

GROWTH OF MALAWI ASSEMBLIES OF GOD
CHURCH: THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF INDIGENOUS
PASTORS FROM 1947-2014

MASTER OF ARTS (THEOLOGY) THESIS

CHARLES DALITSO GOODSON MASTER

UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI
CHANCELLOR COLLEGE

DECEMBER, 2015

MALAWI COLLECTION

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By

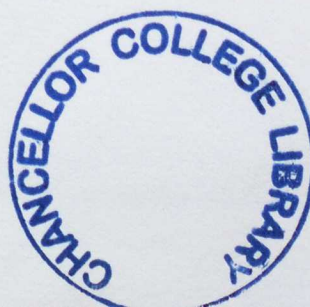
CHARLES DALITSO GOODSON MASTER

BDiv – University of Malawi

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Humanities, in Partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts (Theology)

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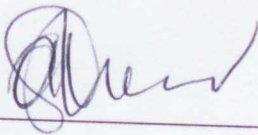


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I, Charles Dalitso Goodson Master, hereby declare that this thesis is my own original work which has not been submitted to any other institution for similar purposes. Where other people's work has been used acknowledgements have been made.

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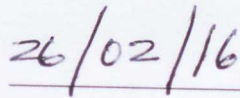
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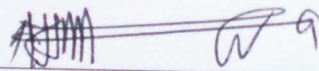


Joseph Thipa, Dth (Lecturer)

MAIN SUPERVISOR

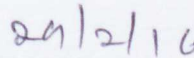


Date



Hermann Mvula, MA (Lecturer)

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT



Date



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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the following people: my beloved wife, Mercy, whose uniting moral support and prayers have made this work a success; my father and mother who have lived to see their long cherished dream realized. To my pastors, Rev. McDonald Chiudza Banda and Rev. Alex 'Monsignor' Midian who have nourished my life with spiritual and moral support. May the Lord cause his face to shine upon you!

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ABSTRACT

The research study is a critical investigation of the role the indigenous pastors have played over the years to the growth of the Malawi Assemblies of God (MAOG) since its inception in 1947. Through the lens of the concept of indigenization in missions, the study explored the factors that have made the names of Malawian pastors absent and muted in the annals of the church. It is argued throughout the thesis that the growth of the MAOG has from time immemorial depended much more on the invaluable efforts of the local pastors than on the much touted foreign missionaries. The findings revealed that the indigenous pastors have contributed greatly to the growth of the church through two major areas, namely, the theological and the social concern mandates. Although these contributions have not properly been documented, they are mostly found in oral transmissions and have acted as catalysts for the development of the church. This study is very significant as it has exposed many gaps, especially in the social concern mandate where the MAOG still struggles with some teething implementation problems. The research study was guided by one main research question with three sub-questions. The main question aimed at investigating the contributions made by the indigenous pastors to the growth of the MAOG. The three sub-questions explored the specific areas which the indigenous pastors made contributions as well as investigating the reasons for the absence of the names of indigenous pastors in the historiography of the church. Hence, the research study comprises six chapters.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AAGA	Africa Assemblies of God Alliance
AFM	Apostolic Faith Mission
AG	Assemblies of God
AIC	African Initiated Churches
ANE	Ancient Near Eastern
AGREDS	Assemblies of God Relief and Development Services
AGIM	Assemblies of God in Malawi
AGST	Assemblies of God School of Theology
ATR	African Traditional Religions
CCAP	Church of Central African Presbyterian
DPP	Democratic Progressive Party
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
MAGIT	Malawi Assemblies of God Institute of Theology
MAOG	Malawi Assemblies of God
MCP	Malawi Congress Party
MFF	Missionary Field Fellowship
NIV	New International Version
PP	People's Party

PAC	Public Affairs Committee
RC	Roman Catholic
USAAG	United States of America Assemblies of God
SAAGA	Southern Africa Assemblies of God Alliance
TRS	Theology and Religious Studies
UDF	United Democratic Front
WAGF	World Assemblies of God Fellowship
ZAOGA	Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa
ZCC	Zion Christian Church

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Chapter overview

The chapter presents the contextual background to the study. This is followed by a statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, theoretical framework, limitations of the study, methods of research and analysis. It ends with an overview of subsequent chapters of the thesis.

1.2 Historical background to the study

The Malawi Assemblies of God (MAOG) is a pentecostal church which was established in 1947.¹ The church has its roots in the pentecostal revivals of the mid-nineteenth to twentieth century which hit the United States of America and later other parts of the world.² Issues concerning pentecostalism are very diverse, but this research study examines the role of indigenous pastors in the development of pentecostalism by surveying the movement's early and present developments in the context of African Christian historiography with a particular attention on the Malawi Assemblies of God church. The need arose from the current crop of literature which mostly glorifies the Western missionaries to a certain degree as responsible for the development of the MAOG. The term pentecostalism or classical pentecostalism refers to a renewal

¹ Gary B. McGee. "Pentecostal missions" *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*. Ed. A. Scott Moreau (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000).

² Gregory Mvula and Enson Lwesya. *Flames of fire: the history of Assemblies of God and pentecostalism in Malawi, spreading the flames at home and abroad* (Blantyre: AGLC, 2005).

movement within Christianity that places special emphasis on a direct personal experience of God through the baptism with the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in other tongues.³ The movement is also noted for its emphasis on performance of miracles, signs and wonders “in Gospel proclamation, utilization of indigenous church principles, pragmatism in communications and technology, and spectacular church growth”.⁴ In its history, pentecostalism began as an expression of both social and theological discontent among the lower and middle-class groups. They felt oppressed and cheated by the clergy who mostly occupied the top echelons of society leaving the poor without any advocate to stand for them in time of their needs. Therefore, the advocates of pentecostal revivals disapproved of the impiety in mainline denominations and were alienated by the growing wealth and elaborateness of their churches. Not contented to remain in mainline churches, they formed new religious communities committed to the theological doctrine of perfectionism.⁵ As is common in conflicts of social disparity, the pentecostal revival was not generally welcomed by the mainline established churches. No wonder that the adherents were either expelled or they moved out on their own from the churches to form congregations which were concomitant with the new phenomena. The pioneers of this revival mostly came from the mainline churches of Methodists, Presbyterian, and Baptist.⁶

One of the unique aspects about pentecostalism is that it spawned a renewed interest for the gifts of the Holy Spirit recorded in the early church especially those having to do with healing and prophecy. Holiness leaders such as Charles Cullis, John Alexander Dowie, and Albert B. Simpson established healing missions across the United States.⁷ The advocates believed a new miraculous era of the Spirit was occurring which would end in the second coming of Christ. People began to seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit. One of

³ Gary B. McGee, “Pentecostal missions” *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*. Ed. A. Scott Moreau. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Randall J. Stephens, *Assessing the roots: a historiographical essay*. Online. Internet. 23 Feb. 2014. Available: <http://are.as.wvu.edu/pentroot.htm>

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

the renowned American holiness ministers, Charles Fox Parham in 1901, is on record as having asked the students of his Topeka bible school to study the scriptures and determine what evidence might be given of Spirit baptism. Using the pentecost account in Acts Chapter Two, the class concluded that speaking in other tongues was the confirmation of the Holy Spirit baptism.⁸ The adherents of pentecostalism also drew inspiration from previous spiritual outpourings, such as the First Great Awakening (1730s-40s) and Second Great Awakening (1800s-30s) and they identified themselves in the tradition of reformers and revivalists such as Martin Luther, John Wesley, and Dwight L. Moody.⁹ The uniqueness of pentecostalism is that in its initial stages, it became multi-ethnic and often challenged racial norms. "Scholars looking at the interracial aspect view the movement as a radical protest to segregation and as a dynamic force of social change. With the ascendancy of the new social history in the early 1970s, scholars began to analyse the demographics of pentecostalism, assessing the movement's adherents according to social status and class."¹⁰

However, the 1906 revival at Azusa Street, Los Angeles marks the second phase of the pentecostals' origins.¹¹ Mac Robert studied the black roots of pentecostalism, emphasizing both the role of the African American, William Seymour, in the revival and the place of African concepts of community, spiritual power, and the desire for revolution.¹² William Seymour who studied under Parham in Houston, Texas, carried the message of pentecost to Los Angeles where he began a revival in one of the poorer sections of the city. The Azusa street revival managed to gather the ethnic minority groups of Los Angeles who discovered a "sense of dignity and community denied them

⁸ Melvin Easterday Dieter, *The holiness revival of the nineteenth century* (Maryland: Scarecrow, 1996).

⁹ Randall J. Stephens, *Assessing the roots: a historiographical essay*. Online. Internet. 23 Feb. 2014. Available: <http://are.as.wvu.edu/pentroot.htm>

¹⁰ Robert Mapes Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited: The Making of American pentecostalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979) 69.

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Ian MacRobert, *The Black roots and White racism of early pentecostalism*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988).

in the larger urban culture".¹³ Seymour commanded respect among people of all races. As a result the formation of Assemblies of God later in 1914 incorporated all races.

Today, pentecostalism "forms an unavoidable and buzzing part of contemporary Malawian Christianity".¹⁴ The growth of the pentecostal movement in Malawi is no different from the global development. Ulf Strohehn observes that like its global counterpart, revivalist manifestation in the mainline churches of Malawi prior to pentecostalism occurred in its history. "One might think immediately of Donald Fraser and the Keswick among the Ngoni around the year 1910...also David Clement Scott had a pneumatological approach to his mission work at Blantyre Synod".¹⁵ The spread of pentecostalism in Malawi took several forms. Strohehn outlines five ways, namely, the Machona (migrant labourers) initiated, the missionary initiated, the charismatic, independent and Zionist initiated. The Malawi Assemblies of God church was established by a combination of both the Machona (Migrant workers from South Africa) and white missionaries from Tanzania.¹⁶

1.3 Problem statement

This study sought to examine the role of indigenous pastors in the development of pentecostalism by surveying the movement's early and present developments in the context of African Christian historiography with a special focus on the Malawi Assemblies of God (MAOG) church. The need arose from the current crop of literature which mostly glorifies the Western missionaries as responsible for the development of the MAOG. From the literature reviewed so far, the role of indigenous pastors is not clearly articulated. Names of indigenous pastors are mentioned as an appendix to the achievements of the foreign missionaries. Available literature which was written before the rise of political independence in Africa is written in the context of the Western world.

¹³ Robert Mapes Anderson, *Vision of the disinherited: the making of American pentecostalism*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979) 69.

¹⁴ Ulf Strohehn, *Pentecostalism in Malawi: a history of the Apostolic Faith Mission in Malawi*. (Zomba: Kachere Series, 2004) 9.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

For this reason the researcher intended to investigate the reasons for the absence of the indigenous pastors, on one hand, and retrieve their voices, on the other, in the current historiography on the growth of Malawi Assemblies of God from a Malawian perspectives. Essentially, it is an attempt to retrieve the voices of indigenous Malawian pastors who played a pivotal role in the growth of pentecostalism alongside their Western compatriots.

1.4 Rationale

At the onset, it should be stated here that the historiography of pentecostalism is as multifaceted as the movement itself. The initial historical works on pentecostalism came from within the movement. pentecostal historians wrote within a kind of framework that focused much on the role of God rather than human and natural causation. These histories were apologetic and largely a-historical.¹⁷ On the other hand, as Verstraen observes on African historiography of Christianity, “a Eurocentric approach has in many instances blinded historians to see the full picture of historic reality...at the present there is only the history of Europeans in Africa...it ignores a great part of Christianity’s past elsewhere by treating it as a small appendix when the West catches sight of it”.¹⁸ Meanwhile, with the advent of political independence, the approach to African history has drastically changed and this has led to a redefinition of both secular and Christian histories. It is with this kind of motivation that has urged the researcher to undertake a study that will attempt to address the gap in Malawian Christian historiography that is lacking in pentecostal literature.

1.5 Hypothesis

The research hypothesises that the pentecostal churches in Malawi have thrived on the sweat and initiatives of indigenous pastors as opposed to the much touted work of the partnering Western missionaries. Much of what is written does not show the endeavours

¹⁷ Randall J. Stephens, *Assessing the roots: a historiographical essay*, 2012. Online. Internet. 23 Feb. 2014. Available: <http://are.as.wvu.edu/pentroot.htm>

¹⁸ Frans J. Verstraen, *History of Christianity in Africa in the context of African history: a comparative assessment of four recent historiographical contributions*. (Gweru: Mambo Press, 2002) 1.

of Malawian pastors but the commendable work of their Western partnering missionaries. This has contributed to the muting of indigenous Malawian voices that, otherwise, played a leading role in the formulation and growth of the (MAOG).

1.6 Purpose statement

The purpose of this study was to examine the growth of (MAOG) in line with the contribution made by indigenous pastors.

1.7 Critical research questions

The research was guided by the following major question: What have been the contributions of indigenous pastors to the growth of MAOG? The following sub-questions shed more light to the research:

1. In what areas did the indigenous pastors contribute?
2. What specific roles have the indigenous pastors played in the growth of the MAOG?
3. Why are the names of indigenous pastors absent in the historiography of the church?

The research questions addressed the gaps in the current literature, discussed in Chapter 2. It is a probe on what has not been recorded about the indigenous pastors' contributions to the growth of the MAOG and an exploration of the reasons which prevented the scribes from chronicling their achievements.

1.8 Theoretical framework

Research that is not theoretically informed, that is to say, not grounded in the existing body of knowledge, is likely to generate findings of a narrow and ungeneralisable value.¹⁹ Conceptual tools are regarded as the lens of the texts without which the texts are incomplete, especially in research projects. Without applying the theories derived from concepts, a researcher can neither produce a good thesis nor can a reader understand it.

¹⁹ Andrew Yiannakis, *Applied sociology of sports Campaign*. (Illinois: Human Kinetics, 1992) 8

So, theories seriously matter in both text studies and field studies.²⁰ The researcher chose indigenization as a theoretical framework for this study as a way of reconstructing the past and present efforts of the indigenous pastors in both historical and current trends of the growth of the Malawi Assemblies of God (MAOG) church.

The choice of indigenization as a theoretical framework is justified in the sense that it accommodates past, present and even future Christian missions theologising. Similarly, indigenization is seen by a number of renowned scholars as a necessary component of contextual theology which emerges out of genuine concern of Christians who long for a God who directly speaks to them at the point of need without the limiting influences of external cultural, theological and contextual paraphernalia.²¹ As Allmen points out, there are three impasses which have been very problematic in the history of the development of Christianity in the Third World where Malawi is situated. These are colonial mind-set that regards Third World theologies (Black and African theologies) as more contextually bound than the mainline [Western] theologies, failure to give room to the insights and constructive developments of particular contexts committed to the central tenets of the Christian faith and the branding of contextualization as syncretistic blending of the Christianity with animistic tendencies.²² In this regard, the theory of indigenization is clarified more with the following concepts: multiculturalism, eschatology, current African historiography, church and politics, inculturation, *glossolalia* and the public role of African Christianity.

Multiculturalism is a term that relates to “communities containing multiple cultures. The term is used in two broad ways, either descriptively or normatively. As a descriptive term, the meaning this study has employed, it usually refers to the simple fact of cultural diversity: it is generally applied to the demographic make-up of a specific place, sometime at the organizational level, e.g. schools, businesses, neighbourhoods, cities, or

²⁰ Andrew Yiannakis, *Applied sociology of sports Campaign*. (Illinois: Human Kinetics, 1992) 8

²¹ Marc Cortez, “Creation and context: a theological framework for contextual theology”. *Westminster Theological Journal* 67.2 (2005): 347-362. Online. Internet. 16 Mar. 2015. Available: <http://marccortez.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/09/Creation-and-Context-Westminster.pdf>

²² Daniel Von Allmen, “The birth of theology: contextualization as the dynamic element in the formation of New Testament theology,” *International Review of Mission* 64 (1965): 48-49

nations”.²³ The Malawi Assemblies of God (MAOG) has been serving people of various cultures and the researcher intends to understand how the role of the indigenous pastors played part in such multicultural communities.

Eschatology refers to the study of the end of things, whether the end of an individual's life, the end of the age, or the end of the world. Broadly speaking, Christian eschatology is the study of the destiny of humankind as it is revealed by the bible, which is the primary source for all Christian eschatological studies.²⁴ In its missions the church emphasizes so much on the second coming of Jesus Christ, and this has become a rallying point for conducting the Gospel resulting in the massive conversions around the world. Doctrines associated with this concept have pervaded the discussion about the indigenous pastors' contributions.

Current African historiography looks at history from African point of view. As Verstraen observes, much of the history of the Christian church was written in a Western oriented format side-lining the crucial role the indigenous pastors played in the propagation of pentecostalism.²⁵ In this study such views will be analysed.

Politics and the church. It is now generally argued that Christianity could not survive, spread or grow in size and influence, without generating a political interest or theology of its own.²⁶ The relationship between politics and the church since the times of the early patriarchs has been a turbulent one. Many Christians are at loss in how to deal with political matters. It is no wonder that the Malawi Assemblies of God (MAOG), like most pentecostal denominations, has not been actively involved in frontline politics, whether as partisan or nonpartisan, as opposed to its mainline counterparts. But of late some of its members have now joined frontline politics. The rationale behind this is that there is now a new attention that is drawn to the endemic political and economic weakness of the

²³ Andrew Heywood, *Key concepts in politics* (London: Palgrave Macmillan 2000) 227.

²⁴ Stephen Travis, *Christ will come again: hope for the Second Coming of Jesus*. (Toronto: Clements Publishing, 2004).

²⁵ Frans J Verstraen, *History of Christianity in Africa in the context of African history: a comparative assessment of four recent historiographical contributions*. (Gweru: Mambo Press, 2002).

²⁶ Duncan B. Forrester, *theology and politics* (New York: Blackwell, 1988) 19.

African state which directly impinges on the welfare of the church in one way or another.²⁷

Inculturation/indigenization: This is based on the fact that the Gospel has spread into new regions of the world, thereby, precipitating both needs and opportunities for fresh conceptions and formulations of the faith in terms and expressions acceptable by the people in a particular culture. The process of inculturation occurs when missionaries interact with new regions in which Christianity does not exist and the instruction of converts (catechesis) takes place. Harvey Cox sees the largely unconscious interaction of pentecostalism with so-called 'primal' religions as helping people recover vital elements in their culture that are threatened by modernization. Pentecostals throughout Africa have found in their own context, both culturally and biblically acceptable alternatives to adaptations from the practices of their old religions and are seeking to provide answers to the needs inherent there.²⁸

Glossolalia is a Greek term referring to speaking in other tongues under the influence of the Holy Spirit. The phenomenon has been a part of ecstatic speech in religious practices for centuries. It presently designates the baptism of the Holy Spirit mostly in the pentecostal and charismatic Christian worship. The first occurrence of the apostles' speaking in tongues or *glossolalia* is biblically recorded in the book of Acts 2:4, as happening on the Day of Pentecost. It is recorded, "*They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance*". The phenomenon may also be called possession by the Spirit.²⁹

Much of Christendom believes in the ongoing ministration of the Holy Spirit. As is evidenced in the book of Acts, evangelism and the working of miracles are credited to this third person of the Holy Trinity. However, the church today is awash with

²⁷ Paul Gifford, *African Christianity: its public role* (Blomington: Indiana Press, 1992).

²⁸ Allan Anderson, *Evangelism and the growth of Pentecostalism in Africa*. Online. Internet. 31 Jan. 2015. Available: http://artsweb.bham.ac.uk/aanderson/Publications/evangelism_and_the_growth_of_pen.htm

²⁹ I. M. Lewis. *Ecstatic religion: an anthropological study of spirit possession and Shamanism*. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971).

controversies as regards the true sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit in an individual.³⁰ Others argue that the working of miracles and speaking in other tongues became extinct with the departure of the apostolic age of the early church Christians.³¹ On the other hand, some believe the gifts of the Holy Spirit were meant to last for as long as the church was in existence. The account in Acts (4:31, 8:14–17, 10:44–48, 11:15–17, 19:1–7) indicates that in the beginning of the Christian church the phenomenon reappeared wherever conversion and commitment to Christianity occurred. The greatest emphasis upon the gift in the early church was made by followers of the second century prophet Montanus. His excommunication about 177 AD and the later decline of the sect probably contributed to a climate of opinion unfavourable to speaking in tongues, and the practice declined.³²

1.9 Limitations of the study

Some of the limitations of the research have been financial challenges that the researcher encountered as he went around Malawi, in the Central and Southern Regions to be particular, as informed by snowball sampling, trying to meet various pastors for information on their role as indigenous pastors for the growth of the MAOG. The researcher used his own resources; he did not secure any funding from anybody. To get information from some of the pastors proved to be a daunting task as they were busy in the run up to the 2014 tripartite general elections. Although a number of pastors were willing to participate, they had difficulties in allocating the researcher their much needed time. For instance, the former president of the MAOG and other officials from the MAOG national headquarters in Lilongwe were hard to come by as they were reportedly very busy.

³⁰ Wayne Grudem. *Systematic theology: an introduction to biblical doctrine* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2006).

³¹ Allan Anderson, *Evangelism and the growth of pentecostalism in Africa*. Online. Internet. 31 Jan. 15. Available: http://artsweb.bham.ac.uk/aanderson/Publications/evangelism_and_the_growth_of_pen.htm

³² Encyclopedia Britannica: Macropedia. 15th Ed. 1987

1.10 Methods of research and analysis

The qualitative research methods were used to collect the data through in-depth interviews, focus group discussion (FGD) and documentary analysis. No questionnaire was used. Snowball sampling informed the afore-stated data collection methods. Data analysis was based on thematic analysis of the categories generated through the interviews based on the respondents' point of views.³³ The interviews were conducted at various levels, such as at meetings with:

- (a) The administrative staff of Malawi Assemblies of God (MAOG) church
- (b) Long serving pastors of the MAOG
- (c) Young pastors of the MAOG
- (d) Focus group discussion (FGD) with both long serving and young pastors
- (e) Retired pastors of the MAOG

1.11 Chapter summary

This chapter has discussed the background to the study in relation to the contributions of indigenous pastors to the growth of Malawi Assemblies of God (MAOG) from 1947 to 2014. The chapter has also presented the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, significance, and limitations of the study. In order to appreciate some of the studies that have been done in the concept of indigenization in Christianity, the next chapter reviews relevant literature on the impact of indigenization to Christianity in the world.

1.12 Thesis structure

As a recommendation for this research work, the thesis comprises six chapters to articulate the issues as arranged.

Chapter one includes an introduction that covers, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, theoretical framework, hypothesis, and definition of the research.

³³ Chapter 3 has catalogued in details issues concerning methodology employed in this research study.

Chapter two covers literature review on the growth of pentecostalism from a wider perspective to the narrow local Malawian context. Its main focus is a discussion on the concept of indigenization. By introducing the concept of indigenization, the need for indigenization, indigenization in African theology and a discussion on models of indigenization where one model at the end is chosen as a guiding framework to the study, the chapter acts as a lens through which the thesis develops its theological perspectives. Thereafter, an evaluation of different models related to the present study is made.

Chapter three covers the research methodology and justification used in the thesis. In a nutshell, the research has basically used qualitative research method incorporating snowball and purposive sampling with in-depth interviews, focus group discussion (FGD) and documentary analysis as instruments for ensuring credibility and reliability of the study.

Chapter four discusses the concept of indigenization as understood by the indigenous pastors of the MAOG over the years. Mainly the chapter offers background information from the origins of the church to the present focussing on the process of indigenization.

Chapter five is a discussion on the research findings as well as an analytical interpretation of the data linking with the literature review in chapter two as its theoretical framework. In other words, the literature review in the second chapter is providing a mirror providing conceptual direction to the analysis and interpretation.

Chapter six summarises the study through conclusion and recommendation derived from the research findings and analysis. It is where the hypothesis has been proved right by retrieving the hidden voices of the indigenous pastors who have positively contributed to the growth of the Malawi Assemblies of God from its inception. Furthermore, the chapter offers tips for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW ON INDIGENIZATION

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews related literature on indigenization. It begins by introducing the concept of indigenization, the need for indigenization, indigenization in African theology and a discussion on models of indigenization where one model at the end will be chosen as a guiding framework to the study. Thereafter, an evaluation of different models related to the present study is made.

2.1 The concept of indigenization

The Christian missiological world is full of many concepts such as indigenization, communication, conceptualization, incarnation, inculturation and contextualization which all aim at ultimately trying to present the supra-cultural message of the Gospel in culturally relevant and understandable terms. In articulating these terms, one encounters a number of hazards which must be approached cautiously if this endeavour is to make any headway. The first is the perception of the communicator's own cultural heritage which might be used as an integral element of the Gospel. Similarly, there is often a syncretistic inclusion of elements from the receptor culture which would alter or eliminate aspects of the message upon which the integrity of the Gospel depends.³⁴

³⁴ David J Hesselgrave, and Edward Rommen., eds. *Contextualization: meanings, methods, and models*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1989).

In its broad sense, the term indigenization describes the translatability of the universal Christian faith into the forms and symbols of particular cultures of the world. In this sense, the word indigenization validates all human languages and cultures before God as legitimate paths for understanding his divine meanings (Evangelical Dictionary of World, 2000). Hence, indigenization is a term that is used in a variety of ways depending on the context and is primarily used by anthropologists to describe what happens when locals take something from the outside and make it their own. Christian indigenization, on the other hand, occurs when individuals and communities interact under specific conditions of power to consciously choose and combine cultural characteristics that reflect, embody, and transmit the meaning of a Christian theological message through the cultural identity of the people who use them (Evangelical Dictionary of World, 2000).

There is an interplay of words on indigenization and indigeneity on one hand, indigenous pastors and indigenous churches, on the other. Therefore, a deliberate attempt is made here to clear such a cloud of confusion at the outset. In the final analysis, it all settles down to a notion that indigenous churches are suited to a particular local culture and led by local Christian leaders, herein termed indigenous pastors. The process of indigenisation is an umbrella term where foreign missionaries create well-organised churches and then hand them over to local converts. The foreign mission is generally seen as a scaffolding of some kind which must be removed once the fellowship of believers is functioning properly. Missionaries provide teaching, pastoral care, sacraments, buildings, finance and authority, and train local converts to take over these responsibilities. Thus, the church becomes indigenous when it is self-supporting, self-propagating and self-governing.

On the other hand, in indigeneity foreign missionaries do not create churches, but simply nurturing local converts to develop spiritual gifts and leadership abilities to govern their own churches. The job of missionaries, in this case, is to provide necessary teaching and pastoral care alone; the church is thus indigenous from the start as it has always been self-supporting, self-propagating and self-governing.³⁵ In the early church, indigenization is

³⁵ David J. Bosch, *Transforming mission: paradigm shifts in theology of mission* (Mary Knoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1995) 353-354.

attributed to have enabled the first century Christian Jews in the gentile-dominated Antioch and other places to cross a massive cultural barrier and begin preaching to the Greeks.³⁶ These early believers used the term 'the Lord Jesus' (Acts 11:20) instead of using the common term Christ or Messiah as it would have little significance to the mixed multitudes. The same process of indigenization allowed freedom for the emerging churches to square up to cultural and social practices with new Christian meanings where patterns of worship and music, of initiation, marriage and funeral rites, even of church structures and leadership could be adopted and or transformed by the Gospel.³⁷

2.2 Boundaries of indigenization

There are two realities of tension, according to various scholars, which inform indigenization. One reality is that in world missions and evangelism, Christian's missionaries carry along the particulars of their culture and social group and best appropriates that faith in terms of those particulars. The second is the recognition that this new faith brings with it a universalizing factor that extends the Christian community past borders of culture and social group. As a result, it becomes difficult to work within the confines of these two realities. Churches find it difficult to keep the balance between "freedom to develop on their own path and allegiance to the trans-cultural Gospel uniting all the churches ... when does indigenization in the name of Christian liberty slip into over-indigenization or syncretism? When does hesitation over indigenization slip into legalism and traditionalism?"³⁸

2.3 A Biblical framework of indigenization

The legitimacy of indigenization is derived from the accommodation of God himself as attested in both the Old and New Testament of the bible. "There is a history to special revelation; the condescending Father communicates truth to us in a form suited to our particular human situation".³⁹ In other words, revelation comes with some sensitivity to

³⁶ Andrew Walls, *The missionary movement in Christian history: studies in the transmission of faith*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996).

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ John Mark Terry, "Indigenous churches" *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*. Ed. A. Scott Moreau. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000) 200.

³⁹ Ibid. 483.

the time, place culture and literary genres of receptors. In this regard, God uses the Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) metaphors to paint himself as the divine warrior (Exodus 15: 1-3) who came to deliver his people from Egypt. Through the incarnation, he appeared as a first century Palestinian Jew. Later, in the fullness of time and power of the Holy Spirit he breaks through that Hebrew socio-cultural world (of limitation and sometimes exclusivism) to proclaim Christ both across and within the global borders of cultural diversities and linguistic expression (Acts 1: 8). Similarly, the day of Pentecost transformed the Babel curse of diversity into a global blessing - the world's cultures became home where the Gospel is preached. "And the Gospel becomes leaven in which those cultures are judged, transformed and liberated".⁴⁰

2.4 The church's road to indigenization

In the Roman Catholic Church, indigenization began with a process called accommodation. The rationale behind this approach rested on the notion which looked at the nature of the pagan world as imperfect which needed to be supplemented by the perfections of the grace offered by Christianity. It is said that Pope Gregory the Great in the seventeenth century could advise Augustine one of his evangelist laboring in England "to destroy the idols, but the temples are to be sprinkled with holy water, alters set up and relics enclosed in". This stance was widely condemned by many stakeholders. The Dominicans, in particular, vehemently opposed this stance leading to its suspension by the papacy in 1744. However, the Vatican II (1962-1965) did revise the accommodation to come up with an improved version called inculturation, a model which ironed out some of the compromises spotted in accommodation.⁴¹

On the other hand, in the nineteenth century the Protestants too came up with various models towards indigenization. The first model is that of ethnocentrism – a belief in the superiority of one's own ethnic group. Christianity was identified with a mentality that carried along the Western civilization as being more superior to the world cultures. This

⁴⁰ John Mark Terry, "Indigenous churches" *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*. Ed. A. Scott Moreau. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000) 483-485.

⁴¹ Louis Luzbetak, *The Church and cultures: an applied anthropology for the religious worker*. Techny, Ill: (New York: Divine Publications, 1970).

made the missionaries to regard the receptor cultures as being very inferior. In this sense the 'native churches' were regarded as too immature to be let go leading to the problem of paternalism.^{42 43} As a result the emerging national churches known identification was that of European models.⁴⁴

2.5 Models of indigenization

The models of indigenization are based on the methods employed in the bible, especially in the New Testament. As an ideal example, the Apostle Paul in the Acts of the Apostles while ministering in the Gentile world of the Roman Empire, is depicted as having served as an itinerant missionary, never staying more than three years in any city. His approach was to plant churches in cities from which the Gospel would permeate the surrounding areas. Secondly, he never appealed to the churches in Antioch or Jerusalem for funds with which to support the new churches; rather he expected the churches to support themselves. To achieve these goals, the Apostle Paul made sure that he appointed and trained leaders to lead the new churches. Foremost, he gave the churches over to the care of the Holy Spirit by regularly making visitations as well as writing periodically to encourage them. Hereunder, are some famous models and principles which were developed by renowned scholars of missiology based on the biblical pattern; the models are known by the names of the scholars:

2.5.1 Henry Venn 1796 -1873) and Rufus Anderson (1796 – 1880)

These two scholars belonged to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and they wrote in the mid-nineteenth century about the necessity of planting three-self churches that would be self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating or self-extending as Venn used it. These scholars exhorted the missionaries to establish

⁴² Paternalism is a concept of intervening actively for the perceived wellbeing of another. It has existed in missions. People with knowledge, skills, funds or power have used them to get new churches to follow their demands. While the connotations of paternalism are negative, churches or missions sometimes develop rules (by-laws, covenants, mission and purpose statements) with the positive results of producing mature Christian behavior.

⁴³ Mikel Neumann. "Pentecostal Missions" *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*. Ed. A. Scott Moreau. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000) 729

⁴⁴ John Mark Terry, "Indigenous churches" *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*. Ed. A. Scott Moreau. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000) 200.

churches that would support themselves and carry out programmes of evangelism and missions on their own without necessarily relying on outside help. Inherently, they cautioned the Western missionaries about becoming absorbed in pastoring and maintaining the churches. Instead, they encouraged the planting of more churches that would also become self-reliant and purely native. In this model missionaries are instructed to train national pastors and hand the care of the churches over to them at the earliest opportunity; the rationale behind this approach is that missionaries should always minister as temporary workers not permanent fixtures.⁴⁵

2.5.2 John L. Nevius (1829 -1893)

He was a Presbyterian missionary to China built on Venn and Anderson principles to develop a set of principles popularly known as the Nevius Plan. This plan was greatly articulated in his book, *the planting and development of missionary churches*.⁴⁶ The Nevius plan or model outlined that:

1. Christians should continue to live in their neighbourhoods and pursue their occupations, being self-supporting and witnessing to their neighbours.
2. Missions should only develop programmes and institutions that the national church desired and could support.
3. The national churches should call out and support their own pastors.
4. Churches should be built in the native style with money and materials given by the church members.
5. Intensive biblical and doctrinal instruction should be provided for church leaders every year. In his writings Nevius criticised the heavily subsidized work that many missions carried out in China. The Nevius plan had a tremendous impact in Korea when the missionaries of American Presbyterians adopted it.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Harvie Conn, "Indigenization," *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*. Ed. A. Scott Moreau. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000) 482.

⁴⁶ John Livingston Nevius. *The planting and development of missionary churches*. (Hancock, NH: Monadnock, 2003).

⁴⁷ John Mark Terry, "Indigenous churches" *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*. Ed. A. Scott Moreau. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000) 483-485.

Today, almost all Korean Christian denominations follow this model. In fact, many denominations, including the pentecostal and charismatic churches, use the Presbyterian liturgy where people among many things recite the Apostles Creed in their services. This is due to the influence of a number of Presbyterian ministers like John L. Nevius and indigenous pastors Ki Sun Joo and Kim Ik Du⁴⁸ who excelled in the gifts of healing during the revivals of the early twentieth century.⁴⁹

2.5.3 Roland Allen (1868-1947)

He was an Anglican missionary working in China who held similar views to Nevius but criticized the methods used by missionaries in China. In addition to the Nevius plan, he emphasized the role of the Holy Spirit in missions and encouraged missionaries to focus much on itinerant church planting, trusting the Holy Spirit to develop the churches⁵⁰

2.5.4 Melvin Hodges (1909 – 1986)

Mervin Hodges was a missionary and missions administrator with the Assemblies of church. In his book, *the indigenous church*, which has been widely used in missions' courses around the world, he expressed the ideas of Venn, Anderson, Nevius and Allen in an updated and popular format. Hodges acknowledged some of the difficulties plaguing missionary fields when an attempt is made to change from subsidy approach to an indigenous approach.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Kim Ik Du was a Methodist minister, popularly referred to as a mystic, who together championed a revival for many years together with Pastor Kil Sun Joo. Hence, the Presbyterian liturgy which pervades many Christian denominations in South Korea today as a result of the work of these two ministers.

⁴⁹ Allan Anderson, *An introduction to pentecostalism: global charismatic Christianity*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 136-137.

⁵⁰ John Mark Terry, "Indigenous churches" *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*. Ed. A. Scott Moreau. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000) 483-485.

⁵¹ John Mark Terry, "Indigenous churches" *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*. Ed. A. Scott Moreau. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000) 483-485.

2.5.5 Allan Tippett (1911 – 1988)

In his book, *verdict theology in missionary theory*, Tippett proposed a six fold description of indigenization fit for embarking on indigenous missions. These principles were based on the on the models previously developed by scholars over the years. Of much interest was that he updated the three selfs of Venn and Anderson. His outline of six proposals is as follows:

1. Self-image. The church should see itself as independent from the missions serving in its locality.
2. Self-functioning. The church is capable of carrying on all the normal functions of a church – worship, Christian education and so on.
3. Self-determining. This means the church can and does make its own decisions. The local churches do not depend on the missions to make their own decisions for them. Tippet echoes Venn in saying that the mission has to die for the church to be born.
4. Self-supporting. The church carries its own financial burden and finances its own service projects.
5. Self-propagation. The national church sees itself as responsible for carrying out the Great Commission. The church gives itself wholeheartedly to evangelism and missions.
6. Self-giving. An indigenous church knows the social needs of its community and endeavours to minister to those needs.

Crowning the importance of indigenization in theology, he made a powerful statement, “When the indigenous people of a community think of the Lord as their own, not a foreign Christ; when they do things as unto the Lord, meeting the cultural needs around them, worshipping in patterns they understand; when their congregations function in participation in a body which is structurally indigenous; then you have an indigenous church”.⁵²

⁵² John Mark Terry, “Indigenous churches” *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*. Ed. A. Scott Moreau. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000) 483-485.

2.6 Critique of the indigenization models

Now all the models of indigenization discussed above fail miserably in squaring up to the type of indigenization occurring in the Malawi Assemblies of God (MAOG) church. The patterns of growth in the MAOG does not reflect any of the models. The problem of paternalism as exercised by the AG missionaries carried along the particulars of their Western culture and social group as a way of giving expression to the pentecostal experiences, which exclusively is the Holy Spirit's phenomenon, as a blueprint of all Christian advancement in Malawi. This malady, somehow, blinded the missionaries into failing to discern the African input to the development and growth of the Assemblies of God in Malawi.⁵³ However, in recent years some missiologists have suggested adding a seventh mark to Tippett's list, an improvisation termed as 'self-theologizing'. Many scholars believe a truly indigenized church will develop its own theology expressed in culturally appropriate ways affirming the central doctrines of Christianity in metaphors and concepts that reflect their own unique culture. In other words, missionaries must allow the national churches to develop theologies and practices that are biblical yet appropriate in their cultural setting.⁵⁴ This is the aspect that somehow reflects the growth patterns of the MAOG. Generally, indigenization in Africa, let alone Malawi, has its own unique features.

2.7 Indigenization in Africa

On the African soil, ideas about indigenization have over the years been responsible for the development of African theologies in all their formats. The study on indigenization has also raised interest in unearthing a genuine historiography of African Christianity to counter the almost negative picture mostly portrayed by writers outside Africa. Parratt narrates a strong tradition about the origins of Christianity in Africa by St. John Mark of the nativity. Not many Western scholars follow this lead but they settle for the fifteenth century as a period when Christianity was introduced to Africa South of the Sahara. However, the origins of a discipline called African theology, which is a form of

⁵³ Gregory Mvula and Enson Lwesya, *Flames of fire: the history of Assemblies of God and pentecostalism in Malawi, spreading the flames at home and abroad*. (Blantyre: AGLC, 2005)

⁵⁴ Ibid.

indigenization, emerged in the 1950s upon the attainment of independence of Ghana as the first black African nation to do so. Many consider a publication by Placid Temple *La philosophie Bantoue* (Bantu philosophy) in 1945 as a precursor to African theology. There was a new quest for the value of traditional African culture which also received a great impetus from the literary world in French speaking African countries known as the *Negritude* which led to a growing interest in African culture.⁵⁵

In African Christian Theology the challenge is to make Christianity authentically African. According to Harvey Sindima, the process of making genuine African theologizing calls for a deep theological reflection which must be able to deconstruct literature on Africa written in European languages of English, French and Portuguese which cause a deep linguistic problem to the majority of ardent Africans.⁵⁶ Similarly, a communiqué of a Pan-African Conference of Third World Theologians in 1977 made a statement to this effect:

“We believe that African theology must be understood in the context of African peoples to shape a new future that is different from the colonial past and the neo-colonial present. The African situation requires a new theological methodology that is different from the approaches of the dominant theologies of the West. African theology must reject, therefore, the prefabricated idea of North Atlantic theology by defining itself according to the struggles of the people in their resistance against the structures of domination. Our task as theologians is to create a theology that arises from and is accountable to African people”.⁵⁷

In pentecostalism, indigenisation is a principle that has been hotly debated and little understood. Sometimes an attempt made by well-meaning foreign missionaries to create a ‘supra-cultural’ or ‘universal’ church in reality is a glorification of the missionaries’ own culture. The ‘Gospel’ is therefore confused with ‘culture’, it has been colonized, and a spurious ‘Christian culture’ is offered in place of a genuine and relevant Christian

⁵⁵ Placide Temple, *Bantu philosophy*. Berlin: Présence Africaine, (Berlin, 1952).

⁵⁶ Harvey Sindima, *Drums of redemption: an introduction to African Christianity* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1994).

⁵⁷ Kofi Appiah-Kubi and Sergio Torres, Ed, *African theology en route: papers from the Pan African Conference of Third World Theologians*, December 17-23, 1977. (Accra: Orbis Books, 1979) 11.

message.⁵⁸ One of the outstanding features of African pentecostals is their religious creativity and spontaneously indigenous character, a characteristic held as an ideal by Western missions for over a century. Pioneering pentecostal missiologist Melvin Hodges, former US Assemblies of God missionary in Central America, enthusiastically declared:

There is no place on earth where, if the Gospel seed be properly planted, it will not produce an indigenous church. The Holy Spirit can work in one country as well as in another. To proceed on the assumption that the infant church in any land must always be cared for and provided for by the mother mission is an unconscious insult to the people that we endeavour to serve, and is evidence of a lack of faith in God and in the power of the Gospel. Any religion that does not offer at least the same benefits as the old religion does will probably be unattractive. Christianity, particularly in its pentecostal emphasis on the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, purports to offer more than the other religions did.⁵⁹

2.8 Need for indigenization in Africa

In earnest, it should be stated that Africa is a continent of striking contrasts, with a remarkable diversity and beauty of landscape and peoples. At present, it is a region where the Christian faith shows unprecedented growth and vitality as compared to the rest of the world.⁶⁰ Yet it is also a place of unparalleled suffering where believers have to grapple with the awesome transforming presence of Christ and the frequently devastating conditions which surround them.⁶¹ Their efforts to reconcile this seeming incongruity have ushered in important theological discussions that cannot be ignored. Many scholars have attributed this state of affairs to the way Christianity was introduced by the Western missionaries.⁶² Much as the Westerners are commended for bringing the light of the Gospel to Africa, unfortunately, the word 'African' used as an appendix to any theologizing of African Christianity is seen by some as signalling a rejection of anything

⁵⁸ Allan Anderson, *To the ends of the earth: pentecostalism and the transformation of the world Christianity*. (New York: Oxford Press, 2013).

⁵⁹ Allan Anderson, *To the ends of the earth: pentecostalism and the transformation of the world Christianity*. (New York: Oxford Press, 2013).

⁶⁰ Diane B Stinton, Ed. *African theology on the way: current conversations*. (London: SPCK, 2010).

⁶¹ Ibid

⁶² Ibid

that has links to the West. Much as the indigenous studies of African Christianity will react to abuses exerted by the missionaries who misunderstood African culture, it offers a forum for articulating a theology that originates from an authentic search for the meaning of scriptures to an African way of life today.⁶³ This view is in agreement with the Malawian scholars like Patrick Kalilombe who championed the need for doing a theology at the grassroots if Christianity is to be appreciated by all in Africa.⁶⁴

Secondly, indigenization as a missiological process is necessary as a way of correcting the African distorted historiography of Christianity by the foreign pioneering missionaries which has compounded African Christianity in many ways. Furay and Salevouris define historiography as "the study of the way history is written and interpreted".⁶⁵ Therefore, African Christian historiography is an attempt to look at the process of cataloguing Christian theology in various forms from the African point of views. This approach answers many questions like what makes African Christianity Christian. What is the mission of the African church? What is the theology of the African church? And, what is the future of the church in Africa or more precisely of African Christianity?⁶⁶ Therefore, indigenization offers an ample opportunity for a critical analysis of Christianity in Africa from historical, theological and sociological perspectives. It is argued that the African church history as inherited from the historiography of European mission has influenced the way in which the trans-African history of Christianity in Africa has been presented. The terms African theology and Black theology are the direct products of recent Christian historiographies of indigenization.

Pius Oyeniran Abioje commending the need for indigenizing the Gospel in African Theology, despite the danger of syncretism, holds that *fides quarerens intellectum* (faith must seek understanding). In other words, the Christian faith must continue to seek understanding, particularly in the face of every new situation, circumstance, and culture.

⁶³ Samuel Waje Kunhiyop, *African Christian theology*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010).

⁶⁴ Patrick Kalilombe, *Doing theology at the grassroots: theological essays from Malawi* (Zomba: Kachere, 1999).

⁶⁵ Conal Furay and Michael Salevouris, *The methods and skills of history*. (Routledge: Routledge, 1988).

⁶⁶ Galgalo, Joseph, *African Christianity: the stranger within*. (Limuru: Zapf Chancery, 2012).

The implication is that Africa should consider every aspect of Christian doctrine and practice from her own perspective. In this light, African Christian theology of inculturation is rightly described as a contextual theology that seeks to incarnate Christianity in Africa, to make Christianity an African-thing. For, it is rightly believed that unless Christianity becomes part and parcel of African culture, it will remain a foreign religion, in which Africans can only play-act.⁶⁷

He underscores the fact that the majority of African Christians have been playacting, partly because Christianity is not well-integrated into their culture. The other point refers to the fact that the person and way of life of Jesus Christ should be distinguished and set-apart from Western mores, so as to distinctly Africanise Him. As a matter of fact, there can hardly be any measure of Christian stability and permanence, unless the church reckons with the culture of a given people. Abioje argues that, apart from the invasion by Islam, part of the reason given for the disappearance of Christianity from most parts of North Africa, where it previously flourished, is that Christianity had not become a way of life for the people, due largely to the fact that little or no inculturation was allowed and encouraged. Thus, if there is no serious effort to redeem Christianity from appearing foreign to Africans, the future may be unpromising.⁶⁸

In the modern times, Abioje observes that the church officially allows and encourages inculturation or indigenization, but there are still many obstacles on the way. Ironically, the greatest obstacle is that a number of African Christians, including members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, still look down with suspicion on African traditional culture, with particular reference to African Traditional Religion (ATR), which is a basic element of the culture. There are many Africans today who still believe that Africans are truly created inferior, biologically, intellectually, and otherwise. This inferiority complex reflects in the attempt by a good number of Africans to change the colour of their skin.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Pius Oyeniran Abioje, "Path to African Christian theology of inculturation." *Journal of Arabic and Religious Studies*: 15, (2001): 1-13

⁶⁸ Pius Oyeniran Abioje, "Path to African Christian theology of inculturation." *Journal of Arabic and Religious Studies*: 15, (2001): 1-13

⁶⁹ Ibid.

2.9 Problems of African indigenization

The process of indigenization though successful in tipping the balance of world Christianity, has been plagued by a number of challenges. Chief among these problems is that of misconceptions of indigenization by the bulk of missionaries. In the 1950s and 1960s when indigenization became a growing concern for the missionary societies to develop local African leadership, local leaders were groomed to take over the system that had been established by the missionaries. Unfortunately, no one seemed to give much thought to indigenizing the system itself. Indigenization in Central Africa, for instance, far too often, simply meant filling existing positions with local people. As this form of indigenization developed, the missionary increasingly felt compelled to pull out of the system and turn it over to the nationals.⁷⁰ This, unfortunately, is what many missionaries thought indigenization was all about and when the missionaries withdrew, management skills and often the money to subsidize the operation were also often withdrawn. By the look of things, a number of institutions involved in missions were plagued by leadership and financial problems due to this oversight. This subject is made complicated by the long period of missionary management that preceded the effort to indigenize and not nearly so much is written about indigenization. Unfortunately, the concerns raised by Schwartz on indigenization characterize Malawian pentecostal Christianity and Malawi Assemblies of God in particular.⁷¹

Failure to draw a line between syncretism and contextualization of the Gospel is the second problem of African indigenization. Syncretism is defined as the blending of two or more religious belief systems into a new system, or the incorporation into a religious tradition of beliefs from unrelated traditions.⁷² Silas Ncozana is of the view that Christianity wherever it has gone in history has been built into those cultures with which it has come into contact. He writes, "This has caused some modifications to the message ... certainly there are some risks involved in the process, like watering down or distorting the central message. But this process must be made if Christianity is to take root and be

⁷⁰ Gregory Mvula and Enson Lwesya, *Flames of fire: the history of Assemblies of God and pentecostalism in Malawi, spreading the flames at home and abroad* (Blantyre: AGLC, 2005).

⁷¹ Ibid

⁷² Byang Kato, *Biblical Christianity in Africa* (London: Longman, 1985).

viable in the cultures in which it finds itself".⁷³ However, in practice Christianity is most often being mixed with traditional religious beliefs and practices. It is evident that strong links with these beliefs are retained by people. It is paradoxical, as John Mbiti sees it, that this background of rich religious heritage in Africa has been attributed to the apparent rapid success of Christianity from the time of its inception. Religion permeates into all the departments of life to the extent that it is very difficult to isolate it from everyday life.⁷⁴ This view is shared by other commentators like O'Donovan who observes that Africa is one of the most rapidly changing continents in as far as Christianity is concerned.⁷⁵

Today, syncretism is recognised as one of the major challenges to authentic Christianity worldwide. This awareness has been highlighted in several international gatherings of Christian leaders. In 1974, at the International Congress for World Evangelization held in Lausanne, Byang Kato warned that Christianity in Africa, or in the rest of the Third World, had gone backwards to the stage it was in the second century. He writes, "Just as syncretism plagued the church in the days of the apologists, so it challenges the historic faith in Africa".⁷⁶

2.10 The success story of indigenized Christianity in Africa

James Cone, one of the architects of liberation theology, issues scathing indictments of white supremacy and calls for a theology forged from the experiences of black people. He argues that white supremacy has poisoned white Christianity rendering it incapable of speaking to and for the oppressed and downtrodden. He further asserts that theology is relevant only when it is drawn from the experiences of the people whom it addresses and when it can speak positively to those experiences. Looking at the development of African Christianity, one would agree with Cone on the tremendous influence the concept of indigenization has had on political and ecclesiastical emancipation from external influences. However, reading Cone's theology, one finds his descriptions of black life

⁷³ Silas Ncozana, *The spirit dimension in African Christianity*. (Blantyre: CLAIM, 2002) 9.

⁷⁴ John Mbiti, *African religions and philosophy*. (London: Longman, 1990).

⁷⁵ Wilber O'Donovan, *Biblical Christianity in African perspective* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000).

⁷⁶ Byang Kato, *Biblical Christianity in Africa* (London: Longman, 1985).

and his call for a revision of God as a God who liberates the oppressed only, rather provocative. The danger is that it opens avenues for more contextualization of the Gospel in the Third World without reaching a unified front as the Gospel of Jesus in John 17 demands.⁷⁷

Adrian Hastings, one of the renowned scholars on African Christianity, reasserts the importance of the roles played by the indigenous African missionaries in converting the continent to Christ by insisting that, "The Christian advance was a black advance or it was nothing".⁷⁸ He argues that in many countries, churches developed by Africans attract more members than the mission-derived churches. By this assertion he problematizes the contention that 'mainline' churches are 'bigger'. In Zimbabwe, for instance, the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) has built a mission school, Mbungu High School, thereby undermining the assumption that only churches set up by European missionaries have schools. In Nigeria and Ghana, some pentecostal churches have built universities. The distinction between 'established' churches and African Initiated Churches (AIC) and pentecostals is therefore difficult to sustain in the face of these realities. Similarly, Nthamburi writing on the study of the Christian church in East Africa looked at the uncritical assimilation of Western values in the name of religion. The author shows how the African Christian church can evolve by communicating the Gospel in metaphors that engage with African philosophy and traditional values and religion. He deplores the tendency of many people in Africa on viewing this stance as being inferior to the Westernized conception of the same.⁷⁹

Throughout his lifetime, Ogbu Kalu researched and argued powerfully to change the perceptions on how African Christianity is portrayed, arguing that its roots lie just as much within traditional African religions as they do within Christianity. He wrote to correct distorted scholarship, but also to alter the way Africa in general was portrayed in Western academia. Across Africa, Christianity is thriving in all shapes and sizes, but one particular strain of Christianity prospers more than most - pentecostalism. He argues that

⁷⁷ James Cone, *Black theology and black power* (London: Longman, 2010).

⁷⁸ Adrian Hastings, *The church in Africa, 1450-1950* (Oxford: Clarendon 1994) 437-438.

⁷⁹ Zablon Nthamburi. *The African church at the crossroads: strategy for indigenization* (Nairobi: Uzima Press, 1991).

in Africa, this kind of faith, in which the supernatural is a daily presence, is sweeping the continent. Today, about 107 million Africans are pentecostals - and the numbers continue to rise. Ogbu Kalu provides the first ever overview of pentecostalism in Africa. He shows the amazing diversity of the faith, which flourishes in many different forms in diverse local contexts. While most people believe that pentecostalism was brought to Africa and imposed on its people by missionaries, he argues emphatically that this is not the case. This work proves as an invaluable apologetic source to anyone interested in Christianity outside the West.⁸⁰

Allan Anderson presents global pentecostalism and charismatic Christianity in all its diversity as the fastest expanding religious movement in the world today. As a former pentecostal minister himself and authority on global pentecostalism, he aims to make more visible the 'non-Western' nature of pentecostalism, in which African pentecostal and charismatic Christianity fall, without overlooking the importance of the movement emanating from North America. Offering an innovative interpretation of pentecostalism, he takes seriously the contributions of the rest of the world to its development and, concentrating on its history and theology, reflects on the movement's development and significance throughout the world. Anderson also examines those theological issues that helped form a distinctive spirituality and how this relates to different peoples and their cultures.⁸¹ Finally, Anderson discusses the development of pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity in the different countries from its origins at the beginning of the twentieth century to its theological emphases in the present day, together with the impact of the processes of globalization. However, much as he is commended for positively recognizing the role of non-Western Christians in the growth of pentecostalism, his work is written from the Western point of view.⁸²

Asamoah-Gyadu investigated on why and how the general recession of Christianity in the modern West coincided with the accession of faith in the Southern continents,

⁸⁰ Ogbu Kalu, *African pentecostalism: an introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2008).

⁸¹ Allan Anderson, *An introduction to pentecostalism: global charismatic Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁸² *Ibid.*

particularly Africa south of the Sahara.⁸³ He pays attention to a specific form of Christianity, described as the religion of the Holy Spirit, otherwise known as the pentecostal Christianity. In a case study, he focuses on major historical and socio-theological developments that have occurred within Ghanaian independent indigenous pentecostalism by examining the key themes associated with the theological orientation of the Charismatic Ministries.⁸⁴

Using some of the most important work in the pentecostal tradition as a point of departure, Engelke focuses on the relationship between pentecostalism and African Independency. Taking up recent discussions within the field of anthropology on pentecostal and Charismatic churches, the author portrays the issues which make conversion to Christianity to become a distinct break with African custom. It is argued that anthropologists of religion need to take such narratives of discontinuity seriously because they allow one to understand better the dynamics of religious change. However, the author fails to appreciate the role of African customs as aiding the rapid growth of Christianity in Africa.⁸⁵

Maxwell contends on a particular version of the prosperity Gospel propounded by the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (ZAOGA), and a pentecostal movement which claims to be Zimbabwe's largest church. He argues that, while the movement's leadership draws upon various American versions of the prosperity Gospel to legitimatise their accumulation of wealth, its own dominant prosperity teachings have arisen from predominantly southern African sources and are shaped by Zimbabwean concerns. It explains the prevalence of the doctrines not in terms of false consciousness or right wing conspiracy but as a means of enabling pentecostals to make the best of rapid social change. For some, the doctrines have engendered social mobility. For others, they provide a code of conduct which guards them from falling into poverty and destitution.

⁸³ Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *African charismatics: current developments within independent indigenous pentecostalism in Ghana* (Brill: Leiden, 2004).

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ M. Engelke, "Past pentecostalism: notes on rupture, realignment, and everyday life in pentecostal and African independent churches." *Africa*, 80(2010): 177-199.

For all they provide a pattern for coming to terms with, and benefitting from, modernity's' dominant values and institutions.⁸⁶

While pentecostal churches derive their growing popularity in large part from their ability to combat witchcraft in society, Newell argues here that pentecostalism is itself an alternative form of witchcraft discourse. As such, it falls prey to the same ambivalent relationship between power, success and social obligation that witchdoctors and politicians must face. He discusses pentecostalism and witchcraft in terms of their relationship to neoliberal understandings of individual agency and economy in contrast to the moral economy of social obligations. At the same time he draws parallels between the ritual techniques of pentecostalism and witchcraft discourse, demonstrating that, despite pentecostal churches' efforts to transcend the power of witchcraft; they in many cases become encompassed by witchcraft discourse, often taking on the appearance of witchcraft itself. However, Newell portrays the prevalent suspicious Western views about contributions from African Christian theology by stereotyping anything from Africa as anathema.⁸⁷

Gary McGee describes the first twenty years of pentecostalism as mostly 'chaotic in operation'. Reports filtering back to the West to garnish newsletters would be full of optimistic and triumphalistic accounts of how many people were converted, healed and had received Spirit baptism, seldom mentioning any difficulties encountered or the inevitable cultural blunders made. These blunders, however, can be clearly discerned in early reports published in pentecostal periodicals. Early pentecostal missionaries from North America and Europe were often paternalistic, creating an atmosphere that forced the Africans into depending on them instead of developing authentic faith in God; and sometimes they were blatantly racist.⁸⁸ There were notable exceptions to this general chaos, however. As Gary McGee has observed, most pentecostal movements 'came into being as missionary institutions' and their mission work was 'not the result of some

⁸⁶ David Maxwell, "Delivered from the spirit of poverty: pentecostalism, prosperity and modernity in Zimbabwe." *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 28, (1998): 350-73.

⁸⁷ Sasha Newell, "Pentecostal witchcraft: neoliberal possession and demonic discourse in Ivorian pentecostal churches." *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 37(2007): 461-490.

⁸⁸ Gary McGee, "Pentecostal missiology: moving beyond triumphalism to face the issues". *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society of Pentecostal Studies*, 16:2 (1994): 208, 211.

clearly thought out theological decision, and so policy and methods were formed mostly in the crucible of missionary praxis.⁸⁹

Paul Gifford in *African Christianity: its public role* presents an absorbing survey of varied manifestations of Christianity in Africa in the 1990s. He draws a particular attention to the endemic political and economic weakness of the African state. He shows how this in some cases has been a threat to the churches and in others an opportunity; they have played a considerable role in promoting civil society, and have at times acquired great political leverage. In different permutations, he covers all principal strains of Christianity: Roman Catholic, Anglican mainline Protestant, Evangelical, Pentecostal and African Independent. The study is in one sense a necessary update on a situation that has been evolving ever since Africa was first colonised. In another sense, Gifford has produced something that engenders the role of incarnation of the Gospel to suit the African situation.⁹⁰

One aspect of African pentecostalism is that it has spawned a number of indigenous churches which have so radically changed the face of Christianity. Anderson writes, "Simply because they have proclaimed a holistic Gospel that includes deliverance from all types of oppression like sickness, sorcery, evil spirits and poverty".⁹¹ This has met the needs of Africans more fundamentally than the rather spiritualised and intellectualised Gospel that was mostly the legacy of European and North American missionaries. The good news in Africa, pentecostal preachers declare, is that God meets all the needs of people, including their spiritual salvation, physical healing, and other material necessities. The phenomenon of mass urbanisation results in pentecostal churches providing places of spiritual security and personal communities for people unsettled by rapid social change. He continues to say, "The more relevant the church becomes to its cultural and social context, the more prepared it will be to serve the wider society".⁹²

⁸⁹ Gary McGee, "Pentecostal missiology: moving beyond triumphalism to face the issues". *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society of Pentecostal Studies*, 16:2 (1994): 208, 211.

⁹⁰ Paul Gifford, *African Christianity: its public role* (Blomington: Indiana Press, 1992).

⁹¹ Allan Anderson, *Evangelism and the growth of pentecostalism in Africa*. Online. Internet. 31. Jan. 2014. Accessed: http://artsweb.bham.ac.uk/aanderson/Publications/evangelism_and_the_growth_of_pen.htm

⁹² Ibid

Aasmundsen stresses the relevance of pentecostalism to a pervading African world view of religion which affects every aspect of livelihood. All the widely differing pentecostal movements have important common features which proclaim and celebrate a salvation (or 'healing') that encompasses all of life's experiences and afflictions, and they offer an empowerment which provides a sense of dignity and a coping mechanism for life, and all this drives their messengers forward into a unique evangelistic mission.⁹³ Their task was to share this all-embracing Gospel with as many people as possible, and to accomplish this, African pentecostal missionaries travelled far and wide. The astonishing journeys in 1914 of the famous Liberian prophet William Wade Harris throughout the Ivory Coast to Western Ghana, has been described as 'the most remarkable evangelical campaign Africa has ever witnessed', resulting in tens of thousands of conversions to Christianity.⁹⁴

It must be stressed here that African communities were, to a large extent, health-orientated communities and in their traditional religions, rituals for healing and protection are prominent. Pentecostals responded to what they experienced as a void left by a rationalistic Western form of Christianity which had unwittingly initiated what was tantamount to the destruction of their cherished spiritual values by seeking to separate 'healing' from 'religion' and secularising it. Pentecostals declared a message that reclaimed ancient biblical traditions of healing and protection from evil and demonstrated the practical effects of these traditions. This resonated well with the popular beliefs of African people. Pentecostalism went a long way towards meeting their physical, emotional and spiritual needs, offering solutions to life's problems and ways to cope in a threatening and hostile world.⁹⁵

There were other such high profile preachers to follow, but literally thousands of African preachers emphasised the manifestation of divine power through healing, prophecy, speaking in tongues and other pentecostal phenomena. The message proclaimed by these charismatic preachers of receiving the power of the Holy Spirit to meet human needs was

⁹³ Hans Geir Aasmundsen, *Pentecostalism, globalization and society in contemporary Argentina*. (Germany: Södertörn University, 2013).

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

welcome in societies where a lack of power was keenly felt on a daily basis. The growth of pentecostalism in Africa must be seen primarily as the result of this proclamation rather than as a reaction to Western missions, as some have suggested.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, because Western cultural forms of Christianity were often regarded as superficial and out of touch with many realities of existential life, it was necessary for a new and culturally relevant Christianity to arise in each context. In support of these views, Harvey Cox discusses the relevance of the pentecostal Christianity to the needs of Africa. Healing and protection from evil are among the most prominent features of the pentecostal Gospel in Africa and are probably the most important part of pentecostal evangelism and church recruitment. The problems of disease and evil affect the whole community in Africa, and are not simply relegated to individual pastoral care. As Cox observes, African pentecostals 'provide a setting in which the African conviction that spirituality and healing belong together is dramatically re-enacted.'⁹⁷

Van Dijk explores how, in the context of African pentecostalism, the rupture with the past is intimately linked to an overwhelming orientation — one might say, a rapture for the future. Analysis of the 'pentecostalistic' movement of *Abadwa Mwatsopano* (Born-Again) in urban areas of Malawi, and most of all in the largest city, Blantyre, discloses the importance of the experience of the 'instant' (instant rebirth, instant healing). Through such experience, subjectivities are constituted which are perceived to be detached from their individual, communal, or even national pasts.⁹⁸ His study betrays the usual high minded stance taken by most Westerners when it comes to writing about Christian experiences of indigenous Malawian/African Christians in the sense that such experiences are looked upon with suspicion if they are departing from the Western homogenizing paradigms.

⁹⁶ Hans Geir Aasmundsen, *Pentecostalism, globalization and society in contemporary Argentina*. (Germany: Södertörn University, 2013).

⁹⁷ Cox, Harvey, *Fire from heaven: the rise of pentecostal spirituality and the reshaping of religion in the twenty-first century* (Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1995).

⁹⁸ Rijk Van Dijk, "Pentecostalism, cultural memory and the state: contested representations of time in pentecostal Malawi." Ed. Richard Werbner. *Memory and the post-colony: African anthropology and the critique of power*. (London: Zed Books, 1998).

Englund writes on recent scholarship on pentecostalism in Africa by debating issues of transnationalism, globalisation and localisation.⁹⁹ He examines strategies of extraversion among independent pentecostal churches. The aim is to assess the historical validity of claims to independency than to account for its appeal as a popular idiom. The findings from fieldwork in a Malawian township show that half of the pentecostal churches there regard themselves as 'independent'. Pentecostal independency thus provides a perspective on African engagements with the apparent marginalisation of the sub-continent in the contemporary world. Two contrasting cases of pentecostal independency reveal similar aspirations and point out the need to appreciate the *religious* forms of extraversion.¹⁰⁰ Similarly, Lazarus Chakwera wrote on the role of eschatology in Assemblies of God missions emphasizing the reasons motivating pentecostals growth in the world. This work is a general treatise on the role of eschatology in pentecostal Christianity. However, the role of indigenous pastors is given less prominence, much as he made contributions on the general growth pattern of pentecostalism in Africa.¹⁰¹

In a nutshell, it should be stated that the process of indigenization is essential if Christianity is to fully be appreciated in Africa and Malawi in particular. One of the positive contributions of this process is that a number of churches in Africa no longer are financially dependent on missionaries, that is to say, the problem of dependence syndrome on foreign funds to support and stimulate growth is curtailed. Allan Tippett, one of the scholars on indigenization, places a strong emphasis on "applying principles of independence and self-reliance from the initiation of the new churches" if Christianity is to be fully appreciated. Another contribution is that indigenization provides a model for missionaries to assist in maturing independent churches.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Harri Englund, "Christian independency and global membership: pentecostal extraversions in Malawi" *Journal of Religion in Africa* 33, (2003): 83–111

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Lazarus Chakwera, *The role of eschatology in Assemblies of God missions* (M.Th. UNISA, 1991).

¹⁰² Allan Tippett, *Verdict theology in missionary theory* (Pasadena, California: William Cary Library, 1973).

Some of the limitations and problems of the indigenization processes in history, especially in Africa, Malawi in particular, have been the continuing unnecessary control still being wielded in the hands of missionaries despite the efforts being championed theoretically by the Western church. "This opening for paternalism is provided by giving the missionary responsibility to decide when a church is to be organized, to determine how it shall be organized..."¹⁰³ Similarly, church leadership is controlled by missionary societies in a subtle way when it comes to financial assistance. The reduction of dependence on the mission funds did not reflect an equal independence from the control of the missionary. "The leader constantly superintends, directs, and examines those under him; the helper directs and examines the leaders and their stations; and the missionary in charge has a general supervision and control of the whole".¹⁰⁴

It should be stated here that although the origins of the church in Africa is most often portrayed as lost in obscurity as John Parratt alleges, biblical and historical traditions are awash with accounts that need to be examined for a true portrayal of the growth of the church in Africa and Malawi in particular.¹⁰⁵ It is with this conviction that the research study conducted an in-depth interview, FGD and documentary analysis on the topic by immersing into any available sources to unearth a multidisciplinary (historiography, systematic theology and cultural dynamics) representation of the pentecostal phenomena in the MAOG as perceived by the indigenous pastors. In this way, the researcher felt the gap of this research study would be filled.

¹⁰³ John Mark Terry, "Indigenous churches" *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*. Ed. A. Scott Moreau. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000) 483-485.

¹⁰⁴ Rolland Allen, *Gospel in culture: indigenization and contextualization* on. Online. Internet. 12 Dec. 2014. Available: <http://ww2.faulkner.edu/o/admin/.../rt.../FourModelsMissions02Rev07.PPT>

¹⁰⁵ John Parratt, Ed. *A reader in African Christian theology*. (London: SPCK, 1995).

2.11 Chapter summary

The first section of this chapter has reviewed some of the available literature on indigenization, its concepts, boundaries, models as well as the biblical framework. The second section of the chapter focussed on indigenization in Africa and its problems highlighting the gap which precipitated the need for this research study in Malawi. The next chapter discusses the methodology employed in this study.

MALAWI COLLECTION

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.0 Chapter overview

This section describes the research design and methodology used to explore the questions that guided the study. The chapter begins with the design, followed by the sample as well as the instruments used, ethical considerations, data analysis and issues pertaining to trustworthiness and credibility of the whole research process.

3.1 Research design

Cooper and Schindler view research design as a blueprint for fulfilling research objectives and questions in a systematic way to study a scientific problem which tries to define the study types, research questions, and hypotheses.¹⁰⁶ In other words, it is an overarching term which applies to all methods that are used to collect data providing a framework for the data collection and analysis. It is, therefore, accepted as a conceptual structure on the basis of which, the entire research is conducted. This study used a qualitative research design with some minimal elements of quantitative methods. Gillham defines study methodology as a unit of human activity embedded in the real world, which can only be studied or understood in context.¹⁰⁷ On the other hand, Creswell¹⁰⁸ and Maree¹⁰⁹ agree on the need of using multiple sources as a way of triangulating and validating the research studies.

¹⁰⁶ Donald Cooper and Pamela Schindler, *Research designs: qualitative and quantitative approaches*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2001).

¹⁰⁷ Bill Gillham, *Case study research methods: continuum research methods*. (London: Continuum, 2000).

¹⁰⁸ John Creswell and Lawrence Manion. *An Introduction to the theory and practice of teaching*. (Routledge: Routledge, 2007).

¹⁰⁹ Kobus Maree, Ed. *First steps in research*. (Hartfield, Pretoria: Van Shaick, 2007).

3.2 Sampling

The need for choosing the right sample for a research investigation cannot be taken lightly. In this regard, the research study used non-probability sampling methods of purposive and snowball sampling. "Purposive sampling simply means that participants are selected because of some defining characteristic that makes them the holders of the data needed for the study".¹¹⁰ In this case the researcher managed to obtain the richest possible source of information to answer the research questions; it entails the choice of respondents was guided by the judgement of the investigator.¹¹¹ Similarly, Creswell defines snowball sampling as development of cultural models which require more involvement and interpretation from the researcher. "Analyses move beyond counting explicit words or phrases and focus on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data, that is, themes. Codes are then typically developed to represent the identified themes and applied or linked to raw data as summary markers for later analysis... this sample design is particularly useful in the study of those social groups whose members tend to hide their identity for moral, legal, ideological or political reasons..."¹¹² In this approach, the researcher chooses a few respondents and asks them to recommend other willing people who meet the criteria of the research to participate in the project. The process is continued with the new respondents until there is no more substantial information which could be sourced through additional respondents.¹¹³ The researcher weighed the advantages of using snowball sampling over its disadvantages and felt to continue with it anyway.

One of the major disadvantages of snowball sampling include the little control that the researcher has over the sampling method as he relies on the previous subjects that were approached. Sampling bias is another fear of researchers when using this sampling technique. Thirdly, initial subjects tend to nominate people that they know well. Because of this, it is highly possible that the subjects share the same traits and

¹¹⁰ Kobus Maree, Ed. *First steps in research*. (Hartfield, Pretoria: Van Shaick, 2007).

¹¹¹ Sotirios Sarantakos, *Social research*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) 164.

¹¹² John Creswell and Lawrence Manion, *An introduction to the theory and practice of teaching*. (Routledge: Routledge, 2007) 2

¹¹³ Sotirios Sarantakos, *Social research*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) 165.

characteristics, thus, it is possible that the sample that the researcher will obtain is only a small subgroup of the entire population.¹¹⁴ In this way there is a high probability of leaving out respondents who might be of great importance to a study. However, the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. The sample locates hidden populations that would not be known with meticulous planning. Similarly, people of a specific population, such as users of illegal drugs, are easily located. The major advantage is that of low cost as the researcher does not have to invest a lot of money and time for the sampling process. Another benefit is that snowball sampling requires no complex planning to include many people like the other methods of sampling.¹¹⁵ In this case, the researcher managed to locate indigenous pastors through snowball sampling that would otherwise not be known using other methods.

3.2.1 Selection of participants

The sample size used in this study was relatively small but sufficient to generate substantial quality information needed to answer the research questions guiding this study. It was enough to provide insights into the specific cases from which the researcher sought to understand the indigenizing principles as advanced by the local pastors in contextualizing the gospel. All in all, five pastors were interviewed in in-depth interviews and five pastors comprised an FGD. Henceforth, in this multidisciplinary research study, it involved a lot of planning on the part of the researcher to meet various categories of the MAOG indigenous (Malawian) pastors - long-serving pastors who have been with the movement since 1947 or thereabouts, pastors in the MAOG National executive committee working at the national headquarters in Lilongwe and a sample of pastors across Malawi deemed to contribute positively to the research request.

Inherently, the process led the researcher to meet a number of pastors who were originally not earmarked as respondents in the research study but were recommended later by the interviewed pastors. It is the nature of snowball sampling for the numbers of

¹¹⁴David Morgan, *The SAGE Encyclopaedia of qualitative research methods*. (Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 2008) 816–817.

¹¹⁵Mirela-Cristina Voicu, "Using the snowball method in marketing research on hidden populations". *Challenges of the Knowledge Society* 1 (2011): 1341–1351.

respondents to increase through such recommendations.¹¹⁶ This enabled the researcher, to gain a deeper insight into a specific situation, which, in this case, is the process of indigenization in the growth of MAOG especially among the local pastors.

3.3 Methods of data collection

The data used in this research study were collected through three methods, namely: in-depth interviews, FGD and documentary analysis. The three qualitative methods mentioned above were appropriate in the sense that they are the methods commonly used to collect data which provide sufficient information of research findings.¹¹⁷ Hence, the researcher used the three methods to ensure that demand for triangulation in the data collection was met. The term triangulation is defined as “the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour”.¹¹⁸

As stated earlier, some of the target population of pastors studied through the above mentioned instruments involved both the long-serving and young pastors on one hand, and the top officials of the MAOG at the national headquarters in Lilongwe, on the other. The researcher also scuffled relevant records to the study found at the National Archives as well as visiting libraries at theological institutions like Assemblies of God School of Theology (AGST), Chancellor College, Zomba Theological College and Leonard Kamungu. The choice of these respondents was precipitated by the notion that the pastors are regarded as key-players, in as far as policy formulation of the MAOG is concerned.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, the collection of data also focused on the current leadership of the movement and those who served as ministers on several portfolios in the national executive committee of the MAOG for a long period of time. All the necessary guidelines to ensure a free reign and establishment of rapport was taken into considerations to secure their consent and trust.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ Lewis Cohen et al, *Research methods in education*. 6th Ed. (London: Routledge, 2007).

¹¹⁷ Gary Shank. *Qualitative research: a personal skills approach*. (Columbus, Ohio: Merrill Prentice-Hall, 2002).

¹¹⁸ Ibid. pp. 233

¹¹⁹ Gregory Mvula and Enson Lwesya. *Flames of fire: the history of Assemblies of God and pentecostalism in Malawi, spreading the flames at home and abroad*. (Blantyre: AGLC, 2005).

¹²⁰ Sotirios Sarantakos, *Social research*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

Interviews in the in-depth interviewing and FGD played a very vital role in sourcing information from the indigenous pastors. Maree defines an interview “as a two way conversation in which the interviewer asks the participant questions to collect data and to learn about the ideas, beliefs, views, opinions and behaviour of the participant”.¹²¹ So, the in-depth interviewing, sometimes referred to as unstructured interviewing, is defined as a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, programme, or situation.¹²² Participants are asked about their experiences and expectations related to the programme, the thoughts they have concerning programme operations, processes, and outcomes, and about any changes they perceive in themselves as a result of their involvement in the programme.¹²³ Regarding its importance over other methods in qualitative techniques, classic ethnographers such as Malinowski stressed the importance of talking to people to grasp their point of view, for a reason that personal accounts are seen as having central importance in social research because of the power of language to illuminate meaning.¹²⁴

3.3.1 In-depth interviews

A total number of eight pastors were interviewed in the in-depth interviews. These pastors, as earlier on stated, were sourced from the MAOG national headquarters in Lilongwe and those that were recommended by snowball sampling throughout the Central and Southern regions of Malawi. To be precise, these pastors came from the districts of Lilongwe, Zomba, Ntcheu and Blantyre. It should be pointed out that the choice of this kind of interviewing techniques is of cardinal importance as opposed to the other techniques in qualitative research because of its inherent potentiality to generate detailed information about a person’s thoughts and behaviour in a deeper way. “Interviews are often used to provide context to other data offering a more complete

¹²¹Kobus Maree. Ed. *First steps in research* (Hartfield, Pretoria: Van Shaick, 2007) 87.

¹²² Carolyn Boyce, *Conducting in-depth interviews*: (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006).

¹²³ Ibid

¹²⁴ Robert Burgess. *Field research: a sourcebook and field manual*. (London: Routledge, 1982).

picture of what happened in the programme and why".¹²⁵ Much as Qualitative research projects are informed by a wide range of methodologies and theoretical frameworks, the advantage of using in-depth interviews rests on the fact that it explores new phenomena and capture individuals' thoughts, feelings, or interpretations of meaning and processes.¹²⁶

3.3.2 Focus group discussion

In FGD, the researcher held two sessions of discussions with a selected number of pastors chosen for their expertise in pentecostal theology. The first group comprised five senior pastors who have been with the MAOG for quite a good number of years. In this group pastors working at the MAOG National headquarters in Lilongwe and those nearing their retirement were involved. Similarly, another discussion with young pastors who have been with the MAOG for a fewer number of years was also conducted. A good number of these pastors were also involved in the in-depth interviews.

In FGD, valuable information about group processes, attitude changes and manipulation, the attitudes and opinions of group members, the group or the public, the effectiveness of certain methods and so on, is secured thereby enabling the testing of strategies in solving problems.¹²⁷ It is of cardinal importance that the focus group generates diversity and differences which reveal "the dilemmatic nature of everyday arguments".¹²⁸ It was befitting that divergent views be heard in as far as the contributions of the indigenous pastors over against the western pastors is concerned. The FGDs offer some advantages as compared to the other methods of collecting data, such as interviews and participant observation, because they present a more natural environment to the respondents as compared to individual interviewees; participants in FGD are influenced in their

¹²⁵ Carolyn Boyce. *Conducting in-depth interviews*: (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006) 3.

¹²⁶ KayCook, *In-depth interviews* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2009).

¹²⁷ Uwe Flick. *An introduction to qualitative research* (London: SAGE, 2002).

¹²⁸ Sotirios Sarantakos, *Social research* (New York: Macmillan, 2005) 195.

interaction just as they are in real life.¹²⁹ In other words, FGD occupies a middle ground between participant observation and individual in-depth interviews.¹³⁰

The responses in both in-depth interviews and FGD were duly audio-recorded¹³¹ with permission from the participants. Field notes were taken where necessary to supplement the recorded discussions. The researcher also asked follow up questions in order to get further clarifications and elaborations. As Rossman and Rallis observe, in follow up questions the researcher asks for more details, hoping to discover deeper meaning and understanding of the phenomenon.¹³²

3.3.3 Document analysis

Document or documentary analysis as a research tool is one of social research method which acts as an invaluable part of most schemes of triangulation. It refers to the various procedures involved in analysing and interpreting data generated from the examination of documents and records relevant to a particular study. In other words, documentary work involves reading lots of written material like monographs, magazines, newsletters, online scanned documents and many others.¹³³ The advantage of working with documents is that they provide background information and understanding of issues that would not be otherwise available. Maree observes that documents could serve to corroborate the evidence from other sources.¹³⁴ Besides, some documentation the researcher acquired from the National Archives, academic libraries (especially from Chancellor College, Zomba Theological College and many others) the researcher also requested pastors to provide him with the relevant documentation relevant to the study. The respondents provided him with some documentation which proved very invaluable in the study.¹³⁵

¹²⁹ Lita Litosseli. *Using focus groups in research* (London: Continuum, 2003) 2.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ A Techno T340 cell phone was used to record all the interviews in both in-depth and FGDs interviews.

¹³² Gretchen Rossman Sharon Rallis, *Learning in the field: an introduction to qualitative research*. 2nd Ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003).

¹³³ Collin Robson. *Real world research*. 3rd Ed. (Chichester: Wiley, 2011).

¹³⁴ Kobus Maree. Ed. *First steps in research*. (Hartfield, Pretoria: Van Shaick, 2007).

¹³⁵ Ibid.

3.4 Ethical considerations

In any other methods of data collection, issues involving ethics are regarded as highly relevant to be given their due consideration.¹³⁶ In this study, research ethics were given their due respect as the participants were made aware of the purpose of the research, what would happen during and after the study. This ethical approach ensures that principles in research associated with the quality and rigour of the study resulting in credibility and dependability are abided by.¹³⁷ In other words, scholars advocate that good research be a moral and ethical venture that should ensure privacy so that the interest's research participants in a study are not harmed in any.¹³⁸ Therefore in this study the major tenets being pursued are informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity

3.4.1 Informed consent

Informed consent may be defined as a voluntary agreement to participate in research. It is not merely a form that is signed but is a process, in which the subject has an understanding of the research and its accompanying risks. Informed consent is essential before enrolling a participant and ongoing once enrolled.¹³⁹ To avoid suspicion on the part of the participants, the researcher notified the participants beforehand about the purpose and procedures of his research. The researcher, in compliance with professional research ethics, made sure that participants were made aware of their right to be informed on what they were being researched.¹⁴⁰ The researcher therefore had to respect the participants' rights by ensuring that he got permission from them. The participants were also told the potential benefits from the study, which included the possibility of a true portrayal of MAOG's pentecostal historiography that unmasked the contributions of indigenous pastors who have been inhibited by the current Western oriented historiography, among others. They were also allowed to ask questions on any point they

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Yvonna S. Lincoln and Egon G Guba, *Naturalistic inquiry*. (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 2000).

¹³⁸ W. L. Neuman, *The 'ideal' interview process and the practical realities in research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1997).

¹³⁹ Allan Bryman, *Social research methods*. 3rd Ed. (Oxford: Oxford Press, 2008).

¹⁴⁰ Sotirios Sarantakos, *Social research*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

did not understand. After the briefing, the participants were given liberty to make their final statements whether they would participate in the study or not.

Fortunately for the researcher, a number of selected pastors expressed their interest to participate in the study. Some of them signed the consent forms and letters of commitment to show that they agreed to participate in the research (Appendices 1 and 2). Others did not see it necessary to sign any document as they had trust in the researcher. Consent by the respondents was also sought on the use of audio recorder by the researcher in compliance with what Gall, Borg, and Gall emphasise: "Researchers must inform each individual about what will occur during the research study... and the intended use of the research data that are to be collected".¹⁴¹

3.4.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

In the process of gathering information, there were instances when the participants, especially those at the national headquarters of the MAOG, became jittery and wanted some assurance of confidentiality that their names would not appear anywhere else in the write up, a thing the researcher was more than willing to guarantee. Confidentiality and anonymity in research insures the secrecy of information shared and non-disclosure of names of research participants. According to Rossman and Rallis, confidentiality has two elements, protecting the privacy of the participants and holding in confidence what they share with the researcher.¹⁴² The researcher therefore assured the participants that any information they provided would not be propagated in a manner that could jeopardise their identity. Therefore, the researcher made sure that participants' names do not appear anywhere in the study. Instead, codenames or pseudonyms were used in order to hide the identity of the participants in Chapter 5. Similarly, the emphasis to protect privacy and the identity of the research participants and locations of respondents are hence concealed.¹⁴³ The researcher, therefore, assured the participants that he would never

¹⁴¹ Meredith Gall et al, *Education research: An introduction*. (New York: Longman, 2003) 88.

¹⁴² Gretchen Rossman and Sharon Rallis, *Learning in the field: an introduction to qualitative research*. 2nd Ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003.

¹⁴³ M. Bulmer, *Social research ethics*. (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1982).

reveal or mention their names or their churches anywhere and to anyone without their consent. Apart from the FGDs, the researcher also made sure that the respondents did not know what the other respondents had said.

3.5 Data analysis and interpretation

One of the characteristics of the qualitative research analysis is that it deals with data presented in words aiming to transform and interpret data in a rigorous and scholarly manner. Simply put, there is no general consensus as to how qualitative analysis should proceed or what makes an acceptable analysis.¹⁴⁴ Sarantakos in his contribution to the subject notes that “the process of analysis is deeper, more focussed and more detailed than in quantitative analysis...”¹⁴⁵ However, the researcher used content and interpretational analysis to analyse the data and find meaning. The content analysis of interviews was conducted to identify patterns and develop categories under different themes that emerged from the respondents’ responses. The themes extracted from the data analysis became the basis for its interpretation which offering some deeper insight for the researcher to draw scholarly conclusions.¹⁴⁶

The transcribed interviews were read over and over again in order for the researcher to decipher the meanings communicated by the respondents. As defined by Gall, Borg, and Gall, interpretational analysis is “the process of examining case study data closely in order to find constructs, themes and patterns that can be used to describe and explain the phenomenon being studied”.¹⁴⁷ Similarly, it is a requirement that a researcher should immerse deeply into the data to extricate reflections that will offer correct answers to the research questions.¹⁴⁸ As Rossman and Rallis stress, re-reading the data enables one to

¹⁴⁴ Sotirios Sarantakos, *Social research*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) 344.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Silverman, D. *Interpreting qualitative data in methods for analysing talk, text and interaction*. (London: Sage, 2001).

¹⁴⁷ Meredith Gall et al, *Education research: an introduction*. (New York: Longman, 2003) 453.

¹⁴⁸ Catherine Marshall and Gretchen Rossman, *Designing qualitative research* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage, 1989).

become fully aware in passionate ways the lessons learned from research.¹⁴⁹ At the end of re-reading the texts and re-listening to the audio tapes, the researcher developed a number of themes and categories which reflected the research questions for the study. The analysis of the data was at two levels - descriptive and interpretive. At the first level of description the concern focused on what was actually said whereas at the interpretive level the researcher dealt with interpretation of what was meant by the respondents by inference or implication enabling the researcher to come up with themes and categories from the study which became issues for discussion in Chapter 5.¹⁵⁰

The analysis of the data has been ongoing since the process of data collection started and guided the researcher's decisions related to further data collection. Rossman and Rallis point out that analysis is an ongoing operation and that "throughout a study, you are describing, analysing and interpreting data although different activities may be more focused and instrumental at various times".¹⁵¹ Creswell stresses that in qualitative studies data analysis begins immediately after data is collected and is an ongoing process.¹⁵² This ensures that the activity is focused and prevents a researcher from being overwhelmed with voluminous data collected during the analysis session.

3.6 Trustworthiness and credibility of the study

There is a general consensus in research discourse that every good research must comply with ethical requirements which border on issues of validity and credibility thereby remaining faithful to its premises.¹⁵³ Hence, the researcher located discussions of validity within the research paradigm, that is, the qualitative methods which concomitant with theological studies. A general consensus by. Credibility is considered to be "a useful indicator of goodness in ... studies research".¹⁵⁴ Because issues of credibility and

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Sotirios Sarantakos, *Social research* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

¹⁵¹ Gretchen Rossman and Sharon Rallis, *Learning in the field: an introduction to qualitative research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003) 271.

¹⁵² John Creswell, *Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2003).

¹⁵³ Clive Opie, *Doing educational research: a guide to first-time researchers*. (London: Sage, 2004).

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. 71

trustworthiness are critical in any research, three features were incorporated into this study in order to ensure its viability; these are peer reviews, triangulation of data collection methods and use of direct quotations from the interview data. The triangulation of data collection methods involved the in-depth interviews, FGD and documentary analysis. Similarly, the researcher has included direct quotations of interviewees as a means of ensuring the trustworthiness and credibility of the study. Therefore a number of features were built into this study in order to ensure its trustworthiness and credibility.

3.6.1 Peer review

Throughout the study the researcher interacted with some 'critical friends' for comments as a way of ensuring the trustworthiness and credibility of the study. These friends were fellow post-graduate students and colleagues both in and outside Chancellor College. "Critical friends", according to Rossman and Rallis, are "small groups of peers working together to test out ideas, critique one another's work, offer alternative conceptualisation and provide both emotional and intellectual support".¹⁵⁵ The process acted as a feedback mechanism for the researcher to iron out some crude ideas throughout the study, starting from the research proposal development stage itself. Comments from the critical friends assisted the researcher to look more deeply into both the writing and data collection endeavours. Every obstacle encountered could no longer be blamed on anybody, instead, the researcher valued so much what the friends saw, what they questioned, and, most important, what they saw missing in the whole process as a positive step towards climbing the ladder of academic excellence. Henceforth, research discourse replaced some expressions which lacked academic articulation for the study.

3.6.2 Triangulation

The term triangulation refers to the use of multiple methods of data collection with a view to increasing reliability of information collected. This involved combining methods in the same study where the researcher was able to overcome the deficiencies that are inherent in using one method. Polit and Hungler emphasise that "a researcher can be

¹⁵⁵ Gretchen Rossman and Sharon Rallis, *Learning in the field: An introduction to qualitative research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003).

much more confident about the validity of the findings when they are supported by multiple and complementary types of data”.¹⁵⁶ Henceforth, the researcher triangulated the data that were collected through the use of in-depth interview, FGD and documentary analysis methods. The researcher opted for triangulation as a means of validity checker for the various research methods used in the study to complement each other as it facilitates the researcher’s interpretation and understanding of an issue.¹⁵⁷ In this case, triangulation is conceived as “the complementary compensation of the weaknesses and blind spots of each single method”.¹⁵⁸ This study, therefore, utilized multiple data sources and different methods of collecting data in order to maintain credibility and to strengthen the conclusions.

3.6.3 Direct quotations

Use of direct quotations in research is of cardinal importance as respondents are given chance to speak for themselves in verbatim. Hancock points out that “quotations should be used because they are good examples of what people have said specifically about the category being described”.¹⁵⁹ Therefore, the research study’s provision of direct quotations as sourced from the participants in FGD and in-depth interviews throughout the report has added credibility to the information (see Chapter 5 and Appendices 6 and 7). These quotations express the participants’ perspectives and experiences and not the researcher’s perceptions. The quotations were drawn from visits to the MAOG national headquarters, FGD discussion with the pastors from the South Eastern Division and Southern Division of MAOG due to their proximity to Zomba where the researcher resides. The proceedings of in-depth interviews and FGD were audio-recorded and transcribed and analysed accordingly. Finally, a report was written.

¹⁵⁶ Denise Polite and Cheryl T. Beck, *Nursing research: principles and methods*. (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Williams & Wilkins, 2004). 259.

¹⁵⁷ Uwe Flick, *An introduction to qualitative research*. (London: SAGE, 2002) 265.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Beverly Hancock, *Trent focus for research and development in primary health care: an introduction to qualitative research*. (Nottingham: Trent Focus Group, 2002) 27.

3.7 Role of the researcher

The researcher approached this study with his own capabilities, effort and subjectivity as a Christian and also as a student studying theology at Master's level. Knowing that he was a student at Chancellor College of University of Malawi, the respondents could regard him as a person of higher status and this might have affected their responses in one way or another. As an insider, that is to say, a member of the MAOG, every effort was made to follow conventional requirements of conducting research to minimise cases of bias.

3.8 Chapter summary

This chapter has described the design of the study, the instruments that were used to collect data, how participants were identified, how data was collected and analysed. The chapter has also discussed some of the methodological challenges or limitations of the data collection and analysis. This was followed by discussion on trustworthiness of the study, access negotiation to the research site and ethical considerations. The following chapter presents indigenization as experienced in the MAOG church.

CHAPTER FOUR

INDIGENIZATION IN MALAWI ASSEMBLIES OF GOD CHURCH

4.0 Chapter overview

The previous chapter focussed on methodology and data analysis employed in the study as enlightened by various scholars on research methodology. This chapter discusses the concept of indigenization as understood by the indigenous pastors of the MAOG over the years. Mainly it is background information from its origins to the present. It is presented in two sections with their subthemes. The first section reviews the background information from the origins of Assemblies of God (AG) in the USA to Malawi. The second section outlines the views of indigenous pastors as derived from in-depth interviews, FGD and Documentary analysis.

4.1 The origins of the Assemblies of God church

The AG church was founded in the United States of America following the holiness and pentecostal revivals of the 18th and 19th centuries. Throughout the latter half of the 19th century in the United States and in other parts of the world, Christians, mainly of Protestant persuasion, began to ask themselves why their churches did not seem to exhibit the same vibrant, faith-filled life as those in the New Testament era. A number of these inquisitive believers joined evangelical or holiness churches which were known for their belief in the continuation of biblical signs and wonders where they engaged in ardent prayers and personal sacrifice to earnestly seek God. It was in this context that people began experiencing biblical spiritual gifts of glossolalia and healing.¹⁶⁰ With hunger for authentic biblical Christianity, the pentecostal pioneers looked to previous spiritual outpourings for inspiration such as the First Great Awakening (1730s-40s) and Second

¹⁶⁰ Assemblies of God, *Brief history of the Assemblies of God*. Online. Internet. 2 Jan. 2015. Available: <http://ag.org/top/About/History/index.cfm#>

Great Awakening (1800s-30s). They identified themselves in the tradition of reformers and revivalists such as Martin Luther, John Wesley, and Dwight L. Moody - this is how the AG was born.

One of the focal points of the emerging pentecostal movement was known as the Azusa Street revival (1906-09). Spiritually, thirsty Christians used to congregate to seek renewal from God. The street was located in the poor suburb of the city and was an unlikely location for an event that would change the face of Christianity in the ages to come. In the summer of 1906, revival erupted in the newly-formed congregation meeting at the small, run-down Apostolic Faith Mission at 312 Azusa Street in Los Angeles, California. Critics, as is common with any new phenomenon, attacked the congregation because its mild-mannered African-American holiness preacher, William J. Seymour, preached racial reconciliation and the restoration of biblical spiritual gifts to the majority of the pessimistic white community. The revival soon became a local sensation which attracted thousands of curiosity seekers and pilgrims from the world beyond.¹⁶¹

William Seymour who provided the doctrinal framework for the young pentecostal movement had been a student of Charles Parham.¹⁶² Parham's identification in scripture of speaking in tongues as the evidence of Spirit baptism became a defining mark of the emerging pentecostal movement. After students at his Bethel bible school in Topeka, Kansas, began speaking in tongues at a prayer meeting on January 1, 1901, Parham through his Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM), had some success in promoting the restoration of the gift of tongues. While the AFM was largely confined to the south-central of the USA, the revival at Azusa Street 'catapulted' pentecostalism before a worldwide audience.¹⁶³ In particular, the AG developed from the Azusa Street Revivals of 1906 to 1909 which led to the establishment of the church in 1914. Its membership

¹⁶¹ Assemblies of God, *Brief history of the Assemblies of God*. Online. Internet. 2 Jan. 2015. Available: <http://ag.org/top/About/History/index.cfm#>

¹⁶² Charles Parham was a holiness preacher and teacher at his Bethel bible school in Topeka, Kansas, where he inspired his students to seek biblical gifts as recorded in the book of Acts of the Apostles. One of his students, Agnes Ozman, is recorded to have spoken in other tongues during a prayer session.

¹⁶³ Assemblies of God, *Brief history of the Assemblies of God* Online. Internet. 2 Jan. 2015. Available: <http://ag.org/top/About/History/index.cfm#>

grew from Christians who were expelled from other Christian denominations because of doctrinal misunderstanding about *glossolalia*.

The General Council of the AG, which is now one of the largest pentecostal denominations in the USA, was formed by a broad coalition of expelled ministers and ordinary Christians who desired to work together to fulfil common objectives, such as sending missionaries and providing fellowship and accountability. Formed in the heat of the emerging worldwide pentecostal revival, the AG quickly established itself in other countries and formed indigenous national organizations. Pentecostalism is today recognized by some scholars as the third movement in Christianity with Roman Catholicism and Protestantism as being the first and the second respectively. The term was first coined by Henry P. Van Dusen in 1958 the then president of Union Theological Seminary who prophetically recognized the future impact of the movement.¹⁶⁴

4.2 The development of Malawi Assemblies of God church

Some of the itinerant AG missionaries coming to Africa established their presence in Nyasaland in the 1940s. The Malawi Assemblies of God (MAOG) church developed from an amalgamation of two missionary points of Igali in Tanzania and that of the Full Gospel church of South Africa station at Chimbewa village in Ntcheu, Malawi.¹⁶⁵ In around 1943, the Igali AG Mission crossed borders into Malawi to establish a mission station at a place called Mubula around Misuku Hills in Chitipa District. The centre joined hands with a mission station established by an indigenous pastor Laiton Kalambule who belonged to a South African Full Gospel church mission in Ntcheu district of the central region of Malawi. Kalambule was converted to pentecostalism while working in the gold mines of South Africa in the 1930s and is also regarded as the first indigenous pioneer of the MAOG.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ Gregory Mvula and Enson Lwesya, *Flames of fire: the history of Assemblies of God and pentecostalism in Malawi, spreading the flames at home and abroad*. (Blantyre: AGLC, 2005).

¹⁶⁵ Ibid

¹⁶⁶ Uhlf Strohhahn, *Pentecostalism in Malawi: a history of the Apostolic Faith Mission in Malawi* (Zomba: Kachere, 2004).

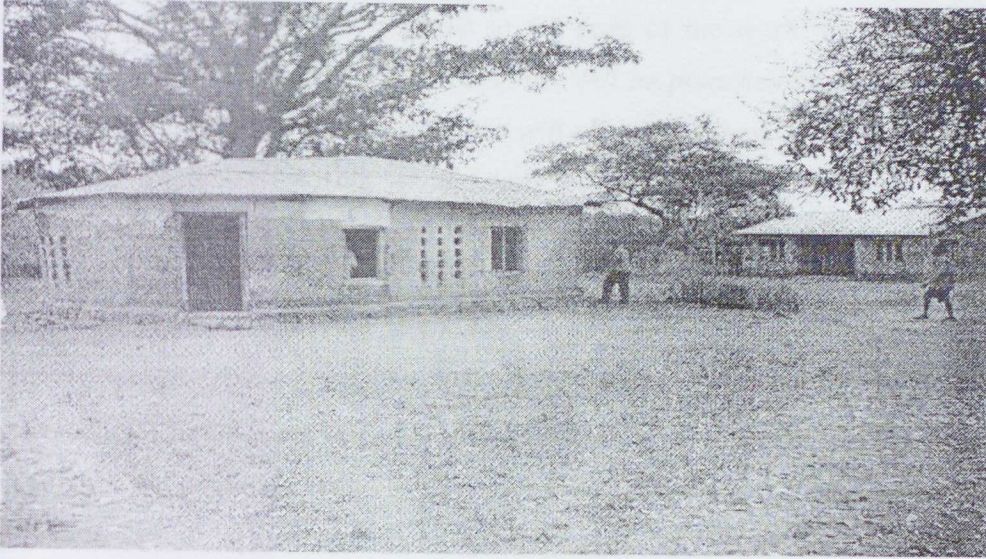


Figure 1: Laiton Kalambule: the first indigenous pioneer of Assemblies of God in Malawi

In 1947 a group of four missionary families from Tanzania AG met with their counterparts from South Africa Full Gospel at Chimbewa village, the home village of indigenous pastor Laiton Kalambule, in Ntcheu to form Assemblies of God in Malawi (AGIM).¹⁶⁷ The group from Tanzania comprised Paul Derr, Ragner Udds, who later became a station leader at Mubula, Misuku hills centre, Morris Williams and his wife Macy, while the South African contingent included Fredrick Burke, Paul Wright and Moody Wright families. The meeting which was chaired by Fredrick Burke, Kalambule's Full Gospel church's mentor, resolved to form one church under the umbrella of the AG, a church which was deemed to be more organized in terms of finances and personnel at that particular time in history.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ Gregory Mvula and Enson Lwesya, *Flames of fire: the history of Assemblies of God and pentecostalism in Malawi, spreading the flames at home and abroad*. (Blantyre: AGLC, 2005).

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.



**Figure 2: Chimbewa village church in Ntcheu district and Laiton
Kalambule's house**

From its outset, the church endeavoured to indigenize its operations to make sure that the work was fully self-autonomous as to wean itself of any form of paternalistic influences plaguing other Christian missions in Africa. Although the idea was good, the process itself was characterised by a 'rocky terrain' of misinterpretation by both the white missionaries and their black counterparts on cultural and theological misunderstanding which degenerated into some form of paternalism and even racism.¹⁶⁹ According to the Word Web Dictionary (2014), paternalism is defined as an attitude (of a person or a government) that some people should be controlled in a fatherly way for their own good. In practice, the white missionaries treated Africans like children who needed persistent scolding if they were to perform, a thing which bred resentment in the lives of the early converts and indigenous pioneers.

Another affront to indigenization rested on the AG's hesitancy to open up for a greater involvement in the plight of the poor and in opposing socio-political oppression which was rampant in society. All matters of social concern were rated as inferior to the

¹⁶⁹ McGee, Gary. 'Pentecostal missiology: moving beyond triumphalism to face the issues'. *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society of Pentecostal Studies*, 16:2 (1994) 208, 211.

overarching concern of taking Christ to the ends of the world to spur Jesus' second coming " ... and this Gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come" (Mathew 24:14 NIV). As a result, there was a general tendency to highlight the "triumphalistic accounts of how many people were converted, healed and had received Spirit baptism, seldom mentioning any difficulties encountered or the inevitable cultural blunders made".¹⁷⁰

Among the missionaries who came to East and Central Africa, Ragner Udds and his wife are credited to have pioneered an AG missions in Malawi. The missionary couple arrived in Malawi from Igali Tanzania in 1944, earlier than the official launch of the Malawi AG in 1947, where they established a missionary centre at Mubula Misuku hills in Chitipa district.¹⁷¹ The Udds combined mission work with an enterprise aiming at incorporating social concerns to support proper indigenization of the mission work. Ragner Udds utilised a coffee estate purchased earlier by a Mr Richards, a missionary from Igali, to develop a one-stop centre for a day school, clinic and church centre which attracted the surrounding communities. But over the years, when other missionaries succeeded them, this approach was totally ignored. The new missionaries only focused on evangelistic and missions development as spurred by eschatological concerns about the imminent return of the Christ; the social concern approach was looked upon as a time and resource waster. The Mubula station therefore was left in derelict condition especially when the centre was ransacked by the nationalists fighting for political independence in the wake of Kamuzu Banda's fighting for the liberation of Nyasaland from colonial rule in 1958.

However, it must be acknowledged that despite the seeming naiveté of many early pentecostals, their evangelistic methods were flexible, pragmatic and astonishingly successful in reaching the masses with the Gospel.¹⁷² The early pentecostal missionaries

¹⁷⁰ McGee, Gary. Pentecostal missiology: moving beyond triumphalism to face the issues'. *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society of Pentecostal Studies*, 16:2 (1994): 208, 211.

¹⁷¹ Ragner Udds was hated by fellow missionaries for incorporating social amenities alongside missions work to the extent that some even called him derogatory names such as 'an agriculturist'.

¹⁷² Allan Anderson. "Towards a pentecostal missiology for the majority world" *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 8 (Jan 2005): 29. Online. Internet. 12 Aug. 2014. Available: <http://connection.ebscohost.com/c/articles/16927619/towards-pentecostal-missiology-majority-world>

claimed that the rapid growth of the pentecostal movement vindicated the Apostle Paul's statement that God uses the weak and the despised to confound the mighty in society in 1 Corinthians 1: 27. Pentecostal churches all over the world were missionary by nature, and the dichotomy between church and mission that for so long plagued other Christian churches did not exist. This 'central missiological thrust' was clearly a 'strong point in pentecostalism' and central to its existence.¹⁷³

In the early years, the AG in Nyasaland was led by an Executive Council that supervised two fields – Nyasaland and Tanganyika. Later in Nyasaland, three workers of the Council were organized to oversee the work in each of the three regions of the country. Missionary Fred Burke acted as the first Chairman of this workers council. Missionary Morris Williams served as Secretary in the beginning. In 1960, H. B. Garlock assumed the leadership role and during that time the Chairmanship was officially called 'the General Superintendent' of the AG in Nyasaland.¹⁷⁴

In 1960, leaders were elected at the Annual Conference of the Assemblies of God at Missi in Dowa. The whole Executive Committee was as follows:

Rev. Harry Downey - General Superintendent
Rev. Gideon Bomba - Assistant General Superintendent
Rev. Morris Williams - General Secretary
Other Members were:
Wilfred Makoko
Paul Wright
Scott Malenga¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ Allan Anderson, "Towards a pentecostal missiology for the majority world." *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 8:1 (2005): 30

¹⁷⁴ Gregory Mvula and Enson Lwesya, *Flames of fire: the history of Assemblies of God and pentecostalism in Malawi, spreading the flames at home and abroad*. (Blantyre: AGLC, 2005).

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.



Figure 3: Some of the Assemblies of God in Nyasaland early pioneers (Right to Left Garlock, Makoko, Downey, Bomba, Williams and Malenga)

An important leadership change happened when the Missionary Council decided that they no longer needed to carry the visionary torch of the church. Furthermore, they decided that leadership handover would be meaningful with the giving up of registration of local assemblies (churches) into the hands of the AGIM, a thing which was done in a bid to indigenize the operations of the church.¹⁷⁶ Leadership changed hands from the white missionaries to African leadership in 1962 when Gideon Bomba was elected as the first African general superintendent of the church. The term General Superintendent (GS) has now changed to president in the new designation for the top most authority of the MAOG. One would have expected the indigenous pioneer, Laiton Kalambule, to naturally assume the position of the first African GS. Unfortunately, Kalambule by this time had already parted ways with the white missionaries on issues of paternalism which reached their peak

¹⁷⁶ Gregory Mvula and Enson Lwesya, *Flames of fire: the history of Assemblies of God and pentecostalism in Malawi, spreading the flames at home and abroad*. (Blantyre: AGLC, 2005).

in a doctrinal wrangle regarding polygamy.¹⁷⁷ Gary McGee describes the first twenty years of pentecostalism as mostly 'chaotic in operation' due to paternalism, as one of the factors. Early pentecostal missionaries from North America and Europe were mostly paternalistic, often creating dependency, and some cases they were even racist. There were notable exceptions to this general chaos, however. As has been observed, most pentecostal movements inadvertently "came into being as missionary institutions" and their mission work was "not the result of some clearly thought out theological decision" and so policy and methods were formed mostly in the crucible of missionary praxis.¹⁷⁸

4.3 Steps towards indigenization of the Malawi church

There have been a number of steps taken by the MAOG as a way of indigenizing its activities. For instance, the church in Malawi has been undergoing a 'name designation metamorphoses' in a bid to reflect processes of ongoing indigenization since its existence. From Assemblies of God in Malawi (AGIM) the name changed to Malawi Assemblies of God (MAOG) church. The first designation entailed the Malawi church was regarded as a subsidiary of the American church. The new designation denotes an independent entity which is fully autonomous, not dependent on the AG church in the USA. The new designation ensures that the pioneering Malawians such as Laiton Kalambule, Gideon Bomba and Elliot Nkunika are given prominence in the annals of the church. They are henceforth regarded as the founders of the AG on Malawian soil. Much as the white missionaries brought sanity in terms of administration and organization, the African pioneers are applauded for having initiated the movement in Malawi. It must also be acknowledged that the movement was popularised with the arrival of partnering American missionaries in the late 1940s working in southern Tanzania and those from the AFM from South Africa. These itinerant evangelists and pastors became part of the

¹⁷⁷ Although the white missionaries position on polygamy could be regarded as biblically correct, it was the problem of wrong attitude towards Africans, in paternalism, that infuriated Laiton Kalambule to part ways with the Assemblies of God church. In other words, with proper dialogue it was an issue that could have been resolved amicably

¹⁷⁸ Gary McGee. McGee, Gary. Pentecostal missiology: moving beyond triumphalism to face the issues'. *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society of Pentecostal Studies*. 16:2 (1994): 208, 211.

movement and together they officially registered the church with the government of Nyasaland.¹⁷⁹

Administratively, in those formative years the movement had been led by collaborative teams of missionaries and nationals until the first Malawian GS was elected in 1962 to kick-start an indigenization on leadership. Rev. Gideon Bomba was a prolific preacher who involved himself in itinerary evangelism criss-crossing Africa with the white missionaries.¹⁸⁰ In 1979 another GS, Rev. Maxwell Chapola, was elected to replace Bomba who had retired in the same year. Ten years later after the demise of Rev. Chapola, Rev. Lazarus Chakwera was elected and continued to lead the movement until May 14th, 2013. He resigned after leading the movement for twenty-four years to join politics as a presidential candidate for the Malawi Congress Party (MCP). Rev. Dr. Edward. J. Chitsonga as the fourth indigenous president was elected to replace Rev. Chakwera in a special General Assembly in 2013. The subsequent appointment of indigenous pastors was a realization by missionaries of transferring the mantle of leadership as a bid to make the Assemblies of God church be weaned from their control. This move partly was also due to the nationalistic fervour that swept through Africa as people were agitating for political independence from the colonial masters.

¹⁷⁹ Gregory Mvula and Enson Lwesya. *Flames of fire: the history of Assemblies of God and pentecostalism in Malawi, spreading the flames at home and abroad.* (Blantyre: AGLC, 2005).

¹⁸⁰ Gideon Bomba is attributed to have cofounded the Kenya Assemblies of God when the first white missionaries migrating from Nyasaland



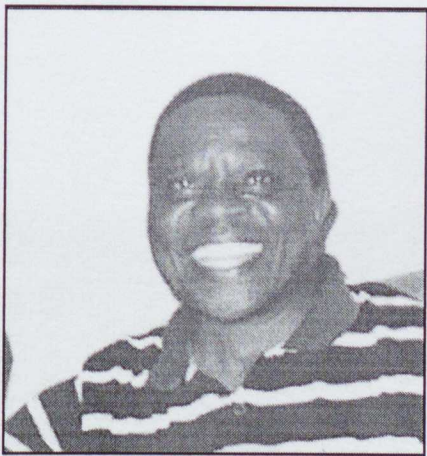
Gideon Bomba (1962 – 1978)



Maxwell Chapola (1978 – 1989)



Lazarus Chakwera (1989-2013)



Edward Chitsonga (2013 – Present)

Figure 4: List of indigenous presidents in chronological order

However, this proved to be a far-fetched dream in many instances as the missionaries, through paternalism, tried to control the nationals in certain aspects, resulting in a number of frictions characterising the movement up to the recent past. Some decisions by the indigenous leadership could be questioned by the partnering missionaries. A good example is when the nationals decided to partner with non-traditional foreign missionaries like Rev. Daniel T. Sheaffer and his team. Traditionally, it was the Missionary Field Fellowship (MFF) missionaries, now popularly known as the Missionary Council which had been in the forefront spearheading all missionary activities in Malawi. They felt the process of indigenization which they had initiated would be derailed rendering the MAOG financially subservient to Sheaffer who had the financial muscle to even pay the pastors working in the rural areas.¹⁸¹ It could be deduced from here that the indigenization of the Malawian church proved to be a painful process for both the MFF and the National church leadership. Because of such struggles, control of church assets like the bible college only reverted to the indigenous control very recently.¹⁸²

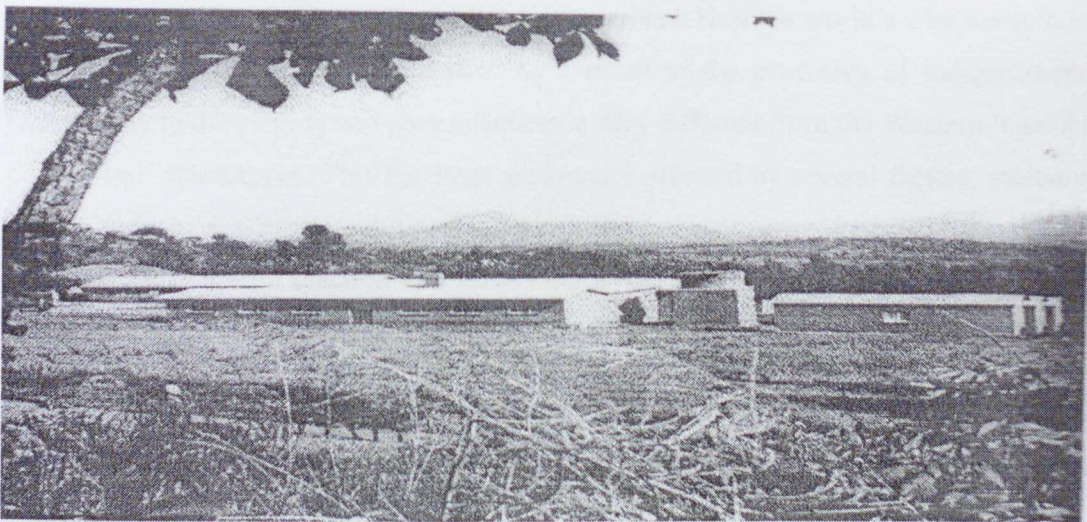


Figure 5: First bible school at Mcheneka in Dedza

¹⁸¹ Gregory Mvula and Enson Lwesya. *Flames of fire: the history of Assemblies of God and pentecostalism in Malawi, spreading the flames at home and abroad*. (Blantyre: AGLC, 2005) 2002-2003.

¹⁸² Ibid.

With the indigenization bid now taken by the nationals, the MAOG redesigned its organization structure with the aim of accommodating the ever-expanding number of churches being planted in missions and evangelism campaigns. From its establishment, the MAOG had three administrative districts, namely, the Northern, Central and Southern Districts which were patterned on the three regions of Malawi government. Under the leadership of Dr. Lazarus Chakwera, the country was re-demarcated to have five divisions – the Northern, North Central, Central, South Eastern and Southern Divisions.

Today the Assemblies of God has tremendously grown especially in the Third World countries¹⁸³ as opposed to its motherland due to indigenization. Recent statistics show that classical pentecostal churches like the Assemblies of God, the world's biggest pentecostal denomination, have probably only some eight of their world associate membership in North America, with at least eight percent in the Majority World¹⁸⁴. One estimate put the total number of adherents of the World Assemblies of God Fellowship (WAGF) in 1997 at some thirty million, of which only about 2.5 million were in North America.¹⁸⁵ It is estimated that in 1991 the majority Third World mission's movement was growing at five times the rate of Western missions. Half the world's Christians today live in the developing, poor countries. As a result of the processes of indigenization, Christianity in developing and poor countries is very different from the Western 'classical pentecostal' stereotypes. This has been profoundly affected by several factors, including the desire to have a more contextual and culturally relevant form of Christianity, the rise of nationalism, and "a reaction to what are perceived as 'colonial' forms of Christianity, and the burgeoning pentecostal and charismatic renewal".¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ According to recent statistics Assemblies of God Church worldwide has over 60 million adherents, 17 million of which are Africans. Malawi estimates show that there are 2.5 million adherents. AGWM Vital Statistics. Online. Internet. 12. Mar. 2014. Available: <http://agwm.com/assets/agwmvitalstats.pdf>

¹⁸⁴ Blumhofer, E.W. *The Assemblies of God: A popular history*. Radiant Books: (Springfield, Mo: Gospel Publishing House, 1985).

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Allan Anderson. "Towards a pentecostal missiology for the majority world" *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 8:1 (2005) 30



Figure 6: Malawi Assemblies of God Sheaffer Complex, Housing the National Headquarters, the MAGIT and the MAGU

4.4 Chapter summary

The chapter focussed much on the process of indigenization as carried out by the MAOG since inception in 1947 to the present. The next chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study with regard to the experiences of the indigenous pastors in their contribution to the growth of the MAOG.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.0 Chapter overview

In Chapter 4, the discussion mainly centred on the concept of indigenization as understood by the pastors of the MAOG over the years, that is, from its origins to the present. This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study. The study sought to understand the contributions of indigenous pastors in the growth of MAOG. The findings of the study are presented in two major sections. The first section outlines the categories generated from the responses of the indigenous pastors studied. The second section discusses in details the two themes emerging from the findings as a response to the main research question which sought to determine the contributions of the indigenous pastors to the growth of the MAOG from 1947 to 2014. Its sub-questions had the following questions:

1. In what areas did the indigenous pastors contribute?
2. What specific roles have the indigenous pastors played in the growth of the MAOG?
3. Why are the names of indigenous pastors absent not mentioned in the historiography of the church?

5.1 General categories from the findings

The study came up with a catalogue of findings as contributions made by the indigenous pastors in the MAOG over the years of its existence. These findings range from the cultural, political, hermeneutical, traditional, medicinal, missions and evangelistic contributions. However, the researcher has condensed these findings into two major

themes, namely the theological and social concern contributions as per the research norms advanced by Marshall and Rossman.¹⁸⁷ Similarly, Patton views that the ability to use thematic analysis involves a number of underlying abilities, or competencies which illuminates the findings of any research study. One competency is called pattern recognition; it is the ability to see patterns, themes, sequences, and differences in seemingly random information.¹⁸⁸

5.2 Presentation and discussion of findings

The study has established that the indigenous pastors have been very instrumental in many ways to the growth of the church in Malawi either as frontrunners or catalysts to the success of the foreign missionaries.¹⁸⁹ Throughout this study, it has been stressed that the contributions of the indigenous pastors are not properly documented. Hence, this research study through the in-depth interviews, FGD and documentary analysis has endeavoured to extricate these muted voices that have been instrumental in the development of the MAOG in Malawi and the lands beyond. This is summed up by the words of one of the early missionaries, Warren Newberry, on the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the MAOG in 1972 who said,

“How can the history of Assemblies of God in Malawi be written with mere pen and ink? Or how can any record of God’s moving be set to the printed page? Those things that can be recorded are names, dates and places, but even then it is impossible to include everything that has happened...”¹⁹⁰

This kind of elusiveness in cataloguing the contributions of the local Malawian pastors manifests in many ways; it is only through the process of indigenization from the perspectives of the indigenous pastors themselves that one can really monitor the depth of commitment as expressed by the Malawian nationals in the growth of pentecostalism in Malawi and beyond, over the years.

¹⁸⁷ Catherine Marshall and Gretchen Rossman, *Designing qualitative research*. (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage, 1989).

¹⁸⁸ MM. Patton, *Qualitative research and evaluation method*. (London: SAGE, 2002) 452

¹⁸⁹ Interview with Respondent 1 FGD in FGD (25th January, 2015)

¹⁹⁰ Warren Newberry. *Assemblies of God: 1947-1972*. (Limbe: AGP, 1972) 3

On the same note, the study has further established that indigenization on the African soil calls for its broadest sense, in order for proper translatability of the universal Christian faith into the forms and symbols of particular cultures of the world. In this sense, the word indigenization validates all human languages and cultures before God as legitimate paths for understanding his divine meanings.¹⁹¹ On this stance, the MAOG must be commended as it engaged a hybrid version of Tippet's indigenization model with a 'self-missionizing principle' added to it.¹⁹² This denotes that indigenization works in a variety of ways depending on the context. As indigenization is primarily used by anthropologists to describe what happens when locals take something from the outside and make it their own, Christian indigenization, on the other hand, occurs when individuals and communities interact under specific conditions of power to consciously choose and combine cultural characteristics that reflect, embody, and transmit the meaning of a Christian theological message through the cultural identity of the people who use them.¹⁹³ It has been in the 'DNA' of Assemblies of God to engage indigenization in their missions programmes to Africa and elsewhere. In spite of these indigenizing efforts, a lot of problems bedevilled the new churches as to continue depending on the missionaries in finances and personnel for many years. Below are the two major themes of the study as the contributions of the indigenous pastors.

5.3 Theological contributions

Pentecostalism, a branch of Christianity which is now referred to as the third wave of Christianity after Catholicism and Protestantism, is a brand of Christianity to which the MAOG subscribes. Generally, this Christian phenomenon has been interpreted primarily in terms of its most characteristic feature, *glossolalia* or speaking in tongues. This has been true both within and without the movement.¹⁹⁴ However, there are many theological portraits characterising pentecostalism and much more, African pentecostalism as

¹⁹¹ Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions, 2000

¹⁹² Appendix 7 has more details on this indigenizing principle. Analysis of research data indicates that the MAOG is doing well in missions and evangelism as a result of this indigenizing model.

¹⁹³ Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions, 2000

¹⁹⁴ Donald W. Dayton. *Theological roots of pentecostalism*. (London: Scarecrow, 1987) 15

depicted by the indigenous pastors of the MAOG. These traits are regarded as contributions to the theology of pentecostalism worldwide. Donald W. Dayton observes that the issue of glossolalia when taken lightly, inhibits some other more important pentecostal tenets which characterize the movement, namely salvation, healing, baptism in the Holy Spirit and *parousia* (Second Coming of Jesus Christ).¹⁹⁵ Some respondents have stressed that the AG being the largest pentecostal church worldwide depicts all these traits.¹⁹⁶

The general view regarding the origin of African pentecostal churches is that they resulted from the American Azusa Street revival of 1906. This is not the case with what is normally seen in Africa as regarding narratives of their establishment. In Nigeria and Nyasaland, for instance, the AG denominations are said to have their origins in the ministry of local believers who received the baptism of the Holy Spirit elsewhere in the Christian diaspora and later began to correspond and interact with the USAAG. It was a common trend of having independent existence first before these African established churches received a missionary from the USAAG to adopt the designation Assemblies of God mission.¹⁹⁷ It is highlighted by Elizabeth Isichei that Africans worked in the critical roles of evangelists, catechists, and teachers in developing the new faith both as initiators or catalysts.¹⁹⁸ Respondent 3 in agreement with this observation had this to say on this:

These people were goal-getters, so they were able to influence the nation and they were also able to attract other partners worldwide to help and minister in the church in Malawi, which helped a lot. And from this leadership, they managed to sensitize, I can say, the holy competition where people were not satisfied to have a status quo, a small church,

¹⁹⁵ These fundamental truths of the Assemblies of God were organized by a theologian Stanley Horton in a book *Into all the truth: a survey of the course and content of divine revelation* which is a denominational training manual for Assemblies of God.

¹⁹⁶ According to recent statistics Assemblies of God Church worldwide has over 60 million adherents, 17 million of which are Africans. Malawi estimates show that there are 2.5 million adherents. AGWM Vital Statistics <http://agwm.com/assets/agwmvitalstats.pdf>

¹⁹⁷ John Farounbi, *A brief history of pentecostal movement in Nigeria* (Lagos: Lemuel, 1997).

¹⁹⁸ Elizabeth Isichei. *A history of Christianity in Africa: from antiquity to the present*. (London: SPCK, 1995).

they would have that ambition to grow, 'we want to grow and become a big church', so that spirit helped in the influence.¹⁹⁹

However, in Malawi, and probably the rest of Africa, these characteristics have been seen in the light of missions' praxis. Inherently, the indigenous pastors, as theological contributions, have made their mark in missions and evangelism, leadership, hermeneutics, soteriology, and many more. For the sake of this study the focus will be on the first three.

5.3.1 On missions and evangelism

It is the underlining belief of all pentecostals that the coming of the Spirit brings an ability to all Christians to perform signs and wonders in the name of Jesus Christ as an accompaniment and authentication of the Gospel message in the praxis of missions and evangelism.²⁰⁰ The role of signs and wonders, particularly that of healing and miracles, is prominent in pentecostal mission praxis. Allan Anderson stresses that the pentecostals regard healing as part and parcel of the Gospel for the poor and afflicted. The early twentieth-century pentecostal newsletters and periodicals abounded with thousands of testimonies to physical healings, exorcisms and deliverances.²⁰¹ Similarly, Grant McClung points out that divine healing is an 'evangelistic door-opener' for pentecostals. He states that signs and wonders are the "evangelistic means whereby the message of the kingdom is actualized in person-centred deliverance".²⁰² Gary McGee takes up the issue of signs and wonders from an historical perspective. This "power from on high" which he calls the "radical strategy in missions...a "new paradigm", has impacted pentecostal

¹⁹⁹ Interview with Respondent 3 in in-depth interview on 31st July, 2014

²⁰⁰ This stance is taken from scriptures like Mark 16: 15 – 18 which say: "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation...And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons;^c they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes^e with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on^f sick people, and they will get well." NIV.

²⁰¹ Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to pentecostalism: global charismatic Christianity*. (Cambridge University Press, 2004) 206-217.

²⁰² Peter White and Cornellius Niemandt, "Ghanaian pentecostal churches' missions approaches." *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 24 (2015): 241 – 261. Online. Internet 12. Mar. 2015. Available: https://www.academia.edu/16733708/Ghanaian_Pentecostal_Churches_Mission_Approaches

and charismatic movements in their mission endeavours.²⁰³ According to him, at the beginning of the twentieth century, there was an expectation that signs and wonders would accompany an outpouring of the Spirit.²⁰⁴

In support of these views, a number of indigenous pastors in the MAOG are known to have performed signs and wonders in the course of their missions' praxis over the years. However, most of these are not recorded in any written account. It is said of the names of the pioneers Laiton Kalambule and Gideon Bomba as having shaken the nation in their church planting ventures as signs and wonders followed their missionary travels.²⁰⁵ Below, is a verbatim account of one of the top respondents at the national headquarters of the MAOG:

The Assemblies of God believed, as it still does today, in following the full Gospel of Jesus Christ as Savior, healer and baptizer in the Holy Spirit and the soon coming king. Every minister was expected to be Holy Spirit filled and have a demonstrable call of God. In those early days, the church experienced rejection and persecution from people of other churches. Sometimes, its members were teased as people that weep because of their way of intercessions in the Spirit. However, the powerful preaching and miracles that happened among them vindicated them as God's witnesses (sic). The leaders believed that the baptism in the Holy Spirit was available to all believers as an endowment of power with the special purpose of effective witnessing to others, in line with Acts 1:8. Rev. Gideon Bomba led the Assemblies of God for seventeen years. He was succeeded by Rev. Maxwell Chapola in 1979. Rev. Maxwell Chapola was an ardent Preacher who travelled throughout the country, winning many souls to Christ. He also had a major influence on the beginning of the Assemblies in Zambia. Rev. Chapola went to be with the Lord in 1989 after leading a General Superintendent for ten years.²⁰⁶

There are a number of pastors working in very remote areas that have worked in this grace yet have not found any space in the media of the country, let alone in the official annals of the church. An exceptional case was recorded by Patrick Mphaka of Malawi

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Gideon C. Bomba, *A roaring lion, beware!* (Limbe: AGP, 1978).

²⁰⁶ Interview with Respondent 2 in in-depth interview on 31st July, 2014

Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) in around 1995 where a blind woman had her eyes opened in a miraculous way when a pastor from Naisi AG church was conducting a revival meeting at Zomba Air wing trading centre.²⁰⁷ This grace, otherwise known as the realm of the miraculous acts in the pentecostal circles, normally has been exercised in the light of pastoral and evangelistic campaigns. Many indigenous pastors are ministering in the deep recesses of Malawi, travelling around places mostly inaccessible to vehicles. This has been a trend for the church in Malawi where the majority of the populace live in rural areas. It is recorded that the missionaries established churches only in district headquarters as well as famous trading centres.²⁰⁸ Yet, today the MAOG boasts of having planted churches in almost every known area of Malawi through the missions and evangelism approach. In concomitant with rural poor housing setting of rural Malawi, the churches range from grass-thatched structures to temporary shacks with a few iron-roofed structures as one would expect to see in towns. This is due to the fact that indigenous pastors have been responsible for such a feat without receiving any financial incentive from anyone else. Typical of all pentecostals, missions and evangelism is driven by an eschatological motivation to prompt Jesus second coming when the whole world is fully ministered to the gospel – “*And this gospel of the kingdom " will be preached in the whole world " as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come*” (Matthews 24:14). Carrying Gospel tracts and missionary equipment to remote areas of the country, most of these travelled on foot. The gifts of the Holy Spirit prove very invaluable in such areas tackling problems ranging from sicknesses, witchcraft and lack of basic resources.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁷ The pastor's name is Charles Makawa, one of the indigenous pastors working in rural areas ministering at a Church in Zomba District. During “the Morning Basket” programme, He narrated to the reporter that more than five people had their eyes opened by that time through his ministry. Apart from this occurrence, the researcher has not come across any account of that magnitude recorded in the media or church records. The pastor is even least known among the top officials of the Assemblies of God in Malawi.

²⁰⁸ Gregory Mvula and Enson Lwesya. *Flames of fire: the history of Assemblies of God and pentecostalism in Malawi, spreading the flames at home and abroad*. (Blantyre: AGLC, 2005).

²⁰⁹ There are some pastors who are excelling in the grace of performing signs and wonders; a good example is that of Rev. George Samuel currently [2014] ministering at Ntcheu Assemblies of God church and Rev. Steven Banda of Kawale Assemblies. These pastors are attracting the multitudes beyond the MOAG membership to the wonders that God is performing through them. It is said that Pastor George Samuel did not go to school but learned reading and writing while at Mcheneka bible school in Dedza; an angel of the

The growth of the MAOG hinges primarily on the promises and manifestation of the realm of the miraculous acts which includes healings, deliverance from evil spirits, and calls to regeneration. Much as this emphasis proved a very vital asset to missions and evangelism then, it is equally appealing to the general populace of Malawi. It should be stressed here that African communities are, to a large extent, health-orientated communities and in their traditional religions, rituals for healing and protection are prominent.²¹⁰ The AG indigenous pastors responded to what they experienced as a void left by a rationalistic Western form of Christianity which had unwittingly initiated what was tantamount to the destruction of their cherished spiritual values by seeking to separate 'healing' from 'religion' and secularising it. Much as the pentecostal missionaries declared a message that reclaimed ancient biblical traditions of healing and protection from evil and demonstrated the practical effects of these traditions, it was the nationals who practically inculturated these traditions when carrying out their job on the ground. This resonated well with the popular beliefs of African people. Pentecostalism went a long way towards meeting their physical, emotional and spiritual needs, offering solutions to life's problems and ways to cope in a threatening and hostile world.²¹¹

The research study is of the view that failure to address issues of health in missions and evangelism is the sole reason which renders religion to be irrelevant in Malawian societies which eventually leads many Christians to degenerate into syncretism. As for those Christian missions by the mainline churches which incorporated health services, that is, hospitals on their agenda, they lessened the problem of syncretism drastically. Toeing this line of thinking, Rev. Dr. Kawale, the then Secretary General of Nkhoma Synod said that the majority of Christians in Malawi practice syncretism. A good example, according to him, a number of Christians partook of the *Mchape* drink at Liwonde, a concoction thought to cure or prevent HIV and AIDS prepared by a Billy Chisupe, the self-proclaimed African Traditional Religion (ATR) prophet in 1995. He

Lord taught him how to read in a dream. He now preaches in English and has visited countries like the USA for ministry.

²¹⁰ John Mbiti, *African religions and philosophy*. (London: Longman, 1990).

²¹¹ Hans Geir Aasmundsen, *Pentecostalism, globalisation and society in contemporary Argentina*. Södertörn University (Sodertorns hogskola SE-141 89 Huddinge, 2013).

swayed the country and the regions beyond Malawi into believing he had a cure for HIV and AIDS. The manner in which the Christians from all walks of life got shaken to follow him, proved that the fabric of Malawi's Christianity has some cracks attributed to the problem of syncretism.²¹² The same views were also shared by Respondent 1FGD in the issue of drinking *thobwa* which was not sanctioned by the Assemblies of God missionaries:

From what I have found out is that the very first missionaries settled around Ntcheu Dedza where there is a lot of traditional beer drinking. So, when the white men came to preach, when they found their members drinking *thobwa* (a beverage drink made from maize flour), they could not differentiate between *thobwa* from *maseke* (opaque beer which looks like *thobwa*). So they wanted their members to refrain from drinking. And, with the levels of learning of the people translating for them, when they said, "this is not beer, but sweet beer" they complicated the matter. So with that understanding and at the same time they [the missionaries] wanted to avoid the temptation of drinking beer; they would keep the *thobwa* and it would stay for three to four days and it would begin to ferment, so they said why don't we stop this?

But over the year, that is another thing about education, people studied the bible the more. If we use the word ferment, there are so many things that ferment. Even we eat bread that ferment, we give our children, when they are young, gripe water – yes, there is a content of alcohol. So, there are so many things that contain alcohol, so we find that it was just, like Paul puts it in Acts 15, it was like adding something on top of salvation. Such people would miss out on salvation, miss out the baptism of the Holy Spirit just to get hold on top trivial issues. Because that is now, it was disturbing the culture of the people, now they became hypocrites that in the presence of their fellow believers they would not drink. But their wives would keep something at home. That's their drink when they go the garden, when they visit their friends. So we stopped people from taking the fermented thing but we open Coca-Cola which fermented. So it was a double standard.²¹³

²¹² Rev. Dr. Kawale during interview on MBC Television, 2005 lamented over the shallowness of Malawi's Christianity which he described as lacking in real commitment which results in syncretism. This is exemplified in the *Mchape* saga of 1995 where a good number of professing Christians went to Liwonde in Machinga district to drink an HIV/AIDS cleansing concoction prepared by an ATR prophet Billy Chisupe.

²¹³ Interview with Respondent 1FGD in FGD (25th January, 2015).

This scenario need no further elaboration as it stresses the importance for indigenizing the Gospel from the point of view African Theology, despite the danger of syncretism – where it holds that *fides quarerens intellectum* (faith must seek understanding).²¹⁴ Viable missions in Africa must continue to seek understanding, “particularly in the face of every new situation, circumstance, and culture” to avoid degenerating the Christian faith into serious syncretism.²¹⁵ In the words of Pius Abioje, African Christian theology of inculturation should indeed live to its saltiness as a contextual theology that seeks to incarnate Christianity in Africa as a way of making Christianity an African-thing. Otherwise, Christianity will remain a foreign religion, in which Africans can only play-act without displaying true commitment.²¹⁶

In the light of Tippet’s model of indigenization, the ideas of self-theologizing and self-propagating have manifested in the manner indigenous leadership has carried out its work recently. David Bosch, attests to the importance of self-theologizing as a new paradigm for doing missions. He commends the Third World churches that have taken an initiative in coming up with a mode of theology tailored for their taste:

So, we see an upsurge of interest, especially in the Third World churches, in narrative theology, theology as story and other non-conceptual forms of theologizing. It is important to recognize that these modes of thinking and expression are not irrational or antirational. The problem of scientism is that it fetters human thought as cruelly as any authoritarian belief system has ever done, that it offer no scope for our most vital beliefs and forces us to disguise them in farcically inadequate terms.²¹⁷

In an effort to fully indigenize and inculturate the work in Malawi, the MAOG under the leadership of Malawian indigenous nationals is on record as having initiated a number of missionary campaigns to fully iron out some of the misconceptions associated with

²¹⁴ Pius Oyeniran Abioje, “Path to African Christian theology of inculturation.” *Journal of Arabic and Religious Studies*: 15, (2001): 1-13

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ David J. Bosch. *Transforming mission: paradigm shifts in theology of mission*. (Mary Knoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1995) 353-354.

pentecostalism in the country. In 1995 the MAOG under the leadership of Rev. Dr Lazarus Chakwera launched a Decade of Missions codenamed 'Missions, we can do it too'. It was a very ambitious programme as attested by Respondent 3:

And we had a decade of harvest that helped a lot... another contribution was the emphasis on the missions. You know in 1994 we had a special convention where we said 'Missions we can do it too'. Yes, missions we can do it too. That came with a good [sic] bang to the nation. The campaign really transformed [sic] and pulled ourselves, in that I would say the bible school which is not just, I mean, *kuti* Sheaffer *ananimangira* (that Sheaffer built for us) helped in fostering the initiative. If the Malawi church was not willing to partner with those people [the white missionaries] or to have these infrastructures, we would not have the structures in place. If the Malawi church was just, I mean, castigating those partners that would not have materialized. But the church allowed and accepted the vision to have big infrastructure.²¹⁸

This initiative must be commended because it is in line with the Tippet's model on tenet of self-determination where the church in serious indigenization ought to make its own decisions as regarding its welfare and future. Although this has been seen in small measures, in the past the bulk of the local initiatives in missions by the nationals suffered from the problem of over-dependence on donors for support in human and financial matters. At least, the new generation of pastors are now grasping this concept to wean themselves from dependency syndrome of the older generations. With this new generation of indigenous pastors some have dared to go flat out in missions in foreign and dangerous areas of the world in place like Sudan, Zimbabwe and India.²¹⁹

5.3.2 Partnerships in missions

Another milestone in the theme of theology was achieved through partnerships with churches and individuals outside Malawi. One of such partnerships brought in the services of revivalists like Dr Daniel Sheaffer of Crossroads church in the USA. This

²¹⁸ Interview with Respondent 3 in in-depth interview on 31st July, 2014

²¹⁹ Respondent 3 attested to the fact that the MAOG under the leadership of Rev. Lazarus Chakwera sent missionaries from Malawi plant churches and a bible school in Zimbabwe in a 'Decade of Harvest' campaign of 1995 to 2005. A couple, Mr. Mwamvani and his wife, were sent to Sudan and other parts of North African regions as missionaries to the Muslims.

man built landmark structures at the National headquarters of the MAOG in Lilongwe besides constructing churches throughout Malawi in almost every district in Malawi. The structures completely changed the perceptions of people as regards the MAOG in Malawi society. A number of respondents attribute this development to the liberality of the indigenous leadership in respecting and recognizing the gifts of people of the other races whom God had also blessed.

The second contribution is leadership. The leadership that was there, was able to interact with the entire world. After the late Chapola and the coming in of Dr. Chakwera with his team, these people were goal-getters. So, they were able to influence the nation and attract other partners worldwide to help and minister in Malawi; that helped a lot. And from this leadership, they managed to sensitize everyone in the movement. I can say, there came a holy competition among pastors where people were not satisfied to go by a mere status quo of getting satisfied with a small church.²²⁰

Actually, the involvement of Dr Sheaffer and other foreign missionaries under the auspices of indigenous leadership is regarded as the Malawi miracle. Partnerships in missions in the MAOG are regarded as very beneficial because the MAOG manages to pull resources from well-wishers for the benefit of the church.

5.3.3 Hermeneutics

The issues of hermeneutics pervade almost every area covered in this discussion. But here the research study tackles some major areas as they starkly reflect the new thinking that has characterised the developments in the modern times as regards the image the MAOG is displaying to the world. Some scholars have proposed the addition of a seventh tenet to Allan Tippet's six point model on indigenisation which stipulates that a church should be self-theologizing. The rationale behind this being that a truly indigenous church will develop a theology of its own depending on a local culture that surrounds it inculturation of theology "These theologies would affirm the central doctrines of the Christian faith, but they would express them using metaphors and

²²⁰ Interview with Respondent 3 in in-depth interview on 31st July, 2014

concepts that reflect their own unique cultures”.²²¹ In essence, this is the right approach in missions which checks supra-cultural influences of the foreign missionaries planting churches in Africa to impose their cultures instead of the biblical faith.

Looking at the MAOG, one can easily see that the church has tremendously developed in all spheres since 1989 when Rev. Lazarus Chakwera took the reigns of the church as compared to the two eras of his indigenous predecessors. A number of respondents attribute this development to the implications of new hermeneutics the church has employed. The indigenous leadership that was there then began to interact with the entire world. After the reign of late Rev. Chapola, the team that was led by Dr. Chakwera could be described as goal getters as they attracted a number of partners worldwide to help the church in Malawi.²²² Rev. Dr Lazarus Chakwera was the first ever highly educated indigenous minister in the MAOG as compared to his predecessors. He was a graduate of Chancellor College, one of the constituent colleges of the University of Malawi, trained as a Presbyterian minister under Nkhoma Synod in South Africa and acquired a doctoral degree in the USA. Gideon Bomba’s known occupation before answering to the call of God was a cook and worked in mines in both Rhodesia and South Africa. His only credentials were the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Similarly, Maxwell Chapola worked as a tailor in Northern Malawi district of Mzimba before surrendering his life to the Lord for ministry. Again his strong credentials were the charisma he received from the Lord enabling him to rise above his peers. Unlike other churches which emphasize good academic papers as a prerequisite for ministry, the pentecostals look for demonstrable calling in one’s life as attested in the following verbatim:

Not disregarding those who have not been educated, that’s the other advantage of pentecostals, even non-educated people become ministers of the Gospel, other than the other so called mainline churches, where they have education standards for becoming ministers. But pentecostalism does not put education first, it puts spirituality first. So education is there to complement.²²³

²²¹ John Mark Terry, “Indigenous churches” *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*. Ed. A. Scott Moreau. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000) 483-485

²²² Interview with Respondent 3 in in-depth interview on 31st July, 2014

²²³ Interview with Respondent 1FGD in FGD (25th Jan. 2015)

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²²² Interview with Respondent 3 in in-depth interview on 31st July, 2014

²²³ Interview with Respondent 1FGD in FGD (25th Jan. 2015)

Generally, the MAOG experienced tremendous growth in the 1990s which led to some governance and functional problems. “Different denomination structures were overtaken by both numerical and local assemblies’ growth. The awareness of these structural fissures manifested during that year’s [1997] general presbytery meeting held that year. At the end of the debates and deliberation, it became evidently clear that the ‘wines skins’ of the church were inadequate to keep the new wine flowing therein. The whole leadership, administrative and operational structures needed revamping”.²²⁶ One of the contentious issues which plagued the movement from its inception in 1947 was divorce and remarriage. The first Malawian indigenous pioneer, Laiton Kalambule, parted ways with the AG over disagreements with the white missionaries emanating from hermeneutical misunderstandings.

To differ on doctrinal issues something I’d say it’s normal. Because the missionaries, they came on a different front and the nationals on the other front... and in those days when the missionaries were coming and looking at you *kuti mukuyimba mmanja madrums ng’oma* (that you were clapping hands and beating drums), they would associate that with, I mean, witchcraft. And now also coming in Africa, they needed to or to adjust to find a way to come accommodate or to adjust to find a way to come into the system properly and help the church to understand and differentiate *kuti* (that) these things they are sinful practices. So you come in a culture *ngati ku* (like in) Mangochi where people, I mean, polygamy is a stronghold, its normal. So if you differ on those fronts *basi mwasiyana* (you are taking different paths). So, they needed to approach with wisdom. However, from what I have observed missionaries were coming in with a baggage. This baggage issued out of different backgrounds they came from. For instance they would impose on Malawians their culture as if it was biblically supported on another hand they would restrict the indigenous population from using some of the materials they brought from the western world. And sometimes they would not want to leave that baggage. And the nationals would struggle also to accommodate their baggage.²²⁷

²²⁶ G.H. Mvula and E.M. Lwesya. *Flames of fire: the history of Assemblies of God and pentecostalism in Malawi, spreading the flames at home and abroad*. (Blantyre: AGLC, 2005) 278.

²²⁷ Interview with Respondent 3 in in-depth interview on 31st July, 2014

It was reported in a 1997 General Presbytery meeting that some pastors who had remarried after their wives had run away needed to be stripped of their ministerial status. After much debate and consideration an ad-hoc committee to review the constitution of the MAOG was set up to thoroughly come up with a lasting recommendation to the problem of divorce and remarriage. The committee was given a task to come up with a constitution amendment to realign the movement with the current growth, social and psychological realities. This approach somehow simmered the situation but not fully eradicated the divorce and remarriage problems. What prevailed could be regarded as judgement based on situational ethics of every matter.

So, I can tell you that even now we do not encourage divorce, we do not tolerate divorce. Only that, years back, I think that was 2004 - the General Presbytery discussed this issue and said recommended that each case must be viewed according to circumstances. Therefore, if a minister is responsible for a divorce, he'll not be allowed to remarry and continue. If he remarries he'll stop ministering. That's our stand at the moment. But we don't condone divorce...²²⁸

Another area which has benefited from the new hermeneutics regards the issue of political and social concerns. Generally, the majority of classical pentecostals have been shunning politics regarding it as mundane. Primarily the MAOG, being one of the classical pentecostal churches, examined the evangelistic mandate as proposed in the Great Commission of Matthew 28: 18-20 as the sole reason for the existence of the church. But today through engagement with indigenization processes analysed in the light of new hermeneutics, have led the church to an exegetical application of Matthew 25: 34-40²²⁹ equating its mandate to the Great commission mandate.

²²⁸ Interview with Respondent 2 in in-depth interview on 31st July, 2014

²²⁹ "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you? The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'" (NIV, 2002)

The classical pentecostals, they are the ones that said, no politics. Aha. The classical pentecostals they are the very distinct division between the evangelistic mandate and the social concern mandate. Let me give you an example, the social concern mandate that's where we do clinics, all things, education, all humanitarian issues, even politics, engagement with politics, culture, all the involvement, social humanitarian work, they emphasise this. So they were bit on Mathews 28:18-20. They did not look at these. This is Mathews 25 – you know I was hungry, you never fed me, I was in prison you never visited me – yes, that's the concern. They emphasize this. But it was influenced by the American notion. But it was not so at the beginning.²³⁰

This new hermeneutics, though misunderstood by the bulk of Christians in the MAOG and the entire Christendom in Malawi, is biblically correct. A number of bible scholars have now come to appreciate this stance. John Stott stresses that the apathetic stance of the church towards political and social mandate was due to a number of factors in the history of missions at the beginning of the Twentieth Century. These factors led to what he termed as the 'Great Reversal'.²³¹

It is an established fact that at least during the last century, not only in Britain and America but also through the agency of missionaries in Africa and Asia, the gospel of Jesus Christ produced the good fruit of social reform. But something happened, especially among the Evangelical Christians. At some point during the first 30 years of this century and especially during the decade following the first World War One, a major shift took place which American historian Timothy L. Smith has termed The Great Reversal.²³²

The first factor was the fight against theological liberalism seeping into the church at the turn of the century which the churches of Europe and America were embroiled in. Understandably, the churches became preoccupied with the defence of the Gospel as the majority of Christian believers seemed to have abandoned the historic biblical

²³⁰ Interview with Respondent 1 in in-depth interview on 31st July, 2014

²³¹ John Stott, *Issues facing Christians today: new perspectives on social and moral dilemmas*. (London: Marshall Pickering, 1990) 5-6

²³² Ibid.

Christianity.²³³ It was at this time -1910 to 1915 – when fundamentalism arose forcing the evangelicals into a defensive mode thereby abandoning the social concerns of the Gospel. It was also at this particular time when Social Gospel was birthed out of theological liberalism. The church therefore abandoned anything that had to do with the social mandate of the Gospel for fear of compromise with the prevailing lukewarm condition of the Western church.²³⁴

Secondly, after the First and Second World Wars there was also widespread pessimism and disillusionment because of the exposure of human evil. Human beings and human society appeared to be irreformable and any attempts at reform were deemed useless and untenable. As a result eschatological teachings of the pre-millennial scheme took the centre stage.

There was the spread (especially through J.N. Darby's teaching and its popularization in the Scofield bible) of the premillennial scheme. This portrays the evil world as beyond improvement or redemption, and predicts instead that it will deteriorate steadily until the coming of Jesus, who will then set up his millennial reign on earth. If the world is getting worse, and if only Jesus at his coming will put it right, the argument runs, there seems no point in trying to reform it meanwhile.²³⁵

World Christendom was thus poisoned and the social mandate of the gospel was in serious jeopardy. It was no wonder then that the pentecostals missionaries who came to Nyasaland saw no point in dealing with social concern. Their mandate was only one, the Great Commission. They planted churches and established a bible school in Dedza at a place called Mcheneka. Some missionaries tried to revive the social mandate but were ridiculed and discouraged.

²³³ John Stott, *Issues facing Christians today: new perspectives on social and moral dilemmas*. (London: Marshall Pickering, 1990) 5-6

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Ibid, p.8

Let me give you an example. The Chitipa, the Misuku mission that began in 1943, had a lot of schools, had clinics, primary and secondary schools and clinics. This is AG under Ragner Udds. But as the years went and when other missionaries came, they came with a different philosophy. They hated what Ragner Udd did. So what happened in 1958, there was an uprising, the Kwacha uprising, the Kamuzu issue. Burning of things, they went and burned the Misuku site because the missionaries were looked at as colonialists- colonial masters. And that place was Assemblies of God for many-many years. But the missionaries, because Ragner Udds was no longer in the country, every missionary who was here refused to go to take it up. Because they hated what Ragner Udds was doing, they left the place to rot, they never rebuilt it; they never rebuilt schools, because schools were everywhere in the district.²³⁶

It can easily be deduced with these facts that the whole enterprise of missions was at fault. The research study contends that the whole issue of indigenization and inculturation though theoretically on paper was the guideline for doing missions by the Assemblies of God, in practice it bore no results, that is to say, in as far as the three 'selves' of the Henry Venn model of indigenization were concerned. The indigenous Christians were not given any room to theologize for proper contextualization and inculturation of the Gospel to occur. As Harvey Sindima puts it, in African Christian Theology the challenge is to make Christianity authentically African. The process of theologizing calls for a deep theological reflection which must be able to deconstruct ideas on Africa articulated in Europe and America which cause a serious number of problems to the majority of ardent Africans.²³⁷ Similarly, a final communiqué of a Pan-African Conference of Third World Theologians in 1977 made a statement to this effect:

We believe that African theology must be understood in the context of African peoples to shape a new future that is different from the colonial past and the neo-colonial present. The African situation requires a new theological methodology that is different from the approaches of the dominant theologies of the West. African theology must reject, therefore, the prefabricated idea of North Atlantic theology by defining

²³⁶ Interview with Respondent 1 in in-depth interview on 31st July, 2014

²³⁷ Harvey Sindima, *Drums of redemption: an introduction to African Christianity*. (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1994).

itself according to the struggles of the people in their resistance against the structures of domination. Our task as theologians is to create a theology that arises from and is accountable to African people.²³⁸

Now with the use of the new hermeneutics, the MAOG through many forums like biannual General Presbytery meetings, the meetings which gather a cross-section of pastors from all the administrative divisions of the church, the movement, apart from attending to ecclesiastical business, is now participating in political and socio-economic matters in a prophetic and non-partisan approach. The church has its representation in Public Affairs Committee (PAC) and other bodies of interest. Besides, a non-governmental organization called the Assemblies of God Relief and Development Services (AGREDS) was instituted to spearhead development programmes as a social concern programme. It also encourages its members to participate in partisan politics. On this stance, Respondent 1 has this to say:

So, now how does Dr. Laz Chakwera move to the other side? It's because to him this social concern versus evangelistic concern, he says, this dichotomy was never set by God, and this dichotomy was set by us. So, this dichotomy of evangelism versus social concern, to some of us it no longer exists, it's both. So if you came to our church, you find that we have a clinic, 20 kilometres from here we have a clinic, at Mpingu. As our local church we do street kids ministries, poor street kids, we have homes for them at Mpingu we are beginning a school. At Mpingu we have 20 acres; we have a radio station and a TV station. But our goal is, how do we engage community and how do we impact this community for Jesus? You can't say this community we can't impact it we just tell them how to go to heaven, no you can't. But, that is our interpretation of theology.

So to me, for example, when we were going towards the elections we insisted in our church, we would preach and say we are not aiming at MCP, we want (the one from) Christians in the positions, yes, Christians. So would have UDF, DPP, MCP stand in front and we'd pray for all of them, nonpartisan. So, but *wa* (the one from) DPP failed no *wa* (the one from) PP, *was* (the one from) standing PP *ku* (in) Zomba, Mark *aaa* Botomani, yes, he didn't go through. We had *wa* (the one

²³⁸ Kofi Appiah-Kubi and Sergio Torres, Ed., *African theology en route: papers from the Pan African Conference of Third World Theologians*, December 17-23, 1977 (Accra: Orbis Books 1979) 11.

from) UDF *aaa* Namizinga, he didn't go through, we had two MCP went through; a Chakwera as MP there's Peter Dimba, went through, yes he's MCP. Tony Ngalande, he was trounced by Lucius, Lucius *ku* (in) Balaka. Tony, Lucius *ndi amayi* (with our mother) *a* first lady, all of them they were in the same area. But they are all in our church, local church; they still come to our church. I would stand as a senior pastor and say listen, we have the responsibility to influence the government.²³⁹

This is in line with new hermeneutical understanding of doing missions in this 'postmodernist paradigm' as David Bosch puts it. In this paradigm the issues of the social mandate are taken aboard as having the same significance with the evangelistic mandate of the church, a thing which has been on the forefront for many years. It must be done in theologizing terms understood by the nationals (Africans). David J. Bosch writes:

So, we see an upsurge of interest, especially in Third World churches, in narrative theology – theology as story and other non-conceptual forms of theologizing...metaphor, symbol, ritual, sign, and myth long maligned by those interested only in exact expression of rationality, are today being rehabilitated; they create forms and evoke action with a purpose, but compel the heart.²⁴⁰

5.4 Social concern mandate

The second theme, as an indigenous contribution by the pastors of the MAOG, is on the social concern mandate. The evangelical and pentecostal missionaries, who brought the gospel to Malawi, like their counterparts elsewhere in Africa and possibly in the whole world, had abandoned the social mandate as stipulated in scripture. They opted for the Great Commission in Mathews 28:18 - 20 carrying the Gospel to the ends of the world ignoring another equally pressing mandate appearing on the day of judgement narrative, Matthew 25: 34-40 (NIV) - "*Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed*

²³⁹ Interview with Respondent 1 in in-depth interview on 31st July, 2014

²⁴⁰ David Bosch, *Transforming mission: paradigm shifts in theology of mission* (Maryknoll, New York: 1991). 353-354.

clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me..."

There are many theories which led to the abandonment of the social mandate by the evangelical world; the abandonment is codenamed 'the great reversal'.²⁴¹ The decades following the First and Second World Wars, a major shift took place. There was widespread pessimism and disillusionment because of proliferation of evil as perpetrated by human beings. Many missiologists viewed human beings and human society as irreformable and beyond redemption while on earth. So any attempts at the social concern mandate were looked upon with disdain. The only sensible approach was that of the evangelistic mandate which offered hope for the advent of the otherworldly bliss.²⁴² Another theory is attributed to an overreaction against the emergence of the social Gospel which stressed that the essential purpose of Christianity was to transform human society into the kingdom of God by regenerating all human relationships, with no emphasis about the other worldly bliss which is emphasized in Christian eschatology. This stance generally made evangelicals and other conservatives condemn everything having to do with the social gospel. Unfortunately this led to the abandonment of the social concern mandate.²⁴³

5.4.1 On socio-economics

Similarly the MAOG, from its inception had disregarded the socio-economic aspects of the Gospel as opposed to what their counterparts the Presbyterians, Anglicans and Roman Catholics were doing. While these other congregations were building schools, hospitals and initiating developments projects in Agriculture, the Assemblies of God missionaries focussed all their energy in planting churches prompted by the evangelistic mandate. In this mandate all the pentecostals were driven by an eschatological urgency to preach the Gospel to the ends of the earth with the aim of swiftly ushering Jesus' second coming;

²⁴¹ John Stott. *Issues facing Christians today: new perspectives on social and moral dilemmas*. (London: Marshall Pickering, 1990) 8.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ibid, p.7

some of the contemporary events in the world, like the First and Second World War, were proof enough signalling the *parousia*. However, there were some missionaries like Ragner Udds who deviated from this position; he engaged the social mandate drive in northern Malawi with noticeable success as Respondent 1 testifies:

Let me give you an example. The Chitipa mission, Misuku mission to be precise, that began in 1943, had a lot of schools, had clinics, primary and secondary schools and clinics. This is AG under Ragner Udds. But as the years went and when other missionaries came, they came with a different philosophy. They hated what Ragner Udd did. They didn't like it... My mother she knew this area, it was called Mibula station, yes. You have to remember a missions' station, in those years had three things: missions station at a congregation, part of the mission station had a clinic had a healthy centre and it had school. You could not find a mission station without three of these. Anywhere, whether catholic, whether pentecostal whether evangelical, it had at least one.²⁴⁴

As attested by the above verbatim account, it is clear that the zeal to accomplish the evangelistic mandate was done with such urgency as to cast a blind eye on the other needs which were equally fundamental to the accomplishment of the Great Commission. No wonder then that the likes of Ragner Udds were looked at as misdirected and out of focus with the nobler vision of reaching out to the whole world in no time.

With this kind of frenzy, the indigenization models' three-self churches were compromised. How could the three-self churches be self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating or self-extending, as Venn used it, when the social mandate of the Gospel was ignored? As a result the Assemblies of God failed miserably in infrastructural development, governance and mercy ministries as compared with the other churches. When the indigenous pastors took over the reigns of the movement in 1962, there was so little to show to the world in as far as buildings, schools, hospitals and social amenities were concerned. Because of the one-sided focus, some of the churches which were planted in the remote areas failed to hold on as many Christians migrated to churches that were fully established in social amenities. However, with the nationals

²⁴⁴ Interview with Respondent 1 in in-depth interview on 31st July, 2014

taking over the mantle of leadership, the MAOG has witnessed a realignment which gradually has seen infrastructural and socio-economic developments, though with some hesitancy. Why the hesitancy? There are some advocates who still view church's involvement in social concerns as delaying the drive to reach the ends of the world with the Gospel. So involvement in education, hospitals, governance, social justice, culture and commerce were looked upon as worldly and time wasters.²⁴⁵

Apart from Ragner Udds who dared to contribute positively towards the socio-economic development of the people under his mission's jurisdiction, the MAOG has made some indelible strides; though with some teething problems as is attested by some respondents below:

Our training institutions include the Assemblies of God School of Theology (AGST) [Now codenamed MAGIT – Assemblies of God Institute of Theology] where ministers train for Certificates, Diplomas, and B. A. Degrees in conjunction with Global University in USA. We also have All Nations Theological Seminary where post-graduate studies are offered for Masters of Arts Degrees, also in conjunction with Global University in USA. The Assemblies of God Extension School provides an opportunity to people who are unable as residential students at our theological institutions to obtain a Certificate in Religious Studies. [Recently the Malawi Assemblies of God University (MAGU) was inaugurated as another milestone in the social concern mandate]²⁴⁶

Apart from the above mentioned institutions, the MAOG has a secondary school at Mcheneka in Dedza on the former first bible institute for the Assemblies of God.²⁴⁷ There is also a non-governmental organization called Assemblies of God Relief Services (AGREDS) with a mandate to disaster management alongside socio-economic and human development.

²⁴⁵ John Stott, *Issues facing Christians today: new perspective on social and moral dilemmas*. (London: Marshall Pickering, 1990).

²⁴⁶ Interview with Respondent 2 in in-depth interview on 31st July, 2014

²⁴⁷ At the time of writing this report, the Girls secondary school at the former bible school premises – Macey Williams Secondary school - was no longer in the hands of the MAOG headquarters but was sublet to a local Church, Kawale Harvest Church of Lilongwe city. This arrangement was made for the purposes of competitiveness.

5.4.2 On culture

On issues involving culture, the study has found that the Assemblies of God missionaries had difficulties in appreciating the African culture which they came into contact with. This stance led a number of missionaries to treat native Africans as children who needed guidance on every step – paternalism.²⁴⁸ For instance, African music with its drumming and clapping accompaniments was looked upon as demonic. Similarly, rites of passage and a numbers of customs which formed the backbone of African societies were regarded as detrimental to the Christian witness. The American missionaries, for instance, in their notion about indigenizing their missionary work, regarded African culture as static or either looking backwards. By being static the assumption is that the African culture has its roots in the legendary past, a stance which was disagreeable to the majority of Africans who felt the missionaries were detached from reality on the ground. Some of the things that the missionaries clung to had actually lost their function in African societies and the Africans themselves were more than willing to substitute them with the Western cultural elements that suited well with African culture.²⁴⁹

Eminent scholars have echoed this anomaly which shook the very core of mission praxis in Africa. For instance, Gary McGee describes the first twenty years of pentecostalism as mostly chaotic in operation. In their newsletters the missionaries would report with an aura of optimism and triumph of how many people were converted, healed and had received Spirit baptism, seldom mentioning any difficulties encountered or the inevitable cultural blunders made. These blunders, however, are clearly discerned in early reports published in pentecostal periodicals. Early pentecostal missionaries from North America and Europe were often paternalistic, creating dependency, and sometimes blatantly racist.²⁵⁰ Saayman has observed that a good number of pentecostal movements came into being as missionary institutions and their mission work was not the result of some clearly thought out

²⁴⁸ Respondent 1 confided in the researcher that some white missionaries were somehow racist. He narrated an instance where he could not permit indigenous pastors to come to his apartment.

²⁴⁹ Gregory Mvula and Enson Lwesya, *Flames of fire: the history of Assemblies of God and pentecostalism in Malawi, spreading the flames at home and abroad* (Blantyre: AGLC, 2005).

²⁵⁰ Gary McGee, "Pentecostal Missiology: moving beyond triumphalism to face the issues", *Pneuma: the Journal of the Society of Pentecostal Studies*, 16:2 (1994): 208, 211.

theological decision, and so policy and methods were formed mostly in the crucible of missionary praxis.²⁵¹ Respondent 3 had this to say:

And in those days when the missions were coming, and looking at you that you were clapping hands and beating drums, they would associate that with witchcraft. And now, the missionaries coming to Africa, they needed to adjust for them to accommodate and to come into the system properly in order to help the church to understand and differentiate things that were sinful. So you come in a culture like an Islam-dominated Mangochi where people practise polygamy; to them it is taken as normal. So if you differ on those fronts definitely you are taking two different paths. So, they needed to approach with wisdom. However, from what I have observed missionaries were coming in with a 'baggage'. And sometimes they would not want to leave that baggage. And the nationals they would struggle also to accommodate their baggage.²⁵²

Of particular importance were the rites of passage of *Jando* in the Yao areas, *Gulewamkulu* in the Chewa areas of the Central region of Malawi and *Vimbuza* dance used for exorcism in the northern region which became the points of concern by the missionaries. There was need to carefully tackle these issues because they were the very cultural foundations which defined the very existence of the people concerned. By the grace of God, the Gospel penetrated deeply in these societies by the help of indigenous interpreters who cushioned the cultural shocks between the white missionaries and the natives. There is a major rise in the number of churches planted in the stronghold of Islam in Mangochi and Machinga districts in the period when the nationals took reigns of the MAOG.²⁵³

One major problem with the stance taken by the Assemblies of God missionaries was that they worked with an aura of colonial mentality of superiority over the Africans which inherently obscured their judgement to differentiate between what was good and bad in

²⁵¹ Willeim Saayman and Klippiess Klitzinger, *Missions in bold humility: David Bosch's work considered*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2013.

²⁵² Interview with Respondent 3 in in-depth interview on 31st July, 2014

²⁵³ Gregory Mvula and Enson Lwesya, *Flames of fire: the history of Assemblies of God and pentecostalism in Malawi, spreading the flames at home and abroad*. (Blantyre: AGLC, 2005).

African cultures. The majority of them at times did not differentiate colonization and missionization. "Colonization rode on the back of treating the natives as less superior to the masters; the subtle reality that further damaged the esteem of the natives was the insidious persuasions for them (the natives) to believe that they were inferior to the masters...the master-servant mind-set permeated some missions for sure. Whether missions overtly pushed for this mind-set or the African knelt down submissively and handed it to them is immaterial to this narrative".²⁵⁴ In other words, African culture was viewed as sinful and retrogressive to the advancement of the Gospel. On this Respondent 1FGD has this to say:

Sometimes, we have to differentiate culture from sin. There are some things that are just cultural but not sinful. For example, in the days of Jesus there was the culture of circumcision; even Jesus was also circumcised. So, among the Yao, for somebody to be circumcised, that will not deter them from receiving the Gospel. But what we discourage is the other rites that go together with circumcision. There is the practice of invoking evil spirits in that ceremony. So, we allow, we go there to preach Christ. And those who feel like their children need to go for circumcision, we recommend hospitals for circumcision. Not only Christians, I have had a privilege of working in those areas, even Muslims don't take their children to the bush.²⁵⁵

It is obvious that the missionaries failed to understand the Malawian culture, an issue which would have assisted them tremendously in reaching deeply to the hearts of the natives. As it has been alluded to earlier, syncretism is still widespread among Christians of various persuasions whereby people in private visit witchdoctors seeking solutions for witchcraft and evil spirits. Similarly, many parents continue to send their children for initiation ceremonies as a means of attaining the rites of passage in society.²⁵⁶ In the words of Kwame Bediako, the culture of people comprises something more than music,

²⁵⁴ Walter Elwell, *Evangelical dictionary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan Zondervan, 1982) 1282.

²⁵⁵ Interview with Respondent 1FGD in FGD (25 Jan. 2015).

²⁵⁶ Rev. Dr. Kawale during interview on MBC Television, 2005 lamented over the shallowness of Malawi's Christianity which he described as lacking in real commitment which results in syncretism. This is exemplified in the *Mchape* saga of 1995 where a good number of professing Christians went to Liwonde in Machinga district to drink an HIV/AIDS cleansing concoction prepared by an ATR prophet Billy Chisupe.

dance, artefacts and the like. But it comprises one's worldviews which is pertinent in understanding where "we are coming from, and where we are going. So culture must be regarded as everything in us and around us that defines who we are really are, where we are coming from and where we are going".²⁵⁷ To generalize people's culture as evil is an injustice that the MAOG missionaries committed against the natives in various ways. Another point is that the failure to appreciate African culture also dwarfed the zeal for total dependence on God. True regeneration as patterned on scripture must be an overarching phenomenon that encompasses culture as well. Bediako continues to say that salvation must just involve one's soul but also culture on its deepest level where scripture must become the interpreter of who we are "in the specific concrete sense of who we are in our cultures and tradition".²⁵⁸

It is no wonder then that the MAOG Christians were not allowed to drink *thobwa*, a beverage which the natives were drinking to restore energy after heavy work in their gardens. Because people could not understand the reasons advanced by the missionaries, many people opted to do it secretly resulting into a syncretism of some sort. This practice by the missionaries inherently disturbed the culture of the people pushing them into acts of hypocrisy and double standard.²⁵⁹

Similar sentiments were also expressed by Respondent 3:

That one is connected with where people were coming from. Because *amene amavutika ndi* (the people finding it difficult with) this issue to do with *thobwa* (non-alcoholic opaque beer-like drink) it's people from Dedza and places like that – the Ngoni area because these are places where they were drinking beer heavily. And telling them *kuti mutha kumwa thobwa mutatembenuka mtima* (that you can now drink sweet beer upon conversion to Christ) was becoming really problematic. And even when this *Moyo Watsopano* (New Converts' instructional manual) was being translated, beer *monga mmene* (as it is) is rendered in other versions 'sweet wine' this sweet wine is *thobwa*, everything was spoiled. So that's where it was ... sweet beer, just like that. Right now other

²⁵⁷ Kwame Bediako. *Scripture as interpreter of culture and tradition* in Tokunboh Adeyemo. Ed. Africa Bible Commentary: a one-volume commentary. (Nairobi: Word Alive Publishers, 2006) 3

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Interview with Respondent 1FGD in FGD (25 Jan. 2015)

countries like Tanzania this malt, a non-alcoholic drink like *thobwa*, you know, it's in a bottle similar to Carlsberg beer bottle. In Tanzania if a pastor or a church member is found drinking it, straight away they will be put on discipline - but that one is a non-alcoholic beverage. But because of, I mean, background, that's where we were but now the majority have no problem with *thobwa*.²⁶⁰

However, through the various General Presbytery meetings of the MAOG which are held biannually, a clause in the Old *Moyo Watsopano* [New Christians Baptismal Instruction Manual] forbidding *thobwa* drinking was deleted. This is a very good example of inculturation and indigenization making a very good intervention where issues that were obscure to the white missionaries are now made clear, even to the merriment of the white missionaries who sacrificed their lives on the African soil for the advancement of the Gospel.²⁶¹ Similarly, the retired Rev. Gilbert Banda who was the secretary general of the MAOG at one point in time is credited to have developed some guidelines in the MAOG for the rites of passage issues for the Yao areas of Mangochi and Machinga where issues of circumcision were rife. Unfortunately, these guidelines could not be traced, but they are mentioned in the book "*The Flames of Fire*".²⁶² It is a timely contribution which helped the Christians and some former Muslims not to indulge in syncretism for the purposes of pleasing their Muslim neighbours.

5.4.3 Involvement in political and governance issues

At the International Congress on World Evangelization held in July 1974 at Lausanne, Switzerland which is regarded as the turning point as regarding the incorporation of the social mandate in missions and evangelism, it was noted that the socio-political involvement of the church ought to be emphasized in its praxis.²⁶³ The controversies surrounding the political involvement by the church are as old as the days of the

²⁶⁰ Interview with Respondent 3 in in-depth interview (31 Jul. 2014).

²⁶¹ Gregory Mvula and Enson Lwesya, *Flames of fire: the history of Assemblies of God and pentecostalism in Malawi, spreading the flames at home and abroad*. (Blantyre: AGLC, 2005).

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ John Stott. *Issues facing Christians today: new perspectives on social and moral dilemmas* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1990) 10-11.

patriarchs of the church. There have been problems and there will be problems as regards the question of whether the church should be involved in partisan or nonpartisan way in politics. In a sense, every religion and every political system cannot escape involvement of some kind.

Forester offers some light by surveying a fascinating heritage of varying relationships between theology and politics to which early Christianity had to relate to. All societies have some kind of political theology, "more or less developed, and articulated in a huge diversity of ways...the context out of which Christianity emerged illuminates the special characteristics and problems of Christian political theology and its relation to other approaches to understanding and assessing the political dimension of life".²⁶⁴ In tandem with the views of David Bosch, that time of paradigm shift is always a time of deep uncertainty, this is characteristic of the MAOG in this matter.²⁶⁵ There have been contrary opinions in to this effect affecting the MAOG. This church all along is known for taking a non-involvement in politics from its inception, a tradition which is characterises classical pentecostal churches.

As it has been attested by the majority of respondents in this study, there is a new wind of change affecting the MAOG especially in this dispensation of the multiparty era in Malawi. This wind of change has witnessed the participation of the church in interfaith bodies on good governance and political affairs. One of such bodies is the Public Affairs Committee (PAC). The following verbatim summarises it all:

It's a new trend, indeed, it's a new trend. Only that everything has its own time. That's very important. Formerly we didn't have doctors in MAOG, I mean academicians. So as we are moving, everything is also moving along. And now we are also having people that are involved in other committees. They are involved in, let's say PAC (Public Affairs Committee) and etcetera. Because we are having people that are involved and they are also being exposed, they feel, I have also a contribution which I can make to this. To a certain degree, it is a new

²⁶⁴ Duncan B. Forrester. *Theology and politics*. (New York: Blackwell, 1988) 1.

²⁶⁵ David Bosch. *Transforming mission: paradigm shifts in theology of mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991).

trend, but everything has its time. But, we are all politicians to a certain extent. Go into these other denominations, CCAP, Anglican, they had doctors long back. But come to pentecostals, we were not writing books because just as I said earlier on, we were not people of the book, but were people of the Holy Spirit.

Now, we want the Holy Spirit but we also want to do the academics. And so all that, we are bringing these and now we are putting these together, the world outside is looking at us also and says ok, if you are forming this committee (yes) let's say PAC or whatever, we can bring in Dr. So and so to be part of this.²⁶⁶

This new trend is a direct contribution of the indigenous pastors who felt time was ripe for the MAOG to be actively involved in matters of politics and governance as a social mandate of the church. As it has been said earlier, this results from the new hermeneutics which has seen the self-indigenizing as a requirement of true indigenization in Tippet's Model. The rationale behind this kind of stance revolves around the new thinking in the MAOG which looked at the social problems besetting the nation in socio-economic life as warranting the involvement of the church to partner with other denominations to fight with a common front.

And so I believe it's not good it's not proper for a church to be in a country and be silent about issues of good governance, it is not right. Because whatever happens to a country, it affects the church [eventually]; God used his prophets in the Old Testament as a voice to nations, as a voice to national leaders. Whenever they were going astray, it was the voice of prophets that were bringing them back on track. If the church could remain silent in these issues, then nations will not be blessed by God and God will not be happy. And so, I believe for so many years, we have waited until elections are held then we say, "Let's pray for the politicians to be saved". And that is not easy; what I think is that leaders can transform our countries when they are provided with good counsel to become influencers not be influenced.

²⁶⁶ Interview with Respondent 3 in in-depth interview on 31st July, 2014

If our governments can be led by godly people, I believe our nations can be transformed. We prayed for Dr. Chakwera and we are still praying for him. In fact, we visited his office at parliament, the office of the leader of opposition.²⁶⁷

Concurring with this position is another respondent who influenced his church in the run-up to the 2015 Tripartite General Elections to actively participate in the process of choosing right candidates who would stand for Christian values:

I would stand as a senior pastor and say listen, we have the responsibility to influence the government. And I would stand and say all these political parties the unfortunate thing is they have no ideologies, they do not advocate any specific ideology. *Awa* (the one from) *akuuza* (they tell you that) they hate homosexuals, *awa akuuza chonchi* (these will tell you this), they will never tell you why; they have no ideologies they move because of the people that started the parties. But for us our ideology is to choose men of integrity men of values with Christ, so that's what we were preaching. Somebody made a comment, an elder, he said, "Wow! The way we managed the transition was interesting". Because, here we were having Dr Laz, that's how we call him, as moving out and is going to politics and yet is making a transition. So, it's because we positioned ourselves as non-partisan but engaged; that's the advantage, non-partisan but engaged.

As is expected, there have been opposing views expressed as well, by various pastors, especially those who have been in the movement for quite a long period of time. They feel the pastors should not be involved in partisan politics but that laypeople should be encouraged to do so. Below, is the verbatim account of one respondent:

It is not good, because that compromises the testimony of the gospel. A good example is what happened in North Africa where Christianity collapsed due to such political involvement. The church declined because the clergy were involved in politics, ignoring their ecclesiastical duties. As a result the whole region was islamised because of this gap. In my view the clergy should continue to pursue their prophetic role.

²⁶⁷ Interview with Respondent 3 in in-depth interview on 31st July, 2014

But, they should encourage laypeople to go into politics instead so that there is no vacuum which can be filled by secularists who might easily deviate the whole country from following God.²⁶⁸

However, on the decline of Christianity in North Africa, it is attributed to the failure of indigenization and inculturation. The language used in church liturgy was Latin thereby leaving the indigenous people out in the dark. When the Muslims invaded the region, the indigenous Berber tribesmen easily switched allegiance to the enemies inherently bringing Christianity to extinction.²⁶⁹ Similarly, the researcher is of the view that the MAOG involvement in both partisan and non-partisan politics is a timely development which is in line with the resolutions of the 1974 Lausanne Congress recommending the socio-political involvement of the church if certain problems are to be sorted out in human society.²⁷⁰ Moreover, fear of the general populace of the church to get involved in politics wells up from the misunderstanding on the words politics and political. John Stott says these words may be given either a broad or a narrow meaning. Broadly speaking politics denotes the life of the city and the responsibility of the citizen to live together in a community. On the narrower side, politics means the science of government.²⁷¹

In the broader sense, Jesus himself could be said to have practiced politics. It is also obvious that Jesus never participated in politics, if he is to be assessed on the narrower definitions of the term. With this kind of new hermeneutics, it is surely only proper that the MAOG involvement in politics is a very welcome timely move which must be encouraged. Again, in indigenization of missions, this is in line with Tippet's model tenet of self-determining and self-theologizing, where the church is empowered to make its own decisions deemed fit for the proper inculturation of the Gospel.²⁷² Looking at the social problems bedevilling Malawi, the study views the social concern mandate of the

²⁶⁸ Interview with Respondent 3FGD in FGD (25 Jan. 2015).

²⁶⁹ Adrian Hastings, *The Church in Africa, 1450-1950* (Oxford: Clarendon 1994).

²⁷⁰ John Stott, *Issues facing Christians today: new perspectives on social and moral dilemmas*. (London: Marshall Pickering 1990) 10-11.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Allan Tippet, *Verdict Theology in missionary theory* (Pasadena, California: William Cary Library, 1973).

church will only be meaningful as long as the church dares to tread on the much feared ground of politics. For instance, respondent 1 is of the view that Rev. Dr. Lazarus Chakwera joining of politics, as president designate of the Malawi Congress Party in 2013, is a godly response to the biblical social concern mandate. Because of his high academic status, Rev. Chakwera could easily discern that the dichotomy between evangelistic and social concerns was never set by God but by man, an interpretation which has left many a believers in the MAOG at loggerheads. Unfortunately, the issue of politics has not only baffled the MAOG membership but even Christians of the mainline churches. Respondent 1 narrates that even people from CCAP and Roman Catholic churches say they can permit a layman who is a believer to go into politics but not a pastor. Most of them regard the clergy's involvement in partisan politics as a demotion.²⁷³ Another respondent looks at political involvement as consistent with the biblical pattern where God himself had to appoint Godly people to lead the children of Israel who would bring peace and tranquillity to the nation. He viewed the church's silence on matters of politics and governance as not proper on the premise that whatever happens to the country affects the church also. The church has a very powerful prophetic voice which must be exercised in the light of politics as well.²⁷⁴

The third respondent attributes acquisition of higher education by the ministers of the MAOG as one of the factors setting a new trend of political interest by its members which has come into play at the right time when Malawi as a nation critically needs such leadership. This generation of leaders will be involved in issues of governance with participation in bodies like the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) and other pressure groups put into check the running of the Malawi government. He acknowledges that every human being is in some sense political in nature.²⁷⁵

On the contrary, some respondents urge the church to move with caution. Any political involvement, they reason, has the potential of derailing the evangelistic mandate of the

²⁷³ Interview with Respondent 1 in in-depth interview (31 Jul. 2014).

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Interview with Respondent 3 in in-depth interview on 31st July, 2014

church if mishandled. Yet others feel the church should not even dare engage itself in politics:

It is not good, because that compromises the testimony of the gospel. A good example is what happened in North Africa where Christianity collapsed due to such political involvement. The church declined because the clergy were involved in politics, ignoring their ecclesiastical duties. As a result the whole region was islamised because of this gap. In my view the clergy should continue to pursue their prophetic role. But, they should encourage laypeople to go into politics instead so that there is no vacuum which can be filled by secularists who might easily deviate the whole country from following God.²⁷⁶

According to the word of God, Jesus said, we are the light of the world. So, to me, it's not bad when the churches are involved in social issues. [It is] because, through the involvement in politics or whatever, the church can also have a chance to witness Jesus to politicians, in every area where the church can be involved. But on the other hand, we should be very careful because there is this scripture, I think it's from John where Jesus said, "we are not of this world" ok; we are not of this world. That tells us that we should be very careful when we are interacting with the world. We need to balance. Because when we are involved in politics, we should see to it that we are separated from the world, ok. We should avoid to allow the world to dominate us. But we should see to it that we by our involvement in politics, it's our chance to teach the world how the Christian life is, ok. We should aim at changing the world not the world changing us, that's what I can say. It's good for a pastor to be involved but it needs spiritual maturity so that you cannot be taken away by the world. So, to me it's okay.²⁷⁷

Truly, caution must be exercised to fully reach out to the ruling elites, politicians and social players who have been side-lined on the pretext that they are beyond redemption. With the new hermeneutics of self-theologizing in Tippett's indigenization model, these elites once reached with the Gospel, they will easily influence the nation in adopting policies that will change the face of Malawi in areas of poverty and economy as cases of corruption and abuse of power will be minimized. It is high time when African Christianity, Malawians included, need to understand that the destinies of their nations

²⁷⁶ Interview with Respondent 4 FGD in FGD (25 Jan. 2015)

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

rest on their political participation. As the bible says, "When the righteous thrive, the people rejoice; when the wicked rule, the people groan" (Proverbs 29:2).²⁷⁸

Borrowing from Bosch's words, a time of paradigm shift is a time of deep uncertainty engendering strong reactions in favour of hanging on to the old enlightenment paradigms in spite of the warning signs from all quarters that it is breaking up.²⁷⁹ Judging from the views of the respondents who contributed on the political involvement there is a sharp contention in the church as to whether the MAOG should pursue this path. The researcher considers this as a healthy development. It is a necessary turbulence which will ensure the relevance of the Church to the needs of the Malawians in this new paradigm of conducting missions.²⁸⁰

In the final analysis it should be stressed that theology keeps on changing. As respondent 1 commented:

Theology is man's attempt to interpret revelation, therefore theology is imperfect. It doesn't matter, and I always tell my students don't die for theology because theology tends to shift. We are hoping that our orthodox theology is permanent and strong, but we can't still run away from the fact that it's our attempt to interpret revelation. Revelation is what is in the scriptures, but for us to look in the scriptures and organize it, sometimes we organize it wrongly. So, this dichotomy of evangelism versus social concern, to some of us it no longer exists, it's both. So if you came tour church, you find that we have a clinic, 20 kilometres from here we have a clinic, at Mpingu. As our local church we do street kids ministries, poor street kids, we have homes for them at Mpingu we are beginning a school. At Mpingu we have 20 acres; we have a radio station and a TV station. But our goal is, how do we engage community and how do we impact this community for Jesus? You can't say this community we can't impact it we just tell them how to go to heaven, no you can't. So, that's where we are, we are saying it's no longer there. We want to preach the gospel and yet minister to the needs of the people, it's both and not either or.²⁸¹

²⁷⁸ James B. Kantiok. "Christians and politics" in *Africa Bible Commentary: a one volume commentary*. (Nairobi: Word Alive, 2006) 1001.

²⁷⁹ David Bosch. *Transforming missions*

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Interview with Respondent 1 in in-depth interview on 31st July, 2014

5.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has discussed the findings of the study which have revealed that the indigenous pastors found it difficult to fully indigenize their operations based on the models proposed by the missionaries as they were imposed on them through paternalistic tendencies, among many problems. However, the indigenous pastors devised other 'home-bred' strategies to deal with the challenges which have inherently produced fruits of their endeavour warranting the growth of the MAOG to its current status. The final chapter summarises the study by drawing conclusions and making some recommendations from the study.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

6.0 Chapter overview

The foregoing Chapter 4 discussed analytically the contributions of the indigenous pastors towards the growth of the MAOG from its origins in 1947 to 2014 as derived from the research findings. This chapter, on the other hand, presents conclusions on the key findings of the study discussed in Chapter 4. The conclusions and implications are followed by recommendations of the study. The last section outlines suggested areas for further research.

6.1 Summary of research thesis

The study investigated the indigenous pastors of the MAOG in their contributions to the growth of the church since its establishment in Malawi 1947 to 2014. The main research question was: What contributions have the indigenous pastors made to the growth of MAOG? Three specific research questions were explored. The first question was: In what areas did the indigenous pastors contribute? The second was: What specific roles have the indigenous pastors played in the growth of the MAOG? The last one was: Why are the names of indigenous pastors absent and not mentioned in the historiography of the church?

The research questions addressed the gaps in the current literature, discussed in Chapter 2. It was an investigation on what has not been recorded about the indigenous pastors' contributions to the growth of the MAOG and an exploration of the reasons which prevented the writers from chronicling their achievements. These questions have been answered in Chapter 4. The study identified two main areas of contribution the

indigenous pastors have made to the growth of the church. These areas have been categorized as theological and social concern mandates. In spite of operating under the watchful eye of missionaries' paternalism and non-recognition, the indigenous pastors have been innovative enough as to obey the Lord's call to continue ministering under tough conditions planting rural churches which have been wallowing in abject poverty. The main argument of the thesis is that the various contributions made by the indigenous pastors of the Malawi Assemblies of God have not properly been documented. As for those that have been documented they have also suffered from a distorted historiography which was typical of the histories of countries which were under colonial rule. In spite of Malawi having attained independence in 1964 and multiparty democracy in 1994, the colonial mentality still hangs on as tendency of failing to write plagues the movement; accounts of miracles and other exploits done by the indigenous pastors are still orally transmitted under the genre of remembered history. Apart from a book written by Gregory Mvula and Enson Lwesya, *The Flames of Fire* which endeavoured to catalogue the historiography of the MAOG, with some ahistoricities here and there, there is no discernible attempt by the church to deliberately chronicle the various contributions by pastors.²⁸²

These deficiencies have had a negative influence on the quality of kerygma delivery which is the mode of transmission of the gospel to the target multicultural audiences. With the absence of a deliberate policy to catalogue and preserve its rich posterity, there will be no points of reference by the future generations of the great things taking place in the movement. This problem is very conspicuous even on the way the local churches keep their records. It is very common for the majority of pastors to tell you that they do not know the history of their churches; the year when they were planted, who was the first pastor and so on and so forth. As a hangover from the African past where oral tradition was the mode of transmission, the church should strive to move out of this retrogressive behaviour which is not in tandem with the postmodern paradigm. Much as the foreign missionaries might be blamed for advancing paternalism, racism and other maladies which contributed negatively

²⁸² Gregory Mvula and Enson Lwesya, *Flames of fire: the history of Assemblies of God and pentecostalism in Malawi, spreading the flames at home and abroad*. (Blantyre: AGLC, 2005).

in many respects, the failure to catalogue the church's progress is none of their business but a hangover from the past. This perhaps is something worth tackling as an area for further research in order to understand the issues underpinning the indigenization of the MAOG.

6.2 Conclusion, implications and recommendations

It may not be possible to draw generalisations from this small exploratory study. However, the following are the implications and recommendations. First, the MAOG as a growing church must devise a poverty eradication initiative for its pastors especially for those operating in rural areas. Much has been said about their contributions in various aspects but a lot leaves to be desired in as far as financial support is concerned. Generally speaking, the MAOG generates its funds through Sunday offerings and tithes from which the pastors' allowances are paid. It goes without saying that it is the pastors operating in urban areas who benefit from this kind of arrangement more than those in the villages. A number of these ministers have actually quit or joined other churches which have an attractive salary structure for their pastors. Up to now the MAOG does not have an arrangement for paying its rural pastors from a central position; the pastors have to fend for themselves on faith missions' principles which have proved catastrophic in many instances. Although the issue has for many years been a bone of contention at biennial General Presbytery Meetings, there is no tangible solution to date offering hope for a fixed remuneration for pastors. In a nutshell, it could be said that the pastors themselves have been the victims of the neglect of the social concern mandate.

Looking at the great neglect of the social concern mandate of the gospel by the AG in the past, and the rest of the evangelical world of course, the church should strategise for this post-modernism era where influence of the church over government, politics, media, arts, entertainment, commerce and technology – the so called seven gates of society are addressed by the church if the church is to remain relevant. This will only be achieved

when there is new approach to leadership training, new worship styles, new ministry focus, new power orientation and liturgy which will motivate people to match with the times.²⁸³

It is also high time the MAOG had utilized the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and other to preserve and disseminate its messages. What a local church in Lilongwe, the International Christian Assembly (ICA) an Assemblies of God denomination is doing by operating Television and Radio stations (Channel for All Nations) is commendable. But the national church should make sure to have these facilities nationally available to the entire MAOG membership. It is not proper that that the church should entirely depend on tract distribution as in the past when the reading culture of Malawians was at its peak. Much as the tract distribution ministry is essential, the programme is beset by production costs yet is not as effective as using the ICT methods which can reach the masses with little ease.

Although the MAOG is known as the 'people of the Holy Spirit' in a classical sense, the church should learn also from these African initiated pentecostal and charismatic churches which are well advanced in innovations as regards indigenised forms of prayers for deliverance (exorcisms) and exercising of the gifts of prophecy which are used to meet health and personal and corporate guidance of the church.

On the education front, the MAOG should understudy what the Roman Catholics and CCAP have achieved over the years in order to come up with a viable school administration that will not crumble like the only education institution of the MAOG at Mcheneka in Dedza for lack of administrative experience. While it is commendable that the MAOG has now established MAGU, there is need to understudy the aforementioned churches in order to avert another failure.

The MAOG would do well if it officially recognized Laiton Kalambule as the first indigenous pastor responsible for the birth and growth of the Assemblies of God in Malawi. Critical analysis of the issues that led Kalambule to break away from the Assemblies of

²⁸³ Irvin G. Chetty, "Origin and development of the 'New Apostolic Reformation in South Africa: a Neo-Pentecostal movement or a post-pentecostal phenomenon?" *ALTERNATION: Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of the Arts and Humanities in Southern Africa*, Special Edition no. 11 (2013): 190-206.

God, apart from the doctrinal differences on divorce, were as a result of paternalism, a social malady which no genuine Christianity would tolerate. It is indeed high time the officials of the MAOG reconsidered their stance if talk about autonomy and indigenization is to carry more weight. Mere allusions to Kalambule as the first pioneer are doing more harm than good to this great son of Malawi in as far as pentecostal Christianity in the country is concerned.

In conclusion, it should be stated here that the MAOG would do well if it strove to make its indigenous pastors more visible through writing than it is currently doing. The contributions of the likes of Daniel Shaeffer, Morris Williams and other Western missionaries are well-known through the various publications like bibliographies, newsletters and even blogs, a culture that is almost absent in the current Malawi Assemblies of God. It is high time when bibliographies of some famous indigenous pastors like Gideon Bomba, Elliot Nkunika, Maxwell Chapola and Laiton Kalambule, George Samuel, Gilbert Banda and Lazarus Chakwera were compiled for posterity sake.

6.3 Areas for further research

It may be worthwhile for other researchers to undertake studies in the following areas with the purpose of complementing some of the issues raised in this study:

- A comparative study with other pentecostal or charismatic churches is needed for the MAOG, as a classic pentecostal church, can learn from the African initiated pentecostal and charismatic churches in terms of their contributions to both the theological and social concern mandate. These churches have improvised methods of survival in interacting with politicians and social economic issues.
- There is a need to probe deeply on why Malawi, after more than fifty years of independence, still suffers from dependency syndrome to the West, a thing which has become a scourge on Christianity in Malawi.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Letter of introduction



CHANCELLOR COLLEGE

PRINCIPAL
Christopher Kamlongera., B.A., DipTEO., M.A., Ph.D

Our ref: TRS DPT
Your Ref:

P.O. Box 280, Zomba, Malawi
Telephone: (265) 01524 222
Fax: (265) 01524 046
E-mail: principal@chanceo.unima.mw

To: Whom It May Concern
From: Head of Theology and Religious Studies Department, Chancellor College,
University of Malawi
Date: 15th March, 2014

Letter of Introduction for MR. CHARLES D.G. MASTER (MA Student)

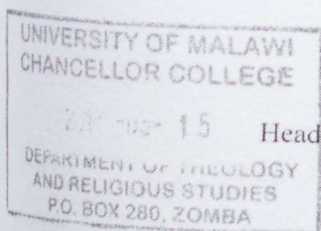
This is a letter of introduction for MR. CHARLES D. G. MASTER as one of our Masters' students in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Chancellor College. He will need assistance to access and collect information for his studies. Please assist him accordingly.

For further information please, contact the undersigned.

Many thanks

Mastone L.K. Mbewe
Head of Theology and Religious Studies Department
Chancellor College
P.O. Box 280
Zomba

Email: mastonembewe@yahoo.com or mmbewe@cc.ac.mw



Appendix 2: Pastor's consent form for audio recording

I (Please print your name in full) a pastor at, am aware of all the data collection processes in this study. I give consent to the following:

(a) Being audio-taped during interview

Yes / No

(Use a cross (x) to indicate your selection)

(b) The possible future use of audiotape for conference purposes

Yes / No

(Use a cross (x) to indicate your selection)

Signed Date

Appendix 3: A sample letter of commitment for participants

.....
.....
.....
.....

University of Malawi
Chancellor College
P.O. Box 280
Zomba

I _____ acknowledge your invitation to participate in your research titled Growth of Malawi Assemblies of God church: contributions of indigenous pastors. I hereby, freely accept to participate in the research. I promise that the information I supply will be true and relevant to your research.

NAME _____

SIGNATURE _____

DATE: _____

Appendix 4: In-depth interview schedule

A guide for in-depth interview for pastors

1. In your view what have been the contributions of local indigenous pastors to the growth of the Malawi Assemblies of God church since its establishment in the country in 1947?
2. It is recorded that differences emanating from doctrinal issues and paternalism led Laiton Kalambule who is regarded as one of the indigenous pioneers to secede from the Assemblies of God church, what is your take on this?
3. The historiography of the church mostly records the exploits of the American missionaries as sorely responsible for the establishment and growth of the church in Malawi, why is it that the names of the African indigenous pastors are absent from the historiography of the church?
4. The old *Moyo watsopano* baptismal book records that *thobwa* was not condoned in the church, but the new book has omitted that injunction. In general, how has the church dealt with cultural issues like polygamy, initiation ceremonies in its long period of its existence?
5. Since its inception, the MAOG never participated in political or social issues but focused its attention on evangelism, do you consider the involvement of its clergy both serving and retired part of the growth of the church or not? Elaborate please?

Appendix 5: Focus Group Discussion (FGD) schedule

A guide for Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

1. In your view what have been the contributions of local indigenous pastors to the growth of the Malawi Assemblies of God church since its establishment in the country in 1947?
2. It is recorded that differences emanating from doctrinal issues and paternalism led Laiton Kalambule who is regarded as one of the indigenous pioneers to secede from the Assemblies of God church, what is your take on this?
3. The historiography of the church mostly records the exploits of the American missionaries as solely responsible for the establishment and growth of the church in Malawi, why is it that the names of the African indigenous pastors are absent from the historiography of the church?
4. The old *Moyo watsopano* baptismal book records that *thobwa* was not condoned in the church, but the new book has omitted that injunction. In general, how has the church dealt with cultural issues like polygamy, initiation ceremonies in its long period of its existence?
5. Since its inception, the MAOG never participated in political or social issues but focused its attention on evangelism, do you consider the involvement of its clergy both serving and retired part of the growth of the church or not? Elaborate please?

Appendix 6: Sample of an In-depth interview transcript

In-depth interview with a pastor of Malawi Assemblies of God national office in Lilongwe on 31st July, 2014 from 11.00. - 12.00 noon.

Res = Researcher

Pr = Pastor

Interview with Respondent 2

Res: In your view what have been the contributions of local indigenous pastors to the growth of the Malawi Assemblies of God church since its establishment in the country in 1947?

Pr: *aaa* the contributions of Malawians to the growth of the church in Malawi, ok, as my preamble, I'd say the first thing just looking at the way they have come they have responded to the call of God. Because in Malawi Assemblies of God *aaah* from something around 90s to where we are many young pastors emerged responding to God's calling. You could see young people they were not afraid to go and *aaa* to theological studies because in the past theological studies and pastoral ministry was considered *kuti* (that) that as for the aged people, retired people *eee* things like those. Even, I mean, going to do studies like BA *aaa* those, I mean, former pastors would say why waste time to do such studies. You don't need a BA to pastor, just go there and get a certificate and then reach. But beginning with the 90s we saw young people coming from school or resigning from work not because *akalamba* (they are old) and then go to bible school to ministry, that has transformed the church because it injected a new special DNA in the system. That's the first thing I can say. The second contribution is leadership. The leadership that was there, it was able to interact with the entire world, *eee* after late Chapola and coming in of Dr. Chakwera with the team that was working with him. These people were goal getters, so they were able to influence the nation and they were also able to attract other partners worldwide to help and minister in the church in Malawi that helped. And from this leadership, they were also managing to sensitize or there more like, I can say the holy competition where by people were not satisfied to have a status quo a small

church, they would have that ambition to grow, we want to grow and become a big church, so that spirit helped in the influence.

And we had a decade of harvest that helped also. Another contribution was the emphasis on the missions. You know in 1994 we had a call a special convention where we said 'missions we can do it too'. Yes, missions we can do it too. That came with a good bang to the nation. It really transformed the – the pulling myself in that I'd say *aaa* the bible school which is not just I mean because of *aaa* Sheaffer *kuti anatumangira* (that Sheaffer built for us) but this infrastructure it helped. Although it is not already Malawian contribution, but to a certain degree, if the Malawi church was not willing to partner with those people or to have these infrastructures *aaa* these infrastructures wouldn't have come. If the Malawi church was just, I mean, castigating those partners that wouldn't have come. But the church allowed and accepted the vision to have big *aaa* infrastructure.

mmm *aaa* what else *aaa* of course, at a certain point in time we had committees, we had several committees like *eee* the evangelism committee, the Missions Committee, Literature committee. The three committees in the periods between the 90s and 2000s, these were strong committees *aaa* I remember we were having meetings in Limbe at Press. Malikula and *aaa Madala* (Elder in age) Gilbert Banda, *aaa* Jerry Farley, John Yoke, we had those committees and those committees really worked hard to transform the nation. Because out of those committees we had *eee* literature *eee* a lot of literature were coming encouraging people to write some literature tracts and others – so those things helped. Right now there's a Sunday school department and is also coming up with new quarterlies and is still bringing in a good impact in the church and nation. *Yaa*, so.

Res: Question on African leadership and doctrinal issues which led to Kalambule seceding.

Pr: *Aaa* leadership, *aaa* of course doctrinal issues, to differ on doctrinal issues something I'd say it's normal. *Aaa* because the missionaries, they came on a different front and the nation on the other front. And in those days when the missions were coming

and looking at you *kuti mukuyimba mmanja madrums ng'oma* (that you were clapping hands and beating drums), they would associate that with, I mean, witchcraft. And now also coming in Africa, they needed to *aaa* or to adjust to find a way to come accommodate or to adjust to find a way to come into the system properly and help the church to understand and differentiate *kuti* (that) these things *aaa* they are sinful practices. So you come in a culture *ngati ku* (like in) Mangochi where people, I mean, polygamy is a stronghold, its normal. So if you differ on those fronts *eee basi mwasiyana* (you are taking different paths). So, *aaa*, they needed to approach with wisdom. However, from what I have observed missionaries were coming in with a baggage. And sometimes they would not want to leave that baggage. And the nationals they would struggle also to accommodate their baggage. *Zimene ndikukamba* (what I am saying) is challenges until such a time when also the nationals were having some *aaa* good education as well as, *eee* education I am not talking about academic education but they were travelling, they were visiting other nations *ndikumaona* (they were able to see) what was happening in these other nations and with that they were now able to work together, *aaa* that has helped. So *aaa* the partnership, even to, I mean, up to now I can't say its 100 percent *aaa* partnership, because we still differ on certain things *mmm mamishonarezi* (the missionaries), somewhere they still feel *kuti manationals* (that the nationals or natives) we should control them while the nationals they feel no, we don't have to be controlled we r a self-governing sovereign organization - things like those.

Res: The historiography of the church mostly records the exploits of the American missionaries as sorely responsible for the establishment and growth of the church in Malawi, why is it that the names of the African indigenous pastors are absent from the historiography of the church?

...

Res: The old *Moyo watsopano* baptismal book records that *thobwa* was not condoned in the church, but the new book has omitted that injunction. In general, how has the church dealt with cultural issues like polygamy, initiation ceremonies in its long period of its existence?

Pr: That one is connected with where people were coming from. Because *amene amavutika ndi* (the people finding it difficult with) issue to do with *thobwa ndi* (non-alcoholic opaque beer like drink) people from Dedza places like that – *Ngoni* area because they were places where they were drinking beer.... and telling them *kuti mutha kumwa thobwa mutatembenuka mtima* (that you can now drink sweet beer upon conversion to Christ) was becoming problematic. And even when this *Moyo Watsopano* (New Converts' instructional manual) was being translated, beer *monga mmene* is rendered in other versions 'sweet wine' this sweet wine is *thobwa*, everything was spoiled. So that's where it was ... sweet beer just like that. Right now other countries like Tanzania *aaa* this malt, a non-alcoholic drink like *thobwa*, you know it's in a bottle like Carlsberg beer bottle. In Tanzania if a pastor, if a church member is found drinking it, straight away will be put on discipline. But that one is a non-alcoholic beverage. But because of, I mean, background, that's where we were but now the majority have no problem with *thobwa*.

Res: On Herbal Medicine

Pr: As someone who has been doing missions, I find myself in a fix because my position, I'll say it's usually somehow different with average people's positions. Aa, my position, I'll say when it comes to let's say polygamy, I don't find any problem for a person coming to church with two or three wives because I want that person to come to church. Whilst in the church that's where he can be saved, that's where he can receive the Word. The challenge is when I accept that member in the church, *mamembala tsopano* (now the church members), don't understand. They will say: '*abusa amalorerera uchimo, muti? Mucharichi*'. (The pastor is tolerating sin, where? In the church) - Things like those. But, I try and do try to help people understand that we have to accommodate these people in the church. There is a room for these people to be accommodated also in the church. And I *eee*, herbal medicine, they are all, they are all over. The challenge, even the bible does not tell us we cannot, I mean, use herbal medicine. It talks about *kuombedza* (divination), those things where you do divination. If you look at *aaa* even the medical, I mean, the medical level, they get roots in our villages. *Ku* (at) Chancellor College, there was a certain gentleman who was coming from 4 miles if not 6 miles with a bag *ya* (of)

ma (the) roots *kumakapanga* (delivering) submit *kumeneko* (there) for research; and so all these things are there. *Aaa* even the, whatever name we use, the English medicine is coming from the same roots/herbs. And *aaa* so, it's something we need to help the church to understand the position of the roots. How do we bring in the roots, who can bring in the roots? - And things those. Even in the bible we talk about the Balm of Gilead, we talk about *mvunguti* the Balm tree) and they were using that one. But when we need to, that's how I approach this. But I approach that with special wisdom knowing *kuti* it has got a sensitivity to break the church, there is that potential that it can break the church.

Res: Since its inception, the MAOG never participated in political or social issues but focused its attention on evangelism, do you consider the involvement of its clergy both serving and retired part of the growth of the church or not? Elaborate please

Pr: It's a new trend, it's a new trend. Only that *kuti* everything has its own time. That's very very important. Formerly we didn't have doctors in MAOG, I mean academicians. So as we are moving, everything is also moving along. And now we are also having people that are involved in other committees. They are involved in let's say PAC (Public Affairs Committee) and etcetera. Because we are having people that are involved and they are also being exposed, they feel, I have also a contribution which I can make to this. It is to a certain degree a new trend, but everything has its time

But we are all politicians to a certain extent. *Aaa* go into these other denominations, CCAP, Anglican, they had doctors long back. But come to Pentecostals, we were not writing books because just as I said earlier on, we were not people of the book, were people of the Holy Spirit. Now, we want the Holy Spirit but we also want to do the academics. And so all that, we are bringing these and now we are putting these together, the world outside is looking at us also and says ok, if you are forming this committee *ya* (yes) let's say PAC or whatever, we can bring in Dr. So and so to be part of this. As he's involved there he's being exposed to the corporate world. So people are seeing as if we are just entering that *aaa* for the first time. But, yes it's first time but it's time. Being involved in academics is also a new trend.

Appendix 7: A Sample Focus Group Discussion (FGD) transcript

What can you say are the contributions of the indigenous pastors to the growth of Assemblies of God?

Respondent 1FGD: Well, it's very unfortunate that in this part of the world not much is put in writing. We still come from an era of remembered history. Yaa, right from the beginning, eee in fact, the first people to come with the Pentecostal message were not missionaries it was Malawians Africans who had gone to work in south Africa, Zimbabwe, then Rhodesia, people like Gideon Bomba, Laiton Kalambule, Elliot Nkunika aaa and others. They are the first people who came back home with the message and then the missionaries followed later. Eee, because the missionaries came with a lot of resources, that's why we have heard mostly about the missionaries. But it was the indigenous Malawians who came with a Pentecostal message.

Respondent 2FGD: I think eee mine is a different one. It is on leadership. When the church just began the leadership was in the hands of whites. And again after sometime nationals were... in national leadership, which means nationals contributed to the growth of the church

Respondent 1FGD: I can also chip in there. For your own information missionaries, some missionaries, not all of them but some key missionaries aaa declared this country as a dry land that nothing can grow spiritually on this land. So they left Malawi for other countries. Some of them went to Kenya. When you see Kenya Assemblies of God they were missionaries who came from Malawi who started that church in Kenya. Even People like Gideon Bomba were the first preachers to preach in that land as Assemblies of God preachers. But when the indigenous pastors took lead of the church it has grown tremendously even beyond the level that those missionaries left. That even when they come back they are even surprised.

Why is it that the historiography of the church generally records the contributions made by the foreign missionaries as opposed to those made by the indigenous pastors?

Respondent 2FGD: I think we should go back to what we said about aaa not coming from the culture of writing. It's not like there were no those people who contributed but because maybe aaa of that problem of our background. That's why there isn't much, but there were people who contributed, there were those people who interpreted, there were those people who moved with the missionaries.

Pentecostals contributed less in social matters but contributed more in theological mandate. Is involvement in politics and governance issues part of this rediscovered social mandate?

Respondent 1FGD: Well, it's not; sometimes people generalize, like Pentecostals never contributed anything towards social development. That is not true. Because eee there were other things that Pentecostals did that people thought were not adding to social development. Because, even when we talk about, they were just talking about heaven but we were preaching salvation. When people get saved that means they will not destroy the nation. But you don't emphasize on preaching about salvation, the development will be destroyed. So we were contributing in one way. It's not like, because we were not doing what others were doing, it mean we were only thinking about heaven. We just raised structures like churches, is that not social development? And people have had nursery schools, primary schools, secondary schools run on our premises, is that not social development? So, it's not like we were completely, we were no on that side but we had other issues to do. And eee, as time goes, we still feel like we can add on some of those things. Like if those who feel they can join politics, as long as they keep their faith, there is no problem with that.

Respondent 2FGD: I think, eee, the church has contributed much as far as social development is concerned. Only that maybe some people have not seen it as development, yaa but that's development.

Respondent 3FGD: Aaa, church, according to the word of God, aaa Jesus said we are aaa the light of the world. So, aaa, to me, it's not bad when the churches are involved in social issues. Because through the involvement in politics or whatever, the church can also have a chance to witness Jesus to politicians, in every area where the church can be involved. Aaa, but on the other hand, we should be very careful aaa because aaa there is this aaa scripture, I think it's from John where Jesus said, "we are not of this world" ok, we are not of this world. That tells us that aaa we should be very careful when we are interacting with the world. Yaa, we need to balance. Aaa because when we are involved in politics, we should see to it that we are separated from the world, ok. We should avoid to allow the world to dominate us. But we should see to it that aaa we aaa by our involvement in politics, it's our chance to aaa teach the world how the Christian life is, ok. Aaa we should aim at changing the world not the world changing us, that's what I can say. It's good for a pastor to be involved but it needs spiritual maturity so that you cannot be taken away by the world. So, to me it's okay.

Respondent 4FGD: Aaa it's not good, Because that compromises the testimony of the gospel. A good example aaa is what happened in North Africa where Christianity collapsed due to such political involvement. The church declined because the clergy were involved in politics, ignoring their ecclesiastical duties. As a result the whole region was islamised because of this gap. In my view the clergy should continue to pursue their prophetic role. But, aaa they should encourage laypeople to go into politics instead so that there is no vacuum which can be filled by secularists who might easily deviate the whole country from following God.

On Education Pentecostals are now becoming highly educated, a thing which has not spared the Assemblies of God church, as compared to the pioneers even in the USA. Is this a contribution as well?

Respondent 2FGD: When we read the bible eee the bible does not show us that God aaa is very much interested in using people that are ignorant or people that are not knowledgeable people that do not have aaa education. When you look at the church now, even then we had people who were educated when the bible cites people like the early apostles being ignorant that does not mean all the leaders of the church were ignorant

then. When it comes to Assemblies of God as a movement, we see that they have people who are educated and they are pursuing higher education. Because we also look at the generation that the pastors are leading, I mean the members that the pastors are leading; that's why there is need for more educated leaders in order to lead the flock of God.

Others feel more education will jeopardise life in the spirit which has been characteristic of the Pentecostal movement?

Respondent 2FGD: I think eee the education will help the people to know more about the Holy Spirit, hahaha than, I mean, killing the move of the Holy Spirit.

Respondent 3FGD: Aaa I think by pursuing education it's not bad because aaa we are living in a world which is changing each and every day. So, a pastor he has to be knowledgeable in eee so many issues. Aaa but when it come to baptism in the Holy Spirit, I think aaa there is a chapter on Romans chapter 10 is it verse 17 "faith comes by hearing". Yaa, so I think most of the pastors they don't emphasize they don't teach on the subject of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I think that's the reason. Because you cannot know, because you cannot give a thing which you don't have. First you have to aaa a pastor has to believe on the baptism of the Holy Spirit, he has to have this communion with the Holy Spirit eee he has to have this deep fellowship with the Holy Spirit so aaa this pastor can easily aaa preach about the Holy Spirit, about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. So, I think the problem with the pastors they don't emphasize on this subject about the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Respondent 1FGD: it's a very big misconception. Spirituality does not fight education, in fact they complement. It's because the writers of the bible didn't have to take time to describe aaa how educated some of the people were. You talk of people like the apostle Paul; he was a highly learned lawyer, deep in the laws of the land. But you see that, because of his higher education, he managed to write so many things. The bible says because peter was not as educated as Paul, peter the one who walked with Jesus wrote so small but the educated man wrote so many things. So, education is not the killer of spirituality.

Ya, it's a, you see sometimes that's why I say, it's just a problem of attitude. When a Malawian pastor becomes Dr. Charles Master, people will have a problem. But if a white man comes from America, is Rev. Dr. So, there is no problem, he is still spiritual. So it's a problem of attitude. We Africans we think we not worthy of education. Even those who are not as educated who have come to appreciate education, they know how good it is to have educated people in the ministry. Not disregarding those who have not been educated, that's the other advantage of Pentecostals. Because Pentecostals even non-educated people become ministers of the Gospel - other than the other so called mainline churches, where they have education standards for becoming ministers. But Pentecostalism does not put education first, it puts spirituality first. So education is there to complement.

Respondent 2FGD: But the issue of education is very important as far as the ministry is concerned. We need educated leaders...

What contributions on cultural issues have the indigenous pastors made to the growth of the MAOG?

Respondent 1FGD: Aaa, sometimes we have to differentiate culture from sin. There are some things that are just cultural but not sin. For example, in the days of Jesus there was the culture of circumcision. Even Jesus was also circumcised. So, among the Yao, for somebody to be circumcised, that will not deter them from receiving the Gospel. But what we discourage is the other rites that go together with circumcision. There is practicing of invoking evil spirits in that ceremony. So, we allow, we go there we preach Christ. And those who feel like their children need to go for circumcision, we recommend hospitals for circumcision. Not only Christians, I have had a privilege of working in those areas, even Muslims don't take their children to the bush.

Respondent 2FGD: Just to concur; even in the days of the apostle Paul, it wasn't hard for him to associate with people of different culture because he wanted to win them to Christ. So the Assemblies of God church, when we go to areas where there are different cultures, ours is the message. That's why we allow them to eee but not to go the extremes.

Respondent 1FGD: It must also be appreciated that the Gospel is preached in the context of culture, everywhere. So you must first of all have respect for the culture of the people of that particular area for them to receive the message. You don't just go there to break down their culture, a people are identified by their culture. After all, it's not the culture that will lead people to heaven but the Gospel. So the Gospel, even the Gospel we read here today is presented in the context of the Jewish culture. So there is Jewish culture, there is Malawian culture, even amongst the Malawians there are *Tumbukas*, there are *Ngoni's*, and you don't force *Ngonis* to become *Chewas* so that they become Christians. Let them become *Ngonis* in *Ngoni* culture.

I find the issue *thobwa* as being restrained in the old *Moyo Watsopano* (a baptismal instruction book), how come that today the MAOG membership are freely drinking it. Is it a new hermeneutic by the indigenous pastors?

Respondent 3FGD: Yaa, aaa I think *thobwa* it's not a wine, okay. There is not an element of that aaa wine. Aaa I think the old readers old readers, aaa they took Christianity to the extreme. Aaa because, food is not bad. That *thobwa* there is no element of alcohol. So aaa there is no problem when a Christian is taking *thobwa*. I don't know what the perception was all about because *thobwa* is not alcoholic.

Respondent 1FGD: Aaa from what I have found out is that, aaa, the very first missionaries settled around Ntcheu - Dedza where there is a lot of traditional beer drinking. So, when the white men came to preach, when they found their members drinking *thobwa* (a beverage drink made from maize flour), they could not differentiate between *thobwa* from *masese* (opaque beer which looks like *thobwa*). So they wanted their members to refrain from drinking. And, with the levels of learning of the people translating for them, when they said "this is not beer, but they said this is sweet beer" they complicated the matter. So with that understanding and at the same time they [the missionaries] wanted to avoid the temptation of drinking beer; they would keep the *thobwa* and it would stay for three to four days and it would begin to ferment, so they said why don't we stop this? But over the years, that's another thing about education, people studied the bible the more. If we use the word ferment, there are so many things that ferment. Even we eat bread that ferment, we give our children, when they are young,

gripe water – yes, there is a content of alcohol. So, there are so many things that contain alcohol, so we find that it was just, like Paul puts it in Acts 15, it was like adding something on top of salvation. Such that people would miss out salvation, miss out the baptism of the Holy Spirit just to get hold on of *thobwa* issue. Because that is now, it was disturbing the culture of the people, now they became hypocrites that in the presence of their fellow believers they would not drink. But their wives would keep something at home. That's their drink when they go the garden, when they visit their friends. So, we stopped people from taking the fermented thing but we open Coca-Cola which has also been fermented. So it was a double standard.

Appendix 8 : Malawi Assemblies of God goals and strategies for 2000 to 2010

Pentecostal missions in a new millennium preaching all the gospel to all the nations in the power of the Holy Spirit until Jesus comes

In order for us to fulfil Christ's Commission, and to establish self-supporting, self-propagating, self-governing, self-theologizing, and self-missionizing Assemblies of God in Malawi and abroad, and in order for us to provide the Gospel to all the people, we agree to focus our resources on the following goals:

1. To have Pentecostalism as the dominant spiritual force in Malawi by 2010.
2. To have 1,000,000 well-discipled, Holy Spirit filled members by 2010, worshipping in at least 5000 churches.
3. To have at least 20 mega (really big) churches scattered throughout the country.
4. To have well-functioning pastors' missionaries' and lay people's school (AGST, Graduate, AGXS...) by 2010. By 2005 to have 200 Diploma and Certificate, 100 Bachelor of Arts, 10 Masters, 3 Doctorates.
5. To have ten families working together with unreached or neglected ethnic groups all over Malawi by 2010; to have 15 supported missionary families, and at least twice as many self-supported and /or short term missionaries working in foreign lands by 2010.
6. To have a strong Men's Department functioning alongside other departments by 2005.
7. To generate supplementary income through businesses to strengthen our financial base for missionary support (e.g. building office blocks to rent out, guest houses, schools...)
8. To have District Offices, equipment and vehicles by 2005.
9. To have well-functioning, Pastors Pension Scheme by 2002
10. To have well-functioning department of churches and society to cover relief, development and social matters.²⁸⁴

²⁸⁴ Gregory Mvula and Enson Lwesya, *Flames of fire: the history of Assemblies of God and pentecostalism in Malawi, spreading the flames at home and abroad* (Blantyre: AGLC, 2005).

Appendix 9 : Churches built by Sheaffer Team

1. Kawale Harvest Temple
2. Karonga
3. Rumphu
4. Katawa
5. Kasungu
6. Kamuzu Road (Holy Ghost Temple)
7. Mchinji
8. Chimsoro
9. Area 23
10. Area 25 – Victory Temple
11. Monkey-Bay
12. Mangochi
13. Chimwala
14. Chemusa
15. Nkolokosa
16. Chilomoni
17. Lumbadzi
18. Sadzi
19. Area 18
20. Bangwe

And over 600 church building under the Roofs Support Project. This is where local people build the structure and Sheaffer Fund provides the roof.²⁸⁵

²⁸⁵ Gregory Mvula and Enson Lwesya, *Flames of fire: the history of Assemblies of God and pentecostalism in Malawi, spreading the flames at home and abroad* (Blantyre: AGLC, 2005).

Appendix 10: List of the general officers that have been at the helm of the MAOG²⁸⁶

YEAR	GENERAL SUPERINTENDENT/ PRESIDENT	VICE	GENERAL SECRETARY	GENERAL TREASURER
1947	Fredrick Burke	Ragner Udd		The General Secretary used to work as the Treasure of the movement during this period
1948	Fredrick Burke	Ragner Udd		
1949	Fredrick Burke	Ragner Udd		
1950				
1951				
1952				
1953				
1954	Paul Wright	Wesley Hurst	Morris Williams	
1955	Magnus Udd	Wesley Hurst	Morris Williams	
1956	Morris Williams	Magnus Udd	D. Kingsriter	
1958	HB Garlock (For Both Nyasaland and Tanganyika)		Morris Williams	
1959	HB Garlock	Gideon Bomba	Paul Bruton	
1960	Harry Downey	Gideon Bomba	Morris Williams	
1961	Harry Downey	Elliot Nkunika	Morris Williams	
1962	Gideon Bomba	Elliot Nkunika	Wilfred Makoko	
1963	Gideon Bomba	Elliot Nkunika		

²⁸⁶ Gregory Mvula and Enson Lwesya, *Flames of fire: the history of Assemblies of God and pentecostalism in Malawi, spreading the flames at home and abroad* (Blantyre: AGLC, 2005).

1964	Gideon Bomba	Elliot Nkunica	Gilbert Banda	
1965	Gideon Bomba	Elliot Nkunica	Gilbert Banda	
1967	Gideon Bomba	Elliot Nkunica	Gilbert Banda	
1968	Gideon Bomba	Elliot Nkunica	Gilbert Banda	
1969	Gideon Bomba	Elliot Nkunica	Gilbert Banda	
1970	Gideon Bomba	Elliot Nkunica	Gilbert Banda	
1971	Gideon Bomba	Elliot Nkunica	Gilbert Banda	
1972	Gideon Bomba	Elliot Nkunica	Gilbert Banda	Maxwell Chapola
1974	Gideon Bomba	Bill Younger	Gilbert Banda	Maxwell Chapola
1976	Gideon Bomba	Bill Younger	Gilbert Banda	Maxwell Chapola
1978	Maxwell Chapola	Gideon Bomba	Gilbert Banda	Saidi
1980	Maxwell Chapola	Gideon Bomba	Gilbert Banda	Saidi
1984	Maxwell Chapola	Elliot Nkunica	Gilbert Banda	
1988	Maxwell Chapola		Chandler	Chandler
1989	Lazarus Chakwera	Gilbert Banda	Langston Muva	Chandler
1992	Lazarus Chakwera	Gilbert Banda	Langston Muva	Weja
1996	Lazarus Chakwera	Gilbert Banda	Charles Makata	Mathias D. Simenti
2000	Lazarus Chakwera	Steven Banda	B.K. Kapuchi	Mathias D. Simenti
2013	Edward Chitsonga	Steven Banda		

Appendix 11: List of national leaders and missionaries that attended the 1947 Convention²⁸⁷

MALAWIANS	WHITE MISSIONARIES
Laiton Kalambule	Fred Burke
Thom Iphani	Paul Derr
Joshua Lumbe	Ragner Udd
Elliot Nkunika	Morris Williams
Wiskesi Odala	Magnus Udd
Bilison Sika	Paul Wright
Wilfred Makoko	Moody Wright
Langford Banda	H.B Garlock
J. Sida	
Mose Kapondolo	
Wingolo	
Jamieson Gomani	
January Kamwiyo	
Salatiel Zuze	
Robert Chitsonga	
Philip Maushenti Chilemba	
Mgwalidi	
Gideon Bomba	

²⁸⁷ Gregory Mvula and Enson Lwesya, *Flames of fire: the history of Assemblies of God and pentecostalism in Malawi, spreading the flames at home and abroad* (Blantyre: AGLC, 2005).