hastings Kamuzu Banda which was intended to fulfill a pledge to end what he called the association between education and religion (cf. Lwanda, 1993:214). For the obvious reasons of power and authority, Kamuzu did not care about the dominating influence of Islam and Christianity over traditional religions on environmental care and ethics.

Thus, by implication, Kamuzu Banda’s decree on separating education from Christianity assisted many Malawians with Islamic backgrounds to receive Western European education (cf. Kalinga, & Crosby, 2001:117). The Moslems were thus not only given a chance to access the education systems run by the missionaries but Muslims were also encouraged to build their education centres. They solicited their funds from the Arab banks and opened more schools and mosques. While newer Muslims’ structures were suitable because they challenged the missionaries’ institutional power and authority, which Kamuzu feared, they, for Kamuzu, were a sign of development and progress success in Malawi. The infrastructure, however, increased the need for more space, clearing of land, cutting down trees for wood to fire up kilns to bake red bricks.

3.12.5 The spread of Islamic Development and progress under multiparty democracy

Although Islamic teaching and interpretation of the Qur’an (see 3.4.3) claim to have attempted to address environmental challenges, there is no evidence on the ground regarding Islamic policies and action to address the environmental crisis in Malawi. Reasonable effort is possibly put into Islamization and politics. The political rise of Bakili Muluzi (a Muslim) to the Presidency of the Republic of Malawi influenced the structural growth of Islam on Malawi’s landscape (Esposito, 1995:269). One Islamic initiative and advancement was the construction of scores of impressive mosques, very strikingly close to one another along main roads in Malawi. Along with the renovation of the existing mosques, it was an attempt to give the Muslims confidence and note to others the presence and strength of their religion in Malawi (Bone, 2000:78). As one of the earliest foreign religions, Islam promoted progress and development like those carried by western missionaries, which are environmentally hazardous. The implication here was that the more Islamic centres and mosques
the country had, the more forestry land to be cleared for infrastructure, red brick fuelwood, and new crop fields.

Another advancement is in the mushrooming of madrassas built next to these mosques and training of the Muslims to teach in those madrassas who needed new housing areas (cf. Brenner, 1993:88). The birth and work of the African Muslim Agency (AMA) and other groups and individuals have also facilitated the fast growth of Islamic infrastructure in Malawi. The AMA provided funding for establishing Islamic higher learning centres, some of which have been taught by highly qualified foreigners who needed highly prestigious and spacious accommodation (cf. Froise, 1991:54). Many more primary schools were established under Bakili’s leadership, and even more, scholarships were awarded, which increased the number of middle-class workers desiring middle-class accommodation.

Private primary and secondary schools under the ownership of a wide range of Muslim organizations often thrived with the sponsorship of individuals and groups from outside the country (Miriam Chipeta Banda, 1996:19). These schools are sometimes run with teachers from Sudan, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia. These teachers desire and influence progress and development compared to their sending countries. However, Malawian Muslim leader Bakili Muluzi like Malawian Christian leader Kamuzu has played essential roles in enhancing education, health, agriculture and influenced the country’s economy through unfriendly means to the environment. Regarding Islam’s middle-class development and national socio-economic influence, Imrah Shareef, the Secretary-General of the Ulama Council of Malawi, states that:

“For over 50 years, the country’s economy has been controlled and driven by the Muslim community, who has invested in various business undertakings. Through these undertakings, the community has employed people of other faiths. This is how far Islam has gone to influence the economic direction of Malawi over the years....”

Similarly, Sheikh Salim Chikwatu, the coordinator of the Halaal Department of the Muslim Association of Malawi (MAM), concurs with Shareef on the influence of Islam adherents’ life. Chikwatu asserts that: “It’s becoming extremely difficult for businesspeople in the food industry who are not adhering to the halaal concept to make a mark in their businesses” (Friday Bulletin 2003:184). In the Friday Bulletin, little effort is demonstrated on how environmentally friendly “better food” can be acquired (cf. Bailey, 2009). Talking about the ability to claim their democratic and religious rights, Muslims have since written two (Fatwas) as a kind of pastoral letters expressing their views and demanding fair treatment and access to information and rights (US. Dept. of State Report, 2003:69). But none of these two have given severe concern to the relationship between human and non-human environments in Malawi.
3.12.6 Environment, human rights, and freedoms

In Malawi, the history of forestry management has undergone several stages of change. With the dawn of independence from colonial rule in 1964, the government forest management focus became timber production for economic growth through local and international timber trade. The expectation was that economic growth stimulated by timber trade would trickle down to the whole country and contribute to improving people’s welfare.

The era of industrial forest plantation was characterized by high altitude plantations where exotic softwood such as Pinus patula tree species were planted for timber production, mainly in Forest Reserves. While the government was busy with plantation forestry, changes were taking place in VFAs and forests on land under the control of traditional leaders (Mulwafu, 2004). Thus, political independence was interpreted by communities to include freedom from the colonial system of forest management.

The result was accelerated utilization of forestry products that led to accelerated deforestation and degradation of the woodland in Malawi. The developments in VFAs after independence demonstrated the negative impacts of politics on forest management. By the 1990s, it was generally agreed that demand for forest goods and services had significantly influenced forests to the extent that demand surpassed supply (Forestry Policy, 1996). To address emerging forest issues in Malawi, the Forestry Policy was revised in 1996. The forest policy of 1996 was a departure from the traditional forest approach, which emphasized forest protection, to the present policy that emphasized multi-stakeholder participation, including local communities and multiple forest management foci and multi-stakeholder in forest management.

3.12.7 Environment, poverty, hunger, disease, and ignorance

Western stereotypes and economic domination, which continues to grapple the church, government, and civil society, tend to reduce and subject the entire continent of Africa to three problems: poverty, hunger, and disease. Sadly, in Malawi, this challenge is exacerbated by high population growth. A survey in 2000 indicated that 65% of Malawi’s population fell below the state-determined poverty line, equivalent to an income of US$120 per year (Ellis et al., 2003). A large fraction of Malawians is food-insecure, and three-quarters of young children experience stunted growth due to chronic

malnutrition – one of the highest rates on the continent (Tobin & Knausenberger, 1998). Thus, population, hunger, disease, and ignorance are historically manifested through persistent poverty that strikes hard on the rural majority, mainly among women and children, who then cause deforestation in Malawi.

Thus, deforestation has often exerted socio-economic pressure on women (Action Aid Strategic Paper, 1999:1). Therefore, women end up involved in almost all small-scale industrial enterprises, including charcoal production, selling firewood, farming without essential inputs, and doing all sorts of work that do not bring meaningful income for survival (cf. Riano, 1994:235). Despite the experience of extreme unemployment, poverty, and disease, women still carry the burden and responsibility of taking care of the daily food and well-being of most single-headed families (see NEAP, 2010). This deprivation of the necessary material resources to meet their needs leads to the violation of women’s capabilities and thus surrenders to domination (see Nussbaum, 2000:5).

3.12.8 Environment, tribalism, nepotism, and corruption

There is a historical legacy of social segregation and sometimes warfare based on tribes and places of origin that connected the misuse of environmental resources (Pike, 1965:140). For example, some people (tribes) are famous for charcoal production. They migrate following forest areas until they exhaust them before moving on to another (Community Based Rural Development Report, April 2004). Such behaviour is also encouraged by nepotism and corruption in land allocation through land reforms programs in Malawi. The report states that some project beneficiaries were selected to benefit from the funds corruptly. Such heirs soon sold the newly acquired land and returned to their original home (see Chiotha, 2018). According to Transparency International, corruption is operationally defined as misusing entrusted power and authority for private gain (Bianchi & Peters, 2013:472). Corruption manifests itself through bribery, embezzlement, fraud, favouritism, nepotism, tribalism, and the use of value influence in the running of public affairs. Corruption is like a disease, cancer that eats into society's cultural, political, and economic fabric and destroys the functioning of vital organs. Corruption has become the most significant challenge not only of the contemporary world but also as it weighs heavy on environmental cost and affects deeply sustainable livelihood on the poor of society.

178 https://www.transparency.org/en/what-is-corruption
3.12.9 External economic policies and resource monopoly

Although the Portuguese had wanted to colonize Malawi before the British, the first external influence was noted at the arrival of the Swahili Arabs from Kilwa (Browne, 1972:18). The trade links between the Yao who had settled on the eastern part of Lake Malawi and the Arabs who had established a trading post on Kilwa Islands south of Tanzania changed the lifestyle, relationships, ecological systems, and the landscape in Central Africa (Vere Allen, 1993:5). The local Maravi and Yao chiefs made their own competitive and conflicting trade agreements in the rapidly evolving ivory and the slave trade (Alpers, 1975:84). The Yao people played an intermediary role between the interior and the Arabs on ivory, hides (skins), timber and slave markets in the Maravi Empire (Briggs & Bartlett, 2006:7).

Therefore, Dudwa Phiri suggests an earlier possible blood connection between the Maravi groups of Gawa Undi in the Lower Shire near Zambezi (1979:19). There is a well-known trade link between the Maravi around Lake Malawi and the lower Shire before colonialism. Such trade links might have been extended to the Mwenemutapa Empire down south, Mwenelubemba, Chitimukulu, and Kalindawalo in modern Zambia (cf. Phiri, 1983; Nations Newspaper 7th May 2018). Mwenemutapa Empire and other kingdoms attracted the Arabs and Europeans for gold and copper (gold from which the colonialists thought King Solomon obtained his supplies). The Maravi Empire supplied ivory, skins, and slaves (Burton, 1860; Chambliss, 1875:365; Keltie, 1895:256). Thus, the Portuguese and Europeans successfully benefited from the natural and human environment than the local inhabitants they intended to civilize in Eastern Central Africa.

However, trade had enhanced the establishment of centres (urbanization), encouraged settlements in Arabic, and later western terms of development and progress. Life and relationship between human and non-human environments among the Maravi, Tumbuka, Yao, Ngoni, and civilizing agents began to change (cf. Du Plessis, 1930:296; Barnes, 1933:126; Brelsford, 1960:58). The natural environment was more perceived as a source of raw materials for trade. Thus, Arabs and later the Europeans successfully changed economic ideologies in the religious values, traditions, trade items and values, and practices of the local inhabitants of Central Africa (cf. Brelsford, 1960:58).

In other words, development and progress began to be defined as the full exploitation of human and natural capital resources. The care and respect the indigenous people paid to the ecological systems and biodiversity changed (cf. IPCC, 2007). The ecosystem that provided the local inhabitants with animals and plants for food, timber, medicine, land for agriculture, shelter for both the living and the dead is turned into the source of capital. Instead, the ecosystem is famous for ivory, skins, gold, and other precious materials under new regulations and trade rules promoted by the outsiders—precisely
Europeans and Arabs (cf. Velar, 1995:44). Therefore, from 1911 when the Nyasaland government had noticed early indications of environmental degradation, to the 1970s, when it was clear, Malawi had a different environmental outlook.

3.13 The current environmental outlook in Malawi

3.13.1 Environmental crisis and oppression: Malawi’s gold

Malawi faces an acute environmental crisis (Malawi Country Environmental Analysis World Bank, 2019). The challenges are complex and interrelated, but there are three underlying factors behind Malawi’s environmental crisis (Environmental Affairs Department, 2001:3). Population growth and poverty place tremendous pressure on natural systems (Nkhwazi, 1971:144). Secondly, more forest land is being converted to agriculture. Lastly, more natural forests are being harvested for the production and supply of charcoal (popularly known as Malawian gold) and timber and as domestic fuel (NEAP, 2006). The decrease in land cover increases the absorption of sunlight, and the land and atmospheric temperature are often high and enhance drought (UN Women and Children Welfare Report, 2001:48).

The deforested land is prone to soil erosion so that a fair amount of rainfall has been causing floods almost every year since 1992 (Women and Children Welfare Report, 2001:48). The weather conditions are unstable and often lead to climate change which exacerbates the degradation of the environment. Malawi has thus been exposed to increasing environmental crises due to increased incidents of natural disasters and extreme weather conditions (World Bank Report, 2019). Critical factors in Malawi’s environmental degradation are rapid population growth, poverty, unfair land distribution policies, unsustainable land management practices, corruption, poverty, poor local ecological management, and poor institutional participation in eco-management, especially after the current decentralized environmental management system (Donda et al., 2014:70).

Malawians have to experience volatile weather conditions following environmental degradation, including natural disasters. According to Lawrence Wood, the recent ecological prospects of Malawi are essentially the legacy of colonialism (2015). Imperialism has severe environmental consequences, especially in the former colonies worldwide (Wood, 2015:1). It is likely that the primary goal of imperialism and industrialism, the improved profitable (capitalist) exploitation of natural resources, are the leading causes of the deterioration of the environment in many countries, including Malawi (Report Scientific Summary of Berlin Conference, 1968:24). The industrial revolution fuelled colonial resource extraction (cf. Wood, 2015). Industrialization and imperialism thus grew faster but paid less attention to the degradation of the environment. The post-colonial governments repeated colonial
capitalism and were forced into unilateral trade treaties or policies that continued to put pressure on the environmental scars left by the imperialists in Malawi (see Walker, 2004).

3.13.2 *Ufulu, mtendere*: The road to freedom and peace, Kamuzu Banda’s slogan

It is asserted that industrial agriculture was certified by the *Nyasaland Department of Agriculture* as essential for the rapidly growing population of Nyasaland, which was noted as early as 1897 (East Africa and Rhodesia - Vol. 37, 1964:238). The rapid population growth was noted six years under the British Central Africa Protectorate. The government in 1903 was warned by the Nyasaland Department of Forestry concerning the rapid deforestation. The challenge of deforestation followed industrial, agricultural practices but did little or nothing to improve industrial farming (African Report – Vol. 9-10, 1964:11). Ten years down the line, in 1913, the government was warned that the tobacco estate-led economy caused rapid deforestation and that there was a need to introduce tree planting. Yet White estate owners refused to participate in the exercise as they blamed the Malawians for environmental degradation (Morel, 1969:45; Walker 2004:5).

The challenge of environmental degradation and crisis contrast sharply with values of “mtendere” and “ufulu.” At independence from Britain in 1964, Kamuzu Banda preached freedom and peace to poor Malawians but continued with the industrial agriculture, the tobacco estate economy, and environmental degradation accelerated (see Malawi National Land Policy, 2001:7; cf. Mwakasungura et al., 2016:20). It was possibly an overemphasis to argue that there was freedom and peace in Malawi because degradation undermined progress and development by the colonialists and the missionaries on the one hand (see Phillips, 2013:194). On the other hand, *mtendere* and *ufulu* in the slogan of Kamuzu are similarly challenged by the rapid deterioration of the environment and continued poverty, inequality, and corruption (cf. Green, 2008).

The white capital monopoly and the autocratic government of Kamuzu promoted domination, poverty, inequality, and corruption. Women (*Mbumba za Kamuzu*) suffered education and employment marginalization and inequality and yet subjected to patriarchal patriotism and the four cornerstones of the one-party system— (*Umodzi, Kumvera, Kukhulupirika ndi kusunga Mwambo*), which means Unity, Obedience, Loyalty and Discipline (see Kandoole, 1989:108). Poverty and freedom do not belong together, and poverty is the antithesis of freedom, peace, progress, and development. If anything, poverty enhances people’s overdependence on the natural environment (Malawi National Strategy for Sustainable Development, 2004:14).

Thus, Malawi and many other countries in the SADC continue to face annual severe environmental challenges, poverty still exerts pressure on the nonhuman environment (NEAP, 2006). In other words,
colonial economic policies, coupled with Banda’s autocracy, compelled Malawians to drop the Ubuntu collaborative practices—the life that assisted them to value ecology (cf. Kaoma, 2014: vii). Malawians, therefore, adopted a capitalist economy that introduced individualism and competition in the destruction of the remnant natural resources (cf. Okonofua, 2013:90). Capitalism encourages competitive exploitation of Earth’s natural resources as raw materials (cf. Schweickart, 2011:145).

Additionally, capitalism contrasted communal life and values that discouraged overfishing, overgrazing, and agriculture methods that enhanced deforestation and soil erosion (cf. Stuit, 2016:230). Communal life and preservation values of soil and fish in the lakes and rivers were overtaken by commercial ones. In the lake, traditional fishing methods of chisako, mono, (which did not catch fish in masses) were replaced by fishing nets that caught fish in huge numbers at once, even “small/baby” fish.” In the agricultural systems that Kamuzu advocated, fertilizer had long-term effects of making the rich soils vulnerable (Soil Fertility in Malawi Policy Review, 1998:32). Consequently, missionaries, the colonialists, and Kamuzu may have brought civilization, commerce, and Christianity; however, they failed to get ufulu ndi mtendere (freedom and peace).

Possibly this makes true of the argument by Paulo Freire, (1970) that “it is the only power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed that will be sufficiently strong to free both the oppressed and the oppressor.” Thus, the capitalist policies of the colonial government, Malawi’s self-government in one party and the multi-party, significantly contributed to the ecological injustice. It is now more apparent than ever that the power of injustice ultimately destroys the oppressed as well as the oppressor (cf. Steger, 1984:407). However, in the day’s climatic challenges and crisis, the capitalists continue to oppress, exploit, and condemn the poor based on their power to dominate (Negri,1999:7).

It is possibly true that Malawians cannot find the power to liberate them in colonial power and policies. It is only the power that perhaps “emanates from the weakness of the oppressed” Malawians that is strong enough to liberate them from capitalism, poverty, and corruption, and it is possible only then that justice will prevail in the environment (cf. Freire 1970:28). In other words, the present social democratic values are closely related to missional theological church practice characteristics. Thee Ubuntu, and their attractiveness to interdisciplinary approaches and contextual issues, might be a pointer to environmental and ecological justice that will free the Malawians from further acute environmental challenges.

### 3.14 Conclusion

In this chapter, the primary purpose was to explore how the historical events in the colonial, post-colonial, independent, and post-independent government policies, methods of agriculture, economics,
and education, influenced changes in the biodiversity, ecology, and climate in Malawi. The chapter examined how the Anglican Church, Roman Catholics, the Presbyterian Church, the Zambezi Industrial Mission of Joseph Booth, and other earlier denominations have contributed to the increase or decrease through their participation in development in the challenge of the environmental degradation and the crisis in Malawi. The chapter further explored how the churches’ architectural constructions material such as red brick, wood, and cement and the pursuit of the Industrial Revolution and Enlightenment technologies advanced and affected the current weather conditions and increased the ecological challenges in Malawi. In the next chapter, the main task will be to present, process, and analyze data collected during the research fieldwork.
Chapter Four

4 Research methodology, data collection, and presentation

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter examined how historical events in the colonial, postcolonial, independent, and post-independent government policies, agricultural, economic, and educational methods changed and influenced Malawi’s biodiversity, ecology, and climatic conditions. The chapter highlighted and discussed how the Anglican Church, Roman Catholics, the Presbyterian Church, the Zambezi Industrial Mission of Joseph Booth, and other earlier denominations, engaged in the development, contributed to the challenge of environmental crisis in Malawi.

The chapter further explored how the church buildings, materials such as brick, wood, and cement used in construction, farm inputs, and new methods of agriculture, modern technologies, and governance system promoted and influenced the existing weather conditions and the ecological challenges in Malawi. The main task of this chapter is to present, process, and analyze the data collected during the research fieldwork. This chapter, therefore, seeks to answer the main and sub-questions of the research. Different methods and techniques were engaged in collecting and interpreting data.

4.2 Research design, methods, and methodology

The attempt to answer the research questions validly and legitimately depends on the research design and the choice of methods and methodology. For this reason, Plano & Badiee, (2010:277) argue that research questions set the boundaries of a research project, explain its direction, and prevent a study from becoming too large or too small. Any research project’s success is determined by how others convincingly are satisfied that the research questions have been logically answered through a valid methodology and methods. Thus, the design methods and methodology are crucial in collecting, processing, and analyzing research data. Therefore, based on the conclusions drawn from the literature review on research methods and methodology, it is deduced that a mixed methods research approach is the most appropriate methodology to examine the missional theological response of the church to the challenge of the environmental crisis in Malawi. The mixed-method is also known as methodological triangulation.

4.2.1 Mixed methods / Methodological Triangulation

The mixed-method was adopted as the principal design methodology for the study. The mixed-method is defined by John W. Creswell, (2009), as a research method in which the researcher collects and
analyses data, integrates findings, and draws conclusions using qualitative and quantitative approaches in a single study (cf. Cassim, 2019). The mixed-method allows other methods or techniques, such as survey and interview, participation, observation, and discussion groups, to be engaged simultaneously with it (see Ulin, 2002:53; Vogt, et al., 2014:429; Hesse-Biber & Johnson, 2015:188). See also (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017; Bryman, 2008; Bergman, 2008; Creswel, 2009). Therefore, mixed methods involve using many combined or integrated techniques, thus enriching and avoiding missing data in the research process (cf. Batabyal, 2020:112).

However, while mixed-methods seem to be generally preferred, there has been antagonism on the methodology between natural science and social and behavioural sciences (see Yin, 2011). Social science disciplines are mostly associated with qualitative non-empirical methods of collecting data (cf. Jordan, 2002:136; Gozdiak, 2011:37). Besides that, some scholars, such as Lincoln & Guba, (1985); Smith & Heshusius, (1986), argue that qualitative and quantitative methodologies are not compatible, therefore, cannot be triangulated. The two sides discussed for years until Howe (1988) and Tashakkori & Teddlie (1998) attempted to reconcile the two opposing views by emphasizing the complementary nature of mixed methods in the social and natural sciences (see Kockelmans & Kisiel, 1970: 441; Hinchliffe & Woodward, 2000:61; Mainzer, 2013:621).

4.2.2 The rationale for methodological triangulation as a design method
Both natural and social scientists have thus realized that there are strengths and weaknesses in both approaches, and they have developed a system that combines the two, whereby the powers can be exploited. The disadvantages are somewhat offset (Bryman, 2008:603). Therefore, an assumption here is that research that triangulates methods is inherently unbiased. It potentially counteracts bias inherent in qualitative and quantitative research methodologies (see Mathison, 1988; Patai & Koertge, 1994; Mutch, 2009; Riccucci, 2010:61; Lee & Cronin, 2016:289).

In this study, methodological triangulation (mixed methods) helped thoroughly investigate the empirical and descriptive nature of the research question: What is the church’s missional-theological response to the challenge of the environmental crisis in Malawi? The question identified the nature of the study as both qualitative and quantitative. To answer the question, different methods had to be involved. The four data collection techniques were semi-structured face-to-face individual interviews that dominated data collection. A semi-structured self-administered questionnaire was engaged as a data collection tool during discussions. Methodological triangulation was thus vital because semi-structured interviews can be used in conjunction with other methods in an empirical study (cf. Holloway, 1997:73).
According to Munhall, (2012:553-559), mixed methods assist researchers in examining the phenomenon (occurrences) beyond comprehensiveness. Thus, mixed methods helped increase confidence and reduce bias in the findings (cf. John & David Creswell, 2017). Mixed methods ensure empowered groups are heard in society, and one method is developed and supported by the others in data collection, processing, and analysis (cf. Withrow, 2016:413). The interpretation of research findings engaged both quantitative and qualitative results. Results, therefore, are likely to be innovative and valuable; and are likely to provide a broader perspective of the environmental crisis in Malawi (cf. Curry & Nunez-Smith, 2014).

In other words, while examining the church’s missional and theological response, the mixed-method research approach also examined some Malawians’ perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs regarding environmental degradation. This in no way contradicts the claim that methodological triangulation or mixed methods and the associated sets of methods and techniques can be integrated to answer research questions relating to a single case - environmental crisis (cf. Onghena et al., 2018). But instead, acknowledge that there are strengths and weaknesses in both so that by combining them - the strengths can be exploited while the disadvantages are neutralized (see Bryman, 2008: 603).

Qualitative research methods are appropriate in answering the why and how questions (cf. Osmer, 2008:34; 2010:7; Armour & Macdonald, 2012:42). Qualitative research provides a varied contextual understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (see Vaughn et al., 1991; Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Nieuwenhuis & Smit, 2012). Qualitative research data is coded and tabulated to quantify the results empirically and obtain quantitative research (cf. Ott & Longnecker, 2008:16). Triangulation and integration of methods and techniques possible prove the researcher’s inconclusive claims that most if not all research processes naturally start at qualitative and descriptive levels.

Consequently, qualitative research is in the process of coding enabled to describe the research conclusions numerically. Thus, the data collected for this research were coded and tabulated. In this case, outcomes assisted in measuring and describing the churches’ missional theological response to the church to the environmental crisis in Malawi quantitatively. The coded and tabulated data was collected from various groups randomly selected across Malawi through sampling. Coding and tabulation of the samples enabled the study’s qualitative nature and allowed the generalization of findings to the whole country.

This implies that qualitative methods and techniques, primarily associated with descriptive research processes, are important because they deal with the numerical part of the investigation and description of a phenomenon - environmental crisis. Qualitative methods and techniques provide a deep
understanding of context and contextual factors in a measurable way. Thus, qualitative methods and techniques transform the theoretical and descriptive contextual factors into numerical forms.

The numerical forms help readers understand factors that may have prompted the churches’ missional theological response to the challenge of the environmental crisis (cf. Babbie, 2012; Babbie & Mouton, 2001). In other words, qualitative research is necessary because, where it is properly coded, it provides a deep understanding of the empirical and descriptive concepts and theories in a phenomenological investigation (cf. Kempton, 1991; Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Vaughn et al., 1996).

Correspondingly, quantitative outcomes of the research provide broader quantified or numerical measurable results of churches' missional theological response regarding the challenge of environmental crisis in Malawi. Thus, methodological triangulation enabled the study to collect, process, and analyze empirical and descriptive data simultaneously in a single collection phase while saving time and money (cf. Creswell, 2009). Secondly, triangulated quantitative and qualitative methodologies gave the study complete access to various perspectives (Johnson & Christensen, 2016).

Thus, while quantitative research is often associated with natural science and that the two can be carried independently, quantitative analysis in social work develops immeasurable outcomes (see Sheppard, 2019). Sometimes, social science research shares the same bases as the natural sciences and uses empirical, measurable results to arrive at conclusions. Some natural scientists, for obvious reasons, tend to look down on social scientists. Therefore, David Kaplan, (2004) highlights the broad array of state-of-the-art quantitative methodologies in social sciences. In other words, Kaplan asserts that quantitative methodologies begin with scaling qualitative experience through the properties of tests and measurements, advancing to applying statistical methods, and closing with broad philosophical themes that transcend many of the quantitative methodologies (2004: ix).

4.2.3 The missionality view of methodological triangulation as a design

The researcher’s view is that methodological triangulation is missional and theological as a method; it seems to have some affinity and attraction to the events and actions in missio-Dei. Methodological Triangulation is evident in the atonement depicted in the process of the kenosis. For example, in Atonement, God reaches out and appears to humans face-to-face as a method (Gen. 1-3). God uses miracles, instructions, conversation, and Jesus used parables, storytelling, questions, and answers to collect data or information and communicate God’s message to people. God speaks to people through

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mediums, including the prophets, diviners, law tablets, and nature—like the burning bush in the case of Moses.

The Trinity engages various methods (mixed methods) to avoid missing out and compensate for losses incurred during the process of an encounter between God and God’s people. God dwells among people in human form (incarnation). God’s presence among people can be likened to ‘structured participatory action and observation.’ Today, people access God through Scripture, observing nature and through the power of the Holy Spirit. This would be similar to ‘literature study’) in methodological triangulation. This implies that missio Dei and missional studies are multidimensional. Above all, the incarnation demonstrates an act of reconciliation and justice as God joins the activities of Israel as in (Discussion Group). God, therefore, shows kenotic love in the context and events of Israel. God’s participation in the (events of Israel) is descriptive and qualitative. However, the examples are translatable (can be coded) to give them empirical meaning. The one discussion group (Israel in the Middle East) can be generalized and extended to different circumstances, places, contexts, and languages across the globe.

Methodological triangulation (mixed methods) is therefore not only in line with God’s purpose and nature in the mission but also as an example of an approach to draw participants to the conservation of the Earth. Methodological triangulation, therefore, has the potential as a method for collecting and analyzing data. It is inclusive, multidisciplinary, and multisectoral, thus bringing all participants together to conserve the environment, biodiversity, and Earth’s care. Therefore, mixed-Method helps develop a sustainable missional and theological ecological paradigm (ecotheology). The methodology draws everyone, the poor rich, educated and illiterate, scientists and theologians, believers and atheists are essential and involved in slowing down the degradation of the environment and addressing its challenges in Malawi.

Apart from its flexibility and inclusivity, mixed methods have made it possible to examine the church’s response to environmental degradation using (independent) variables such as degraded areas in the four regions of Malawi, different levels of education of research participants, age, gender, income and resources, political, religious events, ethnic affiliation, and various sources of information used. Similarly, the research methods were valuable in investigating (dependent variables) such as the general environmental practices of the people, perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes affecting the decline. Therefore, the church’s response to the environmental crisis in Malawi was necessary.
4.3 Methods triangulated

4.3.1 Survey and interviews

The survey began with the recruitment of research assistants trained by the researcher. After the training, a pretesting of the questionnaire took place at Njereza. This is an area that was once part of Lake Malawi National Park, and now the site is one of the rapidly degrading places in Malawi. Details of the pre-testing and the involvement of research assistants as part of their practices are set out later in the chapter. Semi-structured interviews were conducted after sampling (survey) of participants across the country. Interviews as a data collection method involve the presentation of oral-verbal stimuli and responses in terms of oral-verbal responses that can be briefly recorded in various forms and analyzed (see Taylor et al., 2006:76; Mangal, 2013:357; Gurusamy, 2019:277).

Thus, semi-structured interviews were conducted using a self-administered questionnaire. According to Holloway, (1997), semi-structured interviews are usually conducted systematically. Systematic in this case means that interviews as a method involve using a set of predetermined questions and the use of highly standardized techniques such as recording or shorthand or note-taking other techniques are involved in the process of data collection (cf. Millar et al., 2017:121). Interviews follow a rigid procedure set out, and questions are asked in a form and order prescribed on the questionnaire (see McConaghy, 1993:8; Hashim et al., 2010:124). The researcher guide the process, gives feedback, and conducts interviews within a specified period, no longer than one hour (cf. Disselkamp, 2013:177).

4.3.2 Structured observation

According to Khotari, (2014), the observation method is the most used, especially in studies regarding behavioural sciences. Under the observation method, data is sought through the investigator's direct observation without direct use of the questionnaire before respondents (Daniel & Sam, 2011:111; Mekonnen, 2018:81). The main advantage of this method is that subjective bias is eliminated if the observation is done accurately (Cargan, 2007:142). Then, the information obtained with this method relates to what is currently happening in the area studied. Structured observation is characterized by a precise definition of the units to be observed, the recording style of the practical information, standardized observation conditions, and the selection of appropriate observation data (see. Jackson, 2007:81). Structured observation has many benefits, but it has been discovered that the observer can quickly lose objectivity through uncontrolled emotions. If left unchecked, the researcher's range of experience may diminish (cf. McMillan, 2012:150).
4.3.3 Focus Group

An alternative research approach to the interviews was Focus Groups, also known as Discussion Groups. According to Babbie, (2011:343), Discussion Groups are group interviews that last 1-2 hours. The typical size of such groups is 6-10 participants (Krueger, 2014:68). Their composition is not based on representativeness but on finding segments of the population of interest. Focus groups or discussion groups are likely to provide the most significant and meaningful information (Greenbaum, 1998:60; Leslie, 2015:56). Discussion groups are best applied when rich, in-depth material from several people is required (Ingley & Lockhart, 2015:310; Dwyer, et al., 2012:360). Being part of a group often creates a more relaxed atmosphere than a one-to-one interview (Hays & Singh, 2011:253). In this study, focus groups helped collect data from village forestry forums, churches, and guilds/groups.

4.3.4 Participant participatory action research

This method is a critical source for collecting reliable data (Kondlo, 2009:15; Hardina, 2012:131). The technique was beneficial in areas where government and civil society have instituted various activities, such as tree nurseries, fishing communities, charcoal production associations, natural regeneration, and forest woodlot preservation. The researcher prepared the tree nursery, harvested honey, and made a fire break. In some districts, the stakeholders formed different groups, and the researcher had the opportunity to participate in charcoal and honey production groups and permaculture awareness committees.

The advantages of participant participatory action research are that the researcher often must reflect on how several groups of people participate in a process for the best result (Kindon et al., 2007:257). Participation means the involvement of relevant stakeholders in the decisions and activities that affect them. Participatory Action Research is value-driven and has to do with respecting the rights of stakeholders to influence decisions that affect their lives (Luczak, et al., 1993:535; McClean, 2012:177). However, stakeholders must be treated as equal partners in the processes that affect them, as it is their right to be recognized and respected as autonomous people.

Additionally, setbacks can be encountered when influential leaders induce negative responses to achieve selfish goals (see Carnegie, 2010). For example, at Njereza in Mangochi, one principal leader in charcoal production influenced several people to boycott meetings because they wanted to produce charcoal for money rather than attend meetings where they would not get their children’s food. Different stakeholders have different views - they see the world differently. Nevertheless, participant participatory observation remains one single method that engages all stakeholders in various roles of their interest and capability (observed at Sungusya Tree Nursery near Malindi in Mangochi from 2nd to 3rd August 2019).
4.3.5 Methodological design diagrammatic summary

![Methodological design diagram](stellenbosch-university-scholar.sun.ac.za)

Diagram modified from Creswell et al., (2003).

4.4 Survey of participants

4.4.1 Top religious leaders

The fieldwork exercise involved four hundred and eighty (480) participants from the four regions across Malawi. The selection of individuals or groups to participate was based on their perceived roles and geographical location concerning environmental activities in the area. Participants were categorized according to the methodology used to collect data from them. Thus, a total of one hundred and twenty (120) participants, including church/religious leaders, participated in face-to-face interviews: three general secretaries of the CCAP, four ACM bishops, and seven ECM bishops. Within this group of church leaders included the CCAP Secretary of the General Synod, the ACM President and two ECM Archbishops, the Seventh-day Adventist Malawi Field, and the national leader of the
Churches of Christ, Gowa Mission, four Sheikhs, and four African traditional religious leaders selected equally from the four regions across the country. It was discovered and concluded that the environmental degradation and crisis followed religious and socio-economic activities blessed by the church.

4.4.2 Government, civil society, and local leadership

The second group of face-to-face interviews had one hundred and forty (140) participants that came from the civil service, such as the national director of environmental affairs, the Chief Meteorological office, district commissioners, and local environmental officials. The group also included the chairman of the civil society (CONGOMA), chairman of the Chiefs (T/A) council in Malawi, chairman of the Muslim Association in Malawi (MAM), chairpersons of the Community Forestry Forum from selected groups across Malawi, the Chairperson of Public Affairs (PAC) and the Chairperson of the Law Society of Malawi, and the chairpersons of the Malawi Association of Business Owners (MABO).

Institutional leaders who formed part of this group included the Secretary for the Malawi Council of Churches, the Secretary for Wildlife Society (WESM), the administrator for CADECOM. Other participants included the Chairperson Parliamentary Committee for Environmental Affairs, Faculty of Religion and Theology (University of Malawi—Chancellor College), Faculty of Theology and Religion (University of Mzuzu), Zomba Theological College, Leonard Kamungu Theological Seminary, African Bible College in Lilongwe and Zambezi Evangelical Bible school.

4.4.3 Participant participatory action in selected projects

The researcher and the assistants visited existing environmental conservation projects. They worked with members involved in areas most affected by the environmental crisis in each of the four geographical sections where demonstrations in the environmental management of natural forest conservation were conducted. The first discussions and participation were held in the Eastern region at Nkombera, Nkalo in Zomba, Sungusya, and Njereza in Mangochi, Mwanza, and Nsanje. Lilongwe and Dedza in the Central region, Sanga and Kalonga in the Northern region. The researcher worked together with a total of 100 participants from ten projects (see details on p.16).

4.4.4 Discussion groups

This group comprised one hundred and twenty (120) members from various faith groups, three groups in each of the four regions. There were ten participants in each of the 12 places scattered in the four regions in Malawi. In summary, there were two hundred and sixty (260) participants in the category of interviews, one hundred participants in the Participant observation category, and one hundred and twenty in the Discussion group category.
4.5 Research fieldwork preliminaries

4.5.1 Recruitment of research assistants

A self-administered questionnaire was involved in conducting oral interviews. Individual participants who found some questions difficult to understand were supported through feedback and rephrasing the question without changing its meaning (see Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Babbie, 2012). From the outset, it was clear that support to all participants alone would be insufficient; therefore, four assistant researchers were recruited and trained by the researcher. Consequently, two young men and two young ladies were selected based on their college-level qualifications and gender balance.

The researcher held a four-day training session for research assistants from 8 to 12 July 2019. The training of research assistants is considered one of the quality control measures in research (Babbie, 2012; Babbie & Mouton, 2001). This training was aimed, among other things, at familiarizing the assistants with the questionnaire, their role as interviewers, how they should act and present themselves before their respondents, how to record responses, how to probe for more information and to provide support on specific questions to various struggling interviewees. It was an opportunity for assistants to practice their role as data collectors.

The research assistants were reminded and requested to consent to their role as volunteers to participate in the study. They were advised that they had the right to abandon the data collection process when they felt they could do so. The assistants were also reminded that they could not expect any monetary gains from participating in the study as volunteers. All the research assistants signed their consent forms, which marked the end of successful training. Later, they participated in the pretesting of the self-administered questionnaire.

4.5.2 Questionnaire pre-testing

The pre-testing and evaluation of the questionnaire took place at the Njereza area in Mangochi from 15 to 19 July 2019. A focus group consisting of four men, six women, including the village headwoman (Bibi Kumatuwi), participated in the discussion group. During the pre-test, the four research assistants were present as listeners to become familiar with the questions and techniques for delivering and receiving feedback. They learned how to administer a questionnaire in semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (see Bernstein, & Schaffzin, 1996: 242). Research assistants learned from the “role-play and demonstration techniques” which the principal researcher (formerly schoolteacher) provided on how questions can be reformulated without changing meaning. They also observed how feedback and comments were obtained and given to facilitate communication between participants and the researcher.
The research assistants also learned to respect without compromising the participants’ opinions. The respondents were also advised not to relegate or downplay other participants’ views, comments, or contributions (cf. Maini, 2011:11; Tiwari & Rahul, 2015:13). The pre-test took five days, and the first day was mainly about research assistants and the researcher's conversations to become familiar with the questionnaire.

Research assistants observed as the principal investigator/researcher conducted individual interviews on the second day. Later, the assistants were helped to conduct face-to-face interviews. We did not disclose their status as research assistants to respondents, and this was to let them command respect from the participants and reduce participants’ attention to the principal researcher. Each interviewed their first five respondents in a series of one hour. The researcher conducted a discussion group using the questionnaire on the third day. On the fourth day, the assistants perform their focus group discussions.

Before each day's events, there were recap sessions for the previous day that were followed for introductions, reestablishment of rules and norms, and explaining the necessary procedures to be followed during sessions or discussions. Group members were welcomed to participate fully in the discussions following their own rules for equitable participation (cf. Zaccaï, 2007:76; Gray & Streshly, 2010:33). At the end of each day, the lead researcher and the assistants evaluated the day's work and took notes on other contributions that were not recorded. On the last day, on July 19, the researcher and the assistants tabulated the findings of the pretesting.

4.5.3 Cross-tabulation of the pretesting results
Aprameya, (2017) states that cross-tabulation is a method of quantitatively analyzing the relationship between multiple variables. Cross tabulation is therefore also known as contingency tables or cross tabs. Crosstabs help in grouping data and assists researcher in understanding the numerical correlation between different variables (cf. McCready, 1982:11). It also shows how correlations change from one variable cluster to another. It is thus, usually used in statistical analysis to find patterns, trends, and probabilities within raw data (see Mababaya, 2002:262).

When data analysis is done correctly, cross-tabulations from both quantitative and qualitative studies become a suitable tool for analyzing the relationship between two or more variables (Henkel, 2017). To illustrate the importance of cross-tabulation, Jalen, (2016) states that cross tables help group the raw data easily. The axes of the table can be specified as only one variable or formed from several

variables (see Dixon, 1992:242). The resulting table has as many rows and columns as codes developed from analyzing raw data (see Hardman et al., 2017:567).

### 4.5.4 Advantages of cross-tabulation

White, (2004) states that one can easily take the information from this crosstab and create a visual map or graph. The researcher can easily adjust the map or diagram, fonts, and colours to fit the themes, theories, and concepts raised in the code analysis. Crosstables can help explore the survey data, to uncover hidden relationships between variables. Cross tabulation is as much as scientific and systematic; it is easy to analyze and understand virtually by both the researchers and the respondents (see Kuckartz, 2014). In other words, the principal researcher, assistants, the research respondents can easily understand the numerical outcome of their study. Above all, it is easy to use crosstab results to draw charts and graphic representations of research findings (cf. Kumar, 2010).

### 4.5.5 Cross-tabulation of the questionnaire pre-testing at Njereza in Mangochi

**Discussion Group composition:** This pretesting discussion group with (14) participants included 4 Research Assistants as observers, 1 Village Head Woman, 5 men, and 4 women.

**Key:** RA = Research Assistants, VH = Village Head, F = Female, M = Male

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire</th>
<th>Coded themes</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Sex</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How do the current environmental challenges affect the basic human needs in Malawi?</td>
<td>Basic needs: Water, clean air, food, habitat; Land issues: Erosion, pollution, deforestation, droughts, overfishing, warming, poverty, unemployment/no jobs, teen marriages, disease, hunger migration</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What are the main factors for Malawi's current critical environmental challenges?</td>
<td>Internal politics, geopolitics, trade, economics, corruption, poverty, high cost of synthetic farm inputs, unemployment, high cost of living, governance, beliefs, church grassroots presence, numbers, faith, commitment to excellent and abundant life</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Does theology or religion, regarding current environmental challenges, have a role to play, and why or why not?</td>
<td>God's creation who cares, biblical Earth stewards of domination, ancestors, preservation methods, kingdom motifs this world is not my home, fill the Earth, children as wealth, forest as a home source of income.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. In your opinion, is the church or any other religious beliefs relevant in either the cause and/or the solution to the environmental challenge?</td>
<td>Religious teaching scripture, liturgy, worship, music, traditions, Ubuntu, policies rapid population growth, subdue Earth, nature, time, God's desire, punishment, evil</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. If the church had a role to play in addressing the problem of environmental degradation in Malawi, what would make its role unique or different from the other institutions?</td>
<td>No Church/mosque boundaries, worship as the character, less denominational power/authority, interfaith, interdenominational, exemplary life of believers, ecumenisms, local church grassroots advantage</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. If you understand the church as a stakeholder in addressing the environmental issues in Malawi, how important do you think it is compared with other stakeholders?</td>
<td>Advantage of grassroots population, mission schools, institutions, church radio, sermons, constitutions, canons, resources, capabilities, faith in theology, practices, traditions, values</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Is the issue of environmental degradation ever addressed discussed in your council/church, a local institution, parish, or synod meetings?</td>
<td>Aspects of the crisis: Climate change, water, and air pollution, decreased fish catch, waste damping, acidification land &amp; water, energy crisis, rapid deforestation, habitat degradation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Are there any environmental degradation initiatives you know in the broader district, society, and church in your area, parish, or synod?</td>
<td>Other faiths/sciences initiative: Land-atmosphere warming, droughts, floods, hurricanes, heatwaves, economic pressure, diseases spread, population expansion, loss of biodiversity, increased consumerism</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Have you ever drafted or heard a sermon or public address that refers explicitly to the challenge of environmental crisis?</td>
<td>Response to crises: Afforestation, waste management, resilient ecosystems, renewable energy, more green spaces, green design science, sustainable agriculture, reduction in carbon footprint and emission</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. To your knowledge, is the issue of environmental crisis ever discussed in any other forums in your society, in</td>
<td>Decreased water table levels, loss of biodiversity, reduced fish catch, water, and air pollution, waste dumping, increased consumerism, acidification of land and water, energy crisis, renewable energy green</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
your local church, in your parish, or your synod? If so, what aspects of the crisis are commonly referred to?

| Design, sustainable agriculture, reduction in carbon footprint, and emissions |
|---|---|---|---|
| 60 | 50 | 60 | 52 | 56.3 |

From the cross table, both the horizontal and vertical axis, the figures explain different levels of understanding, the causes, consequences, and the response given to the environmental crisis in Malawi. The average percentage for both vertical and horizontal axis is 56.3%. If a teacher achieves their class average of 56% of their lesson, the process of teaching and learning is unsuccessful. The teacher is required to revise the lesson until a satisfactory mark closer to one hundred percent is achieved. Since the crisis is critical to many people's lives, 56% is too low for a response and thus justifies the need to examine the church’s missional theological response to the environmental crisis in Malawi.

The level of understanding among the participants in the pretesting was quite diverse. Women were very active and contributed a lot like men. This indicates the impact that the challenges in the environmental crisis have on women and girls. This implies how women solved the challenges. It shows women's growing interest and expectations for a sustainable solution to the environmental crisis. This is because of the apparent reason associated with similarities and connections between androcentric abuse of Mother Earth and human mothers.

The understanding or perspective of effects and factors that led to the challenge of the environmental crisis and the response to it differs significantly. This was due to several factors, including levels of education, traditions, beliefs, values, and religious background. Participants expect more from the religious community regarding variations in doctrines and practices. Poverty, hunger, and multi-party politics are widely cited as some of the most important factors for environmental degradation (cf. Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, Vol. 41, No. 8, 1985: 21; NEAP 2017). A small number of respondents associated the environmental crises with religious beliefs – a verse from the Qur’an and Bible that urges people to multiply and fill in the Earth (cf. Naqvi, 2012: 109).

4.6 Pre-testing debriefing

4.6.1 Identified challenges in the pre-testing

The most challenging issues raised during the pretesting were soil erosion, droughts, floods, declining water levels, and overfishing. There is a high cost of living, reduced energy sources, increased promiscuity, teenage marriages and pregnancies, school leavers, long distances to fetch water, unstable weather conditions, warming, and biodiversity decline. Many men blamed the government for not providing people with jobs, and most men considered the youth a source of potential labour in charcoal production. In many ways, women and girls were very concerned about the decline and crises of forest
products. Women further raised challenges regarding increased promiscuity, forced marriages, and an increase in gender-based violence (cf. NEAP, 2007; 2017).

The pre-testing also uncovered a challenge regarding comprehension and language variation within the same group. Babbie & Mouton, (2001) point to language as one of the challenges in interviews and suggest the translation of the questionnaire in which linguists are involved. The researcher’s previous teacher-training experience played a role in the oral translation of the questions into Chichewa. Chichewa, which most participants speak and understand in the study, is the national language for Malawi.

Some learned Yao and Lhomwe individuals translated the Chichewa questions into their languages in some exceptional cases. Some still struggled to understand critical concepts in the discussions or questions. This was done to feel comfortable in their languages – since languages define our worldview and how we respond to them. The college education level of the four research assistants helped as they could provide feedback and reformulate questions without changing the meaning.

The language challenge mostly took place at Njereza following the migration to the Eastern region of the Lhomwe people to an area occupied mainly by the Yao and the Nyanja in Mangochi, Balaka, and Machinga. The Lhomwe at Njereza, in the Eastern region, are migrants from Mulanje and Thyolo who came to the area following the government’s resettlement program - kuzigulira malo (see Jimu, 2012: 21; Daniel et al., 2018).

Another challenge arose about participation grants. Although participants signed consent forms, they still expected to receive money. Participants claimed that no one could research without cash. The association of the researcher with the University of Stellenbosch in the Western Cape gave the participants the impression that he had sufficient funds to pay out generously. The government and non-governmental organizations introduced the growing challenge of paying participant honorariums for attending workshops in the early 1990s. Later, this facility was abused by organizers as a channel for sifting public funds. As they call it, the allowance syndrome has been strengthened with the advent of multiparty political campaigns where candidates hand out money and goods to get the villager’s votes. The researcher is perceived as a “donor” from overseas.

4.6.2 Pre-testing observations

During the evaluation of the preliminary exercise, the researcher and the four assistants realized that there are several benefits for the self-administered questionnaires. The benefits include higher completion rates, which are likely to be at least 90-100 percent response rate than email or posted
surveys (cf. Lavrakas, 2008:269; Ryan, et al., 2017:63). In addition, individual attention and support, feedback, or explanations are given to complex questions to individuals or group participants. Babbie & Mouton (2001) state that the interviewer is likely to obtain relevant answers and increase high response rates and contact between interviewers and participants (cf. Mentz & Botha, 2012).

The pretesting exercise and the examination of the feedback, especially on some of the challenges encountered during the exercise, prepared and trained the research assistants to participate successfully in the research fieldwork. Regarding the processes and participation of participants, it was discovered that most adults in their absence discussed what they thought of the youth. Initially, the research design was aimed at two hundred and sixty respondents, and the youth were not included in the first target. After pretesting the questionnaire in Mangochi, it was observed and decided to increase the respondents’ mark to have youths so that they could speak for themselves. Therefore, the target was increased to four hundred and eighty participants. Although four hundred as a figure was frightening considering the scarcity of resources in the study, the participants’ willingness to volunteer did, however, help maintain reasonable costs.

### 4.7 Fieldwork data presentation and analysis

The primary purpose of the empirical study was to examine the missional-theological response of the church to the Malawian environmental crisis. The ecological situation in Malawi and possibly the entire Southern African threatens the economy, sustainable living, and livelihoods, especially among youth and the poor majority in rural areas. Therefore, a research question was raised regarding the missional theological response of the church. The assumption was to argue that more than any other institution, the church's position, faith, practices, and grassroots presence would enable it to provide a successful and sustainable response to the challenge of the environmental crisis in Malawi.

Malawi has disturbing statistics on deforestation, species extinction, rising land, and atmospheric temperatures. There are unstable weather conditions, growth in poverty, unemployment, and insurmountable land and water fill (see Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper International Monetary Fund, 2012:76; NEAP 2017). There is not much done by the government and others that seem to stop overproduction, consumption, pollution, deforestation, droughts, overfishing, declining biodiversity, and the exploitation of non-renewable resources (cf. Conradie, 2000:22; Gama et al., 2014:1). One day and one year before the next, they reveal their environmental challenges, including high fire danger temperatures that threaten flora and fauna life and existence on the planet (see Douglas & White, 2003:201; Kaoma, 2010 & 2014).
4.7.1 Face to face interview

Two hundred and sixty (260) participants in a mixed bag (men, women, and youth) across the country from all the four regions were interviewed in this category of individual face-to-face interviews. The group consists of religious leaders, government officials, local leaders, youth, women, civil society, and the business community.

4.7.2 Coding and tabulation of the face-to-face interview

**Question 1:** *How do the current environmental challenges affect the basic human needs in Malawi?*

This question seeks to address objective number two regarding significant issues in the environmental crisis and how this is affecting life in Malawi. Basic needs in this question refer to the essential things Malawians would have difficulty dealing with if the crisis were still affecting them. Given Braham Maslow’s hierarchy of human needs (1943: 383), most of Malawi’s needs fall into the level classified as physiological needs. Such needs are air, food, drink, shelter, clothing, warmth, sex, sleep. In other words, these basic needs are for physical survival and are therefore classified in the first category that motivates and influences people’s behaviour and response.

**Coded themes**

- Resources scarcity: Water resources, agricultural resources, habitat degradation, water pollution
- High population growth: Disease, hunger, outbreaks, sanitation, hunger, poverty, and illiteracy
- Land degradation: Soil erosion, droughts, floods, deforestation, biodiversity decline, land scarcity
- Atmosphere and water: Air and water pollution dry spell, high fire danger temperatures, climate change
- Socio-economic: Poverty, corruption, exploitation, moral decay, unemployment, high cost of living

**Graph**

In the graph, church leaders and women are aware of the causes and consequences of the environmental crisis. The average percentage of effects and severity of basic needs caused by environmental degradation is 62.5%. Church leaders and women each scored 80% and 75%,
respectively, asserting that essential resources scarcity, water, atmospheric pollution, and forest degradation, poverty, socio-economic, and political issues were some of the severe contests in the challenge of environmental crisis in Malawi. The severity of the crisis is well known to most members of each category. According to the graphic percentage, at each level, the business community underestimated the severity of the factors of the environmental crisis.

The different positions were taken by the businesspeople regarding the severity of the crisis possibly indicate that profiteers, to some extent, do enjoy in the light of the crises. A few participants, particularly members of other faiths (20%) and some local leaders (20%), associated ecological challenges with natural events or God’s time. Some participants connected the crisis to economic inequality, mismanagement (corruption), and political influence. Surprisingly only government and NGOs leaders cited rapid population growth and one of the crisis factors.

**Question 2:** What are the main factors for Malawi’s current critical environmental challenges? According to the USAID 2019 report on Malawi, the country faces continued high consumption levels, energy demand, poverty, unemployment, and rapid population growth (cf. Ezekiel Kalipeni, 1996). This question attempted to answer the third objective related to factors causing the environmental crisis in Malawi. These factors were advanced as deforestation, constrained water resources, declining fisheries, mismanagement of natural resources, and land pressure. These factors followed farming practices that led to soil erosion and reduced fertility.

**Coded themes**

- Policy formulation and implementation, institutionalism, alien life standards, beliefs, values and norms, external debts, geopolitics, unfair external trade, poverty, mining
- Population and land pressure: inapt land and animal husbandry practices, use of synthetic inputs, industrialization, consumerism
- Production and consumerism: high energy demands, charcoal production, infrastructure development, red bricks production
- Unstable weather conditions: high fire danger atmospheric/land temperatures, floods, droughts, natural fire, quakes, diseases
- Economic monopoly: poverty, unemployment, corruption, rapid population growth exploitation, external debts, donor syndrome, corruption
A close examination of the graphic survey results (between 30 and 45%) suggests that economic monopoly and corruption involved in the process and implementation of policies and legislation are the most critical factors in the environmental crisis in Malawi. This claim is not supported much by the business community (5%), who suggest that unstable conditions are the main factors of the environmental crisis in the country. Interestingly, according to the figures presented in the graph, many people seem not to link the crisis to rapid population growth and land pressure. Among many local people, population growth is a blessing, and children are gifts from God. Only between 5 to 20% of the participants attributed the challenge of environmental crisis to rapid population growth. Many participants mentioned challenges in policy legislation, unemployment, poverty, high cost of living, corruption, market liberalization high, lack of political will, and commitment to environmental issues.

**Question 3:** Does theology or religion, concerning current environmental challenges, have a role to play, and why or why not? This question is asked given objective four to ascertain the action and influence of religion on environmental degradation. It seeks to examine the peoples’ theological practices, conceptualizations, and understanding of God’s creation and our home (see Bloomquist, 2009; Pope Francis, second encyclical ‘Laudato Si’ (2015), on the Care of Our Common Home).

**Coded themes**

- Foreign religions: institutionalism, participation in materialism, capitalism, industrialization, technology, dismissal of cultural traditions, the introduction of new alien species,
- Traditional Religions: Spiritualism and object veneration, ancestral worship, gule wa nkulu as syncretism, cultural accommodation, translatability, contextual conceptuality
- Umunthu/Ubuntu: Primitivism, Spiritism, communalism, naturalism, and ancestral worship
- Missional theology and ecclesiology: contextualization—theologizing migration, child labour, gender discrimination; call and promotion of for interdisciplinary, multidimensional, multisectoral approach to natural environmental issues
There are three main perspectives raised in the graph regarding the role of religion in society. Almost all participants, between (30 and 60%) state that the church’s place and position in society are vital to varying degrees. The youth at all levels of the graph seems to be indecisive, and (45%) of the business community suggests that the church’s role in the environmental crisis is moderately crucial in society. The church seems to be less critical (between 35 and 50%) among the youth, NGOs, and government, possibly because of its archaic traditions and beliefs, participation in deforestation, political watchdog role, and inability to guide geopolitics and foreign trade influence. The government and NGOs do not seem to work together. Still, they are at par in the graph because both do not consider religion important in planning and responding to the environmental crisis. For women, the church plays various roles in ecological preservation. It opens for opportunities to participate in church interventions, form solidarity groups, and hope for a better environment that might reduce their vulnerability to various environmental challenges.

This possibly explains why the church features lowly in most interventions led by government and non-governmental organizations. While most respondents generally accept that religion, particularly church, is vital in society, the indecisive character of the youth on religious matters demonstrated in the graph undoubtedly indicates how secularism is firmly digging deep into society's faith and moral fabric through the youth.

Question 4 In your opinion, is the church or any other religious beliefs relevant in either the cause and/or the solution to the environmental challenge?

This question explores how religious beliefs and values influenced climate change, spiritual perspectives, and practices contributing to the crisis. The inquiry examines how religious themes such as beliefs in the afterlife, kingdom motif, divine intervention, grace and love of God, end-time events, stewardship, authority, dominance, harmony, Ubuntu, and eschatology shaped people’s perspectives

Coded themes

- Religious teaching: Scripture, liturgy, worship, subdue the Earth, imago Dei, power, domination doctrines,
- Policy: government and NGOs as custodians, divine occurrences, policy formulation on development, agriculture
- Belief and values: People as God’s image, gender, and discrimination, children are wealth, new life and new Earth, kingdom motif with no poverty, equality, water, and other resources as central to life, preach economic liberation,
- Stewardship failure: Earth keeping, sustainable living, and livelihood, Mother Earth, forest as habitat, migration, diseases
- Times and nature: God’s plan, natural events, punishment for evil-doing, apocalyptic fulfillment, first signs of the last days

The church leaders, Islam and other faith groups, women, and the youth (score between 7 and 9%), suggest the defensive character of the categories that religious teaching, beliefs, traditions are not probably the leading cause of environmental challenges in Malawi. On the part of women and youth show their love for religion, hope, and compliance, which may have enabled them to internalize and normalize exploitation and discrimination in religious institutions. At the same time, the high percentage of other stakeholders such as the business community indicate that they take a more significant role in influencing factors that necessitate environmental degradation. There is a blame game regarding causative factors among stakeholders. Government and civil society are self-appointed custodians of the natural environment and seem to accuse the church and other faiths of influencing environmental challenges. Possibly this could be why the church and faith groups are not present in most documents and discussions of government or civil society’s interventions on ecological degradation and climate change.
Question 5: If the church had a role to play in addressing the problem of environmental degradation in Malawi, what would make its role unique or different from the other institutions in society? The question, in line with objective four, seeks to explore the church’s self-understanding (cf. Conradie, 2008:10) its position in society in the light of “changing landscapes” (cf. Ross eds., et al., 2014) and environmental crisis. The question intends to explore further the role of a missional theological church as it strives to build a resilient “New Earth” (cf. Ruether, 1975).

- Church as a local congregation: Small local numerous voices, small crisis action groups, grassroots afforestation, local level ecological system, and biodiversity restoration
- Church as a worshipping community: Beliefs, values, traditions, Climate change liturgy, environmental crises hermeneutics, Earth keeping sermons, practical-worshiping, faith and life of believers
- Church as a denomination: Break the silence and creed barriers, live a sustainable life, be the exemplary public face, cut on emissions, local intervention programs, flexibility, and multidimensional
- Church as an ecumenical movement: Breaking doctrinal barriers, creating and supporting ecological and biodiversity regeneration groups, lobby for climate change initiatives, faith action groups,
- Church as a parachurch organization: Develop programs and projects on safeguarding the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the Earth

According to the statistics in the pie chart, 25% of participants suggest that the church’s role is not only essential but also unique and diverse in society, while the business community thinks differently. This stand is supported by women (17%) and other faiths, including (15%) Islam. According to percentages on the chart, like the businessmen, the NGOs do not exactly consider the role and position of the church in society as very much unique and vital.

Question 6: If you understand the church as a stakeholder in addressing the environmental issues in Malawi, how important do you think it is compared with other stakeholders? This question reflecting
objectives two and four seek to examine public and self-understanding of the church's role in the environmental crisis in Malawi.

Where (1) Not very important (2) Moderately important (3) Very important (4) Extremely important

Coded themes
- The church, population, and advantages in numbers
- Mission schools, parachurch institutions
- Church radios and other media outlets
- Grassroots presence and direct involvement in daily issues of community
- Translatability, adaptability, accommodative, and contextuality

**Question 6**

The graph shows (65%) self-understanding of importance by the church in society, and the picture is highly supported by women (60) in all regions of the country. This is possibly because religion seems to provide hope for women who, in most cases, are victims of events in the environmental crisis. The NGO and Government seem to acknowledge the church’s existence in the community but not as important as the church understands itself. There are various reasons to be explained in data analysis in the next chapter. The youth always choose the middle path in all graph categories, possibly because they are less informed and customarily excluded.

**Question 7:** Is the issue of environmental degradation ever addressed in your council/church, a local institution, parish, or synod meetings? This question is intended to explore and examine how the churches respond or plan to respond to the environmental crisis in Malawi. Thus, it endeavours to investigate the missional theological response of the mainline churches to the environmental crisis in Malawi. The question based on objective number four and sub-questions three and four is all
concerned with examining the church's availability of resources and capacity to respond to the environmental crisis in Malawi.

Not given attention and address (1), Moderately given attention and address (2), Strongly given attention and address (3), Extremely given attention, and fully addressed (4)

Coded themes

- Church sermons, policies, programs, projects the creation of employment/jobs, strategic plans, and mitigation and coordination, capability, resource availability
- Church teaching, scripture, liturgy, worship, music, stories in creation and degradation
- Church and society, economic programs, resource mobilization, climate mitigation, poverty eradication, unemployment, and ecological systems, and environmental preservation
- Parachurch self-evaluation, gospel presence in parachurch activities, faith-related environmental themes in parachurches
- Church institutions, Christian education, environmentally friendly syllabi, teacher training, gender stereotypes check, and balances

Church leaders (22%) assert they respond in a missional way to the environment through preaching, strategic planning, and offering targeted environmental crisis activities in society. However, the church leaders underlined challenges in institutions where church teaching has been closely monitored and contested since the dawn of multiparty and human rights in Malawi. The youth and women in all country regions go along with the church but associate the churches’ responses with mainly emergency relief and disaster management. That is why in the graph, they are separated, and their scores are interestingly variant. Islam, other faiths, and church are all religions, but because they do not work together either in either ecumenical or ecological partnerships, hence have different perspectives and views about each other. The other categories, especially NGOs and some government officials, expressed dissatisfaction and pointed to different religious beliefs such as giving birth to more children and other traditions leading to degradation and environmental crisis in some parts of Malawi.
Question 8: Are there any environmental degradation initiatives that you know of in the broader district, civil society, and church or your area, parish, or synod? This question reflects on questions one and five. It examines whether the church’s activities and its participation in missio Dei (Stewardship, Diakonia, and Koinonia) enhance partnerships, ecumenism, multidimensional, multisectoral, interdisciplinary approaches in Earth care sustainable living. Does the church ensure the full participation of all other stakeholders in Earth-keeping (preservation) in its effort to slow down and eventually address environmental degradation in Malawi?

Coded themes
- Church and society: Involvement in mitigation, advocacy, and in building resilient, sustainable environments
- Church and government: Inclusion and exclusion, part of the solution, and the problem, policy, consultation, corruption
- Mainline churches: Self-identity and autonomy, institutionalism, Patriarchalism—power, authority, prosperity gospel, paternalism, discrimination, doctrinal, scriptural, androcentrism hermeneutics
- Church and development: Infrastructure development, afforestation, animal, and crop husbandry, use of red bricks, smallholder synthetic farm inputs, and methods

According to the figures in the graph, the church’s efforts to respond to the issue of the environmental crisis are likely facing several challenges. The statistics indicate that although there is knowledge of the church’s involvement in ecological activities, not much is done with other stakeholders. There are challenges of identity, autonomy, and power within the church and between the church on the one hand and institutions, government, and civil society on the other. This challenge occurs even among congregations within the same denomination to respond to ecological degradation and climate change challenges.

Question 9: Have you ever drafted or heard a sermon or public address that refers explicitly to the challenge of environmental crisis? This question is raised in objective four and sub-questions four and
five. It intends to examine whether the church in Malawi understands and responds to their missional calling, specifically regarding the issue of environmental crisis. The question seeks to explore the significance of the church in the public sphere. The church in Malawi constitutes a more significant part of the population and plays a leading role in politics and socio-economic development. The question, therefore, seeks to investigate whether environmental issues receive equal attention as political issues in church in Malawi.

Coded themes

- The teaching—doctrine, dogma and kerygma and environment as the church in missio Dei (Stewardship, Diakonia, Koinonia) and stewardship, partnership, Christian life, and morality
- Earth keeping as Martyria (witness), as missional, theological responsibility, the life of Christians
- Church and sustainable living, water conservation, biodiversity preservation, ecosystem management, deforestation, waste management
- Earth keeping and ecumenism, institutionalism, interdisciplinary, multisectoral

Pie graph

Less than 50% of participants indicated that church leaders and some members of society have drafted and preached to a lesser extent. Some community members asserted that they have not listened to the church's sermon or religious public address concerning the environmental crisis. Occasionally the government or civil society has organized and called the church to participate in the National Day of Prayer and Worship. However, there is no indication in the fieldwork or documents whether the NGOs, government, and other stakeholders have attempted to open for the church or the other way round to plan and work together to face environmental degradation in society.
Question 10: To your knowledge, is the issue of environmental crisis ever discussed in any other forums in your society, in your local church, in your parish, or your synod? If so, what aspects of the crisis are commonly referred to? This question intended to examine how the church and other stakeholders understand themselves, their position, role, and issues in their surroundings and therefore corroborate to respond to such topics, particularly regarding the environmental crisis in Malawi.

Coded themes

- Issues in the crisis: Decreased water table levels, loss of biodiversity, decreased fish catch, water and air pollution, waste damping,
- Aspects of the crisis: Climate change, increased consumerism, overproducing, acidification of land and water, energy crisis, rapid deforestation, habitat degradation
- Factors: Poverty, economic and trade monopoly and liberalization, unemployment, rapid population expansion, geopolitics, freedoms, and human rights, farmland pressure
- Impacts of Crisis: Land and atmosphere warming, devastating droughts and floods, hurricanes and cyclones, heatwaves, the spread of diseases, migration
- Response to crises: Afforestation, waste management, resilient ecosystems, renewable energy efficiency, more green spaces, barefoot infrastructure structural design, sustainable agriculture, reduction in carbon footprint and emissions

Key: Govt = Government, NGOs = Non-Governmental Organisations, Instit = Institutions, Mosq = Islam and other faith

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Coded themes</th>
<th>Church</th>
<th>Society</th>
<th>Govt</th>
<th>NGOs</th>
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<th>Mosq</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious Leaders</td>
<td>Description: Issues in the crisis: Decreased water levels fish catch, loss of biodiversity, water, and air pollution, fish catch, damping, rapid deforestation, habitat degradation, energy crisis</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50</td>
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<td>Christianity</td>
<td>Aspects of the crisis &amp; factor: Climate change, increased consumerism, overproducing, acidification of land and water, Poverty, economic monopoly, unemployment, politics</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>65</td>
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<td>(20)</td>
<td>Impacts: Land &amp; atmosphere warming, droughts and floods, hurricanes, heatwaves, economic pressure, unemployment, the spread of diseases, rapid population expansion</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Response: Afforestation, waste management, resilient ecosystems, renewable energy, more green spaces, barefoot infrastructure structural design, sustainable agriculture</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>55</td>
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<td></td>
<td>45</td>
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<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>57.5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

In the table, 45% of religious leaders claim to have discussed issues of environmental degradation in their various churches, but only 15% of society seems to support it. Contrary to the church’s claims, the table shows that the community gets most environmental discussions from the government and NGOs or parachurch organizations. However, the table indicates that the church gave 57.5% of the environmental discussions
and responses to the environmental crisis. This is worrying because 57.5% of the church’s response may not be enough to respond to the crisis to a significant extent.

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<tr>
<td>Description:</td>
<td>Issues in the crisis: Decreased water levels fish catch, loss of biodiversity, water, and air</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25</td>
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<td>Forestry officers &amp;</td>
<td>Aspects of the crisis: Climate change, increased consumerism, overproducing, acidification of</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>45</td>
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<tr>
<td>District Commissioner/their representatives (20)</td>
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<td>unemployment, the spread of diseases, rapid population expansion</td>
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<td>Response: Afforestation, waste management, resilient ecosystems, renewable energy, more green</td>
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<td>spaces, barefoot infrastructure structural design, sustainable agriculture,</td>
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In the table, affirmation and partnership between the church and other stakeholders in environmental issues are rated at only 30%, government and civil society 10%, government and other institutions 15%. The government considers itself or is regarded as the most crucial stakeholder responding to the environmental crisis in Malawi. The government seems to exclude or distance the NGOs and the church. The government’s environmental efforts in institutions or schools are not enough and are widely expected. This is indicated by an overall score of 50%, which is insufficient for the government's anticipated impact on a critical crisis.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civil society/NGO</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description:</td>
<td>Issues in the crisis: Decreased water levels fish catch, loss of biodiversity, water, and air</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pollution, fish catch, damping, poverty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(20)</td>
<td>Aspects of the crisis: Climate change, increased consumerism, policy, overproducing, acidification</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of land and water, energy crisis, rapid deforestation, habitat degradation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Impacts: Land &amp; atmosphere warming, droughts and floods, hurricanes, heatwaves, economic pressure,</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>unemployment, the spread of diseases, rapid population expansion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Response: Afforestation, waste management, resilient ecosystems, renewable energy, more green spaces, barefoot infrastructure structural design, sustainable agriculture.

The NGO’s working relationship with the church is 30% and between NGO and society is 40%. This implies that the NGOs contribution has a 55% impact on the environmental crises. The NGO’s engagement with society on the ecological crisis is 40%, and its corroborations with the government is 25%. Considering the extent of the crisis, an overall percentage of 50 for the NGO as the response to the environmental crisis in Malawi is a challenge. This is possibly why the challenge of environmental crisis seems to keep increasing in the country.

The youth’s general knowledge of the environmental crisis in Malawi is 55%, and most of this knowledge is obtained (80%) from the government, NGOs, and very little from the church. This is a severe challenge in sustainable livelihood and considering that the church works with people at the grassroots level. It is a concern because the youth make up most of the country’s population. Moreover, the youths are the future of society and the society of the future. Yet, they seem to be neglected or alienated from the church to respond to the environmental crisis in Malawi.
Aspects of the crisis: Climate change, increased consumerism, overproducing, acidification of land and water, energy crisis, rapid deforestation, habitat degradation

Impacts: Land & atmosphere warming, droughts and floods, hurricanes, heatwaves, economic pressure, unemployment, the spread of diseases, rapid population expansion

Response: Afforestation, waste management, resilient ecosystems, renewable energy, more green spaces, barefoot infrastructure structural design, sustainable agriculture,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Coded themes</th>
<th>Church</th>
<th>Society</th>
<th>Govt</th>
<th>NGOs</th>
<th>Instit</th>
<th>Mosq</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other faith groups</td>
<td>Issues in the crisis: Decreased water levels fish catch, loss of biodiversity, water, and air pollution, fish catch, damping, poverty</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aspects of the crisis: Climate change, increased consumerism, overproducing, acidification of land and water, energy crisis, rapid deforestation, habitat degradation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Impacts: Land &amp; atmosphere warming, droughts and floods, hurricanes, heatwaves, economic pressure, unemployment, the spread of diseases, rapid population expansion</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Response: Afforestation, waste management, resilient ecosystems, renewable energy, more green spaces, barefoot infrastructure structural design, sustainable agriculture,</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures in the table indicate that the business community receives 25% of the information about the church’s environmental crisis. Therefore, most of what they know about the crisis comes from non-governmental organizations (65%), civil society (60%), and gets to some extent, 45% of his knowledge from the government. Interestingly, there is close contact between the business community and society. The fundamental knowledge (71.25%) shows possible manipulations, which are the benefits that the business community gets from society due to the environmental crisis in Malawi.

The general knowledge of other faith groups regarding the challenge of the environmental crisis in Malawi is 73.75%. According to the cross table, the church contributes 20% of this knowledge, especially disaster relief. Most participants in other faiths acknowledged the church’s efforts to distribute emergency relief to victims of various environmental challenges. Most of the information about the crisis comes from government and
non-governmental organizations. Surprisingly, it is the only category (other religions) without self-praise so far. The 15% of the response to the environmental crisis by the Mosque category here could mean a lack of concern or possibly an attribution of the crisis to natural causes and events in God’s time. The exchange of information or attempt at the environmental partnership between church and mosque (15%), especially in the Eastern region, is more expressive of rivalry between the two faith groups, as each attempt to occupy space, authority, and dominion in society.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Coded themes</th>
<th>Church</th>
<th>Society</th>
<th>Govt</th>
<th>NGOs</th>
<th>Instit</th>
<th>Mosq</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local leaders</td>
<td>Issues in the crisis: Decreased water levels fish catch, loss of biodiversity, water, and air pollution, fish catch, damping,</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twenty Participants</td>
<td>Aspects of the crisis: Climate change, increased consumerism, overproducing, acidification of land and water, energy crisis, rapid deforestation, habitat degradation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Impacts: Land &amp; atmosphere warming, droughts and floods, hurricanes, heatwaves, economic pressure, unemployment, the spread of diseases, rapid population expansion</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Response: Afforestation, waste management, resilient ecosystems, renewable energy, more green spaces, barefoot infrastructure structural design, sustainable agriculture,</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The local leaders’ knowledge of the environmental crisis and its impact on society in Malawi is 72.5%. According to the survey, 30% of this knowledge is obtained from the church’s response to the environmental crisis. In this way, the local leaders’ knowledge of the crisis is gained mainly through institutions, NGOs, and the government. However, local leaders are also informed by primary and secondary schools from the cross table. Most of these schools are run by the government but belong to churches and other religious institutions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Coded themes</th>
<th>Church</th>
<th>Society</th>
<th>Govt</th>
<th>NGOs</th>
<th>Instit</th>
<th>Mosq</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Women</td>
<td>Issues in the crisis: Decreased water levels fish catch, loss of biodiversity, water, and air pollution, fish catch, damping,</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aspects of the crisis: Climate change, increased consumerism, overproducing, acidification of land and water, energy crisis, rapid deforestation, habitat degradation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Twenty Participants

Impacts: Land & atmosphere warming, droughts and floods, hurricanes, heatwaves, economic pressure, unemployment, the spread of diseases, rapid population expansion

Response: Afforestation, waste management, resilient ecosystems, renewable energy, more green spaces, barefoot infrastructure structural design, sustainable agriculture,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire</th>
<th>Coded Themes</th>
<th>Karonga</th>
<th>Nkhata</th>
<th>Lilongwe</th>
<th>Nsanje</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How do the current environmental challenges affect the basic human needs in Malawi?</td>
<td>Essential resources scarcity: Water, clean air, habitat degradation, food, population pressure, overproduction, inapt land, flood, droughts, cyclones</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What are the main factors for Malawi's current critical environmental challenges?</td>
<td>Governance challenges: Multiparty democracy, institutionalism, corruption, geopolitics, materialism, capitalism poverty, corruption, economic</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>72.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The average perception regarding the environmental crisis for women is 65%, which is available from sources other than the church and other faith groups. According to the cross-table, rapid population expansion is one of the factors associated with the environmental crisis. The theme’s total column count and other themes are 50%, which implies that the theme of the population scores fewer points. It is, therefore, surprising that many women have found it very difficult to view population growth as a serious factor in the challenge of the environmental crisis. Although it is claimed that the severity of the environmental impact has hit women and girls the hardest (cf. NEAP, 2007), some suggest that a more prominent family is better. Therefore it is difficult to associate it with environmental degradation. The argument concerning population growth as a factor in environmental degradation is further explored and discussed in chapter six.

4.7.3 Focus/Discussion Groups

Four groups of women interested in conserving ecology were selected from four disadvantaged areas in the four regions of Malawi. Participants were drawn from different religious backgrounds and practices. Each of these groups had ten participants, and in this category, there were forty (40) women. All ten questions from the questionnaire were administered to each of the four groups during the discussion. Responses were then coded, and themes developed as indicated in the table below. The table shows (1) the Karonga district under the leadership of permaculture expert Kenneth Mwakasungula, (2) Nkhata Bay at Sanga under Richard Mwase, (3) Lilongwe under Kanchira Kampandira, government's agricultural technician, and (4) Nsanje under Jamester Langwani Primary School teacher interested in natural resources and natural medicine.
|   | liberalization, unemployment, high cost of living, enormous family source of a wealthy, large family as the source of human power | Missional and ecclesiological theology in safeguarding the integrity of creation, Earth stewardship, institutionalism, ancestral, earth feminization, kingdom motifs, the earth our home, children as a blessing and gift from God, mobilization of society, societal stakeholders (political party, religious group, or any other forum) |     |     |     | 8 | 9 | 10 | 8 | 87.5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3. | Does theology or religion, regarding current environmental challenges, have a role to play, and why or why not? | Religious teaching scripture, liturgy, worship, music, traditions, stewardship, *Diakonia, koinonia, martyria*, Ubuntu, policies on infrastructure development, rapid population growth |     |     |     | 7 | 8 | 7 | 9 | 77.5 |
| 4. | In your opinion, is the church or any other religious beliefs relevant in either the cause and/or the solution to the environmental challenge? | Advantage of the church as a local congregation, a worshiping community, a denomination, as an ecumenical movement, a parachurch, as a life of believers |     |     |     | 9 | 10 | 9 | 9 | 92.5 |
| 5. | If the church had a role to play in addressing the problem of environmental degradation in Malawi, what would make its role unique or different from the other institutions? | Advantage of grassroots population, teaching about children as gifts from God, mission schools, parachurch institutions, church radio/media, sermons, constitutions, canons, strategic plans, resources, capability |     |     |     | 8 | 7 | 10 | 10 | 87.5 |
| 6. | If you understand the church as a stakeholder in addressing the environmental issues in Malawi, how important do you think it is compared with other stakeholders? | Advantages of the church as a local congregation, a worshiping community, a denomination, as an ecumenical movement, a parachurch, as a life of believers |     |     |     | 9 | 10 | 9 | 9 | 92.5 |
| 7. | Is the issue of environmental degradation ever addressed in your council/church, a local institution, parish, or synod meetings? | Aspects of the crisis: Climate change, water, and air pollution, decreased fish catch, waste dumping, acidification land & water, energy crisis, rapid deforestation, habitat degradation |     |     |     | 4 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 40 |
| 8. | Are there any environmental degradation initiatives that you know of in the broader district, civil society, and church or your area, parish, or synod? | Issues in crisis: Land & atmosphere warming, droughts, floods, hurricanes, cyclones, heatwaves, economic pressure, unemployment, diseases spread, population expansion, decreased water levels fish catch, loss of biodiversity, consumerism, overproducing, dumping waste, pandemics, outbreaks |     |     |     | 5 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 50 |
| 9. | Have you ever drafted or heard a sermon or public address that refers explicitly to the challenge of environmental crisis? | Response to crises: stakeholder coordinated effort of afforestation, waste management, resilient ecosystems, renewable energy, more green spaces, barefoot infrastructure structural design, sustainable agriculture, reduction in carbon footprint, and emission |     |     |     | 2 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 30 |
| 10. | To your knowledge, is the issue of environmental crisis ever discussed in any other forums in your society, in your local church, in your parish, or your synod? If so, what aspects of the crisis are commonly referred to? | The political party, religious group, or any other forum: Decreased water table levels, loss of biodiversity, reduced fish catch, water, and air pollution, waste dumping, increased consumerism, inept policies, acidification of land and water, energy crisis, deforestation, droughts, floods, cyclones, heatwaves, deforestation, renewable energy, barefoot structural design, sustainable agriculture, reduction in carbon footprint and emissions |     |     |     | 4 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 32.5 |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | 14.5 | 15.25 | 17.5 | 17.25 | 64.5 |

In the table, 75% of women in all regions indicated that the environmental crisis had exposed society to various challenges related to basic needs. The cross-table also suggests that 87.5% of participants claim that the church’s position in society, role, teaching, and practices has the potential to meet environmental challenges. The women (92.5%) claimed that the church’s role is exercised at the grassroots level, that the church deals with people daily, and that it makes the church unique among different societal stakeholders. However, in terms of current environmental actions, the church has achieved between 30% and 50%, possibly indicating that society still expects more from the church than is currently offered.

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4.7.4 Second Category of Discussion/Focus Group: Interfaith group

This discussion group comprised 120 participants (men and women) split into 12 Focus groups, three in each of the four regions of Malawi. Members came from various communities, adhering to different beliefs and, in most cases, interested in the new developments taking place in their various environments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Coded themes</th>
<th>Northern</th>
<th>Central</th>
<th>Eastern</th>
<th>Southern</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How do the current environmental challenges affect the basic human needs in Malawi?</td>
<td>Essential resources scarcity: Water, clean air, habitat degradation, food, population pressure, inapt land, flood, droughts, cyclones</td>
<td>18 Female, 8 Male</td>
<td>17 Female, 10 Male</td>
<td>16 Female, 12 Male</td>
<td>15 Female, 11 Male</td>
<td>89.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What are the main factors for Malawi's current critical environmental challenges?</td>
<td>Governance challenges: Institutionalism, neo-colonialism, corruption, geopolitics, materialism, capitalism, poverty, corruption, exploitation, unemployment, high cost of living</td>
<td>12 Female, 7 Male</td>
<td>18 Female, 9 Male</td>
<td>15 Female, 12 Male</td>
<td>16 Female, 12 Male</td>
<td>82.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Does theology or religion, regarding current environmental challenges, have a role to play, and why or why not?</td>
<td>Missional and ecclesiological theology in safeguarding the integrity of creation, Earth stewardship, institutionalism, Ancestor worship &amp; Spiritualism, Earth feminization, kingdom motifs</td>
<td>13 Female, 12 Male</td>
<td>18 Female, 11 Male</td>
<td>16 Female, 14 Male</td>
<td>15 Female, 13 Male</td>
<td>93.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. In your opinion, is the church or any other religious beliefs relevant in either the cause and/ or the solution to the environmental challenge?</td>
<td>Religious teaching scripture, liturgy, worship, music, traditions, stewardship, Diakonia, koinonia, martyria, Ubuntu, policies on infrastructure development, rapid population growth</td>
<td>17 Female, 11 Male</td>
<td>12 Female, 12 Male</td>
<td>15 Female, 10 Male</td>
<td>16 Female, 10 Male</td>
<td>94.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. If the church had a role to play in addressing the problem of environmental degradation in Malawi, what would make its role unique or different from the other institutions?</td>
<td>Advantages of the church as a local congregation, a worshiping community, a denomination, as an ecumenical movement, a parachurch, as a life of believers</td>
<td>16 Female, 10 Male</td>
<td>17 Female, 12 Male</td>
<td>16 Female, 11 Male</td>
<td>14 Female, 14 Male</td>
<td>90.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. If you understand the church as a stakeholder in addressing the environmental issues in Malawi, how important do you think it is compared with other stakeholders?</td>
<td>Advantage of grassroots population, mission schools, parachurch institutions, church radio/media, sermons, constitutions, canons, strategic plans, resources, capability</td>
<td>17 Female, 12 Male</td>
<td>16 Female, 10 Male</td>
<td>16 Female, 14 Male</td>
<td>15 Female, 13 Male</td>
<td>94.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Is the issue of environmental degradation ever addressed in your council/church, a local institution, parish, or synod meetings?</td>
<td>Aspects of the crisis: Climate change, water, and air pollution, decreased fish catch, waste dumping, acidification land &amp; water, energy crisis, rapid deforestation, habitat degradation</td>
<td>5 Female, 4 Male</td>
<td>8 Female, 6 Male</td>
<td>9 Female, 5 Male</td>
<td>7 Female, 7 Male</td>
<td>42.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Are there any environmental degradation initiatives that you know of in the broader district, civil society, and church or your area, parish, or synod?</td>
<td>Issues in crisis: Land &amp; atmosphere warming, droughts, floods, hurricanes, cyclones, heatwaves, economic pressure, unemployment, diseases spread, population expansion, decreased water levels fish catch, loss of biodiversity, increased consumerism, overproducing, dumping waste</td>
<td>10 Female, 6 Male</td>
<td>9 Female, 4 Male</td>
<td>10 Female, 8 Male</td>
<td>10 Female, 7 Male</td>
<td>53.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Have you ever drafted or heard a sermon or public address that</td>
<td>Response to crises: stakeholder coordinated effort of afforestation, waste management, resilient ecosystems, renewable energy, more</td>
<td>10 Female, 6 Male</td>
<td>9 Female, 11 Male</td>
<td>5 Female, 8 Male</td>
<td>9 Female, 8 Male</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
refers explicitly to the challenge of environmental crisis?

10. To your knowledge, is the issue of environmental crisis ever discussed in any other forums in your society, in your local church, in your parish, or your synod? If so, what aspects of the crisis are commonly referred to?

| Decreased water table levels, loss of biodiversity, reduced fish catch, water, and air pollution, waste dumping, increased consumerism, acidification of land and water, energy crisis, deforestation, droughts, floods, cyclones, heatwaves, afforestation, renewable energy barefoot structural design, sustainable agriculture, reduction in carbon footprint and emissions |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8 | 4 | 10 | 5 | 11 | 7 | 10 | 5 |
| 10.5 | 7.7 | 11.17 | 7.5 | 10.75 | 8.41 | 10.58 | 8.33 |

The cross table shows that about 75% of men and women across the country claim that there is an ecological crisis that affects the basic needs of humans in many ways. Poverty, hunger, and population growth are not emphasized as main factors by the church and religious leaders. Despite the increase in challenges, church and society still maintain that religion, especially the church, has everything in its power to help humanity deal with the deterioration of the environment successfully. There is a general agreement among all participants, male and female, in this category about the apparent inability of the church to meet the challenges in its hierarchies, worship, practice, and public life. Some people, about 42.5%, claim that they have barely heard a sermon directly related to the challenge of the environmental crisis in their church. More women, especially in the Northern region (11.17%), are active in preserving and know more about the environmental crisis than men. About 94% of the participants in this category suggested that the role and position of the church in society are unique and critical in the challenging of environmental degradation in Malawi.
4.7.5 Semi-structured observation

Ten sites were set up for this exercise and one hundred participants at ten locations, namely; Nkombera hills at Songani in Zomba for natural forest conservation, Nkalo in Machinga for charcoal production, Sungusya in Mangochi for nursery seed preparation, Njereza for natural forest conservation, and tree planting exercise, Mpatamanga in Mwanza for the production of wood energy server local stoves, Chididi in Nsanje for permaculture on Integrated Land Use Designs (ILUD), Mchezi in Lilongwe for local seed conservation and local seed banks, Mganja in Dedza for income diversification from charcoal production to ebony curio production.

The observation for reforestation also took place at Sanga in Nkhata Bay and Kalonga. Participants observed agroforestry as a means of nutrient fixing into the soil and balancing diet for the humans (balance the soil nutrients to balance your food on the table). It should also be noted here that the same participants offered the researcher and research assistants the opportunity to later participate in their activities as set out in the next section.

All questions were asked without reference to the questionnaire. Thus, the questionnaire was summarized considering the main research question and sub-questions (see Chapter 1.6 p.20). We made sure that, no matter what, but the four most important questions were asked to the participants during the observation. This was done to avoid suspicions, as some participants believed that the researcher was a government spy who wanted to report it to the authorities. The fear of spies spread following the Youth Network and Counselling (YONECO), a non-governmental organization.

YONECO is known for its effort to build resilient democratic and healthy communities through advocacy and mitigation to protect women and children. Before our exercise, YONECO had reported several cases of teenage marriage, gender-based violence, rape, and child labour. Therefore, it was considered that the researcher and the assistants were YONECO staff members who were looking for charcoal producers to report to the government.

There was no recording of the events, and note-taking was done after the exercise when all participants were gone. Some of the key questions that guided the observation process were:

1. How do the current environmental challenges affect the basic human needs in Malawi, and what could be the factors?
2. Have the churches been part of the solution or the problem regarding the environmental crisis in Malawi?
3. To your knowledge, is the issue of environmental crisis ever discussed in any other forums in your society, in your local church, in your parish, or your synod? If so, what aspects of the crisis are commonly referred to?
4. To what extent do the mainline churches consider environmental care their responsibility and therefore have a missional policy to ensure a positive environment response to the crisis?

**Coded themes from the response**

- Awareness of the issues in crisis: Loss of biodiversity, decreased fish catch, water and air pollution, waste dumping, acidification of land and water, energy crisis, deforestation, droughts, floods, cyclones, heatwaves, habitat degradation, food scarcity, population pressure
- Factors: corruption, greedy politics, materialism, capitalism, poverty, unemployment, high cost of living, increased consumerism, high cost in agricultural inputs
- Response: afforestation, renewable energy sustainable agriculture, government farm loans, beneficial market prices of farm produce, legislate charcoal production, address internal and foreign trade policies
- Religious role: Prophetic, political watchdog, institutionalism, power and identity, the practice of varying faith beliefs, traditions, teachings, and values, corroboration, ecumenism,

**Bar Graph**

Participants (68.1%) claim that the environmental crisis has affected society, especially people's basic needs in all four regions. Each religion claims it should protect the environment. The church elders assert that the church has and continues to offer missional response dawn from its mandate from the Bible (Gen. 1:28-31). Although individual churches participate in many ways, the graph still suggests that much is still expected of churches by society. It is generally emphasized that corruption, multi-party politics, poverty, corruption, and unemployment have primarily contributed to the ecological challenges. Some participants in various categories hold a different view regarding the rapid population growth as one of the factors in the deterioration of the environment.
4.7.6 Semi-Structured Participant participatory

As indicated earlier, the researcher and research assistants collaborated with participants in ten groups. Questions such as those in the structured observation were asked voluntarily during participation as part of discussions. Participants expected a meeting after working with the research team. But there was no forum, and questions were asked to become part of the activities. For example, to obtain information on the issues in the crisis, the first question in the conversation was reformulated: why would they bother to waste time protecting the natural forest? This question responded to issues in the ecological crisis related to basic human needs. These are the current basic needs affected by declining ecological biodiversity and ecosystem.

Crosstab Key: Nko= Nkombere, Su = Sungusya, Nk = Nkalo, Nj = Njereza, Mp = Mphatamanga, Ch = Chididi, Mc =Mchezi, Mg = Mganja, Sa = Sanga, Ka = Kalonga

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Coded theme</th>
<th>Places/ location</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How do the current environmental challenges affect the basic human needs in Malawi?</td>
<td>Essential resources scarcity: Water, clean air, habitat degradation, food, population pressure, inapt land, flood, droughts, cyclones,</td>
<td>Nko</td>
<td>Su</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. What are the main factors for Malawi's current critical environmental challenges?</td>
<td>Governance challenges: Multiparty, institutionalism, neo-colonialism, corruption, geopolitics, materialism, capitalism poverty, corruption, exploitation, unemployment, high cost of living</td>
<td>Nko</td>
<td>Su</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Does theology or religion, regarding current environmental challenges, have a role to play, and why or why not?</td>
<td>Missional and ecclesiological theology in safeguarding the integrity of creation, Earth stewardship, institutionalism, ancestor worship &amp; spiritualism, Earth feminization, kingdom motifs, the earth our home</td>
<td>Nko</td>
<td>Su</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. In your opinion, is the church or any other religious beliefs relevant in either the cause and or the solution to the environmental challenge?</td>
<td>Religious teaching scripture, liturgy, worship, music, traditions, stewardship, Diakonia, koionisma, martyrta, Ubuntu, policies on infrastructure development, rapid population growth</td>
<td>Nko</td>
<td>Su</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. If the church had a role to play in addressing the problem of environmental degradation in Malawi, what would make its role unique or different from the other institutions?</td>
<td>Advantage of the church as a local congregation, a worshipping community, a denomination, the strength of an ecumenical movement, as parachurch, as a life of believers, institutions</td>
<td>Nko</td>
<td>Su</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. If you understand the church as a stakeholder in addressing the environmental issues in Malawi, how important do you think it is compared with other stakeholders?</td>
<td>Advantage of grassroots population, mission schools, parachurch institutions, church radio/medias, sermons, constitutions, canons, strategic plans, resources, capability</td>
<td>Nko</td>
<td>Su</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Is the issue of environmental degradation ever addressed in your council/church, a local institution, parish, or synod meetings?</td>
<td>Aspects of the crisis: Climate change, water, and air pollution, decreased fish catch, waste damping, acidification land &amp; water, energy crisis, rapid deforestation, habitat degradation</td>
<td>Nko</td>
<td>Su</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Are there any environmental degradation initiatives that you know of in the broader</td>
<td>Issues in crisis: Land &amp; atmosphere warming, droughts, floods, hurricanes, cyclones, heatwaves, economic pressure, unemployment</td>
<td>Nko</td>
<td>Su</td>
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<tr>
<td>District, civil society, and church or your area, parish, or synod?</td>
<td>Diseases spread, population expansion, decreased water levels fish catch, loss of biodiversity, increased consumerism, overproducing, dumping waste</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>9.</strong> Have you ever drafted or heard a sermon or public address that refers explicitly to the challenge of environmental crisis?</td>
<td>Response to crises: stakeholder coordinated effort of afforestation, waste management, resilient ecosystems, renewable energy, more green spaces, barefoot infrastructure structural design, sustainable agriculture, reduction in carbon footprint, and emission</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>10.</strong> To your knowledge, is the issue of environmental crisis ever discussed in any other forums in your society, in your local church, in your parish, or your synod? If so, what aspects of the crisis are commonly referred to?</td>
<td>Decreased water table levels, loss of biodiversity, reduced fish catch, water, and air pollution, waste dumping, increased consumerism, acidification of land and water, energy crisis, deforestation, droughts, floods, cyclones, heatwaves, afforestation, renewable energy barefoot structural design, sustainable agriculture, reduction in carbon footprint and emissions</td>
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<td>44.1</td>
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Many participants indicated a severe change in the weather pattern that manifests in extremely high temperatures on land and the atmosphere. Nearly 67% of participants’ participatory actions mentioned that the change in weather conditions posed challenges in basic human needs. The church is always present, but according to the table, 73% of participants associated corruption in the government and leadership monetary fights in church, causing neglect of important issues, including the environmental crisis. It revealed in the crosstab that the church does not discuss much regarding the crisis in its various missions. There are no clear missional theological policies, plans, and actions to address the causes and challenges of the crisis.

In addition, it is noteworthy that although the purpose of *missio Dei*, of which it is an important participant, the church made no significant efforts in environmental protection and justice. Malawi could build a just environment compared to the church’s witness and prophetic role in politics. Nevertheless, the church leadership in the survey claimed that the church plays a crucial role in society on the environment. This view is supported by most research participants (respondents) in the field, who hold the church highly and identify it with primarily emergency relief and humanitarian support. The business community, government, and the civil find that, to an extent, the church causes environmental crisis through some of its beliefs, values, and traditions. In the table, general society values church contribution in various sectors. Still, it seems to register dissatisfaction and claims that the church should not simply leave the response to an environmental crisis to government and non-governmental organizations for obvious reasons, including corruption, nepotism, and the inability to reach out to grassroots beneficiaries.
4.8 An overview of the research fieldwork

Ten questions were engaged in the field research work posed to respondents in four categories: face-to-face interviewees, discussion groups, focus groups, participant observation, and participatory action. Several follow-up questions were mentioned in the chapter as “questions guiding the research” were involved to clarify or make a point. The research questions were necessary, particularly in observation and participant participatory action. In these two categories, the questionnaire was not administered directly before respondents, and notes had to be taken after the event, as we recalled.

4.9 An overall summary in crosstab

4.9.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent category</th>
<th>Question 1-10 percentage per category</th>
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<td>%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pretesting group</td>
<td>64.2 50 78.5 57.1 64.3 85.7 57.1 35.7 28.5 42.8</td>
<td>56.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face to face interviews</td>
<td>70 64 67.5 38.87 15.9 34.3 35 6.7 23 53.43 37.16</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Women focus group</td>
<td>75 72.5 87.5 77.5 92.5 87.5 40 50 30 32.5 64.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus group</td>
<td>89.16 82.5 93.33 94.16 90.83 94.16 42.5 53.33 55 54.16 74.91</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant observation</td>
<td>34.22</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant participatory Action</td>
<td>67 73 30 32 62 64 33 31 24 25 44.1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>73.07 65.4 70.34 52.13 61.1 70.13 40.2 32.35 31.1 41.38 51.73</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The main task in the fieldwork was an attempt to answer the research question regarding a *missional theological response* of the church to the challenge of the environmental crisis in Malawi. The hypothesis here was that a *missional theological response* of the church to the environmental crisis was enough to deal decisively with environmental challenges. The assumption was that a missional church is people-centered, and its grassroots basis gives it the potential to offer interdisciplinary and multisectoral responses. Therefore, the summary in the crosstab suggests (51.7%) overall participants considered the current church’s initiatives as *missional theological responses*. In a democratic vote, 51 plus percent is a winning mark but closer to failure. What does the remaining 48 plus percentage suggest of the missionality of the church response then? This question is answered in the next chapter.

4.10 The missionality of the church in Malawi

From the fieldwork, individual denominations attempted to respond to the challenge of the environmental crisis and the socio-economic development issues. This is reflected in the ecological and socio-economic development activities of various churches. Individual churches have sought to create awareness, mitigation, and respond in multiple ways to ecological challenges. The church
“offers” programs in education, health care, sanitation, socio-economic responses to reduce poverty to promote environmental justice and democratic institutions. The word “offers” in the discussion, which is really what the church does and is perceived so by the public, is critical for the nature and qualities of a missional theological church response. In other words, the church does it all and is a provider and community the beneficiary of the church missions. Therefore, the church is an institution with a well-established development desk or disaster management department that offers the technical knowledge, interventions, and provisions to the community.

However, the establishment of disaster management, development, and environmental desks at denominational levels shows the degree of commitment and seriousness the church in Malawi has given to the challenge of the environmental crisis. It is also discovered that some of the development programs of the church and many religious institutions are making significant contributions to the environmental crisis. Most mission stations in Malawi are characterized by beautiful Victorian architectural buildings in red bricks and industrial agriculture activities and are mostly surrounded by the natural environment. The red bricks are baked in large ovens and baked by firewood. This implies that different denominations are thus depleting large hectares of natural forests to pursue industrialization and infrastructure development. While interventions are provided, the church offers both the cause and solution to the challenge of environmental crisis.

The fieldwork shows that the church and society are fully aware of the environmental crisis and its consequences. The most critical challenges are land, water, and atmospheric warming, which causes enormous variations in weather conditions and climate changes. The research discloses the potential of the church to reverse the challenges but is limited by denominational polity, identity, power, and authority. The limitations exist even within individual denominations, such as the Anglican, Roman Catholics, the Presbyterians, the Industrial churches, and the Pentecostals across the country. The Roman Catholics possibly offer an organized response to the environmental crisis through the CADECOM established in Malawi’s dioceses. However, each diocese has its mandate and decides how and what to respond to in the crisis.

It is noted that in the study that corroboration, partnership, or affirmation in each other’s attempts to respond to the crisis even within the same denomination is difficult. Ecumenism, koinonia, and interfaith response to an environmental crisis are not considered and are usually neglected in the challenge of ecological crisis. The fieldwork has indicated that there is no proper budget, policy, strategic plan, and documentation regarding the pastoral response to the challenge of environmental degradation at various levels. While other churches have attempted to plan strategically and
organize their environmental action, there is a lack of proper budgeting, practical commitment, and documentation in their response to the challenges in environmental crises.

This challenge of environmental crisis is excellent when it comes to funding and the allocation of appropriate budget to tasks and objectives that deal with building a healthy and resilient ecological system. The expenditure and budgets on the environment are less priority to most churches in Malawi. The church’s response to the challenge of environmental crisis compares sharply to the interventions in the socio-economic and political. The church in Malawi has well-documented and established bodies such as the Cristian Hospitals Association in Malawi (CHAM), the Association of Christian Educators in Malawi (ACEM). These are organized ecumenically and have established partnerships, serious grassroots participation, and detailed documentation.

4.11 Conclusion

The chapter discussed research design and methodologies, mainly stating how methodological triangulation (mixed methods) assisted in collecting data in the field. The collected data were transcribed, coded, and analyzed to present the fieldwork empirically using crosstabs, graphs, and general observations. The implication of the findings and observations suggests the need for a missional theological framework that will respond and take environmental awareness beyond individual denominational practical and doctrinal statements to a more realistic and coordinated commitment that can prioritize the building of the Earth our only home. The current church interventions based on institutionalism and individual denominations may not stop the ever-growing degradation and the challenge of the environmental crisis in Malawi. The government and civil society have attempted to no avail, environmental crises continue, and many Malawians are disturbed in many ways. The next chapter seeks to analyze and discuss the research findings to determine a missional theological response of the church to the church of environmental crisis in Malawi.
Chapter Five

5. A critical analysis and discussion of the research findings

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the research design and methodologies. The data collected in the chapter was processed to obtain the empirical expression of the study. According to the research findings, nearly 52% (see Chapter 4.10 p.173) of the study participants claim that the church in Malawi is attempting a missional theological response to an environmental crisis. However, the challenge of the environmental crisis continues to increase and puts pressure on most poor Malawians (see Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy IMF 2012: 91; cf. Arndt, et al., 2016). Society is aware of the crisis and appreciates the support from the church but expects more.

This chapter deals with a critical analysis and interpretation of the data presented in the previous chapter. Nearly 73% (see Chapter 4 p.173) of the research participants claim hunger, poverty, disease, unemployment, shelter, clean water, air, and health are among the challenges manifested and were related to the deterioration of the environment in Malawi (cf. Malawi Congress Party Manifesto, 2014:66). The research revealed that the challenges are primarily natural but ignited by the relationship between humans and the natural world (cf. Bauer & Scholz, 2015). Religious leaders, however, claimed that they offer a missional theological response to the challenge of environmental crisis.

5.2 A missional theological response to environmental crisis?

The study indicated that nearly 52% of participants claim that the current church’s response to the environmental crisis is missional and theological (see Chapter 4 p.173). But evaluating the everyday activities and operations of the church do not meet the standards, characteristics, and nature of a missional theological church. The church in Malawi is institutionally denominational, ecclesiastically sacramental, structurally hierarchical, patriarchal, and is immersed in power and authority. According to Guder & Barrette, (1998), a missional theological church is aimed at society. In other words, a missional theological church is the church of the people, with the people, by the people, for and through the people.

In contrast, the study reveals that people still view the church as the buildings at the mission stations and institutions. This perception of the mission as the centre is thus confused with the understanding of the term missional. The mission institutions or stations are considered providers of activities - missions, which must be closely linked to missionary societies abroad. This possibly explains why 52% of some Malawians in the study claim that the church is missional and theological.
Consequently, society views the church at the same level of government and civil society as the guardians and protectors of natural resources and the environment. The study reveals that the churches as denominations, on the one hand, do not work together in the preservation and protection of the environment. On the other hand, the church, government, and civil society are barely working together in the environmental crisis in Malawi. Meanwhile, the challenge of environmental crisis continues at an alarming rate.

The beautiful landscapes, nature reserves, and games mentioned by David Livingstone and described in the national anthem in Malawi are slowly disappearing. God has blessed Malawi with thriving flora and fauna, beautiful plateaus, forestry reserves, and national parks. The natural resources of Malawi were indeed part of what God saw as good when God finished the creation of the universe (Gen.1:31). The scenery, the animals and plants, minerals attract local and international visitors, and to some extent, Malawi earns foreign exchange, but natural beauty is slowly being affected.

While the prophetic role, ecumenical effort, and ability of the church to respond to society's socio-economic-political challenges are recognized in the public domain, little is done and known about the church’s public roles and efforts in environmental degradation. According to the study, the church is fully aware that environmental degradation poses several challenges, including disasters, displacement, and property damage. The church is aware that the destruction of wildlife and ecosystems is due to severe deforestation, and some species are now on the verge of extinction (see 4.7. p.151). The study reveals that the environmental crisis in Malawi is causing displacement and migration, forcing other organisms to move near or among people, which is one of how diseases and viruses are spread. Furthermore, the careless and irresponsible disposal of industrial waste has resulted in the pollution of the environment, which in turn led to siltation, the growth of weeds in lakes and rivers, causing the death of some aquatic life.

The study reveals that in the pursuit of development and progress, the beliefs and practices such as those associated with the end times possibly make the church part of the cause of the challenge of the environmental crisis in Malawi (see Chapter 4 p.173). Why should we care about the environment when we know that the world will end anyway? Thus, some believers have concluded that if the environmental crisis is a sign for the last days to do something, it would mean resisting God’s will and plans for the end times. This kind of debate is reflected in the score of almost 52% in terms of the church’s missionality, representing a divided opinion about the church’s response to the challenges of the environmental crisis in Malawi.
However, the church remains an integral part of society that plays essential roles in key areas of life in the community. The study indicates that society expects the church to make more sustainable interventions regarding the environmental crisis. Although the church has played an excellent role in alleviating poverty, hunger, disease and helping the victims of the environmental crisis at the church level, the crisis continues. It simply suggests that the church needs to review its understanding of its missional theological role and response to contextual issues. The church must change from institutional and ecclesiastically rigidness to ecumenism, interdisciplinary, multisectoral, and multidimensional approaches to stop environmental degradation. The church’s response to the challenge of the environmental crisis compares sharply with the response in social, economic, and political areas where the church usually gives an ecumenical voice and action.

Therefore, the church’s marginal role and voice in environmental conservation and protection raise questions about whether it is aware of its obligation and function in the mission regarding the preservation, conservation, and safety of the Earth and its inhabitants. Although half of the study participants claim that the church in Malawi is missional, the gap between people and the mission centres and between the mission centres of one denomination and another, and the gap between all denominations on the one hand and the other stakeholders is clear and continue to increase. According to the hypothesis of this study, the missional theological response of the church can bring all stakeholders together to address the crisis. Thus, only when the church in the true sense of its missionality is indeed the church of society and the society. Interestingly, the church has everything it needs - resources, capacity, and established structures in society that can handle ecological exploitation and domination.

The study discovered that although there is no ecumenism and partnership among denominations, the church is excluded in the plans and actions of civil society and government for the environmental crisis. On their part, churches did not have strategic goals, policy documents, and objectives to deal with the ecological crisis collectively. The study found that in the presence of Scriptural backing, evangelism, stewardship, witness, and service hardly reflected the churches’ ecological and biodiversity preservation plans and actions with other stakeholders.

Although there are doctrines, dogmas, practices, liturgies, worship materials, and prayers regarding creation, the church does not seem to have used them much to teach and practice Christian life to sustain the life of the Earth and its integrity to maintain life on the planet. This is evident in the church’s inability to provide scriptural and prophetic guidance in environmental care in the same way as it does in socio-political direction. The church’s position in society still offers it the advantages to encourage the development of partnerships or networks, interdisciplinary, multisectoral, and multidimensional
approaches. The church’s work and the trust it has acquired in society enable it to ensure that unanimous environmental bodies are merged in action to provide resilient conservation, protection, and promotion of environmental justice.

Subsequently, given the characteristics displayed, it was challenging to refer to the current environmental reactions of the church in Malawi as a *missional theological response*. This is because there is still an increasing impact of the environmental crisis in Malawi. The study argues that a missional theological church needs a multisectoral and interdisciplinary approach, and it needs dialogue, ecumenism, and partnerships to respond effectively to the environmental crisis. Therefore, the current pastoral response to the deterioration of the environment leaves many questions unanswered. The church does not seem to understand its missional theological role in the challenge of environmental crises fully.

The public perception and understanding of the church’s role contrast sharply with the *missional theological church’s role* described by Guder & Barrette. The churches do not understand the interface between *missiones ecclesiae* and environmental care. Therefore, the church seems not to understand fully what the term missional means as it still holds on to the understanding of mission as the visible institution. The current interventions in terms of aid and relief to the victims of crises have taken a central stage instead of preventing the causes of environmental crises. The church possibly fails to occupy its proper position to guide because it is also involved in progress and development, considered in the study as factors of environmental degradation. Thus, the church finds itself in a difficult position as both the causative agent of the problem and the provider of relief and aid as the solution to the challenges it is causing.

The church's current seemingly double standard position in environmental protection and preservation explains why there seems to be silence in the church's synods’ minutes and documents regarding plans and action to deal with the causes of the environmental crisis. By implication, the churches in Malawi, therefore, do not consider themselves an important part and full participant of the mission of God, particularly in environmental care. This possibly weighs heavy not only on the church’s complete responsibility in protecting and preserving the environment and building up of the kingdom but also on the missionality of the church and their main task in *missio Dei*—the salvation of people in the world.

The world's salvation, particularly nature, is essential for all creatures' sustainable living and livelihood—human and nonhuman environments together. The church’s neglect of its missional role in environmental care and the emphasis on relief and aid to the victims of ecological crisis leaves several challenging questions as to whether the church is fully aware of its mandate in God’s mission.
Does the church understand the effects of the crisis on sustainable living and its impact on building the kingdom of God? Does the church understand its missional role and position in God’s mission and, therefore, the advantages of its role and place in society given sustainable and transformational leadership in contextual challenges in society?

5.3 Understanding the missionality and the church’s role in society

When participants in the study were asked whether the church was engaged and to what extent the church realized that it was its role to respond to the contextual issues in society, the quick response was yes. The church was involved. The church elders claimed they offered a missional theological response to the environmental crisis (see Chapter 4 p. 174). When asked to explain what and how missional theological was the church’s response, most began to tell how connected their churches were to their missionaries’ roots and their European or American founding denominations (cf. James, 2018:139). This shows a misconception of the term “missional.” As discussions continued, some church leaders insinuated that the whole missional debate was a new area worth exploring more profoundly. Still, others dismissed it as the usual intellectual contestations in the institutions of high learning.

5.3.1 The church’s self-understanding, its role, and its response to the crisis

The study reveals that some church leaders did not like the term missional for various reasons; that every church was missional when its origins were traced back to the early missionaries. Some church leaders have argued that the term missional is pejorative and meant to despise the major churches as institutional, less filled, or not filled by the Holy Spirit (Interview with Anonymous CCAP Church Leader July 17, 2019). Other participants described the use and meaning of the term missional as mere arrogance by evangelical scholars over the mainline churches. Some participants argued that the usual intellectual discourses arose from time to time in higher education institutions and referred to the same terminologies differently.

However, the missional ontology cannot be a new discussion, nor could it be merely an academic subject, but perhaps a return to the earlier and original discussion of the purpose and mission of the church since the incarnation (cf. Ladies, 2016:52). The ontology and practice of missionality is only a profession that seeks to speak to the purpose of reconciliation (Atonement) in the Old Testament. The sense of reconciliation manifests itself in the incarnation through the saving love in the birth, life, and death of Jesus (cf. Hastings, 2012:225). Through kenotic love, God the Creator and author of mission send the Son, and the Son sends the Holy Spirit to embrace the church and invite it to participate in the salvation of God’s people and the universe.
Thus, in simple language and through interpretation, a missional public face of the church is visible when the church in its true sense is the church of the people, by the people, for the people, and with the people who are together dealing with their contextual issues. Therefore, a missional theological response of the matters in its society is inseparable from the society’s contextual issues. This implies that the ecclesiastical barriers, hierarchies, traditions, and worship will not deter ecumenism, partnership, dialogue on issues dealing with the welfare and life of society.

The purpose of a *missional theological* church is to bring about *missional* plans and action (to work together) on critical matters to achieve a “kingdom” with resilience and abundance. The goal is a kingdom where everyone is responsible for each other, Earth, and creation by promoting justice and fairness. In a *missional response*, the kingdom is a colony of different living and non-living organisms in its biological sense. These organisms are each considered essential enabling factors for the development and achievement of sustainable life and livelihood on the planet (the researcher's interpretation).

The purpose of a *missional* theological, ecclesiastical response is thus shown through inclusive acts of worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry, and service. It is derived from the Great Commandment (Mat. 22:37–40) and the Great Commission (Mat. 28:19–20). Both the Commandment and the Commission are not limited by race, gender, boundaries, wealth and worth of a person, or ethnicity and nationality. The Commandment and the Great Commission fulfill what (John 10:10) about people to have life in its fullness. This is the goal of the Atonement and the purpose for the Incarnation of Jesus (cf. Jenkins, 2013:53).

Thus, in a missional theological church response, God must do the work of salvation, restoration, transformation, and liberation, and the church must testify through its faith and practice (cf. Horton, 2011:244). The Trinity and the church work together through the Incarnation, and the Pentecost, which places the church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to become the mission of Christ as the church belongs to Christ.

However, challenges of tribalism, regionalism, boundary limitations, diverse traditions, and practices have impinged on the missionality of the church. The study discovered that the church in Malawi is still identified or regarded as rigid hierarchical institutions of power and authority (cf. Gopal, 2008:238). The churches and institutions in Malawi are paternal and gender-insensitive. They are closely connected in denominational identities than in ecumenism. Besides being authoritative, the church and its institutions are diverse in liturgical issues, rituals, objectives, and operations. In addition, congregations within the same denomination are operationally disconnected and highly
autonomous, and the church remains with a gap between the church and society (cf. Appiah & Gates Jr., 2005:725). The figures in (Chapter 4 p.157) indicate that the church and its leadership possibly do not fully understand its missional nature and role in society.

5.3.2 The public understanding of the church’s role in society
According to the study's findings, the mainline denominations in Malawi have grassroots strength and participate in various activities in society. Their work in education, health, technical, and agriculture justifies the church’s claims that it provides a *missional theological response* to the environmental crisis. But when asked if their churches at any level had the policy, budget allocation, or ever attempted to assign theological significance and teaching or sermons to the challenges of the environmental crisis, both religious leaders and the community each scored less than 50% (see Chapter 4 p. 163). This represents a divided opinion on understanding the church’s role in society, which could be described as the “middle path” character or indecisive position that is not good in a crisis. However, the community considers the church’s presence, its contribution in development and progress, its provisions of relief and aid, its interventions to issues in the crisis to be necessary and essential, and always expects the church to do more.

Advantageously, the church in Malawi has established structures and capacities that are potential and strategic for a *missional theological response* through various congregations at the local and national levels. The church is well-defined in liturgies, logical order in worship, prayer, witness, and service. The church has managed to relate doctrines, hymns, hierarchies, and well-coordinated guilds for women, men, youth, Sunday schools, and different institutions to fighting diseases, ignorance, and poverty—development and progress.

Contrastingly it is possibly just a few churches in Malawi, particularly the Roman Catholic Church, that have displayed a well-organized response to the environmental crisis. The Roman Catholic Church has detailed documented interventions related to its liturgy, worship, prayer, and some extent, with practice. Other denominations have engaged in what they call interventional programs. Despite the Roman Catholic’s well-documented environmental programs and the other churches’ interventional programs, the challenge of ecological crisis continues to challenge sustainable living and livelihood in Malawi. The current church’s practices contrast the *missional theological* nature, faith, and approach towards environmental degradation in Malawi.

5.3.3 The public perception of the church’s response to the environmental crisis
The public holds the church high in the Malawian society (see Chapter 4.7 p.173). The public recognized the church as an institution to assist the community with providing goals in civilization
and the enlightenment’s various packages of development and progress. Regarding environmental
crisis, the public has a divided perception of the church, and others understand the church as being
fully involved in the environmental crisis. They cite the interventions in providing relief and aid as a
missional response of the church to degradation. Thus, according to the study, Malawians (51.7%) of
the participants suggested that the current church’s environmental crisis interventions in Malawi were
in line with the missional theological responses of the church (see chap. 4 p.173).

The public perception of the church’s response to the environmental crisis in Malawi indicates a
situation of fifty and fifty in percentage. One half, therefore, argues that the church is missional, and
this is based on the visible centres and institutions that provide various services to society. While the
other half still view the church as institutional, they found their argument on the persistence of the
challenges in the environmental crisis and claim the church has not done much yet. Therefore, the
Malawi society expects the church to be as vigilant and active in the environment as in politics. The
Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, the Church of the Central African Presbyterian, and
the Council of Churches in Malawi with a united voice, in 1994, successfully intervened in politics on
behalf of the poor and brought about the necessary changes and transformation in Malawi. But a
similarly united voice and action of the whole church regarding environmental justice, conservation,
and protection is absent or silent.

The study hardly found strategic plans, actions, or documentation regarding the churches’ unity in
responding to ecological and biodiversity preservation and protection. Each denomination has its plans
mostly undocumented and is called interventions responses. Therefore, the term intervention implies
that environmental crisis may not be a serious issue compared to politics, economics, poverty
reduction, education, and primary health, which receive much attention and are highly documented
and given attention.

There is almost total silence regarding the churches’ involvement in environmental preservation and
their causing factors such as geopolitics and international market liberalization. There is no evidence
of the unity of purpose of all denominations in responding to external matters as they do to internal
socioeconomics and politics. Thus, the church has said nothing about natural environmental resources
taken from the country by foreign companies and governments. For example, the church in Malawi
has not said much or responded to the Kayerekera uranium mine in Karonga by Paladin, an Austrian
mining company.

The Kayelekera Uranium Project started in 2007 would be Paladin’s second-largest uranium mine
globally and its second mine in Africa. The mine site is in an area now thickly forested (see the picture
in the appendix). Until its temporary closure in 2019, uranium products at the Kayerekera mine have been excavated and sent outside the country, not for sale but experiments. The church in Malawi has said nothing on this. The church has not responded to the unilateral and concealed trade agreements between the Malawian (lead politicians) and foreign companies whose policy is to plunder the poor of their natural resources and increase environmental degradation. There is no record of either of the church’s attempts even to offer what is often called “church interventions” in mining regulations.

The church’s interventions were examined to engage and appreciate the public perception of the church’s responses to the environmental crisis. The focus was on the failure of the church to recognize the impact of missional theological response to the environment. It was discovered that foreign trade policies in the presence and sometimes with the church's blessing affect the natural environment. The natural environment is the church’s part of the kingdom, which is the central promise of the Gospel and the church's mission. The natural environment is the source of the church’s message of abundant life—life in its fullness which is the purpose for the Incarnation for which Jesus Christ laid down his life. How could the church seem to turn back or remain silent on issues central to its existence?

The public seems to assert that the church in Malawi does not realize how geopolitics and foreign trade policies (given an example of the church’s silence in Kayerekere mines) play a major destructive factor in the deterioration of the environment (see the response in Chapter. 4 p.153). There is no evidence that the church critically examines foreign policies affecting their country’s natural resources and plans to respond to them. For example, Malawi and the Southern African region have rich minerals, but market prices are determined by foreign countries that do not have such minerals. Interestingly, currencies of such mineral developing countries are more robust than those of mineral-rich countries. How does the church expect western money currencies (global north) to be stronger than global south currencies, yet most of such nations (through geopolitics and trade policies looted) or still monopolize the gold market in Africa?

According to the study, the church seems to have not yet noticed the interface between the environment and the national economy, poverty, and environmental degradation (see chap. 4 p.173). The church in Malawi has responded to education goals, diseases, food, development, and progress, but not much has been done regarding national economics in terms of the environment. No church has yet raised questions as to why the strength of local currencies is weak amidst the availability of natural materials (gold) deposits. The church has not yet taken tough economic questions such as how environmental natural resources contribute to the national economy and the strength of its currency.181 Similarly,

181 The church has possibly not yet discovered the connection between strength of the British pound and the US dollar (the printed beautiful papers called money) and gold from the natural environment of Africa. These two currencies get stronger...
there is no evidence that the church realizes that geopolitics, neo-colonialism, and economic monopoly are essential factors in the deterioration of the environment and are factors behind promoting poverty in Malawi.

It appears the church has not yet established a connection between natural resources and geopolitical influence on the instability and promotion of conflicts and violence. The society and church seem not to have discovered that geopolitics promote conditions necessary for the western plundering of natural wealth in many parts of Africa. Nevertheless, the study shows that people still expect the church to respond to issues relating to the degradation of the environment as in the internal socio-economic politics. It seems that the church has the capacity of both human and nonhuman resources to respond to external politics, neo-colonialism, and economic liberalism.

5.4 Analyzing and discussing effects of the environmental factors

The study shows that the international community, the government, and the civil society have deliberately or indecisively taken poverty, unemployment, and rapid population growth as factors of the environmental crisis in Malawi. This discussion is given much attention later in the analysis. But the study reveals that development and progress goals by humans enhanced environmental degradation factors. Thus, the factors are natural, but they are caused by the unfair relationship and domination between human and non-human environments. The study identified deforestation as the main factor in environmental degradation and the crisis. The study also discovered Malawi’s other environmental driving factors: agricultural expansion, tobacco curing, charcoal production, mining, and brick baking. Furthermore, this study reveals that each underlying factor of environmental degradation has several or more related close factors, as shown in the diagrammatic summary below.

The study discloses that the government and civil society dedicate most of their effort to addressing the outcomes instead of their causes. Poverty, food insecurity, and joblessness, low gross domestic product (GDP) is principally the outcomes of the fundamental factors of environmental degradation future high. They pose as factors in themselves to degradation. It is also exposed that the government and NGOs mostly accuse the church of advancing rapid population growth. Yet, population growth is possibly an outcome of a healthy nation with successful development and progress goals outlined in the Millennium Development Goal (see details 5.7.1).
Thus, two things are clear from the discussion of the main factors of environmental degradation and their consequences; first, they all stem from the efforts of the state, civil society, and the church’s plans for the development and advancement of human culture. Secondly, all factors relate to or target the natural environment. Both development and progress have severe impacts on forest cover, land, water, and the atmosphere. These are crucial for the sustainability and the livelihoods of fauna and flora on the planet. Consequently, forest cover, land, water, and atmosphere are essential for developing the self-sufficient kingdom for which the church exists.

Diagrammatic Analysis of crucial factors in development and progress and their effects

Adjacent to the key (development and progress) factors, the study highlighted several other close factors and effects, namely, economic, demographic, policy, and governance on the one hand and religion, culture, and spirituality on the other. The discussion on demographics attracted wider attention because those mostly in rural areas and some in the urban contended the government and the civil society’s claims that rapid demographic growth caused degradation and poverty. Generally, many participants believed that the factors of environmental degradation and their proximate effects affected basic human needs.

The average study response percentage on how the factors and their proximate affected basic human needs are 74.8% (see Chapter 4 p.145). The church and society understand how environmental degradation factors influence basic needs. The church and society understand that these factors lead to severe challenges in ecological degradation, including soil erosion, siltation, floods, droughts, and
many other challenges annually. These factors mainly affect the agricultural industry, which is the backbone of the economy in Malawi.

The community and the church understand that the economy of Malawi is entirely based on the agriculture sector. That means that any challenges in the agriculture sector do not only derail national efforts for food security and economy, rather defeat the church’s goal for abundance and fullness of life. However, despite this knowledge, the church’s effort to respond to the environmental crisis remains astounding in contrast to how the church responds to the socio-political challenges in Malawi. The study wonders if the low-profile response is due to the church’s total involvement and commitment to achieving the development and progress goals, which are vital to the causes of environmental degradation and crisis.

5.4.1 Natural factors causing the environmental crisis

While the government, the civil society, and others in the study held different views on the causes of the challenge of environmental crisis, many participants assert that human activities aggravated most of the natural disasters. Natural disasters are the most adverse events after disturbing Earth’s biological processes (Chauhan, 2018:26). They are caused by various phenomena such as soil erosion, seismic activity, tectonic movements, extreme heat, air pressure, and ocean currents (Ayyam et al., 2019:178). Natural events cause natural hazards that destroy life, displace property and organisms from their original place (Newton, 2019:211).

Some catastrophic natural events occur once or after more years in a period but have lasting consequences and impacts. Malawi has had severe weather conditions since 2007 with natural disasters. Natural disasters generally constitute an emergency and usually require immediate intervention due to their incredible impact on progress, particularly people's health and safety (Chan, 2017:62). In the study, Malawian society is aware of the church’s response to the emergencies caused by natural disasters. However, there is not much to be found in the church's plans, policies, testimony, work, and stewardship in the long term, other than emergencies and relief. This reflects a sense of guilt as the church exacerbates natural factors that cause disasters, particularly as it seeks to implement socio-economic goals through various activities in the community.

5.4.2 The human factor and the ever-increasing environmental degradation

The human species seems to be approaching a critical threshold where there is no longer the ability to influence the reversal of the ever-increasing global warming, climate change, and the annual environmental crises (see Bernard & Semmler, 2014:150). Global warming is caused by greenhouse gases coming from human activity. The current “warming” conditions seem to display similar
descriptions as in the Great Tribulation in the Bible (signs of the end times). The conditions suggest the re-emergence of scientifically described conditions that ended the rule of dinosaurs on the planet (cf. Barr, 2017:5). Many church leaders do not understand the current extreme heat and fire hazard conditions concerning the Great Tribulation.

Although environmental degradation is a severe case, the study found that not many churches or church leadership prepared people by what the various texts of the Scriptures stated about environmental protection and preservation. There was no evidence of teaching or sermon directly offered concerning the weather changes in the same way church provides to the socio-political challenges in the country. There is no evidence in the church records or plans to work or possibly use science findings or the related scriptural narratives to provide a well-organized multisectoral response to current environmental challenges. Congruently, the lack of pastoral capacity to influence positive and sustainable environmental changes in Malawi is also confronted by economic constraints, poverty, the corruption that affect basic human needs. In addition to all the environmental challenges, the increase in population growth (close to twenty million) is another possible factor (the National Statistics Office, 2018).

The church continues to promote progress and development in the same way as the capitalist, colonialist, imperialist, and patriarchy did while claiming that it is the church of the people that provides a missional theological response to contextual issues in society in Malawi. Ecological challenges are increasing; environmentalists have raised a red flag over the uncontrolled consumption of fossil fuels and the use of non-renewable resources (cf. The Oriental Economist, 1968: 1288). Surprisingly, no record is found of the church joining hands with the scientists on their environmental sentiment. There hardly appeared any responses in the church given the scientist’s observations through sermons, worship, prayer, and witness in action, except the National Day of Prayer. The National Day of Prayer is considered only when disaster - drought or floods strikes the nation and affects basic human needs.

5.4.3 The basic human needs and environmental crisis in Malawi

In answering the first question, the study found that the church has always been concerned and responded positively to various issues to ensure that society is given the opportunity and capacity to meet its basic needs. The church has addressed issues in society related to the environmental crisis, namely water, food, and habitat. In schools and mission centres, the church provided better accommodation constructed with red brick infrastructure, agricultural inputs such as hybrid seeds, synthetic chemicals, fertilizers, and pesticides to deal with weeds and pests. The church has supported the fishing industry in many ways by providing boats and nets to increase fishing. However, most of
these interventions are related to environmental challenges like acidification, erosion, sludge, deforestation, emissions, overfishing, and warming.

There is no evidence that the church’s support for basic needs in industrial development measured the pressure and impact of its initiatives on the environment. In the process of responding to the basic needs of the church, for example, there are indications of economic pressures and environmental challenges, such as the marketing challenges, trade monopoly, unemployment, poverty, cheap labour, migration, trade, gender-based violence, and rapid population growth (cf. Towards Vision 2020 in Malawi, 1998: 3; cf. Werner, & Jeglitzka, 2016). The study shows that women and children are exploited and expected to produce cheap labour in various industries, particularly agriculture. Thus, agriculture facilitates uncontrolled and unprotected movement of youth and women, unfair trade, domination, internal and external migration.

Nevertheless, there was evidence of the church’s understanding of the challenges and issues associated with the environmental crisis caused by the church’s intentions to respond to it. Several challenges occurred as the church attempted to respond to the needs of society related to agriculture, economics, health, and technical services. Thus, individual denominations or parachurch organizations had intervention programs to respond to environmental challenges, but each in their ways.

Previous studies indicated that many rural Malawians are economically challenged. Out of the total rural population of Malawi, 57% are financially poor (Footitt et al., 2020: 129). The rural majority percentage compares sharply with 17% of the working class of the urban (Footitt et al., 2020) and creates an economic gap between the rural and the working-class population. In general, the country is hit by severe poverty, illiteracy levels, diseases, and poverty. Malawi is also challenged with illiteracy, unemployment, and harsh weather conditions (cf. Bangura 2010).

The church’s education, health, and agricultural responses have remained focused on addressing the long-term issues of poverty, ignorance, disease, and provision of relief aid to victims of natural disasters. There is no evidence that the church ever evaluated its response to determine why the country was still subjected to ecological crises. No records show the church’s concern about why the government struggled under severe disasters and poverty and was constantly dependent on foreign aid, let alone support from western nations with “so little” in terms of their countries' wealth of natural resources.
5.4.4 Church as part of the problem and solution to the crisis

Most of the causes of the environmental crisis are related to the legacy of the colonial church, colonial and postcolonial governments in their greedy pursuit of economic and social progress and development goals in Malawi. The church in Malawi is also a contributor to environmental degradation. The church has institutions and centres with magnificent western architectural styles that mostly use red bricks baked in kilns using firewood, and all such buildings are roofed using hardwood. The mission station communities occupy large acres of open land for homes, school blocks, and mission animal and crop farms.

The missionary churches and the government activities all strove for socio-economic progress in the community. Most of the activities in development and progress depended on natural resources. Thus, in the pursuit of progress and development, the economic activities of the church and government-enforced local people to systemically engage in exploiting the natural environment. In the study, some participants claimed they were involved in deforestation to get income “ndalama zotukulira pa khomo ndi zogulira chakudya” (money for domestic development and buying food). Food is thus one of the basic human needs under physiological need in Maslow’s theory of human needs (see Maslow, 1973), of which no human being can survive without it.

Food is fundamental to the extent that it affects society’s religiosity, spirituality, and political life (see Banik & Chinsinga, 2016:122). In politics, food is used to lure the poor and the needy to vote for them. Thus, food ensures resiliency and abundance in society and is a political campaign tool. Politicians who promise food in their campaign to hold a political office, whether through the provision of or subsidies in agricultural inputs, are likely to draw many votes for themselves (cf. Pinstrup-Andersen, 2015:113; Hickey, et al., 2019:237). Individual churches or denominations would gain many followers if they provided food or means for procuring more and better food for the members.

182 In the famous July 2020 re-election campaign, Malawians may have voted for Lazarus Chakwera of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP), who is himself a prominent pastor, and Saulosi Claus Chilima of the United Transformation Movement (UTM), who is himself a devout Roman Catholic, in the Tonse Alliance, because they promised drastic subsidies for fertilizers. The two promised to reduce the price per bag of 50 kg of fertilizer from K20,000 to K4500. Initially, subsidies were not to vote, but to improve agricultural production, reduce food insecurity and other food-related challenges (cf. Toulmin, et al., 2012: 234). Chakwera and Chilima, both devout Christians, oriented and immersed in an industrial farming and advanced by scientific agricultural techniques, had no idea for missional theological alternatives they might have acquired from their church back to offer to the Malawians regarding the cultivation of more and better food (for more and better food, see Bayley & Nyika, 2011). The politicization of food in Malawi, continues after the first agricultural subsidy project (Starter Pack) by Bakili Muluzi in 1998 (see Levy, 2005: 30). Muluzi is a devout Muslim whose faith is also due in large part to the legacy of foreign Arab missions in Malawi. Bakili’s Islamic background, a religion whose goals such as those of Christianity encouraged the exploitation of the natural environment, played a role in the deterioration of the environment. Many smallholder farmers received some of the synthetic farm inputs. Amidst subsidies government offered under Muluzi, the agricultural industry however was challenged by market price liberalisation. Following the privatisation of parastatal organisations there was retrenchment and those who lost jobs diversified sources of income to natural resources.
By implication, the procurement of more food (food security) by both government and churches led to several environmental consequences, including market liberalization, privatization, and provision of synthetic inputs spread across Malawi, affected the environment, and enhanced degradation. Some smallholder farmers who did not have land opened new crop fields in the protected areas and in the highlands where soil erosion is high. The eroded topsoil from such newly opened farmlands with high contents of synthetic fertilizers and chemicals improved the growth of dangerous weeds (namasupuni) for the first time in the lakes and rivers in Malawi. Besides environmental degradation, agricultural subsidy programs in churches and government have been faced several challenges, including corruption, tribalism, regionalism, and nepotism.

However, the agricultural subsidy programs have helped local farmers to some extent by using industrial farming methods to achieve domestic food availability but far from bumper yields. Subsequent presidential candidates and incumbents sought to create their models of agricultural starter packs. Like the previous subsidies, these were not necessarily designed to combat food insecurity or feed the rapidly growing population but rather carefully designed to win people’s votes. The agricultural methodologies and practices farmers have applied are essential factors for the deterioration of the environment.

The church supported such agricultural, industrial farming methodologies and, together with the government, condemned the traditional farming methods as inferior and primitive (Interviews July 17, 2020). The church and government did not realize that food security is not as crucial as food sovereignty, which is acquired only by balancing the health of ecology to balance the availability and continuous provision of health and better food.

5.5 Other drivers and impact of environment degradation

The study identifies four primary factors of the environmental degradation that Malawi experiences, namely; rapid population growth, unemployment, poverty, and hunger (see Chapter 4.7.2 p.149), and failure to attach the value cost and market price to the natural environment products by state, church, and the public in their pursuit of development and progress (cf. Pearce & Moran, 2013). These factors have impacted the land water and atmosphere through deforestation, soil erosion, pollution, sedimentation, drought, floods, and extreme warming weather conditions. The church in Malawi is aware that the attempt to create the wellbeing of society through development and progress has enhanced economic liberalization and capitalism (cf. Eisenstein, 1979).

Following the factors mentioned above, Malawi has experienced an acute scarcity of basic needs such as clean water, clean air, permanent habitat, and food. The effects of the crisis on basic human needs,
particularly the essential needs related to agriculture, have affected the market prices of the essential commodities. Thus, leaving the market of critical agricultural items in the hands of traders and business people who are highly connected to individual powerful and wealthy politicians. Therefore, politicians and businesspeople have become the ones controlling the market prices of essential basic needs of society. Markets are usually critical to the regulation of the economy in capitalism and always for the benefit of the elite, wealthy people whose interest is to make more profit by exploiting the poor (cf. the Road to Selfdom by Hayek & Caldwell, 2014).

Correspondingly, government and traders usually form capitalist economic and political coordination. They formulated policies to achieve development and market liberalization goals (cf. Persons, 2003:91). But development, progress, and liberalism have perpetuated poverty, inequalities, and domination, all of which are factors of environmental crisis (see Copeland, 2019:5; cf. UN Dept. of Economic & Social Affairs, 2006; 2010; 2020). The church and government have in one way or another been coerced by external market regulation whose aim is to maintain the status quo and increase their power, authority, and domination over the poor people and their natural resources (cf. Le Billon, 2014; Roe et al., 2009; Mattei, & Nader, 2008:133; Johnson & Carling1886:27). The church in Malawi, based on its interventions, has, therefore, over the years, continued to support “Neo-liberal economics, globalization and in the process consequently enhanced poverty, inequalities, domination and ecological destruction (cf. Cole, 2010:49; Gupta, 2008:295).

Neo-economic market monopoly and liberalization worsened during the multiparty democratic era. Many participants associate poverty and degradation with the birth of multiparty in Malawi. Therefore, market liberalization has widened the gap between the rich and the poor and made societies less resilient (cf. Biswas, 2007:53; Kirton & Maclaren, 2018:225). The economic and market liberalization caused social marginalization and vulnerability of women and the youth. Liberalism has also impacted heavily “on people with disabilities and the impoverished” (Kennedy, 2010:147). Thus, the poor have opted to satisfy their basic economic needs from “green gold” (forestry products) as capital income. Therefore, economic and market liberalization in Malawi has adverse impacts on the environment, especially natural resources, which are already facing challenges after industrial development and consumerism (cf. NEAP, 2002:13).

However, over the past two and a half decades of multiparty democracy, the Malawi government and the church have made great strides attempting to reduce or eradicate poverty and improve the well-being of the people (see Englund, 2011:186). The church leadership cited a significant long-term contribution to education, health, agriculture, tertiary, and technical services. Their contribution aimed to develop self-sufficiency—abundant life in families through offering responses to immediate socio-
economic challenges (see Chapter 4.7.5 p.173). However, despite the church’s effort in the socio-economic development and progress in the Malawian society, poverty, diseases, ignorance, corruption, famine remain the country’s main challenges, and correspondingly the church’s long-term contributions cited are the main drivers of environmental crisis.

According to the study, poverty, joblessness, and rapid population growth are associated with environmental degradation, mainly deforestation. However, other participants shared strong views on poverty and population growth as degradation factors. Their strong argument will be elaborated on later in the chapter. Famine—hunger, illiteracy, and lack of civic education have also contributed to environmental degradation and crises. Similarly, corruption, bribery, and nepotism which have eaten the moral fabric of society and religious circles, are also mentioned as severe environmental degradation drivers (cf. Phiri & Ross, 1998:111; Tangri & Mwenda, 2013:20). Poverty is a challenging issue in Malawi, with equally economically severe implications on sustainable living and livelihoods of the marginalized of society (cf. Mlenga 2016:21).

The government, civil society, and parastatal organizations often maintain that sustainable management of natural resources integrated into national policy is drawn up to benefit vulnerable groups (Poverty Reduction Strategy 2009:11). It is further claimed that planning and budgetary processes to ensure effective management of the environment and natural resources are put in place to benefit the poor (cf. Zeleza-Manda et al., 2011:3). On the other hand, the parachurch institutions and the church interventions (missional response) are meant to fulfill the gospel promise of attaining an entire life (John 10:10). While such claims by both church and government still stand, the challenge of poverty, equality, discrimination, economic monopoly, and exploitation remain severe threats to the ecosystem and ecological biodiversity.

5.5.1 Natural resources, the sole source of trade and business capital

The environmental crisis in Malawi is also affected by trade and business activities dependent on nature as the source of capital. Business and trade policies that favour the wealthy elite affect the ecological system and the biodiversity of the natural environment. The poor are forced to exploit a source of capital for their natural resources thus. At the same time, nature plays an essential role as the source of “capital” but is not assigned with much value in the economy and market among most low-income families in Malawi (cf. Flournoy & Driesen, 2010:99).

The pursuit of basic survival needs for the individuals or families and at society’s level has led to wanton cutting down trees with less care about environmental degradation consequences. The ecological policies present in Malawi do not spell out the actual economic costs and benefits of the
natural world to the Malawian society. Above all, they emphasize interventions on the outcomes other than dealing with the causes. Moreover, available policies, ownership issues, protection functions, and produced goods are not clearly defined and determined in the government. As a result, natural resource is regarded as a free source of business and trade capital. It is not accessible for everyone but rather a few elites who induce the poor to destroy their environment. After all, these documents are produced by the international societies with economic interests and often deliberately mislead targets to create loopholes that facilitate undetectable looting and plunder over and against fair trade.

Consequently, trade or business, whether domestic or international, is affected by the dynamic oppressive conditions prevalent in the world market on the precious natural resource from the developing countries (cf. Bovet, 1963:110). What traders and business people seem not to consider is that the declined natural environment declines the ability of the ecosystem to sustain conditions for sustainable living and livelihood on the planet Earth. Similarly, it could be deduced that nature as capital, whether domestic or international, is affected by the dynamic trade and business conditions prevalent in the market. Many economic factors affecting ecology are related to trade and business policies. Such policies include high bank charges on loans and low interest on fixed and savings deposits, high tariffs on goods and services, economic recession, and constant inflation (see Stevenson & Phillips, 1977:74). These factors are also affected by internal and external trade policies, geopolitics, and factors related to demographics—population (see Spring 2010:3; Linklater, 2011:29).

Thus, the harm caused by the pursuit of economic resources and capital in business and trade from the natural world has severe environmental impacts, including global warming and climate change. The impact exerts more pressure on the economy and living standards of the poor. Thus, the poor people of the society are responsible for a significant share of the biodiversity losses and the challenges following ecological injustice perpetrated by traders and businesspeople. Therefore, the private and the broader social interests of poor people in society are significantly diverged by superficial traders and businesspeople. These traders and business people do not consider the long-term impact of the natural resource destruction for the sustainable living of the Malawian society (cf. Chenje, 2000:45).

Insincere trade and business policies are thus drafted to increase the interests of poor, local people in misusing forestry products, land, and water resources to be intense, immediate, and focused on (short term but with high turnover). They target food, fuel, cropland, energy, transport, cell phone tariff, water bills for domestic use, high school fees, high medical bills. Usually, They hike the cost of agricultural inputs (cf. Biswas, 2007:105). But how these affect lives in the long term deliberately receives little attention and care. The poor do (often unknowingly) incur almost any social cost and permit the immediate exploitation of their natural resources to sustain their primary livelihood.
The selfish interests of economic exploiters such as the Timber mongers, Agro-dealers, commercial farmers, politicians, business people, and others who exploit the Malawian enhance severe degradation in the Forest Ranges and National Parks, Wildlife, Grasslands, and Water Resources. These natural environments are very important for the functioning of the ecosystem and biodiversity, but their degradation is driven more by immediate profiteering considerations. The exploiters (some of whom are not all are religious people) never consider the need for resilient biodiversity for the benefit of the entire society and the country our only home on the planet (cf. Gudger & Barker 1995:15; King, 2013:18). The exploiters for selfish interests of making high profits in trade and business order life for the poor in such a way that views existence as a once-for-all event that must be fully lived before it comes to an end.

5.5.2 Free trade, market price liberalization, and the environmental crisis

Respondents cite trade liberalization as a factor that led to the Malawian relaxing with environmental standards (see Chapter 3.12.4 p.126). Participants argued that free trade and market liberalization gave people the freedom to mark prices, free choice of business, free initial raw material from natural resources as capital (cf. Management Association, Information Resources, 2018: 1416).

Congruently, the study found that charcoal producers, for example, support free trade and market liberalization because they provide accessible sources of capital income. Charcoal producers and timber sawyers claim that trade liberalization is good because people can produce goods with a comparative advantage. However, free trade seems to have not assisted Malawian society. They are all losing the life-saving natural environment, which is greatly incomparable to free trade and market liberalization benefits.

The charcoal producer and the sawyer do not consider that free trade and market liberalization have increased consumerism, carbon footprint, and emission besides environmental degradation. Free trade and market liberalization have failed to work for economic equity between the poor and the middle-class people in Malawi (cf. Paine et al., 2011:35). The poor still cannot determine the price of their commodities, including their capital's value in natural resources.

Above all, free trade has enabled the poor’s labour and resources plunder by traders and corrupt politicians (cf. Lancaster & Walls, 2018:553). The study discovered that the monetary gains of rubber plantations in Nkhata Bay have been going to some political leaders and not to the society around the
rubber tree plantation (cf. Ellis & Freeman, 2004:280). The Uranium mine at Kayelekera in the Northern region made politicians' money. Malawi timber attracted the international market for its high quality and lower price, but for the benefit of a few solid politicians and their parties (see Mkandawire 2007:7).

5.5.3 Policies, rights, freedoms, and environmental crisis

Historic documents available in the public domain indicate the church’s role to provide checks and balances in the political leadership of the Malawi society since colonial times. What remains a challenge in the church’s role is possibly the aspect of a watchdog instead of partnership with the government and civil society institutions in desirable stewardship management of resources and the development equitable enhancing socio-economic policies.

Malawi’s socio-political development since 1964 is classified into three phases. The first was characterized by relatively rapid economic and socio-political influence (well supported by the colonial church) based on colonial development policy to enrich home countries (see African Digest, Vol.8, 1960:84). The second phase was economic liberalization, partially supported by the church as watchdogs. In this phase, political leaders deliberately created a gap between politics and religion. The religious society could no longer address underlying structural problems and did not avert the decline in the environment and per capita incomes (cf. Graybill & Thompson, 1998:183; Molony & 2017:297). The third phase corresponded to the dawn of multiparty, where the church faced secularism, pluralism, prosperity gospel, freedoms, and human rights. The third phase ushered challenges around governance, economic crises, severe environmental degradation, pandemics, outbreaks, and a steep decline in most development goals indicators (see United Nations Development Programme, 2005:20).

At the end of 2004, Malawi’s natural resources reserves were possibly at the edge of collapse (NEAP, 2007). Apart from the deterioration in the macro-economy, the density of the rural population, patterns of land-use, and environmental degradation increased (see the response for question 8 in cross tab Chapter 4 p.157). The absence of productivity-enhancing measures in smallholder agriculture (the lack of extension farm agriculture technicians) continued to be a particularly grave concern. Human rights were advocated highly in the multiparty era, which condemned the past one-party dictatorship but enhanced freedom and human right with less or no responsibilities (see Milazi et al., 2002:93).


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Council of Churches attempted to provide watchdog services. Individual church denominations such as the Roman Catholics also issued several pastoral letters. Before the birth of the National Initiative for Civic Education (the church initiative that is secular and independent), there were no religious-led institutions to monitor and guide citizens on the democratization processes. Thus, society interpreted multiparty freedom and rights as justification for wanton cutting down natural forest trees and land encroachment (see Bruce, 1998:234). Therefore, democratization has too often been defended and criticized as freedom from previous restraints, not a system where the people rule and have obligations and rights.

Despite varied interpretations and justifications given to the democratization process, there are still signs of political party member alignment (neopatrimonialism). This emanates from colonial and post-colonial legacy concerning loyalty given to political leadership, which affects environmental management (McMichael, 2010:102). Malawians’ attitudes on presidential patronage have been very effective in buying off supporters even when such supporters are involved in severe environmental degradation activities such as charcoal production and illegal mining (cf. Lansford, 2015:1641).

During the fieldwork, the study observed that some party members are diehards, revere political leaders, and are loyal to their parties. At some points, participants would argue, and one would say, “zandale pano ai, msonkhanowu aitanisa ndi abusa, ndi za chalichi izi.” (No politics here, this meeting is called by the reverend, and is about the church). This implies that political parties like churches have remained weakly institutionalized groupings of the followers of personalities based on tribalism, regionalism, nepotism, and biased towards gender (see Phiri Dudwa et al., 2006:72).

5.6 Gender discrimination, exploitation, and environmental crisis

The similarities between environmental degradation and women’s subjugation are the exploitation and domination by androcentrism in society. Mother Earth suffers exploitation for its resources, and yet through her womb (Earth Crust), she delivers and sustains life—flora, and fauna in their various biological and ecological kingdoms. Similarly, the human mother, host in her womb, offers and nurtures life, yet both Mother Earth and Human Mother are subjected to domination and exploitation by society.

184 Literature review has shown that Malawi’s patronage-oriented political system has deep historical and social roots. Colonialism placed elements of a modern state on hierarchical from which common societies are generating powerful legacies (cf. Taiwo, 2010). Such legacies included an ambiguous moral attitude toward laws and administrative rules that required honesty and professionalism in the public service (cf. Englund, 2002 Reddy, 2015). As a result, both government officials and politicians would neglect, and sometimes even supported perpetrators of environmental injustice as an act of protection and to loyal political party members. While that is the case, environmental degradation is growing rapidly and, most often, women and children are the ones distressed the harder with the environmental crisis (see United Nations Development Programme ‘UNDP’, 2017).
The Malawi church is still challenged by gender discrimination and domination challenges. Among all the mainline denominations, only Livingstonia and Blantyre Synod have recently granted women's ordination in the twenty-first century (cf. Fiedler, 2015:75). Women are the majority and play essential religious and economic roles in almost every denomination and group in Malawi, yet they suffer domination and chauvinism (cf. Ross, 2018:71).

The absences of women in decision-making forums of the church and other bodies plunder society with the motherly experience and feel, which could be used in the development of environmental policies considering that women share the same experience with Mother Earth. Correspondingly the study shows a correlation between environmental injustice, exploitation, and gender discrimination in the Malawi society (cf. UN Country Report on Human Rights 2011:364).

Women and children do most of the work or activities connected with the environment and provide cheap labour than men (cf. Dah, 2017). It has been discovered that when inequalities in society increase, environmental injustice also increase, and the victims of inequality are usually the poor, women, and children (cf. Cudworth et al., 2015:2). It was also established that activities carried out by women and children are traditionally closely linked to the exploitation of both the environment, women, and children (cf. Eisenstein, 1979).

In other words, the way the environment is exploited for its raw materials is the way women are dominated and exploited for their labour and violation of their equal rights and existence in church and society. In all four regions of Malawi, women are considered caregiver workers the duties included those related to water, land, forests, and reproduction. Women did work that included home management, cooking, cleaning, and laundry, requiring fetching and hauling of water (cf. Mzumara, 2019:27). Similarly, women and girls spent a significant portion of their time performing subsistence tasks linked to natural resources, such as gathering fuelwood or growing crops to feed their families and nursing the sick (cf. Banda & Lambert, 2018:97).

In all the mainline churches understudy in all the four religions of the country, while women are significant in every aspect of the environment, they are not involved in decision making. When asked to give their view in environmental crisis discussions, women referred to their male participants.

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185 Women have all the capabilities and do more environmental care work than men (cf. Nussbaum & Glover 1995; Dah, 2017:131). The church should be in front to preach about equality of the imago Dei and lead by examples (see Claassens and Klass, 2013:2); Haddad, 2003:155); Gender equality needs to be front and centre in plans and policies to achieve environmental and economic sustainability. The church must challenge gender discrimination if it will succeed in taking part in environmental crisis (cf. Oduoye,1992:115). Such efforts will have the highest returns if women can exercise their collective voice as managers, decision makers, leaders, innovators, and contributors in all aspects of environmental management.
Evidence in documents available in the public sphere suggests women are only influential in implementing policies made by men for everyone (cf. Grear & Grant, 2015:105). The paternal attitude of the government and religious community in Malawi subject women and children not only to discrimination (see Phiri, 2007:168; Longwe, 2019:14; NyaGondwe, 2017:181) but also to serious androcentric exploitation as a source of cheap labour or as slaves (cf. Munthali, 2003:70; Tsoka, 2006:57; Strohbehn & Ulf, 2016:72).

5.6.1 Child labour, early marriages, and environmental crisis,

It is established in the study that children provide cheap labour in the agriculture industry, charcoal production, and in the molding of bricks. It has also been revealed that hard-working boys and girls earn the privilege to be given a spouse at an earlier age as they assure parents that they are responsible enough. However, documents available in the mainline churches indicate that no person under the age of 18 can register for the rite of marriage in church. But the records are silent concerning the age a child can be employed.

The youth and children are considered necessary for working to clean the church premises or sing in the choir children are neglected in many decision-making ranks in the church (Land Use Forum - Volume 2, Issues 1-3 – 1993:23). There is no clear response of the church towards child labour and early marriages. Yet, when family economic responsibility gets tough, an ax to cut down trees for charcoal production is the option. The study discovered that some family members who gave their daughters for early marriages minimized their responsibility due to economic hardship in society (see Chapter 4.5.5 pp.145-146).

Most participants cited reasons for early marriages and child labour, such as poverty, hunger, and high living cost. Parents offered daughters for marriage to boys who worked hard in their parents’ crop fields or those who opened new crop fields by failing huge hectarages of forest (kuswa mphanje). Thus, early marriages like child labour are a direct consequence of poverty and a direct driver of deforestation (see Moni Monthly Magazine - Issues 436-447, 2001:13). In all churches understudy, there were no clear policy or synodical resolutions, missional theological responses to deal with the challenge of early marriages and environmental degradation.

186 Inequality creates a socio-economic gap between men and women which perpetuates what Gouws (2012: 17) terms “...women’s lived experience of poverty.” To that effect, therefore, Nussbaum, (2000:201) asserts “When poverty combines with gender inequality, the result is acute failure of central human capabilities” of men and women to address environmental crisis together.
In Malawi and possibly Southern Africa, the environmental crisis is closely linked to child labour and human trafficking (cf. South, 2017:259). Extreme weather conditions such as floods, droughts, erosion, or any other crises caused by environmental degradation aggravate poverty and hunger in most parts of Malawi (cf. Malaya & Nkhata, 2006:34). The effort, energy, and inputs are wasted in the agriculture industry when drought or floods come when crops and animals are nearly mature and ready for use.

For various reasons, including poverty, children are forced to migrate or give in to traffickers to seek employment to support their families with food and other basic needs (Cf. Dean, 2020:13). Thus, children who live in highly vulnerable areas and are prone to disasters where crop fields are affected are likely forced to work for food for their family’s survival (Tsoka 2006:20; Ochumbo & Lombe, 2016; FAO Country Report, 2019). Because of poverty and hunger, school-age children are forced to assist or engage in charcoal production or sent to the market to sell forestry products for their employers or families (see Chapter 4 p.145).

The study found that farmers whose crops and property are destroyed in rural areas because of environmental crises, cyclones, droughts, floods, and pests remain with no other choice but to send their children away to work (cf. Cherunilam, 2020:318). In Mangochi, Zomba, Dedza Mwanza, and Balaka, parents support children to get passports to work in South Africa or Dubai (see 4.5.5 cross tab p.146). In times of agricultural challenges, conflicts, and other crises exacerbated by environmental crises, child labour or migration can be a response or coping mechanism for some families (Phiri, 2007:147). While Mangochi, Zomba, Dedza Mwanza, and Balaka are placed in Malawi, where the mainline churches are well established, little was evident in the plans and activities available in their documentation to the challenge faced by children. Other churches have programs intended to keep children out of the street and not out of the estates, factories, and forests.

However, no church response has attempted to investigate why children are in the streets or find out what is wrong in the streets. Parents looking for a secure and safer or more food-secure environment other than the street send their children for better, greener pasture abroad in anticipation of a bountiful future for their family (interviews at Njereza in Mangochi, August 2019). The study discovered that girls\textsuperscript{187} and boys seek employment opportunities abroad, and parents are sure that their daughters and sons will be food secure. Employers or traffickers are assured of making money because boys and girls are a source of cheap human power in homesteads and companies within or across borders (cf. Ladan, 2004:191). Children are the future of the church and church of the future, but in all mainline

\textsuperscript{187} Cf. Ngwena et al., 2015:113 states that in Malawian society, the female gender is mostly perceived as 'second class', destined for wifely duties due to gender stereotypes.
churches, one hardly finds documents, plans, or policies towards responding to child labour, trafficking, and migration.

5.6.2 Youth migration and environmental crisis

At the time of the study, there were eleven youthful Anglican congregations in Cape Town, spread in the Diocese of False Bay. Bishop Margaret Virtue and Archdeacon Leslie Adrianse, amazed with the zeal and dedication of such youth and their young families, responded by requesting Malawian clergy studying and working at the University of Stellenbosch to provide a pastoral presence to congregations.

There are many Malawian congregations of the CCAP, the Roman Catholics, and Pentecostals in Cape Town alone. The study found that youth in these congregations were assisted to travel to South Africa when agriculture and fishing industries were no longer yielding good results following environmental degradation. Many youths from Malawi in the Diocese of False Bay receive pastoral care from Bishop Margaret Virtue. But the church in both Malawi and Southern Africa hardly considers migration and trafficking connected to environmental degradation. This is an area that needs a missional theological response of the church.188

Many migrant youths came from districts alongside Lake Malawi, such as Salima, Chitipa, Karonga, Likoma, Mzimba, Nkhatabay, Nkhotakota, Rumphi, Balaka, and Machinga. These districts are prone to various environmental challenges that affect either fisheries or agriculture industries. In some parts of Malawi, cases have been reported about the youth who were promised job opportunities and were forcibly flown overseas, including Saud Arabia, Lebanon, Germany, and America (cf. Mafukidze et al., 2006:268).

The church does not have a specific missional theological response to migrant youths. Studies have shown that trafficking has increased in many parts of Malawi, particularly Rumphi, Nkhatay Bay, Kalonga, Mangochi, Chiradzulo, and Machinga (cf. McCracken, 2012:184). Most cases of human trafficking usually occur in centres of tourism and areas in the aftermath of natural disasters such as cyclones, flooding, earthquakes, and droughts (United Nations FAO, 2016:56). But natural crises are likely to become more intense as land and atmospheric temperatures keep rising. This implies that the youths who are the potential human resource for the country are outside Malawi.

188 Rev Ishayo Anthony a second year PhD student forced to change his research from “Trafficking and Migration to Information and media because his church leadership in Nigeria does not consider trafficking a serious church concern and yet there were numerous youths who came promised for jobs in South Africa (shared at Cloetesville in July 2019).
Migration is not limited to the youth and across borders. Thus, some people have moved from places of origin to migrate to other parts of Malawi under the land reforms program (kuzigulira malo) following various environmental challenges. In other cases, some people have become climate change refugees or climate change migrants in Malawi. These are described as a subset of environmental migrants popularly known in Mangochi as (osamuka aku maTrustee). Several Trustee members at Njereza are from Mulanje and are Roman Catholics or the CCAP. In Mangochi, some of these migrants have joined Anglican or Charismatic and Pentecostal churches found in the proximity of their new home areas.

Although the program of kuzigulira malo was politically motivated (cf. Power, 2010:103; Chinsinga, 2015), those involved claimed they left their former settlements following environmental challenges. They suffered frequent floods, soil erosion, loss of soil fertility, and unpredictable weather conditions (Interviews at Njereza in Mangochi, August 2019). At Njereza and possibly in many other areas, these internal migrants are often accused of deforestation and the destruction of wild animals. However, in the intervention responses of the CCAP, the Roman Catholics, and the Anglicans, one hardly traces any initiatives specifically to address the plight of internal migrants. Internal migrants are those whose ecological activities in pursuit of the natural capital have depleted forests, threatening the environmental system and biodiversity.

5.7 Reproduction, population growth, and environmental crisis,

Given the environmental crisis in Malawi, some respondents constantly raised one factor: the ever-growing population (see Chapter 4 p.165). According to the study's findings, the Government of Malawi, the US International Development Agency (USAID), and many other respondents claim population growth. However, rapid population growth causes poverty, disease, and ignorance, which may not directly cause (children are wealthy) environmental degradation (Chapter 4 p.151).

There is evidence that the population of Malawi is undoubtedly increasing at a rapid rate. The sixth national census of Malawi, which took place from the 3rd to the 23rd of September 2018, estimated Malawi’s population at 17,563,749. The figure showed a rapid increase in population growth of 4,534,251 (34.8%) compared to the 2008 census. The population has risen from about 4 million in 1964 to nearly twenty million in 2020. However, many respondents of the survey, especially women, refused to accept as the whole truth the issue of rapid population growth as a problem. Let alone associate rapid demographic growth with environmental degradation and the crisis.

Participants in rural areas spoke positively about population growth, asserting that children are gifts from God (see Chapter 4 p.151). This was like that among Christians, Muslims, and aZamakolo
(ancestral believers or traditional region). Secondly, in rural areas, participants claimed children are not only the future of society or society of the future, but they are also chuma (wealth). The more you have, the richer one is (see Chapter 4 p.166).

Those in the urban and educated individuals held different views. They advanced economic reasons such as challenges in living cost—scarcity of and prices hikes in basic needs of the family. They cited high medical schemes, school fees, utility bills, and many other things. The NGO and government leaders in the study denigrated the idea (about children as wealth and human power). They ridiculed it as regressive and backward progress and development in modern society.

The idea was rejected mainly and was strongly unsolicited in towns and urban areas. However, population growth as a challenge is a centuries-old debate in the history of development and progress. Thomas Malthus is known for claiming that population growth would suppress the standard of living (cf. Smith, 2015). Philosophers who follow in the footsteps of Plato and Aristotle, like Malthus in reducing population growth, long ago recommended strict population control over birth rates. These philosophers strongly advised that there would be progress and development unless stringent measures were taken to reduce the population (see New York Times, July 13, 2011).

Contrary to the government and the perception of civil society, many Christians in Malawi refuse to associate environmental degradation and the crisis with rapid population growth. There was a solid Christian belief about the population growth as the will and act of God among many Roman Catholics, Muslims, and Traditionalists. This implied that any interventions against population growth were against God’s will. In general, Christians and Muslim missions support the Malawi public health services, including safe motherhood, which are offered in Christian and Muslim hospitals and are firmly against abortion.

The government and most civil society organizations seem to hold Malthus’ population policies that led to the famine and slaughter of millions of people in the world in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (Robertson, 2012). In recent decades, the most critical discussion has been the doctrine of population control and family planning advocated by ecologist Paul Ehrlich (Ehrlich, 1995). Ehrlich warns against overpopulation, arguing that the U.S. government should take domestic strict local population control measures and the Third World countries that received assistance from America (Ehrlich, 1995). It should be noted how strong and fresh this idea is still189 in the USA’s foreign affairs

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189 With the Johnson administration now backing population control, Congress passed the Foreign Assistance Act in 1966, including a provision earmarking funds from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) for population control programs to be implemented abroad. The legislation further directed that all U.S. economic aid to foreign nations be made contingent upon their governments’ willingness to cooperate with State Department desires for the establishment
policy, considering that Ehrlich is the mentor of and regular collaborator with John Holdren, President Obama’s scientific adviser (see The US Congress Senate Report, 2010:19).

5.7.1 Population growth, development, and progress

The anthropocentric, philosophical viewpoint on population growth which is possibly polished and adopted by all the Abrahamic religions in Malawi, is that human beings are central or most significant beings in the universe. This underlies the domination and exploitation of nature by humans on the planet. This is a fundamental belief embedded in many western religions and philosophies as they engaged in missionary to Africa and other parts of the world.

Anthropocentrism regards human beings as separate from and superior to nature and holds that human life has intrinsic values. This simply suggests that other living and nonliving organisms (including animals, plants, minerals, and other natural materials) are merely resources that may justifiably be exploited for the benefit of humankind. This further implies that although churches do not openly proclaim this view, according to the beliefs and practices in anthropocentrism, humankind population growth indeed increases competition in the exploitation of resources.

Thus, Cornucopian philosophers argue that either the projections of resource limitations and population growth are exaggerated or that technology will be developed as necessary to solve future problems of scarcity of resources if population growth is left uncontrolled. The implication of this statement is clear. The population must be controlled to avoid starvation and competition on essential resources. Therefore, when technology seems to fail to arrest resources scarcity, people like Tertullian, Malthus, or Ehrlich take to advise the world to reduce by any means rapid population growth not let too many mouths become a challenge for governments to feed.¹⁹⁰ UNESCO shares this idea that population growth has a negative impact—the depletion of essential resources (UNESCO, 2012:215).

What is not questioned here is the possession and withholding of almost all-natural wealth of resources by a few individuals and nations, particularly those from the western European world—the northern hemisphere over and against the majority world population. Both ENESCO and the early philosophers have argued that if rapid population growth were not checked, too many bodies would need more food,

water, and space for the growing number of people on the planet. Therefore, according to UNESCO, environmental degradation in Malawi may have significantly been caused by a rapid population.

UNESCO further contends that scarcity would enforce sharing too little food, clean water, and other essential resources. The world will be hungrier and poorer, and there will be wars, conflicts, and violence because hungry people are angry persons (cf. Chiras, 2006:135). But what such projections do not consider and realize is that more people would also ensure the presence of deeper thinking and many hands to act (cf. Foran, 2003:99). Historical events testify that population growth has expanded alongside development and improvement since human progress started. This implies that if Malawi keeps pushing for development and progress, the population will rise.

Things have improved in Malawi so that in the next generation, life and health in every step of development and progress changed for the better and possibly necessitated rapid population growth (see Dasgupta, 2009:165). Civilization, progress, and development are packaged together in the *missiones ecclesiae* of the church in colonial, post-colonial, and independent Malawi. No one has ever suggested that the church's missions were aversive and needed to be revisited or changed because they caused rapid population growth.

The implication is that the church's missions in development and progress, particularly in enhancing civilization, participation in public health initiatives, and education, have increased the rapid population growth. Perhaps this explains why civilization, development, and progress easily fit into the framework of Christianity. If that is the case, then - population growth does not only conform to the scriptural texts to subdue and populate the Earth as sea sand but also to the governments, efforts to progress and development. This, therefore, concludes that the state, civil society, religion, and philosophies are to blame for the rapid demographic.

Some Christians, especially of Roman Catholic descent, Muslims, other religions, and traditionalists, vigorously deny that population growth is even a factor in the degradation of the environment in Malawi (see the discussion with Enock Nyalaya below). Population growth increases when healthier deliveries of children outnumber infant mortality and live longer (see Mahoney, 2000:33). For example, in 1920, the life expectancy worldwide was less than 40 years, while in 2020, the life expectancy is almost 75 years.191 In 1920, one in every three children died before the age of five, and by 2020, it is one in every twenty-five worldwide. In 1920, a terrible disease like smallpox killed more

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than 300 million people. Contrastingly, Ebola and Covid-19 together have killed less than three million people, smallpox and polio have entirely been eradicated.\textsuperscript{192}

Regarding poverty, the study participants claim it was a challenge in many ways but not the severe and sole factor in environmental degradation in Malawi. They argue that poverty was great before the arrival of the missionaries and colonists, and yet the environment was better. This argument conforms with other narratives standard literature in the public domain. For instance, around 1920, about 80\% of the world’s population lived in extreme poverty\textsuperscript{193}, but the environment was possibly better than in 2020. By 2020, about 10 percent of the world population lives terribly in extreme poverty, yet the 80\% of poor people who lived in 1920 kept their environment intact.\textsuperscript{194}

Therefore, population growth is an indicator of a healthy society and cannot be a factor for environmental degradation and let alone poverty. The participants argued that population growth in the presence of high technology might not be a challenge rather an advantage (see Pomeranz, 2021). Possibly the challenge in environmental degradation is in the economic monopoly (see Pettinger, 2017). Poverty is an indicator of the inability to share equally the resources prompted by wealthy individuals and the powerful world countries desiring to reduce competition by controlling the access to natural resources, to allow them the freedom to exploit and dominate the use of primary resources before the poor (UN Research Institute Report, 1994:7). Thus, the extreme weather conditions in this era are not caused by population growth but the rich who exploit both the poor and the environment and cause degradation and crises.

5.7.2 The local peoples’ view on rapid population growth

The local Malawian view about population is divided between the learned primarily situated in urban and rural remote areas. However, the study shares the opinion of Mr. Enock Nyalaya, a participant from Mpuypu in Zomba, Eastern Malawi. Mr. Nyalaya grew up in the suburb of Zomba municipality, educated and from a working-class population but shared views with the rural uneducated. Mr. Nyalaya stated that Africa is more significant in natural resources than Europe, China, and the United States of America (US) put together (Interview August 2\textsuperscript{nd} August 2019). The area of Africa is 30.4 million km\(^2\), China is 9.6 million km\(^2\), the size of the US is 9.8 million km\(^2\) and Europe is 10.18

\textsuperscript{192} Although apples and oranges are incomparable, the fight among economic world powers on the origins of the virus, the competition in the production of protective equipment and quick discovery of a vaccine for covid-19 remain mysterious. Cynicism or suspicion may continue to linger around the origins, spread, the vaccine and other events around the disease. Questions might keep rising as to why there is still no vaccine after 300 years of research into the common cold? After 100 years of research on cancer, there is no vaccine, 40 years of research have lapsed, and there is still no vaccine against HIV, how could there be somehow magically a vaccine for covid-19 at high speed?\textsuperscript{193}

million km². Mr. Nyalaya thus, argued that there is more space in Africa alone for all the world’s population.

Mr. Nyalaya further contended that Africa has 1.3 billion inhabitants on its 30 415 875 km², China with 1.4 billion inhabitants on its 9.6 million km², and we are told that Africa is overpopulated, which is why Africa is poor! 195 On the contrary, China has done well on internal and external trade because they have the numbers. Africa is thrice bigger and has fewer in population than America. 196 But America is the leading world economic power. Mr. Nyalaya maintained Africa is not poor because of overpopulation but possibly because of continued geopolitics, unfair trade, corruption enforced by America, China, and Europe as they look for cheaper materials, labour, and market. These wealthy nations plunder human and natural resources from developing countries like Malawi. They supposedly wish all Africans died from Covid-19 to take over the wealth (Interview August 2nd August 2019).

Following Mr. Nyalaya and many others who argued that population was not the source of poverty, unemployment, and, therefore, environmental degradation, the study searched the literature and the internet. The results indicated that Africa has 60% 197 of the world’s arable land; Africa is 90% rich in raw material 198 reserves. Africa has 40% of the world’s gold reserves, and the continent has 33% of the diamond reserve; it is rich in manganese, iron, tin, tungsten, tantalum, platinum, chromium, copper, uranium, silver, beryllium, and titanium, wood, and many other resources. 199 The search revealed that Malawi has new deposits of minerals. These include but are not limited to rare Earth minerals such as limestone and dolomite, coal, and uranium. Malawi has heavy mineral sands, semi-precious gemstones, kaolinitic ceramic clays, bauxite, graphite, gypsum, glass sands, rock phosphates, vermiculite, talc, pyrite/pyrrhotite, and salt. 200 The argument is that how could Malawians be poor, jobless, and how could their environment be subjected to degradation in the presence of such enormous natural wealth?

5.7.3 Joblessness, population growth, poverty, environmental degradation, and the missional church response

Studies focusing on joblessness, poverty, population growth, and inequality took from the backdrop of the church response to the environmental crisis at both the regional and country levels are few and

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197 The figures quote by Mr Nyalaya were verified and compare with internet information found on this site: https://www.euractiv.com/section/development-policy/news/malawi- accessed on [19 November 2019] at Stellenbosch.
far between. However, it is evident in the public domain that the role of the mainline churches in advocacy in support of human rights, democracy, and poverty alleviation has had a positive impact on society.

The relationship between church-related NGOs in Europe, mainly Norwegian Church Aid, and the mainline churches in Malawi for advocacy in good governance is appreciated. Thus, some government officials, parastatals, NGOs have realized the role and effectiveness of the involvement of churches in advocacy, the external linkages, and relationships of the church to other groups to address the issues related to joblessness, population, and poverty and their interface with environmental degradation in society in Malawi.

The analysis of poverty, joblessness, rapid population growth and inequality most often tends to be based on income or consumption expenditure to measure the well-being of only human beings instead of the well-being of the Earth, ecological systems, and its biodiversity. Thus, it is easy to prioritize poverty and population growth interventions above joblessness concerning the environmental crisis. However, the mainline churches in Malawi are creating job opportunities in their parachurch organizations. But there is no evidence that there is a clear policy or goal to address joblessness to reduce the effects of environmental degradation.

There is also no evidence that the working relationship between the church and the government or civil society prioritizes responses to targets to eradicate unemployment as the key to reducing the environmental crisis. Among the main churches or in the ecumenical councils, there are rare goals to be found and standards set to reduce the deterioration of the environment through job creation. Each church or denomination has its initiatives to deal with unemployment. Sen, (1985, 1987) argues that poverty, inequality and possible unemployment, population growth, and environmental degradation should be considered multidimensionally.

The church, government, and civic organizations have also provided unemployment interventions that prepare people for work in a white-collar compared to skills development to create instant jobs and self-employment. So many are trained to wait to take jobs created by the government or business people whose goal is to maximize the Earthly prosperity and profits for themselves. Thus, job creation means producing a workforce for the few rich people in society. Job creation initiatives to reduce poverty are being taken, but there is no corresponding response to reduce the wealth and consumption of the rich. It seems that the gospel remains good news to the poor than to the rich. There is no evidence that the church has plans or programs to respond to the rich or businesspeople to reduce environmental degradation.
5.8 Degradation and religious beliefs—end of the time

Some participants in the study acknowledged the human factor in the environmental crisis, but they held on to the religious narrative about the end time. They perceived environmental crises as God’s time, God’s will, and signs of end times (see Chapter 4 pp. 151;164). Such perception from religious participants implied that the church or anyone could do nothing to stop end-time events. There is scriptural and oral evidence regarding end-time signs in different religions and traditional beliefs. For instance, in Islam (see Quran 18:98-99), in Christianity (see Mat. 24), and end time signs are also mentioned in other religions (cf. Bell, 1968).

The popular narrative of the End-time, also known as the Last Days, Doomsday, or the Eschaton is a future event described variously in the scriptures of several world religions. The End-time narrative describes world events reaching a climax (Firestone, 1990). It is thus clear here that religion is one factor that causes environmental degradation through the belief in the end time. Some people who had intentions to respond to the crisis are quickly discouraged because they cannot respond to natural events since they seem to be working against God. In this way, planting trees to respond to soil erosion, desertification to prevent floods from enhancing carbon filtration would imply averting God’s plans and events in nature, particularly end-time events.

Interestingly, no leader from the mainline churches related the events in the environmental degradation to the signs of the end of the world. However, local religious leaders insinuated that; mainline churches would not speak about the end time because they were comfortable with the Earthly riches. The local leaders further accused the mainline church leadership of hiding the truth about end-time scripture fulfillment because they benefit from international funds for disaster relief.

Correspondingly, church members and church leaders in the study had not heard a sermon or teaching that had been delivered mainly related to the events in the environmental crises as the signs of the end. There is no record in the church that indicated that the relief or disaster responses given to the victims of the extreme weather condition were offered to assist victims of the end time calamities. However, none of the church leaders dismissed the scripture projections of the end time signs, and no missional theological responses for the day of the Lord seem to be offered either. If the current weather events are signs of the end of time, it will surely take many by surprise.

5.8.1 The local worldview, the Abrahamic religion, and end times

Nthawi siitha dziko silitha amatha ndi anthu, (the universe and the time do not end but people). Contrary to the local Malawian world view of time, the Abrahamic religions—Judaism, Christianity,
and Islam present a linear cosmology, with end-time scenarios containing themes of the Age of the Messiah, transformation, and redemption (see Hahne, 2006:120). The Age of the Messiah includes an in-gathering of all believers (Jews and gentiles), the resurrection of the righteous, rapture, hell, and the new world to come. In Islam, the Day of Judgement is preceded by the appearance of the al-Masih al-Dajjal (see Bailey, 2015:94) and followed by the descending of Issa (Jesus), the triumph over false messiah, or the Antichrist, the sun rising from the west and the beginning of the Qiyamah - Judgment Day (see Jaleel, 2015:678).

If the environmental crisis in Malawi is pointing to the end times, then the question still is what the theological response of the church doing about it? So far, there is no record in the public domain or in the church concerning interventions made from a religious point of view specifically to address the end-time issue. However, the predictions of end times are often based on or related to the current events, including the wars and conflicts, outbreaks, and natural phenomena throughout human history (see Festinger & Schachter, 2013; Schachter et al., 2016).

The silence in that Malawi’s mainly Christianity to relate the current events possibly suggests they are not the signs of the end time or guilty of the church enhancing the signs. Regarding end-time predictions, many people were aware that most current events are ignited by human action and could be dealt with by coordinated human action (cf. Kofi Annan, 6 Apr 1998 — 19980416 Report on Africa).

5.8.2 Non-Abrahamic religions, the end time and environmental degradation

It is recorded that the non-Abrahamic religions present in Malawi and elsewhere have more cyclical worldviews, with end-times characterized by decay, redemption, and rebirth (Kuntz, 1992; David, 2015). In most Malawian indigenous traditional religions, the environment, particularly forests and water, is vital for both the living and the dead (cf. Mbiti, 1975:63). Both the living and living dead enforce the preservation of the natural resources, and the elders and ancestors are watchdogs, moved by the belief that the past influences the present (Narratives—Story of Chameleon, Tortoise, and the Creator Interviews at Njereza in Mangochi, 17th July 2019 see below).

Thus, the future or the eschaton is not necessarily the primary concern of most endogenous religions (cf. Mbiti, 1973). In many traditional stories of creation, narratives insinuate that the Creator’s time has no end, the Earth has no lot, but the creature, including people, is the one with the time and a future. Dziko silitha amatha ndi anthu—meaning the universe does not end but people (Interviews Njereza Mangochi 17th July 2019). The traditional narratives of the Yao in Mangochi uphold the eternity of a Creator. The Creator, whose name has no gender, lives in harmony with the creatures,
including Chameleon and Tortoise as some of the early long-living creatures on Earth. Scientifically it has been proven that chameleons, tortoises, and many reptiles have not evolved so much as other species for many generations (see Rand, 1961; Brattstrom, 1974).

Thus, the chameleon and tortoise were with God and will when other species disappeared among Yao. The Earth has no end, the Creator does not die, but the beings have time for their being and must reproduce to keep their population from death. The beings have a rebellious character of self-destruction because their time in life has a span. The Earth and the universe have survived domination from animals and human kingdoms before, but they all ended.

The narrative states that human beings end their own lives through domination. When all human beings are extinguished, the Creator will return to join the remaining faithful populations of other species in various kingdoms. The Chameleons, Tortoise, and other Reptiles shall continue with peace and tranquillity as it was before the two creature beings emerged from the water before they started reproducing to fill the Earth. (Narrated by Ali Kazembe, Mangochi, 19th July 2019).

Among those practicing Hinduism in Malawi, the end time follows the final incarnation of Vishnu riding on a white horse (see Journal of Dharma, Vol.30, 2005:98). It is not sure whether the decay in Hinduism can be compared or linked to the current rapid changes in the atmosphere, land, and water conditions. The world is thus awaiting redemption and rebirth because the decay is already done, and humanity is responsible for decaying the environment. The destruction is intense, so that it is difficult to continue with life if Vishnu does not arrive. What is not clear is whether Vishnu riding on a white horse, dwelling among people on Earth, will restore the environment himself or possibly put to an end era of human beings to allow for regeneration to take place in the absence of human beings—the end of time.

In Buddhism, the Buddhist teachings must first be forgotten after 5,000 years, then follows the turmoil. The Buddhist teaching must be rediscovered by a bodhisattva called Maitreya, after which the world must be destroyed by an extreme hit from seven suns (see Zürcher, 2013). The Earth is currently experiencing turmoil conditions varying from land tremors, cyclones, extreme fire dangers, wildfires, diseases, infections, conflicts, and wars. If the counting of years and the Hindu calendar is the same as the world calendar, then the end time is a little farther from now. The changes in weather and the crisis experienced in this age are possibly just signs of the beginning of the end time.
5.8.3 Science, end time, and the environmental crisis

Although they were not scientists, some government, parastatal, and NGO leaders (trained) dismissed the Abrahamic and non-Abrahamic religious insinuations about current environmental crises as signs of the end times. In science, the end of time and space is an inconclusive discussion. Moreover, the extreme conditions the Earth is currently experiencing are not new to the universe. Severe weather conditions worse than the current one have hit the universe before, and time and space have continued.

The Earth is about 14 billion years old (Kirshner, 2016:13), and due to the extreme conditions, life only started on the planet 3.7 billion years ago (see Weintraub, 2018:3). For more than 160 million years, dinosaurs dominated the Earth (see Beres, 1998:50; Walters & Kissinger, 2014:9). They were so successful that other animal groups only played and occupied secondary roles. Then, 65 million years ago, the dinosaurs (natural justice—the predominant prey is naturally removed) were wiped out by asteroids and disappeared from the Earth forever (see Burgauer, 2001:149; Kolbert, 2014). The principal prey for this era is the human and natural justice is watching. The end of the time of the dominant spice might be coming soon (cf. Resurgence, 2002:24).

Regarding time, temporal finitism speculates that time is finite in the past (cf. Kafatos, 2013). The philosophy of Aristotle states that although space is finite, with only void existing beyond the outermost sphere of the heavens, time was infinite (cf. Grote, 1872:404; Howells & McIntosh, 2020:432). As the development of the concept of the big bang and deep time has improved with the calculation of the estimated age of the Earth, scientific discussions about end times have considered the fate of the universe (see Holder & Mitton, 2013; Teerikorpi, et al., 2020). Theories have usually included the Big rip, Big crunch, Big bounce, and Big freeze or Extreme heat death (cf. Fuller et al., 2017).

Significant in the discussion regarding end times and environmental crisis is that religions and science have concluded that something great is likely to occur in natural events, time, and space. In the study, many participants concluded that events leading up to the end of time for humans and certain species are not going to occur naturally, but after exploitation and dominant character of humans. It is discussed that the Malawians are forced into poverty, unemployment, hunger, and rapid population growth to destroy the natural environment. The human species is greedy, selfish, rebellious, feels superior, proud, and authoritarian in governance and the pursuit of development and progress.

5.9 Governance and the environmental crisis

The study found that environmental degradation had started to increase since 1994. The Malawi government paid attention and drafted several pieces of legislation, including the National
Environmental Policy and the National Environmental Act in 1996 and 1997. This was when the church in Malawi was famous for its prophetic role in advocating for change and multiparty democracy. However, little is found almost in all mainline denominations regarding plans or policies to utilize its prophetic role and position in society towards environment care. So much effort is directed towards political and governance challenges to which the church is famous as only a watchdog.

5.9.1 The government’s androcentrism and environmental crisis
The government, parastatals, and non-governmental organizations documented, implemented, and evaluated environmental degradation, preservation, and protection policies. There is little or no evidence that people at the grassroots level are involved in policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation (see Chapter 4 p.151). In the study, most religious and local leaders claimed that they did not know, or that they may have heard, that there are legislative documents regarding the use, care, and protection of the environment. On the contrary, they knew some laws prevented citizens from using natural resources and wondered why. Natural resources were God’s creation, and all the people were supposed to use and enjoy their benefit.

According to the study, the tendency to think or accept that government and civil society are the guardians and custodians of the natural resources or environment continues to enforce degradation because people see the natural resources belong to the government (see Chapter 4 p.153). This implies that the government should protect its natural resource and not the people in the community. Therefore, the government should also offer biodiversity and ecosystem protection and preservation services. Consequently, the income and benefits of the natural resources are controlled and belong to the government.

The locals, therefore, have virtually nothing to do or say regarding usage, protection, and preservation of the natural environment. These attitudes and practices have endangered the environment, and the essential human basic needs are diminishing because natural resources belong to the government. The government’s efforts to achieve climate change and sustainable development goals are likely to be jeopardized. The church’s missional role in stewardship and care of the Earth and people must come in and bring all stakeholders together for change in attitudes and practices towards the environment.

The study indicates that government officials who took part in the research praised themselves and claimed they provided the necessary response to the environmental crisis in Malawi (see Chapter. 4 p.155). But practically, evidence shows that the environmental problem is critical for one stakeholder to deal with effectively. Thus, the government alone cannot effectively tackle growing environmental challenges in Malawi. Other stakeholders need to be included in efforts to stem the ongoing
deterioration of the environment and create a more sustainable society. Most environmental challenges in Malawi involve socio-economic, political, and religious factors and possibly require a multisectoral approach.

In the study, some of the environmental issues stem from the failure of the government or the inability to eradicate poverty and reduce unemployment (see Chapter 4 p. 156). In the light of the documents available in the public sphere, the government has sought to draw up policies and actions to protect the environment (NEAP, 1997). It has also taken on the responsibility of controlling pollution, providing infrastructure and services essential to health, and ensuring a decent living environment for society (Malawi Environmental Outlook Report 2010). The government has regulated land, water, and natural resources by introducing preventive measures to limit environmental risks (National Land Policy 2002). But in all the government’s efforts, there is hardly any involvement with the other equally important stakeholders such as the church and civil society. In most of these environmental commitments, the government has assumed to plan, organize and execute. Yet, corruption and nepotism have eaten away at the moral structure of some government officials along the process.

5.9.2 The civil society’s chameleon character and environment crisis
There is no working relationship between government and civil society because of their role as watchdog and seemingly policing government. According to the study, civil society is well known for its contribution to ensuring justice, conservation, and protection of the environment (see Chapter 4 p.154). Yet, upon implementing some of the government’s policies, the civil society dismissed the input of religion and local views on environment conservation and protection. While the NGOs in Malawi are doing commendable work, as indicated in the research results, it is noted that there are no clearly defined parameters of affirmation or partnership between the government and civil society in an environmental crisis.

The NGOs could help set the agenda and provide an inclusive perspective on policymaking and implementation. But it is evident in public information that the government in Malawi seeks to actively destroy the non-governmental organizations because they mainly present themselves as opposition bodies to the government (see Makuwira, 2014). The relationship (sinks or swims)201 between the government (ruling parties) and the opposition. Therefore, civil society has never been good, as the government regarded NGOs as evil watchdogs (Nyasulu, 2011). According to Footitt, et al., (2020:131), the government in Malawi recently introduced strict registration measures and high fees for non-governmental organizations. The government is currently working on the NGO Board Act - a

201 See Whytone S. Fole Tang Lixia Thokozani J. Guta in Developing Country Studies www.iiste.org ISSN 2224-607X (Paper) ISSN 2225-0565 (Online) Vol.8, No.4, 2018.
piece of legislation that will disempower the CONGOMA (cf. Lwanda & Chanika, in the Society of Malawi Journal, Vol. 70, no. 1, 2017:19-54). The government seeks to approve the (NGO Council Draft Act 2017-2018) which intends to give more power to the NGO Council, which is directly under its control. If the legislation succeeds, the government will be empowered to appoint members of the NGO Council (cf. Mtawali of Nyasa Times 4 August 2020).

The annual general meeting of NGOs appoints current members of the CONGOMA.

5.9.3 Corruption, transparency, accountability, and the environmental crisis
Malawi as a country stands at a crucial moment in its history, in which mitigation and advocacy around challenges related to the environmental crisis require transparency and accountability (cf. Makuwira, 2013:41). Malawi may need local ecological leadership that can take the citizens seriously to create awareness, mitigation, and action to reduce corruption and the damage that corruption has done to the natural environment. The survey conducted by Pelser in 2003 thus indicated that the shared experience of corruption is the third crime most committed after the theft of crops and livestock.

The three main types of corrupt acts are related to employment (29.2%), distribution of food subsidies (18.4%), and policing services (15.1%) (see Pelser, et al., 2005:46). Unemployment and food insecurity are highlighted in the study among the most critical factors in the deterioration of the environment. Unless serious efforts are made to civic education, moral competence, and the dedication of local leaders, corruption has a significant impact on the environmental crisis and governance. In addition to ensuring local leaders' education, morality, and commitment, a more collaborative and inclusive approach to planning, action, monitoring, and evaluation can address the environmental crisis more effectively.

5.9.4 Economic, trade monopoly, exploitation, and the environmental crisis
The study reveals that the business society is active, but its ecological response is mainly channeled where profit is concerned. Since the introduction of multiparty and market liberalization, businesspeople control the economy and price of goods and services primarily to benefit the few elites (cf. Younger, et al., 1999:246). Contrastingly, the Malawi government policy on the environment of 2004 revised in 2014 and 2017 stipulate the importance of economic incentives and empowerment of society. These financial incentives ensure sustainable resource use, conservation, and environmental

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202 To ensure the success of the NGO law, the government has often drawn support from local traditional leaders and some strong women who oppose and treat NGOs and some leaders as non-conformists (cf. Masina of VOA News, December 2018). See https://www.voanews.com/africa/malawi-ngos-protest-amended-ngo-bill accessed on 21 November 2019 at Stellenbosch.
management. Therefore, government departments and local communities should have the right to revenue generated from sustainable utilization of natural resources on public and customary lands.

According to the study, the business sector referred to as the private sector in the environmental policy is the more advantaged of the government’s economic incentives on ecological protection. The private sector has acquired plantations, land, made business agreements with foreign companies to exploit natural resources such as timber and minerals. Still, the benefits do not reach society nor plowed back profit to protect the rapidly degrading environment. It is evident in this study that the regulatory mechanisms that ensure sustainable utilization of natural resources enshrined in the policy are captured by the business community. They are controlling the economy and Malawi’s entire natural resources alone.

5.9.5 Religious institutionalism, androcentrism, and environmental degradation

The study results (57.5%) show the religious leaders’ knowledge and commitment to Earth’s care (see Chapter 4 p.163). Religious leaders from Islam, Traditional religions, Christianity engaged in the research claimed that they had a sacred responsibility and obligation to look after nature. About 56% of the overall research participants, including religious leaders, claim that caring for the Earth is part of their sacred duty and their mission. This is expressed in various religious strong attitudes and values towards the sanctity of nature. It is also articulated through the peoples’ spiritual connection with the land, water, forests, hills, and mountains and the religious theological mandate to exploit plants, animals, and natural resources for various purposes in life. However, despite such deep spiritual knowledge, the church remains divided within itself and with the society where it is placed, and environmental degradation is accelerating high.

Moreover, corruption, nepotism, and tribalism have also seized the helm of the moral integrity of some religious institutions and leadership (cf. Sebahene, 2015). Corruption occurs in the religious leadership and poses serious compliance risks to some of its members to its environmental protection laws. Most religious leaders in all sectors involved with economics, particularly funds, are not spared from the widespread acts of corruption (cf. Chakanza in Religion in Malawi Issue 1-8, 1987:43). In addition, extensive hierarchical systems, paternalistic attitudes of some religious leaders provide a fertile environment for corruption, bribery, and nepotism in religious circles. Corruption thus diverts some church’s attention from offering a prophetic or missional theological response similarly that it renders to the political challenges as to the environmental crisis (cf. Cunningham, 1859:568; Maseko:2008:192; Branson & Warnes, 2014:72; Sebahene, 2017).
While corruption continues to rock the morality of many citizens, the scale of environmental devastation has kept increasing drastically in recent years since 2005. Mostly to blame are anthropogenic or human-generated factors, including deforestation, use of synthetic agricultural inputs, burning fossil fuels like coal and oil, and the excavation of natural resources as a viable source of economic capital in trade and business. Much of these traumatic exploitations of natural resources trace their origins from the early colonial government and the colonial church. Foreign missionaries, in general, did not actively promote the conservation of natural resources. Much of the development and progress activities by all foreign missionaries in Islam and Christianity are closely connected and continue as a lasting theological legacy, still weighing heavy on their missionality regarding the challenge of environmental degradation in Malawi.

5.10 Conclusion

The chapter focused on analyzing and discussing the study’s findings based on understanding the missional theological response to the environmental crisis in Malawi. The main task was to discuss and explore critical areas given the missional theological response of the church to the challenge of the environmental crisis in Malawi. The intention was to understand the leading causes of environmental concern and whether the current church response to the crisis was missional and theological. In other words, the chapter critically analyzed and discussed the contemporary church’s role in either championing or deterring degradation and whether the response was informed by the theories, concepts, and practices of a missional theological church.

It has been challenging to ascertain the missionality of the church in Malawi because the individual established denominations in Malawi are institutional, hierarchical, and authoritative. This is a setback in the church’s engagement in the awareness and mitigation responses to the environmental crisis challenges in Malawi. It is also established that individual congregations within various denominations were freely offering interventions to the environmental crisis. In most of these interventions, the church takes the role of the messiah—provider and society, therefore, expects the institutions of the church to do everything for them. Besides being institutional, denominational, and hierarchical, the church in Malawi is often paternal in terms of governance. Society is thus waiting and looking up to the mission—an institution to help solve their environmental problems.

While it is true that the original nature of the early church in the first century consisted of many and varied congregations sometimes called houses (1 Cor. 12: 12-31), and yet they were mutually living cells of the same group with the same goal—the kingdom. Oden, (2006) emphasizes the complex nature of the church and argues that the church has never been merely a matter of isolated individual entities being converted and voluntarily merged to form autonomous, voluntary organizations of
believers in society. Instead, the body of Christ, proclaimed by the Divine mandate, from the beginning as a corporate contextual social reality. It speaks a lot about the church’s public face, manifestation, and action when it participates in contextual activities. The missionality and theologicality of the church are in its concern for contextual realities. In the next chapter, the study discusses the nature of a missional theological church and how that would assist the institutional church towards responding fully to the challenge of environmental crisis.
Chapter six

6 Towards a missional-theological response to the environmental crisis

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter analyzed and discussed the study’s findings based on the understanding of a *missional theological response* of the church as the road towards successful interventions to the challenge of the environmental crisis in Malawi. The objective of the analysis and discussion was to determine the missionality of the church as it responds to contextual challenges in society. The primary purpose was to understand whether the current missional response to the challenge of the environmental crisis in Malawi, as claimed by the participant in the study, was truly missional and *theological* in nature and practice.

In other words, the chapter examined whether the theories and concepts informed the church’s current response to contextual issues in society of a *missional theological* nature of the church participating in *missio Dei*. Therefore, it was concluded that the church in Malawi was attempting a *missional theological response* to the crisis, but there were still several challenges that needed improvement.

The church was still institutional, and there was a continued disconnection between the church and society. Church centres and mission stations are places of authority and power, and the church is denominational, traditional, strictly hierarchical, and paternal.

This chapter discusses the current claims of the church’s missionality and how it responds to the challenge of the environmental crisis. Given the study’s hypothesis, a *missional theological response* is possibly effective in addressing the challenge of the environmental crisis. However, the challenge of the environmental crisis continues, exerting economic and social pressure on the Malawians, particularly in rural areas. According to the study results, a little over fifty percent of the participants (51.7%) argue that the church’s response to the current environmental crisis is *missional theological*.

The implication here is that the current missionality of the church’s response to the environmental crisis is challenged. The chapter discusses what needs to be done towards a successful *missional theological response* of the church that can effectively address the environmental crisis, as claimed in the hypothesis of this study.

6.2 Exploring the missionality of the church in Malawi

According to the results of the study analysis and discussion in the language of Paul and considering principles of a *missional theological response* to the environmental crisis, the church in Malawi is not hot or cold. As the environmental situation escalates, 51.7% of people still say the church is missional-theological in response to contextual issues. Therefore, this part of chapter six intends to reflect on
and justify the outcome of missionality demands by briefly presenting the current public face of the main churches and one other earlier denomination in Malawi, the Zambezi Industrial Mission. The Zambezi mission was chosen from the beginning because its formation is as old as any other three so-called mainline churches—Anglican, Roman Catholic, and the Presbyterian church. AS THE NAME SUGGESTS, the ZIM contribution to industrial farming is of great importance in this study.

6.2.1 The missionality and structure of the Anglican Church in Malawi

The Anglican Church in Malawi (ACM) reveals a strong network of congregations called stations at the local level. The church has official desks for environmental response (field trip and interviews July 2019). In terms of worship, the Anglican Church is a community of highly rigid ecclesiastical institutions of hierarchical, paternal, power, and authority, based on a tradition of high church worship and rigid sacerdotal priesthood (Tracts of the Anglican Fathers Vol. 3, 1842:147; Hutton, 1879:226). At the national level as a denomination, individual dioceses in the ACM are still identified with specific jurisdictional boundaries with autonomy, authority, and independence. Ecumenically, each diocese is a member of the Malawian Council of Churches and, to an extent, works with other church councils such as the Evangelical Council of Churches and the Episcopal Conference of Malawi.

The entire Anglican community in Malawi still defines and maintains the overarching goals in the legacy of the 1861 mission to Magomero - to civilize, train, transform and introduce legalized trade to the Malawians (cf. Transafrican Journal of History Vol.1, 1993:203; White, 1989). The mission headquarters has become a place for corporate life and prayer with offices, centres, schools, and hospitals that are paternal and hierarchical in structure (cf. White, 1989:93). Therefore, the religious practices hardly reflect the daily life of its believers, and members still look up to the mission and the centres in all aspects of life and still regard the mission as the provider of services and goods to the receiving individuals (group discussion summary and interviews-July 2019).

The church continues to offer transformational programs in progress, development, various interventions to the individual and the community. This manifestation of the church contrasts sharply with the manifestation of a missional church. A missional church is a community of God’s people in the society of God that defines and organizes its life around its real purpose of being an agent of God’s mission to save people and all of creation (cf. Guder & Barrett, 1998).

A missional church maintains that all people attempt to live ‘together in harmony with the environment as God’s people in a fallen and ever-changing world. Therefore, missional church members attempt to witness God’s abundant and resilient kingdom for the world around them (cf. Guder & Barrett,
1998; van Gelder, 2007; Goheen, 2011). In simple terms, the Anglican Church lacks some of the essential characteristics of a missional church.

6.2.2 The missionality of the Church of Central African Presbyterian

The Church of Central African Presbyterian (CCAP) consists of the synods of Blantyre, Livingstonia, Nkhoma Harare, and Lundazi (see Cox & Haar, 2003:147; Bwalya, 2018:14). Consequently, the CCAP diversity in all the three synods in Malawi and the other two in Lundazi, Zambia, and Harare, Zimbabwe, in different ways poses several challenges in the mission of the church in society (see Munyenyembe, 2019). At the local level, the CCAP covers many parts in all four regions of the country and enjoys the benefits of the contributions of local church structures such as councils, local assemblies, local groups such as the Mvano, (women’s union) youth movements, different local ministries, various church infrastructure and local church government (cf. Schoffeleers, 1999; McCracken, 2008).

The CCAP responds to religious issues through its liturgy, worship, prayers, and congregational music. The CCAP falls within the Reformed traditions and emphasizes the pulpit--preaching (see The Presbyterian Survey Vol.63, 1973: 13). The liturgy is well organized, music and prayers follow according to an order that is loosely formulated, but with reverence and zeal as it flows during worship (see American Presbyterians, Vol. 74, No. 3, 1996: 157-170). The liturgy is scaled down into the hands and control of the preacher on the pulpit (see Report of the Proceedings of the First Judge, 1877:320).

The focus on the Word on the pulpit thus draws attention to worship in many matters, including politics, socio-economic, development, stewardship, and many other aspects of life. The ecclesiastical structure of the CCAP displays a public face with its leaders as public figures (see Walsh et al., 2004:61; Smit & Conradie, 2007:72; Grundlingh, 2017:85). The CCAP is already an ecumenical organization because members of different traditional backgrounds form it. Additionally, the CCAP as a denomination is a stalwart of the Council of Churches in Malawi.

Each of the CCAP synods has the power to enter an ecumenical partnership with other denominations (cf. Hendriks, 2004:117). One example of a lasting ecumenical collaboration is the Blantyre Synod and the Upper Shire Anglican Diocese from the early 1960s through the Chilema Ecumenical Training and Conference Centre. The Anglicans and the CCAPs have long trained their clergy together at Zomba Theological College (the researcher is a product of such an ecumenical endeavour).

Like many other Protestant churches, the practice of mission is hardly displayed in the lives of individual believers because they expect the institutional church for missions for the people. There is
a gap between churches within the general synod, local synod on the one hand, between the community and the whole CCAP as an institution, congregation, and parochial level. Unity of purpose is a severe setback for the CCAP effort to provide a missional theological, pastoral response to the environmental crisis in Malawi.

6.2.3 The missionality of the Roman Catholic Church in Malawi

The Roman Catholic Church is one well-organized denomination involved in a series of socio-economic development activities in Malawi. The study found that Roman Catholics have a well-developed system and church structures, documentation, and budget allocations to respond to the contextual issues of society, including the protection of the environment and the conservation of biodiversity in the country (field trip and interviews by researcher).

As a local church, the Roman Catholics have well-established and advanced systems, local leadership, and they involve members in various guilds of men, women, and youth (cf. Sundkler & Steed, 2000). They have well-defined programs in different ministries of the Word and have facilities in various institutions and staff members. They take advantage of the local church networks to provide primarily local solutions to challenges in society (see Heyer, et al., 2008:23). As a denomination in Malawi, the Roman Catholic Church has eight dioceses (see Zagano, 2011). Therefore, the Roman Catholic Church enjoys the benefits of internal unity in diversity. Although all the denominations (dioceses) are autonomous, they operate under the Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM), whose secretariat is in Lilongwe (ECM Strategic Plan 2018-2022).

The church’s teaching and prayer life are well connected and bring all participants together in the church’s sacramental and liturgical life (Barron, 2011:84). The sacramental life is the primary way all Catholics are brought together in Christian life. It is claimed that liturgy sustains and brings together the Roman Catholic communities, thus promoting a godly life for all believers. According to believers, Jesus is the Lord, only through the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Barron, 2011). The Catholic church life of the local believers is well connected. It enhances the national and international commitments, which are essential to gain international support, including the Pope’s guidance on various interventions.

More than any other denomination, the Roman Catholics are, in a sense, a public face of their church in Malawi. Among Muslims, in some parts of Mangochi, the Yao people call any Christian (aRoma). Any Christian is a member of the Roman Catholic Church (captured during a research tour in July 2019). This indicates the extent of influence of the Roman Catholics in society. Ecumenically, it is recorded that member churches in the early days of the Chilema Ecumenical Centre at Malosa were
the CCAP, the Roman Catholics, Anglicans, and Churches of Christ Gowa mission (see Tengatenga, 2006:90). Eventually, the Roman Catholics established their centres and withdrew from the ecumenical community at Chilena. It is also recorded that in the 1970s, the Anglicans, after the closure of their St John’s Seminary in Lusaka, trained their clergy together with the Roman Catholics at Kachebere Major Seminary in Mchinji (Mugambi et al., 1982:37).

However, Roman Catholic unity with the other denominations is no longer the case in Malawi (cf. Walls & Collins, 2017; Candia, 2004:111). They write their pastoral letters to fulfill their prophetic role in Malawi's socio-economic and political life (see Religion in Malawi Issue 8., 1998:28). However, within the Roman Catholic community, each diocese is independent with its strategies to meet contextual challenges (see Reijnaerts et al., 2019:483). The autonomy and ecumenical failure of dioceses possibly stem from the legacy of the Roman Catholic missionary movement that first spread Roman Catholicism in Malawi.

Historically the missionary movement (the White Fathers) that evangelized Malawi was born in the context of the colonial expansion of the nineteenth-century era of imperial progress (McCracken, 2012: 107). The White Fathers were characterized by rivalry and disputes with the Protestant missions (cf. Mbaya, 2006; Lamport, 2018:884). It is evident that the Roman Catholic Church still strongly views the other denominations as Protestants. Apart from the internal autonomy, the Roman Catholic Church is hardly in partnership with the Protestants and barely addresses the contextual issues with any other denomination (see Bogonko, 1982).

6.2.4 The missionality of the other churches in Malawi

The Malawian Council of Churches (MCC) brings together many denominations, and this is the potential that remains untapped for a multidimensional approach to environmental degradation in Malawi. However, each of the denominations in the MCC remains autonomous and executes the development and progress plan individually. The Zambezi Industrial Mission (ZIM) is one of the members of the MCC and one of the oldest missionary churches founded by Joseph Booth in 1892 (see chapter 3 p.115).

The ZIM featured the locals' liturgy, worship, prayer, and work ethic at the congregational level. Joseph Booth is one of the missionaries who kept busy with the philosophy and benefits of small local groups’ spiritual and economic development (Joseph & Gillies, 2009: 268). Booth’s fellow missionaries and the colonial government realized and feared the power in the local churches. In addition to spreading the gospel, local congregations provide potent grassroots networks that could
change congregations' thinking, attitudes, and actions towards foreign domination and the economic monopoly of the colonial government and missionaries.

M’passou also states that several other smaller denominations of evangelical belief and fundamental nature were instituted by Joseph Booth (1984:82). Booth thus was not liked by fellow colonial missionaries but is instead an individual who did much to introduce Evangelical Christianity in Malawi (see Matemba, 2003:148; Mijoga, 2001:166). Booth also campaigned to form numerous parachurch movements, including Jehovah’s Witness Watch Tower Foundation (Sundkler & Steed, 2000:481). But the study’s interest here is to analyze the missionality of the ZIM.

The ZIM worked well with people at the local and congregational levels and enhanced indigenous leadership and local responses to contextual issues (see Morris, 2016). The ZIM combined missionary evangelism, medicine, economics, and teaching with agriculture and other commercial activities. The ZIM missionaries believed that European mine owners, planters, and traders treated Africans primarily as a source of cheap manual labour. Industrial missions aimed to assist Africans to live successfully and independently in their society, not as wage earners dependent on European enterprises.

Africans were therefore trained to relate the bible with liberation and work ethics with God’s blessing and abundance (see Langworthy, 1996). Training in new agricultural methods emerged to produce economic crops, besides introducing unique and valuable crafts such as carpentry and clothing, shoes, and technical trades. The mission realized that the European missionaries’ development plan would not promote the Europeans and the indigenous Africans (cf. Randall, 1971:71). Thus, the ZIM opened congregations in many parts of Malawi, emphasizing the industrial and economic independence of the indigenous inhabitants. The missionaries and colonialists often exploited the local population to benefit their steering agents.

As a denomination, worship, liturgy, and the sharing of the Word were reduced to a workaholic spirit, possibly informed by the Reformed work ethic, Joseph Booth (of British descent) might have acquired it in Australia (cf. Taylor, 2008:343). In the early days, the ZIM grew coffee and tobacco, engaged in animal husbandry, shoemaking, repair, tinsmiths, education, and medical services (Pachai, 2007: 122).

Ecumenically, Booth is one missionary who did not find it difficult to identify with Christianity as ecclesiastical institutions (see M’Passou, 1994:82). Booth assisted several other independent missions in Africa, including Nyasa Industrial Mission and Seventh Day Baptist in 1893, the Baptist Industrial Mission in 1895. Apart from ecumenical or inter-church efforts to spread the gospel and socio-economic activities, Booth realized the power in the parachute organizations (see Chakanza & Ross, 1998). Booth, therefore, organized and supported the formation of various parachute schemes with
similar objectives as the inclusion of the African Christian Union, the British Christian Union, and the British African Congress.

Most of Booth’s thinking has helped many Africans to stand up in many ways and face the truths of the church and society (see Anderson, 1999: 131; Matemba, 2003: 132). However, despite Booth’s ecumenical efforts, Zambezi Industrial Mission, like the other missionary churches, remained an independent denomination with rigid structures. In addition to the challenge of denominationalism and institutionalism, the Zambezi Industrial Mission pursued enlightenment goals that continued to contribute to the deterioration of the environment on a larger scale.

From the discussion of the manifestation of the church in Malawi, it can be deduced that the missionality of the church is challenged. The church is not missional and therefore has not been able to tackle the challenge of environmental degradation over the years. In other words, and considering the investigation, the church in Malawi, due to its missionary background, does not offer a missional response to the ever-increasing environmental crisis. According to this study, it is instead a missional theological church response that can fully address the environmental crisis in Malawi.

6.3 Understanding the ecclesiology of a missional theological church

The field of theology that seeks to understand all aspects of the church is ecclesiology (cf. Kärkkäinen, 2002:134; Migliore, 2004:248). The term ecclesiology is derived from the Greek word ecclesia, and this general term refers to an assembly or meeting place appropriated to worship those who come together (see Parsons, 1862:206). There are several aspects and meanings of the term ecclesiology, but this study focuses on the nature and characteristics of the missional ecclesiology within the concept of missio Dei. Thus, our primary concern in this chapter is understanding the missional ecclesiology of environmental degradation. The study examines the church’s response to the ecological crisis in Malawi, given its position and role in society.

6.3.1 Teaching, belief, and practice of a missional church

Besides teaching about the Trinity—God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, the Holy Spirit, missional ecclesiology includes the doctrine of Creation, Humanity, The Fall of humanity Salvation, the Church, Scripture, Angels, Satan, and the Last things (see Hastings, 2012; Frost & Hirsch, 2013; Keifert & Rooms, 2014). A missional church takes part in missio Dei as a mere participant humbled under the Cross and not as an authority or institution of power (see Bosch 2011). The church fulfills the purpose of the Incarnation by turning around the Cross into emancipatory action of a transformative service called Diakonia (see Spindler, 1987:120). Therefore, the teaching of a missional theological church is more concerned with God’s demonstration through the Incarnation of relationships. This implies that
the success of ‘Martyria,’ ‘Koinonia,’ and ‘Diakonia’ as the main contextual tasks (missiones ecclesiae) depends on interrelationships between the church and other stakeholders in a society where it is placed (cf. Bosch, 2011:389).

In other words, the church’s engagement in ‘Martyria,’ ‘Koinonia,’ and ‘Diakonia’ do not make it an authority of power because missio Dei is greater than missiones ecclesiae. In another way, missio Dei is thus the origin and source of missiones-ecclesiae. This means that missiones ecclesiae are only the church’s essential activities in missio Dei, making the church a vital participant in God’s plan for the salvation of the universe and people. Bosch (2011:399) argues that missio Dei deals primarily and ultimately with the Triune God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. God freely opts to work with the church not because God needs assistance but for the sake of demonstrating the importance of partnerships, interdisciplinary, multisectoral approach in the salvation of people and entire God’s creation (cf. Kirk, 1999:31).

In missio Dei, God embraces missiones ecclesiae (religious activities) so that the church activities become the centre for the unity of purpose of all believers to their context. To meet different contexts, the church should be inclusive and multidimensional in nature and approach, always striving to work with others to salvation the entire God’s creation. Therefore, the church must cross barriers of masculinity towards working together with women. The church should cross congregational, denominational, and doctrinal boundaries to render services to everyone in society. The church should tap from various orientations, experiences, talents, faith, skills, disciplines to participate in missio Dei.

Missional theological church response to remain contextual, it must seek to understand and stay within the purpose and meaning of God’s kenotic love (Phil. 2:7-11) manifested in the Incarnation and climaxed in the Cross where the church is constantly rebuked and purified. Bosch states that “missio Dei purifies the missiones ecclesiae in the mission” (cf. 2011:531). Therefore, a successful missional response is likely if the church remains under the Cross of Jesus- a place of humiliation and where it is ever safe and is constantly purified to render contextual responses to the society. Bosch discusses that “the Cross is the place of humiliation and judgment, but it is also a place of refreshment and new birth” (2011:531). Therefore, the church is humbled under the Cross and constantly reminded that it is only a participant equal to any other participant. If the church renders successful environmental stewardship in the challenge of ecological crisis—the mission of God, it will not do so alone but by engaging other stakeholders.
6.3.2 Unity in diversity in a missional theological ecclesiology

Unity in diversity is a missional theological church (cf. Veliath, 1988:54; Oliver, 1997:66; Pope Benedict XVI, 1995). Critics point to ecclesiastical divisions, (denominations) doctrines, traditions, values, and beliefs. In some cases, Christians have to acknowledge shortcomings, and sometimes non-Christ-like conduct of members as border disputes, leadership fights, immorality, nepotism, tribalism, and corruption that often dispel efforts of unity of purpose in the battle against common issues (cf. Cleveland, 2013). But if we look at the bigger picture, the Christian church has always been united on essential points of faith such as the reality of a personal, loving God, salvation in Christ through his death and bodily resurrection, human depravity, and the need for salvation (cf. Schweinitz, 1885:203).

6.3.3 Unity of the church and not of denominations: The visible and invisible church

The church is one, and denominations are a new development in the history of the Christian church (see Chapter 7 p.300). The word unity follows the many denominations that portray Christianity alongside cultural and ethnic identities. The word unity means the state of being “together” in “oneness,” as a whole or the totality of combined parts into one as of the components of a whole (see Tappan, 1844:150; Middleton, 1922:129; Hocking, 2015). Names of denominations (the visible church) will forever remain separate and cannot be synthesized or synchronized into a single unit, but the church is by its nature already synchronized. The denomination that needs unity of purpose here is the invisible church.

The word church refers to both people and the physical and visible building structure. The visible and local church refers to the building structures of individual denominations in society and around the world and the members of those denominations. At the same time, the invisible and universal church refers to all believers everywhere (see Dargan, 1897:34; Stewart, 1997:37; Damazio, 2013). The invisible and universal church is one church, united under the Cross of Jesus Christ, not the many physical structures of denominations we see around and attached sometimes, foreign and unrelated to the contextual realities.

The Universal Church herein does not refer to the physically visible Roman Catholic denomination of the Pentecostal denomination called the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, no. Everyone in the universal church (invisible) is a true believer and devoted follower of Jesus. The reality of the universal church is shown in the conduct, life, witness (testimony), and worship of the believers that reflect Christ’s life and the belief in Christ as their Lord and Saviour. Not only do visible and local churches often offer to save non-believers, but the believers are also imperfect, divided into factions within the same church, resulting in challenges, tensions, and anxieties from the earliest stage in church history. They all need constant purification.
6.3.4 The visibility and missional nature of the early church: Lessons from history

The early Christians had no buildings, at least not in the sense of what we would consider church buildings today, and yet they spread the faith and practice across the Earth (cf. Gangel, 1997:19). First-century Christians were often persecuted and consequently often met secretly in homes. Yet, they increased and followed through the same beliefs and practices transmitted by the apostles (cf. Frend, 2014:499). As the influence of Christianity spread, buildings dedicated to worship were eventually erected into what we know today as churches (cf. Garrett Jr & Richardson, 2019:220). Thus, the compound word ‘early church’ referred primarily to people, not necessarily the house-buildings the first believers met (cf. Brown, 1999:40). Fellowship, worship, and ministry are all done by people and for people, not to or by the church buildings (cf. Peatross, 2003:33).

The church structures facilitate the gathering and unity of God’s people in God’s mission, but those church structures do not fulfill the mission of God (see Hafemann, 2015:37). The visible church is not necessary for the mission of God for the universe and people. An excellent example of the importance of the invisible church in God’s mission is apparent during the worldwide pandemic of covid-19 when the visible church closed entirely. Still, the invisible church (people, the walking church) remained open, did not close. The implication here is that the invisible church is a living church, has a prescribed missional character, is unlimited to the building and space, it is contextual, and responds together with the rest to contextual issues in its society.

6.3.5 The purpose of a missional theological church

The purpose of any church is based on its foundation in worship, fellowship, and evangelism—witness. Worship in the church is directed to God and Christ. It is not about entertaining Christians but intended for the expression of love by praising and glorifying the Creator (see The Christian Science Journal, Vol. 119, Issue, 7-12, 2001:44). The purpose of the church is about building up through the process of teaching and learning of members to enhance and deepen the knowledge about themselves and their Creator (cf. Third Way Magazine Vol. 7, No. 6, June 1984:23). This church role involves raising and nurturing believers, caring, or helping believers to become mature in Christ (see Walls & Ross, 2008:41). To this end, churches have a variety of ministries, such as Bible study, evangelism, stewardship, education, health, etc., in related contextual issues and areas in real life.

Evangelism and stewardship are critical to the purpose of the church. It means reaching out to the “world” with the good news about Jesus (cf. The Living Church Vol. 155, 1962:5). Since people often have questions or doubts about Christ and Christianity, the knowledge of the truth and its defense (apologetics). Besides evangelism and gospel, the church must also show compassion and mercy by
being tangible by helping others understand who they are, their role, and responsibility. The church should maintain good relationships with others, including non-human environments on Earth, our typical home (cf. The Catalyst- Vol. 10., 1980:32). Christ loved and laid down his life to serving people and the world, and the church must also attempt to do likewise. The church must make a real difference in society by attracting all people to participate in God’s mission without compromising the main themes in the message of Christ and the purpose of the church and the Cross.

### Missional theological roles: Connection with the purpose of the church

6.4 Understanding the tasks of a missional theological church

The tasks of the church are activities, perceptions, values, traditions, and beliefs by which a missional church can be recognized in its theologizing and practices (cf. Roxburgh & Boren, 2009). Three points are usually summarized as central to the tasks of the church, namely, the preaching of the Word, the administration of the Sacraments, and ecclesiastical Discipline (see Yates, 2009:23). But within the task of “Discipline,” there are various tasks like “transformation” and “care” (cf. Vondey, 2010:261). In summary, therefore, the church proclaims the good news of the kingdom, teach, baptize, and nurture new believers; responding to human need through loving service; that seeks to transform unjust structures of society by challenging the violence of all kinds against humanity and the environment.

Therefore, the missional church strives for peace and reconciliation between people and God, among people, and between people and the whole environment of God. The church tasks play leading roles
in striving to protect the integrity of creation and to sustain and renew the life of the Earth (see Anglican Consultative Council, “6,” 1984:49; “8,”1990:101; Ross and Walls, 2008:3). A missional church aims to attain sustainability on Earth and benefit all creatures who live on it.

Diagram for Tasks of a missional theological church

6.4.1 Missional church and the proclamation of good news
The “good news of the kingdom” is the centre of a missional theological church that assures people about the unconditional care and forgiveness of God (cf. the USA Presbyterian Minutes of the General Assembly Vol 1. 1984:132). A missional theological church thus demonstrates God’s reconciliation through exemplifying the kenotic love and service of Jesus Christ in services to save the people and the entire God’s creation (Phil. 2:7-11). The kingdom describes where and how the universe/world as a dwelling place is cared for and looked after as an act of faith, prayer, and stewardship (cf. Bickersteth, 1853:284). In the kingdom, people faithfully and responsibly live “together” in ways and means that show the love and grace of God among people and towards the entire creation (cf. Saints Herald Vol. 37, 1890:183; Galbreath, 2014:11). The good news is the news to the kingdom about forgiveness and God’s reconciliation with the world and people (see Samuel & Sugden, 1989:73).
Therefore, the proclamation means to practice forgiveness, even when forgiveness is complex, and it break cycles of revenge and violence against people and non-human environments (see Nash, 1982:30). Good news then means existing in harmony, hope, and a shared purpose based on more than people’s power, authority, and domination (cf. Pouloupolos & Inglezakis, 2016; Crist, 2019). Good news thus becomes the message that God has reconciled with God’s creation. It is good news that Christ has assumed the role as the bride of the church and that the Holy Spirit has become the paraclete to help the church proclaim the good news of God’s reconciliation with human and nonhuman environments.

Proclamation is fundamental, as Jesus the bride announces the coming of the kingdom of abundance and resilience through the church. The kingdom’s announcement is through the preaching of good news to the poor, release of prisoners, restoration of sight to the blind, and celebration of the year of God’s grace. God’s favour culminates in thriving ecosystems and biodiversity for the sustainable life and livelihood and all the Earth's inhabitants. Thus, the fundamental task of a missional church (proclamation) is translated by the church into actions to portray a character and life in the kingdom by ensuring that God’s reconciliation reaches all sectors of God’s created order.

Proclamation, therefore, means the action of the church to address the urgent and contextual issues of society. Thus, the church’s tasks in the proclamation are to enable the community to participate in God’s mission through nurturing of faith, prayer, and action. The church gets believers to render merciful service and promote non-violent yet active resistance to environmental injustices through the proclamation. The church supports equality of the imago Dei, especially women, the poor, and the marginalized. It reduces economic monopoly and reliance on natural resources, often leading to creation exploitation and biodiversity extinction.

6.4.2 Teaching and nurturing the Christian faith in a missional church

The missional commission in (Matt. 28: 16ff) is to go out into the world to teach, baptize and nurture new believers. Based on the belief that the news of God’s love and forgiveness is truly the ‘good news,’ a missional church thus seeks others to know the good news and accept it for their salvation and the salvation of the universe (cf. Kingsley, 2020:54). For that reason, Jesus demonstrated in his life, death, and resurrection the depth of God’s love for people and all creation. Therefore, the Christian message is that God, the source of love, life, and goodness, is the same God that sent Jesus, who cares, and provides for everyone intimately and loves the whole creation deeply (cf. Arterburn, 2018:1524). This is the creation that God said was very good, and it is the same creation that is no longer good, and God, through a missional theological church response, God seeks to redeem and therefore give life a new purpose and meaning (cf. Schaefer, 2019:10).
A missional church must therefore strive to provide society with the good news of hope amid serious environmental challenges and encourage people to participate in the positive response to the demands of nature (see Origins, Vol. 30, Issue 1-24, 2000:338). In terms of knowing that life is not out of control when faced with severe natural challenges, there is always something that can be done and hoped for outside of difficult circumstances. The missional church must learn about love for one another, encourage fellowship, lead in witnessing, and responsibly exercise Diakonia (see van Rheenen, 2014). God created people uniquely in God’s image and entrusted them with the responsibility to take care of the whole creation to sustain the Earth for the people’s benefit.

6.4.3 Church’s response to the basic human needs by loving services

The third task of the missional church and response is about services (cf. Thung, 1976:71). At the last supper, Jesus shared with his followers the most profound virtue of servitude by washing his disciples’ feet. They are told that to follow Jesus and lead others to do the same, they, too, must be the servant of others (cf. The Living Church Vol. 154, 1976:154). The missional model of leadership is servant leadership. Jesus also taught that the two greatest commandments are to love God with all your heart, mind, and strength and love others as one loves themself. Loving service is at the heart of the missional church message and response and is the contextual task the church must teach and practice in society.

As with most aspects of missional life, the church is challenged to see its faith in service in the community. If the church’s missional service grows from love, it should be for the sake of the other in society, not for itself. As a missional “servant,” the church must attempt to determine how society desires the church to serve them rather than doing what it aims for humanity. Servants do not choose how to serve but do the will they serve. In response, the missional church also seeks to know the society of those it serves, rather than seeing them simply as recipients of its services. The church may always benefit from serving others, but the crisis comes when it will not be to the church’s benefit, and the church must do it anyway; that is true missional church service.

6.4.4 Seek to transform unjust structures of society

One of the tasks of a missional church, as it responds to societal issues, is to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation (see Platten & Lewis, 1998:31). There is too much violence perpetrated against women and children because they are female. In South Africa, gender-based violence has claimed many lives of women and children, and the government has declared it femicide. According to the study, many of the challenges of environmental degradation in Malawi affect women and children. Violence and corrupt acts against Mother Earth exert pressure mostly
among women and children. Most societies’ economies and possession of property and land are unjustly structured to the poor, particularly women, youth, and children (see van Beek, 2006:300).

However, the missional teaching ensures the church proclaims that all people are equal and uniquely created out of love and diversity by God (see The Living Church - Vol. 220, 2000:37). Jesus revolutionized the teaching of his day by insisting that Christians are to “love their enemies” since they, too, are loved by God (see Warnock, 2020:120). This one commandment means that Christians must learn about people of other beliefs, cultures, or groups within society and learn to empathize with them without judgment and do as much to help them as we would for our friends and own family members.

The missional church response takes cognizance of injustices within society and churches, institutions, schools, workplaces, families, and friends (McNeal, 2009). The missional church must learn to vary its approaches in addressing contextual challenges, whether they take the form of prejudices, bullying, exclusion, coercive or abusive use of power, favouritism, nepotism, corruption, economic monopoly, geopolitical domination, and chauvinism (see Sebahene, 2017). The missional response and message are about the hope that death can be turned into life. Therefore, injustice can also be transformed into peace and tranquillity among people and the entire creation of God (cf. Musa, 1992:103; Chung, 2012:274).

6.4.5 Safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the Earth

A missional church belief is that God is the ultimate Creator of all the visible and invisible organisms. The environment people live in has been given to them to care for and sustain (cf. Engagement: Judson Research Center Bulletin-Vol. 8-11, 2007:5). Thus, the people’s relationship with the environment should be responsible and careful stewardship realizing that humanity cannot live without the environment (cf. National Research Council, Division on Earth and Life Studies, Board on Earth Sciences and Resources, Resolutions, 2010). Everything God created gives glory and must be revered, for God made it for a purpose. It is written in scripture that the heavens declare the glory of God (Ps 19:1), and all creation cries out together with human beings in hope and longing for the salvation of God (Rom 8:19).

Thus, in creation, God reveals Godself to people in material form, particularly in Jesus, and in doing so, reminds us that creation can be a doorway people may glimpse God (King, 2019). In the Holy Communion as a Sacrament, elements such as bread and wine are treated with reverence elements in a Eucharistic service because they believe they are part of all that God created. This implies that creation is a thing of wonder to be honoured and an item of fascination to be respectfully explored and
reverently cared for (see Johnson, 2019:23; Maximian, 2019:185). The tasks discussed so far constitute profound missional teachings that are usually interlinked with missional theological thoughts and practices as the missional church endeavour to respond to contextual issues in the society where it is placed.

6.5 Understanding the theology of a missional church

Theology, in general, is the systematic study (faith seeking understanding) of the nature of the divine and, more broadly, of religious beliefs (cf. Miley, 1893:196). Studying mission theology means taking on challenging questions about the meaning of religion (church or denomination) to the cosmological events concerning missio Dei theology (see Voss, 2016:277). The central tenets of missio Dei theology, described by the World Council of Churches Together Towards Life, 2015 (TTL), emphasize the Trinity as the source of mission theology and its purpose—salvation of people and nature and the building of the building the resilient kingdom of God. The TTL document clarifies that God, not the church, is the primary agent in the mission and that the whole of creation is invited to participate in this mission.

By opening to invite others to participate in missio Dei, mission theology thus crosses barriers of faith, racial and gender discrimination to include in missions all participants (cf. Adogame & Spickard, 2010:5). Missional theology is natural theology, and it is concerned with knowledge about God which is derived primarily from nature—creation (see De Cruz & De Smedt, 2015; Franke, 2020). Natural theology emphasizes reason and philosophy (see Federal Supplement, Series 1, Vol. 440, 2007:139). This implies that missional theology is systematic and therefore suggests its ability to consider step-by-step processes with other topics in an interdisciplinary and multidimensional engagement in its practices and operations. In other words, meaning that religion and science both focus on the mystery and truth of creation may work to care for and understand nature together.

Missional theology is scripturally based, and it deals with studying and understanding scripture from religions such as the Bible, Quran, and others (see Goheen, 2016). It is historical theology as it is concerned with knowledge about God derived from studying the development of ideas and events over time, place, and generations (Grethlein, 2016). Historical theology is often arranged around the significant events in history connected to changes in circumstances of such times. For example, theology of the Early Church, theology of the imperial church, theology of the Middle Ages, theology of the Enlightenment and Reformation, theology democracy and development, theology of women, theology liberation, and possibly now theology of diseases (covid-19).
Missional theology is systematic theology because it deals with knowledge about God which seeks to incorporate and combine all the theological and scientific sources to respond to contextual issues (Guder, 2015). The structures of missional theology are often arranged around major topics or categories of ideas or occurrences which theologians have systematically investigated and agreed upon over the centuries. As systematic theology, missional theology is concerned with the Christian views on Creation, Sin, Anthropology, and others (Fergusson, 2014). Though mainly concerned with Practical theology, Missional theology is Dogmatic theology (Nurnberger, 2016). It deals with the theoretical truths of faith concerning God and God’s works, especially the official understanding and position recognized by organized denominations in various traditions such as Orthodoxy, Protestantism, and the Reformed.

6.6 Missional theology as contextual theology

Missional theology, therefore, is understood as God’s people seeking to live as part of God’s entire creation in a fallen and ever-changing world and to bear witness to God’s purpose for saving people and the environment around them (cf. Bevans & Tahaafe-Williams, 2012). Although missional theology may not be everything or everything becomes missional theology, its contextual attractiveness to issues demand its careful participation in many concerns of the society. Missional Theology thus includes the goal to deal with the church’s service to the eminent or contextual kingdom, as it focuses on the mission of God in the entire world (cf. Bevans & Schroeder, 2004). The church thus, considers the Biblical foundations of missionary work through the theology of mission, to reflect on dialogue with various world religions, to enable it to engage through the theology of mission different actors in the fight against many challenges holding entire life in the present world.

In other words, missional theology deals with human contexts that are ever-changing as people seek to live as God’s people entrusted with responsibilities to care for the Earth and promote fair and equitable shares of resources (cf. Bergmann & Vähäkangas, 2020). Missional theology draws on and complements systematic and biblical theology (cf. Hiebert, 2009:39). Systematic theology uses the methods of philosophy to study the ultimate structure of reality, and Biblical theology uses historical methods to analyze the cosmic story (see Carson, 2002). Missional theology uses the techniques of contextual reality to examine specific human contextual situations in the light of constitutional, statutory, canon law, and model case laws (cf. Nicholls, 2003). By nature, missional theology is the multidimensional, interdisciplinary, multisectoral approach to contextual issues.

Therefore, missional theology as contextual theology means and points to various things. For some, it simply means that theology should affect how Christians live with other people and their environment. For others, it means that love should be the ultimate end of all doctrinal and theological teaching and
reflection. Still, for others, it means a compromised altar of communion for the sake of building a cross-cultural community in the name of Christ (cf. Kim · 2005). Missional theology is, for yet others, a catchphrase to cover for denominational and institutionalism compromise. In other contexts, “missional theology” connotes remaking Christ in the values of the various cultures, rather than remaking the cultures in the image of Christ (see Maxwell, 2019).

In summary, therefore, missional theology never compromises the communion altar and the gospel. Neither does missional theology abandons its purpose for the sake of its destination. Missional theology seeks to make sense of the truths of Christianity within a new cultural context, language, and lifestyle of people in a society. Missional theology aims to reach out to the entire world, for it is written that the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached to the whole world (Mat. 24:14). World, missional theology depends primarily upon the kingdom motif and, thus, depends on the Old Testament and the New Testament, and the Christian tradition. The main themes under missional theology are Creation, Christology, Cosmology, Hamartiology-Sin, Soteriology-Salvation, Ecclesiology Church, and Eschatology. Missional theology is Exegetical theology, Historical theology, Systematic theology, and it is Practical theology.

6.7 **Missional theology as practical theology**

Practical theology describes the mutually strengthening relationship between theological learning and the experience and needs of Christian communities (see du Preez, 2014). Practical theology is built upon theologies mentioned above and emphasizes practical contextual living. Missional theology is concerned with contextual life (cf. Lyimo, 2012). Practical theology is anxious for society’s contextual ethics, economics, ecclesiastics, and politics (Stuerzenhofecker, 2018). Missional theology as practical theology is therefore applied and often raises questions: What is going on? (Descriptive-empirical task), Why is this going on? (Interpretative task), What ought to be going on? (Normative task), How might we respond? (Pragmatic task) see (Osmer, 2008).

Thus, it could be summarised that both missional and practical theology target society. The emphasis is on building a resilient kingdom with vibrant social and theological structures that are just. Mission theology is foundational to promoting, integrating, and contextualizing the elements of Christian mission, and it does so through proclamation, communion, ecumenism, contact and dialogue, and social transformation. Missional theology is characterized by trustworthiness, commitment, devotion, and creativity (Maier, 2010).

Missional theology seeks to link systematic theology dogmatics, ethics, economics, and governance with contextual life and realities of their society. Missional theology applies canon law, catechetics,
liturgics, homiletics, pastoral care, stewardship, and apologetics to the community’s real life. Missional theology thus outlines and interprets mission systematically and practically from the perspective of God’s mission, Christ’s mission, the mission of the Holy Spirit, and the mission of the church for the practical benefit of the entire society. In other words, missional theology crosses denominational, academic & disciplinary, and institutional boundaries without compromising faith in the mission of the Trinity; to engage all other stakeholders in missio Dei's purpose for the salvation of people and the entire universe.

Missional theology has developed rapidly during the latter half of the twentieth century (see New Catholic Encyclopaedia, 2003:728). But in a real sense, missional theology is incarnational theology, which has possibly suffered a cover-up by the selfish ambitions, power, authority, dominion, and territorial extension enshrined in the early missionary attempts to spread the gospel (see Walls, 1996; 2002). In other words, missional theology is a rediscovery and revival of the original intention and purpose of the atonement and incarnational theology.

Missional theology is thus atonement and incarnation filled in the contextual life of society. It is the rediscovery of the connection between the primal theologies and Christian theology for the African. This process has been ill-treated, distorted, ill-informed, and influenced by postcolonial critiques. To the African missional theology represents significant shifts in social, religious, political, economic, and cultural consciousness, most of the poor people when the message of the Bible is read and understood in their context and mother tongue translations (cf. Mombert, 1883:117; Sanneh 1989; see Bediako, 2004).

Missional theologians are, therefore, reengaging the medieval integrative use of philosophies (social and natural scientific insights in theological reflection on missionary activities. The examination and redemption of primal spiritualities in mission, theological investigation of the interactive dynamics of gospel and culture have become vital in making practical theology a reality in the community’s daily life. Finally, missional theology fosters confidence in an ecumenical, interdisciplinary, and multisectoral vision worthy of trust and practice for all who seek to take part in missio Die’s salvation of people and the entire creation.

Missional theology is a rediscovery of the poor peoples’ self-understanding and the engagement of all stakeholders’ necessary world views for sustainable living on the planet. In other words, missional theology is pursued alongside the same goals as a pedagogy of the oppressed (see Freire, 1993). Missional theology thus includes the realization by the poor about who they are in the incarnation, their role in the missiones ecclesiae, and how the church theology and ecclesiology make sense in their
culture and speak to their daily contextual life. Thus, any church response towards sustainable livelihood in society must endeavour to include the reflection and possibly the re-examination of challenges that weigh heavy on the contextual interests of the community.

6.8 Missional theology as Liberation theology/Black theology

The first thing that comes into mind when people speak about liberation concerns human freedoms and rights often trampled upon by the wealthy minorities of the world (see Amaladoss, 2014). Many people often define liberation theology as a radical movement in South America and South Africa in the 1960s led by Gustavo Gutiérrez. He questioned the action and exploitation of the rich (Christians though) against the poor and the marginalized. Others assert it is a combination of Marxist philosophy with specific biblical motifs that seek to reconstruct the whole of Christian theology by seeing it through the “axis of the oppressor and the oppressed.” I would instead call liberation theology a religious or faith perspective and possibly the core of Christian faith, practices, and purpose of the gospel and the very reason for the atonement and incarnation.

Liberation theology starts with the Trinity question about how could God save nature and people from deprivation and injustice? The answer is simple, God is the creator of the currently dominated nature, the oppressed poor, the suffering, and marginalized poor peoples (see Pembamoyo, MA Thesis, 2005). Upon hearing the cry of the afflicted and seeking to reconcile with God’s creation, Jesus is sent to make a common cause with nature and the poor who are socially, economically, and politically afflicted. This is where the gospel has some affinity with poverty, and thus the gospel becomes the good news for the poor and marginalized (Pembamoyo, 2005).

The poor, who the oppressor often pushes to exploit their life-giving natural resources for survival, are based on the same natural resource as everyone. The poor have since fought for political, socio-economic, and androcentric liberation, and they must similarly stand up and liberate themselves from natural resources androcentrism. In the words of Freire, freedom cannot come from the plans and actions of the oppressor, and somewhat it is the plans and activities of the oppressed that can save both the oppressor and the oppressed (see Freire, 1993). Thus, a missional theological question must be asked; could God save the world and people from dominion? Is God going to serve people from exploitation, injustice, and diseases (Coronavirus, HIV & Aids, Tuberculosis, and Cancer), corruption, migration, human trafficking, gender-based violence, geopolitics, conflicts, wars, food insecurity, consumerism, overproduction, waste dumping, economic monopoly, environmental degradation, ecological and biodiversity crisis? And what is, therefore, the missional theological response of the church to an overall context such as that?

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6.8.1 Liberation from androcentric exploitation and domination of Earth and women

The missionality of the church's liberational response depends on its contextual and inclusive ability in society. Being inclusive must exceed ecumenical, interdisciplinary approach, multisectoral, multidimensional to include gender equality. Thus, by implication, ecofeminism will no longer be regarded as a concern and fight back for the socio-economic injustices resulting from an entrenched patriarchal system that devalues and exploits women (see Ruether, 1996:2).

Ecofeminism which in many ways highlights the suffering of women and other marginalized groups in the same way as the Earth is devalued and exploited may turn around the androcentrism in care of both the Earth and the woman (cf. Renzetti & Curran, 2003:356). The church's missional theological response to environmental degradation must therefore seek to give a new orientation to the system that oppresses and dominates nature in much the same way as women (cf. Anderson, 2013:16). Ecofeminism claims that the domination of women and nature are intrinsically linked and argue that materialism subject women and youth to capitalist domination. Patriarchalism, in much the same way as market liberalization and capitalism, enhances the exploitation of the Earth’s life-giving materials on the planes.

However, ecofeminism has, to a lesser extent, some challenges that must equally be criticized, such as its tendency to alienate men. Men are not generally exploiters, therefore modeling and actualizing only women alongside the pattern of a web of nature and men as destructive by their nature imply that men are spiritually marginalized and separated from nature through their experience. Men are also exploited and dominated under capitalism as a system that favours the wealthy elite (see A Journal of Female Liberation, Vol. 1, 1968:117). Such a generalization and uniform assumption alienates men and excludes them as human beings, and condemns them from life (cf. Carol & Melvin Ember, 1977:331).

The generalization falls short of the realization that men, like women, are divided by class, ethnicity, race, and so forth. Many suffer poverty and human rights abuses, as do women. Thus, if ecofeminism continues to alienate men, the gap between men and women will likely widen. Future generations would grow up thinking that men are only interested in conquering nature and women as their enemy. Through a missional theological response, the churchmen and women must ensure the liberation of the Earth and promote women’s freedom. Without being extremists, the missional response must be understood and taken in a way that emancipates women and men with the “human dignity” they require since both are created in the image of God—imago Dei (cf. Claassens & Spronk, 2013; Hansen et, a., 2013; Claassens, 2016).
6.8.2 Liberation of human race and biodiversity from extinction

Due to the hunger and greedy for capital resources, men and women seriously exploit the Earth of its essential resources. These are the very core that sustains both the living and non-living environments on the planet (see Kolbert, 2014). By exploiting them means ecosystems, species, wild populations, local varieties, and breeds of domesticated plants and animals are shrinking, deteriorating, or vanishing. The essential, interconnected web of life—the ecosystem on the Earth is getting smaller and increasingly distressed. The loss in biodiversity directly results from human activity and constitutes an immediate threat to human well-being in all world regions. According to the IPCC Report, around one million animal and plant species are now threatened with extinction, now more than ever before in human history (see Newman, 2020).

It is recorded that the average abundance of native species in most major land-based habitats has fallen by at least 20%, mostly since 1900. More than 40% of amphibian species, almost 33% of reef-forming corals, and more than a third of all marine mammals are threatened. The picture is less clear for insect species, but available evidence supports a tentative estimate of 10% being threatened. At least 680 vertebrate species have been driven to extinction since the 16th century. More than 9% of all domesticated breeds of mammals used for food and agriculture had become extinct by 2016, with at least 1,000 more species still threatened.

In permaculture, the thumb rule of extinction is contrasted to the revolution rule of survival of the fittest. This means that the bigger the living organism, the more the food needed to survive, the faster the source of its food depletes, the quicker it extinct. Thus, the exploiter fastens their existence because natural justices balance them out. Among the most significant terrestrial organisms, people are closer to the elephant, rhinos, cattle, and the big wild cats (the big five), all facing serious extinction threats.

By classification, if the big five are extinct, the next on the line is human species—thus, the hypothetical complete end of the human species is possibly just too closer. This end of the human species may come either from natural causes or mainly due to anthropogenic (human) exploitation of the essential natural resources on the surface of the Earth. Extinction risks are likely through natural disasters, such as a meteorite impact and large-scale volcanism. The current extreme fire danger conditions such as those that killed the dinosaurs, cyclones, Earth tremors, or earthquakes are generally considered to be comparatively low in their effects to cause extinction (cf. Weekly World News Magazine Vol. 15, No. 24, March 15, 1994:27).

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204 https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2019/05/nature-decline-unprecedented
As extinction strife close, society continues to look up to the church for liberation to help it (for the sake of the kingdom of abundant life) avert the disappearance of species from the surface of the Earth. The church, however, is closely associated with the “anthropogenic extinction”—omnicide. Many possible indicators of the anthropogenic extinction are clear and possibly now at the doorstep of every household (cf. New Scientist Magazine, Vol. 121, No. 1657, March 25, 1989:38). The extinction signs manifest through serious, devastating climatic events such as global warming, global pandemics such as covid-19, wildfires, ecological system collapse, and biological, nuclear warfare threats. The probability of anthropogenic human extinction within the next hundred years is the topic of active debate. The question still to be answered is the missional theological response or liberation plans of the church to the extinction of humans and other species.

6.8.3 Liberation of the Earth from resource exploitation
Towards the middle of the twentieth century, theologians became instrumental in conceptualizing liberation theology (see Rowland, 2007). What spurred this synthesis of thought and action that challenged both church and state orthodoxy was exploitation, discrimination, and economic monopoly of some egocentric internal and foreign ethnic tribes (see Gutiérrez, et al., 2001). But Liberation theology has played a central role in defining the moral fabric of society, church, and government, including commitment through liberation theologians and activists to challenge ethnic superiority, economic domination, and colonialism. What Liberation theology is still to try and attempt is to enhance ecological stewardship and social justice.

According to this study, environmental injustices have increased following civilization, development, and progress. Modern society is indebted to the pioneers of industrialization and their Enlightenment worldviews beginning from the seventeenth century with Descartes, Newton, Bacon, and many others (see Cohen, 2010). Together, their work gave rise to the idea of exploitation and conquest of people and the Earth. The Earth has no longer been viewed as alive and purposeful (see Teich, 2015). Instead, the Earth has been reduced to something to be exploited by humans for wealth accumulation. In the capitalist system that emerged out of the modern view, value has been ascribed to capital accumulation than to the protection of Earth systems (cf. Eisenstein, 1979). Thus, working on the Earth now is simply a vehicle for accumulating wealth instead of protecting and preserving nature for the sustainable satisfaction of basic human needs.

Consequently, capitalism has created vast economic inequalities, monopoly, and political, social, and ethnic conflicts and injustices. Therefore, the system is developed whose political manifestation is liberal democracy, with a liberal economy in which freedom is equated with the right to exploit nature.
and accumulate wealth (cf. Kelso & Adler, 2017). Capitalism as a system has been imposed worldwide and has created a culture of limitless private accumulation, consumption, and therefore increased waste damping and increased water and air pollution (see Girling, 2002). It is now more than before realized that a finite Earth cannot support endless growth that overshoots the Earth’s biophysical limits and threatens long-term human survival and Mother Earth’s capacity to provide bounty resources to its inhabitants.

Therefore, Earth requires protection and can only be gotten from eco-liberation theology emancipated by a missional theological church. The engagement of ecotheology a liberation theology in missional church response to the challenge of environmental crisis is a multidimensional issue because liberation theology is just a different practical way of doing theology. It does not start from existing theological traditions or disciplines to focus on society’s poor and the excluded and marginalized populations. Its core is the struggle of the poor to free themselves from the set conditions of poverty and domination (see Girling, 2002). If conditions related to poverty and power will be reversed, a missional theological church must engage ecological theology as liberation theology as a tool to respond to the environmental crisis.

6.9 Missional theology as ecological theology

Missional theology is practical or applied theology which deals with contextual socio-economic, political, ethical, justice, and moral issues in society (see Castillo & Daniel, 2019). Ecological theology is sometimes called the theology of nature, popularly known as environmental theology, and is concerned with primarily environmental justice. Ecotheology is a form of contextual theology that focuses on the interrelationships between religion and nature, especially in the light of environmental degradation and injustice perpetrated by human beings. Ecotheology is generally the fourth wave of theology after liberation theology. It starts from the premise that a relationship exists between human religious, spiritual worldviews and nature’s degradation or restoration and preservation (see Conradie, 2006). It explores the interaction between human and nonhuman environment and ecological values and how their relationship affects sustainable living and livelihoods on planet Earth.

Ecotheology explores the relationship between humans and nature in terms of degradation alone and provides for environmental ethics that enhance the renewal of theology (see Jenkins, 2013). Ecotheology ensures that men and women made in God’s image have an equitable share of the benefits and consequences of interaction with nonhuman environments. It also provides equity in the use and management of the ecological resources in the ecosystem. Just as God loves creation, thus “women and he-men” (research’s) as an equal partner in missio Dei are together called to take care of the Earth and one another.
According to the study findings, the government, civil society, and the church have attempted to address crises related to environmental degradation, but the challenge of environmental degradation continues. Thus, amid the accelerating degradation of our global environment and the many crises present, the church must reinvestigate how it engages with contextual issues in society. Considering the images of the missional church explained already, the Malawi church must re-examine its eco-theological tasks to take on greater urgency and tactics than before to offer viable missional theological services.

6.10 Missional theology as ecofeminist theology

There are similarities, interconnectedness, and interrelationship concerning the lifegiving functions, androcentrism, and exploitation, between the Earth and women (see Ott & Moyo, 2002). Struggling to seek justice and liberation, a sub-sect of Women’s theology or Feminist theology emerged in the late twentieth century concerned with ecology and environmental discourses (see Loades, 1990; Fiorenza, 1994; Clifford, 2001). The word ecofeminist was coined by Françoise (1974), in which she argues that the destruction of the planet is due to the profit motive inherent in male power. Ecofeminists perceive a connection between the oppression of women and the oppression of the rest of the natural world.

The androcentric connections of women’s oppression and ecology can be traced as far back as the “Enuma Elish creation” in the story of the third millennium B.C.E. The Ecofeminist theology aims to develop an ecological culture that grips with how existing anthropocentric religious worldviews contribute to environmental destruction. Her ecological work searches for social justice through transforming hierarchical structures that legitimize the oppression of the natural world and the marginalized, together with increased ecological awareness. Spretnak constantly raised a question on addressing ecological ethics in a consumerist society, unaware of how human behaviour contributes to the “eco-crisis” (Spretnak, 1990:3).

The characteristics of inferior and superior respectively, for example, are gradually naturalized and normalized to perpetuate the exploitation of women in the same way as Mother Earth. For example, the notion that every woman is emotional, motherly, and weaker than a man is a hierarchical-dualistic perception. Such perceptions have led some ecofeminist theologians to justify that Christian theology

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205 In this ancient Babylonian myth, Marduk, the warrior god, creates the cosmos by conquering his mother, Tiamat, the goddess of chaos. Upon killing her, Marduk “stood upon Tiamat’s hinder parts,” “smashed her skull,” and “cut through the channels of her blood.” Tearing her body in half, he then fashioned the heavens and the earth from the pieces of her corpse. Only by sublimation of her wild “chaos,” could she be used as matter from which Marduk formed the natural world including people.
naturalizes human and nonhuman environmental androcentrism. The rapid destruction of ecosystems in contemporary societies in Malawi is related to some of these normative hierarchical, patriarchal, and dualistic worldviews prevalent in the church. Therefore, it is not surprising that the challenge of the ecological system and biodiversity degradation and crisis in Malawi despite the church’s claims that they provide a missional theological response to the environment.

6.11 Advancing a missional theological church response to the challenge of environmental crisis in Malawi

The fragile state of the environmental affair of Malawi poses critical challenges to both human development and economic growth. Deforestation is recognized as a significant driver of the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem products and services. Deforestation also disturbs natural biogeochemical, hydrological, and ecological cycles. In Malawi, deforestation is estimated to be responsible for the loss of 33,000 hectares per year and is mainly attributed to agriculture expansion, tobacco growing, and excessive use of biomass. According to the study by Ngwira & Watanabe, (2019), the land cover analysis showed that forest covered 66% in 1991, and by 2017 it had decreased to 45.8%. Most households depend on wood from customary land forests for tobacco curing (69%) and brick burning (68%). Furthermore, 47.6% of the households have expanded their agricultural land by approximately 0.57 hectares during the past 15 years.

Obviously, the anthropogenically caused environmental crisis threatens sustainable living, and it is evident that previous individual church attempts to solve the problem have failed. As such, a missional theological response to environmental crisis challenges is increasingly becoming necessary in its true sense of missionality. The persistence of the environmental crisis and the challenges testify that there is more the church needs to do to offer a missional theological response to the environmental crisis. Therefore, the study argues that a missional theological church response can provide an effective, sustainable, and resilient response that could successfully address the environmental crisis in Malawi. A missional church draws its strength and potential for an effective response following its attraction to engaging various disciplines, sectors, and dimensions without compromising its theological mandate to participate fully in the mission of God for the salvation of the universe and people.

A missional church is a people-centred church, which means that it is the church of the people, by the people with the people and for the people. Thus, the key theological issues of the missional church must ensure that reciprocally inform, adapt, accommodate, translate, and assimilate the ecological, ethical issues and practices of the people and other stakeholders as they all seek to respond to environmental challenges in society. The contextual nature of a missional theological church response
is emerging as a new conversation with opportunities for continued theologizing while engaging inter-religious, interdisciplinary, and multisectoral dialogue. A missional response has the potential to call all stakeholders to work together towards a life of action and stewardship to change landscapes.

As it seems new, Missional church theology has developed slowly during the first half of the twentieth century and has become a significant field of study since the late 1960s. Therefore, it has accumulated experience that, if integrated into environmental church response, may turn around the challenge of environmental crisis in Malawi. Many of the issues discussed in ecological degradation in Malawi include constraints in basic human needs such as food production, eating habits/overconsumption, construction of habitat, waste dumping, extensive use of non-renewables, and many others. These themes are explicitly discussed in the missional theological church response to the challenge of environmental. The issues are discussed in the missional church’s pursuant of the kingdom with harmony, peace, and abundance (John 10:10). Harmony, peace, and abundance are critical and valued in Ubuntu and traditional indigenous religious world views. They are the goals of the truth that science seeks to uncover, and Permaculture bases its principles on plans meant to achieve abundance while in peace and harmony with the Earth and its inhabitants.

A substantial opportunity for success is expected to arise from missional theology's inter-religious character. Its adaptability would necessitate the adoption of complex food and animal production and distribution issues according to ethos and practices in the Ubuntu philosophy and other traditional values. The Ubuntu traditional ethos and practices consider the importance and advantages of “togetherness” (Conradie & Pillay, 2015), “I am because we are” (Hord & Lee, 1995; Tutu, 2012). The concept of “togetherness” is culturally and socio-economically compassionate. It is diverse and connected to the traditional indigenous religiosity of many Malawian people. The conventional indigenous religious thoughts contain high regard for the rights and values of animals, plants, and other nonhuman environments. This high regard for nature might resonate with the missional mandate of the church as an essential participant in missio Dei as the missional church leads in “Earth care,” “fair share,” and “people care” (Mollison & Holmgren, 1990)

6.12 The multidimensional Approach

6.12.1 Engaging the indigenous traditional ecological knowledge

The environmental crisis in Malawi is a contextual issue; it requires the involvement of all stakeholders. Thus, a missional church that is a unified body of believers involved in ground-level events committed to providing missional responses to the community of which they are a part is probably one that can respond effectively to the crisis. Any attempt to respond to the contextual crisis
must recognize that God is already with the people in their contextual life is at work, even before such
endeavours are done (cf. Bediako, 1996). Missional responses should generally show common ground
with the local world views, first through essential acts, witness, prayer, and worship (see Meyers,
2014). It must also be displayed in the Christian art and artifacts and sometimes through proper
positions and styles of leadership posed by faithful church elders (see Hicks, 2016). Having gained
the right to be heard, appreciated, and accepted within the traditional community, missional responses
will access the indigenous ecological worldviews and provide a more balanced different “new way of
life” within their transforming community (cf. Santos & Naylor, 2019:178).

6.12.2 Engaging ecumenism: above denominational identity, power, and authority

The church in Malawi is institutional, paternalistic, and hierarchical. However, it is very much aware
of the importance of ecumenism (see Levering et al., 2020:193). Nevertheless, the practice of
cumenism is challenged in many ways by denominational identity claims (see Harmon, 2010:78).
Most of the church's contribution to the environmental crisis is based on attempts to make
denominative names (cf. Studia Patristica Vol. 3. 2010:37). Thus, even studies and books are done
and written along with denominations (cf. Kilcourse, 1992:157). For example, a critical and in-depth
analysis that Cyprian Obiora Alokwu undertook at KwaZulu Natal University in 2009 to involve
‘indigenous oikotheology’ is only to help the Church of Nigeria, especially the Anglican Church and
to some extent the Anglican Communion as if there were an Anglican environment.

Thus, the study and a book from the critical study intended to “better address the challenges of the
dual earth crisis” of poverty and environmental degradation are thus limited to one designation. The
study argues that the crisis of poverty and ecology are inextricably linked. A similar well-known
ecological intervention making a significant contribution in Malawi, Africa, and possibly worldwide
is the “Laudato Si,” an attempt by the Roman Catholic to respond to the challenges of the
environmental crisis on earth, our only home (etc. Pope Francis 2015). The church’s guiding principles
inform Pope Francis “the golden rule” responds to the IPCC’s report on climate change. One form of
the golden rule is that people should treat others in ways they want to be treated themselves. This
important contribution that would help the ecumenical environmental response is limited to the Roman
Catholic community.

The Golden Rule is undoubtedly a Roman Catholic religious tradition but probably a fundamental
principle of organizing themselves in society. The Laudato Si is thus treated and applied as if the
weakened environment - the earth our home is home to the Roman Catholics alone. The Protestants,
the Evangelicals, the Pentecostals, the Charismatics, the Reformed, the Jewish and Muslim leaders
recently made similar statements citing exclusion in the Laudato Si and the Golden Rule.
In a similar spirit of ecclesiastical identity, records show that the Anglican Advisory Council (ACC) as early as 1984 identified the so-called Five Marks of Doing Mission. The ‘five marks of mission’ is an introductory statement about the mission, and the Marks express the Anglican Communion’s general commitment to and understanding of God’s holistic and integral mission. The five marks emphasize that the church’s mission is the mission of Christ (Anglican Consultative Council in 1984 (ACC-6). The five marks of mission are translated into different languages to cater the planet are as follows:

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptize and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service
4. To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind, and pursue peace and reconciliation
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the Earth

The fifth mark, “To protect the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth,” led to the formation of environmental networks, but mainly identical to the Anglican communion. The Archbishops Rowan Williams and Justen Welby, responding to the five marks of mission, sought to engage ecumenism, interreligious dialogue, and dialogue between religion and science. Institutionalism, denominationalism, and identity outweigh ecumenism in all the ecumenical efforts. At the same time, the deterioration of the environment worsens.

6.12.3 Engaging interreligious dialogue

Interreligious dialogue, sometimes called Interfaith dialogue, is best defined as intentional encounter and interaction among members of different religions. Interfaith dialogue aims to promote respect and collaboration between other faiths and beliefs. At the same time, each maintains their religious identities but pursues common environmental goals for the benefit of all members. Interreligious dialogue can play an indispensable role in limiting, if not preventing, mass atrocities fuelled by pernicious portraits of the Other. Genuine interfaith dialogue seeks to remove such barriers, identifying potential areas of understanding and commonality without undermining true distinctiveness and difference. Interreligious dialogue acknowledges the need for diversity and integrity in speaking and responding to contextual issues, promotes interchange, reflection, inquiry, discussion, and standard action toward issues in society.

There are four interfaith dialogues: debate, dialogue, discourse, and diatribe. When talking with someone, it is helpful to know what type of conversation you are in. You can do so based on a
conversation’s direction of communication (a one-way or two-way street) and its tone/purpose (competitive or cooperative).

![Diagram](image)

Diagram adapted from David W Angel 2016

An example of the many interreligious dialogue initiatives is elaborated in a Synthesis Paper based on the presentations and discussions of the Faith for Earth Dialogue held during the United Nations Environment Assembly 4 (11-15 March 2019, Nairobi, Kenya). One of the main objectives of the Faith for Earth Dialogue of the UN is to strategically engage with faith-based organizations (FBOs) and mobilize faith leaders and the faith community in an effective partnership to collectively achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and fulfill the objectives of the 2030 Agenda. It is almost a decade down the line and less than ten years to the target year, and there is no hope that the objectives may be achieved by the set date, yet the environmental crisis keeps worsening every year.

According to the *United States Institute of Peace Special Report* 123, 2004, Interfaith dialogue is an increasingly popular response to religious conflict and religious nationalism. The report argues that religion has been, and will continue to be, a decisive contributing factor in violent conflict. While practitioners employ a variety of approaches, the purpose of all interfaith dialogue projects is to enhance religious tolerance and promote peaceful coexistence. In Malawi, the territorial and governance conflicts between Islam—Arabs and Christianity—Western Europeans, which affected some Malawians’ education attainment, have continued significant impacts on some districts’ nonhuman environments.

The history of the Christian mission in Africa has been associated with colonialism, and thus, Christianity came demonizing indigenous religions and everything associated with them. However, considering the place of indigenous religions in the lives of many Africans, theologians and other scholars of religion have observed that many Christians walk with one leg in the indigenous religion and the other in Christianity. Using the missionary styles of Paul of the New Testament, mainly as
reflected in Acts of the Apostles, this paper argues that the future of Christian mission in Africa should engage interreligious dialogue.

The Malawi contemporary environment presents a varied religious adherence. Besides religion, globalization has resulted in cultural diversity, atheism, and secularism. It has also resulted in the spread of different religious beliefs and practices. It is no longer surprising to find all major religions in Nsanje or Mangochi. Influenced by technological advancement in postmodernism, globalization has resulted in the resurgence of cultural differences and religious identities (Berger 1999:12). Such cultural differences and religious identities have a background of the missionaries’ approach to denounce different cultures and religions head-on (Amanze 1998).

Today this head-on approach of denouncing religions and cultures has enhanced individualism among various religious groups, denominations that stand in their way for environmental interreligious dialogues. A missional theological response to the challenge of environmental crisis considers dialoguing with the indigenous religious beliefs as one major step towards offering a holistic response that will halt degradation in Malawi. The missional theological church response to the environmental crisis engages in dialogues with other religious groups and develops and encourages interdisciplinary engagements with the modern scientific world views. It does so to respond fully to society's contemporary needs and challenges.

6.12.4 Engaging interdisciplinary approach

The interdisciplinary approach in environmental studies refers to curriculum integration intending to focus primarily on the different disciplines and the diverse perspectives they can bring to address a societal issue holistically. In a multidisciplinary approach, a subject or topic is studied from the viewpoint of more than one discipline. In other words, as religion and science had been studied together to find the truth about reality, each view is never considered antagonistic but complementary. Thus, multidisciplinary approaches are required to address the complex environmental challenges of our time in this and subsequent generations. Solutions to climate change problems are good examples of situations requiring complex syntheses of ideas from a vast set of disciplines, including natural or pure science, engineering, economic, social science, and the humanities.

However interdisciplinary approach in ecological or environmental studies is not straightforward. Middleton, (2011) argues that most ecologists have narrow training and are not equipped to bring their ecological skills to the table with interdisciplinary teams to help solve multidisciplinary problems. To address this challenge, Middleton states that new graduate training programs and workshops sponsored by various organizations provide opportunities for scientists and others to learn to work together in
multidisciplinary teams. Two examples of training in multidisciplinary thinking include those organized by the Santa Fe Institute and Dahlem Workshops. In addition, many organizations and individuals have agreed that interdisciplinary programs have successed in providing insight into climate change problems. Examples include the International Panel on Climate Change, the Joint North American Carbon Program, the National Academy of Science Research Grand Challenges Initiatives, and the National Academy of Science.


The overview includes references to discourse on human rationality (as an implicit critique against ideology), social sciences in theological reflection, the teaching of evolution in public schools, science, religion, and religion and ecology. The essay concludes with a survey of some prominent voices on the interface between religion and science in South Africa. In short, Conradie has contributed a lot to Christian theology in conversation with numerous other disciplines. In the words of O’Connell, interdisciplinary must include bringing into dialogue the various sciences, history, philosophy, and the arts, each with their distinct focus, to participate in a common task of sense-making. O’Connell includes the intercontinental dialogue of scholars of ecotheology as one other means to help societies understand and respond positively to environmental challenges.

Another prominent voice in the multidisciplinary approach in Central Eastern Africa is John Kapya Kaoma, who views the environment from a theological social-political system (Kaoma) Kaoma has remained theologian and an example of the promotor and practice of the ideology of multidisciplinary approach. Kaoma has pointed out the mounting ecological catastrophe and its adverse effects on humanity and future generations of life. He argues that the environmental crisis caused by the social-political ambitions of humans demands proactive actions. Kaoma connects the ecological catastrophe in many parts of Africa to the colonial church and colonial politics, but also to the African’s economic theories undermine the integrity of Creation. The ongoing crises of deforestation, air and water pollution, land degradation, and many other ecological predicaments are critical geopolitical, socio-economic, moral, and justice issues.
To provide a social and economic response to the environmental crisis in Malawi, Sosten Chiwotha delivers a fertile ground for a multisectoral approach as the church seeks to offer a missional theological church response to the environmental crisis in Malawi. Sosten Chiotha currently works as Regional Director for Leadership for Environment and Development (LEAD) in Southern and Eastern Africa. The LEAD aims to Explore the Future of Malawi’s Environment using a Scenarios Approach. LEAD targets the community, excluding or involving stakeholders equally concerned with environmental degradation, particularly the church. The project is also multidisciplinary and appeals to sustainable natural and human resource care and use.

Chiotha is concerned with how environmental degradation poses challenges to Malawi’s rural areas and cities regarding housing, infrastructure, and provision of basic services and climate change. Chiotha and several researchers recommend multisectoral as an essential approach to tackle significant current and future environmental challenges. They explore, deploy, and equate the multidisciplinary approaches to multilingual, sustainability, and multiple criteria with lasting environmental responses that could avert disasters. However, Chiotha and many others in the social sciences in Malawi are yet to learn and include the missional theological church response as one other most integral part of their multisectoral approach.

While contribution like that of Chiotha is exclusive of the church, the same is true with current church missional theological initiatives and responses towards addressing environmental challenges offered along ethnicity, regional or national boundaries, and denominationally affiliated. For example, a remarkable contribution is made by Cyprian Obiora Alokwu 2009 but confined to the Anglican Church, Dioceses in Nigeria, and Nigeria as a nation. This is equally true of the remarkable contribution of Chitheka—Toward a Chewa Ecotheology with Special Reference to Ernst M. Conradie. This study serves as a point of departure for churches in Malawi to participate in Earth Care and the challenge of environmental crisis, but it is more ethnic and denominational. The same applies to a rich contribution of John Kapya Kaoma—Towards an African theological ethic of earth care: Encountering the Tonga Iwiindi of Simaamba in Zambia. In the face of a severe ecological crisis, the church must aim high, focus beyond institutionalism, and aim towards unity as expressed in Ubuntu/Umunthu philosophy— “I am because we are.”

An inclusive attempt is somehow made by Harvey Sindima in his article—Community of Life: Ecological Theology in African Perspective. However, a Presbyterian minister Sindima looks at how a transformed religious and political environment could enhance community life. He argues that the current foreign carbon print life and system in the environment contribute to the current eco-crises. Sindima states that the mechanistic world view, imported to Africa, has been primarily responsible for
many eco-crises faced by Africa and has led to the global crises people face now. Sindima argues that community must be based on a consciousness that all creatures are part of all others, that humans share a common destiny with nature. He advocates Umunthu Community that ensures justice, love, and care for nature as central and key to sustainable living and livelihood.

Sindima relates the bond there is between “Umoyo—Life” and “Umunthu—humanness” as they “together” represent the bondedness of life. This notion of the bondedness of life has informed some African Christian thinking, and this philosophy has attempted to transcend the West’s mechanistic views imposed on Africa. But such a life-centeredness view could also serve as a vital basis for all missional action, as a guide and an empowering vision and tool for alleviating the suffering of living and non-living creatures in the entire Community of Life.

Community and the vision put forth that community must be dedicated to the fullness of life for people, animals, plants, Earth, and all expressions of the divine Moyo—Life. Thus, community life must be based on a consciousness that all creatures are part of all others, that humans share a common destiny with nature, and the need to integrate efforts of all stakeholders. Therefore, the church in Malawi needs to realize that how people think about the environment affects how they live in it. In other words, the people’s understanding of nature, the ecosystem or cosmology, affects the way they understand themselves. The way people relate to other people, and, of course, the way they relate to the Earth and other forms of life, though to a varying extent as time and place change, affect their life in many ways. The church must tap from all kinds of understanding and actions to respond fully to the challenge of the environmental crisis in Malawi.

Thus, even the missional theological response this study advocate is not static and absolute. It is subject to transformation just as new contexts have transformed Christian theology throughout its history outside of Christianity. In the same way, a missional theological response of the church as a tool for transformation must be transformed by its contextual realities in society. A truly and fully missional church response thus challenges the mechanistic worldview that has dominated Christianity in the West since the Enlightenment and handed over together as the gospel truth to the Malawi church. The mechanistic world view, imported to Africa, has planted individualism, capitalism, competition, domination, exploitation, and a dismissal of the African world view on ecology. This lifestyle has been largely responsible for many eco-crises faced by Malawi now. The same has led the church to fail to claim its rightful position in society and offer a complete missional theological response to the environmental crisis.
6.13 Together towards sustainable living on planet Earth

The word “together” in this topic is very significant in discussing a missional theological response of the church to the challenge of environmental crisis. In a church priest vocational seminar organized by the Diocese of False Bay in 2019, Professor Miranda Pillay spoke about the terms “other” and “togetherness” and how these two affected the church in Apartheid South Africa continue to do so now. Pillay, with the background of teaching Ethics, New Testament examines the two terms because of priesthood experience of women under patriarchal church system and traditions on the one hand, and on the other how the terms affect the relationship between people of Colour, the Blacks, and the Whites. Similarly, this study looks at the word “Together” as a hugely important aspect of missional church life and key to responding to the challenge of environmental crisis in Malawi.

The term “together” implies unity gives hope for security, love, and joy, and the promise much-needed support. It provides a sense of belonging and encourages people in a family or society to love one another. In a missional church, people belong together and refer to each other as a family ready to respond to contextual issues. The characteristics of the early church depict the concept of “togetherness.” Members together devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching and fellowship. They lived communal life; they had everything in common. They broke bread “together.” This means they took Holy Communion together. Holy Communion these days is symbolic of the breaking and sharing of the body of Christ together. Christ, therefore, is central to the community that breaks and shares his body. This indicates unity and explains the concept and importance of togetherness in the light of Christ’s incarnation, being present in the community. Togetherness brings a happy feeling of affection and closeness to all members, as friends and family, and standard action.

Malawi must deal with the institutional challenges the church faces; if it responds positively to the environmental crisis challenge, the secret is in the concept of “togetherness.” In togetherness, people are not divided along with denominational power, the power of their wealth. Neither do people look at identity issues in terms of ethnicity or place of origin. Where people are together, the destruction of the environment by anyone in one part of the Earth becomes their concern because they would not want to do what they will have an equal recessional impact. The Bible states that in Luke (6:31), do to others as you would have them do to you.

Thus, the concept of “togetherness” in a missional church response to environmental crisis endeavours to join members together. Like in marriage, the two individuals who enter a missional church contract in missio Dei become one. In their togetherness, Christ becomes their bridegroom. In the words of Mark, 10:9), therefore, we can say, what God has joined together, should not be separated. Proverbs, (31:10); who can find a virtuous partner, for their price is far above rubies, implying that members of
the same group value each other. If the church in Malawi wonders why all the effort it applies environmental crisis continues, it possibly must check its “togetherness.” The church would like to do it alone, and worse enough, the challenge of denominationalism, power, authority prevents churches from working together, let alone from working with government or the civil society—the world.

6.13.1 Church and civil society working together

The working relationship between the church and the civil society is rare, although both work with people at the grassroots. Many theologians have discussed church and state relationships, particularly politics, multiparty democracy, and human rights. For example, Pauw, (1993) is concerned about “Independency and religious change in Malawi…” Tengatenga (2006), “Church, state and society in Malawi: An Analysis of Anglican Ecclesiology;” Gundani, (2018), writes about “Church-state relations in South Africa, Zambia, and Malawi in light of the fall of the Berlin Wall (October 1989);” Zeze with the “State-Sponsored Religion in Malawi,” and Ross et al., (2018), about “Politics, Christianity and Society in Malawi and Beyond…” just to mention a few. While some of these authors have cited the work and importance of non-governmental organizations and their relationship with government, a few have committed to thoroughly examining the relationship between church and civil society. The study reveals that NGOs and government scored less in church role and impact in the environmental crisis (see chap. 4 p.194).

6.13.2 Church and state: Identifying common grounds in the environmental crisis

As a social institution and its adherents in their capacity as members of society, the church has a social and moral responsibility to be involved in environmental conservation, protection, and proper utilization of natural resources. The way the church cares for these natural resources is a measure of its stewardship, fellowship, witness evangelism, and service together with the Creator in mission. However, government and church hardly work together in environmental conservation. The church may be divided as some traditions see nature as the wilderness associated with several positive and negative things.

Some traditions, for example, in Orthodoxy and Protestantism, particularly Calvinism, are based on work ethics. Nature is the source of raw materials to be exploited. In Malawi, the church is associated with development and progress, and thus, the state and the church influence their environment. However, at the realization of the ever-growing challenge of environmental crisis, no efforts are discovered on the ground where church and government plan and work together to respond to environmental issues. The missional church response is the people's response. Therefore, the people
in their community are determined to bring the church and government together if the response to the environmental crisis is successful.

6.13.3 The church, state, and geopolitics: Equitable sharing—the west and the rest

Malawi remains one of the poorest countries in the world despite making significant economic and structural reforms to sustain economic growth. The economy is heavily dependent on agriculture, employing nearly 80% of the population, and it is vulnerable to external climatic, political, and economic pressures. Economically Malawi is dependent upon external aid from Western countries and the US. Like many African countries, Malawi is rich in natural resources and minerals, but unfair trade agreements are deliberately made to enhance domination and exploitation. The Western world determines the prices of Africa’s natural resources, including gold, the most expensive commodity in the world market, to hold poor the African and increase dependence on aid instead of trading.

The civil war in Mozambique affected Malawi when refugees flocked in and introduced charcoal production—a severe factor in deforestation. To address the degradation caused in refugee camps and nearby forests, the Christian Services Committee (CSC) of the churches in Malawi and some non-governmental organizations invited Jan McMichael, a leading Permaculture trainer from South Africa. McMichael trained church leaders and community leaders at Chilema Ecumenical Conference and Training Centre in 1994. That was the only time in the history of ecumenism in Malawi that the church and community sat together to plan for interventions against environmental degradation.

The church, the civil society, and the government have never sat down to deal with important issues as youth migration following environmental degradation. For example, the end of Apartheid in South Africa and the dawn of democracy attracted many youths to migrate to South Africa to seek jobs. The discovery of uranium attracted Australian companies into Malawi to exploit the resource mostly for the company and a few top government officials’ benefits. The discovery of gases and oil in Lake Malawi drew Tanzania and Malawi into dispute. The church has remained quiet in all these cases, yet Malawi’s nonhuman environment is at stake. The consequences following these environmental-related geopolitical issues the church should respond to.

As part of geopolitics, Malawi’s natural resources are cheap in the world market. For example, the Chikangawa plantations, which are entirely depleted, now have provided cheap timber to China and other countries in Western Europe. Animal species in Malawi’s national and game reserves are on the verge of extinction because they supply cheap hides, tasks, and meat to the international market. The recent discovery of natural minerals has already attracted foreigners from several African and other countries. The foreign miners of these minerals react to the global demand for Malawian minerals.
excavated with cheap but strenuous labour. Thus, Western world leaders determine the prices of precious minerals such as gold with the highest price at the world market mined in Malawi generally Africa. Malawi could only address geopolitical environmental challenges if it engages a missional church response because it considers the multisectoral and multidimensional approach to contextual issues in society.

In geopolitics, the Western European countries have held on to capitalism not because it is good, possible because it places them at an advantage of dominating the underdeveloped world’s resources. Capitalism ensures market liberalization—free trade and competition. Indeed how could the heavyweight enter the same ring with the lightweight observing the same rules? The Western European governments deliberately use capitalism to dominate and continue to exploit the Malawian and their resources. A missional theological response has the appropriate approaches and a contextual responsibility to understand various systems and how they affect sustainable living and the livelihood of the planet and people.

6.14 The multidimensional and multidisciplinary approach

In Bediako's (1996) words, besides various challenges, including environmental crisis, closer to this age and time, Christianity in Malawi has largely become a non-Western religion. This study, therefore, suggests Christianity in Malawi has become of age to be called a traditional religion—the Malawi Christian tradition. In the process of the attempt to bring all denominations “together” as participants in a missional theological response to the challenge of environmental crisis, all foreign religions, Islam, Christianity, and Indigenous religions are here called “the Tripartite religion.”

All the sciences and Indigenous philosophies are applied sciences in this study. Thus, the study attempts to tap on the strength in the concept of “togetherness” by bringing all Permanent cultures that are not related or affiliated to any faith in the unity—the togetherness of the Tripartite religions, Applied sciences, and Parmenrnt cultures of the Malawi society—abbreviated as TAP. The TAP is a practical toolkit necessary for developing a sound and long-term missional and theological response to the current challenge of environmental crises.

In TAP, proper utilization of interdisciplinary and multidimensional approaches, knowledge and faith will inform the church on varied strategies to address various ecological challenges. For example, Agroforestry and Permanent culture (Permaculture) are discussed as examples of scientific disciplines the church’s missional response may deploy for biodiversity protection, preservation, and improvement. Agro-forestry is a system that combines trees and shrubs with other fast-growing crops and offers a great promise to filter carbon, both in the atmosphere and below-ground.
In TAP, the philosophy of Ubuntu regarding the Earth and human relationship reflected several oral stories that could assist the church in presenting a well-balanced response to the challenge of environmental crisis in Malawi. Ubuntu is built on principles and ethics of (non-competitive lifestyle), supporting one another—I am because we are. Thus, TAP draws from the values of preferring small but numerous initiatives by many equal individuals who contribute to the system through stewardship committed to Earth preservation and sustainable living.

Thus, the church’s sound knowledge and engagement with Agroforestry offers a new varied presence of opportunities for sustainable “climate-smart” agriculture carried out from a faith perspective. Agroforestry generates steady income and can increase environmental justice regarding the wealth and health of rural communities within a shorter period. Agroforestry inspires good practices (Integrated Land Use Designs—ILUD) inland stewardship to develop balanced ecosystems, biodiversity, and habitats for various wildlife. ILUD techniques improve air and water quality management processes and diversify farm input and output.

Permaculture is a design science developed in the mid-1970s by two Australian ecologists, Bill Mollison, and David Holmgren (Permaculture One 1981), who endeavoured to develop ideas for creating stable or permanent agriculture systems imitating nature. Permaculture applies techniques and principles from ecology and local or traditional philosophies. There is no competition among different elements in nature. Instead, there is a high sense of mutuality, interdependency, and complementarity. Any dominating preys are ruled out by natural justice. People can emulate nature as it builds upon one another in an ecosystem for the benefit of all. Permaculture encourages cooperative economics, appropriate technology, sustainable farming and promotes the self-preservation initiatives of nature and wisdom of the indigenous people to create sustainable human environments.

Permaculture principles and ethics resonate and fit well within many Traditional religions. For example, in Christianity, love one another as yourself, men and women created in imago Dei to take care of one another and take care of all God created. Thus, scientific experiments, theories, and principles, and the philosophy of Ubuntu deployed as worker bees church are likely to lay fertilized eggs that will bring honey and milk for all dwellers of the Earth. If the church applied TAP, the South Africans would find themselves walking on a familiar ground towards sustainable and resilient environments, averting the current environmental challenges and the water crisis.

6.14.1 Religions and sciences on environmental resiliency

In Malawi, science, Islam, and Christianity are brought together in the same package of the foreign missionaries—Islamic and Christian advancement of colonialism. Both the Orthodoxy and Protestants immersed in the Enlightenment goals of development and progress demonstrated that science and the Christian faith are complementary. They use science to excavate natural resources and religion to emancipate colonialism.

It is apparent among the Roman Catholics that the church’s Catechism states regarding faith and science that though faith is above reason, there can never be any real discrepancy between faith and reason. Thus, the school and health systems brought by the church in Malawi introduced several subjects in church schools and medical centres, which included science and religion being part of the instructions at all levels of the education system and learning. The Malawi Church school system does not count science as an enemy to face and fight or demonize. Thus, the entire Christian Church and Islam in Malawi before now has been famous for championing interdisciplinary, multidimensional approaches in other areas except in faith practices and stewardship in the environmental crisis.

Religion and science are closely interconnected. Natural historians’ theologians seek the truth and provide naturalistic explanations for human behaviour and culture from faith, emotions, and morality. These are the exact domains as the natural scientists use observation, investigation, and experiment—a different approach to achieve the same goal—the truth. However, some scientists, such as Stephen Jay Gould, hold on to a view called “non-overlapping magisterial” (NOMA). The theory claims that science and religion deal with fundamentally distinct aspects of human experience, and so when each stays within its domain, they co-exist peacefully. This implies that if the capitalist’s goals in natural resources domination are taken away, Science and religion will go back to their historical roots in the medieval where Christianity has had a far more positive role in society's progress and development.

However, Gould’s view is challenged as it is genuinely based on modern geopolitics and domination. Both intended to promote neo-colonialism by increasing the antagonism between science and religion to keep the African backward to enhance natural resource exploitation. It is a view based on the exploitation spirit, the true character of capitalism. During the Colonization and globalization, the professionalization of science has been deliberately engaged to separate action faith from practice, moral beliefs from ethics, and spirituality from the action. Since then, the relationship between science and religion has been characterized by conflict, harmony complexity, and mutual independence.
6.14.2 Traditional world views: Beliefs and practices of Dambwe on ecology

At the dawn of progress and development that encouraged deforestation in most parts, there has remained a strong sense of grassroots environmental care by the smaller congregations of Gule wa Nkulu. Members, therefore, have often attempted to preserve forests in graveyards as the place of their convergence. At the traditional authority levels, Gule wa Nkulu members meet for action for a funeral, demonstrating a high sense of fellowship. Each group displays dances and engages in various activities in society. Although the grove at the graveyard is preserved for its spiritual connections as the home of the dead ancestors everywhere in the country, the Dambwe grove enjoys extra protection for their shrinal functions related to Gule wa Nkulu. In some parts of the country, such as Chikwawa and Dedza, traditionalists still preserve trees or forests and pay allegiance to shrines—aKachisi. Such commitment to preserving ecology around worship centres compares strongly to congregations’ locations in the church system.

Some of Gule wa Nkulu adherents who took part in the study indicated that they were more comfortable with the teaching and practices of some African Independent Churches (AIC) as Ethiopian or Makolo Church than with the mainline churches. This suggests efforts of inculcation, assimilation between the AIC and Gule wa Nkulu. Such provides a critical example for the mainline church to tap from this kind of relationship to learn the ecological wisdom of the Dambwe to preserve the ecosystem and biodiversity. The Gule wa Nkulu people attributed forestry degradation to modern practices associated with the arrival, techniques, and values of foreign missionaries in Malawi, which helped degrade forests, the home of the spirits, the dead, ancestors, and a place where they kept their mask regalia.

In Dedza, Lilongwe Kasungu and Mchinji Gule wa Nkulu are an organized society. Most of the thickest (trees are protected and preserved) graveyard in these districts usually suggests the presence of these districts, the Dambwe. However, many cemeteries are no longer thick anymore. Gule wa Nkulu members, therefore, resolved to erect buildings at such deforested graveyards where they meet and keep their items. Some members of parliament in some of these areas have assisted the new Dambwe construction projects with red bricks and roofing iron sheets. In Mitundu in Lilongwe, such Gule wa Nkulu infrastructure is referred to as “charichi cha Aloni”—the church of Aaron, the biblical figure. Interestingly some Gule wa Nkulu figures have names such as Petulo Simoni and Maria, (Peter, Simon, and Mary) from the Bible. Though with pejorative connotations, such names

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207 A thick forested place usually at the graveyard where the mask and other tools are kept, this is the home of spirit mask dancers of Gule wa Nkulu.

208 The researcher’s own interpretation.

209 Researcher’s visitation and interviews conducted at Mitundu in Lilongwe near (not allowed access to enter even part of that graveyard).
provide an entry point for missional engagements and corroboration in environmental protection and preservation in society.

In Nsanje, down south of the country and a few other parts in Malawi, one finds adherence openly to indigenous traditional religions with a well-organized oral liturgy accompanied by prayers and worship at their shrines. In the lower Shire River, the Mbona Shrines (aKachisi wa Mbona) are dedicated for use when there are severe natural challenges in society. There are also shrines among the Bimbi ‘cult’ adherents of Eastern Malawi near Lake Malombe and Ulongwe. The Bimbi and Mbona believers do not wear masks, and women occupy leading roles in worship and prayers.

Both Bimbi and Mbona cults are concerned with the environmental crisis—the frequent droughts and floods have devastating effects on human basic needs and property (see Amanze 2003:356). Both attributed the environmental crisis to variations in the weather conditions caused by related misconduct of the people in modern lifestyle. Like Gule wa Nkulu, the Mbona and Bimbi believers assert that people have abandoned za makolo (traditional) for zachizungu (European’s) lifestyle, and the ancestors are not happy.

6.14.3 Dialogue: Mbona and Bimbi as communities of faith, practices, and values
There could be no clear concepts of denomination and ecumenism as they are understood in Christianity; however, there are dynamic group systems (community). There is a strong sense of communal life of believers at the grassroots who adhere to indigenous traditional beliefs, values, attitudes, and practices. When one group loses a member (death), members from other communities are responsible for all chores and food provision for the funeral services of their neighbour followers, which is like fellowship and koinonia of believers in Christianity. They use community power to build houses together, responding to their members of parliament to plant trees in degraded areas, including the graveyards, caring for children and widows of their fellow believers. Interestingly, some of the believers of traditional religions are Christians on Sunday or Muslims on Friday and learn from the church and mosque beliefs and values they apply in society.

6.14.4 Permaculture as a design system for creating resilience and abundance
The term permaculture combines the words permanent culture and permanent and agriculture. Permaculture is a design system that integrates land, crop, and animal management and philosophy that adopts natural designs observed in the flourishing natural ecosystems. Permaculture includes a set of design principles and ethics, all derived from using holistic, systematic thinking. The term was first coined in 1978 by Bill Mollison, the Tasmanian son of a fisherman. Bill defines “permaculture” as the
conscious design and maintenance of agriculturally productive systems with diversity, stability, and resilience of natural ecosystems.

There are three ethics: Earth Care, People Care, and Fair Shares. These ethics are not exclusive to permaculture and were derived from the commonalities of many worldviews and beliefs. The permaculture ethics are therefore shared by many throughout the world. Permaculture makes these ethics explicit within a design process, removing them from the realms of philosophy and practically rooting them into the lives of its adherents. The permaculture ethics transform thinking and encourage action design. It usually depends on the ethics’ combined presence within a design with a radical capacity for ecological and social change and transformation.

The ethic of Earth Care was the basis of permaculture design, but it was bound to grow and permeate all aspects of permaculture as permaculture made a difference in life. The original vision of care for all living and non-living environments has grown to embrace a deep and comprehensive understanding of Earth Care that involves many decisions, from the clothes we wear, the food we eat, and the goods we buy. The ethic of “People Care” seeks to ensure that the basic needs for food, shelter, education, employment, and healthy social relationships are present to all in society. Genuine People Care cannot be exclusive in tribal, regional, denominational, racial, and economic monopoly. The last ethic is a synthesis of the first two. It acknowledges that we only have one Earth, and we must “Share” it and its resources with all living things and future generations.

Besides ethics, there are twelve permaculture principles, and the first is concerned with “observation and interaction.” People observe the culture, social dynamics, and the natural environment and learn from them. The second is about “Catching & Storing Energy.” Clean energy includes solar energy, wind, turbines, and many other sources. The third principle is about “Obtaining or maximizing a Yield.” The principle encourages not to waste personal energy and resources on something that ultimately will not provide value and design systems. The fourth principle is about “Applying Self-regulation and waiting to see Feedback.” Feedback is critical whether applied to natural ecosystems, business processes, or personal relationships. It gives us information on the effects of our actions and allows us to make better decisions based on those effects.

The fifth principle concerns the “Use and Value of Renewable Resources and Services.” The principle of renewables is perhaps most tangible in smart economics. Attempt to live on an income, not on the savings, avoid debts. Whether money or energy or water, the logic of renewable “incomes” helps ensure people honour limits. The sixth is “Produce No Waste.” Notwithstanding the note about avoiding wasted effort. The truth is that everything you produce can have value and reduce emissions.
and carbon footprint. The seventh principle regards “Designing from Patterns to Details.” Harness and leverage the observed patterns of sun, wind, rain, and topology rather than work against them. For example, if you have a hill on your land, use the south face for buildings that need to be warmer, harness the shading on the north face, and capture rainwater near the top of the hill so you can gravity feed it to where it is needed.

The eighth principle is about “Integrating rather than Segregate.” Use the synergy between different elements to your advantage. The integration allows complementary qualities to support each other, and there is no competition among objects in nature. The ninth principle regards the “Use of Small and Slow Solutions. Here is where our economy has its real opportunities, scaling back from the industrial-sized systems capitalism developed. Slow solutions allow for feedback, adaptation, and corrective action of any adverse impacts. By starting small, one can see whether there is wisdom in making the solution larger before any adverse impacts are created at a large scale. The tenth principle speaks about the “Use and Value of Diversity.” Diversity is one characteristic that is basic to any sustainable system. Diversity represents resilience. If one species, technique, or initiative does not address a challenge, another may do.

Principle number eleven is about “Use of the Edges and Value the Marginal.” Edges and margins are typically the most robust growth, progress, and development areas. You can use the edge effects to create substantial change. The edge effects principle can also represent and mean different ideas are coming together for the same purpose. The twelfth principle and the last is about “Creative Use and Response to Challenges.” Given how dynamic living systems are, it is unavoidable that changes and challenges may arise. As they do occur, turn them to your advantage, drawing on your personal and organizational assets to best address them. Consider how these principles might apply to departments and functions within your organization and lead toward greater security, resilience, and self-sufficiency.

6.15 Introducing the TAP

Within the “missio Dei” framework, this study seeks to adopt the (TAP) as a tool to promote sustainable living and livelihood in Malawi. “TAP” is not a water tap but an acronym for Traditional religions— (Christianity, Islam, and Traditional religions), Applied sciences, and Permanent cultures. This tool takes cognizance of the contextual interconnections and application of knowledge from Scripture (Traditional religions); Applied science; Permanent cultures to combat various environmental challenges, including soil erosion, floods, drought, deforestation, pollution of water and air, hunger, poverty, and many other challenges related to environmental degradation and crises.
The TAP recognizes that science and religion both have historical traditions showing evolution over time. Religion and science each have places for unique insight and common distinction. Analytical and synthetic reasoning can be found in both. Science and religion were formative elements that form an increasingly global human society. Both science and religion led to and contributed to the threat and the universal human benefit. Typical assumptions about the relationship between science and religion are explained in three forms: conflict, separation, or interaction. A conflict approach assumes that science and religion are competitors for cultural authority. Science sets the standard for the truth that religion must conform to or be dismissed, or religion sets the standard that science must do. Some atheists, for example, follow this approach, arguing that science reduces religion to a purely natural phenomenon. The TAP recognizes some semi-scientific contributions, such as Farming God’s Way through the missional theological response. Thus, TAP intends to bring them together for their shared contribution to sustainability and subsistence on Earth.

6.15.1 The TAP and preservation of soil

Soil/Land/Earth is an essential element in sustainable living on the planet and is necessary for all the tripartite religions, Applied sciences, and Permanent Cultures. Soil or land is closely linked to religion, culture, development, political, thoughts, livelihood, governance, health, and progress of every society. All religions, sciences, and cultures are aware of the importance of soil/land to support life on the planet. But different religious bodies and traditions address it differently, and consequently, they carry divergent cultural patterns of basic understanding of the importance and use of land/soil.

The most significant difference between religious perspectives on soil/land (matter, nature) is whether it is seen as divine attributes or seen as a dependent creation. Soil/land is the machinery behind sustainability, and it is a carrier of spirit, a cradle of life. It is of the utmost importance that theologians, scientists, anthropologists, and all who deal with land should reflect on the varieties of religious and social perceptions of the soil nature and its cultural and practical implications on the livelihood of society. Malawian society needs to protect the land or soil because agriculture and the environment depend on it. Thus, the degradation of land or soil in any which way leads to the decline of their religious beliefs, culture, development, progress, livelihood, and ecological survival systems.

The links between soil and religion, culture, development, livelihood, and health can stem from the ethical attitude and principles that people develop over the use and care for their land or soil, demonstrated through their interaction with it. However, land or soil resources have been overexploited in modern society and are currently on the verge of being dysfunctional in many ways. The TAP, nevertheless, has the potential to bring religions, sciences, and culture together to improve soil and land management. Sustainable or abundant livelihoods on the planet remain a dream if the
land is mismanaged. While the soil is negatively affected, the ecosystem, biodiversity, crop, animal production, infrastructure construction, weather conditions, forest cover, economies, and human lives are also affected.

6.15.2 The TAP and water preservation
Water is essential in all the tripartite religions in Malawi; it is also crucial in all the Applied sciences and is critical in all the Permanent Cultures. The current environmental crisis in Malawi is related to the shortage or presence of water. Thus, the water-related environmental crisis in Malawi and elsewhere affects the Earth’s biodiversity, ecology, land, atmospheric and aquatic temperature, leading to climate variations and unstable weather conditions. Such conditions are unfavourable for the agricultural-dependent economy of Malawi. There is a need for coordinated initiatives of all stakeholders to address the resultant challenges speedily. Thus, as one crucial participant in Earth care, the church cares and promotes fair share. As a key stakeholder in the missio Dei, society is expected to provide a missional and theological leadership to free people from subsequent water challenges.

While the political, religious, and socioeconomic infights, power struggle, and domination continue in the church, the anthropocentric challenges such as floods, erosion, droughts, and siltation continue (see Wessel K.J., 2006).210 The challenges continue to dehumanize and destroy people’s economies211 and relationships. Conflicts and infights among denominations, religions, sciences, governance and economic monopoly, and exploitation have enhanced instability in society and the church. The state of uncertainty possibly explains why the church in Malawi seems to have “…not prevented [d] the widespread environmental degradation over the years” because efforts are deviated from real environmental challenges (cf. Conradie, 2011:6) to settling of disputes among stakeholders. The TAP, within the framework of missio Dei, is therefore designed to bring all stakeholders together as in the medieval and at the start of missionary expeditions when philosophy included religion and science.

6.15.3 The TAP and creation care
Human exploitation of the creation of the Earth’s natural resources causing crises and disasters is enhanced by human activities and can be dealt with by human solutions. Against this background, the TAP is recommended as a tool for creating management and care. The adoption or acceptance of the TAP increases the chances of creative and corporative care because wisdom, expertise, and practices

211 Cf. https://www.a2globalrisk.com/analysis/sub-saharan-africa/implications-south-africas-water-crisis/ Western Cape’s water shortages are damaging the prospects of the country’s wine industry, which employs up to 300,000 people. Cape Town’s large affluent population could face growing security risks, given that many accuse them of causing the water crisis, while poorer residents bear the brunt of it.
are put together from a broader spectrum. For example, scientists, theologians, historians, permaculturists, and others address society’s contextual needs and challenges.

6.15.4 The TAP, deforestation, and global warming
Deforestation is one of the major causes of several issues highlighted in the study as challenges in the environmental crisis in Malawi. Bare land speeds up soil erosion, floods, and droughts, raises water and land temperature, and causes global warming. The TAP, through engaging sciences, particularly (Agroforestry) and Permanent culture (Permaculture), will be part of the missional initiatives to respond to deforestation. Agroforestry is a systematic environmental care approach that combines trees and shrubs with other fast-growing crops. It offers a great promise to the rapid afforestation that can filter carbon, both in the atmosphere and below-ground carbon dioxide, causing global warming and climate change. Thus, the church’s sound knowledge in Agroforestry offers a new varied presence of opportunities for sustainable “climate-smart” 212 agriculture carried out from a faith perspective. Agroforestry encourages good practices (Integrated Land Use Designs—ILUD) inland stewardship suitable for developing balanced ecosystems and habitats for various wildlife—balanced and healthy biodiversity. It improves air and water quality and can diversify farm input and output. Agroforestry generates steady income and can increase environmental justice regarding the wealth and health of rural communities within a shorter period.

6.15.5 The TAP, unemployment, poverty, and food sovereignty
Food insecurity (hunger), poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy cannot be separated when analyzing and discussing a missional theological church response to the environmental crisis in Malawi. Hunger is usually complemented by poverty. Due to the increase in famine in an area, the poor are constantly hungry, while the rich buy food from other countries (cf. Gen. 12:10; 42: 1-2). As climate change affects the agricultural industry, many jobs are lost, and food-seeking migration increases elsewhere. In the Old and New Testaments, hunger is linked to other terms that describe those forced to a marginal existence by societal conditions - the poor, the needy, the widow, the orphan, the oppressed.

The TAP is therefore pursuing a missional theological, ecclesiastical response and promotes three proposals regarding poverty. Firstly, in a missional response, the TAP can divert human thinking to spiritual concerns, focusing not only on physical but also on spiritual poverty. Secondly, with TAP included, a missional response can provide moral and ethical guidance regarding poverty and all its immediate consequences in society. A missional response with TAP can influence poverty by ensuring

that ethical principles and practices that benefit everyone in society are applied within the ecological and economic systems.

6.16 A missional theological church response: Engaging the TAP for resilient ecological systems and biodiversity

The core duties of being a disciple in a missional theological church are to be responsible for the proper use and care of the Earth as part of its principles, ethics, and practice in martyria—witness, Diakonia—work, koinonia—fellowship, and leitourgia—procedures. This implies that the gospel as an act of prayer, witness, and worship engaged with the TAP is reduced to service and the ethical conduct of the people at the grassroots in society. The TAP, which enhances the engagement of other stakeholders in responding to the contextual challenges of society, is intended to bring all religions on the one hand and all other stakeholders in other disciplines on the other to find sustainable solutions for the conservation of the Earth.

Missional church and TAP in a diagrammatic summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Missional church</th>
<th>The Tap</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contextual, people and centred</td>
<td>People care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A missional church seeks to put the good of their neighbour over their own.</td>
<td>Use of the edges and value the marginals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking to transform unjust structures of society</td>
<td>Promoting fair share</td>
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<tr>
<td>Safeguarding the integrity of the creation and sustaining and renewing the life of the Earth</td>
<td>Earth Care</td>
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<tr>
<td>Responding to basic human needs in society</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proclaim kingdom with abundant life</td>
<td>toward greater security, resilience, and self-sufficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage all stakeholders to maximize response</td>
<td>Integrating rather than Segregate—Use the synergy between different elements to your advantage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multidimensional, multidisciplinary, multisectoral approach to missiones ecclesiae</td>
<td>Use and Value of Diversity, thus Diversity represents resilience</td>
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Lasting sustainable solutions are needed because nature, particularly Earth, has been subject to exploitation which has caused environmental degradation and threatened sustainable living and livelihood. The church is well established at grassroots levels, and therefore, it must lead by engaging stakeholders to preserve and protect both non-human and human environments or face extinction. However, although it is well represented in society at various levels, the church alone may struggle to fully address the environmental crisis in Malawi. The TAP as a tool for achieving the multidimensional, interdisciplinary and multisectoral approach has the potential to fulfill the church’s mandate to participate effectively in God’s salvation of the people and the universe.
6.17 Conclusion

This chapter offered a brief image of the institutional exhibition of the church and how that affected its missional theological response to the challenge of the environmental crisis in Malawi. In other words, although church leaders and community claim the church interventions climate change and in relief and development are missional response, evidence the research indicates that it is not. The claim is associated with misunderstanding missionary institutions as a missional church. This possibly explains why the challenge of environmental crisis continues to pose threats to Malawian society. Given the study’s hypothesis, it is only a missional theological response that could effectively address the deterioration of the environment in society.

According to the study’s findings, a little over fifty percent of study participants claim the church’s response to the current challenges of the environmental crisis is missional theological. But if the church is missional, why is the challenge of the ecological crisis still a problem to society? In other words, the missionality of the church’s response to environmental concerns is questionable. The chapter, therefore, proposes what needs to be done in the direction of a successful missional theological response of the church that effectively addresses the environmental crisis, as the hypothesis claims. The next chapter concludes the study by summarizing all the chapters and making recommendations based on the research outcome.
Chapter seven

7 Study conclusion and recommendations

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented a brief picture regarding the institutional character and practice of the church and how that has affected the alleged missional theological response to the challenge of the environmental crisis in Malawi. In other words, the chapter sought to prove the hypothesis of the study, claiming that a missional theological response can address the ecological challenge in Malawi. This followed the research findings that showed the “middle path” character in the environmental crisis. The chapter thus discussed the church's current manifestation, comparing it with the generally accepted standard of a missional theological response of the church to contextual issues. The chapter discussed a successful missional theological response of the church and how that can effectively address the challenges of the environmental crisis.

In this chapter, the study is concluded, and the discussions in all the study chapters are summarised. The chapter expounds on the research findings and makes recommendations based on the research results. It reflects and explains the attempted ecological activities that may or may not have taken place in the church, which might have caused or meant to redress the environmental challenges in Malawi. The discoveries mostly inform the conclusions and recommendations of the study on the current ecological situation, historical and religious beliefs, values, and practices. The missionary churches’ apparent nature and practices include institutionalism and patriarchalism. The church’s acceptance and practice of colonial policies are summarised as the study concludes and recommendations.

7.2 About research topic, goal, objective

Since the 1990s, the church in Malawi has been known for responding prophetically to the socio-political, educational, health, and economic challenges as their role in the mission. So far, the public sources of information do not emphasize any significant church’s prophetic role late alone a missional theological response to an ever-increasing environmental crisis. The failure of public documents to name the importance of the church in the public domain in environmental degradation, ecosystem, and biodiversity challenges, seems to indicate the existence of a gap in the missionality of the church in Malawi. This has raised an underlying critical question about how churches in Malawi understand the environmental crisis, its impact on church and society. How does the church in Malawi understand the importance of the term missional-theological and respond to their calling to contextual issues, more specifically regarding the challenge of environmental crisis?
The importance of the church in the public role, especially in the conservation and protection of the life-giving ecological system and biodiversity, must be understood and taken seriously by the churches in Malawi. The church makes up a more significant part of Malawi’s population. The fact that 90% of Malawians are Christians\(^{213}\) (and churches) has suggested that churches are not irresponsible for the problem and solution to the environmental challenges. If the situation at present has been unresolved for three decades, Malawi is likely to face more severe environmental challenges.

Christianity in Malawi has largely become a non-Western religion. This follows the efforts of local agents’ initiative to address contextual, cultural, traditions, beliefs, and language challenges in the indigenization processes. But as the process of contextualizing continues, the Christian faith faces challenges in ecosystems and biodiversity protection and is now being challenged by the environmental crisis. The Earth’s temperature continues to rise annually, and the weather conditions and patterns are unstable. Society is hit by poverty, unemployment, rapid deforestation, soil erosion, floods, droughts, and declining fishing industry.

Malawi’s climate will likely remain more volatile and focused on spontaneous heavy rainfall events that cause severe flooding. Frequent, prolonged dry periods have severe consequences for Malawi and Earth's human well-being and sustainable life. The Government of Malawi and the civil society organizations have tried to meet the challenges. But the prophetic and missional intervention of the church is becoming increasingly important, and society is expecting far more missional responses to meet the challenge of the environmental crisis. The public expectation of the church points to the paternal relationship existing between society and the church. It confirms the patriarchal, institutional, powerful, and authoritative nature of the church in Malawi. It, therefore, justifies the finding of the study that despite its claims of being missional, the environmental crisis continues.

Interestingly, the study reveals the inability of the church to provide a missional theological response, while Christianity has primarily become Malawi's widely known and practiced religion. In other words, like Christians now living in Malawi in this generation, our interaction with nature has a profound effect not only on our environment but also on us as a human species (Walls and Ross (2008:94). The unfriendly human activities on the Earth's surface, in water, forestry cover, and atmosphere, cause global warming.\(^{214}\) If it goes unnoticed for more than twenty years, the Earth is like to be inhabitable, and the Earth’s natural life-sustaining ability will be jeopardized. According to the


\(^{214}\) It is predicted “that Earth’s average temperature in the 21\(^{st}\) century, will rise between 1.8° and 4.0° Celsius (3.2° and 7.2° F) depending largely on how humans change the ways they live on the planet, see website: [https://www.windows2universe.org/earth/climate/ipcc_feb2007.html](https://www.windows2universe.org/earth/climate/ipcc_feb2007.html) Accessed on [2 May 2018] at Stellenbosch.
study, the remains the only hope\textsuperscript{215} for the people and must intervene to save the Earth and its ecological systems, the biodiversity, and the people of extinction.

7.3 The main threat in the challenge of environmental crisis

Deforestation is an important driver for the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem functions. Thus, the loss of forest cover is the most crucial factor in the environmental crisis in Malawi. Deforestation leads to the loss of 33,000 hectares annually, mainly due to progress in agriculture, infrastructure, and industrial development. Therefore, the underlying factors to the loss of forests include the market system, unemployment, poverty, illiteracy, food insecurity, and probably rapid population growth. The market costs for alternative building materials, lack of awareness, lack of resources, and lack of commitment only increase the environmental pressure. Each of the underlying deforestation drivers mentioned above interacts with single or multiple related factors to escalate further the ecological challenges in society.

A collection of economic factors, patriarchal and demographic factors underlie the expansion of agriculture, tobacco cultivation, and brick burning in Malawi. There are also synergies between underlying driving factors, such as a lack of awareness and alternative financial resources. Consequently, the study reveals that the church in Malawi is not fully missional and therefore does not offer a fully missional response to the environmental crisis. This possibly explains why the environmental crisis continues, as it is the missional theological response of the church, as in politics, that could make a lasting impact on the protection and conservation of the ecological system and biodiversity in Malawi.

To speak of a missional response in God’s mission is to talk about the church’s position, power, authority, and purpose, as it participates in God’s mission as an essential participant (see Hoekendijk, 1950). It takes the church to cross-institutional barriers and uses a diversified approach to address contextual issues in society (cf. Birch & Rasmussen, 1978). To be precise, a missional response emphasizes the necessity of the church’s involvement with the government and civil society and with all other essential stakeholders in society. This approach ultimately crowns a missional theological church as an ‘alternative community (cf. Conradie, 2008).

\textsuperscript{215}The Christian faith and practice must possibly go beyond expecting God’s grace to save the planet to a new religious conversation and action. The conversation and action must prove faith without works to be as dead as work without faith (James 2: 14-26). God’s dispensation of grace should never relieve Christians of the obligation in this world, to stewardship. The practice of Christian faith should maximize the use of available Biblical, spiritual, and scientific resources and opportunities to cope and deal with the threats of the recent environmental challenges in Malawi.
7.4 Summary for chapter one: Background and focus of the study

The first chapter of this study introduces the topic “A missional theological response of the church to the environmental crisis in Malawi.” It provides a detailed description of the main purpose, research question, objectives and discusses the research design and methodology, problem statement, and the background of the environment decline in Malawi. The chapter also provides the background on colonial, post-colonial, and post-independent governments concerning the management of ecological systems and biodiversity in Malawi and how it has affected the environmental crisis. The chapter, therefore, provides an overview of the research impact, motivation, ethical research issues, and a chapter outline.

The chapter deals with and discusses the history of the church in Malawi. European missionaries introduced the church in Malawi from the United Kingdom, France, and South Africa. The first missionaries to arrive in 1861 were Anglicans, and they were from a missionary society called the Universities Mission to Central Africa (UMCA), a missionary society founded in 1857 in England. Derived from the nineteenth-century revival in England, the UMCA was strictly episcopal, sacramental, and ritualistic in its liturgical character.

The second British missionaries to arrive were from the Church of Scotland. These missionaries came to Malawi from the Free Church of Scotland, founded in 1843 and arrived in Malawi in 1875. In 1876 a sister church from the Free Church of Scotland arrived in Malawi. Later, the Dutch Reformed missionaries from South Africa arrived in Malawi in 1884. The first Roman Catholic missionaries, the White Fathers (Pères Blancs), arrived in 1889. The White Fathers' first attempt was related to the Portuguese imperial ambitions against the British around Lake Nyasa.

However, the Roman Catholic effort of 1901 had a significant impact on missionary work and legacy. Joseph Booth made the last remarkable missionary effort of the Zambezi Industrial Mission, who arrived at Mitsidi in Blantyre in 1892. The mission opened new farms and given their name (Industrial), they significantly contributed to the deterioration of the environment, mainly deforestation. Chapter one thus captured the historical background of the missionaries and their impact on the environment before discussing the theories and concepts in the next chapter.

7.5 Chapter two—Conceptualization

This chapter dealt mainly with the conceptualization of the study. The chapter discusses ecological concepts and theories within the context of a missional church through lenses of ecotheology and missio Dei, considering the deterioration of the environment. This follows the recent events of rapid environmental destruction and crises in Malawi and throughout Southern Africa that have been
observed increasing since 2005. The main aim was to lay the study’s theoretical foundation and investigate how such theories and concepts could help deal with the challenges to the environment. It was intended to examine how, based on missio Dei, in the light of the problem or solution, a missional church and ecotheology would address the challenge of the environmental crisis. It was clear that the environmental crisis had jeopardized the Earth’s ability to protect and conserve ecosystems, biodiversity, and compromised efforts to maintain a sustainable existence in Malawi.

Therefore, important concepts and theories such as missional theological, nature, creation, water for life, environment, morality, justice, and many others were discussed. The theories and concepts were discussed to name the observed phenomenon and explain the connection between the observed phenomenon and the experience. The discussion of theories enabled the study to explain key issues and terms. Theories and concepts thus helped the study to identify challenges and make recommendations for change or rectify the situation.

The concept of missional theological church, for example, explains better the cohesion of stakeholders, the multidisciplinary and multisectoral approaches, all of which are potential for ecological justice and in the church’s response to the environmental crisis. The concept of missional theology is objective and meaningful if many stakeholders in society accept the call by the church and plan together to address the deterioration of the environment.

Additionally, the theories and concepts discussed in this chapter also reflected the effects of the interaction between the human and non-human environment in Malawi. They provided light and guidance to discover the challenge of environmental degradation and the crisis. The discussion of theories and concepts revealed how conflicting religious beliefs, traditions, and values in pursuing scientifically guided development and progress have contributed to the current environmental status. The study’s discussion of theories and concepts showed that greed, corruption, natural events, hardships, poverty, injustices, and inequalities intensified the crisis.

7.6 Chapter three: Historical background of the study

In this chapter, the main aim was to examine how policy and governance, methods of agriculture, economics, health, and education in the historical events of the colonial, post-colonial, independent, and post-independent government influenced challenges in biodiversity, ecology, and climate in Malawi. Through the historical background, it is clear that the excessive dependence on agriculture and the efforts of the government and church to address poverty, disease, illiteracy, and to feed the growing population of Malawi, effected changes in the environment. These changes included the fertility of the soil, the destruction of forests, and the introduction of alien species, some of which
impaired the ability of the Malawian environment to hold and sustain standard life-giving practices, beliefs, and values. Different foreign agricultural inputs and hybrid plants introduced and new cultivation methods had various effects that led to the destruction of the environment.

The chapter discussed the arrival of various mission societies and how their participation in progress and development changed the landscapes of Malawi. The focus was on the Anglican Church, Roman Catholics, the Presbyterian Church, and to a less extent, the Zambezi Industrial Mission of Joseph Booth. The chapter discussed how these missionaries contributed to the increase or decrease in the deterioration of the environment. The chapter further examined how the churches’ participation in the pursuit of the industrial revolution, education, and technology advanced and influenced the current environmental conditions that have led to the increase in ecological challenges in Malawi. The discussions and exploration of the conditions of the environment before foreign influence thus necessitated the field research work to compare what was discovered in history with the present reality of the environmental situation in Malawi.

7.7 Chapter four: Research design, methods, and methodology

This chapter aims to answer the main and sub-questions of the research. Different methods and techniques were used to collect and present data to perform this. The attempt to answer the research questions in this chapter validly and largely depends on the research design and the choice of methods and methodology. Research questions usually set the boundaries of a research project, and it explains the direction to be followed and prevents a study from becoming too large or too small. Thus, the success of any research project is determined by how convincingly readers are satisfied that the research questions were answered logically through a valid methodology and methods.

Therefore, the study, design of methods, and methodology were of cardinal importance in collecting, processing, and analyzing data in the study, which all projected and pointed to the research results. The data collected was transcribed, coded into themes, and processed to obtain and present the fieldwork empirically through cross-tables and graphs. The study made general observations from the data processing and commented on each question attempted in the presentation of data. The chapters identified some challenges, including the direct interpretation and meaning of the word “crisis” and understanding the long-term effects of environmental degradation on society. The chapter discusses the research design and methodologies to determine how methodological triangulation (mixed methods) helped diversify techniques and data collection in the field.

Based on the conclusions the researcher made from the literature study and methodology, the research results indicate that the church in Malawi is aware of the crisis and somehow attempts to offer
interventional responses to the challenge of the environmental situation in Malawi. A closer examination and observations of the process reveal that the church in Malawi is not fully missional in the true sense of the concept. This implies that the church’s claim to present a complete missional theological response to the challenge of the environmental crisis in Malawi is disputable. The chapter showed that the awareness and conservation of the environment beyond individual denominational and institutional levels is necessary. Thus, for the church to come to the missional theological level, it requires to develop a more practical, multidimensional, interdisciplinary approach and coordinated commitment that can prioritize the reconstruction of the Earth, our only home. A missional theological discussion could lead the church to realize its inadequacy in offering missional theological responses following the critical analysis of the data presented in this chapter.

7.8 Chapter five: A critical analysis and discussion of the research findings

This chapter dealt with a critical analysis and interpretation of the data presented in Chapter Four. The chapter focused on examining and analyzing the discussion of the study’s findings based on understanding the missional theological response to the challenge of the environmental crisis in Malawi. The intention was to understand the leading causes of the environmental crisis and whether the apparent pastoral response to the crisis was missional and theological. In other words, the chapter critically analyzed the current ecclesiastical role if it were informed by the theories, concepts, and practices of a missional theological response.

It was challenging to determine the missionality of the church because the individual established denominations in Malawi are institutional, hierarchical, and authoritative. This played as a setback in the church's involvement in raising awareness and mitigating responses to the environmental crisis challenges in Malawi. It is also established that individual congregations within different denominations have freely provided interventions to the environmental crisis. The church has often acted the role of the messiah - the provider and society, therefore, expect more from the church. Apart from being institutional, denominational, and hierarchical, the church in Malawi is also paternal in terms of government. Society is therefore waiting and looking up to the mission - an institution to solve the environmental problems.

The study shows that almost 73% (see chapter 4 p.194) of the research participants testified that issues such as hunger, poverty, diseases, unemployment, shelter, clean water, air, and unfertile agricultural lands are some of the manifestations of challenges related to the decline of the environment in Malawi (cf. Malawi Congress Party Manifesto 2014: 66). The research has revealed that the challenges are
mostly natural but are ignited by the relationship between humans and the natural world (cf. Bauer & Scholz, 2015). Religious leaders claim to provide a missional theological response to environmental challenges.

The study indicated that nearly 52% of participants said that the current church's response to the environmental crisis is missional and theological (see Chapter 4 p.194). Yet, the study shows that the church is an institutional, ecclesiastical, hierarchical structure with power and authority. According to Guder (1998), a missional theological church is aimed at society, which is the antithesis of institutionalism. Missional is, therefore, a term that enforces a re-description of the word “mission” in theological discourse, along with the terms “missional,” “missionary,” “missionary society,” “mission field,” and the plural term “missions.” It was revealed in the analysis that participants still regard the term missional as a prejudicial statement of the institutionalism of mainline churches. However, the mission stations are still seen as centres of power, authority, solutions, and assistance in society.

Consequently, society regards the church, the government, and civil society as the guardians and protectors of natural resources and the environment. God has blessed Malawi with thriving flora and fauna, beautiful forestry reserves, and national parks. Meanwhile, the decline and environmental crisis continue at an alarming rate. The scenery, the animals and plants, minerals attracted local and international visitors, and to some extent, Malawi earned foreign exchange, but this is now slowly being negatively influenced. The beautiful landscapes and nature reserves described in the national anthem in Malawi are slowly disappearing. The natural resources of Malawi were indeed part of what ‘God saw that it was good when God finished the creation of the universe (Gen.1:31). It is possibly no longer good anymore.

7.9 Chapter six: Towards a missional theological church response

This chapter gave a brief reflection on the institutional manifestation of the church in Malawi and how it affects the missional theological response to the challenge of the environmental crisis. In other words, given the hypothesis of the study, a missional theological reaction from the church would effectively address the environmental degradation in Malawi. According to the study's findings, approximately 52% of study participants claimed that the church's response to the current challenges of the environmental crisis was missional. But the ecological challenges and deterioration continued. In other words, the claims about the missionality of the church's response remain challenged. The chapter, therefore, suggests what needs to be done in the direction of a successful missional theological response of the church to address the environmental crisis effectively.
The study analysis and discussion show that the church in Malawi is institutional, rigidly hierarchical and that there is a gap between the church and society. The church is seen as an institution of power and authority that must solve societal challenges, contrary to the characteristics and nature of a missional theological church. The church is engaged in the development, progress, and industrialization programs that seriously degrade the environment. The findings still raise questions about whether the church is fully aware and understands what a missional theological response is and, therefore, its missional role in society. Upon realizing the shortfalls in the missionality of the church, the chapter, therefore, proposes alternatives, including the adoption of the multidimensional approaches and the TAP.

7.10 Chapter seven: Conclusion and recommendations

Chapter seven is a concluding part of the study; it signs off the investigation and makes recommendations. The investigation is summarized chapter by chapter in this part of the study, based on the research analysis and discussions. The chapter sets out the conclusions and recommendations that reflect on the ecological activities that may or may not have taken place in the Malawi church because of the nature, practices, including the challenge of institutionalism, power, authority, and polity during and after colonialism in Malawi.

7.11 Recommendation

The future of sustainable living on the earth and its inhabitants are threatened. In all four regions of Malawian society, one observes the severe destruction of the environment. The biggest challenge in the destruction of the domain is the covering of forests being destroyed in Malawi and throughout Southern Africa. Apart from the forest destruction, there are worrying estimates about the extinction rate of the ecological system of biodiversity that sustains life on the planet. Much of the challenges come from the destruction of forests that have been converted into local agricultural land. In three decades, Malawi could turn into a desert if the situation is not controlled.

The role of a missional church in the life of the 21st-century believer is critical because it fills a void that only the church can. On the one hand, the difference between a garage, a clinic or a health centre, a shopping centre, and the church, particularly a missional church, lies in the accessibility to society. If a car has a fault, it must go to the garage to be repaired.

Thus, if someone is ill, the health centre or hospital is the best place to seek medical help. A missional church should not expect people to come as they do to a shopping mall when they need a spiritual solution. The church is a hospital or a shopping mall with, for, and by the people who are always
repentant sinners in need of reconciliation with God and the environment. A missional church is not an exclusive, authoritative, and influential institution for saints.

Why then would society want to be part of a church? Regardless of what is said about churches, society expects the contextual challenges to be addressed somehow. Regarding all the weight and pressure from the contextual challenges, society still expects a missional theological church to provide environmental responses that no other institution can offer.

In God’s mission, the church must sustain livelihood by preserving the environment; God wants all Malawians to live abundantly. God wants no Malawians to be subjugated by government or church but to prosper. Therefore, the church that works for God must create opportunities for Malawians to live in harmony with the environment and each other and share the resources God has given to society. Apart from spirituality, the church must ensure that people keep their contextual responsibility, including the obligation to pay taxes to the government, and tithes to the church, refrain from laziness, dishonesty, bribery, corruption, nepotism, and immorality, to harness God’s blessings reserved to those who live faithfully.

The church has a vital missional theological role to rebuild the degrading environment, ecology, and biodiversity. The church must encourage society to work hard as those rebuilding Jerusalem worked with one hand and held a weapon with the other (Neh. 4:17). Society needs to have the right analytical tools, design tools and apply them responsibly to find wealth and reduce poverty without destroying the environment and monopolizing, subjugating, and oppressing the disadvantaged of society.

7.11.1 Church as one-stop super centre: “A house with many rooms.”

A well-known term ‘one-stop super centre’ is used synonymously or antonym with idiomatic expression related to another word ‘all-in-one’ or ‘all-together. In the case of a shopping centre, it means where they have a comprehensive range of goods or services in one place, mostly under one roof. The term one-stop super centre is used in the study synonymously with the view of God’s kingdom as a house with many rooms. It implies a kingdom with many people worldwide—a multicultural kingdom with diverse artifacts, skills, and talents. A home with many rooms for all whom Jesus died, so many people must be allowed to occupy a space.

This is a picture that explains a missional theological church in society. A missional theological, pastoral response to the contextual must be multidimensional. Like Super Centres, one can buy anything from cooking oil to motor oil and pet food to fresh produce. The church’s response to

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contextual challenges should be addressed exclusively by different players drawn together to address various societal issues. Therefore, the church must bring all players together to enjoy society to have everything under one roof. It is just and faithful for a missional theological church to respond to the needs of its society.

7.11.1.1 Malawi as a disreputable religious nation

Malawi is a religious country with 33.5% of Protestant believers (includes the Presbyterian Church of Central Africa, 14.2%, the Seventh-day Adventist/Baptist 9.4%, Pentecost 7.6%, Anglican 2 to 3%), Roman Catholic 17.2%, other Christians 26.6%, Muslim 13.8%, traditionalist 1.1%, others 5.6%, and those with no affiliation to any religion 2.1% (Census National Statistics Office, Zomba, 2018). If these religious identities and obstacles were overcome and different religious groups were willing to work together, the environmental crisis would be addressed. Each religion has beliefs and practices that uphold the environment essential to the existence and maintenance of life. All it needs is for the missional church to initiate interfaith and multidimensional dialogues and ecumenical engagement on the environmental crisis in Malawi.

7.11.1.2 Listening and inclusions of many voices and actions

The church in Malawi has played a watchdog role for the government and civil society that encouraged these institutions to listen to the voice of society. The church must now listen to the voices of many people who have expressed hope and expect it as a change agent to change as well. The battles for borders, authority, and institutionalism must stop. In the Umunthu philosophy are words of wisdom, ‘kalikokha nkanyama,’ ‘uweka ukoma nudya,’ ‘mutu umodzi suusenza denga,’ all these words refer to the famous ‘I am because we are’ meaning in the unity of diversity there is power. These wise expressions must encourage the church to rethink its institutionalism and denominationalism. The church must make deliberate steps to work together with other stakeholders to transform society as it seeks to be transformed too.”

7.11.2 Malawi church and the concept of Umodzi—Ubunye—Togetherness

When one thinks about the many denominations a small country like Malawi has, a question comes into mind as how many churches did Jesus establish? According to (Matt. 16:18 ff.), many believe that Jesus would build his church on the Rock - Peter. One would assume that this indicates only one church, Peter’s church. The Roman Catholic Church believes that Peter was the church's founder and the first pope. This is strange considering that Peter lived in the first century after the death of Jesus, and the Roman Catholic Church was first established in 400 AD.
Many believe that the text in (Mat. 16:18) indicates that Jesus is telling Peter that He will build his church on him (Peter) and believe that the Greek word for "Peter" and the Greek word for “rock” is the same Greek word, “Petra.” The accurate translation of (Matt. 16:18) would possibly be the ‘rock’ on which to build or the rock used for creating the church of Jesus. In that case, the Rock is Jesus and Peter uses the Rock as the foundation upon which to build the church. Jesus is the solid rock, the substratum, the foundation of the Christian faith upon which Peter builds the church.

Subsequently, only one church is being built (Matt. 16:18). The church has never been the Roman Catholic Church, but rather the church of Christians. Christian means’ little ‘Christlike people who follow Christ’s teachings and lifestyle.’ This is a group of people based on the teaching, practices, and life of the Solid Rock—Jesus. So, Peter was very instrumental in the early church, especially in reaching the Jews with the Solid Rock (Jesus). Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles for the same Solid Rock. Neither of the two started their sector ‘religion’ under their names. They spread only the message of the solid rock - Jesus Christ, on which Christianity was built for the salvation of the people and the world.

The Solid Rock Foundation is a clear sign of consistency and reliability of the church's message because it is called to participate in the mission of God and the Solid Rock through the Holy Spirit. Considering the examples of the incarnation church, participating in that mission has the mandate is to call for unity of all stakeholders to address contextual issues in the society in which it is placed. The church is most trusted in society. Thus, it must begin to see the power in the unity between men and women and between rich and poor. This unity must be extended to human environments and non-human environments, as they act together. Otherwise, the environmental crisis will threaten sustainable living and livelihood in Malawi. The church’s public interest will continue to weigh until it is no longer vital in society as elsewhere.

7.11.3 Church in the contextual public service

The humility of Jesus Christ (Phil. 2: 7-11) must be translated into the humble public services of the church in society. The research revealed that the church is the centre of authority and hierarchical powers, the provider, and the messiah of society. This is not the true reflection of a missional church, and this character cultivates paternalism and creates a gap between society and the church. It also misunderstands what the church is and its mission in missio Dei. Churches are public servants in their surrounding communities. Together with the communities, they must identify their challenges and propose and offer solutions.

7.11.4 Church in the life of the believers
The church exists in a critical time that has never been experienced in the history of humankind, and at the same time, the church must respond to the basic needs of humans. The times and landscapes of the world and its events are constantly changing, and it requires the need to bring the church to a new and corresponding level. The time is over for churches to be viewed from the level of an independent denomination that is institutional and strictly traditional. It is time to consider the church as an organism or living matter, as some theologians call it. It is time to practice and to regard the church as the body of believers, the community of believers. The missional church differs from the institutional church. It refers to the church, not as a unified, centralized organization with authority and power to dominate, but rather as a collection of individual believers. Christianity is a life illustrated in the birth, life, and death of Christ for the salvation of the Earth and its inhabitants.

7.11.5 Environmentalism, faith, and practice
A missional theological, pastoral response to the environmental crisis must ensure that every Christian takes seriously the mandate to care deeply about God’s creation, just as God cares for everyone in society. In the hope of guiding Christian environmentalists on how they can contribute to the well-being of the natural world and all the inhabitants of the Earth, the church must have an action plan that is strategically designed to respond to global warming, climate change, and environmental crisis.

The church must preach and send prophetic warnings, as in politics and socioeconomics, to let Malawians know that their livelihood is dependent on the health of the environment. Humans live and share an intrinsic connection with the creation around them. A society's neglect and carelessness of nature often lead to the suffering of people created individually in the precious image of God. Mindful of the ties between environmental and human rights, Christians must show their active commitment to God’s broader creation, driven by their underlying stewardship of God’s creation.

The church needs to develop alternative initiatives to help Christians achieve a shared vision and common goal of advocating collectively, enthusiastically, and honourably for the planet. Through witnessing, preaching, fellowship, and commitments, the church must be prepared to take more substantial initiatives, facilitate multidisciplinary, multisectoral, and multidimensional approaches. It should be ready to work with community members, environmental justice activists, parachurch organizations, government, civil society, and professionals in the environment to address society's ecological challenges and crises. The church can only do this if it is subject to change and transformation before changing the community.
7.11.6 Church as a transforming and change agent
The historical impact of the church in the transformation, development, and change of society has been successful, but it usually does not have the church’s self-transformation. The changing dynamics and characteristics of being a church today establish that it is not so much about what the church believes, but in how much it is willing to change what it usually does traditionally to provide the necessary change that the church designs and desires for the society.

Today, much emphasis is placed on the church’s role as an agent of transformation and change (see Bosch 1999: 376-393). The Church of Jesus Christ typically understood that the transformation of society is an essential part of its missional theological task of the church wanting to respond to the basic needs of society. The mission's focus is to communicate the good news of Christ, call men and women to repentance and faith, and baptize. The church has to teach society how critical, creative Earth care is part of the church’s missional role and obligation in missio Dei.

7.11.7 Church, environmental education, and the youth
Environmental degradation is “the issue of this generation;” it will probably be passed on to the next generation. As a missional theological church, it is necessary to inform the youth about preserving the environment. Environmental education is a process that enables individuals to investigate ecological issues, solve problems and take action to improve the environment. As a result of environmental education, individual youths will undoubtedly develop a deeper understanding of environmental issues and have the skills to make informed and responsible decisions, particularly environmental justice and protection.

Environmental education for the youth will promote a healthy lifestyle, foster respect for nature, educate the youth about environmental challenges and educate the youth about the importance of being responsible for nature. Environmental education will enable the development of critical thinking skills and teach the youth to be accountable. Youth environmental education will help the church meet its missional theological obligations regarding environmental management and support the government to achieve its goals in development and progress.

Consequently, environmental education and information provide society with the tools to act holistically and identify others who have different approaches to environmental protection. Environmental education should determine the impact of environmental degradation on youth, such as migration, child labour, and economics, and how much long-term effects reflect society's life. Environmental education should help youth gain knowledge, appreciation, and awareness of how
natural environments work and how health interactions between human and non-human environments influence a sustainable way of life and life on Earth.

7.11.7.1 Deforestation

Environmental education for youth should target deforestation as an issue with a severe impact on the basic needs of society. The study analysis and discussion showed that the socio-economic conditions led most parents to use the youth power and energy in charcoal production - dependence on forest. Yet, charcoal production is one of the underlying drivers of deforestation. The youth remain dependent on forest resources for their economic survival in society without really understanding the future impact of their actions on the forest cover, which is the lungs of the Earth.

7.11.7.2 Agriculture expansion

Historical evidence shows that most civilizations deteriorated after their agricultural development, as it involved synthetic methods and inputs to improve food production to feed their growing population. The synthetic inputs and heavy technological machines destroyed fertility and compacted the soil texture. Achieving significant advances in science and technology over the past few years has brought with it a variety of challenges. Therefore, youth education about the environment must point out the advantages and disadvantages of science and technology for the deterioration of the domain. The youth need to learn that some of these environmental challenges are closely related to people's unfriendly activities in their daily lives and agricultural practices. Therefore, there is a need to change their awareness and 'environmentally friendly' farming practices. A missional theological, ecclesiastical response needs to promote environmental education to nurture the youth, for this is the future of the nation and the nation of the future.

7.11.7.3 Tobacco growing and curing and the tobacco estate led economy

Tobacco has serious consequences for the lives of youth. Scientific evidence shows that tobacco companies’ advertisements and promotions influence youth to use tobacco. The youth who are exposed to cigarette advertisements often find it attractive. Besides smoking, tobacco cultivation and curing also severely affect youth and their environment. In Malawi, landlords move across the country searching for tenants in their tobacco estates. The youth offer cheap labour in the cutting and collecting firewood and timber for curing tobacco and building barns. The environmental education advocated by the church must therefore raise and address issues regarding tobacco cultivation and its impact on the youth and the environment.
7.11.7.4 *Brick burning: Building materials and environment*

They were building a house with red bricks baked in an oven is considered modern. Education for transformation is necessary for the youth regarding preserving the environment on effects red bricks. The church must strive for environmental education that changes the way of thinking of the youth about construction with red bricks as modernity. Homes can be built with permanent but straightforward designs, such as those offered by Barefoot Architecture in permaculture. In housing construction, another underlying factor for the preferences for red bricks is the market system, poverty, and expensive alternative building materials. Alternative building materials and indigenous methods regarding the use of local materials with attractive beauty and durability should be improvised in the youth environmental education in the church and schools.

7.11.8 Church, environment, and social justice

There is increasing recognition that the victims of environmental degradation are also the victims of socio-economic injustice. These include different groups of the marginalized people in the economic periphery, for example, the local rural Malawians, environmental refugees, women, children, the poor, and middle-class workers. Therefore, just as in politics, the church must improve social-environmental justice. The pastoral role in environmental justice must include the testimony and fellowship of all Christians and people of other faiths, committed to proclaiming the love found in the gospel and the righteousness of God’s kingdom in the public sphere. Environmental justice must be done without prejudice among the poor and rich. The study discovered that the poor are illegally induced to destroy their environment in many ways that even increase poverty.

The church’s missional theological response to the environmental crisis in society thus involves the reconciliation of people and nature and reconciliation between the poor and the exploitative affluent. It involves further reconciliation between humans and God and seeks to bring the good news of freedom, hope, love, joy, justice, peace, and healing to the Earth, to most of the poor (cf. Luke 4: 18ff) and the marginalized of society. The church is embodied by Christ and thus has a missional mandate to proclaim liberty to the prisoners and liberate the oppressed and marginalized. Liberation is the opposite of oppression, and exploitation naturally expresses itself in poverty and environmental degradation. Thus, the church is sent to respond to exploitation on behalf of the Triune.

218 Connected to the issue of power and authority of missional response to the environment is the concept of liberation, of both people and the Earth. Thus Bosch (2011), suggests that the church’s participation in God’s ongoing work of liberation is about reconciliation between God and human beings on one side and human being and nature on the other side. Thus, the churches power and authority include discerning and unmasking the power and authority that exploit, enslave, marginalizes, subdues, and dominate and set barriers not only between men and women, poor and rich to liberating them.
To consider the church’s justice tasks on poverty, oppression, and exploitation as part of its missional theological response to the environmental crisis is to make a statement of the church’s claim to its missional theological responsibility involving all stakeholders through multidimensional approaches to different challenges in society. To try and justify the missional theological nature and mandate of the church is to seek to fit in with the rest of society and respond fully to the contextual issues. Therefore, in this claim, the church justifies its public role concerning its Godly mandate and missional nature in society. At the same time, the church’s involvement in environmental issues determines the church’s nature, calling, and place as an essential participant in missio-Dei the-salvation aimed at both people and the whole creation in God’s universe.

7.11.8.1 Church, environment, and poverty

The interrelationship between poverty and the environmental crisis is an essential mission to the poverty eradication response of a missional theological church. Care of the environment is crucial for people’s survival. The environment is the source of what everyone needs to survive—air, water, and food. It is also the source of the material society required to take lives from pure survival to subsistence and beyond-shelter, clothing, tools, and the infrastructure of collective human settlement. Absence or denial of these necessities constitutes absolute poverty. Therefore, environmental degradation breeds poverty, while the gospel of Jesus through missio Dei, which embraces the church is about the good news that must undermine poverty and seeks to restore human dignity.

Correspondingly, poverty engenders environmental degradation (see NEAP, 2010), and the impact of poverty exerts pressure on women and children, especially girls, the marginalized of the society. Poverty is the very antithesis of the wholeness of life (Jesus says, “I came so that you may have life in abundance, John 10:10), the actual thrust of missio Dei. The mission of God has to do with enhancing the wholeness of life, which is ideally the antithesis of poverty and, therefore, the reason for the church’s missional mandate in ecological stewardship. Poverty creates unequal access to primary materials and other environmental resources, thus becoming the foundation of ecological degradation. In addition to being excluded from accessing essential resources, the poor are also most likely subjected to the degrading or polluting impacts of the consumption patterns of the wealthy nations.

Unless adequate environmental awareness, preservation, and protection initiative are carried out, and Christians understand the relationship between poverty and the ecological crisis and their impact, the

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219 According to Lesseps, (2002:2): …link between poverty and the environment, however, certainly does not result from the poor being the ones who are mainly degrading. It is the wealthy people and nations who contribute most to environmental degradation through their excessive consumption of natural resources (often taken from poor countries) and their release of waste material into the environment in excess of the earth’s ability to absorb them.
church will not respond fully to the environmental crisis in society. The church’s efforts to carry out environmental preservation based on biblical and theological foundational teachings are a unique contribution that Christians can offer to respond to the environmental crisis and contribute to poverty eradication.

7.11.8.2 Church, environment, and corruption

At the root of the environmental crisis is corruption. At the bottom of corruption is immorality, injustice, bribery, nepotism, and exclusion, particularly on issues concerning economy and ecology. The church must establish partnerships with organizations fighting corruption, such as the judiciary, the anti-corruption bureau, and other faith groups. Religious communities have a duty and privilege to use their churches, mosques, temples, and other places of worship to urge their members to restrain themselves from corruption. Using various holy books, religious leaders and congregations can draw gems of truth regarding values, ethics, and integrity, which will break the existing chains of corruption when translated to practical living.

7.11.8.3 Church, environment, and the rapid population growth

According to the study, rapid population growth has some underlying factors directly related to environmental degradation. It is discovered that significant challenges, such as hunger, poverty, disease, lack of potable water, denial of human rights, economic and environmental exploitation, over-consumption, technologies that are inadequate or inappropriate, and rapid depletion of resources, suggests that all are in some ways affected by the continuing ecological crisis and rapid population growth.

The missional church response to the rapid population growth should enhance stewardship responsibility for human reproduction in the rapid population growth challenges. Taking part in God’s mission should be an ongoing creative and re-creative concern for the church after the examples of Jesus Christ, who has called the church to find the meaning of its life in the love of God and neighbour. The imperative for the individual Christian and the Christian community is to seek patterns of life, shape the structures of society, and foster those values that will dignify human life for all, care of the Earth, and fair sharing of the Earth’s finite resources.

7.11.8.4 Church, environment, and job creation

The church and government in Malawi are famous for offering education to secure white-collar job opportunities. The church has highlighted the failure of the government to create enough jobs for the growing number of educated youths in the country. However, the are no church initiatives to create jobs to reduce the involvement of the youths in (green-gold business) charcoal production. If the
church put effort and interest in environmental preservation as in politics, environmental degradation would receive considerable attention. The church must change the mindset by introducing skills training education instead of syllabi that prepare society and youth for employed jobs.

7.11.8.5 Church, environment, and political governance

A country's economy is not something apart from its political realities but is deeply influenced by politics. In turn, the economy influences and sometimes determines politics. The political economy gives birth to macro-economic policy, and within macro-economic policy, there is an interplay of politics, economics, and environmental issues. The failure in political governance often led to political and economic instability, which invariably affects the environment. The role of a missional church should thus be to provide guidance to the government and all other stakeholders on good governance, fight corruption and ensure environmental and social justice are applied in the life and practices of society.

7.12 What is the church’s missional-theological response to the challenge of environmental crisis in Malawi?

While the churches in Malawi are well known to have responded strongly to the socio-political issues with a single voice and action as a dimension in their mission since the 1990s, the same unity in diversity is not available in the church’s response to the environmental crisis. Primary and secondary sources of information available in the public domain mention no effective plan or policies developed by individual denominations to deal with the challenge of environmental crisis in Malawi. The ecumenical efforts of the Malawi Council of Churches are focused on other issues such as health, education economy, politics, and not on environmental degradation.

There is not much done ecumenically about responding to the challenge of environmental degradation. More church work in the environment is done by individual denominations and mainly relief and disaster management. The church is not doing enough to offer a missional theological response to an ever-increasing environmental crisis. There is no evidence that the church engages interdisciplinary, multisectoral, and multidimensional approaches. The church must possibly be encouraged to attempt and do it now. One hardly finds documentation, policies, or practices in the church and public arena regarding the churches’ missional and theological plans strategically developed to respond to the environmental crisis.

The failure of public documents and church archival repositories to mention the church’s significance in environmental preservation suggests the existence of a challenge regarding the churches’ mission
and, above all, a missional theological response to the issue of the environmental crisis in Malawi. More fundamentally, the challenge of the environmental crisis raises an underlying critical observation of how churches understand their role and calling in society—‘the things of the world.’ The environmental crisis continues to dare the living standards of most Malawians. Yet, the church continues to identify itself along with denominations, traditional roots of origins, tribal, and ethnicity. The church is still regarded as a mission station connected to denominational institutions of power, authority, and hierarchy.

Therefore, it has been challenging to ascertain the missionality of the church in Malawi because the individual established denominations in Malawi continue to pose as centres of power and authority. This is a setback in the missionality and the church’s engagement in the awareness and mitigation responses to the environmental crisis challenges in Malawi. It is also established that individual congregations within the various denomination freely offer interventions to the environmental crisis. In most of these interventions, the church takes the role of a paternal provider, and society, therefore, continues to expect the church to do more. People in society keep waiting and look up to the mission—an institution of help to solve the environmental challenges in their society.

7.13 Conclusion

The deterioration of the environment in Malawi is influenced by several factors, including poverty, rapid population growth, government policies, religious attitudes, and gender-related issues. Society is looking for the church to address environmental challenges as the church has done in the socio-economic and political difficulties over the years. The church’s position and religious influence in society allow it to call all stakeholders together to address environmental challenges in Malawi. Religiously driven care for the environment has been an inherent part of every society since the beginning of creation and has spread across different cultures and influenced different worldviews. The church is guided by its role in martyria, diakonia, koinonia, and stewardship and driven by its missional theological role and position in the community. The church should bring all stakeholders to participate in ecological and biodiversity preservation.

The church should revisit the Western Christian perspective of nature that has treated “Mother Earth” as someone whose resources are not religiously connected, should instead be fully utilized for human socio-economic benefits. The Earth thus has provided linear raw materials for development and progress. Science, coupled with globalization, Industrialization, technology, and advances in Enlightenment, has accelerated the exploitation of natural resources. Thus, instead of accelerating peace, love, joy, and justice as people use Earth’s resources, science has encouraged socio-political conflicts, monopoly, and economic domination, primarily between the Global North and Global South.
Therefore, the Earth has become a lineally exhausted object of resource extraction. The Earth is thus subjected to ecosystems and biodiversity failure that augment global warming. The church is simply not very active in Earth preservation and biodiversity conservation.

Nevertheless, there has been even more evidence recently that acknowledges that scientific and political solutions alone are inadequate in the fight against society's poor living conditions, leading to the deterioration of the environment. This study discovered and envisioned how great a well-defined missional theological response of the church could play in protecting the environment, its preservation, and its sustainable use. This discovery provides knowledge and guidance on how the rest of society is a prerequisite for a healthy ecosystem and biodiversity. A missional theological response should make society realize that flora and fauna can do very well without humans, perhaps even better, while humans will quickly perish without flora and fauna. Yet humans should stop destroying fauna and flora as is the case.

Although the missional theological response to the environmental crisis has the potential, the church is confronted with institutionalism, power, and authority that affect its missionality. Until the church in Malawi realizes and uses a multisectoral, interdisciplinary approach to deal with contextual issues, environmental degradation will remain a challenge for society. Many factors underlying the challenge of environmental degradation in Malawi require a multidimensional approach. Therefore, this research emphasizes the importance of the missional theological, ecclesiastical response and offers a plan (the TAP) that explains how the church will bring all stakeholders together to address the ecological crisis and related challenges in Malawi.

Referring to the church’s missional theological response as a possible step to addressing the challenge declares the church’s subjection to a transformational process to allow it to occupy a position that makes it the church for the people. Thus, the church must no longer exist singularly to draw people to itself and merely perpetuate its institutional authority and power, as has been the case throughout the history of Western European missionary purpose and journey. Thus, the untheological and unmissional (church-centred language) and aims of “expanding” or “building” the kingdom of God—implying increasing territories of dominion and authority must be avoided. An emphasis must be on contextual and inclusive missional language, activities, and enhance togetherness or partnership that “seek,” “receive,” or allow all people to “enter” into God’s kingdom (cf. Leeman, 2010).

This research reveals that the church’s success in contextual responses depends on its willingness to take a low profile in society as it seeks to initiate liberation from the challenge of environmental crisis. The low profile enables the church for self-transformation as it engages in effective emancipatory
transformative service—Diakonia as a change agent. Diakonia is central in missio Dei and is an essential aspect of the missional theological church’s response towards environmental degradation. Therefore, the church missional theological response becomes a vital aspect for missio Dei and serves to demonstrate what the church means concerning Diakonia, martyria, and ‘koinonia’—to the contextual concerns of the community. In other words, the church’s concern for contextual services ensures missio Dei not only enables successful missional theological church responses (missiones ecclesiae) but also gives the church its real nature and character in missio Dei a vital partner with God in mission (cf. Bosch, 2011:389).

In other words, missio Dei is the source and authority of missional theological response (missiones ecclesiae) to the challenge of environmental crisis. Thus, the missional theological response to environmental degradation (missiones ecclesiae) becomes an essential activity in missio Dei’s plan to salvation people and the entire God’s creation. It is from this background that Bosch’s (2011:399) argument that missio Dei primarily and ultimately endeavours to save people, the universe, and the building of the kingdom through (missiones ecclesiae) (Diakonia). The church is thus embraced as an important partner and an agent of missio Dei for the sake of responding successfully to contextual issues of society. Therefore, preservation, protection, and preservation are defined by missional activities and faith in Christ as the Saviour and Redeemer of all created, seen, and unseen.

Salvation through the Incarnation is not only concerned with just the salvation of individuals’ souls from the threat of God’s retribution and punishment. It is also concerned with the liberation, protection, and preservation from all that endangers life and sustainable, abundant living (John 10:10b ff). As part of the gospel, the missional theological response to the deterioration of the environment is thus not just the news of what God has done in Christ to forgive individual sinners. It includes restoring universe systems and biodiversity human beings have destroyed. A missional theological response concerns repentance and salvation presented ‘holistically’ or ‘comprehensively,’ with ethical implications for each dimension of life. It is carried out as the message of reconciliation, justice, peace, healing, deliverance, and love for the whole natural and human environment. (cf. Van Gelder in Baker, 2000:32-35).

Suppose the church in Malawi will not do what it must do in its missional theological response and let it do so correctly and at the right time, in that case, society must surely be ready for the extinction of people and certain species from the face of the Earth. End time? We do not know, but let the church just do its part and do it well if human and non-human environments on Earth will survive extreme weather conditions of the first two scores of the 21st century. This study, therefore, claims that it is a missional theological response of the church, embedded in missio Dei (stewardship, Diakonia,
koinonia), that has the potential to ensure and influence effective church martyrria (witness) towards practical environmental preservation and biodiversity preservation. The church’s position in society allows it to encourage all participants (missional) in conserving and protecting the Earth’s resources for sustainable existence and livelihood in Malawi.
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8.3 Audio Resources

9 Appendixes

9.1.1 Appendix text materials

Self-administered Questionnaire
There will be group discussions and individual interviews using the same questionnaire. There will be a time for introductions, mood-setting, and guidance. All group members or individuals are welcome to participate fully in the discussions. Members should respect other people's views.

Questions
1. How do the current environmental challenges in Malawi affect basic human needs?
2. What are the main factors for the current critical environmental challenges in Malawi?
3. Does theology or religion, regarding the current environmental challenges, have a role to play, and why or why not?
4. In your opinion, is the church or any other religious beliefs relevant in either the cause and/or the solution to the environmental challenge?
5. If the church had a role to play in addressing the problem of environmental degradation in Malawi, what would make its role unique or different from other institutions in society?
6. If you understand the church as being a stakeholder in addressing the environmental issue in Malawi, how important do you think it is compared with other stakeholders?
   (a) Not very important (b) Moderately important (c) Very important (d) Extremely important
7. Is the issue of environmental degradation ever addressed in your council/church, the local parish, or synod meetings?
8. Are there any environmental degradation initiatives that you know of in the broader district, civil society, and church or your parish or synod?
9. Have you ever drafted or heard a sermon or public address that refers to the challenge of environmental crisis?
10. To your knowledge, is the issue of the environmental crisis ever discussed in any other forums in your society, in church or your parish, or your synod? If so to what aspects of the crisis are commonly referred?
To Whom It May Concern:
29 April 2018

Request to Conduct Interviews
Revd. Fr. Eston D Pembamoyo PhD Student (Missiology) 19085176

Dear Sir, Madam
Fr. Eston D. Pembamoyo is an Anglican priest of the Diocese of Upper Shire in Southern Malawi. Presently he is pursuing his PhD studies at the University of Stellenbosch in South Africa under my supervision. The research topic for his study is: *A missional-Theological Response to Environmental Crisis in Malawi*. For him to conduct the study, he needs to interview some leaders of the mainline churches in Malawi, namely Anglican, CCAP, and Roman Catholic. By this letter, I kindly request that you give him an opportunity to interview you regarding his research topic. Your kind consideration will be highly appreciated.

Please kindly assist him.

Yours faithfully,

Henry Mbaya

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Professor Henry Mbaya
Fakulteit Teologie
Faculty of Theology

Professor Henry Mbaya
Praktiese Teologie en Missiologie (Missiology) • Practical Theology and Missiology (Missiology)
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https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0118-6903

To: District Commissioner/ Church Overseer

..........................................................
..........................................................
..........................................................

Date:

Dear..................

Permission to Collect Data for Academic Research

I am a research student at the University of Stellenbosch in Capetown in South Africa. I would like to conduct face to face individual interviews and hold focus group discussions within your district / church on a research project entitled: A Missional Theological Response to environmental crisis in Malawi.

The information collected is for academic research purposes only, and your consent for the exercise will be appreciated.

Yours Faithfully,

Eston Dickson Pembamoyo
From: Revd. Fr. Eaton Dickson Pembamoyo
Faculty of Theology,
Department of Practical Theology and Missiology
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7600,
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https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0118-6903

To: District Commissioner / Church Overseer

Date:

Dear...

Permission to Collect Data for Academic Research

I am a research student at the University of Stellenbosch in Capetown in South Africa. I would like to conduct face to face individual interviews and hold focus group discussions within your district / church on a research project entitled: A Missional Theological Response to environmental crisis in Malawi.

The information collected is for academic research purposes only, and your consent for the exercise will be appreciated.

Yours Faithfully,

Eaton Dickson Pembamoyo

Permission granted

[Signature]

[Stamps and dates]
Dear [Name],

My name is Rev. Fr Estan Pembamoyo and I am a research student at the University of Stellenbosch in Capetown in South Africa. I would like to invite you to participate in a fifteen to twenty minute face to face interview / focus group discussion comprised of five to ten people in each group or individuals on a research project entitled A Missional Theological Response to the environmental crisis in Malawi.

Please take some time to read the information presented below, which explains the details of this project and contact me if you require further explanation or clarification of any aspect of the study. Also, your participation is entirely voluntary and you are free to decline to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part.

- There is no identifiable risks so far with regard to your participation, but in the case where other risks or harm, discomfort, inconveniences, psychological stress, stigma etc., there is no compensation of any kind.
- You will participate as volunteers and therefore there is no honorarium attached to your participation.
- Four Research Assistants will be given a digital record each which will be returned at the end of the research interviews for data coding purposes by the researcher.
- As participant you are free to choose not to be recorded, but where recorded, your voice will be used for the purpose of this research only and will be confidential.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact at [Contact Information] or [Contact Information].

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS: You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact Ms Mélène Fouchez ([contact information]) at the Division for Research Development. You have right to receive a copy of the Information and Consent form.

If you are willing to participate in this study please sign the attached Declaration of Consent and

[Signature]

[District Commissioner's Signature]

[Date]
APPROVED WITH STIPULATIONS
REC: Social, Behavioural and Education Research (SBER) - Initial Application Form

31 July 2019

Project number: THE-2019-9742

Project title: A Missional-Theological Response to Environmental Crisis in Malawi

Dear Rev Eston Pembamoyo

Your REC: Social, Behavioural and Education Research (SBER) - Initial Application Form submitted on 29 May 2019 was reviewed by the REC: Humanities and approved with stipulations.

Ethics approval period:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protocol approval date (Humanities)</th>
<th>Protocol expiration date (Humanities)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31 July 2019</td>
<td>30 July 2022</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

REC STIPULATIONS:

The researcher may proceed with the envisaged research provided that the following stipulations, relevant to the approval of the project are adhered to or addressed:

1) The researcher is reminded that written permission is required from all gatekeepers to access participants belonging to church denominations or government officials to be interviewed. It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that all permissions are obtained – in particular for participants that will be recruited due to their positions as spokespersons for organizations or employers – i.e. church leaders, all government officials as well as principals of training institutions. [ACTION REQUIRED]

2) Research assistants must be trained on how to conduct ethical research before embarking on research activities. The researcher must ensure that these assistants sign non-disclosure agreements. [ACTION REQUIRED]

HOW TO RESPOND:

Some of these stipulations may require your response. Where a response is required, you must respond to the REC within six (6) months of the date of this letter. Your approval would expire automatically should your response not be received by the REC within 6 months of the date of this letter.

Your response (and all changes requested) must be done directly on the electronic application form on the Infonetica system: https://apply@infonetica.sun.ac.za/Project/ Index/15470

Where revision to supporting documents is required, please ensure that you replace all outdated documents on your application form with the revised versions. Please respond to the stipulations in a separate cover letter titled “Response to REC stipulations” and attach the cover letter in the section Additional Information and Documents.

Please take note of the General Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter. You may commence with your research after complying fully with these guidelines.

If the researcher deviates in any way from the proposal approved by the REC: Humanities, the researcher must notify the REC of these changes.

Please use your SU project number (9742) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your project.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.
FOR CONTINUATION OF PROJECTS AFTER REC APPROVAL PERIOD

Please note that a progress report should be submitted to the Research Ethics Committee: Humanities before the approval period has expired if a continuation of ethics approval is required. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary)

Included Documents:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document Type</th>
<th>File Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Version</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Investigator CV (PI)</td>
<td>Curriculum Vitae 2018</td>
<td>30/03/2018</td>
<td>Word Document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget</td>
<td>Budget For Environmental Crisis Research</td>
<td>09/03/2019</td>
<td>XL Document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informed Consent Form</td>
<td>SU HUMANITIES Consent template Written Filled (1)</td>
<td>02/05/2019</td>
<td>MS Document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data collection tool</td>
<td>Self Administrative Questionnaire Environmental Crisis</td>
<td>03/05/2019</td>
<td>MS Document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Default</td>
<td>Request for Research Data Collection in District Church</td>
<td>03/05/2019</td>
<td>MS Document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Default</td>
<td>Submitted PhD Research Proposal June 08 July</td>
<td>03/05/2019</td>
<td>MS Document</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data collection tool</td>
<td>Self Administrative Questionnaire Environmental Crisis</td>
<td>03/05/2019</td>
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<td>Research Protocol Proposal</td>
<td>Submitted PhD Research Proposal June 08 July (1)</td>
<td>28/05/2019</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at cgraham@sun.ac.za.

Sincerely,

Clarissa Graham

REC Coordinator: Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)

National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) registration number: REC-034441-022.
The Research Ethics Committee: Humanities complies with the SA National Health Act No. 81 2003 as it pertains to health research. In addition, this committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research established by the Declaration of Helsinki (2013) and the Department of Health Guidelines for Ethics Research: Principles, Structures and Processes (2nd ed.), 2015. Annually a number of projects may be selected randomly for an external audit.
Investigator Responsibilities

Protection of Human Research Participants

Some of the general responsibilities investigators have when conducting research involving human participants are listed below:

1. Conducting the Research. You are responsible for making sure that the research is conducted according to the REC approved research protocol. You are also responsible for the actions of all your co-investigators and research staff involved with this research. You must also ensure that the research is conducted within the standards of your field of research.

2. Participant Enrollment. You may not recruit or enroll participants prior to the REC approval date or after the expiration date of REC approval. All recruitment materials for any form of media must be approved by the REC prior to their use.

3. Informed Consent. You are responsible for obtaining and documenting effective informed consent using only the REC-approved consent documents/process, and for ensuring that no human participants are involved in research prior to obtaining their informed consent. Please give all participants copies of the signed informed consent documents. Keep the original in your secured research files for at least five (5) years.

4. Continuing Review. The REC must review and approve all REC-approved research proposals at intervals appropriate to the degree of risk but not less than once per year. There is no grace period. Prior to the date on which the REC approved of the research expires, it is your responsibility to submit the progress report in a timely fashion to ensure a lapse in REC approval does not occur. If REC approval of your research lapses, you must stop new participant enrollment, and contact the REC office immediately.

5. Amendments and Changes. If you wish to amend or change any aspect of your research (such as research design, interventions or procedures, participant population, informed consent document, instruments, surveys or recruiting material), you must submit the amendment to the REC for review using the current Amendment Form. You may not initiate any amendments or changes to your research without first obtaining written REC review and approval. The only exception is when it is necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants and the REC should be immediately informed of this necessity.

6. Adverse or Unanticipated Events. Any serious adverse events, participant complaints, and all unanticipated problems that involve risks to participants or others, as well as any research-related injuries, occurring at this institution or at other performance sites must be reported to the學校内 within five (5) days of discovery of the incident. You must also report any instances of serious or continuing problems, or non-compliance with the REC's requirements for protecting human research participants. The only exception to this policy is that the death of a research participant must be reported in accordance with the Stellenbosch University Research Ethics Committee Standard Operating Procedures. All reportable events should be submitted to the REC using the Serious Adverse Event Report Form.

7. Research Record Keeping. You must keep the following research-related records, at a minimum, in a secure location for a minimum of five years: the REC approval of the research proposal and all amendments; all informed consent documents; recruiting materials; continuing review report; adverse or unanticipated events, and all correspondence from the REC.

8. Provision of Counseling or Emergency Support. When a dedicated counsellor or psychologist provides support to a participant without prior REC review and approval, to the extent permitted by law, such activities will not be recognised as research nor the data used in support of research. Such cases should be indicated in the progress report or final report.

9. Final Reports. When you have completed (no further participant enrollment, interactions or interventions) or stopped work on your research, you must submit a Final Report to the REC.

10. On-Site Evaluations, Inspections, or Audits. If you are notified that your research will be reviewed or audited by the sponsor or any other external agency or any internal group, you must inform the REC immediately of the impending audit/evaluation.
From: Revd. Fr. Eston Dickson Pembamoyo
Faculty of Theology,
Department of Practical Theology and Missiology
171 Dorpe Street,
7600,
Stellenbosch.
South Africa.

Nsauka Village, TA Chikowi,
P.O. Box 906,
Zomba.
Malawi.
19085176@sun.ac.za esjopembamoyo@gmail.com
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0118-6903

To: The Research Data Collecting Assistant

Dear…………

**A Call for Training as Volunteer Research Data Collection Assistant**

Following the form of consent which you filled and accepted to take in the research project entitled *A Missional Theological Response to the environmental crisis in Malawi*, I would like to invite you for training on the basics required for you to participate well in the exercise.

- The training will include:
- Research methodologies
- Conducting face to face interviews and facilitating focus group discussions
- Data collection and recording

Data collected in the process is purely for academic research purposes and your participation in the training will assist in the exercise of your role as a Data Collector. Your participation will greatly be appreciated.

Yours Faithfully,

Eston Dickson Pembamoyo
To
Fr Eston Dickson Pembamoyo,
25 Gabriels Street,
Cloetesville, 7600,
Stellenbosch, SOUTH AFRICA

Dear Fr Pembamoyo,

Sub.: Invitation to present your research paper on Faith, Practice and Global Warming: A Theological, Missiological and Sociological Challenge for Malawian Christianity at our forthcoming conference on Christianity and the Public Sphere in Africa and Asia (1–3 July 2018) here in Liverpool.

Your passport number MA119429 expiring on 26 May 2021.

On behalf of the Selection Committee, we are pleased to invite you to present your research paper in the above-mentioned conference. All participants will be happy to learn from your paper. You will have about 20 minutes for your presentation and 10 minutes for questions and answers from the plenum. We request you to kindly email us the final draft of your paper by the end of May 2018 for an online publication along with other conference proceedings.

May we draw your attention to following website with necessary information on registration, accommodation, and meals: Conference Registration. On-campus accommodation is available on the basis of prior registration and ‘first-come-first-served’. Travel directions from the nearest international airport in Manchester (MAN), the bus and railways stations in Liverpool are available online at Directions to Hope. If you need any additional information, please let us know (either jeyarad@hope.ac.uk or kwiyani@hope.ac.uk).

We look forward to welcoming you.

Thanking you,

(DR HARVEY KWIYANI)
9.2.1 Appendix photographic materials

Photographic materials

Kayreker Uranium mine Kalonga

Waste dump typical in many places

Floods in Zomba and Mangochi 2013

Floods in the SADC Region 2019

Strong winds and heavy downpour in Salima

Deforestation
Charcoal production - Malawi green Gold

Red brick baking in Kilns – deforestation

Drought - Lake Chilwa at Kachulu in Zomba

Water shortage drought - Phalombe near Lake Chilwa

Mposa Drought in Machinga – Lake Chilwa

Fishnets causing over fishing, and yet suffer the same consequences with conservationist using fishing baskets
Malawi Defence Force protect Dzalanyama Forest Reserves

Industrial Carbon footprint and transmission

Zomba Mountain in 2002 and in 2010

9.2.2 Researcher with Andrew Walls and Lamin Sanneh at Hope University Liverpool Conference 2018

9.2.3 Researcher with Bill Mollison the Father and founder of Permaculture Movement and Practice in Amann -Jordan

9.2.4 Researcher with John Mbiti at the University of Stellenbosch