

**Being a Church in a globalised world: Reflection
on the need for theological transformation for the Church's
advocacy work in Malawi**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis has discussed, analyzed and explored the need for the Church in Malawi to address root causes of socio-economic injustice. The majority of people in Malawi are living beyond poverty line and the poverty level is being deepened as a result of economic injustices. The Church in Malawi, being one of the civil society institutions, stands in a strategic position to address injustice issues since it is able to work directly with people at grass root level.

The thesis gave a background of the political and Socio-economic situation in Malawi and it analyzed and discussed the role of the Church over such issues. It has been noted that Socio-economic injustice is a world wide problem. Globally, neo-liberal economic policies are bringing devastating impact in many developing countries. In case of Malawi, it has been noted that the impact of such policies are contributing to the worsening situation of vicious circle of poverty.

An analysis of theological models which theologians follow when it comes to social issues shows that different ecclesiological understandings leads to denominations being involved in social issues differently. Even though the Church agrees in general for its need to be involved in social issues, there have been some disagreements on its involvement when social issues especially when they are connected to political issues. The Church in Malawi has been responding to problems mostly on reactive level which has been beneficial to a lot of people. However, it has been argued that responding on reactive level only can not help people get out of vicious circle. Rather, the Church has to respond on proactive level as well; thus addressing the root causes of social problems.

It has been argued that in order for the Church in Malawi to be involved in Socio-economic injustice issues it has to exercise its prophetic role that has a heart for the marginalized in the society like the poor, women, orphans and other groups with physical and mental challenges. As a way forward for the Church in Malawi, the thesis suggested the need for transformation, the need for ecumenical engagement at local, national and international level and the integration of Socio-economic issues in its theological schools

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I primarily got interested in Socio-economic issues when I worked with people in acute poverty as I worked with Evangelical Association of Malawi. I got involved in working with a lot of elderly people who were taking care of orphans and the majorities were victims of HIV/AIDS consequences. I saw devastating effects of poverty and HIV/AIDS and how difficult life was. Such problems kept building upon each other one after another creating a vicious circle of poverty that is very complicated to get out of.

Analyzing the role of the Church in Malawian society, I came to realize how the Church stands in a strategic position to combat such problems. With the two years of diaconal studies and having theology as background, my interest in searching for answers on how people who are trapped in vicious circle of poverty can get out of it led me to come up with this multidisciplinary thesis.

First and foremost I would like to express special thanks to my supervisor Stephanie Dietrich, an associate Professor at the Department of Diaconia at Diakonhjemmet University College who has done an excellent and outstanding work for me to be able to write this thesis. She has been an inspiration and an encouragement to me. Her commitment and eagerness and all the time she invested can never be appreciated enough with words.

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LIST OF ACRONYM

AGAPE	-	Alternative Globalization Addressing Peoples and Earth
AIDS	-	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ARV	-	Antiretroviral
CCAP	-	Church of Central Africa Presbyterian
CCJP	-	Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace
CEAR	-	Central and East African Railways
EAM	-	Evangelical Association of Malawi
ECM	-	Ecumenical Council of Malawi
GATT	-	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GOM	-	Government of Malawi
HIV	-	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IFI	-	International Finance Institutions
IMF	-	International Monetary Fund
KISP	-	Komiteen for Internasjonale Spørsmål
LWF	-	Lutheran World Federation
MCC	-	Malawi Council of Churches
MPRSP	-	Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
OVC	-	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
SAP	-	Structural Adjustment Program
UN	-	United Nation
UNDP	-	United Nation Development Program
UNICEF	-	United Nations Children's Fund
WTO	-	World Trade Organization

Chapter 1

1 Introduction

This thesis discusses, analyzes and explores on the involvement of Church in Malawi in some ethical issues namely Socio-economic injustice that is contributing to the deepening of poverty and worsening HIV/AIDS crisis. Ethical issues especially regarding human dignity have been compromised as economic injustice increases world wide and gap between the rich and the poor widens everyday. One of the root causes of such increase in poverty and worsening HIV/AIDS crisis is socio-economic injustices that have resulted in creating the vicious circle of poverty.

The Church in Malawi, being one of the civil society institutions in the country, has been involved a lot in eradicating of poverty mostly through reactive work; thus responding to the problems and dealing with the immediate needs. This has been helpful and beneficial to many people. Whilst the Church in Malawi in general agrees on the need of its involvement in social issues, like helping orphans, helping those in deep poverty, promoting education and health services, it disagrees on its involvement on political issues. Since Socio-economical issues are connected to political issues, some theologians have resorted not to be involved in such issues. In this regard Socio-economic injustice is a social problem that the Church would need to address but since addressing its root causes would lead the Church to get involved in some politics, it challenges Church's social work.

Therefore in this thesis, I am discussing, analyzing and exploring the theological basis for the Church in Malawi to take more intervention on social ethical issues in combating with the root causes of Socio-economic injustice.

1.1 Background Information for the Thesis

My interest for choosing this subject matter is because of my background in working with Evangelical Association of Malawi¹ as HIV/AIDS program officer. I worked with Churches that were implementing HIV/AIDS programs. My job involved working with people who were infected and affected with HIV/AIDS, those living in absolute poverty and trapped in a

¹ Evangelical Association of Malawi (EAM) is an Umbrella body for evangelical Churches, Christian organizations and individuals joined together in the common task of holistically improving the social and spiritual well-being of all people in Malawi.

‘vicious circle of poverty’ hence my interest to help the poor people developed. For the majority of local Malawians, living standards have been dwindling drastically due to the privatization of most government facilities which has led to individual responsibility in accessing basic needs. This has created a situation that it is hard to fight and eliminate against absolute poverty and HIV/AIDS which are the major challenges in Malawi thus making social work difficult. Most of the people have been hit on microeconomic level and have been affected negatively by the structural adjustment programs (SAP) that the government is implementing.

Even though on macro level structural adjustment implementation has contributed to the development of the country, the few people who are benefiting are foreign investors; leaving the majority of local Malawians in poverty. A lot of these foreign investors are not even concerned to participate and contribute in alleviation of social problems. The UN 1996 report on human development reflects that the growth on macro economic level does not automatically mean a growth in human development and this can be reflected in Malawian context. The voiceless, the marginalized, the poor are being oppressed and are suffering because they are getting little or no help at all.

Studies on diaconia especially on prophetic diaconia, which put much emphasis in fighting for justice, speaking out for the voiceless and empowering the marginalized in the society, sparked my interest in the subject matter. Diaconal work is about social enhancement carried out by the Church which promotes serving and empowering people. In Malawian context, some of the examples of the marginalized groups are orphans, HIV/AIDS infected and affected people, widows, poverty stricken people, physical disabilities, mental illnesses, visual impairment, hearing impairment and intellectual impairment. Women are generally marginalized because they live in a society that is biased against women almost in every aspect of life. When I started international diaconia studies, especially on world economics, it was an eye opener for me in the context of Malawi since it has not been left on the neo-liberalism globalization process.

It can be noted that the Church in Malawi is influential within the Malawian community and is strategically positioned to fight against the root causes of socio-economic injustices perpetrated by forces from within and outside. The Church has the advantage that it works with people at grass roots level and her role can be of vital importance. However, the Church

has not embarked a lot in playing one of her major roles to curb the root causes of this kind of injustice that is affecting the communities around which it is operating. With the above background my interest in the subject matter rose. In my search for the answers to the questions that I raised as regards to Church and Socio-economic injustice, I would want to challenge the Church in Malawi to work towards advocacy and get more involved in proactive social work through prophetic theology and prophetic diaconia.

1.2 The Study objective

The main objective of this thesis is to challenge the Church in Malawi for its approach in response to Socio-economic injustices, and that it should work ecumenically towards prophetic theology and prophetic diaconia as a response to Socio-economic injustices. The importance of this objective is that it will challenge Churches to take responsibilities in fighting against the root causes of social ills which are often times ignored.

1.3 Research Question and Method

1.3.1 Research Question

The reflection on role of the Church in Malawi on intervention on Socio-economic injustices issues in a country not spared from neo-liberal globalization waves guided my research question. The gravity of poverty and the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS have challenged the Church in Malawi and in general. The Church agrees on the need for its involvement in this, though this involvement is demonstrated at different levels. In this thesis I will challenge theological interpretations that ignore Socio-economic injustice and claim they are only interested in winning souls. I am exploring the possibilities and the need of the Church in Malawi to work ecumenically when it comes to fighting against the root causes of poverty. However the question that I will try to explore its answers in this paper is:

How can the Church in Malawi work ecumenically on proactive social work and advocate for Socio-economic injustice within the realm of influence of neo-liberalism globalization?

Here are some of the questions that I will be trying to explore their answers:

-Why is it necessary for the Church in Malawi to be involved in fighting against Socio-economic injustice?

-How can the Church in Malawi fight against root causes of Socio-economic injustices?

The questions above are both theological and sociological. On the theological part it will reflect on different forms of ecclesiologies and their influences on Church's involvement in social issues. It will discuss the need for transformation of the Church so that it can be an agent for change. The problem statement above is also sociological because it is involving Church's social order in a society. It will address Church's role on social issues and it will evaluate the context of Malawian society with its social problems.

1.3.2 Method

This thesis is theoretical paper and it is a desk research paper. My approach to in it will mainly be theological in nature. I have chosen the Church in Malawi specifically because of its history, and because it stands in a strategic position as a civil society institution, able to reach even the remotest part of the country. I have not made any comparative study on different theories of theological views when it comes to Socio-economic injustice issues. Rather, I am making a systematic approach through critical analysis of data that is available to me which can build up on working towards prophetic theology and prophetic diaconia when it comes to the Church dealing with Socio-economic injustice issues. It will be an exploration and analysis of the Church's role in Malawi in intervention with the root causes of Socio-economic injustice. I will also discuss the position of the Church in Malawi within the society and analyze its impact on politics and social issues and I will discuss the need for the Church to fight for Socio-economic injustice despite challenges that lie ahead.

1.4 Literature Review

The thesis will greatly depend on the available data most of which will be secondary data. I will critically look at the Church's role in economic social injustices, and therefore I will use theological data that reflects on the Church and social order of the communities. The first thing that stimulated my enthusiasm of the topic above was some of the books that were on syllabus as I started getting deeper into international diaconia. Whilst articles on access to medicine by Blaylock, 2006; Alternative globalization addressing peoples and earth (AGAPE) 2005 discussed some social problems caused by neo-liberal policies; the Letter from LWF on the global consultation and Prophetic Diakonia: "For the healing of the World"² dealt more

² This Lutheran World Federation report titled Prophetic Diakonia "For the healing of the world" was published in November 2002 and it mainly tackles three problems facing our world today namely poverty, violence and HIV/AIDS

with the Church's response to such situation. This motivated me to venture deeper on such issues and reflecting on the theological basis of the Church's involvement into Socio-economical injustice. With my background in theology I thought of reflecting on different forms of ecclesiologies that are influential in Malawian context. The main data that will be used in this thesis are:

- Literature on prophetic theology and prophetic Diaconia
- Literature on Church and social issues

The first document is Entitled Prophetic diaconia: "For the Healing of the world," this is basically stating the three social problems that our world is facing today; Poverty, Violence and HIV/AIDS and stating the need of prophetic model to handle such problems. The second document is a report entitled "The Church and Economic Globalization" written by Commission on International Affairs (KISP)³ under the Church of Norway. Third I will use a document entitled "Mission in Context Transformation, Reconciliation Empowerment" that was issued by LWF. Finally I will use Kairos Document that was issued by group of theologians from South Africa. The first and second documents have perspectives of both the Church in the North and in the South, the third document has a perspective of the Church in the North and the last document has a perspective of the Church in the South. It should be kept in mind that prophetic theology has not been emphasized by the majority Protestants Churches in Malawi.

However some literature on Socio-economic injustices will be used as supplementary

1.5 Overview of the thesis

The Church in Malawi is influenced by both the Roman Catholic and Protestant theologies which also affects on how the Church involves itself in Socio-economic injustice. Since issues of Socio-economic justice cannot be divorced from political landscape of a country, there has been a wide range of debates on how far should a Church be involved in the politics.

The Church and Church affiliated institutions in Malawi have been playing vital roles and they can be accredited for their involvement in addressing social problems and alleviation of immediate suffering. This has been beneficial to a lot of people who would have died or end

³ KISP (Komiteen for Internasjonale Spørsmål) is the Commission on International Affairs that was placed under the Church on Norway Council on Ecumenical and International Relations.

up in acute situations without such help. However, the rapid increase of HIV/AIDS and poverty, which is a major challenge to Church's social work, has led to worsening the gravity of vicious circle of poverty. It is almost impossible for people who are trapped in this circle to get out of it if the problems faced are only addressed at their consequences and not at their root causes.

Therefore this thesis will argue and challenge the Church in Malawi to work towards prophetic model in advocating for the voiceless, the marginalized and the poor in the society with regard to issues of Socio-economic injustices for transformation for the betterment of the majority Malawians.

Chapter 2: Brief Background on Political and Economic situation and the Church in Malawi

2.1 Introduction

This chapter has two main objectives. The first one is to give a background of political situation in Malawi following the attainment of independence in 1964 and also on how Malawi became a democratic country in 1994. A reflection on the role of the Church over this period will be done. The second objective is to give a background to the Socio-economic situation and the impact of neo-liberalism policies within Malawian context. However the reflection of world wide globalised neo-liberal polices will be given first in order to understand and identify Malawi with other countries going through the same socio-economic dilemmas and complexities of Socio-economic problems. The aim of the chapter is to have a basic understanding of the background to the political and socio-economic situation in which the Church in Malawi is operating and explaining the need for the Church in Malawi to be involved in addressing Socio-economic injustice.

2.2 Background to Political Situation in Malawi

One cannot talk of the history of the political situation in Malawi without mentioning the Church. The history of missionaries goes back to 1861 with the establishment of the Universities Mission to Central Africa under the leadership of Bishop Mackenzie and this was before the British Protectorate was established in 1891. As missionaries were coming to Malawi, they were involved not only in religious activities but also in social work especially within the education and health sectors. They collaborated with the then British government in the Protectorate to enhance both these sectors. Malawi became independent from the British colonial rule in 1964 under the leadership of Dr. Kamuzu Banda. However his regime devolved into dictatorship and he was in power for 30 years. During the regime of Kamuzu, self governing of associations and organizations were extremely scrutinized and it was not easy for them to operate freely. Kamuzu's regime was suspicious of organizations and associations that were being formed. As a result, it affected the development and establishment of civil society. However, the Church was one of few civil society institutions that were operating and it gained a lot of respect from people. One of the reasons that the Church gained a lot of respect was because of its involvement in social issues.

2.2.1 The Period of a silent Church

However from 1964-1992 it was a period that I can refer to as ‘the period of a silent Church’ regarding political issues and this applies to both the Catholic and Protestant Churches. In an article written by Andrew Timpuza⁴ he stated that “during the period from independence up to 1992, the Catholic Church leadership and the laity were characterized by a lack of consciousness of the Church's mission in the social and political spheres and were paralyzed by political fear.” (Timpunza: 2001). One of the reasons that kept the Church silent was that Kamuzu’s regime handled criticism harshly hence it created fear among Church leaders.

Another reason for Church’s silence was that there was good relationship between the Church and the state during the fight for independence and both institutions were committed to work together towards social issues. As a result the Church became very loyal to the government and it was difficult for the Church to criticize the government. Kenneth Ross⁵ stated that it was particular the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) that formed the closest relationship to government after independence and it became so assimilated with the government’s activities (Ross 1993).

However, it should be noted that it was not only the CCAP that had close relationship with the government but also the Catholic Church, Anglican Church, Seventh Day Adventists and others that were invited to officiate and support annual independent celebrations during Kamuzu’s regime.

Apart from the political fear, the Church had a policy of non-interference in politics which was the basic vision of the first missionaries in Malawi; the White Fathers and their counterparts, Montfort missionaries who viewed the involvement in secular matters as being outside the role of the Church (Timpuza 2001). This was applicable not only to Catholic Missionaries alone but also to other different protestant missionaries in Malawi. Timpuza stated that “according to the first missionaries, the main role of the Church was to save souls, by making available to the people the means of eternal salvation. Thus, their preoccupation was to build the Church and minister spiritually to the people” (ibid). From this observation it is clear that the Church’s policies were not holistic in nature and overlooked issues of

⁴ Andrew Timpunza is a Catholic priest from Dedza diocese, Malawi. He holds a Doctorate in Canon Law from Ulban University, Rome.

⁵ Kenneth Ross is a former Professor of Theology at University of Malawi from 1988-1998

injustices. “As a result, great injustices that were committed by the colonial government towards the people went un denounced by the Church” (ibid). The Church was silent at the cost of suffering of the masses during Kamuzu’s regime. Another major reason that the Church kept silent was that there was lack of unity among Churches and this prevented the Church to confront Kamuzu. Churches did not make attempts to work together to confront Kamuzu due to fear suspicion and lack of trust for each other.

2.2.2 Breaking of the Church’s Silence

Even though Kamuzu regime started to see the beginning of dissent against its government policies during the late 1980’s and early 1990 by various individuals and groups, it was the Malawian Catholic bishops’ pastoral letter that was issued on 8th march 1992 which is widely thought to have signaled the beginning of the end for the regime (Gibbs, 1999:57). The bishops’ letter was signed personally by all the bishops called for far-reaching economic and political reforms.

It was this prophetic voice of the Bishops that challenged the Kamuzu regime and spoke out on the sufferings of people. “More than 16,000 copies of the letter were printed and read in all 130 Catholic parishes in Malawi” (ibid). This signified unity, commitment, and sacrificial quality of great leadership that went beyond looking at their lives and focused on the people they lead in order to confront Kamuzu’s regime. Malawi got its first democratic government in 1994. It was the era that marked the historic change in Malawi; the then period and the there after period. From 1994-1999 the Church was silent because it was satisfied with what it did in 1992. However, the Church exercised its prophetic role during 2001–3 when United Democratic Front government attempted to amend the constitution to allow the then President Bakili Muluzi to stand for a third term in office. The Church played a significant role that led to the failure of such an attempt. This was an indication for the Church’s role as a continuity in its involvement in political developments. Ross in his article entitled ‘Worrisome Trends’: The voice of the Churches in Malawi's third term debate” stated that Malawi's Churches have come to regard themselves as custodians of democratic values, champions of the constitution and spokespersons for the people (Ross 2004).

2.3 General over view on Socio-economic injustices in Globalized society

The previous sub topic discussed the political situation in Malawi and the role of the Church. As a continuation, this part will reflect on Socio-economic injustice and a critical look at the impact of trade policies that Malawi is following will highlighted. However since the trade policies that Malawi is implementing are also affecting other countries globally, a reflection on world wide Socio-economic injustice will be exposed first.

2.3.1 Overview of Globalised society

Having a globalised world is not a new phenomenon as it might seem to some because just a reflection on the slave trade and well known route ‘the great triangle’ one can note that it was globalization process. In a report that was issued by the Commission on International Affairs (KISP) on the Church and economic Globalization stated that Globalization in general is a collective term for a diversity of interdependent and often mutually enhancing different processes (KISP 2007:8). In the case of this thesis, it is referring to globalization of economy.

According to an Organization of Economic Co-operation development (OECD) definition stated that “globalization of the economy is that process through which markets and production in different countries become increasingly depended on one another, because of the dynamic of trade in goods and services and the movement in capital and technology” (Kung, 162).

The vast increase of new technologies in communication and transport as Thomas Friedman⁶ stated, has made globalization “farther, faster, cheaper, and deeper.” In general, one can note that globalization has a significant impact on all aspect of societal life in our world today like on economy, politics, culture, communication and the individual’s sense of value and even on morality (Mission in context: 13).

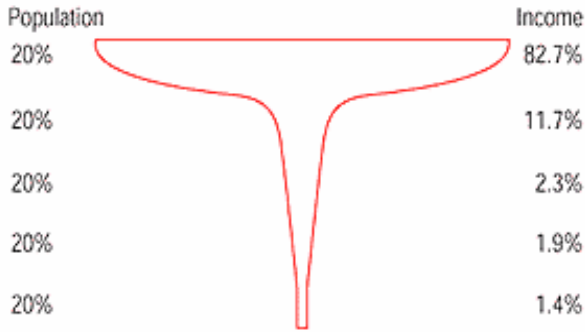
2.3.2 Overview of Socio-economic injustices world wide

The world wide statistics on distribution of wealth shows discrepancies on how the wealth of the world is distributed, and generally the countries in the northern hemisphere are rich whilst those in the southern hemisphere are poor. A background document on Alternative Globalization Addressing Peoples and Earth (AGAPE), stated that 20% of richest people in the world own 86% of global goods and services and on average 24,000 people die every day

⁶ Thomas Friedman is the New York Times foreign Affairs columnist
<http://www.thomasfriedman.com/lexusolivetreeintro.htm> visited on 12.01.08

due to poverty related reasons (Agape, 3). Randy Charles Epping, an international finance specialist, stated that “as incredible as it may seem, the net worth of ten wealthiest people in the world is more than the total yearly earnings of everyone living in world’s developing countries” (Epping, 129). Epping also pointed out that “although the third world holds much of the world’s natural resources-including vast petroleum reserves in Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East-much of the raw materials from the third world are shipped abroad for consumptions by the world’s wealthier and more developed countries” (Epping, 117).

The below figure from 1989 UNDP report shows the unequal distribution of world income. This figure reflects that 20% of world’s population hold more than 80% of world wide income and 80% of the population have access to less than 20% of world income.



If the figure above is re-drawn today, it would reflect worse conditions than above since the gap between the rich and the poor has been increasing in the past decade. James Gustave Speth, a former administrator of the U.N.D.P., upon the releasing of 1996 human development report stated that "If present trends continue, economic disparities between industrial and developing nations will move from inequitable to inhuman." (1996:iii). Unfortunately such trends have been on the increase. One can already see this trend emerging as trade rules surpasses human life and dignity. The report also stated that “The assets of world’s 358 billionaires exceed the combined annual income of countries with 45% of the world’s population” (UN 1996:2). It continued to state that the gap in per capital income between the industrial and developing worlds tripled from \$5,700 in 1960 to \$15, 400 in 1993 (ibid). From the statistics above one can note that Socio-economic injustices is a global problem and the world today is challenged with such social upheavals that are attacking and threatening human life.

2.3.3 Reflection on neo-liberalism policies

There can be several reasons that are contributing to such an increase in the gap between the rich and the poor. However the UN world social report stated that foremost among the global dynamics that help explain the root causes of persistent inequality trend are the liberalization policies implemented in many countries during the past decades. (UN, 2005:108). Such inequality trends are deepening poverty levels, increasing the gap between the rich and the poor hence making social work difficult and even posing many challenges regarding ethical issues. It should be noted that developing countries are the ones suffering the most as a result of such trade policies as many of them are financially weak and unable to compete on international markets.

In a document that was written by Lutheran world federation, Prophetic Diaconia: for the healing of the world stated that “poverty is a symptom of the deeper problems of injustice, greed and the massive accumulative of wealth encouraged by the neo-liberal paradigm and implemented through multilateral corporation and institutions”(2002). We are living in a world that is globalised and one of its characteristics is neo-liberalism. For the past 20 years, the concept of neo-liberalism has become debatable in political, economic, academic and even religious realms. In the case of this thesis, the term refers to the economic issues. Various sociologists and economists have given some definitions on neo-liberalism. One can see a trend of defining the term based on its negative impact basically because the positive part that it brings is too far to outdo its negatives. It should be noted that it is not easy to condense everything about the term neo-liberalism in a simple statement. One of sociologist who tries to give an explanation and some concept about the word is David Harvey. He explains that:

“Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. The state has to guarantee, for example, the quality and integrity of money. It must also set up those military, defense, police and legal structures and functions required to secure private property rights and to guarantee, by force if need be, the proper functioning of markets” (Harvey 2005:2).

In this regard, Harvey understood Neoliberalism as an economic theory that privatization and individualism can promote human well being. Neo-liberalism promotes individualism and freedom in markets; thus we are living in a world where everything is moving towards that where everyone has to deal with their own problems and challenges. As a result, it is creating lack of methodological contextual approach to social problems. This individualism is affecting many areas of life which includes but not limited to modern pastoral theology where we see a trend of individual orientation in counseling rather than the society in which one lives in.

The process of privatization of state facilities reflects that few individuals benefit from it, and as a result, the majority of people struggle as the rich gets richer and the poor gets poorer. It is about the survival of the fittest; the weak one can hardly survive because they can not stand as individuals. Frans J. Schuurman, an editor of the book '*Beyond the Impasse: new directions in Development theory*' said that the third world's share of world income fell from 5.6% in 1978 to 4.5% in 1984 and the income ratio between the rich and poor countries went up to 60:1 in 1989 from 20:1 in 1960 and 46:1 in 1980 (Schuurman, 10). According to these statistics one can note a drastic increase in the gap between the rich and the poor.

There has been an out cry from developing countries where free trade policies are being enforced to be implemented by international institutions that control world economy who are behind the neo-liberalism policies. The AGAPE document stated that much of the understanding of injustices is institutionalized which means it is supported by structures and systems of the conduct that control and normalize today's global trade and finances (2005:35). These international systems are International Monetary Fund (IMF), The World Bank and World Trade Organization (WTO). The World Bank and International Monetary Fund were established after the World war II in order to deal with financial transactions, and these two together are referred to as international financial institutions (IFI). The WTO was established in 1995 as a successor of General agreement on trade and tariffs (GATT) making it a 'trinity institution' by joining with IMF and World Bank.

KISP stated that these international institutions are interdependent in nature in such a way that each institution was established within the global economy. The IMF is responsible for international currency and financial system; the World Bank being responsible for the global development policy and WTO is responsible for global trade system (2007:13). Even though

each of these institutions has their own role to play, they are interdependent through their common work with the Free Trade Objectives in different parts of the world economy. In addition, the decision that one sector makes has definitely influence on the other two (ibid).

It is important not to over look the positive side of IMF and World Bank and ought to be given credit for their initiatives and efforts to eliminate poverty in poorest developing countries. The World Bank gave loans to developing countries to help them in development which one can see as a good motive. The developing countries, being thirsty and eager to develop themselves took the loans and were even encouraged to take more. However the developing countries ended up paying back much more than the loan itself leaving a great population in these countries poorer than before and this is the situation Malawi finds itself. For example many countries in Africa ended up paying 3,7 Billion Dollars more for the loans that they took each year from 1997-2003 (Agape 2005:29).

One of the problems that have been raised of how these ‘trinity institutions’ operate is that the policies and systems that are set are assumed that they would be applicable to all contexts. At the beginning of early 1990’s the notion of Washington Consensus, which aimed at having the economy of the developing countries function more in line with the economic policy of the Western countries, was established to a greater extent with the influence of these institutions (KISP 2007:14). Peet, who calls these three institutions ‘the unholy trinity’ stated that believers at the IMF, World Bank and WTO is that the policies of free trade, privatization, fiscal austerity, the deregulation of finance are a one size fits all recipe for success everywhere (Peet, 5). This has been proven to be disastrous in many developing countries in Africa and Malawi is not exceptional. Currently, there are agreements by different sectors that these three international economic institutions continue to suffer from so called democratic deficiency especially within the IFI (KISP 2007:15).

It has also been argued that the dealings between these institutions and the poor countries, lack democratic processes, and also lack of legitimacy related to the market-liberal solutions recommended to poor countries (Ibid). The other argument is that ethical issues have been compromised a lot just like Warren Allmand⁷ quoted by Maureen Wilson stated, “We live in a

⁷ Warren Allmand is the president for the centre for the promotion of human rights and Democracy

world in which it is more serious to break trade rules than to violate human rights.” (Wilson: 2).

2.4 Background of the Economic Situation in Malawi

During the reign of Kamuzu, there was totalitarian political controls with conservative economic policies and Malawi was relatively a closed state and moderately stable economically. However, since 1981 Malawi has been implementing a broad program of macroeconomic adjustment and structural policy reforms with financial and technical support from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), and bilateral and multilateral donors (Ng’ong’ola 1996:v).

Structural adjustment is a term used to describe a series of reform programs aimed at changing the structure of the economy from government controlled to private-sector led. As an approach for development, structural adjustment has been practiced by a number of less developed countries, including Malawi. The aim of this structural adjustment is expected to create a free market economy through reform of policies that depart from free market conditions (Ng’ong’ola, 1996:1). However one can argue that this has not helped developing countries and KISP agrees to this “The demands from global financial institutions for adjustments of national structures to make them fit better with the requirements of the markets, economy, and the so called structural adjustment programs have in many places resulted in the out-phasing or razing of social structures and support structures, which in turn has caused many people to end in deep social misery” (2007:17).

It has been over some decades since Malawi started implementing structural adjustment programs (SAP) yet the nation of Malawi still remains one of the countries that are struggling in human development. In a recent report by UNDP, Malawi ranks 164th country out of 177 countries listed, (UNDP human development 2007/2008). What can be shocking about this ranking is that almost all the countries that are ranked lower than Malawi are either in a state of war or civil conflict or have just emerged from some crisis yet Malawi, since independence, has been free from war crisis. This simply implies that Malawi is one of the poorest countries in one of the poorest regions of the poorest continent in the world.

The Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy paper 2003/04, indicates that poverty in Malawi is widespread, deep and severe. The results from 1st and 2nd integrated household survey that

was conducted in 1997/98 and 2004/05 respectively, reviews that there have been no changes in poverty reduction especially on microeconomic levels. 65.3% of the population still lives below poverty line if one takes worldwide definition of poverty. However the definition of poverty in Malawi has been changed and it has adapted the definition below here:

Poor Below MK 16, 165 per person per year (this is about 153.59 USD as per the exchange rate in 2005).

Ultra poor Below MK 10, 029 per person per year (this is about 93.30 USD as per the exchange rate in 2005).

From the adjustments that have been made, the poverty line in Malawian context is defined as those living under half a dollar per day are considered extremely poor.

2.5 Impact of neo-liberal trade policies in Malawi

A large population of Malawian people has been affected negatively by the trade policies that the government is implementing. In a paper that was presented during sensitization of faith community leaders in economic justice issues on the model of economy which Malawi is following, Dr. Augustine Magolowondo⁸ stated that Malawi is currently following neo-liberal economic model which diminishes the role of the state in the provision of social services to its population. Ironically the government has adapted to such situations and this is even stipulated in the constitution of Malawi in section 13 n (CCJP: 2006). As a consequence, the economic reformed policies that Malawi has been following like the structural adjustments have brought much pain in Malawi such as unemployment. The government has decreased its workforce through reduction of expenditure and reduction of financial support in its budget allocation in essential sectors like agriculture, education, health and development institutions which have been hit so hard. This has as a resulted in crippled social services that Malawian citizens are to enjoy leading to increased number of social problems that are intertwined with each other.

Globalization and free trade policies have led to easy mobility of those that are highly qualified to move to developed countries. Those that are unqualified or partly-skilled are limited to stay within Malawi and look up to the government, that does not even have enough resources, to improve their living standards. For example, the health sector is badly affected

⁸ Augustine Magolowondo works as a coordinator for Netherlands Institute for multiparty democracy for Eastern and southern Africa

that it is now stimulating the intervention of other international institutions. There are more Malawian doctors in UK only than in Malawi and this has affected the country so much to the extent that the ratio for doctors is 1 doctor to 50,000 patients.⁹ This has increased the number of sick people dying without being attended to. The British government has been accused for employing doctors from developing countries where the doctors are needed the most.

The situations above are worsening the HIV/AIDS crisis making it difficult to fight against it. The threat of HIV/AIDS has gone beyond just being a health problem but is attacking all the other areas of life causing severe chains and circles of social problems hence intensifying poverty levels in Malawi. Infact out of the 8 Millennium Development Goals, 6 are directly challenged by the HIV/AIDS crisis to be fulfilled. More than 12% of the Malawian population is infected with HIV/AIDS causing deaths everyday and this is increasing the gravity of poverty. AIDS is claiming a lot of productive age group and life span in Malawi has been reduced to 37 years leaving a lot of children orphaned. According to the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (MPRSP) prepared by the Government of Malawi, HIV infection rates in the 15-49 age group was at around 15 percent nationally (MPRSP 2002). The paper reported that about 70,000 children become orphans every year, adding to the already large number of orphans, an estimation of about 850,000. This situation is even creating new scenarios of child-headed families whereby children are taking parental responsibilities even at a tender age of 13 years old¹⁰. In addition, such families are vulnerable to all sorts of abuses as well. Several departments of government hospitals have been privatized, restricting the access to only few rich people in the country most of whom are expatriates.

Jean Blaylock¹¹ stated that it is sad that today, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, one in three people in the world are unable to get essential medicines. “When it comes to medicines that treat HIV and AIDS, the statistics are even more damning, thus a lot of sick people who need antiretroviral (ARV’S) do not have access to them.” (UNAIDS & WHO 2005:3) Medicines in Malawi are getting expensive and the price of medicines is affected by trade rules on patents.¹² Blaylock stated that the fact that patent protection in developing

⁹ See cf on <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/5019522.stm>

¹⁰ See information of Unicef in Malawi http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/malawi_43083.html

¹¹ Jean Blaylock wrote an article on access to medicines as a contribution to the trade for people campaign and the deep the promise campaign of the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (2006)

¹² A patent is a set of exclusive rights granted by a state to an inventor or his assignee for a fixed period of time in exchange for a disclosure of an invention

countries keeps drugs unaffordable for the majority of the world's population is, by this view, a regrettable but unavoidable side effect (Blaylock: 2).

In a report that was presented by Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) on ecumenical economic justice under good governance, it shows that the Malawi government finds itself in between two traps. On one side it finds it is limited to the income base that does not correspond to its social obligations and struggle to provide basic services to its population, whilst on the other hand, Malawi's economy is directly influenced by global forces on international trade and economic policies (2006:2).

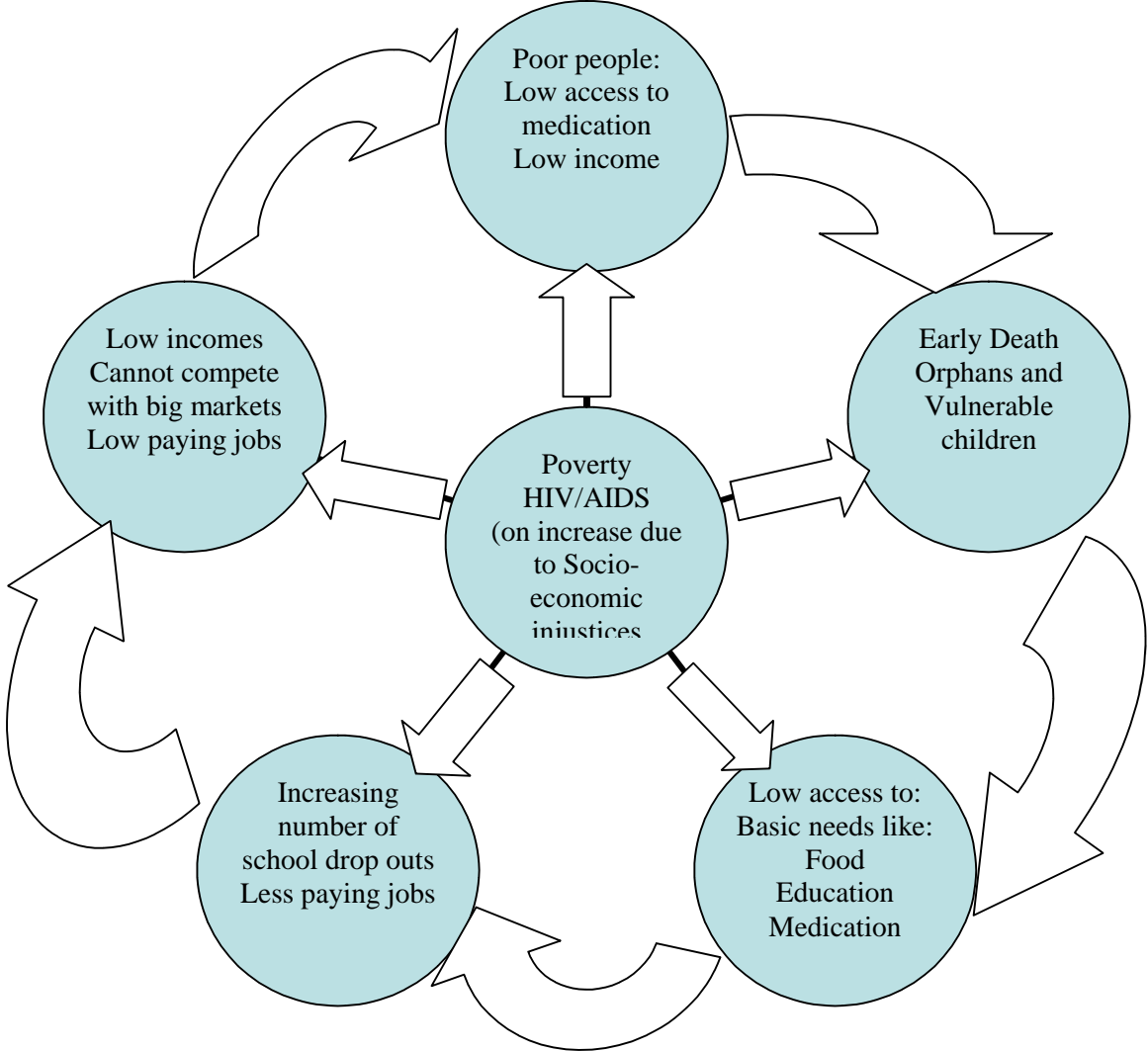
An example on how agriculture sector was hit is the hunger in 2001 that can hardly be forgotten by any Malawian who experienced it and claimed over a thousand lives. This happened a period after the government had been implementing SAPs close to a decade. The report that was released on June 13, 2002 by action aid exposed IMF negligence and economic policies that the government is implementing. The then president Bakili Muluzi stated that IMF was to blame because it forced and insisted the government to sell maize from its strategic reserve in order to pay back the debt that Malawi had.

Another example is the privatization of the railways which was helping a lot of rural Malawians to transport their farm products to different places at a cheaper rate. In a research that was carried by CCJP who net-worked with Center for Social Concern on impact assessment of the privatization of Malawi Railways company, unveiled serious irregularities in the contract between Malawi government and those who bought it, Central and East African Railways (CEAR). The company bought the railway lines and the wagons at US\$4.5 million payable in five years and at the same time Malawi government pays CEAR 150,000 US Dollars per year for the company to run passenger service. The passenger services were to be done three times a week in each railway route, but the services have been reduced to once a week and almost zero in the central region of Malawi yet the government is still obliged to pay for the poor passenger services. The government has no monitoring mechanism of the running of passenger services by CEAR.

This has greatly affected the communities that have no access to good roads and depend only on the railway line for the transportation of agricultural products to the urban markets. This has created a challenge in a way that people in rural areas can hardly afford to transport their

farm products to cities. With the liberalization of trade policies, these local famers also face the challenge of competing with imported farm products which are sold by foreign investors. The agriculture sector itself is the core foundation of Malawi’s economy accounting for 85 percent of employment for the total rural population, 35 percent of GDP, 80 percent of the labor force, and 90 percent of foreign exchange earnings (Ng’ong’ola xii). This reflects that the majority of the population is being affected and as a result, the ‘vicious circle of poverty’ has been created.

2.6 The Vicious circle of Poverty



The question here is what makes this poverty a vicious circle. The problems discussed above keep on building upon each other leading to one problem after another, and this makes it difficult to get out of the circle. The circle demonstrates how the problems are intertwined with each other and it should be kept in mind that on the percentage of poor people living below poverty line is 65%. We have noted that 85% of the rural population depends on agriculture for employment and daily survival through procuring and selling farm products in cities. Transportation of these commodities by road is expensive. The privatization of state owned bus company and railway lines is affecting negatively those staying in very remote areas. Prior to the privatization the buses could get even to the remotest areas of the country but now they have stopped.

After struggling to get into the cities, these local Malawians find it difficult to compete with big investors on markets. KISP stated that rich countries provide huge subsidies to their agriculture sectors thereby over production of commodities which leads to dumping of the farm produce to poor countries, and as a result, prices goes down on world markets making exporters in poorer countries suffer, (2007:43). In addition to this cheap import from the developed world makes farmers in the poor countries unable to compete with developed countries on their domestic markets (ibid). With such a situation the local Malawians end up with little or no profit at all.

This is also the same population that is greatly affected by HIV/AIDS, which creates a vicious circle on its own. It is not easy for these people to have access to ARV's, and if at any point, by chance they get access to ARV's, they can not afford the nutritious food that is required when one is on taking the treatment. This is a really a blow to them because it makes ARV's ineffective. Earlier on I pointed out that the life span has been reduced to 37 years, resulting in increased number of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC). This is creating what can be a shocking scenario in the history of Malawi where children are taking the parental responsibilities when the parents are dead. Often times the parental responsibility starts from the period the parents are sick. The same population has an increased number of uneducated people since they can hardly meet education needs. The fact that generally poor people are vulnerable, the OVC's are more susceptible to all different kinds of abuses. In search of finding basic needs, a lot of these children drop out of school, looking for jobs where they are not even well paid and in many cases they are abused.

From the above explanation it can be noted that interventions that only react to situations, help little in elimination of the problems. Unless one starts addressing the core and root causes of such problems, the situations will continue getting worse.

2.7 The Church in Malawi and social issues in General

Statistics on the percentage of religious groups in Malawi have been allocated as follows: Protestants 55%, Roman Catholic 20%, Moslems 20%, Indigenous Beliefs 3% and others 2% (World Fact book: July 2005). From these statistics it is not surprising that Malawi is one of the countries where there is widespread identification with the Christian faith by the general public. However it should be noted that the within Protestants there are several denominations. Combining all the Presbyterians synods, Livingstonia, Nkhoma and Blantyre, they make the majority of Protestants consisting of the 20 % of the 55% of protestants. Both the Catholics and Protestants like Presbyterians, Anglicans, Seventh day Adventists just to mention a few have contributed a lot to social services in Malawi within the health system and education sectors. As already mentioned, the Church and Church affiliated institutions have been playing a vital role in trying to eradicate absolute poverty which is also one of the millennium goals. In general, the Church in Malawi is one of the few outstanding civil society institutions and one can not talk of historic developments in Malawi without giving accreditation to the Church itself.

The Church has contributed a lot to the development of the country. In an article written by Liz Goold, et al stated that over the years the Church in Africa, thus including the Church in Malawi has played major roles in the implementation of development and relief work with communities, (Goold, 5). The Church in Malawi has a strong potential of a long established history in development work; it is rooted and legitimate part that has trust from the civil society and they have a voluntary membership from the local population; a strong value base of concern for the poor, the marginalized and the voiceless groups and this is supported by Church's Biblical mission (ibid).

To some extent the Church has exercised its prophetic role in political issues specifically the time Malawi was going through the transition period from autocratic to democratic type of government even though it has not embarked on Socio-economic injustice a lot. The LWF letter stated that "Poverty, violence and HIV/AIDS are three of the major issues in our day

that Churches cannot ignore”. The gravity of problems that such issues are causing can indeed not be ignored but acted upon. We see that in Malawian context the major challenges to Church’s social work are poverty and HIV/AIDS.

2.8 The Church in Malawi and Socio-economic injustice issues

Generally the Church has been active in reactive social work than proactive social work. The LWF report says that reactive diaconal work reacts to events and situations of human need and strives to alleviate the immediate suffering while proactive diaconal work involves preventive measures (2002:14). Recently the Roman Catholic in Malawi has been active of both reactive and proactive social work as the formation of Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) reflects this. The social doctrine of the Roman Catholic is stipulated within their catechism which I think has contributed for them to be active in proactive social work.

On the other hand, it can be noted that a lot of Protestants Churches in Malawi have been active on reactive social work and there seems a tendency of neglecting proactive social work. Nevertheless, there can be some legitimate reasons why the Church has emphasized on reactive social work rather than proactive social work. One of the reasons to this is that can be given is the severity of social problems that require immediate attention are excessively deep to be ignored and that the Church can not afford spending resources on long term measures in the midst of social problems that requires immediate attention. Another argument that can be raised on why the Church is involved more on reactive social work more than proactive social work is that it can be easier to raise funds to alleviate the immediate suffering other than preventive measures.

However, it can be argued that not all the time does proactive social work requires huge amounts of resources. Sometimes it just needs time commitment and planning strategically in order to address the problem faced. As the Catholic bishops confronted the Kamuzu regime, it did not require very huge amount of financial resources but rather it needed a lot of commitment, strategic planning and sacrifice. The protestant Churches responded positively by supporting the Roman Catholics after releasing the letter. Both the Catholics and the Protestants worked cordially with each other.

2.9 Summary

In this chapter, I reflected on political situation where we have seen that the Church in Malawi is one of the influential civil societies in Malawi. It played a tremendous role during the transition from autocratic to democratic type of government. The chapter also illustrated that Socio-economic injustices is a global problem and that there are so many discrepancies in the distribution of worth world wide where generally countries in the north are extremely rich and countries in the south are extremely poor. The chapter also reflected on Socio-economic injustice issues and illustrated with examples on the impact of neo-liberal policies in the context of Malawi. We have seen that the major social issues that are challenging for the Church in Malawi are poverty and HIV/AIDS and that these problems are being deepened because of Socio-economic injustices resulting in creating a 'vicious circle of poverty'. In the next chapter will reflected on understanding the Church in Malawi that can play a role in breaking this vicious circle of poverty.

Chapter 3 Theological reflection on understanding the Church in Malawi and its involvement in social issues

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will continue by going deeper into understanding and reflecting on different ecclesiologies that influence the Church in Malawi in general and how Churches are involved in social issues. It has already been stated that the Church in Malawi is influenced by both the Roman Catholics and Protestant theologies. Generally within protestant circles two different theological conceptions, the Lutheran doctrine of the two kingdoms and reformed doctrines of the Lordship of Christ in Christian faith can clarify its historical situation and its political commission (Moltmann 64). This also influences and can clarify on how different protestant Churches are involved in social issues as we will see on the reflection on different theological models that theologians have been using when it comes to social issues. Therefore this chapter will first reflect on these ecclesiologies starting with different theological models on social issues. Second, a reflection from one of the Church father's view, Augustine of Hippo will be given followed by reflection from reformers theology; thus from Calvin and Luther's theology. Fourth I will reflect from the Roman Catholics point of view followed by reflection from Free Churches' point of view; then from Pentecostals point of view and finally will reflect also from other modern theologians' point of view.

3.2 The meaning of the word Church

According to Easton's Bible dictionary the word Church is probably derived from the Greek word kuriakon (i.e., "the Lord's house"), which was used by ancient authors for the place of worship. In the New Testament it is the translation of the Greek word ecclesia, which is synonymous with the Hebrew kahal of the Old Testament, both words meaning simply an assembly.

3.3 Theological models

In the context of Malawi, there have been different theological models that theologians have been holding on to when it comes to Socio-economic injustice issues and they all have biblical basis for what they believe. Billy Gama¹³, writing on state-Church relationship in Malawi, stated four different theological models that theologians have been using when it

¹³ Billy Gama is one of the Presbyterian Pastors in Blantyre synod in Malawi. He wrote a master thesis on the state-Church relationship in Malawi

comes to Church's involvement in social issues namely the separation model, the prophetic theology model, the identification model and the transformational model (2006:2).

3.3.1 Separation Model

Theologians who hold on to separation model when it comes to politics believe that Christians are not of the world, but strangers on earth therefore should totally abstain from politics. "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will" (Romans 12:2). Through the separation from the world, Christians should be ready to suffer economically and suffer from world possessions as Moses did by refusing to be identified with Egyptians who raised him. Heb. 11:25. (Gama 2006:40). The proponents of this model say that being separated from the world is just a matter of obedience to God. Some of the theologians who hold on to this theory have been using the Luther's theory of two kingdoms (will explain more about this theory when reflecting theology on Luther's point of view). This model in Malawi can be reflected in both the Roman Catholics and Protestants and this is seen during the time of 'a silent Church' and also during the time of early missionaries as it has been pointed out in chapter two that the White fathers Montfort missionaries viewed that the involvement in secular matters as being outside the role of the Church.

What can be interesting about the use of this model in Malawi is that those that have been holding on to this model still agree and are involved in social issues to some extent but they set boundaries when it comes to political issues. For example it can be noted that in Malawi during the period of 'silent Church' the Church was still involved in social issues like the education sectors and health sectors but it had boundaries on issues affecting the economy of the country because they directly involved political issues.

This model is clearly seen in the Jehovah's witnesses who are booming in Malawi. Evaluating their work in Malawi, it can be noted that they do not contribute to any social development of the country. They are building structures, just for religious purposes but do not contribute anything to education or health services in Malawi.

It should be noted that if the Church in Malawi is to be involved in Socio-economic injustices, it can be difficult to use this model since it fails to address issues of injustices. This model

allows Christians to be separated from the world and the understanding of this separation has been understood as not being involved in social issues because social issues are of the world.

3.3.2 Identification Model

Theologians who hold on to identification model believe in participation of the Church in social issues “Instead of confronting the state on social justice matters, the identification model recommends the participation of the Church in matters of social justice” (Gama 2006:63). In the Old Testament, the stories of people like Joseph and Daniel reflects this type of model. They rose to one of the highest positions in secular governments on the other hand, but they were able to follow what God wanted them to do on the other hand. They were able to live under both kingdoms; the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the earth. The supporters of this model argue that even Jesus himself used this model by identifying himself with the people like tax collectors, drunkards and sinners (Matt, 11:29) and Jesus even said that “...give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's (Matt. 22:21).

This type of model can also be seen within Luther’s theoretical doctrine of the two kingdoms especially when Luther talks about the double use of Law. Writing on “Whether soldiers, Too, can be saved, Luther himself stated that:

“God has established two kinds of governments among men. The one is spiritual; it has no sword, but it has the word, by means of which men are to become good and righteous, so that with this righteousness they may attain eternal life. He administers this righteousness through the word which he has committed to the preachers. The other kind is worldly government, which works through the sword so that those who do not want to be good and righteous to eternal life may be forced to become good and righteous in the eyes of the world. He administers this righteousness through the sword,”(1526, 46:99).

The identification model however, fails to address the issues of injustices in the society. For example, after Malawi gained independence in 1964, Church members from Presbyterian congregation became closely involved in politics and gained high positions in government thereby failed to speak out about the injustices (Gibbs 55). The same applied to graduates from Catholic secondary schools who emerged as influential figures and took up technocratic positions, (ibid). Kamuzu himself was ordained by the Church of Scotland in 1941 and claimed his authority was from God and it was difficult for the Church to confront him.

3.3.3 Transformation Model

Some theologians have been holding on to transformation model which believes that the structures of life can be converted and changed. Theologians who follow this model believe that attitudes of people can be changed within a community or culture. The transformation model is based on eschatological expectation; where there is a belief that the whole society will be changed for the better when the '*parousia*' takes place; thus the fulfillment of the total transformation of society will reach during the second coming of Jesus. The proponents of this model refute to withdrawal like those who support separation model and they do not accommodate like the supporters of identification model but rather they do advocate optimistic towards transformation of culture; thus hoping that the society can change for better, (Gama 2006:86). The belief here is that if Christians are involved in social issues and act in a Christian manner, then things can get better. John Calvin and Augustine are some of the proponents of this model as we will see in reflection on their perspective on ecclesiology.

However just like the separation model and identification model, this model fails to address the politicians on Socio-economic injustices because it does not take into account of the social analysis and it fails to take actions and speak out of the injustices.

3.3.4 Prophetic Model

Theologians who hold on to prophetic theology believes in confronting the state and speak out the injustices just like the prophets in the Old Testament who spoke boldly on injustices. Prophetic theology always sides with the poor, the oppressed, the marginalized and the voiceless in the society; thus it sides with the victims of injustice. This is the model that can be seen during the period of breaking the silence of the Church; thus during the transition from dictatorship to democracy. The letter that was issued by the Roman Catholic Bishops pointed out the Socio-economic injustices there were going on in the country. However this model has its own challenges and it is not perfect just like any other models. I will discuss its challenges and explain more about this model in chapter 4.

3.4 Reflection from One of the Church Fathers- Augustine

I have chosen to reflect the Church starting with one of the Church fathers, Augustine of Hippo because he contributed an important view when it comes to ecclesiology. He brought the idea of the Church as visible and invisible which keeps on being reflected on and on and can be seen in many other ecclesiological understanding even though it is expressed

differently. Augustine was influenced by neo platonistic ways of thinking who believed that the true reality is not what is visible but invisible. (Alston, 2002:53).

According to Augustine the true Church is always invisible and the visible Church on earth is a real but imperfect reflection or representation of the true and invisible Church which is completely known to God (ibid). Augustine position of the Church and social issues can be traced in his book “The City of God” in which he describes about the heavenly city and the earthly city where he refuted the allegations that were brought by the pagans that Christianity was responsible for the fall of Rome. The "City of God" consists of those who will enjoy eternal happiness with God in heaven, the "earthly city" of those who will not. The city of God is not identical with the Church, since not all members of the Church will be saved; that is in reference to the invisible and visible Church principle. According to Augustine members of both the city of God and the earthly city can be among the citizens of any particular state and he argued that Christians conduct would result in transformation of the world for better. This reflects Augustine’s transformation model.

3.5 Reflection from Luther’s point of view

The idea of reflecting the Church as visible and invisible continued with reformers like Calvin and Luther though they expressed their ideas about the visible and invisible Church differently. Luther was an Augustinian monk and it should not be surprising that he was influenced greatly by Augustine’ doctrine of the Church even though Luther stressed its human social and ethical implications rather than the theoretical, metaphysical implications that was emphasized by Augustine (Alston 2005:54). Whilst Augustine spoke of the two cities; the city of God and the city of human being, Martin Luther spoke of the Kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of the world.

For Luther, it can be noted that his view of the Church was also influenced with what was central to him, soteriology, the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Kärkkäinen stated that Luther’s theology always centered on the gospel of Christ: “where the word is, there is faith; and where faith is, there is the true Church” (2002:40). We can see that Luther’s understanding of the Church is based on one’s personal relationship with Jesus Christ and the size does not really matter as long as sacraments are administered. “Where two or three are gathered in my name there am I with them” (Matt 18:20). Alston noted that Luther cared more about how the invisible Church manifested itself in the visible historical and communal

structures of the world. Kerr in “A compend of Luther’s Theology” quoted Luther on writing in his work on the councils: “Wherever, therefore, you hear or see this word preached, believed, confessed and acted on, there do not doubt that there must be a true ecclesia sancta catholica, a Christian holy people even though it be small in number”¹⁴.

Luther also brought an important point to note within reformers protestant theology especially when it comes to the hierarchy in Church institution. He brought out the doctrine of priesthood for all believers this is to say that he emphasized on the non institutional character of the Church that he even disliked the word Kirche and preferred the term *sammlung*-assembly and *gemeinde* –congregation, (Kärkkäinen 39). Article VII of Augsburg Confession defines the Church as following, “The Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered.” Kärkkäinen stated that Luther’s soteriological maxim, the thought that a believer is as *simul Justus et peccator*, just and sinful simultaneously, also shapes his doctrine of the Church (2002:41). To express this in other words, for Luther the purity of the Church is not based on the morality of a human being but rather it is based on a functional Phenomenon; as long as the Church is led and is being guided by the Holy spirit and mediated by the preaching of the word and sacrament, then it will remain pure, (ibid). This also makes a contrast between Luther and Calvin since Calvin emphasized on the moral aspect where discipline is a necessity for the purity of the Church as this can be reflected in his institutes.

When it comes to social issues, the Lutheran doctrine is greatly affected by Luther’s theory of two kingdoms. According to Witte (2002:89), this theory came to describe at once within the Lutheran circles the distinctions between the following:

1. *The fallen realm and the redeemed realm, the city of man and the city of God and the reign of devil and the reign of Christ*
2. *the sinner and the saint, the flesh and the spirit, the inner man and the outer man*
3. *reason and faith, natural knowledge and the spiritual knowledge*
4. *two kinds of righteousness, two kinds of justice, two uses of law*

Through these distinctions it can be noted that that Luther’s theory of two kingdoms is inline with the identification model. As human beings we live under both kingdoms. Luther, in writing a commentary on Epistle to the Galatians he stated that the law has two purposes, a

¹⁴ See Hugh Thomson Kerr ed. A compend of Luther’s Theology (1966:127).

political use which is governing of God through the laws and state and men in order to preserve justice. Human beings fallen nature makes him prone to sin and it is by law that brings fear in human being to do wrong things. Another use of law is the theological use through which our failure to save ourselves by meeting the required perfection of the law is made clear to us so that we are led to repentance by faith that brings salvation in us.¹⁵

As a consequence, Luther's theory of two kingdoms has been understood differently with different theologians and resulting in Churches being involved differently in social issues but all basing it in the theory of two kingdoms. Some theologians who hold on to separation model and identification model and even transformation model in some cases have been using this Luther's theory as their basis.

3.6 Reflection from Calvin's point of view

As for Calvin he understood the true Church, the invisible Church, as known to God in his mind and not to a person. This true Church constitutes only those that God predestined. "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified." (Rom 8:29-30). Whilst on the other hand, the Church visible is the context and framework in which the predestined believer's relationship to God is born, nurtured and complete, (Johnson 1993: 360).

So we see that as for Calvin, the visible Church includes the predestined and the reprobates therefore both the good and the evil can be found within the visible Church. "Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. (Matt 7:21). Calvin referred to the visible Church as the mother of the faithful through whom one has rebirth and salvation.

Calvin also agreed with Luther that that the marks of the true Church were the preaching of the word of God and the right administration of the sacrament. Johnston quoted from Calvin's institutes where he stated "Wherever we see the word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacrament administered to Christ's institution, there it is not to be doubted a Church of

¹⁵ See Luther's Commentary on Galatians Chapter 3

God exists” (1993: 360). According to Westminster larger catechism¹⁶, it defines the visible Church as a society made up of all such as in all ages and places of the world do profess the true religion, and of their children whilst the invisible Church is the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one under Christ the head. This means that the invisible refers to those persons who have actually been predestined and regenerated or quickened by the Holy Spirit, God's elect or true believers and they might not even belong to the visible Church.

For Calvin, the Church is primarily a visible community (Kärkkäinen 51). One motif that helped Calvin to stress the visible side of the Church was his growing emphasis on the public appropriation of the sacraments, especially of baptism (ibid). Another aspect that is included in Calvin's understanding of ecclesiology is a specific form of ecclesiological institution and administration which he referred to as the order by which the Lord willed his Church to be governed, (McGrath 2001:483). Whilst one can agree with this, it can be argued that it is not easy for one to state an absolute perfect way of doing this since there are always defects that are raised by theologians in any model of ecclesiology. One can argue that the normality of right orders of the Church itself has been challenged and compromised through the renewal of orders within the Church.

Kärkkäinen stated that Calvin was much more the legalist who sought to implement a specific and rather ascetic view of the norms of Christians conduct as it can be observed that he even devoted one chapter in his institutes on the topic of discipline.

Nevertheless, if we have to contrast between Luther's and Calvin's understanding of ecclesiology, we see that whilst Luther spoke in terms of human personal response to faith that is implanted within the heart by hearing God's word and spirit, Calvin spoke about it in terms of God's own secret elections of those that he wants since before the world began. So we see that what contrasted the two is the doctrine of predestination.

When it comes to social issues, Calvin's doctrine of Lordship of Jesus Christ where he believed that Christians should be able to transform the world for better in their work places

¹⁶ Westminster larger Catechism along with shorter catechism is the central catechism of Calvinists in English traditions through out the world and was adopted by the Church of Scotland in 1648 and the Presbyterian synod of New York in 1788 see (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Westminster_Larger_Catechism)

can be linked to the transformation model. This transformation can be reflected in Calvin's view of the Church especially with his emphasis on discipline in his institute. It is about transforming the moral behavior. Christians should work towards transforming the culture for better whenever they are involved in social issues. Christians should live as light of the world.

3.7 Reflection for Roman Catholics

The Roman Catholic Church is presently the world's largest Christian body that has membership of about half of all the Christians (Kärkkäinen 2002:26). In order to reflect ecclesiology from Roman Catholic point of view, it is important to note the differences between the description of the Church by Vatican council I and Vatican council II. The former started with a reflection of the Church as an institution and placed more emphasis on the importance of the hierarchy of the Church where it radically defines papal infallibility.

The Roman Catholics view Pope's power as universal and infallible. Vatican council I viewed the Church as *societas perfecta* which made the Church and its structures absolute. The later, Vatican council II, starts with a different approach. One of the most significant ecclesiological documents in ecclesiology is *Lumen Gentium* of Vatican II. Kärkkäinen noted that even the structure of the document gives clues to its purpose whereby within the draft of the outline there was a hierarchy chapter at the beginning but the final version placed the chapter on the people of God at the beginning of the documents (Kärkkäinen pg 28).

Another important point to note is that Vatican II replaced the old *societas perfecta*, institutional-hierarchic ecclesiology, with the dynamic people of God notion in which the Church is seen first of all as a pilgrim people on the way to the heavenly city. This also contributed positively to the ecumenical theology of the Church because now the Roman Catholics accept other denominations as part of the universal Church.

When it comes to social issues, the Roman Catholics catechism on the economic activity and social justice states that

“The development of economic activity and growth in production are meant to provide for the needs of human beings. Economic life is not meant solely to multiply goods produced and increase profit or power; it is ordered first of all to the service of persons, of the whole man, and of the entire human community. Economic activity, conducted

according to its own proper methods, is to be exercised within the limits of the moral order, in keeping with social justice so as to correspond to God's plan for man”(Roman Catechism, 2000: 518).

This can explain the liberation theology in Latin America and Brazil within the Roman Catholic circles. The use of prophetic model can also be reflected Malawi. The Bishop's letter was a direct confrontation and spoke out of the injustices that were happening during Kamuzu's regime. In addition to this, the establishment of CCJP in Malawi reflects the prophetic model.

3.8 Free Church Ecclesiologies

The free Churches are comprised of different denominations and it is not easy to state in simple statements on the understanding of ecclesiology based on free Churches in general. Generally the distinctiveness of free ecclesiology Churches is that they do not have the hierarchical structures. Miroslav Volf stated that the Church in Christian history is going through the process of Congregationalization. He had this to say about free ecclesiology: *“Today's global developments seem to imply that protestant Christendom of the future will exhibit largely a free christen form. Although the Episcopal Churches will probably not surrender their own hierarchical structures, they too, will increasingly have to integrate these Free Church elements into the mainstream of their own lives both theologically and practically. Although restorative efforts will slow the appropriation of these elements, they will be unable to obstruct them entirely”* (Volf 1998:13).

It can be noted that there is already a move towards this with the charismatic movements within Churches with hierarchal structures. The understanding of the Church seems to be moving away form the traditional hierarchical model to the participative models of Church configuration.

The continuing global expansion of the Free Church model is without a doubt being borne by irreversible social changes of global proportions (Volf 1998:13). Most of the free Churches see the Church as a fellowship of believers. Usually such understanding of the Church believes in believer's baptism and not infants' baptism. In the context of Malawi some of examples of such free Churches can be Baptist Churches, Zambezi Evangelical Churches, Seventh day Churches.

When it comes to social and political involvement, a lot of Free Churches hold on to separation model. However as I stated, most of them would be involved in social issues but they would set boundaries when it comes to social issues that have political aspects

3.9 Reflection from Pentecostal/ Charismatic ecclesiologies

The Pentecostals have been booming in the twentieth century and in Malawi this is not an exceptional. According to a well known statistician David Barrett, there were 74 million Pentecostal/charismatics or they comprised of 6% of the world population of Christians in the world in 1974 and by 1997 an estimated figure had reached 497 million thus about 27% of the population of Christians world wide. In Malawi, Pentecostal Churches like Living Waters, Calvary Family Church, and Winner's Chapel have been booming for the past decade. The doctrine of ecclesiology is still being worked on and not much has been written as it can be observed that the theology of the Church in the Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements was written by a Roman Catholic theologian (Hocken 2002:551-54). Kärkkäinen stated that is often practical rather than systematic in nature therefore a Church is understood generally as a charismatic fellowship (2002). Since there is a lot of diversity within the Pentecostals, they exhibit all forms of Church structures from congregational to Episcopal to all kinds of independent models.

The prosperity gospel that is propagated by the Pentecostals has effects on the social-political issues. According to Pentecostal theology, God met all human needs suffering on the cross through the suffering of Jesus Christ and when he said it is finished. It is believed that authentic religious and authentic behavior will result in material prosperity for the believer. In this case it means that those that are facing economic injustices they just need to be more authentic to their belief and God will prosper them. In regarding to the explained theological model, it can be noted that the Pentecostals hold on to a mixture of what can be called radical transformation model on one hand and separation model on the other hand. I am calling it radical transformation because they believe good morals will automatically lead to financial prosperity for the poor. It can also be separation model because they are not involved in addressing the social injustices at all.

3.10 Reflection from Modern Theologians view

Modern Theologians have been reflecting on ecclesiology in different ways. Nicholas Healy stated some key methodological elements on how modern theologians attempt to understand the Church, (Healy 2000:28). One of the key elements is the attempt to describe the Church by one of the most essential characteristics. One of the theologians who used this type of reflection is Avery Dulles¹⁷ in his book “Models of the Church” He did an assessment on the functions of the Church and he points out 5 different models of the Church. He looks at the Church as an institution, as a sacrament, as a communion, as a herald and as a servant Church. (Dulles 2002 81-88).

“In the institutional models, the official Church teaches, sanctifies and rules with the authority of Christ. In the communion models, the Church is viewed as God’s people or Christ’s Body, growing into the final perfection of the Kingdom. In the sacramental ecclesiologies, the Church is understood as the visible manifestation of the grace of Christ in human community. Finally in the herald models, the Church takes on an authoritarian role, proclaiming the gospel as a divine message to which the world must listen... Whilst in the rest of the models the Church is the subject, in the servant Church the Church is the object and sees the world as the object... To be of service the Church must work within the structures of the world rather than build parallel structures. The house of God is not the Church but the world. The Church is the servant, and the first characteristic of a servant is that he lives in someone else’s house, not his own” (Dulles 2002 81-88).

In all the above models Dulles pointed defects; thus each model has its usage and limitations. Different theologians have been emphasizing on the different models above depending on the denomination that they belong to. One can note that there seems to be a syndrome that different theologians think that their way of reflecting on ecclesiology is the best. However it is very important to keep in mind that it is difficult to find an ecclesiological model that is perfect. From the different ecclesiological understanding, it can be noted that it is impossible to reach the perfection of the Church whilst on earth because we will always have the visible and invisible Church. Dulles tries to establish another model which he calls the true Church. The problem with this kind of reflection is that one will always find defects even in the true Church. If a person thinks an important aspect of the Church has been omitted then it can not

¹⁷ Avery Cardinal Dulles is an American Catholic theologian and scholar, professor of Religion and society at Fordham University.

be a perfect model and this is the likely factor. Dulles in his reflection pointed out that the Roman Catholics are more identified with the institution model in general because of the papacy hierarchy within Roman Catholics whilst the Protestants can be identified with the herald model.

However, as I pointed out, this can be crucial and pretty complicated. For example at some point in history the same Roman Catholics emphasized on the sacramental model. So what we have here is that the emphasis has been shifting depending on the context. In general we see a tendency of succession of models as Healy observed it: “The body of Christ model popular in Roman circles especially in the 1950’s, was relegated to secondary status by some theologians of next decade or so, who preferred the model of people of God. This in turn has been replaced, again especially in roman circles by sacrament and more recently and generally by the model of communion, (Healy 2000:31).

One of the modern theologians who have contributed a lot to reformed theology is Karl Barth. Kärkkäinen describes Barth’s contribution in a more radical way “If John Calvin is the theological architect of the reformed wing of the protestant reformation, Karl Barth, the Church father of the twentieth century is its ablest and most creative interpreter for the modern times” (Kärkkäinen 56). He reflected on the Church based on Christological point of view; thus as the body of Christ. Barth understood the invisible Church to be the true Church of God’s election which is one, holy, and Catholic and apostolic. This invisible Church does not exist apart from the inextricable unity with the historical and the visible Church or Churches which are multiple marked by sin, local and divided and historically contingent. (Bender, 2005:76). However as for Barth the true Church is not, however the invisible Church itself, but the invisible becoming visible. This aspect of visible and invisible Church can also be seen in the description of Church as a sacrament by Karl Rahner¹⁸. Rahner stated that the Church as a sacrament is a word and sign for the whole world. The Church is there as invisible Church and the visible Church and social structure of the Church is thus only the sign and means of action of Jesus Christ in the spirit (Rahner 2005:211).

¹⁸ Karl Rahner is a German theologian and one of the most influential Roman Catholic theologians of the 20th Century

3.11 Presentation of my understanding of the Church in this Thesis

So far we have reflected on some of the positions that some theologians hold on to as regarding to the Church and social issues. As we can see it is not easy to put everything in a nut shell. The depth of Church's richness can not be condensed in a single model as Johnson expressed it "No single metaphor or understanding of the Church seems to be able to capture its complexity or exhaust its richness" (Johnston 1993). The ecclesiological models and theological models that theologians use have all both their positive and negative side.

However, despite different views on ecclesiology it should be noted that the Church, the local congregation is comprised of different people; the rich and the poor; the powerful and the powerless. Without these people we can not talk of the communion, the sacraments, the body of Christ and the people of God or any other images that are related to the Church.

Johannes A. van Der Ven stated that theological evaluation of the Church as a denomination leads to various ecclesiological models. At the same time theological evaluation for the Church as an association leads to critical enliven or revitalize its inheritance from the Church (the universal institutionalized Churches (1996:22). It can be easily observed that in this thesis I am reflecting at the Church both as a denomination and Church as an association. When I express the word Church I consider the Church at a local, national and international level. I think of the Church as an assembly of believers who share communion and the baptism sacraments or ordinances of Christ. This is one of the fundamental aspects for the basis of ecumenism for the Church. This aspect was emphasized by the Church fathers, the reformers and even modern theologians. I also consider the voice of the Church which is comprised of both Church leaders and members. I think of the Church as one of the civil society institutions hence looking at it from its sociological point of view that makes the visible aspect of the Church important. However I can not divorce the aspect of the invisible Church because it can not be separated from its visible aspect.

As it will be expressed in the next chapter, Church's prophetic social work has a place for the marginalized in the society within the advocacy work. Therefore when I talk of the Church's voice I am including the marginalized, giving voice to the voiceless in the society who can express themselves if they can be empowered.

Nevertheless the models above can be used in different times at different situations. It can be too ambitious to think that one model is perfect and can be applicable to all situations. In case of this thesis, since I am discussing the Church' role in Socio-economic issues and the prophetic model can be useful here for advocacy since it is able to address such issues. It has preferential aspect of the marginalised in the society and can address the root causes of injustice. This does not make this model superior to others because in other situations this model can not be used at all. The transformation model, the identification model and even separation models can be useful in some instances.

3.12 Summary

In this chapter the focus was on different ecclesiologies and different theological models which theologians use when it comes to involvement in social issues in Malawi. It has been discussed that it is difficult to find an ecclesiology that is perfect since all the ecclesiologies have their usage and defects. I stated that my understanding of the Church as an assembly of believers which is also a fundamental principle in ecumenical approach to Socio-economic issues. I also stated that I do understand the Church from its sociological point of view; thus being one of civil society institutions in Malawi. The next chapter will continue by analyzing prophetic diaconia that I proposed as a way forward for the Church regarding Socio-economic injustice issues; thus a way to break the vicious circle of poverty.

Chapter 4 Exploring the need for working towards prophetic theology within the Church in Malawi as response to Socio-economic injustices

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter we saw how Churches are involved in social issues. It was reflected that generally when the social issues involve political matters the Church turns to set boundaries on its involvement. This chapter will challenge the Church in Malawi for the need for some theological reflection and transformation in response to Socio-economic injustices. This will be done through critical analysis of prophetic diaconia since it emphasizes on advocacy that empowers the powerless, voicing out for the voiceless and recognizing the marginalized in the society. Basically, I will limit myself to use of documents on Prophetic theology and documents that have tackled issues of prophetic diaconia in relation to global economy. In addition to this, the chapter will also tackle the aspect of justice because at the heart of prophetic theology, there is the word justice.

4.2 understanding Church's social work based on prophetic diaconia theology

4.2.1 The meaning of the word diaconia

If someone asks a question what is diaconia one starts thinking of the complex of the term and its richness that can not be unfolded so easily. The word diaconia is a Greek word meaning service. In some English Bible version the word is translated as ministry. The argument that has been there among theologians is the understanding of the meaning of the word ministry or service. This word has been understood in different ways with different theologians and depending on the ecclesiological understanding of different denominations. Diaconia is used in the New Testament but not in a uniform way. (LWF report: 2002). Sometimes diaconia refers to specific material services to aid a particular person in need (Mk 15:41; 2 Tim 1:18). In other instances it means serving at the tables (Mk 1:3; Acts 6:2). In some cases it refers to the distribution of funds to people in need (2 Cor. 8:19; Rom 15:25).¹⁹

Lars Lindstrom in a book "Theology of Diaconia" gives some definition of the word as interpreted by different people and here are some few examples of how the word has been defined: Diaconia is the social work carried out in the congregation/Church; The work of the diaconal institutions; The work done by the deacons; Human care carried out according to

¹⁹ I owe it to the Lutheran World federation report (2002) for using the above verses.

Christian Values; Good deeds, inspired and urged by the Christian faith of individual people; The practical aspect of the Church's proclamation regarding the kingdom of God (1999:27). From the above definitions one can notice that the meaning of the word varies even though at the bottom of it denotes a type of service. This service is carried out differently from place to place and time to time.

For a long time diaconia has been related and referred to as a humble service but this was challenged by the New Testament scholar, John Collins.²⁰ As he tried to find the meaning of the word diakon, he went further outside of the New Testament and find out from philosophical point of view where Plato used the word as go-between. This is to say that although diakonos is a service this service is more expressed in fetching than in menial service.²¹ Collins brought a controversial interpretation of Mark 10:45 which is used as a Biblical basis of Diakonia. Collins argued that this verse has been misunderstood and that Jesus' service here is not of humble service. He argued that Jesus' service was a personal commission under God. This understanding of service brings a different understanding of service. If this kind of service is understood in the context of the Church it means that the Church is involved first and foremost in Service because it is required by the Lord. In a document "a Dialog with John Collins" Paula Gooder even went further to give an example of a waiter in a modern world who do not care for customers because they are kind but rather because their employer requires it hence service is therefore more about carrying out orders from above other than looking for others (Gooder 15). However this can be argued because kindness is a virtue that the Church has to possess. Nevertheless an important point that Collins brought as Gooder observed is the question of motivation for the Church in doing diaconia. This motivation is what makes a difference between the Church and others organizations offering services; the Church's services are not just humble services but are part of being a Church in obedience of Lord.

Collins' understanding of the word diaconia has influenced the Norwegian Lutheran Evangelical Church's understanding of the diaconia. The old definition had an emphasis on diaconia as a humble service; it defined diaconia as "the Church's care for fellow human beings and its development of community spirit and as that service which is particularly

²⁰ John Collins is a Roman Catholic writer whose PhD research led him to re-examining the word diakonia. He wrote a book on *Diaconia: reinterpreting the ancient sources*

²¹ See *Diakonia in the New Testament: A Dialogue with John Collins* by Paula Gooder (<http://ecc.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/3/1/33>)

directed at people in need.²² In the new plan for diaconia for Norwegian Lutheran Evangelical Church defines diaconia as *“the Church’s care for fellow human beings. It is the Gospel in action and is expressed through inclusive fellowship, brotherly and sisterly love, fight for justice and care for creation”*²³ (Kirkerådet plan for diakon 2007).

From this definition one can see that diaconia moved from humble services to individuals to social ethical understanding of the Church carrying out God’s mandate where it emphasizes Church’s role in the world. According to this definition, it shows that diaconia includes people outside the Church and services are offered even to those outside the Church. However Dulles argued that even though sometimes diaconia refers to specific material serving to aid a particular person in need, usually this was service to the needy people within the Church and not outside the Church. He stated that diaconia that goes on in the Church is generally if not always seen as the behavior of Christians toward one another. He also stated that all offices in the Church are forms of diaconia, and thus the term, in biblical usage, can not properly be used in opposition to preaching or worship (Dulles 2002:92). However, the LWF document (2002:27) argued that according to Biblical understand on Jesus’ ministry itself, diaconal services in principles does not follow the frontiers of Churches or ethnicity. Among the people Jesus healed, there were representatives of other religions and culture. His services were not limited to the Jews only but reached others as well.

In supporting the LWF document, if one reads and reflects on the story of the Good Samaritan and ask the question, who is my neighbor, it can be noted how radically Jesus explains about serving our neighbors. It illustrates serving anyone who is in need and this is inclusive of people outside the Church and this is where diaconia begins, following orders from above, serving a neighbor in need. The LWF report on prophetic diaconia stated for the need for the Church to focus on this service. “In its service that transcends borderlines, seek justice for the poor and the marginalized and its preparedness to transform structures which threaten life, diakonia responds to the God who hears the cry of the poor” (2002:22). Nevertheless, despite the theological differences of the meaning of word diaconia, one thing that one ought to keep in mind is that at the bottom of the word diaconia there is an aspect of service and this is a very important aspect for the Church; need for service and the importance of service is mentioned and reflected over and over within the New Testament.

²² Definition from the old plan for diaconia

²³ Own Translation from the Norwegian language

From this perspective it shows that the aspect of service is very important for the Church. One of the aspect about of service in diaconia that has been raised in recently discussions about diaconia is a service that is not just one sided. It is not about one being a giver of services and one a receiver of services but rather it has to be mutual. The receiver and the giver both play the subjective and objective roles. Both the Church in the Northern hemisphere and the Church in the Southern hemisphere need each other because they are one body of Christ and if one part suffers the whole part suffers. It is no that one part is always suffering and the other part is always doing great but both parts suffer at some point and also get better at some point.

4.2.2 Brief background to approaches on understanding diaconia

Nordstokke in his article on '*Diaconia as a Theological Imperative*' gives three approaches of understanding diaconia. The approaches he brought in are important to keep in mind because that is what brings the diversities among Churches on understanding the meaning of the word. The first approach is inline with individual piety. Diaconia first of all became humble service, connected to charity work in favor of the sick and poor and this inspired the establishment institutions which offer services to the needy. This is referred to an institution diaconia. The second understanding of diaconia has been related to the understanding of Church's ministry. Thus, within the Catholic and Anglican Churches, diaconate is the first step in the hierarchical career of being a priest. However, the aspect of diaconia is being renewed within the Church of England so that diaconia can be used to bridge the gap between the Church and the needs of people who are not regular Church goers.²⁴

In Churches like Baptists and Presbyterians deacons mostly have liturgical tasks. In this approach the relation to diaconia as social practice in the Church is not very clear or I should say it is not linked in any way to social services. The Last approach is based on a broad reflection on the meaning of being Church. This is Church's diaconia and has been summarized by Eurodiaconia as 'to be and to do'. Here diaconia is defined as "active expression of Christian witness in response to the needs and challenges of the community in which Christians and the Churches live" (Eurodiaconia 2004: 4). This approach to diaconia has been emphasized in the modern theology, especially within the Roman Catholic circles

²⁴ See report entitled "For such a time as this: A Renewed diaconate in the Church of England

where the Church has increasingly been described as a sacrament for the world; a sacramentum mundi. It is in this approach of diaconia where we find the statement that 'diaconia is part of being Church'.

4.2.3 The meaning of the word prophetic

We know the word prophet from the Old Testament. According to Easton's Bible dictionary, the word nabi in Hebrews is used for a prophet. This word nabi means "to bubble forth, as from a fountain," hence "to utter". This Hebrew word is the first and the most generally used for a prophet. The Easton's Bible dictionary continues to say that foretelling of future events was not a necessity but only an incidental part of the prophetic office. The great task assigned to the prophets was "to correct moral and religious abuses, to proclaim the great moral and religious truths which are connected with the character of God, and which lie at the foundation of his government." In short we can say that in certain cases prophets predicted future events, but as a rule prophet was a *forthteller* rather than a *foreteller*. Prophets could speak out injustices. The well known prophets who spoke out against the oppression of the poor were Micah and Amos and are known by theologians as social justice prophets.

4.2.4 What is Prophetic Diaconia then?

We have analyzed the meaning of the words diaconia and prophetic and now let us see the meaning of the word prophetic diaconia. From the above analysis, the term prophetic diaconia is used to mean the actions taken by the Church to speak out against injustices in the society. It is about advocating for the poor, the marginalized, the oppressed and empowering the powerless and voicing out for the voiceless. In addition to this, prophetic diaconia is unique in nature other than prophetic theology in general. Whilst prophetic theology always sides with the poor, prophetic diaconia goes beyond. It creates a role of the victims themselves to be involved in the process of speaking out injustices because of the aspect of service that is both subjective and objective.

Prophetic theology speaks on the particular circumstances of a crisis, a response that does not give the impression of sitting on the fence but clearly and decisively takes a stand. This is the theological model on social issues that one finds within the Kairos document.²⁵ This document was issued by a group of concerned South African Christians after they saw a lot of

²⁵ The **Kairos Document** (KD) is a theological statement issued in 1985 by a group of black South African theologians based predominantly in the black townships of Soweto, South Africa.

oppression for black people and even within the Church itself, who were being killed everyday because of apartheid.

Kairos document is a critique of the current theological models that determine the type of activities the Church engages in to try to resolve the problems of the country. This group of Christians had analyzed the transformation model, the separation model the identification models and other models that are not mentioned in this paper that the Church was using at that time. Through critical analysis, they saw that these models were not addressing the issues of the marginalized black people. They evaluated their context and saw the need for theological transformation in social injustice issues. In fact the word Kairos is an ancient Greek word meaning right time or opportune moment and for the writers of Kairos document the time had come. The Kairos document made an attempt to develop, out of this perplexing situation, an alternative biblical and theological model that will, in turn, lead to forms of activity that will make a real difference to the future of South African country. Considering such a situation, this group expressed the need to reflect on such conditions and determine what response could be appropriate by the Church and all Christians in South Africa.

This aspect of analyzing the theological models is part of the transformation. It shows the importance of the Church to be aware of its social context that it is working on.

“Understanding context requires naming the realities and powers that are operative in the world; this includes naming both the powers of evil and the power of God” (Mission in Context, 11). In this case, the Church should be in a position to understand the economic systems of this world so that it can evaluate its context and take proper measures. Prophetic theology is sometimes confused with liberation theology. However the two are not the same and should not be confused with each other. Prophetic theology model speaks to the leaders of the state who are influential for the necessary change for some oppressive systems to push them to take an action that is recommended for good governance and make the majority of citizens contented while Liberation Theology takes direct action in fighting against the oppressive system. However their similarity is that they both fight for the freedom of the oppressed, marginalized and exploited.

Prophetic role takes the side of the oppressed, the marginalized, the voiceless and the powerless. It is always against the oppressor or the unjust. The oppressor and unjust, always do everything possible to maintain their status even at the cost of millions of lives. “The heart

of prophetic diaconal calling is a theology of the cross that calls things what they really are, moving beyond politeness and pretence, breaking the silence and taking risk of speaking truth to power, even when this threatens the established order and results in hardship or persecution,” (LWF: 2002).

In general, it can be noted that at the heart of prophetic diaconia there is the word justice and it can be important to understand this aspect.

4.2.5 What is a justice then?

There have been a lot of arguments and debates concerning the word justice among theologians, politicians, philosophers and other groups. In today’s world of pluralism that has much emphasis on individual liberty other than the communal liberty makes it difficult to agree on the notion of what is good and also on the theories of justice, (Johannessen 2001). There are different forms of justice one of which is distributive justice. Distributing justice is an important aspect when it comes to social justice. However it is not the intention of this thesis to go into the philosophical or theological arguments on the word justice because it is too broad and can be a thesis on its own. But rather it can be important to consider it when it comes to Socio-economic injustices. It can be of importance to note that the way justice is used theologically is different from the use of it as social justice. In other words, it is important not to confuse social justice with the doctrine of justification. However, according to Barth the bonds between God and the concern for social justice are obvious. Reflecting the aspect of justice from theological point of view, one sees that Justice is at the heart of God Himself; He is just and He loves justice (Ps. 9:16; 11:7; 33:5; 89:14). With His just character God justifies fallen human beings. However, when the Bible says God loves justice it is often related to social justice.

As Johannessen observed, it is indeed surprising that there has not been a lot written in theological perspective about Justice as one might expect.²⁶ In Christian anthropology, all human beings are created in God’s image. Despite the differences that exist within human beings, they all bear the image of God and they ought to be treated with respect and justice. God himself requires people to act justly. In the Old Testament, the passages in Amos and Micah are about social justice. Whilst the passages do not define what justice means, they

²⁶ Kai Ingolf Johannesen (2003) writing on ‘Diakonia has man half sisters- justice is the most prominent’

give explanation and examples of actions that are unjust and God condemns them. This is also true with theories of justice where it is more obvious to state what is unjust than stating what justice means in practical terms. These unjust actions include the oppression of marginalized groups like the poor, widows, and orphans.

One of the pictures that represent justice in several courtrooms is that of Lady Justice, Iustitia, an ancient Roman goddess of justice. The picture which is an allegorical personification of moral force that highlights the legal system portrays Iustitia blind folded, with a scale in one hand and a sword on the other hand. Iustitia using her scale is continuously weighing the real achievements, efforts and actions of people and she does not consider reputation, social esteem, religious belief, income or power of a person so that they could get what they really deserve in turn.²⁷ She is also carrying a sword which illustrates two things; punishing according to misdeed and protecting those who are mistreated by the stronger. However she is blind to consider social differences and dissimilarities in wealth, ability and skills and by this virtue of blindness it contributes to discrepancies in fairness and impartiality on the part of judges, politicians and those in power.²⁸

Let us now look at this aspect of social injustice from one of well known philosophers John Rawls through analysis of his principles of justice. Issues of social justice in the broadest sense arise when decisions affect the distributions of benefits and burdens, equality and inequality between different individuals or groups. It should be kept in mind that Rawls' principles of justice are Meta ethical rather than normative ethical principles. In his first edition of *A Theory of justice*,²⁹ Rawls stated two principles of justice.

1st principle

“each person is to have an equal basics liberties compatible with the similar of liberty for all.

2nd Principle

Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are

- a). to be the greatest benefit of the least advantaged and*
- b). attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunities” (Rawls 1971:83)*

²⁷ (ibid)

²⁸ (ibid)

²⁹ See Rawls (1971) *A Theory of Justice* Oxford University Press, Oxford. London New York

Rawls specified that the 1st principle should be satisfied prior to the 2nd principle and the 2b should be satisfied prior to 2a. The second principle can be of importance in regarding Socio-economic issues. In his book, 'Justice as Fairness: A Restatement' Rawls defended his fundamental theory of justice is fairness. He introduced the aspect of justice as fairness already in 1971. He expressed the need of having a just and fair society. For Rawls, a well-ordered society is one that is designed to advance the good of its members and effectively regulated by a public conception of justice³⁰. Rawls does place the concept of justice to the basic structure within the society. Rawls argued that justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought.³¹ In this case Rawls meant that social justice can be achieved if the basic structures of the society and its institutions are fair enough (Strømme 2005:64). In this regard, as the Church in Malawi get involved in Socio-economic issues, it has to address injustice issues that have been institutionalized. According to Rawls if institutions are unjust, regardless of how efficient and well arranged they are, they need to be reformed and re-structured. It is difficult to fight against injustices if the injustices have been institutionalized. It can be noted that Rawls was trying to develop 'weapon' to criticize institutions which were unjust.

Considering Rawls principles of justice, justice has to do not only with fair distribution but it also demands equal liberty amongst human beings; thus taking into account of the Rawls' first principle of justice. This is also an important aspect in Christian anthropology as it has been pointed out that all human beings are created in God's image. In the Biblical sense, one can also note that Jesus' ministry itself had a preferential aspect of the marginalized by offering greater opportunities to the least advantaged in the society. This shows the application of Rawls' second principle of justice.

Going back to the vicious circle of poverty in Malawi given in chapter 2, and in reference to Socio-economical injustices, the Church needs to strive for social justice within the society. Long-term perspective will be necessary to seek to replace the present global commercial and financial institutions with democratic legitimate institutions where it can be possible to provide the poorest countries with a greater degree of co-decision making (KISP, 2007:15). Addressing such issues is part of fighting against Socio-economic injustices and working towards a just society.

³⁰ See 2nd edition of a theory of justice pg 397

³¹ John Rawls (19: 3)

4.3 Challenges of the word Prophetic Diaconia in Churches in Malawi

The word prophetic is problematic in Malawi in such a way that it is often linked more to its foretelling aspect other than its forthtelling aspect by the general public. This link has even increase within many Pentecostal circles that are using the word to mean foretelling. For the word diaconia it has also its challenges and there is need to work out on its meaning if prophetic diaconia can be the way forward for the Church to fight against the Socio-economic injustices in Malawi. The word diaconia is a strange word and being a Greek word one would always need an explanation for it. The time the word was used in the Bible communicated to the people and this ought to be the same in our time today and it should not be over looked. It should be noted that the word diaconia is as old as the New Testament itself and yet it is still not known by many in countries like German, Scandinavian countries where there have been and there are still several diaconal institutions. In Malawi there are no diaconal institutions just as in many Scandinavian countries and therefore the word is not familiar at all and does not communicate.

The word that is popular is the noun deacon which is different from the word diaconia. There has been a trend of confusing the word deacon and diaconia. This can lead to undermining the proper usage of the word that can also hinder deep insights that the word diakonia itself can unfold. Within Malawian Churches, Protestant Churches in particular, a deacon is chosen by the Church and his or her responsibilities are mostly liturgical and not connected to social work. What is called diaconal work within the Scandinavian Churches is not known as diaconal work in Churches in Malawi. Even though the Churches in Malawi are widely involved in what is referred as diaconal to work within Lutheran Churches, the activities are not called diaconia but rather charity or social work.

There are different Church traditions among different Church denominations as regard to the deacon ministry. Frequently, Charity work is separated from administration work, an example is the Presbyterian and Baptists approach where deacons are elected and the deacons' work as Church administrators. They are elected by the Church members and the elders to be responsible for all Church finances, which may include some for diaconal ministry. For the Roman Catholics deacons are the ones who are on their way to be ordained as priests. The charity work and other Church's social work are not associated with the deacons' work within the Church. I have always argued about the use of this word since I started my study but I think I have been misunderstood to some extent. It is necessary to use the word that

communicates to people. Therefore I have come to prefer to use the phrase Church's advocacy social work/services instead for the word prophetic diaconia. Since the practical work of prophetic diaconia involves people at grass root level they need to have a picture and at least deduce the meaning when they hear the word. Another advantage of using the word Church's advocacy social work other than diaconia is that it does not trigger a lot of theological debates as the word diaconia does. Nevertheless, the biblical ideas and understanding of diaconia are important for my approach.

4.4 Theological basis for Church's advocacy social Service

The theological background of Church's advocacy social work can be found in the very essence of theological background of diaconia in general. Through out Jesus' ministry we see the manifestation of His servant hood attitude, and no wonder he summarized his ministry as being a 'servant' "For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 10:45). As for Jesus service was not just one dimension in his life but central and even the goal in his life and finds its climax in his vicarious suffering and death for human kind (LWF 2002:24). This was the climax of his obedience to God, Obedience to the point of death. The LWF goes even to an extent of saying that Jesus saw his entire work as a deacon, thus a servant among his disciples and the only title that he irrefutably gave himself is that of a deacon, (ibid). However this can be argued and can raise a lot of theological debates in regarding to the work of a deacon as I already pointed out at the beginning of the chapter. In other words it can difficult to prove theologically that those offering services or serving others can be regarded as deacons.

A reflection on Jesus' ministry shows that He uplifted and raised the excluded and marginalized in the society, His heart was for the weak, the sick, the despised, the oppressed and the powerless. This can be reflected in the narratives within the Gospel like the story of the Samaritan woman, the healing of lepers, the acceptance of Zacchaeus and how he stood up for other different marginalized groups in the society.

When one comes to prophetic issues one finds that issues of justice are reflected over and over again in the books of the prophets. Prophetic Church's social work is about speaking out injustices, voicing out for the voiceless, empowering the powerless and recognizing the

marginalized in the society. This prophetic role speaks against system that oppresses the people because God did not create people to suffer.

In the Old Testament Amos and Micah are called the social justice prophets because they spoke out against the oppressive system during the times of Old Testament. In Amos 2:6-7 we read this “This is what the Lord says: for three sins of Israel, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath. They sell the righteous for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals. They trample on the head of the poor and upon the dust of the ground and deny justice to the oppressed” Amos 5:12b “You oppress the righteous and take bribes and you deprive the poor of justice in the courts”. Micah 6:8 “He has showed you, O man what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humble with your God.” The Old Testament prophets spoke out against injustices without fear and pointed out what the Lord requires. With reference to the vicious circle of poverty in Malawi, the Church has to exercise its prophetic role on injustices and speak out on the oppressive systems.

The LWF report (2002:56) made some propositions about prophetic diakonia that can be important to be reflected theologically. Here are some aspects of prophetic diakonia that it brought about:

- While diakonia begins as unconditional service to our “neighbor in need,” prophetic diakonia leads inevitably to social change that is restorative (e.g. healing) and/or progressive (e.g., reformative) and/or transformative(e.g., liberation). Diakonia understand what kind of social change is appropriate or required
- Prophetic diakonia is the journey of a pilgrim Church that ventures to the margins in order to hear the gospel. It recognizes that just as “poor people” are not the objects of the Churches’ material charity, neither are they objects of the Church’s’ theological charity. Diakonia recognizes the preferential attentiveness the Church must give to the special ministry of marginalized people to speak the gospels to the Church.
- Prophetic diakonia requires the continual community discipline of social analysis or reading the signs of the times. (Mt 16:3) that widens and expands the Church’s understanding of its social context (e.g., globalization etc.) and deepens its capacity to the conversant on the challenges faces (e.g., poverty, violence and HIV/AIDS etc.).

- Prophetic diakonia needs to address the spiritual crises of misery and suffering facing the victims of poverty, violence and HIV/AIDS in a way that is life informing for affluent people who face a spiritual crisis of meaning in their way of life.
- While diakonia incarnates the word as Church prophetic diakonia seeks relentlessly to articulate and embody an ethic of justice and peace for the world to be pursued with those of other faiths and people of good will.

4.5 Challenges and arguments on Prophetic Church's social work

Church's social work will always be a challenge for the Church as long as the Church is still here on earth. Social services are a continuous call for the Church. The LWF report on prophetic diaconia said that "Diaconia is a permanent challenge and a constant thorn in the flesh of the Church"(2002:20). There are several reasons why there are so many challenges when it comes to implementation of prophetic diaconia. In discussing the challenges, will start with the theological challenges then political and finally social challenges.

4.5.1 Theological challenges

Every theological point of view that one can hold on to comes with challenges and criticisms and this does not spare Prophetic Church's social work. One of the main challenges that can be raised for prophetic Church's social work is for the Church today to say that 'this is what the Lord says' and claim that they are speaking directly on behalf of God himself. It can be noted that the prophets in the Old Testament always claimed that they were speaking directly on behalf of God and this can be problematic for the Church today to claim that its voice is always coming from God.

Billy Gama³² argued that the danger of prophetic theology is that if both the Church and state are much involved in the kingdom of the world, there will be less effort in dealing with the kingdom of Christ; thus basing on Luther's principle of two kingdoms. I have to argue on this because the prophetic voice of the Church is not heard each and everyday nor is the Church going to be involved in that alone. However, the concept of two kingdoms by Luther has been understood differently with different theologians. Moltmann argued that the intention of the concept of two kingdoms is not to divide the world or bringing dualism.

³² Billy Gama is one of the Presbyterian pastors in Malawi. He made an argument in a thesis on the relationship between the Church and the state: a theologically based investigation of the social doctrine of the Church in Malawi

“The two kingdoms does not intend to divide the world as it is or human being as they are in two parts-one which contradicts God and the other which corresponds to God but rather it is more concerned with two total aspect of the world and human being which is self contradiction to God and self correspondence to God,” (Moltmann, 1984:67).

In this regard one can see that the two realms that Luther talks about are the realms that we belong to as human beings. It is necessary to understand that by proposing prophetic theology to the Church in Malawi does not mean that the Church should abandon other responsibilities and just focus on Socio-economic injustice issue but rather it is to say that as the Church is exercising its responsibilities it should not overlook the need of being involved in Socio-economic injustice issues. Jesus himself preached about the coming kingdom but at the same time exercised the healing ministry. The Church has to care and be concerned with the needs of its members and it has to look at a human being in his or her totality and respond with holistic approaches to the needs of a human being. Timpuza expressed this in this way “Therefore, any pastoral concern that does not address and condemn the oppressive social structures is failing in its mission of justice and is therefore, unjust to all who count on it as the voice of the voiceless ” (Timpunza 2001). From this one can note that the Church has an obligation to work towards a just society and this is why the understanding the issue of justice becomes very important.

4.5.2 Social and political challenges for the Church

I mentioned it at the beginning that prophetic diaconia is about empowering the powerless, speaking out injustices for the voiceless and fighting for the marginalized in the society. As it has been reflected in chapter 2, Neo-liberalism policies turn to favor those that are rich in a society and often works negatively for the poor and this has created and increased social injustices in our societies. In a report of UN given by Jon Schaffer, a Washington staff writer says that 89 countries are worse off than a decade ago and the gap of the shares in the world has been increasing despite huge profits that have been made in recent years.³³

Whilst the Church can be trying to advocate for the marginalized and fighting for social justice, the existing systems and policies of neo-liberalism globalization hinders such efforts hence posing a challenge for the Church to implement prophetic diaconia. When

³³ <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/incomgap.htm> visited on 14-01-08

implementing prophetic diaconia, the Church would want to place human dignity at first which is contrary to the society heavily influenced by neo-liberalism globalization where trade rules are more important.

4.6 Need for implementation for Prophetic Theology in Malawi

For along time, the Church has been responding to social problems reactively. It has been so much involved in mitigating the poverty levels in a reactive ways which is very good. We have seen the change helping orphans, helping people living with HIV/AIDS, and offering health services and education services. The Church has been involved in food distribution during hunger crisis. It can be of importance to note that the Church is neither just one of the NGO's nor just one of the civil society institutions. It has an obligation which is bigger than this. In reference to Collins arguments, the Church is first of all required to go between ministries because God requires it to do so. It has authority from above therefore it has to go beyond reactive response type of service. The Church is the hope for the majority of Malawians. However it is important that as the Church is taking action in doing social work it should not overlook the need to tackle the root causes of poverty in Malawi. In order to be effective and credible agents of prophetic diaconia, all levels of the Church regularly need to assess internal structures and governance models for the sake of transparency and accountability (LWF 2002:8).

4.7 Summary

In this chapter, a critical look on the term Prophetic diaconia was done and its meaning explained where it has been reflected that the term itself is the major challenge and a suggestion of interpreting the term was given. We also saw that at the heart of prophetic diaconia there is the word justice therefore the chapter gave a brief look at the word justice in relation to Socio-economic issues. Theological, political and social challenges have been explained and the need for the Church in Malawi to implementation of prophetic Church's social work.

Chapter 5 Exploring the possibilities on how the Church in Malawi can be involved in Socio-economic injustices

5.1 Introduction

So far we have reflected on the social and political situation in Malawi and how the Church is involved in chapter 2. The reflection reveals that the Church has been and still is active on social issues and it is playing a vital role in trying to eradicate absolute poverty. The reflection on the impact of neo-liberal trade policies in Malawi shows that economic injustice is a global problem and it reveals that it is worsening the vicious circle of poverty. In chapter 3, a reflection on different ecclesiologies that influence the Church in Malawi when it comes to social issues was made. In general the reflection shows that despite differences in ecclesiological models, the Church, in general turn to agree on the need of its involvement in social issues. Since reactive social work does not usually involve politics, many Churches agree and are involved in trying to eliminate the immediate suffering which is really a necessity. The challenge however, comes when it is proactive diaconal work which involves political issues to a certain extent; some Churches set some boundaries on how to be involved. Chapter four continued by reflecting on prophetic diaconia which the Church in Malawi can use as response to Socio-economic injustices. The term prophetic diaconia has been reflected and whilst it can be agreed that of prophetic diaconia can be seen as a way forward for the Church in Malawi to use when it comes to Socio-economic injustices, it has been argued that the term 'prophetic diaconia' is a challenge and will always need an explanation and a proposal of using the word Church's advocacy social services or Church's social services has been suggested. Now in this chapter 5, it will give some suggestions on how the Church in Malawi can use Church's advocacy social services in Socio-economic injustices.

5.2 Need for implementing prophetic Diaconia despite Challenges

The Church in Malawi still has great opportunity to implement prophetic diaconia despite so many challenges that are there. The issues on Socio-economic injustices which are worsening the vicious circle of poverty calls for the Church in Malawi to act and advocate for those in need. In reference to the Kairos document, this is the moment of truth for the Church to consider contextual theology that will analyze the needs and address injustice acts. Injustices that have been institutionalized needs to be addressed and structures need to be changed. It is important for the Church to recognize that it can not do this on its own but to involve other technical actors that are willing to address and fight for the same course. The heart of prophetic diaconal calling is a theology of the cross that calls things what they really are,

moving beyond politeness and pretense, breaking the silence and taking risk of speaking truth to power, even when this threatens the established order and results in hardship or persecution (LWF 2002:7). Here are some of the suggestions that I think the Church can use to implement prophetic diaconia.

5.3 The need for transformation

In reference to the theological models, it would be important for the Church in Malawi to willingly transform in order for it to be a transforming institution. In a continuously changing society, Church's social work can only remain faithful to its original assignment if it can develop different forms and structures that can be appropriate and suitable for the different conditions like being able to work in both the traditional and contemporary environment, (LWF, 2002:23). This transformation is for the sake of human dignity. The Church is called to serve humankind and if there are things that threaten human life; God's image bearer, it is not an option but an obligation for the Church to act. This transformation is not just a social change. An Indian theologian, Monica Melanchthon, stated that:

*“Transformation is a process whereby changes are wrought in structures, be they political, social, economic or culture. The process of transformation should therefore affect the individual personally, interpersonally and socio-structurally. Equally significant is also the fact that transformation is a characteristic feature of Christian tradition, fundamental to the Christian view of things, and at the heart of our conviction that something new and different can be brought about by God's will and work”.*³⁴

5.3.1 Transformation in some theological interpretation

Christian theology understands human dignity on the basis of biblical testimonies; this is to say from the narratives that we have in the Bible and basing on creation theology. Christian theology recognizes human being as God's image bearer and therefore ought to be handled with dignity (Gen 2:27). Considering this, the Church is obliged to be involved in Socio-economic injustice issues and any activity that robs this dignity is intolerable and arouses need for action. Basing on the doctrine of *creatio continua* we see that God continues to create and He continues to reveal things about Himself in different context.

³⁴ See a report on Koinonia and Missions (1998) in LWF consultation on Churches and Mission pp. 109-117

The mission of the Church is twofold thus: the *sanctification* of people for their salvation and the *transformation* of the world with the Gospel values and principles. The former is achieved through the preaching of the Gospel, administering the sacraments or administering ordinances and governing the people of God, while the latter is to be realized in the Church's prophetic role through the promotion of good governance and the rule of law. (Timpuza 2001). For good governance, the Church has to be willing and get involved in speaking out against injustices that are affecting so many lives.

In this regard, the need for transformation calls out for theological interpretations that do not take issues of Socio-economic injustices seriously. This is what the Christians who wrote the Kairos document did. They learnt from their experiences and saw the need to transform and review their theology and moved to contextual analysis theology. The need for transformation also calls to extend its wings on reactive social work and it calls for proactive social work. The LWF report on Church's advocacy social services stated:

“In its efforts to react to the needs of the suffering and marginalized, the Church has to exhaust all possibilities and use all instruments at its disposal. But these conditions can not be healed by charitable attention alone. The nature of structural poverty alone requires that one should attack its causes by appropriate methods and try to get to their roots at a structural level. In other words: the factors that damage and humiliate life, that prevent the fulfillment of basic needs and produce human injustice and dependence must be dealt with at the level of their causes and not or not only at the level of their consequences” (2002:27).

5.3.2 Transformation for inclusion of marginalized groups

The need for transformation also calls for the Church to take initiative to eradicate the existing gender inequalities in Socio-economic issues in Malawi. In Malawian society in general, three things that I can refer to as ‘the marginalizing trinity’ have been used to marginalize women in the society and these three are cultural ramifications, some religious beliefs and social construction structures. A lot of women in Malawi are involved in non-paying jobs in society and this includes in Churches, and as a consequence, they are affected a lot with the results of Socio-economic injustices. It is not uncommon to hear statements like ‘my wife does not work she just stays at home’ even though the wife is responsible for taking care of children, fetching firewood, drawing some water at home and all other household chores in which most of the time they spend almost the whole day to find such things. In Malawi, a society that is

bias on men, such structures have resulted in making the majority of women and girls become victims of poverty and HIV/AIDS. In spite of the fact that a lot of women have low income access, they take the responsibility of taking care of the sick. Often times the girl child takes a lot of parental responsibilities in the absence of parents. Statistics shows that 10.5% of girls drop out of school as compared to 6.3 % boys despite women being 51% of the population (GOM/UNICEF Malawi 2002). As the HIV/AIDS pandemic continues to spiral out of control, the responsibility of caring for the vast majority of orphans is naturally assumed by the already overstretched extended family members who are mostly elderly women whose resources are meager to begin with, due to the 'marginalizing trinity' (Kawewe 2001). A lot of girls who take parental responsibilities, end up getting married at an early age to elderly men; this also explains the increase of HIV/AIDS in a girl child as compared to boy child. Girls are prone to HIV infection at a tender age; getting pregnant at an early age, and as a result facing dangers of child birth complications hence an increase in maternal deaths. This risk of girls is further deepened by the fact that men often seek younger female sexual partners and the cultural ramification makes them vulnerable and susceptible to exploitation.

The need for transformation calls for the Church to review its structures on perspectives on women. This transformation also calls for the Church to review its structures and be able to offer greatest opportunities to the least advantaged in the society; those who suffer greatly when it comes to Socio-economic injustices. It can be almost impossible to talk about Church's involvement in Socio-economic injustices if half of the population, women, are excluded in the whole process. The involvement of women has to start within the Church itself.

The other groups that are often overlooked and marginalized are groups like with physical disability, blindness, deafness, intellectual impairment or mental illness. Such people faces discrimination in different places and it can be sad that this kind of discrimination has not spared the Church.

True transformation of the Church should have such groups at the heart of the Church and fight for their course. Implementation of Church's advocacy social services calls for the Church to transform and be able to integrate such marginalized groups. The Church in Malawi itself has to start to integrate such groups and be an example to the society if it has to be

involved in issues of injustices. The Church in Bærum³⁵ Haslum congregation in Norway has an impressive program on how they integrate people with mental challenges; a move that Churches in Malawi have not yet made.

5.4 The Need for Ecumenical engagement

For the voice of the Church to be strong and more influential, it needs one voice. Ecumenical engagements can enable different denominations to see the glimpses of different situation and see with different eyes and perspective to different things. Jesus Christ Himself prayed for Christian believers to be one (John 17:21). This ecumenical engagement is a call for unity for the Church in Malawi and this unity is a costly unity as described by an article by World Council of Churches. “Costly unity is discovering the Churches’ unity as a gift of pursuing justice and peace”³⁶ One can note that there is too much diversity within the Church and it makes it almost impossible to have one voice as the Church. However, in the midst of such diversity, there is need of working ecumenically. This gives the Church a lot of influence and it can be easier to influence the world and implement prophetic diaconia.

“Ecumenical engagement and the results of ecumenical and interfaith dialogue also provide a different perspective and may give new or clearer glimpses of God’s reign breaking into the world, along with the new possibilities and changes for mission that may have been overlooked” (Mission in context 11).

This ecumenical engagement can be on local, national and international level.

5.4.1 Ecumenical engagement on a local level

Ecumenical engagement on a local level can be of vital importance. If Churches at a village and community level are able to work together ecumenically, it empowers the local people to be united and have one voice at that grass root level. The government of Malawi has been decentralizing its powers and it realizes that importance of having grass root actors. Voices at grass root can be of vital importance because this is the level where people can become subjects in the process of fighting against Socio-economic injustices.

5.4.2 Ecumenical engagement on national level

³⁵ When I was doing some practicals with the Haslum congregation, it was impressive to see how the Church integrates with different marginalized groups. It is important to know that marginalized groups differ from context to context.

³⁶ World Council of Churches writing on costly unity <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/faith-and-order-commission/vi-Church-and-world-unity-and-the-life-of-the-Church-in-the-world/ecclesiology-and-ethics/costly-unity.html>

On the national level, it can be important for the Churches to have one body which can be looking into economical issues of the country. It has been stated that the Roman Catholic has an arm that deals with such issues. However, the effectiveness of such groups would have greater influence if other denominations are integrated. Different Churches in Malawi belong to one or two of the following Church umbrella organizations for Churches like Malawi Council of Churches (MCC)³⁷, Evangelical Association of Malawi (EAM), and Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM)³⁸. These umbrella organizations have been doing an outstanding work in responding to social problems. To some extent they have been involved in advocacy. However it can be very influential if these organization form a wing that can tackle Socio-economic injustices.

By proposing that the Church should work ecumenically I mean that the Churches in Malawi should have an umbrella body that can be embarking on Socio-economic injustices. The importance of ecumenical work in advocacy has been underestimated and a lot of denominations ignore the Socio-economic injustice issues. A lot of people are still looking up to Church for answers on the social problems that they are facing. It can be important for Churches to understand that involvement in injustice issues is not a competition on who is doing best, but rather acknowledging that they are all fighting for the same course.

5.4.3 Ecumenical engagement on International level

It can be of vital importance for the Church in Malawi to be involved in ecumenical engagement on international level. The ecumenical alliance for advocacy is a broad international network of over 90 Churches and Christian organizations cooperating in advocacy on global trade and on HIV and AIDS through out the world. As of November 22, 2007, not a Church in Malawi was listed as a member to this alliance. This alliance represent tens of millions of Christians around the world who share the conviction and passion that advocacy against unjust structures, practices and attitudes should not be a task that Churches or Church affiliated organizations should be engaged in when it is convenient, but rather it must be a fundamental requirement for Churches for of living out faith.³⁹ Being part of this alliance would be beneficial for the Church in Malawi since it can be able to learn from other

³⁷ MCC is a body for protestant Churches in Malawi which was established with the aim of human transformation following the image of Jesus Christ, promoting holistic development and fostering unity, peach, justice and love amongst the human race.

³⁸ ECM is an umbrella body for all the Catholic Churches in Malawi

³⁹ See web home page site for Alliance for Ecumenical advocacy

countries' experiences and make some positive progress in combating social injustices. When the Churches both in the south and in the north work together and agree to focus their cooperative powers on injustice issues, important changes in global structures and local communities can be achieved.

The Church, (the universal Church) is the body of Christ consisting of different parts (1 Cor. 12) and by this virtue calls for ecumenical engagement. Different Churches need to work together and support one another for the sake of Christ.

5.5 The need to Net work with Churches in the North

As already pointed out, it has been observed that issues of economic injustices are global problem and they are affecting both the Church in the North and the Church in the south. One of the ways forward for the Church in Malawi is to network with the Church in the North on issues of Socio-economic injustices. It can be challenging for the Church in Malawi to interact with IFI for initiating change because it does not have power on its own and that makes it being marginalized in nature if one just look at it locally. But as it has been already stated, IFIs being international institutions it can be more influential for the Church to involve others on international level. The AGAPE document stated that the role of the Church must be to contribute to replacing the international system of today with a new system built on solidarity, public engagement, self determination in regards to resources, peace, ecological balance and justice (AGAPE 43). Through networking with the Church in the north, the voice of the Church in Malawi can be heard.

The Church in Norway, as one of the Churches in the North, in responding to injustice issues raised in the agape document, KISP (2007:19) stated that it is the task of the Church to challenge all responsible decision-makers regarding the following four issues:

- Work to obtain binding global regulations and mechanisms ensuring all countries and groups representations and co-determination power, including ensuring democracy within the WTO and international financial institutions
- Support and participate in the work to prevent the market from penetrating and taking over the social , cultural and religious basis upon which all societies depend
- Counteract the law of the market concerning the survival of the fittest by taking the side of the weaker part (opting for the poor)

- Work to give states in the south the opportunity of protective themselves against the destructive consequences of the present market logical, so that overtime they will become equal participants on the global arena.

The above strategies sound good if they can be implemented, and the implementation of these strategies should include the input of the Church in the south otherwise it can go back to the same aspect of one part being the subject whilst the other being the object.

The Church in Malawi, with the majority of its members being poor people, needs to develop a strategy that can be incorporated with the felt needs that can be integrated with the plan above. For example the Church of Norway initiated the positive progress that was carried by its government by delaying its support to World Bank because the World Bank is forcing developing countries to privatize government public facilities. This reflects that the Church in Norway is willing to help out in voicing out for the oppressed.

5.6 Need for Empowerment and Involvement

Empowerment is defined as *“the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. Central to this process are actions which both build individual and collective assets, and improve the efficiency and fairness of the organizational and institutional context which govern the use of these assets”*⁴⁰. If the Church the Church in Malawi has to implement prophetic social work effectively, the aspect of empowerment should not be ignored. Empowerment can be a very effective method for practical social work. It has to be noted that if one is empowered on the other hand, then the other loses power on the other side. It is about sharing the power. If the marginalized groups are empowered so that they are able to stand out on Socio-economic issue, then the injustices can be reduced. For example the Malawian society is composed of both 51% female and 49% males, and if women are left out on the economic issues then injustices can hardly decrease. If the society that we work with is full of an inequality, injustice, unfairness and suppression, then empowerment can be an effective method to use. When people are empowered, they are able to take a step further in their lives. I do agree with Noko Frans Kekana that the prophetic understanding of justice is not the impartial

⁴⁰ Definition given by World Bank on empowerment website

administration of law, but the overcoming of the gap between rich and poor; it is economic justice.⁴¹ The way to achieve this can be through the process of empowerment.

Empowering the marginalized groups helps them to be objects in the whole process but they become subjects as well. *“Therefore the poor and the marginalized are not primarily objects of charitable giving through diakonia but they have to be seen and treated as the subjects and actors of God’s judgment as signposts to God’s kingdom and call to repentance ever for the Church”*. The trend of thought is that the poor are the problem and the rich and powerful the agents of its solution.

Jan Olav Henriksen,⁴² brought out an important aspect of empowering people based on Luke 18. We read that Jesus asked the man in Jericho, what shall I do for you? Even though Jesus knew what this man would ask, but still asked him and this was a process of involvement. Henriksen writes about the necessity of involving the actors on grass root when solving some problems. He says we ought to ask the same question, “What do you want that I should do for you?” just as Jesus asked. Henriksen stated that when such a question is asked it changes the way that we think might be helpful because it brings a whole new perspective.⁴³ The Church needs to create a place those that are oppressed in fighting for Socio-economic injustice. It is important for the oppressed to articulate their problems and grievances. It could be seen with a whole new perspective.

5.7 Need for teaching economic systems and policies

For the Church to speak out against economic injustices it has to be aware on how economic systems operate and function within the society. On this it is important that the leaders of the Church are aware of such issues and be able to sensitize their members and other people within the community. As it has been reflected, the economic systems and policies are increasing the gap between the rich and the poor hence worsening the vicious circle of poverty. Taking an example of CEAR and the transportation system, if the Churches in the communities had taken the responsibility of empowering the local people who are being affected; there would have been some positive outcomes.

⁴¹ Kekana, Noko Frans. (2005) Economic justice in South Africa towards a prophetic theology of community solidarity, economic equity and pastoral care, Ecumenical Foundation of Southern Africa (pg 10)

⁴² Jan Olav Henriksen is a professor of systematic Theology and Philosophy of Religion

⁴³ Henriksen (2005) *Det umulige Nåløyet: fattigdom og rikdom i Norge i globalt perspektiv* (pg 34)

But as it has been stated sometimes the Church thinks that getting into such issues is getting outside the box. This can be argued because the same people that are being directly affected by Socio-economic injustices are the same people that the Church work with. In many cases Church leaders are ignorant of the economic systems and policies. There is a need to include the aspect of Socio-economic issues within Theological schools in Malawi if the Church would take economic injustices seriously. The Church, especially in many developing countries stands in a strategic position to disseminate information on economics and this is part of prophetic diaconia. The Church should be aware of what the government is doing and be committed to refute if the policies would end up in oppressing the poor.

5.8 Supporting groups that influence positive changes

The Church should be able to offer support for other groups in the communities that are also fighting for Socio-economic justice. The Church should be able to collaborate with such groups that have more political power so that its voice can be heard. The Church should realize that other groups that are involved in Socio-economic injustices are not the competitors and it is not about who is doing best but rather it should recognize them as fellow actors.

5.9 Summary

In this chapter, different ways on how the Church in Malawi can use prophetic diaconia in involvement in Socio-economic injustices have been explored. The chapter has stated the importance of ecumenical engagement at local, national and international level. It also stated the need for transformation for the Church in order for it to be a transforming institution. It continued by stating the need of incorporating Socio-economical issues in its theological schools so that the Church leaders would be aware of such issues and be able to sensitize its members.

Chapter 6 Summary and Conclusion

In this thesis, I have discussed, analyzed and explored the need for theological transformation for the church in Malawi. Being a Church in a globalised world calls for the church to be involved in advocacy social work. I have discussed and analyzed the major challenges to Church's social work in Malawi which are poverty and HIV/AIDS. In searching for answers to the first part of my problem statement, why is it necessary for the Church in Malawi to be involved in fighting against social economic injustices, I discussed the social economic situation in Malawi. I stated and discussed with some examples how poverty and HIV/AIDS is being worsened as a result of increase of social economic injustices. This has created a vicious circle of poverty where problems are intertwined with each other. The vicious circle shows how difficult it is for one to come out of it once caught in it.

I also discussed, analyzed and reflected on some of the theological models that Churches use when it comes to social economic injustices. The reflection shows that generally the church has been responding to social problems at a consequence. This has been very helpful and the church needs to continue addressing problems at reactive level. However I have argued that addressing problems at consequence level only, can not help people to get out of vicious circle. I stated that the church needs to address problems at their root level as well.

In answering the second part of my problem statement, how can the Church in Malawi fight against root causes of social economic injustices, I made a proposal of using prophetic diaconia and discussed its theological basis. Even though different models can be used at different times, the prophetic model is one of the best ways which the Church can use when it comes to fighting against social economic injustice. I specifically mentioned prophetic diaconia that has the preferential aspect of the marginalized, the poor, and the voiceless. Not only has this, but it also involves the poor in fighting for good changed through empowerment. However, I argued about the term prophetic diaconia that it does not communicate well in Malawian context. I made a proposal of using the word Church's advocacy social service instead of prophetic diaconia. Nevertheless, the word has been useful in this thesis because of its theological implications.

I also discussed the need for transformation in some theological interpretations that do not take socio-economic injustices seriously. This transformation calls for some changes in

Church structures so that some marginalized groups like women, orphans just to mention a few, should be included in her programs. I also stated the need for ecumenical engagement at local, national and international level. In a globalised world, there is a need for international ecumenical engagement in order to address neo-liberal policies that are being implemented world wide. I also stated the need for the church to empower and involve people at grass root level; thus to involve the victims of socio economic injustice in the process of fighting against it. I also stated the need to integrate socio-economic issues in theological schools so that Church leaders would be able to sensitize their members.

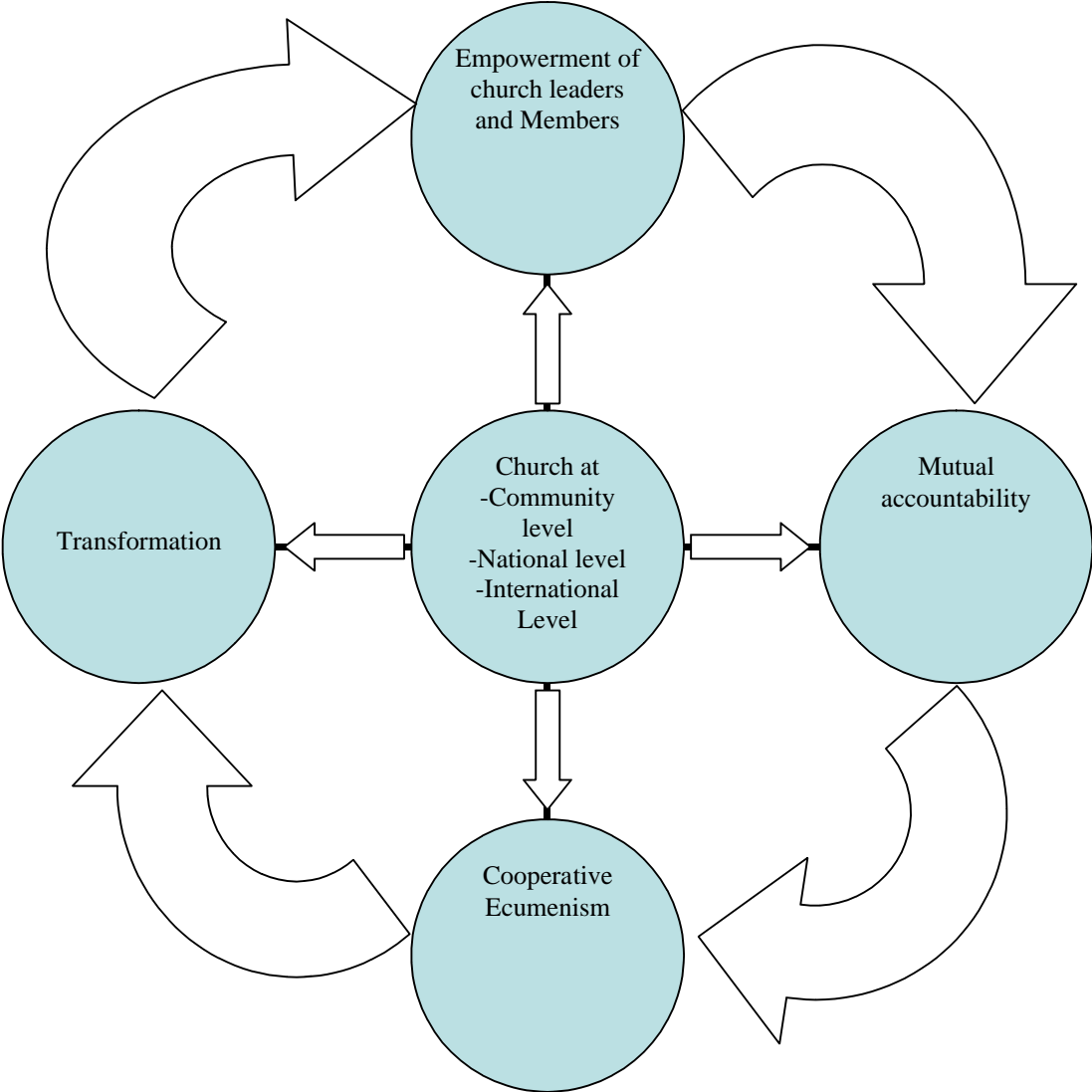
In conclusion, while recognizing the global structural divide between the rich and the poor, there is a need to address the root causes of poverty wherever they are found. For the voice of the church to be heard, it has to be one and sound; that is to say the Church has to be well informed and open to new perspectives. It is also important for the Church to be involved in continuous ecumenical engagement because the Christian community will always have a global perspective.

The social upheavals that are happening needs to be addressed. Addressing root causes of poverty calls for the Church in Malawi not only play the part of a nurse looking after the casualties of the system, but to deal with such issues that can prevent casualties. (Dorr 1991:126). Jesus Christ Himself came to serve humankind and give his life as a ransom for many. His heart was for humanity. He had a preferential aspect of the poor.

The Church in Malawi should be challenged to address economic injustices and to question any view that defines or evaluates people according to their wealth or market value. Unless the Church in Malawi work together with other institution for the same course to participate actively in the fight against structures that sacrifices Malawians at the altar of poverty and degradation, its purpose for existence can be extraneous.

The concluding diagram below is a circle of Empowerment that can lead to some positive changes. The church in Malawi needs to have a lager perspective of itself at community level, national level and international level. Empowering of Church members and Church leaders at all the levels above can lead to mutual accountability, cooperative ecumenism and transformation. This can help the universal church be able to fight together against global economic injustices.

The cycle of Empowerment



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