

Mission, Identity, and Ecology: Sustainability among the Luo of Tanzania

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DECLARATION

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DEDICATION

To my mother, Zilper Anyango, to my wife, Happy and to our children, Sheryl, Veronica, Meshack and Deborah. Without your enduring audacity and expansive love, none of this achievement would have been possible.

ABSTRACT

This is a study of Luo ecology through a Christian missional-theological lens. It explores how sustainability is a moral and ecosocial problem, and confronts Christians with contemporary challenges of sustainability (including ecology) and identity politics. The backdrop is colonial, western missionary civilization: its disconnection between mission, identity and ecology; and its separation of us from each other, the biosphere and the cultural universe. It argues for a radical return to a pre-colonial indigenous narrative of interbeing and, urges the emerging religio-cultural discourses to build upon such indigenous cosmic wisdom to create new integrating sustainability ethics and practices.

This thesis evaluates the ecological consequences of exclusionary theology that characterized African sociology over the last 200 years. It examines social change through colonial missionary conversion, education and medicine; and explores the dynamics of pre-colonial, Luo cultural cosmology and ecological wisdom embedded in the Bible. It pursues an alternative missional theology of social morality and inclusive sustainability. It critically engages with literature on Luo eco-social history and on ecological control and economic development in East African history; and considers its neglect in the past by the Christian academic establishment in the region. It argues that engaging moral, social and ecological challenges of sustainability requires a culturally-driven values that cannot be fully justified by forms of modern rationality, yet confronts modernity, one that lies beyond them, indeed transcends them with important implications for integrating ecosocialization.

Drawing on the dynamics of Christian faith and ecological consciousness set in motion by Paul Tillich and on recent ideas from ecotheology, social ecology, human geography and sustainability; this thesis presents a fresh approach to missional theology: highlighting the possible interconnection between mission, identity and ecology. The central argument of this thesis is that everything is always connected: we must learn from our long intergenerational Luo history of ecosocial interdependence and reconsider 'ecological salvation' as redemptive imagination – grounded on the reality of cultural mandate, ecological reality, and transcendence.

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ABBREVIATIONS

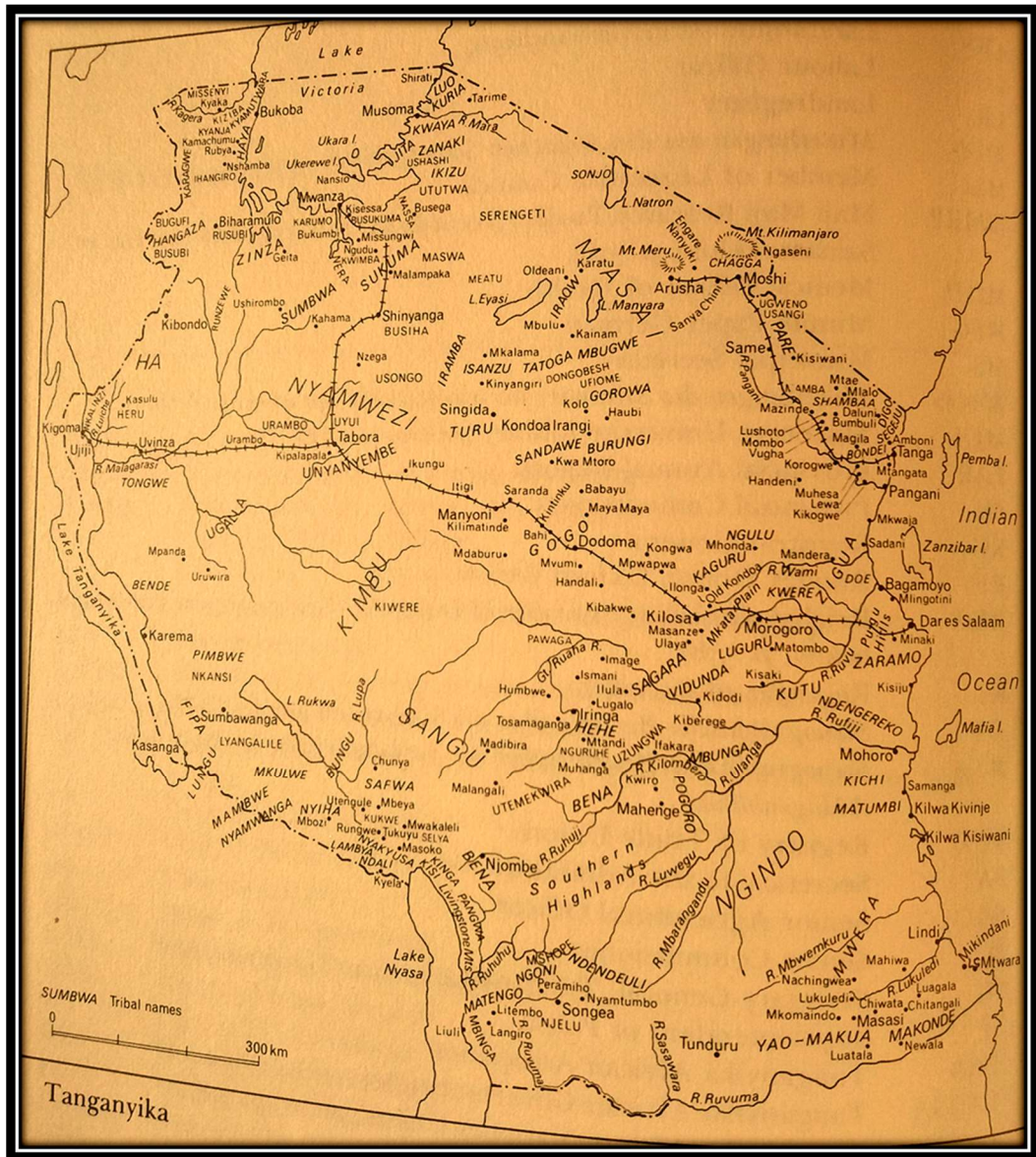
ACC	the Anglican Consultative Council
AfDB	African Development Bank
CMS	Church Missionary Society
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDP	Gross domestic product, measure of total goods and services produced
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MTC	Msalato Theological College
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
NIV	New International Version translation of the Holy Bible
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission on Refugees
URT	United Republic of Tanzania
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
RSV	Revised Standard Version translation of the Holy Bible
WCC	World Council of Churches
WCED	World Commission on the Environment and Development
WMC	World Missionary Conference

Figure 1: Map of Mara Region—Places with larger Anglican Congregations



Source: The Church of England, Diocese of Leeds website, 2017

Figure 2: Geographical locations of ethnic groups in modern Tanzania



Source (Iliffe 1979)

Chapter One

Introduction, Methodology and Literature Review

1.0 Introduction

Ecological wisdom in the Bible and in the cultural energies of indigenous cosmology has barely been recognised by evangelical¹ Christianity for decades, even though it can address moral and social challenges of sustainability, and in particular, among the Luo of Tanzania. This thesis responds to this failure by developing a missional-ecothological understanding of sustainability. This thesis seeks to investigate how precolonial Luo cosmology and transcendent ecological wisdom embedded in the Bible were closely grounded on the state of ecological consciousness and on the communal traditions of sustainability within the shared medium ancient community matrix. Moreover, it also seeks to observe to what extent, such ecological wisdom and cultural traditions of co-existence which has largely been ignored in existing misguided sense of self and adversarial theological scholarship might contribute to our contemporary search for creating mutually enhancing ecological spirituality and sustainability ethics.

As much as, and perhaps than, most adversarial abstracts or conventional concepts, the moral universe of ecological wisdom is fundamentally relational and expansive one. The concept of ‘ecological wisdom’ (ecosophia) was understood among most ancient cultures as the forces of nature that should best understood and most truly experienced essentially as persons rather than simply mindless matter. Since the antiquated time, ‘ecological wisdom’, as the name itself suggests, looked unwaveringly at just distribution of wealth, put forward the best religio-cultural insights for regulation of the common good, explored the relations and

¹ This thesis is written from an evangelical Anglican perspective. While defining *evangelical* is, according to Dave Bookless (2016:87): ‘a potentially dangerous exercise, as it is a term that has been fought over verbally on many occasions. Some definitions are effectively negative (neither Catholic nor Orthodox nor mainstream Protestant), and others somewhat tribal, identified with specific issues, institutions or key leaders’. With all this in mind, the word *evangelical* tradition is used throughout this research to describe those who affirm the uniqueness of the good news of Christ and the importance of the Bible as the supreme cultural mandate. This description draws on David Bebbington’s influential notion of evangelicalism that characterized this tradition in four fundamental positive qualities. These are: 1. **Biblicism**: A particular regard for the Bible as the inherent source of all spiritual truth; 2. **Crucicentrism**: A focus on the atoning work of Christ on the cross; 3. **Conversionism**: Individual humans needing to be converted to Christ; 4. **Activism**: The gospel needing to be expressed in practical consciousness (Bebbington 1989:2-17).

interdependent between ecosystems wellbeing and human civilization in a more ethical economic-political society (Maseno 2011).

Capitalist societies who colonized Africa, like much of conventional concepts of reality and adversarial wisdoms that dominated colonial Africa, did not know this fundamental reality even though they pretend to know it. Quite the contrary, in a modern capitalist society of Adam Smith and its embodied concept of economic industrialism have confused the lifelong meanings of ecological wisdom, suspended the meaning of history, and even confused the meaning of present development. Ecological wisdom is the stuff of social reality and sustainability.

Exploring constituent dimensions of ecological wisdom (or consciousness) is arguably the most expansive branch of intercultural research which takes “Who we are” as an interior question to identity politics, missional ethics and sustainability matters. Drawing on the works of spiritual teachers and readers of consciousness from the perspective of nonduality such as Rupert Spira’s 2017 book *The Nature of Consciousness*, being human is not about cells and chemical reactions, but about exploring the essential nature of being aware of ourselves and cosmological reality that sustains our earthly life.

Following this expansive path as it shall become apparent, even science (especially ecological science) reaches non-dualistic conclusions that ecological consciousness is a derivative from consciousness, and that the only sustained reality is pure consciousness. Thus, everything else, including mind, matter, and the folder called ‘theology’, is according to Spira, a modulation of that reality. Without ecological wisdom in which we human beings participate but which also go beyond any individual person and emerge from the sustained interactions among us, there would be nothing that could properly be called social sustainability. The physicality of the human interaction with nature made most ancient cultures to believe that, if the life-giving Earth is to survive healthily, ethical theory and communal practices must be in covenant with the natural world of reality. As biblical wisdom literature, specifically, the book of Job puts it so compellingly: “You shall be in covenant with the stones of the field, and the beasts of the field” (Job 5:23).

It is in light of the above metaphysics of ecological wisdom that the analysis which follows understands ‘ecological wisdom’ as an integration of both Biblical cosmic consciousness and cultural energies. It recognises that together these express a vision of society answerable to God and creation. The language and expression of wisdom (*hokhmah*) in current cosmology needs to be distinguished from biblical ‘wisdom literature’. Jonathan Burnside in *God, Justice, and Society* understands *hokhmah* as including:

the skill needed to win a war or complete a technical enterprise; the cleverness and shrewdness required in government or administration; the hidden secrets and knowledge of prophets or magicians; the prudence required to deal with difficult situations; the ability to make ethical...decisions, and ultimately the ability to discern God as the one who created the world through wisdom and who is the fount of all knowledge and understanding (Burnside 2011:24).

Hokhmah is holistic, and visualises the interconnectivity between God, humanity and cosmic reality. Biblical ‘wisdom literature’ is wisdom in particular divine-humanity contexts (including Proverbs and Job, but scholars also recognise the influence of wisdom on other materials in the Bible).

The readings like Burnside’s suggests that the knowledge of sustained moral wisdom is a rapidly emerging discourse that could have a lasting impact on the interdisciplinary study of sustainability. Long marginalized by positivist and adversarial theologies of imperialism advocated by some Anglican missiologists such as Max Warren (see Warren 1950, 1951, 1965, 1976), the cumulated natural phenomena of biblical agrarianism and indigenous forms of abundant life presents opportunities for rethinking the sustainability discipline. Burnside’s study, for instance, suggested that recovering ecological wisdom, from both these sources, can contribute to mutually-enhancing sustainability ethics and spirituality to create more just economic-political practices.

The thesis is based on a ‘triangulation method’ of research: involving archival collections, participant observation and literature. This research is combined with accumulated research on ecological wellbeing from previous studies (Otieno 2011, 2013). Politics of identity and ecology are combined: the extremes of ecological crisis on the one hand, and the reconstruction of sustainability theology on the other hand. A culturally-grounded Christian eco-theology is then developed from this to facilitate sustainability. The central hypothesis is that the development of competitive societies based on capitalism

affects not only human anthropology, but also defaces true Christian identity and its earth-honouring spirituality (Jenkins 2008). Therefore, any eco-theological study of Africa, must trace the political and economic effects of colonial civilization, including the impact of the imported theology and imperial sciences.

A historical reflection critiques how cultural imperialism marginalized the ecological wisdom embedded in cultural traditions.² It also compares and contrasts contributions to the struggle towards collective cosmology and sustainability.

An integrative inter-disciplinary approach examines the implications of unsustainability among the Luo people. For example, when goods and services are efficiently produced, allocated and consumed it is assumed that this serves as an engine of economic growth. However, this capitalistic culture is sustainable, and may often contribute to economic injustice and eco-social imperialism. The use of natural resources through commerce, the imported politics and exclusionary theological discourse has led to a catastrophic relationship between nature and society.

Socio-ecological transformation is ultimately about integration, and what it takes to sustain it. 'Integration' refers to a sense of common good, collective freedom, and a transformed concept of belonging. It gives each person maximal respect and security, while binding the community in a shared pursuit of life-widening sustainability. This is not 'individual' spirituality or freedom to industrialise structural differences, or freedom to buy anything you want, and be defined by what you buy. The assumption is that over one hundred years of colonial missionary Christianity in Africa, and among the Luo people in particular, Christian engagement with socio-ecological integration has been rarely consciously undertaken; while the politics surrounding social civilization and ecological ethics have become increasingly fractious as a consequence.

One of the most dangerous impacts of the colonial missionary civilization is that it has led to socio-ecological modernization and industrialism, contrary to traditional Luo cosmology which situates ecological consciousness

² Throughout this project, the word 'wisdom' refers to the body of knowledge and experience that develops within a specified society.

at the centre of its social, cultural, political, and identity discourses. Colonial morality, on the contrary, invented a dominating sense of separation: separation from each other, separation from the biosphere that sustains creation, and separation from the cultural energies that has brought society forth (Uhl 2013). One of the most negative aspects of this present spiritual condition is that it has largely forgotten the basics of our collective ecological morality. The hypothesis is that ecological sustainability cannot be addressed through quick moral fixes. Instead, it must take place in its widest context to find a new integrating discourse, to replace the previous exclusionary mission theology of ecology on the one hand, and ecosocialization on the other.

The environment in which such an integrated narrative was born, lives and has its soul will need to be reinvigorated, to sustain ecologically-conscious society and public morality. This includes the culturally-inspired ethics of sustainability and renewed ecological wisdom embedded in the Bible, as opposed to the imperialistic theological hegemony arising from colonial Christianity. Articulating an ‘inclusive ecological morality’ is essential. As Andrew Kirk comments in *What is Mission?*, over the last two centuries of Christian missionary enterprise in Africa and Asia, ecological matters were simply not seen as central to the gospel (Kirk 2000:166).

Similarly, N.T. Wright notes that the missionary enterprise in Africa has deep roots in ‘modern Western culture’. He argues that ‘the idea that the cosmic project could continue to grow and develop, producing unlimited human improvement and marching towards a Utopia, goes back to the Renaissance, and was given its decisive push by 18th-century European Enlightenment’ (Wright 2007:94). The loss of an ecological sense of belonging and the fragmentation of society are, according to Kirk and Wright, part of larger industrial civilization and structural changes that were born in the European world of industrial revolution and missionary enterprise.

The argument is that the present conflicting social discourses and non-intersecting ecological insights have developed from an adversarial colonial culture. To reinvigorate an expansive ecology of society, there must be a strong sense of integrated society – one that is connected by the moral codes of common

good, and socialised within a framework of shared ecosocial values. Society, according to Jonathan Sacks's *The Home We Build Together*, 'is where we come together to achieve collectively what none of us can do alone. It is the realm in which *all* of us is more important than *any* of us' (Sacks 2007:5).

It appears that the whole subject of 'ecological consciousness' was largely missed in the history of modern Western civilization.³ Any examination of contemporary public spirituality must therefore reflect on the impact of imperialistic religious discourses, with specific reference to ecological spirituality.⁴ This cannot be simply based on modern missionary scholarship, even though some missionary voices are pioneering critiques on ecological exploitation. Rather, an integrative mission study of sustainability must spring from what eco-theologian Heather Eaton has called 'multidisciplinary discussions' (Eaton 2014:204). No exclusionary method or mission theology can provide complete ecological reform by itself; but, there is a growing scholarly conviction that a partnership between Christian scripture, cultural wisdom and ecological science (Gaia) might prove to be a way to realise what David Hallman terms a 'One Earth Community' (Hallman 1994/2009).

These intercultural partnerships and interdisciplinary discussions will be used as a methodological framework for the study of Luo cultural approaches to ecological sustainability and socio-economic spirituality.

³ The word 'ecological consciousness' did not appear or did not assumed its sustained ecological relevance during both the expansion of Victorian Christianity in Africa and during the spread of colonial European economic, ecological imperialism, and political hegemony in the region. Throughout this study, the term 'ecological consciousness' will be referring to that mothering sense of being aware. That in which all ecological experience is made or known. Put differently, that mothering experience or medium out of which or within which all the eco-social experience appears. For more engaging study of consciousness, see, for example, Rupert Spira's 2017 book *The Nature of Consciousness: Essays on the Unity of Mind and Matter*. Against the misguided sense of self and inability to explain consciousness as the source of infinite reality, Rupert Spira regards consciousness as fundamental, transcendent, creating everything here and now, whose creation is endless, for consciousness itself is infinite and inexhaustible.

⁴ The distinction between public spirituality as 'subjective-life' and religious discourse as 'life-as-religion' is adopted from P. Heelas and L. Woodhead's *The Spiritual Revolution* (2005:5ff). Public spirituality as subjective-life sacralizes collective (subjective) life which invokes the public sacredness in the cultivation of unique subjective-life. By contrast, public spirituality as life-as makes sacred life-as subordinating subjective spirituality (life) to the 'higher' authority of transcendent meaning, goodness, and truth.

1.1 Background Information

The Luo people of East Africa are patrilineal and the only Nilotic society residing in the Mara Region of the United Republic of Tanzania. Historical roots of this mixed group can be traced back to the settlement of the Luo in the Nyanza Province of Kenya (according to the historian Bethwell Allan Ogot). This occurred in three chronologically defined waves:

1. The Jok people in the early 16th century
2. The Owiny clans in the mid-17th century
3. Settlers arriving in the later 17th and 18th centuries (Ogot 2003:1)

Among the third wave of migrants were several Omolo groups, who left the Pakwac-Pawir area in Uganda between 1630 and 1680, and moved eastwards through Busoga before reaching Western Kenya. Modern clans of Luo people in Mara Tanzania owe their ancestry to the original settlement in Western Kenya (mainly from Omolo clusters who settled into the lands surrounding and adjacent to Lake Victoria).

Known as Tanganyika until 1964, the United Republic of Tanzania (URT) is located in the eastern part of the African continent. Geographically, the eastern arm of the Great Rift Valley cuts southward through Tanzania and divides it into natural regions (Ilfie 1979)⁵ connected through the great lakes of Nyasa, Tanganyika, and Victoria Nyanza. Tanzania borders eight other countries.⁵ It covers an area of approximately 885,803 square kilometres and has an estimated current population of 53 million people.⁶ Approximately 70% of Tanzania's population lives in rural areas. The cultural transformation of modern Tanzania can be traced back to the colonization by Bismarck's Germany (1884-85).

Lake Victoria and its attached waterways facilitated migration, transport and trade. Landing sites and market places were both foci for interchange of goods and products along and across East Africa's rivers and lakes (Kjekshus 1996). Luo

⁵ Ecologically there five distinctly different regions: the Western Plateau, the North-West, the Southern Highlands, the South-East, and the North-East. Ecological diversity of this country has been the first determinant of its geographical exploration, missionary incursion, and colonialism (Okello 2002).

⁵ Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique.

⁶ See United Republic of Tanzania. (2013). *Tanzania in figures 2012*. Retrieved from http://www.tanzania-gov.de/images/downloads/tanzania_in_figures-NBS-2012.pdf Accessed 27 September, 2016.

historian Okello Ayot (1979) indicated this widespread transport and migration pre-dates the colonial period. Ayot also pointed to the importance of canoes from the Gulf of Kavirondo in Kenya, to trading partners on the shores of Victoria Nyanza (cf. Kenny 1979) and beyond. Kjekshus (1996) notes the role of canoes in the movement of goods to eight important population groups, to what may have been one of the largest of the precolonial trading networks of East Africa.⁷ Bethwell Ogot (2003) refers to this pre-colonial social interaction, which became the ancestry of future East African Common Services Organization (1961) as ‘a symbol of collective self-reliance’ (Ogot 2003:263).

In 1884, Karl Peters (a German colonialist) negotiated for himself a series of treaties with local rulers on the coast of what is now Tanzania. He promised German protection in return for trading privileges. As Brian Stanley observes, in *The Bible and the Flag* (1990:111-132): by the end of February 1885, Bismarck had ratified the treaties, and hence endorsed the status of the territories as German protectorates. The German intrusion, argues Stanley: ‘had a knock-on effect far inland, transforming the Arab chiefs of the East African interior from traders to empire-builders, and hardening their attitudes to all things European’ (1990:124). This suggests that Arabs were not against Germany’s colonialism and conquest of the East African area (1886-1916). German colonialism not only transformed landscapes and ecologies, but also established structures of cultural discrimination and ecological exploitation (which resulted in the *Maji Maji* war). These persisted when Tanzania became a British colony from 1920s to 1961 (Keshomshahara 2008).

After gaining independence in 1961, and union with Zanzibar in 1964, Tanzania adopted *Ujamaa* as its political ideology (African Socialism). The Arusha Declaration Accord (1976) established the *Ujamaa* model as a national ideology, and this was imparted through Nyerere’s writings (1966; 1968; 1974) and other theorists of *ujamaa* (cf. Ishumi 1995; Kweka 1995; Legum 1995; and Omari 1995). The aim of the *ujamaa* model was to revitalize the traditional African philosophy of egalitarianism, to subvert the neo-colonial mentality and to restore the pre-

⁷ Karebe, Ganda, Ziba, Zinza, Sukuma, Kara, Ruri, and Luo.

colonial economy of affection that had been distorted during the colonial era (Keshomshahara 2008:76).⁸

However, ecologically, the *ujamaa* policy is regarded by Helge Kjekshus in *Ecology Control and Economic Development in East Africa* (1977/1996), as ‘the most massive confrontation of man with the Tanzanian ecosystem since the beginning of historic time’ (1996,p.xxvii). The execution of *ujamaa* fundamentally altered the settlement pattern of millions of people in the rural areas, to fit a model of nuclear settlements prescribed for them by the country’s ruling party. Kjekshus sees ecological viability as the weakest part of *ujamaa* policy.

Bernstein (1981) regards the *ujamaa* movement as an extension of state control over the peasantry: to extract surpluses for ambitious development programmes in the individual, health and educational fields. Other observers, such as Freyhold (1979), complained that villagization had not realized socialist ideals, but furthered class formation and exploitation in the countryside instead.⁹ These studies indicate that the ecological problems, raised by the *ujamaa* model and the Tanzanian villagization programme, caused major economic and ecological disasters which are still evident today, and are at the root of the continuing land conflicts.

The Mara region was started on 1st May 1963 as part of a total of thirteen regions at that time.¹⁰ President Nyerere, a child of the Mara region by birth, appointed M.T. Spearning, to develop the region’s administrative structure, with Oswald Mang’ombe as the Mara Region’s first Commissioner from 1963 to 1965. Musoma serves as the region’s capital. According to the 2012 national census, Mara had a population of 1,743,830, showing a 2.5% population increase year on year.¹¹ Mara is Tanzania’s leading cosmopolitan region, diverse culturally and linguistically. A majority of the population is from a Bantu background, and only

⁸ Unfortunately, under this political ideology, Nyerere’s government experienced economic difficulties between 1981 and 1985. This, according to Lipumba (1995), forced Tanzania to accept the conditions of IMF and World Bank who advised the county to undergo the Economic Recovery Programme (ERP). Ali Hassan Mwinyi (Nyerere’s successor) accepted the conditions of IMF, in late 1985, that made him accept the policy of trade liberalization (Keshomshahara 2008:83). Over the course of these socio-economic and political transitions in modern Tanzania, attitudes to Nature developed that continue to determine the ecology of mind and relationship with Nature.

⁹ See excerpts of Bernstein (1981) and Freyhold (1979) in Kjekshus’ *Ecology Control* (1996), p. xxvii.

¹⁰ Following the instruction of Government’s paper order Na.VPC 9/50/02

¹¹ For more detailed information see http://www.potiori.co_m/Mara_Region.html#cite_note-2012_census1 Accessed on 02nd September, 2014.

Luo people are the Nilotic in this region (Kirwen 1980). Culturally, Mara is inhabited by social ethnic groups that follow patrilineal and matrilineal descent systems (Kirwen, 1979, Blum, 1989).¹² The region is an ancestral homeland to over fifteen different communities¹³. The Luo community is the most populous ethnic group found in each of the six districts of Mara Region.

Economically, the communities in northern Tanzania largely depend on freshwater fishing in Lake Victoria, rain-fed agrarianism and pastoralism (Maathai 2010:227-238). The Tanzanian Luo population is estimated to have grown from 1.1 million in 2001, to 1.9 million in 2010; and the Luo people's livelihood and economy is totally dependent on rain-fed agriculture and fishing from Lake Victoria. Fish, *Ugali* and green vegetables are the staple foods of the Luo people.¹⁴ Unfortunately, this important source of food and economy to Luo people has become increasingly jeopardized, as this article written in 1995 by Nancy Chege shows:

The once clear life-filled lake is now murky, smelly and choking with algae...for decades, ecologists have travelled to Lake Victoria to study *cichlids*, small indigenous bony fish which made up 80% of the biomass composition of the Lake. Some 400 species had evolved from five species of ancestors, making Lake Victoria one of the most species-diverse lakes in the world. But now there are only 200 species thanks to the depredations of the Nile Perch which has jumped in 15 years to 80% of fish weight in the Lake.¹⁵

The situation continues to worsen year by year. This includes the decline of Nile Perch in the lake, which until recently were bought locally. They are now not as available, due to the high demand for exportation.

More recently, severe environmental degradation has been caused by over-cultivation of farm lands, deforestation, unplanned habitations, over-grazing, the mining industry, over-fishing and inappropriate disposal of waste materials (both in landfills and in water sources).¹⁶ The result of this environmental degradation has been the reduction of crops and fish, leading to food scarcity. This is despite

¹² Michael C. Kirwen, *African Widows: An empirical study of the problems of adapting Western Christian teachings on marriage to the leviratic custom for the care of widows in four rural African societies* (New York: Orbis Books, 1980, p.22).

¹³ Luo, Jita, Ruri, Zanaki, Kuria, Kabwa, Kiroba, Simbiti, Ngoreme, Kwaya, Ikoma, Isenye, Ikizu, Sizaki, Sukuma and others

¹⁴ <http://www.kenya-information-guide.com/luo-tribe.html> Accessed on 04th September, 2014.

¹⁵ *Tanzania Affairs*: Issued by the Britain-Tanzania Society, No. 52, September 1995, p.18.

¹⁶ This statement was issued in the 'Friends of the Earth's annual report 2008. Visit <http://www.foe.org> cited on Thursday March 21, 2013.

the fact that agriculturally, the Mara region has a very rich landscape on which a variety of crops grow.¹⁷

The majority of Luo people in Mara claim to be Christians. Yet, most see Christian spirituality as from their Christian upbringing and intergenerational moral cosmology. The Luo people does not consider their eco-theological experience as ‘something completely new upon which we embarked’ (Mboya 1965; Ayot 1979; Maseno 2011), but as the evolving moral energy which combines their traditional moral heritage and the beauty of the Christian tradition (cf. Ogot 2003).

According to Ranger (1972), there were more than 12 independent churches, as well as mainline churches, among the North Mara Luo community between the 1940s and 1970s. The Church Missionary Society (CMS) was established here at the beginning of the 1930s (Nyaronga 1985:7; Kirwen 1979:21-23) and prior to that were the Roman Catholics and other Protestant denominations.

1.1.1 Research Questions, Hypothesis and Scope

This study reconsiders how Anglican churches among the Luo people might respond missionally to eco-social sustainability in its widest sense; allowing Luo cosmology to be heard as an equal partner: in both the conversation about practical mission, and in imagining alternatives to sustainability. The fundamental question motivating this thesis is: *What are the implications of Luo cultural ecology and the impact of colonial missionary Christianity for contemporary conversations about mission and sustainability?* It has four aspects:

1. *What were the cultural teachings in the pre-Christian Luo community by which the community maintained its ecological sustainably?* Chapter 2 examines traditional Luo cosmology and cultural approaches to the environment.
2. *What are the impacts of colonial missionary Christianity on the environment, as it spread among the Luo people of Mara-Tanzania from the 1930s?* Chapters 3, 4 and 5 examine whether and how colonial theology

¹⁷ In the highlands, farmers grow bananas, potatoes, onions, tomatoes and in the middle and lowlands farmers grow maize, millet, cassava, cotton and sugarcane.

has influenced economic competition, political hegemony, and social change in the public spheres of Luo universe.

3. *How do contemporary eco-theological and interdisciplinary conversations about mission and sustainability regard traditional cultural ecology, and what are the implications for sustainability?* Chapter 5 considers these emerging debates in significant depth.
4. *What are the solutions that the synthesis of Luo cultural cosmology and integrated earth-honouring faith might contribute to the wider struggle towards 'one earth community', as David Hallman (1994) puts it?* Chapter 6 suggests a pioneering way forward.

The ecological crisis is first and foremost a spiritual crisis. It requires a moral change, and a collective reconsideration of our ecological relationship. These questions rethink the lived ecological wisdoms embedded in the 'cultural traditions' of sustainability found in the Bible and in Luo cosmology. It is hoped that a Luo ecological and mission theology can be developed that challenges the disconnection of people from each other, the ecosphere and from the cultural universe.

This thesis examines the background of the daily life of Luo people, and considers Luo taboos that protect the divisive categories of the universe. Mary Douglas, states explicitly that, in their cultural structure, 'taboo protects the local consensus on how the world is organized' and is used to 'confront the ambiguous thing and to shunt it into the category of sacred' (Douglas 1966 & 2002).

Douglas's anthropology regards taboos as having a protective function. They were the central device for protecting social relations, respecting ecological mystery and coordinating 'what human beings are doing and the cosmic reality within which they learned how to thrive sustainably' (Beyer 2011). The study hypothesizes that the ongoing modernization of competitive societies, which will be referred to as 'capitalist spirituality', affects collective moral traditions of abundant life, thus compromising sustainability among the Luo people.

To test this hypothesis, a set of objectives have been identified, in order to investigate the Luo dimensions of sustainability discourse from a more interdisciplinary perspective. These are:

1. To assess the role of Christian mission and practice among the Luo people, and its implications for life and environmental sustainability
2. To explore the dimensions of Luo cultural ecology and its ‘grassroots’ wisdom, in relation to their collective forms of belonging.
3. To examine the relationship between Luo identity and natural cosmology, and the way such cultural narrative reflects the rich diversity of Luo life, and provides an alternative strategy for ecosocial sustainability.

1.1.2 Central Argument, Significance and Possible Impact

There is a significant variety, in terms of both content and sub-disciplines, among scholars within mission theology and eco-theological ethics. Many discourses identify with Christian ethics, most subdivide into sub-disciplines of practical theology, liturgical studies, and ecclesiology; while others, such as John Milbank’s influential 1990 book, *Theology and Social Theory*, root their research in Christian social ethics.

This thesis identifies with Christian eco-spirituality and roots the discussion in Luo cultural ecology. It reviews major reflections on religious ecology from the Luo cosmology viewpoint, and uses empirical thinking about the physical world (in which Christian cosmology might generate moral ecology). This thesis suggests that the ecological reformation of the Christian tradition will have direct, practical application when it values the cosmological energies embedded in Luo cultural wisdom.

The history of interactions among disparate peoples has shaped the modern world by creating reverberations, evident after many centuries; and these, according to physical ecologist Jared Diamond, ‘are actively continuing in some of the world’s most troubled areas’ (Diamond 1997:16). For example, much of Africa is still struggling with legacies from modern theological, political, and economic colonialism.

For both clarity and eco-social integration, it is important to revisit the interconnection between Christian cosmology and cultural ecology. This

theological reflection is in people and communities: how they understand themselves in light of earth-honouring faith, and their commitments and responsibilities to others. This can reveal how Christian missional theology and traditional ecological ethics are integrally related, even though they remain somewhat distinct.

While, there are many overlaps between Christian theology and indigenous ethnography, as Scharen and Vigen (2011) observed (for example in their use of sources, themes, and method), '*theology*' is often construed as systematic 'God-talk': inquiring into the mysteries of divine being and doing. As such, theology considers elaborating formal, systematic categories (such as sin, salvation, revelation, and eschatology) without making explicit connection to social practice. It might be hoped, that by getting the ideas right, then the practices will follow, but many Christian theologians fail to make that connection explicit. This does not mean that Christians should stop trying to reflect theologically, however, they must recognise, as ethicist Anna Peterson argues, the 'need to stop thinking that this is an adequate intellectual and moral response to environmental crisis' (2007:57).

Decades of serious works in environmental philosophy (such as Peterson's eco-theology and other related fields) have offered ecological interconnection. They taught that there are many right paths to a transformational vision of eco-social flourishing, which emerge from careful engagement with our hyperconnected world. The problem is how to engage and live missionally by them. This requires not just an extension of the usual way of doing mission, but also a new way of thinking about this task, and of knowing our eco-social responsibility. While it is possible to work in either systematic theology or traditional cultural ecology without reference to the other, such separation is increasingly unsatisfying. The premise is that Christian theology and cultural ecology are necessarily bound up with one another, based on the intergenerational code of cultural mandate. The two ought not to be divorced.

The ecology of God-talk reveals intergenerational truth: through attitudes, relations, practices, narratives and ecological struggles of a people. Therefore, this thesis posits that the challenges of mission, identity, ecology, and sustainability should be explored and engaged within embodied community wisdoms, and in particular eco-social geography.

In summary, this thesis serves four primary purposes.

1. *To encourage integration between Luo cultural ecology and evangelical Anglican missional-ecothology.* This is identified through its Fifth-Mark of Mission: ‘To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth’ (Ross 2012). The hope is that this will assist Luo Christians to become ecologically concerned, and that the church in Tanzania might respond to contemporary moral, social, and ecological challenges of sustainability. This thesis argues that Luo cosmology has a contribution to an eco-social reformation of the Christian tradition, and to the ongoing worldwide conversation on sustainability.
2. *To challenge dominant missional-eco-theological readings, that emphasise theological ideals above the lived experiences of belonging and eco-social integration.*
3. *To use the sustainability discourse as an interdisciplinary value framework, and to explore how such framework might facilitate conversations around human-environment interactions and cross-cultural practices of sustainability.*
4. *To inform educational and missiological dialogue and praxis among the Luo people, through the revitalization of the connection between evangelical Anglican eco-theology and Luo indigenous ecology.* This could establish the starting point for developing an eco-theology of mission and sustainability among the Luo people.

1.2 Methodology, Sources of the study, and Literature Review

1.2.1 Methodology and Sources of the Study

This study uses a ‘triangulation method’ involving three approaches: participant observation (fieldwork interviews), archive collections, and literature review. The participant profile was deliberately broad, involving Luo elders, lay participants, and senior Anglican theologians and was conducted between May 2015 and September 2016. They were selected from the predominantly Luo-speaking areas in Mara region, although the theologians were based in diocesan and academic institutions in the Dodoma municipality. All the conversations were

focused on what sustainability can and should mean across diverse interdisciplinary and intercultural contexts.

Through conversations with Luo elders and lay participants, the intention was to explore the existence of formulaic, transcendental traditions in Luo social values regarding sustainability; and to consider how these might contribute to the current struggle for more integrated sustainability ethics.

The elders were chosen as a gateway to cultural heritage, because as residents they live off and are integrally connected with the land, and as such have inherited lifelong social hopes and values from previous generations of our ancestors. As Luo elders, they are tasked with cultural responsibility to inspire their present society with deep transcendental moral affection: spanning from cultural ecology of daily life, social cohesion, through to meaningful practices and Earth-honouring traditions.

The lay participants were chosen in the age range 25 to 50 years, as these are key stakeholders and emergent sustainability ethics is targeted toward this group. They are most probably involved in the wide range of production industry, transactional processes, and other complex economic activities that affect life on the planet and can destroy much of life's moral codes at the same time (see Gare 2010; Rasmussen 2013). Senior Anglican theologians and other scholars with a wide variety of interdisciplinary expertise were chosen, because they were the custodians of divine wisdom, with the jurisdiction to inspire deep ecosocial reflection and animate meaningful practices in the community.

Participant interviews engage with orality and reality, and give an intimate familiarity with the original phenomena of Luo moral traditions of sustainability. These are engraved on the elements of cultural heritage: language, memory, and creative energy of the people animated in cosmological stories, proverbs, and prayers. The research was in two periods June to September 2015 and June to September 2016, including interviews, conversations, participation in the conferences and correspondence.

Drawing on the methodological insights of Jenkins (2013) and Kopnina (2016), discourse analysis was applied to organise collected data in thematic

clusters. Participatory learning meant the information was connected together and integrated within a theme. According to Kopnina (2016), discourse analysis involves recording interactions; transcribing the recorded material; formulating claims about the conversational moves, structures and strategies demonstrated in the interaction. It develops an argument using transcript excerpts from interviews, informal conversations or correspondence. These were then analysed to create the basic qualitative units of the present study by coding key ideas, words or sentences. Incidentally, a similar method was used when researching Owen's notes.

Archival study focused particularly on W. E. Owen. He was a dominant influence in early missionary activity in the region. Primary research examined Anglican missionary practices and the inherent colonial missionary perspectives on indigenous cosmologies. It explored the impact of mission theology upon the indigenous culture and society.

Since this was a predominantly interdisciplinary study of missional-ecothology and sustainability, a literature review was chosen because it academically informed the researcher in the subject. The review focused on current paths and emerging conversation around communal practices, ecological ethics, sustainability matters, and how they interact. Broad background reading was essential and traversed many different academic disciplines: ecotheology, missiology, education, environmental ethics, to cross-cultural readings of identity politics in the sustainability arena.

The analysis of all the collected information and conversations was focused on sustainability matters. The three approaches were intended to address the relentless dominance of academic textual critiques, as the particularity of oral culture was taken seriously. It sought to discover the truth revealed through embodied habits, practices, narratives, struggles, and lived experiences of ecological relationship to nature. It examined the question of how missional-theology can mobilise the best religious and cultural energies of humankind to address sustainability issues.

The premise is that each particular life-widening tradition, situation, or community ethnography (be it oral or written), is potentially, revelatory of

transcendent wisdom or divine truth and could encourage an ecological transformation of the Christian tradition.

Undeniably, just as any other methodological composition, this assumption does not claim to either value or risk-free. Indeed, it could turn such embodied experiences into a kind of flat characterization, static, an idealized substitute for a more complex, even infinite, reality. Yet, as Scharen and Vigen pointed out in *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*, that possible weakness should not be a reason to rule out the use of ethnography in Christian ethics and theology.

Writing in the Foreword to Scharen and Vigen's book, Mary M. Fulkerson noted that 'common sense tells us that attention to lived faith, or the lived situation of the human beings everywhere is basic to Christian faith'. Christian theology and ethics, argues Fulkerson, must have some grasp of these lived faith situations or realities, however messy they are, and participant observation is a marvellous way to initiate access to them. The study is one of many examples of an integrated missional-ecothology emerging from the 'organic' methodological framework developed by writers such as Ghanaian theologian Kwame Bediako, British environmentalist James Lovelock, American ethicist Willis Jenkins, and more recently, eco-theologian Heather Eaton of Saint Paul University, Canada.

In recent decades, the methodological framework required for understanding integration between indigenous cultural cosmology and Christian theology has become a growing concern, particularly in Africa. The suggested reading list for integrated Christian theology and ethics is too long. But Kwame Bediako's influential book, *Theology and Identity* (1992) appears to be particularly significant.

Bediako developed what he named 'organic method' to address the roots of problems found in African Christian mission theology. Bediako describes the 'organic method' as contextualising the 'particularity' within 'the totality of cultural anthropology, social morality and the entire network of relationships between African religion and their milieux' (Bediako 1992:5-8). It may be understood as a presentation of Christian theology in the light of African identity and cultural heritages as whole. Bediako's 'organic method' recognises that an interdisciplinary approach is vital when considering social sustainability. This

approach is even more challenging when considering the practical theology of mission and other interdisciplinary eco-theological discourses.

Bediako's 'organic method' is undeniably provocative and has helped to raise insightful public awareness, engender respect and cultural empathy. It may, in future perhaps, even lead to cosmological transformation through what Christopher Wright calls 'redemptive living' (2010,p.96ff). While Bediako's 'organic methodology' is practically useful, it needs to be expanded to include both an ecological critique of cultural attitudes, and an eco-theological critique of dualistic theological hegemony. To address this missionary-bequeathed plight of dualism, an alternative approach to integrating faith and ecosocial morality is to be adopted.

This thesis discusses how such integrative engagement with ecosocial reality (as opposed to exclusionary missionary theologizing) may be approached within culturally-driven values of social resilience or sustainability. It then suggests a way ahead towards these achievement ecotheologically. While Bediako's 'organic method' is a systematic theological presentation of the whole theology of culture, this thesis offers a missional reading of Luo cultural cosmology through a Christian eco-theological lens.

This thesis argues that contemporary challenges of sustainability must be informed by ecological wisdom embedded in the Bible, and must be absorptive to intergenerational moral ethics and traditions of sustainability (regardless of whether that value framework is universal or indigenous). 'Sustainability' is seen as an important value framework that might be socialised missionally and achieved through integrating faith and ecosocialization.

Until more recently, and within Christianity as whole, there were three prevalent methods: retrieval (such as Lynn White's historical roots of ecological crisis); reinterpretation (such as the liberation theology and holistic creation theology); and reconstruction, such as the renewal of creation theologies advocated by some contemporary African theologians such as Jesse N.K. Mugambi.

Successively, research on how to begin ‘integrative conversations around ecological ethics and practices of sustainability within Christian morality’ has been considered with reference to Willis Jenkins (2008) and Peter Beyer (2011).

Both Jenkins and Beyer take the view that ecological theology must be approached (or at least structured) with respect to two well-known ecological hypotheses, namely J. E. Lovelock’s Gaia hypothesis and Lynn White’s analysis of the roots of the ecological crisis (White 1967:1203-1207).

What is notable about Lovelock’s analysis is that it frames the ecological question through visibly religious symbols. Unlike other scientific projects, Lovelock’s approach is to first translate the abstract concepts of ecology and environment into the concrete form of the planet Earth. Then he transposes this Earth into the formally religious idiom of the ancient Greek goddess of the Earth, Gaia. Finally, he recasts her as an anthropomorphic and female-gendered being, whose organic self is threatened by the destructive attitudes and behaviour of her own offspring (‘us’, as Lovelock compellingly concludes).

Lovelock’s Gaia hypothesis and White’s classic critique of colonial Christianity both examine eco- and mission theology, and offer encouragement for an ecological reformation of the Christian cosmology and cultural sciences¹⁸.

Like Bediako, Lovelock, Jenkins, and Beyer, a recent development of an integrated methodology for Christian ecotheology has come from Heather Eaton (2014:195-217). In response to this, Eaton examines practical steps towards engaging social change through an ecological transformation of the Christian tradition and the society.

In order to bring traditional energies and other ecological wisdom into a comprehensive diversity (argues Eaton), ‘we need to be ecologically literate’ and understand climate change, soil erosion, species extinctions, and bioregional challenges of ecosocial sustainability. For Eaton, ecological literacy means knowing the eco- and biodynamics of a few specific eco-social problems. Given

¹⁸ The word ‘science’ is used here more with the broader meaning than it has in English; where it includes what is called Gaia, including natural sciences, the social sciences and the humanities. At this stage of analysis, this also includes ‘theologians’ (Bayer 2011), but theological discourse must be distinguished from other sorts of scientific observation (except the *Gaia* theory).

that different methods result in distinct analyses; it is clear to Eaton that we require many diagnostic tools (ecological, economic, systemic injustices, poverty and gender). Theology, she argues, is itself not enough for the development of a robust eco-theological ethics. If theology is to be effective, Eaton continues, ‘it must move into multidisciplinary discussions’ (p.204).

Eaton criticises exclusionary eco-theologians who reinterpret creation, while continuing to see a discord between science and theology. In Eaton’s view, such theological dissonances are not only intellectually irresponsible and ecologically illiterate, but also theologically misguided. A basic understanding of ecological science is necessary to become more equipped and ecologically relevant (Eaton 2014:205).

Eaton’s key methodological point is that ecological sciences (such as the Gaia hypothesis and other religious moral ecologies of sustainability) are not contradictory to each other, but complementary and integrated. Whatever their distinctions may be, they are connected, and their embeddedness in the cosmic reality stand above whatever divides them (see also McLeish 2014).

Finally, the three interlinked strands of the ‘triangulation method’ are presented below and then linked to the subject under examination.

1.2.1 Archive Collections

The special collections of archive materials at Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham, contain extensive documents referring to the work of the Anglican’s Church Missionary Society (CMS) in many parts of the world (including colonial Africa).

The Library also has a collection of letters sent by missionaries back home, which show the missionary perception of traditional cultures and cosmology.

To determine the colonial missionary understandings of sustainability (grounded in the reality of being human among the Luo people of Tanzania), the research considers some of the most insightful discourses that were recorded by the Archdeacon Walter Edwin Owen (1880-1945). Owen is regarded as the first CMS missionary and founding pastor to the Anglican Church in Mara, Tanzania.

1.2.2 Participant Observation: Fieldwork and Conversation

Conversations were held with senior theologians through interaction, conference participation, and correspondence. Two fieldwork studies (especially interviews) were conducted in Tanzania, in order to access the informational aspects of the indigenous Luo cosmology sustainability.

The researcher's main intention was:

1. To compare and contrast the connections between deep Luo cosmological traditions of sustainability against those emerging in current interdisciplinary sustainability discourse
2. To use such concrete recital of cultural heritage and original phenomena of lived wisdom to develop contemporary Luo missional-ecothology

Data was analysed in the light of Jorgensen (1989):

...a breaking up, separating, or disassembling of research materials into pieces, parts, elements, or units. With facts broken down into manageable pieces, the researcher sorts and sifts them, searching for types, classes, sequences, processes, patterns or wholes. The aim of this process is to assemble or construct the data in a meaningful or comprehensible fashion (Jorgensen 1989,p.107).

Discourse analysis was used to examine the transcript excerpts, and segments of informal conversations and primary research were developed into what might be called the moral nature of 'Luo cosmology'. Walter J. Ong (1982/2002/2012) gave suggestions on how to balance the relationship between oral wisdom and written networks.

1.2.3 Literature Materials

Eco-theology embraces several disciplines, and so a wide range of published literature and unpublished monographs on mission, identity, and ecology were studied. The sub-sections below are indicative, not exclusive, as many works transgress into other fields.

Mission, Identity and Ecology

The researcher's previous dissertations on 'biblical environmentalism' (Otieno 2011) and 'Christian theology and ecological well-being within the mining community' (Otieno 2011:2013), were used to frame preliminary ideas for this research. By revisiting these dissertations, the intention was to identify the interaction between cultural cosmology, Christian eco-theology and interdisciplinary discourses on sustainability.

Since the 1950s, much has been written on eco- and mission-theology, and on the public theology of faith. However, a critical theology of what ‘faith’ can and should mean in relation to the ecology of daily life and sustainability, is referent to the work of American-German theologian Paul Tillich (1886-1965). He defined faith as ‘a state of being ultimately concerned’ *Dynamics of Faith* (1958). His understanding of faith as ‘the dynamics of man’s ultimate concern’ has contributed much to this study, especially in rethinking man’s place in the whole.

Other relevant mission theology, especially in a post-colonial context, includes Lesslie Newbigin (1909-1998): *A Faith for this One World?* (1961) and *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (1989). Missiologist David Bosch’s (1929-1992) standard textbook *Transforming Mission* (1991), theologian J. Andrew Kirk’s (b.1937) *What is Mission?* (2000) and the Old Testament scholar Christopher J. H. Wright’s (b.1947) *The Mission of God’s People* (2010) also make significant contributions. ‘Christian faith’ is seen not as a private commodity (as it has dominantly been theologized), but as being concerned about each other, about the biosphere that sustains us, and about the universe that has brought us forth.

Eco-Theology and Pneumatology

To explore how such ecologically-grounded Christian faith can be enacted in everyday life, an interdisciplinary study of pneumatology was undertaken. Kirsteen Kim *The Holy Spirit in the World* (2007) and *Ecospirit* (2007, edited by eco-pneumatologists Catherine Keller and Laurel Kearns) indicate that a Biblical understanding of the ‘spirit of life’ call humanity to live consciously and gratefully *within* creation, rather than seek to escape from it. Further, they suggest the fluid medium for interdisciplinary eco-theology.

Christian Ecology from an African Perspective

The works of leading African scholars (such as Bénézet Bujo, Laurenti Magesa and John Mbiti) were consulted.

Bénézet Bujo’s *African Theology in its Social Context* (1992 & 2006), and Laurenti Magesa’s *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life* (1997) and *What is Not Sacred?* (2014) were significant resources.

Magesa asserts the importance of cultural heritages and moral traditions of abundant life: ‘It is not for you to call profane what God counts clean’ (Acts 10:15).

He argues that the incarnational spirituality of those cultures remains vibrant, revolutionary, and significant and has relevance today. Magesa's hybridized, but culturally embedded, cosmological theology challenges and decolonizes the theological hegemony of Christianity. He challenges John Mbiti's popular thesis that 'only Christianity has the superior responsibility of pointing the way to the ultimate identity, foundation and source of security' (2002:277).

Other African voices that were consulted include Gabriel M. Setiloane's *African Theology: An Introduction* (1986), John Parratt's *Reinventing Christianity: African Theology Today* (1995) and Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator's *Theology Brewed in an African Pot* (2008).

These works consider new ways to challenge the dominant Eurocentric theology. They approach eco- and mission theology through non-Western sources of cosmological spirituality (such as cultural myths, communal memory), and reconceive what Walter J. Ong (1912-2003) defines in *Orality and Literacy*, as 'an oral universe of communication or thought' (1982&2002:2ff).

Historical Appraisal of African Eco-Theology

The ecological-historical discourse was informed by British historian John Iliffe's *A Modern History of Tanganyika* (1979), Kenyan historian Bethwell Ogot's *Peoples of East Africa: History of the Southern Luo* (1967) and *Ecology and History in East Africa* (1979), and Helge Kjekshus's *Ecology Control and Economic Development in East African History* (1977 & 1996).

This literature traces the ecological history of pre-colonial East Africa, and maps economic and ecological changes during the colonial period. Tribal ecology is regarded as a vehicle for economic action and environmental choices.

Henry O. Ayot's *History of the Luo-Abasuba of western Kenya from A.D. 1760-1940*, provides additional details about the Luo migration into western Kenya and northwest Tanzania.

Michael Kirwen's *African Widows* (1979) studies the problems of adapting Western Christian teachings on marriage to the African leviratic custom for the care of widows. D. Cohen & A. Odhiambo's *Siaya: The Historical Anthropology of an African Landscape* (1989) was a key source regarding the Luo peoples' practice of 'Pimship': the traditional mentoring of children. Ben Knighton's *The*

Vitality of Karamojong Religion (2005) provides some profound synthesis of cultural economy and spirituality common to all Nilotic peoples of East Africa.

Eco-Theology and Religion

An eco-theological reading of current paths and horizons in eco- and mission theology (from a Christian perspective) is informed by wider reading of many theologians.¹⁹

Perspectives on religion and ecology in the public sphere are in Celia Deane-Drummond & Heinrich Bedford-Strohm's *Religion and Ecology in the Public Sphere* (2011). John Grim & Mary E. Tucker's *Ecology and Religion* (2014) examines integrative social sustainability. Lucas F. Johnston in *Religion and Sustainability* (2013) and essays in Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee in *Spiritual Ecology: the Cry of the Earth* (2014) enumerates ecological problems from different parts of the world, and the need for a spiritual response.

Some revolutionary voices were included, such as: Karl Polanyi's *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (1947 & 1957), E. F. Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as if People Mattered* (1973 & 2011), Walter Rodney's *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1972, revised 1982, 2001).

The vitality of moral traditions was portrayed in *Ecologies of Grace* (2008) and *The Future of Ethics* (2013) by Willis Jenkins. This affirms the doctrine of God's grace, but concludes that 'the future of Christian ethics lies in sustaining the practices through which future generations might forgive us' (2013:323). Faith communities must devise sustaining practices and move collectively toward the vision 'to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly before God' (Micah 6:8)

Eco-Theology and Sustainability

Research in sustainability across diverse interdisciplinary contexts is found in essays edited by Helen Kopnina and Eleanor Shoreman-Quimet's *Sustainability: Key Issues* (2015). It contains a range of articles, including essays by Michael Bonnett and Haydn Washington.

¹⁹ These include Volz 1983; DeWitt and Prance 1992; Hallman 1994 & 2009; Volf 1996; Clinebell 1996; White 2009; Primavesi 2000, 2009; Walls & Ross 2008; Davis 2009; Ross 2012; Wright 2013; Northcott 2014; Bell and White 2016

A further collection of essays edited by Colin Bell, Jonathan Chaplin and Robert White's *Living Lightly, Living Faithfully: Religious faiths and the future of Sustainability* (2013) were consulted. These offer a vision of eco-social flourishing, grounded in the reality of being human in a complex and sometimes fragile world.

The next subsection reviews an ecological critique of colonial missionary Christianity and reveals implications to this thesis.

1.3 General Literature Review

Colonial missionary Christian traditions in Tanzania are in transition, from a previous theological colonialism to a more holistic integration of all aspects of life. It has been widely understood that the influence of western religious civilization has been a complicit partner to colonial imperialism and ecological exploitation. According to Niall Ferguson's *Civilization*, it was western religious ideas that brought the complex forces of Europe's domination: namely competition, science, medicine, consumerism, and work ethic all together (Ferguson 2011).

The term 'colonialization' is seen as the appropriation of a people, nation, or religion by another for the purpose of economic exploitation and moral domination. According to Byrne et al (2002), it imposes an external culture, social structure, laws and institutions, technology, systems of production; and even social relations on the colonized society. In the era of European colonization, ecological imperialism altered the ecology of colonized places and sacred spaces by the introduction of new land uses, land management, and spiritual ecology.

Some of the earliest scholarly critiques were Edwin Smith's *The Golden Stool* (1927) and Victor Murray's *The School in the Bush* (1929). Smith and Murray were among the first Africanists to argue that Christianity can generate moral patterns strong enough to meet Africa's sociological reality, while at the same time, take seriously the contribution of traditional religious ecologies. Since then, Christian eco-theology has seen many literature taking the same line of argument: calling for the best religious ecologies and cultural energies to respond to contemporary moral and social challenges of sustainability.

Growing gradually from the insights of these early writers, from the subsequent scholarship and from the fatal implications of cultural imperialism and intensified ecological modernization—the urgent need for integrative Christian

faith with a moral ecology strong enough to shape and correct human civilization in favour of integrating values that support both human dignity and the integrity of creation as whole, culminates in the 1990s. This critical turn towards the theological-ethical discourse on ecological morality and an examination of indigenous traditions of sustainability, from an Anglican perspective, which rose to prominence in the 1990s, emanated at first from the now canonized work of the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC-8) who developed *Five Marks of Mission* between 1984 and 1990.²⁰

Theological examination and study of these *Five Marks of Mission* has been published in somewhat might be called twin volumes: *Mission in the 21st Century: Exploring the Five Marks of Global Mission* (edited by Andrew Walls and Cathy Ross, 2008) and *Life-Widening Mission: Perspectives from the Anglican Communion* (edited by Cathy Ross, 2012). Ecotheologically speaking, it is the focus on actually researching and rethinking what it means ‘to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and to sustain the life of the earth’ (fifth mark), that makes this twin volume both a significant contribution to the conversation around communal principles of sustainability and a viable Eco-activism in contemporary Anglican literature.

Anglican Eco-activists motivated idealistically and prolifically by the eco-bishops have called for the worldwide Anglican family to urgently find its ‘collective moral voice’ against climate change and for mutually enhancing ecological reformation. Meeting in South Africa in 2015, at the invitation of the primate of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa Bishop Thabo Makgoba, this group formed by 20 bishops from around the world described catastrophic causes of the climate change as ‘the greatest man-made disaster’ (Makgoba 2015:xii). By ‘moral voice’, they are undeniably referring to the need to retain cultural traditions of harmonious relationship to nature, the need to revisit ecological wisdom embedded in the Bible, and the urgent need for a more just economic-political order and spirituality. Similarly, a further call with keen ethical insights calling for an ecological civilization and a more just economic-political order was made in 2015, through *Laudato Si’*, Pope Francis’ encyclical on *Care for our Common Home*. The

²⁰ For more details see (*Bonds of Affection-1984 ACC-6, p49; Mission in a Broken World-1990 ACC-8, p.101*).

title of this encyclical is autological—compelling human civilization and spirituality to a radical turning point: change or perish.

The urgent need to take radical turning point –to change or perish is paramount in the *fifth mark of mission*. Inviting Anglicans everywhere to the redemptive task of determining the right relationship between humans and nature, the *fifth mark of mission*, eco-theologically, offers at least two significant images of a paradigm shift in the modern world of mission theology that has been going on since the 1980s: First, it was a meaningful reversal of colonial theological hegemony: helping restore the cultural moralities that had been demonised by missionary spirituality. Second, it proclaimed the relationship between the integrity of creation and the flourishing of life in its holistic form. As such it was a rejuvenation of Judaeo-Christian cosmological spirituality. But that is not all. What makes this Fifth-Mark so important, is that it re-establishes co-existence Mission. It recognises that human flourishing comes from the integrity of the creation itself. It calls for all parts of society to come together to protect the environment, that the world is driven by moral purposes that should not be ignored.

Along with the paradigm shift within the Anglican Communion, a broadly critical turn towards ecologically grounded mission literature has also been ascending among other traditions. To be sure, concern for theological imagination in a culturally-conditioned eco-social environment has been shown, for example, in Uppsala Interfaith Climate Manifesto (2008), Interfaith Declaration on Climate Change (2009), Geneva Interfaith Forum on Climate Change, Environment and Human Rights (2011), Climate Justice for Sustainable Peace in Africa (2011), the WCC 10th Assembly Statement on Climate and Justice (2013) and Climate, Faith and Hope Summit of Faith Traditions Together in New York (2014).

Internationally, the political response is seen in the UN Conferences on ecology and sustainable development. For example, the first Rio Earth summit (1992) declared environmental sustainability to be one of the eight Millennium Development Goals. Further conferences included the Seventeenth Conference of the Parties (COP 17) on Climate Change (Durban, South Africa, 2011) and RIO+20 (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 2012).

Despite some failure to convince powerful nations to reduce carbon emissions quickly, together these documents both reveal the ‘urgency of the matter’, especially in Africa (Kaoma 2013), and compel a re-examination of attitudes to and with the environment. However, despite such international interest, not many are aware that the crisis in places like Mara, Tanzania goes much deeper. Unless it is addressed soon, it will expose local society’s livelihoods and stability into the vicious cycle of eco-social impairment.

The word ‘mission’ is a term based upon the Latin for ‘I send’, but it also has biblical associations²¹ to right relationships between humans and nature. Unfortunately, since the 16th century, ‘missions became the foreign arm of churches based in powerful countries who took advantage of their global connections to carry the message further afield’ (Kim 2012:9) and to administer relationship between colonial churches and imperialism (Stanley 1990). This resulted to a ‘reductionist’ view, in which church and empire strive to be in harmony, regardless of whether such harmony is eco-socially right or not.

However, new understandings and research do recognise the essential place of right relationship. Brown & Garver (2009:8-16) found that right eco-social relationships are only possible where there is environmental ethics, and this allows an expansive sense of eco-social interdependence and relationships. That, ‘right relationship is something done by inspired people of all faiths and cultures when they live life according to cherished values built on caring for other people and being stewards of the earth’s gifts’ (2009:8). This study suggests that any influence which isolates a person from their expansive cosmological reality is bound to be ecologically problematic.

The lack of moral theology for right relationship pushed colonial missionary Christianity into accepting ecological and cultural imperialism; and this plundered Africa’s cultural energies. This continues even today, and is justified by the belief that colonialism was providentially sanctioned.

Back in 1927, Albert Muller advanced a ‘Christian’ and theological principle to justify colonialism by stating that superior races have the right to

²¹ See passages such as John 20:21-2; Rom. 10:14-15 and 2Cor. 5:20.

appropriate the resources of inferior races. Using the principle of the providential destination of the goods of earth, he wrote that ‘retarded people are not in a position to put to good use their portion of the goods concealed in the territory which they occupy, and left to themselves can only let these resources lie fallow to the detriment of the general prosperity’ (Muller as cited in Kanyandago 2011:173).

Assertions like Muller’s have been used, albeit in more subtle forms of argument, as a reason to deprive Africans of their right to enjoy fully the benefits of Africa’s resources (Kanyandago 2011), but more specifically, as a springboard for cultural imperialism and structural exploitations that continues in the name of economic partnerships.

The socio-economic consequences of such detrimental partnerships cannot be ignored. Indeed, it is important to consider whether such theological assertions (like Muller’s) have influenced political, moral, and economic decision-making processes in the public sphere of modern Tanzania.

Colonial western imperialism sliced up the African continent like a cake. It laid down many lasting geographies of social change and structural exploitation, and locked the ruled within artificial political boundaries. The pieces, according to Thomas Pakenham’s *The Scramble for Africa* (1991), were swallowed by five principal and often rival nations: Germany, Italy, Portugal, France and Britain (with Spain taking some scraps). Figure 3 illustrates how Africa was divided by the imperial powers²².

²² From <http://mswarnockv.weebly.com/imperialism.html> accessed 20/2/2017.

Figure 3: Africa divided by imperial powers



By the 1920s, the British Empire took over territories that had previously been dominated or colonized by other imperial powers (such as the German East Africa). Colonial cities became ‘great conurbations’, exploiting and corrupting local politics. A consumer culture developed and it impacted developments in transportation (Beinart and Hughes 2007). Colonial missionary enterprise and colonialism was summarised by Walter Benjamin (a German Jewish philosopher), ‘Every great work of civilization is at the same time a work of barbarism’ (as cited in Tracy 2007:119).

Soon after World War II, the ruled societies grew restless. They became aware of the ecological barbarity, the exploitation of natural resources and

corruption in government. (Shorter 2006; 2007). Since gaining independence, countries have found a new voice over their cultural integrity. Some have reformulated ideas about nature conservation, landscape, and moral traditions of sustainability. This has caused challenges at the local and global level, about who has the right to regulate nature (Beinart and Hughes 2007).

Missionary Christianity was slow to assume ecological responsibility. However, missionary Christianity that once played a role in ‘a shift from economic structures based on subsistence peasant agriculture to an export-oriented cash-crop economy’ (Hull 1980:119), is now facing its responsibility and role in earthkeeping through collective cosmic theology.

Loren Wilkinson’s *Earth Keeping* (1980) examines ‘earthkeeping spirituality’ from the perspective of evangelical Christian theology. Wilkinson concludes that, ‘We must seek to find our place within the marvellous design of this ecosphere’ (1980:255-92). Wilkinson’s conclusion shows the need to reform those colonial structures, with a determination to see the church as a safe place to do risky ecological mission in Christ’s service.

Similarly, in 1992 Ghilleen Prance and Calvin B. DeWitt (eds.) published *Missionary Earthkeeping*, which is original in including voices from Africa. Contributors include: J. Mark Thomas, Dennis Testerman, Robert Clobus, Mutombo Mpanya and James Gustafson. They represent different traditions: catholic, protestant, first world, developing world, missionary and academic. What they have in common is their Christian faith and a similar experience of the ecological problems. They do not share a common tradition, but their analysis is remarkably consistent: all are concerned with ‘missionary earthkeeping’.

Denis Testerman reviews two primary phases of missionary activity in Africa and Asia: from the Roman Empire through the Middle Ages, and from William Carey’s Baptist Missionary Society in 1792 to the present. In doing so, Testerman reveals the ambiguity of missionary work to date, its ecological success and failures. The ecological destruction ranges from monks felling sacred trees and draining swamps, to modern missionaries cutting trees and organizing monocultures to serve the market (Testerman 1992:11-44).

DeWitt and Prance stated that, ‘mission programmes that once condoned or even promoted the destruction of Creation are being propelled into a new awareness that comes from the interplay of increasing environmental degradation and biblical teachings on the care and keeping of Creation’. From its previous ignorance of environmental concerns, ‘the church and its Christian missions are for the first time coming to fathom the profound meaning of Revelation 11:18: ‘The time has come...for destroying those who destroy the earth’. DeWitt and Prance warned:

We are extinguishing at least three kinds of plants and animals every day; we are contaminating surface and ground waters world-wide, especially among the poor; we are injecting troublesome materials into global circulations of water and air; and we are extinguishing indigenous knowledge of the medicinal, food, and fibre uses of thousands of species of plants and animals, as well as indigenous wisdom on sustainable living (DeWitt & Prance 1992:p.viii).

Accompanying this is what DeWitt and Prance called the ‘muting of Creation’s testimony’, or deconstruction of the cultural perception that nature is sacred and is God’s. In many urban areas, statements such as ‘the heavens that declare God’s glory’ (Psalm 19:1) have become meaningless due to light and air pollution. The proclamation of Romans 1:20, that Creation’s testimony to God’s divinity and everlasting power leaves all people without excuse, ‘rings hollow’ they added. The ‘Great Commission’ given by the risen and cosmic Christ to his disciples (Mark 16:5): ‘Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature’ has to be seen from new perspectives. Instead of bringing the gospel of God’s love for the cosmos (John 3:16) and of Jesus Christ’s work as Creator, sustainer and reconciler (John 1; Col. 1; Heb. 1), too often the Church has been a complicit bystander or participant in the degradation and defilement of the world.

After several centuries of destroying the habitat to demonstrate that ‘our God reigns’, a new understanding of mission work has been emerging. Theologians, such as DeWitt and Prance (1992), suggest that that the primal goal of mission is the wholeness, integrity, and renewal of people and Creation, and their relationships with each other and the Creator – that mission is reconciliation of *all things* (see also 1 Cor. 15:20-22; Col. 1:15-20; Rom. 5). While this understanding (as loving, caring, and sustaining all that is God’s, as recoded, for example, in Numbers 6:24 or Gen. 2:15) might be seen as new mission thinking,

there is scholarly evidence showing that at least some missionaries in the 20th-century recognised the need for the integration of mission practice with cultural ecological wisdom. In relation to East Africa, these include W.E. Owen, Victor Murray, and John V. Taylor.

In considering earlier monastic movements, Testerman draws an interesting contrast between the Benedictine tendency to subdue nature, and the Franciscan charge to let it be. Missionaries today, Testerman claims, ‘would do well to look to Francis as a model of humility and of respect both for the environment and for other cultures and religions’ (1992:20). Testerman calls for intercultural ways through which faith and ecological practice can find practical expression.

Similarly, Prance maintains that without ‘a deep understanding of the culture in which we are working, it can be easy to bring North American and European culture rather than or as well as a true culture’, instead of leading to ‘an ultimate pluralism of religious values’. Prance observes that, ‘the ecology of indigenous peoples and of their reverence for nature can lead to the establishment of a much more permanent and environmentally-sound Christian faith’ (Prance 1992:45-61). In *The Earth Under Threat* (1996) Prance notes how such practices have not only caused the diminution of native practice, but sometimes the destruction of land and even extinction of the native peoples themselves.

In *Missionary Earthkeeping* James W. Gustafson (a Swedish Evangelical Covenant missionary to Thailand) explores a model for mission that has the promise of integrating ecological, spiritual, and economic development. Gustafson’s concern is to see mission touching persons holistically, as well as the whole of creation (Gustafson 1992:111-126). However, Gustafson fails to identify that culture is integral. Apart from this omission, Gustafson suggests an ‘integrated holistic development’. He outlines seven steps (or principles) that can guide this:

1. Know the message of the gospel.
2. Know the local people and the local culture.
3. Contextualize the message of the gospel.
4. Confront the value system of the local culture with that of the gospel.
5. Establish dynamic equivalent churches in the local culture.
6. Establish socio-economic projects in dynamic equivalent churches.

7. Enable the church to do integrated holistic development in its own community.

These seven principles could facilitate an integrated earthkeeping mission if used critically, carefully and contextually.

Exploring missionary earthkeeping in the West African context, Robert Clobus (a Catholic missionary) portrays a deteriorating ecological situation in Ghana. There, he says, ‘a population that has doubled in size in 50 years has put pressure on the land to produce yearly, thus eliminating traditional fallow times’ (Clobus 1992:63-89). The clearing of tropical forests to provide more arable land, and the demand for firewood, has contributed to deforestation. In addition, mechanized farming has changed the texture and water-holding characteristics of the soil, leading to the exhaustion of fragile soils. The people have become landless, and it has deepened the length and severity of drought in parts of sub-Saharan Africa.

Mutombo Mpanya reflected that a church project may have carelessly contributed to ecological crises in his native Democratic Republic of Congo. He describes ecological destruction around mission stations. For example, the missionaries’ practice of building private property (requiring considerable amounts of local materials) has devalued the ecological and social orientation of the hosting communities (Mpanya 1992:91-109).

Richard Hull’s *Modern Africa: Change and Continuity* describes how ‘the Christian missionaries, with their denominational varieties and rivalries, undermined traditional social, religious, and political institutions...this made African leaders even more vulnerable to imperial conquest ... In many ways the missionaries paved the way for European colonialism.’ And he continues:

In much of tropical Africa, the missionaries, not the European traders and enclave administrators, were the torch-bearers of Western influence until at least the early 1890s. They favoured imperialist intervention and colonialism, because it would offer them protection and security and would stimulate capitalist enterprise, which in turn would provide new economic opportunities...especially those who had suffered from slaving activities (Hull 1980:65).

From about 1860, prominent missionaries (such as Dr David Livingstone) gave imperialism an undeserved cloak of moral justification. Economic factors

alone, warns Amartya Sen, are insufficient to validate any proposed commercial enterprise. Instead, economic modernization must be justified morally. Certain economic choices are inappropriate for the collective wellbeing of all human beings and the non-human community (Sen 1999:227-234). Colonial authorities, missionaries, colonial officers or other decision makers are often ignorant of interdependent cultural ecology; or, perhaps more precisely, between ‘what human beings do and the world in which they do it’ (Beyer 2011:21-37).

Livingstone hoped to create intertwining ‘centres of Christianity and an entire fabric of European civilization’ for economic mobility in colonial Africa (Testerman 1992:21). However, this opened up exploitation of human and natural resources by colonial powers. Protestant missions and missionaries habitually remained ‘aloof from formal politics’ as ‘most Protestant missionaries lacked a theology of the State to help them engage with politics’ – other than simply recognising the secular authority of the colonial State (grounded on Romans 13²³). As Adrian Hastings puts it, ‘the large majority of white missionaries...deeply destructed the rise of political parties [movement towards self-government] and were inclined to see “communism”, a vague and abusive word, under every bed. Existing government was good enough and should not be challenged, at least in public’ (Hastings 1979:79).

However, since the 1930s, there were a few missionaries who espoused the indigenous moral traditions of sustainability; and supported the struggle for national independence in the 1950s and 1960s. Some exceptional clerics, such as Walter E. Owen and John V. Taylor, are noted for being very critical of colonial economic projects.

Walter E. Owen was Archdeacon of Kavirondo and the head of Maseno mission from 1922-1945. Originally, the Archdeaconry of Kavirondo covered the whole of the Luo people’s land in Western Kenya, as well as the Luoland in the Northern Tanzania. Owen was the first missionary in the early 1920s and 1930s to raise concern about the ecological impact of gold mining in the North Kavirondo Native Reserve. When the colonial government in Kenya stated: ‘Government

²³ For detailed information see David Maxwell ‘Decolonization’ in Norman Etherington, *Missions and Empire* (2005), pp.285-306.

therefore, cannot let this gold remain hidden and idle but must allow people to look for it and take it out when they find it' (SMS.A5/1933/1-10)²⁴ Owen objected. He recognised it as destructive, with implications for native peoples. Colonial governments saw the mining industry as one of the pillars of economic development. Owen pointed out that 'developmental projects' should take place slowly through the medium of the public sphere.²⁵ In a provocative letter written in 1933, he argued that if the land was to be taken for any developmental prospects 'the principle of "land for land" should be maintained and exercised in order to prevent native owners from becoming landless'.²⁶

Archdeacon Owen was concerned that the government's attitude to the mining industry was anti-social and unjust, and that its operations were potentially destructive. He was concerned that existing tribal life, their culturally respected ancestral land, and the traditional principles which had been governing right relationships between men, would all be jeopardy.²⁷ Owen's stance meant that he was often considered a disobedient Church Missionary Society missionary.

Owen opposed any developmental or educational programme that would always grant 'the big fish unquestionable opportunity to eat the little fish', instead of promoting collective flourishing and social justice.²⁸

After years of being ridiculed as unprogressive, Owen's views are now respected. For example, since February 2017 the Tanzanian Government has been challenging large mining companies (such as ACACIA Mining Company) on tax evasion and operating illegally since 1997.²⁹

An unpublished Masters Dissertation on the ecological implications of the mining industry in Tanzania by G. Otieno (2013), and essays published in R. Bihuzo and F. Rusembuka's *Governance of Mineral and Natural Resources*

²⁴ Archdeacon Owen's letter to Mr Hooper on the implications of mining industry in Kavirondo, dated 23 December, 1932.

²⁵ Kenya Missionary Council (CMS G3-AS, Owen; January 24, 1933), p.1.

²⁶ See minutes of the Church Missionary Society executive committee held at Nairobi on May 13th-18, 1933 (CMS-G3.A5.AS/O1933/102-202), p.204.

²⁷ CMS. G3 AL 35-39 (Owen, 1939, Corban in Kenya), p.6.

²⁸ CMS.G3.AL 35-39; pp. 3-5. See also CMS.ACC 83.

²⁹ Full investigation of the matter was submitted to President Magufuli and others chosen by the President to probe the scandal under the chairmanship of Professor Nehemiah Osoro submitted at the White House on Monday 12 June 2017.

(2014), indicate that the problem remains an existential challenge in Africa today, despite 50 years of African independence. Many international financial institutions have encouraged African governments to privatise industries exploiting natural resources, particularly mines, and to promote laws encouraging private investments (Alain Kalubi 2014).

Mining investors are reminiscent of the colonial ideologies of structural exploitation. Therefore, the challenge remains to reconcile the mining industry with the requirements of socio-ecological sustainability.

Modern ecumenical investigation into the reciprocal relationships between mission, identity and cosmology (with an African perspective) began with the British theologian and missionary John V. Taylor (1924-2001). Taylor worked as Anglican missionary in Uganda between 1948 and 1954, and had already appealed for the church to engage with Africans practically and cosmologically, rather than ideologically.

The Primal Vision (1963) is the product of Taylor's experience of and encounter with African cosmology. Taylor identifies the problem facing Christianity, namely an attitude of superiority. He postulates that the crises faced by people in Uganda at that time were grounded in the belief that we are separate: separate from every alternative cultural view, separate from the cosmological reality that sustains us, and separate from cultural identity that has brought us forth. *The Primal Vision* points to the interconnection between religion, identity, and the unbroken cycle of life.

What Taylor and Owen share is a critical awareness of the destructive forces of imperialistic cultures. They warn against any readings of indigenous cultural ecology that secure dominant narratives. Taylor was reacting against previous scholarships of Africa: such as that of German philosopher Georg Hegel (1770-1831). In 1830, Hegel wrote,

The peculiarly African character is difficult to comprehend, for the very reason that in reference to it, we must quite give up the principle which naturally accompanies all our ideas – the category of Universality. In the Negro, the characteristic point is the fact that consciousness has not yet attained to the realization of any substantial objective existence – as for example, God, or Law – in which the interest of man's volition is involved and in which he realizes his own being.³⁰

³⁰ Originally presented in a lecture series and later compiled in *The Philosophy of History* (first published in German in 1837).

The Negro...exhibits the natural man in his completely wild and untamed state. We must lay aside all thought of reverence and morality – all that we call feeling – if we would rightly comprehend him. There is nothing harmonious with humanity to be found in this type of character.

Hegel then promises himself not to ever mention Africa again, for ‘it is no historical part of the World; it has no movement or development to exhibit’. What we properly understand by Africa, he concludes, ‘is the Unhistorical, Undeveloped spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature’.

John V Taylor not only demonstrated that Hegel was completely wrong, but came to the understanding that, ‘we are members of one another by virtue of the biological links [identity] of family and race, by virtue of our interdependence in society and culture, by virtue of the history and nationality that bind us to a particular past and future’ (Taylor 1963:109). The Hegelian hubris, in contrary, suggests that no such thing as ‘African cosmological consciousness’ can be used for negotiating social justice, peace and ecological sustainability.

Today, both eco-theologians and social anthropologists agree that Hegel’s 200-year-old anthropological narrative is false. Social consciousness can work and exist through ecological interrelations, and the importance of *place* itself is vital (Keller and Kearns 2007). As Taylor concludes, a vibrant ecological perception, wisdom and inclusive narrative of inter-being emerges from a more expansive sense of self, and from a radical awareness of the *primal vision* of life.

The 1970s, saw the rise of integral mission theology and social ecology. These led to the struggle towards a ‘one earth community’ – meaning a way of living together within the human family and within the totality of creation (Hallman 2009:5). Hallman’s eco-theology presupposes a moral universe in which humans and nature belong together, in their created ecospace, in transcendence and in their salvation.

In the same vein, ethicist Larry Rasmussen complements Hallman’s ecumenical ecotheology of ‘one earth community’ and offers both a moral critique of ecosocial disintegration and an ecological critique of Christian theology. For Rasmussen, any theology that is not locally or ecologically grounded, ‘is not real, just as an ethic that is not somebody’s is nobody’s’ (Rasmussen 2009:112).

Eco-theology exposes threats to social justice, and offers a path to rediscover the moral traditions of shared sustainability (Bujo 1992; Magesa 1997).

It offers a life-widening mission (Ross 2012), a reinterpretation of the Bible from an ecological perspective (Bauckham 2010), and the recovery of cultural ecology and religious lifeways (Grim & Tucker 2014). It offers a sacred alternative to the path of overpopulation and destruction (Owen 2016).

James Lovelock puts it compellingly: ‘those who fail to see that population growth and climate change are two sides of the same coin are either ignorant or hiding from the truth’. These two environmental problems, Lovelock concludes, ‘are inseparable and to discuss one while ignoring the other is irrational’.³¹ Lovelock’s Gaia-hypothesis is recognised as the foundation of contemporary ecology (Primavesi 2009; Bauckham 2010; Kim 2013).

The ecological implications of population growth to sustainability are scientifically examined in Professor Ian Goldin’s *Is the Planet Full* (2014). Goldin discusses the ongoing debate regarding the relative impact of population growth to climate change and CO₂ emissions.³² In the Tanzanian context, one clear implication is that if the size of each household increases every year, then the land for small farmers will become scarcer and less productive due to over use (Clobus 1992; McKeown 2016). Therefore, any analysis of population impact must be measured according to the physical and social conditions under which communities flourish.

As John Byrne, Cecilia Martinez and Leigh Glover’s *Environmental Justice* observes, ‘Ecological justice applies not only to the living generations and general environmental values, but also embraces future generations, non-human species, and ecosystem processes’ (2002/2009:13). Eco-theology may be regarded as the ‘Planetary Witness’. It recognises that ‘relationship’ is the key to the survival of our species on the social, spiritual, and political level (Brown & Garver 2009).

‘Planetary witness’ is subjective, always inviting people of all faiths and cultures to live according to their sustained ecological values – built upon the

³¹ Optimum population Trust, 26th August 2009, ‘Gaia to be OPT Patron, www.populationmatters.com.

³² Between 1980 and 2005 sub-Saharan African produced 18.5 per cent of the world’s population growth and just 2.4 per cent of the growth in CO₂. North America had 4 percent population growth, but with 14 per cent of the extra emission. A causal link is as yet undetermined. Cf. George Monbiot, *How did we get into this Mess? Politics, Equality, Nature* (London: Verso, 2016), p.103-5.

traditions of caring for others and of being stewards of the Earth's gifts. Such ecological lifeways, which are undeniably religious (Grim & Tucker 2014), resonate with James Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis.

In, *The Revenge of Gaia: Why the Earth is Reacting Back – and How We Can Still Save Humanity* (2006), Lovelock rejected the Christian idea of stewardship as 'flawed by unconscious hubris'. Lovelock's theory is that the whole Earth system (which he calls Gaia) behaves as a single system, *like* a single organism. Based on this hypothesis, he understands Christian stewardship as being responsible and caring (2006:146-7; 148,137). Lovelock's hypothesis has attracted other discourses in eco-theology, and is in the works of biblical scholars (Richard Bauckham) and in environmental ethics (Anne Primavesi). Reflecting on the nature of our common universe, Primavesi says:

Both religious and contemporary scientific descriptions tell us that the "first things" to emerge from it were earth, skies, water, life, breath. Without their interactions and interdependence the earth could not have brought forth the grass, the seeds, the trees, and their fruits. Without their interactions the waters could not have brought forth a swarming of living souls. Without their interdependent co-arising earth could not have brought forth creepers on the ground, beasts feeding on plants and creatures flying in the air. Without their continuing interactions and interdependence, we would not be here today" (Primavesi 2009:22).

Primavesi is one example of many contemporary eco-theologians who believe *Gaia* (science) reforms our relationship with nature. Culturally, Primavesi probes the sense of ecological connectivity, not only among the human community, but also within the dynamics of the ecological economy.

One way to conceptualize this among the Luo people is to identify three aspects of human reliance on ecological services: nature as Soil (land), nature as Society, and nature as the Soul of Life (the three Ss). The ultimate subject of eco-spirituality and eco-theology is to humanize the Earth through incarnational imagination, as well as to constitute ecologically-friendly social conditions under which subjective-life and collective flourishing are possible.

Like Primavesi, Bauckham (2010:7) regards the self-regulating Earth system as part of creation within which humans must live. That, 'science and good theology may combine to require a more modest, more limited understanding of the human dominion than the hubristic and dangerously exaggerated notion that has been with us for the last four centuries'.

Bauckham argues that dominion in Genesis 1 did not entail total control over the rest of creation. He observes that ‘no one before the early modern period read it in that way. Medieval western Christians, for example, were supposed to refer to the kinds of use of other creatures and the environment that were normal in their time: farming, hunting, building, mining, and so forth. They did not suppose that Genesis 1 set humanity a task of achieving total control over the Earth. Total control in those days obviously belonged to God alone’. Bauckham believes that, ‘it was Francis Bacon, in the 17th century, who utilised the Genesis text to authorise the project of scientific knowledge and technological exploitation whose excesses have given us the ecological crisis’ (Bauckham 2010:6). This modern Western thinking, with its roots in the Renaissance, Bauckham concludes, ‘Made the Westerners forget their own creatureliness embeddedness within creation, their interdependence with other creatures’ (2010:11).

Themes of subjective-life and ecological consciousness have been returning in a new way. William Herzog’s *Parables as Subversive Speech* (1994) rediscovers that since the outset of the early church, ecology was at the centre. Concerns range from social justice, political relations, social setting, to the macrosociology of advanced agrarianism, and include economics in relation to the role and meaning of public legal systems.

Similarly, Michael Northcott’s *A Political Theology of Climate Change* explains how the church was ecological from its outset, and how such antiquated values of the past might help us today. Northcott states:

The community worship of the early Christians sustained a sacred cosmopolis which empowered the Christians to challenge the conventional human divisions and hierarchies of the ancient world through works of love while also giving them a vision of the natural world and the heavens which challenged the humanocentrism of classical and Roman thought (Northcott 2014:198).

For the early Christians, salvation was an ecological as well as a political and spiritual reality in which the earth and all its creatures, as well as human society, were being redeemed through the worship and the witness of the saints and under the kingly rule of Christ (Northcott 2014:198).

Northcott considers the Christian vision of paradise and its restoration in Revelation: where John of Patmos draws upon Ezekiel’s vision and imagines a heavenly city from which the river of life flows out, giving life to the trees along

its banks. This vision of the restoration of Paradise on earth, Northcott claims, ‘was for more than a thousand years understood to be the work of the Christian church. And this was a material and not only a spiritual work, just as Paradise was said to be a real place and not only mythic or other-worldly reality’ (2014:199).

Some writers argue that ecological crisis is a result of Western anthropocentric philosophy that places humanity at the centre ‘with the responsibility to exploit nature for his purposes and ends’ (Nkansah-Obrempong 2013:275). They argue that the West’s dualistic theology of cosmological reality undermines and ‘discards the basic interconnectedness between human beings and nature, or between the spiritual and the material’ while itself being completely materialistic. Such dualistic thinking is why many Protestant theologians discuss ‘ecology’ without considering its relationship to all life-forms, including their daily life.

In both religious ethics and in popular culture ‘ecology’ indicates a worldview; shaped by appreciation and care for the complex relations supporting natural states, such as stability, balance and beauty (Jenkins 2013). But ecology is also an interdisciplinary science. It searches for the principles of nature’s economy and the problems of human interference; and provides information for practical ‘ecological’ policies and moral ethics.

Many Protestants only understood ‘ecology’ through the maxims of ecological ethics and the Green Movement. Although the ethics of sustainability needs to be considered (Jenkins 2013), what is required is not ‘particular ethics’. What is actually required is a collective intercultural education: to consistently critique respective parties, while reconstructing ecological consciousness in the public sphere. This is referred to as eco-sociology.

Christian eco-theology has a divine imperative to negotiate collective strategies of justice, peace and sustainability. But, as Catherine Keller & Laurel Kearns argue, ‘Christianity must understand itself “as one religion amidst many” which knows itself incapable of ecological evolution apart from attention to its own interdependence with multiple religions, philosophies, and practices’ (2007:5).

The dominant missionary concern to propagate the gospel meant there was ‘a tendency to portray the customs of native peoples as an obstacle to civilization’ (Patrick Harries, cited in Etherington’s *Missions and Empire* 2005:239). Harries argues that throughout the period of major missionary endeavour (1850-1940) the texts, bulletins, journals, and magazines of missionary organisations ‘buttressed the view that non-European peoples were fixed at lower levels of evolution and that only missionary supervision could bring about their spiritual and secular salvation’ (Harries 2005:239-40). Indeed, ‘Anthropology was born of the marriage of foreign missions and modern science’ (W.C. Willoughby, 1913).

Eleven years later, Edwin Smith, another leading missionary anthropologist, repeated Willoughby’s assertion, ‘Social anthropology might almost be claimed as a missionary science... on account of its great utility to missionaries, and because the material upon which it is built has so largely been gathered by them.’³³

The relationship between anthropology and modern science developed further after the 1940s; when it became a universal methodology for economic, spiritual and political ideologies of social development. Discourses such as Tom McLeish’s *Faith and Wisdom in Science* define this period as the time when ‘science became political’ (2014:7).

The question remains: how much should we trust and use science in relation to cultural integrity and cosmological spirituality? Since the 1940s, there was an implicit and explicit regard for science as the key contributor³⁴, as this speech by Pandit Nehru, first prime minister of India clearly indicates:

It is science alone that can solve the problems of hunger and poverty, of insanitation and illiteracy, of superstition and deadening custom and tradition, of vast resources running to waste, of a rich country inhabited by starving people.³⁵

Science was entrusted with a dual responsibility: to solve the problem of human poverty, and to eradicate cultural values conceived as the ‘deadening custom and tradition’. Nehru’s high regard for science no doubt reflects his own

³³ W.C. Willoughby, review of *Life of a South African Tribe*, IRM (1913), p.588; and W. W. Smith, ‘Social Anthropology and Mission Work,’ IRM XIII (1924), p.518 (both references observed in Patrick Harries, ‘Anthropology’ in Etherington’s *Missions and Empire*, 2005, p.238).

³⁴ See Richard W. Hull, *Modern Africa*, 1980.

³⁵ Jawaharlal Nehru, quoted in Tom McLeish (2014), p.7.

educational experience as he obtained a degree in Natural Science from Trinity College Cambridge. And indeed, science has many astonishing achievements (such as the Human Genome Project, the complete mapping of the DNA code) that, according to McLeish (2014:9), it opens a new era of understanding in medicine. But, without cultural wisdom, science is powerless to achieve Nehru's dream, as McLeish indicates. 'There is no technical reason why anyone in the world today should starve, go blind with cataracts, have no access to clean water or die of the many preventable diseases.'

In summary, the study of ecology requires an interdisciplinary method. It must be capable of aligning all life on Earth and the ecological reality in a single discourse, and suggest a way for it to function as a single balanced, living earth community. As religious faiths engage with culture and science to embrace ecological challenges, celebrated particularity and ideals are likely to be compromised. But whatever the difference in beliefs and response to the challenges, the fact remains that everything is interconnected in the community of beings, beyond our religio-cultural and political divide.

1.4 Plan and Overview of the Study

Chapter 1 provides a brief historical survey, introductory review of literature and methodological framework for this study. Chapter 2 researches the sophiology of Luo cultural cosmology, a study of traditional myths and ecological history (in relation to how Luo people's wisdom communicated nature and sustainability issues in pre-colonial cultural settings). The governing question is: *'What were the cultural teachings in the pre-Christian Luo community with which the community managed its environment sustainably?'*

Chapter 3 is based on participant observation conducted in Tanzania. It uses segments of informal conversations held during the observation alongside emerging discourse on sustainability, to examine how awareness of ecology and sustainability comes to life among the Luo people. Chapter 4 examines the entry and consequences of what Terence Ranger has called 'the invented traditions' (colonial missionary ideology and political imperialism), and their impact on Luo cultural cosmology and collective traditions of abundant life. The governing

question is, *'What have been the ecological implications of the spread of colonial missionary Christianity among the Luo people of Tanzania since the 1930s?'* This considers the 19th-century missionary theologies of such eminent missionaries as Dr David Livingstone and Johann Ludwig Krapf. It also surveys how the 19th-century missionary thinking nurtured not only subsequent cultural modernization and Luo social change, but also conceived ecological imperialism and exploitation.

Chapter 5 investigates how those imported cultures and divisive mission education (which demonized Luo cultural cosmology) can be reversed through an integrated Luo eco- and mission-theology. The chapter focuses particularly on the trilogy of Luo cosmology: the Soil, Soul, and Society, as the meeting ground for integrative eco-theology. These three dimensions function as the pinnacle of the Luo's socially-defined expansive sense of cultural identity, social belonging, and interconnectedness. The intention of this narrow focus is to help critique the exclusionary theology, and act a practical means towards decolonizing knowledge systems, in order to learn how cosmological reality was envisaged in the past.

Chapter 6 explores the place of ecology in evangelical tradition and liturgical practice, with specific reference to evangelical Anglican churches in Mara, Tanzania. This chapter addresses the question: *'How does contemporary theology of mission regard the earth and what implications does such understanding have for nature, identity, life and sustainability?'* The focus on Christian doctrine in this chapter is deliberately narrow, so that the ecological wisdom embedded and accumulated in Luo cultural heritage and in their moral traditions of sustainability can be repossessed pragmatically and in a way that might enable its generative insights, if any, to nurture our present search for a more just and powerful moral ecology strong enough to shape and correct adversarial theologies, economic principles, political hegemonies, and the entire webs of structural folly that have brought us to this chaotic state of disintegration and unsustainability.

Chapter 7 brings together the preceding chapters on sustainability discourse (based on Paul Tillich's influential 1957 book, *Dynamics of Faith*), while at the same time drawing on the emerging pedagogy of the life-widening mission. In so doing, the chapter investigates a hopeful path toward a more expansive Earth-

honouring faith; with integrating moral capacity to meet the complex challenges of social sustainability: through the twin avenues of eco-theology and eco-socialization.

Chapter 8 finally teases out what some practical consequences are, with some surprises.

1.5 Conclusion

The hypothesis of this study is: *‘Colonial missionary Christianity has brought about changes in the notions and functions of the Luo people’s cosmology and identity in Mara Tanzania, which can only be redeemed by the synthesis of pre-Christian Luo cosmology and some creative contemporary eco-theology.’*

This hypothesis is directed by three distinct aims:

1. *To explore the way in which traditional Luo cosmology has influenced their ecosocial consciousness before the incursion of colonial missionary education.* It hopes to discover how the synthesis of such cultural cosmology might be used as a basis for the reconstruction of communally-inspired sustainability ethics, and find ways of moving beyond the present adversarial clash of cultures.
2. *To assess the ecological impact of the spread of the colonial evangelical Christianity among the Luo of Tanzania and to explore whether and how such missionary endeavors have influenced the relationship between nature and society.*
3. *To develop a culturally-inspired eco- and missional theology of sustainability and ecological transformation.* This will be based on the inclusive ecology of responsibility and a sense of belonging, one that is appropriate to a society connected by the ideas of life-widening values and ecosocialization, instead of individualistic morality.

Chapter Two

Imagining the Past: Cosmology and Subsistence among the Luo people

2.0 Introduction

'*Dongruok*' is a Luo word for social flourishing and continuity within a moral universe, which acknowledges ecological interdependence and solidarity. The aim of this chapter is to examine the ecology of Luo people's *dongruok* in the pre-colonial era; and to reflect how such past traditions have been transformed by colonial powers, industrial civilization and missionary spirituality. It will consider the dynamics of the Luo people's cultural cosmology in their natural settings, especially within the cosmology of *aluora*. *Aluora* denotes the 'commonwealth of life' in relation to the central life-sustaining forces of society, land and atmosphere. The ecology of *aluora* will be fully examined in Chapter 4.

The evaluating argument I will be making in the chapter is emphatically not for a return to the way things were in the precolonial Luo era, but the assessment that will be outlined in the following pages is resolutely future-oriented, seeking to question how the past integrating Luo wisdom might inform their contemporary struggle toward ecosocial transformation and *dongruok*. *Dongruok* embodies what may be termed the cultural dynamics of social continuity and participative sustainability. We shall get into the details of this Luo's notion of holistic flourishing in detail in Chapter 5. But, for the moment, the main concern is to engage the sustained cosmological tradition; and how it contributed to the foundations of our collective identity, cosmic consciousness, and the need for the Luo community to live and flourish within their ecological means (Ogot 1979).

The present chapter will therefore assess how the pre-colonial cultural spirituality embodied a creative ecological association: between human ecology and the natural world of the Luo universe. The impact of colonial missions upon those indigenous cultural values will be closely examined. By focusing particularly on the key themes of the Luo people's cosmology (such as cultural land ethic and naming traditions), the chapter will explore how the colonial demonization of indigenous cosmology altered people's behavioural attitudes towards nature; as opposed to what may be regarded as 'old-forms of sustainability' (Washington 2015). In trying to understand how Luo cosmology might participate in the worldwide campaign for ecosocial transformation, we will examine from the

literature (Mboya 1965, 1997; Odaga 1983, 2011) how ‘old forms of sustainability’ (or preindustrial socio-economic methods) might provide an example in which the land ethic, cultural wisdom and economic choices were often combined in the attainment of collective sustainability (Magesa 1997). The period of Luo cosmology covered stretches from the dawning of the 20th century right up to the 1950s, a time in which saw the consequences of the growth of the civilizing mission and colonial hegemony on ecology and sustainability.

More recently scholars of pre-colonial Eastern Africa have begun to recognise the role of the natural environment in the migration and settlement of different ethnic groups. These scholars have gone as far as to establish the cultural clash between indigenous wisdom and colonial missionary teachings, in relation to the integrity of creation (Kaoma 2012; Magesa, Laurenti 2014; Okello 2002). For instance, Kaoma (2012) observes an ontological clash between missionary Christianity and traditional ecological cosmologies, as he writes:

The fact that a majority of non-Western indigenous religions do not view humanity as the ruler of creation *per se* but rather as a part of interconnected forces of life can inform Christian spirituality...Africans reverence natural phenomena as instruments of divine mysteries. In some cases, sacred forests, certain animals and snakes, mountains, river sources and trees can be said to be ontologically superior to humanity. The presence of a python, for example, is celebrated as divine visitation among many African cultures – among them the Igbo of Nigeria and Luo of Kenya (Kaoma 2012:79).

These traditional cultural cosmologies were denounced as evil by the colonial missionary theology and imperial science, which considered them to be a primitive state that needed redeeming. The colonial hegemony established both ecological colonialism and a hierarchy that placed white civilization at the top and black people below. However, it is now arguable that it was the traditional ecologically-grounded association with nature that is the key pathway to sustainability (Washington et al. 2017). As far as the Luo cosmology is concerned, it is returning to such cosmic-spirituality that could enable Luo people to regain their ecocentric spirituality; and could possibly help the wider faith communities to invigorate a more expansive relationship to nature.

This chapter is not simply a historical account of Luo cultural cosmology as a vital force of social change and ecological transformation; but rather it is an interpretation of the trends, in terms of collective cosmology and sustainability. In particular, it will consider aspects of the past (such as cultural agrarianism and food preservation) with the sole object of throwing light on the present situation. This

will be scrutinised under the governing question: ‘What were the Luo cosmological myths or teachings with which the community sustained its social well-being and ecological sustainability?’ It will encroach upon several disciplines in the pursuit of this single aim. First, we shall start by exploring the ecology of Luo cosmological myths.

2.1 Luo Myths and Cosmology of Daily Life

The purpose of this section is not to explore the debates on the theories of myths, instead it seeks to survey ecological aspects of Luo myths in public spirituality.³⁶ The word ‘myth’ is complex and may refer to various aspects of the society when used in dissimilar contexts. For the purpose of this study, the meaning of myth is based on its definition by Loreen Maseno who describes ‘myth’ as ‘any traditional story’ (Maseno 2011:132). While Maseno is fully aware of the variations within mythology, she tries to reinstate Luo myths into their moral universe of communication.

A moral universe is a worldview expressed in a mythical language. James Sire’s popular book *The Universe Next Door* may help us unpack this point. Sire’s definition is: ‘A worldview is a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions that we hold about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being’ (Sire 2009:20). As commitment we hold (consciously or subconsciously) about the basic nature of reality that provides on which we live and move and have our being in the society; a worldview the central defining cosmological imagination expressed in a story or in a set of presupposition, but *is* not a story by itself.

More recently, the anthropological studies of myth have been gaining ascendancy in scholarship. These mythological studies have come to recognise ‘myth’ as a source of historical knowledge in the study of non-literate societies

³⁶ The term ‘spirituality’ is used here as a concept that involves “a search for the sacredness in which humans experience their authentic being in relation to larger whole” (Grim and Tucker, 2014:29). In the case of Luo people, their religious spirituality, entails their spiritual journey of self-cultivation to overcome loss, suffering, insecurity, disintegration or fragmentation, and for the endurance of notions of sustainability based on traditional religious relationality – meaning sky, earth, and living creatures (Kokwaro and Johns 1998). However, in order to maintain their religious spirituality, Luo people followed similar guides common to every religious group globally; as Grim and Tucker commented further: “Spirituality is often associated with the mystical traditions that are present in all the world religions as repositories of contemplative insight and practice. There are guides on this path in the form of teachers, scriptures, prayers, rituals, and ascetic disciplines” (p.30).

(Maseno 2011; Odaga 2011; Rutere 2012). These studies suggest two main ways of using myths:

- Myths should be used as a means of calculating the historical timeline: by connecting present chronological events and past phenomenon, also known as *phenomenon calendars* (Mbiti 2002:19).
- Myths should be considered as instruments of social stability: this is through the resistance they give to pressures of structural exploitation and cultural imperialism, as well as in supporting social reconstruction and theological transformation.

By looking at myths in this way it is hoped to address the phenomenon of Luo ecological spirituality, sustainability and the mystery of life in general (Magesa 2014).

Ecologically, Luo myths may be defined in Shorter's phrase as "symbolic stories" which always "occur in sets of different transformations". For Shorter, "each myth has a manifest meaning, behind which lies a hidden meaning wrapped in a code of symbolic elements" (Shorter 1998:59). Likewise, Maseno (2011) describes myths as "sacred narratives explaining how the world and humankind came to be in their present form and are therefore closely linked to religion" (p.132). As symbolic stories, it is conjectured that Luo myths created a moral community of their time and taught people about becoming a sustainable religious and ecological society. As such, they could be used to help in solving ecological problems among the contemporary Luo society.

As Grim and Tucker (2014) put it: "the aim of the study of religious ecology is to retrieve, re-examine, and reconstruct human-Earth relations that are present in all the world religions" (p.42). For Grim and Tucker, every religious system has ingredients of ecological relationality, even if they may be devalued or unseen. They suggest that retrieving ecological spirituality through stories, practices, symbols and ritual could enhance social integration; and may hold a promise of extending the integrity of creation and compassion to the planetary community of life (p.42).

Similarly, Paul Mboya in *Luo Kitgi gi Timbegi*, (1965, reprinted 1997), points to the symbolic significance of Luo myths, especially *Simbi Nyaima*. Mboya emphasizes this myth as a tragedy caused by the hostility of Simbi villagers. But

he leaves the cosmological profundity of this myth unarticulated. This book contains vital traces of Luo customs and practices; but its analysis of *Simbi Nyaima* is flawed by the pedagogy of cultural masculinity. Researchers who offer a more helpful reading of *Simbi Nyaima* include Odaga (1983, 2011)³⁷ and Maseno (2011). With regard to the intrinsic nature of Luo traditional wisdom and ecological consciousness: these writers consider *Simbi Nyaima* as the first example of its kind, and perhaps the most concrete story in thinking about Luo cultural maps of ecological sustainability.

Most Luo myths co-evolved as social constructs that formed an expansive web (sense) of life. As such these myths led to a democratization of ecological spirituality; and helped reflect on best practice regarding nature and the dynamics, which govern the activity of all reality and environmental choices (Ogot 1979; Maseno 2011). During the history of the Luo people, the vast majority of those folktales were fashioned to facilitate relationships between humans, animals, and plants for sustainable living. The Luo myth of origin does not begin with ‘chaos’³⁸ or the creation of earth, because the earth and surface in general were held traditionally as God’s mysterious work (Mboya, 1997). Odaga (2011) summarizes Luo myths as “traditional narratives meant to provide general knowledge for God’s existence, personal development and socialization, social justice and social responsibility, the value of work and man’s dependency on his environment” (Odaga 2011:106-134).

That religious perception was also shared by Kenyan theologian John Mbiti, who points out that; “African peoples have many religious associations with animals and plants...some of which are linked with concepts of God” (Mbiti 2002:50). For Mbiti, this form of religious ecology is vibrant in East Africa and derives from their “sacred attitude towards animals”. Among the Luo people, for

³⁷ In her 2011 book *Oral Literature: The Educational Values of the Luo Oral Narratives*, Asenath Odaga collected nineteenth Luo myths, each of them addressing a certain aspect of Luo welfare; including the belief in God, the split and migration of the tribe, marriage, warriorhood, family problems, leadership, festivals, sports, wild animals, and cosmic powers (pp.142-279).

³⁸ See also J. Mugambi, and N. Kirima, *The African Religious Heritage* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1989).

Although various myths (biblical, traditional, archaeological, and scientific) of origin begin with a ‘void’ (which is known in Greek mythology as *Chaos*-nothingness from which all things were born), Luo myths are representations of life-events developed in order to ‘explain and answer questions about the meaning behind the historical events of a people’s past, present and future’ (Maseno, 2011:131-132).

instance, the religious scope of sacredness is both anthropological and ecological: since it includes various animals (both domestic and wild), together with grasses, and some trees (for example, fig-tree and sycamore) (see also Kaoma 2012). Based on his findings, Mbiti argues that in traditional African religion, nature is used not just as a food source or a means of acquiring wealth, but is intrinsic to religious spirituality too.

Similarly, Tanzanian theologian Laurenti Magesa in his important book, *What is Not Sacred?* (2014), suggests a revitalization of African indigenous spirituality and moves on to argue that: “our environment, beautiful or ugly, exerts a fundamental influence on us” (p.11). For Magesa, the imperfection of traditional cultures, whatever they might be, should not validate any attempt at their eradication or destruction, especially at the expense of external sources. To develop this point, two Luo myths with practical implications for ecology and sustainability will be studied, namely: *Sigand Chuech* (the myth of origin) and *Simbi Nyaima* (the story of a ruined Luo village).

2.1.1 *Sigand Chuech* (Luo Creation narrative)

To the Luo people, as in many cultures, the creation story was never regarded as a sort of ‘once-upon-a-time’ event, but as the continuing basis for understanding the mysterious reality: God who is the absolute creator and sustainer of the Luo universe. This generative understanding of the ‘creation’ story is integral to Luo cultural cosmology, and is indicative of an integrated creation story which will support ecological sustainability and social integration. The word *Sigand Chuech* (creation story) entered the Luo language in ancient times, perhaps when the people came to the understanding that, in George E. Ladd’s words “nothing exists except by the will and word of God” (The Gospel of the Kingdom 1992). For the Luo people, the creation story has always been understood as God’s work: the divine sovereignty in action and in which every human being and the entire community of creation belong (Mboya 1997; Otieno 2011). In this age of secularism, an understanding of God as the owner of the present and future destiny of life offers a distinctly different perspective. This is also suggested in Old Testament scriptures, such as in the first three chapters of Genesis, the enigmatic book of Job, and the Psalms. The Luo cultural maxim offers a vital discourse in

returning to the management of God and in reconsidering how the Gospel speaks of planetary salvation.³⁹

Sigand Chuech speaks to us of the mysterious reality, God, and sees God as Creator with Luo man as his creature. This understanding establishes the basis for coming into an unbroken relationship with the transcending reality and with his creation; which is absolute and uncompromised, both today and tomorrow. The fact that all transcending reality depends upon the creative word of God means that “the word of God must judge the ideas of men about truth and error, not the other way round” (Ladd 1992). We may freely eat of every tree of cultural wisdom and of sophisticated intellectual reasoning, but we must be submissive to the transcending knowledge of good and evil (compare Genesis 2:16-17). In the case of Luo culture, *Sigand Chuech* manifests itself as the fundamental authority for the theology of life in its social context. It reveals God as the key moulder of Luo cultural cosmology, and as a living reality that must be consulted, when changing chaotic aspects of life into sacred spaces of sustainability.

Creation and Creator are at the heart of many theistic religious traditions in Africa (Kaoma 2013). The Creation story has a deep impression on the Luo people, who until more recently were all living close to the land and physical environment in general (Okello 2002, Odinga 2013). The word *chuech* (pottering) is used metaphorically by the Luo people (as in any other African society) to describe God’s creative activity (Mbiti (2002:39-41). As such, creation is the most famous and extensively recognised work of God within Luo religious knowledge. At the dawn of their antiquity, as Mboya (1997) points out, *Nyasaye* (God) was known to this people as *Jachuech* (Creator, Moulder, Maker, Originator, Inventor, or Potter). As such, *Sigand Chuech* was intended to provide a traditional cosmology and theistic spirituality (Odaga, 2011:37).

By the word *Nyasaye Nyakalaga* they meant that God was omnipresent, at work in people’s bodies and in his creatures and creation as whole. Cosmologically, *Sigand Chuech* holds firmly that it was *Nyasaye* alone who created the world and everything therein; including the earth, the sky, the stars, the waters, mountains, rivers and valleys, the seasons, the sun, the moon and the

³⁹ A more recent finest collection of essays on this subject is Colin Bell and Robert White, *Creation Care and the Gospel* (2016).

wildlife; summed up in the Luo phrase ‘*Nyasaye mochueyo polo gi piny* (God who created heavens and earth). It is reported that this myth developed to answer simple but profound questions such as ‘What is the origin of the earth and life?’, and ‘Where did everything come from?’ From these first order questions emerged *sigand chuech* expressed in primordial language (Mboya 1997; see also Mbiti 2002).

The question raised by the Nigerian Jesuit theologian A.E. Orobator in *Theology Brewed in an African Pot* is why African cultures paid particular attention to the question of origin or ‘before before’, which translates into Luo language as *chon gi lala*. He notes that whilst this precedes living memory, there is a collective memory of the events that make up that period of ‘before before.’ Despite the distance in time from ‘before before’ to contemporary society, Orobator notes “As Africans, we tell in stories, songs, proverbs, and different forms of speech how we came to be where we are. These stories also form the basis of a creation-faith or faith in the creator of the universe” (Orobator 2008:44). To find out how the Luo people avowed their creation-faith it is necessary to look at their myth of origin.

As can be seen through myths in the works cited above, in African sociology, humanity perhaps appears as an important living creature – yet is without divine power over nonhuman creatures. Instead, humanity seems to have a clear obligation to safeguard “cosmic harmony” (Maseno 2011; Mbiti 2002; Odaga 2011; Orobator 2008). This presupposition places the Luo myth of origin in conflict with Western Christian mythology. Nevertheless, as Orobator puts it, ‘African creation-faith may not, and need not, affirm the same things that our Christian faith affirms’ (Orobator 2008:44).

So what are the distinct differences between Christian creationism and the Luo creation myth of origin? While there is some recognition of Western biblical scholarship on Genesis, a good example of distinction between Luo myth of creation and Western Christian mythology is David Atkinson. In his theology of Genesis, Atkinson writes:

To be in the ‘image of God’, or perhaps better ‘as the image of God’ then, is not *primarily* a matter of our capacity to be or do anything. It is about the relationship that God has towards us, and in a derivative way, of our relationship of sonship to the Father. It is not about some characteristic we possess: it is about our whole existence. True humanness is found in personal communion with God – it is in such personal communion that his glory is reflected, his image is seen (Atkinson 1990:38).

Understanding humanity in Atkinson's sense is close to considering humans as the 'kings', standing above all else. The anthropocentric utopianism of Atkinson appears to be based on reading the Bible from the Darwinian perspective and a poor understanding of Genesis 1: 28, "Rule over the fish". It fails to engage with the ecological ethics of the Bible as may be seen in passages such as: Job 12: 7-10, Psalms 104, John 3:16, Colossians 1:15-20. This distortion of the biblical understanding of ecology has directly or indirectly contributed to moral decline and a lack of ecological awareness among the contemporary Luo community. To redeem such ecological disregard, and to attain a sense of organised structure for social sustainability, the Luo people have again begun to address nature through their mythical tradition created purposely to treat the planet with positive affection (Odaga 2011).

This cosmological phenomenon was rightly acknowledged by Mbiti when he says, "African peoples live in a religious universe, so that natural phenomena and objects are intimately associated with God" (2002:48). Like Mbiti, Lord Jonathan Sacks, sees religion as a child of culture emerging as an organised social structure with myths, rituals, sacred times and places for society's civilization (Sacks 2015:35). This hypothesis is in sympathy with the Luo tradition of religious spirituality, which has been a central feature of mission, identity and ecology from the dawn of their history.⁴⁰

2.1.2 *Simbi Nyaima*—A Luo Myth with an Ecological Emphasis

Simbi Nyaima may be described as an 'aetiological myth', that is a myth which gives a reason for the geographical features of cultural cosmology. *Simbi Nyaima*⁴¹ is perhaps the most well-known Luo myth with a strong ecological emphasis. The

⁴⁰ This reference was made during an interview with Luo Elders in Rorya District of Tanzania about their concept of God. For more details about Luo concept of God see (George Otieno's *Towards Biblical Environmentalism: The practical implications of Genesis 1-3 for life in Rorya*. Unpublished dissertation submitted for partial fulfilment of an Undergraduate Degree in Theology with Education of the St John's University of Tanzania, 2011).

⁴¹ *Simbi Nyaima* is a Luo cosmological myth which was formulated after the arrival of Luo people in Kenya between 1400s to 1650s C.E. and it can now be found in Kendu Bay in Kenya. It is a volcanic lake and it is thought to be connected with ancestors, which is why many Luos pray beside this lake. It is believed that if a stone is thrown into the lake it will not fall far. Sometimes people draw water from this lake in bottles which they use for curative purposes. It is said that the lake is curative because the ancestors are directly involved when people pray for cures by the lake. Some observers observed that, many skin diseases are cured and the lake is said to turn bloody or green or is even clear at some times (Maseno 2011:134, see also Odaga, 2011:162-4). It is also said that when wishes and prayers are made around this lake, especially when there is drought, it is believed that the answers result from the ancestors in the lake having compassion on the people.

socio-ecology of *Simbi Nyaima* reveals a triune of Luo socio-cultural ecology, namely: *Dala* (soil, village and society); *Nam* (divine power, nature, natural sources of sustainable life); and *Yamo* (natural seasons, divine power, the soul of life, wind, storm or coolness).

Recently, this myth has gained ascendancy in multidisciplinary studies in East Africa, among them Mboya (1997), Odaga (1983, 2011) and Maseno (2011). This accelerating study of *Simbi Nyaima* has resulted in various accounts of the myth.⁴² Despite the variations in religious belief, the vast majority of Luo people of Tanzania and Kenya continue to embrace cosmological spirituality in the light of *Simbi Nyaima*.

This myth not only explains the origin of Lake *Simbi Nyaima*, but also explains the traditional reaction against the giant causes of ecological unsustainability in the village or community. It is believed that there was once a very big village in which all the people belonged to the same clan. The people had sufficient flow of water, plenty of land to till and enough food. After many years of living in harmony; hatred, disunity and animosity developed when a few people became materialistic. A sibling rivalry broke out to become a war known as '*Goch Masira*', which means 'war of the angered' or 'war with a thorough beating' (Maseno 2011). As the war continued, people forgot to continue farming, fishing, and pottery-making, and became impoverished by the consequences of the long war. The ecosocial conflict addressed in *Simbi Nyaima* may be regarded as the archetypal of industrial civilization, in the hope of providing a stable economic foundation for ancient Luo community development (through constant harvests of natural resources, such as fishing); but resulted in social, economic, and ecological contradictions that became increasingly politicized and memorized (by resisting all forms of ecosocial hegemony, and in the promotion of new forms of social regulation through ecosocialization), as the politics of convergence between nature's protection, social morality, and cultural relations (we shall return to politics of ecosocialization in Chapter 6).

The myth denounces individualism, greed and warfare as they are amongst the key causes of ecological catastrophes. It also shows that without peace, equality and genuine love among the citizens there could be no cosmic-harmony and

⁴² See another version of this myth in Asenath Odaga (2011:162-4) and Paul Mboya (1997: 231-3).

sustainability at all. Within this cosmological myth are insights into the sense of the sacred, not only in *Simbi Nyaima* itself, but also in public life as whole. Unlike other myths, *Simbi Nyaima* is an aetiological myth that explains the origin of this volcanic lake (Odaga 1983, Maseno 2011), and the traditional Luo preconditions for ecological wellbeing and human dignity. It provides the Luo with a religious understanding of sustainability in relation to ecology where a balanced life and cosmic-harmony are fully functional. However, this is easily jeopardised when a few people become too powerful and materialistic at the expense of the many. This imbalance leads to the dominion of the few over the powerless community including planet earth (Maseno 2011:134).

2.1.3 Embedded Time and Cosmology of Life

In the period between 1500 and 1890 CE, Luo cosmology was determined and controlled by the cyclic view of time and life, based particularly on natural seasons, and the cycle of birth, growth, decline and death. Studies show that before the 1900s, the predominant ecology of life, civilization and migration of the Nilotes and Bantu peoples in eastern Africa was determined by geographically embedded time, ecological orientation and environmental choices (Ogot 1979; Iliffe 1979; Ominde 1979). Time was observed mainly through events, changes in seasons, or a time based on collective experience of their cosmic reality (Ayot 1979; Okello 2002).

Time was perceived as a concrete social phenomenon that was used to see God in history. Their traditions indicate that within the context of ancient Luo sociology it was understood that time happens, that time flows within its cyclical orientation (Ogot 2003). Although throughout history different civilizations have perceived time differently, ancient Judaism also perceived as cyclical, and that ‘time is God’s way of keeping everything from happening at once.’ Moreover, the experience of ‘cyclical time as it occurs in nature’ adds Rabbi Sacks, remains normative in the sense that ‘some trees have long lives, most fruit flies have short ones; but all that lives dies’ (Sacks 2017). This ancient Jewish notion of time resonates with the Luo people’s concept of time. Ecclesiastes (Kohelet) expresses this succinctly:

The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises. The wind blows to the south and turns to the north; round and round it goes, ever returning on its course... What has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun (Eccl. 1:3-10)

The second intuition of Luo concept of time is that it is a natural experience, the flow of events reckoned by natural order. The hands on a clock or the dates on a calendar dissociate time from natural events, and helped create the artificial notion of an abstract world of mathematically measureable life. One of the earliest theologies of time with cultural entailment was Alexander Schmemmann's *For the Life of the World* (1963, 1973:47-65). Schmemmann understood time as "the icon of our fundamental reality, of the optimism as well as of the pessimism of our life, of life as life and of life as death". "Through time" he argues, "we experience life as a possibility, growth, fulfilment, as a movement toward a future" (p.47). Time is the reality of life, yet, as Schmemmann suggests, it a strangely non-existent reality. Schmemmann concludes that, 'by itself time is nothing but a line of telegraph poles strung out into the distance and at some point along the way is our death'.

Throughout all generations, there has been anxiety regarding the march of time towards death. According to Schmemmann, all philosophy, all religion is ultimately an attempt to solve the 'problem of time'. Many authors have been written about it, for example, the cosmologists Deepak Chopra and Menas Kafatos (2017:84) describe the notion of time as "a constant universal democracy", which has brought with it more freedom of participation in discovering our hidden relationship with cosmic reality, in understanding who we are and how to reach our greatest cosmic self.

Since the 1970s, there has been an interesting scholarly debate about the African cosmology of time. In his pioneering work *African Religions and Philosophy*, Mbiti argues that Africans perceive time essentially in a two-dimensional approach, "with a long *past (zamani)*, a *present (sasa)* and virtually *no future*". According to Mbiti, "The linear concept of time in western thought, with an indefinite past, present and indefinite future, is practically foreign to African thinking" (Mbiti 1969:16-7). Mbiti employed the Swahili concept of *sasa* and *zamani* to contend that they control the life of the African person from birth to death. Mbiti argues further that Africans find it difficult to appreciate the Christian doctrine of eschatology, based on the linear understanding of time, when God will bring everything to a final end at some indefinite future date, because they lack the conception of a distant future (1969:23). Some hyperglobalizers criticized Mbiti's concept of time in African societies as regressive and inhibitive to economic

development. But such critique only appears valid because it is entrenched into the linearity of modern civilization and the progression of an anti-cultural movement, as described by Bishop Lesslie Newbigin in his book *A Faith for this One World*, “the new world of scientific civilization and technology” (Newbigin 1961:14).

Other African writers have written along similar lines to Mbiti. Magesa, for example, quotes Elizabeth Isichei (the Nigerian Igbo historian) as saying that among the Igbo, the idea of the ‘recurrence’ of events, not their difference, uniqueness, and succession, dominates the people’s perception of time. “It reflects a community closely linked with the land and nature...its attitudes moulded by the shorter cycle of the lunar month, the longer cycle of the seasons and the farmer’s year...The ancestors are ‘the returners’, and by returning they incarnate the past among the living” (Magesa 2014:53). Magesa himself argues that:

It is true that Africans tend to conceive of time in a cyclic and phenomenal way. As with everything else, time is sacred because it is inserted into the cycle of life and serves it. Time is not an abstract idea moving toward an imagined ‘future’ existence. The future is tied up with the human reality. Time in the African perception, corresponds with the life-giving events of birthing, undergoing certain rites, marriage, worship, and death. It has meaning in connection with actions related to planning, harvesting, hunting, fishing, constructing a house, and so on (Magesa 2014:55).

In the precolonial incursion, time was understood by many Africans not as a clock or calendar, but as a natural expression of everyday events: looking after the cattle or the cattle returning home, the cock crowing, market days, daily fetching water, clearing farmlands, harvesting crops, hunting or elders meetings. Today, other events might include: going to church, political meetings, or to school, a dance, or to a public house. Our argument here is that the clock-based calendar, as opposed to natural revelation of time, translates heavenly movement into industrialized routine – hence profoundly accelerating both human separation from and control over nature.

The linear model of the measurement of time, ultimately and perhaps most significantly, converts reality into numbers. Clocks, argues Eisenstein, do to time what name and number do to the material world: they reduce it, make it finite. Time measurement, “turns out a succession of unique moments into just so many seconds, minutes, and hours, and denies the particularity of each person’s subjective experience of them” (2013:65-66). A strong critique of the linear model of time with indefinite trajectory on ‘other-worldly’ hope has been challenged as

unbiblical and anti-ecological by Christopher Wright (2014, 2010; 2013), and more compellingly by Richard Middleton's *A New Heaven and a New Earth* (2014).

What emerges from this critique of the linear model of time, is the proposition that the cyclical view of time is more ecologically friendly and less destructive to nature. It suggests a cyclical model gives a more expansive sense of the integrative self, and has greater sympathy with the ecological relationship to cosmological reality. It calls for a more serious engagement with nature and with common life and the emergence of non-violent sustainable development. The physiology of socio-cultural ecology and the cyclical view of time would help to challenge legal systems; that authorise the control and exploitation of nature through the notion of linear, finite measurement and the moral code that glorifies it.

A cyclical view of time may not be perfect, but it could be more suggestive of an improving ecological sustainability, a greater faithfulness to life-giving power, and a closer relationship to nature when compared to its counterpart. The only way out is, as Eisenstein suggested, to stop following a negative path of separation from our stratified wisdom and living a destructive life, and instead do nothing for a while. This is the message encoded in the Exodus narrative, in which the children of Israel, after fleeing slavery, had to wander the desert for forty years before they could start a new nature-based life in the Promised Land. Similarly, overthrowing the dictatorship of busyness and allowing a period of 'wonder and wander' may lead to a rediscovery of bliss; and an opportunity to reimagine the frugality of cyclic perception of time, life, and sustainability.

The Luo conception of time which we call 'cyclical progression' cannot be understood accurately when detached from the place, space, history or cultural ecology which saw every aspect of life as integrated into a holistic system of life, through cyclical seasons of life and its cosmic cycle. All of these elements, as Magesa (2014) understands them, form an integrated movement in the rhythm of life, for there can be neither season without space nor space without season and place. Culturally, place, space and season, are the inseparable constituents of planet Earth that together constitute history, where history is understood not as merely a series of events happening 'out there' but as the cumulative result of a community's attitude and behaviour, in the universe; leading to constructing a more expansive

sense of self ‘*Ubuntu*’ (Magesa 2014), and a more cosmological spirituality and ecological relationship to nature (Eisenstein 2013).

2.2 Imagining Intersection: Nature, Cosmology and Sustainability

Karl Polanyi’s *The Great Transformation* (1947/1957) offers insight into the relationship between man, nature, and society. Polanyi (1886-1964), an eminent critic of the implications of market organizations in the post-world wars, held the revolutionary view that ‘production’ is the interaction of man with nature. He argued that as this was organized through a socially-regulated mechanism of barter and exchange, therefore “man and nature must be brought into its orbit; they must be subject to supply and demand”. Thus they become commodities, ‘man’ is reduced to ‘labour’, and ‘nature’ as ‘resources’, simply commodities available for sale (Polanyi 1947/1957:130). Polanyi argued against this commodification; and saw the urgent necessity for the integration of man, nature, and economic society in a way that maintains their intrinsic relationship and ensures their flourishing. Otherwise, leaving the fate of soil and people to the market “would be tantamount to annihilating them” (p.131).

Accordingly, Polanyi commended the countermove in which the factors of economic production are checked in the light of the flourishing of people and land. It therefore appears that returning to this Polanyian socio-ecological theory is essential for rethinking the practical connections between nature, people and sustainability. Based on Polanyian theory of environmental-social transformation, nature (as land, time, and form) acts as a powerful constraint in communities that are empirically centred in the transformation of human-biophysical relationship, and in mediating the veracity of nature’s different meanings in our life and sustainability. Critically, however, that does not mean that the confrontation between social and natural production has always been understood (for example among the Luo people, in terms of rigid relationships, limits, or determinants of social organization and technological development), but it is empirical evidence attesting religio-cultural politics with which they constructed, conferred meaning and imagined expansive relationship to nature (cf. Ogot 1979; Ocaya-Lakidi 1979; Ominde 1979; Ogutu 1979). Surely, the response to contemporary ecological flaws has as much to learn from these cultural-political subjects and the dynamics of their

struggles over meaning – within an institutional, regulatory, economics, and cultural milieu in the public sphere.⁴³

Within the unified whole that constituted Luo society; environment, cosmic-harmony and sustainability were always treated jointly and intertwined together. Above all else, the ecosystem and its most common parts (the land and water), were the central core of Luo religion, politics and social sustainability (Mboya 1997).⁴⁴ The traditional religious beliefs of the Luo people (and elsewhere in Tanzania), the flourishing of land, and the flow of the precious water were always sensed within the scope of seasonality, interconnectedness, and the supreme luminosity of the cosmic planet. The intrinsic nature of the way in which these phenomena interact and interrelate to form the Luo identity illustrates what John Mbiti describes in the phrase: “Africans are tied to the land”. By this, he meant that land is the concrete expression of time (*Zamani* and *Sasa*), that it is land which provides the roots of existence and binds Africans to their departed community, who remain in the land (Mbiti 2002:27). Among the Luo people of Tanzania, this phenomenon of sustainability traces its history further back to the period when this society (just like any other) practised life based on the principles of what Max (1991) calls ‘self-rule’ – albeit without formal constitutions.⁴⁵ The issues that arise from the Luo ecology of land and life in the past will be explored to see how they might be rethought for contemporary ecological sustainability in this community.

2.2.1 Ecosystem Services and the Flourishing of Life

The important term ‘ecosystem services’ was defined by the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MEA Board, 2005) as “the benefits people obtain from the ecosystem”. Such an anthropocentric definition indicates that nature’s services are for humanity alone (Washington et al., 2007). However, nature provides services

⁴³ Excellent exploration on this subject area is perceptive essays collected in Deane-Drummond and Bedford-Strohm’s *Religion and Ecology in the Public Sphere* (2011).

⁴⁴ The land was a main cause of war and intertribal conflicts as Odaga further states: ‘The Luo fought many wars with their neighbours over land and cattle raids. Inter-clan fighting also broke out from time to time over land or boundaries. Sometimes it erupted as revenge over the killing of a neighbouring clan’s man, or due to disagreement over some issues, such as the abuse of a clan’s daughter. Some Luo women fought side by side with men and children also went into the bush to throw stones at the enemies during the fighting. The battle often took place during the day, while cattle-raiders used the cover of the night to attack’ (Odaga 2011:51-52).

⁴⁵ According to Max (1991), self-rule might have commenced from the events of clinging and living together along tribal groupings, mainly for self-protection of land, religious identity and survival.

(habitat, nutrients and energy) not only to humanity but for all species, and these too must be safeguarded and sustained. From the time when pastoralism and agrarianism were extended to become key means of social economy and sustainability among Africa's early populations the land and water have superseded all other physical elements to become the vital means of life and sustainability (Odhiambo & Williams 1977:5).

Traditionally, the Luo people are termed *Joka-nyanam* (the River-Lake people) which defines their lake identity, but also indicates their historical reliance on finite natural resources for survival and sustainability (Ogot 1967)⁶⁷. This point is put forward by a group of historians Odhiambo, Ouso, and Williams in the co-authored work *A History of East Africa*, (1977). They argue that people were dependent on land and its produce since the time when “[they] were hunters and food-gatherers and tended to live near lakes or rivers”. This, they continue, is the time people learned to fish, dig up roots and eat fruit and nuts. Research of Luo ethnology, amongst them Ogot (1967, 2009), Odhiambo et al., (1977), Ayot (1979), Mboya (1997), Kokwaro and Johns (1998), Odaga (2011) and Odinga (2013) all attest to this nature-based life.

Until more recently, land was seen as the most golden inheritance, one which every Luo parent wished to bequeath to his offspring. This parental desire was nurtured for two reasons. Firstly, land was central to the existing life, a home of ancestral spirits and the vital constituent of religio-cultural sustainability. Secondly, as a semi-pastoral, agrarian community, land was a key element to belonging and the sustainability of the Luo people (Odinga 2013). Indeed, as the research of the American Old Testament Theologian Walter Brueggemann has shown, it is in the prism of land that we find “a central theme of biblical faith, a historical sense of belonging and its destiny, the existentialist or formulation of the mighty deeds of God in history” (2002:3). Without the land and a sense of place, he argues, the likely outcome would be “unrooted lives, endless choice and no commitment”. For Brueggemann, it is insupportable to discuss Yahweh and his people without mentioning land. As he puts it, “we must speak about Yahweh and his people *and his land*” (p.5). He considers Deuteronomy 6:10-11⁴⁶ and goes on

⁴⁶ ¹⁰ When the Lord your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you – a land with large, flourishing cities you did not build, ¹¹ houses filled with

to suggest that, in the Mesopotamian Israelite context, the land was not just an object to be taken and occupied, but rather, a party to a relation (p.45). Regarding the land as a kith and kin, as Brueggemann concedes, has been the main concern of many religious ecologists such as Taylor (1972), Elsdon (1992), Grim and Tucker (2014). Therefore, this must remain at the heart of any study of sustainability among the Luo people of Africa.

In what seems to be an attempt to spiritualise the land, Luo people give pre-eminence to their land through the subsequent creation of myths, rituals and politics. Ogot argues once again that, “a *Ja-Luo* (Luo people) look upon the land as a potential place where they could build *dala* (homestead) be it on the hills or slopes declining towards a river or a watercourse down below in the valley”. To avoid the problem of landlessness or having the unplanned settlement, there were social regulations followed by *Jo go mier* (the new-home builders). These prevented people from building homes too close to public sources of life, such as wetlands, natural streams and grazing lands. In fact, such ecological precautions were taken against both foreseen and unforeseen consequences to ensure the security of ecosystem services (Ogot, 1967). Through cultivation, grazing and fishing, the land was held by Luo people as the chief resource of commercial activities on which the Luo people’s lives have depended since the dawn the history (Mboya 1997). This hand to mouth cultivation that relies on God’s gift of rain provided a sense of faith and self-reliance.⁴⁷ In this way, Luo life and sustainability have been pursued according to ecosystem principles, season after season and year after year.

This view of perennial, land-based life differs sharply from Scott (1990) who considers environmental conservation as ‘a growing concern’ with direct or indirect influence from Christianity. Wright argues that the ongoing ecological problem is religiously influenced by a deficient Christian view of creation and of the life after death (2013:21). If Wright’s view is correct, then, it will take years for the church (and particularly the Anglican Communion) to amend its practice

all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant – then when you eat and are satisfied...

⁴⁷ The word ‘self-reliance’ is used here based on Cliffe and Saul (1973) who define it as: ‘making the fullest use of our life in society by co-operating in all our activities in the interest of all the individual members [and nature]’.

regarding ecological conservation, especially if it fails to consult other moral ethics beyond its own. Wright admits this point as he calls for a new theology which comes in “a way which, by and large, has not been in the Western world and church” (p.21).

2.2.2 Back in time: Land use and treatment

As mentioned above, the work of Mbiti (1969; 2002:27) describes the land as the concrete expression of both space and time, which provides Africans with the roots of existence. It binds them mystically to their departed, making them see the graves of their forefathers as sacred sites. As such, it insulates them from the fear that something could separate them from these ties, as that will bring disaster to family and community life. Within the matrix of land use, the treatment of agriculture and pastoralism were closely paralleled. This association is reflected in Luo language by twin phrases: ‘*pur gi pith*’ that is, ‘agriculture and pastoralism’. The operating land principle of that time maintained such an interconnected equilibrium. This enabled them to have it “held by the tribe or clan” (Bell 1964:157), and on the other hand prevented it from the “superficial creation” ethic of land-grabbers and elites (Maathai 2010). All these traditional integrities saved the land from the possibility of further anthropogenic exploitation.

Before the time of the colonial missionary incursion into Luo society, and indeed, of the impacts of missionary education afterwards, the place of land and its ecology was central to Luo cultivation and pastoralism. This formed a mainstay, giving economic leverage and social sustainability (Ogot 1967). In addition to agriculture and pastoralism, fishing activities formed an additional, useful component to the pre-colonial Luo economy (Ayot 1979). Nevertheless, the period at which the Luo people began cultivation and pastoralism remains unknown. Scholars like Okello (2002), believe that, Luo people possibly learned farming skills from the neighbouring communities of their cradleland; since the idea of cultivation and producing food is believed to have started in the Middle East, possibly in Sandibar in the northern part of the present day Iraq (p.12). The work of Kokwaro and Johns (1998) indicates that for more than a millennium of their existence as a tribal society, practical methods and moral traditions of cultivation and pastoralism among the Luo people have changed little. An example of the

classical farming method of this group is *mixed farming* that is, cultivating land and keeping cattle at the same time (Odaga, 2011).

2.3 Rituals, Spirituality and Norms

The practicality and spirituality of Luo cultural ecology, rituals and moral traditions have always been grounded in a realistic relationship with the life-giving power on which all our lives depend. For this people, sacred things and places were to be protected from defilement and all other unclean endeavours deemed to be destructive to Luo conceptualization of *dongruok*. The aim of this collective spirituality was, among other things: to enhance their multigenerational commitment to sustaining the unbroken cultural identity, to protect their divine consciousness from destructive profanation, and to promote sound hygienic tradition (Mboya 1997; Odaga 1983; 2011; Maseno 2011). Among various cultural societies, the practice of rituals were aimed at ensuring that spirituality is maximally present and integrated into a holistic system of life, development and sustainability (Knighton 2005; Owen 2016). This maintenance of social subsistence and sustainability through rituals and moral norms were intrinsically helpful, not only in preserving the community's common spirituality but also it has a protective function which always confronts the community to live within their spatial limits, as well as to ensure that available material means of life are sufficiently shared among all members of the present generation and for those who come after (Davis 2009). The aim of this section, therefore, is to explore interrelationship between rituals, ecology and moral customs of belonging and how such past ecologically-driven traditions contributed to the making of Luo people's scope of life and sustainability.

2.3.1 Naming and the Luo Cosmology of Belonging

Naming is a significant aspect of the African spirituality; as it relates to the life of a person, and integrates human life with nature and with cosmological realities, thus mediating social continuity and belonging. Indeed, this cultural practice was singularly vital, empowering inner feelings of interdependence, social belonging, and the pursuit of dreams that were collectively sustained through the naming process. African cosmologists and ecologists believe that this self-understanding becomes complete only when human life and living is situated in

constant contact with cosmological realities (Magesa 1997:82). Among the Luo people, human life and identity becomes fully possible if it is lived in continual contact with the life and activities of other people and with nature. As H. Sindima explains, this is because naming and human life as a whole are intrinsically ecological or cosmologically-shaped. “As nature opens itself to people, it represents possibilities for experiencing the fullness of life, possibilities for discovering how inseparably bonded people are to each other and to all of creation” (Sindima 1990:144-5).

Most significantly, naming was understood as the crucial moment of receiving a blessing from God and the ancestors. But that is not all. Naming is an act of integrating and commissioning the child into an engagement with all aspects of reality – God, ancestors, community and natural world. As Magesa adds, naming “involves the incarnation or actualization of a person (an ancestor), a certain desired moral quality or value, a physical trait or power, or an occasion or event” (1997:42). A complementary definition is: “to confer a name is therefore to confer personality, status, destiny, or express a wish or circumstances in which the bearer of the name was born” (Nyamiti 1988:42). The way in which names are given in a traditional African context, indicates a specific understanding of ‘reincarnation’ throughout the continent.

Therefore, in traditional (pre-colonial) Luo society, the naming of children and nonhuman entities were among the most important religious occasions often marked by ceremonies (Mbiti 2002). Through naming, the Luo people stressed what the Nigerian theologian A. Orobator calls ‘cosmic harmony’; a harmony that exists between and among humans, animals and all the elements of nature (Orobator 2008:61). It was performed as an act of obedience to God, to nature, and to the living-dead (see Shorter 1977, Mbiti 2002).⁴⁸ Through naming individuals they “owe their existence to other people (living and dead) and to the interplanetary community”, thereby becoming what Mbiti calls “part of the whole”. Only then

⁴⁸ The term ‘living-dead’ is used here based on Mbiti’s definition of this term as, ‘the departed relatives’ who despite being dead, remain ‘alive’ in the memories of their surviving families, and are thought to be still interested in the affairs of the family to which they once belonged in their physical life. The living-dead says Mbiti, ‘solidify and mystically bind together the whole family’, and as we shall see in this section, the Luo people took this concept seriously in their naming process, as they hold the belief that they see departed members of their family coming back and appearing to them wanting their names to be given to the expected children or unborn members who are about to be born or still in the loins of the living members (for fuller discussion about the living dead see Mbiti 2002:106ff).

could they truly recite Mbiti's philosophy of African humanity: "I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am" (Mbiti 2002:108-9).

The ontology of Luo naming is one that is built upon the metaphor of the interconnectedness of the Supreme Being, ancestors, the living community and nature (Odaga 2011, Mboya 1997, Magesa 2014). Within the unified whole, that constituted the Luo sense of interconnectedness between the earth, sky and living organisms, the relationality was exercised through ritual libation, naming and 'ethnosystematics' (traditional systems of naming and classifying plants and animals). Commenting on the ontology and ecological aspects of naming among the Luo people, Kokwaro writes:

One cultural use of both plants and animals which has been silently practised by the Luo community for many generations is to name their newborn after a popular plant or animal. Examples include Kwach (Leopard), Jowi (Buffalo), Rachier (Cobra), Adiel (Secretary Bird), Odiero (Shrike Bird), Oseng' (Bishop Bird), Raila (from Stinging Nettle Aila), Oruka (Edible Mushroom), Orengo (Herb for mental illness), Bonyo (Locust), and many others (Kokwaro 1998:vi).

Naming of children after certain wild animals was intended to promote the *status quo* and wellbeing of non-human creatures into Luo moral tradition, as well as making them valuable in daily life. Since antiquity, a Luo person enjoys more than one name, namely an ancestral name (*nying mochaki*) ceremoniously bestowed upon the child some days after its birth and the adolescent name (*nying pakruok/pon*), even though one of them will be more widely used than the others. Usually these adolescent names (or 'nicknames' to use Magesa's phrase) are given by one's peers or one confers this name on oneself. The work of G. Parrinder (1969:80) observed this point and asserts that names are conferred according to circumstances of birth, likeness to ancestors or elders, or by choice of an ancestor or divinity through some sort of oracle or revelation. The recalling of the past event or mission that the community engaged with, enabled the present community to create a new environment or cosmological order, in which everyone can enjoy a full life and past calamities could be prevented from reoccurring (see Magesa 1997). Given this socio-ecological and ethical significance of Luo naming ceremonies, it may be argued that naming is the single most important religious action that can be used to promote cultural ecology, ecological compassion, and more significantly, for the revaluing of cultural identity and creation care.

Unsurprisingly, the naming ceremony and its cosmological values was misunderstood by the colonial missionaries of Africa throughout the latter part of

nineteenth century and the major part of the twentieth century. African scholars such as Ngugi waThiong'o and Patrick Lumumba Otieno (both Kenyans) suggest that those who want to control you start first by changing your name (waThiong'o 1986). Victorian evangelical missionaries are remembered for their missional commitment in promoting religious liberty, mass education, and cultural civilization (Niall Ferguson 2011; Bryant Myers 2017). However, one of their presumptions of cultural superiority was acknowledged in relation to naming spirituality, specifically, when they forbid the use of traditional Luo names such as Onyango (m) or Anyango (f) as forenames during baptism; instead, they insisted that every candidate must be given a 'Christian' name (basically European names such as Johnson, or Jane). Unfortunately, Africans failed to reject this colonial imposition without recognising the implications: that this was a sense in which not only cultural cosmology of naming was traumatized, but that the entire ecology of African mind and identity was dislocated from its sustained matrix of sustainability (Mboya 1997). Similarly, this colonization of African names was not restricted to human persons, but also to natural features, such as Lake Victoria (traditionally *Nam Lolwe*). In response to this, Ngugi waThiong'o has been writing extensively about the need to decolonize African minds.

Colonial missionary salvation, as David Sibley described it in *Geographies of Exclusion*, often involved "not only accepting Christianity but also adopting European styles of dress and the discipline of a Christian education in mission school" (Sibley 2007:26). John Mbiti, saw exclusionary discourse pertaining to missionary-imposed naming among African communities as problematic. As he puts it compellingly:

Nearly all African names have a meaning. The naming of children is therefore an important occasion which is often marked by ceremonies in many societies. Some names may mark the occasion of the child's birth. For example, if the birth occurs during rain, the child would be given a name which means 'Rain' [Okoth] or 'Water' if there is a locust invasion when the child is, it might be called 'Locust' [Bonyo] or 'Famine' [Okech], or 'Pain', some names describe the personality of the individual, or his character, or some key events in his life (2002:118).

If a Luo child was born with some common traits (*mbala*) similar to that of a particular 'living dead' then, as Mbiti refers to it, this might be seen as partial re-incarnation, and the child named after the 'predecessor'. According to Odaga (2011): "the Luo people were careful in naming babies and as such they were not named after men or women of dubious characters or criminals" (p.49). The Luo

people used several methods for naming their children, such as naming them after plants, animals, the ‘living dead’ or grandparents. They also sought their children’s names when the child was crying frequently afterbirth. During this period, different names of the living dead were mentioned, and if the child stopped crying when a particular name was called out, then the child received that name (Mbiti, 2002:119).

For the Luo people, the child was named three to five days after birth. Naming was often done at *chuny dala* (in the centre of a homestead) where *par* (a mat) was spread *dayo* (an old woman) or *nyamrerwa* (the midwife) who then sat with the child on her lap. Then the grandparents or the parents named the child and after that the name was then announced loudly to the crowd followed by the prayers often offered by *jodongo* (elders) for long life and prosperity. However, the ceremony and worship associated with the naming event were nothing less than “symbolic acts marking the end of one phase of life, and the beginning of a new [interconnectedness] one” (p.119). The Luo matrix of naming was a religious process: the child was relentlessly swamped with spiritual activities, which joined a child with physical life, and incarnated the child into the actual environment of his social ecology.

2.3.2 Initiation as integration into cultural-ecology

The Western belief in the separation of religion and socio-politics (transcendental and socio-political arenas) has its origins in the Greek philosophy of Plato and Aristotle. It was clearly reflected in Augustine’s *City of God* (Keshomshahara 2008:68) and its influence reached its zenith in the Middle Ages. During the modern European incursion of Africa, missionaries maintained this schism with the dominant view being that the church should operate as a social institution distinct from the state and the indigenous traditions and culture (Mbiti 2002).

The outcome of the encounter between Christianity and African cultural values resulted in what L.S. Senghor calls a ‘half-caste’ outlook. Mbiti refers to it as the “partial withholding and partial rejection or partial giving and partial receiving of one’s culture” (2002:265). This influenced people such as Vincent Lucas to seek more culturally-friendly approaches to mission. Lucas introduced a transformative missional approach towards the acculturation of ‘*jando*’ (initiation

rites) among the Makua and Yao people in Tanganyika. Lucas served in Tanganyika from 1909 and eventually became the founding bishop of the Anglican diocese of Masasi from 1926 until 1944. His insightful *Christianity and Native Rites* (1950) has continued relevance and could be used to develop a sensitive framework of cultural ecology within the Anglican church of Tanzania today. Indeed, practices like adopting rivers and wetlands, as places of spiritual pilgrimage could increase love and care for the ecosystem.

Lucas may have adopted *jando* as a new method of evangelization because it was seen to be effective within Islamic communities, and had contributed to the spread of Islam (Stroner-Eby 2008:176). Alternately, Maimbo & Kings (2016:14) argue that Vincent's development of a Christianized form of *jando* "was motivated by the recognition that such rites of passage gave a sense of identity which needed to be provided in an acceptable Christian form" because "its absence left Christians isolated from the wider community". In fact, the absence of serious acculturation left Christians not only isolated from the wider human family, but also from the entire galaxy of traditional cosmology and its phenomena of spiritual life.

2.3.3 Culture and Cosmic Spirituality – A Luo Perspective

The development of stereotyped studies of culture and exclusionary discourses saw culture used as a potent discriminator of social difference. For example, the German philosopher Georg W. Hegel identified whiteness with higher consciousness of rationality, in contrast to blackness which he demonised as irrational and unconscious (Mbembe 2016). Indeed, it was this racist 'scientism' which was the basis of antisemitism in Nazi Germany that culminated in the Holocaust. Many still consider it still remains the invisible influence behind present day anti-Semitism (Sibley 2007; Sacks 2015).

However, such cultural prejudices were addressed in Richard Niebuhr's prominent work *Christ and Culture* in the 1950s. Niebuhr proposes that Christian spirituality can be performed in the light of the five taxonomies of culture: Christ against culture, Christ of culture, Christ above culture, Christ and culture paradox, and Christ transforms culture. The latter dynamic in Niebuhr's taxonomy 'Christ transforms culture' is held by many contemporary ecotheologians as fundamental for the rethinking of the cosmic-Christ as the transcending force behind ecological

reform movement, both within and outside Christianity (cf. Conradie et al. 2014). Cultural anthropologists (such as Loreen Maseno) have shown that African indigenous culture has some aspects closer to those of Semitic cultures, than to the European cultural values that have been imposed upon the Africans (Maseno 2011; 2016).

The word '*cultus*' has associated meanings of protection, nurture, growing and devotion to a god (Turner 2013:30). It can, therefore, be argued that, culture is intrinsically related to agriculture and in some agricultural communities. Turner's view of culture indicates that culture should be seen as good for all, that it has a specific eco-ground relating to agriculture, cultivating positive ecological attitudes for creation care, caring for the land (not just through interventional strategies, but through its expression in beautification or a caring devotion).

From this, it can be seen that cultural identity is the prime *locus* for the construction of a truly integrated ecological spirituality. As the American missiologist Stephen Bevans expresses: "[mission] theology needs to interact and dialogue not only with traditional cultural values, but with social change, new ethnic identities, and the conflicts that are present as the contemporary phenomenon of globalization" (Bevans 2010:26-7). For any specific social group, a balance must be established between human experience, social location, culture, and cultural change. In his *African Culture*, Aylward Shorter, a British missiologist with a specialism in Tanzania's cultural anthropology, describes four levels of culture. These are:

- *Industrial technical* – examples include patterns of work, settlement, fashion for instance, in clothes, and modes of transport
- *Domestic technical* – the culture of the home, leisure, décor, cuisine
- *Values* – the choice of alternate guiding qualities or social ideals
- *Worldview* – a view of religion, pseudo-religion, and the Absolute.

Worldview is the uppermost or core cultural coding that underpins the first three levels of culture (Shorter 1998:22-8).

In Luo cultural understanding, it appears that cultural globalization did not start with the worldwide dimension of popular culture, but with the social dimensions of sameness and commonality. The work of Frances Young, for

example, found that, at the heart of cultural modernity is the sense of human autonomy. This is evident in the destructive impact of power carried around by power and constantly mechanized based on scientific progress and industrial development, a growth in political liberty, and the sense of freedom to determine individual destiny and moral choices individually, rather than comprehending these through the community (Young 2014:77). In summary, modernity and its cultural enterprise has left little room for God and entire networks of cultural premises.

While some optimistic hyperglobalizers have been receptive to global culture, others such as Benjamin Barber, political theorist and hyperglobalizers have warned against the uncritical consumption of Anglo-American values and lifestyle. In the book, *Consumed* (2007), Barber warns against an “ethos of infantilization” that sustains global capitalism: turning adults into children through “dumbed down” advertising and frivolous consumer goods, while at the same time targeting children as consumers. Similarly, Steger (2013) concurs, suggesting also that cultures which promote “an endless market for consumerist goods as was once thought” contribute to the growth of destructive markets, capitalism, and the homogenization of global products. (Steger 2013:77). For this ecological reason, Steger concludes that global consumerism is increasingly becoming “soulless and unethical” in its pursuit of profit.

Therefore, the effect of cultural globalization is to obliterate cultural spirituality and thus affect cultural wholeness. Such cultural homogenization is mainly taking place through the uncritical embodiment of cultural *glocalization*, a complex interaction of the global and local characterized by cultural borrowing, popularly known as ‘hybridization’. Cultural hybridization may be used by local cultures to set their own limits in appropriating global fashions, music, dance, film, food, and language. However, such an approach faces a challenge to the heterogeneity of many cultures and societies, and may hardly possess an authentic self-contained culture. This indicates that cultural societies (including that of the Luo people) are undergoing gradual cultural change, detrimental to their cultural spirituality and the moral values that shape their ethics for cosmic care (Nkansah-Obrempong 2013). At the same time, emerging cultures “coexist in uneasy tension with a sense of placelessness and a less stable sense of identity and knowledge” (Steger 2013:80). As seen from the perspective of the Luo people, the global New Age Culture (NAC) today is overwhelming the ability of its society to influence

and control such things as the traditional ethics of language⁴⁹ and food behaviours. Perhaps, food has the most visible ecological consequences.

2.3.4 Traditional Practices around Food

In her study of Luo traditional food preparation and preservation techniques, Odaga (2011), states that: “the Luo have special methods and ways of preparing and cooking various types of food. Certain types of food are cooked in pots only used for that purpose (for example porridge and fish each have their own pot). The staple food for this people is porridge made from millet, cassava and maize flour often eaten with a variety of other foods. It was not until the introduction of ‘Westernised’ food and food preservation techniques at the start of twentieth century that the Luo people began to experience what Cohen calls “an ambiguous food process” by which he meant incursion of foreign food and crops into Luoland (Cohen 1989). This foreign food incursion saw the invention of modernised food conservation techniques such as refrigeration.

Cohen writes that maize first entered the Luo local economy through the intervention of the colonial government, an intervention that “involved pressure” (p.64). For several decades later, maize meal was consequently referred to as *kuon ongere* (meaning white man’s food). Consequently, traditional crops like millet became unpopular as they became seen as a ‘primitive’ crop; and more imported foods (such as rice, sweet potatoes, cassava and green maize) became common.

In the past, when the land was still fertile, most Luo cultivated vegetables; but also sourced them directly from the wild and picked them from the bushes. Some of them grew on cultivated land (even though they had not been planted

⁴⁹ The study has shown the rising significance of the English language as the official language of British colonialism in the late 16th century, when only approximately seven million people used English as their mother tongue. By the 1990s, this number had swollen to over 350 million native speakers, with 400 million more using English as a second language. Today, more than 80 per cent of the content posted on the Internet is in English. Indeed, almost half of the world’s growing population of foreign students is enrolled at institutions in Anglo-American countries. At the same time, however, the number of spoken languages in the world has dropped from about 14, 500 in 1500 to less than 6, 500 in 2012. Given the current rate of decline, some linguists predict that 50 to 90 per cent of the currently existing languages will have disappeared by the end of the 21st century (Steger 2013:85-6). This indicates not only the rapid extinction of the world’s languages and the spread of consumerist values, lifestyles and spirituality; but it reveals the extinction of cultural values, identity, meaning and history, often embedded and intuited in those endangered languages including their ecological wisdom as well.

there, as they were naturally seeded from the surrounding area).⁵⁰ According to Mboya (1997) and Odaga (2011), evening meals were more important than lunches; because it was during these meals that socialisation, fellowship and transmission of traditional knowledge happened within the groups of men on the one flank, and women on the other. As Odaga states:

Traditionally, evening meals were of great importance to the Luo. Male adults, youth and male children in the home had their meals at the *duol* which was an open fireplace. Male members of the homestead met and shared evening meals and held all sorts of discussions. It was here too that the youth learnt much about the Luo traditions from the older male members of the community. Like *Siwindhe*, *Duol* too was an educational institution (p.29).

Having most of these evening meals, eaten outside the main house near the cows-kraal, enabled the males to fellowship about what they had done, including *kwath* grazing (cf. Mbiti 2002, esp. sections on kin and household). For women and girls, evening time was a time to acquire domestic knowledge, including food preservation techniques (such as gutting, smoking and preservation).⁵¹ Despite the fact that modern domestic science has introduced a complex life style, some of these traditional food preservation methods may yet help in reducing energy consumption and food waste. Such waste is an insult against the generosity of ecosystem services around the whole world.

2.4 Ecological Impacts of Luo Migration in Tanzania

Although the *transhumance* of the Luo people from their cradleland of Bar-el-Ghazel to Mara Tanzania depended on the geographical landscape and its ecological services, it had a sustainable ecological footprint. This may seem like a pervasive avoidance of central ecological contradictions (and the crucial social and political problems of Luo migration), such as felling large number of trees for fencing; and adopting and introducing new farming knowledge across East Africa (having been known as steady growers of millet, sorghum and leguminous crops)

⁵⁰ The most popular Luo vegetables include: *odiolo*, *obwanda*, *angayo*, *osuga*, *ododo*, *ndemra*, *atipa*, *apiwu*, *awayo*, *alike*, *apoth*, *anyimliech*, *bo dhok*, and *obuolo* – mushrooms of which there are three common edible species which are: *olando*, *oruka* and *ofumo* (Odaga 2011:28). The most common Luo cultivated vegetables were: *dek akeyo*, *bo* – coe peas, *ng'or*, *mito*, *osuga* and *apoth* – an okra like plant. These are cultivated nowadays for food and sold to the urban community.

⁵¹ Every food item was preserved through a certain traditional technology which was energy efficient and prevented food waste. Luo people used the sun to dry meat and vegetables, unlike modern methods of food preservation, such as freezing which consume gas and electricity (see Odaga 2011:29-30).

(Okello 2002). But despite Luo's agricultural revolution and expanded geographical reach in search of geographical territories, more safety, and developed social life – the basic ethnographic and ecological assessment of indigenous migration seems to have had few ecological consequences in the public sphere. This was also clear to Adrian Hastings in his observations on the precolonial African societies. Hastings reported that:

The balance of life, physical, social, spiritual, was well constructed in principle but easily disturbed in practice. It was not a golden world in which generations passed without undue pain, crisis, or history. The rains failed. Children died unexpectedly. Men fought over women and murdered one another in anger. More powerful neighbours seized one's cattle or invaded one's ancestral holding. But most such tragedies, millions of times as they occurred, left no trace whatever beyond the memory of one or two generations in the story of humankind...life went on. People forgave, moved their dwellings, bore other children, and recognised new lords and new gods. The knowledge and technology available, even to the more powerful, could have next to no effect upon the ecology (except, perhaps, in the over-use of some limited terrain around a royal capital) and relatively little upon the majority of their neighbours (Hastings, 1994:53).

In this masterful assessment, Hastings raises two important points. The first concerns the 'balance of life' and 'religiously inspired ecological spirituality'. These were the underlying political structures through which concepts of life and sustainability were frequently seen by many African societies, and the Luo people in particular. Within the context of pre-colonial Luo society, religious-based environmental spirituality venerated not only human institutions, but also personified nature's aspects (including trees, rivers, graves, stones, caves, mountains, forests, wildlife), and often treated their lands as persons to whom they could relate. (Kaoma, 2012).

The respect for and personification of nature were common practices among the world's indigenous societies, most of whom treated them as "cognizant and communicative subjects rather than as inert or insignificant objects"⁵². Secondly, despite some exceptions like the "over-use of some limited topography around the royal places" it was dominion and power which certainly became the giant force behind the worldwide ecological degradation (Spencer & White 2007). Since their entrance into northern Tanzania in the 1800s, the Luo people have been clearing their wooded plateau for cultivation, house building, and construction of

⁵² This understanding and relationship to nature practised by many societies during the period so called 'Animistic' or 'Ancestral' was made by Jeffery G. Snodgrass and Kristina Tiedje. See SNODGRASS, J.G and TIEDJE, K. (2008) 'Guest Editors Introduction: Indigenous Nature Reverence and Conservation—Seven Ways of Transcending an Unnecessary Dichotomy', in *JSRNC* (2.1) 6-29.

protective stockades around villages.⁵³ The expansion of farm lands due to population pressure⁵⁴ and economic demands have led to continuous detrimental damage to land and water sources. While all these pressures on ecological sustainability have been rapidly degrading Luo land over the intervening decades, their “ecology of mind and praxis” has been also descending from its traditional pathways to despair.

2.5 Conclusion

This brief overview of the Tanzania Luo people has considered the social and ecological-historical aspects of Luo life and their notion of sustainability. It has, among other things, shown their cultural-ecological struggles. In light of its arguments, this chapter submits that no approach to the question of cosmological consciousness and social sustainability will be free of normative commitments. Moreover, it has been suggested that the problems regarding the over-use of nature’s facilities among the Luo of Tanzania predates the period of ‘incursion’, even if they seem to have been comparatively much less significant compared to recent environmental scenarios. This indicates that, to some extent, the problems relating to the misuse of physical environment cannot be excluded from the acquisition of land, dominion over the surface and disunity. Yet, despite such internal antagonism, social units (family and clans) have an ultimate religious and political responsibility for the management of their land. The land was treated both as a sacred gift and a gracious companion, not objectively as it became in subsequent eras. This is clearly elucidated by Laurenti Magesa (2014).

Also, it has been shown that a balanced life and religious teachings were always envisaged in the Luo community, in terms beyond the individual experience. This is not to deny that there were social inadequacies and failures, in terms of how the vast majority of Luo people related themselves to natural

⁵³ The clearing of trees for a cow-kraal and its surroundings was reported as a challenge against the flourishing of the trees and identity in the biography of Daniel Mtusu of Nyasaland, Malawi completed and published by the renown Scottish Missionary to Nyasaland in *The Autobiography of an African*, by Donald Fraser, 1925, (London: Seeley, Service & Co. Limited), 17ff.

⁵⁴ The demographic chart of Luo people has been growing steadily and has been mentioned by every writer on Luo history or sociology as the cause of their further migration. For example, Kokwaro and Johns quotes the 1957 census at which the population of Tanzania Luo was 0.1 million making them the 29th largest tribe out of 129 ethnic groups of Tanzania, nevertheless, by 1998 their population was estimated at 0.5 million.

resources. Indeed, in the past, ecological challenges occasionally experienced (through drought, crops failures, overpopulation, land deficiency and post-war environmental effects) were provisionally resolved through further migration into places with adequate ecosystem services.

Throughout all of this, the Luo mythical past served as the foundation to Luo society and the Luo cultural identity and sustainability. Practically, this was animated through the construction and perpetuation of Luo religious spirituality, through which nature is symbolised as a living organism. Therefore, to be truly 'Luo' was to embody the narrative of the Luo past; bequeathed through myths and related original phenomena of the spiritual life symbolized in their geographical traditions; which has been engraved on their language, memory, and cosmic consciousness. It is to how the Luo cultural teachings on collective identity and cosmic spirituality has declined as the result of colonial civilization that will be considered in chapter 4, but before that extraordinary task, it is exploring educational value of oral perspectives on ecological transformation and sustainability ethics that will be considered next.

Chapter Three

Community Ecology and Sustainability: Engaging Oral views

3.0 Introduction

Over the past few decades, the value of orality in indigenous ecology and long-standing oral traditions of sustainability has begun to be recognised by the scholarly world. The literature on cultural orality is indispensable in understanding earlier states of social consciousness, community matrix and their customs of sustainability ethics (see Walter J. Ong's *Orality and Literacy*, first published in 1982, then reproduced in 2002 and 2012).

Ong's *Orality and Literacy* describes how oral ideas structured the cosmology and social matrices of early communities. He explains why orality holds such sway in the oral universe of communication, even before the evolution of the earliest script began (approximately 6000 years ago). Ong describes the history and cultural sources of meaning, and argues that the relations between orality and literacy are deep and complex. These issues also reveal our own biases (Ong 2012:2ff). Chapter 3 attempts to identify our educationally-grounded biases, and overcome them. Oral views are presented, as a unique approach to understand the politics of sustainability across cultures and disciplines.

Long before the term 'ecology' was conceived by a German biologist (Ernst Haeckel in 1866), oral cultures involved themselves with an open-ended study of their places. They developed ways to improve their interactions with complicated lifeways across the bioregion.

Oral cultures also offered a moral order. They ascertained and catalogued a cultural framework concerned with how they relate to each other and to the life-sustaining earth (Kokwaro and Timothy 1998). Such an approach, incomplete and evolving as it is, has created the cultural framework of indigenous ecology over aeons of time. To some extent, this still remains today. As Christian ecologist R. J. Berry suggests, 'ecology has no general rules like Newtonian physics', but it is an open-ended study or knowledge (*-ology*) of places (*ecos*) and their inhabitants.

‘Ecology’ is about the ‘home life of living organisms and their organizations’ (Berry 2011:3-25).

The proposition is that a reconsideration of both oral knowledge (*ology*) of places (*ecos*) is now required. We have established that ‘no approach to socioecological sustainability will be free of normative energies of humankind’ (see Chapter 2.6). Engaging with oral views can contribute significantly. They may widen our understanding of the world and the human place in it, into something more broadly suitable for sustainability ethics.

For this thesis, relevant oral traditions were investigated through informal, but structured, interviews. These were conducted in Tanzania between June 2015 and September 2016. The questions asked are as follows: What were the cultural teachings with which the community sustained its ecological wellbeing? How might contemporary theologians (specifically Anglicans) contribute to our present search for ecological morality? How might a synthesis of ecological wisdom embedded in the Bible and in the cultural energies of indigenous cosmology, contribute to our current struggle for creating mutually enhancing theology of sustainability? We will now consider the response to these questions.

3.1 Ecology and Sustainability: Reading oral voices

The participants recalled various routes and directions in their modern religio-cultural shift. It appears that the move from oral cultures to chirographic (i.e. writing) cultures has led to a sense of separation. The disconnecting economics of life has been challenging a deep sense of cosmic belonging.

There has been a move to ‘reading about God through books’, rather than experiencing God through the nurturing practices of religious ecology. A previously-ordered identity was being disordered (see Appendix I & II). This religio-cultural paradigm shift has fragmented the modern Luo community, as well as disordering culturally-sustained traditions of ecological spirituality. However, some ‘importantly-selected’ participants remembered vital traditions with which the indigenous community (particularly ancient Luo) sustained their ecological consciousness. These traditions included ecologically-grounded rituals (*dolo*) used

to bring people into the immediacy of intimate human-earth reconciliation, or into relationship with the biosphere that sustained and shaped their communal life.

Almost all readings of indigenous orality and ethnography contrast indigenous morality (on the nurturing powers of the Land which sustained previous generations), against the impact of invasive dominating cultures (see essays in Christian Scharen and Aana Vigen's *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*, 2011). The evangelizing efforts of Christian missionaries and 'civilizing' policies of government agents (from 19th and 20th centuries) internalized negative perceptions of indigenous religious practices in the indigenous population.

Cultural critic and ecologist Arran Gare (2010:9-13) argues that these economic policies with their modern spirituality (together with a more technological approach to agriculture) have impoverished much of humanity, damaged indigenous wellbeing and destroyed global ecosystems.

Colonial missionary spirituality and government policies have had a significant impact on traditional practices. Indigenous cultural ecology has changed, leading many to internalize skeptical attitudes against their indigenous ecological values. Despite this, scholarly evidence indicates that the incarnational cosmology of these cultures remains visibly vibrant and indispensable. It still has much to contribute and teach other cosmologies, including Christianity (see Bediako 1992, 1995, 2004; Bujo 1998, 2006; Kaoma 2012, 2013).

The indigenous agrarian mind-set has an inclusive comprehension of life. This provides the basis for a new reconnection with the cultural energies of human ecology. It challenges the prevailing dualism between body and soul, and between landscapes and ecologies, and critiques both pre-missionary cultural ecology and industrial-missionary civilization. A way of life that honours the wholeness of creation may be recalled by reading the cultural traditions of agrarianism (Davis 2009:21-22). And by doing so, argues Davis, it should promote and develop the integrating forms of thinking required; to reconsider the relationship between humanity and their ecological responsibilities. Recalling this way of life may guide people on how they to live and organize their economic life, and so conform to the ecological limitations of their landscapes.

Davis's discourse may be innovative in some theological quarters. However, the idea of an interconnection between landscapes and ecologies of daily life, is not new in African Luo cosmology.

Mboya (1965/1997) studied the traditional systems of integration among the Luo. Until the 1950s, people connected agriculture with the nurturing powers of the land through rituals. These remained the source of incarnation with which they sustained their ecological wellbeing. People understood that life-sustaining landscapes cannot be separated from both human and physical geography. Rather, the two parties are interconnected and interdependent (see Herring 1979:77-107).

Oral human traditions and the physical geography of their homelands formed, influenced, and sustained them. Ancient Luo society was brought into the immediacy of eco-social embodiment through this ecologically-grounded understanding of eco-social wellbeing. People acquired the capacity to feel the sacred power of the life-giving (the Land) in one's body.

John Grim and Mary Tucker's *Ecology and Religion* (2014) shows that many indigenous communities around the world recognize the sacred power of land. Sacred power resides in the surrounding world of plants and animals that nurture humans. This is opposed to modern industrialism, which focuses entirely on economic power and modernizing forms of technology. Grim and Tucker's research reflects the Luo people's longstanding practice of ethnosystematics (see Chapter 2.4.1). This is supported by the participants' observations. They recognised that the biosphere that sustains all creation, the cultural universe that has brought us forth, and summation of people's wellbeing cannot be divorced (see Ogot 1979; Maseno 2011).

Such an integrated indigenous philosophy of life and ecological spirituality (also known as 'lifeway') distinguishes indigenous ecology and sociology from industrialised societies. Industrialised societies tend to make a distinction between economics and ecology, politics and society, science and religion (Grim and Tucker 2014:126-7). In indigenous societies (like the Luo community), interwoven eco-social connections were practised in ritual; and remembered in an incarnated sophiology, in myths with ecological affection (such as *Simbi Nyaima*) and in stories about the community of living presences in the given landscape (see Odaga 1983, 2011). African theologians (such as Kwesi Dickson) called for the integration of religious spirituality and public life, appealing specifically for modern humanity's life to be conformed in the context of society's collective soul (Kwesi 1977:4).

As Kwesi suggested, the dualistic separation of the sacred and secular (originating from Greek thinking), propagated by imported ‘civilization’ and missionary Christianity, ignored the nurturing wisdoms that could be learnt from traditional religious ecology. Indeed, indigenous Luo cosmology saw cosmic life as one, similar to traditional Jewish ecology). These discourses found in cultural cosmologies sought to maintain the path to social wellbeing: based on the ecology of belonging and collectivism, as opposed to individualism and detrimental materialism.⁵⁵ Indeed an agrarian reading of the Bible has revealed that Orthodox Jews have a theological ethic of eating, and in some quarters that has come to include ecologically-responsible eating (Davis 2009:22).

It can be argued that a traditional, time-honoured understanding of reality includes an ecology of eating together, and this flows from a lifeway in a particular bioregion. This ‘bioregion’ is the place where the biosphere that sustains them (rivers, mountains, animals, and particular sites sacred to the people), which is profoundly intertwined with their identity and their ways of nurturance.

Anthropologist Tim Ingold is among those who imagines this indigenous concept of wellbeing, and he entitles it ‘life-world’. They dwell in a sphere that has a strong sense of the relationships between places and life forms, as opposed to regarding lands and species as existing simply to serve human needs (Ingold 2000, 2011).

A biospheric atmosphere, with a strong sense of relationship between humanity and the biosphere, sustained their life; and provided the basis for different kinds of life-sustaining ethics, practices, and a different vision of future reality. It embodied a different political philosophy and economics of affection than those which have dominated modernity.

The Tanzanian theologian Laurenti Magesa has explored the economics of affection or ‘eating together’ from an African perspective and in *What is Not Sacred?* (2014). He argues that ‘economic of eating together’ in Africa must be distinguished from the economics of ‘production’ and ‘consumerism’ in capitalist societies. He maintains that the ‘economics of eating together’ should be explained in the light of *Ubuntu* ontology; and must be distinguished from capitalist consumerism, that basically involves the production and distribution of goods for

⁵⁵ For Jewish cosmology and social wellbeing, see Jonathan Sacks 2002, 2007, 2011, 2015)

individual clients with the financial power to purchase them. Magesa claims that the African economic perspective based on the philosophy of ‘eating together’ emphasizes mutual dependence and cooperative success, above competition and individual accomplishment. Discussing African economics of affection, he writes:

Its logic is the enhancement of common life through *communal* consumption. The accent is on the good life, the acquisition of the necessities of life, realized by all (or as many as possible) through the effort of all (or as many as possible)...The sharp distinction between producers and consumers in this economic paradigm is blurred (Magesa 2014:150).

Ideally, every able-bodied person should engage in the production of goods to satisfy the needs of the community. Magesa recognises that this emphasis on shared life ensures everyone’s needs are addressed, and would be prioritised before personal or private savings (p.150). Magesa’s *Ubuntu*-based economic perspective (in contrast to competitive and individualistic economic policies) has an unapologetic focus on the enhancement of ‘common life’ through ‘communal consumption,’ resulting in ‘solidarity’. Solidarity, as Magesa explains (in accordance with Pope John Paul’s *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*), ‘is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people [but] a *firm and persevering* determination to commit oneself to the *common good*...of all and of each individual because we are *all* really responsible for all’. Holistically it means, ‘a commitment to the good of one’s neighbour with the readiness...to lose oneself’ for the sake of the other instead of exploiting him, and to serve him instead of oppressing him for one’s own advantage’ (2014:151).

The potential impact of *Ubuntu*-based economics of affection toward reconstruction of ecologically-grounded sustainability ethics must be recognized. It provides the basis for soulful community solidarity and collective consumption (in contrast to capitalist consumerism, which is competitive and individually-oriented for both the producer and the consumer). It enhances the common good of all (rather than simply promoting the maximization of profit, sometimes with very little regard for the common good).

This ‘economics of affection’ within the eyes of Luo people’s cosmology would provide the basis for a different sociology; a sociology with a seamlessness between political, economic, religions, and cultural domains. It would integrate and bind together, thus forming a collective social consciousness. It transmits nothing but life-sustaining values and conditions.

3.2 The Church and Current Problems of Unsustainability— Some Conversations

The Anglican Church has been immensely influential in the development of the Christian faith in East Africa, both in cultural transformation, and in ecological imperialism. Since its arrival in the 1840s, followed by its subsequent expansion, its political-ecclesial influence in the region coincided with the spread of European imperialism, economic and political hegemony. It can be argued that the Anglican Church remains inseparable from the history of European imperialism. It not only locked disparate human societies together and regulated their environmental wellbeing through invented cultures, but transformed indigenous landscapes and ecologies (see Beinart & Hughes 2007).

It is claimed that there is a close correlation between the expansion of Christianity in colonial Africa and the spread of European industrial civilization. This has led to the increasing and intensifying cultural indictment of colonial Christianity's attitudes to nature. Christianity has played a significant role in nurturing the transition of African societies from a pre-modern to a modern perspective, and the intimate link of ecology to matters of spiritual connections (belonging), economic and political justice must be recognised.

However, the way nature is treated depends on the cultural norms of any society, and such moral affection must go beyond an illustration of how creation evolved. Creation theology must be integrated into society's functioning cultural values, and these are intimately bound up with its moral beliefs and practices (see Magesa 1997; Kirk 2000).

Bryant Myers points to the Church's missional calling to peacebuilding 'pursuing God's mission of restoring and redeeming the creation' (2017:66). Achieving this calling is only conceivable if matters relating to environmental mismanagement are properly addressed.

The majority of Luo people associate two words in relation to Church-led social change: 'civilization' and 'missionary education'. Both remain paradoxical. The theological legitimation of ecological modernism was registered, and structural exploitation through industrial civilization was established, simultaneously. They refer to the time in the 19th century when the foreign

imperialists set themselves a mission to bring civilization to Africa, through religious conversion and cultural conquest. This, the imperialists believed, would make Africans free from their so called 'savage practices' and 'darkest immorality'.

Yet it was this enterprise that led the African people to separation. Separation from the biosphere that sustains them; separation from the cultural universe that has brought them forth; and separation from the great community that birthed them, sustains them, and into which they were all born.

Larry Rasmussen (2013) rightly maintains that 'we are born to belonging, and we die into it'. However, until more recently, this ancient ecological reality which hypothesized or thought of life as a constant round of loss and renewal was alien to some conservative Christian movements. For instance, conservative Anglicans (the legacy of the 1930s East Africa Revival movement) consider that any compromise with the sustained traditions (such as ritual purification, pilgrimage, or any form of unconventional social participation and resilience) should be seen as no different to idolatry (Gatu 2012; Ward & Wild-Wood 2012).

The discussions show that the number of Christians with an interest in traditional wisdom is increasing, compared to the 1970s and 1980s (which is known as the decades of revivalism). Perhaps this growing interest in traditional wisdom comes partly as a reaction against life-threatening consequences of the arising ecological crisis, and partly as a result of growing ecosocial orientation that has emerged in the ecclesial arena.

In the last decade of the 20th century, in response to the crisis of ecological modernism, the worldwide Anglican Communion developed the *Five Marks of Mission*, and these were adopted at the 1998 Lambeth Conference. These proposals were to be used by churches to imagine the dynamics of collective life and identity, and to assess ecological crises and engage with them.

There were critics, for example, Martin Percy described the *Five Marks of Mission* as 'the uncritical top-down imposition' (2017:59). But at least they introduced a broad, diverse, and integrative missional framework, and this can be used to imagine the intersection of ecology, ethics, and cultural mandate.

The invitation to the worldwide Anglican family to address ecological challenges through the *Five Marks of Mission* should be treated as a pioneering missional discourse. It calls the church to assess its relevance to ecological concerns. It also provides a cosmic foundation to the conversation on sustainability, through insights of ecological wisdom embedded in the Bible and even in the hosting cultural traditions of abundant life.

Other contemporary Anglican theologians call for even more critical thinking. One of our theological respondents Dr George Okoth (now the Anglican Bishop of Mara) commented that:

As an Anglican theologian, I would say that all Christians should be environmentalists: by standing against the destruction of the environment, and by blowing the whistle on any technological enterprise that might have detrimental environmental side effects in their communities...Of course, this will only be possible if we change our theological training, which stipulates that "this world is not our home and thus we are just passing through". This only promotes passivity, instead of responsibility to take care of the environment. This world is definitely our home; God has placed us here for now, and hence we need to make every effort to safeguard the integrity of the planet Earth. In fact, by doing so, we will be able to have clean air to breathe; produce enough food, clean water to drink; and help curb diseases (see Fieldwork II).

This comment has three important points.

1. At the moment, there is no collective example of theology-led ecological reform.
2. Existing theological curriculums need to be reviewed.
3. A more integrative form of ecotheology (and a different way of thinking theologically) is needed to inspire people to strive to sustain their common good.

Unfortunately, until recently, ecological concerns have often been treated as a secular phenomenon to which the faith community has paid little or no regard. As one clergyman Peter Mkengi contributed: 'To integrate ecology into faith, I think that it should be incorporated into our theological curriculum' (Mkengi 2016).

Dr Okoth concluded by calling for 'the re-interpretation of controversial passages such as Genesis 1:26' in the light of sustainable development and conservation. Okoth recognises that development without sustainable means of conservation can easily lead to exploitation or to the abuse of creation's integrity.

Commenting on the same subject during our participant observation, Graham McKay, of St John's University, states:

I believe the root cause of environmental degradation and overexploitation of natural resources is greed and self-centredness. While this is true of large organisations such as multinationals and governments, we should not only focus on them. It is also true of individuals from corrupt politicians and business people – right down to poor village people. It is amazing the extent to which even individuals will simply go out and rape the countryside (even parts of it that they have no right to), for their own benefit; and without any concern for the effects their action may have (in the short or long term) on the environment and on other people. Naked greed and self-interest is a powerful force of destruction and the Bible defines this as the essence of sin (G. McKay, 2016).

The progenitors of ecological exploitation are a combination of industrial civilization, structural economic exploitation, adversarial missional-theological ethics, and a desire for tangible success. While Tanzania's environment is supposed to be protected by law, in reality no-one enforces this, especially in those unreserved areas.

In McKay's view, this gap has allowed, for example, individuals to continue to fell trees for domestic or commercial purposes. This is despite the fact that these do not belong to them, and without regard for the consequent erosion and culminate impact on rainfall. Looking at malpractice by government agencies and large corporations, McKay noted how greed often led to the exploitation of the environment and resources, causing vast and rapid damage.

So how might the contemporary church and ecotheology engage with the increasing problems of ecological disassociation missionally? Varied proposals have been put forward in response to this question, with varied frameworks and proposed ethical constraints. However, there is still concern about what the faithful community actually needs in this increasingly challenging situation.

One of the most hopeful ethical-theological alternatives that was first suggested in 1963 by Anglican missiologist John V Taylor. This was said more recently by Kenyan ecotheologian Loreen Maseno (2011:125-138): it is to 'retain a mythologically grounded sense of sacred in nature' for socio-ecological purposes in communities within Africa. These myths are arguably more immeasurable and integrative than invented abstract concepts and rational thoughts, and might encourage healthy co-existence among the community of creation.

The actions of retaining, excavating, and looking for sacred meanings below the obvious surface, can promote a practising assumption that ‘sacred’ is everywhere. It is in each being, in the biosphere that sustains us, in the cultural universe that has brought us forth, in the creative energy of people, language and memory. More prominently, and in contrast to conventional theology, ‘sacred’ is not limited to one place.

The Anglican Church has over five million followers, spread across Tanzania’s 31 political regions. In Tanzania, from the evangelical Anglican perspective, many senior pastors and theologians feel that their contribution to creating ‘mutually enhancing maps of meaning’ should be in the congregational arena, via the traditions of ministry and parochialism.

Some would see this as ‘legitimate ecclesial claim’. But other Anglican ecclesiologists who are engaged in ecclesiological investigations (such as Martin Percy) would prefer to see the church engaging the community more integrally, critically and constructively.

Percy (2017) notes that ‘the heart of ecclesia labour’ is deeply infused with ‘sociological and anthropological lenses’. The Gospel must embody a well-thought through theology of mission that is ecosocially-oriented, and responds to the secularizing cultures that shape our contemporary world – however it is communicated (Percy 2017:132).

Percy calls upon theologians to ‘dig and excavate’, to look for meanings below the surface (cf reflective sociology of Pierre Bourdieu, & cultural theology of Katherine Tanner). This involves searching for hidden linkages, and the underlying body of rules or patterned order which may exist. Percy refers to this theological digging as discovering ‘ecclesial DNA’: the hidden codes that programme behaviour, reflexes, bodily identity and overall health (2017:131).

For Percy, ecclesial theology is like anthropology, and it is not a matter of finding one agreement, but meaningful interpretations, faithful to their subject, landscapes, and ecologies. In theology and anthropology both practice engagement, and both are inherently relational discourses and practices, born of hybridity, not purity (p.131). But how do we change from purity-based theologizing to hybridity?

To answer this within global Anglicanism, Percy suggests that, ‘the church needs to recover its capacity to read culture more deeply, in order to understand the impact this has on its own mission and ministry’ (p.133).

As John Swinton, practical theologian puts it, ‘the knowledge of God [which] is necessarily experiential, practical, and transformative; should seek to describe and redescribe the world in order that the practices of Christians can remain true to the practices of God in, to, and for the world’ (Swinton 2012:16-17). Percy suggests that only by doing this can the re-charting of the church be done.

The mission and ministry of the church is not about preserving a presence in the form of individual life, neither is it about being present in peripheral places. The church is called to do more than that. Taking the gospel to the whole world (or taking Christology integrally) involves engaging complex forces of human civilization, and assessing and evaluating the currents and contours of social change that have brought the church to its current place of bewilderment.

Some Anglican clergy and leaders have begun to reconsider the scope of Christology and the relevance of the church to ecological concerns in Tanzania. When speaking of the relevance of Christian faith in ecological reformation, one of the participants (who has an Episcopalian role in Mara Region) admitted that ecological problems are deeply ethical problems. To address these problems, he said, means being informed by ecological insights and motivated by strong Christian ecotheological ethics. Reflecting on the weight given to ecological concerns, this participant (among the Tanzanian House of Bishops), revealed that the Anglican Church of Tanzania has not grasped how to counter the forces of environmental degradation that have pushed them to the brink (at the time of our conversation in July 2015). He writes:

Despite the fact that we have a broad role for the care of environment and to educate people about sustainable farming methodology, planting trees, protecting sources of water, stopping over-population, overgrazing, and disproving destructive industrialization, it is sad to confess that nobody is seriously talking about the 1998 and 2008 Lambeth Conference resolution that the Fifth Mark of Mission is safeguarding the environment... The church has not come to its senses for the care of creation that is why it is quiet. This urgent concern has not been discussed at the Bishops’ house, it has never been discussed since I became a Bishop in 2010.

It is discouraging to hear that the House of Bishops has not taken enough action toward embedding environmental mission, although it is hoped that they will

be helped to address this. The consequence of no action is continuing ecological disassociation. Failing to invest in deeper ecotheological education, is also a lack of engagement by the church with the complex forces of globalization that shape our contemporary world. Percy provocatively suggests that, ‘if the church continues to be dominated and led by the organizational activists [bureaucrats], it will become more gathered, less institutional, and therefore narrower and smaller’ (Percy 2017:159).

Contemporary ecological problems are intrinsically ethical issues. The church can only lead in this area if it is willing to become less dominating, less exclusionary in its ecclesiality, and if it has a strong intellectual presence in the public sustainability sphere. Public morality and responses to ecological problems today should be taken seriously by Christian churches and other religions, not just shaped by civil society and policy makers alone. This is true for how to *adapt* to a changing biosphere, as much as it is for how to *prevent* it.

Understanding religious ecology and climate change is complex. The answers are far from simple or unified. Rather, they require a deep level of discernment and critical reflection on nature, religion, society. Their intersection has to be interpreted in each new age; and in a spirit of coherent faithfulness and flourishing. To an extent, the need for such an integrated approach to ecoeducation and public spirituality has been growing worldwide (Hallman 2009). If, the transcending reality-God is both ‘creator and saviour’ as Sallie McFague argues in *A New Climate for Theology* (2008:79), then the church in Tanzania must consider becoming more participative, more integrative theologically and more creation-care-oriented in its ecclesiological analyses.

A new era of integrated mission and critical engagement with the complex forces of ecological modernization that shape our contemporary world is emerging in some local Anglican dioceses as an attempt, to address some of the most pressing issues and challenges in sustainability. In an attempt to combat ecological challenges in the Dodoma region, the Diocese of Central Tanganyika (DCT), has in the recent years (2015-18) taken some moves towards environmental mission and sustainability. As an initiative, an annual clergy conference has begun to extend the conversation to environmental mission and sustainability. It aims to resource

and equip clergy with an integrated missional education. They then work within their own environments, but also those of the diocese and entire faith community around Dodoma, to reconsider the weights of ecological challenges and befriend their deep traditions of earth-caring and sustainability.

In July 2016 the DCT's July 2016 Clergy Conference (in which the researcher participated) brought together more than 350 clergy. They reflected on the central theme: '*Care for the Environment & Practice of Sustainable Agriculture*'. The conference was presided over by the Rt. Rev. Dr Dickson Chilongani of DCT with Rev Dr Kathy Grieb, as keynote conference speaker. As a distinguished Professor of Biblical Interpretation at Virginia Theological Seminary (USA), Grieb pulled together a wide array of ecological insights in the Bible to show that any civilization that disintegrates the world, land, and people; or separates soil conservation and sustainable agriculture must be denounced. She argued that in biblical tradition, ecologies are invariably tied up with people's livelihoods. These are themselves always understood and maintained in terms of cultural ethics, regulations, traditions and moral knowledge about sustainable flourishing and their relationship with nature.

This agrarian-oriented biblical thinking and biblical ecology can be seen as according with other emerging agrarian readings of the Bible. For example, Ellen F. Davis's book *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture* similarly examines theology and the ethics of land use within the parameters of biblical ecology. At the end of this three-day conference, three missional perspectives were revitalized. These are: (1) *the world, land, soil, and the rest of the creation are not only holy, but have a sanctified entity as God himself*; (2) *the mission of the church of God is to evangelize, not only the humanity, but the whole of the 'groaning' creation (Rom 8:35ff) and*; (3) *Soil conservation and sustainable agriculture are integral to the ministry of salvation and social sustainability*.

These perspectives were then translated into specific practical commitments: (1) To teach eco-theology and cosmic sustainability through worship and Bible study; and to change the ecology of our mind for an integrated green revolution in DCT; (2) To establish a Diocesan demonstration farm that will equip our parishioners with sustainable knowledge about conservation and

sustainable agriculture; (3) To expand the sustainable agriculture and environmental care training in our parishes through the directorate of Development services; (4) To mediate the relationship between food sovereignty, Sabbath and poverty alleviation among our parishes by 2020; (5) To motivate the expansion of micro-financing groups in our parishes for economic improvement and integrated spirituality; (6) To insist upon and implement tree planting: that is to say, each Parish must plant not less than 100 new trees before 2020; (7) To ensure that every Parish plans and implements ‘rain water harvest’ for domestic use and for their environmental conservation; (8) To become a role model to our parishes by adopting environmentally-friendly conservation and enhancing sustainable agriculture.

Sustainability-based conversations and initiatives such as DCT annual clergy conferences create a space for rethinking mission ecotheologically. Such integrated endeavours provide both the nurturing resources required for creating holistic living ethics, and a working methodology through which the people (i.e. DCT family) will engage critically in reconstructing practical webs for life-enhancing hopes and ethics.

3.3 Reconstructing Ecological Morality: Nearly Oral Opinions

Peter Beyer (2011) has inquired, ‘Who shall speak for the Environment?’ The simple answer to this question must be: *every person*, because every person is born to ‘belonging’ and is divinely ordained to participate in creating mutually enhancing life connections and relationships. The term ‘participate’ is not an adoption of modern institutional frameworks to improve the lot of the inferior. Rather, it is being embedded in a cosmic community. To ‘participate is concerned not just with the decision about who should join in, when and under what conditions, or about how much power they should be given. Rather, it is primarily, ‘about relationships between peoples and their natural environments’ (Antonio 1994:230).

In any society, personal or collective communication will operate in various ways. It is not possible for each person to be talking to everyone else about everything at the same time. Therefore structuring social contexts to create ecological morality becomes a necessary. For example, Peter Beyer’s study argues

that there are two social domains that are important for conversations on ecological ethics and communal practices of sustainability. Beyer suggests that these are: *religious* systems and *secular* systems (particularly the secular systems for economy, state, science, and others). First and foremost, in Beyer's view, is 'the religious system' that has arisen historically.

'At its core,' Beyer claims, a 'religious system is a type of communication that one can style in various ways, for instance, religious practices or religious ritual, but which...could be called communication with supra and super-empirical entities that are deemed to be the agents for the imparting of information and the understanding of human efforts to communicate with them' (Beyer 2011:24).

Religious communication with mysterious reality-God has existed throughout, say, Luo community's religious and cultural life. Such religious systems of communication, imperfect as it is, is the subject matter to understanding religion, cultural ethics, and ecology of their places (Iiffe 1979; Ogot 1979). Its moral purpose among other things, 'is to render access to a level of reality more fundamental than any other, and indeed a level that is the condition for the possibility of all of reality, including human and social reality' (Beyer:24).

The problem is that current religious systems and secular systems are ecologically flawed. They lack an understanding of what binds humankind to all that has gone before, to that which surrounds, sustains, and brought humankind and the whole creation forth. Neither respects what the Anglican's *Fifth Mark of Mission* calls 'the integrity of creation' or what Larry Rasmussen has simply called 'aboriginal belonging'.

Rasmussen identifies humankind as 'biocommunal and geocommunal creatures *by nature*' who cannot flourish outside the bonding matrix of aboriginal material kinship, relationship and belonging. For 'nothing is itself without everything else' (Rasmussen 2013:17, 22). The notion that 'nothing is, without the other' is indeed the way of 'covenant' (the biblical term for relational living and interdependence: between God and Earth, between God and humankind, between human kind and God and the Earth). The way of covenantal relationship, for better and worse (see Jonathan Burnside's *God, Justice, and Society*, 2011), establishes relationally grounded order, sustains creation community as we now know it, and

provides the way things are and should be structured in the sustainability arena. As Rasmussen concludes, ‘there is no life apart from the geological, biological, ecological, and cosmic processes that give life birth and sustain it’ (p.17).

Rasmussen’s use of the phrase ‘aboriginal belonging’ means ‘indigenous notion of belonging’. It is uncommon in theological discourse, particularly among the conventional Western cultures (which until recently denied any workability of ‘aboriginal’ ecology). Western theology offered in its place dualistic and adversarial theologies that unfortunately became disconnected from ecological relationships. Most aboriginal or indigenous ecologies (incomplete and informal as they are) are ecologically aware or intuitively able to recognise that the ecosphere sustains us, ‘is larger *in time* (it was here before us we were), larger in *inclusiveness* (we are embedded within it) *more complexly* organised, and has greater *diversity*’ (Rasmussen 2013:24). The fact that an indigenous religion has not previously been incorporated into one societal system alongside others, means that it is a challenge to do this in society today.

Several of our participants consider it vital to promote a form of integrating life and a way of thinking that will inspire people to work for the common good. One participant (now Secretary General of the Anglican Church of Tanzania) commented: ‘the only way out of ecological problems in Tanzania is for our masses to return to their roots and respect our traditional values of handling our environment’. He added that, there should be a theological approach which values our traditional way of life (Mecka Ogunde 2016).

Another participant, Rev Jairo Nyahongo, commented that any response to the ongoing ecological problems should be aimed at helping people to recognise the detrimental impact of their activities on the environment. ‘I would urge them, and indeed the government, to find alternative ways of using the Earth's resources (renewable energy and bio-diversity), so as to serve and keep God's creation as He intended in creation.’

Similarly Robert Heaney, Anglican theologian and educator, calls for an even more critical and constructive theological education. He suggests that nothing other than a radically changed outlook on ecclesiology of life is needed: the way

life is lived, and the way participation in the conversation around ecological ethics and communal practices occurs:

I think theologians (what kind of theologian we are thinking about of course is a key question) can influence the church, education and society. Theologians need to learn from and educate the church – make the connections between environmental issues and faith. They need to contend for it being part of church and seminary curricula and they need to connect the church with groups in society already ahead of the church in this area. All of that presupposes theological commitment that it is God that is the agent of God's mission. (Heaney, correspondence, 15th June, 2016).

Heaney's concern is to promote a form of theological life, and a way of thinking, that can inspire the faith community to work for the common good and sustainable integration: through theological education, ecological ethics and experiential practices. Heaney foresees a theological challenge to the destructive perspectives on lifestyle, which can guide the church towards ecologically-grounded spirituality, life practices, hope, love, and an integrated sense of ecosocial justice.

Several participants remarked that what is missing 'is the learning component about ecological morality' and that 'the church must reach to the ground level of its organization with new ways of understanding consequences of ecological crisis, while at the same time encouraging an ecological reformation of the Christian tradition and of its hosting society as whole' (cf Fieldwork Report II). These responses indicate how integrated religious ethics should contribute to the present search for ecological sustainability. They illustrate the need to re-orientate: to an integrative dynamic of ecoeducation and ecological morality.

This was first raised by Christian ecotherapist Howard Clinebell's *Ecotherapy: healing ourselves, healing the earth* (1996). He argues that theologians (and specifically clergy) should be involved in this field. The faith community has an obligation to develop informative and integrative moral ethics, to shed light on the spiritual and ethical roots of the ecojustice crisis. Clinebell argues that to connect with the deep ecospirituality grounded in the earth, we must be illuminated or filled with 'cosmic wisdom' (sometimes referred to as the 'Cosmic Christ'). This spiritual wisdom is shared by many native spiritualities. It is described variously in the world's major religions, and appears to be fundamental to Clinebell's ecotherapy. Clinebell concludes, 'this ancient wisdom honours the earth, the sacredness of life, the human-earth bond, sexuality and women' (1996:115). Clinebell argues that returning to this 'Cosmic Christ' wisdom is

essential to heal the spiritual causes of violence against the earth and its people (particularly the oppressed). The crisis is likely to deepen unless the integration between indigenous ecoeducation and ethical-theological discourses in the South and North is made more viable (Beyer 2011).

The book *Christian Faith and the Earth* suggests that Christian ecotheology should be seen 'as an attempt to retrieve the ecological wisdom embedded in the Christian tradition and as a critical response to ecological destruction and environmental injustices' (Conradie, et al 2014,p.1-2). It is suggested that ecotheology may enable the church to participate in an ecological transformation of destructive economic modes of production and cultural patterns of consumption, and at the same time, renew and reform the church in the light of other wisdom traditions.

The impact of missionary teaching and European imperialism has significantly contributed to escalating forms of disconnections, in particular, creating the artificial Western culture: namely, technologizing culture. Industrialization has brought in its path ecological, cultural, and moral desecration, and it has generated a plethora of other problems, such as ethnic and political profiling.

Gare (2010) is surely right to point out that modernist forms of technology (particularly as applied to agriculture), have been associated with the concentration of economic power through the mechanisation of farming and industrialised processing. This has excluded and impoverished much of humanity, and has damaged local and global ecosystems. The ecosocial chaos from technologizing culture has permeated all indigenous culture and religion. This includes practices and traditions expressing deep assumptions of collective sustainability.

The concern is that what shapes the missional priorities of much of ecclesial life in the Church of Tanzania today has not been considered appropriately. Nor is it confident in the 'earthing of heavens' (to borrow Jones' phrase). It lacks earth-honouring faith and spiritual rootedness. It does not critically or constructively engage with the complex forces of industrial civilization. This has brought ecological society and humanity's hopes to our current catastrophic position. 'A church that easily becomes culturally-relative or culturally-resistant' leads to

‘disorientation’. It loses its identity and moorings. It further compounds its problems by ‘making deficient maps and conversations around the very territories and seas that it seeks to navigate’ (Percy 2017:132).

For the church to engage critically with the ecological crisis, a new map of missional theology has to be discovered, to promote the common good of the community. Integrated forms of thinking are required to reimagine the relationship between humanity and nature, and between individuals and their ecological societies. Only then can it offer a transformative way for people to live: so that the integrity of future generations and their biosphere are not compromised.

Undertaking this ground-breaking endeavour will require a strong form of theologically-led missiology. This theology is not to be rooted in dominant theological traditions or in adversarial scientific culture. As research has shown (and Percy suggests), it can be rooted in wisdom traditions, contemplation and conversation. An emerging missionally-led ecotheology can provide the basis for a different ecclesiology, and a different vision: a new kind of ecosocial ethics and political democracy.

Christianity, modern ecological sciences, and indigenous cosmic wisdom are overlapping identities in contemporary Luo universe. Their overlapping aspects and moral ecology can be used to rethink and enrich our present search for creating mutually enhancing theology of ecology and sustainability. Working out how these sources can be integrated into a comprehensive missional-theological outlook will require the help of ecotheologians (Clinebell 1996). They can be given the dual task of developing a public theology of ecology. This would be grounded in the particularities of the Christian faith on the one hand, but also developed on an ‘hybridized theology’ which is compatible to moral traditions of sustainability. One of the finest attempt on how this ecotheology’s dual responsibility might be approached is a landmark of essays in C. Deane-Drummond and H. Bedford-Strohm’s 2011 volume: *Religion and Ecology in the Public Sphere*.

3.4 Conclusion

One way to embed ecological morality is to value old traditions of abundant life. Moral traditions of sustainability and increased interdisciplinary engagement in ecological issues can be connected. There is a correlation between orality and literacy on ecological morality. This can direct us to a mutually-enhancing and integrated state. If the Church is to move towards environmentally-grounded mission, then it will have to accept the political and moral components of social regulation that come with it.

The relationship between indigenous traditions and ecological ethics is beginning to be understood. More needs to be learnt, particularly on faith-based ecological spirituality and sustainability. This qualitative study shows the divide between ecological morality and an adversarial ecclesiality. The purpose of *religious* morality (in contrast to secular systems) should be to recognise the God-given imperative to healthy living practices; and ‘to render access to a level of reality more fundamental than any other – a level that is the condition for the possibility of all of authentic reality, including human and social reality’ (Beyer 2011).

There is general agreement that we are now facing a planetary crisis, with climate change and the destruction of ecosystems. Human civilization is at a radical turning point, and we need a more just and ecologically-friendly economic, political systems, and spiritual praxis. Reconstructing and redeeming the scope of relationship between these constituent elements of social order including the depth of our embeddedness in nature is fundamental in creating a cultural society that wove the intersection of ecology, economy, and moral ethics into its ecology of daily life.

In an age of twisted values and disordered economic-ethical identity, a fundamentally different cultural society is urgently needed to direct our escape from the crisis of disintegration, to redeem us from our destructive civilizations to the commonwealth of truth and light that sustains. This fundamentally-different cultural society is arguably required for the renewal and regrowth, because the negative effects of industrialism and adversarial theological ethics can go no further. The direction of our move toward this alternative society depends on our

theological, political, technological and cultural choices. As we have examined thus far, the possibility that cultural societies such as Luo, can navigate a fundamentally different society—a different society with a moral ecology powerful enough to shape and correct their mainstream civilization in favour of values that support both human dignity and ecological wellbeing—depends on the strengths of their cultural synthesis. Chapter 5 will discuss this hypothesis at length from the perspective of Luo ecotheology.

Chapter Four

Progress or Despair? Civilizing Missions and Luo Social Change

4.0 Introduction

The study of the history of social change is actually an assessment of the economics of affection, cultural morality and changes of an area. In this chapter the hypothesis is that the impact of colonial missionary civilization in the 19th-20th century on the Luo people was predicated on the assumption of European cultural and religious superiority; and that has led to disordered identity, ecological disconnection, and competitive social modernization. Such fundamental change in their cultural notion of sustainability is arguably the precursors of the core ecological-ethical problems Luo people now facing.

In order to examine and evaluate this assumption, the following chapter considers the works of John V. Taylor (1963) and Kwame Bediako (1992); who argue that “socio-cultural change” in colonial Africa was inflicted upon tribal societies through a top-down imperialism, and that many social changes were formalised through colonial civilization and theological hegemony (see also, Mpanya 1992; Kirk 2000; Kaoma 2013). Curiously, other studies (Shorter 1977, 1998, 2006, 2007; Hull 1980; Isichei 1995; Parratt 1995, 1997; Etherington 2005) have revealed that that the medium of “civilizing missions”, for example, through evangelization or Bible translation, altered not only indigenous spirituality, but impregnated the entire sociology and cosmology of African life. Thus, in *Legitimacy and the State in Twentieth-Century Africa* (1993) cultural critic Terence Ranger could not find better word for describing the spread of colonial European economic, political hegemony, and Christianity in Africa other than what he calls the ‘invention of culture.’

Through this cultural invention and mission-based civilization, indigenous landscapes and ecologies were transformed and confused. In pondering what appears to be the confused meaning of present development and social ecology, Niall Ferguson (2011) warns that colonial Western civilization should not be misunderstood as a single value system; but ought to be seen as a collection of principalities and powers that invaded, dominated, and locked disparate human

societies together over the last 500 years (see also Beinart & Lotte 2007). Ferguson went on to argue in that breathtaking book *Civilization* that Western conquest of other cultures was a collection of interrelated principalities and powers which he called “the six killer applications of western power”, namely: competition, science, property rights, medicine, the consumer society, and the work ethic. These, he argues, provided both a moral framework and a mode of activity that held together the dynamic, but potentially unstable, society it created (Ferguson 2011:1-18).

While each of these colonial principalities deserve full examination, this chapter concentrates initially on mission education, conversion and medicine as the factors that shaped Luo social relations, environmental change, and attitude towards nature. In a preliminary way, the chapter will also suggest how contemporary mission-ecothology might contribute to our present search for ecological sustainability that will be dealt with more fully later. The central argument is that (from the viewpoint of Luo people) colonial missionaries’ emphasis on the individual (rather than on the collectivity of social consciousness) and their view that individual life could be separated into ‘spiritual’ and ‘secular’, were intrinsically counter to traditional ecologies which were already generative in the pre-colonial universe. Therefore, the ecological implications of missionary Christianity cannot be studied meaningfully without revisiting the spirituality of the 19th-century Protestant mission; which not only regarded these six ‘killer’ applications of Western power as transcendentally given, but also legitimized their practices both theologically, educationally and even ecclesiologically.

4.1 How Did Colonial Competition and Social Change Begin in Tanzania?

This question may be hypothesized both politically, economically and missiologically, as we shall see below.

4.1.1 The Political and Religio-Economic Origins of Our Time

The political and economic origins of colonial competition in Tanzania began when Portuguese King Manuel commanded Vasco da Gama “to make discoveries and go in search of spices”, a mission that began to tilt the whole world westwards (Ferguson 2011:33). The arrival of Da Gama, his fellow Portuguese sailors and a few missionaries, in Eastern Africa in April 1498, “was surely the

fierce competition that drove the Age of Exploration” and later colonialism (Mugambi 2002; Ferguson 2011; Kanyandago 2011). The spirit of competition together with a centralization of both political, economic, and religious life created the launch-pad for both capitalism and western imperialism (Ferguson 2011:13).

The ‘spice race’ is a primary example of what propelled Europeans to seek further opportunities to exploit distant lands, and that allowed European imperialism to dominate the world for the better part of the last 500 years (Beinart & Hughes 2007). Tanzanian missiologist Laurenti Magesa (2002:95) characterizes five attitudes of the colonial powers towards traditional culture: derision, exclusion, imposition, passivity and individualism. These imperialist attitudes were not the creation of missionaries *per se*, but were often unconsciously carried with them, causing them to unthinkingly overwrite the traditional moral landscapes and ecologies they encountered (Bujo 1992; Magesa 1997). Political scientists of African studies Patrick Chabal & Jean-Pascal Daloz described “social disorder” in their detailed book *Africa Works* (1999) as a “political instrument,” used for Westernization, something that is still in evidence today, in the implementation of the foreign patrimonial political order upon socially existing systems.

Bevans (1994:158-169) outlines eight common images of the Victorian colonial missionaries. He describes them as; treasure hunter, teacher, prophet, guest, stranger, partner, migrant worker, and ghost. These eight images could have enabled missionary enterprise to communicate God’s transforming love through the power of the cosmic Christ; and to explore the divine treasures embedded in the hosting community’s cultural heritages, especially their myths of origin and the moral traditions that shaped their cosmology and theology of sustainability. Unfortunately, this was far from what actually happened. Instead, pioneering missionaries such as Johann L. Krapf and David Livingstone are seen to compromise not only indigenous traditions of sustainability, but also to negate the vitality of cultural cosmology and morality (Knighton 2005).

Knighton’s study indicates that the impact of colonial missionary civilizations has been hugely transformative; but caused the loss of traditional African cultural cosmology, including their concerns for purity and integration. Missions became a potent agent of social differentiation that often led to a sense of separation; creating groups who not only regarded themselves as different, but also saw themselves as superior to the traditions that had gone before. These

differences were offered sometimes coercively, as a replacement for the ‘inferior’ culture of the colonized (Sibley 2007). As Mary Douglas argues in her book *Purity and Danger* (1966/2002), a central theme at the heart of many traditional African societies, with wide-ranging impact on our attitudes to society, was the concern for ‘purity’ (or the state of being) and cosmological knowledge. Unfortunately, such traditional wisdoms were either demeaned or disregarded, no longer playing a constitutive part in established constituents of the society (church and state). Their variant vision of human flourishing was lost to that of the emerging colonial myth of progress.

N.T. Wright’s *Surprised by Hope* (2007) reflects on the roots and development of the European myth of progress, and how this has shaped the modern human story and accelerated extreme environmental change. While considering modern roots of “the myth of progress” as emanating from modern Western culture and Christianity, Wright sees that:

The myth of progress has deep roots in contemporary western culture, and some of those roots are Christian. The idea that the human project, and indeed the cosmic project, could and would continue to grow and develop, producing unlimited human improvement and marching towards a Utopia goes back to the Renaissance, and was given its decisive push by the 18th-century European Enlightenment (Wright 2007:94).

Wright regards the full flowering of this belief as taking place in Europe in the 19th century; when the combination of scientific and economic advances on the one hand, and democratic freedoms and wider education on the other, produced a strong sense that history was accelerating towards a wonderful goal. According to Wright, this was a dream driven by the assumption that the millennium in which the world would live at peace was just around the corner. So here in light of Wright’s argument, we could arguably say that under this colonial myth of progress, nature was not only seen as a distant land to be discovered, but also to be controlled through mission and discipleship. Or, and for the purposes of this study, the colonial myth of progress might be said to have played a substantial role in the cultivation of the mechanical view of the world—a hubristic view that perceived the material world not as an extended body of God upon which we totally depend, but as a property to be discovered for our exploits. Indeed, ‘instead of dependence on God’s grace,’ Wright argues, the utopian myth of progress imposed on us the destructive belief that, ‘we will become what we have the potential to be by education and hard work’ (Wright 2007:94). Such detrimental hermeneutics and its

equivalent economic theories continue to dominate contemporary human's ambition.

The consensus view is that the planetary crisis now being faced is driving human civilization to a radical point: either to change or to perish. There is a shared understanding that the “transition from a pre-modern to a modern perspective contributed to the development of some novel attitudes to nature” (Andrew Kirk 2000). And the current, “socio-environmental crisis has its origin in the crisis of the economic processes of industrialization in the North and to a much lesser degree in the South” (Brun 1994). But precisely how to respond remains an open question.

Despite the evidence of initial resistance to missionary intrusions (Hull 1980; Kanyandago 1999) the traditional African cosmology is now bruised, modified or even disordered. Indeed, under the ‘myth of progress’, the neglect of the cultural heritages and moral traditions of sustainability has become the rule of the day. Evangelical Christianity has been a major Christian influence in East Africa from the mid-19th century, but it was perhaps not until the 1950s that the practical and moral implications of such negligence began to be realized.

4.1.2 The Church Missionary Society (CMS) and Bible Translation

The Evangelical Anglican Church Missionary Society (CMS) is an important Christian missionary movement that has existed in East Africa since the arrival of Johann Krapf in 1844; which has spread and overseen the rise of Anglican Churches in Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, and so on. It was founded in 1799 as a result of the great Evangelical awakening which existed in Britain since the 1730s. Historians of evangelical religion, such as David Bebbington, regularly apply the term ‘evangelical’ to the churches arising from the Reformation in the 16th and 17th centuries; and notes that there are variations in statements by Evangelicals about what they regard as basic to evangelicalism. However, he concludes, “there is nevertheless a common core that has remained remarkably constant down the centuries; that conversion, activism, biblicism, and crucicentrism, form the defining attributes of Evangelical religion” (Bebbington 1989:4).

The decade beginning in 1844 witnessed the expansion of Evangelical Christianity in modern Tanzania, especially through CMS. Drawing heavily on its founding evangelistic conviction that, it “being a duty highly incumbent upon every

Christian to endeavour to propagate the knowledge of the Gospel among the Heathen” it aimed to achieve that end, especially in Africa and to the East (Ward, Kevin 2000:1). From Krapf’s time onwards, the CMS’s movement has a twofold aspect: one aspect is the preaching of the gospel as witness, and the other is the gathering out of the ‘Ecclesia’, the visible church of God (Rosenthal 2003; Stock 1989). To varying degrees, these aspects have persisted throughout the life of the Anglican Church in Tanzania.

Bible translation was a priority of CMS’s evangelistic thrust, which recognised the importance of making copies of the gospel available in local languages for the use of future converts Clarke (1963). Krapf spent 30 years in East Africa translating the New Testament Bible into Swahili, developing a Swahili dictionary and grammar (cf. Maseno 2016; Okello 2002). Swahili developed as the *lingua franca* of Eastern Africa (Mugambi 2002:10). Writing in 1994, historian Adrian Hastings described those years as the decisive time when several CMS Bible translation projects were evolving all over Africa. For instance, J.F. Schön had a similar project for Hausa and Igbo, while Samuel Crowther was at work on the Yoruba New Testament. However, such Bible translations came to overwrite indigenous culture within the colonial cultural setting. Hastings comments further on the implications of Bible translation in Africa:

What was already beginning to make a decisive difference to Africa by 1850 was the diffusion of copies of the New Testament, of hymn-books, prayer-books, and what have you (including, quite soon, a series of versions of *Pilgrim’s Progress*) in a number of important languages...this beginning to a popular literature would provide not only a tool for each future wave of missionaries to use and extend, but also, far less predictably, an autonomous instrument of Christianization of immense authority, at once Western and native (1994:243).

The Bible became the autonomous vehicle of social modernization. For Hastings, “Modernization goes with reading, and reading meant acculturation into the world of Christian literature and ideas” (1994:243). The indigenous African experiential narrative was seen to be little more than darkness that needed to be enlightened by the special gift of missionary knowledge.(Bevans 1994; Freire 1996; Maseno 2016). By 1899, CMS had become the largest Anglican missionary agency in terms of “resources, personnel, and influence” (Ward 2000:2) and this expansion was accompanied by the translation of the Bible into local languages. This explosive growth can be seen numerically and chronologically. The Anglican

Church in East Africa rose from 225,000 in 1914 to 400,000 in 1938. The Catholics claimed over a million converts at that time and other Protestant denominations were significantly present (Bell 1964:147). Between 1938 and 2010, Anglicanism in East Africa had become the second major area of its flourishing worldwide, but this growth raised several problems (Mung'ong'o & Matonya 2013; Wells 2011).

Ward states that throughout the 19th century “CMS work turned out to be primarily in areas of British colonial power; indeed often their very presence was instrumental in making those areas British” (Ward 2000:23). The colonial CMS missionaries relied to some extent on the colonial government to do their work, and the colonial government was given some credibility and legitimacy by the work of CMS in evangelism. New studies on globalization by missiologist Bryant Myers (2017:3-14) has found that Victorian evangelical missionaries “were critical in promoting religious liberty, mass education, most colonial reforms, and the rule of law, including legal protection for nonwhites” (p.6). Contrary to Myers’s findings, a study conducted a decade ago by Beinart and Hughes (2007), revealed that such Victorian Christian convictions were barely in evidence in challenging European imperialism about their unethical extraction of natural resources.

Creating and promoting religious liberty and the rule of law is not new. Empires often imposed their culture and laws on the people they conquered. All of the major imperial powers and religions extended their domination by inviting or coercing conversion to their beliefs or the rule of law, simply because the laws were made for the guidance of the wise and the restrict obedience of fools. Consider, for example, some of the colonial cultures and laws that were created in Britain as part of the British Empire’s national state process, including its established Church. Because of such collusion with British colonialism, CMS in the 19th-century (and even in the first half of the 20th-century) largely paid little concern to restraining the Empire’s undemocratic transformation of indigenous landscapes and ecologies. The exception in the 1930s was Archdeacon Owen (as shall shortly see).

This partnership of CMS with the various aspects of colonialism may be regarded as the precursor of colonial globalization as we now know it. Some consider the work of CMS in East Africa as crucial to the global spread of Anglicanism (Wells 2011), but the vitality of the church cannot be summarised only in census figures. It must not be examined in terms of how the church has maintained its colonial *replicas*, but in terms of how much it has assumed its

responsibility and relevance within its own community. For example, how it has communicated the ecological wisdom embedded in the Bible, and promoted theologically informed debate and diversity at all levels of socio-ecological wellbeing. This was precisely the approach that Archdeacon Owen pioneered in the 1930s, one that had him characterized by the colonial government in Kenya as anti-Western civilization.

4.1.3 Bible Translation as Translated Identity and Ecologies

The experience of God through the Bible may be described as a transcending account of “Earth-honouring God-talk” (Rasmussen 2013). This definition presupposes both a close relationship between God’s people and God’s land, and funding an appreciation of the life-giving Earth as home. Paradoxically, the ‘God-talk’ that was introduced to African (Luo) community (which ascended into formative status through Bible translation) mediated new way(s) of experiencing earth-honouring God-talk. While in traditional Luo cosmology ‘to be at home’ is to be in relation with life-giving earth and transcendence; according to colonial Bible teachers, ‘to be at home’ we needed to have a translated image of earth-honouring God-talk, in addition to disconnection from home, from each other, and from the natural world which brought us forth (Mboya 1965/1997).

The aim of this section is to critique the disconnected view of the world that was built into the foundations of colonial missionary civilization, Bible translation, and mission education as we know them. The triumph of our disconnection from home, and clear evidence in the development of ideological spirituality, arose into prominence at the translation of the Bible into Dholuo (Luo language) in the 1930s. This historic event, marked the beginning of the end of Luo oral cosmology and “oral theology” to use John Pobee’s phrase. It became a moral framework and a viable instrument of imperialism, used to substitute Luo cultural ethics by Western written cultures. Through Sunday school programmes, catechetical classes and in ordination training, Bible teachers strongly warned against ever trusting traditional cultural earth-honouring spirituality. Instead, such traditions were seen as at best unnecessary, and at worst dangerous and unscriptural. This imperialistic rejection of cultural values failed to recognize and to embrace the whole drama of ecological interdependence that was to be found in indigenous cosmologies.

Some African scholars such as Musa W. Dube (Botswana) consider colonial Bible translation as a container of Western imperialism that has been significantly implicated in the promotion of patriarchy, modernization, and cultural subjugation. As such, Bible translation became the basis for an arrogant anthropocentrism and cultural climate change, as Dube writes:

When one turns to postcolonial contexts and subjects, one finds that Bible translation has been heavily involved and implicated in promoting both patriarchal and imperial ideology. Consequently, modern imperialism and colonialism were characterized by a massive marketing of...massive translation projects; that is, translating the colonized to become subjects of the empire. This involved the translation of economic, political, cultural and social structures of the colonized for the interests of western empires. Biblical translation was an essential aspect of this larger agenda(Dube 2016:170).

Dube's observation applies to the situation in Tanzania and among the Luo people in particular, where the effect of Bible translation and teaching promoted humankind as standing above other beings, and lords over their life and wellbeing. Bible translation could have been used as an opportunity to link the interdependence between humanity, the biosphere that sustains our wellbeing, and the universe that brought us forth under God. Instead, it was simply quaint and exclusionary (Rasmussen 2013). Instead of embracing sustained cultural drama relating to ecological civilization and earth-honouring faith traditions, people were given a spiritual ideology and economic instruments with which to dominate the world and the universe of faiths.

R.G. Bratcher (1995:55) describes the task of the Bible translators as "threefold: to determine the form of the original text, to ascertain the meaning of the original text, and to transfer the meaning to the target language in such a way that the readers of the translation understand it as did the readers of the original". Bratcher's threefold approach is promising, though not without difficulties. The original intended audience had complete familiarity with the context, geography and culture of the text. In comparison, the contemporary reader is disadvantaged by being unfamiliar with these and of relying upon the translated meaning. Commenting on Bratcher's definition, Musa Dube (2016:168) argued that the translators are required, above everything else, to be faithful to the meaning and impact of the original text, and to translate the whole text and nothing but the text. Although pioneer missionaries like Johann Krapf, who first translated the English Bible into KiSwahili, had the required qualifications for the job, there is scholarly evidence that Bible translation has been implicated in promoting imperial ideology.

Michael Kirwen's study of the Luo cultural traditions of marriage and spirituality is a case in point. According to Kirwen: "the Good News of Christianity could only be heard and accepted by Africans in terms of the truths taught by their creation stories" (Kirwen 1987:22). Paddy Musama (2010:87) argued that the Bible was translated into a language that does not inhabit the deeper empirical experiences of its adherents, because Kiswahili is a lingua franca, not a native tongue. In other words, the ecology of the Bible cannot be understood meaningfully outside the social context which intuited its cosmological values; nor can the Bible message be meaningfully understood without integrating its texts implicitly and explicitly into actual forces of life within their cultural setting. Without such integration, the result in Musa Dube's words is "a translated African people" or 'a translated subject' that will never become the original subject.

To address this requires, in Laurenti Magesa's words, a move beyond the "privatized" biblical meaning in Africa (Magesa as cited in Musana 2010:87); but to do so is neither impossible nor simple. It requires a recognition that missionary enterprise was not simply about conversion to a 'neutral' Christianity, but to a model of Christianity imbued with colonial values. As Ngugi wa Thiong'o records in his book *Decolonizing the Mind* (1986), the Bible became an instrument of conquest that dominated the economic, political, cultural and spiritual wellbeing of Africa.

The estrangement caused by Bible translation and other imported traditions is reminiscent of the "Forgetting Tree": a tree around which Tanzanian slaves were led as they journeyed into captivity. On each turn, they were told to recite:

You will forget your land.
 You will forget your village.
 You will forget your people.
 You will forget your wife.
 You will forget your sons.
 You will forget your daughters.
 You will forget your name.
 You now belong to your master. You have no memory but nothing to forget or lose
 ... Your past life must be gone (Geldof 2005:125).

African theologian, A. O. Mojola, argues that this separation of memory and identity prevails with biblical translation and hermeneutics, and claims that "Postcolonial study of Bible translation takes it as an axiom that has much more to do with 'macropolitics' of empire or the well-being of imperialism" (Mojola

2004:101). For example, the Luo name for God (*Nyasaye*) is a gender free term (Odaga 2011). Yet when the Bible was translated into Swahili (and then later into Luo language) they found themselves introduced to a masculine God. Similarly, the Iraqw people of Tanzania have always believed in a female God *Looah*: “She is the provider, the protector, the merciful, and the giver of life” (2002:62). But again, their Bible translation presented God as male, which they found deeply unacceptable. Both ‘Looah’ and ‘Nyasaye’ satisfy the Christian qualities and attributes of the supreme God as the creator of the universe, loving, empowering and sustaining the created order. So, why then, was it necessary to impose a foreign theology, when an indigenous term was readily available? (Mojola 2007:159).

In response to this, Richard Bauckham, a noted British ecotheologian, is a leading voice amongst those calling for “a metanarrative interpretation and reading of the Bible”, that is, a sort of reading that comprises: “a storytelling and historiography about the whole reality – providing the meaning and purpose by which people and society can live in relation to that whole” (Bauckham 2016:1-16). Such a narrative interpretation and reading, Bauckham claims, might allow the Bible to be embraced as the story of God’s wellsprings of hope, always focused towards the flourishing of Earth’s community and for ecological salvation.

Bauckham’s argument is focused on the integration between ‘God and the world’, but in the context of the contemporary disordered identity, surely it is essential to add the third participant. By including ‘human culture’ to make the story a three-way interrelationship between God, creation, and the cultural mandate, it would embrace the transcending presence and earth-honouring traditions that had been maintained in the past. Despite this omission, Bauckham’s metanarrative approach appears to be a suggestive and urgently needed response. It could decolonize the Christian exclusivism entrenched through Bible translation, and sustained through what Leslie Newbigin has called “the package deal”: the dependency upon foreign texts, architecture, church election systems and even German theology (Newbigin 1961:106-7). It could help reverse the cultural dispossession that has occurred, and instead embrace Earth-honouring God-talk and an expansive ecological relationship to nature and sustainability of all life.

4.1.4 W.E. Owen and the Anglicanization of the Luo Universe

The historical roots of the Anglican mission into Mara Tanzania can be traced back to the early 20th-century. This was when Luo Migrant workers arrived back in the region from Western Kenya. There, the Anglican mission was already well established among the Luo community in Kavirondo. The first encounter, around 1904, was when the Kenyan Railway from Mombasa reached Kisumu city (the metropolitan city of Luo world) (see Ward 1993; Iliffe 1979).

It was from contact with these Luo migrant workers that a kind of informal Anglican spirituality emerged. It appears likely that the Anglican tradition was the first Christian movement to reach the Mara region, ahead of Roman Catholic and other Protestant traditions who arrived a decade later. (Iliffe (1979), Kirwen (1979)) Although still not formalised, the ministry of the Anglican Luo was strong enough to keep expanding numerically, and even geographically, to reach neighbouring villages (Ward 1953). In fact, the Anglican Church in Mara has a unique history in terms of its identity and of being locally founded. The creative work of evangelism was undertaken by its local Luo evangelists.

This evangelism appears to characterise Henry Venn's missionary philosophy of a "self-propagated" church. Indeed, they worked tirelessly preaching the Gospel in response to such biblical passages as "...woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel" (I Cor. 9:16). However, this evangelistic mission was not without far-reaching ecological implications. It unwittingly carried with it a Western version of Christianity, without an expansive understanding of what salvation entails holistically. They were unintentionally impressing certain foreign values, rather than, in Bishop John V. Taylor's words, "Inviting a man to become what he is, helping him to accept the fact that he is already accepted in the beloved" (Taylor 1972:180). The pattern of evangelization that prized individuals coming to 'salvation', also did not follow traditional Luo processes of decision-making and adaptation of new social changes normally approved by the council of elders (Cohen & Odhiambo 1989; Mboya 1997; Odaga 2011; Ogot 1967). Evangelization of this type was actually a subversive activism against public social life and its cultural cosmology.

For so long the official date of commencing service and commissioning of Anglicanism in the Mara Region through the ministry of CMS was uncovered. My findings, however, suggests that the official commencement took place on Monday

14th November, 1932, when the Archdeacon and Head of Maseno Mission Walter E. Owen⁵⁶ made his first pastoral visit to Kowak village in North Mara. Based on Owen's pocket diary, this date may be regarded as the possible birthday of the Anglicanism in the region. It was on this day that Owen celebrated the first Eucharistic Anglican service at Kowak village. On his way back he visited Sakawa village where he met some pioneering members of this formulating missionary tradition.⁵⁷ The Rev Ezekiel Apindi was appointed as the first local priest in Southern Nyanza.⁵⁸ However, the primary and subsequent evangelizations were undertaken by those who came to faith in Kenya.

Despite not being a university graduate, Owen became one of the great missionary figures of his time. His distinct missionary model and social activism is well documented (Cohen & Odhiambo 1989; Odinga 2013; Ogot 1967). In the 1920s, the British rulers imposed colonial taxes for revenue (over-riding native interests), Owen founded the Kavirondo Taxpayers Association, with the specific purpose of teaching people within his archdeaconry how to run their own affairs (just one of Owen's many initiatives). Unlike other colonial missionaries, who saw their task as "feeding minds of pagans with Christian literature" (Fraser 1911:270-1), Owen introduced several courses, including micro-economic development, cultivation, watermills and bookkeeping.⁵⁹ Nancy U. Murray described Archdeacon Owen as someone who was known by many of his settler contemporaries and missionaries as 'the only European in Kenya who dared to raise his voice, in protest against 'colonial policy' (Murray 1982:653). Likewise, British

⁵⁶ Archdeacon Walter E. Owen (1880-1945) was a British Anglican missionary, researcher, environmental activist and religious leader (known as the Archdeacon) in Kenya. Soon after joining the CMS he went to their training institution in Islington, London. He was assistant secretary in the CMS Office in Belfast. He was accepted as a missionary in 1904 and ordained as a deacon in the same year by the Bishop of London, and as a priest in 1905 by the Bishop of Uganda. He served in Uganda for 14 years and then succeeded Walter Chadwick as Archdeacon of Kavirondo from 1918 up to the end of his earthly life in 1945. His mission was mainly among the Luo, Luyia and Kalenjin peoples of Nyanza Kenya. However, because the clans of Luo people are living side by side along the Kenya-Tanzania border, Owen became the first CMS missionary to reach the Luo of Tanzania in 1932 and became an officiator of Anglican mission in this area.

⁵⁷ The CMS-ACC 83- F1, Pocket-diaries and [notes of engagements] 1920-1945.

⁵⁸ It is believed that, about 1931 there were few people in north Mara (particularly at Kowak and Kamageta areas) who could call themselves Anglicans such as Ayubu Okello, Paulo Obonyo, Zedekiah Alando, Sillah Onguru, Zadock Opundo, Jacob Ogendo, Yohana Adhero, Benjamin Lwande, Awiti Agak and Yohan Odiero.⁵⁸

⁵⁹ The list could equally include Owen's concerns about: forced marriages, marriage customs and rights regarding land ownership.

Missiologist Brian Stanley defines Owen as “a sharp thorn in the settler flesh” (Stanley 1990:154).

Owen’s writings (covering sociology and an archeological study of Luo ethnography) contributed significantly to the development of Luo ethnography; and are regarded as an important collection of Luo ethnography. Some of his literature has been used and cited in many scholarly researchers (among them Ayot 1979; Fatton-Hoehler 2012; Odinga 2013; Ogot 1967). Under Owen’s archdeaconship (from 1920s-1945), the Anglican Church in Western Kenya was active in spreading the gospel. According to Hastings, missionaries such as Owen and Arthur in Kenya were also active in the formation of local associations or welfare groups and in responding to detrimental colonial missions (Hastings 1994:593). The driver of Owen’s social activism was his belief that that a new era of civilization has dawned for Africa, as Owen himself states:

With all our mistakes there is a very high and noble record of achievement on behalf of Africans. Gone is the slave trade, and gone inter-tribal wars. A new era of civilization has dawned for Africa, and out of the sleep of the ages Africa awakes to find laid at her feet the rich treasures of knowledge and achievement which it has taken us hundreds of years to acquire.⁶⁰

Owen appears in these words to be both acknowledging the contribution of the civilizing missions in transformation modern Africa and also promoting indigenously informed social integrity, despite some ingredients of paternalistic affinity for his British colonial system. Nevertheless, as Brian Stanley concludes in his book, *The Bible and Flag*, the political generation which came to maturity in the aftermath of various controversies between moderate strands of local nationalism and the liberal mission leadership which climaxed during the anti-colonial wars in the 1950s, “owed an enormous debt to the missionary tradition symbolized by W. E. Owen – a tradition of liberal evangelism and fearless opposition to white racialism” (Stanley 1990:152-3). That it was a locally mobilized political rejection of colonialism does not mean that it was an offspring of ‘liberal evangelism’, but rather a response to wider concerns.

⁶⁰ A precept from W. E. Owen’s article on ‘Empire and Church’ as cited in Brian Stanley (1990), 154.

So far, we have examined the contribution and theological influence of Owen's missionary spirituality on Tanzania Luo Christianity in the 1930s, and how the church continued to grow around Kowak and beyond in the hands of local Luo preachers. At the same time, specifically in the late 1930s, the gold mineral deposits were discovered in the region; and it was hoped that they might provide transformational benefits to the Mara region's economic life, since Mara was largely an area of small-scale farming and fishing. In trying to understand as to whether the establishment of economic activities (such as the gold mining industries and the spread of the missionary spirituality in Africa, particularly among the Luo people) provided what might be called 'transformational development' or became emancipatory and catastrophic, is the task that follows. The next section, begins the turn towards rethinking ecological and economic consequences of the spread of the mainstream colonial missionary theology of development.

4.2 Colonial Missionary Movement and the Myth of Progress

It can be argued that it was the lack of resources that pushed Western Europe to search for resources outside their borders during the age of exploration (1400 to 1700). The age of exploration, saw the rise of European maritime empires, which led to increasing international trade, cultural modernization, and ecological imperialism (Ferguson 2011; Myers 2017). But the sailing ships that sustained the Portuguese and Spanish Empires, later followed by the Dutch and British Empires, carried not only "patterns of extracting gold and silver from the colonies to enrich the coffers of the king" (Myers 2017:75); but also missionary movement and an "ethico-anthropological tradition". Peter Kanyandago (2011:172) has defined this term "ethico-anthropological tradition" as a belief that non-Westerners were not human or fully human.

This belief, Kanyandago claims, was used to exploit and plunder not only these people's natural resources, but also their cultural value. Since then, as Kim observes, mission "became the foreign arm of churches based in powerful countries" (2012:9). Christianity was present in Northern Africa Christianity since its earliest beginnings (Parratt 1997:1), but it was not concerned with the politics of taking the land. This was a later development, and can be seen, for example, in

Pope Nicholas V's papal bulls *Dum Diversas* (1452) and *Romanus Pontifex* (1455). That resulted in the seizure of non-Christian lands and the enslavement of native peoples in Africa and the New World (Kanyandago 2011; Magesa, 2016).

The age of exploration was the major external impetus that triggered the beginning of European domination over the discovered lands (known as non-Christian lands) and the enslavement of their people. The cultural superiority it embodied mediated oppressive and negative forces, and structures which are still in evidence.

However, the transformation of Britain's social and economic views in the 1800s represented a new understanding of economics at the level of nation-state, and also resulted in a radical transformation of their sociology. For the first time, reports Myers in *Engaging Globalization*: "human beings figured out how to create wealth by increasing the production of the nation's goods and services, thus increasing the size of the nation's economic pie" (2017:78). The result was a radical new direction in mission spirituality and in the economic history of the world that continues to this day. In relation to Africa, the discovery that wealth could be created, not just accumulated or redistributed, was deeply connected with the wave of mission and advocated by one of the most prominent of the nineteenth-century Victorian missionaries to Africa, Dr David Livingstone. The result of Livingstone's mission theory was a broad economic, technological, and social transformation that reordered the African economy, ecologies; and ultimately the way people viewed themselves. Livingstone used the combination of economic, technological, and social changes of the time to develop his mission practice; and an analysis of this will provide both a key commentary to ecological impact of colonial mission theology and explore ecological imperialism as a phenomenon of mission.

4.2.1 Livingstone and the Dynamics of Civilizing Mission

Adrian Hastings (1994:250-53) reports that, in December 1856, David Livingstone returned to Britain, after fifteen years working for the London Missionary Society (LMS) in southern Africa. During those early years, he had split his time between his missionary activity, which was largely ineffective, and his pioneering exploration of the heart of the continent. Within a week of his arrival in Britain: "he had addressed a special meeting of the Royal Geographic Society,

followed the next day by another of the LMS, chaired by Lord Shaftesbury”. Similarly, “Oxford and Glasgow presented doctorates”, while the Royal Society “elected him a Fellow” (Hastings 1994:250). The reason for these presentations is often attributed to either Livingstone’s popularity, or a public interest in his meticulous observations of African geography and anthropology. There is a common agreement that awards were bestowed upon him for being in Hasting’s words, “a continent-wide strategist” and “an anti-slave-trade propagandist” (Hastings 1994:251).

Livingstone’s dynamics of mission were predicated on his understanding of a partnership between Christianity and colonial civilization through commerce, often referred to as the 3Cs. Anglican missiologist Max Warren, then the CMS General Secretary, in his book *The Missionary Movement from Britain in Modern History* states that: “The conjunction of these three words, is here, however, concerned to indicate the fact that the Christianity of the 18th and early 19th century had as its particular *context* an economic revolution and a remarkable development in the understanding of the meaning of Empire. There is a closer relationship between the three than is commonly appreciated” (Warren 1965:18). However, Dr Robert Heaney critiques this summary as essentially one of imperialistic spirituality (Heaney 2009). This typifies the variance in views regarding Livingstone’s mission theory.

Maclean (1913:5-6) notes that Livingstone’s work in Africa can be divided into two periods, the first from 1841 to 1852, when he served as a missionary, and secondly 1852 to 1873 when he was a British explorer. Maclean considers Livingstone as “the man who opened Africa” to be possessed by Western Christian ideology and enterprise. Livingstone resigned from the London Missionary Society in 1857, to become instead Her Majesty’s Consul to East Africa. His words of farewell in December 1857, in the Senate House in Cambridge, show his linking of commerce and Christianity:

I beg to direct your attention to Africa: I know that in a few years I shall be cut off in that country, which is now open; do not let it be shut again! I go back to Africa to make an open path for commerce and Christianity; do carry out the work which I have begun. I leave it to you.⁶¹

⁶¹ William Monk, *Dr Livingstone’s Cambridge Lecture* (Cambridge, 1858), 24. Accessed through A. Hastings (1994), 251-2.

Murray (1929:247-50) comments that: “it was the latter 19th-century evangelical spirituality which invented and advocated commerce and its inclusion in the spread of Christianity abroad, largely championed by David Livingstone and his successors. After Livingstone’s death, Henry Stanley continued the exploration of Africa and unveiled Africa’s mineral, and agricultural wealth” (Okello 2002).

Reflecting on the work of British overseas mission, Brian Stanley (2001:16-17) refers to the 19th-century evangelical Protestant missionary as a systematic effort to connecting Christendom, civilization, and capitalism beyond the boundaries of traditional evangelicalism. Thorne (1999:49) perceives Livingstone’s popularity as mainly due to the fact that his mantra of mission (the 3Cs) was seen by the concomitants of imperial expansion as a catalyst for the spread of western technology, scientific civilization, cultural superiority, and philosophy; since missionary propaganda was central to laying the groundwork of both Christian and secular advancement (cf. Ward 2006:164f). Later, in the same lecture cited above, Livingstone continues:

I resolved to go into the country beyond, and soon found that, for the purposes of commerce, it was necessary to have a path to the sea. I might have gone on instructing the natives in religion, but civilization and Christianity must go on together.

Livingstone’s unquenchable thirst to see that colonial civilization and Christianity are coupled for the capitalist modernization of Africa was deeply seated in his personality. Stanley (2001) argues further in the same work, that the Protestant mission theories of the 19th century shared five common assumptions with Enlightenment:

1. that all non-Western people were heathens
2. that all other religions were false
3. that Western civilization was superior to any other form of civilization
4. that rational knowledge was necessary for proclaiming the gospel
5. that the Christian message was one of individual responsibility.

These five assumptions find resonance in Livingstone’s missionary objectives, as he went on to say:

My objective is to open up traffic along the banks of the Zambezi, and also to preach the Gospel. The natives of Central Africa are very desirous of trading, but their only traffic is at present in slaves, of which the poorer people have an unmitigated horror: it is therefore most desirable to encourage the former principle, and thus open a way for the consumption of free productions, and the introduction of Christianity and commerce.

Opening the Zambezi route for commerce and the Gospel is what Livingstone wanted to do. Before the end of the same century, there was a widely-shared view that mission was inseparably linked to the transfer of scientific civilization from West to East and South through structured investment, people, literature, and institutions (Bosch 1991; Stanley 2001; Newbigin 1961). In 1897 James S. Dennis stated:

The evangelistic aim is still first, as it ever will be, and unimpeachable in its import and dignity; but a new significance has been given to missions as a factor in the social regeneration of the world...with a beneficent trend in the direction of elevating human society, modifying traditional evils, and introducing reformatory ideals (Dennis 1897:23).

Historian Elizabeth Isichei argues that the 19th century British evangelicals believed that Christianity and commerce went hand in hand. They imagined an Africa producing raw materials (such as cotton for British industry) and then purchasing the resulting products. They saw the development of alternative forms of commerce, not only as the surest way to eliminate the slave trade, but also to enable the mills of Manchester to “shout for joy” through the cotton wealth from Africa (Isichei 1995:83). Because of that, she adds: “missionaries and traders in Africa often co-operated, with the former relying heavily on commercial transport and other resources” (p.84). However, for Africa this paradigm shift from a subsistence economy was problematic and ecologically destructive, placing material prosperity above the core values of social ecology and the integrity of creation in general (Kempf 2008).

In his recent work *God's Family, God's Earth* Zambian Anglican eco-theologian Kapya Kaoma, makes a piercing ecological critique of Livingstone's mantra of mission that “led to the evangelization and colonization of Africa... European missionaries sought to save Africans from hell, but unwittingly promoted imperial powers' interests on the continent”. He continues, “Livingstone and some missionaries unwittingly and enthusiastically worked as colonial agents” (Kaoma 2013:60). But is Kaoma correct to contend that Livingstone worked ‘unwittingly’ as a colonial agent? Livingstone, not only resigned from his missionary role to become ‘Her Majesty's Consul’, but his public lecture (cited above) indicates that Livingstone was not unaware of the implications of his controversial hypothesis. This suggests that perhaps, Kaoma's view of ‘unwitting’ cooperation may apply to other missionaries, but not to Livingstone.

4.2.2 Henry Stanley and Livingstone's Unfinished Mission

Sir Henry Morton Stanley, British American explorer (1841 to 1904), became famous in 1871 for locating and rescuing Livingstone when he was in Ujiji, Tanganyika. After Livingstone's death in Africa in 1873, Stanley effectively assumed his role. Livingstone's body was finally laid to rest in London's Westminster Abbey, considered by Titus Presler as, "the best known Anglican monument in the world" (Presler 2001:83). This was attributed to the high honour and esteem that society afforded Livingstone placing 'the Anglican and Scottish mission story' into the orbit of the grand British colonial civilization of Africa which Livingstone advocated throughout his life.

Stanley began by continuing Livingstone's unfinished 1873 exploration in 1874, and his expedition, surpassed not only previous expeditions but also helped complete many details of the map of Africa. In doing so, its ecological structure was now becoming thoroughly known. According to Smith and Murray, both Livingstone and Stanley advocated transcontinental exploitation in terms of developing commerce, railway links, trade and industry. The European Evangelical missionaries and explorers advocated the creation of a new ecology of mind, socio-economics and attitude in East Africa.

It is difficult to ignore the effects of Livingstone's and subsequently Stanley's influence on Evangelical Anglican spirituality in East Africa. It was Stanley who was the first British explorer to preach Anglican spirituality in Uganda and to appeal for its establishment in that land (see Smith 1927:39). Like Livingstone, Stanley looked upon the underdeveloped wealth of the country at the end of his 999 days' expedition in 1877, and in Smith's words, "dreamed of fine time". That is, a time when all the land will be redeemed from wilderness, the industry and energy of the natives stimulated, the havoc of the slave-trade stopped, and all the countries round about permeated with "the nobler ethics of a higher humanity" (Smith 1927:29). For Stanley, what Africa needed was a "tramway" or railway to be an iron bond never to be again broken "between Africa and the more favoured continents".

The completion of Livingstone's and Stanley's continent-wide exploration saw Africa's arable lands of East Africa and Rhodesia raising ever more crops for

the European market. Both grain and other crops (such as sisal) were grown largely to fulfil the demand in Europe (Murray 1929:12-15). Similarly, the discovery and subsequent extraction of minerals, including gold, became a matter of increased foreign interest in Africa. While the total area of East Africa and Rhodesia controlled by Europeans in 1876 did not exceed one-tenth of the continent; 50 years later, following the completion of the Livingstone-Stanley expedition, barely one-tenth of Africa was free from European domination (Smith 1927:23). Today, almost two centuries after the first missionaries, the influence of colonial civilization and missionary exploration in Tanzania is impossible to ignore. As in many African countries, this comes through in popular cultural change: whether it be the spiritual ideology which secularizes moral traditions of collective subsistence, or ecological exploitation culminating in the name of bilateral investment.

4.2.3 Missionary Civilization and Modernity

The 20th century saw a huge change in Luo life as a result of colonial civilization. The cultural identity was impacted through such factors as World Wars, missionary education and transmission of the cultural meaning of life as depicted through Bible translation. The period saw the unprecedented (Luo) transformation to ‘modernity’: a life that seeks to break with the past to engage in the wider contemporary world. Or as Professor Kwame Bediako puts it aptly, it was a liberation from what was seen by colonial missionaries as “a state of absolute awfulness and gruesomeness” (Bediako 1992:223).

The term ‘modernity’ embodies a matrix of fields such as education, social, political, scientific, or missiological and is, in this case, the expression of the particular ideological treatises of colonial imperialism and post-colonial governance (Meyer 2015; Steger 2013). As such, modernity has marred Luo life, damaging their strong moral identity and socio-cultural economic and ecological structures. Although aspects of modernity may have reached this region before that period, it was not until the town of Musoma (Mara’s capital) was founded in 1921 as the centre of Indian Commerce (Kirwen 1979:87), that the life and identity of the Luo people in Mara encountered systemic and intensive social change.

The development of Anglican churches in Tanzania has been heavily influenced by Western Protestant missionaries, whose modern theological tradition

had little awareness of the link between faith and the entirety of human ecology, as Dr Paul Tillich debated in his book *Dynamics of Faith* (we shall return to this book in Chapter 6). This led to the de-spiritualization of ecological wellbeing (Abraham 1994). Such exclusionary spirituality or anti-ecological missionary Christianity made Nature and the entire cosmic reality to convey no value or interest for Christians. Such disconnected Protestant missionary theology made a Luo Christian to think of salvation as a personal soul's saving; as opposed to traditional African cosmology, which, according to South African theologian Manas Buthelezi, emphasized the notion of salvation in relation to the 'the wholeness of life' (as cited in Parratt 1997:85-90). Under this traditional African cosmology, goes on Buthelezi: "all life was sacramental and therefore was the meeting place of man with God". While the ecology of 'the wholeness of life' is central to understanding biblical theology of creation, cosmic salvation, and above all to understanding Man's creaturely relationship to transcendence; it is one that was despicably missed out by the colonial mission theologies. Wendell Berry, the environmental activist, gave another pertinent critique of missionary anthropocentrism:

Despite its protests to the contrary, modern Christianity has become willy-nilly the religion of the state and the economic status quo. Because it has so exclusively dedicated itself to incanting anemic souls into Heaven, it has been made the tool of much earthly villainy. It has, for the most part, stood silently by while a predatory economy has ravaged the world, destroyed its natural beauty and health, divided and plundered its human communities and households (Berry 1992:114-5).

4.3 Colonial Mission Education, Medicine and Social Geographies of Change

Accompanying the ideals of colonial Western Protestant civilization and the commitment to propagate the Gospel, were two subsidiary branches of mission work, namely: education and medicine. Like other killer apps of colonial imperialism (such as competition and property rights), education was not simply about imparting knowledge – it was a specific science – a way of studying, understanding and ultimately changing the traditional geographies, which gave the European imperialism (among other things) a major military and cultural advantage over the colonised (Ferguson 2011:13). Colonial missions were instrumental in

transplanting European imperialism through mission education and medical missions in colonial Africa, and therefore it is important to examine their influence.

Stanley (1990:133-55) argued that mission education produced the first generation of political leaders, some of whom formed cohesive elites, who pioneered political independence in Africa. This demonstrates the imperial impact on African elites, but other less overt impacts are possibly even more significant. The consequences of colonial missionary education and medicine played an important part, not just in making political elites, but in restructuring the previously existing dynamics of cultural life. Therefore, missionary education and medicine will be considered in detail to determine the nature and extent of their influence.

4.3.1 Missionary Education and Cultural Exclusion

Right up to the 1920s, colonial missionary education was the leading agent in the formalising of education in the region. However, it was within the walls of colonial mission classrooms that Christianity was confined into “a daylight religion of reason” with little recognition of cosmic reality (Taylor 1963:12). In this period, the educational policies in colonial Africa were strongly influenced by the educational policies of the British, Belgians, and Portuguese and by the spiritual ideologies of colonial missionary churches from the same foreign countries. The writings of G.W.F. Hegel and Levy-Bruhl, who at different times tried to demonstrate race and mental disparity between the Europeans and the Negroes in particular, may also have had some effect (see Makumba 2014).

In most parts of colonial Africa, mission education and medical missions remained largely under the direction of overseas missionaries right until the 1960s (Etherington 2005:261). In Tanzania, for example, before the country’s independence in 1961, 70.15% of all the educational institutions in the country belonged to the churches or missionary societies (Keshomshahara 2008:55-7). Although some of these mission schools were nationalized in the 1970s, and became state schools, religious institutions remain one of the larger educational providers in the country.

Studies by Victor Murray (1929), Ngugi wa Thiong’o (1986) and Terence Ranger (1992) have shown that educational reforms in colonial Africa were not without socio-cultural and ecological flaws. They suggest that they introduced Africans to models of ‘modern’ behaviour, disordered their sense of identity, and

were themselves the realities through which a neo-colonialism continued to effect control. The aims of colonial mission education were stipulated, for example, in Donald Fraser's *The Future of Africa*. Fraser gives us a controversial conception both of Bible and secular education. As *Livingstonia* missionary and educator, Fraser's major aim of education was to improve literacy and civilization (Fraser 1911:156). indeed, mission education as whole was taken as an arm of parochial ministry and public civilization.⁶² This trend continued at least until the 1920s, when more recognizable academic disciplines and sub-disciplines began to emerge (Hanson & Oakman 1998).

The 1910 World Missionary Conference (WMC) held in Edinburgh was the first to objectify the aims of mission education in colonial Africa. Their report on *Education in relation to the Christianization of National Life* put forward four general aims of mission education. These were stated as follows:

1. 'Education may be conducted primarily with an evangelistic purpose, being viewed either as an attractive force to bring the youth under the influence of Christianity, or as itself an evangelising agency.
2. Education may be primarily edificatory, in so far as the school has for its object the development of the Christian community through the enlightenment and training of its members.
3. Education may be leavening, in so far as through it the life of the nation is gradually permeated with the principle of truth...
4. The motive of missionary education may include the philanthropic desire to promote the general welfare of the people.' (See WMC, Report III, 1910:370).

This philosophy of this report is an exclusionary educational framework that fails to offer education as life-centred, cosmologically-committed, justice-oriented, and Earth-honouring. It stands apart from a moral universe encompassing the whole of life, bringing the biosphere and atmosphere together as eco-education (Rasmussen 2013). The report paid almost no regard to the role of education in

⁶² A more recent study of pre-1920s mission education by Professor A. Shorter has shown that in its early stage missionary education was purely religious, not secular, and the catechetical instruction was basically oral, relied on written aids in the form of small books: catechisms, prayer books, Bible stories and the like (Shorter 2006: 198-9). Although Shorter is writing from a Catholic perspective, his thesis, with some exceptions, applies to the context in which Protestant literature programs and schools emerged.

relation to the integration of African cultural values, identity and sustainability. Perceived from the perspective of the post-missionary era, in terms of eco-missiology, the impact of this Euro-American missionary enterprise upon the African consciousness was to be immense and incessant.

Concerned that through colonial education schools were instruments of Westernization, the American led Phelps-Stokes Commission of 1924 suggested that primary education at least must take into account the environment of the children and the social values of their community. However, as the work of Shorter (2006) has shown, mission schools (especially the ones under the European missionaries), resisted the Phelps-Stokes Commission report. They saw education as a necessary instrument in the conversion of indigenous communities. Therefore they did not place learning into the actual ecological history of the learners' context, encompassing the billions of years of the universe's pilgrimage and as a God-talk that embraces the whole drama of life in all its intergenerational reality (Rasmussen 2013) Instead it was "to extol the virtues of Western Christian civilization and to justify the European conquest of Africa and the resultant benefits of colonialism" (Hull 1980:148). As John Iliffe, a leading historian of modern Tanzania observed, such imperialistic mission education caused "eclecticism", by which he meant an individual selection of advantageous elements from different faiths, the reinterpreting one religion in terms of another (Iliffe 1979).

A more recent study on the history of education reforms in a Tanzanian context by mission historian Raphael M. Akiri has examined the early 20th century British policy documents on education (used in British colonies). Examples such as the *Education Policy in Africa* had their roots in *The Privy Council Memorandum on Industrial Schools for Coloured Races* produced in 1847 by the committee of the Council on Education (Akiri 2016:181). "The 1847 report" Akiri observed, "served as the first serious policy document on education in British colonies and later on, it was used in African countries under British occupation." The prominent missionary leaders of the early 20th century, such as J. H. Oldham, were a great influence on the British policy initiative on education. Similarly, the 1847 report, according to Akiri's study, recognized the influence of Christianity in education (especially in character development) and it sought to make the school an instrument of social regeneration (e.g. training in household economy, utilitarian skills and arithmetic skills) necessary to daily life; in addition to equipping the

small farmers with intellectual power, with which they could enter into calculations and commercial agreements (2016:181).

Little is known (by means of written records) in relation to the actual impact of the 1847 educational report. But, it can be argued, that its full implementation might have contributed toward an understanding of the ‘household economy’ or a cosmologically informed view of power relations. However, that has been neglected almost entirely by an exclusionary vision of life. (cf. Sibley 2007:90-114) It appears that in colonial Africa, the implications of the 1847 report were hardly felt. Similarly, the 1925 Advisory Committee on Native Education in Tropical Africa submitted to the British government its first policy statement, *Education Policy in British Tropical Africa*. This also seems to have been ineffective. Amongst other things, it aspired for education to “be adapted to mentality, aptitudes, occupations and traditions of various peoples”, in addition to “conserving all sound and healthy elements in the fabric of their social life...and promote the advancement of the community as a whole through the improvement of agriculture and development of native industries”.⁶³ As summarised by John V. Taylor in *The Primal Vision*, “for 40 years and more the advance of the Christian Church in tropical Africa has depended more upon her virtual monopoly of Western education than upon any other factor” (Taylor 1963:7).

Critics comment that missions and the colonial government were like fish and the sea, since the co-operation between them was often mediated by the high ranks of missionary organizations. They note that the educational systems were so designed that African students would not only internalise an image of their Western conquerors; but also internalise the Western image of the African, one whose own heritage was ignored (cf. Hull 1980; Setiloane 1986; Rodney 2001). Under the title *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* Walter Rodney considers not only that African heritage was ignored, but that students came to see it as alien. Consequently, as Oldham concluded, Western education was esteemed and greatly in demand by the African, as it was viewed by students as the means of achieving elite status (1931:29-34). Yet, what most African students of Western scholarship remained unaware of, was the fact that colonial system brought with it a killer apps

⁶³ Advisory Committee on Native Education in Tropical Africa, 1925:2 as cited in Akiri 2016:181.

for economic exploitation, cultural watershed and impoverishment of African land, as Rodney rightly observed in the 1970s (cf. Rodney 2001:149-72).

Since the 1960s, the implications of Western education and capitalist spirituality – in relation to ecological degradation – have been studied by indigenous peoples, archaeologists, anthropologists, and other scholars. They have sought to not only challenge detrimental educational knowledge, but also to re-insert indigenous people's collective moral universe back into history. These older narratives, newly written, have been increasingly adopted to resist theological hegemony and educational elitism – which have culminated in forms of structural corruption and exploitative economic investments. The whole eco-theological mission has focused on infusing traditional African Earth-honouring spirituality (cf. Bujo 1992; Bediako 1992; Magesa 1997, 2014; Kaoma 2012, 2013). These scholarly voices have been crucial in reconsidering the ecological and economic origins of African religious education in a new light. Unlike old colonial mission education, new mission education seeks to integrate collective cultural consciousness, the biosphere that sustains us, and the universe that brought us forth into the orbit of educational sustainability.

4.4.1.2 Mission Education and Schooling among the Luo People

In 1910, the building of Kenyan colonial railways extended towards Lake Victoria, reaching Kisumu in Luoland. This marked the beginning of missionary educational expansion, which later developed into a force of social change and segregation (Ogot 2003, Kirwen 1979). The spread of mission education included everything European: pedagogical teaching style, school uniforms, music and hymns and building styles. Western dress (*nanga*) was viewed as a sign of progress and of embracing Christianity. Those who became the first to wear Western dresses were *jonanga*, people who had become progressive and 'civilised', beginning a journey of spiritual revolution, political autonomy and economic mobility (Ogot 2003). By 1915, some Luo chiefs like Odera Akang'o of Gem group ordered his people to discard traditional dress, and instead wear Western clothes; in other words, to become *jonanga*, turning their back on their cultural heritage (see Taylor 1963:21).

As Ogot explains in, *My Footprints on the Sands of Time* (2003), from the very beginning of their arrival in Luoland, the activities of missionaries resulted in

cultural conflicts and struggles for the control of the church and school. Ogot observes that the intention of Christianity to dominate cultural consciousness had been present from the beginning. The missionaries feared the integration of Christian faith and indigenous cosmology because “Africans might interpret the Christian message and appropriate it in terms of their own ecological history and cultural experiences” (Ogot 2003:12, see also Ogot 1979:1-7). The Christian theological concepts (such as the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, and the Virgin birth) crossed the linguistic divide to acquire new cultural connotations in the minds of Luo converts. The Holy Spirit, for example, was equated among the Luo with ancestral spirits. According to Ogot’s observation, that was why “the missionaries resisted translating the Bible into Dholuo until the late 1930s for fear that the Old Testament would provide the Luo with justification for polygamy” (2003:12).

In 1906, the first Church Missionary Society (CMS) School to be established in Luoland, was Maseno School in Western Kenya. It was founded by Bishop J.J. Willis who explains its purpose:

The general plan of campaign was based on the model of Iona; the establishment of a Christian basis from which the Gospel might be carried far and wide into the surrounding country, with a school for sons of Luo chiefs, at which the future leaders of the country could be trained in a Christian atmosphere. (Willis as cited in Ogot 2003:12).

This colonial mission education (part of an order issued by the colonial Government that every family must send one son to be educated) was transformational, as opposed to traditional (the fear that education will lead to loss of cultural identity). However, although this colonial vision was better (e.g. than those cultures which believed that it is not possible to hold a spear in one hand, the sticks in the other, and books at the same time); by itself, this educational vision was not only discriminative, but lacked deep awareness of gender equality and inclusion, because its institutional priority was boys not girls. Willis recognises the need to prepare future political leadership, but does not explicitly recognise the importance of ecological wellbeing

Many of the first pupils in the mission schools were adults, and the education programme was largely in the hands of mission stations and churches (Bell 1964, and Shorter 2006). But before the coming of missionary education, significant aims of cultural education among the Luo people were to enhance the ecology of the mysterious reality – God, corporate accountability to family, clan

and community and the protection of the integrity of their universe (Cohen & Odhiambo 1989; Odaga 2011).

Culturally, education was commonly understood by many Africans to be more than mere training, knowledge facts, or abstract conception. Observing native education systems in tropical Africa in the 1920s, Victor Murray, wrote in, *The School in the Bush*, that:

“The African peoples like all others have of course their own system of education, for by ‘education’ in the more deliberate sense we mean simply those things which one generation thinks it worthwhile to pass on to the next. Where life is tribal and the members of the tribe are considered to include equally those who are ‘dead’ and those who are alive, it is obvious that the younger people must be told of those things which bind the tribe together so that they may carry on its tradition” (Murray 1929:83).

Education referred to integrative ideas that helped learners to make sense of the world and their own lives; and to give meaning to a more participative, sociable and morally sensible society. Communicated mainly through engrossing storytelling and during formative years of cultural initiation, traditional education was the collective responsibility of the whole community: an attempt to sustain an orderly system of ideas and values, which are “the lifeblood of any human community” (Makumba 2005:164).

Collective education is evident in ancient times, where according to New Testament scholar William Herzog (1994:156-168), it was organized on the three interdependent levels: the household (*oikos*), the city (*polis*) and the aristocrats of imperium (the *paterfamilias* or *oikodespotés*). The last one was no different to colonial education, which was offered to the sons of aristocratic families (similar to the sons and daughters of academic, political, economic and religious elite of our time). The connection between *oikos* and *polis* was formulated by Aristotle, who viewed education in the household as training for participation in the life of the city (Aristotle, *Politics*, and esp. Book 1). A similar importance of integrative education during the Hellenistic era (up to the early 5th century AD and beyond) can be seen in *The City of God* by Saint Augustine of Hippo (354 – 430). Augustine speaks of an “*eros* of the mind”, meaning a deep sense of longing to understand more about God’s nature and his transcending mission, in a transformative way that integrates such understanding in people’s lives (cf. McGrath 2005).

The theories of cognitive development, such as that pioneered by Jean Piaget in *The Psychology of the Child* (1969 & 2000:122-29), have shown that

social culture shapes and changes how we embody reality. They suggest that the structure of the society is built into the structure of procedural thinking, social affection and moral values. The effective relationship between the child and his teachers (who play the parental role), “engenders the specific moral feelings forced upon by one’s social conscience” (Piaget 2000:122). Traditionally, it was understood that, “education offered during initiation was vital not just for agrarianism but for the community’s maintenance of its self-understanding, self-subsistence and for integration of their moral universe into ecology of daily life” (Mugambi 2002; Maathai 2010).

Among the Luo people, colonial mission education has given many people academic learning, but at the cost of negatively influencing their community. Formal education has brought in individualism in its wake. This has led to the gradual denunciation of moral traditions: of collective sustainability and the ecology of relatedness (*Ubuntu*), a balanced approach to holistic life that emphasizes local ideas, as well as universal principles of common flourishing and belonging (Kaoma 2013:95-102). If the sociology of education exists specifically under four major domains (religion, politics, economy, and family) as Hanson and Oakman (1998) suggest, then a properly balanced approach to holistic education is required.

Since its commissioning in the 1930s, the Anglican Church in the Mara Region of Tanzania has been one of the largest education providers, and the leader of educational development in the region. The regional church (through its current local dioceses of Rorya, Tarime and Mara itself) has always provided a range of programmes (including academic, vocational, theological, health and agricultural education) through its integrated community programmes, and through its major farm centres. Bill Jones, the Headteacher at the Anglican Diocese of Mara’s Issenye Secondary School (from 1989 to 1996) summarises the church’s educational mission across the region in his 2013 book *Mara! As*: “bridging the gap between Church and Life” with a continuing commitment not to resting on its laurels but “still looking to expand” (Jones 2013, see cover page and pp.130ff). However, the problem of the kind of education provided by the church (through its primary and secondary schools in the region) is that it is often offered under a bureaucratic and capitalistic system of private education, making church schools very expensive and unaffordable by the vast majority of Christian families

(including pastors' families). For that reason, it can be argued that most church-based educational and developmental initiatives have been discriminative or detrimental to collective social experiences (see Mugambi 2002; Kaoma 2012).

4.3.2 Medical Missions and Images of Difference

Many Luo people have walked to receive the *sindano* (the needle)⁶⁴ at mission hospitals in Mara, and the impact of such medical intervention has been significant. We can certainly force ourselves to begin by making an assertion that up to 1950s there were many epidemics and diseases, but that does not mean that those places had no sound hygiene. Actually, some research like Mary Douglas's influential book *Purity and Danger* argue that even the most exotic of ancient rites and traditions have a sound hygienic orientation. This section provides a contrasting perspective to the previous ones on medical mission. While acknowledging that medical missions were established by colonial missionaries to provide a connection between spiritual transformation and physical health as a dual commitment to the redemptive task of social transformation, it also argues that the same ministry was also used to concoct geographies of cultural exclusion.

Medical missions may be regarded as sub-branch of colonial missionary enterprise used to transform the world of health, as well as to register ethical ambiguities in life sciences, as we have come to know them (Ferguson 2011). As it will be seen below, some research considers medical science as one of great 'killer applications' of Western power, which played a constitutive part in the organization of contemporary lifeways and hygienic culture. According to Niall Ferguson's observation, most people now accept the great scientific truths revealed by Newton, Darwin and Einstein; and even if they do not, he says, "they still reach eagerly for the products of Western pharmacology at the first symptom of influenza or bronchitis" (2011:7). The arrival of medical missions in sub-Saharan Africa traces its origin back to the 1840s-50s, specifically through Dr David Livingstone.

Although few traditional societies may continue to resist the encroachment of Western patterns of competition (capitalism) and consumption, as well as the Western lifestyle itself, it is becoming almost impossible to resist Western medicine – *sindano*. More and more Luo people, for example, eat a Western diet,

⁶⁴ See T. O. Ranger (1992), 267.

wear Western clothes and live in Western housing. Even the Western ethic of work (five or six days a week from 9 until 5, with two or three weeks of holiday) has become a kind of universal standard (Ferguson 2011). A comprehensive study of colonial medicine in African perspective is Steven Feierman and John Janzen's volume *The Social Basis of Health & Healing in Africa* (1992). Eighteen essays in that – those focused on 'precolonial medicine' (Abdalla 1992; Janzen 1992; Waite 1992) and on 'colonial medical knowledge' (Curtin 1992; Ranger 1992) – illustrate how medical services were related to European hygienic, political phenomena and theological hegemony.

Norman Etherington's *Missions and Empire* (2005) argues that "in many parts of the Empire the only contact colonized people had with European medicine was through mission facilities" (p.275). The use of drugs and hygienic practices helped solve many health problems. But colonialism also initially introduced alien diseases, occasional epidemics and initiated unbalanced diets. Population development also showed rapid increases towards the end of the colonial era (Kjekshus 1996; Spencer & White 2007). From the 1930s, local mission hospitals in the Luoland became key sites of medical civilization in the area. Their encounters with indigenous traditions (taboos) of healing have been challenging. Earlier writings on health and cleanliness in the colonial empire not only found healing taboos alien and irrational (Douglas 1966 & 2002); but also used the notion of dirty to suggest a threatening difference, drawing on an ethnic stereotype well-established in colonial British culture (Sibley 2007).

Etherington explains that medical missionaries were often European doctors (with the double charge of ministering to sick missionaries and attracting converts). Others were African ex-slaves, sent to the most deadly climates, presumably as it was assumed they would be more resistant to indigenous diseases. According to Etherington's research, the first priority of imperial medicine and medical services (particularly, prior to the First World War) was concentrated on the mines, plantations, and to keeping soldiers and officials functioning in unhealthy environments (2005:261-84). Many critics believe that the invention of these colonial drugs had less to do with African needs than with Euro-American development.

The study of human hygiene has wider ecological effects, including among non-humans. In precolonial Africa, hygiene was an understanding of native health

skills, which everyone would glean through traditional education. Unlike Europe, where hygiene was not an obligatory subject, in most parts of colonial Africa, hygiene education was introduced. (Murray 1929), But as early as the 1920s, critics (like Victor Murray) were among the first Africanists to critique the intervention of colonial hygiene. Murray described colonial hygiene as a “collection of rules of health which the African has to master, and then he is supposed to know hygiene – just as morality is supposed to be a collection of rules of conduct the knowledge of which makes a man moral” (Murray 1929:190).

It appears that foreign hygienic knowledge was also taught with the tacit assumption that the European is a clean person, and the Native is not, and as Murray’s study also pointed out, came with a sense of Western superiority. The Director of Medical and Sanitary Services in Tanganyika is said to have prepared and scheduled the hygiene-rules including ‘mothercraft’, a liberal education for motherhood and sanitation (Murray 1929:190-1). In precolonial Africa, healing taboos were used among the Luo people, a commonly agreed consensus on how purity is understood. But, the colonial notion of ‘dirt’ associated it with blackness, disorder, irrationality and carelessness, which blurs the tabooed cultural classifications of the Luo universe.

Unfortunately, there is insufficient documented research in this area, and Etherington suggests that ‘medical missions’ is a neglected topic in mission theology. The 1880s saw the return of some African-born doctors, such as Dr John Nembula, who had studied medicine in Chicago.⁶⁵ But, “a medical missionary was a missionary trained in Western medicine” (Etherington 2005:278). The first medical missionaries, like Livingstone, may only have had ‘very rudimentary training’, yet that ‘rudimentary training’ made them appear as far better doctors and pastors of hygienic spirituality than the traditional African doctors Livingstone encountered. (cf. Okello 2002).

Etherington reports that Livingstone’s knowledge of pharmacology was limited (2005:278), but sound hygiene and pharmacology were seen as almost sacred things to be received from the ivory towers of the civilizing missions. Even though Livingstone himself “did not hesitate to take medicines recommended by Africans with local knowledge when he fell ill”, as Etherington observed, yet still

⁶⁵ John Iliffe, *East African Doctors* (Cambridge, 1998), 12-16.

the missions failed to develop the link between traditional pharmacology, ecological-economic history and political phenomena (see Douglas 2002:8-35).

Etherington notes, that by the time of the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910, “medical missionaries were sufficiently numerous to form an annexe to the main gathering”. In 1925, Protestant missions from Europe and North America employed 1,157 doctors and 1,007 nurses in overseas clinics and hospitals. However, “Catholic medical missionaries were slower to emerge, being inhibited from clinical practice until the 1930s by canon law, which forbade clergy to practice medicine or surgery” (Etherington 2005:279). Despite its slow influence at the beginning, colonial medical missions gained gradual ascendancy (Mbiti 2002:217). As colonial influence led to a different way of life, medical services gained more credibility and became important. But, as David Sibley’s study has shown (2007), colonial medical knowledge was often used to associate black people with ‘dirt’ which, in turn, is associated with disease.

Since 1970s, many ecological-historians have explored these relationships (Ogot 1979). Helge Kjekshus’s study of ecology economic development in East Africa (1977 & 1996:126-60), considers ambiguities of colonial medical science as the basis of the existing “break-down of the man-controlled ecological system” in Tanzania (see also, Ranger 1992:267). Etherington suggests it was evangelical, rather than philanthropic imperatives, that guided mission medicine in the early 20th century, and that medical services carried implicit Christian attitudes. “All churches” says Etherington, “regarded healing as an imitation of Christ, who had cast out devils, made lepers whole, enabled the lame to throw away their crutches, and raised Lazarus from the dead” (2005:275).

Medically trained professionals acknowledged the role of prayer and miraculous cures in healing. Such integration between medical knowledge and healing through Christ became evident in the early 1930s. For example, at the Gahini Mission in Rwanda (led by Doctor Joe Church, a dedicated evangelical Anglican missionary), the mission took a conservative evangelical approach to medical services, and also promoted an urgent quest for renewal and personal holiness as understood by the Keswick movement (Ward 2010:3-10). It appears that the Gahini Mission hospital refused to decouple the association of disease from sin and morality.

Standard histories of medicine celebrate the triumph of scientific advances against disease and illness in the 19th and 20th centuries. Yet, Etherington observes, some medical missions of that period witnessed the emergence of sects and churches specifically concerned with divine healing in Europe and North America. Christian Science and the Jehovah's Witness set their face deliberately against modern surgical procedures. Similarly, Seventh Day Adventists promoted "a Providentially sanctioned path to health and wholeness through diet, most famously identified with the breakfast cereals developed by their devout follower Dr John Harvey Kellogg of Battle Creek, Michigan" (Etherington 2005:277). Etherington's assessment of the medical missionary's spirituality reads:

From the missionary point of view, cures were never assured. Visitations of disease and miraculous recoveries both counted as manifestations of God's Providence. The mission clinic and hospital were instruments for saving sinners, not demonstrations of European superiority or disinterested philanthropy (Etherington 2005:281).

This appears to be based on the individual spirituality of medical missionaries, but the cultural ambiguity embedded in colonial medical services was evident in its biased social classification. In the *Geographies of Exclusion* (first published in 1995, reprinted 2007), David Sibley examines this bias. Focusing on the Aboriginal people, Dr Sibley indicates the way in which 'dirt and blackness' were used as signifiers of class difference in a white society, as well as in moral instruction given by the Health and Cleanliness Council, London (probably in 1920s). His illustration of this rarely studied subject draws heavily on Cesare Lombroso's catalogue (see the image below adopted from Sibley 2007:20), which points to the connection between visual images of physical imperfection, according to the colonial scale of being, which differentiates the normal and the deviant.

Such imposed physical classifications not only invented a theology of exclusion, which divided native people's collective consciousness into primitive and civilized; but also, 'the self and the world' were split into good and bad objects (Sibley 2007). In explaining the ways in which colonial subjectivity, moral hegemony and medical knowledge were connected to produce geography of exclusion, Sibley states,

An obsession with scaling and measurement of physical characteristics in order to determine moral boundaries and marginalize the other was particularly characteristic of 19th-century and early 20th-century science, but the association of appearances and moral characteristics is an enduring one (Sibley 2007:19).

Figure 4: Geography of social health in the 1920s



Source: Adopted From Sibley, 2007

Key: Captions read starting top left then clockwise.

- *Dirt brings Flies, Flies bring Disease*
- *Cleanliness means Health, Dirt means suffering*
- *The result of Dirt is Misery*
- *The result of Cleanliness is Happiness*

Written during the helm of colonial medical civilization in the 1920s by the British health and cleanliness council, there was no better knowledge of hygienic science to this council other than what they dubbed “where there’s dirt there’s danger” (Sibley 2007:20). It may be that the writer of this abstract notion of hygienic morality was using a definition of dirt as ‘matter out of place’. This was a very suggestive hygienic approach during the colonial era. According to British anthropologist Mary Douglas’s perceptive book *Purity and Danger* (1966 & 2002), this approach is based on two conditions: a set of ordered relations and a contravention of that order. But, ‘dirt’ is never a unique, isolated event to be used as a synopsis of marginalization. For Douglas, “where there is dirt there is system. Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements” (Douglas 2002:44).

The ecology of dirt takes us straight into moral traditions of symbolism and promises a link-up with more obviously cultural symbolic-systems of purity. Drawing on Douglas’s position, notions of dirt are a type of what Douglas refers to as an “omnibus compendium”, which includes all the rejected elements of ordered

systems. For example, shoes are not dirty in themselves, but it is dirty to place them on the dining-table; food is not dirty in itself, but it is dirty to leave cooking utensils in the bedroom; and so on. This pattern-making intuition, which condemns any object or idea likely to confuse or contradict cherished classifications, is not new. Assenath Odaga explains that cultural scheme of classifications (see Chapter 2.4.4). They arrived at this knowledge by exploring their own awareness of cleanliness, where strongest domestic discoveries were made.

Returning to the ambiguities of colonial hygiene, the colonial medical missions could have perceived a greater awareness of the cultural hygienic norms, had they examined the social patterns of hygiene and their social phenomena. What was not realized, for example, is that in Africa, particularly among the Luo people, men respect their wives during pregnancy and after child-birth. Indeed, maternity and child-birth was so intimately known to men, and so freely discussed among them as the most ordinary subject of conversation, that something more creative was needed than simply specialized advice. Above all, motherhood among the Luo people is the culmination not only of the woman's life, but of the life of the home, something which runs closely to the characteristics of motherhood in the Old Testament worldview.

Both Hastings (1994) and Isichei (1995) report a long list of Protestant missionary prohibitions or negative influences on indigenous practices throughout the history of colonial evangelism in sub-Saharan Africa. The list included wearing discs in the ears or numerous chains on the neck, removing the incisors and braiding men's hair with fibre. In 1902, for instance, a CMS representative condemned Ganda domestic architecture: "There was no home life among them and their houses were an outward symbol of that sad fact. They were round, very dark inside, having only one opening; there were no partitions beyond those made by hanging barkcloths....it could not be a wholesome life..."⁶⁶

Among the Luo people, for example, *nyaluo* (round house) is culturally a symbolic representation of Luo people's cyclical view of time, with huts built adjacent to each other as a community. Ecologically, *nyaluo* signals an equitable consumption of natural resources used for erecting houses, compared to colonial

⁶⁶ Quoted in Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of Christianity in Africa* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 83.

architecture which consumes enormous amounts of natural resources (Mpanya 1992). Persistently, argues Isichei (1995), missionaries condemned circular houses, and advocated rectangular ones. Meyer notes that the Basler Mission and the *Norddeutsche* Mission, both active there since the mid-19th century, even instigated the building of separate Christian villages or communities and cemeteries within villages that were named “Salem” (Little Jerusalem).⁶⁷ These villages were a distance from what were called “heathen settlements”. Commenting on the ecological impact of these buildings, Meyer states:

The house constitutes part of the self-definition of the owner. The appeal of a self-contained house goes along with the appeal of modern notions of personhood and visions of the good life, as launched through Christian conversion (Meyer 2015:109).

Therefore, conversion to Christianity came to be regarded as ‘a constant assault’ against indigenous living systems and ancestral spirits. The self-contained home, bounded by a fence and housing a nuclear family “not only offers a model for an ideal modern way of life but also expresses an ideal of seclusion that exists within the person” (Meyer 2015:109). The style of house is an important indicator of the size of the ecological footprint per individual.

In the light of its modernity and materialism, conversion to Christianity, in the words of Meyer again, “meant being saved from family-based social bonds” and making a complete break with the past. This was replaced with a vision of personal wellbeing, wealth, and foreign sanitation. As Meyer puts it sensitively:

The new Christian homes, as well as the lifestyle and material culture of their inhabitants, featured as signs of a modern and Christian way of life. Here, new patterns of distribution and consumption developed, and a gap opened up between Christian and non-Christian family members. The former refused to take part (at least openly) in family rituals that involved pouring libations and slaughtering sacrificial animals for the ancestors and saw new opportunities for at least partly removing existing moral obligations and rights associated with kinship in favor of closer ties with their spouses and children (Meyer 2015:109-10).

Yet, to this day, Luo people still love their cultural values and identity, particularly those related to land and housing. Every Luo man has a cultural expectation of putting a house in his home village, whether he is staying there or not; and this is a home that should not be rented to others; because in traditional Luo culture the home house was not just a property (as it has been projected in modern domestic sciences), but a sacred place of certainty and safety from both nonhuman and human threats, or a man’s castle and a hallmark of maximum

⁶⁷ There is no evidence of separate Christian villages in Mara as far as the fieldwork is concerned.

belonging. Some economic research suggests that this tradition should be reformed, since it expresses a rigid cultural valuation of houses without substantive economic reasons. Dr Bitange Ndemo (2014),⁶⁸ explains, “The society demands it [because]...it is a home where you will be buried.” Such cultural mythology needs to be demythologized. However, this practice that was intended to keep an extended family together is not without both ecological and economic implications. Some system analysts (such as Ndemo) have argued that this practice is impoverishing both the present and future sustainability of respective families and is ‘dead capital’. This is also true not only economically, but also ecologically. (Cribb 2010; Jenkins 2013; Maathai 2010; Northcott, M. 2007; Northcott, S. M. 2014). Today, there are many underutilized properties in every village of the Luo community in Mara Tanzania. Clearly, such cultural mythology needs to be challenged.

In conclusion, Christianity has played a vital role in the promotion of modern life styles. Secondly, the Luo culture of investing in house building in anticipation of future death comes at the expense of the living, who often struggle to feed themselves. This is in contradiction to the Luo people’s community-based virtues and ethics that place an obligation to share riches within the community.

4.4 Ecological Effects of Colonial Missionary Education and Civilization

Christianization, urbanization and social modernization through education and medical intervention have separated many Luo people from the heartland of their cultural ecospirituality into what Aylward Shorter calls, “the threshold of the modern world” or “multiculturalism” (Shorter 1998:34). Mission education and medicine has become not only social processes by which people acquire specific ways of understanding themselves; but of accommodating materialistic culture, behaviour and ideas that originate from the civilizing missions. The Tanzania’s social transition from precolonial ecological control to colonial civilization (from

⁶⁸ For more details about “Africa’s Poverty Contradictions and Dead Capitals” by Dr Bitange Ndemo, a senior lecturer at the *University of Nairobi*, see <http://www.nation.co.ke/oped/blogs/dot9/-Africas-Poverty-Contradictions-and-Dead-Capital/-/1959700/2151968/-/13lg12n/-/index.html> Accessed on 31/01/2014 and re-accessed on 15 February, 2016.

the 1840s –1960s), influenced not only social change, but brought with it a decisive socio-cultural transition and a new myth of human ecology transplanted across the land through missionary conversion, educational enterprise, and colonial land policy.

The effects of missionary education and spirituality on the Luo moral universe and social setting is evidenced in various kinds of segregation (educational segregation, social competition), and in its continued domination by the killer applications of Western power (competition, science, property privatization, medicine, consumerism and colonial work ethic). Ecologist Christopher Uhl was right when he argues that “all the crises that humanity now faces are grounded in the colonial civilization and beliefs that we are separate from each other, separate from the biosphere that sustains us, and separate from the universe that has brought us forth”.⁶⁹ In light of the controversial and inspiring causes of social change studied above, there can be no doubt that the impact of the killer applications of Western power laid deep down into the architecture of cultural change all over the world of former colonies.

In this subsection, we summarise the ecological consequences of colonial civilization on the Luo people’s collective cosmology, and reconsider how contemporary ecotheology and mission theology can offer both a Christian critique of educational segregation, environmental destruction and an ecological critique of colonial geographies of exclusion. While the aim I would espouse is to encourage ecological reform within Christianity and for Luo social integration; it seems to us that all these will be possible only if we are willing to rediscover educational values and moral traditions of interdependence, rooted not in the killer applications of colonial civilizations, but in the cradles of our cultural heritage.

4.4.1 Mission Education and Social Segregation in Mara

As the words of Bishop J.J. Willis cited in (Ogot 3002:12) have already indicated above, mission education introduced itself as a pedagogy of individual consciousness aimed at deconstructing the long-established trilogy of collective (regional) consciousness, cosmic consciousness and transcendental consciousness. This is in direct contradiction to the central tenet of Luo cultural sociology, that all

⁶⁹ See Uhl’s comment at the back cover of Charles Eisenstein’s *The Ascent of Humanity* (2007).

children, regardless of their family and social background, should have a decent chance to improve their lot in life through *siwindhe* (a unified social reality). The research indicates that mission education played a constitutive part in formulating the new landscape of social segregation. It opposes the sustained collective cosmology and ‘transcendental consciousness’ which are embedded in one infinite being or “one Earth community” in David Hallman’s phrase.

Brazilian educationalist Paulo Freire uses the term “banking knowledge” to describe a concept of education where “knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing” (Freire 1993:52-67). It implicitly conveys the spirit of paternalism, domination, and separation, failing to recognise the heart of reality is “being connected to the cosmic mind which is built into our nervous system” (Chopra and Kafatos 2017:219-34).

As has been noted, Mission education promoted individualistic consciousness and spirituality at the expense of the commonwealth of life and interdependency. However, there is an emerging movement toward collective eco-consciousness through educational programmes and developmental innovations, particularly those run by churches in the Mara region.

Fieldwork studies undertaken by the writer at Charya Primary School (CPS) in Sakawa, Mara (where the researcher received his primary education from 1985-1991), indicate that over the past 25 years there is clear evidence of an increasing separation between children from poor and wealthier families. A major factor in this has been the provision of segregated schooling. Private schools, mostly church owned, are populated by children from more wealthy families. Less privileged children attend state schools that are often less well-resourced, regarding teachers and facilities (Ishumi & Maliyamkono 1995). This pattern continues into higher levels of education.

There is also an increasing loss of a collective consciousness among all strata of society. In 1991, children of all backgrounds came from similar homes and mixed unselfconsciously in schools, the neighbourhood and in church. Today, by contrast, that spirit of togetherness is diminishing at an unprecedented rate. In fact, even when the schoolchildren from different backgrounds live within the same

locality, they are unlikely even to encounter each other, except in church for those from religious families. This educational segregation has implications not only for the composition of the extended family, but in sustaining a common dream and morality.

According to Ishumi & Maliyamkono (1995:46-60), the problem started in the mid-1970s when the failing of Tanzania's education system began to emerge. The *Ujamaa* ideology, a socialist system of village cooperatives, had resulted in an ill-structured curriculum and scarce teaching and learning materials. This led to structural adjustment in the 1980s, but also nurtured the privatization of education in the 1990s. Also, some mission schools that had been nationalized in the early 1970s were de-nationalised. Private educational provision (such as that offered by the Anglican diocese of Mara) is relatively expensive, and so only accessible to a minority; creating elitism rather than a community. As Bill Jones observed "the school largely caters for relatively wealthy Tanzanians" (Jones 2013:114). In other words, church schools are now beyond the economic reach of the vast majority of Anglicans in the region.

Professor Robert Putnam of Harvard argues in *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis* that educational segregation is the main cause of economic inequality, social disparities and declining sense of "social capital – that is, informal ties to family, friends, neighbours, and acquaintances; involvement in civic associations, religious institutions, volunteer activities; and so on" (Putnam 2015:207). He maintains that "social capital" has repeatedly been shown to be a strong predictor of well-being, both for individuals and for communities. He states, "Community bonds and social networks have powerful effects on health, happiness, educational success, economic success, public safety and (especially) child welfare." However, like financial capital and human capital, Putman claims, differences in social connections contribute to the youth opportunity gap.

While better-educated Tanzanians have wider and deeper social networks (both within their closest circle of family and friends) and can influence the wider society, especially their common wellbeing, many studies have shown that ill-educated or poor folk have few chances to access those networks. The incidence of educational segregation among the Luo society (and similarly among various societies nationwide) rose sharply between 1991 and 2015: from schooling together

to attending different schools, from receiving collecting cultural consciousness to compartmentalised pedagogy, and from walking to school to being driven to elite schools. Education, especially in privately-owned learning institutions (like church schools) is no longer in touch with empirical dimensions of collective reality, instead, they are the ivory towers of the former colonial civilization.

In this foregoing section, we have argued that colonial mission education was complicit with gender inequality and social imperialism, and produced a corrupt version of the Christian faith that is less concerned to the social-ethical ambiguities of educational segregation and social disconnection. One of the things that these weaknesses reveal is that it is possible to reconsider the place of education in the development of moral ecology (powerful enough to shape and correct existing educational flaws), in favour of values that support both ecological integrity and equitable human flourishing. Education, we believe, can become more effective in addressing social ecology and sustainability; but only if it is offered in a dialogical way, that helps learners see themselves present, past, and even their future, in the light of integrated social cosmology and sustainability. In conclusion, a re-imagined mission education may offer a key to a prosperous future for the Luo community.

4.4.2 The Impact of Missionary Education on Luo Cosmology

European science and theology both established hierarchies of being which placed themselves and the scientific method at the apex. To the colonialists, Africans were primitive in both fields, ignorant of science and understanding, and often animists in theology. The Europeans therefore assumed: “a dominance which the church in colonial powers like Britain also asserted with its argument that peoples closest to nature, in a primitive state, needed saving” (Sibley 2007:26). “Saving” was not simply reaching the unchurched with the message of salvation, but also, as David Sibley explains further that, ‘often involved not only accepting Christianity but also adopting European styles of dress, and the discipline of a Christian education in the mission school’. Sibley. This prejudicial perception led to the denunciation of traditional cosmology and a disconnection from an expansive relationship with nature.

Fraser’s book, *The Future of Africa*, made it clear that, “missionary education was aimed toward the production of a more rationalised brand of learning

for ‘explanations of the world in which we live’ and undermined the inexorable hold of traditional customs and superstitions” (Fraser 1911:157). So defined, it appears that Fraser’s education aimed to create an intellectual elite with no reference to their cultural identity or cosmological heritage. To colonial educationalists like Fraser, nature was seen as a ‘resource’ to be exploited through rationalism (Cribb 2010; McGrath 2004; Steger 2013). Indeed, at the heart of its civilizing missions “was the sense of human autonomy: being in control and in charge of your own destiny, mastery of environment, making your own moral choices” (Young 2014:77). In short, colonial modernity left no room for transcendental and cosmic consciousness to be experienced in any practical sense known to native cosmology, socio-economic and spiritual education. The subsequent destruction of the ecological equilibrium and growing spirit of consumerism was the result of this creed. (Boff & Elizondo 1995; Magesa 2014).

Luo historian, Assa Okoth, argued education and agriculture were the two means through which Africans tried to improve their positions during the colonial period, but it must be recognised that both education and agriculture predate the colonial era. As previously portrayed, formal education is perhaps the most important instrument through which the physical and spiritual subjugation of Africa persists, through what Assa Okoth has called the “educated elite” (Okoth 2006:47). Although Luo cultural language associates culture and religion with cosmology, the dominant language of missionary education (both theological and secular) does not. The traditional understanding of interdependence between the cultural mandate, religion and cosmology appears reasonable, but was wittingly ignored in Western formal education and religious teaching.

When missionary education condemned, for instance, Luo cultural practices and instruction as primitive and ‘somewhat malign’ they were not helping to reconstruct native cultural practices in better ways, but were seeing them as outdated and evil. As Mbula (1977:199) writes, “Young people were uprooted from their cultural background and put into schools where they were first taught about the evils of their customs and secondly how the new innovations would open new vistas for them” (as cited in Gitonga 2008:87). Unfortunately, they failed to understand the universe as whole and to see that new knowledge must be incorporated, meaningfully, into the existing culture, religion and cosmology (Knighton 2005:33). Any attempt to separate faith and sacredness from social

cosmology within which it is conceived, is not only bound to marginalize the functionality of cultural cosmology and its moral traditions of collective sustainability; but will continue to weaken any suggestions as to how the interface of cultural interdependence may be woven into a single fabric of social resilience or sustainability.

Since the 1900s, the Luo people have drifted from their culturally-conditioned “moral traditions of abundant life” to use Laurenti Magesa’s phrase. Indeed, the popular perception of Luo Christians in the Mara region was that the contemporary ecological problems were associated with the church, since the church and its agencies did not exploit natural resources. They understood that ecological problems emanated from poor traditional techniques of land management, population increase and a lack of strong environmental policies against large profit-based corporations.

Kenyan Luo writer, Asenath Bole Odaga, notes in *Oral Literature: The Educational Values of the Luo Oral Narratives* that “Education in the pre-colonial Luo era was based in the reality of all aspects of life including the need to maintain sustainability”. Commenting on this model of instruction, Odaga states:

A child’s education therefore began from birth and continued throughout his or her entire life. Parents, grandparents, *ayahs* known as *jopidi*, siblings and later on peers, were the first and immediate instructors and teachers. A child was taught through oral instruction, theoretically and practically. A baby’s immediate family members played a crucial role in its education as well as socialization. From an early age, children learnt through observation and imitation as they copied those around them and also from the answers the adults gave to the numerous questions they asked...both boys and girls were taught the basic rules by their parents, especially the mothers...the mothers began to tell them about some of the taboos and beliefs which formed their societal code of conduct. Children learned about the weather and the changing seasons from adults and through observation. When the clouds were gathered to the north...people knew it would take longer before it began to rain, when there were thick huge clouds hanging on the western sky, then they knew the rains were about to come (Odaga 2011:44-6).

Traditional methods used to prevent children from killing harmless species were scare stories, for example “If you kill a frog, one of your mother’s breasts will drop off!” For Odaga, this was part of informal education, and an enculturation that laid stress on the observation of taboos and folk beliefs. Education was therefore not academically abstract, but instead practically imparted culture and arts innovation or “coexistence with those other creatures which shared [their] environment” (Odaga 2011:45). Practical learning activities like grazing, hunting or minding the fire were not only relevant in connecting educational theories and

praxis, but for integrating contemporary knowledge into the empirical dynamics of life and social wellbeing. Odaga concludes that the knowledge learned orally and through observation was abundant, functional (p.46) and often delivered through the *siwindhe*.

Reflecting on the vitality of this form of indigenous education, Nahashon Gitonga states that, “the young people in the village gathered in the house of the grandparents where they were taught and counselled on such topics as reverence towards God, respect for parents, environmental conservation, self-control, family life, diligence in work, and the use of intelligence and wisdom in facing challenges in life” (Gitonga 2008:85). Indeed, the use of folklore and stories made this teaching lively and memorable. It was aimed at producing a healthy person, who was spiritually and intellectually whole and prepared the learner to take a holistic view of life (see for instance Bediako 1992). Accordingly, even to this day, the traditional African eco-sociology of the Luo people has remained at the heart of their desire for education and cosmological sustainability.

4.4.3 Eco-Theological and Social Effects of Civilizing missions

Cultural ecology (also known as ‘lifeways’) clearly had a beneficent external implications for human ecology that may not be empirically proven or fully justified by forms of modern rationality. One thing that was common to the former, as opposed to the later, is that it provided a common faith and ecosocial ground on which to stand, live, and act on as a common humanity. That is why most forms of colonial missionary’s theology and social spirituality, have been persistently critiqued for its failure to establish a theological imagination that is grounded on the reality of common humanity with moral universe encompassing the entire community of life. That’s why understanding ecological implications of precolonial ecospirituality is crucial if we are to re-enter creative ecosocial morality and retrace the ways in which transcending reality was observed in precolonial theology and rationality.

The works of leading religious scholars, such as Professor John Hick and Jonathan Sacks, make the point provocatively. “When we look back into the past” says John Hick in his book *God and the Universe of Faiths*, “we find that religion has been a virtually universal dimension of human life – so that man has been defined as the religious animal.” Drawing on this empirical cosmology, Hick

wanted religion to be understood as “an understanding of the universe, together with an appropriate way of living within it, which involves reference beyond the natural world to God or to the Absolute or to a transcendent order or process” (Hick 1973:133).

Like Hick in the 1970s, more recently, the former Chief Rabbi, Jonathan Sacks, has defined religion as the transcendental justification of the society; and argues that Abrahamic society emerged as a sustained protest against secularism and established hierarchies. It asserts that, “every human being, regardless of colour, culture, class or creed, was in the image and likeness of God” (Sacks 2015:4ff). Both Hick and Sacks consider religious civilization as originated from the Abrahamic traditions, with a moral universe encompassing the entire community of life, but always subversive to exclusionary life principles that propagated controversial ideas (such as “to be is to be different”), as well as materialistic systems of beliefs (such as communism and humanism). When we look back into the past, at two great centuries of the civilizing missions, we find that the colonial influence of materialism is witnessed in the dualistic view of the world, and in the loss of social capital and the biosphere that sustains us. The growth of materialism has been at a cost; almost half of humanity is hungry, homeless and ignored; and there is a catastrophic disconnection between soils, soul and society that brought us forth (cf. Kumar 2014:129-41).

Society is defined by our culture and our shared values and the way we act toward one another; it is about relationships that do not depend on wealth or power (Bujo 1992). Among the Luo people, specifically in its pre-colonial era, this ecologically-driven worldview was conceived of as a cultural covenant – a powerful sense of collective responsibility embedded in phrases like ‘*kanyakla*’ (community); bringing together clans, sub-clans and migrants from all different cultural backgrounds consisted in the *aluora*. Similarly, the Christian doctrine of the trinity expresses relationship, yet this doctrine has failed to be articulated in a holistic and ecological worldview that can be used to redefine the path of our socio-cultural and ecological interdependence (cf. Asamoah-Gyadu 2013; Kim 2013).

Ogot describes how some of the Luo chiefs abandoned their cultures and traditions, and with them their social capital, in order to follow the path of colonial

civilization and materialism (Ogot, 2003). Yet the majority of their citizens are still living below the poverty line. Indeed, the cultural covenant, which for so long had enabled Luo communities to survive as members of one group, has been ever more quickly deteriorating. Robert Putnam, of Harvard University, argues that such cultural covenant (known in different fields as ‘reciprocal altruism’ or ‘social capital’) is scarcely to be found in modern Western society; where consumerism, individualism and educational elitism have separated religion and society from each other, to a point that the two can barely be held together any longer (Putnam 2015).

It is normal for many indigenous societies, such as the Luo people, to teach themselves stories about who they are, where they would like to be, and how are they going to get there. These stories regulate the “behavioural environment” (Ogot 1979), by determining the significance of all the things people encounter as a community, and all the events they experience. Difficulties would regularly occur, and they would be regarded as an integral, predictable, and constant feature of the human environment (Peterson 1999). However, the impact of colonial ideology and theological hegemony interfered with the integrity of understood stories, and massively deregulated the collective maps of meaning.

Despite these catastrophic consequences, it is yet possible to find some resolution, just as other difficulties can be overcome, although “at higher cost” (Peterson 1999:21).

Some mythological stories of the Luo people taught them to preserve some parts of their geographical locations, because those places were representing divine consciousness within their locality. Consequently, such transcending stories about sacred places were dismissed by Western-dominated theology; that not only misunderstood, but also destroyed the belief in the existence of divine consciousness in the physical world of reality (Keshomshahara 2008:67). Yet the Creation story in Genesis speaks of the Garden of Eden not as a “once-upon-a-time” (to use George E. Ladd’s phrase), but as a geographical place, covered by the transcending consciousness, without any separation of that world into spiritual and secular. This understanding is shared by eco-theologian Sallie McFague, who sees the world as God’s household, the *whole* planet. For McFague, the whole

cosmic reality is composed of human beings living in interdependent relations with all other life-forms and earth processes. Drawing on the Greek word for ‘house’, ‘*oikos*’, as the source of our words ‘ecological’, ‘ecumenical’, and ‘economic’, McFague suggests the Christian concept of salvation should be seen as the flourishing of God’s household. If salvation means the well-being of all creation, not simply the salvation of souls for life in another world, then McFague continues, the catholicity of the church demands that “creation not be left out” and that “Jesus be loved as a world” (McFague 2008:33).

Steven Bouma-Prediger (2010) has suggested five interrelated factors that together have nurtured the exclusion of planet Earth from the scope of catholicity in successive centuries of missionary Christianity.

- The church has been “captive to modern Western culture” which severs God from creation and subjects creation to humanity’s rule.
- The church has accepted the “anthropocentrism of modernity” – a modernity that banished God, or rendered God harmless, and elevates people to be the measure of all things: *homo mensural*.
- The church has “made technology into a god” which creates a culture without moral foundations (2010:79).
- The church “has forgotten creation” and instead modern theology has fought between being personalized or politicized.
- The church has had a prevailing attitude of pride and condescension towards non-Christian wisdom. Colonialism has wreaked an enormous toll, affecting not just the economies and politics of the so-called developing nations. but also the very mind-set of the church (Bouma-Prediger 2010:78-80).

In contrast to this, the traditional Luo view of the universe sees humans not as the master of the universe, but as the middle of the living organisms, the friend, the companion and the user of universe’s bounty. As Kenyan theologian John Mbiti writes, “He has to live in harmony with the universe, obeying the laws of natural, moral and mystical order”, for if these are unduly disturbed, he continues then “it is man who suffers most” (Mbiti 1996:180). Christian mission has been captive to a theology lacking a deep concern for the cosmic scope of God’s work and love towards the universe as whole, resulting in the reduction of the Kingdom of God

into church activities (Gregersen 2015). As the Zimbabwean eco-theologian Edward Antonio states:

Ecologies are invariably tied up with people's livelihoods, which are themselves always understood and maintained in terms of rules, regulations, structures and institutions hedged on the one hand by a framework of ethical and moral knowledge about the requirement for sustainable relationships with nature. In rural communities, people quite literally live off nature, and they do so in a more immediate and direct sense than their counterparts in urban settings. Their knowledge of the world and their sense of reality are shaped by how they interact with the natural environment. (Antonio 1994:230).

Through the missionary colonialism, the people of Tanzania have been made to assume that the propositional statements, the creeds and confessions, are the defining marks of Anglican spirituality; and that there is nothing to learn from indigenous traditions and cosmologies. Bouma-Prediger's conclusion provides a possible way forward: "We must renounce the idols to which we have pledged our allegiance – the false gods of scientism, technicism, and materialism, among others – and return to a faith refined of hubris and marked instead by humility" (p.80).

4.5 Conclusion

It can be concluded that social disconnection and structural inequalities (that continues through various ways discussed above) are the direct result of the whole economic, social, ecological, and political domination. By being kept in an ecosocial situation, in which it is practically impossible to develop ecological consciousness and responsibility; these complex forces of colonial civilization have created a tension, not only between the local community, the church, the state, and the economy; but also between the crying exploited earth and her marginalised people.

Having explored the historical roots of the current ecological situation, three major points emerged. First, missionary Christianity imperiously sought the 'remaking Africa' through conversion, and failed to accept indigenous wisdom as an equal counterpart. This missionary pride and disdain over other traditions has made some contemporary scholars see Christianity as anti-ecological, anthropocentric and oppressive (Hallman 2009). Second, with the desire to supplant Luo cultural values with the formal education and written culture, the Bible has not been used to nurture a mutual relationship between God, Mother Earth and humans. It has been used to choreograph the transcendent foreign sovereignty and its embrace by the converts (Mitchell 2013). The Bible, instead,

remains largely oxygenated by the colonial and philosophical ideologies that influenced its translation, none of which are ecologically friendly. Third, today it is evident that the impact of missionary Christianity and secular modernity on Luo life is increasing in a myriad of ways, significantly the problem of social dysfunctionality.

Yet, it is hoped that the present ecological crisis may be provocative to Christian spirituality' which for so long has forgotten its role in caring for the earth and the wellbeing of our common planet. The situation is far from hopeless. As Walter Brueggemann (2002) puts it, "The seasons of our lives change." To counteract a paradigm shift missiologically, Brueggemann proposes a model of orientation, disorientation, and new orientation, to show the cyclical view of life and renewal. Brueggemann is optimistic that contemporary spiritual hegemonies (like ecological crisis) can be treated as a season of 'disorientation' that can be overcome by rediscovering the wellbeing and wisdom of nature, as richly embedded in the Scripture and ecological wisdoms of non-Christian communities, such as Luo cosmic mythology.

The ecological crisis of our time cannot be solved by any single approach, no matter how big and bold it may be. This is because ecology is not just about repairing nature, or releasing it from oppressive domination: it is also about people, their livelihoods and ways of engaging with the world. In other words, as Edward Antonio puts it, "the environment is the specific conjuncture of relationships between people, their local knowledge, the social structures in which these subsist and the outside world of rivers and seas, soil and land, space and time" (Antonio 1994:233).

In this regard, Falloux and Talbot (1993) suggest that "knowledge of societies is an essential starting point". However, such optimism towards social transformation in a modern context can only work if a mutual participatory approach is embraced. But such hope is futile if the "knowledge of society" is not formed as a result of conversations with the endogenous structures of traditional communities, and the moral economies which have carried them through generations. These ideas provide a hope oriented upon the gospel of *interconnectedness* between faiths, cultures, societies and organisms. To explore

this ecological optimism, in the light of contemporary eco-missiology and ecotheologies, is the task of the next chapter.

Chapter Five

Ecologies of *Aluora* and Alternative Approaches for Luo Cultural Sustainability

5.0 Introduction

Traditional cultural ecology has been the victim of intrusion by missionaries and colonialists who endeavoured to introduce ‘modern’ civilization. Contrary to expectations, these approaches to civilization became not only fruitless but detrimental, due to the exploitative forces of capitalism and the devastating impact it had on communities and the environment. Therefore, some scholars, such as Asian theologian Kim Yong-Bock (2014:219-231), are now arguing for the need to regard and respect the cultural heritages of indigenous people, and to seek to understand and digest their wisdom for life.

Albert Einstein, stated that “Problems cannot be solved at the level of consciousness in which they were created without requiring a substantially new manner of thinking if humankind is to survive” (Bergmann & Eaton 2011:11). Einstein’s criticism is indicative of the new manner of thinking needed to determine the scope and possibility of Luo cultural sustainability

The focus of this chapter is on the ecology of *aluora* (a bonding space of social locality, moral values and ecosystem reality) as an integrating means to explore the dimensions of Luo cultural sustainability. In today’s ecological crisis, *aluora*’s cosmic spirituality attempts to re-position Luo cultural discipline: where the spiritual is not a dimension of reality, nor is it a parallel reality; rather, it is that presence and power which flows through the inner heart of cosmological reality and primal vision of ‘the unbroken cycle’ of life-giving power, the cosmos.

By drawing on three dimensions of Luo people’s cosmic spirituality, namely the ‘Soil’, ‘Soul’, and ‘Society’, and in light of Bethwell Ogot’s notion of ‘behavioural environment’ (1979:6-7); this work will examine strategies for achieving integrative social sustainability, inspired by ‘culturally-conditioned’ moral traditions of abundant life. It will be argued that because physical life and development takes place in a physical space, past missionary and colonial influence (that led to the disintegration between social spirituality and ecological production)

has created problems both in managing natural resources and in moral traditions of human flourishing.

This chapter explores the interaction between social and ecological spirituality through the lens of the Luo people's cosmology of *aluora*. The term *aluora* (encircle or around) delineates a cyclical view of life. According to tradition, the *aluora* emerged in ancient Luo sociology but regained its cosmological intensity in early modern Luo sociology possibly between the 1630s and 1800s), specifically after their settlement in Nyanza Province (Ogot 1967:220ff). The language of *aluora* provides one of the most inclusive ecospace of Luo cultural ecology and macro-geography of their ecosocial interactions (Ominde 1979). In its broadest sense, the term *aluora* denotes the sociality of life within a certain part of the planet Earth. It places the inclusiveness of everything within the sacred space: ranging from the physical environment to the social well-being, and the entire commonwealth of life.

There are at least five reasons why the ecology of *aluora* may function as a radical approach towards ecosocial transformation.

1. It is now understood scientifically, theologically and culturally, that everyone's life is embedded in the matrix of ecological reality.⁷⁰
2. In the pre-colonial Luo era (Ogot 1967; 1979, 2003), what we currently refer to as "religion" versus "spirituality" were not distinct phenomena. Instead, they referred to beliefs about ultimate reality and established socio-cultural life values; that enabled people to cope with the challenges that are inherent in the lives of all humans, and the community of creation as living-dying creatures.
3. Christian religion has a growing presence in Africa, not only in terms of population, but also in terms of sharing in 'ways of giving meaning to life' (Atiemo 2013:15ff).

⁷⁰ For scientific discussion of this topic see, for example, Deepak Chopra and Menas Kafatos's more recent book, *You are the Universe: Discovering Your Cosmic Self and Why It Matters* (2017).

4. Current destructive powers, are rooted in modern Western civilization, with its global market capitalism, imperial hegemony and modern technology (Yong-Bock (2014:219).
5. Untold billions may be spent on capitalistic development initiatives and fervent mainstream (apologetic) theologians strive to keep faith with God. However, it must be recognized that ecological reality emanates from the very heart of Christian identity, and what finally matters is ecological reality.

Together with developing the Luo eco-theology of sustainability (in light of the ecology of *aluora*), this chapter investigates specifically five interrelated aspects of Luo cultural synthesis that have contributed to the foundations of their commonwealth of life; these include: Luo notions of pedagogical development, agrarian spirituality, living with other creatures, cultural belongingness, and their ecology of sacred places.

The suggestion is that the established churches in Tanzania lack sustained cultural legitimacy, they are without a strong sense of cosmological reality, and they have lost collective moral values for their religious spirituality. Therefore, the basic aim of this second investigation is to examine the facts and consider the scope of Luo cultural ecology as a basis for Luo eco-theology, and as a link with the contemporary discourses on sustainability. This is in light of the understanding that that the Christian Bible was at its very inception based on a cultural mandate or on ‘the totality of people’s way of life’ in J.N.K. Mugambi’s phrase (Mugambi 2002).

5.1 The Dimensions of Aluora—Developing Luo Cultural Ecology

The work of Suzanne Owen has argued that the rising culturally-shaped ecological spirituality is motivated by the need to “broaden conceptions of religion to include marginalized groups and ritual activity that cuts across boundaries established and maintained by the World Religions Paradigm” (2016:107). This would appear to be true in East Africa as the strong ecological, historical studies by John Iliffe and Bethwell Ogot, and the theological research by John Mbiti and Laurenti Magesa and others indicate. Much of this literature breaks with the dominant colonial tradition, by focusing on the pre-colonial wisdom traditions and ecological spirituality in order to challenge hegemonic ones. They carry a specific

mission to re-insert indigenous cosmology back into history; a history that has been adversely dominated by a European economic ideology, spirituality and political hegemony that has trampled on the indigenous cultural identity (Magesa 2014:178).

The concern for indigenous spirituality with moral ecology powerful enough for ecological reform within the respective communities has also come from the growing body of the agrarian readings of the Bible, specifically those provocative episodes which have gone back to the Scripture as a critical turning point for “preserving both communities and the material means of life” (Davis 2009:66). Drawing on such engagement of the Bible and community theologies, this chapter reconsiders the dimensions of Luo cultural ecology, often observed and practiced through the trilogy of *aluora*, namely: the Soil, the Society and the Soul of Life.⁷¹ It argues that the reciprocal relationships between Soil, Society, Soul of Life, relies on nothing else but on their intrinsic relationship: since they belong together, rejoice together and relate to each other, they enchant each other, and subsist by the cultural wisdom of the society.

5.1.1 The Soil as the Prism of Luo Ecology

At the heart of Luo people’s collective ecology lies the land (Soil). Apart from featuring how centrally and integrally land is to Luo lifeway, this section aims to take recognition that the land, as a symphony of material and life cycles, is infused with the infallibility of divine experience, emanating from the Hebrew notion of *adamah* that surfaces its life-giving power dynamics.

Given that these power dynamics have been recognized in Luo cultural ecology and anthropology over many past centuries, we shall use those empirical truths to argue that there seems to be a historical closeness between Hebrew/OT understanding of people/soil and Luo understanding of people/soil. The works of ecotheologians Sallie McFague (2008) and Richard Rohr (2013) who not only argue for the reconsideration of the place of land in theology but also petition for the land (soil) to be treated as *the body of God* himself. While adhering to McFague and Rohr’s petition, we argue that our common soil must be validated as the

⁷¹ For equivalent presentation about dimensions of ecology see for example, Satish Kumar’s “Three Dimensions of Ecology” in Vaughan-Lee’s *Spiritual Ecology* (2013:129-141).

greatest single treasure on which all living beings depend and transcend, and must be attended with earth-honoring faith and total social fidelity.

The land (Soil) where the Luo have settled is not only known to them as part of their *aluora* but more communally as representing the sociality of their identity and sociality of their community. This cosmological understanding of the soil as a life-giving source, Ogot (1967:155) argues, goes back to the 1600s when Luo society had permanent soil for their cattle, and maintained a state of co-existence and an expansive ecological relationship to nature that sustained their cultural enterprise. Since those days, the Luo people were well aware that the water which nourishes life and abundance is hosted by the soil. Although this tradition may have changed during the course of later tribal dispersion and assimilation (Ayot 1979), fortunately, the synthesis of co-existence between the cosmic reality and community prevailed leading to the creation of cultural norms which prevented ecological misuse or exploitation (cf. Kaoma 2012). To some extent, this pattern of belief, shared across the continent, as research shows (Mbiti 1969; 2002; Bediako 1992; Bujo 1992; 1998; 2006; Magesa 1997; 2014), helped to reduce ecological exploitation. Critically speaking, the rising ecological problems in Tanzania emanate especially from the mid-nineteenth century colonial invention of scientific civilization and the spirit of capitalism.

Recent research such as Van Dyke, Mahan, Sheldon and Brand's *Redeeming Creation* (1996) and Vaughan-Lee's *Spiritual Ecology* (2013) has helpfully raised our understanding of Soil (or Earth) as a living being that sustains all life and structures. But first and foremost, the Earth exists not just to sustain human life and its complex *anthropocosmic* systems and structures supporting endless prosperity of the human community, but to glorify God, her Creator and sustainer. The term *anthropocosmic* refers to a view of the human as having arisen from cosmological and ecological processes.

In religious ecology, however, the conversation regarding *anthropocosmic*, (Grim & Tucker 2014:43-4) claims, speaks of the long-term human struggle to discover our divine roles in creating mutually enhancing human-Earth relationship. While the vast majority of anthropocentric ethics and creativity have been so consuming and radically changed the face of the planet that geologists now call

period the anthropocene. It is important to make it abundantly clear in light of our research that our life-giving Earth/Soil is itself fragile and delicate. That is why it is imperative that faithfulness is always put what Larry Rasmussen has called ‘Earth-honoring faith’ before any search for success.

Really, Soil can be degraded, it can be washed away by erosion. It can be polluted, it can be dehumanized and conquered, but more seriously, it can also be marginalized by those who live and survive on it. Such new understanding in a deepening ecological crisis, regarding the ‘beingness’ and ‘well-being’ of soil, is critical of the past.

1. It criticises the capitalist mode of industrialisation which encouraged the emergence of what Marx called the *labourer* who is “free in a double sense, with no attachments to lands or guilds”, and established a “lasting basis of capitalist agriculture”. This then completes the separation of agriculture and rural domestic moral values of industry (see Dörre, et al 2009:25).
2. It decries the nineteenth-century mechanistic and dualistic anthropocentric ecology which dehumanized the Earth as a mindless resource to be conquered and exploited for human gains (Kirk 2000; McFague 2008; Wright 2010; Eisenstein 2013; Beck 2015).

The notion of double-freedom (with no attachments to lands or society) and the implicit degradation of the land was dangerously mistaken, since there can be no life without connection to soil and society. Any thought that marginalizes such thriving interconnection between the human community and soil, as many scientists and eco-theologians from around the globe have begun to argue, is destructive and oppressive.

Clearly, human beings are not independent from nature, but are intrinsically and ultimately dependent on nature (Antonio 1994; Bauckham 2015; Berry, R. J. 2011; Boff & Elizondo 1995; Jenkins 2013; Johnson 2015; Kauffman 2015; Kumar 2013; Magesa 2014; Moltmann 2015; Rohr 2013; Vaughan-Lee 2013; Wright, T. 2007, 2013). For that reason, it can be seen that the current ecological crisis is far

from hopeless if there is a change in attitude, and the perception of nature's wellbeing is rediscovered in the ecology of mind and hearts.

This new ecological vision provides once more an opportunity for the reconstruction of an expansive ecological relationship to nature, as well as the activation of cosmological spirituality: one which engenders nature through its cultural norms, rituals, and agricultural practice. The connection is culturally experienced through cyclical progression and natural orientation of cosmic movement; and this then requires a reconsideration of God and God's relationship to the soil, given that everything is connected to everything else through the land (Bouma-Prediger 2010). For Luo people, soil (*loh*) is the main dimension and dominant element of cultural identity, belongingness and interconnectedness, all-embracing relatedness and divine spirituality, as well as the prism of their cultural ecology and ethno-systematics (Kaoma, J. K. 2012; Kokwaro 1998; Mboya 1997).

Contemporary biblical scholars such as Christopher Wright (2010) have shown that the land was seen as a divine gift, a promised treasure, and the central theme of biblical faith and theology for life. This is seen especially in the Exodus narrative where it represents an act of redemption. In consequence, what redemption actually was for Israel must have a similar impact on the mission of God's people (2010, 97-113). As Israel suffered in Egypt politically, economically, socially, and spiritually, so the Promised Land was given as a great gift of redemption to sustain them integrally in those dimensions.

Until the 1990s, many biblical theologians were not aware of such an expansive state of the soil in ancient Israel's sociology. David Atkinson's book, *The Message of Genesis 1-11* provides a rather contradictory theology of creation, but is a good example of abstract theology as opposed to placed cultural ecology. Atkinson writes:

The poem of beauty and grandeur which forms the opening chapter of our Bibles is a hymn of praise to the majesty of God the Creator. That is not to say that it was necessarily written as hymn of worship. Rather, that countless believers through ages have found that this chapter evokes praise. Through its structured harmonies our hearts are tuned to the music of the heavens, and our minds are lifted to contemplate God as the source and sustainer of all that is. This chapter invites us to bow in humility before his creative world. It shows us our own place within the panorama of God's purposes for the whole of his creation (Atkinson 1990:15ff).

Atkinson's portrait is aesthetic, existentialist, anthropocentric; a landless theology of creation. To the theologians like Atkinson, the first morning of the universe from which the land and the whole creation community were brought forth, is nothing but a 'poem of beauty'; failing to recognise that 'the heavens' is not a distant ether, but the future of the present Earth (Wright 2014). Such unrooted eco-theology has no resonance with the Luo people or among other traditional landscapes. Brueggemann, in contrast to Atkinson, comments on the centrality of rootedness (placed or land-centeredness), which was the mother of all practical knowledge and ultimate meanings among the ancient Abrahamic faith:

Space means an arena of freedom, without coercion or accountability, free of pressures and void of authority. Space may be imaged as weekend, holiday, and is characterized by a kind of neutrality or emptiness waiting to be filled by our choosing. But, 'place' is a very different matter. It is a space that has historical meanings, where something has happened that is now remembered and that provides continuity and identity across generations. Place is space in which important words have been spoken that have established identity, defined vocation, and envisioned destiny. Place is space in which vows have been exchanged, a promise has been made, and demands have been issued. Place is indeed a protest against the unpromising pursuit of space. It is a declaration that our humanness cannot be found in escape, detachment, absence of commitment, and undefined freedom (Brueggemann 2002:4).

Brueggemann's distinctive separation of space and place revitalizes the status of place (land) for creation theology and eco-missiology, and calls upon the need to indigenize God's land as historical land for people and the entire community of creation within a specific society (place) and arena (space). It enables the biblical myth about Eden to be seen as an ancient or ancestral society comparable to the Luo *Simbi Nyaima*. As well as the similarities between biblical and Luo conception of the land and soil, my research also paid some attention to the differences. One obvious difference is that in a monotheistic context the earth can perhaps be seen as 'the body of God' as McFague observed, but the Luo cosmology is not monotheistic compared to Christianity—instead, the earth is inhabited by a whole range of spirits, divinities and transcendence.

Scientific developments, commercial interests, and an abstract Christianity have led to the demise of a reciprocal and reverential relationship with the soil and with others. To destroy African ancestral soil, according to Magesa (2014), is to annihilate the existence of the African people.

Instead we must assert and establish that all life and flourishing are connected to the soil, that landlessness leads to a disordered identity devoid of

meaning, and that only through a harmonious relationship with the ancestral land is cosmic spirituality and existence made possible. The soil is the hub of biblical theology for life, redemption, and the vital force with which the Christian mission for creation care should engage.

5.1.2 The ‘Soul of Life’ as a Turbine of Cultural Ecology

Accompanying the Luo cosmology of the life-giving source (Soil) is their understanding of the ‘Soul of Life’ as the turbine of the biospheric power that sustains their *aluora* and animates all lives therein. The Luo word *muya mar ngima* is the second key concept that can be variously translated as the ‘Spirit of Life’, the ‘Soul of Life’ or more universally as the *anima mundi* – the ‘Soul of the Life of the World’ (Haugen 2013). To distinguish it from all other spirits, *muya mar ngima* is sometimes described as *muya maler* (Holy Breath). As it will be seen, the Soul of Life is greater than other myriads of spirits or spiritual powers. While the Soul of Life, *muya mar ngima*, can be linked with other socially constructed forces of life and rebirth, its scope and intensity is greater than any other moral and intellectual forces of life that encouraged respect, participation, and collaboration among various social bodies. Unlike other forces of life, the Soul of Life generates life, sustains life, and presides over other forces of life (such as science, technology, spirits, religious ideology, culture, belief, money, etc.).

Mbiti’s *African Religions and Philosophy* distinguishes the difference between *muya mar ngima* and other spirits by categorizing spirits into two groups of *divinities*: ‘natural beings created by God’ and ‘Common spirits’. ‘Natural beings created by God’, says Mbiti, are ontologically associated with God and often stand for His manifestations or as the spiritual beings in charge of phenomena of nature. ‘Common spirits’ are widely regarded as dwelling in the woods, bush, forest, rivers, and mountains or just around the village. These he designates as a further group of personalities who have moved completely from the living-dead and have sunk into the distant horizons of Zamani period (2002:75-6, 79). The emergence of both groups is the result of the personification of spirits and may be because, ‘man may not want to imagine himself in an entirely strange environment when he becomes a spirit’ (2002:80).

This anthropocentric pneumatology presents itself as partaking in the *anima mundi* and in the myriad nature of the spiritual universe, but they are not the *anima mundi* themselves. Whilst Mbiti's characterization of spirits is helpful, it fails to distinguish the Soul of Life as the source of all other divinities and spirits. The Luo *muya maler* or *muya mar ngima* is taken to be a 'Mothering soul' or 'Spirit of Life' from which all created powers and other socially constructed forces of life emanate. Thus, the Luo Bible translates the 'Soul of Life' as '*Roho mar Nyasaye*' which means the 'God's Holy Breath' (*Chakruok*/Genesis 1:1-3, NIV), using a Kiswahili Christian term in place of the Luo *muya maler*. The use of the word *Roho* in the Luo Bible rather than *muya maler* can be compared to poor translations for God discussed in (Chapter 3), and may be regarded as revealing the translator's reluctance to use the traditional word (*muya maler* or *muya mar ngima*) for the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God. Such theological hegemony has made some contemporary Luo and non-Luo Christians see cosmic spirituality as an individualised encounter rather than a shared divine experience (Wangiri 1999). The roots of this are found in the nineteenth-century evolutionary theories of religion promoted by thinkers who struggled to revolutionize non-Western religious cosmologies by demonizing them as 'primitive religions' or animism. The term *animism* was invented by the English anthropologist E.B. Tylor (1832-1917) who used it first in an article in 1866 and later in his book *Primitive Culture* (1871).

Tylor's theory of religion misunderstood 'animism' as a primitive stage in the taxonomy of religious civilization. Tylor suggested that such 'primitive religions' were subject to further evolution before they could culminate in a mature monotheism. However, although the emergence of Tylor's religious evolution was celebrated in missionary Christianity (and remains prevalent in some pneumatological literature), it is actually fundamentally flawed and misleading cosmologically (Beck 2015:7). The term *anima* (soul/spirit/breath) is not a term limited to Christian vocabulary, and similarly the cosmology of *anima(ism)* is not limited to a church or conservative understanding of the Spirit(s). Since the advent of Tylor's theory, the term *animism* has come to be a common designation of the traditional religious cultures of African societies, –a designation that never investigates deep traditions of the intersection between religious ethics and

ecology, but every so often dominated by religio-cultural politics of exclusion and domination.

In *Rethinking Christian Identity*, Medi Volpe (2013) studied the cosmological identity of medieval Western Christianity and by re-examining the writings of Gregory of Nyssa. Seeing Gregory as perhaps the most inclusive account of Christian formation from ancient sources that provides what Volpe calls ‘vista point’ (see chapters. 4 and 5). Tracing Gregory’s thinking on the soul, sin, and Christian formation, Volpe submits to us two fruitful convictions. First, that the scope of Gregory’s thinking covers the now-divided disciplines of theology and spirituality, for the way he considered theological topics such as identity and formation, is not separated from the spiritual practices he finds appropriate to orthodox Christian belief.

Second, that Gregory’s soul language provides a landscape for ‘a unified theological concept of the soul, in which the senses, desire, memory, imagination, and human attention to God are connected’ (Volpe 2013:181). Both during his own time and beyond, Gregory’s theology of the soul, Volpe claims, remain indispensable ancient source to understanding the anatomy of Christian cosmology, faith, and the intersection between these two and the soul of life. With time, of course, the Soul of Life was increasingly understood to be bearing God’s image, mirroring his transcendence, and moving endlessly towards increasing participation in the operation of divine love and formation. A more reverential cosmology of the Soul of Life was developed by St Francis who understood the *anima* as a way of being together with cosmic reality. As Leonardo Boff states in *Saint Francis*, this ‘led him to a confraternization with all strata of reality’: superior (the Most High God), interior (intimate archaeology), and exterior (ecological reality) all of which demonstrate his cosmic spirituality (Boff 1982:45). Unfortunately, from that time Christian ecological spirituality was then largely neglected until the 1960s, when Lynn White Jnr pioneered an emerging Christian interest in this field. (White 1967:1205).

John V. Taylor understands the Soul of Life as a generating and sustaining power of life ‘which from time to time marks every man’s relationship with the world around him and with whatever reality lies within and behind that world’

(Taylor 1972:8). Drawing on the root word for spirit/soul *ruach* (Hebrew), *pneuma* (Greek), and *spiritus* (Latin), Taylor argued that all of them means ‘wind’ or ‘breathe.’ Even the Luo fierce wind (*nyakoi*), and the breath of a living organism may be linked to the root meaning of ‘breath’. Taylor noted that, the Old Testament distinguishes between *nepesh* (life-force) and *ruach* (soul/spirit). For Taylor, both ancient Hebrews and other tribal peoples often associated themselves to *nepesh* (life-force) through ritual sacrifices of ‘blood’ while *ruach* is a different kind of power inherent in man but a more invisible go-between known to Christians as the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God (Taylor 1972:7).

Taylor’s understanding of *ruach*, as an interplanetary power of communication between us and the rest of terrestrial community, challenges an individualised perception of the Holy Spirit. Taylor’s pneumatology disputes Enlightenment dualisms in Christian theology and reunites heaven and earth, spirit and matter, in a spirituality of immanent transcendence. Such transcendental cosmology contests the view that the Spirit as *ruach* is biblically understood as a ‘force field’, as suggested by Trinitarian theologian Jürgen Moltmann (Moltmann 1992). The notion that *ruach* (breath or wind) is distinct from *anima mundi* and superior to animism has similarly been countered by eco-pneumatologists, such as Catherine Keller, who challenge Moltmann’s reductionism. She describes other elements of earth theology, or *eartheology*, such as wind, water, and the greening power of the solar fire above all of which interact turbulently within the earth. She submits that these ‘field forces’ are invisible but physical. Whilst some of them are invisible geo-biologically, their earthen life-form mediates God’s power to other earth creatures through their physical presence on earth, in geo-biological bodies, and in every metaphorical body – social, cosmic or theological – with its terrestrial ground (Keller 2007:73-76).

Keller’s theology of the ecospirit attempts to overcome dualistic Christian pneumatologies by integrating ‘force fields’ of life and sustainability with transcendental power based on the terrestrial ground; and by rediscovering a more communitarian philosophy of the Soul of Life. Taking *Muya mar ngima* in its widest sense as the ‘supreme source of life’, the Luo people use this language usually to specifically refer to every source of life including the origins of life, the intrinsic capacity for growth, and in relation to living environment and

cosmological reality such as *ler* (light). They believe that it is the driving force, a sacred energy seen as solar energy which regulates all social activities, whether they be economic, ritual or spiritual praxis. As such, the scope of *Muya mar ngima* goes beyond everything created: informing cultural identity, memory and the heritage of ancestral spirits and immanent presence of mysterious reality, God (Mboya 1997; Odaga 1983; 2011).

An attempt to integrate *ler* (light) and the Soul of Life is not only a tribal view, but a universal cosmology. George Fox, founder of the Society of Friends (1624-1691) insightfully says: ‘If ye dwell in the light which was before the earth, with it ye will preserve the tender plants’ (Fox cited in Clinebell 1996:89). It is intercultural cosmology that regards ‘Life’ as coming from where nothing has been except the Soul of Light, from whom everything, including humanity, is constantly sublimated into something beyond the reach of time, and subjected to continuous participation in this process of cosmic ‘sublimation’ that constitutes the essence and meaning of life (Kobia 2003:17-8). Fox considered ‘Light’ as the first born of the Soul of Life, the eldest ‘creature’ who witnessed the creation of the life-giving power, the Earth. This is described in Genesis (1-3) and in other traditional myths. Consequently, this pneumatological worldview and the relationship between the Soul of Life and the life-giving power has evolved over time, yet it still remains inadequately examined. Keller characterises ‘this compacted mass of interplanetary dirt called the ‘Earth’ as having ‘two primary products: soil and atmosphere’ (Keller 2007:71). These two elements compose terrestrial climate, which fostered the ancient Hebrew cosmology of *ha-shamayim et ha-arets*, (heaven and earth) and other religious creation stories; nevertheless the earthing of the ecospirit is yet to be fully unveiled.

Hebrew cosmology describes the ‘Earth’ as *producing* ‘heaven and earth’ and as with other religious narratives sought to construct meaning, to provide a brief history of terrestrial time and to describe our place in space (Gribbin, 2012). Similarly, this can be expanded religiously to include the notion of the green and deep blue face of God in the world (cf. Shaw & Francis’s *Deep Blue*), who ‘ensouls’ all things on Earth with sacred purpose and divine power (Wallace 2013:197-211), or to see the whole Earth as the ‘divine body of God’ (McFague 2008; Rohr 2013). All of these wide-ranging cosmologies imaginatively expand

the dimensions of religious cosmology; exploring the interrelationships between physical and spiritual, material and immaterial, life and light, as well as heaven and ether through the Soul of Life, the *anima mundi*. Kärkkäinen *et al.* (2013) present various interdisciplinary approaches to pneumatological theology driven by an intuition that such an expansive appreciation may both inform the construction of a more robust cosmological spirituality and enable us to reimagine the vitality of the Soul of Life in the Spirit-filled world.

Similarly, Kim (2013:248), argues that the prevailing adversarial understanding of animism must be overcome if we are to benefit from sources of the spirit-filled world theology. The vision of the Holy Spirit, Kim claims, is ‘a facilitating grace that works with and around the human community and other spirits to bring about reconciliation and peace’ (2013:254). The Soul of Life (*muyamar ngima*) as a facilitating grace is known to Luo cosmology of *aluora* as both ecospiritual and socio-political: in an ecospiritual sense it is seen as the origin of life itself; but in the sociopolitical sense it is a continuing reminder of society’s ecological history, and the intergenerational ascription that the biosphere that sustains us and the world in which our society is inhabited belongs to none other than the transcending reality – God. The identity and character of this gracious God makes all the difference in relation to reconciliation, peace, and sustainability within a given society (*aluora*).

5.1.3 The Society as a Sacred Milieu to Luo Cultural Ecology

A third dimension of Luo cultural ecology compatible to the Soil and the Soul of Life, with relevance in relation to sustainability is ‘Society.’ Society has been a prominent aspect of the Luo ecology of *aluora*. According to both the oral tradition of *aluora* and the Luo cultural myth of *Simbi Nyaima*, ‘Society’ identifies three aspects of the cosmic unit, namely

- *dala* – relating to man’s community and domestic animals
 - *gwen’g* – relating to particular land and territory
 - *aluora* – relating to atmosphere, divine transcendence, and totality.
- (cf. Odaga 1983; Maseno 2011).

Therefore, ‘Society’ is a bonding space and ontological reality; within which all aspects of life and interplanetary interactions are unified and integrated into a single cosmological reality that interrupts ordinary, time and space. Similarly, Bethwell Ogot argues it is a geographical place which embodies human being’s relationship to the environment, ecological history, cultural inheritance and the ‘behavioural environment’. These governed the group’s attitudes, spatial alternatives, and awareness of action in both time and place. As such, the group had a duty to transmit these values to the next generation. In sub-Saharan Africa, this cosmological tradition is known as *Ubuntu*, which is a philosophy of life that places much wisdom and emphasis on interrelationships among the ‘beings’ and their ‘beingness’ rather than ‘things’ (Kaoma 2013; Magesa 2014).

Luo society is a place and space within which every aspect of life is integrated into a holistic system, and where wealth and material prestige are not transcendental elements of social pride and development.⁷² Therefore, everyone both individually and collectively is responsible for serving it in turn, by safeguarding the dual interaction between the land and totality, and to interact by using traditional systems that allowed their subsistence-oriented economy to be practised successfully (Herring 1979:77). Of course, no agricultural systems and settlement patterns ever existed without some sort of environmental implications, but these were recognised and addressed as the studies of agriculture and ecology in nineteenth-century East African societies by Helge Kjekshus (1996) and Beinart and Hughes (2007) evidence (cf. Ogot 1979:1-7).

Increasing ecological break-down and man-centred cosmological spirituality in sub-Saharan Africa have made scholars examine the possible roots of these problems from the nineteenth-century onwards. Historical studies of ecology in Kenya and Tanzania (Ogot (1979), Iliffe (1979) and Kjekshus (1977; 1996) note the spread of disease and plagues such as sleeping sickness (*Trypanosoma gambiense*), smallpox, the rinderpest and the sand-flea or jigger-flea (*Sarcopsylla penetrans*). The 1890s saw explosive expansion of ecological failures and social change in the region. According to Ogot, it is not only the physical environment, man’s activities, and patterns of diseases in both man and

⁷² Appendix 1. Fieldwork Report I, 4.

animals that have been changed by these plagues; but cultures and the behavioural environment.⁷³ These destructive events were unknown before, and the lack of effective remedies made the situation catastrophic in several East African societies. Ogot, Kjekshus and Iliffe agree that most of them were inadvertently transferred by the colonial authorities (cf. Kjekshus 1996:126-60).

The ecological implications of cultures and moral change that Ogot refers to as the ‘behavioural environment’ were based on an intensive study of Luo oral literature as is seen in both of his major works (1967; 1979). Sociologically, the Luo people do not divorce religion from public discourse, because the two are perceived as intrinsically connected and always treated inseparably; since whatever affects either, ultimately affects both. This is unlike in the contemporary West where they are seen as distinctive areas of knowledge. To this day, the huge impact of the European incursion into Africa is articulated in Norman Etherington’s *Missions and Empire* (2005) and has been influencing contemporary Luo people’s life in a way that is rarely compatible with their traditional social conditions.

This has been a matter of concern, not only among the Luo people, but since the 1960s it has been an area of interest to sympathetic Anglican theologians such as John V. Taylor. He critiqued what he termed ‘classroom religion’ by which he meant the exclusionary approach used by missionaries to spread the gospel in Uganda. For Taylor, such an approach was destructive and irrelevant socially, because it excluded cosmological reality and ‘the unbroken cycle’ of traditional Ugandan life in its totality (Taylor 1958; 1963). Similarly, in *The Christian Ministry in Africa*, Bengt Sundkler notes that there is a theological need to rediscover “fundamental facts of the African interpretation of existence and the universe” (1962:100) if African societies have to overcome what Kwame Bediako (Ghana) has called ‘cultural partiality’ which accompanied the spread of Christianity (Bediako 1992:251).

These socio-cosmological ideas re-emerged in the 2000s through the work of another Anglican theologian, John Karanja. Focusing on the paradox of

⁷³Furthermore, all accounts agree that these destructive events (with the exception of famine) were unknown before and nobody seemed to know what to do about them, making them become more catastrophic in several East African societies. Both Ogot, Kjekshus and Iliffe agree that most of them were invented by the colonial authorities (cf. Kjekshus 1996:126-60).

encounter between his Kikuyu cosmology and Anglican missionary culture, Karanja pointed out that the “missionary worldview posed additional challenges and problems to the traditional Kikuyu worldview”. He suggests that the conflict emerged primarily in relation to two expressions: in relationship between individuals and society, and in the sphere of personal moral growth. Although Kikuyu culture was dynamic and adaptive, argues Karanja, the Kikuyu Anglican missionaries tended to develop ‘a replica’ of its English mother culture rather than accommodating ‘the realities of Kikuyu culture’ (Karanja 2000:254-82).

Due to this unresolved tension, says Karanja, the Kikuyu Anglican church became a product of a two-way exploration of tensions between the established Kikuyu culture and invented Kikuyu belief and practice (p.259). Karanja’s observation correlates the situation among the Luo people already noted. In the majority of studies focused across sub-Saharan Africa, mission activities produced micro-societies within the established society. That is, in their attempt to preach the gospel (which addresses the individual’s personal responsibility to and relationship with God) to the people of the East African region, Laurenti Magesa argues, five major attitudes were characterized, namely: derision, exclusion, imposition, passivity, and individualism (Magesa 2002:95).

Yet these attitudes were not entirely the creation of missionaries *per se*, but of the European socio-cultural and scientific civilization reigning at the time. As the children of social Darwinism and European colonialism, Magesa maintains that most colonial missionaries to East Africa preached an exclusionary culture, which made people gradually develop a conscience that was more and more individualistic rather than collective.

Actually, such individualistic soteriology has been imperfectly regarded as referring to the redemption of individuals from their sins, so that they might live eternally in another world; rather than a collective experience of renewed well-being of all creation, “the flourishing of God’s household” (McFague 2008:33). Or as the early theologian Irenaeus puts it, “The glory of God is every creature fully alive.” Such an individualistic sociology of religion was a significant factor in the Luo Christians’ alienation from their traditional shared cosmological reality and established ecological ethics, or, in Ogot’s phrase, their ‘behavioural environment’.

The current hunger for solutions to this situation can only be satisfied adequately by spiritual, religious, or cultural systems of belief and practice⁷⁴. The notion that humankind and nature exist as independent entities demotivates the value system underlying the behavioural environment of the society. Herzog refers to this as “the moral economy of the peasant” that always operated under the lasting sociological reality of the society’s traditional reciprocity and ecological orientation. (1994:194-214)

Ancient Luo society was largely agriculturalist; and contemporary Luo society will continue to depend on agriculture, and to live as extended families within a single *aluora* for the future. The Luo concept of ‘society’ has never been allegorical, but has historically accumulated memories and lived experiences connected to a land or identified through a certain ecological attitude. To overcome the rising ecological challenges requires the appropriation of those moral values and social traits, with which they safeguarded the integrity of their community. By so doing, they will sustain their cosmological relationship to the life-giving power and to those who, according to Michael Kirwen, ‘are deceased but still alive in the memory of their society and in the world of Spirits’ (Kirwen 1979:217). There is a need to preserve the concept of ‘one earthed community’ of life under the mysterious reality, God, to give a hermeneutically and culturally oriented scholarship aimed at maintaining the ‘richness’ and ‘integrated’ view of life as it is experienced by our native society (Mboya 1965; 1997).

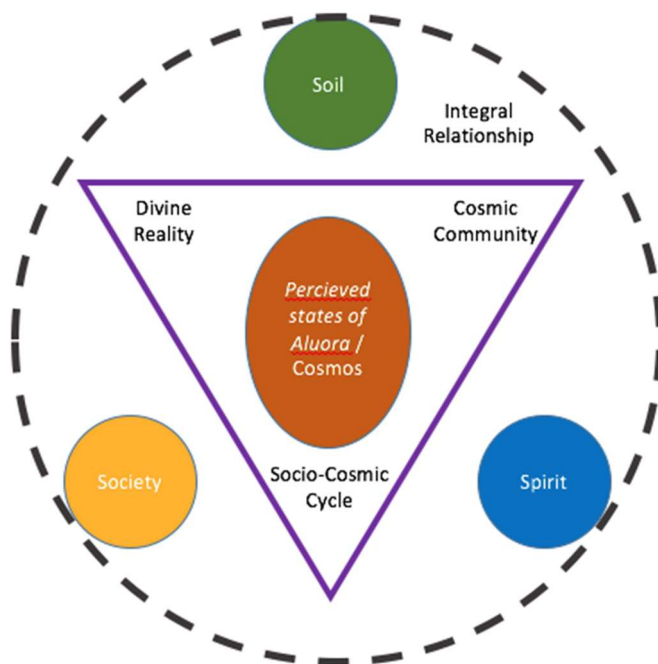
‘Society’ is more than a body of individuals who are living together: a group of persons associated together for religious, cultural, scientific, political, technological, or other purposes parallel to the essential ethos of *shalom* (Hallman 2009:8). The ecological understanding of the society is seeking to reconceptualise the relationships within that society, which are established between its members, its institutions and nature (Boff 2009:237). It demands that we cease to regard ourselves as ecological proprietors and recognise that our economic, political, social, educational, urban and agricultural issues must come under moral consideration, as they are inseparable parts of God’s society. As the Patriarch Bartholomew says, “every destruction of the natural environment caused by

⁷⁴ See Appendix 2. Fieldwork report II, 4.

humanity constitutes an offense against the Creator Himself and ourselves” (Bartholomew & Chryssavgis 2012:195).

Luo cultural ecology has a triple dimension of the cosmic movement characterized by the Soil, the Holy Soul of all Life, and the Society. In this context, cultural ecology can be summed up as the concept of life which demands the active involvement of Luo people to live in relationship with all persons on earth, of whom only a few are human. While there is a need to stop the deculturation of

Figure 5: dimensions of Luo cultural ecology and cosmological spirituality



cultural spirituality, there is also a profound need to reconnect with the past; and to re-traditionalize these dimensions of *aluora* into every aspect of life and spirituality, in order to regain a more integrative sense of interbeing, a more expansive sense of identity, and a more expansive ecological relationship to nature within the society.

These dimensions of Luo cultural ecology and cosmological spirituality can be summarised as a cosmologically-shaped social concept in which every aspect of life and sustainability is integrated into a holistic system and connected to a living life-giving power, as can be seen through Figure 5 above.

This pioneering representation of traditional Luo cosmology has been developed to emphasize Luo’s cosmological worldview and interconnections and interrelationships within the biosphere of the Earth (soil), Spirit (atmosphere), and Society (earthly creatures/community) as well as the complex balance and flux of interrelationships. Such interconnections are not scientifically proven, rather this cosmology articulates a vision of creation that is coherent with science and the

biblical creation story. Further to that, this tripartite approach represents Luo's traditional orientation of natural seasons through cyclical progression.

This understanding of the interconnection between the Soil, Soul and Society and between cosmic reality, divine Power, and cosmic community is pivotal in reckoning our 'ecological history' (Ogot 1979; Kokwaro 1998) through memories of the past, and more broadly for understanding the Spirit-filled universe and its natural cycle (cf. Magesa 2014). To secure this socio-ecological vision, some interrelated cultural practices were generically employed to sustain the practicality and flourishing of this cosmological view spiritually, socially, educationally and economically. The next section of this chapter re-examines ecological aspects of these traditional practices in order to develop Luo socio-ecological synthesis.

5.2 Cultural Synthesis—Rediscovering Luo Cosmology

The way nature is treated, Andrew Kirk (2000) argues, 'depends largely on the cultural norms of any given society.' Based on this cosmological reality, the present section extends its development of Luo cosmology by focusing, more specifically, on Luo cultural synthesis as an attempt to illustrate Luo cultural understanding of the planet. It aims to formulate alternative proposals to solve the rising ecological problems in the light of society's cosmological awareness, practice, and spirituality before the incursion.

The primary commitment of traditional Luo society has been their cultural preservation and transformation but this has been deeply challenged by the incursion of colonial missions and civilisations; those who saw themselves as bringing liberation from a dark past and bitter present to a better and brighter future. However, as Freire notes, invaded cultures have always been resistant to any notion that seems destructive of their identity (Freire 1993:160-4).

It appears that only through cultural synthesis is it possible to reduce the catastrophic implications of the rising ecological crisis, social disintegration and moral decay. Dr George Okoth, for example, states: "As an Anglican theologian I would say that all Christian people should be environmentalists by standing against the destruction of the environment and by blowing the whistle on any technological enterprise that might have environmental side effects in their communities" (Okoth 2016, Appendix 2, Fieldwork report II, p.3-4). Similarly, Mecka Ogunde argues:

‘About the whole agenda of ecological disasters in Tanzania, it is evident that the only way out is for our masses to return to their roots and respect our traditional values of handling our environment. There should be a theological approach which values our traditional way of life’ (Ogunde 2016, Appendix 2, Fieldwork report II, p.2-3).

These voices call upon other theologians to be advocates of traditional ways of life that are friendly to the environment and affirm the need to remain vigilant against invasive cultures, technologies, and economic organizations with destructive economic modalities. The task of cultural synthesis is to raise ‘people’s conscious and reflexive realization of who they are and to whom they belong’ (Knighton 2005:16). This section examines some ecological aspects of Luo cultural synthesis in relation to their traditional understanding of all aspects of life.

5.2.1 Cultural Belongingness and Eoidentity

Pre-incursion Luo cosmology was endlessly self-conscious about its cultural identity and continually reflected on their ecological history and their cultural fibres of social inclusivity. The governing culture of the day was also characteristically aware, at the same time, that adherence to cultural law, to customs, to tradition, and to the collective behavioural environment, makes them belong to and be rooted in a particular socioeconomic, ecological condition, and political reality. Indeed, in the broader “African worldview, ‘belonging’ is a central principle of being human” (Magesa 2002:96). Similarly, Walter Brueggemann argues that in the Old Testament the domain of ‘belonging’ functioned essentially to characterize Israel’s theological foundation in YHWH and its historical connection to socioeconomic, territorial, and political realities (Brueggemann 2014:1-69). In short, cultural belonging is one of the primary characteristics of traditional societies, and is to be seen in their inhabited eco-identity and a coherent resistance to invasive threats, such as those posed by colonialists.

John V. Taylor described this worldview as a fundamental sense of ‘belonging’ *to* and *from* a particular *place*, culture, or history. In his groundbreaking work *The Primal Vision* (1963:109), Taylor said:

Taking the Bible as a whole we can find no conception of man as an individual existing in and for himself, nor is its attention focused upon the individual’s relation to God. The Christian can never truly say ‘I am a man’, but only ‘I am in Man’; he exists not in his identity but in his involvement. We are members of one another by the virtue of the

biological links of family and race, by virtue of our interdependence in society and culture, by virtue of the history and nationality that bind us to a particular past and future.

Taylor's understanding of existing through 'involvement.' laid a strong foundation for what may be regarded as a 'theology of interdependence'. In most indigenous traditions, like that of Luo people, the awareness of interdependence is a synonym for corporate living, and individuals cannot be seen except in their relation to others. Practically, this theology of interdependence is subversive to individualistic and exclusionary Western mythology inherent in colonial religious education. Examining traditional Ugandan culture, Taylor's modern revaluation of traditional African cosmology, morality and theology, substantiates his argument that cultural belongingness is constructed within discourse and in the interplay between divine wisdom, incarnation and human genealogy, within *place* and *history*. This 'cultural belongingness' is not oriented toward unnatural portraits of nature, but is intrinsically subject to a *place*, the natural object of belongingness. This cosmological assumption suggests that nature is best considered through place, that is, 'through reflection on the meaning of specific, concrete places as environments' (Clingerman 2011:147).

Eco-theologians have begun to discuss 'nature' in the light of experience of places strongly associated with nature (McFague 2008:27; Jenkins 2008:25-7) or in the light of cosmic-belongingness through incarnation. Incarnation, Bauckham (2015) argues, "combines the universality of God the eternal Son with the human and creaturely particularity of Jesus". It is through the universal interconnectivity of creation, its relatedness to all other humans and to the rest of creation, that it is constructed and sustained (Bauckham 2015:50).

Through incarnation, the land, space and creatures are closely linked, and often 'incarnation' is used to animate them with divine roots of existence and bind them mysteriously to their cosmic belongingness. Therefore, as John Mbiti (2002:27) argues, anything separating people from these ties will bring disaster to family and community life. Some scholars refer to this state of belongingness to the land as a 'geo-collective entity' in which people are tied together by the principles of solidarity (Maposa 2016:430), or in a state of sharing and belonging to common ecological values, traditions, culture and historical identity (Sacks 2011; 2015). The virtue of cultural belongingness to a common history, culture, and ancestral commonwealth of life was begun according to (Joshua (24:2) 'long

ago' by their pagan ancestors prior to the Abrahamic religious civilization (Drane 1987:40).

The ecology of *place* and belongingness, as Marion Grau describes it, 'knows its biblical traditions of prophecy and protest – it listens to voices that represent the needs of the land and people, and witnesses to the unsustainability of ideologies, technologies, and lifestyles, as well as encouraging necessary changes of heart and hand' (Grau 2007:434).

Historical intuition from the archaeological conception of the past ecosocial spaces believe that interdependence between the human community and nature has a long history of ecosocial relationship. This antiquated intuition is also evident in the historical episodes of Luo ecology and in their oral experience of belonging (Mboya 1997). The Luo people have always lived in a shared locality with a deeply rooted sense and culture of 'belongingness' that traces its originality back to C.E.1000 when this people group emerged (Ayot 1979; Odinga 2013; Ogot 1967; Okello 2002). Despite their interregional migration and subsequent interaction with other ethnic societies, this people did not desecrate their cultural sense of belongingness to ancestral places be it by virtue of biological links, cultural history, or by traces of their cosmological identity. This cultural belongingness was often ignored or misunderstood by the missionary movements whose programmes were largely focused on the 'remaking of humanity' (Maposa 2016; Mombo 2016; Moyo 2009). In summation, the cultural synthesis of belongingness does not deny the contribution of missionary spirituality as an integral part of its modern history, but seeks to develop the people's understanding of ecological places and the creation narrative. This will lead to a restructured society where every aspect of life is integrated into a holistic history, identity, culture, innovation and spirituality.

5.2.2 Rituals, Sacred Places, and Fullness of Life

John Kokwaro and Timothy Johns' research published as the *Luo Biological Dictionary* (1998) studied the development of the ethno-systematics tradition in pre-colonial Luo cultural ecology. Culturally, it illustrates a possible atmosphere which influenced the intensification of symbolic rituals, such as persistent practice of *dolo* (remission of sins or the concept of atonement in theological language) that emerged when the people rose from ungodliness to

sacredness. This was strengthened by the need to promote sacred space and the growth of ritual from the perspective of the religious man's experience of time and nature.

Similarly, Cohen & Odhiambo (1989) and Kjekshus (1996) recorded accounts specifically in relation to indigenous planning and adaptability in response to profane situations and ecological changes among tribal-communities in East Africa. These public discussions over pre-colonial cultural settings and ecological traditions has received growing scholarly attention in recent years, not least because of the increasing ecological crisis. In *Spiritual Ecology* (2013) Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee identifies a central but rarely addressed aspect of this ecological crisis as a 'forgetfulness' of the sacred nature of creation and how this affects our relationship to the environment.

Now there is a pressing need to articulate a spiritual response to the ecological crisis and to rediscover the basics of cultural ecology. The assumption is that to realise a sustainable future for the Luo people requires a clear knowledge of the basics of life and the ecological situation in the region (see Ominde 1979:11). The analysis of tribal-ecology, as seen in the works of John V. Taylor, John Mbiti, Bolaji Idowu and Harry Sawyer, examined the interrelationships of tribal-cultures with their geographical traditions and each other. It was a theology of the economy of nature and ecological spirituality in an African rhythm; one that saw the need to re-insert indigenous people's cosmology back into history as a vital source for religious cosmology and sacred economic actions.⁷⁵ Clifford Geertz (1926-2006) understood the economy of interrelationships of cultural communities with nature and each other as the primal cause behind the creation of many traditional cultures across the world (Geertz 1973:90). Similarly, Magesa (1997:3), found that in many sub-Saharan African societies, cultural ethics of abundant life emerged to motivate 'the quality of the emotional life it supports, and the way one ought to behave while in it'.

It is this relationship of symbols to meaning, and particularly human meaning that makes them such a fundamental aspect of religion. Magesa regards 'sacred symbols' as relating to ontology, cosmology, aesthetics and morality,

⁷⁵ For further study on the same subject see S.H. Ominde "Ecology and Man in East Africa" in B. Ogot's *Ecology and History in East Africa* (1979), 9-23.

where their peculiar power comes from their presumed ability to identify themselves with values at the most fundamental level. Magesa (2014) describes *Kwaya* cosmology where sacred symbols and moral ethics were always sustained to assure the safety of natural resources from those of malign intent; and to prevent those communal resources such as natural wells, sacred hills, forests, and animals from being misused in any way (2014:89-98). Drawing on Geertz (1968), Magesa substantiates that ‘religious meanings’ are contained in a certain number of sacred symbols; that are most abundantly expressed in rituals and myths of a given culture; in a way that explains their origin, purpose, and meaning of the world and humanity’s place in it.

Symbolic rituals employ symbolism, where objects such as *dolo* or Christian sacraments represent real entities, and ritual enactments of events represent real events. However, Eisenstein notes that like language and arts, “symbolic ritual evolved gradually from a time before separation, when symbol and object were one”. He continues: “rituals only became symbolic when the spirit became abstracted from physicality, when divinity became separated from nature, and that only happened when technology and culture created a separate human realm, especially when agriculture placed nature in an adversarial role” (2013:95). However, such a view is problematic as it fails to recognise the original purpose that led to the persistent growth of ritual; or that the symbolic rituals of sacredness are a reality of a wholly different order from other ‘natural realities’, be they cultural or technological (Eliade 1959; Geertz 1973; Magesa 1997; Owen 2016).

Indigenous people are place-based societies, and at the centre of those places are the most sacred sites, where the communities’ relationships with the Creator are reaffirmed. (cf. Magesa 2014; Odaga 2011). This is the religious ecology of life; one that has influenced the development of the Luo people’s fabric of religious cosmologies; woven by the cultural belief that human beings are a part of everything that is beneath, in the deep blue above and all around. These traditional beliefs about places, creatures, and spaces were misunderstood by the western missionaries and colonial powers who gradually de-ritualised and de-sacralised these places, leading to an individualistic culture (see Kaoma’s *God’s Family, God’s Earth*, 2013). Such oppressive spirituality is now critiqued by writers such as McFague, Rohr and Wright, leading to research regarding the

reinterpretation and reconsideration of ‘sacred places/sites’ in the ancient traditions. Commenting on cosmological spirituality of Greco-Roman tradition, Dieter Gerten writes:

In the Greco-Roman world, it appears that almost every spring had a sacred status for the simple fact that it provided water. The Romans even celebrated a festival of the springs in October, when they were full again after the long and dry southern European summer. Other springs, especially hot ones, were visited in order to make use of their assumed healing properties, and those who were ill often resorted to the use of thermal waters, for example, by incubation, that is, by sleeping in temple rooms encircling the water source, so as to receive healing dreams. The cleanliness of freshwater was believed to remove not only illness but also impurities in general. As an example of the latter function, the ancient Greeks habitually used the clear water of springs and streams for the ritual washing of statues and other representations of gods, for bathing newly-wed couples and newborn children, and for other initiations, especially in the various mystery forms (Gerten 2008:35)

Gerten argues that the presence or absence of the spiritual relationship of people with their environment is a crucial determinant in their dealing with nature. Traditional beliefs hold that nature has its own character and integrity, one that should be safeguarded reverentially, and where the interdependence between man and the cosmos is animated by the transcendental reality (Mbiti 1970; Bujo 1998:215; Kaoma 2012; Nkansah-Obrempong 2013). This affinity may be seen in the light of the Gospel of John that depicts the Cosmic-Christ as the creator who revered the creation, and redeemed it through his atoning death to renew its sacredness.

Sacred places are important as places of sacred memories for the society, demonstrating the ‘venerative cosmological customs’ of a given people (Magesa 1997) and enshrining the ritual relations between the living and the dead (Mbiti 2002). There is a natural connection between sacred places/spaces and the hydrological cycle as Shaw & Francis (2008:10-11) portray. They describe the interchange between salt water and freshwater; between oceans and rivers; between clouds and rain; and between land, sea, and sky; and between all the creatures and plants that live in these ecological domains. More specially, Shaw and Francis assert that the water cycle can be used not only to appreciate the sacred process of the movement of water, but to understand why *in the beginning there was only water*; and why the water cycle marks the passage from creation to dissolution, and then to (re)generation of the wheel of life. They add that ecology of water can be used to raise community awareness about the relationship between the perpetual movement of waters and the ongoing life of the planet, including ecological anthropology.

Creation stories in many cultures are associated with water; especially the emergence out of the primordial sea, the great cosmic mother, the ocean. Many religious cosmologies describe the creation of all life as generated through a life-giving surge of water where the sky, through its rain, intercourses with the earth: fertilizing the ground, nourishing the plants and replenishing the rivers and ground water systems. Life, as Shaw and Francis understand it, is fecund, fertile, sensuous, shimmering. It travels through the cosmic-cycle and water cycle in an eternal dance, balancing and rebalancing the movement from salt to fresh, from ocean to sky, from earth to ocean (2008:11). Water came to be worshipped as a source of healing and eternal life, thus making the use of water a common aspect of ritualization and ritual healings. Seeing water as ‘life’ emerged from the cultural sacrality of water, which must have influenced the ritualization of natural occurrences of bodies of water in places like oceans, lakes, rivers, and waterfalls.

Throughout the history of Luo cultural cosmology, the concept of ‘Society’ has always been seen as a sacred place, a “common property of all people and non-human creatures” (Magesa 2014:89). To illustrate sacred place and space, Ben Knighton gives a more cultural sociology of ‘sacred’ in his study of the Karamojong (Eastern Nilotes) of Uganda, which bears a resemblance to that of the Luo people (Southern Nilotes):

Sacred is not in opposition to a profane world. The sacred dominates and infuses the life-world. What is especially sacred or godly is the people and animals, places and events, which are the occasion for dense moments in the life of the people. Here the spiritual is maximally present. Such power must be regulated by custom, both to bring it out and to channel it for the common good (Knighton 2005:30).

Within the Luo people’s concept of *aluora*, sacred places included mountains, hills, great rocks such as (*kit-Mikayi* and *Luanda Magere*), large fig-trees and large-trees, and water where it is accumulated in any form and size. This is not to say that other places are profane or mere matter, for the whole land (*piny*) is directly susceptible to social transgression. Some local traditions of farming and land care produced some restrictions or taboos against some parts of the land (known as no-go zones) but mainly this applies to the ceremonial grounds (*kuonde dolo*) which are the meeting places for sacrifices. To ensure the preservation of these sacred places in the *aluora*, ritualistic ceremonies were selected as a medium of interaction which integrated every aspect of sacrality into the society’s holistic system of life. ‘Life’

not just human life but life as whole, is the aggregate of Luo cosmology and its primary concern. According to Luo cosmology, 'life' springs from the heart of a living, mysterious reality that is God, who alone is the giver and sustainer of life. For that reason, life is treated here as a complex energy which is only perceivable through an holistic vision of interconnection that cannot be fragmented but should be regarded as "constructing a single source of life, an undifferentiated whole" (Bujo 2006:17).

To recover from the dualistic spirituality of the past, the faith community needs to continue to grow in its understanding of cosmological theology. By developing a more reverential attitude to 'our common home' it is possible for the church to critically engage with cultural societies on issues of social justice, spirituality and ecological sustainability. It is also important for the church to listen to what local culture is telling the church on similar matters.

5.2.2 The Work of Pims: Gender, Culture and Ecology

Much of the literature on the ecology of gender has been concerned with the analytical study of gender as a contested cultural discourse that refers to both men and women, masculinity and femininity. But, a more inclusive debate on gender identity was set in motion by Miroslav Volf's influential 1996 book, *Exclusion & Embrace*, in which he presented a contrasting perspective on theology by asking his readers to consider the following two universal claims. First, that 'all human beings exist as either male or female and no human being would exist if there were not men and women.' Second, that 'with the possible exception of early matriarchal cultures, in all societies throughout human history men were considered superior to women' (Volf 1996:167ff).

Engaging these two claims together indicates why anthropology of identity has been attracting a growing scholarship. While taking Volf's claims seriously, for the purpose of this section, my interest is to engage Volf's first claim in the light of the work of Pims. The reason for this due to the fact that less attention has been paid to the cultural hermeneutics of this claim compared to the second one which has become a catchall to disturbing geographies of exclusion, otherness, and domination as opposed to the idea of *embrace* that Volf proposes.

The anthropology of gender, culture and social ecology has gained a great deal of ground in recent years, and it has acquired something of an official status

in gender discourse. Women's studies have flourished in Tanzania during the last two decades (Bujra 1990; Mbilinyi 1991; Kjekshus 1996). Actually, since the 1970s, individual feminists and the UN's Commission on the Status of Women has been responsible for organizing the world conferences for women in Mexico (1975), Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985) and Beijing (1995).⁷⁶ This gender-based movement has been systematically theorizing, reviewing progress in the implementation of twelve critical areas of concern identified in the Beijing Platform for Action (cf. Tribble 1978; Ruether 2007; Mealey 2015).

In sub-Saharan Africa, a group of cultural eco-feminists led by Mercy A. Oduyoye (Ghana) and other concerned African women (Mananzan, et al, 1990; Mwaura 1999; Ndung'u 2005; Mombo 2016), have been responding to cultural and national issues pertaining to gender equality, family development and women rights. A more critical and timely contribution to eco-feminism development in Africa is Ghanaian scholar Mercy Oduyoye. In her book, *Introducing African Women's Theology*, Oduyoye, considers the women's role as integral to the construction of dignity and integrity of all, and referring to African women in particular, she states;

All human beings, originate from the express will of God, be they male or female. 'The fear of our bodies, has made it difficult to accept the integrity of our being and led to the separation of our make up into material and spiritual, body and soul/spirit/mind. Being in the body (particular gender identity), has allowed traditional Christian anthropology to make the female body an obstacle to the fullness of women's humanness (Oduyoye 2001:69).

Oduyoye considers the missionary Christian's view of anthropology, contemporary Marxist anthropology and feminist ideologies of the day, as lacking a positive appropriation of our embodiment. Oduyoye's critique of gender issues accords with Sen's economic survey which found the championing of gender and economic equality in the West is of quite recent origin. Similarly, Jocelyn Murray's (2000) study of the status and place of women in the history of the CMS from 1799-1917 has shown that, until the 1960s, women were only rarely mentioned. She notes that there was a failure to record anything substantial on women, even though they discussed such issues as social service and education, both areas in which the role of women was central (Murray 2000:66-90). Unfortunately, Max Warren served as the CMS secretary general and mission theologian in the mid-1960s, at a

⁷⁶ See <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/> (Accessed 03 August, 2017).

time when women had attained parity with men and were outnumbering men in missionary churches, failed to recognise how his own male dominated western ecclesiology and spirituality was marginalizing women. Ironically, the same religious elites had previously expressed concern about the lack of status of women in African culture (see also Rutere 2012:141).

The above timely and significant contributions to the conversations around gender ethics and ecological development in Africa have been crucial in reconsidering communal eco-practices; and has raised growing interests, not only in researching ecological problems of Christian theology and ethics, but also development of creative interface of theology, gender identity and cultural ecology. In that respect, most crucial issues relating to gender ecology and sustainability in an African perspective has been re-examined and remain under ongoing scrutiny.

In order to describe and evaluate the critique above, this section takes the stock of experience set in motion by Luo ladies well known as *Pim* or *Pims* (pl.). In traditional Luo society, *Pims* were older women who for centuries played a constitutive role in building the foundations of Luo culture. They had a special responsibility to inculcate both boys and young women in the traditions of the community, one that would naturally give rise to a deep spiritual development. (Odaga 2011, Makumba 2007). Another powerful affirmation of the same community ecology is the 1998 Nobel Laureate in economic and political science Amartya Sen. Sen's (1999) conception of a good society was one where collective freedom was valued on the basis of toleration of cultural diversity, identity, beliefs, and commitments to different people within a particular society. This precisely describes the central mission of the *Pims*.

The Luo *Pims* with great affection knew, or at least assumed normatively, that women had a responsibility to build a society that works for everybody. Cohen & Odhiambo (1989) define the *Pim* or 'old woman with social affection' as the one who was responsible for the upbringing of Luo children within the *siwindhe* (nursery) located within the enclosure or compound. In traditional Luo society, she was responsible for their pedagogical development and nurtured transition from infancy to maturity. Cohen & Odhiambo note that "it was within the *siwindhe* that much of the critical social intelligence of the Luo world was imparted by the *pim* to those with little experience or knowledge of it" (1989:92). They evaluate the *Pim*'s' work as a critical role in "the nurturing of Luo culture and society"

(1989:95) and this contributed crucially to attitudes and behavioural development. Social behaviourists such as Ajzen and Fishbein (1977) and Jones (1991), found that strong attitude-behaviour relations are obtained only when there is a correspondence between the separate aspects of attitude and behaviour.

Among the Luo people, these dual constituents of psychological development were potentially integrated into social development through the work of *Pims*. The society recognised the role of these women, accepting that mothers are embedded in the society and always at the centre of the Luo household. Given that the way a society behaves depends largely on the cultural norms of that society, this Luo cultural practice was aimed to strengthen child-mother interaction in way that would shape society's future. Actually, *Pims*' work was to provide in the words of Michele Obama, "a necessary concept to believe in" and with which to explore the world.⁷⁷

Civilisations have often been built on specific religious foundations that underpins cultural spirituality, moral values, attitudes toward nature and the entire web of social relationships that bind communities. Therefore, the loss of cultural spirituality inevitably leads to the further destruction of the natural ethos of life and the depletion of the politics of common good. It breaks social unity, resulting in family disparity and separation. One effect of the incursion was to dismiss indigenous cultural spirituality as 'not modern' despite the intergenerational inheritance it offered. Instead, it was seen as primitive and uncivilized. Optimistic mission scholar James S. Dennis, specifically in his influential book *Christian Missions and Social Progress* (1897), for example, demonised indigenous practices including their educational programmes as the undesirable evils of the traditional society, and contrasted them with mission education which he surmised as efficacious; since it worked on the mind, moulding new attitudes, shaping character and nurturing social regeneration.

The *Pim*'s role in the *siwindhe* could have been seen as the cultural opening through which mission education could engage with the society. However, mission education saw itself as a unique transforming power whose main task was to deposit knowledge into minds, seeing learners as little more than 'containers', empty receptacles to be filled by the teacher (Freire 1970; 1993:53). This alien

⁷⁷ Michele Obama Addresses Trump Era in Oprah, (December, 2016), accessible on YouTube.

education was described by Paulo Freire as lacking ‘the teacher-student relationship’. Instead, its well-meaning task was to fill African children with knowledge, but this knowledge was contrary to the student’s cosmological reality and alien to the totality of their cosmic spirituality (Freire 1993:52). Unlike the *Pim*’s work, which aimed at the integration of cultural attitudes and social spirituality, mission education was divisive and drew largely on Dennis’s exclusionary sociology. This is embodied in the 1910 WMC report:

What is needed is some form of education and disciplinary organization [*sic*] which will replace, in an enlightened way, the old tribal unity. In this work the influence of Christianity and the devoted services of Christian missionaries are indispensable. They bring with them a new view of the status of women, a new sense of the sacredness of human personality (WMC, Report III, 170).

Colonial missionary education saw its teaching as a gift that was superior to traditional pedagogical development, that knowledge, could be bestowed upon those whom they considered ‘uncivilized’ only by those vocational missionaries. J. H. Oldham, writing in the 1930s, emphasized imperial education as mandated for *The Remaking of Man in Africa*. Such a title indicates how education was used to bolster colonialization in Africa. Victor Murray’s *The School in the Bush* has been the most influential analysis. He explained that most of the European missionary educators in the early twentieth-century saw the importation of education as part of their missionary mandate (Murray 1929). The concept of mission education as a mandate given to the church is certainly not without justification, yet when it misses the foundations of practical education, it becomes a tool of domination rather than an enhancement; it makes missionary activities part of the colonial oppression rather than part of the cosmic-gospel (Newbigin 1994:16-25).

In Tanzania, such an exclusionary and authoritative view of education created a condition in which the alternative view of cultural spirituality and educational ‘syncretism’ thrived (Iliffe 1979). It gradually established a learning environment which made students vulnerable to the ‘sonority of words’ instead of developing a life-transforming awareness of self and an expansive ecological relationship to nature. Walter Rodney argues that colonial education created educational underdevelopment in relation to the preservation of cultural identity and social structure. However, the colonial educational system achieved *what it set itself to achieve* (Rodney 2001:238-61), which was none other than ‘filling the

containers' with alien knowledge. A dominant aspect of colonial education was rote learning. The students record, memorize and repeat these phrases, without perceiving what five times four really means, or without necessarily realizing the true significance of the words that they are mouthing. Instead of grounding 'African Man' in his social values and ecology of life, Western education detached them from having close links with social life and cosmological reality.

Knowing that human sexuality is an integral part of our humanness and a gift from God, Luo *Pims* ingrained a sense of confidence into both young women and men to realize all aspects of their humanness, and become active members of their future Luo society, regardless of their gender. In the world of social disintegration, perhaps the Luo *Pims* specific contribution was to operate within the existing social structure with the objective of preserving and transforming it. It dealt with fundamental questions such as 'How should we sustain the integrity of our society? As well as respecting time honoured customs, how do we achieve this?' The *Pims* were held in esteem as those who carried the cultural inheritance in their memories and could transmit them effectively to the next generations.

Probably the greatest contribution of *Pims*' work came from their social ability to nurture the disciplines of Luo ecosocial anthropology and ethnography.⁷⁸ Through their ability to recite fragments of the past socio-cultural atmosphere, shared cosmological spirituality, and traditions of collective integration accumulated through indigenous myths and lived experience, they ingrained cultural values into the lives of young children. The young people learned stories that moulded their understandings into a vision of one integrated place that included ecological concerns (Odaga 2011; Maseno 2011), leading to a full realization of ultimate lineage, social identity and relationships to their land. Usually, the period of *siwindhe* culminated in a number of initiation rites. These included the ritual of *muko lak* (known as the lower dental evulsion) as a cultural symbol of the unbroken cycle of social incarnation, of being integrated into the heart of Luo social identity, and to mark the beginning of their provisional social status and independence. Oftentimes, these ritual ceremonies were presented in the public arena or attended by the representative gathering of the whole *clan*. Indeed,

⁷⁸ The term 'ethnography' is used here as a pedagogic description of peoples and cultures within their moral ecology, customs, habits and mutual differences.

the *Pim*'s work was much more than sharing fragments of memories from the past. Cohen and Odhiambo, for example show that:

Children learned about the past from the *Pim*. They drew upon her wisdom. They learned about the people, the groups, and the settlement around them. They learned a geography of succour and a geography of danger. They learned about sexuality, about marriage, and about childbirth. And from her wide-ranging social knowledge the *pim* was able to supply information that both broadened and delimited the fields of possible and optimal marriages of her charges. From the *Pim*, children learned about magic and other powers of the world. They learned about health, illness, misfortune, and death. They learned about interest, opportunity, and obligation, factors that would both open up and restrict their lives. As the *Pim* nurtured and instructed her charges, linking them with the adult world, the experience she brought from outside the enclosure neighbourhood and from outside the patri-group provided the young with information extending far beyond the patrilineage, and gave them the elements of an intimate understanding of a complex and physically remote social universe (Cohen & Odhiambo 1989:92-3).

They also learned about herbal remedies and 'ethnosystematics' the traditional system of naming and classifying plants and animals (Kokwaro & Johns 1998). The knowledge of herbal remedies helped them to provide health care before the advent of modern medicine. Likewise, the knowledge of ethnosystematics enabled them to know how to classify plants and animals, as well as to live in diverse ecological habitats. This is not to say that the precolonial Luo society had no challenges, but simply recognises how the *Pim*'s role maintained the integrity of their cultural ecology of life and its social web of bondedness, belongingness, and unbroken unity. *Pims* knew life was precious and fragile, that we come from one common 'mother's womb' and must sustain the land, society, and cosmological spirituality. Colonial imperialism and its incursion saw a decline in the work of *Pims*, and the ascendancy of Darwinism, neo-Darwinian biology, and in 1960s psychology which all challenged the existing moral structures. Jonathan Sacks puts it aptly: 'I' was substituted for 'We' and as he goes on to argue, 'in the world of 'I's, marriages do not last, communities erode, loyalty is devalued, trust grows thin and God is ruled out completely. In a world of clamorous egos, there is no room for God' (Sacks 2011:5-6). All of these bring challenges to society and ecology.

The *Pim* learned her critical role within the *siwindhe* (nursery) of her own childhood. 'In taking care of her first charges,' say Cohen and Odhiambo, 'she became part of a chain of nurturing extending far into the past'. This called upon the entire web of her life experience and social memory. Forrest Clingerman describes memory as "the capacity to store and access information about the past" (Clingerman 2011:143). Without this memory it is impossible for Luo people to

position themselves in a season of life and to appropriate the cultural orientation of cyclical progression. However, this difficulty can also be an opportunity for the mission of the church, if it could be re-contextualized to cover the role played by the *Pims*. As the next generation of Luo people may be in danger of seeing themselves as a personal project or a private oasis in a desert of meaninglessness, it can be submitted that revising and reforming the sociology *Pimship* might be re-established as an alternative pedagogical outlets and as para-cultural spaces of ecosocial reformation with important implications for theory and method in Christian ecotheology.

5.2.3 Living with Others and Cosmic Harmony

‘*Dhano en le*’ translated ‘a man is animal’ is a Luo proverb that reveals their cultural understanding of the human to nature relationship, and may inform an expansive sense of self and a sustainable ecological relationship to nature. Among the Luo people, as the work of Kokwaro & Johns (1998) has shown, the conception of animals as an integral part of the human community is an ancient one. The call for animal ethics has become an important aspect of the literature on ecological development and sustainability. However, this critically and ethically demanding eco-biology is not new, either to the society or to biblical tradition. Rowan Williams comments on the account of Noah⁷⁹ and the animals,

Is clearly about how the serving of the human future is inseparable from securing a future for all living things. The creation stories of Genesis 1 and 2 see the creation of humanity as quite specifically the creation of an agent, a person, who can care for and protect the animal world, reflecting the care of God himself who enjoys the goodness of what he has made (Williams 2017, at www.sarx.org.uk).

The same interaction and relationship with the animal world as described by Williams has been an integral part of Luo people’s mythology, perhaps in part because they were a migrating society and their journeying took them through diverse ecological habitats (Kokwaro & Johns 1998).

Contrary to those who would assert that God’s creation and salvation purpose are merely a matter of human concern, God’s covenantal relationship extends to all creation. If God’s covenantal promise to Noah was not just for one society or one culture, then one may argue that all human beings, including the Luo people, share in that divine mission of being caretakers of the whole creation. At

⁷⁹ Witness Genesis Chapters 6 – 9.

least the phrase ‘*Dhano en le*’ seems to reflect a sustained cultural emphasis about the inseparability or continued experience of human and animal relationships. This identification with animals developed over time. Through the actual experience of interacting with the animal world bonds were formed emotionally and psychologically. Kokwaro & Johns’s study found that it was during the many years of interregional migration that these people accumulate their framework, known botanically as ‘ethnosystematics’, the traditional system of naming and classifying plants and animals.

Although some argue against animals’ moral status, there has been recently an increasing concern for a reinterpretation of animal ethics. As the former Archbishop of South Africa, Desmond Tutu, puts it so movingly: ‘It is a kind of theological folly to suppose that God has made the entire world just for human beings, or to suppose that God is interested in only one of the millions of species that inhabit God’s good earth’ (Tutu 2016, www.sarx.org.uk). Tutu’s argument raises our awareness of the vitality of the non-human creature, and a similar sentiment is described in Mohandas Gandhi’s often quoted words: “the greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated” (Gandhi 2008). The voices are echoing the words of Hosea, the Old Testament prophet “I will make for you a covenant on that day with the wild animals, the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the ground; and I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land; and I will make you lie down in safety” (Hosea 2:18). The entire community of all creation, including non-human creatures, are awaiting the day on which this prophecy will be fulfilled. This prophecy reminds Christians to reconsider the relationship between humanity and nature in Christian spirituality and implies a moral concern for animals.

Across sub-Saharan Africa, the belief that animals are an integral part of human society is common as it can be seen through their creation narratives (Mbiti 1969; Orobator 2008). Among the Luo people, the inclusion of animal ethics and their sociology in Paul Mboya’s *Luo Kitgi gi Timbegi* (Luo customs and practices) is the earliest manifestation that animals, both domestic and wildlife, are regarded as potential companions by these people. As such, they deserve humane treatment, something which is to be extended to vegetation and all the elements of nature (Kokwaro & Johns 1998). In its widest moral obligation, Magesa (1997; 2014) argues, African spirituality rejects all forms of ‘wrongdoing’ to humans and non-

humans, and breaking these moral codes, endangers life and is bad, wrong or 'sinful' (Magesa 1997:166). Reflecting on the human to animal relationship within the context of ancient Jewish cosmology Richard Bauckham writes in *Living with Other Creatures*:

A duty to treat animals humanely and compassionately, not causing unnecessary suffering and whenever possible relieving suffering, was well established in Jewish tradition by Jesus' time, though it was applied largely to domestic animals—those animals owned by humans as beasts of burden, working animals, sources of milk and food, and therefore also offered in sacrifice to God. These were the animals for which humans had day-to-day responsibility. They were not simply to be used and exploited for human benefit, but to be treated with respect and consideration as fellow-creatures of God (Bauckham 2012:80).

Bauckham's argument rejects an anthropocentric domination of nature and suggests a different spiritual conviction, that God gives animals rights to be respected and to be cared for, since they are God's creation. If so, then, it can be maintained that '*Dhano en le*' – 'a man is animal' and so animals are persons with whom we share our planetary home.

Living together as people in the community of creation is the strongest defence against the depersonalization of imperialism; and reconstructs the covenantal bond of ecological righteousness and justice, mercy and compassion, love and relationship with all persons on earth (of whom only a few are human). Despite contrasting views of ecology in Genesis 1 and 2, these chapters (and the unfolding narrative of scripture) are intrinsically connected through what Davis (2009) has described as 'the drama of soil'. From an African perspective, the coherence between these chapters can be appreciated when they are seen as the common mother of our understanding of the universe, and a divine entrée to an integrated sense of cosmological spirituality.

Such an attitude of servanthood is reinforced by Jesus' teaching which speaks of God's providential care of all creatures (Mt. 6:26-30). Deane-Drummond (2008:55) argued that such an attitude was an integral aspect of Jewish teaching on the treatment of non-human creatures. In her earlier study of animal ethics, Deane-Drummond found that the mistreatment of animals (or the view that sees them as simply 'walking larders', 'providers for human needs' and 'outside the realm of human moral concern') is not biblical, but instead has its roots in ancient Greek philosophy (2004:54-83). The Exodus account describes the 'shareable Sabbath', the occasion when people, animals and the land were to celebrate rest (Exod. 23:12; Lev. 25). The legal material in the Bible develops the moral codes of Sabbath and

goes on to prohibit the unlawful practices of tree cutting, taking away a bird with eggs, or muzzling a threshing ox (Deut. 20:19-20). Likewise, in the New Testament, Matthew saw Jesus as the cosmic-Christ while Mark (1:13) describes Jesus as being with the wild animals in the temptation account.

Today, the entire web of the biosphere is endangered, facing potentially catastrophic ecological challenges; yet there is no agreed consensus on how to respond. Looking at traditional codes of life, Orobator's study found that in many African cosmologies life is seen as a shared reality and event; therefore the poisoning of such a shared revenue of life, is the poisoning of the 'community's life blood' (2008:61). Although this understanding has not yet found full acceptance in African Christian circles, the impending ecological disaster has forced many eco-theologians to revisit human-nature relations. The concept of '*dhanu en le*'—'a human is animal'—offers a wider understanding of the scope of the human to nature relationship that has been recognised by various writers. For example, Wendell Berry writes:

To preserve our place and to be at home in them, it is necessary to fill them with imagination. To imagine as well as see what is in them. Not to fill them with the junk of fantasy and unconsciousness, for that is no more than the industrial economy would do, but to see them first clearly with the eyes, and then to see them with the imagination in their sanctity, as belonging to the Creation' (Berry 2005 cited in Davis 2009:42).
Similarly, 'think of the genius of the animals, every one truly what it is: gnat, fox, minnow, swallow, each made of light and luminous within itself. They know (better than we do) how to live in the places where they live (Berry 2013:82).

Berry's concept of *animal genius* is in sharp contrast with both Thomas Aquinas, and Descartes who viewed animals as 'automata'. By contrast, the indigenous understanding of the sanctity within all of creation is often seen in both academic and some Christian missionizing discourses as 'animism', a prejudicial term that presents it as primitive and reflecting a culture in urgent need of regeneration (Harvey 2005). Such false academic and spiritual ideologies are destructive at every level. In Luo traditional practices and the spirituality of the 19th and early 20th century often identified their traditional heroes (men or women) by using a particular traditional attire, head dress, ear-ring, a fly-whisk (*orengo*), or an upper arm bangles. These included such things as hippo teeth, zebra (*magwar*) skin, chains of python (*ng'ielo*) bones, antelope (*nyakech*) horns, ostrich (*udo*) feathers for example. (Kokwaro 1998). These practices gave an integrated cultural sense of valuing animals as 'alive' with signs of personhood, "because, like human beings,

they breathe, consume, excrete, and reproduce and they are sentient and possess genomes composed of nucleic acid” (Harvey 2005; Beck 2015).

Harvey continues, ‘animals are like humans and equally humans are animals in important respects’ (Harvey 2005:100). Both animals and humans communicate in particular ways, and whilst both are intrinsically communal, they also manage various degrees of individuality and solitude. Clearly, humans do communicate in a different way, their language reaches levels of abstraction, imagination and creativity alien to animals. But these advantages do not confer a right to domination, but are instead intended to inspire an integrated relationship with the rest of the cosmic-community.

The wisdom tradition which developed the Luo concept of the human to nature relationship takes account of both the similarities and the differences between human beings and animals, and importantly, acknowledges the demands of social justice in the human community alongside the vitality of our non-human fellow-creatures with whom we share the planetary home. Perhaps, this wisdom tradition which integrates moral codes into society’s attitude towards animals can be used by Luo Christians as an alternative to engage with some important and neglected questions about where animals belong in Christian faith, and what that means to our *missional* agenda for creation care, and how we should treat animals. More specifically, the concept of *Dhano en le* – ‘a human being is Animal’ – can be used as a binary approach towards improved humanization of our fellow-creatures, and for renewing our impaired affinity with all life-forms.

5.2.4 Agrarian Life and Eco-Subsistence

Sociological descriptions of pre-colonial Africa that describe the cultural synthesis of agriculture and the subsistence of the Luo people are often written from the distorted perspective of imperial culture and missionary spirituality. Davis (2009) describes the aim of agrarian life as maintaining the health of the land and of living creatures (Davis 2009); where the society understood itself as ‘earthly creatures’ who have been given the earth to live, not on, but with and from; and only on the divine condition that they care properly for it. The politics of agrarian life and subsistence was that of bottom-up and middle-out economic structures. Although agrarianism has been dismissed by adversarial cultures as a primitive system of life, these agrarian communities encountered a cosmic movement precisely and

mysteriously over many aeons (*chon gi lala*) with which their life and subsistence methods naturally had to align. Like those ancient people, humankind is increasingly becoming aware that it will never know enough about the divine revenue of this mysterious gift to make the “survival sure or our lives carefree” (Wendell Berry’s Foreword to Davis 2009: ix). This advocates the need for continued humanization of nature, religious cosmologies and scientific ecologies.

More specially, in their study of agroecology in a Kenyan context, they conclude that such agrarian techniques of soil fertilization which have been utilized traditionally have been looked down upon as ‘not modern’; despite them improving soil fertility, and also creating family income from sales of stock and manure. They argue that the modern attempt to control nature through technology and agro-ecological intensification will continue to kill the natural predators, lose the top soil, and deplete the minerals. Driven by the increasing demand of the globalised markets, the race to increase production has led to another toxic reality; that the crops cannot grow without repeated applications of more and more adversarial agricultural technology. As is noted by Eisenstein (2013), each fix brings some temporary improvement, but then, crop yields start failing and we need another fix. Such globalized agro-ecological intensification has been shown to be problematic to soil fertility, and some organic ecologists have warned that increased toxic dosage to intensify the fertility of the already wounded soil will increase its degradation that no amount of fertilizer would coax to life (cf. Davis 2009; Eisenstein 2013).

In *Scripture, Culture and Agriculture*, Davis noted that the culturally ingrained, intergenerational agrarian philosophy of life was one of reverence and humility towards nature, one that recognized an inescapable dependence on nature. She asserts there was a commitment to “preserving both communities, the material means of life, to cultivating practices that ensure that the essential means of life suffice for all members of the present generation and are not diminished for those who come after” (Davis 2009:66). Davis regards the Israelites as an example of agrarian people explicitly entrusted with ecological responsibilities and with explicit instructions for meeting them ecologically, economically, spiritually and politically (see also Christopher Wright 2010). For the Tanzanian Luo people, their approach to agriculture was determined by local adaptation, when previous

subsistence methods needed to adopt a beneficent-and-conservation-based response to a changing situation. (cf. Kokwaro & Johns 1998; Maseno 2011).

Consequently, most of these indigenous agrarian practices which contributed significantly to socially-conditioned ecological regulation has been interfered by colonial scientific initiatives and related spiritual ideology. However, it is now clear, through the works of biblical theologians such like Ellen Davis (2009) that any form of religious spirituality that is not firmly rooted in any specific landscape and live ecological praxis can hardly understand the sanctity of what it continues to call *creation*. Ecologically-speaking, missionary Christianity became a religion that is practically alien to both the biblical use of land and to traditional norms of agrarianism, and so inevitably affected both the land and its inhabitants adversely.

The honouring of both the mysterious reality of God and God's life-giving power found in the land (and known through memory of the past and maintenance of social systems) is necessary for ecological sustainability. Helge Kjekshus in *Ecology Control and Economic Development in East African History* drew on late pre-colonial travellers such as Speke and Burton to describe a basic mastery by East Africans in Tanzania over their environment. Burton found wildlife rare in the densely settled areas of the East African coast and suggested that the people were often "superior in comforts, better dressed, fed and lodged and worked less than the unhappy Ryot of British India" (Kjekshus 1977:4, 72; quoting Burton 1860).

Similar pictures of abundance, fertility, and ecological control in pre-colonial Eastern Africa have been drawn more recently by William Beinart & Lotte Hughes in *Environment and Empire*. Burton was known for his racist view of precolonial Africa as this comment taken from *Lake Regions of Central Africa* indicates: "He [the African] seems to belong to one of those races which, never rising to man's estate, fall like worn-out links from the great chain of animated nature" (Burton quoted in Ogot 1967:15). So, his previously cited positive about African life and its ecology of agrarianism from Burton could be treated as substantive evidence to the active role played by agrarian tradition, with regard to agricultural and rural development in different parts of Eastern Africa, including ecological control in the nineteenth-century.

Beinart & Hughes (2007) describe agriculture achieved by the hoe, transport by portage and canoe within some communities in Central and East Africa still largely without cattle up until the 1820s; although there was some livestock accumulation within their enclaves between A.D. 1490 and 1600s. The life of the subsistence farmers was still intrinsically involved and connected to the cycle of nature, wedded to the soil, and sustained only through a knowledge of cultural norms and respect for the natural laws of life and unbroken social unity. The Tanzanian Luo people, whose search for territory and water supply for their animals had moved them from Kenya, were restricted in their movements by the British around 1900 (Ogot 1967:151). Their agrarian economy and sociology was seen from the viewpoint of modern western eyes as “barbarity and childlike state of life” (Fraser 1911) or an extremist state of “macro-powerlessness” (Hastings 1994).

A Marxist hope that people could become “free in a double sense”, free from having attachments to the lands or society, and free from social disciplines, overlooked that freedom without boundaries is destructive and slavery is its end. As Christopher Uhl, the author of *Developing Ecological Consciousness*, puts it: “All the crises that humanity now faces are grounded in the belief that we are separate – separate from each other, separate from the biosphere that sustains us, separate from the universe that has brought us forth.”⁸⁰ Economists such as Amartya Sen (1999) Dambisa Moyo (2009), Charles Eisenstein (2013) and Ian Goldin (2014) instead call for a ‘renewal’ and ‘reunion between self and cosmic reality’ (Eisenstein 2013).

In the case of Luo cultural agrarianism and the subsistence economy, as Kokwaro & Johns (1998) have shown, freedom, equality, and social fraternity may be best understood as a critique of the rising cultural-debasement, nature-disempowerment, and self-destruction wrought upon society under capitalism and dualistic practices. Nevertheless, the possibility for the renewal of sociocultural subsistence in a spirit of agrarian ecological critique, lies exclusively in a socio-ecologic reconstruction of agrarian spirituality and subsistence; rather than adversarial agro-ecological mechanisms, designed exclusively to save the

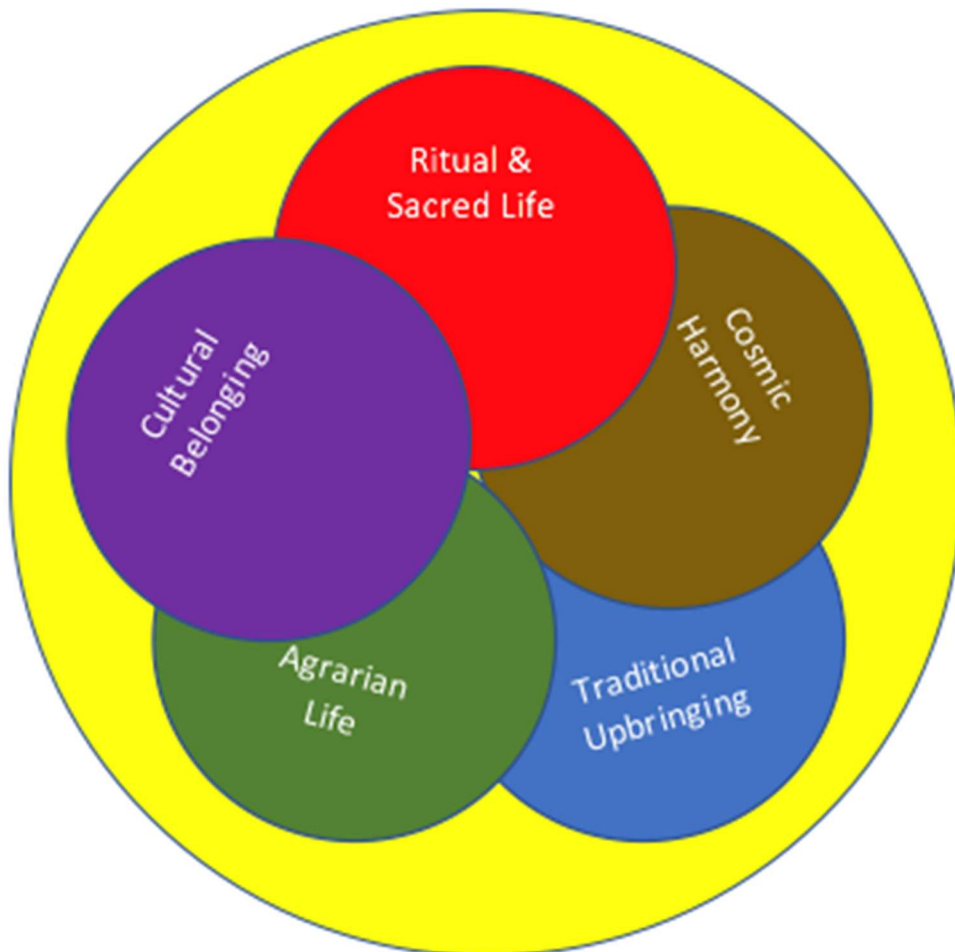
⁸⁰ See Uhl’s recommendation to Eisenstein’s *The Ascent of Humanity* (already cited).

disembodied soul, and reductionist science and technology that led to prevailing ecological violence. Recasting the agrarian ecology within it is an ongoing task; requiring, interdisciplinary discussions and a reinterpretation of locally adapted economic subsistence, spirituality and life style.

5.3 Conclusion

The dimensions of Luo cultural synthesis within the *aluora* can be summarised as a cosmologically-shaped social construction of awareness, meaning and ecological control in a religio-cultural context; where every aspect of life and sustainability is integrally connected to the life-giving power – Cosmos, as indicated in Figure 6 below.

Figure 6: The dimensions of Luo cultural synthesis



The dimensions of Luo cosmology have been examined together with the cultural synthesis factors that have previously been misunderstood and disregarded. This study has indicated how they could form the framework for understanding

contemporary eco-theological literature and as a contextual approach toward cosmological theology. This should help to redress the legacies of dualistic spirituality: the idea that we are separate, separate from each other, separate from the biosphere that sustains us, separate from the universe that has brought us forth. The research has reconsidered the three dimensions of Luo people's cosmic spirituality (Soil, Soul, and Society) and examined five interrelated cultural factors (pedagogical development, agrarian spirituality, living with other creatures, cultural belongingness and cultural synthesis of religious ritual and sacred places). The history of Luo religious cosmologies from its antiquity onwards has emerged as a manifestation of sacred reality, as opposed to other natural realities. The Luo cultural ecology, whatever its weakness, was fully aware that nature is potentially fragile if misused, and of the need to sustain cultural development that meets the needs of its present community without compromising the ecological ability of future generations.

This examination of Luo cultural ecology shows that ecologically-friendly mission agencies, and the entire framework of developmental-ecological sustainability among the contemporary Luo people, should be aligned with their ecological-historical spirituality and integrated with the fifth-mark of mission. The Anglican Communion's fifth-Mark of Mission is a well-known mantra of integral mission, which challenges religio-cultural societies to: "strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth". How this may be addressed from a Luo perspective is the question examined in the next chapter.

Chapter Six

Engaging Sustainability through Interdisciplinary Conversations and why it Matters

6.3 The Rise of Sustainability/Unsustainability Discourse

A recent volume that breaks new ground in the field of interdisciplinary study of sustainability/unsustainability is Helen Kopnina & Eleanor Shoreman-Quimet's book, *Sustainability: Key Issues* (2015:5). This offers not only a timely and comprehensive guide for multidisciplinary approaches to sustainability, but is a significant contribution to contemporary research conversations about key issues in ecological ethics and sustainability. They trace the origin of "unsustainability", from the perspective of environmental education and cross-cultural social sciences. They argue that modern ecological problems and social inequality issues have their modern roots in the Industrial Revolution (in late 18th-century England) and in the later global industrialization. This led to major changes in agriculture, manufacturing, mining and transportation, and the intensification of the capitalist economy. Industrialization in late 18th-century England assumed that natural resources were unlimited (Steger 2013); so the rhetoric of industrialization propelled the mass production of consumer goods, which not only led to the rise of consumerism, but also created catastrophic economic criteria.

Since the 1940s, the philosophy of industrialization and social competition has grounded both spiritual and economic ideology in material abundance. Whether the system was capitalism or socialism, pursuing development through consumerism was the strategy.

The political and economic origins of this strategy were born in the famous 1944 Bretton Woods Conference.⁸¹ This Conference was designed to globalize the international economy and to regulate financial orders. Recent research on the complex forces of globalization that shape our contemporary world (such as Manfred Steger's *Globalization*), has shown that the Bretton Conference was the first international monetary convention "to establish binding rules on international economic activities and the capitalist system in which the value of each country's

⁸¹ This conference is formally known as the United Nations Monetary and Financial Conference (UNMFC).

currency was pegged to a fixed gold value of the US dollar” (Steger 2013:38). It founded three international economic organizations, namely: the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (both established in 1945), and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) established in 1947).

The economic and ecological consequences of the Bretton Woods Conference are still paramount through these three organizations, each of which has been accused of promoting structural inequality and ecological exploitation, specifically in the developing countries (as Steger observed in the same work). For Steger, most detrimental ecological problems of capitalism intensifies their catastrophic implications in the 1950s, right after the Bretton Woods Conference’s declaration assumed its global ascendancy. This was followed by the rise of the global markets, economic colonialization, and the internationalization of trade and finance – all of which resulted in political globalization, cultural homogenization and the formidable ecological problems of our time (Legum & Mmari 1995; Keshomshahara 2008). The internationalization of trade (and globalization of natural resources through multilateral investment policies) is seen by many scholars to have led to the kind of universalization of economic and market values that has brought so many social changes (see Kopnina & Shoreman-Quimet 2015:7).

Today, both in the South and North, something is regarded as ‘uneconomic’ or ‘unsustainable’ simply in terms of ‘monetary profit’, regardless of whether it yields a profit for ecosocial integration or moral terms, or benefits others or society as a whole (Sen 1999).

6.0 Introduction

Sustainability, in our view, is a sustained and disciplined inquiry into the generative moral values and conditions that condition human life within the community of creation. Having examined various elements of the unsustainability problems facing Luo community in the preceding chapters, it seems to me that sustainability matters are not merely about a simple list of ‘don’ts’, or ‘if only we all do this or that then our current ways of life will be prosperous’. Far from this reductionist approach, sustained Luo concept of sustainability was something significantly deeper, absorptive, and more soulful. This sustained forms of value, were always embodied and integrated in society’s cultural inheritance, in their

‘behavioural environment’ as Bethwell Ogot pointed out (1979:1-7). And these (as we have discussed so far in this research) can be characterized under what we have called the quadrilateral points of cultural sustainability or the 4Bs—namely: belonging, becoming, bestowing, and befriending.

The first point (chapter 2) was about rethinking the meaning of *belonging*, the second (chapters 3 and 4) was about the vitality of religio-cultural history *becoming*. The third point of our research (chapter 5) was preoccupied with the notion of *bestowing* or indwelling culturally-conditioned life-sustaining integrities. That last point—the one we are exploring in this chapter and next one is an exploration of the assumption that sustainability is lived along value-lines and practiced through *befriending* the conditions that condition human life in the social regulatory arena.

Together, parallelogram of these interlinked points constitute an expansive basis for sustainability discourse. Though they followed one another in sequence, these points were by no means disconnected, rather, complementary and interdependent only separated in the space of chapters comprised in this research. Returning to these points and expanding their scope and depths in the light of the emerging discourses on sustainability issues, this chapter focuses specifically on moral and social aspects of sustainability, and explores how they might contribute to development of sustainability ethics among the Luo people.

Traditionally, within Anglican Christianity (particularly within the evangelical Anglican tradition that influenced the Luo community), there have been two different approaches to sustainability theology. The first approach studies sustainability through the *Five Marks of Global Mission* (Ross 2008; 2012). In this approach, sustainability is seen as a matter of ‘life-widening mission’ which calls for an ecological reformation of the Christian worldview for the sake of sustainable human-Earth flourishing. The second approach (led by British eco-theologian Dave Bookless, 2008a; 2008b; 2016) follows David Bebbington’s quadrilateral framework of biblicism, crucicentrism, conversionism and activism. Although the supremacy of the Bible in life as whole remains unquestionable, the current chapter draws on these approaches but also extends its curiousness into a wider discourses on sustainability: in order to understand its importance and how it might meet the challenges of unsustainability in Tanzania, and among the Luo people in particular.

As well as extending the discussion from the preceding chapters, this chapter starts in the lights of Larry Rasmussen and W. Scott Prudham. Prudham has called for the politics of ecological crisis to be transformed into ‘into new forms of social regulation through ecosocialization reacting to the environmental and social effects of capitalist nature [while] rework social and cultural relations to nature in the regulatory arena’ (Prudham 2005:172). Like Prudham, Larry Rasmussen, writing in *Earth-Honoring Faith* (2013), offers an inspiring answer. He suggests a dramatically new way of thinking by rejecting the modern assumption that morality applies to human society alone.

Rasmussen insists that we must derive a spiritual and ecological ethic that accounts for the well-being of all creation, as well as the primal rudiments upon which it depends: earth, air, fire, water, and sunlight. He argues that good science, necessary as it is, will not be enough to inspire fundamental change without engaging religious discourses. We need to move from an industrial–technological age (obsessed with its attendant competition and consumerism) to an ‘ecological age’, that constructs a moral framework for eco-social relatedness and relationships. Rasmussen’s suggestion is that ecological sustainability has become an interdisciplinary subject. It is a new way of thinking about human society and moral ethics that relates to the well-being of all creation.

Rasmussen and Prudham are evidence of an emerging interdisciplinary conversation on sustainability discourse, but there are also a growing number of people from outside the church who are deeply concerned with sustainability discourse. This makes addressing integrative sustainability an even more pressing matter for Christian mission and its witness to wider society. Rasmussen and Prudham both argue that a holistic approach is required with an interdisciplinary perspective, and that this is vital to ecotheology and sustainability discourse more generally.

Sustainability, in the joint views of Prudham and Rasmussen, is a movement towards primal vision: a gradual conception of integrating capacities and shutting down disintegrating promises. As such, it should lie at the very heart of missional-theological concern. For this reason, it can be argued that redemptive conversations are the only way through which communities might humanize the complex forces of our disintegration that shape our contemporary world. How might interdisciplinary wisdom facilitate the return toward an expansive life-widening

spirituality and how might interdisciplinary thinking contribute to our present search for creating mutually enhancing sustainability ethics (specifically in the context of Luo) community, is what exercise the following sections of this chapter.

6.1 Sustainability as Life-Widening Morality

David Hallman's volume *Ecotheology* (1994; 2009) described the notion of sustainability as, the ongoing capacity of natural and social systems to thrive together, both for current generations and future ones. Hallman sees that sustainability is built up slowly, clearly, and carefully – it is a step-by-step process, and the participants are stimulated and encouraged by summaries of the progress achieved. It is an ongoing experience, and so it possible to speak of sustainability in relation to sustained cultural wisdom and social orders (although *Ecotheology* gave little attention to the integration of sustainability and ecotheology in life-widening mission). Hallman's work informs theologians of the ecumenicity of sustainability and offers highly original contributions to the debates on the subject.

Sustainability has recently emerged as both an interdisciplinary discourse and a missiological concept. As such, it offers a promising approach for social morality and for eco-social reformation with important implications for theory and practices of socio-cultural sustainability. Since the 1980s, there have been many definitions of 'sustainability'. It can be defined as an eco-social discourse which safeguards the integrity of community life, and its capacity to sustain both present and future generations.

6.2 Sustainability or Sustainable Development?

Since the UN's *Our Common Future* (also known as the *Brundtland Report*) was published in 1987 by the World Commission on the Environment and Development (WCED 1987) there have been competing definitions of 'sustainability' and 'sustainable development'.⁸² Before that time, sustainability was a lesser concern in mission circles as well as in public discourses. According to Spencer & White (2007), sustainable thinking began to emerge as a significant force when it became increasingly evident that human activity was having a

⁸² See for example, the Global Development Research Centre definitions as: <http://www.gdrc.org/sustdev/definitions.html> Accessed December 30, 2016.

serious, long-term, detrimental effect on the ecosystem. The Brundtland report remains the most widely used definition of ‘sustainable development’ as a “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987:8).

Sustainability is a key issue, not only in managing natural resources: it is also important in defining the ecological dimensions of cultural ecology, Christian ecotheology and life-widening mission. In Christian ecotheology, sustainability may be regarded as a state of being concerned about not only humanity, but the renewed well-being of all creation. But that raises questions regarding what should be sustained, how and why?

Professor Laurenti Magesa’s perceptive book *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life* (1997) offers an examination of the role of moral traditions in influencing sustainability in Tanzania. Magesa hypothesizes that moral traditions of sustainability stem from a cultural ecology of life, where social development is a phenomenon of central importance. Social norms regarded creative interaction with nature as the defining feature of man’s well-being.

Throughout history, the Tanzanians have regarded ecological consciousness and sustainability as critical to a flourishing human existence. This African cultural position distinguished them, socially and historically, from their Western counterparts, who generally viewed sustainability and social advancement through the lens of capitalist theory. Magesa (1997) states that in many African traditions natural resources are referred to as “common resources”, contrary to the industrialized view of the world.

According to Kirk (2000:168), the industrialized Western culture saw nature as the “source of raw materials”, while the workings of natural resources were seen in a mechanistic way as a “machine” (the view that nature is mindless and void of feelings). Alister McGrath (2004) and Niall Ferguson (2011) suggest that this mechanistic view meant that freedom of choice and capitalist development were thought to be limitless. This persistent development of capitalism reduces nature into an element in the creation of wealth and a “means of profit” (Ferguson 2011).

The association between neo-liberal capitalism and Christian civilization was found especially where Christianity was well established during the industrial revolution. The theological legitimation of the imperialistic culture (such as that

advocated by Max Warren in the 20th century), suggests that Western Christianity has had a detrimental impact on traditional, ecologically responsible practices.

This is contrary to the moral traditions of sustainability and the ecological wisdom embedded in the Bible, which provide a robust and transcending dynamic ethos for creation care and sustainability. It suggests, not only what is required to become God's people in holistic mission (Wright 2010), but also what it is to be integrated humans, who value the non-human community. It reveals God's purposes for ecological well-being, and challenges us with the ancient assertion that God himself is the Creator, the Sustainer and the Life-giver. These three aspects of the biblical notion of sustainability provide a foundation for rethinking eco-social belonging, and the need to understand the foundations of religious sustainability, and the recent discussions in relation to the Fifth-Mark of Mission (as was examined in the first section of this chapter).

Ecological wisdom found in the Bible, and in various oriental traditions of abundant life, is a fertile source for rethinking eco-social sustainability – both within Christianity itself, and within its hosting communities all over the world.

Pioneering conversations recovering a sense of belonging to society (which has been lost from the mainstream theology of sustainability) have once again been restarted in the Western hemisphere, specifically by ecotheologians, who consider sustainability as an evolving theological agenda (Jones 2003; Berry 2007; Bookless 2007; Jenkins 2008; Weaver 2017).

For centuries, almost all Christian theologians excluded the sustainability of natural resources in their theological discourses with very few notable exceptions, for example St Francis of Assisi (c. 1200s) and Sir Thomas Browne (c. 1600). However, a close reading of Paul Tillich's *Dynamics of Faith* (1958) suggest that, in its widest sense, the ecology of sustainability is not just about human welfare or material possession, but involves the intimate destination of life and the ultimate concern of any faith community (Tillich 1958:1-26). Sustainability entails a concept of a search for a home (Bookless 2007:35); or an axiom of intergenerational solidarity.

These definitions substantiate the growing conviction that 'sustainability' is essentially different from the language of 'sustainable development'. It suggests that, at some ultimate analysis, sustainability is a theological term with an empirical inheritance from the Bible.

A biblical understanding of the world as God's good creation (Genesis 1) demands that we use all gifts of knowledge, wisdom, ingenuity, and the gift of science and technology, to sustain and make sense of the world in which we live. This biblical understanding outlines a different pattern of sustainability ethics that stems from the transcending wisdom.

Unfortunately, and quite contrary to this transcending wisdom, the sustainability of natural resources is threatened worldwide, particularly as many countries are now moving towards more capitalist environments (compared to traditional cultural sustainability). This growing concern about natural resources has motivated ecumenical intuition: that widening ecological exploitation and consequent climate change are directly affecting the livelihoods of marginalized people groups. Communities (such as farmers and fishing communities) are the spinal-cord of society in developing countries (like Tanzania), and are crucial to the world's food security at large.⁸³

This exposes the weakness of economic measurement: modern humanity cannot come to a meaningful sense of sustainability itself, just through food provision. God's help is required in the form of ecologies of grace, and in the form of culturally-informed moral values for ecoregulation (Prudham 2005). Sustainability is ultimately concerned with the destiny of life. The dynamics of sustainability incorporate the dynamics of human being's ultimate concern: food, security, shelter, justice, cultural values and freedom, and for that reason, it is no longer adequate to only consider economically-driven arguments.

Capitalist environments effectively distance people from their cultural values and their associated social networks: such as kinship relations and other socially-defined hierarchical relations. There is a need to examine how modernization of competitive environments affects our natural resource use and the foundations of our cultural ecology. This is not to say that social networks and social hierarchy do not exist in capitalist environments, but only that the modern

⁸³This formulation is derived from a WCC press release on 9 December 2015, with COP 21 still in session. See <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/cop21-how-climate-change-affects-access-to-our-daily-bread> (Accessed 12 January 2017).

economic powers regard them as disconnected from belonging at the level of the nation, or the economy, or the public sphere.

Professor Willis Jenkins of the USA argues that ecological problems, climate change, and a “throwaway culture” affect not only human and non-human flourishing, but are at the heart of Christian identity and socio-cultural values (Jenkins 2008).

Throwaway culture is a big problem in Tanzania today, as both urban and rural parts of the country becomes artificially decorated with empty plastic containers and plastic bags. Indeed, throwaway culture is a clear sign of an ecological consciousness in crisis. Cultural unsustainability affects not just social relations, but the very heart of our humanness (Houghton 2016:121), and our shared responsibility in safeguarding the common good for all and for future generations.

A comprehensive, theoretical and strategic vision for sustainability is urgently required: one that is informed by an integrative cosmological theology of sustainability. Sustainability issues impact on human communities and ecosystems, and currently result in the large-scale loss of biodiversity and soil fertility.

So how can the world’s most serious socioecological and sustainability issues be addressed, and an integrative cosmological theology of sustainability be developed?

6.4 Sustainability of All life in Public Cosmology

The term ‘public ecology’ is used to refer to emerging (non-dogmatic or ongoing) multidisciplinary conversations on sustainability discourse. At the heart of sustainability, there is a reliance on a cultural mandate: a specific culturally-informed wisdom that is placed within a moral universe, which encompasses the commonwealth of life. In ‘public cosmology’, sustainability describes how divine consciousness (with an inheritance from the Bible) remains transformational, robust, and revolutionary over time. Michael Northcott observes that in the Old Testament, prophets criticized the people for breaking the covenant through their unjust treatment of the poor and the vulnerable, and through their failure to care for the land (Northcott 2001:221-2).

Other biblical scholars (such as Walter Brueggemann) have offered similar findings: that in the Old Testament the economy of life and moral spirituality was

focused upon the relationship with both land and Yahweh, “never only with Yahweh as to live only in the intense obedience, never only with land as though simply to possess and manage” (Brueggemann 2002; 2003; 2007; 2014). The ecology of land (earth), the stability of the local economy and sustainable living were central (arguably *the* central) concerns of the Hebrew Scriptures. This confirms their fundamentally agrarian character and the intimate care of the land (Davis 2009:101ff; Wright 2010).

Such an ancient need to belong, a need to have close and long-term social relationships with Yahweh and with the biosphere that sustains us, is not only a fundamental human need; but a proof that people need supportive, positive eco-social relationships and a strong social sense of belonging to sustain their well-being against all forms of poverty.

Such socially-embedded arguments are found in traditional African sociology. The theological roots are found in the works Gustavo Gutiérrez and more recently, in the scholarly reflections as published in Daniel G. Groody’s book *The Option for the Poor in Christian Theology* (2007). Groody’s work does not simply offer another account of the complexity of poverty in all its dimensions or merely an understanding of how the poor undergo death on many different levels (such as sickness, fatigue, hunger, dehumanization, and the violation of human rights); rather, it explores how to understand this reality from a faith perspective, how to do a faith reading and reflection of the reality of poverty in the contemporary world (Groody 2007:1-14).

Like Gutiérrez and Groody, the problem of ‘poverty’ has been exercising biblical scholars since the publication of Albert Gelin’s book *The Poor of Yahweh* in 1964. Since then, the question was re-examined from the perspective of place (land) as a gift and promise to the poor of Yahweh, and of the need for biblical revival.

Walter Brueggeman’s seminal work *The Land* (2002) looked specifically for a constructive theology of land that would be warm, physical, and vital. He looked to ancient days to find the essential inspiration of the religious cosmology, with a transforming vision for collective agrarian civilization and for socio-ecological sustainability.

Gelin suggests that Isaiah was a prophet who advocated and accepted an agrarian civilization, and looked at agriculture as an art taught by God (Gelin 1964:17). “When a farmer ploughs for planting, does he plough continually? ...Does he not plant wheat in its place, barley in its plot, and spelt in its field? His God instructs him and teaches him the right way” (excerpt Isaiah 28:23-29).

Isaiah also engaged widely with public concerns, often standing against the exploitation of the poor and the environment (both of which were the results of ignoring God’s care of creation and God’s justice), as expressed in Isaiah 24:5-6. “The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore, a curse devours the earth, and its inhabitants suffer....”

Because the great prophets (like Isaiah) championed the weak and sustainable way of life⁸⁴, they never stopped denouncing oppression in every form: fraudulent transactions (Hosea 12:8; Amos 8:50, large landholdings (Micah 2:1-3; Ezek. 22:29), corrupt judges (Amos 5:7), enforced slavery (Neh. 5:1-5), and the violence of the propriety class (the ‘landholding classes’, and ‘heartless officials’) amongst whom were included the kings themselves (Jer. 22:13-17), those “who turn justice to wormwood and cast down righteousness to the earth”(Amos 5:7). Similarly, the prophet Jeremiah condemns those who “have grown fat and sleek. They know no bounds in deeds of evil; they judge not with justice the cause of the fatherless, to make it prosper, and they do not defend the rights of the needy” (Jer. 5:28).

It is important to grasp the true meaning of these public prophetic messages, since the prophets did not romanticize the poor. In fact, Jeremiah was willing to attack the quality of the faith of both poor and rich (Jer. 5:4); and Isaiah (for the same reasons) delivered both classes to Yahweh’s wrath (Isa. 9:12-16). The prophets, according to John Sawyer (1987) used religious criteria in forming their judgments: rich and poor alike were evaluated in relation to Yahweh and His will for human flourishing. This prophetic messianism offers not only peace and fruitfulness, but also prevents any further destruction of the well-being of all creation that may come through individual wealth, pride or even from foreign cultures, political hegemony, economic and military alliances (Weaver 2017).

⁸⁴ cf. Isa. 24:4-12; 5:1-7; 19:9; 32:14-20; 41:18-19; 55; 58:13-14.

Further, in Deutero-Isaiah (John Weaver notes), hope was presented as a coming when relationships would be restored between God and humanity, and the earth is restored to fruitfulness and harmony (Isaiah 55:10). Ultimately, the earth will be full of God's knowledge and glory (Isaiah 11:9, 6:3) and will be made new (Isaiah 65:17). Conversely, there are also biblical warnings about environmental mismanagement, either through poor creation care or neglect⁸⁵.

New Testament writers (like John and Paul) were also aware of the need to safeguard key issues regarding the environment and sustainability (Romans 8:19-22). A sense of the interdependence between ecological sustainability and social well-being is expressed clearly in the Lord's Prayer "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven". This led Jones (2003:7) to conclude that, "Jesus not only was earthed but also saw his mission as none other than the earthing of heaven." It was evident to John, that God's love was both creative (*Logos*) and sustaining.

A common translation of (John 3:16) is "For God so loved the *world* that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life." A better rendering, that communicates so much more, is "God so loved the *cosmos* that he gave his only Son" to "empower us to fulfil his purpose for life" (Berry 2007:32). Furthermore, God's own Word, the eternal Son, the *Logos* assumed "flesh" in Jesus and became Immanuel (John 1:14). As Niels Gregersen and Richard Bauckham has emphasized it is through Jesus "*all things on Earth and in heaven, are reconciled to God*" (Col 2:15-20).

Developing the Pauline ecotheology of Derek Tidball (1999), Berry comments: "Paul never narrows the focus of his vision to concentrate on a few elect people who enjoy the benefits of salvation for their own good irrespective of what happens to the rest of creation. His lens is always a wide-angle lens which keeps the whole of creation in view" (Berry 2007:32).

The Christian concern for ecological sustainability largely waned over the centuries. However, Carl Volz writes in *Faith and Practice in the Early Church*, that as Christianity inherited its belief in 'one God, the Father and creator of all' from Judaism, then it ought to recognize its inheritance: that Christian faith shows there is only one mysterious source of life, one God powerful enough to sustain, to govern the destiny of humans, and to supervise the complex world. Virtually, every

⁸⁵ For example, Lev. 18:25, 28; 25:2-6; Deut. 29:22-25; Isa. 24:4-6; Jer. 12:10-11.

ancient rule of faith (including that which developed into the Apostle's Creed, Volz claims) begins with a similar affirmation (Volz 1983:13ff).

David Hallman's *Ecotheology* describes how, before the 1970s, social ecology challenged the dualism between the human sciences and the natural sciences, and instead recognized their connectedness, that there was no clear understanding of ecological holism. This shows that, until recently, holistic and integrative mission was not a central concern of Christian mission and praxis. This lack of ecological concern is seen in the history of Christian mission and goes all the way back to the pre-Reformation era.

However, there are exceptions. Lynn White (1967), Leonardo Boff (1982) and more recently Pope Francis, point to Saint Francis as "the example per excellence of care for the vulnerable (God's creation, the poor, the outcast) and a revolutionary model for public ecospirituality". Saint Francis is the patron saint of all who study and work in the area of religious ecology and sustainability (Francis 2015:9). For Saint Francis, the Bible and nature were not just "two books" but an interdependent source of God's revelation and a living hallmark of salvation and solidarity with other creatures, even when it involves sacrifice and suffering.

Leonardo Boff regards St Francis as somebody who breaks the rigidity of the feudal hierarchy, and calls all persons "brothers and sisters". Speaking as a "little brother" (*fratello*), Francis wanted to unite the great and small, to treat the wise and simple with brotherly affection, and to bind together with ties of love people from across all sectors of society. But he also regards the whole of creation and seeks, "the friendly union that he established with all things" (Boff 1982:22, 34, 46ff).

St Francis regarded the whole of creation with infinite gentleness and felt a moral responsibility to act. He showed care for the rocks, gathered worms in the road so that they would not be stepped on by the travellers, and provided the bees with honey and wine in the winter so that they would not perish from hunger and cold (1982:35). Here is a clear distinct way of being-in-the-world, not having dominion over things, but acting together with them like brothers and sisters of the same family. Even to his own agonies and sufferings, Boff observes, "he gave not the name of pains but of brothers".

Other theologians were far less connected to creation, for example Thomas Aquinas, spoke of God “as pure act” and Bonaventure spoke of God as “self-diffusive goodness and love” (see Bevens & Schroeder 2011:9).

Saint Francis’ expansive view of anima, his approach of gentleness, care, and living in harmony together with all creatures, provides an exemplary Christian model for an integrative ecological spirituality and sustainability. Saint Francis of Assisi lived a life in solidarity with God and with the entire community of God’s household, the whole planet. Hence, he is to be regarded as “the greatest ecological patriarch since Christ” (White 1967:1205-7). In the 1600s, Saint Francis’ sense of anima is echoed in the words of Sir Thomas Browne: “Nature is the art of God” (Religio Medici 1642).

Browne’s description of what can be defined today as “a cosmological realm of ecotheology” reappeared in the 20th-century through the words of ecotheologian Howard Clinebell, who (having read people like Paul Tillich) reaffirmed that, “humans and nature belong together, in their created glory, in their great tragedy, and in their salvation” (Clinebell 1996).

Tillich considers “ultimate concern” as the destiny of faith, and crucial to it is an understanding of sustainability. ‘Sustainability’ is to be seen as an all-embracing inquiry into the destiny of life, freedom and comprehensive interaction with the natural world and cosmological reality. Therefore, the dynamics of sustainability give content to the norms and values that are the drivers of life: shaping our understanding of truth and collective justice, even if that challenges faith and culture. Hence, faith and culture can only now be affirmed as authentic if they promote moral obligations for sustainability. Much of the literature on sustainability recognizes that all sustainability projects are essentially about rediscovering our primal ecological roots and moral obligation to care for the earth, its finite resources and vulnerable creatures (Rasmussen 2009).

6.5 Mission’s Return to Theology of Sustainability

The modern ecumenical movement for an integrative theology of mission and sustainability are, in essence, retrieving: the dynamics of the Christian faith, the meaning of the “primal vision of life” (John V. Taylor) and the holistic dimensions of the “life of the world” (Schmemmann 1973). Sustainability discourse is a rethinking of the ecological dimensions of the Great Commission.

Until recently, these dynamics of Christian mission were not read from an ecological perspective; but a fresh missiological reading has begun to emerge (see Wijzen 2015) that has influenced ecotheological approaches to sustainability. These have raised a new theological perspective on ecological wisdom embedded in the Bible, and in other moral traditions of abundant life. By hearing the voice of early literature, a new perspective in ecotheology and Christian mission has developed, that recognizes an integrative mission theology of sustainability that must include the welfare of the whole planet Earth.

In Africa, since the 1960s, it has become evident that there is a close relationship between the moral traditions of sustainability and the present ecological issues. There is a growing need to recognize the interdependence between man's concern for sustainable life, and the dynamics of those ecological entities (or other living beings) which condition human being's existence and prosperity.

For instance, some ground-breaking interdisciplinary studies of ecology in East Africa by Bethwell Ogot (1979), John Iliffe (1979) and Helge Kjekshus (1977/1996) found that the culturally-sustained dynamics of shareable life, and a more expansive ecological relationship to nature (as embedded in cultural wisdom), are vital to the development of ecological integrity and a cosmological vision of life. Contrary to viewing ecological reality in a purely utilitarian way, such a culturally-informed ecological vision for life demands a fresh ecumenical quest. A quest that must include perspectives from both religio-cultural discourses and the ecological wisdom embedded in the Bible.

Many colonial models of development employed a dualistic vision of sustainability, or individualized every aspect of productivity. They lacked the sustained moral traditions of what Pope Francis (2015:118) has called "intergenerational solidarity".

A critique of utilitarian imperialism and its impact on cultural traditions of abundant life can be seen in many academic disciplines. However, the emergent development of ecotheology has emanated from the political and theological critiques of racism and economic injustice, which culminated in the 1970s through liberation theology and successive African anthropology (see Chabal & Daloz 1999; Parratt 1995; 1997). Directly or indirectly, these discourses function as intellectual resistance to a world now increasingly shaped by the emergence of the

International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and other capitalist enterprises.

Christian ecotheology tacitly accepted the capitalist ideology and saw its theological responsibility as shaping ecological concerns of its people within the capitalist world. This failure not only advocated the spread of “the spirit of capitalism” (Max Weber), it also choreographed a colossal spread of secularism and globalization, which is now pervasive in almost all cultural traditions. Since the 1950s, as globalized trade developed, it manifested a growing dominance of multinational corporations (MNCs) and occasioned the unspeakable exploitation of developing countries; as economist John Perkins disclosed in “The Confessions of an Economic Hitman”.⁸⁶

Leading economic analyses (such as Ekins 2013) would agree that most ecological exploitations, structural injustices, and the economic colonization of Third World countries, emanated from a Western-dominated capitalist civilization. The Western World was the primary context for theological discourse, but lacked an integrative avenue for ecological sustainability. Indeed, the limitations and shortcomings of current Christian theological discourse lie in their captivity to Western philosophical traditions, which are entwined with a capitalist worldview.

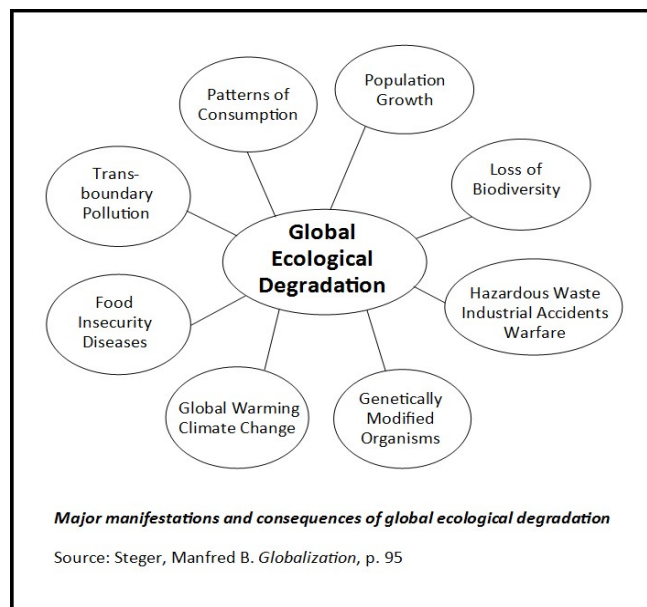
Many contemporary ecotheologians (such as Kim Yong-Bock 2014) see that Western philosophical traditions, and modern scientific-technological discourse regarding the ecology of life, are subject to the capitalist system that dominates and controls the current geopolitical order. Indeed, such classic connections between Western Christianity and Western civilization place the ecological dimension of Western Christianity “in the belly of the beast” (Yong-Bock 2014:220).

Against the dualistic view of Western civilization, African theologies need to converse with the West, offering renewed discourses of ecotheology to create an

⁸⁶ John Perkins is very critical of the World Bank & International Monetary Fund (IMF). See: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Confessions-Economic-Hit-Man-shocking/dp/0091909104> (Accessed 28 January 28, 2017). As an ‘Economic Hitman’ the Chief Economist for the international consulting firm to Chas. T. Main Company, Perkins helped further American imperial interests in countries such as Ecuador, Panama, Indonesia and Saudi Arabia. He convinced underdeveloped countries to accept massive loans for infrastructure development and ensured that the projects were contracted to multinational corporations. The countries acquired enormous debt, and the US and international aid agencies were able to control their economies. Such structural exploitation never ended, nor has there been any acceptance of moral guilt about it.

integrative theology of mission and creative sustainability. Such integrated theological discourse regards the biblical narrative as a sustained expression of the ecology of life, which may provide an integrative avenue for the “convivial life” of sustainability. In the developing world, countries are experiencing ecological

Figure 7: Global Ecological Degradation



challenges (such as are shown in Figure 7).

These daily life experiences are the drivers of Christian ecotheology, which seek an integrative and holistic understanding of life in terms of justice, peace, and the relationship between the integrity of the environment and democracy. Without such a holistic understanding of life, there can be no sustainable solution to the

widening ecological problems (both locally and globally).

Theological conversations that look from the West to the East, and from the past to the present, are needed in order to go beyond exclusionary views of life. They can open a more integrative horizon of life, a more expansive sense of sustainability, and a more integrated ecological-relationship to nature.

Almost everywhere, and certainly in Tanzania, people are increasingly becoming aware of the destructive consequences of ecological degradation produced by the destructive forces of capitalism. They see that they are on the verge of total destruction brought about through exploitative patterns of consumption, structural injustices and homogenization.

Current global challenges and their catastrophic ecological consequences: environmental degradation, climate change, crippling poverty, and social inequalities are among the manifestations of this widespread ecological crisis. One significant, dangerous effect of the capitalist civilization is the attempt at homogenization. As Laurenti Magesa (2014:179) puts it, the most common form of globalization involves: “a sort of mindless transfer of ideas and goods from the

industrialized regions of the world through the power of money and the influence of mass communication”. These in turn affect the cultural sense of self, ecological consciousness, and moral traditions of sustainability.

In Luo cultural sociology, sustainability describes how ‘*oikonomia*’ (a Greek term for the ‘law of the household management’) is a necessary precondition for the well-being of the home, locality and the nation, and can be linked with the ecology of *aluora*. In light of Luo people’s *aluora*, sustainability is not limited to integration within the household, but also to how one constituent of *oikonomia* influences the other. For example, the locality and nation invade the home (in terms of providing cues for behaviour in families); and this behaviour affects the community environment, and transforms their ecologies. Although the home is a “personal space or family space, one which others enter only by invitation”, as David Sibley (2007:90-114) has observed; yet, among the Luo people, this feeling of territorial space depends greatly on the location and the social composition of the area, known as *aluora* (see Chapter 4.2 to 4.2.3). Surprisingly, in academic disciplines where a recognition of this significance might be expected (particularly socio-environmental theology), the conflictual aspects of the home, locality and nation are not widely studied.

To secure socio-ecological sustainability and economic processes, it is important to maintain a balanced relationship between the different spaces, and their bond of connection with the biosphere that sustains us and the universe that has brought us forth (Rasmussen 2013). A simple monetary analogy shows this plainly: “ecosystems provide an annual *income* called biocapacity, and our consumption, the ecological footprint is *expenditure*” (McKeown 2016:181).

Generally, sustainability has been critically probing other discourses on life as a whole, in seeking for a more integrative and expansive meaning of life. However, the capitalist model remains the dominant approach of secularized societies to development.

For example, at the UN’s Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the issue of utilitarian advancement required financing for a “sustainable social and environmental development”. This was the greatest point of tension between North and South. The programmes of Agenda 21 of that conference demanded more than US\$600,000 million a year, and this only for the developing nations (Brun 1994:81). This finance-centred development model

overlooks the fact that the earth is on loan to each generation, and that there is both a cultural and moral responsibility to care for it before handing it on.

Community theologian Ann Morisy substantiates this theology of intergenerational fairness in her perceptive book, *Borrowing from the Future* (2011). Morisy also calls for the rights of tomorrow to be valued alongside those of today, and for an extension of practical justice into the future (using a faith-based approach to intergenerational equity).

Consequently, the influence of financial power has made money the greatest idol of the modern world. Dr Ghilleen Prance warns in his book, *The Earth under Threat*: “it is not economists, engineers, ecologists or earth scientists who will serve the earth but the poets, priests, and different faiths”. That is to say, the intimate care of the earth, integrity of life, and democratization of our common future must be based on alternative premises. This demands a fresh ecotheological quest: accessing the perspectives of concern for God’s creation from social groups and from the moral traditions of abundant life.

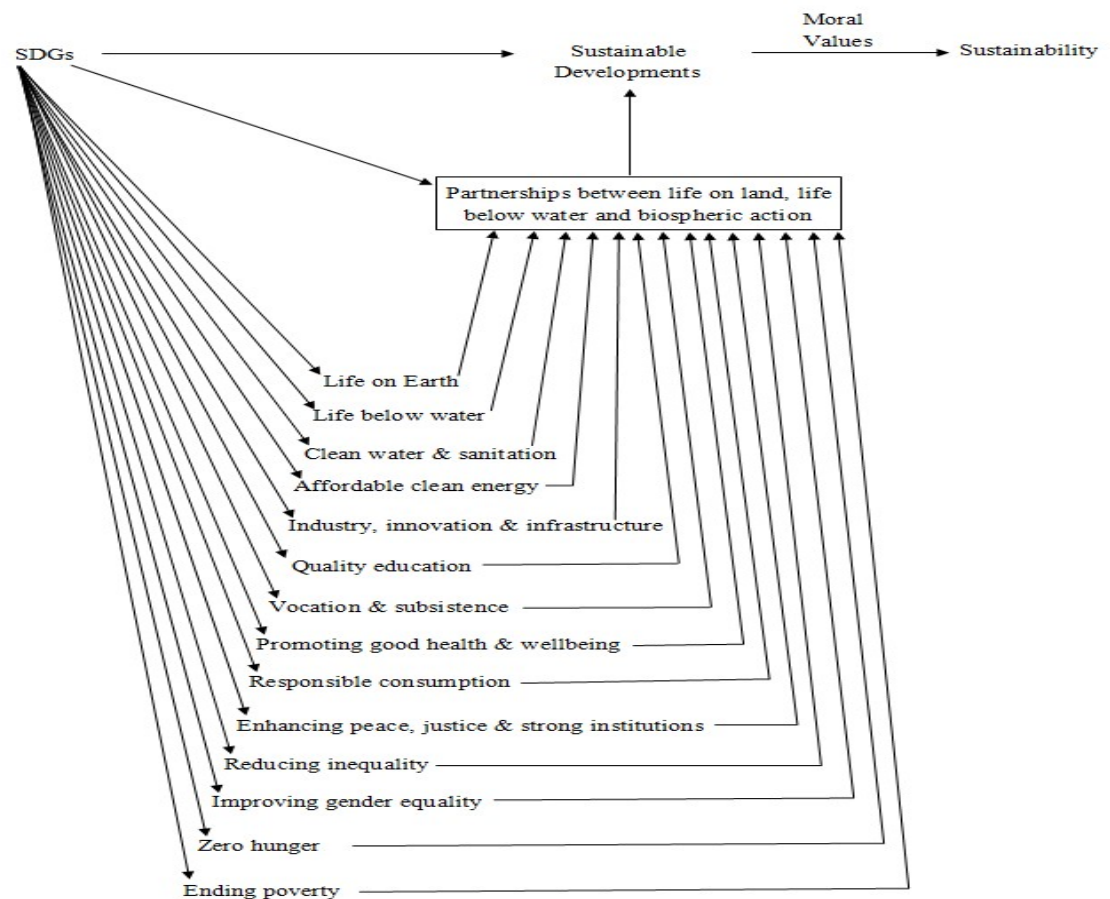
6.6 Towards a Renewed Understanding of Sustainability

In September 2015, the United Nations agreed new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which replaced the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These SDGs came into effect on 1st January 2016. These are: (1) No poverty (2) Zero hunger (3) Good health and well-being (4) Quality education (5) Gender equality (6) Clean water and sanitation (7) Affordable and clean energy (8) Decent vocation and economic growth (9) Industry, innovation and infrastructure (10) Reduced inequalities (11) Sustainable cities and communities (12) Responsible consumption and production (13) Climate action (14) Life below water (15) Life on land (16) Peace, justice and strong institutions, and (17) Partnerships for the goals.

Reflecting upon Luo cosmology and mission-focused ecotheology brings together ecology and development; but to reach the ultimate dimensions of sustainability requires the capitalist causes of poverty, ecological violence and cultural colonization to be resolved. Only then can a true sense of partnership between ecological parties, sustainable development and moral traditions of sustainability can be born. Until recently, the problem of poverty has been almost always described as a conflict between rich and countries and poor ones. But as Jeff Faux observed in his book *The Global Class War*, ‘Never forget that, there are

rich people in poor countries and poor people in rich countries’ (Faux 2006:3). That is why the politics of SDGs and global economy should not be generalized in public discussions of sustainability ethics as if challenges of SDGs were simply economic competition among separate nation-states representing the collective social conditions of their citizens. To avoid such confusion and generalization it is important the SDGs can work for those at bottom of social class. In trying to understand how these goals can work in a more diversified social mores, the allocation of SDGs in Figure 8 below does not follow the UN’s sequence of SDGs. The reason for this is to analyze the ecology of these SDGs using a ‘bottom-up’ model.

Figure 8: Bottom-Up Model of the Ecology of SDGs



The scope and scale of these SDGs has been discussed in both the scientific and religio-cultural discourses on planetary sustainability. For example, Dr Martin Hodson approached these SDGs from a biodiversity perspective, and regards the SDGs as an improvement on the MDGs as the list specifically include two goals (14 & 15) which in Hodson’s view make recommendations concerning biodiversity loss (Hodson 2016:209).

John Dramani Mahama (former president of Ghana) is one of the first African politicians to bring out the remarkable political ecology and social implications of these SDGs. In his speech at the 2016 African Leadership Magazine Awards (held in Johannesburg⁸⁷), Mahama recommends that Africa's immediate attention and political ecology must be focused on what he called 'seven SDGs that pertain to Africa'⁸⁸.

Hodson's biological perspective and Mahama's political approach to SDGs are crucial to understanding both the ecological and political dimensions of these goals. However, discourses such as Hodson and Mahama failed to analyze how each of the SDGs belongs to the interdependent dimensions of socio-ecological sustainability (as previously discussed in relation to the Luo people's sociology of *aluora* in Chapter 4). Boff (1995) argues that a significant challenge to ecological sustainability stems from the causes and consequences of poverty. The effect of poverty always results in the "cry of the earth", while affecting society and culture simultaneously. This is due to the fact that society and culture belong within an ecological matrix.

As well as being the study of the place and its biosociology, the subject matter of ecology can be seen too as the relationship that all living bodies establish and maintain among themselves and within natural surroundings. In this holistic perspective, Boff (1995) states, economic, political, social, military, educational, urban, agricultural and other social regimes are all subject to ecological consideration. Each of them can contribute towards collective sustainability or can cause damage. Damage such as social injustice (the creation of an underclass), ecological injustice (violence against biocapacity and atmospheric well-being) or economic injustice (all forms of capitalist exploitation)

It can appear that the entire goal of these SDGs is to secure economic growth. But they are also ecologically-informed, seeking to reconstitute and nurture the grand partnership between people, place, and planet. As Kofi Annan (who served as the seventh Secretary-General of the United Nations) once said: "If

⁸⁷ On February 23, 2017, reposted on John Mahama's Facebook Account on March 01st, 2017.

⁸⁸ Specifically goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 9 & 16.

our hopes of building a better and safer world are to become more than wishful thinking, we will need the engagement of volunteers more than ever”⁸⁹.

A world cannot be built from the strongholds of selfishness and economic domination; but needs the cultural values and moral traditions which sustained the spirit of volunteerism, egalitarianism and mutual partnerships. However, these are waning, and some see that even when they do occur, “it is not done wholeheartedly” (Sebahene 2017).

Almost the entire treatment of SDGs and sustainability in literature has been focused on how to secure economic growth, especially in challenging times. But the focus must now turn to developing an ‘integrative sustainability’: to define what it is and what it is not (in theory and in practice). Therefore, consideration will be given to different aspects of sustainability; we will examine why such a renewed concept of sustainability is strategically vital to the faith community, and the Luo people in particular, as they strive to recover a more integrative sense of sustainability.

Paul Ekins’ concept of growth and sustainability (2013) explores the relationship between three main growth concepts. These concepts are related to one another, yet distinct.

1. Physical growth: measured by the amount of materials and energy mobilized by the economy and human activities.
2. Economic growth (measured by GDP): according to Ekins, this is the growth in money flows – calculated by adding together consumption expenditure, investment, government expenditure and net exports.
3. Growth in human welfare (Ekins 2013:33-4): in the world of economic colonialization this form of growth is often overlooked, maybe because it is spiritually imbedded (cf. Pope Francis 2015:110-120).

Manfred Steger (2013) argues that economic growth (measured by GDP) is often the dominant measure of growth. But this capitalist concept of development has made ‘resource sustainability’ the main engine or a key issue of economic

⁸⁹ European Commission press release http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-10-1640_en.htm?locale=en accessed 17/8/2017.

growth. The problem of economic growth (measured by GDP) is that, “there is no theoretical limit to it” (Ekins 2013:33-47). Many economic studies have shown that when societies move toward more capitalist environments, the sustainability of commonly-pooled resources tends to decrease. Changes occur in individual preferences, social norms, customs and views towards others through human interactions. Often, there is a decline in moral values and the traditional attitudes that upheld sustainability, leaving little space for the collective care of natural resources (Magesa 1997).

Failure to distinguish correctly between the definitions of the first two forms of growth, and not integrating the contributory spiritual dimensions of sustainability in the GDP, is a persistent weakness in the literature in this area. This fundamentally undermines the suggested economic path to sustainability. Ekins’ concept of growth and sustainability concludes that the contributory factors of ‘growth in human welfare’ (the third concept) can be measured through employment, working conditions, leisure, equality or income distribution, relationships in families and communities, and the perceived security and safety of the future (Ekins 2013:34).

Contrary to many economists who make the assumption that income has an effect on welfare, Ekins draws on Richard Layard to argue that, “people’s spiritual condition is a major influence on their subjective welfare”. That is to say, any discussion of growth, or of using a new resource through applied knowledge and innovation – which is what makes income growth (Ekins 2013:34-5) – must embody reciprocal relationships between people, place, and planet.

6.7 Towards a renewed missional theology of sustainability

Sustainability has been reviewed from both an ecotheological and multidisciplinary perspective. A renewed concept has now emerged: the connection between church as a sociological reality and a cultural cosmology. Theological reflection on the very essence of the church, namely, the cosmic Christ, reveals two intrinsic dynamic properties: reconciliation and transformation. Engaging sustainability in light of this calls Christians everywhere to the redemptive task of reconciliation, and of reforming the ecosocial consciousness on the world.

The creative *Logos* and God's wisdom (seen in the Cosmic Christ) should inform the practice of the Church and define its God-given purpose. Therefore, the church's theology of sustainability should express practices and behaviours consistent with the character of the Creator.

Mission is transformational with a missional responsibility not just to the missionary Christianity but to the community of creation as whole. A missional responsibility of Christians is to reflect on how they and their theologies affect the world, and especially the parts of the world that they cannot immediately see. The missional question to be asked is: how do we understand the world and our place within it, and how do we understand our contribution towards creation's integrity? To begin answer this question, the idea of 'transformational sustainability' must be revisited (as 'sustainability' itself is not without constant change or transformation).

While equitable growth and human flourishing is one of the major features of transformational development figured in Jesus's social gospel (Luke 4:17-19); it is important to see the stark difference between what motivates Jesus's social theology, to motivates modern global economic growth in the era globalization. It is clear that Luke's gospel promotes equitable flourishing and social integration; whilst economic growth in modern world is simply about power and wealth accumulation (Herzog 1994).

In light of the above missional viewpoint, it is therefore evident that a number of integrative considerations have to be made, if sustainable growth and sustainability is to be achieved.

For 'sustainability' to be an integrative and a realistic concept that addresses the widening ecological crisis (and leads people to a long-term harmony with nature and the community of life), then there are some things 'sustainability' cannot be. If, 'sustainability' means the flourishing of all life towards the primal vision (Taylor 1963), and not just limited within certain enclaves of the world, then it cannot be used to somehow justify further socioeconomic exploitation or 'business-as-usual' growth (Washington 2015:366).

1. Sustainability cannot deny cosmological reality: as it is an inquiry into the depth of the expansive sense of the ecological relationship between human ecology and the ecosystem's well-being. The hope of the future is that the dynamics of 'sustainability' become fully integrated into the lives and hearts of people, who find beauty in "one earth community"

and thus live with respect and care for the community of life (Hallman 1994; McDaniel 2007). In practical terms, it has to be a *realistic*, *holistic*, and *anticipative* process, built upon the intimate understanding that the Earth is God's. God's creation is the whole planet composed of human beings living in interdependent relations with all other life-forms and Earth processes. (Bookless 2007; McFague 2008). As a faith community, sustainability challenges us to meet the ecclesiological and doctrinal problems we face and seek to solve them positively. Hence, sustainability cannot be about exclusion or denial.

2. Sustainability cannot ignore cultural ecospirituality and the ecological limits of the Earth: for since ancient times human beings have always lived in an environment which is partly nature and partly culture (Volf 1996; Davis 2009). Accordingly, it cannot be about endless physical growth on a finite planet. The disturbing ecotheological findings from the ancient agrarian culture clearly indicate this (Davis 2009; Wright 2010). Wendell Berry asserts the Exodus was a movement from the flat, easily tillable land of Egypt to "the narrow and precariously balanced ecological niche" that is the hill country of the ancient Judah and Samaria. The people of Israel had to re-make their economic, political, spiritual and social life to conform to a landscape that allowed "only the slightest margins for negligence, ignorance, or excessive consumerism". Similar findings are found in the Luo people's ecological history (Ogot 1979; Maseno 2011) affecting their agricultural practices, and economic activities. Their choice of alternatives of action in both time and place were directly conditioned by: the health of the Earth and living creatures, the collective social consciousness of human being's relationship to nature, the physical well-being of families and communities, and ultimately on their survival.

In the light of the cultural evidence, sustainability cannot be about 'more' it has to be about 'sufficient' (or, to borrow Haydn Washington's word, 'enough'). A theological approach towards sustainability cannot be about unlimited material prosperity (as the biblical scriptures indicate). In the past, the scriptures have often been

misunderstood, and used to promote domination and cultural imperialism. But true, applied biblical-missiology and ecological sustainability must determine questions of value and moral choice in a context. Without such local orientation and a local practice, sustainability would be not only irresponsible, but dangerous. (Kjekshus 1996).

3. Sustainability cannot be faithless: as it is concerned with the ultimate goal of life and the well-being of the whole planet. Therefore, together with its patrimony of nature, it must be fully aware that “patrimony is a part of the shared identity of each place and a foundation upon which to build a habitable city” (Pope Francis 2015:108). Sustainability is not just a matter of rediscovering “the metaphysics of mastery and transcendent nature”, as Michael Bonnet (2015) appears to suggest. A sound practice of sustainability (as ‘intergenerational solidarity’) must incorporate the specific ecological history, culture and architecture of each place, thus preserving its identity. Ecological sustainability and sustainable living must be by cherishing the cultural treasures of humanity and the nonhuman community. Culture, as Pope Francis reminds us, “is more than what we have inherited from the past; it is also, and above all, a living, dynamic and participatory present reality, which cannot be excluded as we rethink the relationship between human beings and the environment” (Francis 2015:108).
4. Sustainability cannot be a ‘weak sustainability’: that somehow suggests we can substitute money for ecosystem services. This appears to be the underlying assumption of *Our Common Future*, WCED 1987, and is expressed by some theorists of integral mission. This approach “breaks fundamental ecological reality” (Washington 2015). Washington suggests it has to be about “strong sustainability”, which retains ecosystem services and natural capital for humanity. However, many scholars believe that our solutions should go beyond that, and be for *all* of nature; hence, it should be “strongest sustainability” which accepts the intrinsic value of nature and believes in Earth jurisprudence and eco-justice as Gregersen (*Incarnation*, 2015) and Kopnina & Shoreman-Quimet’ (*Sustainability: Key Issues*, 2015) articulate.

‘Sustainability’ cannot be used interchangeably with ‘sustainable development’, ‘sustainable consumption and production’ and ‘sustainable prosperity’ as Spencer & White (2007:50) suggest. Without clear distinction between ‘weak’ and ‘strongest’ sustainability, then its values could be used to justify projects such as agroecological intensification.

5. Sustainability cannot *be ethics-free*: it cannot be based on an anthropocentric ‘human supremacy’ approach, where humanity always seeks to be the master (Washington 2015). A meaningful practice of sustainable living cannot be expected from an ‘anthropocentric worldview’ that sees sustainability as simply our responsibility to provide enough for our extravagance (Bookless 2007). Jenkins (2008; 2013) has suggested that the ethicist must make the connection between sustainability and theology, and enable theological ethics to influence the basic goal of global ethics by describing shared moral commitments. These should be sufficient for grounding and guiding international practices of response, especially those ‘without borders’ practices, such as: international relief, human development, human rights reporting and biological conservation (Jenkins 2008:199). Jenkins’ view is appropriate on a global scale, but there should be an integrative ethical dialogue, not just between theological ethics and international practice. It should include and respect the rights of peoples and cultures, and must appreciate that the development of a social group (to quote Pope Francis again), presupposes an historical process which takes place within a cultural context, and demands the constant and active involvement of local people *from within their proper culture* (2015:109).

6.8 Conclusion

The shape and dynamics of ‘sustainability’ have been seen through the emerging conversations in traditional cultural cosmology, Christian ecotheology, and also from the perspective of interdisciplinary debates on moral and social challenges of sustainability. While each discipline’s trajectory has its distinctive

elements, there are cultural and cosmological currents that have prevailed over the last four decades that have helped bring sustainability discourse to the fore.

In summary, the rise of sustainability discourse is a critical resistance against economic establishment and theological hegemony, which have been intensifying into forms of ‘sustainable development’ or through “six things that sustainability cannot be”. The sustainability discourse is an opportunity for traditionally restrictive theology (for example Western Christianity) to have broader relevance. This can be through the world of social science and humanities, and also by making ordinary people, organizations and communities aware of the practical universe they inhabit (see Hallman 1994; Parratt 1995). Meaningful sustainability (Willis Jenkins 2013) is pragmatic ground for studying theology and ethics, within the larger dimension of the study of culture (a discourse for theology and ecological management): regaining an expansive sense of humankind’s ecological roots, and repossessing the oldest and deepest religious moral responsibility. The sustainability discourse is also an effective tool for doing eco-activism and eco-social morality.

Historically, sustainability has been a messianic way for understanding a people, community or collective cultural traditions of social justice; as opposed to social dislocation and every form of ecological or economic oppression (Hosea 12:8; Amos 8:5). In this prophetic tradition, sustainability was used as a way of navigating social relationships, and for creating a culture that lives in harmony and solidarity with nature and others (Washington 2015). This communitarian vision of sustainability has always been subversive to archetypal imprints of individualistic culture, which often conflict with shared principles of socio-ecological ‘realism’ (Bookless 2007; Washington 2015). Thankfully, a ‘realism’ (founded on what the works of James Lovelock among others would call ‘ecological geophysiology’) has shown how sustainability could offer an Earth-honouring faith with ecological solidarity, as opposed to individualized human hubris (cf. Lovelock 2006; Primavesi 2009).

Finally, sustainability can make us re-examine the truth of participative ecospirituality and life-widening mission (given its ‘multidisciplinary stocks’ and willingness to hear or follow the cosmological narrative that encompasses biological, economic, cultural, and religious sustainability discourses). The next chapter will discuss this last point at length in relation to integrative sustainability.

Chapter Seven

Navigating Sustainability through Integrating Life-Widening Faith and Ecosocialization

7.0 Introduction

This thesis has studied the interactions between Christian eco-theology, indigenous cosmology and environmental ethics; and it has explored the possibilities of their integration. These conversations must continue into the future: through an intergenerational process that not only raises ecological awareness, but embeds sustainable subsistence ethics into everyday life. Sustainable subsistence must be about faithfulness to God's kingdom and about improving the quality of life, while minimizing the detrimental ecological impact, in order not to jeopardize the needs of future generations (Davis 2009; Morisy 2011).

Chapter 6 develops the idea that a society must both desire a life that is ecologically sensitive, and be morally willing to recognize and embed this in its religious practices and ethics.

The debate set by Paul Tillich's book *Dynamics of Faith* (1958) will be explored further. Tillich suggests that for faith to be practical, it must take its stock from the conditions that govern human life and the life of a social group: implying the integration of sustainability ethics and a missional theology of ecology.

This chapter argues that both Christian faith and indigenous morality can encourage an ecological reformation of the society; identifying sustainability as an important value framework in "bringing human ecology and flourishing into respectful accord with God's greater economy" (see DeWitt 2008; Hallman 2009). This requires the integration of nature, capital ethics and society; a moral framework that is life-centered, justice-committed, and Earth-honouring.

The question is, how can such a holistic integration between nature, mission ethics and social sustainability be encouraged. This chapter discusses how this might be achieved through life-widening faith and ecosocialization.

7.1 Tillich and the Ecology of Faith-Based Integration

Tillich (1886-1965) was a German-American theologian. His perspective of God and faith illuminated and bound together traditional Christianity and modern culture. Tillich's many books, notably *The Courage to Be* (1952) and *Dynamics of*

Faith (1958), reached a large public audience – including those not usually concerned with religious matters.

Dynamics of Faith (1958) offers a unique interweaving of an integrated reflection on the dynamics of faith that has been ongoing for the past century. Early reviewers of this book (such as American ethicist Reinhold Niebuhr and Wesley scholar Albert C. Outler) considered this book as not only the summation of Tillich's immensely theological scholarship, but as an important essay in its own right – with extraordinary insight into distinguishing what is true from what is false.⁹⁰ Both recommend that it be read by theologians, biologists, and academics alike, to inform their understanding of the universality and dynamics of faith. The focus of the book was on the “ecological and spiritual conditions that condition man's state of being ultimately concerned” about the planet and Tillich defines faith as “the state of being ultimately concerned: the dynamics of faith are the dynamics of man's ultimate concern” (Tillich 1958:1).

Some Christian writers (such as C. S. Lewis), understood faith to be “the art of holding on to things your reason has once accepted, in spite of your changing moods” (Lewis 1952/1975:121). By contrast, for Tillich, faith is a conviction.

It is participation in the subject of one's ultimate concern with one's whole being” (Tillich 1958:32). Faith goes beyond theoretical knowledge, whether such knowledge is based upon evidence or through trust in authorities. In Tillich's view, doctrines, belief, and law keeping are not the defining features of Christian spirituality, but faith. For Tillich, “faith is more than trust in authorities, although trust is an element of faith” (Tillich 1958:32).

Writing after the Second World War and the famous 1944 Bretton Woods Conference, Tillich was fully aware that the system people were living under was the result of the commercial, political and cultural imperialism of the West. He recognised the inherent drive to dominate through unbounded capitalism, and argued against this colonial hegemony. He rejected the theological conservatism

⁹⁰ For full review of Tillich's *Dynamics of Faith* by R. Niebuhr and A. Outler (see the back cover of Tillich's book).

of privatised beliefs, and proposed a new way of rethinking faith. He wanted 'faith' to be looked at as "an act of the total personality" (1958:2).

The concern of faith, argues Tillich, "must be seen as identical with the desire of love: reunion with that to which one belongs and from which one is separated" (1958:112). Such expansive dynamics of faith promoted an integrative spirituality. He saw that colonial missionary theology preached Christian faith as a set of defended religious doctrines of single reality, or communicated faith with the discriminatory intent to separate converts from their cultural traditions. Tillich's faith study, by contrast, suggests that the dynamics of faith are a catalytic step: in building a collective socio-ecological economy, based on the integrating power of faith and on right relationship with life's commonwealth.

The first, and perhaps most fundamental point, in Tillich's *Dynamics of Faith* is that 'faith' is about the ecology of life as a whole, and is an act of total personality. It involves God's unconditional love to creation and the whole spectrum of life. Tillich makes a powerful case for faith to be understood within the context of social integration and engagement with creation: that it should take seriously the conditions that accounts for human being's life and existence, such as food and shelter (Tillich 1958:1-5, 112-116).

Drawing from Scripture, philosophy and various theological traditions, Tillich offers not only an innovative understanding of the theology of faith, but a central thesis for integrated faith practice.

Faith, in Tillich's account, takes its universal characteristics from the God of justice, who, because he represents justice for everybody and everything, is called the God of the universe. Drawing upon: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might" (Deut. 6:5), Tillich deduces what 'ultimate concern' must mean. (1958:3). It is ultimately and unconditionally concerned about transcendent nature and about what she represents in demand and promise. In other words, faith is an all-embracing and all-transcending concern; whose 'ultimate concern' demands expansive and unconditional surrender, promises ultimate fulfillment, and indefinite promises; and the believer's first task is to live accordingly.

For Tillich, faith is the central act of the human mind and spirituality. All movements and functions of life are all united in the act of faith. Faith is not the sum total of their impacts, but it transcends every special impact, as well as the totality of them, and it has itself a decisive impact upon each of them.

Colonial theology and popular religion can often make statements which, intentionally or unintentionally, contradict the structure of faith reality. Such a contradiction is when faith is seen as a type of knowledge, supported by religious authority, but yet may actually have little supporting evidence.

One example of this is the doctrine of Christ's mother remaining a virgin. Tillich sees that whenever this happens, true faith stands against false faiths and gods (such as consumerism and capitalism), and not against knowledge. This is because in other religious traditions (as we have seen in Luo cultural ecology), there is literally no distinction between the religious faith and the knowledge responsible for communication of our human ecology in the public sphere (Maseno 2011). Such an exclusionary attitude is an expression not of faith, but of the confusion of faith with belief or science. Faith, however, "is not belief and it is not knowledge with a low degree of probability" (Tillich 1958:35). In short, faith (as the state of 'ultimate concern') claims 'the whole man'. It cannot be restricted to mere scientific feeling or religious emotion – even scientists, artists, moralists show clearly that they are also ultimately concerned about the conditions that influence their very existence (1958:39-40).

Regarding the life of faith, Tillich argues that any acceptance of faith as the state of being 'ultimately concerned' must be derived from the experience of 'actual faith' (pp.99-127). There is no faith without participation (pp.99-100); and without some participation in the object of one's 'ultimate concern', it is not possible to be concerned about it.

In this sense, every act of faith presupposes participation: not only towards that which it is directed, but toward the living reality itself. Without a preceding experience of the ultimate, no actual courage, no affirming experience of being ultimately concerned, and no faith in the ultimate can exist. In Tillich's own words, "without the manifestation of God in man the question of God and faith in God are not possible. There is no faith without participation." (p.100).

Perhaps, the most significant contribution of Tillich's book (with relevance to contemporary conversations on mission and sustainability) is the subsection on "faith and the integration of the personality" (pp.105-111). He argues that if faith is the state of being 'ultimately concerned', then all preliminary concerns are subject to it. Therefore, the 'ultimate concern' gives depth, direction and unity to all other concerns and, with them, to the whole personality and his cosmic belonging. As the 'ultimate' is the ground of everything that is, so 'ultimate concern' is the integrating centre of the personal life. Therefore, if personal life is relational by nature, then mankind's 'ultimate concern' and faith are always within man's being and within each other; as man is not simply composed of separate parts, but is in unity.

Faith, therefore, is not a matter of the mind in isolation, or the soul in contrast to mind and body, but "is the centred movement of the whole personality toward something of ultimate meaning and significance" (p.106). Faith, unlike emotion or mere feelings, directs man's conscious life by giving it a central object of "concentration" (in Tillich's phrase).

Therefore, only faith can produce an 'integration of the personality', and this integrating power of faith has healing power. The integrating of faith in a concrete situation is dependent on both subjective and objective factors. The subjective factor is the degree to which a person is open to the power of faith, and how strong and passionate is his 'ultimate concern'. Such openness is what religion calls 'grace' and is seen as a gift that cannot be produced intentionally.

Tillich espoused the type of 'integration of the personality' that was created by early Christianity, and yet was repeatedly overlooked in the history of the Church. Its character cannot be described from 'exclusionary faith' alone as its dimensions always lead to the questions of faith and love, and of faith and action (Tillich 1958:111). Integrating faith implies love, determines action, and lives by ecologies of grace. The ecology of grace is central to understanding both the eco-theology of integration and the ecology of life.

This view resonates with emerging perspectives in eco-theology, for example, in Larry Rasmussen's book *Earth-Honoring Faith*, where he notes that:

Life is a gift and a sacred trust. We did not create it, not a single blade of grass, nor do we earn it. It bears its own power, an energy that courses through the cosmos and nature as we know it. It is a power by which life creates the conditions conducive to its own continuation, a rooted confidence that life has what it takes to press on in the face of assault and uncertainty' (Rasmussen 2013:105).

Tillich's *Dynamics of Faith* is a powerful theological possibility for a cultural reading of the ecological reality. It links the dynamics of faith to social concerns, to conditions that typically involve a commitment to justice between generations, then that implicitly involves ecologically-crucial issues (such as equal distribution of wealth, resources and human rights), and includes not only humans, but the whole creation community.⁹¹

The Bible begins with 'man' as a hungry being, or rather with "the man who is that which he eats" as Father Alexander Schmemmann puts it. (1973:14). This perspective, however, is wholly different from scientific materialism and dualism, for nowhere in the Bible do we find the dichotomies of separation between material and spiritual, or the sacred and secular. Yet these are the defining frameworks that underlie the approach of colonial religious ideology. Schmemmann observed:

In the Bible, the food that man eats, the world of which he must partake in order to live, is given to him by God, and it is given as *communion with God*...The world as man's food, is not something 'material' and limited to material functions, thus different from, and opposed to, the specifically 'spiritual' functions by which man is related to God... [*but*] all that exists is God's gift to man, and it all exists to make God known to man, to make man's life communion with God' (1973:1, 14).

In creation mystery, 'food' is a symbolic representation of the divine love that created food, made life for man, and the means of divine presence and wisdom.

Man is a hungry being and consumer (Jones 2003). Man is hungry for food, shelter, and wealth; and as Schmemmann argues, behind all the hunger of our life is God. All desire is 'finally' or 'ultimately', in Tillich's technical language, "a desire for transcending reality –God". But man is not the only hungry being, all that exists lives by 'eating', or by conditions that govern their existence. As such, the whole creation depends on food. Food is not only what we serve on our plates, but refers to everything on Earth that gives us our life and wealth (read Matt. 6:19-20 and 28-34 as well as Luke 12:14-15). Wealth is typically regarded as solely a matter of money, but money is simply a means of exchange for the real things that condition our wealth: edible plants and animals, and resources (such as the land and soil).

⁹¹ See Chapters 4 and 5.

Valuing the symbolic tokens of exchange higher than the reality, has resulted in the wholesale exploitation or neglect of what makes food and true wealth possible. The economic systems that endorse the production and consumption of goods and services, whilst disregarding the components of the Earth or life's commonwealth needed to produce them, are intrinsically incoherent: since there cannot be food and energy without the adequacy of the Earth's ecosphere (Brown & Garver 2009:12). Understanding this, forms an essential foundation for building an economy in a right relationship with life and our life-giving Earth. It also calls for living life in a way that reflects a fundamental eco-social morality. This entreats people of all faiths and cultures to live according to collective values, built on caring for the integrity of creation, and to be good stewards of Creation.

As early as the 1960s, it was clear to people like Joseph Sittler, that such participation was sowing seeds for ecological conversion through the proclamation of the cosmic Christ (Sittler 1962)⁹². This 'cosmic mission' metaphor reveals the unique position of humanity in the universe: that humanity alone is to bless God for the food and the life it receives. And only humanity may respond to God's blessing with worship and with faith.

In light of this sacramental ecology of food, the very act of throwing food away is to reject something intrinsically life-enhancing: a precious gift that, according to Tillich's hypothesis, conditions man's very existence and ultimate place within a given locality. However, a thing's *ultimate* place is not only its place in the great scheme of things, but is also quintessentially its place in the universe. Food and shelter are ecological concerns that are not only essential, but are fundamentals that most centrally and comprehensively identify a man. They reveal man's truest place, the very core of man's identity, and man's state of being 'ultimately concerned'.

Community theologians are now joining this discussion. For example, Andrew Francis's writing in *What in God's Name Are You Eating?* (2014) has shown that what is eaten might literally cost the Earth. He argues that the simple act of eating, conditions the way we think about the world, and therefore, eating is an expression of faith. We have noted (see Chapter 2.4.4) that in traditional Luo

⁹² For a more recent debate on cosmic Christology see essays in Gregersen's *Incarnation*, 2015.

customs, man's food is not something 'material' and limited to material functions alone; rather all food is life-empowering energy made food for deep interconnection with the biosphere and for the intimate communion with the mysterious reality – God.

In the same vein, Larry Rasmussen considered that the faith needed in this crisis, is one that finds a pathway from industrial civilization to ecological civilization. This will involve reconsidering the dynamics of faith that import the elements of Earth, air, fire and water into the moral universe: concerns that condition our very existence. Such a faith, Rasmussen concludes,

...is one in which fidelity to God is lived as fidelity to the Earth. Because, intimacy with Earth is intimacy with God. Such faith, embraces Earth's distress and understands the dangerous downside of human privilege and power on a planet whose life-systems are in deep trouble on every front—in the water, on land, in the air. Yet, it never gives up on the biblical dream, the dream of most religions, that the world can be 'a smiling place' (Augustine) whenever and wherever justice and mercy meet. But a 'smiling place' requires singing communities whose poets and composers know the rhythm of renewable moral-spiritual energy *in* life itself for the hard transitions of the hard times on a tough, new planet' (Rasmussen 2013:110).

It is difficult to read these words and reflect upon Tillich's *Dynamics of Faith*, and not be inspired to consider how faith is truly needed when modern humanity is rethinking how it can find its way from ecological crisis to ecological redemption. Seen through Luo eyes, being 'ultimately concerned' about humanity's very existence means recovering man's cosmic identity and meaning of existence, as the basis of eco-social morality in the community of the created order (Kapolyo 2005:29-61). Above all, reconsidering the human condition through Tillich's perspective involves recovering an understanding of the image of God in human ecology, and all that means in relation to ecological responsibilities.

If all the crises that humanity now faces are grounded in the secularized belief that we are separate, separate from each other, separate from the biosphere that sustains us, and separate from the cultural universe that has brought us forth, then Tillich's work is most prescient. It offers a transformational guide: how to engage as ecological and spiritual beings in bringing about the ecological and identity reform movement needed to protect the sacredness of all life on our common home.

Tillich's *Dynamics of Faith* offers a pathway to constructing a fully-integrated Christian faith and relational theology. His remarkably clear understanding of faith remains immensely provocative and compelling.

The link that is proposed is between Tillich's concept of integrated faith practice, and the emerging discussions about earth-honouring faith and eco-theology in general. It is all-embracing and absorptive towards indigenous Luo cosmology, but it is also a creedal imagination of faith. It meets the 'ultimate concern' by offering a basis for an integrating study of what sustainability can, and should, mean, across a diverse interdisciplinary and intercultural context.

7.2 'Life-Widening Mission' as a Sustainability Metaphor

The phrase 'life-widening mission' is borrowed from the title of Cathy Ross's book *Life-Widening Mission* (2012). This book is a collection of shared perspectives by eco-theologians (from within the global Anglican Communion), and the term 'life-widening mission' is used to describe some of the most pressing issues and challenges in mission theology and sustainability. It is a valuable grounding to integrative sustainability, but also contributes to the ongoing conversation around eco-social reformation. It gives the main biblical, political, ecotheological and ethical angles of human ecology, and features a variety of experts. It originates from the Edinburgh 2010 centenary project, carefully scrutinises the notion of 'life-widening mission', and how this can be used to offer integrating paths and practical horizons in eco-theology.

Ross's volume suggests a five stage process for a holistic 'life-widening' economy, with a moral universe covering the whole of creation. These might be summarised as: (1) sharing treasures in life, (2) nurturing the community of life, (3) sustaining integral mission and ecology, (4) holistic transformation and, (5) Grounding eco-spirituality.

This section examines these five components of 'life-widening mission' for the church in Tanzania. Through these efforts, 'life-widening mission' aims not only to empower people with the skills to be more sustainable, but also to give them the motivation to take action.

7.2.1 Life-Widening Mission as 'Sharing Treasures in Life'

The first step on this new missional path is 'sharing treasures in life'. 'Sharing treasures in life', according to Kwok Keung Chan (the first contributor of Ross's volume), is based on proclamation and 'widening' lives. 'Proclamation' is not simply about making disciples of all nations. It should be something that brings

comfort to people, that helps to meet the needs of the needy, that brings caring and love, and can “let the dry be moistened” (Chan 2012:13-29).

Read this way, the Bible can be understood as not just about ‘spirituality’ or ‘getting to Heaven’, but as a practical library about faith and love; about the good use of ecological services as a religious practice. It should give a sense of being ultimately concerned about the individual’s cosmic identity, and what it means in relation to humankind’s appropriate place in, and relationship to, the cosmos and the life-giving Earth.

Research has shown that ‘sharing treasures in life’ begins with recognizing the importance of living within the ecological limits of the Earth, according to the cultural mandate; rather than trying to ignore the consequences of relentless economic modernization. The Bible is about ecological obedience: a discourse about the connection of a people to a place (Davis 2009). This connection, is arguably, both ‘urgently religious’ and ‘urgently spiritual’. It is ‘urgently spiritual’ because the land (a key component to widening lives) is not a human property, but a part of creation, both natural and divine, and belongs to God (Berry 2009). It is ‘urgently practical’ because of the strict conditions of gratitude and care that are given to its users. Therefore, the Bible is a rich resource to be closely read and proclaimed.

Contemporary theologians are becoming aware that the ecology of ‘life-widening’ originates from God’s mandate to care for and safeguard creation; and emanates from the Spirit of life, present on the first morning of the cosmos. The central focus of the ‘Life-giving power’ (Spirit) and of God’s mission is creation’s integrity, and the flourishing of the community of creation. Proclamation of this builds relationships that empower the marginalized (the land included) through self-giving service (Kim 2013:254). The ‘ecology of proclamation’ may be regarded as a Spirit-centred treasure, needed by people everywhere: to envision life-widening spirituality, to aid the rethinking of social justice, and embrace ecocentric peace and reconciliation – with the sharing of common treasures in life, including sustained moral traditions of sustainability, a whole Earth community can begin to recover.

7.2.2 Life-Widening as ‘Nurturing the Community of Life’

Building a collective ‘life-widening’ community will require pilot community-based programmes and holistic methods of nurturing.

Andrew Thomas (the second contributor to Ross’s book) suggests that ‘nurturing’ can take place through teaching, proclamation, baptism, and evangelism; as these are fundamentally and integrally connected with the identity and life of the Christian community. (Thomson 2012:31-46). If the church is taken to be “the community of those liberated and called by Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, for God’s unifying and transforming mission” (as Professor Jürgen Moltmann observed in his book *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* 1977), then ‘nurturing’ means learning, and applying the scope and depth of Christology. In the context of the wisdom literature, it means: going ‘with the grain’ of the cultural mandate, “to know wisdom, and to receive instruction in wise dealing with justice, and equity” (Proverb 1:1-8).

This is not something that should only be left to ‘experts’ or ‘religious elites’. Instead, ‘nurturing’ should be a corporate task, carried out in the daily lives of people in communities across the globe. It can be done through discussing and reflecting on the ‘concrete sources’ of meaning and transcendence (specifically the Bible and respective cultural wisdom traditions).

As a corporate task, ‘nurturing’ requires understanding changes in the socio-ecological dialogue, as well as changes in how the church thinks about mission.

The work of mission theologians Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder expanded this debate in their book, *Prophetic Dialogue* (2011). They speak of ‘the dance of God’ as mission, and God as a verb. The God revealed to us by Jesus of Nazareth through the power of the Holy Spirit, they argue, “might be best described as a *verb*, not a noun”. What this means, they claim, “is that the God we know from revelation might be best imagined not as a static kind of person – similar to us but wiser and more powerful – who is ‘up there’ or ‘out there.’” Rather, in a way that is much more exciting and revealing, “God is a Movement, an Embrace, a Flow – - more personal than we can ever imagine – who is always and everywhere present in God’s creation” (Bevans & Schroeder 2011:9ff).

Recovering God as ‘a Movement, All-Embracing and a Flow’ locates God at the heart of what ‘nurturing’ as a discourse stands for. It makes God present in the very ‘warp and woof’ of creation: working for its wholeness and healing, calling creation to its fullness.

Although this may be regarded as a new form of Christian eco-theology, it is known in the Luo people’s cosmology. One of God’s names in the Luo language is ‘*Nyakalaga*’ or ‘the God who crawls in the social and physical body of the people, society and hovers above the far-off galaxy and over the whole universe’. That is to say the transcendency of God is deeply engraved in people’s cosmology and experience of life in its widest sense (Magesa 2014).

Jean Piaget (in *The Psychology of the Child* 1969/2000), reveals the close connection between ‘nurturing’ and what Piaget calls ‘affective relationship’. The ‘affective relationship’ between the child and the parents (or the adults who play the role of nurturing) internalizes the affective image of the parents or teachers. This helps form maps of meaning that become a source of the learner’s cosmic identity and moral universe (Piaget 2000:122-128). In some deep sense, ‘nurturing spirituality’ is central to integrating human being’s faith and personality, and will always be so.

As the future state of sustainability becomes ever more unpredictable, so our eco-social and spiritual questions need to seek meaningful answers. The church has to re-configure its ‘nurturing’ to include a holistic landscape: that integrates traditional geographies of land economy, eco-regulation, and integral eco-spirituality.

7.2.3 Life-Widening as ‘Sustaining Integral Mission and Ecology’

Traditionally, ‘integral mission’ has been identified with works of compassionate service to those in distress, recognizing its social responsibility to respond to the needs of those less fortunate (Kgabe 2012). This awareness is an important component of a healthy faith community, but when this overrides all other eco-social and ethical responsibilities, it becomes an idol (Chester 2002).

Thinking about ‘integral mission and ecology’ requires a conceptual framework that takes on the nature of the Spanish term ‘*misión integral*’ meaning ‘holistic development’. As Tim Chester describes in his book *Justice, Mercy and*

Humility (2002), ‘integral mission and ecology’ is about earthing and building relationships; with God, with others in community and with creation (Chester 2002:7), and above all giving them the moral energy they currently lack.

After several centuries, the desire to retrieve the biblical dimensions of ‘integral mission’ has grown, in response to social injustices and ecological destruction. ‘Integral mission’ emerged in evangelical circles during the 1960s⁹³, and more noticeably in the 1970s (in the works of Ecuadorian theologian Dr René Padilla). Much of the relevant literature considers the term ‘integral mission’ as referring to Christianity’s dual priority of evangelism and activism. Padilla offers a compelling and integrating definition: “integral mission expresses God’s purpose to restore every dimension of human life and the whole of his creation, as well as requiring the church’s involvement in the proclamation but also the concrete demonstration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ” (Padilla 2012:55-6). Padilla’s vision suggests that sustainability will not be achieved without challenging “traditional mission hermeneutics”, and people’s view of what is meaningful in life: ecologically and spiritually.

It has been increasingly obvious through developments in evangelical circles that ecological concerns are no longer to be considered secondary in the mission of the church. This is because ultimately integral mission is related to “the totality of God’s creation and to every aspect of life”⁹⁴.

In 1966, the *Wheaton Declaration* urged all evangelicals to recognize that “we are guilty of an unscriptural isolation from the world that too often keeps us from honestly facing and coping with its concerns” (Padilla 2002:43). This impetus was carried to the International Congress on World Evangelization (held in Lausanne in 1974), a congress described as the most definitive step towards “affirming integral mission as *the* mission of the church” (2002:45). Similarly, John Stott (a leading evangelical and chief architect of the Lausanne Congress) cites a key declaration of the *Lausanne Covenant* as “God is both the Creator and Judge of all men... The salvation we claim should be transforming us in the totality of our personal and social responsibilities” (Stott 1996:24).

⁹³ The notion of integral mission first became a part of the evangelical agenda at the 1966 *Wheaton Congress* on the World Mission of the Church, attended by almost 1,000 participants coming from 71 countries.

⁹⁴ See Padilla in C. Bell & R. White, *Creation Care and the Gospel*, 2016 (back cover).

After the 1974 Lausanne Conference, two further global evangelical Congresses followed: Manila, Philippines (1989) and most recently Cape Town, South Africa (2010). *The Cape Town Commitment: A Confession of Faith and Action* was the result of a careful process conducted over four years to discern what the Holy Spirit was saying. In the words of the *Commitment's* chief architect, Chris Wright, it called on “evangelicals globally to include creation within their understanding of the Bible, the gospel and mission” (Wright 2015:183-197).

‘Reducing poverty through benevolence’ has become a popular methodological approach to integral mission, but other approaches to poverty reduction are suggested, such as Amartya Sen’s book *Development as Freedom* (1999). These studies acknowledge poverty as a multidimensional phenomenon that cannot be eradicated by compassion alone. According to Amartya Sen, “poverty must be seen as the deprivation of basic capabilities rather than merely as low incomes, which is the standard criterion of identification of poverty” (Sen 1999:87). Sen argues that although income significantly expands a person’s lifestyle, it is only *instrumentally* significant, whereas deprivations are *intrinsically* important. This point is central to a sociological understanding of poverty (especially within the context of integral mission), and it must be seen that capability deprivation is another aspect of poverty (Sen 1999:88-110).

In the same spirit, liberation theologian Leonardo Boff writes, “the Earth is crying out and the poor are crying out, both victims of socio-economic systems that produce exploitation of nature, especially in relation to the social mechanisms that produce rich and poor, participants and excluded, and so on” (Boff 1995:ix-xii). Responding to this global crisis through ‘life-widening mission’ must start not with benevolence, but at building a relationship between justice, peace and the integrity of creation. Life-widening mission and integral ecology should commence by recognizing the religio-cultural institutions, social values and intrinsic freedom of the world’s poor and dispossessed communities. These surely should be valued as fundamental treasures to widening their eco-social relatedness and sustainability.

Indian theologian, R. L. Sarkar (in *The Bible, Ecology and Environment*) writes: “All life on Earth is part of one great, interdependent system. It interacts with, and depends on, the non-living components of the planet: atmosphere, oceans, freshwaters, rocks and soils. Humanity depends totally on this community of life – this biosphere – of which we are an integral part. It is being related to the

totality of God's creation and to the totality of each faculty of life that will make mission transformational and sustainable.”

For these reasons, it can be argued that integral ecology's central mission is to give environmental ethics and sustainability debates a moral energy that they currently lack. This is important, because debates about 'humanity and the biosphere that sustains us' are increasingly seen as intrinsically moral issues. Knowing that we have inherited a pro-life biospheric planet, and ought to preserve it for our future ecological society, 'integral mission and ecology' advocates transformational morality and practices that might result in a sustainable biosphere.

Keith Thomas suggests (in *Man and the Natural World* 1983, see esp. pp.150-191) that integral ecology has always been meant to prevent cruelty to man and to nonhuman creatures alike. In the same spirit, the work of John Kokwaro (already cited) has shown that in the classical Luo people's tradition, the practice of ethnosystematics (the traditional system of naming and classifying plants and animals) was an integral method by which the community educated itself on: how to live a healthy life, how to prevent ecological destruction, and above all, how to maintain eco-social relationships. Clinebell (1996:25ff) defines the word 'eco-bonding' as a practice that is sustainably beneficial to ecological well-being and to the overall wellness of social flourishing. That is to say, as an act of eco-bonding, ethnosystematics is integrative at its core, and calls for eco-integration in a way that allows interaction with the Earth's biosphere both ethically and sustainably.

The ecology of 'sustainable biosphere' rests on two related ecosocial ethics. Environmental ethicist Holmes Rolston of Colorado State University explores this idea in great detail. "Achieving a sustainable biosphere is the single most important task facing humankind today" (Rolston 2015:354). Rolston's 'sustainable biosphere' model gives priority to a baseline quality of natural resources and ecological society. In light of Rolston's ethical examination of a sustainable biosphere, moving toward a more 'sustainable biosphere' requires two steps.

1. We need to encourage an economic model that is ecologically sound, economically feasible, and socially just. Because the word 'sustainable' is an economic but also an environmental term (argues Rolston), the economy must be kept within an environmental orbit.
2. Each society must learn to live within the carrying capacity of its landscapes. Rolston argues for a reformed understanding of nature:

communities must move toward a more inclusive accounting of what we wish to sustain. Nature must be freed from the current trajectory of the industrial, technological, commercial world, and from their destructive economic forces. Instead, nature must be seen as the matrix of multiple values (though not all in economic transactions) which provides numerous other values (aesthetic experiences, biodiversity, sense of place and perspective), and these are getting left out in in the world of commerce (Rolston 2015:355).

Among the Luo people in particular, the ‘ecology of life-widening’ (as a synonym of integral ecology) is interwoven into every myth of their moral traditions of ecosocialization and social subsistence (Kokwaro 1998; Maseno 2011). Together, they form a collective cultural womb within which a common language or consciousness of cultural identity, kinship names, and the entire fabric of sustainable life or ‘integral ecology of life’ is born.

Boff (1995) speaks of ‘integral ecology’ as the state of convergence between conservationism, environmentalism, human ecology, social ecology and deep ecology. Therefore, he argues, the quest for integral ecology can articulate all these aspects, and found a new alliance between societies and nature. According to Boff’s liberation theology of ecology, this should result in the conservation of the patrimony of the Earth, socio-cosmic well-being, and the maintenance of conditions and would allow ecosocial practices to flourish.

Biblical wisdom literature and historical scholarship have shown that our identity develops from the cultural narratives of life’s meaning, together with a sustained sense of the earthedness of our bodies, minds, and spirits (cf. Bauckham 2012; McLeish 2014).

7.2.4 Life-Widening as ‘Holistic Transformation’

Christian Scripture and local traditions of indigenous people contain many examples of action that lead to the advancement of significant eco-social reform.

Irene Ayallo (the fourth contributor to ‘Life-Widening Mission’) discusses the depth and scope of mission as ‘holistic transformation’ (Ayallo 2012:57-72). Drawing on her Kenyan experience, Ayallo begins by rejecting ‘exclusionary mission methods’ which compartmentalize evangelism from other holistic initiatives for social change. Instead, she suggests “holistic mission entails

transformation. It challenges all injustice which destroys God's intention of well-being for human beings and creation" (Ayallo 2012:57). Ayallo makes this point more compelling, by establishing a difference between 'transformation' and 'development'. She defines 'transformation' as a process which indicates a radical and marked change in form, appearance, nature or character; whereas 'development' is the belief in set goals, progression, or some predetermined quantitative outcomes.

Therefore, the term 'transformation' is a precursor for radical change. It is a process of marked 'holistic transformation', which requires some form of action (not only from the instigator of change, but also from the object being transformed). Mission as 'holistic transformation' is seen by Ayallo as both spiritual and material. 'Transformation' from a Christian perspective begins with the experience of being in the cosmic Christ; and from this comes the need to reshape ourselves, our communities, and our state of being.

From the 1980s onwards, contemporary missiologists (such as Kirsteen Kim and Andrew Kirk) believe that understanding mission as 'holistic transformation' was informed by the works of Protestant missiologist David Bosch (especially his book *Transforming Mission* (1991)). Bosch argues that, "mission is principally God's activity that must be based on the truth of God and should be conceived primarily in terms of a divine concern for creation" (Bosch 1980:239-48). Swiss theologian Karl Barth described mission as "an activity of God himself". Bosch regards mission as '*missio Dei*' and is, "primarily and ultimately, the work of the Triune God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, for the sake of the world, a ministry in which the church is privileged to participate" (Bosch 1991:392).

Understanding the mission of the church as 'transformational', includes demonstrating love, justice, socio-economic and political ecology. The collection of essays from a variety of African writers in A. E. Orobator's book *Reconciliation, Justice, and Peace* (2011) provide creative insights on how the church in Africa can engage in this. Similarly, Ayallo reflects on the many ways the church can contribute to 'life-widening mission' by demonstrating justice and loving service (Ayallo 2012:60). Where justice is denied, love is also denied, and without a 'transforming vision' both love and justice are in danger of being sentimental and baseless.

For example, evangelism is not just about preaching the gospel, winning the souls, and planting churches. It is about speaking with a grounded voice while engaging with challenges affecting the socio-ecological flourishing of society (*aluora*) – such as the globalization, socio-economic and political factors that shape the fundamental principles of life’s commonwealth.

Ayallo also defines mission as ‘transformation’ that “challenges people to venture beyond their tribal boundaries towards the wide horizons and open spaces where the rest of humanity may be encountered and appreciated” (2012:66-72). Therefore, mission as ‘transformation’ “encourages freedom and reconciliation, which then grants a free ground for people to interact and enjoy an unrestricted exchange of ideas...[because] the more people interact with the other outside tribal confines, the more they will learn to appreciate the commonality of their aspirations and social interests” (p.68). This is particularly relevant in places like Kenya where tribalism is a major factor, contesting for power in almost all spheres of life (including in churches).

Mission as ‘holistic transformation’ becomes life affirming and life-widening, when it involves an element of self-sacrifice (which is a missing element in Ayallo’s notion of ‘holistic transformation’). It brings about a complete change of attitude in our relationships to each other and the biosphere that sustains us. It is the essence of divine sacrifice that comes as a result of Christ’s incarnating sacrifice, and can bring a true personal and eco-social transformation – as well as a complete renewal of mind and an unconditional sense of identity.

Therefore, the ‘ecology of mission’ as ‘holistic transformation’ requires some radical sense of sacrifice – both of self and of social worldview. Abraham is the great archetype of such radical sacrifice (when he offered his son Isaac as a model of the cost of sacrifice) that leads to the transformation of our ‘fixed reality’ or prejudices (such as tribalism). God sacrificed his own self to himself through His Son Jesus, so that the world could be transformed and redeemed (John 3:16). The transforming power of ‘life-widening mission’ helps to shape a new perspective. It shows each individual their eco-social responsibility and gives them the opportunity to be part of the solution, not the problem (cf. Bosch 1991; Kirk 2000).

7.2.5 Life-Widening as ‘Grounding Eco-Spirituality’

The Earth belongs to God and is our life-sustaining home. It is the only home for the intergenerational community of creation, but it is endangered by humankind’s exploitative relationship and damaging activities.

Since the 1980s, the growing literature on eco-theology is a clear indication that the post-colonial world is trying to find its way from industrial exploitation to ecological civilization (cf. Wilkinson 1980; Magesa 1997; Davis 2009; Bauckham 2010). God’s creation is not only a world of living things. But it is life’s sustaining energy and life-widening. Through his encounter with the blossoming flesh of the world, Kapyia Kaoma (2012:75-92) calls for the understanding of the Mother Earth as “a sacramental place of divine mystery”.

Similarly, other African theologians such as Bénézet Bujo characterize the entity of life not just as animated but “sacred” (Bujo 1992:17. He argues that, “to an African there is no dichotomy between private, social, political and religious life” (1990:78). He asserts that life goes beyond the biological to embrace “the whole of human existence, life understood as the totality of the dimensions which constitute the human person” (Bujo 1992:21). ‘Life’ is not only sacred and holistic, but is the most precious ecological service that transcends all others.

Ecumenically, this theme of the sacramental nature of life finds its expression in the new WCC’s publication on mission and evangelism (developed by such ecumenical scholars as Kirsteen Kim). Entitled *Together towards Life* (2013) it clearly states that:

Life in the Holy Spirit is the essence of mission, the core of why we do what we do, and how we live our lives. Spirituality gives deepest meaning to our lives and motivates our actions. It is a sacred gift from the Creator, the energy for affirming and caring for life. This mission spirituality has a dynamic of transformation which, through spiritual commitment of people, is capable of transforming the world in God’s grace (Together towards Life, 2013:1)⁹⁵

The question that arises from this WCC statement is: *Can mission be reclaimed as transformative spirituality and life-widening experience without affirming the sources of integrative life-giving?*

The suggestion is that only the “spirit of the cosmic-Christ” (Kim 2007) is capable of renewing justice, peace, and the integrity of creation. ‘Life-widening

⁹⁵ https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/publications/TogethertowardsLife_SAMPLE.pdf accessed 25/7/2017.

mission' is nothing less than a reflection of God's love to the entire creation and its life-sustaining energies. Given the centrality of Creation's natural energies (on which both human and non-human life totally depend), eco-theology is an effective means of sharing and sustaining natural resources. Eco-theology 'is to orient Christianity towards an ecological transformation of the tradition and the society' (Eaton 2014:199).

Eco-theology deals with real life-widening issues, such as: the true relationship between humankind and nature, finding just structures for the society, and establishing the religious dialogue for social well-being and sustainability. Given the way it has established its position as 'a transforming God-talk on the issues relating to social morality, creation care and sustainability', eco-theologian Jay McDaniel was right to call eco-theology "the web-of-life movement". It considers the well-being of life as a whole, rather than seeing increasing economic growth as the central organizing principle of its social vision (McDaniel 2007:22).

Since the 1970s, eco-theology has been organized around four main strands of theological reflection on cosmological theology, namely: (1) Social ecology, (2) Creation theology, (3) Eco-feminism, and (4) Eco-spirituality (Kim 2012:225). In each of those strands, it has become clear that eco-theology is intercultural, confessional and observational; bearing its sources from biblical narrative, cultural heritages (Jenkins 2013) and from science (Gaia).

Therefore, mission theology has a more expansive understanding of the place and role of humanity in the world of cosmological reality. Other eco-theologians consider 'eco-theology' as offering both a Christian critique of the economic and cultural patterns underlying ecological destruction, and an ecological critique of Christianity (Conradie et al. 2014:2).⁹⁶

As such, eco-theology may be regarded as a bureau of mission theology, calling for a critical study of life's commonwealth⁹⁷; and for the integration of mission, identity and ecology as an interconnected agency of life. Its intention is to engage with the ethical implication of reconciliation, justice and peace (within the wider context of globalization, post-modernity) and must include the socio-

⁹⁶ Such an ecological critique of Christianity implies that there are significant flaws both in the Christian tradition and in the cultural traditions alike, and that these flaws must be corrected before a meaningful reformation could be anticipated.

⁹⁷ See essays in Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee's *Spiritual Ecology* (2013/14) and in Kapyra Kaoma's *Creation Care in Christian Mission* (2015).

economic and political factors that shape the integrity of life across the world. Eco-theology's grand vision for life-widening is a journey towards a 'one earth community'. These can be characterized by at least five interrelated components of eco-theology each of which will be discussed in turn.

1. The need to understand that "the whole must be kept whole" (Clinebell 1996:240-1). This implies the need for holistic understanding of the whole Earth as essentially spiritual, material, and sacramental. The Greek word for household '*oikos*' makes this point well, as it is the source of our words *ecological*, *ecumenical*, and *economic* (McFague 2008). By its formal and spiritual integrity, the world of human beings always exists as partly nature and partly culture, sustained continuously by what John Parratt has called "natural grace" (Parratt 1997:147).
2. Eco-theology can be integrated within different perspectives. In *The Dignity of Difference* (2002) Jonathan Sacks (former Chief Rabbi⁹⁸) maintains that there is a need to recognise the 'dignity of difference', because religious education ascends from a cultural mandate. Sacks asserts that this should not result in polarization, rather that difference:

...must be rooted in self-transcendence: transcendence as a hand reaching out to those close to us, to foreigners, to the human community, to all living creatures, to nature, to the universe; transcendence as a deeply and joyously experienced need to be in harmony even with what we ourselves are not, with what we do not understand, with what seems distant from us in time and place, but with which we are mysteriously linked because, together with us, all things constitute a single world; transcendence as the only real alternative to extinction (Sacks 2002:45).

This recognizes that the struggle toward overcoming long histories of estrangement, marginalization, and bitterness must be rooted in transcendence and cultural wisdom, rather than expecting it to come from forms of domination. Dialogue between cultures is key to deconstructing selfish ambition and will help to challenge prejudice. Similarly, Professor Miroslav Volf (writing in *Exclusion & Embrace* 1996) contends that Christian theology must find ways to address 'difference' and 'otherness.' Drawing on the New Testament metaphor of salvation as 'reconciliation', Volf proposes

⁹⁸ Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth.

the idea of ‘embrace’ as a theological alternative to the problem of ‘exclusion’. It is evident from this research that an exclusionary vision of life is the primary problem – it skews perceptions of collective reality, causing reactions based on fear. Contemporary Christianity must take the dangerous and costly step of opening itself to the other, with the same embrace with which has been encountered; that indestructible love which makes space in the self for others, and which creates hospitable conditions for being enfolded by God, rather than being excluded (Volf 1996:99-165).

3. The response of ‘embrace to the problem ‘exclusion’ requires ecological literacy, in order to rediscover this extraordinary echo of embrace. The argument of contemporary eco-theologians (such as Steven Bouma-Prediger) is that ecological literacy will equip people in relation to “seeing things whole” (2010:2-6). Such knowledge is needed in order to have a broad understanding of how people and societies relate to each other and to natural systems, and how they might do so sustainably. There is a pressing need to recognize the immediacy of the crisis and to attain a practical “understanding of the historical, political, economic, and religious forces that have modelled the modern world; to grasp a broad familiarity with the development of ecological consciousness” (2010:4-5). This should provide a basis to develop alternative measures of ‘well-being’ and to explore different approaches. An important element of this is to suggest a more inclusive metric of assessing society, in contrast to the typical indicators of social well-being (such as the Gross Domestic Product).
4. There is a need to effectively question the structures, values, rituals and causes of exploitation from a religious perspective. Jenkins (2013) suggests that when questions of cultural transformation are raised “they can stimulate public ethics on which such a process depends” (2013:181). Such recognition is fundamental, and must be part of the cultural reflection involved. For Jenkins, “revisiting the big questions is one way that humans learn from their embeddedness in ecological systems” (pp.181-2). Society’s

revolutionary history must be reconsidered, and also stories and metaphors that sustained their community. Religious ecology must respond to ecological and theological questions, as Jenkins describes:

Religious projects from many traditions can insist on public moral anthropology: we seek sustainability as those creatures for whom the good of life stands as an open question and a defining search. We manage as creatures who live by questioning the good and so we must manage to at least sustain the conditions of good questioning. We manage as human creatures who know ourselves to desire more than a continuous supply of resources (Jenkins 2013:182).

Such questioning tests our commitment to constructive ecological concerns and ethical positions on sustainability. Moreover, in light of Tillich's theology of faith, questioning both values and authorities is perhaps the most rational method of knowledge inquiry. People enlarge their cosmic knowledge and discover their cosmic identity, by participating in community wisdom, and by questioning our own knowledge or the experience of others.

There is a need to rediscover the moral fibres found in traditional religion. Laurenti Magesa argues for the rediscovery of cultural revelation in traditional myths because through them "at all time... divine power continues to sustain the world and every creature in the universe" (2014:94). He considers that myths portray "the human longing for God", and that throughout history African cosmological myths were an attempt to explain the human condition. They suggest answers to questions, such as: the reality of evil, why damaging events occur, and "how human beings should relate to divine power to avert chaotic habits and forces in the society" (2014:94).

By failing to read cultural myths within this context, Magesa argues, "their meaning will be misunderstood, and, they might continue to be mistaken as referring to a 'withdrawn' (*Deus ontiosus*), 'hidden' (*Deus absconditus*), or inactive God". Moreover, Magesa's cosmology sees cultural myths as sustained accounts of social actions, values and rituals. These are shaped by social and cultural processes that influence human action, within which religious ecology must be grounded. Other researchers (Stinton 2004; Heaney 2015) concur with Magesa's cosmology – their findings show a growing commitment to Christianity and reverence for African cultures. Thus, the study of African

cosmology and practical mission must include the religious dimension, with all its ethical, aesthetic and political ecology.

Since its advent in the 1970s, eco-theology has been calling for theological, economic and ecological reform (from both outside and within Christianity). This vision supposes that Christian eco-theology should not be reduced to a sub-discipline of Christian ethics, or become a specialized field of Christian ethics, as some eco-theologians suggest. As Zambian eco-theologian Kapya Kaoma asserts, what is needed to serve the future of the planet Earth, and life as whole, is a changed individual attitude. In his book (*God's Family, God's Earth* 2013), Kaoma uses his Zambian experience of Ubuntu ethics to argue that what is needed to change people's perception of the natural world is a form of "theological ethics developed with the Earth in mind" (Kaoma 2013:1).

There is growing evidence that eco-theology is not seeking a new regime of so-called "theological coherency" (Heaney 2015). Eco-theology is not there to become a specialized, academic branch of theological ethics, but must practically engage in safeguarding the integrity of creation using ecological dimensions of cultural cosmology, biblical wisdom and evolving ecological science (such as the Gaia hypothesis).

Another pertinent consideration is the rise of individualism. Most of the theologies of the ethics of individual attitude are alien to many traditional societies. According to Boff (1982:82ff), such individualized ethical discourses began over the past five centuries (as part of the process of scientific imperialism). Miroslav Volf made this point even more forcefully in his book (*Exclusion and Embrace* 1996) where he argued that, "from primordial time, human beings were bound by *a common destiny* not by *individual utility*" (Volf 1996:149, [*italics* mine]). Similarly, in traditional African cosmology, all known cultures (including Christianity) have developed from a common experience of its adherents: inspired with common practices, collective religious values and shared cosmological beliefs (Clinebell 1996:89-124).

Eco-theology can only help address the environmental crisis by asking scholars in different disciplines and traditions to take seriously the biblical calling to live lightly and faithfully. Such a challenge to the dominant culture is simply to re-enact the struggle of followers of Judaism and early Christianity, who

confronted the prevailing powers of their day. Some religio-cultural studies carried in sub-Saharan Africa have shown that in every cultural society there is both recognition and comparison of “what *we* know, what is *valued* and *how those things* stack up against other valued things” (Haynes 2014:358, [*italics mine*]).

Among the Luo people, as in other traditional African societies, it was the collective consciousness that embodied their cultural sense of “We”: a communitarian sense of family, clan and their national identity. Magesa (1997) understood this cultural heritage as the landscape upon which their moral universe is grounded. He states that “At all times in a person’s life, a religious consciousness is always explicitly or implicitly present” (1997:58). Expanding this point, Magesa claims, “We must always keep in mind, though, that, just as with regard to its view of the universe [as sacred and our home, pp.59-60], African religion forms the African people’s ethical consciousness as a whole united system wherein each factor influences the other. In this system ‘being’ is the same thing as ‘doing’ and *vice versa*” (p.58). Therefore, it appears that Kaoma’s anthropocentric attitude is in danger of being an intellectual distortion of the credal scope of indigenous cultural cosmology. An individualistic theology that simply addresses personal conscience, rather than life-widening morality and ecosocialization, is insufficient to meet the present challenge.

7.3 Ecosocialization as an Alternative Path to Sustainability

The ‘moral nature’ of life-widening spirituality springs from embracing sustainability culture; and from discovering how this emerges from social, economic, environmental, political and religio-cultural contexts. However, this awareness is not enough to lead a sustainable lifestyle. Instead, it requires a comprehensive engagement with the social dimensions of unsustainability through ‘ecosocialization’. ‘Ecosocialization’ is a term not found in theological discourses, but has been used by some environmental scientists, such as Nicholas Low & Brendan Gleeson (2002), and by the University of Toronto’s environmental ethicist William Scott Prudham (*Knock on Wood*, 2005).

Prudham understood ‘ecosocialization’ to be the politics of nature (a form of social and ecological regulation) used in “reacting to the environmental and

social implications of capitalism and cultural relations to nature in the regulatory arena” (Prudham 2005:172).

‘Ecosocialization’ can also have a historical dimension that goes back to the Judeo-Christian creation story, to traditional Luo practices of ethnosystematics, and to historical-ecological studies of East Africa (pioneered by Bethwell Ogot, John Iliffe, and Helge Kjekshus). This broader understanding of ‘ecosocialization’ might be used as a practically: to communicate ecosocial mores, and start conversations about sustainability culture and the ecology of daily life. It is possible to undertake ‘ecosocialization’ as a missional vision: for ecological conversion, for healthy ecosocial integration, and for developing a practically sustainable approach to life.

The integrating dimensions of ‘ecosocialization’ (such as enabling social ecological integrity, developing social regulation, and motivating cultural transformation) reinforce the point that the politics of nature’s sustainability are ultimately moral; and must continue to be considered within the traditions of agrarianism and ecological economics.⁹⁹ Therefore, the concept of ‘ecosocialization’ is proposed as a socially-grounded alternative for ecosocial integration.¹⁰⁰ It offers an essential critique of dualism: finding its ground in Christian theology, and offers an ethical strategy for social integration. By recognising each person as part of a whole, integrated, mutually-dependent living system; ‘ecosocialization’ might then develop a more inclusive missional framework, and offer hope for a more sustainable future.

7.3.1 Ecosocialization and Society’s Sustainability

The widening gap between the rich and the poor is injurious, not only to the well-being of the rich and poor alike, but also to nature itself. The crises that humanity now faces are grounded in the belief that we are separate; separate from each other, separate from the biosphere that sustains us, separate from the universe (culture) that has brought us forth (Christopher Uhl 2013). Uhl’s hypothesis raises two questions. First, how did ecological experiences that were once seen as an integral part of daily life, became so separated? Second, how might humanity

⁹⁹ See Chapter 4.

¹⁰⁰ Reference, <https://ecosocialization.tumblr.com/> (Accessed 29 May, 2017).

reclaim a settled equilibrium of ecological relationship that reflects its inclusive soul and values, rather than a control established through oppression and imperialism?

The disconnection of the natural world, community and one from another affects everyone: those whose integrated sense has been lost, but also, in a different way, those who have sanctioned it. Disconnection is a distortion of the ecosocial vocation of becoming a more fully-integrated community of creation (White 1967; Wilkinson 1980; Kirk 2000; Ferguson 2011; Magesa 2014). The struggle for ecological humanization is well documented in ecological-historical research (see Bethwell Ogot, John Iliffe and Helge Kjekshus). The struggle for the re-humanization of ecosocial relations (or ‘ecosocialization’) is needed because of disconnection. It is the result of an unjust order and theological hegemony that dominated the oppressed.

The very structure of colonial civilization created oppressors who were separate from the oppressed and non-human community (Rasmussen 2013). But almost always, during the initial states of colonialism and civilizing missions, the invaded communities, instead of striving for ecosocialization, tend themselves to become ‘sub-oppressors’, to use Paulo Freire’s phrase (Freire 1993:25-51). They adopted an attitude of ‘separation’ from each other, from the biosphere that sustains them, and from the moral universe that brought them forth; hence they saw themselves present, past, and even future in ways that are not only unsustainable but patently false in cosmological terms. The research (by social economists Brown & Garver 2009:8-16) has shown that “placing the human economy above the well-being of the natural world creates a lethal, poisonous, wrong relationship”.

Simply put, neither well-being nor sustainability can be measured simply in terms of economic activity (see Ekins 2013). Rather, true well-being and sustainability must be seen in terms of the benefits that come from an expansive relationship: to sources of generative life and the real sources of life and wealth, such as the land and soil (Washington 2015).

To describe social stratification with ecological consequences among the contemporary Luo people, Professor Gerald Lenski’s theory of social stratification has been adopted (*Power and Privilege* 1966). Over the centuries, up to today’s concept of ecological imperialism, the gap between the ruling class and the marginalised has been enlarging, as Lenski’s diagram below demonstrates (see

Figure 9). Table 1 reflects the ranges found in local societies in Mara, Tanzania where the Luo people reside.

Figure 9: Lenski's Model of an 'Advanced Ancient Agrarian Society' (1966)

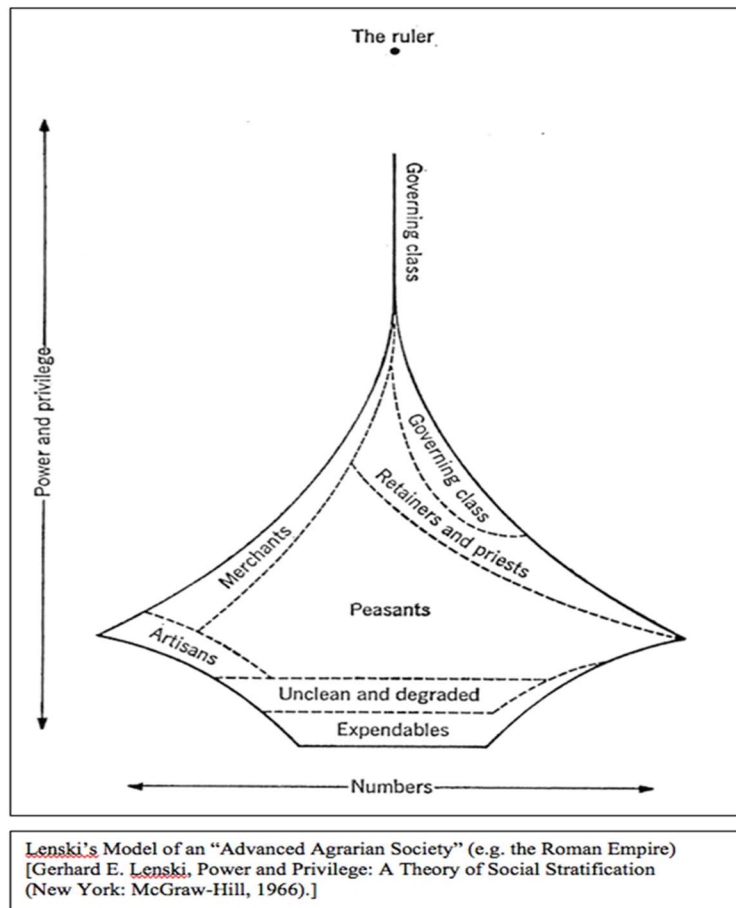


Table 1: Ranges in Local Societies in Mara, Tanzania

Class	% of society
Ruling	1 - 2
Retainers	5 - 7
Merchants	5
Artisans	3 - 7
Peasants	70 - 80
'Unclean'	5
'Expendables'	5 - 15

Lenski observed that in New Testament times, the problem of social stratification was ethical – especially in terms of the unjust relationship between the ruling class and the ruled, between the rich and the poor (mostly peasants), and the expendables.

Similarly, William Herzog observed that in the Mediterranean world (at that time) about 70 percent of the population were peasants, who lived in poverty, despite the fact that they were the ones who worked the land (Herzog 1994:47-63). As Lenski found “they were people with nothing left to sell but their bodies or their animal energies, and they ‘were forced to accept occupations’ which quickly destroyed them” (Lenski 1966:281) The worst affected group are referred to as “the expendables, the excess children of peasant farmers who could not afford to divide their small patrimony” (Herzog 1994:65). Such children sought work as

itinerant day labourers (*'ombaomba'* in Swahili), who might find occasional seasonal work, but were often reduced to begging. Such social injustice reflects the old structures of social relationships, but also the new ranges of ecological control.

Various environmental, ethical and humanitarian organizations (such as Oxfam International¹⁰¹) have been championing new eco-social research, and also new studies of the gap between the rich and the poor. Their surveys have shown that the gap between the rich and the poor is widening at an unprecedented scale. This situation is worsened by the impact of climate change, where it is the poorest communities that are often the most vulnerable. Unfortunately, since the 2015 Paris Agreement that specified “intended nationally determined contributions” to keep the global average temperature to less than 2 percent above preindustrial levels,¹⁰² the United States has rescinded on its commitment. Many consider that this action and other contributory factors mean that the environment may be approaching an irreversible tipping point.

It is vital to reconsider how our faith traditions, and cultural ethics of eco-socialization, might inform our eco-social practices: how we consume, integrate, and relate to the ecological world upon which we depend.

As missiologist Bryant Myers argues in *Engaging Globalization*: “Christians and the Church need to contribute to the development of a moral ecology powerful enough to shape and correct globalization in favour of values that support both human dignity and human flourishing” (Myers 2017:07). This call for the development of a moral ecology that can support eco-social flourishing requires the forming and grounding of an ecological consciousness. To determine how ecosocialization might respond, the following subsections revisit the five main domains of missional integration: social integration, population, community, education, and hope.

7.3.2 Ecosocialization and Social Integration

‘Ecosocialization’ stresses the interdependence of a community. It promotes social intersection and the integrity of creation as whole, rather than

¹⁰¹ See: <https://www.oxfam.org/en/explore/issues/inequality-and-essential-services> (Accessed September 22, 2017).

¹⁰² *Economist*. “The Paris Agreement on Climate Change: Green Light.” December 19, 2015, p.89.

simply the interests of individuals or a particular class of people. In Tanzania, the concern for a more inclusive framework of social integration began with the evolution of a political philosophy known as ‘*Ujamaa*’, and championed by the first president of Tanzania, Julius K. Nyerere (1922-1999).

Nyerere’s focus was not on ‘eco-socialization’ or social integration per se. His intention was to transform models of agricultural production, as a means of empowering rural development across the country – and since its upsurge in the 1960s, ‘*ujamaa*’ became pivotal in the evolution of agricultural knowledge and social transformation. This led to a reformed understanding of the relationship between land and economic development during Nyerere’s presidency (1961-85), which subsequently led to a structural adjustment, social capitalism, and changed traditional attitudes towards the land.

According to Chris Vervliet (2009), Nyerere was the spiritual father of ‘*Ujamaa*’ (a Swahili word for ‘African socialism’ with a wider meaning ranging from ‘familyhood’ to ‘brotherhood’). Since the 1980s, most of Nyerere’s policies have largely been abandoned, but despite this, his policies and writings on ‘*ujamaa*–led’ transformational development have made a significant contribution to understanding the dynamics of social integration.

Nyerere believed that a strong sense of socialism could be the basis for achieving a socially-egalitarian and integrated society. He pointed out how his African (Tanzanian) socialism differed from European socialism:

European socialism was born of the agrarian Revolution and the Industrial Revolution which followed it. The former created the ‘land’ and the ‘landless’ classes in society; the latter produced the modern capitalist and the industrial proletariat... These two revolutions planted the seeds of conflict within society, and not only was European socialism born of that conflict, but its apostles sanctified the conflict itself into a philosophy...

The foundation, and the objective, of African socialism is the extended family... ‘*Ujamaa*’, then, or ‘familyhood’ describes our socialism. It is opposed to capitalism, which seeks to build a happy society on the basis of the exploitation of man by man; and it is equally opposed to doctrinaire socialism which seeks to build its happy society on a philosophy of inevitable conflict between man and man.” (Nyerere)¹⁰³

Although Nyerere tried to differentiate his ‘*ujamaa*’ philosophy from the European Industrial revolution, in principle it was little different from it. In ‘*ujamaa*’ philosophy, nature (land) was seen as a ‘machine’, devoid of entity and

¹⁰³ Nyerere, J.K: *Ujamaa: The basis of African Socialism*. (<http://www.nathanielturner.com/ujamaanyerere.htm>). Accessed 18th September 2017.

integrity, which people could use to increasingly maximize agricultural production. In ‘*ujamaa*’ philosophy, nature (land) was seen primarily as a ‘source of raw materials’. With the development of ‘*ujamaa*’, villages of socialization and centres of raw material production (mostly crops), nature was seen as one element in the creation of wealth, and a means of attaining a utilitarian life.

These utilitarian attitudes came to dominate Tanzanians’ knowledge and relationship to nature, more than the indigenous traditions of agrarianism and ecological economics.

Pivotal in the implementation of ‘*ujamaa*’ was the creation of so-called ‘*ujamaa*’ villages (or communal villages, translated into Swahili as ‘*vijiji vya Ujamaa*’); in which the land was collectively held and production collectively organized. Commenting on how to eradicate poverty among the dispersed population who lived in their ancestral lands based on family smallholdings, Nyerere noted almost gleefully that:

The first and absolutely essential thing to do...if we want to be able to start using tractors for cultivation is to begin living in proper villages. So, if you ask me what our Government is planning to do during the next few years, the answer is simple – the Government will be doing all it can to enable the farmers of Tanganyika to come together in village communities. Unless we do, we shall not be able to provide ourselves with the things we need to develop our land and to raise our standard of living (Nyerere 1966 in Komba 1995:35).

Nyerere suggests that social well-being would be found in newly-established villages, with union leaders; instead of being located within smaller, mutually committed communities (as commonly found during precolonial times).

Nyerere’s communitarian project of villagization hoped to create a social infrastructure that gave access to technology for cultivation, schools, health care and, above all, increase agricultural production. However, he failed to recognise that restructuring into communitarian lifeways would result in a disordered sense of identity, as people were dislocated from their ancestral lands and communities. Equally unforeseen was the economic recession caused by property losses in communities during their transition from ancestral settlement to villagization.

Villagization transformed landscapes and ecologies. It introduced new methods of farming that created a sense of landlessness among those resettled. Many ‘*ujamaa*’ villages became places of rural elites and consumer cultures,

which fundamentally changed the relationships between people and nature (Kjekshus 1996). Studies have shown that any act of transforming the landscapes and ecologies of traditional communities into a secularized setting (like Nyerere's villagization or colonial cities), always leads to changed relationships between people and their traditional lifeways.

In 2014, it was calculated that cities now house about 54% of the world's population,¹⁰⁴ with consequent social implications. Whether through cities or villagization, these developments are more than just changing traditional geographies and exposing its people to foreign life values. They change not only traditional societies, but individuals. Tanzanians after being coerced into '*ujamaa*' villages, lost their cosmological awareness in transition; leaving their world of cultural inheritance and adopting the West's materialist and secular humanism. Villagization advocated a cultural modernization and social domination, which produced in its wake the rich and the poor simultaneously (Boff & Elizondo 1995).

The rise of materialism powerfully altered the sustained ecology of daily life, patterns of relationships, and economic spirituality (Beinart & Hughes 2007). Aylward Shorter defines 'modernization' as "the social process by which people acquire material and non-material elements of culture, behaviour and ideas that originate in, or are symptomatic of, the city or town" (1998:34-5).

Nyerere's political philosophy of '*ujamaa*' failed to understand that villagization was not simply a collection of households – just like a city is not a collection of unrelated men and women. A modern village like a city is a complex community with a life of its own. Unlike traditional African communities, whose main focus was to sustain the reciprocal interaction between people and dynamics of life in the natural world; colonial cities and post-imperial villages created a mounting tension between capitalist exploitation and traditional ethics of conservation (cf. Magesa 1997). These

¹⁰⁴ Cities developed in the wake of the agricultural revolution. Jericho was a population centre of some size 10,000 years ago with other developments in Mesopotamia; see Roberts J (1995:39-47) and Quinn D (1992:151-184) for interesting discussions. Regarding current urbanization and population numbers see - http://www.who.int/gho/urban_health/situation_trends/urban_population_growth_text/en/ accessed November 01, 2016.

intrinsic difficulties became increasingly unbearable to local communities. Those whose ancestral lands were converted into villages, were no less challenged by the changes than those detached from their ancestral land.

The roots of Nyerere's '*ujamaa*' philosophy can be traced to Nyerere's own experience of Catholic social teachings and Asian socialism. With its centralized view of sustainable intensification, this philosophy was far from ecologically-centred African egalitarianism. Its focus was on maximizing agricultural production through industrialized technology, this meant it was little different to other commercially-extractive systems (Young 2014). It is the conceptual clarity of traditional African egalitarianism that provides the basis for addressing the twin challenges of ecological problems and poverty that face Tanzania.

7.3.3 Ecosocialization and Population Matters

Growth in population and the overconsumption of natural resources are two causes of unsustainability. Population size is determined either from culturally-informed individual decisions, or from binding policies that limit it to a certain level (such as operated in China¹⁰⁵). Human population size is clearly related to challenges of sustainability mainly through the human economy (the part of human activity that takes from nature and gives back to nature), and can also be called *human ecology*. The 150 years of increasing industrialisation and population growth has triggered considerable environmental concerns; and politics surrounding these matters have become increasingly fractious.

Theologically, conversations around population and social ethics have a very long history. They go back to the early Church theologian Tertullian (circa 200CE), who is reputed to have said, "What most frequently meets our view is 'our teeming number'. Our numbers are burdensome to the world, which can hardly support us..." (Goldin 2014:5). He was, perhaps, the first in his discipline to recognise the troubled relationship between nature and society. Although Tertullian's 'teeming population' size is estimated to have been around 190 million globally, yet he seemed to have been fully aware that human numbers must be limited by the actual limits of the geographical surface that sustains them (Alcott 2015:278). Conversations on human population ethics must continue to examine

¹⁰⁵ See <http://www.china-un.ch/eng/bjzl/t176938.htm> Accessed 20/4/2017

how to meet the needs of the human and non-human society, within the limits of what nature can sustainably provide.

This general understanding of population ecology continued in the light of Tertullian's demographic theology, until the publication of Thomas Malthus's *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798). Thomas Malthus (1766-1834) was an English economist and clergyman whose essay followed Tertullian's population theology. He argued that excessive population growth would derail any chance of attaining a modern utopia. Malthus anticipated that terrible disasters would result from the consequent imbalance in "the proportion between the natural increase of population and food". Writing in the late-18th-century world, he was quite convinced that "the period when the number of men surpass their means of subsistence has long since arrived" (Sen 1999:205).

Malthusian population ecology became a standard text in population debates up to the 1960s; a time that not only saw the highest population-growth rate humanity has ever seen (Jenkins 2013:246), but also saw the emergent of contrasting paths and horizons in population matters.

One research which countered the Malthusian theory was Ester Boserup's book *The Conditions of Agricultural Growth* (1965). Boserup (1910-1999) was a Danish economist whose study focused on agricultural intensification and market demand. She argued that population growth drives the intensity of agricultural production, unlike Malthus, who argued that population increase would exhaust Earth's agricultural capacity. Contrary to Malthus, Boserup argued that since "necessity is the mother of invention", population growth would dictate food supply (as cited in Goldin 2014:6).

Humanity, Boserup argued, was innovative enough to find ways to feed an ever-growing population. She believed that through creative technological innovation, the food supply could be increased and meet the ecological demands of population growth. However, what Boserup misunderstood is that market demand does not provide ethics with definite limits, which could then determine agricultural morality and responsibility towards the whole creation community. She was writing at a time in the 1960s when the world population was approximately three billion people. The current world's population index reached 7.3 billion in 2015, and it is estimated to rise to 9.7 billion by 2050, and then to over 11 billion by 2100 (See UN-DESA 1999, table 1). Boserup's 'market demand'

solution is now refuted by research that shows that population size is one definite cause of unsustainability, as evident in developing countries such as Uganda and Tanzania (cf. McKeown 2016:175).

In an attempt to discard Boserup's 'population intensification' and to respond to seeming ecological crises in the developing countries international ethicists and environmentalists have called for an ecological civilization. Jonathan Watts (working as global environment editor of *The Guardian*), for example, reports that a third of the planet's land is severely degraded, and fertile soil is being lost at an unprecedented scale a year. This is due to destructive industrialised agriculture, the abundant use of agrochemicals, and the impact of population growth.¹⁰⁶ Industrialised agriculture offers a temporary means of feeding our 'teeming numbers', and meeting the infinite consumeristic desires that Boserup's 'agricultural intensification' theory sacralised; but it is not a solution to unsustainability. This is confirmed by the UN's report published by the Commission on Environment and Development¹⁰⁷ that states:

Present rates of population growth cannot continue. They already compromise many governments' abilities to provide education, health care, and food security for people, much less their ability to raise living standards. This gap between numbers and resources is all the more compelling because so much of the population growth is concentrated in low-income countries, ecologically disadvantaged regions, and poor households (Brundtland 1987:95).

According to this report, continued population growth impairs the deliverability of social services, sustainability efforts and life-quality. The issue is not just about how the church might respond missionally to population growth, or to find some quantitative answers to demographic questions (for example, as seen in Ian Goldin's book *Is the Planet Full?*, 2014) – the most important focus must be on the quality of 'generative life'.

The debate on how humanity might arrive at a settled quality of 'generative life' in Christian ethics (from both left and right) has been intensifying. Each new generation comes into a world that has been prepared by their predecessors, and so every generation must carry the responsibility for the next generation. Sustaining some sort of 'generative life' ways for a future community requires a significant

¹⁰⁶ For full details on Watts report, see <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/sep/12/third-of-earths-soil-acutely-degraded-due-to-agriculture-study> Accessed Tuesday 12 September 2017

¹⁰⁷ Also known as the Brundtland report.

amount of commitment. This has to be shown, not only by words, but by insightful actions – the rights of tomorrow’s generation need to be fostered alongside those of today. The future life of others, not simply ourselves, must be cherished.

Gilbert Meilaender’s provocative study on ‘generative life’ has found that each generation shares in a normative responsibility to both “produce the next generation and act effectively to care for and guide the next generation” (Meilaender 2013:57-73). There are many ways to enact this concern to care for and guide the next generation’s flourishing within the ecological limits of the Earth’s wellbeing. This includes, managing “the unbridled population growth, transforming destructive economic activities and war” (Keller 1994/2009:303-7).

The most difficult question in the population-size discussion, however, is whether political-theological restrictions on procreative freedom are *legitimate*.

Some Christian theologians such as R.C. Sproul (1939-date) appear to support infinite population increase, by urging Christian parents to be open to bearing more children. This is based on such Old Testament texts such as the ‘quiver full’ of sons (Ps. 127:5) and ‘be fruitful and multiply’ (Gen 1:28), and ignores contemporary appeals for family planning. But Sproul’s population theology has been strongly challenged. For example, by Anglican theologian John Stott (1921-2011) in *Issues Facing Christians Today* (1984). This was one of the first contemporary critiques from an evangelical perspective, and Stott identifies uncontrolled population growth as “a single interlocking global crisis” (Stott 1984:117).

The most urgent matter that must be considered is the controversy relating to how reproduction and nurturing contradict what Lovelock’s Gaia theory would call ‘our place within’ the natural phenomena of ecological reality. Consider, for example, traditional cultures, which give the older brother a disproportionate right of land ownership compared to his younger siblings. Unless other land becomes available within a few generations, most will have little more than a postage stamp of land, insufficient to their needs. That is why cultural teaching should include the virtue of ‘generative life’ and ecosocial regulation.

Among agricultural societies, such as the Luo community, population matters are not simply about how big or small planetary population might be; or whether there are too many people on the planet already or not. Culturally, a man’s identity depended on perpetuating his genealogical line (Gen 48:16). If a man died

without a male heir, custom obliged a brother to marry the widow and then regard the first male offspring as continuing the dead brother's lineage (Deut. 25:5-6). While these practices were traditionally part of many African cultures (such as the Luo people), recently changes have been observed in relation to this practice. Olupona (2000:175) notes that in contemporary Africa, no problem is more acute than the crises arising from uncontrolled population and overconsumption of natural resources, as these impact the overall growth and development of the continent. To address the problem, Guillebaud has suggested parents adopt a replacement model for a family unit that is two children replacing two adults (Guillebaud 2009:100-101).

Overpopulation is more than just an environmental issue – it is also an urgent issue of social justice. The most important concern is the quest for ecological balance between the demands of the population and the natural resources available. According to my fieldwork observation ((see Fieldwork 1, case study 1 & 2), there is unquestionable growing ecological concerns in relation to the limits of nature to provide what humans (per family) need in terms of materials, security, and means of comfort to present and future families. As natural resources are finite, then by necessity, there must be some limitation to human numbers for the sake of sustainable subsistence and coexistence. As Alcott concludes, “it is *highly improbable* that human numbers can remain at present levels while maintaining the welfare of each person living now, maintaining other animal species at current numbers, and the humanly useful materials and productive services we find in nature into the indefinite future” (Alcott 2015:292).

Contemporary research¹⁰⁸ has shown that the ecology of balance is fundamental in providing a broader ecological consciousness and sustainability. Clearly, the entire community of creation share the same Earth; all participate in an interrelated and interdependent communal life; and importantly, all are oriented to the mysterious reality, God. It is a mistake just to proceed anthropocentrically, and determine population-size ethics simply on the basis of the maximum number of humans who can sustainably subsist. Rather, the aim should be to strive for life above subsistence; and focus particularly on improving the quality of life, without

¹⁰⁸ See Davis (2009); Bauckham (2010; 2012; 2015; 2016) and Kaoma (2013).

compromising the rights of tomorrow and the well-being of the non-human community of creation.

7.3.4 Ecosocialization and Community Wellbeing

Abednego Keshomshahara reports in *A Theology of Poverty Reduction in Tanzania* (2008) that the majority of Africans have no health insurance he suggests a number of causes, these include: the government's failure to fully fund health services (due to the foreign debt), the requirement for individuals to pay into the Community Health Fund and the inability of many to do so due to poverty and ignorance. He suggests that people's rights to health services, and the government's failure to provide them, must form the crux of any discussion of community sustainability (Keshomshahara 2008:243).

Keshomshahara regards health insurance as a requirement for sustainable development; one that will require the participation of people, church and government if it is to seriously address matters. However, health insurance itself does not provide the rationale for measuring community sustainability – to see community participation in sustainability simply in this way, reflects a modern mode of thought. Medical insurance helps improve general health and lengthen life span, but relating it to the concept of sustainable development belongs to a set of Western practices, according to Zimbabwean theologian Edward Antonio (Antonio 2009:227-34).

Health insurance makes an important contribution to a sustainable community – as communities in Africa commonly face illnesses caused, for example, by malaria, HIV, AIDS or cancer. Knowledge about such illnesses has improved in part due to the increasing communication network. However, amongst the Luo people, an ethic of survival was informed by moral traditions of subsistence. They have an African humanistic vision of what it means to be an integrated person in the community. They developed and maintained hygienic practices, and sustained their relationships to each other and nature over long periods of time (Kokwaro & Johns 1998). This fund of community obligation and moral accountability has unfortunately tilted away from collective responsibility to scientific sanitation.

Luo culture considers that it is neither helpful, nor appropriate cosmologically, for humans not to take communal responsibility – whatever situation they face. As an image of life, community has a form that sustains its viability: it has external boundaries, margins, internal structures, and ecological dynamics that support its moral values. Moreover, it has inherent generative power, through its reward of conformity and resistance to challenge (Douglas 2002).

Jewish wisdom shares a similar understanding: that throughout history, humans have cooperated to establish moral rules that all members of a community or society are expected to follow. In Deuteronomy, Moses emphasises the need to promote the *common* good, rather than the interests of individuals or an exclusionary class of people;

Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God...Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery...You may say to yourself, “My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.” But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenants, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today...if you ever forget the Lord your God...I testify against you today that you will surely be destroyed (Deut. 8:11-19. NIV).

In this passage, Moses encourages a collective sense of community integration, not just for individuals in a given social space, but for the sake of ecological sustainability as a whole, humans included. Moses’s community theology suggests wealth (fine houses, flocks, silver and gold) has to be seen as God’s blessing, and ought to be allocated equitably in society, to be shared responsibly as an act of faithfulness to God’s creation. Any civilization or economic system that operates simply on the assumption that more economic security, intellectual civilization, or scientific modernization will result in greater well-being and happiness, is not only unethical, but will prove to be problematic and even catastrophic. Moses was saying to the new generation, when all their physical needs are met (when they have land and sovereignty and rich harvests and safe homes), then the spiritual trial will commence. The inclusion of eco-social rules that all members of a community or society are expected to observe are essential for the sustainability of present and future ecological communities (Brown & Garver 2009:11).

Moses was reflecting a lesson seen in history, that: *the real challenge is not poverty but affluence, not insecurity but security, not slavery but civilization.* Moses was recognising the value of ‘spiritual capital’, without which moral decline and the fall of civilisation and sustainable development abounds. “Spiritual capital” refers to “the amount of spiritual knowledge and expertise available to an individual or a culture, where spiritual is understood as meaning the values and fundamental processes that give vitality or life to a system, whether large or small, simple or complex” (Morisy 2011:90). Moses was challenging his community to uphold their cultural spirituality and a faith-based approach to intergenerational equity. He was fully aware that it is only ‘spiritual capital’ that can illumine our responsibility, that can offer wellsprings of hope, and that can generate renewable moral energy for the challenges ahead.

Since humans are by nature relational beings, who know that the only life they have, and can have, is life shared together; then some normative community virtues, values, and solidarity of all life are needed (Nkansah-Obrempong 2013). As ethicist Larry Rasmussen summarises, “There is no community life apart from morality, and there is no moral life apart from communities” (Rasmussen 2013:160). Therefore ecosocialization must, for example, include an economy in a right relationship: that promotes the fair sharing of the Earth’s life-sustaining services, with all of life’s commonwealth and the entire community of creation.

Eco-theology has now found a new voice and is contributing to the reformulating of ideas about eco-socialization. In Tanzania, for example, the church is called to be actively involved in matters of advocacy, not simply regarding the Community Health Fund, but also to ensure natural resources (such as minerals) are utilised fittingly (Kanyandago 2011). It must ensure that people are living a healthy life according to cultural conservatism, as well as engaging with political ecology in a way that pressures the government and other authorities in the land to create a country that works for everyone, not the few.

7.3.5 Ecosocialization and Education

Ecosocialization must be seen to be concerned with ecological morality and human flourishing, not just materially but relationally. One way to approach this missional task is through education. Education, which implies a change in the way

we think and behave, has always been a driving force for improving the quality of our lives and ensuring that we do so within the metaphysics of mastery and transcendent ecosocial values. Yet although education has risen in visibility among eco-theologians and ethicists as the surest way to communicate transformational change, it needs to be reimagined. The dominant educational methods and theories that have inadvertently nurtured social change, perpetuated ecological imperialism, and continue to commercialise social class differences through education (as discussed in Chapter 3) must be challenged.

Culturally, Luo education is understood to be more than mere training, or the delivery of abstract knowledge or facts. Among most traditional African societies, education referred to integrative ideas that helped learners to make sense of the world and their own lives. From the beginning, education was seen as sharing transformational meaning; to create a more participative, sociable and morally sensible society. Thus, Kenyan theologian Maurice Makumba, describes traditional African education as an attempt to sustain an orderly system of ideas and values, which are “the lifeblood of any human community” (Makumba 2005:164). Clinebell (1996:240) saw Christian teachers as having crucial opportunities and responsibility in helping their students become earth-literate and earth-caring. “Without the feeling of empowerment for positive change” Clinebell claims, “students can express feelings of hopelessness and despair” (p.240).

Back in the 1930s, Jean Piaget (a developmental psychologist) originated the theory of pedagogical development that binds cognitive, social and moral formation into a whole process of a child’s gradual socialization. He understood that the process of integration between cognitive, social and moral norms (into what he calls ‘structuration’) is vital to effective pedagogical development, as it works from the basis of what has already taken place on a small scale at the sensory-motor level (1969, 2000:114-29).

In traditional Africa, the education of children was the collective responsibility of the whole community. However, this collective process of the ecosocialization of children through the influence of the family and wider community has been diminishing due to a number of factors. These include children being given more privileged status; this may confuse the young, so that they do not perceive the value of cultural authority in the family or clan (1977:122-137). Before these social changes (which originated primarily in the 1950s),

education was seen to be vital to the community's maintenance of its self-understanding, self-subsistence, and for interactive ecosocialization.

The connection between educational development and ecosocial integration (eco-socialization) may be found in some biblical passages, such as when Moses instructs the people after the Exodus¹⁰⁹. Often referred to as the Great Commandment, it shows that Moses regards teaching as the most integrative and effective instrument for the formation of a functional unity; that binds the cultural mandate, social morality and transcendence into a holistic lifeway. Similarly, in Matthew's gospel, Jesus Christ is characterized as a Teacher (רַבִּי *rabbi*) or Master (רַב *rav* literally 'great one') who called disciples to follow him (Mt 8:18-22).

This 'earthing' of heavenly wisdom to children fully resonates with the rabbinic tradition of the affective relationship between the disciple and his teacher, as Michaels L. Satlow describes in *How the Bible Became Holy* (2014). He notes that in first century Judaism, the teaching of children was in stages. Firstly, after the age of six, children attended *beit sefer*, the house of the Torah that emphasized the learning of scripture. Secondly, they then progressed on to the *beit Talmud*, the house of learning where they were additionally taught the Jewish art of questions and answers. The final stage, often attended by the best of the best, was *beit Midrash* where they progressed from being a student to being a disciple or follower of a specific rabbi. At this level, the meaning of a disciple changed from being a student learning what a rabbi knew, to someone who wanted to 'take the rabbi's yolk upon himself' and do what the rabbi did. There they learn to become like the rabbi himself.

Throughout this Jewish learning process, Satlow observes: "true divine knowledge was passed down by means of the teacher-student relationship, not words on a page" (Satlow 2014:273). Interaction was, and still is, the key to learning development

Such ecosocialization is specifically noted by William Herzog in his analysis of the social setting of the parables. He recognises that the need for an interconnection between cultural pedagogy and macrosociology was central to sociology of the Mediterranean world. Herzog suggests that the sociology, seen in the New Testament period, helped to rehabilitate the interconnection between the

¹⁰⁹ Deut. 6:1-24.

household (*Gk. Oikos*) and the city (*Gk. polis*); and was a critique of the traditional, autocratic head of the family (Latin *paterfamilias*) and the aristocrats of imperium (*Gk. Oikodespotés*) (Herzog 1994:156-168).

Aristotle similarly viewed education in the household as training for participation in the life of the city (Aristotle, *Politics*, and esp. Book 1). The ‘polis’ was a collection of significant households, so a ‘kingdom’ or ‘imperium’ was a collection of significant cities, along with the land controlled by them. The importance of the ‘polis’ during the Hellenistic era up to the early 5th century CE is evident in Saint Augustine’s (354-430 C.E.) celebrated work *The City of God*. Augustine, believed that true human ecology may be discovered only in the minds of thinking people, who have a deep sense of longing to know God’s nature and transcending truths (cf. McGrath 2005).

From antiquity, the cultural understanding of what Anne Primavesi has called “the creation event” (Primavesi 2009:18) was the integration between creation and transcendence. Education has always been at the centre of making such fundamental basis of truth claims about realities: be they religious, ecological, social, political, or economical. The integration of sustainability ethics into the core curricula of cosmic knowing about the nature of the universe—one that aid us in navigating maps of meaning and regulates how we think about our ecological society and how to reach our greatest potential—requires a whole-socialising enterprise that links major sustainability challenges to corresponding educational approaches. That is why it is important to recognise that, ‘education—in all its transformational customs—is one of the most powerful instruments of socialization we have for bringing about the changes required to achieve inclusive sustainability through ecosocialization.

7.3.6 Ecosocialization and Hope

A biblically-based consideration of the Christian understanding of ‘hope’ is explored by T. Wright in *Surprised by Hope* (2007). He submits that ‘hope’ belongs to and is embedded within the present world, and that belief about life after death, ought to directly inform belief about life before death. He argues that God’s intention is to renew the whole creation (John 3:16), a renewal already initiated through Jesus’s resurrection. Therefore, the calling of the Church is more than ‘saving souls’. It must actively anticipate the eventual renewal by working for

God's kingdom in the wider world; that is, bringing ecosocial healing and hope in the present life. As he concludes; "hope is a signpost pointing ahead to the renewal, the redemption and the rebirth of the entire creation" (Wright 2007:303-7).

Similarly, Richard Bauckham's article "Ecological Hope in Crisis" (2016) calls upon the church to think afresh about Christian hope: "if Christian hope is to retain its power to be the engine of the church's engagement with the world, [if] it is to be more than an ineffective private dream, hope itself needs renewal as the world changes" (Bauckham 2016:43-52). This renewal relies on renewing our relationship with 'ultimate hope': the unconditional dependence on God's transcendent act of re-creation. By such envisioning 'proximate hopes' (based upon what God has done through Christ), humankind can participate and redefine the path of our ecological civilization more effectively. Bauckham distinguishes such faith-based 'proximate hopes' from modern progressivism and modern utopianism, and defines its scope in this way:

Ultimate hope can fund proximate hopes. It enables us to work in the direction of God's purpose, knowing that we are working with God's purpose, working with the grain of the universe. But distinguishing ultimate hope and proximate hopes enables us to be appropriately modest and realistic about what we can hope for here and now in particular contexts. We have to seek out those concrete possibilities for movement in the direction of the kingdom that we can actually identify and work with here and now. We do not hold the tiller of history. We must simply do what we can, more or less, this or that, as the case may be (Bauckham 2016:47).

Bauckham suggests that this convergence between 'ultimate hope' and 'proximate hopes' may provide a connection between Christian virtues of faith, hope and love (1 Corinthians 13). The three belong together, and like the persons in the Trinity, they are perichoretic. As such, faith, hope, and love are mutually engaging, mutually sustaining, mutually enhancing; and each is necessary for the flourishing of the others. Hence a viable relationship between 'ultimate hope' and 'proximate hopes'.

Regardless of whether examining 'hope' or 'imagining hope as whole' for sustainable solutions, there must be a recognition of the wisdom of traditional cultures. According to traditional African (Luo) cultures, having 'hope' was an act of imagining or longing for a healthier society (Mboya 1965; 1997). There is nothing more important to both cultural sociology and to mission theology than longing for a healthy society, a society with a true sense of right relationship. As Richard Rohr, Franciscan theologian, put it, 'whenever we are connected, in right

relationship - you might say 'in love' - there is Christ, the Body of God, and there is the church, the temple, and the mosque' (Rohr 2013:239). Unfortunately, colonial missionary Christianity reduced that Great Mystery into something small, exclusive, almost a private club; instead of a community of people who are 'in communion' with each other and everything else in their geographical place within creation.

Rohr's understanding of the immense diversity and pluriformity of expansive love not only provides a solid basis for reverence, but exposes who God is. Perhaps that is why a number of traditional African societies came to see the role of 'hope' in a completely different way. Indeed, from a position of 'life-widening', the drama of 'hope' was less about the character of society's progressivism, and more about will and choice for a common future (cf. Magea 1997; 2014; Mugambi 2002). This exposes the contrast between the colonial monotheistic world of individuality; and the traditional African cosmological stories of 'hope', rooted in the expansive cultural belief that "all things hang together, all depend on each other and on the whole" (Bujo 1992:23).

While for Descartes (1596-1650) the world was a collection of individuals; traditional African cosmology saw the world as a complex community with a life-sustaining energy. Some parts are mysterious and intangible (like the Sun); yet all parts together constitute a single, undifferentiated commonwealth of life (Bujo 1992:17-19). The Sun is the most basic natural resource, as mysterious energy: so traditional teaching suggests the best attitude is not to dominate the transmission of its life-sustaining energy, but to observe the sacrality, and maintain our relationship to this mysterious universe.

Comparable to Bauckham's notion of 'proximate hopes' the eco-theologian Anna Peterson refers to "hope in and through the experience of living in right relationships, and in communion with nature and people" (2007:62). Finding hope through right relationships is a useful tool in dealing with the reality of unsustainability and ecological flaws. Can 'hope' be the basis of ecosocialization and exploring missional models that will address the reality of the environmental crisis? The hypothesis is that 'hope' could indeed encourage discussion regarding the moral traditions of ecological survival; and might promote indigenous communities to engage with ecological practices that are already very familiar.

As humankind is confronted with climate change, global pollution, and massive degradation and destruction; so the ‘ecological hope’ must begin by recognising the place of ‘others’ in the ecosystem. This world is a *biotic community* of plants, trees, fruits, birds, animals, cattle, fish, with *life-sustaining energy* found in water, land, sun, moon, stars, and inhabited by ‘every kind of wild beast’ as described in Judeo-Christian Creation story (Gen. 1:3-25). Recognising this cosmic reality challenges current thinking about the way we live: to ensure that the world’s marginalized creatures have life and a sustainable future. It is this ‘cosmological hope’ that Mary Evelyn Tucker suggests will produce a new appreciation of our resonance with nature:

Resonance with the life forces of the natural world challenges us to nurture these same sensitivities. Extraordinary meditations as these on the ordinary rhythms and mysteries of nature are needed to reawaken our sense of intimate connection to life in all its forms. To be able to see deeply into the myriad patterns of life on earth will give us, our children, and our students a vitalizing unity with both one’s own bioregion and the larger unfolding process of the universe story (Tucker 1993:16).¹¹⁰

Tucker’s cosmology¹¹¹ entails the need for a robust belief in the “world of presences, of face-to-face meeting not only with the living, but with the whole totality of nature” (as in John V. Taylor, *The Primal Vision*, 1960). The vitality of observing the ecology of presence was also clear to Ralph Harper (*The Sleeping Beauty* 1958):

Each order of experience has its own atmosphere. The atmosphere of presence, of giving, of wholeness, is silence. We know that serious things have to be done in silence, because we do not have words to measure the immeasurable. In silence men love, pray, listen, compose, paint, write, think, suffer. These experiences are all occasions of giving and receiving, of some encounter with forces that are inexhaustible and independent of us. These are easily distinguishable from our routines and possessiveness as silence is distinct from noise (Ralph Harper, cited in Taylor 1963:190-191).

What is clear from Ralph Harper’s classic theology of ‘presence’ is that those who have lost the capacity for listening, and who cannot be there for others, are unable to be truly present to themselves. As such, they cannot even contrive the anthropological consequences of their separation from themselves, from others, from the biosphere that sustains their life, and from the universe that brought them forth. African theologian Gabriel M. Setiloane describes the cosmology of

¹¹⁰ Mary Evelyn Tucker, *Education and Ecology* as cited in Howard Clinebell’s *Ecotherapy: Healing ourselves* (1996:236).

¹¹¹ John Grim defines “cosmologies” as oral narrative or stories that transmit the worldview values of the people and describe the web of human activities within the powerful spirit world of the local bioregion.’ See <http://fore.yale.edu/religion/indigenous> (Accessed February 16, 2017; cf. Grim & Tucker 2014).

‘presence’ as a manner of human participation, which informs the very soul of the community, their essence of cultural belonging, and their relationship with other humans and objects (Setiloane 1986:13-16).

‘Ecological hope’ cannot just be about discerning, imagining, or choosing possibilities for ‘hope’ without recognising the essential notion of ‘belonging’. Traditional African (Luo) cosmologies know this; and this is the basis for ‘life-widening’ activities – set in motion by the cultural mandate. Facing a situation of ecological challenge and uncertain hope, it is the virtuous trio of faith, hope and love that must keep humankind both connected and determined to act.

7.4 Conclusion

The basis of being concerned about conditions that govern our ecology of life is faith. Life-widening and ecosocialization are the twin components to ensure integrative patterns of sustainability. They have the potential to meet the challenges of ecological imperialism that shape our world. The impact of colonial missionary Christianity has been responsible for many of the moral and social challenges of sustainability. However, had it the same pedagogy of integrating faith and ‘life-widening mission’ towards ecological transformation evident in Luo tradition, then the health of the whole cosmic community would have been far more resilient, instead of being in crisis.

Chapter Eight

General Conclusion, Summary and Recommendations

This thesis has three major aims outline in Chapter 1 (see 1.5). To study in depth the precise ways in which the Luo people's cultural cosmology influenced their ecological consciousness and their moral traditions of sustainability. To assess the ecological impact of colonial missionary Christianity and to challenge the negative theological assessment of traditional cultural cosmology. To develop culturally-informed methods of engagement with ecological problems from the perspective of the Luo cosmology, through an integrative concept of earth-honouring faith, cultural ecology and ecosocialization.

Theological reflections on what 'sustainability' ethics can and should mean were developed from the perspective of Luo-inspired Christian eco- and mission-theology. This is a large and diverse area, and three general dimensions of sustainability were examined: the biosphere, the moral universe and the ecological society. Each chapter has outlined the main discussions that relate to Christian ecotheology, cultural ecology, and sustainability.

Mainstream conservative theological-discourse still insist that Christian morality and indigenous cosmology are not only incompatible, but also that their ecological society and sustainability ethics are different. However, such exclusionary views are coming under increasing criticism, and this thesis adds another voice to that debate. This thesis argues for more expansive ecological ethics with the capacity to meet the challenges of sustainability. It draws on Bethwell Ogot's ecological-historical research and a range of more recent ecotheological research on the political economy and ecology of environmental change. It starts with a historical perspective of the politics of ecological control and sustainability ethics that existed in the precolonial Luo world.¹¹² The impact of colonial missionary education, and its explosive expansion can be assessed from this basis.

To assess the ecological implications of the spread of the evangelical Christianity among the Luo people, Chapter 3 describes the impact of colonial missionary Christianity's civilization through education, medicine, and conversion. The practical and social issues that concerned some colonial

¹¹² For example, Mboya 1965; Ogot 1967; Odaga 1983; 2011; and Maseno 2011.

missionaries like Archdeacon Walter Edwin Owen could be viewed positively or negatively, but we must admit that the core aim was the transformation of humanity and the world, and this mission was most often well intentioned. However, in spite of these good intentions, research has indicated that the resulting ecosocial transformation brought about by mainstream missionary influence and teaching was detrimental (see John V. Taylor's *Primal Vision* 1963).

In East Africa, over the last two centuries, missionary endeavour and colonialism have led to the construction of new eco-social meanings – this resulted in environmental change, but also influenced the political and economic decision-making process (as can be seen in the industrialization of commodities from nature).

The dimensions of the problem are described, and then Chapter 4 explores an alternative Luo ecosocial theology of sustainability; and how it might play a vital contribution to our understanding of the politics of socio-ecological transformation. Chapter 4 focuses on (and re-examines in greater depth) the dimensions of Luo cultural sustainability and ecological society. It considers the ecology of *Aluora*, and what could result from the syntheses of the cultural energies of human ecology and social capital. It suggests that if social capital is recognized as one of the 'vital qualities' of reality, as immeasurably greater than that of 'capitalist rationality' (Taylor 1963:30; Setiloane 1986:1); then important avenues of inquiry would be opened up about the eco-theology of secularized societies, and the eco-theology of social change.

Research has shown that "when the foreign missionaries came to Tanzania, they did not preach to people with heads like empty boxes, but to people who had their religion, their way of life, their social philosophy, their medicine, their traditions and their ecosocial history."¹¹³ Thus, the suggestion is that although Christianity among the Luo people can provide a mechanism for linking individual entity with the divine economy (in a rather sophisticated Trinitarian model), it should not do so in a way that excludes the broader eco-socialization of local geography and ecological management.

¹¹³ A statement from the pastoral letter to the Lutheran diocese in Bukoba, Tanzania by Bishop Josiah Kibira recorded in B. Sundkler, *Bara Bukoba: Church and Community in Tanzania* (London: C. Hurst & Co. Publishers, 1974), 44.

Luo cosmology was then examined in depth from a range of published sources. This gave a broad understanding of the Luo cultural ecology embedded in their language (Dholuo), memory, myths, and even agricultural customs and morality. The inescapable conclusion of agricultural ethics is that to be in touch with the ecology of God's economy, means to be in touch with the rich cosmological heritages of indigenous people, and with the cultural struggles of peoples towards sustainability. As Ellen F. Davis states in *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*, "the essential understanding that informs the agrarian mind-set, in multiple cultures from ancient times to the present, is that agriculture has an ineluctably ethical dimension" (Davis 2009:22). Embedded in such traditional wisdom is the understanding that a sound practice of mission, identity and ecological sustainability depends upon the simultaneous interplay of various fields of knowledge including: biological, economic, cultural, and religious dimensions.

The growing size and scale of industrialized hermeneutics and exegesis is a huge challenge. Accompanying this has been a steady and widespread deterioration of the proportion of ecologically-aware individuals in urban places compared to those in rural areas; this is despite the fact that urban residents deplete ecological resources more quickly than rural residents. The different social environment of city-dwellers and the rural communities has led to the divorce of the sacred from the secular, and consequently, to the growing number of the 'pro-self' rather than 'pro-social' people. Some contemporary social and ecological critiques of capitalism consider such developments as not only putting society's collective well-being in crisis, but as also increasing the destructive dynamics of contemporary capitalism (Dörre et al 2009).

This thesis draws on several cross-cultural and interdisciplinary perspectives on sustainability. It then offers both an ecological critique of colonial missionary Christianity, and also a Christian critique of the destructive economic-and-political juggernaut which is falsely described as 'sustainable development'.

Chapter 5 describes how biblical ecology requires humanity to limit its use of natural resources to promote inclusive sustainability. It argues that the pursuit of real 'sustainable development' should be evaluated by more inclusive sustainable ethics: ecologically sound, economically feasible, and socially transformational, and not by its desire for endless development. It reviews some of the major authors of Biblical research on social justice, and concludes that the Old Testament

prophetic hermeneutics around social justice had a consistent theme. They were aimed at promoting inclusive sustainability, at improving the quality of life, and at maintaining the divine relationship between humanity and the biosphere that sustained their flourishing.

Throughout history, an integral part of the mission of God's people has been the economy of convergence between society, the environment and social justice. This underlines what is, perhaps, the dominant theme of the Bible: the divine cosmos-humanity relationship.

Jonathan Burnside's work *God, Justice, and Society* (2011) makes this point clearly. He argues that the relationship between humanity and the environment is structured in the story of universal creation (Genesis 1:1-2:4) and the story of humanity's creation (Genesis 2:5-25). Burnside argues that these two narratives of universal creation show that the relationship between humanity and the environment is structured by means of various 'eco-laws', or specific guidance or rules for humanity. He states that watching over the Earth is the heart of the relationship between humanity and the environment.

Burnside's reflection on the ecology of humanity and the environment concludes that, "the specific nature of the image of God requires that humanity relates to the environment in a similar manner to God and creation, as seen in the creation narrative. God creates life and the conditions under which life can flourish" (Burnside 2011:176). This is not a new 'eco-law', but the primal model for early human law giving and human judgment, which requires moral wisdom. "When humanity departs from this paradigm," Burnside concludes, "the result is environmental destruction".

Imperialistic words and phrases such as 'civilization', and 'the rise of civilizing missions' usually carry two implicit associations: they convey the false impression that colonial civilization is 'good', and that the indigenous lifeways and ecological ethics are 'bad'. These false assumptions led the way towards an increase in industrial ecology, ecological imperialism, and eventually to prevailing adversarial geographies of exclusion – deliberately ignoring the traditional cultural attitudes to human ecology.

In Chapter 6, an ecotheological framework that offers a new model of life-widening faith practice and ecosocialization was developed. Paul Tillich's theology of *Faith* provides the pathway towards a more integrating concept of ecosocial

consciousness. We have a right to be concerned about the conditions that affect our ecological identity, and beyond that, to a set of expansive earth-honouring faith and relations that enable humankind to live a fully integrated life.

However, the limitations of this study must be recognized. Previous studies of Christian eco-therapy in educational institutions (Clinebell 1996) and in the socializing ecology of daily life in Africa (Bujo 1992; Kaoma 2013; Magesa 2014) have demonstrated that ecological attitudes are not always consistent across denominational or socio-economic boundaries. These findings support the hypothesis that wealthier families with greater patterns of consumption are less likely to adopt eco-regulation than the underprivileged, who are just fighting for their survival and consume proportionately much less. (Boff 1995). This socio-economic fragmentation certainly inhibits ecological reform, and will therefore reduce progress in achieving real change to the cultivation of a new ecology of mind.

The paths into a sustainable future can only be made through identifying fundamental causes of inequity in our own economic and religio-cultural systems, and by discovering more integrating possibilities (Davis 2009; Kapolyo 2005; Morisy 2011). Challenging these limitations through further eco-theological conversations remains an ‘uncompleted mission’ (to use Kwesi Dickson’s phrase). It is a mission that must continue indefinitely in challenging our separation from the natural world and one from another.

Reclaiming a primal vision of life in its natural phenomena requires a transformation of the way primal communities have been understood. Records of early explorers and missionaries witness that societies and communities flourished: arts were practiced, there were economic systems and order which regulated life and gave fulfillment to individual and communal life (Ogot 1967; 1979; Iliffe 1979; Kjekshus 1996). Too often, the indigenous cultural heritages were regarded negatively, seen as ‘savage’ or ‘brutal’. (Setiloane 1986; Mbiti 2002). In Paulo Freire’s phrase, the people ‘internalized’ that image of themselves and see themselves as present, past, and sometimes even future, in that negative light. As Setiloane puts it compellingly, they “look at our cultural heritages with the eyes and spectacles of the Western people who have conquered us, taught us their ways and made us slaves to their thought-patterns, value systems and spirituality” (1986:1).

In many parts of Africa, the negative influences and impact that Christianity has had on the ecological condition is clear to see. Christian ecology cannot effectively contribute towards ecological sustainability until it recognises the failings of its faulty, cosmological traditions and cultural values (Taylor 1963; Hallman 1994; Kirk 2000; McFague 2008; Magesa 2014). This is fundamental to achieving a partnership between the rich moral traditions of abundant life, and the emerging scientific discourses on ecological and renewal technology.

As Magesa suggests, there is a need to embrace this collective spirituality not only to understand and digest their wisdom, but because spirituality for the people of Africa is not passive. Rather, it is a real performance played out in day-to-day life, seen through the observance of moral codes, rites and rituals, and patterns of relationships. Collective consciousness relates to relationships with all elements of creation: physical and nonphysical, visible and invisible, and is essential for the elucidation of this integrative vision. Only through harmonious relationships is cosmic existence possible and its vital force preserved. (2014:195-7)

The Luo people believe that the universal life-force (inherent in the totality of creation) is transmitted effectively within the physical and biospheric universe. This adds to the cultural epistemology of cosmos and its biospheric systems, known to Luo cosmology as a 'moral reality'. The cosmos is seen as a mysterious performance. It creates the essence of life and a decoded intuition of eco-spirituality. Since antiquity, the ecology of the cosmos has nurtured the intuition of the relational value of all life forms on the planet, and governed an expansive ecological network. Without this transcending force of life, "humanity and the cosmos may be seriously threatened" (Kobia 2003:17-18; Magesa 2014:195-196).

Thus, the 'centrality' of the cosmos needs to be integrated into the fabric of life *ecologically*, *ecumenically* and *economically*. These three constituents of sustainability must be seen together, since their ultimate association is embedded in the eco-social ethics of every indigenous society, (as seen, for example, in Judaism). If salvation means the flourishing of God's household and the well-being of all creation; then the ecumenicity of creation care demands that the Earth's resources be distributed justly among all its inhabitants, the human and nonhuman community, on a sustainable basis (McFague 2008).

Scientific discourses maintain that environmental sustainability and economic progress are not necessarily contradictory.¹¹⁴ However, this must not be taken for granted. The ecology of ‘environmental sustainability’ and ‘sustainable economic progresses cannot suggest endless growth. Rather they must create “a culture that lives in harmony with nature (and each other) into the future” (Washington 2015:372). A sustainable future cannot be based on endless growth myth and infinite demographic rise. The otherworldly eschatology to be found in some expressions of Christianity (Middleton 2014:27), and the prevalent ecological ignorance, must be radically reformed in order to engage with this reality.¹¹⁵

Ecological reform is needed both within the church and in the public sphere, with a commitment to ‘integrative sustainability’, to heal our wounded planet (Romans 8). New ecosystems need to be developed that support sustainability, promote the vision of shalom, and suggest holistic ways of living together within the *aluora*; seeing the totality of cosmological reality as “one earth community” (Hallman 2009). These should integrate with new forms of social regulation through an interdisciplinary framework of eco-socialization – as a shared venture towards an equitable world, in which people and the non-human community can thrive sustainably.¹¹⁶

Central to attaining this integrative sustainability is the commitment to the common good. The Christian vision of a better world will not come naturally without a renewed understanding of its calling, and a sustained commitment to collaboration with other partners. However, it is clear that values the faith community espouses cannot emerge unless they are enacted in practical engagement. Hesitation will hold the doors open for a capitalist narrative; where sustainability is only about growth in numbers, resource use, or GDP. This is a false narrative that produces ‘winners’ and ‘losers’

Throughout this thesis, sustainability has been defined as ‘the opposite of endless material possession’ or ‘a societal state of being ultimately concerned about fundamental values of and ultimate destiny of life.’ In its pages, we have leant an

¹¹⁴ For example Kopnina (2012:699-717) and Washington (2015:359-376)

¹¹⁵ For a more detailed debate on theological and ecological problems of ‘otherworldly theory’ cf. Richard Middleton, *A New Heaven and a New Earth* (2014), specifically, pp.21-34).

¹¹⁶ See Future Earth Research for Global Sustainability (especially their 2015 vision) at: <http://www.futureearth.org/news/future-earth-2025-vision-sets-framework-programmes-contribution-global-sustainable-development>. Accessed May 26, 2017.

expensive lesson that unless our ecological riches are protected by all and treated consciously, there can be no lasting ecosocial flourishing (sustainability) for any of us as well as the entire community of creation.

An economy that is increasingly unequal creates exploitation, with the divisive social mechanisms that generate the rich and the poor simultaneously. Such injustice produces conditions that lead to political unrest or conflict (Boff & Elizondo 1995). Hence, the cry of the Earth and the cry of the oppressed has to be heard. This issue must be faced if sustainability is to have theological relevance. There will be conflicts and contradictions in facing this task. However, the mission is now inescapable.

An integrative, logical and clear eco-theology needs to integrate the new ideas on ecological spirituality with the discourses of sustainability. This is part of the 'abundant life' (John 10:10) of Christian spirituality. In order to address this, theological discourses on missional sustainability should be distinct from a general discourse on life. However, this does not mean that it should be distinct in terms of being the dominant hierarchy, but distinct in terms of principle. As the eco-theologian Kim Yong-Bock (2014:219-231) puts it, "it should be a discipline that is critical towards the technocracy that forms the engine of the global regime, which threatens the totality of life on Earth. At the same time, it should invite the creative fermentation of all forms of wisdom in the whole history of the Earth" (p.230). The path to begin to realise the glorious Christian vision of the "dwelling place of God" (Eph. 2:22), can be found in the life transforming power of the Lord's prayer; a prayer that animates the abundancy of the transcending God's force in every aspect of life within the ecologically-embedded reality.

A vision of sustainable life has developed from the synthesis of ecological understandings of the early church, and African moral traditions of abundant life and faith experiences. It is a holistic vision: it recognizes that the ecology of life is imperiled by imperialistic culture and oppressive principles. It is an ecologically-informed vision of life: it requires the convergence of wisdom found in religious, cultural, philosophical, missiological, historical and ecological spheres. It is a multi-faith, a multi-cultural and a multi-philosophical convergence: seeking to

recover integrative dimensions of ‘relationships’ for the promotion of the force of life.¹¹⁷

The quest for culturally-informed sustainability and social order among the Luo people, challenges the adversarial theologies and structural exploitation that were symbolic of foreign imperialism which so damaged Africa’s cultural identity. This means that missional spirituality, relationships, praxis and discourses in eco-theology must promote, not only the force of life, but embrace ‘others’. The oppressed and non-human community in all their forms and differences are to be included; as all aspects of creation contain the spark of divine, spiritual life. Such plurality and multiplicity of the experience and expression of cultural belief, for instance, “poses no innate problem for African spiritual life” (Magesa 2014:196). On the contrary, ‘it facilitates the practical application of an essential component of African spirituality’ (p.196).

In striving to reach the goals of economic growth and personal wealth, humans have placed the entire planet at risk, but yet even the ‘winners’ are not content (Brown & Garver 2009). And yet, this elusive contentment is intrinsic to almost every African ethical tradition that espouses a fundamental sense of belonging: it is known by being part of a community, by being loving and loved, valuing nature, enjoying good health and a sense of integration, and by sharing and making a generative contribution to society’s maps of meaning (Peterson 1999). A far more fulfilling life can be experienced through recognizing the limitations, responsibilities, and mystery that are all part of living among the community of creation.

Throughout this thesis we have examined how cultural narratives of interbeing, cosmic morality, and ecological wisdom embedded in the Bible are all interconnected in Luo-inspired eco-theology. This interconnectivity is reflected in the dimensions of integrating mission and ecology discussed in this thesis: which sees ‘sustainability’ as the metaphysics of different wisdom traditions of common

¹¹⁷ See essays in E. Conradie, S. Bergmann, C. Deane-Drummond and D. Edwards *Christian Faith and the Earth* (2014).

wellbeing, collective flourishing and continuity; and together constitutes a vision of ecological society ultimately answerable to God and transcendent nature.

At the end of this explorative journey, what is the pathway to sustainability ethics? It is important to ask this, because without purpose sustainability ethics is a philosophy without meaning for those engaged in it, or those who are longing to see reformed lifeways.

First, we need to *recover the empowering dynamics of our connection with God through faith*. Tillich (1958), describes the interiority of faith as “the integrating centre of the personal life” that is based on becoming ultimately concerned about your cosmic self (integrated personality); and embracing an ethic of humankind’s appropriate place in, and relationship to, the cosmos and the community. Seen from the perspective of Luo cultural ecology, this begins with the simple recognition that it is sensible to be inspired to live within the ecological limits of the particular geographical conditions, rather than try to ignore the ecological consequences of relentless economic growth (Ogot 1979; Iliffe 1979; Kjekshus 1996; Maseno 2011). Various community-based organizations (such as Oxfam, Tearfund, and A Rocha International) and volumes of literature provide creative opportunities to achieve this. A radical realization of the severity of the current ecological crisis is needed, and how to address it through effective ecological practice and regulation.

Second, we must visualise learning techniques for *the development of integrating models of ecospirituality, and a faith-based approach to intergenerational equity; based on right relationship and ecological history*¹¹⁸. Whatever religious institutions that emerge, must preserve the local ecology and decision making (Stinton 2004; Antonio 1994/2009); yet also embrace respect for the new ecological standards that all should live by, to avoid the further unravelling of life’s commonwealth. Clearly, the more people who participate in reconsidering the place of eco-social integration, the better it will serve people and the entire commonwealth of life.

¹¹⁸ Essays in Ogot (1979) and Hallman (1994), suggest creative ways to do this.

Third, we must *return to sustaining or integrating stories or Earth-honouring faith and moral traditions of eco-socialization*. It has been said by traditional sages that if someone listens carefully to a placed-story, they will never be the same again. That is because the story will work its way into their moral universe and break down barriers to the transcendence and cosmic consciousness. Revolutionizing indigenous cultural energies, including their stories (myths) (such as Luo's *Simbi Nyaima*), denote real ethics of locality, eco-spirituality; and are more real indeed than that of abstract concepts and rational thought.

A lived story or myth, is the concrete recital of events and original phenomena of the spiritual and communal life; which has engraved itself on the language, memory, and creative energy of the people; and it brings two worlds together symbolically (Taylor 1963). If the desire for ecological restoration is to renew a particular place, based on an interpretation of how earlier alterations have led to detrimental civilization, then the reintroduction of cultural stories (myths) with ecological concerns surely becomes inevitable (Maseno 2011). Should ecological restoration be regarded as “a process of interpretation and relocation of the past in the present”? (Clingerman 2011:156-7). By listening carefully to the stories of a particular place, it will lead to the right embodiment of past ecological history (such as the Creation story) by establishing the presence of story in a place long forgotten. In so doing, it becomes an example of how local wisdom tradition can interact with eco-theology as an embedded personal and communal practice.

Fourth, we must strive to *bear witness to guidance conversations built on life-widening mission and eco-socialization*. As a better future comes into sharper focus, built on right sustainability discourse and life-widening mission, then massive ecological reform could be the result. Those who want to safeguard the integrity, resilience, and life-giving power of the commonwealth of life for present and future generations (as suggested by the Five Marks of Mission), need to commit to personal and collective changes that will lead to integrative sustainability. It is not easy to predict how or when this eco-social epiphany will take place. But it is possible to hope for it, and essential to work for it by bearing active witness to the concept of eco- and mission-relationship and to the urgent need for ecological conversion.

The final purpose should be turn to the depths and *ignite a socioecological reform movement within Christianity that can change hearts, minds, and policy towards a right ecological relationship*. This could have significant impact on the Luo people, as Church attendance involves a large proportion of this population. Mission history contains revolutionary examples of nonviolent eco-activism that led to the advancement of comprehensive social and economic reform. One prototype example is that of the Israelites being taken from Egyptian captivity to ecological civilization in the Promised Land (Davis 2009; Wright 2010). The Exodus story can once again serve as a transforming model for building a redemptive communal economy, in right relationship with transcendence and with life's commonwealth. People of all faiths and persuasions should be concerned about the ecological conditions that our existence is contingent upon and about the urgent need to protect life's integrity.

This thesis suggests that integrating the cultural ecology and ecological wisdom as embedded in the Bible, is a strategy for achieving integrating sustainability and social morality. It submits that there is an urgent need for a change of missional attitude, hermeneutics, and priorities. It has been argued in A. E. Orobator's *Reconciliation, Justice, and Peace* (2011:243-4) that "the Church in Africa is not addressing the needs of modern society adequately and should reach out more to marginalized groups, especially, young people, people living with disabilities and the poorest of the poor". Such ecological reconciliation, justice and integrating peace must be high on the missional agendas of all Anglican dioceses in Tanzania, for without a clear strategy for ecological reconciliation and eco-socialization it will be futile to hope for the end of poverty and the cry of the Earth. Finally, the Church must recognize its calling and involve with politics to raise ecological concerns in the public sphere.

In conclusion, it is the hope of this thesis that it can facilitate further conversations about ecological redemption, social morality, and integrative sustainability. It wishes to contribute to the decolonization of cultural and ecological imperialism for the Luo universe, which was inflicted on them by colonial civilization. It heralds a new vision: of a sustainable future for the Luo people and other faith communities across the world.

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Appendices

Appendix One: Fieldwork Study I, 2015

This report is organised into two sections. Section 1 describes the data analysis method used. Section 2 is subdivided into two: the first part contains sample comments from people interviewed, and the second part discusses their responses in relation to the hypothesis of this research. The report concludes with two case studies with important implications for conversation around population matters in the sustainability arena.

SECTION 1

Fieldwork data analysis methods

Jorgensen (1989) and Thorne (2000) consider data analysis as imperative to a research project. For Thorne, data analysis is the “most complex and mysterious” part of all qualitative studies (p.68). Likewise, Jorgensen sees this portion of the research as:

A breaking up, separating, or disassembling of research materials into pieces, parts, elements, or units. With facts broken down into manageable pieces, the researcher sorts and sifts them, searching for types, classes, sequences, processes, patterns or wholes. The aim of this process is to assemble or construct the data in a meaningful or comprehensible fashion (Jorgensen 1989:107).

This survey is qualitatively based, and so it will use the Jorgensen and Thorne model for the analysis. Consideration will also be given to Altheide (1987) and Morgan (1993) – they understand Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) as “a dynamic form of analysis of verbal and visual data that is oriented toward summarizing the informal contents of that data” (Altheide and Morgan cited in October 2013:25). Nyamekye suggests that Qualitative Content Analysis is both reflexive and interactive (based on Sandelowski 2000) – the way the data is treated is constantly modified to detect new insights that may be present. QCA is used when the researcher is interested in attaining a straight description of the phenomenon under investigation.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ The main intention of the QCA used is to describe the fieldwork findings. That does not mean that there is no make no attempt to interpret these data quantitatively, as Sandelowski (2000:338), usefully puts it: “Qualitative content analysis moves further into the domain of interpretation than quantitative content analysis in that there is an effort to understand not only the manifests (e.g., frequencies and means), but also the latent of data.” This of course, explains why our discussion

In order to manage the randomness of the collected data a coding technique is used. In qualitative research, coding is “the process whereby data is broken down into component parts, which are given names” (Bryman 2008:692 cited in Nyamekye, p.37). Other scholars (such as Schneider 2008) see ‘coding’ as a ‘label’ to tag a variable (concept) and/or a value found in a ‘text’ (cf. Nyamekye 2013:37). The use of coding may also directly or indirectly facilitate the practice of both inductive (observation-based inference) and deductive (formal logical inference) reasoning. The coded data was drawn from interviews and fieldwork notes (which were taken and recorded during the enquiry). This is at the suggestion of Charmaz (1983:112) who states:

Codes serve to summarize, synthesize, and sort many observations made of the data...coding becomes the fundamental means of developing the analysis...Researchers use codes to pull together and categorize a series of otherwise discrete events, statements, and observations which they identify in the data.

In summary, coding enables the researcher to create order in the seemingly disordered data. It transforms it into manageable units of information to be used in respective parts of the study. The coding of the data analysis has been done in the following stages:

1. Sound and visual records were reviewed several times before transcribing the interviews.
2. The transcripts were read and re-read several times before certain order, categories and themes in the collected data began to be identified. The themes or categories used in this case were those that related to the main research questions.
3. After coding, the remaining data was regrouped in relation to sub-themes and sub-categories.
4. Ideas that overlapped and interconnected were identified.

This analysis uses the ‘constant comparison technique’. Instead of focusing on individual in-depth analyses of each case, the researcher provides a composite picture for each interview on a particular question (Awuah-Nyamekye October, 2013). This ‘constant comparison technique’ merges ideas from interviews on the

impact of ecological threats on Luo life, as well as their collective insights towards sustainable life and the environment (Billig 1997).

Section 2

Fieldwork Study in Mara Tanzania (between 2/07/15 to 3/08/2015)

Report and discussion of sample comments

Face-to-face interviews were conducted with a small subset of the respondents¹²⁰, as it was neither feasible nor desirable to sample the entire patrilineal¹²¹ population. Instead, a representative group of 15 elders were carefully selected from core clans (including both Anglicans and non-Anglicans). The interviewed group consists of a diverse set of educated people: those who completed secondary school (and above), and ‘experienced people’ (broadly defined as elders mostly over 50 years of age) in the Luo community.

These individuals constituted the Luo ‘universe’ for the purpose of the research (Kirwen 1979:29).

This fieldwork investigation focuses on four ecologically-informed questions:

1. What were the cultural teachings in the pre-Christian Luo community, with which the community managed its environment sustainably?
2. What was the approach of colonial mission to the environment, and what has been the environmental impact of the spread of colonial missionary Christianity (among the Luo people of Mara-Tanzania, since the 1930s)?
3. How does contemporary theology of mission regard the Earth, and what implications does such understanding have for nature, identity, life and sustainability?
4. What solutions does the synthesis of the Luo tradition and Christian theology of mission suggest for contemporary society, in relation to sustainability?

¹²⁰ Places visited during the fieldwork were: Musoma municipality, Butiama district, Bunda district, Rorya district: Kowak mission, Sakawa, Utegi, Baganjo, Shirati.

¹²¹ Patrilineal means that the children are recruited into the clan or lineage of the father: Patrilineal (Kirwen 1980, p.29).

Every interviewee was encouraged to respond to all questions but not all questions were answered in every case. In those instances, follow-up questions were asked.

Question 1: What were the cultural teachings in pre-Christian Luo community, with which the community managed its environment sustainably?

Table 1: Breakdown of respondents

	Category of examinees	Number of examinees	Number of respondents	Remarks
A	Traditional elders (men & women)	8	8	Each category had interest in question 1
B	Anglican priests	4	4	
C	Non-Anglican priest	2	2	
D	Political leaders (village chairperson)	2	2	

Sample answers of respondents

- a) Based on their traditional experience and Christian belief: it is believed that for people to become sustainable ecologically, socially and spiritually there must be a tight relationship between God, nature, divinities, ancestors and the living community. God is in everything in the society. Everything depends on God's power to be sustainable, for God is Almighty, above all things. God is omnipotent through whom all living things exist. God coordinates the existence of natural systems, for God is Creator and omnipresent. God is omnipresent in the world, and since without God nothing could be in this world, then without this strong moral belief nothing could be sustainable (see Buchanan 2012).
- b) It is believed that the cultural myths and traditions taught by parents and *Pims* (teachings of elders both male/female) through *Siwindhe* (nursery) were a potential methodology for sustainability and ecological spirituality. This belief is built upon the taxonomy of the native Luo subsistence economy, which depended solely on ecological services

- (such as agriculture and water sanitation) and was the basis of social progression in general.
- c) It is believed that the Luo social structure of pre-Western civilization provided a space for egalitarianism and *kwerruok* (confronting the evil doings) within *dala* (homestead) and *anyuola* (clan). As most students of traditional African morality¹²² have shown, the Luo concept of egalitarianism and togetherness contributes to the content of Luo morality and leads to the emergence of *chike* (customs) and *kweche* (taboos).
 - d) It is believed that openness and unconditional obedience to traditional mythology enable them to relive the communal memories of their past, and often guided them to see life and sustainability in the same way, as part of the whole. Subsequently, life and sustainability were not imagined independently from the past experience. Rather, the communal memories of the past experience were used to ensure a consistent sustainable life and harmony with nature.
 - e) Given that past experience was treated as a social mirror (through which present life was to be seen and determined), the preservation of traditions appear to be integral to the Luo understanding of sustainability. The concept of sustainability shown in these responses is very positive indeed, and shows that they had a clear understanding that human sustainability is interlinked with past wisdom and Earth's sustainability. That is to say, sustainable solutions to ecological sustainability have to be addressed through the protection of cultural spirituality – which embraces such things as plants, water, and trees. It must confront anti-egalitarianism powers, and the havoc caused through economic and technological invention (such as agroecology and modern extravagant constructions).

Question 2: What was the approach of colonial mission to the environment, and what has been the environmental impact of the spread of colonial

¹²² For fuller discussion about foundations of traditional African morality, see Kwesi 1977; Magesa 1997, 2014; Mbiti 2002; Bediako 1992; Bujo 1992, 2006.

missionary Christianity (among the Luo people of Mara-Tanzania, since the 1930s)?

Table 2: Breakdown of respondents

	Category of examinees	Number of examinees	Number of respondents	Remarks
A	Traditional elders (men & women)	8	8	It seems that the impacts of civilization and missionary conversion are intertwined.
B	Anglican priests and bishops	5	5	
C	Non-Anglican priest	2	2	

Sample answers by respondents on question 2

- a) People believe that when missionary Christianity first came to northern Tanzania, there was a lack of critical indigenous specialists. They could have questioned the application of colonial missionary ideologies, and foreseen the consequences – this, they say, “made conquest and incursion a simple matter”.
- b) People interviewed believe that a lack of formal education contributed to the unjustified influence of Western religion and civilization. They also believe that foreign religions and civilization have a continuing legacy, and that there is a higher regard for foreign cultures over indigenous knowledge and values. This is seen in nearly every aspect of life, such as spirituality, sustainability, and what is regarded as ‘progress.’ Those interviewed felt that such attitudes have been a factor leading to the current disintegration of cultural identity, nature spirituality and communality.
- c) Some respondents accused missionary theology of leading to environmental degradation. Recalling missionary teachings about God, they said: “they taught us to know God through books” instead of “learning about God through the interaction with nature as it used to be in our culture”. This theological swing is thought to have brought the Luo social

structure into cultural fragmentation, confusion, and a lack of religious motivation for environmental sustainability.

- d) Subsequent to this theological confusion, and the lack of regard for nature's integrity, those interviewed also believe that many Luo people are indifferent to their ecological issues – as a result of confusion and theological detachment from the physical environment and belief in enigmatic elements: such as stones, snakes, trees and bodies of water (see Kaoma 2012).
- e) Finally, people believe that Christianity has been the foremost vehicle of foreign influence. They believe that it has contributed to the rapid change of belief, tradition, attitudes and spirituality among the Luo people – a life free of taboos and moral ethics.

Question 3: How does contemporary theology of mission regard the Earth, and what implications does such understanding have for nature, identity, life and sustainability?

Table 3: Breakdown of respondents

	Category of examinees	Number of examinees	Number of respondents	Remarks
A	Traditional elders (men & women)	6	3	The respondents were aware of ecological crisis but unaware of its theological position.
B	Anglican priests or bishops	5	3	
C	Non-Anglican priest	2	2	
D	Political leaders (village chair person)	2	0	

Sample answers from interviewees on question 3

- a) The Earth is God's and everything therein (Colossians 1:16). The church is called to take the gospel to the whole world, including the planet itself (Matt 28:19). Although most of the Luo elders interviewed believe that the Earth is God's, and that its daily care must be the concern of human beings; they

had no specific suggestion about how Earth's care can be safeguarded theologically. However, one of those interviewed (who has an Episcopalian role in Mara Region) admitted that ecological problems are intrinsically moral problems. He also perceived that the Anglican church of Tanzania has not grasped the fundamental importance of the care of environment, before going further to state that:

Despite the fact that we have a broad role for the care of environment and to educate people about sustainable farming methodology, planting trees, protecting sources of water, stopping over-population, overgrazing, and disproving destructive industrialization, it is sad to confess that 'nobody is seriously talking about the 1998 and 2008 Lambeth Conference resolution that the Fifth Mark of Mission is safeguarding the environment... The church has not come to its senses for the care of creation that is why it is quiet. This urgent concern has not been discussed at the Bishops' house, it has never been discussed since I became a Bishop in 2010.

- b) Some of the respondents believe that there must be an integrated approach to ecological conservation, and that without this it would be difficult to embed ecological teachings around sustainability ethics. They noted that the different views on spiritual and material development bring conflict: especially between traditional concepts of life, Christianity and modern science. Traditional Luo religion believes and sees God through nature and cosmic wonders. However, whilst the Anglicans consulted believe that God is the Creator, they do not accept that God may be found outside of the Christian faith. This tends to makes each group consider the others as morally wrong.
- c) There was a common feeling that the Bible colleges, seminaries, and other church-based workshops and seminars must come up with transformed curriculums and training manuals; for the transformation of the Luo community spiritually, socially and ecologically. Without a proper theology of nature, there will be continued ecological disregard.

Question 4: What solutions does the synthesis of Luo tradition and Christian theology of mission suggest for contemporary society, in relation to sustainability?

Table 4: Breakdown of respondents

	Category of examinees	Number of examinees	Number of respondents	Remarks
A	Traditional elders (men & women)	8	8	
B	Anglican priests	4	4	
C	Non-Anglican priest	2	2	
D	Political leaders (village chair person)	1	1	

Sample answers from interviewees on question 4

- a) The interviewees suggested that identifying the interaction between Luo ecological wisdom and Christian eco-theology would influence and stabilize 'creation care' and help 'poverty reduction'.
- b) Identifying this interaction would help the Church to influence public sphere by acting against environmental degradation both spiritually and politically through activism.
- c) The Church should recognize that it has both the opportunity and the responsibility to help in provision of ecological education both within Christian organizations and in the public sphere. Given the present situation teaching about environmental protection, crop improvement, sustainable agricultural production, water sanitation, livestock management and demographic pressure is vital.
- d) The Church could create a spiritual structure that reflects believers' values, identity and needs. This would encourage a dual development in ecology and religious morality.

Alongside the interviews conducted, two case studies were observed to illustrate some of the practical implications of ecological flaws on the gendered reality and collective experience of sustainability among the Luo people.

Case Studies

Case Study 1: Population and the Land Crisis

Mama Silpa Ajuoga is a committed Luo Christian living in Rorya District. She is 56 years old, a single parent and mother of two sons and one daughter. She and her family live and depend on a total size of 5 acres. Both of her sons are now married. The eldest son has four children, and the younger son has five children (both with the possibility of more babies). Their sister too is married with 5 children. Since Luo people are patrilineal, Silpa's land will be divided between her two sons. That means each of them will inherit a portion of 2.5 acreage. According to Silpa, her land has become less fertile over the subsequent years, due to its intensive cultivation. Because of that, Silpa and her sons are compelled to hire extra plots of lands to subsidise their food and other basic needs.

Case Study 2: Population and Social Security

Joshua and Scholar Ombai are a Luo young couple living in Butiama, Mara, Tanzania. They are both Christians with 11 children. The main reason for their extended number of children, they say, is because of their desire for sons. Their first 10 children were all girls, but they kept believing that God had their son in his hands, so their responsibility was to continue their role to multiply until they received their first baby boy in 2013. This cultural desire for sons is a pre-modern Luo tradition. But *son preference* still inflates birth rates, because some parents like Joshua and Scholar keep trying until they have a son. Unfortunately, none of their young girls have reached secondary school and the first three are already married.

Appendix Two: Fieldwork study II, 2016

The first fieldwork study conducted in Tanzania from (July to September, 2015) gathered Luo experiences about their cultural creation. This second fieldwork study ascertained the opinions of theologians, particularly Anglican theologians, about sustainability ethics and the ecological reformation of the Christian tradition; and how these can be usefully be addressed theologically, spiritually, and socially.

Interviews and Contributions

The contributions recorded below are in response to the third question of the thesis: *How can contemporary Anglican theologians respond to ongoing ecological problems (climate change, environmental degradation, disordered identity, moral decline and exploitative capitalism) in Tanzania, in relation to the Anglican Communion's Fifth Mark of Mission?*¹²³

These contributions are drawn from interviews, personal correspondence and a clergy conference. These insights, thoughts and opinions explore the ways mission can reimagine its cosmic vision: to give a more expansive sense of its ecological relationship to nature and planet Earth.

Interviews

Interview 1

Name: Rev Jairo Nyahongo (Luo), MA

Date: 18th June, 2016

Position: Assistant Curate in the parish of Mill End and Heronsgate with West Hyde, UK

“As the majority of Tanzanians live in rural areas and depend exclusively on [the] land to sustain their livelihood, any response to the ongoing ecological problems would be aimed at enabling them to recognise the detrimental impact of their activities on the environment. I would urge them, and indeed the government, to find alternative ways of using the Earth's resources (renewable energy and bio-diversity), so as to serve and keep God's creation as He intended in creation.

¹²³ The 1990 Anglican Communion's Fifth Mark of Mission reads: "to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the Earth".

Humanity is expected to hold all things together and reconcile all things through Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:15-20).”

Interview 2

Name: Rev Dr Suzan A. Lukens, DMin.

Date: 2nd July 2016

Position: Sub Dean at St George’s College, Jerusalem, Israel; Adjunct Professor of Theology at Msalato College, Tanzania

“It is a sad truth that as Tanzania is in the midst of unprecedented economic growth unparalleled in their history, this has occurred; with little support for encouraging a sensitivity to environmental destruction.

God calls us to be a people of action. Therefore, the church has the perfect opportunity to provide the educational infrastructure to their leaders in villages and towns about safeguarding the environment. What is missing is the learning component about deforestation, usage of non-recycled plastic materials – juxtaposed against a clear understanding that the cultural context needs to be slowly transformed. The church must reach to the ground level: catechists and priests in remote villages should begin brainstorming together ways for securing fuel and water (the very essence of life), that does not involve plastic or charcoal, but rather uses new more environmentally-healthy and realistic alternatives. Small steps can bring change when people at the ground level are part of the planning.

The church is positioned perfectly to be a model of leadership that promotes creative solution building, through well organized and effective training. What I have found (after six years working in Tanzania) is that there is great love for the church as a resource for leadership and learning; in fact, a parish village priest is expected to bring new farming methods along with his Biblical scholarship. Caring for creation begins with respect for community voices, with the purposeful belief that it is the community voice that can bring change. Coupled with church funded and directed educational objectives about state of the art recycling and alternative energy sources, God's church acts as the model for loving and caring for creation.”

Interview 3

Name: Rev Dr George M. Okoth

Date: 14th July 2016

Position: Centre's Director at St Mark Teaching Centre of SJUT, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania (now Anglican Bishop of Mara, Tanzania)

“As an Anglican theologian, I would say that all Christian people should be environmentalists: by standing against the destruction of the environment, and by blowing the whistle on any technological enterprise that might have detrimental environmental side effects in their communities. All Christians wherever they are, should remain vigilant on multinational corporations; whose primary aim is maximizing profit at the expense of the locals. Of course, this will only be possible if we change our theological training, which stipulates that "this world is not our home and thus we are just passing through". This only promotes passivity, instead of responsibility to take care of the environment. This world is definitely our home; God has placed us here for now, and hence we need to make every effort to safeguard the integrity of the planet Earth. In fact, by doing so, we will be able to have clean air to breath; produce enough food, clean water to drink; and help curb diseases. Biblical texts, such as Genesis 1:26, have been misinterpreted throughout history to mean having ‘dominion’. It should be re-interpreted in the light of development and conservation. In short, development without conservation can easily lead to exploitation, hence abusing the goodness of creation. It is therefore my call that human beings, regardless of their origin, must use their rational and moral values to preserve the environment.”

Interview 4

Name: Professor Graham McKay, PhD

Date: 3rd Aug, 2016

Position: Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Education, St John's University, Dodoma, Tanzania

“I have a few comments based on my observations here in Tanzania: I believe the root cause of environmental degradation and overexploitation of natural resources is greed and self-centredness. While this is true of large organisations such as multinationals and governments, we should not only focus on them. It is also true of individuals from corrupt politicians and business people – right down to poor village people. It is amazing the extent to which even individuals will simply go out and rape the countryside (even parts of it that they have no right to), for their own benefit; and without any concern for the effects their action may have (in the

short or long term) on the environment and on other people. Naked greed and self-interest is a powerful force of destruction and the Bible defines this as the essence of sin.

Of course, at the level of governments (especially corrupt governments) and large corporations, when greed is applied to environment and resources, the scale of damage is vast and rapid. But even when individuals despoil the environment, the collective effects of many small acts of destruction by many people accumulate significant effects. Just to give one example: when we arrived in Dodoma at the end of 2011, the hill behind our house with telephone masts on top was completely covered with trees. Two years later, it was almost stripped bare. It is supposed to be protected by law we understand, but no-one enforces this or observes this; and, when we walked up there, there were several individuals simply chopping out all the trees and carrying them away – without regard for the fact that these do not belong to them, and without regard for the fact that this will cause future erosion and damage, as well as, most likely, lowering of rainfall. The bare land and widespread erosion all around Dodoma is witness to the fact that this process has been going on for a long time, and many people recognise that the animals and vegetation are much less plentiful than they were in their grandparents' day.”

Interview 5

Name: Rev Peter J. Mkengi, MA

Date: 18-21st Sep, 2016

Position: Sub Dean Holy Trinity Cathedral, Tutor at Morogoro Bible College, Tanzania

“Being given such a prominent consideration in the Anglican Communion (and due to the undeniable reality that ecosystem has direct impacts on human phenomenon), the education pertaining to the care of the Earth should be pinned in Anglican thought and faith practices. The current climatic change has economically, socially, and hygienically affected the entire globe, and more severely, the rural communities. Because of that, I think the time has come for the church to consider the safeguarding of creation to be part of Christian faith. By and large, the ecological field has been treated as a secular phenomenon: hence the faith community pay little or no attention at all to it. To integrate ecosystem into faith, I think that it should be incorporated into our curriculum in our theological learning

institutions. Upon completion of studies, the ministers will take with them the teaching about taking care of the earth alongside routine church teachings: catechism, baptismal class, Bible studies, Christian fellowship, and daily Christian practices. By making it part of our daily faith practice, ecology will be restored and rescued; and thus become normalized theologically, socially, and culturally.”

Responses received by correspondence

Response 1

Name: Rev Dr Robert S. Heaney PhD, DPhil *Date:* 15th June, 2016

Position: Director of (CACS) and Professor of Christian Mission at Virginia Theological Seminary, America.

“I think theologians (what kind of theologian we are thinking about of course is a key question) can influence the church, education and society. Theologians need to learn from and educate the church – make the connections between environmental issues and faith. They need to contend for it being part of church and seminary curricula and they need to connect the church with groups in society already ahead of the church in this area. All of that presupposes theological commitment that it is God that is the agent of God's mission.”

Response 2

Name: Rev Can. Mecka Ogunde (Luo), PhD *Date:* 26th June, 2016

Position: Currently working in Australia

“About the whole agenda of ecological disasters in Tanzania, it is evident that the only way out is for our masses to return to their roots and respect our traditional values of handling our environment. There should be a theological approach which values our traditional way of life. Today, major cities are on the verge of collapse and there is no infrastructure to support large numbers of people living in these cities. Hence land, water and air pollution is everywhere to be seen. Theologians must be advocates of traditional ways of life that are friendly to the environment.”

Observation: Diocese of Central Tanganyika's venture toward Sustainability through Clergy Conferences

Date: 26-29th July, 2016. *Venue:* Msalato Theological College, Dodoma, Tanzania

For three days (26-29 July, 2016), over 350 clergy of the Anglican Diocese of Central Tanganyika (DCT) came together to reflect on the central theme: '*Care for the Environment & Practice of Sustainable Agriculture*'.

The intention was to help the church and faith community to reorient itself, in terms of relating to each other and to the Earth's fragile resources, through agro-ecology and economy. It also aimed to invoke a new narrative of integrated ecology, a more ecological relationship with nature, a more expansive sense of our mission to the entire community of creation. It recognised that any belief that the Earth's fertility and nature's resources are infinite is in Alister McGrath's words 'mindless'.

The conference was led by the Rev Dr Kathy Grieb from Virginia Theological Seminary USA, Mr Lister Nyang'anyi from the DCT's directorate of development services, and current Diocesan Bishop Dr Dickson Chilongani. The researcher was part of the coordinating team and served as the secretary of the secretariat.

Bishop Chilongani (who graduated with a PhD in Theology from Trinity College, Bristol University) made the point clear at his opening speech, "Where there is no vision for the care of creation and sustainable development the people perish". Similarly, Dr Kathy Grieb (who is the Meade Professor in Biblical Interpretation) pulled together a wide array of insights: to show that any attempt to disintegrate the world, land, and people; or separate Harvest, Sabbath and care for the poor; or soil conservation and sustainable agriculture; must be demythologized at this critical time in history.

Given the theme of this conference and by virtue of our cosmic mission, three agreements were made:

1. The world, land, soil, and the rest of the creation are not only holy, but have a sanctified entity as God himself.
2. Our mission is to evangelize not only the fallen human soul, but the whole of the groaning creation (Rom 8:35ff).

3. Soil conservation and sustainable agriculture are integral to the ministry of salvation and social sustainability.

These main agreements were translated into practical commitments to:

- a) Teach eco-theology and cosmic sustainability through worship, Bible study; and to change the ecology of our mind for an integrated green revolution in DCT.
- b) Establish a Diocesan demonstration farm that will equip our parishioners with a sustainable knowledge about conservation and sustainable agriculture.
- c) Expand the sustainable agriculture and environmental care training in our parishes through the directorate of Development services.
- d) Mediate the relationship between food sovereignty, Sabbath and poverty alleviation among our parishes by 2020.
- e) Motivate the expansion of micro-financing groups in our parishes for economic improvement and integrated spirituality.
- f) Insist upon and implement tree planting: that is to say, each Parish must plant not less than 100 new trees before 2020.
- g) Ensure that every Parish plans and implements ‘rain water harvest’ for domestic use and for their environmental conservation.
- h) Become a role model to our parishes by adopting environmentally-friendly conservation and enhancing sustainable agriculture.

Reflection and conclusion: Linking Oral cosmology and literature to the case

The sample answers and segments above illustrate some of the impressions of how Luo orality, local theology obtained through conversation, and literature perceive ecological reality as well as some critical religio-cultural issues connected to the problems around ecological crisis as whole. Linking the these three sources of this qualitative research, we may see a remarkable framework of how social-ecological transformation might be pursued within the constraints of religio-cultural regulatory traditions, and integrating sense of ecosocialization that constitutes a hybridized sustainability identity that interacts critically with politics of social and cultural relations to life-giving nature in the regulatory arena.

Undoubtedly, the segments of sources above and the Luo literature to the subject under inquiry may support the conclusion that Luo people’s concept of life

and thought is intrinsically religious and ecologically grounded. This hybrid cosmic identity involves both consent to cultural politics of social regulation through ecosocialization and, in the very intertwined acts of embedding myths for ecological concerns, embodying religion for moral affection, and navigating traditions for political-economic regulation (cf. Maseno 2011; Odaga 2011; Ogot 1967, 1979; Okello 2002; Ominde 1979; Ongong'a 1995).

Gradually, this research would help, specifically Luo people, to reinvent the meaning and significance of life. the meaning that is intrinsically religious, one that in its cradle state, saw the project of regulating and sustaining the common good through politics of nature (however incomplete it is, culturally) including the construction of new meanings or customs conferred on nature's transformations, as ultimately contingent; but also as the subject matter of religio-cultural ecology and sustainability.

This subject matter of Luo's ecology of life, as we have seen, is religious because it is not particularistic by nature – it holds its belongingness to the past experience of its people, and to the endless divine experiences of *Nyasaye* (God). The Luo people do not treat their past as a 'frozen phase' of life that is largely irrelevant to the present; rather, they believe that past wisdom can contribute to the genuineness and moral uprightness in each generation (compare Kwesi 1977). Kwesi saw the past as a "source of good, particularly if it is not shielded from interaction with the new forces that impinge on our societies in Africa today" (p.3). Although various aspects of African life and traditions have been closely studied by anthropologists, the ecology of traditional African conservation has had little study done on it so far.

The fieldwork indicates that religion, morality and public life are complementary to traditional Luo ecological economics. Ecological reconciliation and restoration are possible, but not through isolationism and uncompromising methodology. To address the Luo ecological problems, there has to be mutual respect through local wisdom, Abrahamic faith and other non-religious sources; united in their shared concern for a sustainable life.

Put together, these insights are clearly calling for a different way of relating to nature; and indicate that the path to ecological salvation does not simply lie in

the physical or spiritual control of technology. Instead, an integrative path to ecological salvation is needed: being more non-violent, cooperative, and in a right relationship with nature. To arrive at this desirable ecological relationship, they suggested several ideas that must be developed to challenge existing theological narratives. These include:

- changing the ecology of mind about “other-worldly” hope (George Okoth)
- reinventing “ecoeducation and cultural cosmology, both in theological curricula and liturgical practice” (Robert Heaney)
- “rehabilitation of ecological ethics among the elite and the ordinary community’ since each of them contributes to the enlarging scale of the crisis” (Graham McKay)
- integrating ecological spirituality into our “daily faith practice” (Peter Mkengi).

These clear ecological insights indicate how to effectively begin to move away from a deepening ecological crisis. They are needed for the development of a collective approach to ecological spirituality. Sadly, the concern raised by these voices are no different to the concerns raised in the past (for example by historian Lynn White in 1967). Yet, they still are a challenge to the Church today, as the tensions between historical tradition and the ecologically-infused changing culture become ever greater. This tension is seen between the church as an institution and the organically-animated faith community, between Christendom and God’s earthly kingdom. Attempts to eliminate all barbarity and primitiveness, by controlling the world and conquering nature, can be seen to have failed. The strategies of civilization, technologizing and desacralisation are seen to be doomed programmes.

The study has shown that to effectively undertake creation care as a transversal theme in Christian mission we must embrace holistic morality and ecological economics in its all forms. That earth-honouring faith ethics must question any ecclesiastical practice whose hermeneutical habits and mission regress the emerging understandings: that place eco-relationship at the centre of life’s abundance and sustainability. Indeed, reawakening humanity’s innerself is to understand that we are interdependent on each other,

interdependent on the biosphere that sustains us, interdependent on the cosmic-movement that has brought us forth, and above all, that we are entirely dependent on the Creator.

The Creator's call to the earthing and reconciliation of *all things* (1 Cor. 15:20-22; Col 1:15-20; Rom 5) requires a new approach to evangelization and mission in its widest context. This is the mission not of the church alone: but of every human being, every human organization – be it political, educational, developmental, technological or even religious. A new approach that treats hybridity of our cultural energies and experiences seriously is needed, because, as literature has shown, some of the existing tools of mission and evangelization still embody a dualistic attitudes to each other, to biosphere that sustains us, to cosmic universe that has brought us forth. To quote Charles Eisenstein: “The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house” (2013, p.474).

Appendix Three: Ethical Approval of Research Project



Ethical approval may be given or withheld in relation to both the nature of the project and the methodology. Projects should not proceed unless both approvals have been given.

Approval must be obtained **before** making contact with human participants or subjects or beginning data collection requiring ethical approval.

Please forward completed forms to Professor Maureen Meikle, Director of Academic Enhancement (Research), for approval by the Ethics Panel.

Reference title of project: Mission, Identity and Ecology: An Assessment of the Impact of Missionary Christianity on the sustainability of Environment among the Luo people in Mara, Tanzania

Proposer / person with lead responsibility: George Lawi Otieno

Proposed project start and completion dates: November 2014 - November 2017

Sponsors, collaborators, grant awarding bodies and/or PSRB involvement: Leeds Trinity University studentship award

Summary description of the project:

This project is a practical study of Christian mission in Tanzania that seeks to assess the impact of missionary Christianity on the sustainability of the environment (particularly land and water) which are the key factors of life. Since the arrival of Missionary Christianity in Mara region in early 1930s, particularly among the Luo people, Christianity has grown steadily and overtly in the region. Many people have been missionized and educated. However, despite this spread of Christianity in Mara Tanzania there has been a persistent environmental degradation with consequences to life and sustainability of the community including food scarcity, drought, over-cultivation, deforestation, disposal of litter (particularly industrial waste materials) and others. This situation has led the observer to question the role of Christian mission in relation to conservation and sustainability. Consequently, to testify the hypothesis of this study, secondary sources and primary data will be examined in order to maximize the impact and practicability of the project.

PROJECT PURPOSE

Please describe aims and envisaged benefits

The main purpose of this study is to assess the impact of the missionary Christianity on the sustainability of the environment among the Luo people in Mara Tanzania with an overarching question, 'What has been the environmental effect of the spread of the Missionary Christianity among the Luo community of Mara Tanzania?'

The envisaged significance of the project by assessing moral aspects of the recurring ecological degradation in Mara, the study will contribute towards the creation of link between environmental sustainability and social wellbeing of Luo people of Tanzania. Such a practical approach to the study of mission that draws attention to ecology and its

impact on life and sustainability should gain acceptance among the local community, local churches and theological colleges which would then lead to a transformed spirituality and practice that sustains life and God's creation.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Please describe, succinctly but accurately, the stages of the project and the involvement of human participants and subjects. Please identify all aspects which ought to be subject to ethical consideration and approval.

The project is mainly library based, meaning it depends on written sources, both published and unpublished materials, for its development. However, as a practical study of mission, the project will involve individual interviews with some Luo elders (men and women) in order to get their perspectives on land, water, and litter. The project will be developed through the following stages:

First step, to read different literatures in the subject area (in progress)

Second step, to visit Cadbury Research Library, Birmingham where Church Missionary Society Archives are kept (the researcher has already been there in January and will be going back again for further archive studies in May 2015).

Third step, to organise a fieldwork trip in Mara Tanzania between June – August this year 2015 for the primary data collection. This stage will help the observer to balance between the knowledge in the literatures vs experience at the grass root. During the fieldwork, face-to-face interviews will be used as a data collection method and technique (Crano, et al., 2015:280ff).

Fourth step, to portion the information collected for the formulation of research's main body. This stage will then lead to more literature review, archive consultation and if any additional primary data is needed therefore a second fieldwork will be taken in consultation with my supervisors.

RISK

Please evaluate potential risks to human participants, subjects and researchers and how these will be mitigated. Please identify significant health and safety issues in relation to off-campus project activity.

As far as the Luo traditions and customs are concerned (see for instance Mboya 1965; Ogot, 1967), Luo elders (men and women) are the senior members of their society responsible by status to transfer the knowledge to their junior members. Because of the social status bestowed to this group, my respondents are not vulnerable to exploitation by definition and by purpose since I am their junior. But, the only area they might be considered vulnerable with regard to the purposes of this observation is informed consent as some of them might not be able to write. Although the researcher's aim is to interview elderly Luo people (men and women) who had been or still involved with social leadership (former member of the parliament, tribal chief, village chair persons, mothers union representative, district and regional public department of environment officers, priests,

senior lay-leaders). Most of these respondents are educated and will sign the informed consent form, however, those who cannot write will offer their consent vocally and it will be recorded.

No physical risk will be encountered by the respondents as long as they will be visited at their respective villages. Nevertheless, the only concern for them might be whether I will be a conscientious observer who will put their experience into practice for social welfare. For this reason I will require the university to provide an introductory letter that will give me more acceptance to individuals and organizations in accordance with the research policy of the Tanzania Commission for Universities.

The potential risk would be to the observer and the research assistants (man and woman,) who will be travelling to local villages across Mara Region using rough roads with unreliable public transport but these risks will be managed using the common sense.

HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

Please describe:

- *the size and nature of the group and the reason for selection*
- *methods of ensuring voluntary participation and for participant withdrawal*
- *details of any payments to be made*

As I stated above, my fieldwork will involve adults (men and women) who are grouped under vulnerable groups. However, according to Luo traditional power dynamics, it is the elders who are considered to have mature experience of social dynamics. As such they are responsible by their position in the society for the transfer of social cultural knowledge including moral ethics, customs and spirituality. It is because of this social power that elders are involved in this study not as vulnerable people but as the best teachers of the society.

As I mentioned earlier in this form, the consent for voluntary participation will be ensured by means of: one, displaying the official introductory letter from LTU that introduces me as a research student with what my research is researching. Second, the LTU-Fieldwork in TRS Ethical Guideline (Consent Form, Appendix III, p.10) will be used to provide participants an option to participate or to withdraw their participation at any time. Third, research questions will be translated into Luo language to make it simple for them to reflect about them before giving their consent to participate or to withdraw. Both (English/Swahili/Luo)—one side A4 informed consent form will be provided for each participant sign in whichever language he/she likes. No payment is to be made for the interviewees.

HUMAN SUBJECTS

Please describe:

- the size and nature of the group and reason for selection*
- security of, access to and restrictions on data and documents*

Not less than 10 Luo elders will be interviewed though the number of the interviewees might increase depending on their informed consent.

The reason for selection is because: the Luo people were the first ethnic group to receive the Church Missionary Society, they are popularly Christian (the details are available in

my initial research proposal submitted to LTU), they are River-Lake community which means they have a traditional myths of water and land, Luo community is also cosmopolitan. As stated earlier in this form, the selection of the respondents will depend on their previous or current positions in the community which gives them authority to be considered representative not only of the elders but of the entire Luo community. For instance, if a somebody was a member of the parliament representing the whole district to the national assembly, or if a person was Ward representative to district council having been elected by the citizens or if a person is a tribal chief or religious leader they are all considered to have been entrusted with a certain social responsibility which makes him/her to deserve hearing and learning from.

All transcribed and recorded data will be kept securely on a passworded computer. Or in other words, my transcribed notes and recordings will be on my personal computer not a written notebook. The names of interviewees will be kept separately and unidentified unless otherwise. Data collected will be stored for the duration of my research and might be used for the replication before they can be destroyed. However, the term 'privacy' in this study is not used in its western understanding, rather it is used to acknowledge the Luo use of 'trust' and 'confidence' this is due to the fact that elders are trusted by the society. They have an appropriate experience of the past social dynamics and so have the right to advice the community on what they should do and shouldn't. Experience is the great teacher of the past and can also help to predict the past to come. Confidence and trust are therefore intertwined in their functionality and usually works to ensure preservation of local wisdom. A person given such wisdom is expected to be confident to pass on the knowledge he had received from the elders to others as way of keeping the life-cycle of traditional wisdom. The most important thing here is not just notes and recorded voice but the knowledge itself that goes into observer's mind that cannot be destroyed physically. It is this Luo conception of 'privacy' that the observer will protect and ensure that local ethics of knowledge preservation and transmission is observed.

LEGALITY and INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Please confirm that the project is within the law of the country in which investigation is proposed, including data protection provisions

Please describe:

-provisions for the respect of copyright and intellectual property rights

-timing and method of secure destruction of data

This research project is within the law of the United Kingdom and Tanzania as well as LTU-TRS Ethical Guidelines. However, because the interview will involve talking to people, following measures will be considered;

First, in accordance with the regulations of Tanzania Commission for Universities, an official introductory letter from the university will be required as an official introductory paper from the university where a student is undertaking his research. A letter should be sealed and must introduce the researcher to whoever he will be going to interview or talk to about his project be it individual, private or public organizations.

Second, informed consent form will be provided for individuals to sign or for those who cannot write the recorded audio will be replayed in the end so that they can take a vocal

consent. Research questions and purpose will be explained before the interviewees can volunteer to participate or not.

Third, the collected data will be stored carefully. Participant's names will be kept separately from the transcribed notes so to control the information from being accidentally disclosed.

Fourth, all of my electronic data will be stored in specific folder with password.

Fifth, all sources of data (secondary and primary) will be acknowledged to ensure the copyrights and intellectual property rights in addition to avoiding the plagiarism.

CONFIDENTIALITY and ANONYMITY

Please describe (referring to participant/subject information sheets as appropriate):

-how the confidentiality and anonymity of participants and subjects will be maintained

-how participants/subjects will be informed of limits on confidentiality

In order to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of the participants, their names will not be used except by their own permission. All references unless otherwise will be refers to using terms like 'as it was commented/ contributed/argued/ said/ by interviewee not 1, 2, 3, 4...'

COMPLIANCE with OTHER CODES

If appropriate, please describe how the project complies with codes in place with relevant bodies (e.g. NHS).

Not Applicable

You should submit, as appropriate,

Relevant permissions and approvals

METHODS

Please describe:

-advice obtained on project design and method

-any procedures to be carried out on or with participants and the competence of researchers to undertake these.

In the process of developing my fieldwork plan the advice was obtained from my core supervisor Prof K. Kim, Dr Anna Piela and Dr Adriaan van Klinken (my mentor, University of Leeds). The information provided in this form bears their comments and advices.

For my fieldwork, interview will be used as a method of data collection (Krippendorff, 2013). Likewise, face-to-face interview will be utilised as a technique of collecting intended data (Henderson & Marcia, 2000; Crano et al., 2015). During the interview sessions the following questions will be asked:

How has ecosystem services (land, water, and environment) changed over the last 40 years?

If so why has the environment changed so rapidly within such a short period of time?

If so what do you consider might have caused such changes?

Do you see any difference in the way Christians and non-Christians regard the land, water, litter and environment in general?

What is the difference between the Christians and non-Christians in terms of their attitude to nature?

What do you understand by the word 'Christianity' and what impact does it have for your understanding and relationship with nature?

What do you see as the impact of missionaries in relation to life and sustainability of the environment?

What teachings and attitudes do you think missionary Christianity has contributed to the sustainability of the environment in Mara region?

What are the most significant impacts of environmental degradation to life and sustainability of Creation and people in Mara? [Again impacts may be the wrong word – I would try 'causes']

What contribution can individuals, community, church and government make to improve the current environmental situation?

In case of an additional clarification to what the respondent has said, open ended phrases like, 'tell me a little bit more about...' will be used.

Regarding the competence of the researcher to undertake this observation, the researcher had previously undertaken the academic research projects finished in 2011(my BA dissertation) and 2013 (my MA Dissertation). Apart from that I have been involved in various research projects over the last ten years both as priest, program coordinator and more recently as a lecturer at the university college in Tanzania.

OUTCOMES

Please describe

-proposed outcomes, methods of dissemination and limits thereon

-methods and timing of feedback to participants.

Methods have been described already in the preceding sections. However, the limits and timing of feedback to participants will be dealt with in two ways:

First, since the interview will involve elderly people it will have to be conducted in Luo language which involves translating the questions from English to Luo and then translating the transcribed notes from Luo to English. This might cause the loss of weight of a meaning from one language to the other. But that is how it has to be.

Second, I will return to LTU when my interviews are finished, I won't be able to provide the feedback to my respondents until when I go back home for additional data collection and information checklist the following year (June- August 2016). The same method of local visit will be used for provision of feedback to interviewees which is likely to involve additional data collection.

Third, the material collected will go into my thesis. Also, any publication based on this research may use this material. A copy of the final research will be made available to community and I too will make myself available to speak about the environment be it through a public forum, lectures or through my pastoral ministry in Tanzania and everywhere.

APPROVAL

Proposer(s) statement

I (we) confirm that I am (we are) proposing to undertake this research project in the manner described. I (We) understand that I am (we are) required to abide by the terms of this approval throughout the project and that consent should be obtained for any significant amendments to the project in advance of their implementation.

Signature(s)	Date
George Otieno	27 March, 2015

Approval

Signature	Date
Suzanne Owen	1 April, 2015

Chairperson of the Ethics Panel

