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THE CHURCH OF CENTRAL AFRICA PRESBYTERIAN 1924-2024

A CENTENARY ASSESSMENT



EDITORS:
KENNETH R. ROSS AND MWAWI N. CHILONGOZI

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1924-2024**

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**The Church of Central Africa Presbyterian
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Edited by
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Livingstonia Church where the CCAP was constituted in 1924

Photocredits

Front cover photo shows the African ministers of Livingstonia and Blantyre Synods who participated in the constitution of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian in 1924. Back row (from left to right) Hezekiah Tweya, Harry Kambwiri Matecheta, Edward Boti Manda, James Kandulu, Yafet Mkandawire, Thomas Maseya, Patrick Mwamlima. Front row (from left to right) Jonathan Chirwa, Stephen Kundecha, Andrew Mkochi, Harry Mtuwa, Yesaya Zerenji Mwasi, Joseph Kaunde. The photo comes from the collection of the late Dr T. Jack Thompson, with gratitude for his kind permission.

The above photograph of Livingstonia Church was kindly provided by Mr Gomezeka Mkandawire, to whom grateful acknowledgement is made.

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Foreword

HE President Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera

My development as a theologian has its roots in the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP), which was the first church to make an investment in my theological education. For this reason, wherever and whenever the CCAP gathers ordained and lay theologians to present theological papers, I find myself there in spirit, as was the case last year when the CCAP convened a Research Conference in Malawi's old capital, Zomba.

One exciting outcome of that Conference is the production of this Centenary Assessment of the work and impact of the CCAP in the past 100 years, and like millions of Malawians, I am a beneficiary of that work. Even now, as I serve Malawians as their 6th President, I see how closely integrated the history of the CCAP is with the story of Malawi. As a case in point, it is not insignificant that the presence of Scottish missionaries of the Free Church of Scotland and the Church of Scotland in the late 1800s, which laid a foundation for the establishment of the CCAP in the first quarter of the 1900s, had also been foundational in the establishment of the British Protectorate of Nyasaland two decades earlier. Providentially, this interlocking of the roots of the Church and the Protectorate positioned the CCAP to play an integral role in the events that led to the birth of Malawi as

an independent nation, the role of an inspiring midwife of sorts.

One example of how the CCAP provided inspiration for the Independence movement of the 1960s was that by that time, the CCAP had already become a fully African Church under African leadership. And the fact that under local leaders, the CCAP did not flounder or lose its calling as a force for good in Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and beyond, was a source of confidence in the capacity of local political leaders to govern themselves. And now, after 100 years, it is hard to quantify the enormous contribution the CCAP has made to areas critical to Malawi's socioeconomic transformation, including spiritual revival, mindset change, education, health, infrastructure development, leadership development, and cultural preservation. Notwithstanding, this book is an excellent effort in quantifying that contribution, written by scholars of global repute and in celebration of a Church that has stood the test of time.

I therefore commend this breathtaking resource to the reading of all Malawians for a deeper appreciation of our nation's history and a stronger commitment to the preservation and expansion of our national heritage.



Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera,
President of the Republic of Malawi
January 2024

Notes on Contributors

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Davidson Chifungo served as General Secretary of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod from 2007-2013. He holds a PhD and an MA in Theology from the University of Stellenbosch in South Africa where he also serves as Post Doctoral Research Fellow. Currently he serves with Veritas College both as Director of Training in Southern Africa and as National Director for Malawi. His main work is teaching the Bible and preaching. Davidson also works as an adjunct Lecturer at African Bible College and Josephat Mwale Theological Institute.

Victor Chilenje is a minister of the CCAP Synod of Zambia and a scholar specializing in Church History and Church Polity. He obtained his DTh from the University of Stellenbosch in 2008 and was ranked Professor by the University of Zambia in 2020. He has authored a biography of Newton Phanana Nkunika and led a research project on the origins and development of the CCAP Synod of Zambia. He is also a book reviewer for *Reading Religion*, a publication of the American Academy of Religion.

Felix Chingota is a former Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian and a retired minister of the CCAP Blantyre Synod. He is also a former Chair of the influential Public Affairs Committee, which represents

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Takuze Chitsulo is Vice Chancellor of Zomba Theological University, a role in which he has served since 2017. He is also currently serving as Associate Minister of Zomba Congregation of CCAP Synod of Blantyre. He earlier worked as Editor on Chichewa Study Bible Project of Bible Society of Malawi. Chitsulo has twice served as Dean of Studies at ZTU. He holds a BD from ZTU, an STM from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, and a PhD from the University of KwaZulu Natal. His special research interest is on economies of extraction and he continues to research, write and lecture on the relevance of the Bible to the Malawi context.

Mwawi N. Chilongozi is the Secretary General of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) General Assembly and the second female minister to be ordained in the Synod of Livingstonia. She did her theological training at Zomba Theological College and her further studies at Stellenbosch University in South Africa where she obtained Postgraduate Diploma, Master of Theology and PhD. She is also a research fellow at the Faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch University. Her research interests include theology and gender.

Nancy J. Collins, a mission coworker from the Presbyterian Church (USA), served as International Relations Coordinator with the social services wing of the Egyptian Presbyterian Church from 1998-2008 and as Regional Liaison for East Central Africa, supporting relationships with PC(USA) international

church partners in Zambia, Malawi, Kenya and Rwanda from 2009-2019. CCAP is the major PC(USA) partner in Malawi and Zambia. Nancy received an MTh degree in Church History from Justo Mwale University, Lusaka, Zambia in 2020.

Gertrude Aopesyaga Kapuma is Deputy Secretary General of the CCAP General Assembly, Senior Lecturer at Zomba Theological University and a serving minister of the CCAP Blantyre Synod (ordained 2003). From 1976 to 1980 she was the first woman to study theology under Blantyre Synod and went on to complete BTh (Honours) and MTh degrees at Fort Hare University, and a PhD in Pastoral Care and Trauma Counselling at the University of Pretoria. She has also served a term as Vice President of the All Africa Conference of Churches.

Winston R. Kawale is Acting Vice Chancellor of the University of Hebron in Lilongwe and an ordained pastor of the Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian (CCAP) where he served as General Secretary of the Nkhoma Synod. He holds a DTh in Old Testament from the University of Stellenbosch in South Africa and has authored several peer referred journal articles and book chapters. He served as Senior Lecturer at Mzuzu University and is a member of the Trustees of the Theological Society of Malawi. He also served as Vice President of the Reformed Ecumenical Council.

Gift Wasambo Kayira is an Associate Professor of History at the University of Malawi. He received his doctorate in history from West Virginia University, USA. His research interests revolve around the history of development, British imperial history, and histories of culture and ethnicity in 20th and 21st-century Malawi. In addition to an extensive series of journal articles and book chapters on these themes, he is the author

of *The State and the Legacies of British Colonial Development in Malawi: Confronting Poverty, 1939-1983* (Lexington, 2023).

Colby Hetherwick Kumwenda is Postgraduate Coordinator at the University of Livingstonia where he has also served as Acting Principal (Ekwendeni College), Deputy Principal (Kaning'ina College), and Quality Assurance Director (University Office). He is a serving minister of the CCAP Synod of Livingstonia and completed an MSc in World Christianity at the University of Edinburgh in the UK and a PhD in Theology and Intercultural Studies at Yonsei University, South Korea. He is active in research and publication.

Alexander Malemelo is a minister of the CCAP Harare Synod, where he has served five different congregations and been elected for terms of office both as Deputy Moderator and Moderator. He was educated at Zomba Theological College, Justo Mwale Theological College and the University of Stellenbosch where he completed a Masters degree in Pastoral Care and Counselling. He has also taken courses in the Netherlands on intercultural Reformed theological training.

Cogitator W. Mapala is a Lecturer and Coordinator of Postgraduate Studies at the Department of Theology and Religious Studies, Mzuzu University. Earlier he served at the University of Livingstonia as University Registrar, Campus Principal and Postgraduate Coordinator. He is a minister of the CCAP Synod of Livingstonia and has completed postgraduate studies in Scotland and South Africa. His research work focuses on the history of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, and he has published several scholarly articles in this field.

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Rhodian Munyenembe is a senior lecturer and the current Head of the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at Mzuzu University. He holds a PhD in Theology from the University of the Free State in South Africa. He is the author of *Pursuing an Elusive Unity: A History of the CCAP as a Federative Denomination (1924-2018)*. He has contributed chapters and articles to various publications in the fields of Church History and African Christian Theology. He is one of the global Langham Graduates.

Timothy P.K. Nyasulu is Vice-Chancellor of the University of Livingstonia and a serving minister of the CCAP Synod of Livingstonia. From 2013 to 2020 he was Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian. Currently he is Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Theological Society of Malawi. He has completed postgraduate studies in Scotland and the USA. His published work includes *Missiology* and *Witchcraft Accusations and Church Discipline in Malawi*.

Gilbert Phiri is Deputy Principal of Domasi College of Education. He is the holder of a Diploma in Education from Domasi College of Education, a Master of Theology degree from the University of Malawi and a PhD from Mzuzu University. His area of specialization is Church History, with a particular interest in the role of the church in the development of education in Malawi. He has published extensively on the educational work of the CCAP Blantyre Synod.

Kenneth R. Ross is Professor of Theology and Dean of Post-graduate Studies at Zomba Theological University. He is also an Honorary Fellow at Edinburgh University School of Divinity, Extraordinary Professor at the University of Pretoria, Senior Research Associate at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Boston, USA, Affiliate at the University of Glasgow School of Critical Studies, and Visiting Professor at the University of Livingstonia. He has been researching and writing about Malawi church history and theology since he first arrived in Zomba in 1988.

Brian Aggrey Theu is Registrar and Lecturer at Zomba Theological University and a serving minister of the CCAP Synod of Livingstonia. He is also a doctoral candidate at the University of Aberdeen in Scotland UK. His special interest is in the interface between Christianity and traditional African beliefs and values. He has presented papers on this topic at national and international conferences and is the author of several book chapters.

1. Introduction

Mwawi N. Chilongozi and Kenneth R. Ross

The Scale of the CCAP

The Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) was established on 16 September 1924, by uniting the Presbytery of Livingstonia and the Presbytery of Blantyre. The former resulted from the work of the United Free Church of Scotland Livingstonia Mission while the latter resulted from the work of the Church of Scotland Blantyre Mission.¹ In 1926, the Nkhoma Presbytery of the Dutch Reformed Church Mission was incorporated into the union of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian.² The three Presbyteries became Synods in 1956 and the 1956 CCAP Constitution was adopted by the General Synod. In 1965, Harare Synod was established in Zimbabwe as the missionaries from Nkhoma Synod were following migrant workers from Malawi who were working in the mines and farms in Zimbabwe.³ In 1984, the Zambia Synod was established. The Eastern and Central regions of Zambia were evangelized by African evangelists and Scottish missionaries based at Loudon Mission Station in Embangweni. These churches remained under the Synod of Livingstonia until 1984.⁴ The CCAP has grown from three Presbyteries in 1926 to

¹ John Weller and Jane Linden, *Mainstream Christianity to 1980 in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1984, 114-115.

² T. Jack Thompson, *Christianity in Northern Malawi: Donald Fraser's Missionary Methods and Ngoni Culture*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995, 211-213.

³ www.rff.christians.co.za/the-church-of-central-africa-presbyterian-ccap-haare-synod-zimbabwe/.

⁴ Victor Chilenje, "The Origin and Development of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) in Zambia," DTh, Stellenbosch University, 2007, 39-40.

five Synods and 103 Presbyteries in 2024. The CCAP has an impact in Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and beyond through its education and health sectors, development work, and ecumenical partnerships. The membership of CCAP has grown both numerically and spiritually. Currently, the membership of CCAP in Malawi is estimated at 2.8 million, with some 200,000 in Zambia, and 150,000 in Zimbabwe making a total of more than 3.1 million members.

The Service of the CCAP

The CCAP values education as an important tool in evangelism and equipping local communities to be self-reliant. Hence, the CCAP has impacted the education sector in Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. All five Synods have an Education Department that coordinates the work of education in the Synod. The CCAP started offering education during the colonial era and thus, most of the people who fought for independence from Britain were educated through its mission schools. The CCAP has offered education from Early Childhood Development (ECD) to Tertiary Education in all the five Synods. The CCAP has ECD centres in most of its congregations where children are nurtured spiritually, mentally, and physically before they start primary education. The CCAP has more than 3,000 primary schools in the three countries where it operates. In addition to ECD and primary school education, the CCAP offers secondary and tertiary education. Currently, the CCAP has some of the most highly regarded secondary schools in the country and four universities, namely Zomba Theological University (ZTU), University of Livingstonia (UNILIA), Nkhoma University (NKHUNI), and Blantyre Synod University (UBS).

The CCAP believes in the importance of equipping its ministers with theological education and sound doctrine. It has been training its ministers through theological education. Zomba Theological College (ZTC) was established to train men and women for ministry for all the five Synods. CCAP ministers also go for further studies within Africa and outside Africa. In addition to ministering in the congregations, CCAP ministers have worked in ecumenical organisations, public universities, and government.

In the health sector, the CCAP has over thirty health facilities, found in all five Synods. The health facilities provide Primary Health Care (PHC) which focuses on the prevention of diseases and empowering communities to make informed health choices. The mission hospitals and clinics provide curative and preventative services to the community. The CCAP collaborates with other churches in Malawi to provide health care services through the Christian Health Association of Malawi (CHAM). CHAM is an ecumenical organization owned by the Malawi Council of Churches (MCC), of which the CCAP is a founding member, and the Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM).

Similarly, the CCAP has played an important role in socio-economic development. It has implemented programmes such as food and nutrition security, teaching communities best agricultural practices, water and sanitation, gender, and environmental management to mitigate the impacts of climate change. The CCAP has been involved in relief operations in times of emergencies and disasters. Through its guilds – women’s, men’s, and youth, the church does social work by reaching out to the needy, visiting the sick in hospitals and homes, visiting prisoners, and paying school fees for orphans and vulnerable children.

The CCAP and the Ecumenical Movement

The CCAP was instrumental in the birth of the Christian Council of Malawi (CCM) in 1964,⁵ just as its missionary forebears had been instrumental in 1910 in the birth of the predecessor body known as the Federated Board of Missions in Nyasaland.⁶ The General Assembly and the three Synods in Malawi are members of the Malawi Council of Churches, as it is known today. CCAP Zambia Synod is a member of the Council of Churches in Zambia (CCZ) and CCAP Harare Synod is a member of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC). The CCAP General Assembly and Blantyre Synod are members of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC). The CCAP General Assembly has just been admitted as a member of the World Council of Churches (WCC). In addition, the CCAP General Assembly is a member of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC).⁷

Through the Malawi Council of Churches, CCAP Synods are working in partnership with other churches in the health sector through the Christian Health Association of Malawi (CHAM); in the education sector, CCAP is working with other churches through the Association of Christian Educators in Malawi (ACEM). In development work, the CCAP cooperates with

⁵ Christian Council of Malawi (CCM) changed its name to Malawi Council of Churches (MCC) in 1998.

⁶ Kenneth R. Ross and Klaus Fiedler, *A Malawi Church History 1860-2020*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2020, 134.

⁷ World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) was founded after merging the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) and the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) in 2010 (www.wcrc.ch/history/history-of-the-world-communion-of-reformed-churches).

other churches through the Christian Service Committee (CSC) and the Churches Action in Relief and Development (CARD).

The CCAP Centenary

In 2024 the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian marks the 100th anniversary of its formation, which took place at Livingstonia in 1924. On any analysis the CCAP has played a significant role in the history of Malawi, and indeed of the southern African region. Over the past one hundred years the CCAP has extended its influence to almost every part of Malawi, becoming the spiritual home of millions of Malawians, some of whom have extended its influence even further into nearby countries. It is also widely recognised that the CCAP has played an influential role at national level during different phases of Malawi's history.

This book attempts an academic analysis of the 100-year history as one contribution to the celebration of the centenary. It therefore aims not only to appreciate the CCAP's contribution in Malawi and beyond but also to offer a critical assessment. The book is based on a research conference hosted by Zomba Theological University, from 19 to 21 April 2023, to examine the significance of the CCAP centenary. Some thirty scholars presented papers on different aspects of the CCAP's life and history. Following a rigorous process of revision and peer review, a good number of the papers have become chapters in this book.

Organisation of the Book

The book is organised into three sections. The first is historical. It does not claim to be a comprehensive history of the CCAP. Instead, it examines important turning points, especially the

three constitutions of 1924, 1956, and 2002, with a view to understanding the distinctive character of the CCAP. The historical section also includes chapters on the two Synods that are found outside Malawi: the Harare Synod in Zimbabwe and the Synod of Zambia. Since much of the discussion revolves around relations between the three Synods in Malawi, this ensures that due attention is given to the two in neighbouring countries.

The second section turns attention to a dimension that has often been neglected in the literature – CCAP Women. While women were excluded from high profile leadership roles for much of history, from the beginning they have played a major role in the life of the church on the ground, which calls for recognition and analysis. The question of ordination of women to the ministry of Word and Sacrament has gripped the CCAP since the 1990s and four Synods have taken the decision to allow women to be ordained. The experience of the first generation of Malawian women ministers therefore calls for examination.

The third and final section, on CCAP Concerns, turns to some of the issues that the Church might wish to address as it moves into its second century. A centenary is a time not only to look back but also to take stock and to stimulate fresh imagination for the future. This section therefore celebrates some of the distinctive features of the life of the CCAP but also highlights unresolved tensions and areas of weakness. It therefore suggests some agenda items for the CCAP as it looks forward from the vantage point of its 100-year milestone.

A Central Question: the Unity of the CCAP

High on this agenda is a question that recurs throughout the book: has the CCAP succeeded in becoming a united church? Or have its constituent parts never truly come together? In a provocative recent study Rhodian Munyenembe has suggested that, in reality, the CCAP is more like a federation of separate churches than a single united church.⁸ Its behaviour often seems to indicate that this is the case, with individual Synods taking their own decisions with scant regard for the authority of the higher court of the General Assembly. At times it can look as if it would be simpler just to give up on any idea of an overall unity under a supreme court and reconstitute as separate churches.

Yet, though internal relations have occasionally been very strained, during the 100 years no Synod has ever left the CCAP. Despite all the struggles a sense of common belonging has prevailed and, as will be evident in the pages that follow, in 2024 there are voices calling for the unity of the Church to be strengthened, not loosened. It seems that the CCAP has all along been caught between centrifugal and centripetal forces, being pulled apart and pulled together at the same time. This is not a comfortable position, so the CCAP has never been quite at ease with itself. This matter recurs throughout the book and is considered from a great variety of angles. Since it is an issue that perplexes both leaders and members, as well as fellow citizens and overseas friends, it could hardly be avoided in any

⁸ Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity: A History of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian as a Federative Denomination (1924-2018)*, Carlisle: Langham, 2019, 153.

realistic appraisal of the CCAP at 100. Might the centenary provide an opportunity to grasp this nettle?

While internal strains and divisions tend to be the “elephant in the room” when the unity of the CCAP is under discussion, these are by no means the only issues to be considered in the book. Such matters as worship and spirituality, church-state relations, migration, gender, evangelism and church growth, social service, ministerial formation, and theological issues are also explored. The book cannot claim to be comprehensive in terms of covering all aspects of the life of the CCAP. Since it is the fruit of a conference, and since the conference featured only those topics on which participants offered papers, its range is limited by the choices they made. This does not mean, however, that it does not offer a wide-ranging analysis of the history and present reality of the CCAP. The episodes and issues that feature in the book are salient for anyone interested in developing a good understanding of the CCAP. We are therefore confident that it will find a place in the literature on the CCAP. We hope that it will prove to be of value to all who have the Church’s future at heart.

A Contribution to the Literature on the CCAP

The CCAP is fortunate to have a rich historical literature. When the Missions from which the Church emerged were founded one of their first steps was to establish a printing press. As well as producing translations of parts of the Bible and educational literature, these presses soon began to generate publications reflecting on the work of the Missions themselves. From 1888 Blantyre Mission published *Life and Work in British Central Africa*, sometimes described as Malawi’s first newspaper, while Livingstonia Mission published the *Aurora* and Nkhoma Mission

published *Mthenga*. These collective efforts were supplemented by the books of individual missionaries, such as Alexander Hetherwick's *The Romance of Blantyre*,⁹ Robert Laws' *Reminiscences of Livingstonia*,¹⁰ and Andrew Murray's *Ons Nyasa Akker*,¹¹ which include reflection on the process that led to the formation of the CCAP. The missionary perspectives are complemented by those of Malawians who were actively involved in the emergence of the CCAP such as Harry Kambwiri Matecheta's *Blantyre Mission*,¹² Samuel Y. Ntara's *Namon Katengeza*,¹³ or Yesaya Zerenji Mwasi's *Essential and Paramount Reasons*.¹⁴ While none of these works focus explicitly on the 1924 union and the resultant life of the CCAP as a unified body, they offer a broader African perspective on the reception of Christianity in the Malawian context, out of which the CCAP emerged.

The early literature was significantly augmented in the 1960s by the revisionist research of scholars like Andrew Ross and John McCracken who sought to move away from a Eurocentric and missionary-oriented approach to focus more on the experience

⁹ Alexander Hetherwick, *The Romance of Blantyre: How Livingstone's Dream Came True*, London: James Clarke n.d. [1931].

¹⁰ Robert Laws, *Reminiscences of Livingstonia*, Edinburgh and London: Oliver & Boyd, 1934.

¹¹ Andrew C. Murray, *Ons Nyasa Akker*, Stellenbosch, 1931.

¹² Harry Kambwiri Matecheta, *Blantyre Mission: Stories of its Beginning*, Translation from Chinyanja with introduction and annotation by Thokozani Chilembwe and Todd Stratham, originally published as *Blantyre Mission: Nkhani za Ciyambi Cace* (Blantyre: Hetherwick Press, 1951), Mzuzu: Luviri Press, 2020.

¹³ Samuel Y. Ntara, *Namon Katengeza*, Nkhoma: Nkhoma Synod, 1964.

¹⁴ Yesaya Zerenji Mwasi, *Essential and Paramount Reasons for Working Independently*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1999 [original manuscript, 1933].

of the African communities that received the Missions. This resulted in the publication of such works as John McCracken's *Politics and Christianity*,¹⁵ Andrew Ross's *Blantyre Mission and the Making of Modern Malawi*,¹⁶ Martin Pauw's *Mission and Church in Malawi*,¹⁷ and Jack Thompson's *Christianity in Northern Malawi*,¹⁸ all of which devote attention to the beginnings of the CCAP. Though only partially concerned with Malawi and the early CCAP history, Retief Müller's more recent work on *The Scots Afrikaners* adds an important perspective.¹⁹ Likewise, new biographies of early missionaries, written from a similar revisionist perspective, also shed light on the formation of the CCAP. These include Peter Forster on Cullen Young,²⁰ Hamish

¹⁵ John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi 1875-1940: The Impact of the Livingstonia Mission in the Northern Province*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977; 2nd ed., Blantyre: CLAIM, 2000.

¹⁶ Andrew C. Ross, *Blantyre Mission and the Making of Modern Malawi*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1996, repr. Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2018.

¹⁷ Christoff Martin Pauw, *Mission and Church in Malawi: The History of the Nkhoma Synod of the CCAP 1889-1962*, Lusaka: BPM, 1980; repr. Wellington: CLF, 2016.

¹⁸ T. Jack Thompson, *Christianity in Northern Malawi: Donald Fraser's Missionary Methods and Ngoni Culture*, Leiden: Brill, 1995.

¹⁹ Retief Müller, *The Scots Afrikaners: Identity Politics and Intertwined Religious Cultures in Southern and Central Africa*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022.

²⁰ Peter G. Forster, *T. Cullen Young: Missionary and Anthropologist*, Hull: Hull University Press, 1989.

McIntosh on Robert Laws,²¹ Harri Englund on David Clement Scott,²² and Kenneth Ross on Alexander Hetherwick.²³

It will soon be apparent that the following pages are constantly informed by this existing literature on the CCAP. However, this book seeks to break new ground and make a distinctive contribution by taking account of the life and witness of the CCAP across the entire hundred years of its existence. The existing literature is heavily weighted towards the early period of Presbyterian presence in Malawi, from the arrival of the Scottish Missions in the 1870s up to the time of the creation of the CCAP in 1924. Undoubtedly, this was a very significant formative period for both church and nation in Malawi, which continues to be worthy of further study.

However, by comparison, the 100-year history of the CCAP that began in 1924 has enjoyed much less scholarly attention. This book aims to be weighted in the opposite direction. Particularly in the first section, it does take account of the formative years that preceded the creation of the CCAP, but the greater part of the book is concerned with the subsequent history of the Church, right up to the present day. Here it is indebted to some significant recent studies, notably the first attempt to take account of the entire history of the CCAP from 1924 to 2018 –

²¹ Hamish McIntosh, *Robert Laws – Servant of Africa*, Carberry: Handsel and Blantyre: Central Africana, 1993.

²² Harri Englund, *Visions for Racial Equality: David Clement Scott and the Struggle for Justice in Nineteenth-Century Malawi*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022.

²³ Kenneth R. Ross, *Mission, Race and Colonialism in Malawi: Alexander Hetherwick of Blantyre*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press and Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2023.

Rhodian Munyenembe's *Pursuing an Elusive Unity*.²⁴ Important unpublished work that informs the book includes dissertations focused on the crucial question of CCAP unity by Cogitator Mapala,²⁵ Humphreys Zgambo,²⁶ and Isaac Chibowa.²⁷ However, the present book seeks to offer a broader and more comprehensive assessment of the life of the CCAP.

Another distinctive feature of this book is that it concentrates mainly on the internal life of the CCAP. This stands in contrast to much of the rest of the literature which is concerned with the social, cultural, and political influence of the Church. Again, we have nothing but appreciation for the scholarship that engages with the outward dimensions of the witness of the CCAP as it has intersected with different aspects of community life in Malawi and beyond. However, as it marks its centenary it seems to be an appropriate moment for the CCAP to take account of its internal life. This orientation of the book was determined not so much by editorial direction as by the individual decisions of those who chose to offer papers for the Research Conference hosted at Zomba Theological University in April 2023 in anticipation of the centenary.

²⁴ Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity*.

²⁵ Cogitator W. Mapala, "A Historical Study of the Border Dispute between the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods of the Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian (1956-2015)," PhD, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2017.

²⁶ H.F.C. Zgambo, "Conflict within the Church: A Theological Approach to Conflict Resolution with special reference to the Boundary Dispute between Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods in Malawi," MTh, University of Fort Hare, 2011.

²⁷ Isaac K. Chibowa, "Reconciliation in Light of Pauline Theology: the Case of the Border Wrangle between the Synod of Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian," MA, Mzuzu University, 2017.

The chapters of this book had their first airing as presentations at the conference, where they were subject to critical appraisal and feedback. They have been further developed through a thorough double-blind peer review process. It is therefore a democratic and participatory process that has yielded the material found on the following pages. It suggests that the minds of those who took the initiative to contribute to this centenary volume were focused more on the internal life of the Church than its external engagement. Again, the virtue of this is that it is leaning in the opposite direction to most of the literature and can therefore hope to make more of an original contribution. We appreciate that the text might be too “churchy” for the taste of some. However, it is published with confidence in the instincts of the contributors and with the hope that it might be of value to the CCAP’s self-appraisal as it marks its 100-year milestone.

At the same time, we recognise the limitations of this book. It makes no claim to be the last word about the CCAP. We are confident that it offers some ground-breaking study on the constitutional basis of the CCAP, on the contribution of women to the life of the CCAP, and on some of the pressing current issues that arise from its history and that challenge the CCAP as it looks to the future. We expect that this volume will become an indispensable point of reference for those who study the CCAP in the future as well as those who are entrusted with leadership within it. However, the last thing we expect is that it will lead any of them to conclude that the subject is closed, with all aspects adequately covered already. On the contrary, it is much more likely, we hope, to be a suggestive volume, touching on many subjects that call for further research and exploration. Far from being a book that closes things down, we hope it will serve

to stimulate a new generation of CCAP studies that will expand and deepen our understanding of this influential community of faith.

The Work of Many Hands

A debt of gratitude is owed to the great many people who played their part in the preparation of this book as a gift to the CCAP on the celebration of its centenary. We are grateful to Zomba Theological University, particularly its Vice-Chancellor Rev Dr Takuze Chitsulo, for its excellent work in hosting the Research Conference in April 2023, which laid the foundations of this book. Also to be noted with deep appreciation is the encouragement and support that was offered to the Conference by the CCAP General Assembly Standing Committee under the leadership of the Moderator, the Rt Rev Bizwick Nkhoma. Of course, it was the participants who made the Conference and we are grateful especially to those who found the courage to prepare and present a paper. The book also rests on the further steps that were taken to revise the papers and to subject them to rigorous review before they finally achieved the form that can be found in the pages that follow. Here we are also indebted to the anonymous peer reviewers who offered their expertise to read and critique the papers, enabling them to be further strengthened prior to publication. A final step in the review process was the work of the consulting editors: David S. Bone and Rev Dr Leonard Katundu, who read the entire manuscript and offered their critical assessment – this too has been highly valuable and much appreciated. In late 2023 the manuscript was accepted for publication by Mzuni Press and we must express our gratitude to its editor-in-chief Prof Klaus Fiedler for his encouragement, guidance and editorial skill. Additionally, we are grateful to Globethics for agreeing to co-publish the book on

an open access basis, and particularly for the generous collaboration of its managing editor Ignace Haaz. Above all our thanks extend to every single member of the CCAP, past and present. Without them, there would be no story to tell and no centenary to celebrate. Our hope and our prayer is that this volume will prove to be a blessing to them and to the CCAP of the future.

2. 100 Years of the CCAP: An Introduction

Rhodian Munyenjembe

1. Preamble

In this chapter, I will present an introduction to the CCAP. I aim to show that in the year of its centenary celebration, the CCAP has made and continues to make strides in building the Kingdom of God in this part of the world.¹ As such, my approach is a celebration of what the CCAP has achieved rather than a critique of what the CCAP has failed to do or is not doing well. History is supposed to be presented from all angles so that a clearer view of the phenomenon being discussed can emerge. However, many authors have undertaken to show the shortfalls of the CCAP throughout its history, so much so that it is not very useful to present another catalogue of the problems of the CCAP in this chapter.² Nevertheless, where necessary, a few

¹ I follow Mark Shaw's Kingdom motif in interpreting church history because I believe that the Church does not exist for its own sake but as an instrument of the Kingdom of God. The Church therefore succeeds or fails in its life and history in relation to how faithful it is as an instrument of the Kingdom. See Mark Shaw, *The Kingdom of God in Africa: A Short History of African Christianity*, Katunayake: New Life Literature, 2006, 16-17.

² See Cogitator Mapala, "A Historical Study of the Border Dispute between the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods of the Church of Central African Presbyterian (1956-2015)," PhD, University of KwaZulu Natal, 2016; Isaac Kachitenji Chibowa, "Reconciliation in Light of Pauline Theology: The Case of the Border Wrangle between the Synod of Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synod," MA, Mzuzu University, 2017; Humphreys F. Zgambo, "An Inquiry into Ethnicity in Structures of the Church: The Case Study of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian CCAP in Malawi," *Open Science Journal*, 2/3 (2014), 1-18; Willy Zeze, "Christ, the Head of the Church?: Authority, Leadership and Organizational Structure within the CCAP-

negatives will also be mentioned so that I do not present the CCAP in the manner of a hagiography, even though my intention is more celebratory.

2. Historical Background

The CCAP is a denomination with five synods under its General Assembly: Livingstonia, Blantyre, Nkhoma, Harare and Zambia. The Synod of Livingstonia evolved from the Livingstonia Mission, which came to Malawi in 1875 and was under the Free Church of Scotland during its formative years.³ Blantyre Synod evolved from the Blantyre Mission of the Established Church of Scotland, which started in 1876, while Nkhoma Synod evolved from the Dutch Reformed Church Mission of South Africa, established in the country in 1889.⁴ On the other hand, the Synods of Harare and Zambia are the daughters of the Synods of Nkhoma and Livingstonia,

Nkhoma Synod in Malawi”, DTh, Stellenbosch University, 2012; Augustine Musopole, “Is CCAP a Failed Ecumenical Experiment?” *Transformed* 1/1 (2009), 4–7; Lapani Nkhonjera, “The Church of Central Africa Presbyterian: Formation and Impact on Its Unity and Disunity,” Bachelor of Divinity, Zomba Theological College, 2008; and Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity: A History of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian as a Federative Denomination (1924-2018)*, Carlisle: Langham Global, 2019.

³ John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi 1875–1940: The Impact of the Livingstonia Mission in the Northern Province*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2000; James William Jack, *Daybreak in Livingstonia*, Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1901.

⁴ Martin C. Pauw, “Mission and Church in Malawi: The History of the Nkhoma Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian 1889-1962,” DTh, University of Stellenbosch, 1980.

established in 1965 and 1984, respectively.⁵ The overall body that represents CCAP unity is the General Assembly. The General Assembly started as a Synod in 1924, then a General Synod in 1956, before becoming a General Assembly in 2002.⁶ Since all the five synods have a large degree of autonomy, the CCAP is sometimes considered an umbrella organization of five denominations rather than as one denomination with five synods. Both views are correct, depending on what one wants to emphasize. If the emphasis is on the autonomy of the synods, it is easier to consider them as five distinct denominations. On the other hand, looking at the CCAP as one denomination makes sense if the emphasis is on the unity of the five synods.

The idea of coming up with a united church started as early as the 1800s during the era of the founders of the missions.⁷ It is on record that David Clement Scott of Blantyre Mission approached the (non-Presbyterian) Zambezi Industrial Mission and Nyasa Industrial Mission as early as 1897 to discuss church unity with them. However, the two industrial missions were not keen on the idea.⁸ Nevertheless, during the second missionary conference at Blantyre Mission in 1904, an honest discussion with other Presbyterian missions occurred. From then onwards, there were commitments from many missionaries of the

⁵ Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity: A History of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian as a Federative Denomination (1924-2018)*, Carlisle: Langham Global, 2019, 86-87.

⁶ See "Constitution of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian General Assembly." Also Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity: A History of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian as a Federative Denomination (1924-2018)*, Carlisle: Langham Global, 2019, 92-94.

⁷ *Life and Work in British Central Africa*, May 1891.

⁸ Andrew C. Ross, *Blantyre Mission and the Making of Modern Malawi*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1996, 174.

Presbyterian missions to form a united church. If not for the First World War, the amalgamation could have occurred in 1914. However, the war delayed the union for a decade.⁹

In 2024 the CCAP is celebrating 100 years of its existence from September 1924, when the Presbyteries of Livingstonia and Blantyre joined to form a united denomination.¹⁰ Two years later, in 1926, Nkhoma Mission joined the CCAP, thereby completing the number of the three original Presbyteries that formed a fully-fledged church of the mission field courtesy of Scottish and South African ("Dutch") missionaries.¹¹ That coming together of the two and then three missions in 1924/26 was done in the hope that the united church would be better placed to witness to the Kingdom of God and build the body of Christ, and minister to the people of this part of Africa without further ecclesiastical divisions. Today, we are privileged to look back with the advantage of hindsight and appreciate what has been accomplished in the preceding decades and perhaps learn some lessons on what the church can be doing from now onwards so that the centenary celebration can be a historical landmark of immense significance for posterity even as the 1924 amalgamation is celebrated as a landmark by the current generation.

3. The Original Intention of the Formation of the CCAP

Right from the beginning of the formation of the missions that led to the establishment of the CCAP, there were ideas and

⁹ Martin C. Pauw, "Mission and Church in Malawi," 270.

¹⁰ CCAP, Minutes of First Meeting of Synod', 17-22 September 1924.

¹¹ CCAP, "Entrance of Nkhoma Presbytery into Synod," in Minutes of Second Meeting of Synod", 13-15 October 1926, Blantyre: Blantyre Mission Press, min. 27," 12-13.

aspirations concerning the establishment of an African church in the area around Lake Malawi, which would be an independent church of Africans without merely being an extension of the mother churches back in Scotland and South Africa. Alexander Hetherwick of Blantyre Mission reflected the thinking of the first generation when he insisted that a church thus established should be responsible even for the missionaries so that the missionaries should not be answerable to their home churches but to the local church.¹² This revelation points to the fact that the formation of the CCAP as a church “of Africa” was not an afterthought on the part of the missionaries but the realization of a long-cherished dream that went back to the very foundation of the first mission stations. That the missions should eventually graduate into a fully-fledged church of the soil was a well-nurtured idea.

However, the actual path that the formation of such a church would take was not very clear. For this reason, we see variations not only in the configurations of the would-be African church but also in the nomenclature of such a church. Whereas some missionaries wanted the church to be called the Church of Africa without qualification, others wanted it to be more specific, even in its system of government. Donald Fraser of the Livingstonia Mission proposed the name of the new united church to be “the Church of Central Africa.” At the same time, Alexander Hetherwick of Blantyre Mission insisted that the word Presbyterian should be added to the name of the united church. The delegates had to vote between these two names, and the name with the word Presbyterian in it won the day. That is how we came to have the Church of Central Africa

¹² Alexander Hetherwick to Robert Laws, 9 August 1904.

Presbyterian (CCAP).¹³ Initially there was a comma before the word “Presbyterian,” but it later fizzled out.

While it was hoped that other missions would join this church to curb competition in the mission field, it eventually became clear that only the missions of the Presbyterian tradition would amalgamate to form the ecumenical church of Central Africa. In the wish of some Scottish missionary personnel, the new church was supposed to be clear about its church government, so the description presbyterian was suggested to be included as one part of the name. For this reason, the newly formed church was named the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, emphasizing its location and church polity. This name was acceptable as far as the missions of Livingstonia, Blantyre, and Nkhoma were concerned. That the name has maintained the description “Presbyterian” up to now indicates that the original intentions of opening the doors to other missions did not materialize. Be that as it may, the fact that the CCAP became a product of the three missions was worth celebrating.

4. A Celebrated Ecumenical Product

Despite the CCAP not taking shape according to initial conceptions, it became one of the most successful ecumenical endeavours in the mission field, highly celebrated by many church historians and missiologists.¹⁴ The CCAP was born at a time when many missionaries in the mission field were talking about unity in Christian witness culminating in the Edinburgh World

¹³ Martin C. Pauw, “Mission and Church in Malawi,” 268.

¹⁴ Kenneth R. Ross and Klaus Fiedler, *A Malawi Church History 1860-2020*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2020, 170.

Missionary Conference of 1910.¹⁵ This hunger for unity among missions and denominations of different theological emphases led to the ecumenical movement overtly concerned with visible unity in the Church. The coming together of the three original missions of Livingstonia, Blantyre and Nkhoma presented a good case study of ecumenism in the African mission field. The establishment of the CCAP was considered one of the most successful outcomes of well-organized mission work though it had its challenges.¹⁶ Even though other missions in other parts of Africa managed to bring together different missionary organizations to create unified denominations, the case of the CCAP in Central Africa was unique and, therefore, highly praised.¹⁷

In this centenary celebration, therefore, it is even more necessary to look back at how the CCAP has survived the 100 years of its existence and appreciate how prepared it is to carry on with the banner of unity as the now five synods continue to work together. To pretend that the 100 years of the CCAP have been nothing but plain sailing would be naïve. On the other hand, it would not do justice to emphasize the negatives in the development of this denomination over the years during this season of centenary celebrations. There are certain things that the CCAP has accomplished which are worth mentioning and celebrating, to which we now turn.

¹⁵ See Kenneth R. Ross, “Edinburgh 1910: Scottish Roots and Contemporary Challenges,” *Theology in Scotland* XVII/1 (2010), 5-21.

¹⁶ Retief Müller, “Traversing a Tighter Rope between Ecumenism and Exclusivism,” *University Faculty Publications*, 152, 2021, https://digital-com.mons.calvin.edu/calvin_facultypubs/152

¹⁷ John Weller and Jane Linden, *Mainstream Christianity to 1980 in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe*, Gweru: Mambo, 1984.

5. The CCAP's Achievements over the Past Century

In its existence of 100 years, the CCAP has achieved many things both at the General Assembly level and at the level of the synods. However, the individual synods have registered more successes than they have done together under the umbrella of the General Assembly. Below are some areas in which the achievements of the CCAP are apparent.

5.1 Evangelization of Malawi and the Surrounding Countries

The CCAP has contributed significantly to evangelizing Malawi and the surrounding countries. The percentage of adherents to Christianity in the Malawian population is almost 80% (77.3%), and the majority are either Catholics or Presbyterians, making the CCAP the second-largest denomination in the country.¹⁸ Besides, the CCAP is found not only in Malawi but in other countries of Southern Africa, such as Zimbabwe, Zambia, Tanzania, South Africa and some parts of Mozambique.¹⁹ The presence of other synods and presbyteries outside of Malawi is a clear sign of the CCAP's vitality and commitment to spreading the Gospel over the many decades of its existence. The spread of the CCAP in these areas outside Malawi is another cause for celebration in the denomination's 100 years of existence.²⁰ It is interesting to note that at the time of the

¹⁸ National Statistical Office, *2018 Malawi Population and Housing Census Report*, May 2019, 18-19.

¹⁹ Oral Information, Blantyre Synod Minister, Zomba, 20 April 2023.

²⁰ The CCAP spread to Zimbabwe and South Africa because of the Malawian migrants who went to work in these countries. The presence of the church in these countries is a solution to the spiritual needs of the

formation of the CCAP, the three Malawian synods joined as presbyteries of the mission-sending churches, but today some of the synods have more than 20 presbyteries and more than 200 congregations each under their administration. The presbyteries extend even to foreign countries such as South Africa, where these synods minister mainly to Malawian migrants.²¹

5.2 Contributions towards Independence and the Democratization Process in Malawi

The CCAP synods in Malawi have been on the side of the poor and marginalized from their mission days. A case in point is their fight against the slave trade and promoting the emancipation of runaway slaves during the early years of their establishment. The same spirit made the church, especially Blantyre Synod, condemn the abuses of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland as it could “see no hope for a peaceful and righteous future for all the people” of Malawi under the Federal

Malawians in the diaspora but also to the indigenous peoples who benefit from the CCAP’s ministry whether they join the church or not. For an introduction to the work of the CCAP in South Africa see Clement Chimbata Mnthali, “Mission Work of the Synod of Livingstonia of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) in South Africa (1980-2021),” Master of Theology and Development Thesis, University of Livingstonia, 2022.

²¹ See CCAP Synod of Livingstonia Presbyteries, www.ccapsolinia.org/presbyteries/; Blantyre Synod Presbyteries, www.ccapblantiresynod.org/presbyteries/html and Reformed Family Forum, “The Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP), Nkhoma Synod-Malawi”, <https://rff.christians.co.za/the-church-of-central-africa-presbyterian-ccap-nkhoma-synod-malawi/>.

Government.²² This stance of Blantyre Synod influenced the Church of Scotland to move the British Government to take Malawi out of the Federation.²³ This change of policy contributed to Malawi's attainment of independence in 1964.²⁴ All the synods supported the nationalist cause, and many of the prominent people in the independence struggle were members of the three synods of the CCAP in Malawi. According to Andrew Ross, when he and Reverend Jonathan Sangaya went to minister to the detainees at Kanjedza Camp during the 1959 State of Emergency, he found out that "approximately seven hundred of these men and two of the women were members of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP), mainly from the Livingstonia and Blantyre Synods."²⁵

There is a consensus among scholars that the CCAP was tragically silent during the single party regime from 1964 to the early 1990s when the winds of change for multiparty democracy started to blow. While it is easier to criticize the CCAP synods for either being coopted or silenced during the single party regime, it becomes clearer with the advantage of hindsight to appreciate that the days were evil, and therefore very dangerous for the leaders of the church to appear to be critical against the

²² Blantyre Synod, "Blantyre Synod Statement on the Present State of Unrest 1958," quoted in Kenneth R. Ross, *Christianity in Malawi: A Source Book*, 2nd ed., Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2020, 200.

²³ Kenneth R. Ross, *Malawi and Scotland: Together in the Talking Place*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2013, 162-66.

²⁴ Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity: A History of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian as a Federative Denomination (1924-2018)*, Carlisle: Langham Global, 2019, 114.

²⁵ Andrew C. Ross, *Blantyre Mission and the Making of Modern Malawi*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1996, (Preface), 11.

government and the ruling party of the time.²⁶ However, at the dawn of multiparty democracy, the synods regained their voice and played their role as midwives of multiparty democracy despite the fact that there were negative forces acting against their unity due to differences in geographical and cultural contexts.²⁷

In the same vein, the synods have continued to play a critical role in nurturing Malawi's democracy in the era of multiparty politics by speaking out against tendencies that undermine the common good either as individual synods or under the General Assembly. For instance, the pastoral letter of 2001 written under the umbrella of the General Synod then was highly praised as the voice of the CCAP against some unpatriotic politicians' attempt to change the Constitution of the Republic of Malawi to allow more than two terms for the president.²⁸ The CCAP also makes efforts to guide the faithful during elections so that people elect good leaders to positions of authority.²⁹ However, the synods' autonomy has made the synods sometimes fail to have one voice on an issue when they have not acted under the umbrella of the General Assembly. This state of affairs may

²⁶ See Kenneth R. Ross, "Where were the Prophets and Martyrs in Banda's Malawi? Four Presbyterian Ministers," *Missionalia* 24/2 (1996), 113-28.

²⁷ See Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity*, 116-17.

²⁸ CCAP General Synod, "Some Worrisome Trends Which Undermine the Nurturing of Our Young Democracy," Pastoral letter of the CCAP General Synod, 2001; see further Kenneth R. Ross, "'Worrisome Trends': The Voice of the Churches in Malawi's Third Term Debate," *African Affairs* 103 (2004), 91-107.

²⁹ See for instance, Watipaso Mzungu, "CCAP General Assembly calls for peaceful elections", <http://mwntation.com/ccap-general-assembly-calls-for-peaceful-elections/>, 27 February 2014.

persist if the autonomy of the synods continues to be promoted over and against their unity in the General Assembly.

5.3 Contributions in the Area of Health

Over the years, the synods have extended their influence by establishing complementary services to the preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom of God. It is on record that the CCAP synods are among the most significant providers of health services in the country through the establishment of various hospitals and medical institutions of various levels and scopes. Together with other Christian denominations, the CCAP synods are prominent members of the Christian Health Association of Malawi (CHAM). Some of these church-owned health centres are the only health relief institutions in some rural constituencies where government hospitals and health centres are very far away from many people. Hospitals like the David Gordon Memorial (Livingstonia), Ekwendeni and Embangweni in the Synod of Livingstonia, together with Nkhoma Hospital of Nkhoma Synod and Mulanje Mission Hospital in Blantyre Synod, are among the well-known church-owned hospitals in the country.

5.4 Contributions in the Area of Education

5.4.1 Primary School Education

It was Christian missionaries who started Primary School education in the country, including the missions that evolved into the CCAP.³⁰ Right from the beginning of missionary Christianity it was observed that if the evangelization of the peoples

³⁰ Kelvin Banda, *A Brief History of Education in Malawi*, Blantyre: Dzuka, 1982.

was to have any lasting impact, people needed to be given some primary education that could enable them to achieve literacy.³¹ For this reason, the three “Rs” of reading, writing and arithmetic were promoted. Every mission station, therefore, had its school at the mission station and village schools in villages far from the mission where teacher evangelists could be sent to do the work of both an evangelist and a teacher of basic literacy and numerical skills. Such schools, mostly grass thatched in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, were the genesis of the modern primary schools in Malawi. Some historians have criticized how missionaries approached the whole issue of education for Africans in the country. Still, even a measure of criticism does not take away from the positive contributions that such endeavours made.³²

The missions of the CCAP and other denominations were solely responsible for these schools until 1926, when the colonial government established the Department of Education to promote uniformity and formality in providing primary education. However, even with the coming of the colonial government, churches continued to dominate the education sector, so much so that even up to now, the CCAP synods still own many primary schools that can be traced back to the formative years

³¹ Dorothy Tembo, “Mission Education and its Impact on the Construction of African Social Identities in Colonial Malawi (1875–1935),” in Chikumbutso Herbert Manthalu, et al (eds), *Education, Communication and Democracy in Africa: A Democratic Pedagogy for the Future*, London: Routledge, 2021.

³² For instance, see Isaac Lamba, “The Cape Dutch Reformed Church Mission in Malawi: A Preliminary Historical Examination of Its Educational Philosophy and Application, 1889-1931,” *History of Education Quarterly* 24/3 (1984), 373-392, www.jstor.org/stable/368014.

of the mission stations that gave birth to the CCAP.³³ Such is the contribution of the CCAP to the primary education sector in Malawi and other countries where the CCAP missions had influence.

5.4.2 *Secondary School Education*

The Malawian synods of the CCAP can also be credited with their contribution to secondary school education. The synods are joint owners with the government in what are known as grant-aided schools, where the government provides funding and pays teachers' salaries while the synods cater to the other needs of the schools. On the other hand, the synods also have private secondary schools where they charge economic fees as sole proprietors of the secondary schools while teaching the government curriculum under the Ministry of Education. Unlike other private secondary schools, the churches' schools are not highly profit oriented.³⁴ In this regard, the CCAP synods continue to contribute to the country's educational development as many learners go to these schools for their secondary school education. Among these schools are boarding schools and Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSSs); some accommodate both girls and boys, while others are single sex.

5.4.3 *Tertiary Education*

For a long time, the churches were the only education providers in Malawi. This continued even long after the establishment of

³³ Gilbert Phiri, "A History of Education in CCAP Blantyre Synod 1876-2018," PhD, Mzuzu University, 2023.

³⁴ Cf. Benjamin Zeitlyna, et al, "Inside Private Secondary Schools in Malawi: Access or Exclusion?" *International Journal of Educational Development*, 43 (2015), 109–117, fn. 2., 109.

the colonial government in 1891.³⁵ The CCAP synods have continued with this activity even after the attainment of independence in the years after 1964. During the single-party regime, the synods mainly concentrated on primary and secondary education with a few post-secondary institutions. They started establishing universities some years into the new multiparty political dispensation, which began in 1993.

Currently, all three Malawian synods have their universities, namely: the University of Livingstonia (UNILIA), Nkhoma University (NKHUNI) and the University of Blantyre Synod (UBS). Interestingly, the former ecumenical theological institution, Zomba Theological College, has now attained the status of a university known as Zomba Theological University, another milestone in the CCAP's contribution to tertiary education in the country and beyond. Looking at the number of graduates from these church universities, it is evident that the synods are making a significant contribution to the education of the Malawi nation. It is an open secret that in Malawi, public universities alone cannot absorb all those who want to pursue a university education. It is for this reason that private universities have mushroomed in the country. Among these private universities are the CCAP synods' universities, which, though new in their capacity as universities, all have histories that go back to the missionary era when these campuses used to be beacons of

³⁵ Dorothy Tembo, "Mission Education and Its Impact on the Construction of African Social Identities in Colonial Malawi (1875–1935)," in Chikumbutso Herbert Manthalu, et al. (eds), *Education, Communication and Democracy in Africa: A Democratic Pedagogy for the Future*, London: Routledge, 2021.

academic excellence when education institutions were few and far between.

For example, the University of Livingstonia, especially its Laws Campus, is a successor of the once renowned Overtoun Institution, considered the first centre of academic excellence in the country and the whole of East Central Africa.³⁶ Similarly, the University of Blantyre Synod is a successor of the well-known Henry Henderson Institute (HHI), whose history goes back to the founders of Blantyre Mission, from which Blantyre Synod emerged. I argue from this observation that the provision of higher education by the CCAP synods is not something that came by accident but that it is a logical consequence of the educational initiatives started by the missionaries and supported by the indigenous leadership of the church after taking over from missionary leadership. The synods' universities have the potential to grow into highly competitive institutions, given time and good management of their resources.³⁷

5.5 Extending to the Hospitality Industry

The synods have not only found a niche in the area of education but also in the hospitality industry, where some of them have lodges and conference centres. For example, Blantyre Synod has the Grace Bandawe Conference Centre, the CCAP Cottage at the Zomba Plateau, Likhubula House in Mulanje and

³⁶ John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi 1875–1940*, 171-96.

³⁷ Other tertiary institutions of the synods include teacher training colleges, which contribute to the training of primary school teachers in Malawi.

others.³⁸ The Synod of Livingstonia has the William Koyi Conference Centre, and Nkhoma Synod boasts of operating the Namoni Katengeza Lay Training Centre at Chongoni, which also provides accommodation and meals. It could be argued that such business activities are a departure from the church's core business of preaching the gospel of the Kingdom. However, I argue that these are complementary services of the church, which do not render the church less effective but make it more relevant in the contemporary context.

5.6 Relief, Development and Sustainable Livelihoods Support Initiatives through Various Departments

The CCAP synods have various departments operationalizing the church's vision of a holistic Christian ministry using different expertise. Some of these departments are there to enhance the church's capacity, such as the Sunday School, Women's Guild, Literature and Lay Training Departments. On the other hand, some departments and programmes benefit insiders and outsiders as well as society. For example, the Church and Society Department is one of the prominent departments in the synods, and it engages in matters concerning economics, human rights, governance, peacebuilding, vigilance towards sustaining our democratic culture and many other concerns that affect the general public.³⁹

Other departments that are also outward looking include Early Childhood Development, Relief and Development, and departments to do with Agriculture, Water and Sanitation and many

³⁸ See www.ccapblantyresynod.org/church-and-society.html and www.ccapsolinia.org/departments/.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

others that touch on the needs of our societies, which non-religious non-governmental organizations mainly handle. All these departments and programmes have projects that target the surrounding communities within the catchment areas of the synods. Recently, we have seen some synods organizing relief items for the victims of Tropical Cyclone Freddy that affected many areas of southern Malawi in March 2023. All such activities point to the fact that it is the church's responsibility to make sure that people are relieved of their suffering, thereby spreading the influence of the Kingdom of God and reversing the effects of the fall.

5.7 Promoting Christian Unity through Participation in Ecumenical Organizations

The CCAP is one denomination with open arms to embrace other Christian denominations and organizations that want to collaborate for the work of the gospel of the Kingdom of God. As such, the CCAP is a member of local ecumenical organizations such as the Malawi Council of Churches (MCC), the Christian Service Committee, the Christian Literature Association in Malawi (CLAIM), the Public Affairs Committee, and through its membership in the Malawi Council of Churches, the CCAP is a co-owner of the Christian Health Association of Malawi (CHAM) and the Association of Christian Educators in Malawi (ACEM).⁴⁰ Outside Malawi, the CCAP is a member of such organizations as the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), and the World Council of Churches (WCC). It should be noted that in some of these organizations,

⁴⁰ www.cham.org.mw/our-members and www.acemmalawi.Wordpress.com.

the CCAP is represented by only one synod, while in others, the General Assembly and one or two synods may also be members, sometimes together with Zomba Theological University. For example, the General Assembly, Blantyre Synod and Zomba Theological University are members of the All Africa Conference of Churches.⁴¹ So far, only Blantyre Synod is in the World Council of Churches, but the General Assembly has also applied to join.⁴² The CCAP's involvement in all these ecumenical organizations shows that it is keen on promoting Christian unity.

6. Adaptations to the Ever-Changing Contexts

No institution, let alone a church denomination, can survive and remain relevant in the everchanging contexts without adapting to the changes and finding new ways of appealing to both old and new members. As such, it has been the CCAP's way of remaining relevant to the modern changes that it has developed innovative adaptations. Below is a brief discussion of some of them.

6.1 *The Women's Guilds: Ubiquity, Conspicuousness and Roles*

Of all the CCAP guilds, the women's guilds, known by various local names in their synods, are the most ubiquitous and conspicuous.⁴³ Clad in their white blouses and black skirts with synodical variations, the members of the women's guilds are easily

⁴¹ See http://aacc-ceta.org/member_churches/details/malawi.html.

⁴² Oral Information, Rev Mwawi N. Chilongozi, CCAP General Assembly Secretary General, Zomba, 20 April 2023.

⁴³ Joel Manda, "Biblical Interpretation and the Role of Women in Church of Central Africa Presbyterian," *Scriptura* 77 (2001), 239-49 [242-45].

visible when visiting the sick in hospitals and homes and during the funerals of fellow Christians. The women's guilds have been known to play various humanitarian roles, such as paying school fees for needy students, helping orphans with food and shelter, and looking after widows and the elderly, besides the central task of evangelization. The women's guilds have been the face of the CCAP's Christian love and compassion in many instances over the past decades. These women's guilds have not been spared from the religious, social and historical challenges that religious groups face throughout history. They have therefore faced and continue to face challenges that make them adjust to the ever-changing context of the church's mission without losing their vitality.⁴⁴ They are, therefore, something worth celebrating in the church's 100 years of existence.

6.2 The Establishment of the Men's Guilds

Apart from pastors and church elders, only a few men could be seen actively participating in the church's affairs. It was discovered that men who were not pastors or prominent lay leaders had no formal platform for serious involvement in church work. Consequently, many men were inactive in the church, not knowing what to do, when, and how to do it. It was for this reason that the first Men's Guild in the CCAP was established in the 1940s and developed gradually until it was fully approved by the Livingstonia Synod in 1960.⁴⁵ For a long time, the

⁴⁴ See Esela Gondwe, "The Continuity and Change of the Umanyano Women's Guild of the Livingstonia Synod," BA (Humanities), University of Malawi, 2006.

⁴⁵ Prince Tembo, "The Establishment and Growth of the Men's Ministry of the Synod of Livingstonia of the CCAP (1947-2020)," MA, Mzuzu University, 2023.

presence of a uniformed Men's Guild (aka *Madodana*) was a feature of the Livingstonia Synod alone, but later other synods also started establishing their own Men's Guilds. Now there are Men's Guilds in all the CCAP Synods with variations in their uniforms and manner of doing things, but at the centre of their existence is the responsibility of spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ. The establishment of these Men's Guilds has opened up an opportunity for many gentlemen to discover their gifts in church work and leadership. Besides, they can experience some warm fellowship and encouragement among fellow Men's Guild members, which would not have been the case without such organizations.

6.3 The Establishment of the CCAP Students Organization (CCAPSO)

Another timely development in the CCAP came with the establishment of the CCAP Students Organization (CCAPSO) in the year 2000.⁴⁶ Before the establishment of the CCAPSO, many CCAP students were members of other student organizations, especially ecumenical ones. While it is a good thing to belong to an ecumenical student organization, it was found that there were many influences in the ecumenical student organizations that a Reformed and Presbyterian denomination could only partially embrace. Besides, the spirituality and culture of CCAP religiosity were heavily eclipsed by elements from other denominations, especially those of the Pentecostal and Charismatic background. The establishment of CCAPSO meant that CCAP students in secondary schools, colleges, and universities could

⁴⁶ CCAPSO, CCAP Blantyre Synod, www.ccapblantiresynod.org/ccapso.html, 10 March 2023.

fellowship with fellow CCAP youth on campus from various synods and go back to enrich their churches with renewed zeal and commitment to Christian values espoused by the CCAP. The fact that CCAPSO has existed for over 20 years and continues to attract many young men and women clearly indicates the organization's importance in contemporary times.

6.4 Openness to Liturgical Changes

The liturgy of the CCAP was copied from the mother churches, and even though there are elements of African contextualization, especially in hymn singing, it was and to some extent continues to be a rigid, book-based liturgy that suits a non-African cultural context more than an African one. However, in recent years, the synods have had to allow for innovations in their liturgy to appeal to the more youthful members of the church and those that the charismatic movement has influenced. Consequently, some elements have been introduced in the CCAP liturgy in the 21st century that could not have been accepted in the 20th century. For example, some CCAP congregations now have what is termed the "contemporary service," which is very charismatic in its approach. Some elements of the contemporary service sometimes overflow even into the traditional worship services, which tend to follow the received liturgy. This means there are efforts to make the church relevant by appealing to people from different backgrounds in the liturgy. Such openness has had the effect of retaining the youth in CCAP congregations, which could not have been the case if the synods had been resistant to change, as was the case in the late 1990s

when a charismatic wing of the Blantyre Synod broke away to form the Presbyterian Church of Malawi.⁴⁷

6.5 Embracing Technology

The synods of the CCAP are not backward when it comes to technology. They have tried to embrace technology and are visible on the internet. All five synods have websites though the General Assembly has no website, and its internet visibility leaves much to be desired. These websites are windows through which many interested parties can know the histories and activities of the synods by just clicking the button of a computer or smartphone. It is, however, discouraging to note that the synod websites need to be updated in a timely manner. Apart from the usual permanent information, it would be helpful if the synods updated their websites regularly. For example, it does not make sense to have names and faces of past leadership teams appearing as current leaders, while the current leaders or developments are nowhere to be seen. Of all the five synods, the Harare Synod has a website that tries to broadcast new information more regularly. It has adequate information about its response to Cyclone Idai, which hit the country in 2019. However, even in the case of Harare Synod, their website is not impressive. For example, they have a bird's feather on the website's home page with no explanation as to what it is all about, while the

⁴⁷ Patrick M'banga, "The Emergence of Independent Churches: A Case Study of the Presbyterian Church of Malawi," BA, University of Malawi, 2000. See also Rhodian G. Munyenembe, *Christianity and Socio-Cultural Issues: The Charismatic Movement and the Contextualization of the Gospel in Malawi*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2011, 46-47.

logo of the Synod, or of the CCAP in general, is conspicuously missing from the website.⁴⁸

Another development in the area of technology is the opening of radio stations for the synods. In Malawi, all three synods have radio stations which broadcast vital information from the synods apart from national and international news and entertainment programmes. The Livingstonia Synod has the Voice of Livingstonia (VOL) Radio, Nkhoma Synod has Nkhoma Synod Radio, and Blantyre Synod has Blantyre Synod Radio. This is one way the CCAP reaches people who listen to the radio, even those who are not CCAP members. This is another instance where the CCAP synods show they are not technologically backward.

7. Challenges of the Unity of the Synods in the CCAP General Assembly

The CCAP is a genuinely African church in Africa and is enthusiastically embraced by many Africans. The Scottish and the Dutch missionaries who established the three missions of Livingstonia, Blantyre and Nkhoma (DRCM) were looking forward to a day when the mission would eventually mature into the church of the land, which happened in 1924/26. However, as many church historians have observed, the unity of the CCAP had cracks right from its establishment. This meant it was impossible for the CCAP to be a fully united denomination with a strong national leadership. As it happened, the three original missions continued to exist as autonomous presbyteries and, later on, synods with real power ending at the synodical level. For this reason, the unity of the synods in the CCAP has

⁴⁸ See www.ccaphararesynod.com/.

been described as a federative unity. This was true for the three original synods and later the five synods after establishing and incorporating the Harare Synod and the Synod of Zambia.

7.1 Territorial Boundary Disputes and their Aftermath

The autonomy of the synods has been a thorn in the flesh in that, despite the CCAP being one, it has continually operated as five denominations. This recognition has tended to render the General Assembly redundant in the hierarchy of the CCAP. Besides, the wrangles or disagreements that once rocked the three Malawian synods over territorial boundary issues continue to dent the otherwise beautiful history of the CCAP. The territorial boundary wrangle, coupled with the fact that the Synods in Malawi are primarily regional churches, with each synod being broadly regionally and ethnically aligned, it has not been easy for the synods to escape the smear of politics which always takes advantage of people's divisions to divide them further for the sake of political gains. Such divisions became pronounced during the political transition of 1992 to 1994 and have not entirely disappeared in the era of multiparty democracy.

Looking at it from a positive point of view, one can argue that the boundary wrangle has positively affected the unity of the CCAP synods considering how things have turned out. The fear that if the boundary issue could not be dealt with in good time would lead to the synods of Livingstonia and Nkhoma going all the way into each other's headquarters is what has happened over the last decade, so much so that the Livingstonia Synod is peacefully operating in the interior of the Central Region of Malawi while Nkhoma Synod has equally penetrated the Northern Region even beyond Mzuzu, which is the base of the Livingstonia Synod. The most surprising thing in the current post-

border wrangle era is that there is genuine friendship among the three synods in Malawi and warm and friendly fellowship right from the leadership in the General Assembly.⁴⁹ This is evidenced by the spirit of camaraderie among the synods' leaders and the willingness of the leaders of one synod to learn from their counterparts, for example, sharing experiences of how they administer their universities.⁵⁰ At the grassroots level, there are exchange visits of choirs and guilds across the synods, which illustrates the unity of the CCAP despite belonging to different synods. It is, therefore, evident that even though the CCAP comes from a background of synodical wrangles, there are efforts to heal the wounds and cultivate peace in the new era of post-boundary disputes.

7.2 Diversity and Contradictions in the Area of Ordained Women Leadership

One of the characteristics of a denomination in the Sociology of Religion is that it allows theological diversity and accommodates some changes in theological positions and emphases.⁵¹ True to this observation, the CCAP has had the opportunity to change some of its emphases over the past century. For example, in women's leadership, the CCAP initially opposed women's ordination. Later women's ordination was accepted in Blantyre Synod, Synod of Livingstonia, Synod of Zambia and Harare Synod. Nkhoma Synod is yet to start ordaining women

⁴⁹ See Harnet Msukwa, "CCAP Synods Say No More Fighting: "We Are One," *Nyasa Times* (Online News) 10 June 2021, www.nyasatimes.com/ccap-synods-say-no-more-fighting-we-are-one/, [7.4.2023].

⁵⁰ Oral Informant, Ekwendeni, January 2023.

⁵¹ Ronald R. Johnstone, *Religion in Society: A Sociology of Religion*, New York: Routledge, 2016, 139-45.

to the ministry of Word and Sacrament. However, in 2007 Nkhoma Synod allowed its women to preach to mixed audiences, and in 2009 Nkhoma Synod decided that women could be elected (and ordained) as deacons and church elders.⁵² The General Assembly took a stand that each synod should be at liberty to interpret the section of the CCAP Constitution, which indicated the possibility of allowing female pastors to be ordained if a synod was willing to have them.⁵³

So far, the Synods of Livingstonia and Blantyre have been able to train and ordain women to the ministry of Word and Sacrament. On the other hand, Nkhoma Synod has continued its stand of not ordaining women to the pastoral ministry though they can serve as lay elders. It is, therefore, fascinating to note that even though different synods can interpret the constitution of the CCAP General Assembly according to their understanding, currently, there is a female Secretary General in the General Assembly. While this is a good development in the CCAP, it is one area showing that the church values its synods more than the General Assembly. Whereas none of the synods has ever had a female General Secretary, the synods did not see a problem with having one at the level of the General Assembly. This instance clearly indicates that male leaders of the synods do not consider the Secretary General of the General Assembly position to be very powerful. This weakness of the General Assembly undermines the unity of the CCAP because the very thing

⁵² Nkhoma Synod Minutes 4143 (2009); and Phoebe Faith Chifungo, *Let My People Go! A Biblical and Cultural Study of Women in the Church in Central Malawi*, Mzuzu: Luviri Press, 2023, 213.

⁵³ "Constitution of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian General Assembly." See "CCAP General Assembly Constitutional Schedule," 6.12.1 and 6.12.2.

that makes the CCAP one denomination lacks the grandeur that is beyond the synods (or that is associated with the synods).

7.3 Continued Neglect of the General Assembly and Its Premises

Since the coming together of the synods that make the CCAP, the synods continued to develop while basking in the name of their unity even when the General Synod, then, and now the General Assembly, kept on deteriorating with no further development from the humble office structure that was erected many decades ago, proving that apart from the grand titles of the General Assembly leadership there is very little to show for it.⁵⁴ Consequently, the visible symbol of CCAP unity has been a shadow of the glory of the synods, the presbyteries and even some congregations. The infrastructure of some congregations is much better than what passes as the headquarters of the CCAP General Assembly. Many people do not even know that there is such a place which is supposed to be the mother of the five daughter synods. The neglect of the General Assembly is one regrettable thing in the history of the CCAP that will need to be corrected in the post-centenary years. Until the General Assembly premises improve in appearance and become more attractive than some offices of the synods or presbyteries, the unity of the CCAP will continue to be haunted by the rundown appearance of this symbol of a unity that has now clocked 100 years of existence.

⁵⁴ Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity*, 168-70.

8. Facing the Future: What Options are Available?

The past cannot be changed. It is there to learn from, so that mistakes that have already happened can be avoided in the future. The CCAP existed when the leadership was still in the hands of the Scottish and South African ("Dutch") missionaries. This meant that there was very little that indigenous Malawians could do at the time, considering the relationships in those days between the missionaries and indigenous leaders, who were only beginning to appear among the ranks of the ordained clergy. However, after the indigenous leaders took over the reins of the denomination, there was a need for some changes in the configuration that the church would take now that it was entirely in the hands of the indigenes. Many of the problems that the CCAP has faced over the years have come from the fact that the Malawian leadership inherited the same structures during the missionary era and ended up perpetuating them without subjecting them to a thorough critique in view of the post-missionary church. Now that the CCAP is celebrating 100 years of its existence, it is an opportunity to reflect on what went wrong so that a new vision can be hatched for the future configuration of the denomination. Below are some scenarios that the current CCAP leadership can reflect upon.

8.1 Considering a National Church with International Branches versus the Continued Autonomy of the Synods

To see a more unified CCAP, some observers feel that it would be best to have a national church with one headquarters in Malawi, with everything being coordinated from that headquarters.⁵⁵ That would mean the death of the synods as we know

⁵⁵ Oral informant, Mzuzu, 2022.

them now. The advantage of such a scenario would be an organically unified denomination. The challenge of taking this route, though, is the level of maturity that the synods have reached so far, both in Malawi and outside Malawi in Zimbabwe and Zambia. Having thus far travelled on the path of autonomy, returning to a national church in Malawi would look like retrogression to the synods outside Malawi and those presbyteries that feel it is time they graduated from presbyteries to synods. While this would be an ideal portrayal of CCAP unity, it is the most challenging way. However, since it is a possibility, it is something that future generations may consider implementing with the advantage of hindsight after the centenary celebration.

Meanwhile, it continues to be challenging for the CCAP to have a united voice in politics, language and culture. About politics, it is an open secret that different synods have different political leanings for various reasons, even though sometimes two synods may be sympathetic towards one political party or group of parties. This is often perceived at the level of synodical leadership. When it comes to the politics of language, the heat has now simmered down, but there was a time when the Synod of Livingstonia was very much opposed to making Chichewa a national language. At that time, there were efforts to mention Chichewa as a national language in the Republican constitution. The Synod of Livingstonia's position was that such a move would promote one language and ethnic group to the exclusion or neglect of the others, thereby doing away with linguistic diversity, a mark of the Malawian society.⁵⁶ Citing what

⁵⁶ Cf. Themba Moyo, "Language Loss and Language Decay of Malawi's Indigenous Languages," *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies* 21/3 (2003), 127-29. (www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/)

happened in 1968, the Synod of Livingstonia feared that such a policy would see some Malawian languages suffer marginalization and become obsolete instead of being nurtured. In the same way, different synods associate with different cultural groups, which also divides them to a certain extent though there are variations even within one synod's catchment area. This means that the diversity of the CCAP will continue to challenge the denomination's uniformity across the synods. Now that the synods that were once belligerent about boundary disputes have become used to inter-regional operations, it is an opportunity to kill the synods' associations with Malawi's political and cultural regions that tend to divide the otherwise peaceful and tolerant Malawians. In any case, the Church, the instrument of the Kingdom of God, should be able to steer clear of human divisions and prove that it is a unifying factor empowered from above.⁵⁷

8.2 Reconsidering the Name of the Church in the Context of 21st Century Missions

The name CCAP was influenced by the geographical destination of the missionaries from Europe and South Africa who came to plant the church in the interior of Africa. It was the

10.2989/160736 10309486336). See also Gregory Kamwendo, "Language, Identity, and the Politics of Recognition in the Post-Banda Northern Malawi", *Ufahamu*, https://escholarship.org/content/qt3bt4r7wv/qt3bt4r7wv_noSplash_a90814a95f189b8e6ad8cce7890b9a3e.pdf?t=mnq1m6; and Pascal J. Kishindo, "Politics of Language in Contemporary Malawi," in Kings M. Phiri and Kenneth R. Ross (eds), *Democratization in Malawi: A Stocktaking*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 252-80.

⁵⁷ One of the characteristics of the gospel is that it is able to bring together entities that would be naturally opposed to each other (Gal. 3:28).

name given by those who had arrived and successfully worked in their mission field instead of their home churches. The name Central Africa was therefore tied to the name of the mission field of the missionaries who had come to this place from their places of origin. The onus is now on the current CCAP members to carry the gospel to other places. To some extent, this is already happening. Therefore, the name Central Africa limits the possibilities of missions for the CCAP. I, therefore, find it compelling to reflect even on the name itself and ponder whether it remains relevant to where the denomination currently stands and where it intends to go.⁵⁸ The CCAP has reached other parts of Africa which are not, geographically speaking, part of Central Africa, like Tanzania and South Africa. What will be the future of the CCAP in such countries? Should the members in those countries keep on being reminded that they belong to a Central African Church? This is something to consider during the centenary celebration, even if it takes some effort.

8.3 Intensifying Theological Reflection at the Level of the General Assembly

In the period after the centenary celebrations, one of the things that the CCAP synods have to promote under the leadership of

⁵⁸ Interestingly, Yesaya Zerenji Mwasi's denomination, which started as the Blackman's Church when it broke away from the missionary-led CCAP in the backyard of the Livingstonia Synod in 1933 is now known as the Church of Africa Presbyterian (CAP), which makes its geographical influence larger than that of the CCAP which happens to be its mother. For a comprehensive history of this denomination see Oswald Jimmy Banda, "African Indigenous yet Presbyterian: A History and Life of the Church of Africa Presbyterian from 1933 to 2013," PhD (submitted), Mzuzu University, 2023.

the General Assembly is a deeper theological reflection that can cascade to the membership at the grassroots level. There are new ways of doing things in the CCAP with different emphases from synod to synod, but they still need a clear theological justification or reflection. The historical background of the CCAP, as rooted in Calvinism and the Reformed tradition, is founded on solid theological reflections. While not necessarily promoting the Western way of theologizing, it is a must for the church to theologize from a contemporary African perspective so that whatever vision the leadership has should be grounded in solid theological reflection. Without such a reflection, the CCAP congregants will continue to be bewildered by changes that seem to contradict what they always thought to be the right way of doing things. Even some of the classical confessions of faith should be revised and contextualized so that the historical baggage of denominational rivalries that characterized the background for the writing of such documents does not arouse in the minds of contemporary Africans hatred for fellow Christians in other denominations.⁵⁹ For example, the polemics against Catholicism at a time when there were persecutions on either side in post-Reformation Europe do not speak to contemporary CCAP Christians' attitudes to their Catholic brothers and sisters in Malawi and other parts of Africa. This means that historical confessions of the Reformed faith need to be purged of elements that are anachronistic in the Malawian context while retaining timeless theological truths. In the same way, the CCAP is supposed to theologically reflect deeply on controversial matters, such as LGBTQI rights, as influenced by Western societies.

⁵⁹ Cogitator W. Mapala, "A Critical Reflection and Malawian Perspective on the Commemoration of the Edinburgh 1910 International Missionary Conference," *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 41/3 (2015), 63–78.

It will be easier for the CCAP to take a stand on such matters if its position rests on solid theological ground.

9. Conclusion

This chapter has presented a cursory glance at the CCAP through an introduction so that we can appreciate where the CCAP has come from in the past 100 years and try to conceive a CCAP future that would make posterity grateful for the centenary reflection. This is an opportunity for the CCAP leadership of today to contribute to the building of the Kingdom of God within the family of the CCAP in a way that will stand the test of time should the church militant continue to wait for the Parousia for some more generations to come.

Part 1 – CCAP History

3. One Hundred Years of Meantime: When is the Eschaton for the CCAP?

Kenneth R. Ross

When the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian was formed in 1924, its creators were aware that it was not yet what it would ultimately be. They signalled this awareness by including in its foundational constitution the word “meantime”: “each presbytery shall **meantime** retain its present constitution.” This language suggested that they were making an interim arrangement, not one that would remain in place indefinitely. This chapter examines the eschatological tension built into the original constitution of the CCAP – the hope that it would become something that it was not yet. In one sense, the CCAP as a united body already existed from 1924. In another sense, it was not yet what it was hoped that it would be. It therefore entered into an interim period, marked by a tension between the “already” and the “not yet.” This chapter investigates why the CCAP was set up on this provisional basis and explores what the results have been.

Aiming for an African Church

From their earliest days, the Presbyterian Missions in Malawi looked forward to the emergence of an African church and part of their dream was that it would be a united church. As early as 1882, when they were both relatively new to Malawi and when an African church barely existed, David Clement Scott wrote to Robert Laws, “I do think successful work in Africa depends a great deal on the union of the various missions. It would simply

be disgraceful if we could not unite for God's work."¹ Ten years later, when Laws addressed the World Presbyterian Alliance in Toronto, he stated that, "We should work towards a Central African Presbyterian Church, which would include Blantyre and the Dutch."² In 1895 Scott wrote in the Mission newspaper *Life and Work*: "When will the larger and wider unity be possible of an African Church, built on the foundations of the Prophets and Apostles, not after the inanity of undenominationalism but after the Catholicity of Primitive Christianity? Why should the sin of home schism be laid on Africa? 'Lo we have sinned and done wickedly: but these sheep what have they done?'"³ From this broad perspective it was obvious that there was little sense in imposing divisions that derived from European history on the life of the emerging African church. When Scott designed Blantyre Mission's central church, later known as St Michael and All Angels, he did not aim to comply with any European denominational tradition. Rather, with Moorish towers and Byzantine domes, he sought to evoke the entire heritage of the universal church on which he imagined the African church would draw as it forged its own identity.⁴

¹ David Clement Scott to Robert Laws, 3 May 1882, National Library of Scotland, MS 7903, cit. Harri Englund, *Visions for Racial Equality: David Clement Scott and the Struggle for Justice in Nineteenth-Century Malawi*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022, 92.

² Cit. Hamish McIntosh, *Robert Laws: Servant of Africa*, Carberry: Handsel Press and Blantyre: Central Africana, 1993, 113.

³ *Life and Work in British Central Africa*, March 1895, referencing 2 Samuel 24:17.

⁴ See further Kenneth R. Ross, *Gospel Ferment in Malawi: Theological Essays*, Gweru: Mambo-Kachere, 1995, repr. Mzuzu: Luviri Press, 2018, 127-38.

Scott's colleague and successor, Alexander Hetherwick, was inspired by the same vision, writing in 1895 that:

We must beware of woodenness in our development of African Life. To attempt to force on Africa the details of Church life and organization at home is we believe fatal to true growth. African life must be met in its own way, and it will grow on its own lines.⁵

A decisive step in this direction was the ordination of the first African Presbyterian ministers: Harry Kambwiri Matecheta at Blantyre on 9 March 1911 and Stephen Kundecha at Zomba a few days later. "Yesterday's Ordination," wrote Hetherwick on 10 March 1911, "was a day of days in all our lives."⁶ "First," he explained, "comes the foreigner and the foreign religion. Then comes its adoption by the people as something partly theirs and partly a strange importation. Finally, it is their own, an eternal Word for all races and the property of none. A native ministry in part marks the time when that last step has been taken. From that point onward the Church is native and national."⁷

Now that an indigenous church was emerging, it provoked the question of church union that had already been in the minds of the missionaries. The question of union was closely intertwined with the question of the emergence of a truly African church. "Could not the various Missions," asked Hetherwick in 1896, "send their representatives to a Council, held say in Blantyre township or in the Mission, and see how far Catholic Christianity could come to agreement respecting Orders, Sacraments,

⁵ *Life and Work in British Central Africa*, September 1895.

⁶ Alexander Hetherwick to W.M. McLachlan, 10 March 1911, MNA BMC/ 50/2/1/114; see further Kenneth R. Ross, *Malawi's First Presbyterian Ministers: Vocation and Identity in a Racialized Context*, Mzuzu: Luviri Press, 2023.

⁷ *Life and Work in Nyasaland*, April-May 1911.

Church doctrine and founding for the Native Church of Africa?”⁸ It was an ambitious ecumenical vision, which would never be fulfilled as he first imagined. Nevertheless, it remained a guiding light for the Scottish missionaries as they sought in the coming years to bring the missions and churches into closer relations with one another.

Steps Towards Union

Hetherwick was very clear as to the ultimate aim of the work of the Missions: “The African Church – not a mere mission, or an appendage of the home Church – but the body of our Blessed Lord living and growing in the life of the African – that is what we wish to see, with the eye of faith if not with the eye of sight.”⁹ When it came to putting this into practical effect, the first step, insisted upon by the governing committees in Scotland, was the creation of Presbyteries. On 15 November 1899, Livingstonia Mission constituted the Presbytery of North Livingstonia (mistakenly expecting that the Mvera-based Dutch Reformed missionaries would constitute a Presbytery of South Livingstonia). The Livingstonia Mission Council took the decision to “approve of the early organization of the native Church into congregations and regularly constituted courts, viz: Kirk Sessions, Presbyteries and Synod.” However, the Council also decreed that, “to the jurisdiction of such courts, the Native Church as such be subject but that the European agents and the

⁸ *Life and Work in British Central Africa*, September 1896.

⁹ *Life and Work in British Central Africa*, January 1903.

financial arrangements of the mission continue subject, as at present, to their several home committees and local councils.”¹⁰

Without any doubt, this was a momentous beginning for organised church life in Malawi. As the Presbytery was formed it was already looking forward to the creation of a Synod to which it would be related. Yet built into the arrangement was a tension between the life of the “native church” and the continuing life of the Mission. This was to have far-reaching effects.

By 1902 the Blantyre Mission Council was ready to take the same step, creating a Presbytery on the following basis:

1. The Presbytery shall consist of 1) all European Ordained Missionaries; 2) All European Elders; 3) All native ordained Ministers; 4) One representative native Elder from each Session, chosen annually.
2. The Moderator of the Presbytery shall always be one of the ordained European Ministers, who shall be elected annually, the office falling in rotation to the various ministers according to the dates of their ordination, commencing with the senior ordained minister.
3. The Presbytery shall be the final court of appeal in all matters relative to the native church – pending the formation of a Synod or Assembly of the African Church.
4. The Presbytery shall have power to license and ordain native candidates for the ministry, for work in Africa only, on complying with the courses of study sanctioned by the General

¹⁰ Minute of the Presbytery of North Livingstonia, 15 November 1899, cit. John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi 1875-1940: The Impact of the Livingstonia Mission in the Northern Province*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977; 2nd ed., Blantyre: CLAIM, 2000, 289.

Assembly, and to exercise discipline over its own licentiates according to the laws of the Church.¹¹

Racial identity – “native” and “European” – was written into the constitution of the Presbytery but, while it accorded certain privilege to its European members, it also looked forward to the day when there would be African ministers and an African Church that would form the supreme court of appeal. When the Presbytery held its first meeting in January 1903, it received the constitution laid down for it by the General Assembly in Scotland but took the decision that, “in the meantime the designation of the Presbytery be “the Presbytery of Blantyre of the Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian.”¹² This was an extraordinary step to take when such a church did not yet exist! In Hetherwick’s mind were the dreams that he and Scott had cherished: “It means the organization and development of the native church life as apart from the Mission that was the means of giving it birth. It means that the Church life here can take on a stamp that is its own and not a mere wooden reproduction of the life and character of the home church and home Christianity. The Church must be native and not exotic – and the freest scope must be given to native character in the development of its work and organization.”¹³

No sooner had the Presbytery been formed at Blantyre than Hetherwick was thinking that this was just a first step on the further journey that would lead to a wider church union: “This is another step in the foundation of the Church of Central Africa. The final step is, we hope, not far distant when we will

¹¹ Mission Council meeting at Blantyre, 11 February 1902, MNA 50/BMC /1/1/1.

¹² Ibid, 13 January 1903, MNA 50/BMC/1/2/1.

¹³ *Life and Work in British Central Africa*, January 1903.

join with the other Presbyteries in a General Synod of all the churches who acknowledge the Presbyterian form of church government.”¹⁴ Hetherwick saw the way ahead very clearly and he was a man in a hurry: “A union of two Presbyteries would give us a court of final appeal in all matters affecting the comity of the native churches and strengthen the hands of each in dealing with the many problems that arise in the organization of native Christianity. We cannot come together too soon, so that the lines of policy and method may be laid down while the churches are yet young.”¹⁵

To set this movement on a formal basis, as preparations were being made for Livingstonia and Dutch Reformed representatives to come to Blantyre for the 1904 Missionary Conference, Hetherwick brought a motion to the Presbytery of Blantyre, at its meeting on 11 May 1904, “that the Presbytery appoint a committee for the purpose of taking steps to join with the Presbytery of North Livingstonia in the formation and constitution of a synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian.”¹⁶ The motion was unanimously agreed and this enabled representatives of the Presbytery to meet with their Livingstonia counterparts during the 1904 Missionary Conference. When the Blantyre committee duly met with its counterpart from Livingstonia, with Robert Laws in the chair and observers present also from the Dutch Reformed Church Mission, they set

¹⁴ *Life and Work in British Central Africa*, September 1902.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Blantyre Presbytery meeting, 11 May 1904, Presbytery of Blantyre, “History of the Movement for Union between the Presbyteries of Blantyre and Livingstonia,” 5 February 1912, MNA 50/BMC/3/2/1.

to work on the creed and constitution of the new church.¹⁷ The result was that, “This joint meeting of the Committee of the Presbyteries of North Livingstonia and Blantyre hereby resolves to take united action towards the formation of a Synod.”¹⁸ History was being made. Though it would be twenty years before the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian came into being, its origins can be traced back to the 1904 meeting in Blantyre.

Thereafter for some years meetings were infrequent and progress was slow, but the approach of the third major Nyasaland missionary conference held at Mvera in 1910 (following Livingstonia in 1900 and Blantyre in 1904) concentrated attention. Two issues required much discussion. The first was the question of what the name of the Church should be. The mother churches in Scotland had recommended “The Presbyterian Church in Africa” but this was regarded as emphasizing the non-African, Presbyterian element too much. Donald Fraser, seconded by James Chisholm, proposed that the new church be called, “The Church of Central Africa.” Walter Elmslie and Alexander Hetherwick moved an amendment that it should be called, “The Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian.” The amendment was carried by 10 votes to 3.¹⁹ Hetherwick, still moved by the old ideals he had shared with Clement Scott,

¹⁷ Minute of the Committee of North Livingstonia and Blantyre Presbyteries, meeting at Blantyre on 19 October 1904, Blantyre Presbytery files, MNA 50/BMC/3/2/1.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Livingstonia Mission Council Minutes, September 1910, Appendix 1-“Meeting at Mvera of representatives of Blantyre and North Livingstonia Presbyteries,” 3 August 1910, cit. T. Jack Thompson, *Christianity in Northern Malawi: Donald Fraser’s Missionary Methods and Ngoni Culture*, Leiden: Brill, 1995, 212-13.

explained that "Central Africa," was stressed because, "we mean it to be the Church of the land and people."²⁰ This point was taken but with the term "Presbyterian" added at the end rather than at the beginning as was more common with Presbyterian Churches. Tension remained about whether the new Church's identity was more a matter of the "land and people" or of its Presbyterian character. It was a tension that was left to be resolved by history. More than a hundred years later, the name agreed at Mvera in 1910 is still in place.²¹

The second major decision was that European missionaries would continue to be subject to the courts of their home churches, rather than to those of the new Church coming into being. Hetherwick's starting point on this issue had been very different. He had written to Robert Laws in 1904 to insist that, "Missionaries who come out from the Home Church must throw in their lot with the church they are sent to here, and put themselves under the jurisdiction of the local church courts. There can be no half measures in the matter: the Home Church must learn to trust the good sense of their daughters in the foreign field ... the local church must be independent of the Home Church, that is my point."²² However, by 1909, when Hetherwick submitted a report to the upcoming Edinburgh 1910 World Missionary Conference, he had to concede that "the position of the European Missionary in the Constitution

²⁰ Alexander Hetherwick, cit. John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity*, 294.

²¹ See further Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity: A History of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian as a Federative Denomination (1924-2018)*, Carlisle: Langham, 2019.

²² Alexander Hetherwick to Robert Laws, 9 August 1904, cit. Andrew Ross, *Blantyre Mission and the Making of Modern Malawi*, 232.

of the United Synod” had proved to be a “difficulty.”²³ The fact that the European ministers and elders did not come under the discipline of the new Church was presented as an opportunity for a truly African church to come into being, unconstrained by the European way of doing things. However, it also gave rise to a Church that was divided on racial lines and could be seen as a failure to witness to oneness in Christ. As John McCracken remarked, “In some ways, the CCAP was to function as an instrument for African initiative; in others, up to the 1950s, it was to serve as a monument to racial disunity.”²⁴ It took the crisis of the Federation years in the 1950s to demonstrate that this arrangement was unsustainable and in 1959 Church of Scotland ministers entered fully into the structures of the CCAP.

Meanwhile, at Mvera in 1910:

- It was unanimously agreed that in the opinion of the joint Committee appointed by the Blantyre and North Livingstonia Presbyteries it will make for the extension of the Kingdom of God and the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ that the Presbyteries should now be united in one Synod of a common Church.
- It was agreed that the name of the Church be “The Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian”.
- That the credal basis of the Church be the Apostles’ Creed for members and the Nicene Creed for office-bearers, and that the worship and order of the Church be Presbyterian.

²³ World Missionary Conference, 1910, Correspondence of Commission VIII, Cooperation and the Promotion of Unity, 280.215 W893c VIII, Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, Switzerland, The Hon and Rev A. Hetherwick Central Africa, No. 83.

²⁴ John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity*, 295.

- That the government of the Church be on the Presbyterian basis, by sessions, presbyteries and synods.
- That each presbytery shall meantime retain its present constitution.
- That the synod shall consist of all the ordained ministers, with an equal number of elders chosen by the presbyteries.
- That the synod shall meet every three years.
- That European members of Presbytery shall continue in their present relations to the home Churches.²⁵

These provisions now had to be adopted by the church courts at Livingstonia and Blantyre before being sent to Scotland for approval but, as Hetherwick remarked, “Meanwhile we rejoice that there is the near prospect of such a union consummated on a simple practical basis *leaving wide scope for future developments* and organizations as the needs of the Church of the country demand. It was a day of great thankfulness—may it be the herald of that wider union which the churches at home are looking for—and of that wider catholic union which will be the answer to the prayer of our Blessed Lord, ‘that they all may be one’.”²⁶ In Hetherwick’s mind, the steps taken at Mvera were just a beginning. There would be much more to be done to fulfil the eschatological hope for a fully united church. Meanwhile, the agreement made at Mvera was enthusiastically adopted by the church courts both at Livingstonia and Blantyre. By February

²⁵ Presbytery of Blantyre, “History of the Movement for Union between the Presbyteries of Blantyre and Livingstonia,” 5 February 1912, MNA 50/BMC/ 3/2/1.

²⁶ *Life and Work in British Central Africa*, September-December 1910, my italics.

1912, both Missions could write to their governing committees in Scotland requesting General Assembly approval.

Since moves were already being made in Scotland for a reunion of Blantyre and Livingstonia's two mother churches, the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church, this request was well received. The Foreign Mission Committees of the two Churches set up a joint committee to work on the terms of union, based on the recommendations that had come from Malawi.²⁷ This Joint Committee worked in consultation with the Missions and churches in Malawi, and left it to the Presbyteries of Livingstonia and Blantyre to frame the brief statement of faith that was to be included in the basis of union.²⁸ By the beginning of 1914 Hetherwick could report that, "Negotiations for union between the Presbyteries of Blantyre and Livingstonia have now been completed so far as parties on this side of the ocean are concerned. We have never had any difficulty here—not even when the home Churches asked us to prepare a 'Brief Statement of Faith'—a task which elsewhere has baffled the brains of wiser heads than ours."²⁹ The General Assemblies of both the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church gave their approval in May 1914.³⁰ Based on the agreement reached at Mvera in 1910 and finetuned by the work of the Joint Committee that met from 1912 to 1914, the basis of union adopted by the General Assemblies was as follows:

²⁷ J. Fairley Daly to Robert Laws, 22 February 1912, NLS 7867/561.

²⁸ W.M. McLachlan to Alexander Hetherwick, 25 July 1912, MNA BMC/50 /2/1/120.

²⁹ *Life and Work in British Central Africa*, January-February 1914.

³⁰ Church of Scotland Foreign Mission Committee, 27 May 1914 NLS DEP. 298/16/3-4.

The Presbyteries of Blantyre and Livingstonia being persuaded that it will make for the extension of the Kingdom of God and the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ that the Presbyteries should be formed into a Synod to be *meantime* the Supreme Court of a United Church,—

It was agreed,—

1. That the name of the Church be ‘The Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian.’
2. That the doctrinal basis of the Church be the Apostles’ Creed, a brief statement of faith as hereinafter set forth,³¹ and a

³¹ Brief Statement of Faith Referred to in Article 2

The Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the supreme rule of faith and conduct.

There is one God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three are one God, equal in power and glory, and He alone is to be worshipped.

All men are sinners and therefore in need of salvation, and can be saved only through the grace of God, through the redeeming work of Christ, and the regenerating and sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit.

God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. The Lord Jesus Christ, being conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and born of her yet without sin, was true man and true God. To save men from sin, and reconcile them to God, He perfectly fulfilled the law of God, offered Himself on the cross a true and perfect sacrifice, died, was buried, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven, from whence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

The salvation thus wrought for us by Christ is applied to us by the Holy Spirit, who worketh in us, and thus uniteth us to Christ, enabling us to receive Him as He is offered to us in the gospel, and to bring forth the fruits of righteousness. In His gracious work the

distinct acknowledgement of the Word of God as the supreme rule of faith and conduct; and that the worship, discipline, and government of the Church be Presbyterian.

3. That each Presbytery shall *meantime* retain its present constitution.
4. That the Synod shall consist of all the ordained ministers, with equal number of elders chosen by Presbyteries.
5. That the first meeting of the Synod shall be held at the time and place fixed by the Presbyteries, and thereafter every meeting of the Synod shall fix its own time and place for next meeting in accordance with such rules as may be framed by itself – the interval between the meetings of Synod not to be longer than four years.

Spirit useth all means of grace, especially the Word, Sacraments, and Prayer.

The sacraments of the New Testament are Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism is a sacrament wherein the washing with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, doth signify and seal our ingrafting into Christ and partaking of the benefits of the Covenant of grace, and our engagement to be the Lord's. The Lord's Supper is a sacrament wherein by giving and receiving bread and wine according to Christ's appointment, His death is showed forth, and the worthy receivers are, not after a corporeal and carnal manner, but by faith, made partakers of His body and blood to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.

It is the duty of all believers to unite in the fellowship of the church, to observe the sacraments and other ordinances of Christ, to obey His laws, to continue in prayer, to keep holy the Lord's Day, to meet together for worship, to wait upon the preaching of the Word, to give as God has prospered them for the support and extension of the gospel, and at all times to seek the advance of the Kingdom of God.

6. That European members of Presbytery shall continue in their present relations to the Home Churches.³²

The term “meantime” was used twice in the constitutional basis of the united Church. On the first occasion, it was provided that the Synod they formed would be *meantime* the Supreme Court of a United Church. This presumably envisaged a time when a General Assembly would be created and would become the Supreme Court, given the normal fourfold hierarchy of courts in Presbyterian church government. There was therefore an interim character to the place of the Synod as the highest court in the life of the new Church. The second use of the term was the provision that each Presbytery shall *meantime* retain its present constitution. This seems to envisage a time when the existing constitutions of the Presbyteries would be superseded by a future arrangement to be put in place by the united Church.

Meanwhile the Missionary Conference that had been planned for Livingstonia in 1914, where it was hoped to bring the united church into being, had to be postponed indefinitely because of the outbreak of the First World War. It was not until 1924 that it was possible to convene the Conference. After it concluded, the ministers and elders of Blantyre and Livingstonia met together and formally constituted the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian. It might not have been all that Laws, Scott and Hetherwick had hoped for in terms of a truly African church that was unencumbered by the ecclesiastical divisions imposed by European history. Nevertheless, after twenty years of

³² *Ibid*, my italics.

patiently working towards this union, it was a day of no small achievement when it became a reality.

Not Federation but Union

In a recent major work on CCAP history, Rhodian Munyenembe has suggested that the CCAP operates more like a federation of churches than a single, unified church.³³ A case can be made for this in terms of how it has worked out in practice, but it might be important to clarify that this was not the original intention. We know that the ultimate aim of the architects of the CCAP was not to create a federation for the simple reason that they already had one. This was the Federated Board of Missions in Nyasaland, which was constituted in 1910 at Mvera where Alexander Hetherwick was elected as its first President. Its membership included Livingstonia Mission, Blantyre Mission, the Dutch Reformed Church Mission, the London Missionary Society, the Zambesi Industrial Mission, the Nyasaland Industrial Mission, the Scottish Baptist Mission, the South Africa General Mission, the Berlin Mission in German East Africa and the Moravian Mission in German East Africa.³⁴ When these Missions met, they were very much aware that African churches were being born through their work. At this embryonic stage, might they form one church instead of many different ones?

Such an idea caught the imagination of missionaries like Donald Fraser of Livingstonia and Hetherwick of Blantyre. They

³³ Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity*, 92.

³⁴ World Missionary Conference, 1910, Correspondence of Commission VIII, Cooperation and the Promotion of Unity, 280.215 W893c VIII, Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, Switzerland, The Hon and Rev A. Hetherwick Central Africa, No. 83.

imagined the possibility of one African church resulting from the work of all the Missions represented in the Federated Board. When the Livingstonia Presbytery received the recommendation of the 1904 meeting in Blantyre, it stated that: “we are of the opinion that steps should now be taken to seek a common basis of federation which while allowing due autonomy to each society, will unite all the evangelical churches in one church of Christ for Central Africa.”³⁵ Failing that, the next best thing would be that at least the Presbyterian or Reformed Missions, which already had so much in common, might combine to create a united church. At each of the Missionary Conferences, additional sessions were organized to allow representatives of Livingstonia, Blantyre and the Dutch Reformed Church Mission to explore this possibility. This cooperation among the Missions laid the foundation for church union.

At this time there were few paved roads in Nyasaland, journeys were time-consuming, and north-south travel depended heavily on the steamers on the Lake. To hold a meeting of representatives of different Missions working in different parts of the country was a major logistical exercise. It could not happen often. The three missionary conferences, held at Livingstonia in 1900, Blantyre in 1904 and Mvera in 1910, were therefore highly significant occasions. Though they were led and organized by European missionaries, from the outset they also included African Christian leaders. Their presence put the African church on the agenda. It was the 1904 Blantyre conference that set the wheels in motion for a union of the Blantyre and Livingstonia Presbyteries. From 1904 onwards, there was a dual character to

³⁵ Livingstonia Presbytery Minutes, 28 March 1905, MNA 50/BMC/3/2/1.

the gatherings: a missionary conference for the Protestant Missions that were active in Nyasaland and an opportunity for the Presbyterians to confer about their hopes of creating a united church. By 1909 Fraser was growing impatient with the lack of progress, writing to Hetherwick: “It is a deplorable fact that we are getting no nearer either to federation or union. The various churches have gone no further yet with the discussion of federation, though the Dutch brethren have written to say they are still keeping it in mind. Now even if all the missions are only prepared to go the length of Federation, it seems to me that we of the Livingstonia and Blantyre and Mvera Missions must not stop short of Union.”³⁶ In Fraser’s mind it was clear that the much-awaited church union was categorically different from federation.

Mission and Church: Inherent Tensions

In reading the Minutes and correspondence of the Livingstonia and Blantyre Missions during the 1920s and beyond, there is a striking contrast between the terms in which the 1924 union is hailed as the fulfilment of all their dreams and the fact that it apparently had almost no effect on their regular operations. There is no reason to doubt the sincerity of the Scottish missionaries in regarding the union as both the fulfilment of all their work and the foundation for the future African church to which they looked forward. When Hetherwick cabled from Livingstonia the day after the union to inform his home committee that it had duly gone ahead, its secretary W.M. MacLachlan immediately welcomed “this epoch-making and felicitous

³⁶ Donald Fraser to Alexander Hetherwick, 20 December 1909, MNA 50/BMC /3/2/1.

event.”³⁷ When the whole committee met two months later, they, “recorded their deep satisfaction that the union of the two Presbyteries had now been accomplished, and that organic unity has thereby been given to the Church in Central Africa.”³⁸ However, while with one breath the Scottish Missions recognized that something momentous had happened, in the next they carried on as if nothing had changed. When it came to the running of the Missions, they hardly missed a beat. The 1924 union was acknowledged as an important and inspiring development, but attention immediately returned to the matters of finance, personnel, property and planning that were the constant preoccupation of those responsible for the Missions. MacLachlan’s note to welcome the church union was literally a “P.S.” at the end of a letter that was mainly about the staffing of the Blantyre Hospital.³⁹ Likewise when Frank Ashcroft wrote to Robert Laws from the secretariat of the United Free Church he was almost entirely preoccupied with matters related to the running of the Mission.⁴⁰

I have not been able to find even the slightest hint that the church union might have prompted any review or revision of the way in which the Missions ran their operations. To some extent, this might be explained simply by the magnitude of the work they were undertaking. Extensive educational, healthcare, industrial and community development work was in the hands

³⁷ W.M. MacLachlan to Alexander Hetherwick, 24 September 1924, NLS 75 91/81.

³⁸ Minutes of Church of Scotland Foreign Mission Committee, 18 November 1924, NLS DEP.298/19/13.

³⁹ W.M. MacLachlan to Alexander Hetherwick, 24 September 1924, NLS 7591/81.

⁴⁰ Frank Ashcroft to Robert Laws, 24 November 1924, NLS 7687/706.

of the Missions at this time. Those responsible constantly felt under-resourced and overstretched. While they welcomed the emergence of an African church and understood that this was the objective for which they were ultimately working, there were so many other dimensions of Mission work calling for their attention that the union and what it meant for the future was, for practical purposes, a peripheral concern. In addition to the work of their main stations, both Missions were much concerned with further expansion. During the 1912 to 1914 period, when the Terms of Union for the CCAP were being hammered out, Livingstonia was much occupied with its extensive work in eastern Zambia while Blantyre was embarking on its new work in Lomweland in Mozambique. By 1924, when the Union eventually took place, both Missions were greatly stretched by the additional responsibilities they had taken up in Tanganyika following the expulsion of German missionaries during the First World War.⁴¹

The wider social and political context is also relevant here. The church union took place at the height of the colonial era. It was assumed that Europeans should be in charge and that the time when Africans would take responsibility for their own affairs lay far in the future. This working assumption seems to have informed the thinking of those responsible for the Blantyre and Livingstonia Missions. While they actively supported and promoted the creation of the CCAP as a united church, and while they had a high sense of the ecclesiastical importance of the union, they seem to have comfortably assumed that the running of the Missions would be the main thing with which they would be concerned for many years to come. They were thrilled

⁴¹ See further Kenneth R. Ross, *Malawian Missionaries in Tanzania's Southern Highlands 1916-28*, Mzuzu: Luviri Press, 2023.

by the emergence of an African church and aware of the promise it held for the future, but did not expect the union to have any immediate effect on the operations of the Missions.

A revealing indication of the limitations of the European perspective is that the leading figures in the governing bodies of the Missions in Scotland tended to hail the church union primarily as a monument to the achievements of their missionaries rather than recognising any need to adjust their mode of operation. From the Livingstonia home committee Fairley Daly wrote to Robert Laws that, “It must be a matter of great joy to Dr Elmslie, Dr Hetherwick and yourself, as the oldest missionaries in the district, to see a united Synod of the Christian Churches in a district so changed from what you first saw in earlier years.”⁴² From the Blantyre home committee, J.L. Ogilvie told Hetherwick that the church union “is a splendid and visible coronation of your forty years labours.”⁴³ It was seen more as a matter of missionary achievement than a step that called for any new departure in terms of everyday operations.

What seems to have been difficult to detect, from the perspective of the Scottish missionaries, was the extent to which the continuation of separate Mission Councils, each answering to a separate home Committee, would limit meaningful integration of the CCAP at an operational level. When the Church of Scotland Foreign Mission Committee asked the General Assembly of 1914 “to sanction and empower the entering of the Presbytery of Blantyre into the proposed Union,” it added

⁴² J. Fairley Daly to Robert Laws, 23 April 1914, NLS7868/259.

⁴³ J.L. Ogilvie to Alexander Hetherwick, 20 December 1924, NLS 7591/975.

a significant qualification: “reserving for the Mission Council of Blantyre all duties and powers conferred upon it in terms of its Constitution as approved by the Church of Scotland Foreign Mission Committee on 20th November 1906.”⁴⁴ The same arrangement applied to the Livingstonia Mission Council. Though they were very closely related, the Scottish Missions and the African Presbyteries were two distinct entities. It was the latter which were united in 1924 and there appears to have been a lack of critical thinking about what the church union might mean for the operation of the Missions.

With the benefit of hindsight, Bengt Sundkler and Christopher Steed can discern the situation that was generally prevailing in Africa at this time:

The mission-related Church had top levels of leadership, a formal leadership which as a matter of course lay in the hands of the White foreigner. There was a hierarchical distinction between the Western missionary with his administrative and economic power and influence and the local African staff – pastors, catechists, teachers, elders etc. However, almost unknown to the White man there prevailed all the time an informal leadership, exercised by the local African pastor and by evangelists and catechists.⁴⁵

It is a general description that fits the situation found at Livingstonia and Blantyre from the 1920s onwards. It was the African church leaders who were able to perceive that there was a problem with continuing an arrangement where most of the power and resources were in the hands of a European-only Mission Council.

⁴⁴ Church of Scotland Foreign Mission Committee, 3 March 1914, NLSDEP. 298/16/3-6.

⁴⁵ Bengt Sundkler and Christopher Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 623.

Respectfully yet clearly, in 1921 Yesaya Chibambo had put his finger on the problem: “the native is not encouraged to attend Mission Council. The missionary is in Africa for the uplift and improvement of the native. This improvement can better be carried out if the mind of the native and the missionary are working together and designing together ... One feels therefore, that it is now time when some remarkable native servants of the Mission should be encouraged to attend Mission Council.”⁴⁶ The Mission Council, however, made it very clear to Chibambo that there was no possibility of his request being considered favourably: “The Mission Council is elected by the Church in Scotland and are by it charged with the control and development of operations in the country ... it is not in the mind of the Home Church that native workers, *meantime*, should be members of the Council.”⁴⁷

This left no doubt about who was in charge of Livingstonia Mission and firmly squashed any hopes African leaders like Chibambo may have had about playing a part in the governance of the Mission any time soon. Yet, the one chink of light in an otherwise demoralizing situation comes with the word “meantime.” As with the basis of union for the CCAP, it opens up an eschatological dimension, suggesting that a future time will come when things will be different. Waiting for this future time taxed the patience of Livingstonia’s African church leaders – in some cases to breaking point. So entrenched was the European domination of Livingstonia Mission that Yesaya Zerenji Mwasi,

⁴⁶ Yesaya Chibambo, Letter to Livingstonia Mission Council, 1921, in Kenneth R. Ross (ed), *Christianity in Malawi: A Source Book*, revised and enlarged edition, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2020, 200-05 [203].

⁴⁷ Livingstonia Mission Council Minutes, 15 July 1921, cit. McCracken, *Politics and Christianity*, 292, my italics.

one of its first African ministers, eventually despaired and broke away to form what he hoped would be a truly African church – the Blackman’s Church which is in Tongaland.⁴⁸ The fact that most of his contemporaries remained within the structures of Livingstonia does not mean that they were satisfied with the prevailing arrangements.

A question that must be asked is how far the “meantime” approach played into the colonialist and racist assumptions that generally prevailed during the early 20th century? P.H. Roux, a Dutch Reformed Church participant at the Mvera 1910 Conference, understood that the conference held to the general conviction that the black African in “his current state of development [was] only a child and not able to stand at the helm of affairs, but should rather be under the supervision of whites.”⁴⁹ It could be debated whether his understanding was correct but the fact remains that it was possible to form this impression. The influence of racial attitudes surfaced again at Livingstonia in 1926 when the church union was being consummated. In an explosive incident, the Dutch Reformed Church delegates vigorously objected to an arrangement made by Robert Laws for “whites and natives” to eat together. When W.H. Murray threatened that the DRC representatives would walk out of the conference if this arrangement continued, the Livingstonia missionaries backed down and separate eating arrangements were

⁴⁸ See Yesaya Zerenji Mwasi, *Essential and Paramount Reasons for Working Independently*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1999, originally written 1933.

⁴⁹ *De Kerkbode*, 29 September 1910, 207, cit. Retief Müller, *The Scots Afrikaners: Identity Politics and Intertwined Religious Cultures in Southern and Central Africa*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022, 133.

implemented.⁵⁰ “Scots missionaries,” Retief Müller concludes, “were the primary if protesting enablers of racist accommodation.”⁵¹ The Livingstonia missionary A.G. Macalpine went so far as to describe the refusal to share meals together as “un-christian.”⁵² Nevertheless, it was accepted by all parties so as not to jeopardize the union and particularly so as to allow the DRC to be part of it. It appears to be another expression of the “meantime” approach.

For architects of the union like Laws and Hetherwick, accommodation of racism was not something that they hoped would be a feature of the church that would ultimately emerge. But they were willing to accommodate it in the “meantime” – just as the CCAP constitution included the racist arrangement that European missionaries would be subject to their home churches rather than the CCAP. This seemed to them to be a pragmatic compromise. However, the fact that such a compromise seemed acceptable reveals how far they were shaped by the racist and colonialist assumptions of their time. This is apparent also in their easy assumption that the work of the separate Missions would continue undisturbed by any need for rearrangement in light of the church union. It appeared natural to assume that Europeans would remain in control of the Missions while the newly formed united church was an

⁵⁰ M.W. Retief, *Verowerings Vir Christus*, Stellenbosch: CSV Boekhandel, 1948, 234, cit. Retief Müller, *The Scots Afrikaners*, 140-41. Müller regards this incident as decisive and paradigmatic for the tension between a missionary-ecumenical strand and an Afrikaner nationalist strand among the Scots Afrikaners.

⁵¹ Retief Müller, *The Scots Afrikaners*, 145.

⁵² A.C. Murray, diary, 13 September 1924, cit. Retief Müller, *The Scots Afrikaners*, 193.

eschatological reality that would come into its own at some point in the far distant future. Hence it appeared to be a simple solution to allow the Presbyteries to continue as effectively separate units, leaving the challenging task of moulding them together into a single cohesive unit to the eschatological future.

Laws and Hetherwick were pro-African missionaries who often clashed with European settlers and Government officials because of their racist outlook and policies. Nevertheless, they were vulnerable themselves to the stadialism that marked a (supposedly) milder and more benevolent form of imperialism. On the basis of a racially defined hierarchy, this categorized humanity into different stages, from the most primitive to the most civilized. Europeans, of course, were considered to belong to the latter category, Africans to the former. This form of racism and imperialism had a more “benign” character in that it included the possibility that those races and peoples currently found at a low level of “civilization” could in future advance through the different stages until, at least in theory, they could reach the highest level. It became a popular way of understanding and justifying European imperial power that it was helping primitive peoples to gradually advance and become more civilized. This served to mask the oppressive, violent and exploitative nature of the Empire by presenting it as a benign institution that was gradually enabling its subjects to advance through the different stages that would ultimately allow them to become “fully civilized.”

It was inviting for the missionary movement to position itself in this script, defining its project in terms of raising primitive people to higher levels of civilization. It became the mainstream view in European society, not least in the churches that supported the missionary enterprise. Hetherwick’s biographer,

the influential journalist and editor William Pringle Livingstone, has recently been singled out as a prime example of a stadialist outlook.⁵³ The writings of the missionaries who were responsible for the creation of the CCAP are peppered with references that betray elements of stadialism and paternalism.⁵⁴ The “meantime” references in the CCAP constitution need to be read in this context. It is a term that perfectly fits a stadialist outlook, suggesting that something is appropriate to a particular stage but that further stages of development lie in the future. The view that guided the formation of the CCAP in 1924 was that the time had come for an African church to be formed but the time had not yet come for Africans to have any role in the operation of the Missions which retained most of the power, resources and initiative. On the one hand, the meantime language shows that the creators of the CCAP were open to this situation changing in future. On the other hand, it meant that the church was created on the basis that it was a child who was yet to mature. It was not yet trusted with the powers and responsibilities that would allow it to flourish as a united church. As the 1924 church union came into effect, it did little or nothing to address the issues that Malawian leaders like Chibambo and Mwasi had highlighted. It was only from the later perspective of the 1950s that Scottish missionaries began to get the point. As Andrew Ross put it: “If the synod was truly a synod of the Presbyterian Church, how was it that a

⁵³ Jeffrey Grant Cannon, “Church of Scotland Periodicals and the Shaping of Scottish Opinion regarding South African Apartheid and the Central African Federation, c.1912 -c.1965,” PhD, University of Edinburgh, 2020.

⁵⁴ See Kenneth R. Ross, *Mission, Race and Colonialism in Malawi: Alexander Hetherwick of Blantyre*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press and Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2023, 167-71.

committee of Scottish missionaries should own so much of the property of the church and alone make key decisions relating to the hospitals and schools that belonged to the churches? Could it be right for expatriate Scots to be pastors of the CCAP, have full membership of presbytery and synod, yet still legally be members not of the CCAP but of the Church of Scotland?”⁵⁵ For the African church members and leaders, the much-celebrated union was a matter, in the trenchant words of John McCracken, of “theoretical rights and practical disabilities.”⁵⁶

Church Union: an Age of Optimism

A further possible reason for the apparent complacency in the minds of the Scottish missionaries about embedding “meantime” arrangements in the constitution of the new church is that they lived in an age when church union seemed to be the direction of travel. If there were certain inconsistencies and anomalies in the constitution, they were confident that these would be ironed out as time went on and the union was more and more firmly cemented. Church life in Scotland during the 1920s was very much dominated by preparations for the union of the two large nationwide churches, the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church, which was eventually completed in 1929.⁵⁷ This had a direct bearing on Blantyre and Livingstonia Missions since from 1929 onwards they would be

⁵⁵ Andrew C. Ross, “Forty-five Years of Turmoil: Malawi Christian Churches, 1949-1994,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 18/2 (1994), 53-58, [55].

⁵⁶ John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity*, 289.

⁵⁷ See Douglas M. Murray, *Rebuilding the Kirk: Presbyterian Reunion in Scotland, 1909-1929*, Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 2000.

governed by the same Church in Scotland. Hence it seemed consistent and entirely natural that the two Presbyteries in Nyasaland should also be united. A significant difference is that when the church union was settled in Scotland there was no “meantime.” Everything was settled on a permanent basis, albeit a Reformed Church always has a capacity for further reform. The “meantime” provision in the CCAP constitution reflected, on the one hand, a recognition that the African church would in future take its own decisions and shape its own organization. On the other hand, it also reveals a certain complacency – an expectation that the creation of a united church would not call for any immediate adjustment to the customary ways in which Mission and Church were operating.

The drive towards church union, moreover, was not confined to Scotland. When it came to worldwide mission, the seminal World Missionary Conference, hosted in Edinburgh in 1910, captured the mood of the Protestant missionary movement and the promotion of cooperation and unity emerged as the major theme.⁵⁸ This in turn spurred on efforts to achieve greater collaboration among Missions and encouraged the young churches arising from the missionary movement to work towards union in many different contexts around the world. Malawi was no exception. Just a few months after the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910, the Mvera Missionary Conference in Malawi both created the Federated Board of Protestant Missions and took decisive steps towards the union of the churches that arose from the Presbyterian Missions. In Scotland too the World Missionary Conference made an impact.

⁵⁸ See Brian Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009, 277-324.

When the Church of Scotland Foreign Mission Committee contemplated its recommendations, it was keen to be in line with what was seen as the progressive approach: “Our Church has always shown her desire for Union in the Mission-field, and now at Calcutta and Madras has realised it.”⁵⁹ Likewise when the United Free Church General Assembly approved the union of the Livingstonia and Blantyre Presbyteries in 1914, it approached the issue “with deep thankfulness that the spirit of unity, which prevails increasingly in the Mission Fields of the world, is conspicuous in the Mission Fields of our own Church, and they hail with much satisfaction the present movements in our two African Fields for closer fellowship with other Christian Missions.”⁶⁰

It was from this perspective that the Assembly welcomed and approved the proposed union of Livingstonia and Blantyre Presbyteries. It seemed to represent the direction of travel in the world church, one with which the Scottish Churches very much identified themselves. This provided encouragement to those promoting the church union in Malawi but did it also introduce the element of complacency that allowed the negotiators to rest content with a “meantime” element in the constitution? If there were elements left to be settled in future, they could be confident that the movement that was carrying churches to greater unity would be strong enough to deal with them at a later date. What they did not anticipate is that a generation later, in the middle years of the 20th century, many of the

⁵⁹ Minutes of the Church of Scotland Foreign Mission Committee, 15 November 1910, NLS DEP.298/15/35. This was a reference to the uniting of Church of Scotland and United Free Church educational work in India.

⁶⁰ Minutes of the United Free Church of Scotland Foreign Mission Committee, 27 May 1914 NLS DEP.298/16/3-4.

movements to form united churches had faltered. By the end of the century a different direction was evident as each denomination sought to assert its own identity. Even the CCAP would encounter forces of division and fragmentation and the “meantime” provision then became a vulnerable point that weakened the capacity of the Church to resist such forces.

Conclusion

The inclusion of the “meantime” clauses in the original constitution of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian in 1924 gave a provisional and ambiguous quality to the newly established church. On the positive side, the eschatological hope built into the constitution revealed the far-reaching vision of its authors. They were not satisfied that the rather loose union of 1924 was the end of the story. Their hope was that it was but a first step towards the attainment of their ultimate goal: a fully African and fully united church. On the less positive side, the “meantime” thinking was to some extent governed by racist and colonialist presuppositions that assumed that Europeans would be in control of the Missions for a long time to come. This led to the running of the Missions being kept separate from the government of the Church, to Europeans being treated differently from Africans in terms of their ecclesiastical status, and to a complacency about an arrangement where the Presbyteries continued to operate on the basis of their existing constitutions. Built into the constitution that gave the CCAP its unity were forces that would drive it apart, making the CCAP, in the words of Rhodian Munyenembe, “one in name but five distinct ‘denominations’ practically.”⁶¹

⁶¹ Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursing an Elusive Unity*, 92.

After meeting in Blantyre in 1926 to admit the Nkhoma Presbytery to the CCAP, the Synod did not meet again until 1933 (this delay violating the terms of the constitution).⁶² The influence of the court that united the Church was very limited indeed. In practical effect, the Missions with which they were identified had the decisive authority in the life of the Presbyteries. Even as they formed a union, they set a course of division. There was thus an ambiguity and provisionality built into the CCAP from the outset. Despite their hopes and ambitions, the missionaries who were behind its creation were handicapped by the racist and colonialist thinking of their time. Nevertheless, their “meantime” language indicated an eschatological hope that the compromises and weaknesses that marked the original CCAP constitution would not be the end of the story. “Assuredly the day will come,” wrote Hetherwick, “sooner perhaps than we at present dream, when the Native Church will ask to be set free to order its own life in its own way.”⁶³ This was the eschaton to which he looked forward, confident that it would be one that would resolve the compromises and inconsistencies that marked the beginnings of the CCAP. After one hundred years, is the CCAP still awaiting its eschaton?

⁶² John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity*, 293.

⁶³ Alexander Hetherwick, *The Gospel and the African: the Croall Lectures for 1930-31*, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1932, 150.

4. The CCAP in the 20th Century: Achievements and Tensions

Nancy Collins

From its inception in 1924, the CCAP had built-in tensions that would militate against the achievement of unity, cohesion and common purpose. Much as the 1924 union of Livingstonia and Blantyre Presbyteries, with the important addition of Nkhoma Presbytery in 1926, was a remarkable achievement, to quite some extent it came about by deferring divisive issues to be dealt with in the future. At the height of the colonial period racial issues loomed large, creating tensions between white and black, as well as between the Scottish and South African missionaries. The continuation of a separate European-only Mission Council for each of the three Missions, effectively disempowered the Presbyteries and consequently undermined their quest for unity.¹ For all the missionary self-congratulation on the ecclesiastical union, the jury was still out on whether or not the CCAP could sustain its unity and become a functional unit.

Strains between the CCAP Presbyteries 1930-1945

Rather than dissipating, the fissures apparent prior to the 1924/26 CCAP church union strengthened and hardened between 1930 and 1956. Peter Bolink details the extensive church union negotiations underway in Malawi and Zambia between 1936 and 1945 whereas Martin Pauw provides an in-depth history of the strains between the Dutch Reformed Church and CCAP between 1930 and 1956.

¹ Cf Graham Duncan, "The Role of Mission Councils in the Scottish Mission in South Africa: 1864—1923," *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 38/1 (2012), 217-234.

On 13 July 1936, Rev R.J.B. Moore, a member of the London Missionary Society (LMS) serving on the United Missions Team formed in the Copperbelt to address spiritual needs of immigrant labourers there, wrote to the Clerk of the CCAP Synod about the possibility of the LMS and the Union Church on the Copperbelt (UCCB) “linking up” with the CCAP. At the October 1936 CCAP Synod meeting held in Blantyre, the Moderator was requested to reply that “the doors are open, and the Synod would cordially welcome any proposal...” This launched union talks between the CCAP, including the three Livingstonia congregations in northeastern Rhodesia – Mwenzo, Lubwa and Chitambo, on the one hand and, on the other hand, the LMS and the UCCB in Northern Rhodesia.² Church union discussions continued until they were put on hold due to the outbreak of World War II.³ In October 1944, an official petition for union between the LMS and the CCAP was drawn up.⁴

While these church union negotiations were moving forward, elements of the Dutch Reformed Church were moving in a very different direction. In 1931 the DRC Synod of the Orange Free State (OFS) retracted its 1928 decision allowing DRC Zambia congregations to join the CCAP. As Pauw observes: “This was largely due to the machinations of Rev J.G. Strydom, the OFS Mission Secretary, who saw no good in the union with this ‘foreign church’.”⁵ In 1933, Prof C.F. Kies of the Missionary

² Peter Bolink, *Towards Church Union in Zambia*, Franeker: T. Wever, 1967, 210-15.

³ *Ibid*, 215-30.

⁴ *Ibid*, 234-35.

⁵ Christoff Martin Pauw, *Mission and Church in Malawi: The History of the Nkhoma Synod of the CCAP 1889-1962*, Lusaka: BPM, 1980, 340-41.

Institute at Wellington, attacked the CCAP, “claiming that while there were countless characteristics and qualities of the Scottish Church to be found in the CCAP, there was no trace of any qualities of the DRC.” As examples, he indicated that English was the official church language and that the hymn book was entirely of foreign origin.⁶ In 1940, Strydom and his colleagues mounted an attack in *Die Kerkbode*, the DRC organ, to undermine the union of Nkhoma with CCAP.⁷ In light of these discussions about Nkhoma being part of the CCAP, it was clear to the DRCM missionaries in Malawi that union negotiations could adversely affect the future of Nkhoma as a CCAP Presbytery, and they were relieved when the CCAP Synod meetings of 1940 and 1942 were postponed.⁸

During the fifth Synod meeting held at Nkhoma in August 1945, Stegmann indicated that union with LMS would have disastrous results, almost certainly requiring Nkhoma to withdraw from CCAP. As a result, Livingstonia delegates moved that “Synod regrets that it is unable to grant the petition of the congregations connected with the London Missionary Society in Northeastern Rhodesia to enter into corporate union with the Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian.”⁹ The 1945 Synod instructed the Standing Committee to investigate uniformity of the constitutions of the three presbyteries and to formulate a constitution for the Church.¹⁰

⁶ Ibid, 341.

⁷ Ibid, 343-44.

⁸ Ibid, 344-45; Peter Bolink, *Towards Church Union in Zambia*, 251.

⁹ Christoff Martin Pau, *Mission and Church in Malawi*, 347.

¹⁰ The Church of Central Africa Presbyterian Minutes of Fifth Synod, 22-26 August 1945, article 13.

Struggle to Develop a CCAP Constitution 1948-1956

According to minutes of the sixth Synod meeting held at Livingstonia in 1948, the Clerks were instructed to prepare a collation of the new suggestions and additions and send copies to all members of the Standing Committee and then send a new draft to Presbyteries for consideration.¹¹ According to the minutes of the seventh Synod meeting held at Blantyre in May 1952, the Synod took up consideration of the Draft Constitution of the Church as revised. Discussion focused on Section 15 dealing with the relations of missionaries to the Church. In the end, primarily because of this issue, the Constitution was not passed.¹²

The basic issue revolved around two matters related to the position of expatriate missionaries in the Church: full voting powers for missionaries of the young Church and integrated membership of Mission personnel in the young Church, coupled with the right of CCAP to exercise oversight and discipline over them.¹³ Based on discussions which continued from 1948 to 1951, it became clear that the Dutch Reformed Church and Church of Scotland had fundamentally different points of view on the issue. According to the DRC, mission personnel should play an advisory and consultative role, serving in a temporary capacity in the Church and ideally not even have voting powers. DRC considered it “principally wrong” that ordained missionaries should become full members of the African Church and

¹¹ The Church of Central Africa Presbyterian Minutes of Sixth Synod, 7-11 October 1948, 4.

¹² The Church of Central Africa Presbyterian Minutes of Seventh Synod, 16-21 May 1952, 4-12.

¹³ Christoff Martin Pauw, *Mission and Church in Malawi*, 351-2.

hold full voting powers in its courts.¹⁴ The Church of Scotland on the other hand believed in the possibility of missionaries becoming members of the young Church, accepting its direction and control, coming under its discipline courts, and thus ceasing for a time to be ministers of the Church of Scotland.¹⁵

In regard to the Article 15 issue, reconciliation appeared virtually impossible. None of the CCAP Presbyteries knew how to overcome the stalemate that now existed. As Pauw remarks, “The position was precarious, not only for the future of the CCAP and for Nkhoma’s position, but also politically. The refusal by Nkhoma to accept integration and let missionaries become full members was seen as something which could have wider repercussions politically, especially in view of the rising feelings in the country against the Federation plans of the Government, and against the racial policies of South Africa.”¹⁶

In early 1954 two possible solutions emerged: 1) upgrading the Presbyteries to Synods within a kind of federal union or 2) upgrading the Presbyteries to Synods and uniting them under a General Synod. The newly created Synods could thus have their own constitutions including arrangements for missionaries. The General Synod would have authority over matters of common interest and matters delegated by the Synods.¹⁷

When the Synod met at Nkhoma from 25 to 29 April 1956, the draft constitution was considered. Section 29 read as follows:

- a) There shall be Synods of the Church whose areas of Jurisdiction shall in the first instance be the areas under

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 352-3.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 353.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 356.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 357.

the Presbyteries of the Church up to the date of the adoption of this constitution. New Synods of the Church may be formed by subdivision agreed by General Synod or by the reception of new Churches or bodies who accept this constitution.

- b) Each Synod shall have its own Constitution.
- c) Each Synod of the Church is authorized to make, amend and repeal laws and provisions for its own management.
- d) The Constitutions, laws and provisions of each Synod shall however be made in conformity with this Constitution.
- e) Each Synod may decide how it shall be related to its Mother Mission and how the missionaries shall serve within the Synod.
- f) Nothing in this Constitution shall prevent any Synod from seeking to establish ecclesiastical relations with like-minded neighbouring churches or societies in consultation with all Synods.¹⁸

At 1:30 pm on Thursday 28 April 1956, “the Draft Constitution as amended was then put to the vote, and there voted: FOR 130; AGAINST 0. The Constitution was therefore passed.”¹⁹ Despite lack of powers designated to the CCAP General Synod under the 1956 constitution, it made significant contributions in four areas during the years 1956-2000.

Achievement 1: Legal Recognition of the General Synod

An early priority for the newly created General Synod was to put in place the policies, personnel, registrations, and

¹⁸ Constitution of the Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian as passed by the meeting of the Eighth Synod, held at Mkhoma, 25-29 April 1956.

¹⁹ The Church of Central Africa Presbyterian Minutes of the Eighth Synod, 25-29 April 1956, 8.

procedures required for it to operate effectively as a legal institution in Malawi. Included were amending the constitution to meet Malawi legal requirements, defining roles of elected officials, defining what constituted General Synod property, incorporating trustees, creating a seal, establishing a bank account, reviewing and approving local Synod minute books, reviewing General Synod auditor's financial statement, establishing an office manned by full time senior clerk, including elders on the Standing Committee, including women delegates to General Synod meetings, establishing a protocol for army chaplain work, establishing ecumenical relationships at regional and international levels, reviewing "reponed" ministers and remembering deceased and retired ministers from the local Synods.²⁰

Throughout the period 1956-2000, the General Synod established ecumenical relationships at regional and international levels. Guests were regularly introduced and welcomed at General Synod meetings and offered an opportunity to bring messages and good wishes. During the 1964 meeting, the Standing Committee reported that Rev J.D. Sangaya and Rev S.P. Kamanga represented CCAP at the 19th General Council of the World Presbyterian Alliance in Frankfurt in August 1964; Rt. Rev A.S. Labuschagne and Rev J. D. Sangaya attended the inaugural meeting of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC); and Rev Killion Mgawi was an observer at the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa in Nairobi.²¹ Minutes of 1972 General Synod Meeting reflect reports from appointed delegates on the 1969 AACC meeting in Abidjan and the 1970

²⁰ Nancy Collins, "The Impact of the General Synod of the CCAP on its Members from 1956-2000," MTh, Justo Mwale University, 2019, 168.

²¹ The Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian Minutes of the Eleventh General Synod, 10-13 September 1964, 2, 8.

World Alliance of Reformed Churches meeting in Nairobi. Plans were made for Rev Silas Ncozana to attend the celebrations of the fourth centenary of the death of John Knox in Scotland in November 1972.²²

Minutes of the 1977 General Synod Meeting indicate visitors and observers were received and welcomed from the Reformed Church in Zambia, the United Church in Zambia, and the Reformed Church in Mozambique.²³ Minutes of the 1987 General Synod Meeting indicate that Rev Andrew Gibson of the Presbyterian Church of Ireland, Rev Committee Njase, Assistant General Secretary and Rev Burton K. Chimbala of the United Church of Zambia, and Rev H.P. Chikomo of the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa brought greetings from their churches.²⁴ During the 2000 General Synod Meeting, guests were welcomed from the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa, the Presbyterian Church in Canada, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, and the Presbyterian Church (USA).²⁵

²² The Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian Minutes of the Thirteenth General Synod, 6-7 September 1972, 4.

²³ The Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian Minutes of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian General Synod meeting, 16-18 August 1977 at Chongoni, 2.

²⁴ Minutes of the General Synod and Constitution of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, of the meetings 1987 and 1990 published in one volume, 29-31.

²⁵ Minutes of the 19th General Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian held at Blantyre CCAP Mission, 1-5 November 2000, 7, 16-18.

Achievement 2: Supported Evangelism and Church Growth

A second feature of the post-1956 period is that the General Synod supported and encouraged evangelism and church growth. Life and Work Reports submitted by the local Synods to the General Synod were discussed and accepted. General Synod attempted to assist local Synods by recommending/enacting mechanisms to increase the number of ministers available to local Synods. These include encouraging establishment of local Synod recruiting committees to campaign with youth and implementation of mechanisms whereby theological students and pastors could be shared across the General Synod. According to statistics provided in Life and Work Reports, the number of CCAP communicants grew from 143,005 in 1956 to 514,600 in 1990; the number of congregations increased during the same period from 141 to 399.²⁶

General Synod attempted to ensure worship and nurture for migrant workers in Southern and Northern Rhodesia and to resolve problems which arose with other denominations in those areas concerning worship for migrant workers. In the 1964 General Synod meeting, the General Synod approved a constitution for the Synod of Salisbury in Southern Rhodesia, which was constituted on 1 May 1965. In 1982, the General Synod suggested autonomy for CCAP Zambia congregations, and a process began which led to the constitution of the CCAP Synod of Zambia on 28 October 1984. As a result, the CCAP grew to include five Synods in three countries.²⁷

²⁶ Nancy Collins, "The Impact of the General Synod of the CCAP," 168.

²⁷ Ibid.

Achievement 3: Established Joint Theological Training

Another significant initiative was the effort of the General Synod to establish an institute of joint theological training for students from the local Synods in order to strengthen unity between the Synods and ensure quality Presbyterian theological education. 1956 statistics indicate Livingstonia had 28 ministers (3 non-Malawians attended the Synod meeting) and 26 evangelists for 38 congregations, Blantyre had 20 ministers (6 non-Malawians attended the Synod meeting) and 78 evangelists for 72 congregations; and Nkhoma had 28 ministers (9 non-Malawians attended the Synod meeting) and 4 evangelists for 31 congregations.²⁸ The International Missionary Council (IMC), which visited Nyasaland in 1953, was instrumental in encouraging development of the joint CCAP theological college at Nkhoma. At the 1956 meeting, Synod approved the recommendation that theological training of CCAP ministers be combined for the three Presbyteries at Nkhoma.²⁹

During the August 1960 Synod meeting held at Blantyre, the Synod discussed proposals which were developed by tutors at a May 1959 meeting and proceeded with plans for concrete implementation of the joint theological college. The Synod resolved to start an experimental combined theological course at Nkhoma in 1962.³⁰ By 1968, the Theological Board reported that, since 1964, 24 students including 9 from Nkhoma, 8 from Livingstonia and 7 from Blantyre had received certificates of

²⁸ The Church of Central Africa Presbyterian Minutes of the Eighth Synod, 25-29 April 1956, 12.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 3, 9.

³⁰ The Church of Central Africa Presbyterian Minutes of the Tenth Synod, 12-15 August 1960, 2-3.

fitness for probation. An additional 23 students were in training. The Board indicated that the cooperation between Synods, staff and students over the previous six years justified planning a new College at Zomba where a site had been acquired. Capital expenditures were projected to be £80,000. The General Synod approved the report and encouraged all Synods to contribute to the expense of building and running such an institution. The General Synod encouraged conversation with the Anglican Diocese of Malawi concerning possible combined theological training.³¹

The 1987 Minutes of the General Synod meeting at Ekwendeni include the report from Zomba Theological College Principal Rev Misanjo Kansilanga indicating Zomba celebrated its tenth anniversary on the same day as its sixth graduation ceremony; and that 50 CCAP students and 15 Anglican students had graduated over the lifetime of the Zomba College.³² Principal Rev Dr D.S. Mwakanandi provided a detailed report on the status of the theological college at the 2000 General Synod meeting at Blantyre. The Theological College grew from 59 students and 6 lecturers in 1994 to 84 students and 9 lecturers in 2000. In 1995 ZTC began offering both Licentiate and Diploma degrees and it launched a 4-year Bachelor of Divinity programme in January 1998. Between 1995 and 2000, 137

³¹ The Church of Central Africa Presbyterian Minutes of the Twelfth General Synod, 4-5 September 1968, 12-15.

³² Minutes of the General Synod and Constitution of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, of the meetings 1987 and 1990 published in one volume, 42.

students graduated with Licentiate degrees and 51 with diploma degrees.³³

Achievement 4: Fostered “Greater Unity”

The General Synod worked tenaciously and resolutely over the years between 1956 and 2000 to move toward “Greater Unity” and “Universalism” between the local Synods in matters of liturgy, catechism, rules, and regulations related to such issues as baptism, marriage, clerical garb, and constitutions. In 1968, committees were established at local Synod and General Synod levels to further the efforts which had begun. In 1977, General Synod indicated its expectation that each committee would arrive at a common and acceptable practice for all the Synods.³⁴ Regardless, in the Senior Clerk’s report on the work of the Standing Committee to the 2000 General Synod, Rev J.J. Mphatso noted comments made to a WARC/SAARC (Southern African Alliance of Reformed Churches) pastoral team during their visit from 30 June to 3 July 1995 that the Synod functioned as an advisory body and historical backgrounds of Synods, ethnic fragmentation and geo-political leanings frustrated efforts toward closer cooperation.³⁵ Despite positive steps, during the second half of the 20th century the CCAP General Synod was still beset by some significant challenges.

³³ Minutes of the 19th General Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian held at Blantyre CCAP Mission, 1-5 November 2000, 26-29.

³⁴ Nancy Collins, “The Impact of the General Synod,” 170.

³⁵ Minutes of the 19th General Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian held at Blantyre CCAP Mission, 1-5 November 2000, 46.

Challenge 1: Mission Council Properties Handed Over to the Local Synods

Included with the 1956 Synod Meeting Minutes highlighting the lengthy discussions of the new draft constitution are Presbytery Life and Work Reports. One primary focus of all three Presbyteries at the time of the 1956 meeting was handovers to the Presbyteries of property and responsibilities controlled by Mission Councils of the mother churches – Church of Scotland and Dutch Reformed Church of Cape Synod – for nearly 80 years since the time the Missions were established and more than 30 years after the founding of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian.

In the minutes of the 1960 CCAP General Synod meeting, reports on Mission Council handovers continued. Livingstonia reported with gratitude the achievement of integration of Church and Mission work. Missionary ministers were received into the Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian and many lay missionaries were received into Church membership in full communion with the CCAP. As a result of the full integration reached, the Synod set up Statutory Committees to run the work of the Church in each department, and it appointed a General Administration Committee with executive power to make necessary decisions.³⁶

The 1960 Blantyre Synod Life and Work report indicated that the re-organization of work in the Synod was virtually complete. The Synod's General Administration Committee and Standing Committees were fully operational and responsible for all the

³⁶ The Church of Central Africa Presbyterian Minutes of the Tenth Synod, 12-15 August 1960, 9.

work previously divided between the Synod and Mission Council. The ordained missionaries of the Church of Scotland all applied for admission to the ministry of the CCAP.³⁷ According to the 1960 Nkhoma Synod Life and Work Report, all education work was handed over by the Mission to the Church as of 1957. However, the Mission still existed and was providing financial support for the schools.³⁸

The Church of Scotland took a proactive approach to handovers to Blantyre and Livingstonia Synods (including property in Northeastern Zambia) based on an evolving understanding of partnership as discussed at International Mission Conferences between 1921 and 1958 and the meeting of the World Council of Churches in 1954. The Church of Scotland was also propelled by the altered post-World War II mission context and by its experience in 1947 with the creation of a united church in South India. All responsibilities and property of the Blantyre Mission Council were transferred to Blantyre Synod in 1959 and from Livingstonia Mission Council to Livingstonia Synod in 1960.³⁹

The Dutch Reformed Church took a different path. Animosity in Nyasaland toward white supremacist rule of the Federation of Nyasaland and Rhodesia and anti-South African feeling as a result of apartheid in South Africa necessitated a change. There were Nkhoma Synod members who considered the presence of South African missionaries in positions of power as a perpetuation of white rule and apartheid. During the 1950s, the DRC recognized the time to establish an autonomous church was

³⁷ *Ibid*, 10.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 12.

³⁹ Nancy Collins, "The Impact of the General Synod," 171.

approaching. Yet some of leadership were reluctant to take the step. In addition, enactment of Nkhoma Synod autonomy was hampered by insufficiently trained and qualified leaders – a result of the earlier DRCM policy of limiting Malawian educational training.⁴⁰

During the 1960-61 handover negotiations, the Mission had to revise its entire policy concerning the question of DRC members joining CCAP and the entire spectrum of its race relations. In a meeting on 19 April 1961 between the DRC delegation and Nkhoma Synodical Committee, the DRC members explained why the DRC now supported expatriate membership in CCAP when this had been expressly rejected in 1952, 1956 and 1960 (and rejection had played a determining role in the shape of the 1956 General Synod constitution). The DRC delegates indicated they now saw “it would bring about a true unity and greater mutual trust in the Church, make the expatriates more acceptable to the people, and silence critics and enemies who wanted to use the fact of non-membership of missionaries as a means to get rid of them.”⁴¹

In the period between 1956 and 1961 Central African countries struggled against the Federation and for independence. In this same timeframe, the nearly powerless CCAP General Synod came into existence and began to function under the 1956 Constitution. In the same years the authority and property of the European-controlled Mission Councils devolved to the three newly constituted local Synods, greatly increasing their responsibilities and their autonomy. One can only wonder about the impact on the General Synod of property and funds being

⁴⁰ Christoff Martin Pauw, *Mission and Church in Malawi*, 372-74.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 383.

transferred to the local Synods at that critical point in time. One wonders how the relationship of the General Synod with the three Synods might have been different if the General Synod had a role in advancing the mission of the church in education, health care, and/or agriculture. How different might things have been if the Church of Scotland and the Dutch Reformed Church had recognized the CCAP as a whole as the institution they were responsible for creating and partnering with, and made the General Synod responsible for one or more mission responsibilities?⁴²

Challenge 3: Border Disputes between Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods

In 1923, DRC pastors the Revs. J.A. Retief, G.D.C. Murray and Mr. W.F. van de Riet were appointed as a commission with their Livingstonia counterparts in the persons of Mr. C. Stuart, Dr. Prentice and Dr. Laws to negotiate the terms of the transfer of Kasungu station from Livingstonia to DRC mission.⁴³ The transfer necessitated redefining the boundary between the two missions. According to Mapala, after the transfer of Kasungu station from Livingstonia to Nkhoma in 1924, the boundary between the two missions changed to the boundary between the Kasungu congregation transferred to Nkhoma and the Loudon congregation remaining with Livingstonia. Mapala discusses the boundary in detail. According to the United Free Church of Scotland Foreign Mission Committee minute 6717 on the 1923 boundary agreement, the border “between Kasungu and Loudon will follow the approximate tribal boundary as represented by the schools occupied by

⁴² Nancy Collins, “The Impact of the General Synod,” 120-21.

⁴³ Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity*, 147.

Kasungu and Loudon.” According to Mapala, the issue then is what “tribal boundary” or “tribal line” meant to the 1923 commissioners engaged in the transfer. Mapala references the *Handbook of Nyasaland* authored by Murray, the chief secretary to the Nyasaland government at the time the decision about the Kasungu and Loudon boundary was made. From Murray’s description, the two chiefs in the area sharing a boundary were Chief Mwase of the Chewa and Paramount Chief M’mbelwa of the Ngoni/Tumbuka/Chewa, and the boundary between their tribal lands was the Dwangwa River.⁴⁴

The genesis of the initial border dispute between Livingstonia and Nkhoma dates from the late 1940s when Nkhoma built prayer houses and schools north of the Dwangwa River. Mapala proposes that Nkhoma began building across the Dwangwa River with the assumption its area corresponded to the regional boundary established between Central and Northern Regions in 1946.⁴⁵

The first record for the border dispute between the two Presbyteries or Synods of Livingstonia and Nkhoma appeared in the 1956 Minutes, minute eight of a Joint Theological Committee which reads, “As some difficulty has arisen about the boundaries between these two congregations (Kasungu and Loudon), the Synods in the concerned area asked to send a commission to investigate and recommend to the synodical committee.”⁴⁶ According to Mapala, the Special Commission

⁴⁴ Cogitator W. Mapala, “A Historical Study of the Border Dispute Between the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (1956-2015),” PhD, University of Kwazulu-Natal, 2017, 162-164.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 154-5.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 153-4.

recommendation to Nkhoma stated that the boundary between Loudon and Kasungu stations was the Dwangwa River and not the Mpasadzi and Milenje streams. The General Synod minutes do not reflect the reaction of Nkhoma Synod to the recommendation. The border debate resurfaced in 1967.⁴⁷ In the 1968 Meeting of the General Synod at Livingstonia, Nkhoma Synod informed General Synod of an agreement made at Chamakala on 22 July 1968 between Nkhoma and Livingstonia Synods that “the two Synods should work together in the area between the two disputed boundaries in a spirit of mutual respect, peace and goodwill.”⁴⁸

In 1979 the General Synod asked Nkhoma and Livingstonia to begin negotiation on the Nkhotakota border dispute.⁴⁹ When the Nkhoma Synod inquired from the Synod of Livingstonia about the Nkhotakota boundary between the two Synods, the Synod of Livingstonia answered that it was where Malawe congregation, established in 1915, ends, which was the Bua River.⁵⁰ Nonetheless, Nkhoma began working between the Bua and Dwangwa Rivers. Thus, Nkhoma Synod unilaterally declared the Dwangwa area a buffer zone. In 1980, the General Synod endorsed the Nkhoma Synod’s position of having a buffer zone. It resolved that there should be proper consultation between the two Synods, or its Presbyteries and congregations, before a prayer house was constructed.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Ibid, 164.

⁴⁸ The Church of Central Africa Presbyterian Minutes of the Twelfth General Synod, 4-5 September 1968, 3.

⁴⁹ Cogitator W. Mapala, “A Historical Study of the Border Dispute,” 289.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 291-2.

⁵¹ Ibid, 297.

The Senior Clerk's report of the Work of the Standing Committee in Minutes of the 2000 General Synod Meeting at Blantyre indicated in 1995 and 1996, key issues were Bulawayo and Dwangwa. "Sadly, the failure to have the 12 November 1994 resolution earned us the withdrawal of Livingstonia Synod from active participation in the programs of General Synod. This move has shown us untold developments which included strained relationships among Synods as between Synods and the Secretariat, unimplemented resolutions and promises, withdrawal of funding for General Synod just to mention a few."⁵² As stated in the Minutes of the 2000 General Synod meeting:

The Dwangwa issue dominated most of the agenda items at meetings since 1996-1998. Lack of good will to implement resolutions and promises on the matter was the order of every meeting. ...1999 passed without meeting of Standing Committee as doing so seemed calling for the dissolution of the CCAP. Instead, intensified efforts were purposely made for personal consultations among Synods and between Synod and the Secretariat and we thank God that on 28 October 1999 a break-through was reached with Livingstonia Synod and an agreement was reached to return to the negotiating table. Hence the successful Kaning'ina and Chongoni meetings which have made the plans for November 2000 General Assembly possible.⁵³

Challenge 2: Church-State Relations

When the Conservative Party came to power in the UK in 1951, the new colonial secretary Oliver Lyttelton persuaded the cabinet to endorse a Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. After a series of lengthy debates in the British parliament, the Federal Constitution Order in Council was approved on 27 July 1953

⁵² Minutes of the 19th General Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian held at Blantyre CCAP Mission, 1-5 November 2000, 41.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 42.

and inaugurated on 3 September 1953 with Godfrey Huggins as Prime Minister. The views of Africans in Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, their supporters in the Church of Scotland, and of the Nyasaland governor Sir Geoffrey Colby were disregarded.⁵⁴ In Nyasaland from 1953 to 1958, most Scottish missionaries and their Malawian colleagues and parishioners moved from cautious criticism of Federation to full-scale opposition. This placed them alongside Congress and in opposition to the government. In 1958, the CCAP Blantyre Synod called publicly for dissolution of the Federation.⁵⁵ McCracken indicates that across the region teachers, churchmen and others associated with the Livingstonia and Blantyre Synods of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian identified themselves closely with the nationalist cause although the Dutch Reformed churches in Nyasaland's Central Province distanced themselves from politics.⁵⁶

Beginning in April 1958, intelligence reports produced by the Nyasaland police commented on "the irresponsible attitude" of the CCAP toward Federation, and on its readiness to support "political programmes in the name of religion." Malawian and Scottish churchmen were accused of giving "encouragement to Africans to oppose Federation by unconstitutional means." Livingstonia's schools (most likely including the schools under Chasefu Mission in northeastern Rhodesia) were considered to be, "positive breeding grounds for Congress leaders of the future."⁵⁷ After campaigns of civil disobedience and

⁵⁴ John McCracken, *A History of Malawi 1859-1966*, Rochester, NY: Boydell and Brewer, 2012, 274-76.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 357.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 348.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*.

political agitation in Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia, and

Nyasaland in opposition to the Federation, transitional governments were formed in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland.

On 19 December 1962, R.A. Butler, Minister of Central African Affairs, announced in the British House of Commons that Nyasaland would secede from the Federation, and the Federation was dissolved at the end of 1963.⁵⁸ Nyasaland became the independent country of Malawi under the leadership of Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda on 6 July 1964. Northern Rhodesia became the independent country of Zambia under the leadership of Kenneth Kaunda on 24 October 1964. Southern Rhodesia remained under minority rule and the struggle for African self-determination moved to guerrilla warfare.⁵⁹

The first ten years of Zambian independence were marked by relative harmony between church and state. Political pluralism existed, and the Kaunda government demonstrated commitment to national development.⁶⁰ In 1972, Kaunda's UNIP declared Zambia a one-party state. By the 1980s, the UNIP was strong enough to completely intimidate potential opposition. Zambia's economy deteriorated, and Kaunda was compelled by the World Bank and IMF to introduce fees at schools and hospitals and devalue the local currency. Maize meal prices were increased, and in 1986 food riots erupted in urban areas across

⁵⁸ Ibid, 388-430.

⁵⁹ G. Haantobolo and P. Ng'andu, *Junior Secondary History*, Ndola: Times Printpak, 1997, 125-27.

⁶⁰ Isaac Phiri, "Why African Churches Preach Politics: The Case of Zambia," *A Journal of Church and State* 41/2 (1999), 323-47.

the country. The anger of the people was directed against the Kaunda government.⁶¹

In July 1990, the Catholic bishops issued a letter questioning the self-proclaimed “supremacy” of the ruling party in the national discourse as opposed to the supremacy of the citizens.⁶² The Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD) was created to campaign for reintroduction of political pluralism.⁶³ With the advent of MMD, the churches took a non-partisan approach to politics to make sure that the process of change did not stall and to address extremism of both camps. The churches helped to raise political awareness by calling for national days of prayer for Zambia and by organizing political seminars.⁶⁴ More than 3,500 ministers and lay people were trained as monitors across the country. In the October 1991 elections, Chiluba attracted 76% of the votes while Kaunda received 25%. The church was hailed as “the mid-wife for the birth of multi-party democracy in the 1991 elections.”⁶⁵

In Malawi, the 1961 elections held prior to independence marked the shift of MCP emphasis from campaigning for independence to allocation of resources by the various ministries. With this shift, regional rivalries began to emerge. Of special import was the difference in levels of education in northern Malawi versus central Malawi – the result of differences in

⁶¹ Ibid, 335-36.

⁶² Paul Gundani, “Church State Relations in South Africa, Zambia, and Malawi in Light of the Fall of the Berlin Wall,” *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 2018, 5.

⁶³ Isaac Phiri, “Why African Churches Preach Politics,” 339-341.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 340-42.

⁶⁵ Paul Gundani, “Church State Relations in South Africa, Zambia, and Malawi”, 5; Isaac Phiri, “Why African Churches Preach Politics,” 342-343.

mission education especially between the Scottish missions and the DRC mission. Under the Protectorate, competition for jobs highlighted the differences between skills possessed by the jobseekers from Livingstonia's sphere of influence versus the Chewa migrants from Central Province who were largely educated in low-grade unassisted schools. Northerners were accused of dominating the Legislative Council. During this period, Banda indicated ability and suitability were the primary characteristics in determining who held what position and who received what.⁶⁶

By the time of the General Synod meeting of 1972, the nature of one-party rule under Banda had become clear. The 1966 Republican Constitution and its subsequent amendments stipulated that the MCP was the only legally recognized political party in the country, and it widened state powers, diminished guarantees of individual liberties, and merged the party and government into a centre of virtually absolute power. The judiciary and legislature were mere rubber stamps of the decisions made by the Life President.⁶⁷

Between 1964 and 1994, the one-party era in Malawi, the church remained silent in the face of Banda's abuse of power and his disregard for quality of life for Malawians because of the ruthless way in which the government machinery dealt with suspected critics of the regime. The prophetic voice of the Church regarding the State was quashed.⁶⁸ Banda solicited

⁶⁶ John McCracken, *A History of Malawi*, 404-06.

⁶⁷ Chiponda, *Democratization Process in Malawi since Independence*, 2007, 98-99. <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org> [16.10.2019].

⁶⁸ Rhodian Munyenembe, *A History of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) as a Federative Denomination (1924-2015)*, 2015,

support from territorial chiefs (traditional authorities) and from specific constituencies of ordinary Malawians among the peasant population. For this later he turned to Chewas of the Central Region. His cadres became the Chewas; his opponents were everyone else.⁶⁹ The period from 1964 to 1994 was also marked by a dualism between being Chewas or not being Chewas or living in the central region or not.⁷⁰

Banda developed the rural Chewas constituency through investment of capital in the Central Region to build up the economy and through the imposition of Chewas language policy and political iconography. Economic development of the Central Region was jump-started by moving the national capital from Zomba to Lilongwe. This entailed major infrastructure development. In terms of state sponsored rural development, two of the four major projects were in the Central Region, and they were the first started, longest running and received the largest funding – approximately 40 million USD. In addition, in 1968, Banda decided to “Chewanize” national identity by declaring Chichewa the only official Malawi language. Tumbuka, the language of the north, was banned in government offices, schools, radio and the press.⁷¹ Through the “Chewas-ization” process adopted by Banda and the MCP, animosity of northern and southern regions was created toward the Central Region. Since

131; Kenneth R. Ross and Klaus Fiedler, *A Malawi Church History 1860-2020*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2020, 316-30.

⁶⁹ Deborah Kaspin, “The Politics of Ethnicity in Malawi’s Democratic Transition,” *Journal of Modern African Studies* 50/3 (1995), 305-24.

⁷⁰ EPR Atlas (Ethnic Power Relations Datasets), *Ethnicity in Malawi*, 2018, 1045. Available online at <https://growup.ethz.ch/atlas/pdf/Malawi.pdf>.

⁷¹ Deborah Kaspin, “The Politics of Ethnicity in Malawi’s Democratic Transition,” 305-08.

the Synods roughly equated to the regions, this drove a wedge between Nkhoma Synod on the one hand, and Blantyre and Livingstonia Synods on the other.

According to Walter Lawrence Brown, “Nkhoma Synod and the Government created a symbiotic relationship.”⁷² According to Willy Zeze, “Nkhoma Synod was a state-sponsored institution and Christianity was more or less a state-sponsored religion.”⁷³ As Munyenembe writes, “The Nkhoma Synod can be understood to have been co-opted, thereby rendering it very uncritical to whatever the ruling party was doing.”⁷⁴ Divergence between the CCAP Synods during the one-party era rendered the General Synod voiceless in regard to Banda’s abuse of power.

In 1990 Malawians heard about the letter issued by the Zambian Catholic Bishops questioning one-party rule and economic and political injustice. In 1991, Malawians watched with great interest as the authoritarian ruler of neighbouring Zambia, Kenneth Kaunda, responded to calls for multiparty democracy by stepping down from power in acquiescence to popular will.⁷⁵ On 8 March 1992, the Malawian Church was awoken from a

⁷² Walter Lawrence Brown, “The Development in Self-Understanding of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod as Church during the First Forty Years of Autonomy: An Ecclesiological Study,” PhD, University of Stellenbosch, 2004, 225.

⁷³ Willy S. Zeze, “Christianity: A State-Sponsored Religion in Malawi? A Critical Evaluation of the Relationship between the CCAP Nkhoma Synod and the MCP-led Government (1964-1994),” 2013, 7, <https://cdn-legacy.iclrs.org/content/events/28/751.pdf>.

⁷⁴ Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity*, 132.

⁷⁵ See Paul Gundani, “Church State Relations in South Africa, Zambia, and Malawi”.

slumber by the Malawian bishops' dramatic pastoral letter, "Living our Faith", which offered the first ever open criticism against the Banda regime's injustices and dictatorship.⁷⁶

On 2 June 1992 a delegation from the World Alliance of Reformed Churches together with leaders of CCAP Synods issued an open letter entitled *The Nation of Malawi in Crisis: The Church's Concern*. The Letter referred to the Catholic letter, considered a seditious document, and called for appointment of a broadly based commission to implement checks and balances on the use of government power; to review the judicial system in line with the rule of law, and to look into socially just distribution of income and wealth.⁷⁷ The Synods of Blantyre and Livingstonia considered that, through the Pastoral Letter, God had granted a Kairos moment to the people of Malawi. On 9 June 1992, Livingstonia Synod organized a conference of its pastors and called on the General Synod of the CCAP to act on the WARC letter, noting that it was a responsibility of the church to speak out on violations of human rights and to be the voice of the voiceless.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Matthew Schoffeleers, *In Search of Truth and Justice: Confrontations between Church and State in Malawi 1960-1994*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1999; Matembo S. Nzunda and Kenneth R. Ross (eds), *Church, Law and Political Transition in Malawi 1992-94*, Gweru: Mambo-Kachere, 1995; Mzuzu: Luviri Press, ³2020; Kenneth R. Ross, "The Transformation of Power in Malawi 1992-94: the Role of the Christian Churches" in Kenneth R. Ross (ed), *God, People and Power in Malawi: Democratization in Theological Perspective*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1996, 15-40.

⁷⁷ T. Jack Thompson, "Presbyterians and Politics in Malawi: A Century of Interaction," *The Round Table* 94:382 (2005), 575-87.

⁷⁸ Willy S. Zeze, "Christianity: A State-Sponsored Religion in Malawi?" 8; Kenneth R. Ross, "The Transformation of Power in Malawi 1992-95, 41.

Nkhoma Synod was one of the few institutions which opposed the Bishop's letter. According to Munyenembe, Nkhoma appeared as the sole defender of the MCP-led government among Malawi's ecclesiastical bodies.⁷⁹ It was only when President Banda bowed to international pressure in October 1992 and agreed to a referendum that Nkhoma backed away from its resistance, indicating however that "the Synod believes genuine Christians can support either side of the referendum without violating the genuine ideals and principles of Christianity."⁸⁰

Presidential and parliamentary elections were held on 17 May 1994. Bakili Muluzi of the United Democratic Front (UDF), based mainly in the populous Southern Region won with 47% of the national vote while Hastings Kamuzu Banda gained 33.5% and Chakufwa Chihana of the Alliance for Democracy (AFORD) based in the Northern Region, gained 18% of the vote. Rev Saul G. Chitsulo, Blantyre Deputy General Secretary in 1994 indicated "We deplore the division of the CCAP at the beginning of the political transformation. That difference seems to have grown wider after the General Election whose voting results were rather on regional lines. We hope that this rift of the Synods is going to be dealt with."⁸¹

Conclusion

From its earliest days, fissures inside the CCAP prevented the Church from implementing Robert Laws' vision of an inclusive African church. Repeatedly the church did not

⁷⁹ Rhodian Munyenembe, *A History of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian*, 182.

⁸⁰ Walter Lawrence Brown, "The Development in Self-Understanding of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod," 234-5.

⁸¹ Blantyre Synod Life and Work Report, 1994, 4.

resolve fundamental issues. Rather it found ways of skirting around issues to remain together. In 1956, this resulted in a General Synod constituted without the authority normally ascribed to the highest Presbyterian governing body. Under the 1956 Constitution, the CCAP General Synod made important contributions to establishing the denomination as a legally functioning and recognized entity. However, between 1956 and 2000 tensions between the local synods continued and worsened to the extent that they may be seen to overshadow the General Synod's contributions. The General Synod was unable to resolve critical border issues and issues of church and state. Without property and departments, it was unable to offer value and leadership to the local synods. As the 20th century ended, the General Synod existed on paper but had not succeeded in becoming a functional unit. It remains to be seen what the 21st century holds. Based on its history, the prospects are daunting.

5. The CCAP 2002 Constitution: Intentions Frustrated

Felix Chingota

On Wednesday 17 September 1924, a conference was convened at the Livingstonia mission chaired by the Rev Dr Alexander Hetherwick.¹ The purpose of the conference was to officially inaugurate the Synod of the Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian (CCAP) which was formed as a result of a union between the Presbyteries of Livingstonia and Blantyre. The conference elected the first Moderator of the Synod, the Rev Dr Robert Laws of the Presbytery of Livingstonia. The Revs. A.G. MacAlpine of Presbytery of Livingstonia and the Rev J.F. Alexander of Blantyre Presbytery were elected as clerks of the Synod. The terms of the union included the following:

1. That the name of the Church be the Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian;
2. That the doctrinal basis of the Church be the Apostles Creed, a Brief Statement of the Faith as hereinafter set forth, and a distinct acknowledgement of the Word of God as the Supreme rule of faith and conduct and the worship, discipline and government of the Church be Presbyterian;
3. That each Presbytery shall meanwhile retain its present constitution;
4. That the Synod shall consist of all the ordained ministers, with an equal number of elders chosen by the Presbyteries;
5. That the first meeting of the Synod shall be held at the time and place fixed by the Presbyteries and thereafter every

¹ Victor Chilenje, "The Origin and Development of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) in Zambia 1882-2004," PhD, University of Stellenbosch, 2007, 57-58.

meeting of the Synod shall fix its own time and place for the next meeting in accordance with such rules as may be framed by itself – the interval between the meeting of the Synod not to be longer than four years;

6. That European members of Presbyteries shall continue in their present relations to the home churches.²

The Dutch Reformed Church Mission joined the union in 1926. As the DRCM joined the union they demanded that more freedom be given to presbyteries. Therefore, at the Synod's meeting which was held in Blantyre a Barrier Act was accepted. The Act says:

That before the Synod passes any Act which is to be binding Rule of Constitution to the Church, such Act before coming into law shall have been passed by no less than three quarters (3/4) majority of members present, and shall thereafter be remitted by them to the presbyteries who may consult their respective sessions and opinion of Presbyteries and their consent thereto be reported to next meeting of Synod who may then pass the Act as law of the Church, if the more general opinion of the Church thus obtained agree thereto.³

The Term of Union number (4), if read together with the Barrier Act, meant that the Church was a “loose sort of union of Presbyteries,”⁴ or a “federation” of Presbyteries.⁵ At its meeting of 1945 the Synod resolved to harmonize the constitutions of the three Presbyteries with a view to formulate a constitution for the Church. A draft constitution of the Church was unanimously adopted at the 1956 meeting of the Synod. According to the new constitution, the Presbyteries were renamed as

² Ibid, 57.

³ Cit. Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity*, Carlisle: Langham, 2019, 93.

⁴ Victor Chilenje, “The Origin and Development,” 58.

⁵ Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity*, 94.

Synods and the Synod became General Synod. Harare Synod was formed in 1965 by the coming together of the two Presbyteries of Harare and Gweru.⁶ The Synod of Zambia was formed in 1982.⁷ As a result, there have been five Synods constituting the CCAP General Synod, which in 2002 became the General Assembly. The 1956 constitution allowed each Synod to formulate its own constitution. However, it is stated in the constitution that the laws, regulations and constitutional provisions of each Synod shall be made in conformity with the constitution of the General Synod. Since then, especially since the 1970s, the history of CCAP “can be described as a history of intended greater unity” amongst the Synods.⁸

Reasons for the Production of the 2002 Constitution

I would like to begin with some words of Dr Robert Laws:

It is absurd to expect a Church abroad to accept the Westminster Confession of Faith as its standard, even if it could be adequately translated into the native language. The environment of the people is quite different, the circumstances they have to face are also different, and it is out of place to burden a new Church with declarations regarding the civil rights of the magistrate and the spiritual rights of the Church where no such questions exist...We were in new circumstances with new environment, and we were facing heathenism and the evil practices connected with it, so we had to draft our creed and adapt our procedure to the necessities of the situation.⁹

For Dr Laws then, the drafting of the Brief Statement of Faith in 1924 was necessary so that the United Church of Central

⁶ Ibid, 87.

⁷ Ibid, 88.

⁸ Ibid, 231.

⁹ Robert Laws, *Reminiscences of Livingstonia*, Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1934, 143-44.

Africa, Presbyterian could adequately evangelize in a heathen environment. When the Barrier Act was adopted in 1926 what was paramount for the Synod was to guard the Church against infiltration of dangerous doctrines. By 2002 the situation had changed such that the General Synod faced new challenges. In my opening speech as Moderator of the General Synod in 2000, I highlighted three challenges, namely, mission work outside Malawi; the border dispute; and prophetic witness of the Church. Regarding the first challenge there is a case in point in South Africa where two congregations belonging to Nkhoma and Livingstonia Synods respectively were worshipping in two adjacent classrooms. This was an example of division amongst Synods in Malawi being exported to the mission field, contrary to the resolution of the Edinburgh 1910 World Missionary Conference. The purpose of mission work ought to be the planting of one united Church in the mission field.

Regarding the second challenge, it should be noted that the early missionaries preferred comity arrangements whereby a missionary field would be shared amongst different missionary societies for purposes of proper evangelization. Regarding missionaries in Malawi, there was a general agreement between missionaries from the Church of Scotland and those from the Free Church of Scotland that while the former would be in the south, the latter would be in the north. Minutes of meetings between Livingstonia Mission and the Dutch Reformed Church Mission of 4 September 1904 and 20 September 1923 respectively indicate areas of influence allocated between the two Missions. In line with the comity arrangement, no Synod was allowed to cross over and start evangelism in another Synod's sphere of operation. However, over the years the General Synod has had to resolve disputes between Nkhoma Synod and the Synod of Livingstonia regarding the border between the two

Synods. The disputes became so intense that in 1998 the Synod of Livingstonia withdrew from the General Synod. For a year the Synod of Livingstonia refused to participate in General Synod functions.

The third challenge concerned prophetic witness in Malawi. If the CCAP General Synod was really one Church, one would have expected that the Synods would speak with one voice on matters affecting the people of Malawi. However, this was not the case. During the transition from the one-party system of government to the multi-party system of government, the two Synods of Blantyre and Livingstonia supported the Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church and their pastoral letter whereas the Nkhoma Synod did not. In 1998, a year before the second democratic elections, the Synod of Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synod each issued a pastoral letter. Blantyre Synod did not. By 1999 it was imperative that something should be done about the unity of the General Synod.

The 2000 General Synod Meeting as a Preparatory One

The next meeting of the General Synod took place in 2000, six years after the previous one. Constitutionally the meeting was supposed to have taken place in 1998, but wrangles and disputes amongst Synods made it impossible to hold a meeting as required. At this meeting, the Senior Clerk¹⁰ of the General Synod, Rev John J. Mphatso gave a brief summary of events leading to

¹⁰ This was the title of the Secretary for the General Synod. When in 2002 the General Synod was renamed General Assembly, the Senior Clerk was renamed Secretary General.

the convening of a meeting of General Synod.¹¹ In his report, he noted one very significant event which took place in 1998, namely, the withdrawal of the Synod of Livingstonia from the General Synod. The Synod of Livingstonia withdrew from the General Synod because of frustration at the General Synod's failure to resolve the border dispute between itself and Nkhoma Synod. This meant that 1999 passed without any meeting of the Standing Committee.¹² Instead during 1999, the Senior Clerk conducted intensive consultations with individuals and Synods trying to persuade the Synod of Livingstonia to come back to the negotiating table.

Plans to hold a General Synod meeting were put in place only after the Synod of Livingstonia had accepted to be a member of the General Synod. Two preparatory meetings of the Standing Committee took place in 2000, one at Kaning'a congregation in Lilongwe on 1 March 2000 and another at Namoni Katengeza Lay Training Centre in Dedza on 12-13 June 2000. Following these meetings, it was agreed to formulate and draft a policy document, a 5-year strategic plan, and a new constitution since it was observed that the 1956 constitution was "one of the sources of the problems the CCAP General Synod is facing."¹³ It was further agreed to appoint G.D. Kainja, a Blantyre Synod lawyer, to guide the whole process. When the General Synod met in November 2000 Mr Kainja presented a draft document of the revised constitution. An Ad Hoc

¹¹ The report of the Senior Clerk, Rev John J. Mphatso, is attached to the minutes of the meeting General Synod held from 1 to 5 November 2000.

¹² The Standing Committee functions like the executive committee of the General Synod.

¹³ Minutes of the 19th General Synod Assembly (1-5 November 2000), 41.

committee which was formed at the meeting to scrutinize the draft constitution recommended to the meeting that the policy document and the constitution should be accepted in principle and be sent to Synods as an overture. It also recommended that a task force comprising ten members, two from each Synod, plus the lawyer, Mr Kainja, be formed. Representatives from Synods should include one minister and one elder. The task force should work till the end of January 2001. Then the task force would report to a Standing Committee meeting to be held in March 2001. The committee further recommended that an extraordinary meeting of the General Synod should be held in May 2002.¹⁴

The General Nature of the 2002 Constitution

The new constitution of the General Assembly was signed into an official document of the Assembly on 8 December 2002 at Silver Stadium. The ceremony was attended by the then Moderator of the Southern Africa Alliance of Reformed Churches, Dr Bukelwa Hans. The signatories of the constitution were all Moderators and General Secretaries of the five Synods which constitute the General Assembly. Also signing were the Moderator and Secretary General of the General Assembly.

¹⁴ The extra-ordinary meeting of the General Synod failed to take place in May. Instead, it took place in December 2002.

Constitutions have been classified in a variety of ways. This is the classification by Leslie Wolf-Phillips:¹⁵

- a. codified/uncodified;
- b. conditional/unconditional;
- c. superior/subordinate;
- d. rigid/flexible;
- e. indigenous/adventitious;
- f. manifest/latent;
- g. presidential executive/parliamentary executive;
- h. monarchical/republican;
- i. bicameral/unicameral;
- j. competitive/consolidatory;
- k. programmatic/confirmatory;
- l. justiciable/nugatory;
- m. federal/unitary.

The CCAP constitution can be classified as codified, conditional, rigid, programmatic and federal. We have legal material in our constitution and there are conditions to be fulfilled before an amendment can be effected. 22 years have gone by, and no amendment has been made to the text of the constitution. The constitution allows some autonomy to the Synods which have their own constitutions. Of particular interest is the fact that our constitution can also be described as programmatic. What this means is that given the challenges listed above the constitution tries to provide remedies for each of them in

¹⁵ Leslie Wolf-Phillips, *Comparative Constitutions*, London: Macmillan, 1972, 46-47.

the hope that greater unity amongst the Synods would be achieved.

- 1) Regarding election of office bearers of General Assembly: It is clearly stated that the Moderator shall be elected on a rotational basis (Art. 8.4.3) and shall follow an alphabetical order as determined by the Standing Committee (see Art. 8.4.6). In order to make sure that General Synod positions are shared equitably amongst the five Synods there is a section dealing with restriction on candidacy for the elected positions (Arts. 8.6.1, 8.6.2, 8.6.3).
- 2) Regarding the organogram of the Church and the powers of the General Assembly: Art. 6 deals with the question of the courts of the Church. Under this general topic, it is indicated that appeals should be made from a lower court to a higher court (Art. 6.2) with the General Assembly as the highest court of the Church (Art. 6.6). The fact that Synods are subordinate to the General Assembly is further indicated in article 3 subsections 2 and 3 of the Constitutional Schedule. According to the provisions of these sections, Synods are required to submit to the General Assembly their rules and regulations governing formation of any new Synod for approval.
- 3) Article 8 deals with the general subject of “General Assembly Governance” and subsection 8.7.5 deals with the issue about “the binding nature of General Assembly Resolutions.” It is maintained that all decisions and resolutions of the General Assembly shall be binding on all Synods and their lower courts and must be implemented by each Synod without further assurance or ratification by the Synods. Failure to implement such a resolution shall be cause for disciplinary action against the failing Synod (Art. 8.7.5).
- 4) A problem that has rocked the General Assembly has been difficulties in relationships between Synods. The constitution, especially the schedule, deals with this problem in article 4. Six policy statements are formulated in order to order to

promote greater unity amongst the Synods. Examples of such statements are: a) Art. 4.1.1 Synods “shall at all times respect the boundaries as existing or as prescribed herein;” b) Art. 4.1.2 “The General Assembly shall, in case of new Synods or mission work areas, demarcate geographical boundaries of Synods and mission work areas and allocate authority to a particular Synod over a demarcated area;” c) Art. 4.2 “When a Synod or any of its lower courts wishes to open, establish or construct a new church or prayer house within three kilometres to the known Synod boundary it shall first consult the other Synod with which it shares a common border to confirm that such a site is indeed within the jurisdiction of the constructing Synod and failing such agreement the matter shall be referred to the General Assembly whose decision shall be binding on the parties. Contravention of this provision shall lead to disciplinary action being taken against the offending Synod.”

- 5) Regarding the issue about public witness Art. 4.5 in the constitutional schedule is titled “General Assembly to speak for all Synods in some matters.” And examples of such matters include a) to warn the congregations of evil tending to invade the Church; b) marriage regulation and practice; c) relations with other churches; d) legislation which conflicts with the Word of God; e) serious matters of national interest and concern.
- 6) Another challenge that prompted the review of the constitution was how to coordinate mission work. This problem has been dealt with in Article 8 subsection 3, The section reads as follows: “All mission work of the church irrespective of the court or member intending to carry out such work in the name of Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian must have prior approval of the General Assembly. This principle applies whether or not the mission is at the instance of the church court or an individual in the church or that of the resident or groups in the said outside locality and irrespective of whether that mission work is on a trial basis or notional

schedule or policy document. The section provides that “all mission work must be sanctioned by the General Assembly.”

Implementation of the Provisions of the 2002 Constitution

I have described the General Assembly constitution of 2002 as “programmatic.” It is a constitution which expresses the wishes of the Synods for greater unity. To that end, a number of action points, examples of which have been mentioned above, have been outlined. The constitution was signed on 8 December 2002 and to date, no action point has been fulfilled. For example, the principle of rotation for electing the Moderator was not followed at the last election in August 2020.

The General Assembly is supposed to be the highest court of the church. However, one finds more correspondence between Synods and partner churches than there is between the office of General Assembly and offices of various Synods. As a result, it becomes very difficult for the General Assembly leadership to monitor events in the Synods. It is difficult for the General Assembly leadership to appreciate pertinent issues to be taken up for discussion at General Assembly level.

In spite of the constitutional provision that the decisions of the General Assembly are binding on all Synods, it has been very difficult for Synods to comply with the decisions of the General Assembly. A very good example is one about mission work in South Africa. At one of its meetings, the Standing Committee agreed to bring congregations in South Africa under the General Assembly. To that end, a delegation comprising representatives from all Malawian Synods went to South Africa to initiate unity talks among congregations in South Africa. A committee

was formed of representatives of congregations in South Africa to facilitate more unity consultations. The idea was to have one united church called CCAP in RSA. It was a commendable start. However, the work of the committee failed to progress further because they faced interference from church leaders at home in Malawi. The result is that there is currently a separate denomination that calls itself CCAP in RSA. On several occasions, the leaders of this church have invited General Assembly leaders to go and minister during Church services especially during festive seasons according to the Christian calendar. We now have congregations belonging to Blantyre Synod, congregations belonging to Nkhoma Synod, congregations belonging to the Synod of Livingstonia, and congregations belonging to CCAP in RSA!

The border dispute between Nkhoma Synod and the Synod of Livingstonia has been a very difficult one to resolve. The Church of Scotland brought in John Sturrock, an expert in conflict management, who conducted workshops for leaders of the Malawian Synods and the General Assembly at Kambiri Lodge in Salima from 12 to 15 March 2006. The purpose was to help us think through our problems and come up with a solution. At the end of the workshop participants agreed to form a task force with a mandate to: compile a workshop report; draw up a plan of action on resolving the border dispute; formulate a Memorandum of Understanding to be signed by the three Malawian Synods committing themselves to the plan of action; draw up a budget for General Assembly activities including those under the plan of action. A Standing Committee meeting of 28 March 2006 approved the plan of action and the MOU. The plan of action was to start with a Commission of Inquiry. However, the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry were not taken on board.

Later in the same year, the Moderator of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (now World Communion of Reformed Churches) accompanied by the then General Secretary of the Alliance, Rev Dr Setri Nyomi, came to the country for meetings with representatives of all Malawian Synods and the General Assembly. The aim of the meetings was to facilitate a negotiated resolution of the border conflict. As a result of the discussions, a number of options for reconfiguring the structure of the General Assembly were drawn up. These included the following: a) maintain the borders; b) abolish Synods and retain Presbyteries, c) let congregations which, for example, Nkhoma Synod had erected in the area under the Synod of Livingstonia together with their respective ministers be transferred to the Synod of Livingstonia. Similarly, congregations that the Synod of Livingstonia had erected in Nkhoma Synod's area of jurisdiction together with their ministers be transferred to Nkhoma Synod; d) let borders be re-demarcated especially between Nkhoma and Livingstonia Synods in Nkhotakota area. These options were sent to Synods for their consideration with their reports to come to the next meeting of the General Assembly. However, before this could happen, the Synod of Livingstonia had already adopted a no-border policy with Nkhoma Synod. Nkhoma Synod followed suit. This is the current situation. In sum, all the interventions did not bear much fruit.

The border dispute had a very negative effect on the next meeting of the General Assembly which was held at St Michael and All Angels Multipurpose Church Hall in Blantyre from 21 to 23 January 2007. Debate on the border issue began when the delegates of the General Assembly were requested to adopt the agenda of the meeting which the Standing Committee had prepared. Item 10 of the agenda was about overtures from the

Synod of Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synod. The issue was whether the election of a Moderator should be conducted after the overtures were discussed or before. It took two days of the meeting to resolve this issue and it was finally resolved through a vote. The results of the vote were as follows: 71 voted for the adoption of the agenda as prepared by the Standing Committee; one person voted against the adoption of the agenda; and 38 abstained. The latter were mostly delegates from the Synod of Livingstonia. Rising on a point of order, the Synod of Livingstonia rejected the results of the vote and declared that they were going to participate in the meeting as observers. The meeting acknowledged the statement by the Synod of Livingstonia and proceeded with the discussions.

The border issue was later tabled as overtures from Nkhoma Synod and the Synod of Livingstonia. The meeting endorsed the recommendation which the Standing Committee had made following its deliberation on the report by the Commission of Inquiry on the border dispute.¹⁶ The Standing Committee meetings had endorsed the border demarcation recommended by the Commission of Inquiry.¹⁷ When the resolution of the General Assembly was communicated to the Synod of Livingstonia, they responded by saying that they would come with their response later.¹⁸

Another issue that arose following the Synod of Livingstonia's decision to participate as observers was that they refused to come up with a candidate for the position of Moderator of the

¹⁶ The Standing Committee met twice at Msamba Catholic Pastoral Centre in Lilongwe, in January 2006 and in August 2006.

¹⁷ See Minute 10.07, 8.

¹⁸ See Minute 10.07.11, 12.

General Assembly. The General Assembly resolved to retire the current Moderator and Secretary General and replace them with an interim Administrative Commission. Former Moderators of the General Assembly would constitute a collective moderator and Rev Lecton R. Kalua would be interim Secretary General. It was hoped that proper elections would take place in six months' time. The General Assembly did not meet in July 2007 as planned. Instead, it met in 2013 in Lundazi (Zambia). In the meantime, the two Synods declared a policy of no border between themselves. The result is that Nkhoma Synod has congregations in such northern places as Mzuzu, Karonga and Jenda while the Synod of Livingstonia has congregations in parts of the Central Region, including Lilongwe, Kasungu, Mponela and Mchinji.

As noted above, the General Assembly met in Lundazi in 2013. The main purpose of the meeting was to elect office bearers of the General Assembly. Very Rev Dr Timothy Nyasulu (Synod of Livingstonia) was elected moderator and Rev Collins Mbawa (Blantyre Synod) was elected Secretary General. It is worth noting that once during the leadership of Nyasulu and Mbawa the General Assembly managed to speak with one voice on a particular national issue. As one way of fighting the Covid19 pandemic, the Malawi Government imposed restrictions on the number of people who could gather for worship. A delegation of all Standing Committee members requested to meet some cabinet ministers.¹⁹ At the meeting, the General Assembly expressed dismay at the restriction arguing that it amounted to the banning of public worship. As a result of this meeting

¹⁹ The meeting took place sometime in August 2020, Int. with Very Rev Prof. Timothy Nyasulu, 15 March 2023.

government relaxed the restrictions. This event gives some hope that it is still possible for the General Assembly to be united and speak with one voice on pertinent social issues.²⁰

Lessons to be Drawn from the Story of the 2002 Constitution

Reflecting on the history of CCAP so far, we can learn a number of lessons. First, we must admit that producing a new constitution, though necessary and important, is not a sufficient instrument to help us achieve complete unity. We need to look beyond the constitution. As early as 1994 the Very Rev Dr Silas Nyirenda had listed the following hindrances to greater unity: church traditions; different Synod structures, tribalism, different political affiliations, and lack of mutual recognition of ministers who move from their home Synods into other Synods. Therefore, apart from having a new constitution, these problems need to be dealt with as well. After the inauguration of the Church of South India in 1947²¹ Bishop Stephen Neill

²⁰ In 2001 the General Synod issued a pastoral letter titled “Some Worrisome Trends Which Undermine the Nurture of our Young Democratic Culture.” The aim of the document was to reject the amendment proposal of the constitution to allow for a possible Third Term for a President. The letter was signed by Moderator and General Secretary of the General Synod together with Moderators and General Secretaries of the three Malawian Synods. It was read in almost all congregations in the country. This is just another example of effective witness through working together. See Kenneth R. Ross, “‘Worrisome Trends’: The Voice of the Churches in Malawi’s Third Term Debate,” *African Affairs* 103 (2004), 91-107.

²¹ The Church of South India was a result of a union of the following denominations, namely, South India United Church, Methodist Church of South India, South India dioceses of the Anglican Church of India, Burma,

remarked, “the final and terrible difficulty is that churches cannot unite unless they are willing to die.”²² This point has also been noted by Munyenembe when discussing one of the two possible options for resolving the issue of greater unity in the CCAP.²³ He notes that the option of letting the Synods “die” would have to deal with a number of questions before it can be implemented. Such questions include the following: “what would happen to the Synods’ headquarters when the Synods are dissolved? Who would be empowered to do such a thing since the General Assembly does not have the capacity to do it? Will the Synods and their leadership accept fading into insignificance for the sake of a stronger CCAP under the General Assembly?”²⁴ Perhaps what needs to happen is to hold a meeting of representatives of the Synods at which the four options can be discussed in a spirit of give and take. The various hindrances, which the Very Rev Dr Silas Nyirenda identified, will also have to be addressed with an open mind. The discussions would require facilitation by an expert in conflict management.

Secondly, we have had occasions when the CCAP has spoken with one voice on national issues and the impact has always been great. In 2001 the General Synod produced a pastoral letter objecting to the amendment of the Republican constitution with the aim of paving the way for a possible Third Term for the President. The letter was read in all CCAP congregations. The bill to amend the Constitution did not pass. Similarly, in

and Ceylon. The South India United Church was itself a union of Presbyterian and Congregationalist Churches (see Barry Till, *The Churches Search for Unity*, London: Penguin, 1972, 291).

²² Stephen Neill, cit. Barry Till, *The Churches Search for Unity*, 291.

²³ Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity*, 245.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 240-41.

2020 the General Assembly took the government to task on restrictions imposed on the number of people who could gather for worship. The result was government listened to the appeal by the General Assembly and the restrictions were relaxed. Such possibilities should give us reason enough not to give up on searching for greater unity.

Third, the search for greater unity in the CCAP has the goodwill of partner churches and ecumenical organizations of which the General Assembly is a member. Barry Till writing on the Church of South India noted that “It was ... Indians who provided the impetus for the negotiations²⁵ and over and over again through the years it was Indians who insisted on their continuing when the westerners were ready to give up hope.”²⁶ Again Till notes that “the spring which both set in motion the quest for unity and kept it going over the years was the recognition of the futility of divisions in the church when it is in a missionary situation.”²⁷ The problem we have had in the CCAP is that the futility of our divisions in the face of the daunting task of mission has not as yet dawned on our consciousness enough to stir us into action as was the case with our Indian Christian cousins in India. Or the problem is that leaders in our Synods are as yet not ready “to die” for the greater good. Perhaps an exit strategy will need to be worked out for them. With sufficient willingness and trust in the grace of God this is something which can be done (Philippians 4:11-13).

²⁵ The negotiations for union took almost 30 years. See Barry Till, *The Churches Search for Unity*, 291.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 293.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 291.

6. CCAP Harare Synod: Migration and Mission

Alexander Malemelo

While the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian has its origins and its most substantial presence in Malawi, it has lived up to its name by spreading to other parts of Central Africa. This chapter will explore how the CCAP came to be present in Zimbabwe, trace the developments that led to the creation of the Harare Synod, and examine what it means to be a church of Malawi origin in the Zimbabwe context.

Background History

During the early colonial period, a lack of employment opportunities in their homeland prompted many Malawians to become migrant workers in such contexts as South Africa, Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia).¹ The farms and industries that were rapidly developing in Southern Rhodesia during the early 20th century urgently needed labour and were within relatively easy travelling distance from Malawi. As a result, many Malawians made the journey to take up the opportunity of employment. Among them were many who had been educated at the schools of the Presbyterian Missions in Malawi and who had become committed members of the church. As they adjusted to their new life in Southern Rhodesia, they wanted to continue to enjoy the kind of church life that they had known in Malawi.

¹ See John McCracken, *A History of Malawi 1859-1966*, Woodbridge: James Currey and Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2021, 83-93; B.S. Krishnamurthy, "Economic Policy, Land and Labour in Nyasaland, 1890-1914," in Bridglal Pachai (ed), *The Early History of Malawi*, London: Longman, 1972.

Initially, Malawian migrant workers around Salisbury (now Harare) were assembling at a farm belonging to Mr Boswell at Mukuvisi Hillside. They were under the care of Mr Jack Maclean who loved black people and was a leader of the Presbyterian Church in South Africa. When he saw that there were many Malawians who wanted to worship in the Presbyterian tradition, he asked for the assistance of a South African Presbyterian minister. Mr Simpson took up the invitation. Though he could not communicate in Chichewa he made a significant contribution by asking the Government for a place of worship for the Malawian Presbyterians. Meanwhile, when all the Protestant Missions in Nyasaland gathered at Mvera in 1910,² the Malawians in Zimbabwe decided to send a delegation to ask for a pastor. Yonamu of Makande, Joseph Mandovi of Livingstonia and Jeremia Mwalo of Zambezi Industrial Mission were chosen and travelled on foot to Mvera to lodge their request.³

The Mvera Conference responded favourably and decided to co-operate in sending a European missionary to Salisbury (Harare) with the responsibility of ministering to the Malawian migrant workers. The following year, 1911, the Dutch Reformed Church Mission appointed Rev T.C.B. Vlok to serve as pastor to the Malawian Christians living and working in the Harare area.⁴ Vlok was a highly experienced missionary, having accompanied Andrew Murray on the initial trip in 1889 that led to the establishment of the Dutch Reformed Church Mission

² See Kenneth R. Ross and Klaus Fiedler, *A Malawi Church History 1860-2020*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2020, 129-32.

³ M.S. Daneel, *Mbiri ya CCAP Harare Synod*, CAVA, 1982, 13.

⁴ Minutes of CCAP General Synod, 12-15 August 1964, 4-8; M.S. Daneel, *Mbiri ya CCAP Harare Synod*, 47.

(later Nkhoma Synod) in Malawi.⁵ Vlok now embarked on a long period of service, 1911-1936, as the minister in charge of the Malawian church in Harare.⁶ The Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa gave an amount of \$500 to purchase land on which to build a church. The building was completed in 1935, extended in 1936 and continues to house the CCAP Harare congregation until the present day. Vlok had to sell books to raise funds to support mission work and eventually managed to purchase a house at 152 Kwame Nkrumah Avenue.⁷ He retired due to ill health in 1936 and died on 3 September, soon after his return to his home at Wellington in South Africa. By then he had laid a solid foundation for what was to become the CCAP Harare Synod. He is remembered as a great pioneer.

A painful experience for the young church was the decision of the white Dutch Reformed Church in Zimbabwe and Zambia to come under the jurisdiction of the DRC Synod in the Orange Free State. Through the leadership of Elder Sambo, the black congregations resolved to continue to be under the Nkhoma Mission and the Cape Synod of the DRC. Following this decision, more ministers began to be sent from Malawi.

Vlok was succeeded by J. Jackson who served the church from 1936 to 1952. Jackson had earlier served in Mozambique under Nkhoma Mission at Mpanyira and Chiputu before continuing his missionary service at Dedza in Malawi. While serving in Dedza he was called to Britstown congregation in the Cape

⁵ See Christoff Martin Pauw, *Mission and Church in Malawi: The History of the Nkhoma Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian 1889-1962*, Wellington: Christian Literature Fund, 2016, 21-26.

⁶ M.S. Daneel, *Mbiri ya CCAP Harare Synod*, 13.

⁷ *Ibid*, 17.

Province, South Africa. Now he sensed a call to fill the gap left by the departure and death of T.C.B. Vlok. Therefore, the Dutch Reformed Church Mission in the Cape sent him to minister in Harare. Jackson was a very hard-working missionary, noted for promoting Christian stewardship and developing the ministry of evangelists. During his ministry, the number of evangelists rose from four to thirty-four. At the end of the Second World War (1939-45) Jackson was appointed by the British Administration to be Nyasaland Labour Chaplain to work jointly with the Nyasaland Labour Commissioner to Zimbabwe. Jackson's wife established the Women's Guild (Chigwirizano Cha Amayi) in Zimbabwe.⁸ She led this work until her husband retired in 1952. On account of Jackson's ill health, the couple then returned to Cape Town where he served as a clerk in Paarl congregation for some time. He died in 1963 in South Africa.⁹

M.S. Daneel, who had been serving as a missionary at Kongwe in Malawi since 1938, succeeded Jackson in 1952 and served until Zimbabwe gained independence in 1980. During his ministry, he was responsible for the construction of many church buildings. He served for fourteen years in Malawi and then thirty years in Zimbabwe. He was elected Moderator of Harare Synod and served for ten years. He was also involved in training evangelists at Dorothea Mission which was established in 1962, serving as a lecturer until 1979. It was through him that Rock Haven Lay Training Centre was donated to Harare Synod by the Bouwer Family. Rev Daneel also served as a liaison officer

⁸ Samuel Gunde, "A Church Historical Enquiry regarding Growth of Membership in the Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian – Harare Synod (1912-2012)," MA (Theology), University of Stellenbosch, 2013, 39.

⁹ M.S. Daneel, *Mbiri ya CCAP Harare Synod*, 13.

for the Synod from 1965 to 1978. After his retirement in 1982, Daneel returned to South Africa where he died in 2000.

Church Growth

The church gradually grew due to the increasing numbers of immigrants from Zambia and Malawi. More ministers were needed and among those sent by Nkhoma Synod were W. Makwalo, T.P. Nyirongo, Y. Lengwe, Makewana, A.M. Kuchona, J. Mlozi, J.N. Maseko, T.J. Chipeta, L.T. Tsitsi, J.E. Kalema, I.G.M. Banda, H.S. Mawanga, J.C. Juma, Y.T. Matyoka, P. Kachaje and D.S. Mwakanandi. Rev P. Mwamlima and Rev Mvula came from Livingstonia Synod while W. Makwalo and A.A. Chirwa came from Blantyre Synod. The last three were seconded by the CCAP General Synod which had been formed in 1956.¹⁰

Additionally, a number of missionaries from the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa served as congregational ministers: M.S. Daneel at Harare from 1952 to 1980, H.M.L. du Toit at Bulawayo from 1954 to 1960, J. van N. Genis at Bulawayo from 1960 to 1966, J.S. Minnar at Bulawayo from 1966 to 1975 and at Gweru from 1975 to 1977, J.H. Londt at Chinhoyi from 1964 to 1970, H.D.R. Blok at Bindura from 1968 to 1980, W.M. Vester at Chinhoyi in 1981, and A.J. Viljoen at Chinhoyi-Bindura from 1972 to 1981. All of the above had a similar career path, serving first in Malawi, before coming to Zimbabwe and finally retiring to South Africa, except for Rev Vester who went to serve in Canada. These missionaries were all fluent in Chichewa and effective in evangelistic work among

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 19.

the Malawians in Zimbabwe.¹¹ Both Malawian and South African ministers benefitted from the support of the Cape Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church, which provided them with cars and some allowances.

As a result of their work, many congregations were established in various towns in Zimbabwe. For example, the Highfield congregation in Salisbury was established in 1957, Gweru congregation in 1950 and Bulawayo in 1955. 1962 was a notable year with congregations established at Kwekwe, Mutare Sakubva, Chinhoyi and Kadoma. Further significant developments were the establishment of congregations at Bindura in 1968 and Hwange in 1970. This period also saw the erection of church buildings that would later become full congregations: at Nyabira in 1956, Rusape in 1957, Mutare in 1964, Rugare in 1971, Mufakose in 1972, Sizinda also in 1972, Mabvuku in 1975, Mangula in 1978, Lobengula in 1978, Marondera in 1979, Zengeza in 1980, Hwange Number 2 and Karoi in 1981. All of these are now congregations except for Rusape which has reverted to being a prayer house of Mutare.

In 1956, when the three Malawi CCAP Presbyteries were constituted into Synods under the General Synod, the work in Zimbabwe was organized as a fourth Presbytery of Nkhoma Synod. This superseded the previous arrangement under which the work was conducted by the Nkhoma DRCM on behalf of the Federated Missions. Initially, the new Presbytery was served by six ministers, two from the DRC, two from Nkhoma Synod, one from Blantyre Synod and one from the Synod of Livingstonia.¹² At this time the total communicant membership stood

¹¹ *Ibid*, 38-40.

¹² Christoff Martin Pauw, *Mission and Church in Malawi*, 286.

at 5,315, of whom around half were in Harare.¹³ The next major step in institutional development came on 1 May 1965 when Harare Synod was constituted, as a fourth Synod of the CCAP under the General Synod. Initially, it comprised the two Presbyteries of Harare and Gweru.¹⁴ By this time the membership had increased to around 6,000.¹⁵ The service to constitute the Synod took place at Harare CCAP where the Moderator of Nkhoma Synod, Rev A.L. Chalungama preached on 1 Corinthians 14:20 with the theme being that the Synod should grow in knowledge.¹⁶ In 2015 the Synod constituted two further Presbyteries: Highfield and Bulawayo. By 2023, membership was recorded as 6,683 adults and 2,323 youths. There were 34 congregations and 26 serving ministers.¹⁷

Distinctive Features of CCAP Harare Synod

Evangelists have played an important role in the growth of Harare Synod churches. Most of them were recruited from the schools which M.S. Daneel started at farms where migrant workers were stationed. With the assistance of Dorothea Mission, he started a three-year course for the training of evangelists.¹⁸ In due course, there were sixty evangelists. Some of them went to Malawi for theological training and became pastors

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ M.S. Daneel, *Mbiri ya CCAP Harare Synod*, 85-86; J.M. Cronjé, *Born to Witness*, Pretoria: Pretoria: NG Sendingpers, 1982, 112-13; see also Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity: A History of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian as a Federative Denomination (1924-2018)*, Carlisle: Langham, 2019, 86-87.

¹⁵ Christoff Martin Pauw, *Mission and Church in Malawi*, 287.

¹⁶ M.S. Daneel, *Mbiri ya CCAP Harare Synod*, 47.

¹⁷ CCAP Harare Synod, "Data on Membership," 2023.

¹⁸ Ibid, 43-44.

– such as M.S. Nkhanga, A.W.T. Katundu and Rev Chikwenzule. The evangelists played a key role in ministering to what Pauw describes as the “widespread network of small and sometimes isolated groups of Malawians in towns, at mining centres and on farms.”¹⁹

Another significant contributor to church growth was the Chigwirizano women’s organization, started by Mrs Jackson during the 1940s. By 1953 there were 16 committees under the Presbyteries of Harare and Gweru. Further important leadership was offered by Mrs Nashawa of Highfield from 1955 to 1964 and by Mrs B. Namvula of Bulawayo from 1961 to 1971. In 1966 a Synod-level leadership was inducted, comprising Mrs Makewana, Chairperson, Mrs Maseko, Vice Chairperson, Mrs Chipeta, Secretary, Mrs H. van Wyk, Vice Secretary, Mrs Esta Mlauzi, Treasurer, and Mrs Deriya Phiri, Vice Treasurer. The Chigwirizano programme includes instruction in handcrafts, cookery, and Bible study. They also contribute to charity organizations, such as Jairosi Jiri and Chinyaradzo Children’s Home. They meet every Thursday for their worship. On official occasions, they wear a uniform, comprising a white blouse, black skirt and white hat (*dukwa*). The black colour symbolizes sin while the white colour signifies salvation. The women play a major role in congregational life, contributing to church building and renovation as well as charity work among the aged and less privileged members of the society.²⁰

A Men’s Guild has also been established. Though it is not on the same scale as Chigwirizano, the men also wear a uniform of white jacket and shirt with black trousers. They hold an annual

¹⁹ Christoff Martin Pauw, *Mission and Church in Malawi*, 287.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 53-58.

conference with a chosen theme and often have a guest from Malawi as the main speaker. Youth work began on an organized basis in 1964 when Mrs M. de Klerk was appointed as a youth worker. She was assisted by Miss Eva James, Loniya Phiri, Miss Jan Hugo, A.W.T. Katundu, Evangelist Chikwenzule, Miss Smith and Miss Nedi Glover. They made a major contribution by training Sunday School teachers and holding camps for the youth during holidays at Rock Haven Lay Training Center.

As a result of these evangelistic efforts, the CCAP can be found all over Zimbabwe today and is spreading into the rural areas where many Malawians have settled. Some have benefitted from the land reform which began soon after independence. In 2020 Harare Synod started its own theological college and the first five graduates were inducted into their respective congregations early in 2023. Only the Principal is working full time at the college, while other lecturers are teaching part-time, coming for two weeks each term to take their respective courses. Harare Synod is a member of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches, and the Moderator is on the Executive Committee of the Heads of Churches. It is also part of the Dutch Reformed Family where it is represented by the General Secretary.

Access to education has been a long-running concern since migrant workers on the farms found no opportunity for their children to be educated. M.S. Daneel approached farmers requesting that they build schools on their farms and often met with a favourable reception. One of the first schools, established in 1953, was Nyabira which continues its work to this day. Mr Shaw gave 10 acres of land for the establishment of a boarding school. The first headmaster, Mr Chirwa, was appointed in 1955. He was succeeded by Mr Lungu in 1978 and later by

Mr D.S. Mwanandi who went on to become a minister.²¹ Other schools were built at Shamva Mine in Bindura, Mazoe Citrus Estate, Darwendale, Glenara and Raffingora. In-service training was conducted by H. van Wyk and M.S. Daneel with help from the Government. Most of the evangelists began as teachers in these schools. Among them were I.S. Phiri, Kaffere, Pumbwa, Mwale, Zamadenga, Kunitengo, Kanjala, Malemia, Chikwenzule and Chikalema. A major blow to the schools was the 5% levy imposed by the government, which was unaffordable at that time. Therefore, the schools were handed over to District Councils in 1974.²² More recently the Synod has revived its efforts to provide quality education. It now has a Secondary School at Rock Haven in Ruwa, with eight classrooms constructed with funds from Devaree Nasteen DVN Holland.

The life of CCAP Harare Synod has featured some significant leaders. The first General Secretary after Zimbabwe gained its independence in 1980 was Rev I.G.M. Banda.²³ Another influential figure was Rev J.C. Juma. He studied at the united CCAP theological college at Nkhoma before going on to take his Bachelor's degree in Theology at UNISA and then a Master's degree in Christian Education at Calvin Seminary in the USA, returning to Zimbabwe just in time for independence. He served congregations at Marondera, Highfield and Gweru before being appointed General Secretary of the Synod in 1987, an office he held until his retirement in 2012. Another significant leader was Rev Dr Dolbs Simeon Mwanandi. After serving as a teacher and headmaster at Synod schools at Chipadze in Bindura and Nyabira, he went on to train for the ministry. He left Harare

²¹ *Ibid*, 65-72.

²² *Ibid*, 70-72.

²³ *Ibid*, 37.

Synod in 1996 to become a Lecturer and later Principal of Zomba Theological College in Malawi.

After independence, the Zimbabwean Government decided to stop pastors coming from Malawi to serve with Harare Synod. The Synod therefore had to start training Malawians born in Zimbabwe and some young men were sent for training in Zomba, including P. Chirongo, E.J. Siinda, J. Mwale, C. Kongola, A. Malemelo, R. Joseph, S. Gunde, G. Mwale and M.S. Nkhanga as well as Revs Kanyangira, Katundu and Maikoro. Today there are 26 pastors, including three women.

Harare Synod started inducting women as elders and deacons from 1992. This came as a result of there being many more women in the church than men. Because of many men migrating to South Africa for employment there was a gap in the church which the women had to fill. As the situation got better economically, the church has continued to promote women's ministry up to today. Lonia Phiri, Eva James and Nedi Glover trained as both evangelists and youth workers, before later leaving to join their husbands. Harare Synod also started training female evangelists at Justo Mwale Theological College. The following were the first to be trained 1992: Fayina Kashoti and Kazamento of Highfield congregation. More than forty from various congregations have now been trained as lay preachers, with Mufakose having about 20 of them. In 2019 Harare Synod started theological training at Rock Haven. The first intake of six students included two women who graduated in 2022 and were ordained in 2023. Monisi Katundu is now serving Kuwadzana congregation and Loveness Zipusa is serving Sizinda congregation. Among the students currently studying at Rock Haven there are two more women, one in first year and the other in second year.

Harare Synod has maintained its relationship with its sister Synods of Blantyre, Nkhoma, Zambia and Livingstonia. It participates in the life of the CCAP General Assembly where its Moderator and General Secretary serve on the Standing Committee. It has also maintained its relationship with the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa, which was its parent mission from 1912. The last South African minister to serve with Harare Synod was Rev A.J. Viljeon who left in 1989. Since then, the DRC has been instrumental in the education of pastors, with a number completing Masters degrees at the University of Stellenbosch. D.S. Mwanandi obtained his doctorate in theology there. Harare Synod has also formed links with new partners, including congregations of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the Outreach Foundation which is supporting lay preaching training and skills training for church members. Harare Synod is also a member of the African Reformed Council of Churches (ARCC).

A Malawi-originated Church in the Zimbabwean Context

From its inception until today, the CCAP has been perceived as a Malawian church serving Malawians in Zimbabwe. However, the situation is changing. Most church members, though their families originally come from Malawi, have been born in Zimbabwe and they are Zimbabweans. Some have married Zimbabweans and their children can understand Chichewa, but they can hardly speak the language of their ancestors. In light of the mission statement of Harare Synod – “We are a living church serving God in His Glory” – today there is a paradigm shift to mission work in the service of God among all the people. The pastors are citizens of Zimbabwe, and they can preach in the main languages of Zimbabwe, namely Shona and Ndebele.

There is now much use of these local languages though Chichewa is also spoken concurrently. It is one of the languages included in the constitution of Zimbabwe. Most literature is in local Zimbabwean languages.

The order of service continues to use the Chichewa liturgy, but most preaching is in local languages. Harare Synod has also included some Ndebele and English liturgy. The Chichewa Bible is being used less nowadays. The *Nyimbo za Mulungu* hymnbook is still in use. Choir songs are also very much Malawian. There are famous choirs like Mbare Voice which made a hit with a song from Malawi *Imilire anganga uli mwana wa Mulungu* (Stand firm you are a child of God). Most members of Harare Synod, as well as many other Zimbabweans, appreciate Chichewa music. When choirs sing, they make the services lively and Chichewa choruses often dominate revival meetings. Other denominations always identify the CCAP by its songs. In fraternal gatherings for women, men and youth, Chichewa songs dominate. When reciting Sunday school memory verses, the Shona and Ndebele languages are used concurrently with Chichewa. The CCAP in Zimbabwe is very much an international church and flexible in approach.

Since most migrant workers were employed in mines they have settled as permanent residents. In the Hwange area and in mining areas surrounding Kadoma like Chakari, Patchway and Eiffel Flats it is rare to hear Chichewa being spoken. In Synod and Presbytery meetings Chichewa is used but the minutes are written in English. It may well be that Chichewa will one day become a thing of the past in Harare Synod as most seniors who were born from parents who actually came from Malawi are gradually departing the scene.

Meanwhile, in most of the old and famous townships, the CCAP has church buildings which continue to be gathering places for Malawians. Those who have been in Zimbabwe since before independence have secured land and property, becoming permanently settled. Others who were born in Zimbabwe have been included on council waiting lists, enabling them to acquire land and build good houses. Those who have no land in urban areas have been able to get pieces of land in rural areas and some actually own farms as they benefitted from the land reforms. The liberation struggle was also something that caused Malawians to be considered to be people of Zimbabwe. Many young men and women of Malawian origin willingly joined the liberation struggle out of their own commitment. It was only later that the young were abducted and forcibly taken to the front for liberation training. Some lost their lives, but others returned and were integrated into the national army. Some have entered politics and taken up government positions. The first finance minister was Dr Bernard Chidzero while Dzingai Mutumbuka was the Minister of Education in the first republic. Both were second-generation Malawians though not members of the CCAP.

CCAP Harare Synod has good relations with the Embassy of Malawi. The staff of the Embassy are mostly CCAP and are members of City Church in Harare city centre. They have the opportunity of deliberating on Malawi issues with church members in Zimbabwe. When southern Malawi was devastated by Cyclone Freddy early in 2023, the Embassy made an appeal for clothes, foodstuff and stationery, to which CCAP congregations responded generously. For someone to be a Malawian in Zimbabwe, it remains important to keep up the Malawi connection by making visits to relatives in Malawi. Likewise, visitors

from sister Synods of the CCAP help the Harare Synod to maintain its identity. These links keep the church intact.

7. CCAP Synod of Zambia: Identity and Purpose

Victor Chilenje

A Child of Livingstonia

Today's CCAP Synod of Zambia traces its origins to a decision taken in 1897 by Robert Laws, leader of the Livingstonia Mission, to send 22 men from Bandawe to evangelize the Senga. They opened thirteen schools and brought twelve Senga people to Bandawe boarding school.¹ Among the first students brought to Bandawe were Jeremiah Buli Mvula, Simeon Nkhandu Ngulube (later Rev) and Joseph Nyirenda, who later became Chief Tembwe.² In 1899, the Livingstonia Mission dispatched nine Ngoni teachers into the Luangwa valley and established three schools in the Senga chiefdoms of Kambombo, Tembwe and Chikwa.³ These became the most extensive and ambitious missionary operations ever undertaken by Livingstonia Mission, leading to the start of work in large tracts of territory in North-Eastern Zambia.⁴

The new wave of expansion sprang essentially from an African impulse to extend the church.⁵ There was only limited input

¹ Hamish McIntosh, *Robert Laws – Servant of Africa*, Carberry: Handsel and Blantyre: Central Africana, 1993, 154.

² Victor Chilenje, "A History of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) in Zambia 1880s-1998," BTh, Justo Mwale Theological College, 1998, 35.

³ John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi 1875-1940: The Impact of the Livingstonia Mission in the Northern Province*, Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1977, 126-127.

⁴ Church of Scotland, Report of the Foreign Mission Committee, 1930, 10.

⁵ Hamish McIntosh, *Robert Laws*, 153-54.

and influence from the missionaries. Many Africans who accepted Jesus Christ as their personal saviour were ready to take the gospel to their brothers and sisters as teacher-evangelists.⁶ This meant that many areas were evangelized by Africans.⁷ It was only later that the white missionaries came to establish mission stations. Mission Stations were opened at Mwenzo (1882), Chitheba (1882), Uyombe (1889), Tamanda (1894), Kamoto (1896), Kazembe (1897), Lubwa (1904), Chitambo (1907), Chasefu (1922), and Lundazi (1962).⁸

In 1902, 53 senior pupils of the Overtoun Institution, assisted by a small party of agricultural apprentices, spent their long vacation working at twenty-nine separate centres in the Marambo area, spread over an area of 400 miles.⁹ In 1904, evangelists and teachers from all the major stations of Ekwendeni, Loudon, Bandawe and Livingstonia (Khondowe), went not only to the Senga, but also into Kunda, Chewa, Bemba and Bisa country, where twenty-four teachers and one travelling evangelist were employed for three months working from seven major centres.¹⁰ In 1907, Laws was deeply touched when twenty-two Christians, two of them accompanied by their wives,

⁶ Robert Laws, *Reminiscences of Livingstonia*, Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1934, 176.

⁷ Hamish McIntosh, *Robert Laws*, 153.

⁸ J. Du Plessis, *The Evangelisation of Pagan Africa – a History of Christian Mission to the Pagan Tribes of Central Africa*, Cape Town: J.C. Juta, 1929, 29, 295; Robert Laws, *Reminiscences of Livingstonia*, 179, 196.

⁹ John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi*, 126-127.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 127.

volunteered to do extension work in Marambo towards the Lungwa.¹¹

In 1924 when the two Presbyteries of Livingstonia and Blantyre formed the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP), Livingstonia Mission was well established in Zambia and all work there remained part of the newly formed Livingstonia Presbytery. When the CCAP Synod of Livingstonia became a Synod of the CCAP General Synod in 1956, the Chasefu congregations continued to be nurtured by Livingstonia and eventually grew into a Presbytery of CCAP Synod of Livingstonia in 1975.

Even though the Livingstonia Mission/Presbytery did not do much in terms of infrastructure like church buildings, manses, schools and health centres, its greatest contribution to the Zambian people was evangelism and mission.¹² It contributed to the training of the local people in stewardship, counselling, and leadership development through the training of elders, deacons, evangelists and ministers and by creating opportunities for the development of women's, men's and youth fellowships.¹³ This contributed to the empowerment of the local Zambian people both in church and society. In this way, the identity of CCAP Zambia Synod was and is closely linked to Livingstonia Mission, Livingstonia Presbytery and CCAP Synod of Livingstonia.

The Livingstonia Mission of the Free Church of Scotland trained the first indigenous Zambians to serve the church in the

¹¹ James Johnston, *Dr. Laws of Livingstonia*, London: S.W. Partridge, 1908, 114; Minutes: Livingstonia Mission Council, 1938, 9.

¹² Minutes: CCAP Livingstonia Presbytery, 1951, 1-2.

¹³ W.M.K. Jere to Rev W.P. Chibambo, General Secretary, Synod of Livingstonia, 16 February 1982.

territory. Jeremiah Nqumayo and Timoti Jere were trained as evangelists at Bandawe in 1910, while the same training was undertaken at Khondowe by Samson Mapara and Zebuloni L. Nguni in 1929, and Yonah Mbeye in 1951. After the constitution of the CCAP Synod of Livingstonia in 1956, it embarked on the training of evangelists for the Chasefu CCAP congregations in Zambia. Reuben Wombe Mvula and Smart Z. Ng'uni were sent for training in 1963 at Lundazi Boma, followed by Raswell G. Those and Meckest A. Nkunika in 1972.¹⁴ These men became leaders, highly respected in church and society in both Malawi and Zambia.¹⁵ Another group of evangelists were trained for Chasefu Presbytery in 1983: Morris J. Simwaba, T.J. Mighi, E.T. Moyo, M.D. Lukhanda and H.C.C. Nyirenda.

Despite the great work of the evangelists, it became clear that ministers were needed to run the mission stations. The first indigenous minister to be trained at Livingstonia Theological College was Yonah Lengwe Mvula who was ordained as a minister on 16 September 1927.¹⁶ The second group to be trained were Simeon K. Ngulube, Euwen Siwale and Paul Mshindo who enrolled at the College in 1940. During the 1950s Sinoa K. Nkhowane, Newton H. Phanana Nkunika and Isaac Mutubila completed their training.¹⁷ The need to train indigenous Zambian ministers was once again felt in 1977.¹⁸ N.M. Mtonga,

¹⁴ Minutes: CCAP Synod of Livingstonia General Administration Committee, February 1963, 6.

¹⁵ Ibid, February 1969, 13.

¹⁶ Hamish McIntosh, *Robert Laws*, 216, 245.

¹⁷ CCAP Synod of Livingstonia Missionary Biographies, 2001, 1-2; Minutes: CCAP Livingstonia Presbytery, 1948, 22.

¹⁸ Victor Chilenje, "A History," 65.

S.M. Mithi, F.J. Mwanza and T.K.M. Zgambo enrolled at the newly founded Zomba Theological College during the late 1970s. The CCAP was growing rapidly in Zambia during the early 1980s. More ministers were needed so David Chiboboka, Lector Kalua and Victor Chilenje trained at Zomba while L.R. Mbewe, C.T. Soko and M.D. Lukhanda were sent for training at an emergency theological college at Livingstonia.¹⁹

Livingstonia Mission also provided the CCAP in Zambia with a model of mission. The education network created at the Overtoun Institution at Khondowe in Malawi became perhaps the most effective and certainly the most admired in Central Africa and provided the early training for many Malawians and Zambians.²⁰ Livingstonia Mission established many mission schools in Malawi as well as in Zambia.²¹ Through the many schools, both rural and urban, the people of Zambia have been enlightened as Livingstonia schools offered the best education in the country. This was a very big contribution to the people of Zambia educationally, as graduates of these schools were in high demand in government and non-governmental institutions.²² The centre of education of the Livingstonia Mission in the Eastern Province of Zambia was at Chasefu. The mission schools were the channels through which Christian teaching spread. The Mission Council worked hand in hand with the Local Education Authority (LEA) to see to it that: (1) in almost all cases the schoolteacher was also the local evangelist; (2) the school curriculum contained a time for

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi*, 234.

²¹ Minutes: Livingstonia Mission Council, 1938, 34; John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi*, 233- 234.

²² Minutes: Livingstonia Mission Council, 1943, 19, 20, 23.

Religious Studies and some of the early reading books were part of the Bible; and (3) often the school building served as the church on Sundays and the same pupils who were on the school rolls made up the hearer and catechumen classes.²³ In an effort to have a holistic approach to mission work, the Livingstonia mission also introduced health work in Central Africa. In Northeastern Rhodesia, health centres were established at Tamanda, Uyombe, Chitheba and Chasefu.²⁴ By 1943, there was a dispensary at Chasefu, which performed invaluable work. The Council sent all serious cases to the main hospitals at Loudon and Livingstonia. The Livingstonia Mission had four welfare centres (clinics) at Chitheba, Uyombe, Kazembe and Chibale. These places prevented many unnecessary deaths, suffering and diseases.²⁵

Many early missionaries and church workers helped people in farming. New crops were introduced, and better methods of production were taught. As a result, the production increased rapidly. One of the exponents who promoted the agriculture industry in the Livingstonia Mission was Donald Fraser of Loudon and Chasefu. As Hamish McIntosh observed: “Fraser considered that an Agriculture Native Demonstrator should be appointed for each area to give lessons on caring for stock, from poultry to cattle, and on the growing of crops in order to increase the wealth, comfort and capacity of the people.”²⁶

The churches in Zambia also imbibed Livingstonia’s spirit of evangelism. The growth of the CCAP especially in the Eastern

²³ Neil Bernard, Director of Surveys and Lands, 2 July 1954.

²⁴ Victor Chilenje, “A History,” 38-39.

²⁵ Minutes: Livingstonia Mission Council, 1943, 16; Church of Scotland Minutes of the Foreign Mission Committee, 1949-1950, 96.

²⁶ Hamish McIntosh, *Robert Laws*, 207.

Province during the early 1960s was because the whole life of the congregations was built upon the Bible. This helped the Church to mobilize its resources for effective evangelistic campaigns.²⁷ Through its guilds (Women, Youth and Men) the CCAP Synod of Livingstonia carried out its evangelistic campaign in Zambia. All these guilds exist in the Church as a tool for evangelism. The Women's Guild was established in the Livingstonia Presbytery in 1936.²⁸ The Christian Youth Fellowship started in 1952 in the Livingstonia Presbytery and spread from Malawi to Zambia during the 1960s with membership open to all youths from 15 to 35 years. The idea of the Men's Guild came from Loudon and Chasefu Presbytery in 1964. Although the General Administration did not accept the idea that same year, it was accepted at the 1965 Synod meeting.²⁹ This group normally meets for Bible studies and fellowship on Saturdays.

Today evangelism by various departments is carried out in almost all the congregations, especially through the Women's Guild, Men's Guild, and the youth. It is the duty of every minister/evangelist to teach his congregants that evangelism is the backbone of the Church and at every gathering of Christian fellowship outreach is done to win souls for Christ. Wherever these fellowship meetings are held, campaigns are always

²⁷ Church of Scotland, Report of the Foreign Mission Committee, 1941-42, 19; Minutes: CCAP Synod of Livingstonia General Administration Committee, 23-27 August 1966, 6, 12.

²⁸ Church of Central Africa Presbyterian Synod of Livingstonia Umanzano Office, *Mdauko Mendesekero na Milimo ya Umanzano wa Banakazi* - History and Constitution of the Women's Guild of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian Synod of Livingstonia, 1972, 2.

²⁹ Minutes: CCAP Synod of Livingstonia General Administration Committee, 18 August 1964, 1, 6.

conducted on Saturdays. Through elders' and deacons' schools, people are taught how to preach the Word of God, do counseling, conduct house visitation and extend hospitality to widows/widowers. The bereaved are also taken care of in the process of evangelism.

Livingstonia Mission considered that the printing and distribution of literature was a means of evangelism. The provision of literature was one of Robert Laws' major concerns in regard to mission and evangelism. He himself was involved in translating useful Christian material into the local languages.³⁰ Many booklets, such as the Tumbuka New Testament, *Makani na vidokoni, Nkhongono Zako Zenecho* (Your Real Power), *Mupharazgi muvemi* (A Good Evangelist), *Evangel, Sumu, Katekisma* and many others were distributed to Christians in Zambia.³¹ The Synod of Livingstonia also produced booklets of Bible expositions, scripture biographies, theology, booklets explaining the way of salvation and concerning Christian life as well as a religious newsletter and magazine in Tumbuka, the language of the people served in Eastern Zambia.³² Up to now, the CCAP Christians depend on the literature from the CCAP Synod of Livingstonia including the Order of Service for ministers. The CCAP in Zambia also benefitted from literature produced by the Nkhoma and Blantyre Synods.³³

The CCAP in Zambia adopted this holistic model of mission. It continues to focus on the gospel, education, health and agriculture as major mission components through departments

³⁰ Robert Laws, *Reminiscences of Livingstonia*, 128-29, 132.

³¹ Minutes: CCAP General Synod, 4-5 September 1968, 18.

³² Minutes: CCAP General Synod, 6-7 September 1972, 17.

³³ Minutes: Livingstonia Mission Council, 1947, 6, 13-14.

established at the Synod level. In addition, the Synod of Zambia and the Synod of Livingstonia have the same liturgy. Their way of worship and praise is so similar that it is difficult to make a distinction between the two. A minister from either Synod does not find any problems with serving in the other one. Both Synods have the same church polity and have the same organizational structures. For example, these Synods have sections, prayer houses, congregations, presbyteries, Synod and General Assembly. Elders are ordained for life. These Synods uphold high standards of discipline in the church. No beer drinking, polygamy or any other vices are allowed. Both Synods are known for their high standards of church administration.

Both Synods use the Tumbuka and Chichewa languages, the former more often than the latter. It is only recently that Zambian languages such as Bemba have been used. The use of Tumbuka in CCAP Zambia resulted in the church being labelled a Tumbuka Church for many years.³⁴ As a Christian community the CCAP in Zambia traces its roots to the Livingstonia work, and there has continued to be a close bond. The CCAP congregations in the Chasefu area remained structurally part of the CCAP Livingstonia Synod and of the Chasefu Loudon Presbytery through the different phases of ecclesiological development of the CCAP Livingstonia.³⁵ The CCAP Synod of Livingstonia deserves to be commended for continuing the Livingstonia Mission work in Zambia despite political, geographical and economic differences between the two nations after they attained independence from Britain in 1964.³⁶

³⁴ Minutes: CCAP General Synod Standing Committee, 9 Nov. 1973, 1-3.

³⁵ Int Silas M. Nyirenda, Zomba Theological College, 11 July 2002.

³⁶ Ibid.

Forging Identity in a Complex Ecclesial Environment

At the formation of the CCAP in 1924, the Livingstonia congregations in Northern Rhodesia were an integral part of the Livingstonia Presbytery.³⁷ The future and identity of these congregations and their members were impacted by the church union processes that took place in Northern Rhodesia. Underlying these was a diversity of missionary origins. The London Missionary Society (LMS) established five stations around Lake Tanganyika during the 1870s.³⁸ The Paris Evangelical Missionary Society under the leadership of François Coillard began work in the Western Province in 1886.³⁹ The Methodist District in Northern Rhodesia originated from two separate Methodist bodies: the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (WMMS) and the Primitive Methodist Missionary Society (PMMS) which covered much of the central part of the country.⁴⁰ The Dutch Reformed Mission of the Orange Free State established stations at Madzimoyo (1903), Fort Jameson (1905), Nyanje (1905), Nsadzu (1908), Hofmeyr (1916), Merwe (1924) and Katete (1944).⁴¹ Later its work expanded throughout the country, becoming known from 1968 as the Reformed Church in

³⁷ Minutes: CCAP Synod, 17-22 September 1924, 1-3.

³⁸ J. Du Plessis, *The Evangelisation of Pagan Africa*, 318.

³⁹ Robert I. Rotberg, *Christian Missionaries and the Creation of Northern Rhodesia 1880–1924*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965, 151.

⁴⁰ Peter Bolink, *Towards Church Union in Zambia*, Franeker: T. Wever, 1967, 65.

⁴¹ Gerdien Verstraelen-Gilhuis, *From Dutch Mission to Reformed Church in Zambia*, Franeker: T. Wever, 1982, 4, 47; J.M. Cronjé, *Born to Witness*, Pretoria: NJ Sendingpers, 1982, 140-41.

Zambia (RCZ).⁴² The Anglican UMCA established its Northern Rhodesia diocese based at Livingstone in May 1910.⁴³

Between 1899 and 1925 minerals were discovered in what became known as the Copperbelt. Copper mines and compounds attracted thousands of migrant workers to Luanshya, Mufulira, Nchanga, Chambesi and Ndola.⁴⁴ In 1936 the United Missions Copperbelt Team was formed. The participating societies were the London Missionary Society, the Livingstonia Mission, the Universities' Mission to Central Africa (UMCA), the Methodist Missionary Society, the South African Baptist Mission, and the United Society for Christian Literature.⁴⁵ The team worked together for 19 years from 1936 until 1955 when it disbanded.⁴⁶ Meanwhile the Union Church in the Copperbelt (UCCB) originated from a spontaneous movement amongst the African Christians who came to the Copperbelt from different tribes and different missions in Central Africa.⁴⁷ The Union Churches of the Copperbelt consisted mainly of the LMS adherents, Presbyterians from the Livingstonia areas in Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia, Lozi Christians from Barotseland, and a few Methodists from the Southern Province, the UMCA (Anglican), the United Society for Christian

⁴² J.M. Cronjé, *Born to Witness*, 147.

⁴³ John Weller and Jane Linden, *Mainstream Christianity to 1980 in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1984, 67.

⁴⁴ John V. Taylor and Dorothea Lehman, *Christians of the Copperbelt: The Growth of the Church in Northern Rhodesia*, London: SCM, 1961, 9, 29.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 35, 38-41.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 33-34.

Literature, and the South African Presbyterian Church.⁴⁸ The Union Church was seen as a temporary spiritual home for the members of the diverse mission churches. The church order was along Presbyterian lines, and the church was dependent on ministers lent by the co-operating missions.

According to Bolink, within two decades all the main participating denominations found that they needed to have their own organizations, “either because Church order and government did matter in mission work (the Anglicans), or because home and foreign missions were seen as one (the Methodists), or because missions came to be regarded as an obligation of the Church itself (the Scottish Presbyterians).”⁴⁹ Tribal identities and differences in exercising church discipline were also significant.⁵⁰ The issues that arose proved to be formative for the future of the CCAP in Zambia.

Relations with the London Missionary Society

In 1936 the LMS member of the United Missions Team wrote to the CCAP Synod Secretary proposing a connection between CCAP, UMCB and LMS.⁵¹ After a ten-year process of negotiations, the church union process failed. At the August 1945 CCAP Synod meeting in Nkhoma, “Synod regretted that it was unable to grant the petition of the congregations connected with the London Missionary Society.”⁵² The same minutes indicated: “Synod, however, expresses sincere hope that this present decision will in no way mar the happy relations and

⁴⁸ Ibid, 39.

⁴⁹ Peter Bolink, *Towards Church Union in Zambia*, 34.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 182.

⁵¹ Peter Bolink, *Towards Church Union in Zambia*, 210.

⁵² Minutes: CCAP Synod, 22-26 August 1945, 7-8.

cooperation at present existing between the congregations of the London Missionary Society and the Union Church of the Copperbelt on one hand and the three congregations about to be formed into the Presbytery of North-Eastern Rhodesia on the other.”⁵³ The Minutes of 1945 further state that, “at the petition of the Kirk Sessions of Mwenzo, Lubwa and Chitambo, Synod considered again the desirability of forming these Congregations into a separate Presbytery and agreed to the separation of these three Kirk Sessions from the Presbytery of Livingstonia and to the formation of the CCAP Presbytery of North-Eastern Rhodesia to include the Kirk Sessions of Mwenzo, Lubwa and Chitambo.”⁵⁴ Bolink suggests that some understood that this Presbytery was given a free hand to unite with the LMS and the Union Churches in Northern Rhodesia and that the North Eastern Presbytery would then become part of two churches: the CCAP in Nyasaland and the united church to be formed in Northern Rhodesia – between these two a federal union was envisaged.⁵⁵

The Moderator of the Presbytery of North-Eastern Rhodesia, Rev Dr Brown, pushed ahead with arrangements for a church union between the CCAP, the LMS and the Union Churches. On Saturday 1 December 1945, the day after the Presbytery of North-Eastern Rhodesia was constituted, commissioners from the churches under the care of the London Mission Society (LMS) in Northern Rhodesia, the congregations of the Union Church of the Copperbelt (UCCB) and those of the North-eastern Presbytery in Rhodesia of the Church of Central Africa

⁵³ Minutes: CCAP Synod, 22-26 August 1945, 7-8.

⁵⁴ Minutes: CCAP Synod, 22-26 August 1945, 6.

⁵⁵ Peter Bolink, *Towards Church Union in Zambia*, 249.

Presbyterian (CCAP) met for the consummation of the Union Church, with Brown in the chair.⁵⁶

The Clerk of the CCAP Synod, the Rev J.M. Alexander, in his correspondence to Brown asked, “Where is now Synod’s Presbytery?”⁵⁷ The Standing Committee of the CCAP Synod meeting from 24 to 27 May 1946 discussed the matter. Its conclusion was, as contained in a letter written to the Church of Central Africa in Rhodesia (CCAR): “that the Synodical Committee was unable to recognize that the union consummated at Chitambo on 1 December 1945 was a Union within the Synod.” The committee realized, however, that the step taken may be one for the furtherance of God’s Kingdom in Northern Rhodesia and sincerely hoped that the CCAR would work as a sister in co-operation with the CCAP.⁵⁸ By this time, however, much CCAP property had been taken over by the CCAR. The relationship between the two churches became so strained that it caused most CCAP members living in the Copperbelt to be resentful towards the newly formed church.⁵⁹

From 1948 the CCAR embarked on new church-union schemes which included the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society and the Methodists leading first to the formation of the United Church of Central Africa in Rhodesia (UCCAR) in 1958 and eventually

⁵⁶ Record of the Consummation of the Church of the Union and Minutes: of the North-Eastern Presbytery of the Church of Central Africa in Rhodesia at Chitambo, 1945, 1.

⁵⁷ Peter Bolink, *Towards Church Union in Zambia*, 255.

⁵⁸ Minutes: CCAP Synod Standing Committee, 24-27 May 1946, 4; Record of the Consummation of the Church of Church Union and Minutes of the North – Eastern Presbytery of the Church of Central Africa in Rhodesia at Chitambo, 1946, 3.

⁵⁹ Minutes: CCAP Livingstonia Presbytery, 2 September 1950, 7.

the United Church in Zambia (UCZ) in 1965.⁶⁰ However, as far as the CCAP Synod was concerned, 1 December 1945 marked the end of the church union negotiations with churches in Zambia.⁶¹ The Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) Livingstonia Presbytery concentrated on CCAP congregations found in the present Eastern Province and part of the Northern Province (Isoka).⁶² The main mission stations were: Lundazi, Chasefu, Usenga South (Chitheba), Usenga North (Sitwe), Uyombe and Kazembe. This whole area remained under the CCAP Livingstonia Presbytery.

Church Life in an Urban Context

As towns and cities developed in Zambia, large numbers of people from rural areas migrated there in search of work. The 1950s were years of rapid growth in the urban areas, especially in the Copperbelt and in Lusaka. Christians from Malawi and Zambia, members of the CCAP, were amongst those who migrated to these areas.⁶³ Presbyterian elders played a significant role in the formation and organization of CCAP congregations in urban centres.⁶⁴ The leadership of the vibrant life of the young church that came into being in the compounds and locations was provided by Malawians and Eastern Zambians who

⁶⁰ Minutes: CCAR Presbytery, 11 July 1948, 8; Minutes: CCAR Presbytery, 22 June 1949, 5-6; Minutes: CCAR Presbytery, 18 July 1958, 9; The Basis of Union and Constitution of the United Church of Zambia, 1965, 9.

⁶¹ Minutes: CCAP Synod, 7- 11 October 1948, 2.

⁶² Minutes: CCAP Synod, 16-21 May 1952, 15, Appendix 2.

⁶³ E.S. Pons, *The Southern and Central Streams of Presbyterianism in Africa*, Johannesburg: Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa, 1982, 12.

⁶⁴ Fergus McPherson, *North of Zambezi: A Modern Missionary Memoir*, Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1998, 146.

spoke Chitumbuka and Chichewa.⁶⁵ Most of the people who came to work in Zambia were well-educated and had a Reformed/Presbyterian Christian background. They knew the practice and procedure of their churches, so they were able to organize prayers, which resulted in the forming of several congregations under their leadership.⁶⁶

On the Copperbelt during the 1950s, with the decline of UCCB and the advent of CCAR, many Christians originally from the Livingstonia area broke away from the CCAR.⁶⁷ This was mainly as a result of issues concerning church discipline, language differences and personality differences. The CCAP had a well-defined view of church order and, to many Malawian Christians, this seemed to be lacking in the CCAR.⁶⁸ Issues related to church discipline prompted Zakeyu Chirongo to report to the Livingstonia Presbytery in 1950 that former CCAP Christians who connected themselves with the CCAR had separated themselves from the CCAR.⁶⁹ The CCAR requested the Livingstonia Presbytery to intervene immediately.

The main reasons why the CCAP Christians broke away from the CCAR were as follows:

- n. They felt they had been ushered into a union without being fully consulted and informed.
- o. The CCAR policy that elders should not be ordained for life but just for four years.

⁶⁵ John Weller and Jane Linden, *Mainstream Christianity*, 21.

⁶⁶ Fergus McPherson, *North of Zambezi*, 20-21.

⁶⁷ Peter Bolink, *Towards Church Union in Zambia*, 266.

⁶⁸ Int. J.W. Kamanga, General Secretary, CCAP Synod of Livingstonia, 27 May 1975.

⁶⁹ Minutes: CCAP Livingstonia Presbytery, 2 September 1950, 7.

- p. A perception of weak discipline in the CCAR in comparison to the Livingstonia Presbytery system, resulting in tolerance of beer drinking, fornication and adultery.
- q. Clash of personalities amongst the leaders of the congregations and tribal feelings.
- r. The use of only the Bemba language, disregarding other languages.⁷⁰

From 1950 to 1984 CCAP Christians in the urban areas were described as “dissidents” since they had disagreed with the CCAR church order.⁷¹

In 1953, the Presbytery of Livingstonia received a letter from the CCAR Presbytery stating that the misunderstanding continued and was causing divisions in the church. The CCAP Livingstonia Presbytery appointed a Special Committee to study the matter and to report back. The Special Committee reported that the dissidents should be strongly advised to rejoin CCAR. The Livingstonia Presbytery adopted the report and sent representatives to the Copperbelt to inform CCAR Christians and the dissidents of the Presbytery’s decision.⁷² However, the directive for CCAP members in Northern Rhodesia to join CCAR was undermined by retired Malawian pastors who came to the Copperbelt and, without the knowledge of either CCAR or CCAP Livingstonia, pastored dissidents.⁷³ These problems between the CCAP Christians and their counterparts in the CCAR

⁷⁰ John V. Taylor and Dorothea Lehman, *Christians of the Copperbelt*, 174-175.

⁷¹ Int. J.W. Kamanga, General Secretary, CCAP Synod of Livingstonia, 27 May 1975; Int Jairos Lungu, Samboko Village, Chief Chindi, Mzimba, 11 September 2003.

⁷² Extract Minutes: Livingstonia Presbytery, 1953, 2.

⁷³ Minutes: CCAR Presbytery, 18 July 1957, 6.

persisted even after the formation of the United Church of Zambia (UCZ) in 1965.⁷⁴

In 1967 in Ndola, CCAP members mainly originating from the CCAP Blantyre Synod moved out from sister churches like RCZ, PCZ and UCZ and formed the CCAP Ndola congregation. They were registered by the government in January 1972 and were visited by Blantyre Synod after their request in September 1972.⁷⁵ Rev Faiti Phiri reported that the group was very frank when visited by the delegation from the CCAP General Synod. They stated the reasons for being separated from the sister churches included the following:

- Segregation practiced by the sister churches.
- Dissatisfaction with their discipline, immorality and liturgy.
- Identity – wanting their Presbyterian way of worship.
- Worries about their properties, which were in other churches' hands.⁷⁶

What is now CCAP Chilenje Congregation in Lusaka developed from Chinika Primary School in Kanyama during the late 1940s. Tumbuka-speaking CCAP members began the prayer house.⁷⁷ In 1967, when people with CCAP origins who were worshipping at RCZ Matero congregation questioned the credentials of

⁷⁴ John Weller and Jane Linden, *Mainstream Christianity*, 151; Minutes: UCCAR Synod, 4 August 1959, 18-19; The Basis of Union and the Constitution of the United Church of Zambia in 1965, 7.

⁷⁵ Minutes: CCAP General Synod Standing Committee, Appendix V: The Report of the Delegation to the CCAP Lusaka and Ndola, 1972, 2-3.

⁷⁶ Ibid; Int. M.M. Banda, CCAP Synod of Livingstonia, Mzuzu, Mzimba, Malawi, 14 October 2004.

⁷⁷ Int. D. Sichinga, Elder, CCAP Chilenje, Chief Nkhomesya, Lusaka, Zambia, 25 June 2005.

a new pastor, 15 CCAP elders were given indefinite suspension. The suspended elders decided to organize themselves and start meeting under the name of the CCAP, which was their original church. This group, which was known by the RCZ as a “breakaway,” grew quickly. This threatened the leadership of the Reformed Church in Zambia. The situation was so bad that the new church was nicknamed “*zoiipa chitani mulungu azaweruzza church*” or “*mupatuko church*”, which means a sect.⁷⁸ Members from these CCAP communities travelled to Malawi in 1969 to ask the General Synod to recognize them as part of the CCAP family.⁷⁹ After discussing the issue, a delegation was appointed to visit the Malawian Christians who had formed CCAP churches in Lusaka and Ndola. The delegation was instructed to find out why these Christians refused to join RCZ or UCZ. After the delegation’s report, the Standing Committee of the General Synod of 1971 indicated it would consult with the RCZ and UCZ and that the CCAP group should be reunited with the existing Churches – RCZ, UCZ, and PCZ.⁸⁰

In 1973 the elders from Lusaka and Ndola wrote again to the CCAP General Synod in Malawi to be allowed to worship as full CCAP members and be accepted as part of the CCAP family.⁸¹ The CCAP General Synod Standing Committee sent another delegation which failed to achieve reconciliation between the groups and the sister churches. The leadership of the UCZ and the RCZ were, however, willing to regard these CCAP

⁷⁸ Int. James Tembo, Mtendere, Chief Nkhomesha, Lusaka, Zambia, 20 August 2003.

⁷⁹ Minutes: CCAP General Synod Standing Committee, 16 November 1969, 3, 5, 7.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 25 November 197, 11-12.

⁸¹ Ibid, 9 November 1973, 2-3.

branches as sister churches.⁸² On Sunday 16 June 1973, the two branches of Lusaka (George) and Chifubu-Ndola prayer houses were officially recognized in Lusaka by the CCAP General Synod delegation as the Lusaka and Ndola CCAP congregations. Now they could worship as a recognized church under the CCAP General Synod.⁸³

At a meeting of the Standing Committee of the CCAP General Synod at Zomba Theological College on 21 June 1979 it was agreed to hand the Lusaka and Ndola congregations to CCAP Synod of Livingstonia, which already had a mission field and a Presbytery in Zambia.⁸⁴ After the handover, various CCAP groups were at peace with one another. Church union succeeded to a large degree in Zambia. However, the united church increasingly lost a clear identity in terms of church polity and discipline. CCAP members rebelled against this loss of identity.

Relations with the Presbyterian Church in Zambia

The Presbyterian Church in Zambia (PCZ) – a Presbytery of the then Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa – suffered from the departure of many of its members with CCAP loyalties into CCAP prayer houses.⁸⁵ Discussion of the relationship between the Presbyterian Church in Zambia (PCZ) and the CCAP started in 1978. A major setback occurred in May 1981 when

⁸² Minutes: CCAP General Synod Standing Committee, 9 November 1973, 2-3; Int. James Tembo, Mtendere, Chief Nkhomesha, Lusaka, Zambia, 20 August 2003.

⁸³ Minutes: CCAP General Synod Standing Committee, 9 November 1973, 1-3.

⁸⁴ Minutes: CCAP Liv GAC, 1978:16.

⁸⁵ Int. J.S. Gondwe, General Secretary, CCAP Synod of Livingstonia, 7 August 1970.

leaders of the two churches literally exchanged blows. Rev E.H.Y. Chaula was badly beaten by PCZ leaders.⁸⁶ The police were called in to control the situation, which brought shame on the Churches.⁸⁷ Afterwards, the two Churches resolved to put the events of May 1981 behind them and begin a new chapter for a better future. They put in place a joint body called the “Liaison Committee” to recommend to both churches a possible future union.⁸⁸ Both the CCAP Synod of Livingstonia and the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa expressed delight at the turn of events and wished the two Churches in Zambia success in their endeavours.⁸⁹ The discussions broke down, however, over the issue of the name to be adopted by the proposed united church.⁹⁰ When the Livingstonia Synod General Administration Committee met in 1984 it reminded itself of the lesson learnt in 1945 when Mwenzo, Lubwa and Chitambo CCAP congregations merged with LMS/UMCB and decided that all the CCAP congregations found in Zambia would remain within the CCAP Synod of Livingstonia until they received autonomy as a Synod in

⁸⁶ Rev W.P. Chibambo, General Secretary, CCAP Synod of Livingstonia, int. by W.M.K. Jere, 22 September 1981; Int. N.M. Mtonga, UPCS, Kanyama Township, Chief Nkhomesya, Lusaka, 15 July 2004.

⁸⁷ Int. N.M. Mtonga, UPCS, Kanyama Township, Chief Nkhomesya, Lusaka, 15 July 2004.

⁸⁸ E.S. Pons, *Southern and Central Streams*, 16.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ N.M. Mtonga, Presbytery Clerk, Presbyterian Church in Zambia, 5 September 1983; W.P. Chibambo — N.M. Mtonga, Presbytery Clerk, CCAP Lusaka/ Copperbelt Presbytery, 9 January 1984.

Zambia.⁹¹ In 1985 both Churches resolved to suspend the business of the Liaison Committee.⁹²

Relations with the United Church of Zambia (UCZ)

The UCZ persistently requested the CCAP Synod of Livingstonia to surrender to it all the CCAP congregations in Zambia. In a letter received by the Synod Executive on 6 October 1981, UCZ requested that the CCAP Synod of Livingstonia surrender Uyombe congregation to the UCZ and indicated that it was pointless for the CCAP Synod of Livingstonia to continue running CCAP congregations in Zambia, thus creating problems among Christians in Zambia.⁹³ The CCAP Synod of Livingstonia Executive rejected the idea of handing over CCAP congregations in Zambia to the UCZ, and requested that time be found for a visit to the UCZ offices to explain the Synod's stand in Zambia.⁹⁴

At the General Administration Committee (GAC) meeting held at Ekwendeni Lay Training Centre from 16 to 18 April 1982, the CCAP Synod of Livingstonia received another letter from the UCZ requesting the CCAP Synod of Livingstonia to allow it to second ministers to CCAP congregations in Zambia. The idea of the UCZ seconding ministers to CCAP Synod of Livingstonia congregations in Zambia was rejected by GAC. However, the CCAP Synod of Livingstonia resolved to work in

⁹¹ Minutes: CCAP Livingstonia General Administration Committee, 3-7 August 1984, 16.

⁹² Minutes: CCAP Livingstonia General Administration Committee, 16-20 April 1985, 14-15.

⁹³ Minutes: CCAP Livingstonia Synod Executive Committee, 6 October 1981, 1f.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 1-3.

partnership with the UCZ in spreading the Gospel in Zambia.⁹⁵ When the CCAP Synod of Zambia met with the UCZ at Lundazi on 8 November 1989, both groups agreed to bury all differences.⁹⁶

Relations with the Reformed Church of Zambia (RCZ)

The relationship between the CCAP and the RCZ was very bad from 1967 to 1987 since many CCAP Christians who left RCZ congregations in urban areas were regarded as breakaways by the RCZ. After the two Synods realized that their relations were unchristian, they agreed to meet and resolve their differences. Ministers and elders of the two churches met at Justo Mwale Theological College on 3 December 1987. The aim was to find the causes of their differences and discuss the way forward. It was found that the causes of their differences were the breaking away of some RCZ Christians who formed the CCAP group at George Compound in Lusaka. After a lengthy discussion, the Synods realized no CCAP ministers in Zambia were present when these breakaways took place. After a heated debate, the two churches agreed to bury all their differences and start afresh to maintain their relationship.

The CCAP Synod of Zambia Today: Identity and Purpose

Identity here refers to the characteristics of the CCAP in Zambia. The Synod of Zambia experienced rapid development

⁹⁵ Minutes: CCAP Livingstonia General Administration Committee, 16th April 1982, 9, 16.

⁹⁶ Minutes: Meeting of the CCAP Synod of Zambia and the UCZ Synod, Lundazi, 8 November 1989, 1, 2; Minutes: CCAP Synod of Zambia Executive Committee, 20 April 1990, 1.

during the 1990s, with marked numerical growth.⁹⁷ At its inauguration in 1984 it had only two presbyteries, sixteen congregations and 15,000 communicants.⁹⁸ By 2004 it had a membership of more than 42,000, nine presbyteries and 47 congregations.⁹⁹ The Synod has 32 ordained ministers, two still on probation and one retired. In addition, the Synod had ten trained evangelists stationed at congregations which have no ministers. 100

The structure of the Synod has contributed to the growth and development of the Church. From the local congregation to the Synod, members of the church understand that the church is missionary by its very nature. Every member is inspired and involved in evangelism and church growth.

The CCAP Synod of Zambia exists for the mission of God. In its quest to fulfil its calling, the church has taken a holistic approach to mission. This approach includes the proclamation of the gospel (kerygmatic). It also features mission schools, health centres and it is involved in agricultural services (diaconal). The church conducts Bible studies which help to enhance fellowship (*koinonia*). All this witnesses to the glory of God and the manifestation of God's divine grace, which results in worship (*leitourgia*). The life of the Synod is marked by proclamation – sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ, service – contributing in terms of education, health, and agriculture, and fellowship – hospitality, opening homes, and having meals

⁹⁷ Minutes: CCAP Synod of Zambia, 1-2 August 1990, 5-7.

⁹⁸ Minutes: CCAP Synod of Zambia, 28 October 1984, 1-3.

⁹⁹ Church of Central Africa Presbyterian Synod of Zambia, Update on Life and Work of the CCAP Synod of Zambia to the Church of Scotland, 2005, 9.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

together. This results in the manifestation of God's glory and grace in church, society and academy.

With the inauguration of the Synod of Zambia in 1984, ecumenical relations assumed a new importance. It was now an indigenous church working with other churches and organizations in mission and evangelism. From the late 1980s, the CCAP Synod of Zambia was determined to work together with other churches and took bold steps in this regard. The Synod now has good ties with the Reformed Church in Zambia (RCZ), the Uniting Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa (UPCSA) and the United Church of Zambia (UCZ). The Synod sends delegates as observers to these sister Churches during their Synod and Presbytery meetings. It also maintains a good relationship with the CCAP General Assembly and all its member Synods.

The CCAP Synod of Zambia played a strategic role in sustaining the unity and functional integrity of the CCAP General Assembly when it was in danger of falling apart. The General Assembly had not met for more than six years when the Synod of Zambia hosted a meeting of its Standing Committee at Lundazi from 4 to 5 January 2012. The outcome of this meeting was that the offer of the Synod of Zambia to host the next meeting of the General Assembly was accepted. Mediation and coordination were spearheaded by the Synod Moderator Prof. Victor Chilenje, Moderator Elect Rev Chizason Chunda, General Secretary Rev Maleka M. Kabandama, and Deputy General Secretary, the late Rev Gerald Phiri. They succeeded in organizing the meeting of the General Assembly, which took place at Lundazi from 13 to 15 December 2013. The main item of business was the election of office bearers, which was successfully completed with the election of Rev Prof. Timothy Nyasulu as

Moderator, Rev Patson Chilongo as Vice Moderator, Rev Colin Mbawa as Secretary General, Rev Edward Tembo as Deputy Secretary General, and Rev Gerald Phiri as second Deputy Secretary General.¹⁰¹ This was a significant contribution to stabilizing and sustaining the CCAP General Assembly.

The Future of the CCAP Synod of Zambia

Mission stations planted by Livingstonia evangelists and missionaries in Zambia embraced the Livingstonia imprint of theology and polity. When confronted with the complex ecclesial environment which existed in Zambia between 1900-1950 – in which mergers failed – congregants clung to their CCAP identity. 1950-2000 were tumultuous years during which CCAP Zambia Presbytery/Synod confronted and overcame antagonism from other Presbyterian and Reformed denominations. The formation of CCAP Zambia in 1984 was a major benchmark in this process. By the beginning of the 21st century, CCAP Zambia had stabilized and was accepted as a legitimate Zambian denomination. During the early 21st century, CCAP Zambia grew numerically and in terms of infrastructure – establishing education, health, shallow wells, and relief and development departments and a theological college in Eastern Zambia.

CCAP Zambia's vision for the future is to grow both quantitatively and qualitatively using its holistic approach to mission-encompassing proclamation, service, fellowship and the liturgical dimension. To achieve its vision CCAP Zambia must overcome multiple challenges. These include its cash-strapped

¹⁰¹ Int Maleka Kabandama, 13 March 2023; Int Chizason Chunda, 13 March 2023.

situation, the inability of some congregations to support a pastor at a responsible level, the struggle to maintain Presbyterian polity and liturgy in the face of the Pentecostal and prosperity gospel onslaught, the urgent need for infrastructure and academic development at Chasefu Theological College, the limited ability of some leaders to think strategically to identify problems and implement gospel oriented solutions, and the struggle of retired pastors to maintain themselves. CCAP Zambia's history has been one of constant struggle and with God's grace CCAP Zambia has persevered. Without doubt It will continue to do so despite the mentioned obstacles.

Part 2 – CCAP Women

8. The Blantyre Mission Women Teachers 1940-1965 and their Life Trajectories

Gilbert Phiri

From its inception Blantyre Mission started training its own women and girls in teaching. At first, there were no teacher training schools. Teachers were trained by qualified missionary teachers within the school.¹ This system of training teachers changed in 1908 because it had a major challenge of diversity. There was no consistency in this training. In 1909, Blantyre Mission started training its teachers at Henry Henderson Institute. After some years, African women teachers were trained at Blantyre Girls' Teacher Training School, locally called *Amanthu*.² However, little has been written about these teachers and their life trajectories. This chapter therefore aims at explaining education, employment, and life trajectories of five women teachers who graduated from Blantyre Mission teacher training schools between 1940 and 1965. These teachers are: Molly Bwanausi Dzabala, Eddah Ella Chitalo, Stella Mathewe Mulanga, Ella Chiponde Nkunika, and Abigail Chilingulo Mangulenje.

¹ *Life and Work in British Central Africa* - January, 1903, 29.

² Anne Hepburn, *Memories of Malawi and Scotland*, Edinburgh: [n.p.], 2011, 11. She observes that it was set up with much skill and vision by Mary Lowe who was working out in the villages at the time Anne Hepburn arrived. It was called *Amanthu*, which means elderly lady, because those who were being trained there were elderly ladies as compared to the young girls who were attending their education at Blantyre Mission Girls School which was locally called *Njingati*.

Background

Molly Bwanausi (Mrs Dzabala) was born on 27 March 1928, the daughter of James Bwanausi and Netty Somanje.³ Both parents were Blantyre Mission teachers and active members of St Michael and All Angels Church. She is the third born child in a family of four children. When she was young, she was nicknamed a-ka-Mao (little mother)⁴ because she could do most of the house chores at her tender age. Being someone from a Blantyre Mission family, Molly Bwanausi was born to Christian parents since both parents were affiliates of Blantyre Mission. She had an infant baptism at Blantyre Mission on 4 June 1928. On 16 April 1944, she became a full member of St Michael and All Angels congregation.⁵ On 27 December 1952 she married Harneck Dzabala and their Christian wedding was officiated

by Rev Borrowman at St Michael's and All Angels Church in Blantyre.⁶ Ever since she has been an active member of St Michael and All Angels Church and a member of the Women's Guild (*Mvano*).

Her contemporary, Edda Thipa (Mrs Chitalo) is a daughter of Kidney Thipa and Ella Panonyele. She was born on 12 October 1932 at Mlanga Village in Blantyre and raised in the Blantyre

³ Molly Dzabala Bwanausi is a grand granddaughter of Ella Kumakanga, a sister to Mungo Murray Chisuse. Netty Somanje who was Ella Kumakanga's daughter was Molly Bwanausi's mother.

⁴ Rosemary Argente, *Blantyre and Yao Women*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2018, 115. This was also mentioned by Molly Bwanausi Dzabala, alumna of Blantyre Mission School, Michiru, Int. 7 April 2022.

⁵ Int. Molly Bwanausi Dzabala, alumna of Blantyre Mission School, Michiru, 7 April 2022.

⁶ Ibid.

Mission.⁷ Both parents were teachers and active members of St Michael and All Angels. However, her parents separated when she was still quite young, so she grew up with her five siblings and her mother. When her father reappeared for reconciliation, her mother did not take him back, but she encouraged the children to accept him as their father.⁸ She has been a member of Blantyre Mission from her infancy since both parents were affiliates of Blantyre Mission. She had an infant baptism at Blantyre Mission in November 1932. In 1948 she became a full church member. She married Ernest Chitalo in 1953 and their Christian marriage was officiated by Reverend Sembereka at St Michael and All Angels Church. In 2011 she and her husband were awarded St Michael and All Angels CCAP Church longest serving members award.⁹ She always found comfort and ease in the Word of God. Prayer was and still is the perfect remedy for her. She has been an active member of St Michael and All Angels Church and a member of Women's Guild.

Another female teacher of this period is Ella Chiponde (Mrs Nkunika) who was born on 29 June 1939 at Mulanje Mission.¹⁰ She is a daughter of Eliazer Chiponde and Edith Magoni who were both from Mulanje. Both parents were farmers. In addition, the father was a church elder while the mother was a member of the Women's Guild. She is the last born in a family of seven children and the only one still surviving today.

⁷ Int. Edda Chitalo (née Thipa), alumna of Blantyre Mission School, Chigumula, 24 March 2022. This has also been mentioned in *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edda_Ella_Chitalo [24 May 2022].

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ "Be Wise in Handling Children" *The Nation*, 24 July 2011.

¹⁰ Int. Ella Chiponde (Mrs Nkundika), alumna of Blantyre Mission School, Namputu Village, Mulanje, 7 January 2023.

Ella Chiponde was born to Christian parents since both her parents were full members of Blantyre Mission. She received infant baptism in October 1939. In 1954 she became a full church member, her confirmation officiated by Rev Joseph Kaunde at Mulanje Mission.¹¹ Her role models were Mrs Doig and Mrs Watt who were Scottish missionaries and Mrs Bertha Mambiya and Mrs Belia Kacheme who were Malawians. She had been a deacon, church elder and Vice Chairperson of *Mvano* at Mulanje Mission. On 12 October 1963 she married Letter Nkundika. It was a church wedding which took place at Mulanje Mission and was officiated by Reverend Mkwezalamba. The couple were together for 34 years until the husband died in 1997.

Her long-time companion is Stella Mathewe (Mrs Mulanga) who was born on 9 July 1940 at Mulanje Mission. She belonged to the family of Lloyd Mathewe and Catherine Kachulu who were from Mulanje.¹² Her father was a carpenter while the mother was a nurse. Both parents were members of Mulanje Mission. She is the third born in a family of five children, and the only surviving member. Stella never saw her biological father who died five months before her birth. Her mother later married Mr Mathewe who raised her.

Since both parents were Christians of Blantyre Mission, she became a Christian in her infancy. She was baptized as an infant in 1942 by Rev Joseph Kaunde. From 1950–1952 she did her catechumen class and became a full church member in 1952. Her confirmation was again officiated by Rev Joseph

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Int. Stella Mathewe (Mrs Mulanga), alumna of Blantyre Mission School, Namputu Village, Mulanje, 7 January 2023.

Kaunde. Scottish women missionaries Margaret Benzies and Anne Hepburn were her role models. She had the following responsibilities in the church: Sunday school teacher, deacon, church elder and a trainer of Women's Guild members (*mphunzitsi wa amayi a Mvano*). On 12 November 1960 she married James Mulanga.¹³ It was a church wedding and was officiated at Mulanje Mission by Rev Piringu.

Abigail Chilingulo (Mrs Mangulenje) is another teacher in this period. She is the daughter of Charles Chilingulo who was from Zomba and Maria Matengambiri who was from Mulanje. Both parents were members of Mulanje Mission. She was born on 12 October 1944 at Mulanje Mission.¹⁴ She is the first-born in a family of six children, of whom three are still alive. She came from a well-to-do family since the father was the Head Clerk / Assistant District Commissioner. Both her parents were full members of Blantyre Mission. She received infant baptism in January 1945 at Mulanje Mission. She did her Sunday school from 1949 to 1953, and catechumen class from 1954 to 1959. In 1959, she became a full church member at Mulanje Mission, her confirmation officiated by Rev Hamish Hepburn.¹⁵ Her role model was Mrs Barbara Doig. Abigail Chilingulo had the following responsibilities in the church: church elder, instructor of *Mvano*, *Mvano* secretary at St Columba's congregation. In 1965 she married George

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Int. Abigail Chilingulo (Mrs Mangulenje), alumna of Blantyre Mission School, Michiru, Blantyre, 11 January 2023.

¹⁵ Ibid, 55.

Mangulenje. Their wedding was officiated at Mulanje Mission by Rev Alistair Rennie.¹⁶

The information above indicates that all these teachers were daughters of Blantyre Mission converts who were active members of Blantyre Mission in their respective congregations. Because of this they had a strong foundation in Christianity since all of them received infant baptism. They did their Sunday school, catechumen class and became full church members within Blantyre Mission. This enabled them to be well grounded in Blantyre Mission teachings and practices hence they have been members of Blantyre Mission ever since. This Christian background has also instilled good manners and a prayerful life. They all had Christian marriages, officiated at either St Michael's and All Angels Church in Blantyre or Mulanje Mission. In addition, it also resulted in them having good and strong families. None of them experienced marriage breakdown.

Education

Molly Bwanausi (Mrs Dzabala) started school in Blantyre at HHI School in 1932 at the age of six years. During this period, HHI School was coeducational. In 1936, she left HHI School and went to Girls' School since all girls at HHI School were sent to Girls' School. After her Standard 4 at Girls' School, she was trained as a teacher at *Amanthu* from 1944 to 1945.¹⁷ She specialized in Homecraft. Then she had to do self-learning with assistance from Miss Mary Lowe for Standards 5 and 6. After passing Standard 6, she continued learning on her own at

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Molly Bwanausi Dzabala, "Tracing some Heroes" in *HHI Centenary Magazine*, October 2010, 18.

Mary Lowe's house and qualified as English Grade Teacher. Through self-learning she acquired the Form Two Certificate. Then, in 1962, she won a scholarship to Melbourne in Australia where she specialized in Homecraft and advanced teaching methods. She graduated in 1963 and came back home the same year.

As for Edda Thipa (Mrs Chitalo), she started school in 1939 at HHI Main School.¹⁸ After one year, she went to Girls' School for Class 2 to Standard 3. After Standard 3, she joined senior primary at the same school in 1946. In 1947 she was in Standard 5. Upon completing Standard 5, Edda Thipa opted to go to Standard 6. She was sent to HHI in 1948 since there was no Standard 6 at Girls' School at that time.¹⁹ In the same year, Edda Thipa passed Standard 6 examinations. In 1949 she went back to Girl's School where she was trained as a teacher. She graduated in 1950. In 1961, she was sent to Emily McPherson College of Domestic Economy in Melbourne in Australia by Nyasaland Government to study and she majored in Home Economics. She graduated in 1962 and in 1965 she went to Stella Maris for upgrading.

Ella Chiponde (Mrs Nkunika) started primary education in 1945 at Mulanje Mission School. Her parents were inspired by some African/Malawian women teachers who were teaching at Mulanje Mission School. In 1953, she passed Standard 3 examinations and proceeded to senior primary at the same school.

¹⁸ Edda Chitalo, "Female Pioneers: Mrs Edda Chitalo (Née Thipa)" in *HHI Centenary Magazine*, 2010, 22.

¹⁹ Int. Edda Chitalo (née Thipa), alumna of Blantyre Mission School, Chigumula, 24 March 2022. This has also been mentioned by Edda Chitalo in her article, "Female Pioneers: Mrs Edda Chitalo (née Thipa)," in *HHI Centenary Magazine*, 2010, 22.

In 1956, she sat for Standard 6 examinations which she failed. In 1957, she went to Kambenje School to repeat. In the same year, she passed the Standard 6 examinations. Then in 1959, she went to Kapeni Teachers' College to be trained as a teacher and she graduated in 1961.²⁰

Her companion Stella Florence Mathewe (Mrs Mulanga) started school in 1945 at Lisanjala Mission School in Mulanje. Her parents sent her to school due to the influence of missionaries, since her father was a carpenter at Mulanje Mission. At Lisanjala School, she did only standard 1. Thereafter, she went to Mulanje Mission School. In 1953, she passed Standard 3 examinations at the same school. In 1956, she sat for Standard 6 examinations which she failed. Then in 1957, she went to Kambenje School to repeat. In the same year, she passed Standard 6 examinations. In 1958, she went to Kapeni Teachers' Training College. She graduated in 1960 and in 1967 she was sent to Jeanes Training Centre to be trained in Domestic Science.²¹

As for Abigail Chilingulo (Mrs Mangulenje), she started school in 1951 at Mulanje Mission. Since her father was educated, he wanted her daughter too to be educated. She did her primary education at Mulanje Mission School. In 1959 she was selected to HHI secondary school.²² In 1961 she sat for the Junior Certificate examinations which she passed. Since HHI Secondary School at that time was a Junior Secondary School, she was selected to Livingstonia Secondary School. However, she did

²⁰ Int. Ella Chiponde (Mrs Nkundika), alumna of Blantyre Mission School, Namputu Village, Mulanje, 7 January 2023.

²¹ Int. Stella Mathewe (Mrs Mulanga), alumna of Blantyre Mission School, Namputu Village, Mulanje, 7 January 2023.

²² Int. Abigail Chilingulo (Mrs Mangulenje), alumna of Blantyre Mission School, Michiru, Blantyre, 11 January 2023.

not go to Livingstonia because her father was old and sick. In addition, the father had no money for her transport to Livingstonia since by then he had retired from work. In 1961 she went to Kapeni Teachers' College to be trained as a teacher. After one year she was sent to Providence Teachers' College because Kapeni Teachers' College was now training P4 teachers while she was to be trained as a P3 teacher. She graduated in 1963. In 1967, she went to Stella Maris to upgrade from T3 grade to T2 grade. She specialized in Home Economics, graduating in 1969 with a Cambridge certificate. In 1978 she went to Chancellor College to pursue a Diploma in Education, graduating in 1980.²³

The information above reveals that Blantyre Mission offered high quality education to women and girls. Through this education, girls and women got educated and empowered from poverty and punitive cultural traditions. It was a blended type of education that gave them both academic knowledge and technical skills. Through this education, girls gained certificates and skills that enabled them to be employed. Though done some time back, this was women empowerment at its best. This is in line with Millennium Development Goals, Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063 where women empowerment which is a component of human capital development is one of priority areas. As for Agenda 2063, this is well stipulated in Enabler number 5.

Why were the girls successful in Blantyre Mission education? There are several factors that contributed to their success. However, the three key factors were the type of education offered,

²³ Rose Biziwick, "Mrs Abigail Mangulenje (née Chilingulo)," in *HHI Centenary Magazine*, October 2010, 25.

the presence of female local and missionary teachers, and the strong link between education and Christianity. Blantyre Mission from its inception, promoted girls' education. It even opened Girls' School in 1909 at Blantyre Mission so that girls could have education in an environment of their own so as to promote their participation in education.²⁴ In addition, both local and female missionary teachers played a significant role in girls' education. They were the role models for Blantyre Mission girls, influencing them to perform better in class. Some female missionary teachers even supported girls in their education by accommodating them in their houses, giving them extra lessons, giving them motivational talks, and sharing their experiences with the girls.²⁵ Finally, the girls did better in their education because Blantyre Mission education had a strong link with Christianity. Through Christian teachings and moral lessons that girls imbibed in these schools, they became well behaved and hardworking, hence doing better in their education.²⁶

However, it must be noted that this education was different from that of the boys, especially in technical subjects. Girls were offered domestic science, homecraft, laundry, sewing, and printing while boys learned brick laying, brick making, carpentry, boot repairing, and printing. In terms of academic subjects, both boys and girls learned the same subjects. This type of

²⁴ Tom Colvin, *Blantyre Mission with Prayer and Praise*, Blantyre, 11.

²⁵ Int. Molly Bwanausi Dzabala, alumna of Blantyre Mission School, Michiru, 7 April 2022. This was also stated by Edda Chitalo (née Thipa), alumna of Blantyre Mission School, Chigumula, 24 March 2022.

²⁶ Int. Ella Chiponde (Mrs Nkundika), alumna of Blantyre Mission School, Namputu Village, Mulanje, 7 January 2023. This was also stated by Stella Mathewe (Mrs Mulanga), alumna of Blantyre Mission School, Namputu Village, Mulanje, 7 January 2023.

curriculum prevented girls from learning skills that boys learned and it also prevented boys from learning skills that girls learned.

Employment

After her teacher training at *Amanthu* at Blantyre, Molly Bwanausi was posted to Girls' School as a teacher. From 1946 to 1961 she had been teaching at Girl's School where female teachers were being trained. She was teaching Homecraft. She was a role model to fellow Africans, and she helped in promoting education among the natives. She also assisted Blantyre Mission in running its schools. At Blantyre, she made a lot of friends both local and missionaries since she was good at mixing with people. One of her best missionary friends was Anne Burton who was married to Hamish Hepburn on 14 August 1954 at St Michael and All Angels.²⁷ Molly gave her vital support when she started learning about African life, customs and Chinyanja (Chichewa) language.²⁸ In 1963, after specializing in Homecraft and teaching methods, she was posted to the Ministry of Labour and Social Development where she was responsible for training

²⁷ Anne Hepburn, *Memories of Malawi and Scotland*, Edinburgh: [no publisher], 2011, 5.

²⁸ She used to take Anne to her home with an intention to expose her to African life and customs. At Girls' School, she could teach her some aspects of African life and customs which some of them were being displayed by the students. On Chinyanja (Chichewa) Molly was literally teaching Anne how to speak Chichewa. www.stagw.org.uk/anne-hepburn-eulogy/ [10.5. 20 22]. This was also mentioned by Molly Bwanausi Dzabala, alumna of Blantyre Mission School, Michiru, 7 April 2022.

women.²⁹ After working for one year, the Cabinet Crisis occurred and she fled to Zambia.³⁰

Her contemporary Edda Thipa (Mrs Chitalo) was employed as a teacher in 1951, a year after her graduation. Her first teaching station was Girls' School at HHI in Blantyre. She taught at that school from 1951 to 1958 where she later became the headmistress. Thereafter, she was transferred to HHI where she served from 1958 to 1960. In 1961 she was posted to Ndirande. In 1963, she was posted to Kapeni Teachers' Training College to teach Domestic Science. In 1966 she was posted to Blantyre Secondary School before being posted back to Kapeni Teachers Training College. In 1970 she was promoted to the level of T2 teacher. Apart from the many services she provided to the government, Mrs Edda Chitalo was appointed by the government to be responsible for visiting VIPs.

As for Ella Chiponde, she started teaching in 1962 at Mulanje Mission School. During her period of teaching, she did not do any other training to advance in her career. She started as PT 4 teacher, but through her hard-working spirit she received promotions that made her move from PT 4 to PT 1. Apart from being a PT 1, she never had the opportunity to be the Headteacher or even the Deputy Headteacher. According to

²⁹ Int. Molly Bwanausi Dzabala, alumna of Blantyre Mission School, Michiru, 7 April 2022.

³⁰ Kenneth R. Ross, *Malawi and Scotland: Together in the Talking Place since 1859*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2013, 178-82. This was so because she was a sister to Augustine Bwanausi who was one of the six Cabinet Ministers who were sacked from their positions by Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda due to Cabinet Crisis in 1964. This was also mentioned by Molly Bwanausi Dzabala, alumna of Blantyre Mission School, Michiru, 7 April 2022.

her, this was due to her being a woman. She retired in 1997. Then she was re-employed by the Ministry of Education in 2000 on month-to-month basis which she did for a year.³¹

Her companion Stella Mathewe started teaching in 1961 as an English Grade teacher at Mtonda Primary School in Blantyre. Then she was transferred to Kapeni Primary School in 1965. In 1969, she was at HHI Primary School. Then she was transferred to Makata Primary, Blantyre Girls Primary, Mulanje Mission Primary and finally Bunda Primary School. Due to her hard-working spirit, she was promoted in 1982 to be the Headteacher, a post she held until 1990. In 1989, she was promoted to PT 1 which is the highest position at primary school. In 1991, she retired from public service. In 1994, she rejoined teaching in government schools on a month-to-month basis up to 2000.³²

Abigail Chilingulo started teaching in 1964 at Lujeri Primary School in Mulanje District. In 1965 she was transferred to Londadele Primary School within Mulanje. From 1969 to 1971, she was at Mulanje Secondary School. Then in 1972, she was transferred to Blantyre Secondary School where she taught up to 1974. In 1974 she was transferred to Blantyre Girls' Primary School since Malawi now had enough graduates in Home Economics. She was at Blantyre Girls' Primary school for two years. In 1976, she was promoted to the post of District Needle Work Organizer for Blantyre Urban. In 1980 she was transferred to Blantyre Teachers' Training College. She was there up to 1991 when she was promoted to Regional Education Officer

³¹ Int. Ella Chiponde (Mrs Nkundika), alumna of Blantyre Mission School, Namputu Village, Mulanje, 7 January 2023.

³² Int. Stella Mathewe (Mrs Mulanga), alumna of Blantyre Mission School, Namputu Village, Mulanje, 7 January 2023.

responsible for Home Economics.³³ She held that post until 1994 when she was promoted to Senior Methods Advisor in the Ministry of Education. In 1998, she was promoted to the post of Education Division Manager, was posted to Mulanje and retired in the same year.³⁴

It is undisputable that Blantyre Mission through its teacher training colleges produced dedicated women teachers who committed their lives to teaching. Through their services, education in Blantyre Mission schools improved. However, it must be noted that these teachers were well-trained in Domestic Science, Homecraft, and laundry. This created a problem because they were denied the opportunity to become specialists in other fields. Despite that, Blantyre Mission contributed greatly towards wealth creation where it employed all these teachers. It also addressed gender inequalities in wealth creation thereby improving the socio-economic status of women.

Life Trajectories

After their teaching career, these women had another phase of life, which resulted from either their career or the type of education they received in Blantyre Mission schools. Out of these five, two ventured into politics, two went into entrepreneurship while the last one went into the Teaching Service Commission.

³³ Rose Bizwick, "Mrs Abigail Mangulenje (née Chilingulo)," in *HHI Centenary Magazine*, October 2010, 25.

³⁴ Int. Abigail Chilingulo (Mrs Mangulenje), alumna of Blantyre Mission School, Michiru, Blantyre, 11 January 2023. This has been also mentioned by Rose Bizwick in her article, "Mrs Abigail Mangulenje (née Chilingulo)," in *HHI Centenary Magazine*, October 2010, 25.

Being someone who came from a family that was politically active, Molly Bwanausi Dzabala was active in politics though she was not very conspicuous in the political realm.³⁵ In 1964, while she was working in the Ministry of Labour and Social Development as a training officer for women, there was a Cabinet Crisis in Malawi which affected her and her family. In the same year, she fled to Zambia.³⁶ While in Zambia, she worked in different organizations and companies. However, prior to the flight, Molly and her family suffered greatly. Molly and her husband lost their jobs while their children were stopped from going to school and were just staying at home.³⁷ When the political tension escalated, the family thought of leaving the country. Their first attempt was to go to Mozambique. Suddenly, the family left for Mozambique and settled at Villa Nova. However, the place had a lot of mosquitoes and was not safe for the family, hence they returned to Malawi. After a short stay in Malawi, Molly and her family left for Zambia and settled at Solwezi where they were living with many people in one house, using one pot for cooking and one

³⁵ She was a sister to Augustine Bwanausi, and to Ceciwa Bwanausi who was expelled from Blantyre Secondary School in 1959 since she was among six political activists who during a concert at the school sang a song that rejected the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. Cf. Kapote Mwakasungula and Douglas Miller, *Malawi's Lost Years and her Forsaken Heroes*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2017, 126.

³⁶ Kenneth R. Ross, *Malawi and Scotland*, 178-82. This was so because she was a sister to Augustine Bwanausi. This was also mentioned by Molly Bwanausi Dzabala, alumna of Blantyre Mission School, Michiru, 7 April 2022.

³⁷ Kapote Mwakasungula and Douglas Miller, *Malawi's Lost Years*, 132. This was also mentioned by Molly Bwanausi Dzabala, alumna of Blantyre Mission School, Michiru, 7.4.2022.

plate for eating.³⁸ As time went by Molly and her husband started looking for jobs. She was the first to get a job in Chingola, so they moved there. In 1992 while in exile, Molly joined the United Front for Democracy (UFMD), one of political parties that emerged in Malawi during that time. In 1993, she was appointed as a Secretary for Women's Development in UFMD.³⁹ She returned home from exile in 1994. In 1995, she started an organization called Young Women Christian Association of Malawi whose objective was to empower women by providing them with knowledge, skills and income.⁴⁰ She is the founder of this organization while Miss Netty Dzabala, her daughter, is the Executive Director. Currently, Molly is based in Michiru in Blantyre.

Edda Chitalo started her political life in 1965 when she got a call from Sanjika Palace while teaching at Kapeni Teachers' College. She was told that the Ethiopian Emperor, Haile Selassie, was coming to Malawi and that she had been chosen as the lady-in-waiting to his wife.⁴¹ From that day on, she could be called upon whenever foreign dignitaries were coming to Malawi. This included the Queen of Britain's visit to Malawi. In 1971, Malawi's President Dr Kamuzu Banda nominated her to

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Int. Molly Bwanausi Dzabala, alumna of Blantyre Mission School, Michiru, 7 April 2022.

⁴⁰ It works to improve the lives of women and girls in all aspects of their lives. It aims at empowering women in order to create and maintain a progressive community. It is committed to uplifting the quality of life of women and deal with women's issues in order for them to become aware of their rights and privileges, and improve their capacity, to appraise their needs and those of the population in general. facebook.com/ywcamw/ [10 May 2022].

⁴¹ "Be Wise in Handling Children," *The Nation*, 24 July 2011.

become a Member of Parliament for Blantyre South-East. Then, she resigned from her post as a teacher and set out on her political journey.⁴² In 1972, she was elected as parliamentary secretary, or deputy minister, for Community Development and later in 1973, she moved to the Ministry of Health where she also worked as a parliamentary secretary. She then won a seat and, therefore, doubled as a Member of Parliament for Blantyre East Constituency.⁴³ In 1976, she was the Minister of Health. In 1977, she was left out of the cabinet since Dr Kamuzu Banda did not want women in that cabinet “due to their tendency of bringing each other down.”⁴⁴ Despite the reshuffle, she remained in Malawi Congress Party serving as deputy treasurer and secretary for Southern Region up to 1983 when she quit politics completely and devoted herself to farming.

Edda Chitalo also worked with Dr Bakili Muluzi. When Dr Muluzi won the Presidential election in 1994, Edda Chitalo was the first female Minister of Women and Children Affairs, Community Development and Social Welfare in his Cabinet.⁴⁵ In 1995, she was the Leader of Delegation of Malawi to the United Nations Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen.⁴⁶ In 1997, she was sent to Fiscal Planning and later went to Human Resources Management to serve as a minister. In 1999, she quit politics. In 2001, she was chosen as

⁴² Int. Edda Chitalo (née Thipa), alumna of Blantyre Mission School, Chigumula, 24 March 2022.

⁴³ “Be Wise in Handling Children,” *The Nation*, 24 July 2011.

⁴⁴ Int. Edda Chitalo (née Thipa), alumna of Blantyre Mission School, Chigumula, 24 March 2022.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Letter from Malawi Embassy to The United Nations Secretariat, Copenhagen, 6 March 1995.

assistant secretary to the President, responsible for women. During this time, she was also the director of women in the UDF Party. She also served as the personal assistant to the President until President Bingu wa Mutharika came to power. In 2004, she was appointed by wa Mutharika to be a Lead Person in the establishment of the Ministry of Women and the Elderly. She served that position for five months and then her contract was terminated since she refused to join the Democratic Progressive Party which was Bingu's party.⁴⁷ Currently, she is managing her farm in Chigumula in Blantyre.⁴⁸

As for Ella Chiponde (Mrs Nkunika) and Stella Mathewe (Mrs Mulanga), when month-to-month employment by the Ministry of Education was over, they teamed up with Margaret Chisasa and opened Apatsa Private Primary School on 8 January 2001, in Mulanje District. It was a full primary school with a kindergarten. It was one of the outstanding schools in Mulanje District from 2006 to 2020 where a good number of students were selected to various national, district and community day secondary schools in Malawi.⁴⁹ They were proprietors of this school up to 2020 when it was closed. Currently, the school is not functioning because the ladies are elderly and cannot manage to run the school. As a result, they have rented out the buildings. Currently, both are in Mulanje District at their home

⁴⁷ Int. Edda Chitalo (Née Thipa), alumna of Blantyre Mission School, Chigumula, 24 March 2022.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Int. Stella Mathewe (Mrs Mulanga), alumna of Blantyre Mission School, Namputu Village, Mulanje, 7 January 2023.

Namputu Village where they are staying and getting involved in farming.⁵⁰

The path taken by the above-mentioned women teachers was different from that taken by Abigail Chilingulo (Mrs Mangulenje). When she retired in 1998, in the same year, she was appointed Commissioner of the Teaching Service Commission by Dr Bakili Muluzi who was then the President of Malawi. She served in that capacity for one term. Thereafter in 2002, she was redeployed by the Ministry of Education on a month-to-month basis and was sent to Blantyre Teachers' College as a Lecturer. She had been there until 2013 when the month-to-month contract was terminated.⁵¹ From 2013 to date, she is enjoying her retirement, based in Blantyre.

The information above reveals that knowledge and skills that Blantyre Mission offered to its women teachers contributed to their survival and flourishing even when their teaching career was over. This is evidenced by the women teachers discussed above who contributed greatly towards the development of Malawi even after their teaching career.

Conclusion

It is undisputable that Blantyre Mission offered solid Christianity and education to its girls. Through that Christianity, it produced strong members of the church whose daughters were

⁵⁰ Int. Ella Chiponde (Mrs Nkundika), alumna of Blantyre Mission School, Namputu Village, Mulanje, 7 January 2023. This was also mentioned by Stella Mathewe (Mrs Mulanga), alumna of Blantyre Mission School, Namputu Village, Mulanje, 7 January 2023.

⁵¹ Int. Abigail Chilingulo (Mrs Mangulenje), alumna of Blantyre Mission School, Michiru, Blantyre, 11 January 2023.

strong Christians who were hard working, well behaved and had church marriages officiated within Blantyre Mission. This is evidenced by the women teachers discussed above.

Through its education, Blantyre Mission offered to its women teachers knowledge and skills necessary for their survival and for the development of Malawi. These skills and knowledge were necessary even when their teaching career was over. This is evidenced by the women teachers discussed above. Blantyre Mission offered liberative education which promoted the spirit of independence in its students. It was a type of education that promoted the concept of “Africa for Africans.” Because of that, most of its students were very active in politics. This is the reason why Mrs Molly Bwanausi Dzabala and Mrs Edda Thipa Chitalo ended up in politics when they were done with teaching. They performed impressively even though they were mere teachers. This education also offered entrepreneurial skills to its students. They were such skills that enabled Mrs Ella Chiponde Nkunika and Mrs Stella Mathewe Mulanga to survive after their retirement from teaching. They opened and successfully managed Apatsa Private School in Mulanje. Finally, this education inculcated a hardworking spirit in its students. This is evidenced by Mrs Abigail Chilingulo Mangulenje who successfully worked as a Commissioner of the Teaching Service Commission.

9. Celebrating the Leadership Roles of Women in the CCAP 1924-2024

Mwawi N. Chilongozi

There is Much to Celebrate

It is worth celebrating the leadership roles that women have played and the impact they have made in the 100 years of the CCAP's existence. Allowing women to be leaders as deaconesses, church elders and ministers and to serve in strategic positions has benefited the church. Excluding women from decision-making positions leads to a huge loss of God-given potential that could be utilized and make an impact on evangelization and the growth of the church.

The Triple Tradition: Oppression and Promotion

When the CCAP was established in 1924/26, women played no visible role as leadership was assumed to be a male activity.¹ At

¹ Before the founding of the CCAP there was a missionary conference (of the three Presbyterian Missions and Zambezi Industrial Mission), which women also attended. Mamie Martin of Thipura complained bitterly that the only papers devoted to women were three papers on medical work: "This was all the time that was devoted to Women's Work. I think it was a downright disgrace. Some of us registered strong protests and held a meeting of our own ... One thing I am glad of – there is a woman on the new Committee for arranging about the next Conference (2 years hence). Just fancy, never having had a woman before. And then they boast about British sex equality..." (Margaret Sinclair, *Salt and Light. The Letters of Mamie and Jack Martin from Malawi (1921-1928)*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2003, 207). – While women were somewhat represented in the missionary conference, they played no leadership role in the formation of the CCAP.

that time there were three traditions defining the roles of women in the three churches coming together.

(1) African Traditional Culture

In traditional culture women played important and well-defined roles,² but their role in family and society was clearly secondary to those of men. This applied even to the central and southern parts of Malawi, where most societies are matrilineal, but still patriarchal, as control is no less in the hands of men, though not of the father but of the maternal uncle.³

The fact that in matrilineal societies there had always been female chiefs, was largely ignored, and they were indeed a minority. The role of the powerful Ngoni chiefs' wives was rejected together with the polygamy that made it possible. That Makewana was always female was largely forgotten,⁴ and that there were female functionaries in charge of rain shrines was rejected together with all traditional religion.

(2) Conventional Church Tradition

In 1924 no mainline church ordained women as pastors, and only very few of the Evangelical churches did so at the fringe

² Isabel Apawo Phiri, *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy. Religious Experience of Chewa Women in Central Malawi*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1997, 35-36.

³ *Ibid*, ³2007, 134.

⁴ Isabel Phiri pointed this out: Isabel Apawo Phiri, *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy*, 28-32. See also: Isabel Apawo Phiri, "African Traditional Women and Ecofeminism: The Role of Women at Chisumphi Cult in Preserving the Environment," *Religion in Malawi* 6 (1996), 14-19 [15].

of Christianity, worldwide.⁵ The same applies to the election of women as deacons and elders. The first female elder in the Church of Scotland was ordained in 1966,⁶ and the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa allowed the election and ordination of female elders only in 1990.⁷ This means that the early missionaries did nothing unusual when they did not give leadership positions to women, as (almost) nobody at that time even thought of it. In biblical interpretation there was no explicit rejection of women's leadership, but the assumption shared by most was that women should be quiet in the presence of men in the church.

This general rejection of women's leadership in the beginning also applied to membership in the mission councils. In Blantyre Mission, after eight years of rejection, Janet Beck became the first female member of the Mission Council in 1904,⁸ and she had to represent all women missionaries.⁹ The Mission

⁵ Exceptions were the Quakers, the Salvation Army, the Free Methodist Church and some early Pentecostal churches, but none of them had (yet) come to Malawi.

⁶ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ordination_of_women_in_the_Church_of_Scotland.

⁷ Christina Landman, "Calvinism and South African Women: A Short Historical Overview," *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, 35/2 (2009), 89-102 [99].

⁸ Mercy Chilapula, "Towards Inclusion: Experiences of Women Clergy in the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) Blantyre Synod," PhD, Mzuzu University, 2023, 51 (Blantyre Mission Council Minutes, 27 January 1904).

⁹ For her life see: Gilbert Phiri, "Beck, Janet S., 1861-1917, Presbyterian, Malawi" in *Dictionary of African Christian Biography* – <https://dacb.org/stories/Malawi/beck-janet/> [24.1.2024].

Councils of Livingstonia and Nkhoma Missions developed along similar lines.

During the missionary era up to 1960, ordination of women was not an issue, neither in Malawi nor in Scotland nor in South Africa. In the Church of Scotland, the first woman was ordained as a minister in 1978,¹⁰ and in South Africa in 1995.¹¹

(3) The Missionary Feminist Tradition

All missions welcomed girls in their primary schools, which were usually coeducational. This created a class of "educated girls"¹² well sought after in marriage especially by the rising elite of the teachers. Some missions, though, offered further educational opportunities specifically for the girls.

Blantyre Mission

Already in the 1880s Blantyre Mission started to teach girls separately.¹³ Later in 1909 (soon after the opening of HHI) the Mission opened the advanced "Girls' School,"¹⁴ with the double purpose of training them to become wives of Christian

¹⁰ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ordination_of_women_in_the_Church_of_Scotland.

¹¹ Christina Landman, "Calvinism and South African Women: A Short Historical Overview," *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, 35/2 (2009), 89-102 [99]. Gretha Heymans was ordained as the first female minister of the DRC in 1995.

¹² Zeenah Sibande, "The Role of the Early Northern Ngoni Women in Livingstonia Synod, 1875 – 1950," MA Module, Mzuzu University, 2013.

¹³ A picture from that period is on the cover of Kenneth R. Ross and Klaus Fiedler, *A Malawi Church History 1860 – 2020*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2020.

¹⁴ *Kwamanthu* was for the elder girls and *Njingati* for the younger girls (Gilbert Phiri, "A History of Education in Blantyre Synod [1876-2018]," PhD, Mzuzu University, 2023, 217).

leaders (mainly teachers) and learning their own professions: nursing, teaching and laundry. Central to this work, over many years from 1887 to 1916, was Janet Beck, whom many girls adopted as their “mother,” and when they had children of their own, they would send them to Janet Beck to become her “grandchildren.” Edda Chitalo and Molly Dzabala are among her “great granddaughters.”¹⁵ Beck’s spirituality was formed by the women's branch of the Great Awakening.¹⁶

Nkhoma Mission

Nkhoma Mission put much emphasis on widespread primary education, and it was the mission with the largest number of schools in Malawi. In this effort they paid special attention to girls' education, and they achieved much – in Nkhoma Mission consistently more than 40% of the learners were girls,¹⁷ while the average for all missions in Malawi was 24%.

A special feature of Nkhoma Mission were Girls' Boarding Homes, where the girls lived close to a single female missionary and received a thorough training in the usual school subjects and on top of that in housekeeping and all the skills a future wife should have. No wonder that they had no problems in finding a man to marry, frequently from among the elite of teachers. The first of seven such Girls' Boarding Homes was set up in 1896 by Martha Murray.

A special feature was that Nkhoma Mission promoted the idea of mission trained midwives to set up their own practice in their

¹⁵ Gilbert Phiri, "Beck, Janet S., 1861-1917, Presbyterian, Malawi."

¹⁶ For more see: Gilbert Phiri, *A History of Education in Blantyre Synod (1876-2018)*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2024 (forthcoming).

¹⁷ Martin Pauw, *Mission and Church in Malawi*, Wellington: CLF, 2016, 160. At that time the girls' percentage was 44.5%.

village areas, with Elizabeth Nabanda and Esitere Nambewe perhaps the most successful ones among them. Esitere Nambewe ran Khola Clinic for 17 years, and practiced as an independent midwife until her death in 1993.¹⁸

Livingstonia Mission

Under Dr Robert Laws, Livingstonia Mission established special schools for girls at Khondowe (Mabutu), Ekwendeni, Loudon, Bandawe and Tamanda (Zambia).¹⁹

Problems

Despite such progress, problems remained.

First the general fact that in the whole school system women were in the minority, just 24% of the overall number of pupils were girls.

- a. Girls in Blantyre Mission were barred from “male” subjects like shoe repair, carpentry or printing. They were instead required to learn laundry, housekeeping etc.
- b. At the famous Overtoun Institution of Livingstonia the female branch was much smaller than the male branch, and while the boys could pursue "technical studies" ranging from carpentry via agriculture to printing and telegraphics, girls could only pursue home economics, and in terms of professional training only "nursing and midwifery."²⁰

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Happy Nyambose, “The Establishment and Contribution of the Overtoun Institute in Northern Malawi and Beyond (1895-2010),” MA, Mzuzu University, 2015, 67.

²⁰ Ibid, 29-30. Nyambose describes the careers of many famous Overtoun graduates, but none of them is a woman.

- c. Nkhoma Mission did little to train women as teachers. There were very few women teachers, and different from Blantyre, no special efforts were made to train them.
- d. The same applies to Livingstonia.
- e. Many parents (and many girls) remained convinced that girls were not for school but for marriage, leading to unwarranted dropouts from school.²¹

Thus, at the start of the CCAP, women were restricted by both traditional and missionary Christian culture, but the missionary feminist movement had provided them with a solid base from which to develop and from which to claim their equality over the years.

The Formation of Women's Organizations

The strong educational base for women and the intensity of their faith made the organization of specific Women's Groups possible, first in Nkhoma Mission and then in other missions almost simultaneously.²²

²¹ As a contemporary study from the Bandawe area shows, the problem is still rampant: Bridget Manda, "Impediments to the Girl Child's Realization of the Right to Access Basic Education in Malawi: The Case of Chintheche Area in Nkhata Bay District," MA, Mzuzu University, 2015. Phoebe Chifungo had to fight off the same idea to be able to finish secondary school (Phoebe Faith Chifungo, *Let My People Go! A Biblical and Cultural Study of Women in the Church in Central Malawi*, Mzuzu: Luviri Press, 2023, 14).

²² For the overall process see: Kenneth R. Ross and Klaus Fiedler, *A Malawi Church History 1860 – 2020*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2020, 408-12. For precedents of earlier women's meetings before the Presbytery-wide organization for the North Livingstonia Presbytery see Frank Kadogana, "The Origin and Growth of Karonga CCAP Mission in Karonga

These organizations, for women only, became the strength of the churches, and here women were able to learn and employ their leadership skills.²³ If a woman has learned to preach among women, she may equally be able to preach when men are listening, and if she can organize a women's conference, she can equally organize the Presbytery meeting.

In the church, Women's Guilds made a major contribution. These women's organizations have different names in each Synod – *Umanyano ba banakazi* in Livingstonia and Zambia Synods, *Chigwirizano cha Amayi* in Nkhoma and Harare Synods and *Mvano* in Blantyre Synod.²⁴ Women's Guilds in all five Synods have been effective in evangelism and in bringing women together for prayers, bible study and nurturing their spiritual lives. The Women's Guilds have been instrumental in empowering women with leadership skills as women serve in different Guild committees. Women do charity works and gather weekly for bible study and teaching.

and Chitipa from 1900-2013," MA, Mzuzu University, 2015, 50-52. For Blantyre Presbytery see: Jane Kambilinya Chalimba, "The Maidservants of the Most High: The Place of Women in the Church of Central African Presbyterian (CCAP) of the Blantyre Synod," MA, University of Malawi, 2010.

²³ Isabel Phiri starts her book with a letter from one of the women leaders: "Do you realize what is happening? We are *people* ... We have been given a place and work to do in the Kingdom of God. Here in the church, we are *people*." (Isabel Apawo Phiri, *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy. Religious Experience of Chewa Women in Central Malawi*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1997, 12).

²⁴ Silas Ncozana, "Mvano and Evangelism in the Synod of Blantyre," in Klaus Fiedler and Kenneth R. Ross (eds), *Christianity in Malawi: A Reader*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2020, 439.

Apart from teachings and bible study, women are taught on different topics such as home management, Gender-Based Violence, socio-economic empowerment through Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLAs) and business management skills.²⁵ Women reach out to vulnerable members of the community such as widows, widowers and orphans. The Women's Guilds have assisted to end harmful cultural practices and beliefs that are oppressive and dehumanizing for women. The Women's Guild coordinators in different presbyteries were instrumental in training and empowering women as leaders in different congregations in the Synods. Thus, women have served in different leadership positions in the Women's Guild.

Important was the fact that the women's organizations were independent, reporting directly to the Presbytery (later Synod). Of the three Malawian synods, it was only Nkhoma which made serious attempts (with much success) to curtail the Chigwirizano's independence, by demanding that a *mkehalapakati* (liaison or go-between) attend all women's meetings, "to liaise with the Synod," by ruling that the pastor's wife must be the local Chigwirizano leader and by placing male pastors (there are no female pastors yet) into the Chigwirizano executive.²⁶ It is important to note that such oppressive rules were not made by the "conservative" missionaries from South Africa, but by the (male) Synod leadership, a generation after the missionaries had left the responsibility to them.²⁷

²⁵ See: Chigodi Women's Training Centre, www.ccapblan-tyresynod.org/chigodi-women-center.html; The Umanyano, the Women's Guild of the CCAP Synod of Livingstonia, www.ccapso-linia.org/departments/womens-guild.

²⁶ Phoebe Faith Chifungo, *Let My People Go!* 58, 43.

²⁷ Isabel Apawo Phiri, *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy*, 96-98.

Women as Deacons and Elders

This process started "naturally" in Blantyre and Livingstonia Synods, where the ordination of women as deacons and elders was approved early. The odd Synod out here is Nkhoma, where women were only allowed to preach to mixed audiences in 2007, and where the ordination of women as deacons and elders was only allowed in 2009, and where many rural congregations still resist their election.

Ordination of Women as Ministers

It took over seven decades from its establishment for the CCAP to begin to ordain women as ministers of word and sacrament. A preliminary and somewhat contested stage to this was the theological training of woman theologians not for the ordained ministry but for work among women, often specifically to be leaders and coordinators for the women's guild or for the women's desk of a Synod.

Theological Training for Women

The case of Mary Chinkwita as the first woman sent by a Synod to study theology at the CCAP college in the 1970s shows the ambiguities. It seems that the purpose of her theological training was not clearly stated, and she (and others in the Synod) understood that God called her to serve as an ordained minister. This was a time when in the Reformed community of churches there was the stirring that women could become ministers, and at the same time the Nkhoma Synod leadership made great efforts to rein in the independence of its Women's Guild, with the unique introduction of the *mkbhalapakati* as the liaison (really controller) of the Chigwirizano and several other

measures.²⁸ The result was that the Synod stated clearly that she was not to be ordained, and she was not allowed to do the final year fourth year of theological studies that would have qualified her to be a pastor. After three years of theological studies, she was sent to teach school, to work in "one-to-one evangelism among her neighbours," anything, except work as a pastor or even in Chigwirizano. She was not trained in education, but she was to do evangelism among women and girls in schools,²⁹ and when she was sent abroad for further studies in education, the theological studies she had been allowed to take were considered as incomplete,³⁰ and she had to do other studies. Nkhoma Synod was "disappointed with her because, when she was sent to the USA for further studies, she never came back to Malawi to work with the Synod."³¹ It took a generation before Nkhoma Synod would again allow women to study theology, this time with the explicit marker: "not for ordination as ministers."³²

Blantyre Synod allowed women to study theology for ministry among women [only] in the mid-1970s and Gertrude Kapuma was the first woman in the Synod to study theology. She began her studies at Kapeni and later moved to Zomba Theological College.³³ The Synod of Livingstonia followed suit and the first

²⁸ Phoebe Faith Chifungo, *Let My People Go!* 58-62.

²⁹ Winston R. Kawale, "The Role of Women in Social Transformation in Nkhoma Synod Malawi," *Scriptura*, 77 (2001), 211-223 [217].

³⁰ Isabel Apawo Phiri, *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy*, 57.

³¹ Interview with Rev Vasco Kachipapa on 22 March 2023. According to Isabel Phiri she was not sent to the USA but to the UK (Isabel Apawo Phiri, *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy*, 59).

³² Phoebe Chifungo was therefore not allowed to attend classes in Homiletics (Phoebe Faith Chifungo, *Let My People Go!* 15).

³³ Dr Gertrude Kapuma is now a lecturer at the very same College.

woman to study theology, Esnart Munthali, was sent to the newly established Zomba Theological College in 1977. To study for work among women, others followed from Livingstonia, Blantyre and Zambia Synods, but not from Nkhoma and Harare Synods.

The Opening of the Debate

However, in 1994 the CCAP General Synod proposed that all the Synods debate the issue of women's ordination.³⁴ Thus, Blantyre Synod from the late 1980s invited female ministers from other Presbyterian churches as role models, such as Rev Peggy Reid from the Presbyterian Church in Canada and later in the 1990s Rev Alice Kyei-Anti from the Presbyterian Church in Ghana. Rev Alice Kyei-Anti's roles included conducting seminars in different Presbyteries in the Synod to sensitize church members on the ordination of women.³⁵

Nevertheless, the issue of ordination of women brought some tension in the Blantyre Synod as women fought for their voices to be heard in church. Thus, in 1995, Blantyre Synod women organized themselves and marched to protest against the Synod's policy of barring women from ordination as ministers.³⁶ The Synod reacted by suspending all the women who were organizers of the march from the Church, but later they were all restored. However, this brought some changes in the

³⁴ Isabel Apawo Phiri "Marching, Suspended and Stoned: Christian Women in Malawi 1995," in Kenneth R. Ross (ed), *God, People and Power in Malawi: Democratisation in Theological Perspective*, Zomba: Kachere, 1996, 63-105 [67].

³⁵ *Ibid*, 68.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 68.

Synod and a few years later women were allowed to be ordained as ministers in the Synod.

At that time, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC)³⁷ and the World Council of Churches through the Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women were advocating for the ordination of women and encouraging the churches to ordain women as ministers. Thus, in Blantyre and Livingstonia Synods from the late 1980s and early 1990s, more women were now studying theology to work in the church and to coordinate the work of women and women's guild. Similarly, the Synod of Livingstonia in the 1990s had two female ministers from Partner Churches – Rev Heather Jones from the Presbyterian Church in Canada and Rev Debbie Chase from the Presbyterian Church in USA as role models to women who felt called to holy ministry. Equally, Zambia Synod followed by sending Kondwani Nkhoma to study theology at Zomba Theological College in the late 1990s. As more women were now studying theology, the issue of women's ordination was now debated in the Synods' meetings.

Decisions to Ordain Women as Pastors

Nonetheless, the Synod of Livingstonia at its meeting in 1994 at Bandawe accepted that women can be ordained as ministers. At that time there were three women who had studied theology, that is, Esnart Munthali, Christina Manda and Martha Mwale. The implication was that they had to apply for ordination

³⁷ World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) was the umbrella body for churches from the Reformed tradition and in 2010 it merged with Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) to form the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC).

starting from their respective congregations and Presbyteries before the Synod could ordain them as ministers. It was Martha Mwale who followed the required process and was licensed in 1999 and ordained in 2000.³⁸ She was the first woman to be ordained in the CCAP family in Malawi.

Similarly, by the time Blantyre Synod accepted to ordain women it had four women who had done theological education and the four were Gertrude Kapuma, Mercy Chilapula, Miriam Chipeta Banda and Grace Kulupando.³⁹ However, the late Rev Edina Navaya was the first to apply for ordination and was licensed soon after her theological training hence being the first woman to be ordained as a minister in the Synod. Zambia Synod ordained the first female minister, the late Rev Kondwani Nkhoma, in 2004. The Harare Synod started ordaining women in 2017.

Currently, the number of women ministers in the four Synods that ordain women as ministers is growing at a very slow pace. One way forward would be for Synods and congregations, parents and spouses to encourage women to apply for holy ministry.

³⁸ Edward Singini, "Mwale, Martha, 1945-2003, Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Malawi," *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, <https://dacb.org/stories/malawi/mwale-martha/> [24.1.2024]. See also: Ruth Nyondo, "The Life of the Reverend Martha Berida Mwale. Her Brief History as the First Ordained Minister not only in the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) but in the CCAP Synod of Nkhoma and Blantyre as well (1946-2004)," BTh, University of Livingstonia, 2010.

³⁹ Isabel Apawo Phiri, *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy*, 65.

Leadership outside the Women's Guild

Nevertheless, women have not only served in the Women's Guild. Both lay and ordained women have served in different leadership positions in the church. Since lay women are ordained as church elders and deacons, they serve in different committees as leaders at congregation, Presbytery and Synod level. Lay women have held different positions in the church such as being Session Clerks, Vestry leaders, Treasurers and leaders in various committees. Lay women have served as Heads of Synod departments in their respective Synods.⁴⁰

"Lay Theologians"

In the same vein, in CCAP there are lay women theologians and some of them have leading roles in private and public universities as lecturers.⁴¹ In addition, lay women theologians have held leadership positions in regional and global ecumenical organizations. Some of the notable lay women theologians from CCAP are Dr Fulata Moyo and Prof. Isabel Apawo Phiri. Dr Fulata Moyo was the Programme Executive for Women in Church and Society at the World Council of Churches in Geneva from 2007 to 2017. Fulata Moyo's scholarly interests are in the area of gender, religion and sexuality.⁴² She speaks

⁴⁰ For example, in Livingstonia Synod, Mphatso Ngulube Chikhwaza was the Head of Livingstonia Synod AIDS Program (LISAP), now she is the head of the Health Department which coordinates the work of all the health facilities under the Synod.

⁴¹ For example, a Church Elder from Livingstonia Synod, Dr Joyce Mlenga is a lecturer at Mzuzu University and Dr Phoebe Chifungo from Nkhoma Synod is a lecturer at the University of Livingstonia.

⁴² One of her articles is: Fulata Lusungu Moyo, "Child Marriage. The Untold Story of My Mother, and the Church in Africa: A Feminist

against harmful cultural practices that perpetuate oppression of women such as some initiation (*chinamwali*) ceremonies.⁴³ Fulata Moyo advocates for gender justice and gender equality in both church and society and has written several articles and books on these issues.⁴⁴

Equally, Prof Isabel Apawo Phiri has been a University Lecturer in Malawi, Namibia and South Africa. She was the Deputy General Secretary for Public Witness and Diakonia of the World Council of Churches from 2012 to 2022. She is now the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Blantyre Synod.⁴⁵ Prof. Isabel Phiri advocates for gender justice and the promotion of gender equality and at the same time condemns gender-based violence as a social ill that dehumanizes the victims whether women or men. She has written several books and articles on issues of women and patriarchy, gender-based violence and HIV and AIDS.⁴⁶

Ethics of *Ubuntu*," in Deanna Ferree Womack and Raimundo Barretto (eds), *Alterity and the Evasion of Justice*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2023, 121-41.

⁴³ Fulata Lusungu Moyo, "The Making of Vulnerable, Gyration and Dangerous Menstruating Women through Chinamwali Socialization" in Ezra Chitando and Nantando Hadebe (eds), *Compassionate Circles: African Women Theologians Facing HIV*, Geneva: WCC, 2009.

⁴⁴ Fulata Lusungu Moyo, "'Traffic Violations': Hospitality, Foreignness, and Exploitation: A Contextual Biblical Study of Ruth," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 32/2 (2016), 83-94.

⁴⁵ For her life so far see: Mary C. 'Polly' Hamlen, "Isabel Apawo Phiri: Centering the Voices of Women in Africa," *Journal of African Christian Biography*, 8/1, 2023, 18-41.

⁴⁶ Some articles are: Isabel Apawo Phiri, "Why does God Allow our Husbands to Hurt us? Overcoming Violence against Women," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 2002; "Stand up and be Counted: Identity,

Since Nkhoma Synod does not ordain women, female theologians must, by default, be "lay theologians." Here a pioneer is Dr Phoebe Chifungo, who has served as the Dean of Theology at the University of Livingstonia.⁴⁷

Ordained Women in Leadership Positions

Furthermore, some of the women theologians in CCAP are ordained ministers and as ordained ministers, women are now serving in different leadership positions in the Synods. Blantyre Synod has gone ahead as it has had women ministers serve as Synod Moderators. The first woman to serve as Synod Moderator was Rev Dr Mercy Chilapula (2011-2013).⁴⁸ From 2021 to 2023 the late Rev Edina Navaya was the Synod Moderator. In Blantyre Synod women ministers, such as Rev Miriam Chipeta Banda, have also served as Vice Synod Moderators. In all the Synods women have served as Presbytery

Spirituality and Theological Education in my Faith Journey," in Denise M. Ackermann et al (eds), *Claiming our Footprints. South African Women Reflect on Context, Identity and Spirituality*, Matieland: EFSA Institute of Theological and Interdisciplinary Research, 2000; "African Women of Faith Speak out on an HIV/AIDS Era" in Isabel Apawo Phiri, Beverly Haddad and Madipoane Masenya (ng'wana Mphahlele) (eds), *African Women, HIV/AIDS and Faith Communities*, Pietermaritzburg: Cluster 2003.

⁴⁷ Her commitments outside the University include: Member, National Integrity Committee of the Anti-Corruption Bureau; Member, Board of Trustees, Theological Society of Malawi, Member, Editorial Board, Mzuni Press.

⁴⁸ She received her PhD from Mzuzu University in August 2023: Mercy Kalipinde Chilapula, "Towards Inclusion: Experiences of Women Clergy in the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) Blantyre Synod." She points out that all the ordained female pastors are still serving the Synod.

Moderators while other are heading the Women's Department and other departments. There are also women ministers who are now lecturers in the universities established by the Synods, for instance, Rev Agnes Nyirenda is a lecturer and Dean of Theology at the University of Livingstonia, while Rev Dr Gertrude Kapuma is a senior lecturer at Zomba Theological University. Rev Dr Gertrude Kapuma has been a leader in the regional ecumenical body, the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) where she was the Vice President for Southern Africa from 2003 to 2008. In 2005 she was elected as honorary president of Religions for Peace.⁴⁹ She has also written several articles on pastoral care for widows as widows suffer because of cultural beliefs that dehumanize them.⁵⁰

The other notable leadership positions that women ministers have held are in the secretariat of the CCAP General Assembly. In 2020 the CCAP General Assembly elected Rev Dr Mwawi Chilongozi as the first woman Secretary General of the CCAP General Assembly in its history and Rev Dr Gertrude Kapuma as the first woman deputy Secretary General of the CCAP General Assembly.

⁴⁹ "Religions for Peace" is an international coalition of representatives from world religions based in New York. It was founded in 1970 with the aim of promoting peace among world religions (www.rfp.org).

⁵⁰ Gertrude A. Kapuma, "Gender-Based Violence and the Church? Malawian Women Speaking Out," in Elna Mouton, Gertrude Kapuma, Len Hansen and Thomas Togom (eds), *Living with Dignity: African Perspectives on Gender Equality*, Stellenbosch: Sun Press, 2015, 265; Gertrude Kapuma "Lay People and Caring for Widows," in Volker Glissmann (ed), *Towards a Malawian Theology of Laity*, Mzuzu: Luviri Press, 2020, 146-68. Her PhD, "Widowhood within the Malawian Context; A Pastoral Care Model," University of Pretoria, 2018 is in the process of publication.

Re-Reading Crucial Texts

Opposition to women's ordination (and to women's leadership in general) was based much on general cultural precepts, but these were also supported by a specific (male premised and very common) interpretation of the biblical evidence under the motto "Women must be silent in church."⁵¹ A rising group of Feminist scholars in Malawi contested this as a misinterpretation of the biblical injunction, and they also pointed to all those women in the New Testament who did not keep quiet, like Anna, the prophetess (Luke 2:36-39) and Priscilla, who taught Apollos (Acts 18:26), or to the female disciples of Jesus (Luke 8:1-3). One of the first women evangelists was the Samaritan woman Jesus met at the well in Sychar. Through the conversation she had with Jesus, she recognized him as the Messiah and she went ahead to tell people in her village that she had met the Messiah. Many Samaritans in her village believed in Jesus (John 4:39-41). In Bethany, Jesus was a friend to Mary and Martha and their brother Lazarus. Women followed Jesus Christ up to the cross and knew where he was buried when his close disciples had deserted him. On resurrection day women were the first witnesses of the resurrection, and Jesus told Mary Magdalene to tell the male disciples. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me" (Mt 28:7-8).⁵²

⁵¹ This position is aptly described in Phoebe Faith Chifungo, *Let My People Go!* 106-109.

⁵² See also John 20:17-18.

When Phoebe Chifungo, loving Christ and his church, found through her perseverance the way to study theology, she decided not to complain much but to write her PhD on the feminist reinterpretation of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12. She was and is convinced that Nkhoma Synod will ordain women also as pastors ("teaching elders"). She hopes her book will make a contribution to this process.⁵³

Earlier Janet Kholowa and Klaus Fiedler pointed out that Lydia did not just offer hospitality to the apostles, but that she was the leader ("elder") of the church in Philippi (Acts 16:40), that Phoebe was not a deaconess but a deacon (Romans 16:1), and that in all probability one of the apostles was female (Junias, Romans 16:7).⁵⁴ Their argument is that Paul's theology should not be interpreted through two verses difficult to interpret, but through what he did, and if in his apostolic ministry women played a major role, why should that be different now?

Involvement in the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians

Furthermore, both lay and ordained women theologians from the CCAP have been active in the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (hereafter the Circle). In the history of the Circle⁵⁵, two Malawian lay theologians have served as

⁵³ Phoebe Faith Chifungo, *Let My People Go!* 15.

⁵⁴ Janet Kholowa and Klaus Fiedler, *Mtumwi Paulo ndi Udindo wa Amayi mu Mpingo*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2001.

⁵⁵ The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians was established in 1989 in Accra, Ghana as a pan-African organization that encourages African women theologians to do research, write and publish their work. The founder of the Circle is Prof. Mercy Amba Oduyoye, a Ghanaian laywoman theologian. For its history see: Rachel NyaGondwe Fiedler,

Continental Coordinators. Isabel Apawo Phiri served as the Continental Coordinator of the Circle from 2002 to 2007.⁵⁶

She was succeeded by Fulata Moyo, who was the Continental Coordinator from 2007 to 2013. Currently, Rev Dr Gertrude Kapuma is the Country Coordinator for the Malawi Chapter. Malawian women theologians from CCAP have written scholarly articles and books on different topics and have advocated for gender justice, social justice, economic justice and ecological justice. Thus, lay and ordained women theologians from CCAP have made an impact regionally and globally through their writings and publications which are used in the academia.

Low Numbers of Ordained Women

However, despite all the notable achievements in terms of leadership roles, the number of ordained women remains very small in comparison to the number of ordained men. For instance, the Synod of Livingstonia has 248 ordained ministers and only 15 out of 248 are women ministers. Blantyre Synod has 221 ministers and only 24 out of 221 are female ministers. The same with Zambia Synod there are only 8 female ministers out of 98 ministers and the first female minister was ordained in 2004. Equally, Harare Synod has only four female ministers. Therefore, there is still a long way to go before the CCAP could claim to have achieved gender equality within its ministry.

The History of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, 1989-2007, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2016.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 48.

10. Women and the Development of the CCAP

Gertrude Kapuma

Introduction

Women have been active in the life and work of the CCAP. They are rightly said to be pillars of the church. Women are in the majority, and they do a significant amount of work towards the growth of the CCAP. Women in all the Synods have significant responsibilities of making sure that the church is growing. That this contribution is hardly recognized by others, has not stopped women from using their God-given talents to contribute to the development of their churches.

The situation of women in rural areas has not changed much compared to that of women in urban areas. In rural areas, women continue to work hard in their gardens and at home to provide food for the family and to bring up the children. Rural women are faced with problems resulting from poor infrastructure, less than adequate resources and strong traditional ties. These may stop them from participating more in other activities of development. However, women have not stopped going to church and participating in activities that affect them. They can stop what they were doing to attend to church things.

Women's Guilds

The CCAP has Women's Guilds with their own unique character, serving the purpose and goal of the CCAP. In the North, the Livingstonia Synod women's grouping is called *Umanyano*. This means that women have come together to know each other better, to share experiences and do things together in

unity.¹ In the Centre, the Nkhoma Synod women's grouping is called *Chignwirizano*. *Chignwirizano cha Amayi* is an organization of Christian women who are united in the service of the Lord. Unity is emphasized in a proverb which says it is easy to break one stick but not a bundle of sticks."² In the South, the Blantyre Synod women's grouping is called *Mvano*, meaning unity, common interest or mutual agreement. This then means that on joining *Mvano* one should be prepared to work with others in unity, striving for mutual agreement in all that is done. As Silas Ncozana has explained, "This unity implies co-operation in achieving a set goal, or working and living together in fellowship. As such members of *Mvano* pledge themselves to the dual responsibility of devotion to Christ and expressing Christian concern for the needs of society."³ This chapter is restricted to Malawi, but it should be noted that the "Women's Guilds" also developed in the two daughter (now sister) Synods of Harare and Zambia.⁴

¹ Mwawi N. Chilongozi is the Secretary General of the CCAP General Assembly and worked as a Women's Desk Coordinator in the Synod of Livingstonia. Interviewed April 2023.

² Isabel Apawo Phiri, *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1987, 80.

³ Silas Ncozana, "Mvano and Evangelism in the Synod of Blantyre," *African Theological Journal* 15/3, 1986, 183. Reprinted in Klaus Fiedler and Kenneth R. Ross (eds), *Christianity in Malawi. A Reader*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2021, 438-446.

⁴ In CCAP Synod of Zambia the common name is Christian Women's Guild, in Tumbuka *Umanyano* like in the Synod of Livingstonia. See Lazarus Chilenje, *Paul's Gender Theology and the Ordained Women's Ministry in the CCAP in Zambia*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2021, 19.

Though the names of each grouping are different, the meaning is the same: a group of women with the same purposes, working together in unity. Women do Bible study and pastoral work together every week. Women's Guild members are good at visiting the sick and the bereaved. This is one of their objectives. The group can easily be identified because of the uniform they wear. In Livingstonia Synod, they have a white blouse with a black border under the collar that shows a little bit, a black skirt and a white *duku* (headscarf). They are encouraged to wear black shoes if they can afford them. In Nkhoma and Blantyre the uniform is the same: white blouse, black skirt and white *duku* (headscarf).⁵ The women wear this uniform when they attend the celebration of sacraments, funerals and other significant activities taking place in the congregation, Presbytery or Synod. The uniform has attracted other churches to have women's groups with uniforms for purposes of identity.⁶

Today young women are also keen to join the Women's Guild. It used to be regarded as an organization for older women but now everyone who feels the call is accepted to join. In the cities, women with professional jobs have also joined the Guild.⁷

⁵ For an interpretation of the Nkhoma Synod uniform see: Isabel Apawo Phiri, *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy*, 91-92.

⁶ A recent case here is the Free Methodist Church with its *Amayi Akuunika* (Bernard Kalukusha, "Women in the Free Methodist Church in Malawi: History and Presence (1973-2020)", PhD (submitted), Mzuzu University, 2023.

⁷ Kenneth R. Ross and Klaus Fiedler, *A Malawi Church History 1860-2020*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2020, 410.

It has become a social grouping for women where they are able to discuss issues affecting them and encourage one another.⁸

Women and Evangelism

Women are in the majority in all CCAP congregations. They participate in various activities and have been involved in evangelism.

Visiting the Sick: By this the women encourage the sick and even their families. That they go to visit the sick wearing their guild uniform attracts others to join the guild or even the church itself. Often the women help the family with some duties, like drawing water or cleaning the home. If the sick person is a member of the guild, they can even agree to help cultivate her garden or help with the harvest. These activities have strengthened the women *and* attracted others to join them. These visits could extend to hospital visits. As a tradition, they do not go to visit someone without taking some small contribution with them which may help the family in taking care of the sick relative. This little something could be money, maize flour, sugar, bread and or relish (*ndivo*).

Funerals: Women are very active to assist the bereaved family when death occurs. The moment death is announced, women who are in that area make it a point that they send messages to other women. They go to the deceased's house to help with the chores that are required. They join members in singing and at the same time make sure that the family of the deceased have food to eat. They give each other responsibilities to carry out during the funeral. As a tradition, they go to the funeral house

⁸ Silas S. Ncozana, "Mvano and Evangelism in the Synod of Blantyre," 438-446.

for the night vigil. They sit with the coffin, sing all night (they may be joined by other choirs), may preach, and more, at the same time comforting the family. In the morning they share responsibilities to make sure that everything is ready on time to start the funeral service. In the village, the guild women will make sure that they search for flowers with which they can make wreaths. They have learnt this art and are able to make beautiful wreaths depending on the availability of flowers. In some cases, the family of the deceased may buy wreaths, and this helps them greatly. In such ways they support the bereaved family throughout until the funeral is over. “When death happens, the Women’s Guild members are the first people to appear and show support. They will come in their numbers to help in cooking, singing and helping the bereaved family. They do all that they can until the burial is over.”⁹

They continue to visit the home, making sure that members are settling well with the loss. If the deceased's home is not from the place of death, women have volunteered to escort the remains to their respective homes and bury them. This kind of service has also encouraged many and strengthens the role and availability of the church in dealing with death rituals. Women are always there, just like the women who were with Jesus up to the cross, they saw all that happened to him. On Sunday morning they were there to go and perform burial rituals for the body of Jesus. This is why they were able to meet the risen Christ.

⁹ Gertrude A. Kapuma, “Widowhood within the Malawian Context; A Pastoral Care Model,” PhD, University of Pretoria, 2018, 130.

Conferences: It has become a tradition that women organize conferences at Presbytery and Synod levels. At these conferences, women have themes that they follow. They are able to tackle issues that affect them and their spirituality. They may invite other women to come and speak to them on different issues.¹⁰ Preaching gifts are noticed at the meetings together with other gifts. They help each other to understand various problems affecting them, encouraging one another on how they can assist in the development of the Church. Evangelism has helped women to learn from other women when they are invited to other functions. Sharing of knowledge and experiences helps the group to grow and in turn, the congregation grows as well. “This knowledge from other women has helped many women to improve themselves spiritually and also their guild is never the same.”¹¹

In these conferences, women follow a theme which is expounded through Bible study. The theme may be divided into sub-themes to help them understand and apply it to their lives. “We do not go to a conference and come back the same. It becomes a special time of getting closer to God, a time of searching yourself.” Such spiritual experiences enable women to grow strong in their faith and become intercessors of one another and the church.

¹⁰ An exception here is Nkhoma Synod, where, opposing the missionary policy, the Synod leadership decided that the main speakers at the women's conferences on all levels must be ordained men (Phoebe Faith Chifungo, *Let My People Go! A Biblical and Cultural Study of Women in the Church in Central Malawi*, Mzuzu: Luviri Press, 2023, 63-65). Since 2010 women can be invited as "non main speakers" (64).

¹¹ Mirriam Chipeta Banda, former Vice Synod Moderator, CCAP Blantyre Synod who also worked as a Women's Desk Director. Int. December 2022.

Christian celebrations: Today the Women's Guild plays a significant role in the events of the Christian Calendar, especially during Christmas and Easter celebrations, but also during conferences and jubilees.

Public proclamation: Since the early years, the Guild women have also been engaged in verbal public evangelism. In the 1940s there were often regular visits to the neighbouring villages (which were largely non-Christian at that time), and in Nkhoma there is still an annual (or more frequent) women's evangelistic outreach, not to women alone.¹² The Guild women often use their gifts of singing in evangelism. They sing beautifully and this attracts people.¹³

In Nkhoma Synod *Chigwirizano* women regularly organize specific evangelistic efforts. Often women's guild choirs join major evangelistic outreaches. Congregations encourage them to be present and join the parading that is done to attract people. Through this participation, the message of God goes beyond their understanding so that it reaches many. The colourful uniform and the singing add flavour to the whole evangelism campaign.

Women's Singing and Unity of the CCAP

Singing is therapeutic in that it heals an individual with issues that are going on in her/his life. Women in Livingstonia Synod sing and dance at funerals. This is significant because it helps with the healing process for the families involved. It is an

¹² Phoebe Faith Chifungo, *Let My People Go!* 50-51.

¹³ There is much material on this in Clara Henderson, *Rolling away the Stone. The Africanization of Christian Music by Presbyterian Mvano Women in Southern Malawi*, Mzuzu: Luviri Press, forthcoming.

affirmation that the deceased is in heaven. When they have their Guild meetings, they sing and dance, this in a way helps others to forget their problems and concentrate on the meeting.

They continue to share the joys of singing with fellow women in other congregations in the Presbytery or Synod and even in other Synods. Through exchange visits, they are able to share experiences and challenges. Travelling to other congregations helps the women to learn from other women and develop new skills. Zomba CCAP congregation is one where the Women's Guild has benefited from partnerships with other women in different Synods, as they have partners in congregations of Livingstonia, Zambia, Nkhoma and Harare. They visit each other periodically which has increased their understanding of the Guild and improved their singing. The partnership visits have helped them to gain knowledge and experiences of what other guilds do to improve their own.¹⁴ The women's guild construction project at Zomba CCAP came about after seeing and learning from what other guilds were doing. Through such visits and experiences, women gain knowledge of developing their guild, which benefits the congregation also. Through these exchange visits women have cemented the unity of the General Assembly. Ministers have also been involved in the partnerships started by women.

¹⁴ Wezi Ndawala, *Mvano* Chairperson of Zomba CCAP Congregation and Chairperson of Women's Work at Presbytery level. Int. March 2023.

Women and Development Activities of the Church

As major partners in development, women have played a significant role in the development of congregations, Presbyteries and Synods. In the rural congregations, the presence of women is seen in the following activities:

- Free work they contribute to the projects by drawing water for brick moulding or church building. They organize themselves to supply water every day until the work is done. This kind of support helps congregations to save money that could have been used to pay others to do the same job.
- In any given activity of the church women voluntarily come to cook for different programmes taking place without asking for payment.
- Cleaning the church and its surroundings is done by women. In some congregations, announcements are done every Sunday as to which group of women will come and do the cleaning.
- For any group that visits the congregation, there is a need for catering, so the women's guild volunteers help.
- Women are also involved in fundraising activities. In some Synods, the Women's Department has more money for development than the actual Synod. They fundraise to assist the less privileged, orphans so that they can go on with school, and even projects that can bring income to congregations.

The work they do is highly valuable, if calculated in monetary terms. In some cases when there is some work to do, they are the first ones to come and the last to go. Their absence can easily be noticed because there will be no one to prepare food or do the cleaning. All this they do for the Lord.

Equally, urban women make their development contribution. In Nkhoma Synod, for example, *Chigwirizano cha Amayi* of Kaning'a CCAP managed to build a Conference Centre while the *Chigwirizano* of Msonkhamanja CCAP has just completed building a very big kitchen which also has offices for the *Chigwirizano* committee.¹⁵

These projects are not only for the benefit of *Chigwirizano cha Amayi* but for the whole church. For instance, the conference centre at Kaning'a is also used by the youth, by church elders and even by the Synod. The Msonkhamanja kitchen will also cater for church and youth activities. The whole *Chigwirizano*, through the executive committee, has a 26-seater bus which, besides helping the owners, is also used to transport pastors, especially during the synodical meetings, from Lilongwe CCAP to Chongoni. It has also to construct houses both at Nkhoma and in Lilongwe city which have helped to reduce the housing problems which the Synod used to have for its employees. Some houses are rented out as one way of generating income.

Women and Leadership of the Church

As years have gone by, there has been an improvement in many areas of leadership of women in the church, but the process is far from complete and moves at very different speeds.

Livingstonia Synod approved the ordination of women as church elders ("ruling elders") in 1978, Blantyre Synod followed in 1980, but Nkhoma Synod only agreed to have women church

¹⁵ For many examples from *Chigwirizano* (Nkhoma Synod), see Phoebe Faith Chifungo, *Let My People Go!* 55-56.

elders in 2009, and even today there are many rural congregations where all the church elders are male.¹⁶

Starting in 2001 Livingstonia Synod and Blantyre Synod have been ordaining women to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament.¹⁷ CCAP Synod of Zambia did the same in 2002,¹⁸ and Harare Synod followed in 2018,¹⁹ while Nkhoma Synod in 2009 explicitly refused to ordain women as pastors.²⁰

The CCAP is now able to recognize women in leadership in principle and for all positions in Blantyre Synod and in Livingstonia Synod, and Nkhoma Synod, still short of this recognition, as women cannot be ordained as pastors (yet), is moving into the same direction.²¹

In Livingstonia and Blantyre Synods women have become session clerks. From 2021 to 2023, the Synod of Blantyre had a female Moderator (the late Rev Edina Navaya), and from 2020 to 2024 the CCAP General Assembly had, for the first time, a female Secretary General (Reverend Dr Mwawi Chilongozi, from Livingstonia Synod) while the Deputy Secretary General is also female (Reverend Dr Gertrude Kapuma, Blantyre Synod). In 2023 the University of Blantyre Synod appointed a female Vice-Chancellor, Prof Isabel Apawo Phiri, Livingstonia University had a female Dean of Theology, Dr Phoebe Chifungo, from

¹⁶ Phoebe Faith Chifungo, *Let My People Go!* 19.

¹⁷ Kenneth R. Ross and Klaus Fiedler, *A Malawi Church History*, 397.

¹⁸ Lazarus Chilenje, *Paul's Gender Theology*.

¹⁹ www.ccapharasesynod.com/pastorsonthemove.htm. – Here Harare Synod delayed like Nkhoma, the mother synod, but in the end proceeded faster.

²⁰ Phoebe Faith Chifungo, *Let My People Go!*

²¹ This is the prediction of Phoebe Chifungo, the leading female theologian from Nkhoma Synod (Phoebe Faith Chifungo, *Let My People Go!* 26).

2021 to 2023, and the current Dean is also female, Rev Agnes Nyirenda. Rev Dr Gertrude Kapuma represented the Synod of Blantyre as the first female Vice President of AACC for Southern Africa (Africa Continental Ecumenical Body), coming from Malawi from 2003 to 2008. Women have also represented the Synods at both local and international Conferences.

There are still Obstacles

This does not mean that the appropriate role of women in leadership has been achieved. No, there are issues that still often prevent women from taking leadership positions even if they are capable. These could be:

Culture. Up to now culture is often used as a yardstick to determine the role of women negatively in the church. As I have argued elsewhere:

Culture has often been used to defend the treatment given to other people who are considered inferior in society. Culture is used against those that are powerless to benefit those in authority ... The question that one would ask is, does culture really oppress, discriminate and marginalize people?"²²

The church can take the role to educate Christians to understand that both men and women are created in the image of God. In the language of the church, there is no superiority or inferiority, men and women stand equal before God. This understanding should help the church to embrace each and every person with the gifts they bring with them to church before God.

²² Gertrude Kapuma, "Wrestling with Power," 140.

Power. Power can be looked at positively and negatively. If power is shared and many people are allowed (or better: enabled) to exercise it, power can be looked at positively, and it is needed to run any organization, and any church for that matter. The sharing of power between men and women is a big issue. When people consider the daily life of women in the church, they observe that, despite the fact that women may even be ministers, there is still much male power exercised over them. Before women were accepted for ordination, I observed:

Women are not able to work and participate freely in church activities. They are only considered to be useful by the church when they do things that will benefit the church like fundraising.²³

Though progress has been made, the belief that women are inferior to men persists in many quarters and has made women not to progress to their full potential and dignity.

Menstruation. What God has designed to be a part of his good creation,²⁴ has, in numerous cases, been interpreted negatively, so that some menstruating women abstain from Holy Communion,²⁵ fearing to disturb God's holiness,²⁶ and some men (and even some women) are convinced that menstruation forbids women from being pastors tasked with preaching the

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ "God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground" (Genesis 1:27, NIV).

²⁵ Mercy Chilapula, "Towards Inclusion: Experiences of Women Clergy in the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) Blantyre Synod," PhD, Mzuzu University, 2023, 159.

²⁶ For a description of the phenomenon and attempts to remedy it from a Christian perspective, see Felix Chingota, "Sacraments and Sexuality," *Religion in Malawi* 8 (1998), 34-40.

word and administering the sacraments.²⁷ Such denials have never been the official teaching in any section of the CCAP, but they continue to be promoted to limit women's role in the church.²⁸

Biblical (Mis-)Interpretation. While the Bible does not discriminate against women, some texts are used to stop them from advancing to leadership positions. This may be a misinterpretation of Genesis 3:16, which is not taken as the result of man's sin, but as God's will for all times,²⁹ or 1 Corinthians 14:34 which is read without reference to Paul's female co-workers in Romans 16.³⁰ Therefore, the Bible, the cornerstone of all Christian theology, must be read with due regard to the cultural and historical context and in the entirety of its witness, not by picking and choosing sentences that fit one's cultural or other prejudices.³¹

Education. Women may not be able to participate and take up leadership positions because of their educational background. In general, though in our society the women's educational levels are lower than men's, there are many women who have achieved even the highest qualifications.³² The church has the

²⁷ Felix Chingota, "Women and the Ordained Ministry: The Case of Blantyre Synod Malawi," *Reformed World* 49/1&2 (Spring-Summer 1999), 8.

²⁸ Mercy Chilapula, "Abstention from Holy Communion: The Case Study of CCAP Blantyre Synod - Malawi," MA, University of Fort Hare, 2004.

²⁹ cf: Janet Kholowa and Klaus Fiedler, *In the Beginning God Created them Equal*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2000.

³⁰ Janet Kholowa and Klaus Fiedler, *Mtumwi Paulo ndi Udindo wa Amayi mu Mpingo*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2001.

³¹ This is demonstrated with much detail in Phoebe Faith Chifungo, *Let My People Go!* chapters 5 and 7.

³² For example, Prof Dr Isabel Apawo Phiri is the Vice Chancellor of Blantyre Synod University.

obligation to make sure that it provides the necessary training to both men and women so that they are able to work together effectively. The current tendency of not sending enough women for theological training is worrisome. At Zomba Theological University there are only two female students among those who enrolled in 2023, against a much larger number of men. Though the situation in the Masters programme is better, still men are in the majority,³³ compared to the number of female students who have come for postgraduate training.³⁴ If the gap continues, the problem of the lack of trained women theologians will continue.

Women should be encouraged to study Theology so that they are empowered to re-read the Bible in their own context.³⁵ This is the reason the Circle of the Concerned African Women Theologians was founded: to allow women to access training so as to be able to participate. The Circle aimed to empower women to study and write theology, which would impact the churches.³⁶

³³ At Zomba Theological University in 2023, on the coursework Masters there are 15 men and 5 women, while on the Masters by research there are five men and one woman.

³⁴ Even at Mzuzu University, where the Department of Theology and Religious Studies is very keen to promote women studying theology, only two of 14 PhD's were awarded to women.

³⁵ An example of such re-reading is chapter 7 in Phoebe Faith Chifungo, *Let My People Go!*

³⁶ Esther Mombo and Heleen Joziassse, *If you have no Voice, Just sing! Narratives of Women's Lives and Theological Education at St Paul's University*. Limuru: Zapf Chancery, 2011, 4. For the history of the Circle and its theology see: Rachel NyaGondwe Fiedler, *The History of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, 1989-2007*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2016.

Low Number of Women Pastors

There have now been two decades during which women have been eligible for ordination as pastors. This has, of course, made their numbers grow: in Livingstonia Synod there are 16 female pastors and 233 male pastors, and in Blantyre Synod there are 24 female pastors and 221 male pastors. The numbers are low, because the number of new female students at the Theological Colleges is low. The low numbers seem to show that women receive less encouragement from the church to study theology than would be appropriate. Mercy Chilapula, in the biographical studies of the first 18 female pastors has shown the crucial role such encouragement played for many of them, and the churches should actively develop these lines of encouragement.³⁷

Way forward

Women have contributed a great deal to the life and work of the CCAP, especially through the Women's Guilds. They have been active through their organization which has helped many to give their life to God and participate actively. This has happened through their visitations, care for the sick, presence during and after funerals, supporting the bereaved families, giving food to the needy, assisting the orphans, the elderly, and evangelizing and ministering to one another. They have been practical in their service to the Lord. The Women's Guild has been a service arm of the CCAP in evangelism and their participation has been significant. The CCAP is called to affirm women in all the ministry they do and empower them to do more without limiting them to only a few things.

³⁷ Mercy Kalipinde Chilapula, "Towards Inclusion," chapter 5.

For women to be able to participate in the life of the church with the trends in the growing world, there is need for the CCAP to encourage more women to go for training as lay leaders and for the ordination to the ministry of the Word and Sacraments. When women are equipped with knowledge, they will be able to participate and contribute more to the development of the CCAP. Knowledge is power, therefore congregations in the CCAP should do much more to empower and encourage women to study and also to encourage their girl children to study. Women who have good training are helping in the CCAP Congregations as elders, session clerks, treasurers and pastors.

Equality

Gender equality is a concept that is relevant to our society. It is the idea of changing the mentality of male superiority and female inferiority, and it is the idea which brings liberation to humanity. It is difficult for some societies to accept this concept of equality and it has been criticized as foreign. In our society, anything which is threatening is regarded as foreign.³⁸ Augustine Musopole argues that “this movement has its origins in African oppression and injustice against women. No Westerner needs to tell them that they are being hurt.”³⁹ The existence of gender equality has been questioned because, as Musopole puts it, “it has the power of truth and truth is bound to triumph in the end. Injustice and oppression belong to falsehood, and they

³⁸ Gertrude Kapuma, “Wrestling with Power,” 175.

³⁹ Augustine Musopole, “The Crisis of Male Identity,” *Gender Review* 4/33 (Sept. 1997), 7; quoted in Gertrude A. Kapuma, “Wrestling with Power,” 175.

cannot last.”⁴⁰ When women ask for their right place in the church, the reaction has often been that women are being influenced by foreign traditions, which is an attempt to deny or undermine the fact that women are capable of articulating their own problems and oppression.⁴¹ This is a call to the CCAP to fully embrace women as co-workers in the service of God’s church.

The Church and Gender-Based Violence

Gender based violence is on the increase and the church has to take a serious role in dealing with this. I have observed elsewhere that:

women are exposed to many types of violence and often have no safe place to go to. Even the church does not seem to be a safe place for women. We have also seen that there is a serious lack of understanding of the nature and extent of violence and its impact on people.⁴²

This means that we need to take a serious look at the theology we teach and how people are able to interpret the Bible which is supposed to bring liberation to Christians, both male and female. To achieve this, we suggest the following:

- a. The church should introduce a truly liberating and healing ministry where the church is an inclusive organization within the society; women and men should be given equal opportunities of leadership so that the church can give witness to equality and inclusivity.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Gertrude A. Kapuma, “Gender-Based Violence and the Church? Malawian Women Speaking Out,” in Elna Mouton, Gertrude Kapuma, Len Hansen and Thomas Togom (eds), *Living with Dignity: African Perspectives on Gender Equality*, Stellenbosch: Sun Press, 2015, 265.

- b. On governance issues: an inclusive church will ensure that issues affecting all members are dealt with accordingly, with representation of women and youth.
- c. An accountable theology: our theological thinking has to be revisited... The Bible must be contextualized in order to empower those that are marginalized, and to help ministers and laity to bring the good news of the gospel to those who suffer from gender-based violence.
- d. A loving church: Christ loves his church and the church is called upon to listen with love to the many cries of people in and outside of the church... This is a calling of not only a few people; it is the calling of all.”⁴³

God calls both men and women to work together in partnership. Women like men are in the body of Christ and need to be treated equally. God calls the community of believers to work together and take Christ as their example. With the different gifts God has given to men and women, Christians are expected to share all these for the glory of God.

This kind of partnership between men and women in the CCAP calls for solidarity and action. The World Council of Churches launched an Ecumenical Decade for Churches to be in Solidarity with Women. Mercy Amba Oduyoye explained that this involved, “empowering, affirming, giving visibility, enabling churches, and encouraging action and dynamic movements.”⁴⁴ This was a call to allow churches to have a dialogue with women on issues that affect them and see how they can promote their participation in the church. Solidarity is a call for action that is

⁴³ Ibid, 265.

⁴⁴ Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Who Will Roll the Stone Away? The Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990, 6.

to allow women to participate in the development of the church in all areas without restrictions.

In the coming 100 years we would like to see men and women working together in the church in solidarity. We should put aside differences and be able to affirm one another as a people created in the image of God. Both men and women are gifted for the service of God in the CCAP and their potential should be recognized. Such understanding and partnership will take the CCAP to another level where women and men can be equal partners in the expected development.

11. Women and the Search for Equality in Malawi's CCAP: 100 Years of Service

Eunice M'biya
and Gift Wasambo Kayira

Introduction

This chapter discusses the struggles women in Malawi's Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) have endured to reform the church and make it more inclusive than it has traditionally been. Although this subject has attracted some scholarly attention, it is worth re-examining now because the CCAP will be clocking 100 years since its birth in 1924. Again, much of the literature on the subject requires refreshing with more contemporary women's experiences. But more significantly, the existing literature on women empowerment is overly elitist, for it tends to focus on women who assumed leadership roles as a measure of success in the fight for equality or lack of it. Such is the case in Isabel Apawo Phiri's "Marching, Suspended and Stoned", Rachel Fiedler's work on women theologians in Malawi and Mary Polly Hamlen's recent biography of Isabel Phiri.¹ The focus in these works is on how selected women theologians and others fought on behalf of the rest of the women to bring about equality in the church. Although significant, the approach

¹ Isabel Apawo Phiri, "Marching, Suspended and Stoned: Christian Women in Malawi 1995," in Kenneth R. Ross, (ed), *God, People and Power in Malawi: Democratization in Theological Perspective*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1996; repr. Mzuzu: Luviri Press, 2018, 63-106; Rachel NyaGondwe Fiedler and J.W. Hofmeyr, "The Birth and Growth of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians in Malawi 1989-2011," *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* XXXVII/2, 2011; Mary C. 'Polly' Hamlen, "Isabel Apawo Phiri: Centering the Voices of Women in Africa," *Journal of African Christian Biography* 8/2 (2023), 18-41.

presents some problems to analysis. We argue that an assessment of the gains registered in the fight for women empowerment should move beyond a focus on leadership roles to include the everyday activities and participation of women in the church. The latter approach is not only inclusive but can also potentially highlight the gains in ways that transcend the beginnings of women's activism in the church in the post-1990 period to include how the CCAP has accommodated womenfolk in the church since its formation in 1924. Although this chapter focuses on the roles that selected groups took to bring about change in the church, it also highlights the significant contribution of ordinary women – including those that were mobilised into the Women's Guild before more recent women's activism and those who willingly marched alongside women leaders to present their petitions to the church leadership.

Before zeroing in on the gains and losses in the women empowerment movement, we reflect on how missionaries, taking advantage of patriarchal institutions, defined the roles of women in the church during the early missionary era and how women's subservient roles were passed on to the African-led CCAP from the 1960s. This account is predominantly a work of synthesis and does not claim to present new data from what is already known on the subject. The aim is to take a fresh look at what is available on women's empowerment in the church and present some insights on how we should interpret it moving forward. As we reflect on this work, we demonstrate how women took advantage of local and global forces to sustain a narrative that helped to transform an otherwise patriarchal institution into one that is relatively inclusive, with women assuming roles that were previously reserved for men. In this way, the chapter engages the concept of "glocalization" and shows how broader global and local forces combined to shape women's actions and

agency. Moreover, these changes were made possible because of the very transnational character of missionary work, which naturally created interactions between people and institutions within and across the boundaries of nation-states. If the church has been perceived as a rigid institution, we argue, it is also fluid with the capacity to adapt to emerging changes. Women helped to trigger that adaptation.

The CCAP and Patriarchy

As others have affirmed, the CCAP, like many other churches in Malawi, has operated as a patriarchal or male-dominated institution since its inception in 1924. Patriarchy is a social structure or system where all power and authority rests in the hands of the male head of the family. Because of patriarchy, the construction of womanhood in African societies has influenced the way people look at women and the roles that they can play in African church and society. Patriarchy has defined women as inferior to men, thereby maintaining the subjugation of women in Africa, in church and society. It has produced male-dominated hierarchical institutions in most African societies and restricted the woman's place to the home and kitchen. From such discourses, it becomes clear that African patriarchal cultures have controlled the expression of African Christianity about women's issues. However, patriarchy was not unique to Africa.² The Blantyre Synod of the CCAP, which is at the centre of this discussion, inherited the very patriarchal attitudes of the Scottish missionaries, including their tendency to define

² Nigel M. de S. Cameron, David F. Wright, David C. Lachman, and Donald E. Meek (eds), *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993, 883.

specific roles that women were expected to take in the church.³ Although the church's theology acknowledged the necessity of marriage for procreation, it also emphasized women's natural inferiority and sinfulness. It was argued that by nature, women were weak, frail, impatient, feeble and foolish, and that experience indicated that women lacked the spirit of counsel and regiment.⁴ In general, the prescribed roles of a woman within the missionary work were seen in the domestic sphere as an obedient wife, helpmate, comforter, companion and mother, denying them the rule, and authority in both the church and the nation.

Women missionaries' discourses in Africa were not widely recorded during this early period. One reason for this omission is that colonies were portrayed as masculine and missionary work described as "men's work." It is clear, however, that male missionaries came with women as wives, or as nurses and teachers. Mission leadership largely viewed Central Africa as too dangerous and unhealthy to be endured by an unmarried woman. The dominant perspective at the time, therefore, held that mission women were primarily wives, although they operated as significant agents through their work as teachers and nurses. Such women could not be allowed to be evangelists, deacons and elders. In the case of colonial Malawi, women only appeared in minor roles as missionary wives who comprised the largest group of European women in early colonial times. The unmarried women – as was the case with Elizabeth Pithie

³ Markku Hokkanen, "Scottish Missionaries and African Healers: Perceptions and Relations in the Livingstonia Mission, 1875-1930," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 34/3 (2004), 320-47.

⁴ John McCracken, "Class, Violence and Gender in Early Colonial Malawi: The Curious Case of Elizabeth Pithie," *Society of Malawi Journal* 64/2 (2011), 1-16.

– whose story historian John McCracken has described at length – were subjected to strict control.⁵ Save for some few exceptions, preference was given to those who were older than 35 years of age for them to be appointed to missionary service. At that age, so it was argued, “they were less likely than younger women to be shocked by the vigorous earthiness of village life.”⁶

Such an understanding of women's place in society impacted the church's perception of women's place in the CCAP that emerged after 1924. Among other restrictions, women were prohibited from preaching in the church or assuming leadership positions. This is surprising, not least because the Blantyre Synod is located within a predominantly matrilineal society where women have historically played significant roles in family relations. One would have expected the Blantyre to be somewhat different from the Livingstonia Synod in the north, where patrilineage tends to reinforce patriarchy. We do not have any possible explanations for this discrepancy. In fact, the experience in the Nkhoma Synod, which has lagged far behind in terms of women empowerment despite being located in a typical matrilineal society, further weakens our hypothesis. In any case, it raises the question of the extent to which Malawian traditions have been powerful enough to influence the culture of the CCAP.

⁵ Ibid. Elizabeth Pithie was an exception to this general age rule as she was appointed to missionary service in Nyasaland at the age of 18. Kenneth R. Ross, "Hetherwick, Elizabeth, 1861-1945, Church of Scotland, Malawi," *Dictionary of African Christian Bibliography (DACB)*, <https://dacb.org/stories/malawi/hetherwick-elizabeth/> [24.1.2024].

⁶ Ibid, 3.

What is clear, as stated, is that Victorian Britain, which did not fare any better at the level of gender equality in diverse circles, significantly impacted the nature of missionary work in the country and beyond. Inspired by that tradition, missionary women were not preachers. Instead, they were auxiliaries to male ministers. The vestiges of missionary work lingered on in the CCAP that was born out of it, and African tradition has done little to uproot it. The 1961 transfer of power, which saw Europeans paving the way for local African leadership, did not mark a break with the past. Women continued to serve in subservient roles. Much of the women empowerment narrative in the church has been aimed at reversing this trend.⁷

The Battle for Women Empowerment

One significant organization in the battle for the empowerment of women is the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians. The Malawi chapter of the Circle provided an organizational home to several women theologians and individuals who campaigned for the cause of women. Examples include Isabel Apawo Phiri, Fulata Moyo, and Rachel Fiedler, although the latter did not belong to the CCAP. At different points from the 1990s, these leaders organized seminars to empower and encourage women to become theologians. Their research exposed the power of patriarchy and offered some clues on navigating it. Taking advantage of their privileged position in the CCAP, the first two lobbied for women's rights within the church. Significant to note also is the role that selected women played in supporting the circle's work. Although

⁷ See NyaGondwe Fiedler and Hofmeyr, "The Birth and Growth of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians in Malawi, 1889-2011," 1.

scholars have not significantly acknowledged their roles, Gertrude Kapuma (of Blantyre Synod) and Mwawi Chilongozi (of Livingstonia Synod) were critical figures within the church who supported its activities when Fulata Moyo left the country.⁸

Beyond these isolated theologians, women in general, took an active role. Blantyre Synod women played a central role in organizing several conferences on women's empowerment. Between 1990 and 1994, they wrote several reports that condemned discrimination against women in the church and provided suggestions on how to deal with it. Among these were a "Report of the Malawian Women in Theology Event," Grace Bandawe Centre, 1990; "Report on Women's Conference, Blantyre Synod," 14-18 September 1993; "Statement by Women Representatives meeting at Chigodi Women's Centre," 30 November to 1 December 1994; Women Commissioners' Letter, 11 November 1994. Mrs C. Phiri, Mrs D.K. Kumi-chongwe, Mr. E.F. Mtika, and Mrs E.M. Chibwana signed the letter. Of note, again, is a "Statement by the Sub-committee organizing a peaceful march from Synod office to Grace Bandawe Conference Centre," March 1995. A "Statement by Women Representatives meeting at Chigodi Women's Centre," from 30 November to 1 December 1994, deserves a comment. The statement was crafted against a Blantyre Synod statement titled "Justice and Peace in the Church," itself a brainchild of the synodical conference held between 22 and 23 January 1993. Among others, women took issue with the latter, for although

⁸ Personal Communication with Rev Dr. Gertrude Kapuma at the CCAP@100 Research Conference, Zomba Theological University, April 2023.

it emphasized peace and justice, the church did not promote gender justice, and the peace it professed left out women. In their submission, the women's statement argued that:

women are underrepresented in the decision making bodies of the Church at all levels even though women are in the majority in the Church; the few women who are in the decision making bodies of the Church are treated as tokens and in most cases chosen by men; even in women organisations, women have no power to make decisions even on matters affecting them e.g. fundraising, and women's programmes; there are inequality in training opportunities. Lay women are not given the chance to go for postgraduate studies (even training for Leadership) [*sic*].⁹

In pitching their arguments against an agreed-upon synodical document, women systematically used pen and ink to project their voice in ways that pushed back at a male-dominated leadership practice that prejudiced them. When this strategy proved unsuccessful, they organized a march, as was the case with that of 1995 reported under "A statement by the Sub-committee organising a peaceful march from Synod Office to Grace Bandawe Conference Centre."¹⁰

The results were not always pleasing. In her book chapter titled "Marching, Suspended and Stoned," Isabel Apawo Phiri narrates the violence women suffered in campaigning for women's rights in the church and beyond. Among others, her work reflects on this 1995 march that came in the wake of failure of the

⁹ "Statement by Women Representatives Meeting at Chigodi Women's Centre," 30 November to 1 December 1994, WARC Archives, Women's Work, 1995-1997, 215.5.1.2/22.

¹⁰ A statement by the Sub-committee organising a peaceful march from Synod Office to Grace Bandawe Conference Centre (Isabel Apawo Phiri, "Marching, Suspended and Stoned: Christian Women in Malawi in 1995", March 1995).

Synod leadership to accommodate women's aspirations. To present their demands more forcefully, Rev Alice Anti, Mrs Violet Chirwa, Mrs Getrude Kapuma, Mrs Mercy Chilapula, and Mrs Mary N. Saukila were tasked to draft a petition to the Synod leadership. Among others, Gertrude Kapuma, who served as the Director of the Chigodi Women's Centre (discussed below), was disciplined with her salary being reduced by half as a form of punishment and later lost her job at the centre. She was also prohibited from associating herself with women's work in the Synod. On her part, Rev Alice Anti was ordered to leave the Synod for a post in Ghana. The Synod suspended all female workers who participated in the march. Dr Isabel Phiri had a fair share of the reprimand. Marked as a troublesome woman in Blantyre Synod, she was told to express her activism within the confines of the Nkhoma Synod, where she supposedly belonged. In general, all those who participated in the march (11 in total) faced the iron arm of the church leadership in one way or another.¹¹

As noted, a focus on equality in leadership positions in the church is a good direction. However, it is necessarily narrow and can potentially redirect our understanding of women's rights movement in the church through an elitist lens that leaves out other significant movements that helped to empower women. Moreover, the approach can limit the areas of assessment within which to analyze the gains and losses in the fight for equality in the church. We argue that this fight was broad enough and encompassed diverse groups and institutions whose activism emerged much earlier than the 1990s and after.

¹¹ Isabel Apawo Phiri, "Marching, Suspended and Stoned: Christian Women in Malawi 1995."

Consider the formation of the Women's Guild in 1945. Its beginnings owe much to the growing concern at the time that Christian women were less empowered as active agents in their families, the church, and society.

Between 1945 and 1946, white women missionaries in Mulanje took the lead to organise their African counterparts into a circle in the name of *Amai A Baibulo* (Bible Women), which Mrs Debora Cook later organised into the Women's Guild in 1947. Following the spread of the organizations to other areas, the Synod leadership formed a Blantyre Mission and later Presbytery Mission Council to oversee women's work.¹² The growing numbers of Women's Guilds necessitated the need for training women to guide activities of the guilds, eventually leading to the appointment and training of *Mvano* Parish Women Supervisors (*Amai Oyendera*) from the 1950s. There was great recognition of the place and contribution of women to the church when the Synod appointed Mrs Bena Silamoyo to serve at the Women's Desk within the Synod in 1967.¹³

Following this successful push for women's empowerment that seemingly was initiated from below, the Synod later established the Chigodi Women's Training Centre in 1968, which has survived to the present day. Beyond its religious instructions, the Centre has helped train women in practical skills of cooking, tailoring, knitting, and agriculture skills. Others have been equipped with skills in the running of small businesses. For some, these may be regarded as mundane and a

¹² Humphreys Frackson Zgambo, "Pursuing a Gender and Women Empowerment Agenda: A Chronicle of Women Ministry in the Blantyre Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) in Malawi from 1876-2023," *Pharos Journal of Theology* 104/3 (2023), 6.

¹³ *Ibid*, 7.

reinforcement of patriarchy in the church by subjecting women to trivial skills for bare survival. As Apawo Phiri has argued, the formation of the Women's Guild seems to have done little to change the fact that women did not have powers and authority in the church. The aims and functions of the guild were designed to involve women serving the Lord through womanly roles. Even within Nkhoma Synod Women's Guild, the mediator (*mkehalapakati*) between the *Chigwirizano* and the session was expected to be a male church elder. Phiri argues that this showed the continued male dominance since the women could not meet without their male coordinator. She further argues that the introduction of the male mediator was a way of trying to keep women in check because the leadership became afraid that the *Chigwirizano* would develop into a "church within a church" since women comprised a larger membership of the church and they were and continue to be more active members of the church than men.¹⁴

It is significant to note, however, that an organisation initially started through women's activism eventually came to command the confidence of Synod leadership, which went about underwriting many of its activities. Through it, women penetrated the upper echelons of synodical leadership, boasting a special Women's Desk dedicated to their cause before women's activism took another twist in the post-1990 era. The Chigodi Women's Training Centre in Limbe has succeeded in training women leaders and several members of the Women's Guild who have gone about to take over leadership positions in diverse circles of the church. These are success stories worth celebrating, for they point our gaze beyond women ministers

¹⁴ Isabel Apawo Phiri, "Marching, Suspended and Stoned", 63-106.

to include how the Synod has helped to empower women in diverse areas through the support it has provided to women's activities.

Moreover, the post-1990 women's activism does a great disservice to the Blantyre Synod's earlier attempts to empower women scholars. Evidence shows that the ten-year strategic plan of the Blantyre Synod launched in 1976 sought, among others, to train women theologians. Gertrude Sulumba (later Kapuma), who eventually became the Principal Tutor at the Chigodi Women's Training Centre, was a direct beneficiary of this strategic planning. Women were encouraged to pursue their studies at the Kapeni Theological College (before it moved to Zomba in 1977 as the Zomba Theological College). Sulumba first enrolled for theological training at Kapeni and later did her master's degree in theology in South Africa in the mid-1990s.¹⁵ Many of these attained their education when the Synod was regarded as less receptive to women's interests.

Gains and Losses

In analysing the gains and losses in women's empowerment, the church's receptibility to new ideas is worth acknowledging. Albeit slowly, the church took the leading role in adapting to global changes, including accepting women's significant role in the church. Consider paragraph four of the CCAP statement emerging at a January 22-23 meeting in 1993:

The Church is both a local church and a universal church it is not limited by country, continent, race or Gender. One common misunderstanding is that the church is often thought of as just a 'local' church which involves only the Christians in any given country or area. However, as Christians we believe that the Church is the body

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 7-8.

of Christ and as Christ's body it is made up of all people who profess Christ throughout the whole world and therefore the church cannot be limited to any one particular local denomination.¹⁶

It is interesting to note that such a statement was issued a few years after the end of the Cold War, which accelerated global interconnectedness and the heightened quest for the empowerment of all groups within global societies. In acknowledging its universality, the church leadership became duty-bound to conform to global standards in running church affairs. Already, although equally under the trappings of patriarchal tendencies, the Church of Scotland had achieved more significant gains in women empowerment. Many women role models who spoke in women's conferences in the Blantyre Synod were ordained women ministers from Scotland. These ladies served as models for both men and women that the latter's empowerment was possible within the church.

What is more, the church was also responding to the concerns that the World Council of Churches (WCC) had registered regarding women's struggles in the world. In 1988, WCC launched the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women (1988-1999) and called upon churches to declare solidarity with women's plight and interests in diverse areas.¹⁷ Subsequently, together with the Lutheran World Federation and the Life & Peace Institute of Uppsala, Sweden, the WCC

¹⁶ "Blantyre Synod Statement on the Transformation of Malawi 1993," in Kenneth R. Ross (ed), *Christianity in Malawi: A Source Book*, revised and enlarged edition, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2020, 273-79 [275].

¹⁷ Aruna Gnanadason, Musimbi Kanyoro, and Lucia Ann McSpadden, "Introduction", in Aruna Gnanadason, Musimbi Kanyoro and Lucia Ann McSpadden (eds), *Women, Violence and Non-violent Change*, Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1996/2005, viii-xii.

declared the Women and Nonviolence Project, which aimed to confront violence against women using non-violent strategies that conformed to ecumenical principles.

It is not surprising that following that declaration, selected leaders in the church took an active role in campaigning for the cause of women, chief among them being Rev Dr Silas S. Ncozana, who served as Blantyre Synod's General Secretary between 1985 and 1995. He trained in the United Kingdom and was well exposed to the gains the Church of Scotland had registered in women's empowerment. Undoubtedly, such a broad environment marked by a more comprehensive exchange of ideas on women's empowerment left a mark on him. He was determined to transfer that experience to Malawi. On 25 September 1990, Ncozana participated in a Women Theologians meeting at Grace Bandawe Conference Centre, where he delivered a powerful speech on women empowerment in the church. Later, in 1991, Ncozana tabled a proposal on women's ordination in the Blantyre Synod, which, unfortunately, failed to garner the required number of votes for it to pass.¹⁸ With time, that effort and the pressure selected women exerted on the Synod leadership bore some fruits.

An analysis of the gains made in the struggle for women empowerment in the Church should be achieved against a 1988 Women's Resolution at a General Synod seminar that took place between 6 and 9 December at Chilema in Zomba District of Southern Malawi. Women participants made the following resolutions, which Isabel Apawo Phiri has been generous enough to summarise from Women's Report on the Seminar on "Women in the 1990s," Chilema, 6-9 December 1988:

¹⁸ Isabel Apawo Phiri, "Marching, Suspended and Stoned," 63-106.

When women are appointed to and or ordained to a position, all the responsibilities/rights/privileges therefore be permitted (i.e. women elders, session clerks, youth organisers); Women should be represented on Sessions, Presbyteries, Synod and General Synod levels; Women be granted all voting privileges that go with their responsibilities; General Synod should consider the ordination of women as pastors; Women's committee and officer be established within the General Synod of the CCAP to co-ordinate the women's work within the synod; The committee to work towards uniformity in the structure of the women's work in the synod; The General Synod should encourage synods to send women to study at the theological college and to encourage women who have already began their studies; The General Synod should sponsor a women's meeting once every two years.¹⁹

It is encouraging to note that many, if not all, of these resolutions have seen fulfilment in the Blantyre Synod. For example, on Sunday 12 August 2001, the Synod ordained Rev Edina Navaya. She became the first woman the Synod ordained as a minister. In the country, she was second to Martha Mwale, ordained by Livingstonia Synod in December 1999. The late Rev Navaya later served as the Synod's Moderator and the first Chancellor of the University of the University of Blantyre Synod.²⁰ Similarly, in August 2011, the Synod elected Rev Mercy Chilapula as its Moderator.²¹ Current statistics show that the Synod has ordained 21 female ministers and has one ordinand. Although a positive direction, the numbers appear insignificant relative to the 195 male ministers the Synod boasts.

¹⁹ Ibid, 65-66.

²⁰ Hobbs Gama, *African Eye News Service (Nelspruit)*, 1999, www.the-free-library.com/Blantyre+Synod+ordains+first+woman+minister.-a079757456.

²¹ *Nyasa Times*, "Blantyre Synod elects female moderator, new SG - Malawi Nyasa Times - News from Malawi about Malawi," (22.8.2011). www.nya.satimes.com/blantyre-synod-elects-female-moderator-new-sg.

Nevertheless, like many others in the country, the Blantyre Synod boasts several women session clerks across many of its churches and several others serving as elders, deacons, and chairpersons in several committees.²² The battle for equality rages on, but there are success stories worth celebrating as the Church clocks 100 years as the CCAP. As stated, these achievements were built on a long history of activism that pre-dates the post-1990s decade to include earlier forms of activism by white women missionaries, whose activities bankrolled on the very receptivity of the Church to new modes of thinking.

Conclusion

This essay cannot claim to have presented any groundbreaking argument. Instead, its purpose has been to remind readers of the struggles faced by the church in its efforts to promote inclusivity within the Blantyre Synod of the CCAP. As we bring this discussion to a close, it is crucial to highlight that the journey towards women's empowerment in the CCAP has not been without obstacles. However, the involvement of diverse groups, institutions, and individuals who advocated for women's empowerment played a significant role in facilitating progress. Additionally, women capitalized on both local and global influences to shape a narrative that transformed the traditionally patriarchal institution into one that is relatively inclusive, enabling women to assume roles that were previously reserved for men. In this context, the essay borrows on the concept of "glocalization" and demonstrates how broader global and local forces influenced women's actions and agency. These transformations were made possible due to the inherently transnational nature of missionary work, which naturally

²² Data from Women's Desk of the Blantyre Synod, 18 April 2023.

fostered interactions between people and institutions across national boundaries. We argue that despite its perception as a rigid institution, the church also possesses the capacity to adapt to emerging changes. Women played a pivotal role in instigating this adaptation.

Part 3 – CCAP Concerns

12. The CCAP: its Biblical Vision

Takuze Saul Chitsulo

Introduction

This chapter offers a critical review of the unity of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) through the lens of Ephesians 4:13a. The formation of the CCAP in 1924/26 demonstrates that the three Presbyteries which came together were motivated by a concern for unity. Similarly, when the CCAP leaders were setting up Zomba Theological College (now University) in 1977, the choice of the phrase “Until We All Reach Unity in the Faith” (the motto for the University from Ephesians 4:13a) accentuates the importance of unity to them. Certainly, it is revealing that out of all the biblical texts they could have chosen, they chose this one which emphasizes the attainment of unity. This suggests that the journey to unity in the faith must have been very important for them. “Until We All Reach Unity in the Faith” entails, as Charles Hodge puts it, that the progress of the Church consists in bringing all to the state of unity.¹ The phrase connotes that unity does not just happen; we have to work at it. Also notable is the fact that the University has retained this text as its motto through all the changes and challenges that it has experienced.

Why was this text chosen in the first place? Why has it been retained? What does it mean today for the CCAP? These are some of revealing questions to be explored in this chapter. It seeks to find out how far Ephesians 4:13a has been fulfilled in the life of the CCAP and in what ways it has fallen short. As

¹ Charles Hodge, *The Classic New Testament Commentary: Ephesians*, London: Marshall Pickering, 1991, 123.

part of setting an agenda for the future, this assessment will map out biblical resources that might aid in fostering the unity of the CCAP. The chapter will first present a careful literary analysis of Ephesians 4:13a, and then will move on to reflect on the unity of the CCAP for purposes of establishing a dialogue between the biblical text and the context. When brought into interpretive conversation, the literary discourse resonances provide additional interpretative resources for understanding the biblical text and the CCAP situation.

A Literary Analysis of Ephesians 4:13a

A literary analysis will involve a critical examination of Ephesians 4:13a. Part of this exercise involves situating the biblical text in its larger and immediate literary context before having a careful exegesis of the text. In this section, we shall therefore begin by establishing the larger literary context of Ephesians 4:13a, which will be followed by a discussion on the immediate literary context of the same text. Then, we shall have a detailed exegesis of Ephesians 4:13a.

The Larger Literary Context of Ephesians 4:13a

The Epistle to the Ephesians is divided into two main parts: chapters 1-3 and chapters 4-6. The first half (1:1-3:21) talks about the believer's position in Christ while the second half (4:1-6:20) describe the believer's conduct in the world.² In the first half, Paul has been unfolding for his readers the eternal purpose of God being worked out in history.³ John Stott

² Thomas Hale, *The Applied New Testament Commentary*, Eastbourne: Kingsway, 1996, 760.

³ John Stott, *The Message of Ephesians: God's New Society*, Leicester: InterVarsity, 1979, 146.

suggests that through Jesus Christ, who died for sinners and was raised from death, God is creating something entirely new, not just a new life for individuals but also for a new society.⁴ In this section, argues Stott, Paul sees an alienated humanity being reconciled, a fractured humanity being united, even a new humanity being created. He says now, in the second half, the apostle moves on from the new society to new standards which are expected of it. So he turns from exposition to exhortation, from what God has done (in the indicative) to what we must be and do (in the imperative), from doctrine to duty, from the *cre-denda* ... to the *agenda*, from mind-stretching theology to its down-to-earth, concrete implications in everyday living.⁵ All of Paul's letters contain a beautiful balance between doctrine and duty, and Ephesians is the perfect example.⁶ The first three chapters deal with doctrine, our riches in Christ, while the last three chapters explain duty, our responsibilities in Christ. The key word in this last half of the book is "*walk*" (4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15), while the key idea in the first half is wealth. The phrase "Until We All Reach Unity in the Faith" comes from the second half of the letter (4:1-6:20), which in this paper is considered the larger context of Ephesians 4:13a.

The Immediate Literary Context of Ephesians 4:13a

The second half of the epistle consists of four large units of thought: the first (4:1-16) is a call to maintain the unity that has been given by God to the church (cf. 2:14-15); the second (4:17-5:21) is a Two Ways form, which talks about the changed

⁴ Ibid, 146.

⁵ Ibid, 146.

⁶ Warren Wiersbe, *Be Rich: A New Testament Study – Ephesians*, Colorado Springs: Cook International, 2007, 93.

life (4:17-32) and living as children of life (5:1-21); the third (5:22-6:9) is a household code; and the fourth (6:10-20) is a call to stand firm as a Christian in the face of spiritual evil.⁷ Stott observes that the new society which God is calling into being has two major characteristics: first, it is “one” people composed equally of Jews and Gentiles – a single family of God; secondly, it is a “holy” people, distinct from the secular world – set apart to belong to God.⁸ He points out that the apostle Paul treats the unity of the Church in verses 1-16 and the purity of the Church from 4:17 to 5:20. Paul’s main argument in the second half of the epistle is that God’s people must manifest their unity because they are called to be one people. On the other hand, God’s people must manifest their purity because they are called to be holy people. The immediate context of Ephesians 4:13a is therefore chapter 4:1-16.

The main idea in this passage is the unity of the Church. No passage is more descriptive of the church in action than this passage.⁹ It focuses on life, order, unity, and the purpose of the Church, as well as its diversity and difficulties.¹⁰ To a large extent, 4:1-16 provides the framework and specific theological basis for what follows in 4:17-6:20.¹¹ First, in 4:1-6, Paul appeals to his readers to live lives that are in conformity to standards intended by the church with regard to God’s design of unity.

⁷ Charles Talbert, *Ephesians and Colossians*, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007, 107.

⁸ John Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 146.

⁹ Klyne Snodgrass, *The NIV Application Commentary From Biblical Text to Contemporary Life: Ephesians*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996, 194.

¹⁰ Markus Barth, *Ephesians 4-6: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974, 451.

¹¹ Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 194.

In 4:7-16, Paul reinforces this appeal by reminding his readers that Christ has endowed believers with individual spiritual gifts so that each may make his or her particular contribution to the good of the church.

Call for Unity of the Church: Ephesians 4:1-16

In 4:1-16, the readers are exhorted to maintain the unity (4:3) that they have been given by God. The segment is a call for Christian unity. Paul used the human body as a picture of Christian unity (1 Corinthians 12), and he adapts the same illustration in Ephesians 4:13-16. Each part of the body is different from the other parts, yet all make up one body and work together. Unity is not uniformity. Unity comes from within and is a spiritual grace, while uniformity is the result of pressure from without. The oneness of believers in Christ is already a spiritual reality. It is, therefore, the responsibility of believers to guard, protect, and preserve that unity. Paul's ethical instruction in the second half of Ephesians centres largely on the metaphor "*walk*."¹² From 4:1 to at least 5:21 the ethical teaching is structured around this verb:

- 4:1 "*walk* worthy of the calling with which you have been called"
- 4:17 "*walk* no longer as the Gentiles *walk*."
- 5:2 "*walk* in love"
- 5:8 "*walk* as children of light"
- 5:15 "Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise, but as wise"

As Warren Wiersbe puts it, Paul in the last three chapters admonishes his readers to "*walk*" in *unity* (4:1-16), *purity* (4:17-

¹² *Ibid.*

5:17), *harmony* (5:18-6-9), and *victory* (6:10-24).¹³ He says these four “walks” perfectly parallel the basic doctrines Paul has taught his readers in the first three chapters. Wiersbe notices the following parallels in Ephesians:¹⁴ “*Our Riches in Christ*” in the first part of the epistle are paralleled with “*Our walk with Christ*” in the second part. In chapter 1, Paul says we are called by grace to belong to His body; in chapter 4:1-16 he urges his readers to walk worthy of their calling, which emphasizes the unity of the Body. In chapter 2:1-10, he says because you have been raised from the dead; in the last three chapters he exhorts his readers to put off the grave clothes and walk in purity (4:17-5:17). In the first three chapters Paul says you have been reconciled to God (2:11-22), then he encourages his readers to walk in harmony in chapter 5:18-6:9. Paul says Christ’s victory over Satan is the mystery in chapter 3; he urges his readers in chapter 6:10-24 to walk in victory. Ephesians 4:1-16 is an exhortation to maintain Christian unity. Paul in this segment turns his attention to the implications of being in the body of Christ – the church. He encourages believers to have unity in their commitment to Christ and their use of spiritual gifts. The segment can be divided into two main sections (4:1-6 and 4:7-16). The first section (4:1-6) is an invitation to live a life focused on unity.¹⁵ The discussion in the first section is further broken down into two ideas. According to Snodgrass, Paul in verses 1-3 is encouraging Ephesians to live worthy of their calling by keeping the unity of the Spirit; while in verses 4-6, Paul says unity is motivated by theological oneness.¹⁶ Paul in verses

¹³ Warren Weirsbe, *Ephesians*, 93.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 94.

¹⁵ Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 195.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 195.

4-6 discusses the basis of this oneness by providing the seven unifying realities of the faith.¹⁷

The second section (4:7-16) shift the focus to the relation between diversity and unity in the church. In these verses, Paul stresses that each person has received grace to build Christ's body. These are the means given for achieving unity. According to Charles Talbert, the section is divided into two parts: the first part (4:7-11) talks about the basis of Christian diversity and Christ's diverse gifts; the second part (4:12-16) is about the goal of the diverse gifts, which is unity, maturity, stability and growth of the church.¹⁸ Briefly put, Ephesians 4:1-16 can be broken down into four parts: a) call to maintain unity of the Church (4:1-3); b) the foundations of unity (4:4-6); c) the basis of Christian diversity and Spiritual gifts; and d) the goal of Spiritual gifts.

Call to Maintain Unity of the Church (4:1-3)

These verses consist of a call to maintain the unity that God has given to the church. Because of all that God has done through Christ, Paul exhorts the readers *to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called* (4:1; cf. Phil 1:27; Col 1:10; 1 Thess 2:12).¹⁹ Talbert says, in canonical Paul, "calling" always refers to the call to be a Christian; it is to walk (=live) in a way that is consistent with being a Christian.²⁰ In response to it means to walk *worthily*, Talbert says it is walking *with all humility and meekness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity that the spirit has given through the bonding that consists of*

¹⁷ Charles Talbert, *Ephesians and Colossians*, 108.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 108-9.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 108.

²⁰ *Ibid*.

peace.²¹ By this, Paul in Eph 4:1-3 listed down necessary Christian graces that we must possess if we are going to preserve the unity of the Spirit. Paul considers *humility* as the first necessary Christian grace in preserving unity of the Spirit. Christians remain united with one another by being humble.²² Paul notices that divisions arise in churches because of pride. Humility means putting Christ first, others second, and self last.²³ Therefore, Paul says, in order to maintain unity in the church and with each other, the first thing we need is humility.

The second is *meekness*. *Meekness* is not weakness; it is power under control.²⁴ Weirsbe cites Moses and Jesus Christ as examples of people who were meek.²⁵ He says Moses was a meek man (Numbers 12:3), yet see the tremendous power he exercised. Jesus Christ was “meek and lowly in heart” (Matthew 11:29), yet He drove the money changers from the temple. In the Greek language, this word was used for a soothing medicine, a colt that had been broken, and a soft wind. In each case you have power, but that power is under control.²⁶ Allied with meekness is *long-suffering* – the ability to endure discomfort without fighting back.²⁷ Hale observes that after pride, criticism and slander is the second major cause of division in the church.²⁸ This leads to the mentioning of *forbearance*, a grace that cannot

²¹ Ibid.

²² Thomas Hale, *The Applied New Testament Commentary*, 773.

²³ Warren Weirsbe, *Ephesians*, 95.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid, 95-6.

²⁸ Thomas Hale, *The Applied New Testament Commentary*, 773.

be experienced apart from love.²⁹ Paul tells us here to bear with one another in love, just as Christ bears with us in love. “Love is patient and is kind” (1 Corinthians 13:4).

Thus, to maintain our unity three things are necessary: humility, patience and love.³⁰ Actually, Paul in Ephesians 4:1-3 is describing some of the “fruit of the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22-23); for the “unity of the Spirit” (described Ephesians 4:3) is the result of the believer “walking in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:16).³¹ The next grace that contributes to the unity of the Spirit is *endeavor*. Literally it reads “*make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit*” or “*being eager to maintain, or guard, the unity of the Spirit.*”³² The verb used here is a present participle, which means we must constantly be endeavoring to maintain this unity.³³ It is like the love of newly wedded couple. If the two want to be happy in marriage, they need to work at it because love is hard work. Unity does not happen automatically; to remain united takes work on our part, says Hale.³⁴ He warns us that Satan is always trying to divide the Church. When we think the situation is the best, Satan will move in to wreck it.³⁵ Therefore, as Weirsbe puts it, the spiritual unity of a home, a Sunday School class, or a church is the responsibility of each person involved, and the job never ends.³⁶

²⁹ Warren Weirsbe, *Ephesians*, 95-6.

³⁰ Thomas Hale, *The Applied New Testament Commentary*, 773.

³¹ Warren Weirsbe, *Ephesians*, 95-6.

³² *Ibid*, 96.

³³ *Ibid*.

³⁴ Thomas Hale, *The Applied New Testament Commentary*, 773.

³⁵ Warren Weirsbe, *Ephesians*, 96.

³⁶ *Ibid*.

The final grace is *peace*—“the bond of peace.” To remain united, the church must bind itself in the bond of peace. Weirsbe refers us to James 3:13-4:10 for the most vivid treatment of war and peace in the New Testament. He says the reason for war on the outside is war on the inside.³⁷ If a believer cannot get along with God, he cannot get along with other believers.³⁸ When “the peace of God” rules in our hearts, then we build unity (Colossians 3:15).³⁹ Jesus Christ is our peace (Ephesians 2:14); He binds the Church together. The Church members need to bind themselves together in Christ.

The Foundation of Unity (4:4-6)

In Ephesians 4:4-6, Paul discusses the ground of unity by providing the seven basic spiritual realities that unite all true Christians. Snodgrass claims that Christians must maintain the unity of the Spirit because everything they hold of any significance they hold with other people.⁴⁰ When one reads these verses he or she is struck by Paul’s repetition of the word “one”; in fact it occurs seven times.⁴¹ Snodgrass points out that in each case the oneness expresses both the uniqueness of the item and its foundational value for unity. He says all seven express the reality that there is only one gospel and that to believe that gospel is to enter into the unity it creates.⁴² While not all Christians agree on some minor matters of Christian doctrine, they all do agree on the foundation truths of the faith.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 198.

⁴¹ John Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 150.

⁴² Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 198.

Unity built on anything other than Bible truth is standing on a very shaky foundation.⁴³

Snodgrass takes Ephesians 4:4-6 as a creed that may have been adapted from a pre-Pauline confession, but it is more likely from a creed used in Paul's churches or one that Paul composed originally for this letter.⁴⁴ Stott agrees and adds that the verses were thought by some to be part of a Christian hymn or a creed for catechumens.⁴⁵ The confession has a threefold triadic structure: (1) body, Spirit, hope; (2) Lord, faith, baptism; (3) one God and father of all, who is over all, through all, and in all.⁴⁶ A more careful reading discloses that three of these seven unities allude to the three Persons of the Trinity – [*one Spirit* (4:4); *one Lord* (4:5), i.e., the Lord Jesus); *and one God and Father of us all* (4:6)], while the remaining four allude to our Christian experience in relation to the three Persons of the Trinity. First, there is *one body*. This is the body of Christ in which each believer is a member, placed there at conversion by the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 12:12-31).⁴⁷

Weirsbe claims that the one body is the model for the many local bodies that God has established across the world.⁴⁸ He argues that the fact that a person is a member of the one body does not excuse him from belonging to a local body, for it is there that he exercises his spiritual gifts and helps others to grow. The second word is *one Spirit*. Stott says there is *one body*

⁴³ Warren Weirsbe, *Ephesians*, 97.

⁴⁴ Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 198.

⁴⁵ John Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 150.

⁴⁶ Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 198.

⁴⁷ Warren Weirsbe, *Ephesians*, 97.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

because there is only *one Spirit*.⁴⁹ The same Holy Spirit indwells each believer, so that we belong to each other in the Lord.⁵⁰ As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:13, “By one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and all were made to drink of one Spirit. Thus, it is our common possession of the one Holy Spirit that integrates us into one body.”⁵¹ *One hope of your calling* refers to the return of the Lord to take His church to heaven. The Holy Spirit within is the assurance of this great promise (Ephesians 1:13-14). Paul is suggesting here that the believer who realizes the existence of the one body, who walks in the Spirit, and who looks for the Lord’s return, is going to be a peacemaker and not a troublemaker.⁵²

Stott says there is one hope belonging to our Christian calling (4:4), *one faith* and *one baptism* (4:5) because there is only *one Lord*.⁵³ For the Lord Jesus Christ is the one object of the faith, hope and baptism of all Christian people.⁵⁴ He is the one who died for us, lives for us, and one day will come for us.⁵⁵ It is Jesus Christ in whom we have believed, Jesus Christ into whom we have been baptized, and Jesus Christ for whose coming we wait with expectant hope.⁵⁶ Therefore, as Weirsbe puts it, it is difficult to believe that two believers can claim to obey the same Lord, and yet not be able to walk together in unity.⁵⁷

⁴⁹ John Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 150.

⁵⁰ Warren Weirsbe, *Ephesians*, 97.

⁵¹ John Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 150.

⁵² Warren Weirsbe, *Ephesians*, 97.

⁵³ John Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 150.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Warren Weirsbe, *Ephesians*, 97.

⁵⁶ John Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 150.

⁵⁷ Warren Weirsbe, *Ephesians*, 97.

He spoke of someone who asked Ghandi, the spiritual leader of India, “What is the greatest hindrance to Christianity in India?” He replied, “Christians.” Acknowledging the lordship of Christ is a giant step toward spiritual unity among His people.

Weirsbe observes that there is one settled body of truth deposited by Christ in His church, and this is “the faith.”⁵⁸ Jude calls it “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). The early Christians recognized a body of basic doctrine that they taught, guarded, and committed to others (2 Timothy 2:2).⁵⁹ Christians may differ in some matters of interpretation and church practice; but all true Christians agree on “the faith”—and to depart from “the faith” is to bring about disunity within the body of Christ.⁶⁰ Since Paul is here discussing the one body, this “*one baptism*” is probably the baptism of the Spirit, that act of the Spirit when He places the believing sinner into the body of Christ at conversion (1 Corinthians 12:13).⁶¹ Weirsbe argues that this is not an experience after conversion, nor is it an experience the believer should pray for or seek after.⁶² He says we are commanded to be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18), but we are never commanded to be baptized with the Spirit, for we have already been baptized by the Spirit at conversion. As far as the one body is concerned, Weirsbe claims, there is one baptism—the baptism of the Spirit. Then he concludes that as far as local bodies of believers are

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*

concerned, there are two baptisms: the baptism of the Spirit, and water baptism.

The seventh basic spiritual reality that unite all true Christians is *One God and Father*. There is one Christian family embracing us all because there is *one God and Father ... who is above all and through all and in all*.⁶³ The marvelous oneness of believers in the family of God is evident here. Surely the Jewish *Shema* – the confession that Yahweh is one (Deuteronomy 6:4) lies behind Ephesians 4:6. Weirsbe says we are children in the same family, loving and serving the same Father, so we ought to be able to walk together in unity.⁶⁴ He goes on to say that just as in an earthly family, the various members have to give and take in order to keep a loving unity in the home, so God’s heavenly family must do the same. Paul is quite concerned that Christians should not break the unity of the Spirit by agreeing with false doctrine (Romans 16:17-20), and the Apostle John echoes this warning (2 John 6-11).

The Basis of Christian Diversity and Spiritual Gifts (4:7-11)

Paul moves now from what all Christians have in common to how Christians differ from each other (in Ephesians 4:7-11). He is discussing variety and individuality within the unity of the Spirit.⁶⁵ God has given each believer at least one spiritual gift (1 Corinthians 12:1-12), and this gift is to be used for the unifying and edifying (building up) of the body of Christ. Weirsbe notices a distinction between “spiritual gifts” and

⁶³ John Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 150.

⁶⁴ Warren Weirsbe, *Ephesians*, 98.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 99.

natural abilities.⁶⁶ He says when you were born into this world God gave you certain natural abilities, perhaps in mechanics, art, athletics, or music. In this regard, argues Weirsbe, all men are not created equal, because some are smarter, or stronger, or more talented than others. But in the spiritual realm, each believer has at least one spiritual gift no matter what natural abilities he may or may not possess.⁶⁷ A spiritual gift is a God-given ability to serve God and other Christians in such a way that Christ is glorified and believers are edified.

How does the believer discover and develop his gifts? By fellowshiping with other Christians in the local assembly. Gifts are not toys to play with; they are tools to build with.⁶⁸ And if they are not used in love, they become weapons to fight with, which is what happened in the Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 12-14).⁶⁹ Christians are not to live in isolation, for after all, they are members of the same body.

The Goal of Spiritual Gifts (4:12-16)

In the last section of our immediate context (Ephesians 4:12-16), Paul was looking at the church on two levels. He saw the body of Christ, made up of all true believers, growing gradually until it reaches spiritual maturity – “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”⁷⁰ But he also saw the local body of believers ministering to each other, growing together, and

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 102.

thereby experiencing spiritual unity.⁷¹ As the apostle Paul elaborates what he means by building up the body of Christ, he is also conscious of the fact that it will evidently be a lengthy process, leading (in three pregnant phrases) to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, mature manhood, and the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.⁷²

This is the goal to which the church will one day attain and is presented in two: the first goal is that we – each member of the church – might reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God; the second goal is that we might become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.⁷³ Hale observes that the second goal is the final and greatest goal God has set for every one of His children; this is the end and purpose of our life – to be conformed to the likeness of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29).⁷⁴ According to Talbert, the focus of the passage is on the church's inner growth rather than on its mission to the world, in contrast to Acts 1:8, where the gift of the Spirit is intended to empower mission.⁷⁵ He says verses 13-16 make this focus on inner growth explicit. Growth continues *until we all attain unto (eis) the unity of the faith* (cf. 4:5) *and of the knowledge of the Son of God* (cf. 3:18-19), *unto (eis) a mature person, unto (eis) a measure of the stature of*
the fullness of the Christ (4:13).⁷⁶ Talbert observes that the thrice-

⁷¹ Ibid, 102-3.

⁷² John Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 169.

⁷³ Thomas Hale, *The Applied New Testament Commentary*, 773.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Charles Talbert, *Ephesians and Colossians*, 115.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

repeated preposition (**eis**) indicates that the three phrases are parallel to one another; they are three dimensions of the one goal of attaining spiritual maturity.⁷⁷ This maturity is defined as the Christ's full stature. This suggests that in this life we will never completely attain to the whole measure of Christ's fullness; in this life we are growing, always growing.⁷⁸ In other words, the church's goal is its own maturity in unity which comes from knowing, trusting and growing up into Christ.⁷⁹

Even though on earth we cannot attain to all of Christ's fullness, we must keep moving toward the end.⁸⁰ We must keep on growing more and more *mature*; we must not remain children spiritually (Ephesians 4:14).⁸¹ Weirsbe says that spiritual unity is not something we manufacture.⁸² He says it is something we already have in Christ, and we must protect and maintain it. Truth unites, but lies divide. Love unites, but selfishness divides. Therefore, "speaking the truth in love," let us equip one another and edify one another, that all of us may grow up to be more like Christ. The purpose of this literary analysis has been to unearth the biblical message of Ephesians 4:13a. This chapter is a critical review of the unity of the CCAP using the lens of Ephesians 4:13a. This analysis has helped us understand the meaning of the phrase "Until We All Reach Unity in the Faith" before engaging in dialogue with the question of the unity of the CCAP.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Thomas Hale, *The Applied New Testament Commentary*, 773.

⁷⁹ John Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 169.

⁸⁰ Thomas Hale, *The Applied New Testament Commentary*, 775.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Warren Weirsbe, *Ephesians*, 105.

Since the history of the formation of the CCAP has been discussed extensively earlier in the volume, I will not dwell much on the history. The next section is a brief evaluation of the unity of the CCAP during the past 100 years.

The Unity of the CCAP

It is interesting to note that thoughts of establishing a United Church began only a few years after the Scottish and Dutch Reformed missionaries established their mission work in Malawi. Mapala observes that by the 1890s, David Clement Scott and Robert Laws were discussing the idea of establishing an indigenous church.⁸³ Rhodian Munyenembe agrees, he says when the CCAP was finally formed in 1924 with the union of the two Scottish Presbyterian missions, it was a fulfilment of the dreams of these two men who had the vision of an African church unencumbered by European divisions back home.⁸⁴ John McCracken states that the value of such a union had been stressed by Laws as early as 1893.⁸⁵ Laws had championed the formation of a United Presbyterian Church out of the congregations of the Church of Scotland's Blantyre Mission, the DRC Mission and the Livingstonia Mission.⁸⁶ Expressing his wish, he

⁸³ Cogitator W. Mapala, "A Historical Study of the Border Dispute Between the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (1956-2015)," PhD, University of Kwazulu-Natal, 2016, 168.

⁸⁴ Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity: A History of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian as a Federative Denomination (1924-2018)*, Carlisle: Langham, 2019, 78.

⁸⁵ John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi 1875-1940: The Impact of the Livingstonia Mission in the Northern Province*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2000, 293.

⁸⁶ Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity*, 78.

said, “I do not believe . . . that we should merely be a presbytery of the home church; we should work towards a Central African Presbyterian Church, which would include Blantyre and the Dutch.”⁸⁷

Necessary first steps were the establishment of Presbyteries at Livingstonia in 1899 and at Blantyre in 1903.⁸⁸ In 1895, prior to the establishment of Livingstonia Presbytery, Laws approached the Blantyre missionaries and asked whether they could jointly form an indigenous church, but Hetherwick turned down Laws’ proposal.⁸⁹ Ironically, says Mapala, the CCAP, though not yet formed as a united church, began by forming the Livingstonia Presbytery which planned to form a union with other churches.⁹⁰ He adds that the early missionaries had thought that from the beginning the Presbyterian Church of Central Africa should look forward to federation or union with other Christian communities in the country. The proposal to include other Christian communities into the union raised some problems which perhaps could be part of the reasons why Hetherwick turned down the idea.

McCracken states that problems arose over the theological basis of the church, the number and variety of missions with which it was to be associated, the disciplinary code to be established and the relations of European missionaries to what was always contemplated as an essentially African organization.⁹¹ Another complication at this stage was the fact that, whereas Blantyre

⁸⁷ Ibid, 78.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 79.

⁸⁹ Cogitator Mapala, “A Historical Study of the Border Dispute,” 169.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity*, 293.

Presbytery was a Presbytery of the home Church of Scotland, the Livingstonia Presbytery had a greater level of autonomy as it was not under the home church.⁹² In 1903, Hetherwick revived the proposal for a united church, much to Laws' satisfaction, and in 1904 the first detailed discussion between representatives of the two Presbyteries took place and proposals on union were tentatively formulated.⁹³ In 1910, during the third Missionary Conference at Mvera Mission, Livingstonia and Blantyre Presbyteries, with the DRCM missionaries present as observers, agreed in a formal meeting to have the two Presbyteries united into one Synod of a common church or denomination.⁹⁴

McCracken, Mapala and Munyenembe observe that opinion was divided with regard to the actual name and the nature of the new church to be formed.⁹⁵ Donald Fraser wanted an inclusive indigenous church that was disregarding denominational differences.⁹⁶ He was hoping for the creation of a single, interdenominational body.⁹⁷ Laws, Elmslie and Hetherwick had a similar view of the church as Fraser, but they grappled with the nature of the polity that it should follow; thus, they concluded that the church should be Presbyterian.⁹⁸ Mapala notes that Africans were not at the centre of the negotiations for their church, but they valued the idea of establishing

⁹² Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity*, 79.

⁹³ John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity*, 293.

⁹⁴ Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity*, 79.

⁹⁵ John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity*, 293; Cogitator Mapala, "A Historical Study of the Border Dispute," 169; and Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity*, 79.

⁹⁶ Cogitator Mapala, "A Historical Study of the Border Dispute," 169.

⁹⁷ John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity*, 294.

⁹⁸ Cogitator Mapala, "A Historical Study of the Border Dispute," 169.

a united indigenous church.⁹⁹ Africans were for an indigenous church that was free of denominationalism because denominational differences were compounded by missionary paternalistic tendencies, which became problematic in defining the nature of an indigenous church.¹⁰⁰ Thus, missionaries failed to establish an indigenous church “instead they established denominational affiliation.”¹⁰¹

McCracken points out that by 1914, two major decisions had already been taken. The first had to do with the name of the new church. Many suggestions were brought on the table but were dropped for different reasons. Fraser suggested that the name of this church should be “The Church of Central Africa.”¹⁰² This was rejected since it did not express the Presbyterian character of the Church.¹⁰³ Hetherwick opposed the name because he wanted the word “Presbyterian” added at the end.¹⁰⁴ A joint committee in Scotland recommended “The Presbyterian Church in Africa,” which was regarded as stressing the non-African and Presbyterian element too much.¹⁰⁵ Thus, the name agreed upon – “The Church of Central Africa Presbyterian” – was a compromise choice, which reflected the compromise in aims of the parties involved.¹⁰⁶ McCracken observes that

⁹⁹ Ibid, 174.

¹⁰⁰ Christoff Martin Pauw, *Mission and Church in Malawi: The Study of the Nkhoma Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian 1889-1962*, ThD, University of Stellenbosch, 1980.

¹⁰¹ Cogitator Mapala, “A Historical Study of the Border Dispute,” 175.

¹⁰² Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity*, 79.

¹⁰³ John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity*, 294.

¹⁰⁴ Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity*, 79.

¹⁰⁵ John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity*, 294.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

the inclusion of “Presbyterian” was for exclusionary purposes.¹⁰⁷ He says it was intended to disallow non-Presbyterians from entering into the union, especially the London Missionary Society (LMS) and the Moravians.

The second major decision taken had to do with internal unity of the church and it was Laws’ argument that came out on top.¹⁰⁸ Despite Hetherwick’s theoretical allegiance to the concept of “ONE Church in Central Africa,” his white parishioners forced him to accept the establishment of separate European and African congregations, each with their own Kirk Session, at Blantyre and Zomba.¹⁰⁹ Likewise it was agreed that European missionaries would not come under the discipline of the new African church now coming into being. Although the decision freed Africans from domination by Western modes of thought, worship and organization; on the other hand, such a division encouraged racial and political discrimination into Church life.¹¹⁰ Racial and politically unfair treatment was observed in: Scottish missionaries not taking meals together with Africans at the biennial meetings of the Presbytery; lay missionaries assuming that wherever a white man is on a station he ranks in all authority over the native, and bitterly complaining when they were told that African pastors were their superiors in matters relating to church; separate seating areas for Europeans were provided in the church at some mission stations; in the interest of hygiene, white people would drink first from the

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Communion Cup; and some missionaries had a strong colour bar as regards Africans.¹¹¹

Coming back to the issue of establishing the CCAP, McCracken states that by 1914, all obstacles had been overcome and the decision to enter into union was officially sanctioned by the General Assemblies of the Churches in Scotland.¹¹² He then cites the intervention of World War I as one factor that prevented the Synod from being formally established. Further, he suggests that subsequent delays resulted from the lack of transport facilities down the lake due to the war and from the attempt to bring the Dutch Reformed Church into the union before the transfer of the Kasungu district took place. Whereas these could be reasons behind the delay in forming the United Church, it needs to be pointed out as stated above that Scottish Missionaries had differing views on how they understood the union.¹¹³ Their insistence on Presbyterian polity was inconsistent with their effort to have a united and inclusive church.¹¹⁴ Despite these setbacks, the CCAP was officially formed as a united Church at Livingstonia Mission headquarters on 17 September 1924.¹¹⁵ Laws, as the force behind its formation, was elected as Moderator of the newly formed CCAP Synod. The Nkhoma Presbytery of the DRCM joined the CCAP in 1926 at the second meeting of the Synod.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, 295.

¹¹² *Ibid*, 293.

¹¹³ Cogitator Mapala, "A Historical Study of the Border Dispute," 169.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, 174.

An Evaluation of the CCAP Unity

John McCracken observes that decisions taken on the character of the union influenced the subsequent nature of the CCAP.¹¹⁶ He refers to the fact that Scottish missionaries both at Blantyre and Livingstonia expressed a variety of different opinions from the 1890s on the character of the African church and the role of Europeans within it. The debates surrounding the name and the nature of the church did not come from a vacuum; they originated from the historical and theological backgrounds of the missionaries. These negotiations started seriously at Blantyre in 1904 and the union was only achieved in 1924. It took twenty years for the CCAP to come into being. Keen observers of these debates will notice that missionaries were pushing for ideologies their missions upheld to be brought into the union. For instance, Nkhoma Presbytery of the DRCM had issues with the union and so delayed for two years before joining. They had to smooth over these issues first before joining the union. Munyenembe has carefully expounded the following three reasons for the delay: First, it was the reluctance of the DRCM to accept the wording of the first article of the statement of faith for the united church. Though this could not be changed, the DRCM was given leeway to interpret the statement according to its own taste, which was more of a compromise.

Second, there was the issue of the influence of the DRC on the union. There was a proposal that the DRC should reserve the right to pull Nkhoma out of the union if it deemed it necessary to do so in certain circumstances. This proposal could not be accepted by the Scottish missionaries who wanted all the presbyteries to have the full rights of continuing or withdrawing

¹¹⁶ John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity*, 293.

from the union without undue pressure from the mother churches.

The last issue was the fear of Scottish liberalism on the part of the DRCM, whose theological position was conservative (in the evangelical sense of the word). The DRCM needed some kind of assurance from their Scottish colleagues that the Church of Central Africa would not be influenced by the so-called modernistic teaching of the Christian faith which, according to them, did not comply with orthodoxy.¹¹⁷ He says once these issues had been ironed out, the way was open for the Nkhoma Presbytery to be received into the union, and this was officially done in 1926. McCracken points out that no further Synod meetings were held until 1933 and by that time the major characteristics of the church were already established.¹¹⁸

One significant characteristic, which has persisted until now, was that each Presbytery retained its own constitution and took many decisions without reference to the General Synod.¹¹⁹ This in essence meant that the CCAP had more the character of a council or consultative body than an organic single denomination.¹²⁰ Martin Pauw adds that although now united in one Church, the three Presbyteries still retained a large degree of independence and autonomy. He says the Presbyteries were responsible in such matters as the training, licensing, ordination and appointments of ministers as well as oversight and discipline over them, while the function of the Synod only included

¹¹⁷ Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity*, 80.

¹¹⁸ John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity*, 293.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, 293.

¹²⁰ Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity*, 81.

matters pertaining to the general welfare of the Church.¹²¹ With no legislative and enforcement powers, argues Munyenembe, the Synod could not impose any change upon the Presbyteries.¹²² So, he concludes that what was achieved was a loose federation of three distinct denominations and a safeguard for any further development of these former missions into an organically unified denomination. According to Munyenembe, the union had no powers of its own to decide the direction it would go without the blessings of the Presbyteries which remained independent of one another. Regrettably, this trait has continued in the CCAP to the effect that the CCAP General Assembly is unable to use its powers to control Synods.

Another characteristic was that European ministers occupied a dual role in which they were recognized as full members of Presbytery but were not subject to its jurisdiction.¹²³ This meant that the Presbyteries in the union were now free to discuss issues pertaining to the African church independently, though the mother churches of the missions retained some control over their missionaries.¹²⁴ European members of the Presbytery were subjected only to the jurisdiction of their church in Scotland.¹²⁵ As pointed out earlier, this led to discrimination in the Church between the white missionaries and African ministers.

¹²¹ Christoff Martin Pauw, *Mission and Church in Malawi*, 278.

¹²² Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity*, 81.

¹²³ John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity*, 293.

¹²⁴ Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity*, 81.

¹²⁵ John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity*, 294.

We notice with interest that all parties involved in the union were concerned with the unity of the Church. At first, they wanted to form one interdenominational church that could embrace all Christian communities in Malawi and neighbouring countries. As pointed out earlier, the Church of Central Africa was open to other missions that were willing to join the union. During the early days Robert Laws hoped that the London Missionary Society in Zambia and the German missions in Tanganyika would join, but later historical events took things in a different direction.¹²⁶ Munyenembe says that even the DRCM which had mission work in Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia intended to amalgamate its Presbyteries of Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique into a Synod before joining the CCAP.¹²⁷ He goes on to say that the end of DRCM's mission work in Mozambique in 1922 and the handing over of Livingstonia's Kasungu station to the DRCM were factors, which swung the pendulum in favour of the Nkhoma section of the DRCM joining the CCAP.

Therefore, in summary, looking at the whole missionary enterprise, we notice that our ancestors wrestled with the question of the unity of the church. Working together in unity was at the centre of their missionary enterprise and they had envisioned one church. Unfortunately, the same missions were betrayed by their own self-interests and differences. In the end, as Munyenembe puts it, they formulated a loose federation of three distinct denominations. Some of the challenges the CCAP General Assembly is facing today emanate from this beginning. While unity was achieved in 1924, the structure of the CCAP also had divisions built into it.

¹²⁶ Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity*, 80.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

Ephesians 4:13a in Dialogue with CCAP Unity: Mapping Out the Future

This final section of this chapter seeks to bring the biblical text (Ephesians 4:13a) and the context (the unity of the CCAP) into dialogue. The dialogue also maps out the way forward on the future of the CCAP. The phrase “Until We All Reach Unity in the Faith” is discussed in connection with the unity of the CCAP. We notice that the phrase “Until We All Reach Unity in the Faith” is pregnant with pertinent questions that need to be considered as we reflect on the CCAP’s 100 years. The phrase is heavy and loaded to the effect that each part of “Until We All Reach Unity in the Faith” connotes a particular concern pertaining to the unity of the CCAP. We shall now discuss each word in detail.

First, we have the word “**Until**,” which carries eschatological overtones. Markus Barth states that Ephesians 4:13 speaks of a movement in which all saints participate.¹²⁸ He says believers are depicted as people moving on a road toward a certain goal, which is highly desirable.¹²⁹ The word “Until” therefore indicates that the process described in 4:12 must continue until a certain end is achieved – when all believers *come to* (arrive at, attain) unity.¹³⁰ The Greek text is phrased so as to leave no doubt: one day the goal will be reached.¹³¹ As yet the church lacks fulfillment: she is dependent on that to which is to come. Thus, the question “Is there an eschatological sense to unity that is not attainable within this current dispensation?” is critical

¹²⁸ Markus Barth, *Ephesians 4-6*, 485.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 209.

¹³¹ Markus Barth, *Ephesians 4-6*, 485.

for the CCAP today. An evaluation of the unity of the CCAP has revealed that the search for unity has been a desirable thing from the beginning. The missionaries had wished to establish a fully united church; regrettably, they never achieved this goal. Instead, what was achieved was a loose federation of three distinct denominations. The desire to have a united church remains eschatological.

This has remained so because the CCAP has never valued unity. Rather than making every effort to maintain unity (Ephesians 4:3), we have forfeited it at the expense of our differences. We value our differences more than unity. Snodgrass observes that Christians have been more fearful of some ecumenical world structure than of fragmenting the body of Christ.¹³² He then asked a question: How can unity be established? He responds, “It does not need to be established, for it already exists, given by God. It needs to be valued and maintained.”¹³³ Christ is the unity of the Church, for the church only exists in Him.¹³⁴ Barth says while unity of the Spirit must be maintained (4:3), *unity in our faith* must be attained.¹³⁵ He claims that the “unity of faith” means a unity of belief in Christ Himself, and this belief relates intrinsically to our knowledge of Him. The goal includes making a united effort to live out and proclaim this faith in the context of a 100 years of CCAP and beyond.

¹³² Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 210.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ Markus Barth, *Ephesians 4-6*, 487.

The **second** word in the phrase is “**We**.” Perhaps the right questions here could be: Does “We” mean all Christians? Why do we prioritize denominational unity when the passage might mean something more ecumenical? Or, perhaps it is local? Or cosmic? The word “We” is the focus in this verse, and it refers to every believer as part of the entire body. It may also refer to different Christian denominations belonging to the body of Christ. As the body is made up of different parts with different roles, so this is not to deny the validity and value of differences among communities, nor should theological and cultural distinctions be ignored.¹³⁶ Our evaluation of the CCAP unity established theological and cultural differences that delayed the process of forming the CCAP. Here, it needs to be pointed out that our concern is not for some organizational unity; rather, the concern is unity in Christ, which carries with it an assumption of the biblical message about Christ as crucified and risen Lord.¹³⁷ Christians do not need to agree on everything to have unity, we need to live the unity of a common commitment to Christ.

The **third** word is “**Reach**.” There is some sense in which we are moving towards something. Is the value in the effort? The word “endeavoring” in verse 3 points to our part in the process of maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (cf. 1 Thessalonians 2:17; 2 Timothy 2:15; 2 Peter 1:10, 15; 3:14).¹³⁸ Barth observes that believers cannot experience unity without the presence of the Holy Spirit, and neither can they maintain unity without allowing the Spirit to work in their

¹³⁶ Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 210.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*.

¹³⁸ Markus Barth, *Ephesians 4-6*, 462.

lives.¹³⁹ He says the Greek word translated endeavouring or “make every effort” is *spoudazontes* and has no sense of the possibility of failure (“just try, even though you might fail”). The word conveys the idea of working toward something difficult with a determination to make it happen.¹⁴⁰ Here, we notice that maintaining unity of the Spirit among believers takes hard work and continual diligence.

The Church and believers face many attempts to tear apart their unity. False teachers would arise, even from within their ranks, attempting to divide the people; persecution would attempt to frighten the church and send it scattering. The believers in each of the churches in and around Ephesus would need to work diligently to maintain their unity. The CCAP today need the same quality of diligence in maintaining *the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*. The CCAP has gone through a lot. Here, we particularly mention the border wrangle that led the two Synods of Livingstonia and Nkhoma to declare no boundary between them, putting the CCAP unity at stake. We note with interest that the two Synods have invested a lot in each other’s territory. The only positive thing we have noted is that the CCAP family is getting used to this state of affairs and the animosity we used to see is dying out. Maybe it is high time we need to accept the status quo and move on in making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the CCAP.

Part of reaching the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace could be demolishing the Synods and remaining with Presbyteries that are answerable to the General Assembly. Maybe this could be a way of solving these problems. I am saying “maybe”

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

because this involves many considerations. One of the matters to be addressed is to think of what we are going to do with the current structures. On the border wrangle, it seems the issue has been resolved. The stand taken by the two Synods suggests that it is the way forward. We do not see the two Synods turning back. We need to learn to live with the current situation.

The **fourth** word is “**Unity**.” What does it mean to be unified? Is it some kind of mystical unity? Or is it concerned with practical matters? Paul is aware that there are an infinite number of issues that divide us – doctrinal beliefs, worship style, race, language – and only one force that will keep us together: “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”¹⁴¹ As mentioned earlier, unity can come only through the Spirit. God’s Spirit has united believers by drawing them to the Father through faith in the Son and indwelling them as a new temple (Ephesians 2;18,21-22).¹⁴² Unity will remain only if we are diligent to maintain it. Unity is like a fire—it tends to die out if unattended.¹⁴³ We have a clear command from Scripture: Work diligently to preserve unity.

The **last** word to be considered is “**Faith**.” What does it mean that we reach unity in faith? That faith is not full yet? What is it? Wherever people believe in Jesus Christ alone and trust in His death and resurrection for their salvation, they are joined with all other believers because of this *one faith*.¹⁴⁴ This faith alone saves; this faith is the one and only “way” (John 14:6).¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 202.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ Markus Barth, *Ephesians 4-6*, 462.

¹⁴⁴ John Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 169.

¹⁴⁵ Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 202.

This one faith binds all believers together.¹⁴⁶ The act of believing is manifested through the act of baptism, the symbol of being brought into the body.¹⁴⁷ This expression of faith through baptism brings unity to believers. Christians may differ in some matters of interpretation and church practice; but all true Christians agree on “the faith”—and to depart from “the faith” is to bring about disunity within the body of Christ.¹⁴⁸

Conclusion

God has given His church an enormous responsibility—to make disciples in every nation (Matthew 28:18-20). This involves preaching, teaching, healing, nurturing, giving, administering, building, and many other tasks. Fulfilling this command solo would be impossible. But God calls us as members of his body. No one should be a bystander, an observer. Everyone must do *the work of ministry*. Some of us can do one task; some can do another. Together we can obey God more fully than any of us could alone. We tend to overestimate what we can do by ourselves and underestimate what we can do as a group. But as the body of Christ, we can accomplish more together than we could dream possible working by ourselves. Working together, the church can express the fullness of Christ.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ John Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 169.

13. CCAP Theology of Praxis

Timothy P.K. Nyasulu

The basic and fundamental principles of the church government and discipline are that the several congregations of believers taken collectively constitute one church: that a larger part of the church or representative group of the church should govern or determine matters of controversy which arise therein: that in like manner a representation of the whole should govern and determine in regard to every part and to all parts united. That is a majority shall govern and always in agreement with the word of God: and consequently that appeals may be carried from lower governing bodies till they be finally decided by the collective wisdom and united voice of the whole church through the representatives. For these principles and this procedure, the example of the Apostles is considered as authority.¹

A Christian church denomination is identified by the distinct religious characteristics that are shared by all its congregations, such as its name, church governance and discipline, history, organization, leadership, doctrine, worship style, moral discipline and sometimes even the founder. This is clearly seen in the above preamble of the Constitution of Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP), which indicates that the CCAP is one Church and one denomination, distinguished by its name.² This means that the individual Synods are but constituent parts of the one CCAP, under its General Assembly. If currently Synods operate in isolation and in autonomy, they are failing to abide by the CCAP Constitution. Members of a denomination are supposed to follow and practice its overarching theology in

¹ The Constitution of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP), Lilongwe, 2002, 16.

² See D.G. Tinder, "Denominationalism", in Walter Elwell (ed), *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001, 335.

terms of creed, confession of faith, preaching, sacraments, liturgy, and canons just to mention but a few. Even its moral church discipline too is an important mark of the church, besides Word and Sacraments, and must be practiced within the stipulated biblical doctrinal mandate.³

The CCAP is one of the oldest and largest Reformed denominations in southern Africa, so its theological direction is a matter that calls for scholarly attention. The big question with which we begin is does the CCAP hold to its Reformed Presbyterian theological traits namely: the Creed, confession of faith, liturgy, and moral discipline inherited from the mother Presbyterian Churches from which it draws its identity. In order to answer this question, I conducted interviews with leaders of the CCAP Synods of Livingstonia, Blantyre and Nkhoma.⁴ The research method was a qualitative one, with guiding questions drawing responses from interviewees, and these being subject to an exercise in interpretation. Informants were mainly leaders who have worked in Synod offices and the General Assembly office.

The research has some limitations. It is mainly focusing its discussion on theological matters in the CCAP. There is already abundant literature on the history of the CCAP, so this chapter does not consider the history except where it has raised

³ See Daniel E. Wray, *Biblical Church Discipline*, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1981, 2.

⁴ I was not able to visit Zambia or Zimbabwe because of limited resources. However, having earlier visited the Synods of Harare and Zambia in my capacity as Moderator of the General Assembly, I am aware of their theological direction. Although the situation might have changed, Zambia, Harare and Mozambique take their theologies from Livingstonia, Nkhoma and Blantyre respectively.

specifically theological issues. Periodization has been employed for purposes of analysis. The chapter will consider first the period from 1924 to 1959 when European missionaries played a major role in shaping the theology of the CCAP. It will then go on to consider the period after Africanization, from 1959 to the present day. This periodization is employed to assess how far there has been continuity of theological trajectories and issues from the time when European missionaries were in charge, to the more recent time when the Church has been fully under African leadership. This will allow for an examination of how the African leadership has been dealing with theological issues since the missionaries handed over all responsibility for the running of the church during the late 1950s and early 1960s.

CCAP Theology before Africanization 1924-1959

The purpose of forming the CCAP was not only to work together in the evangelization of the country and beyond but also to work towards the formation of a truly united Church.⁵ The spirit of wanting to work together in the Livingstonia, Blantyre and DRC Missions started showing well before the CCAP was formed. Indeed, ecumenism had already started when the first Presbyterian missionaries arrived at Cape Maclear. The first Livingstonia party from the Free Church of Scotland included also a representative of the Church of Scotland (Henry Henderson). Though the two Churches were divided in Scotland at that time, they worked together when they came to Malawi. By 1910, when the Federated Board of Missions was formed at Mvera, the Livingstonia and Blantyre missionaries supported by early

⁵ See Kenneth R. Ross and Klaus Fiedler, *A Malawi Church History 1860-2020*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2020, 164-78.

African elders, took steps towards the formation of a united Church.⁶

This was the culmination of a movement that began at Livingstonia in 1900 when different missions came together in conference, including Livingstonia, Blantyre and Nkhoma Missions, as well as the Zambezi Industrial Mission, the Berlin and Moravian Missions from Tanzania, and the London Missionary Society. The purpose of the Conference was to discuss and present theological papers that would help to standardize policy and practice in relation to matters such as baptism,⁷ admission to Holy Communion, methods of evangelism and systems of education.⁸ As young churches emerged from the various Missions, these were some of the theological issues that they had to face. As the European missionaries and African church leaders debated these matters at Livingstonia in 1900, they were pioneers of Christian theology in Malawi.

While it may not be easy to analyze CCAP theology in five different Synods across a period of 35 years, it might still be helpful and important to point out in this study what was being practiced by the clergy and church membership during the time of the European missionaries. It must be noted that the Constitution by which the CCAP came into being in the early 1920s did

⁶ T. Jack Thompson, "The Presbyterians in Malawi," in John Weller and Jane Linden, *Mainstream Christianity to 1980 in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1984, 118.

⁷ On issues of baptism, it discussed whether they could baptize wives of polygamists, or baptize children of polygamists. This continues to be a matter of theological debate until the present day. See Moses Mlenga, *Polygamy in Northern Malawi: a Christian Reassessment*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2016.

⁸ T. Jack Thompson, "Presbyterians in Malawi," 120.

not create a very unified church. It was actually much more like a federation of three existing churches, Livingstonia, Blantyre, and Nkhoma. Although they met together every three or four years to discuss matters of common interest, the day-to-day running of the churches' affairs remained separate and distinct. Each had its own Presbytery which decided matters of church governance and discipline, although consultation was fairly common, especially between Blantyre and Livingstonia. Each Presbytery was free to make its own decisions in its own way.⁹ So, to understand CCAP theology during this time it is important to look at the church structures that were governing and running the affairs of the church and were the custodians of church traditions. These were Kirk Sessions and Presbyteries.¹⁰

The CCAP theology was initially introduced by European missionaries to be followed and practiced by Kirk Sessions at a congregational level and Presbyteries at a district level.¹¹ The expectation was that the locals would continue with the same, which of course they did. However, during the early years, the leadership was to a great extent reserved for European missionaries. This affected strength of church leadership to a certain extent simply because missionaries failed to localize leadership which resulted in Africans doubting if they were really true co-workers with missionaries. Even when the first African ministers had been ordained European missionaries did not give a full recognition of their ministerial status. They clung to power

⁹ Ibid, 122.

¹⁰ The Kirk Sessions formed the Presbyteries where a number of congregations through sessions gathered to discuss church matters.

¹¹ T. Jack Thompson, "The Presbyterians in Malawi," 117-118.

for many years while not being able to cordially work with Africans. They were weak in their belief in succession of leadership because they did not have confidence in the other peoples' ability to lead the church. However, even when African leaders such as Yesaya Zerenji Mwasi or Charles Chidongo Chinula became so frustrated that they broke away from the CCAP, they tended to maintain their leadership style of dominance.¹²

However, missionaries need to be applauded for their spirit of unity. The three Missions: Livingstonia, Blantyre and Dutch Reformed Church Missions were not only passionate to follow the Presbyterian Church system of government with its Calvinistic background.¹³ They also found a strong indigenous link that would support their evangelism enthusiasm. They shared the same background in terms of national and religious history. This context made it easier for the trio to think of amalgamating their Presbyteries to form one denomination.¹⁴ It is well-known that the Livingstonia and Blantyre Missions originated in Scotland but less recognized that the Dutch Reformed Church Mission also traced significant roots back to Scotland, particularly through the Murray family which was extraordinarily influential in shaping the DRC Mission in Malawi.¹⁵

¹² See e.g. Yesaya Zerenji Mwasi, *Essential and Paramount Reasons for Working Independently*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1998, original manuscript 1933.

¹³ T. Jack Thompson, "The Presbyterians in Malawi," 119.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 121.

¹⁵ See Janet Wagner Parsons, "Scots and Afrikaners in Central Africa: Andrew Charles Murray and the Dutch Reformed Mission in Malawi," *The Society of Malawi Journal*, 51/1 (1998), 21-40.

Their common Scottish background, and particularly their shared experience of revival movements in nineteenth century Scotland, gave the three sets of Presbyterian missionaries a decided affinity. The question is whether this unity was upheld and continued after Africans had taken over the leadership positions. Were the reasons for amalgamation during the missionaries' time relevant enough to be continued after they had left? This question is properly answered by observing what is done in Synods today.

Another early theological achievement of the missionaries was the translation of the Bible into the local languages. True and correct theology of the church starts with the Word of God and the biblical text must be understood in the local language. Credit must be given to European missionaries who, assisted by Africans, decided to translate the Bible into a local language, Chinyanja.¹⁶ Missionaries believed and taught that reading the Word of God frequently is important for spiritual transformation and growth; above all when you read the Word of God in a language that you understand well, it can speak to you in a deeper way. Kenneth Ross has referred to this as “language of the heart.” He explains that it was a “requirement for the missionaries to learn the local vernacular languages of chiNyanja, chiTumbuka, chiYao, chiTonga, chiNkhonde, and others” so that the Word of God could touch the hearts of people.¹⁷ Reading the Bible in one’s language also helps in finding verses

¹⁶ Africans who assisted in the Chinyanja translation included Ishmael Mwale from Mlanda, Wilibes Chikuse from Mvera and Jonathan Sande from Blantyre. See Kenneth R. Ross and Klaus Fiedler, *A Malawi Church History*, 197.

¹⁷ Kenneth R. Ross, *Malawi and Scotland: Together in the Talking Place since 1859*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2013, 115.

for teaching Sunday school and other Christian education classes such as catechumen.¹⁸

The Mangochi meeting in May 1900 was a milestone. It was at this meeting that it was officially decided to have a Translation Board with Alexander Hetherwick as the chair.¹⁹ The first translation was into Chinyanja. The work was spearheaded by Hetherwick and William Murray of the Dutch Reformed Church Mission, who was eventually set aside from other responsibilities to concentrate entirely on the task of Bible translation.²⁰ As well as sharing the heavy work of translation, the two leaders understood the strategic value of having a common Bible to serve all the Chinyanja-speaking people. Their first task was to find common words in the local language for key theological terms. The decisions they took were determinative for the future of theological discussion in Malawi. For example, they adopted the word *Mulungu* for God, *Mzimu Woyera* for Holy Spirit, *mpingo* for Church, *ubatizo* for Baptism, and *Mgonero* for Lord's Supper or Holy Communion. By 1904, the translation of St Matthew's Gospel was complete. In 1922 the whole Bible appeared for the first time.²¹

¹⁸ In 2005 I participated in a project spearheaded by Dr Steven Paas in Zomba of translating the Heidelberg Catechism into Tumbuka because most people in rural areas in Livingstonia Synod could not understand English. The same project was done in Blantyre Synod where it was being translated into Chichewa.

¹⁹ Kenneth R. Ross, *Mission, Race and Colonialism in Malawi: Alexander Hetherwick of Blantyre*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press and Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2023, 104-05.

²⁰ See M.W. Retief, *William Murray of Nyasaland*, Lovedale: Lovedale Press, 1958.

²¹ Kenneth R. Ross, *Mission, Race and Colonialism in Malawi*, 109. When the CCAP was formed in 1924, there was already a full Bible in use.

In terms of church governance and discipline, in the early 1900s when Livingstonia and Blantyre Missions were preparing to work together as one Synod, there was a proposal that the Creed, Constitution and Canons should be based on those of the Presbyterian Church in India.²² This was an attractive idea since the groundwork had already been done by Presbyterian churches uniting in another part of the “mission field.” In the end, however, the CCAP worked out its own constitutional basis in a process that began at the Mvera Missionary Conference of 1910 and concluded with the approval of the proposed constitution by both General Assemblies in Scotland in 1914.²³ The First World War caused a long delay but it was the constitution worked out in 1910-14 that provided the basis for the Livingstonia and Blantyre Presbyteries to form the CCAP Synod in 1924.

Some theological concerns were noted as early as 1924. The first was to do with succession of leadership. It took a long time for the European missionaries to hand over powers to African leadership. The other theological problem was to do with church discipline, especially on the suspension period to be applied to church members who were found guilty of such offences as polygamy, adultery and beer drinking.²⁴ In Nkhoma Presbytery such members were suspended for a definite period of one and a half years, while in the Livingstonia Presbytery the suspension was for an indefinite period and could vary from three months to four years.²⁵ They failed to agree as early as 1924 on the time

²² T. Jack Thompson, “The Presbyterians in Malawi,” 118.

²³ Kenneth R. Ross, *Mission, Race and Colonialism in Malawi*, 153-55.

²⁴ For Presbyterians church discipline is an important mark of the true church.

²⁵ T. Jack Thompson, “The Presbyterians in Malawi,” 122.

for which a suspended person would be banned from partaking of the Holy Communion.

Another theological controversy revolved around the opening statement of the Brief Statement of Faith included in the CCAP Constitution: “The Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the supreme rule of faith and conduct.”²⁶ It was on this basis that the Livingstonia and Blantyre Presbyteries were united as they formed the CCAP Synod in 1924. The Dutch Reformed Mission, however, feared that this was not a strong enough statement of biblical authority. They argued that the Bible *is* the Word of God and were uncomfortable with the verb *contains*. The bone of contention between the two teachings was possibly down to differences in interpretation of the terms being used. Nevertheless, the controversy continued to rankle, with the DRCM appealing to texts like 2 Timothy 3:16 to insist that the Bible *is* the Word of God in the sense that every single word is literally spoken by God. Their counterparts at Livingstonia and Blantyre Presbyteries also believed that the Bible is the Word of God but recognized that the biblical books were written by human beings so that they include some human elements. They were also alert to the dynamic that the written Word of God witnesses to the living Word of God, Jesus Christ. This controversy over the nature of the Word of God has continued to this day among the CCAP Synods.²⁷ Nkhoma Synod tends

²⁶ Church of Scotland Foreign Mission Committee, 3 March 1914, NLS DEP.298/16/3-6.

²⁷ When I interviewed a leader from Nkhoma Synod he insisted that the Synod still sticks to the understanding that the Bible is literally the Word of God while the Blantyre Synod informant argued that there are some human elements in the Bible.

to assume that it is more serious about biblical authority and that the other Synods are vulnerable to doctrinal laxity. However, its literalistic reading of some biblical texts has been criticized for providing ideological support for the oppression of some sectors of society, such as women.²⁸ The controversy that began one hundred years ago is still affecting the CCAP today.

The European missionaries were not very good at following the theology of equality and oneness among church members. Their mentality was heavily influenced by euro-centrism, racism and colonialism so they flouted church procedure especially with their failure to recognize equality between whites and blacks in regard to church leadership.²⁹ It became apparent that there was a huge difference in status between European church leaders and local church leaders. People like Yesaya Zerenji Mwasi and Yesaya Chibambo reacted against such arrangements which were evident in the way that probationer ministers were treated.³⁰ Yesaya Chibambo, who was at that time a teacher and later one of the ministers, wrote a long letter to the Mission Council in 1921 complaining about the way in which African members were treated. Among other things he complained about whites not regarding black people as co-workers with the missionary. Their reporting system was corrupted because no native was allowed to report on his own

²⁸ See Isabel Apawo Phiri, *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy: Religious Experience of Chewa Women in Central Malawi*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1997; Phoebe Chifungo, *Let My People Go! A Biblical and Cultural Study of Women in the Church in Central Malawi*, Mzuzu: Luviri Press, 2023.

²⁹ See Kenneth R. Ross (ed), *Christianity in Malawi: A Source Book*, revised and expanded edition, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2020, 215.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 200-225.

work.

The report was only taken to the Mission Council through a missionary.³¹

Despite his protest, the segregation of blacks from whites continued in the following years. During the Second World War when Rev David Sibande was serving as a chaplain, “He complained that although Presbyterianism regarded all ministers as equal, he was treated as an inferior by some of the European chaplains.”³² The native and European were never in the habit of sitting together to harmonize their thoughts. The European missionaries were despotic: they were treating natives like their servants. Zerenji Mwasu complained about this behaviour: “In truth both Foreign mission and Home mission are one and the same. An Apostle whether he was native of Capernaum which is styled Christ own city or a native of Cana ... they were apostles all the same entrusted with the message from God to the perishing Gentile world.”³³ When they were looking at his case, Zerenji Mwasu observed that the Presbytery’s decision against him was *unconstitutional and unjust*. They had not followed proper procedures and he questioned the missionaries’ excessive authority in the affairs of the church.³⁴ It was this excessive authority that later delayed the transfer of powers to the native leadership. So far as the theology of equality and oneness in the life of the church is concerned, issues of Euro-centrism and racism have largely been consigned to the past but, more recently, issues of ethnic

³¹ Ibid, 200-205.

³² T. Jack Thompson, “The Presbyterians in Malawi,” 125.

³³ Yesaya Zerenji Mwasu, cit. Kenneth R. Ross, *Christianity in Malawi*, 219.

³⁴ Ibid, 222-25.

identity and their place in the life of the church have become a focus of concern.

In summary, seven theological issues during missionaries' leadership have been discussed which may need deeper reflection. (1) Succession of leadership was a big issue during the time of the missionaries. The handover from missionary to local leadership was unduly delayed and caused much frustration. Today there continue to be issues around leadership succession. Synods struggle to stick to the prescribed terms for service in leadership. Those in leadership positions are tempted to change the constitution to allow them to continue.³⁵ This raises theological issues to which the Church needs to attend. (2) Contextualization of the gospel: the missionaries realized that their message had to be expressed in culturally appropriate terms, hence their extensive efforts to master local languages. This remains a challenge today as the CCAP serves different ethnic and linguistic communities. (3) The impact of a theology of unity based on enthusiasm for the gospel, which enabled the missionaries to come together in one CCAP even though they came from different backgrounds. (4) The theology of Scripture and the question of how far the Bible should be interpreted in a literalistic way and how far in relation to context. Right and correct interpretation is dependent not only on the understanding of the language, but also on its dynamics and context. (5) Different approaches to the theology of church discipline in terms of duration of suspension when a church member has erred and repented. (6) The theology of equality, which was

³⁵ In 2016-2017 the Synod of Livingstonia was misled by the incumbent General Secretary to change the constitution so that he could stand again for a third term.

much concerned with issues of race during the missionary period but now concentrated on issues of ethnic identity. (7) The issue of constitutionalism, which arose because there were times when the constitution was flouted. This remains a live issue today.

CCAP Theology from 1959 to 2024

The first question we have to ask is: did the indigenous leaders continue with what the European missionaries started? When Rhodian Munyenembe asked Rev Dr Kilion Mgawi this question, he replied that, “the indigenous leaders inherited a church that was not fully united because the expatriate leaders had not fully dealt with the issue of total union of the Synods before handing them over to local leaders.”³⁶ The local leaders were therefore not able to initiate further unification strategies, especially in view of the fact that the mother churches had committed themselves to keep on helping their former missions (now turned daughter churches) with money, personnel and other resources. According to Munyenembe, “This meant that even though the local churches were now independent, their independence was not total because they still had to rely on or expect assistance from their mother churches.”³⁷ This meant some form of dependence on the same missionaries even after they had supposedly handed over.

³⁶ Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity: A History of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian as a Federative Denomination (1924-2018)*, Carlisle: Langham, 2019, 177.

³⁷ Ibid.

If we agree with Mgawi and Munyenyebe, then the elusiveness of unity in the current CCAP is not new. It is a continuation of what started during the time of the missionaries. The dependence on mother churches in Scotland and South Africa also meant that local leaders could still look to mother churches even on theological issues and decisions that were directly affecting them as the owners of the church and of the land. Meanwhile, following the creation of the General Synod in 1956, meetings were taking place every four years. The Synods presented reports on Faith and Order, and Life and Work.³⁸ In the years between Synod meetings, the standing committee met to deal with issues requiring immediate attention and to prepare agenda items for the General Synod. This system worked well until it was disturbed by the border dispute between Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods, which started in the 1960s and became especially intense during the early 2000s.

Another divisive question has been the ordination of women. While both Livingstonia and Blantyre Synods decided to allow for the ordination of women to the ministry of Word and Sacraments during the late 1990s, Nkhoma Synod has declined to do so, though it has started ordaining women to eldership and some women have been elected as session clerks. These differences and disagreements in doctrine and practice illustrate how far the Synods operate autonomously, without any serious regard for the authority of the General Assembly. At times the General Assembly has failed to meet on its four-

³⁸ This was a continuation of the practice of European missionaries who, following the Edinburgh 1910 World Missionary Conference, made a distinction between Faith and Order, which concerned doctrinal matters, and Life and Work, which concerned the practical service of the churches.

year cycle and often the General Assembly office has been starved of funds and resources.

The three Synods developed different liturgies according to their traditions, and each Synod follows its own liturgy, with Harare tending to follow Nkhoma and Zambia following Livingstonia. Over the years, CCAP Synods have each adopted a certain distinctive worship style and approach to discipline. For example, Nkhoma Synod has generally regarded itself to be strict in regard to moral issues. They claim to *osunga chiyero* (keep holiness). Their emphasis on personal conversion to Christ is supposed to be accompanied by holiness. Claiming to be biblical, they have not been comfortable to adopt some of the teachings that allow women to become ministers of Word and Sacrament.

There are also differences in the words used during burial services. While in the Blantyre and Livingstonia Synods the Order of Service includes the words, “May his (or her) soul rest in peace” (*Mzimu wake uwuse mu mtendere*), in the Nkhoma Order of Service, these words are omitted. The reason is that Synods differ in their understanding of the words “May his soul rest in peace.” For Livingstonia and Blantyre, church members can still pray for the deceased because they are believed to belong among the saints who continue to be united with the living church members. In Nkhoma this is not acceptable, because when a person is dead, he cannot do anything to show he is alive, even repentance is not possible after death. This issue calls for theological attention.

When the CCAP Synods were handed over to Malawian leaders, one of their first initiatives was to set up a united theological college, first at Nkhoma in 1962 and later at Zomba in 1977, so that their future ministers could all be trained together.³⁹ One would expect those trained in one school to be of one accord in their understanding and practice of theology. However, this oneness has been undermined by a system of offering Synodical Instruction, where students from each Synod are trained separately in the particular tradition of their different Synods. This has created a culture of separation and mutual suspicion. For example, during my own time as a student at Zomba Theological College, it was very difficult for a Faculty member or student from Nkhoma Synod to receive Holy Communion when the service was presided over by a pastor from Livingstonia, Blantyre or the Anglican Church. They believed that this rendered the elements unclean and they would abstain from participation.

Failing to recognize members and office-bearers from other sister Synods is another divisive issue. The refusal to receive members with disjunction certificates from other sister Synods speaks volumes on whether CCAP church members in all Synods are one. In some cases, an elder from Livingstonia Synod is not recognized as such in the Nkhoma Synod. He will be required to start attending classes all over again if he is to become an elder or deacon. This brings a lot of confusion among church members as regards the oneness of the CCAP. So far, the General Assembly has not proved to be an effective forum where such issues can be addressed and agreement reached.

³⁹ Kenneth R. Ross and Klaus Fiedler, *A Malawi Church History*, 446-47.

The rise of the Charismatic movement in Malawi has posed serious questions to the CCAP in terms of liturgy and spirituality but these have been addressed by each Synod individually, rather than working through the General Assembly to develop a common approach.⁴⁰ Current issues that call for theological attention from the CCAP include the period a person under discipline should stay away from the Holy Communion after suspension. This question has remained controversial in Malawian theological debate since 1924. While some are of the view that readmission should occur soon after repentance, others argue that a specific period has to be applied, even if a person repents of his or her sin.

Another difference concerns tithing, an important doctrine in the Old Testament and extended to the New Testament. The current CCAP Synods understand it differently. The difference is firstly, on whether the tithe should be treated as a command that is mandatory on all church members. If it is taken as a command, where is the role of grace in giving, which might involve being more generous than what is required by the tithe? Also, the use of tithe has been controversial over who should benefit. Should it be given to the church or to the minister in charge of the congregation? Some Synods have agreed that a portion of the tithes should go to the minister thereby making them grow rich at the expense of poor church members. Some church leaders have also drifted away from when to employ tithing. There is some form of indulgences taking place.⁴¹

⁴⁰ See Rhodian G. Munyenembe, *Christianity and Socio-Cultural Issues: the Charismatic Movement and Contextualization in Malawi, Zomba: Kachere and Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2011.*

⁴¹ This term has been suggested by the Very Reverend Dr Felix Chingota of Blantyre Synod.

It has become common that some ministers demand tithes for praying for a client. Also, charges are levied in order to receive baptism or participate in Holy Communion. Is this not a reversion to the practice that the Reformation sought to condemn, with its proclamation of salvation through grace alone by faith alone? A Christian theology on tithing requires serious attention.

True preaching must be Christocentric. If preaching is not centered on Christ, then it has missed the point. Today, however, preacher-centred preaching has become popular in social media and on televisions. This is a kind of hero worship. Some CCAP ministers deliberately preach in a certain style so that they attract a certain kind of following. They put their contact numbers on their Facebook page and count their followers. Such people can claim to have their own God, intoning that “my God says this,” or “my Bible says this.” This has shifted the attention of people from God to individuals. It is the preacher rather than Christ who becomes the focus of attention, often with emphasis on the healing and miraculous powers claimed by the preacher. This shift is often related to an adoption of the prosperity gospel.

The CCAP does not condone the prosperity gospel championed by the Charismatic and Pentecostal churches who believe so much in material benefit. Under this influence, clergy are spending most of their time on business at the expense of preaching the gospel. Some activities in church have raised eyebrows. For example, in times of *kumasula mbusa* (bidding farewell to the minister) and *kulandira mbusa* (induction service), attention has shifted from the Word of God to material possessions.⁴² The clergy these days are mainly concerned about how

⁴² Interviews with some Blantyre Synod ministers.

much will be collected at a welcoming or farewell ceremony. There is high competition in inviting people including politicians to such ceremonies. This new focus on material goods and material wealth calls for serious theological consideration.

The CCAP as a whole needs to strengthen its theology of stewardship.⁴³ Churches prosper financially and also in infrastructure

because of good stewardship. The Bible teaches that Christians need to be good stewards of God's resources. The church is blessed with all resources from above. However, what is questionable these days is how congregations perform their stewardship activities. For example, dates are set for fundraising in a congregation. What happens in most cases is that sections are given how much they should raise towards the budget that has been put in place. In some Synods, fundraising has been extended to admission to baptism and Holy Communion. Church members are expected to pay a certain fee on entry. The more the people you have at baptismal or Holy Communion services, the more the amount of money the Session will have. This is done at a congregational level to support Presbyteries and Synods. On a sad note, in spite of all the efforts to have money, the Synods perpetually fail to support the activities of the General Assembly.

The long-running border dispute between Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods is another issue that needs to be addressed at a theological level. The wrangle has existed for more than 50 years and the issue between them was mainly to do with

⁴³ Interviews with all former and current CCAP General Assembly Leadership. The climax was reached during the panel discussion during the Research Conference on the CCAP Centenary at Zomba CCAP in April 2023.

encroachment for different reasons.⁴⁴ How can the same church be fighting about physical land boundaries? Almost all the church leaders I interviewed expressed concern that this has been one of the most controversial and divisive matters in the CCAP fraternity. The decision to have no boundary between the two Synods was reached with a lot of pain. Now that there is no boundary between the two Synods, there is need to think of pacifying the two Synods. Instead of insisting on having a border as some are still advocating,⁴⁵ the best approach now would be to think of coexistence. This needs to be done on a theological basis.

The issue of tribalism is also daunting. In the CCAP across all the Synods, tribalism has affected the church negatively, both within Synods and between Synods. The Bible teaches that the unity we have in Christ transcends tribal divisions, but the CCAP has often failed to live up to this calling. Some theologians like Winston Kawale argue that all issues of tribal tension are addressed in Acts 15 when James, supported by Paul, was strong in condemning Jews who were forcing Gentiles to be circumcised like the Jews before they could become Christians.⁴⁶ Instead of promoting what the Bible teaches about working together in the service of God, the CCAP Synods have fallen into the sin of tribalism.

⁴⁴ Some of the retired Synod Moderators and General Secretaries from Livingstonia lamented during interviews and they expressed joy that the noise about borders which used to be there is no longer there.

⁴⁵ One former General Secretary from Nkhoma Synod still wants boundaries to be maintained. He thinks that removing boundaries is evil and is done for selfish reasons.

⁴⁶ Interviews with some CCAP Synod of Livingstonia leaders, 15 March 2023.

The Chewa-speaking people would like to be served by and to serve their fellow Chewa-speaking people.⁴⁷ The same applies to the Tumbuka-speaking people want to serve and be served by their fellow Tumbuka-speaking people. This situation urgently calls for theological analysis.

A final issue of concern raised in the interviews is the question of differences among the different Synods in the uniforms worn by the Guilds.⁴⁸ The CCAP Guilds are like wings of a bird that make the church to move and grow.⁴⁹ Since the uniform is a highly visible identity marker, these differences tend to highlight the lack of cohesion and unity in the CCAP. Uniform indicates identity – that a person belongs to a certain group of people with a certain function. CCAP Synods have different colours of uniform i.e. Men's Guild and Women's Guild uniforms are different between Synods.⁵⁰ Strengthening of theological reflection on the unity of the church could find expression in a move to introduce one uniform for each Guild across the whole CCAP. This would give a clear message to the nation about the unity of the CCAP.

⁴⁷ When I worked in Dwangwa Congregation the tension at Majiga Church in Dwangwa was based on the fact that each tribe was following their own people and also because they wanted money from their own people working in the factory.

⁴⁸ This was discussed at length with Rev Dr Winston Kawale, former General Secretary of Nkhoma Synod, who questioned why the CCAP Synods have different uniforms and asked what message does it portray to the world around us?

⁴⁹ They include Men's Guild, Women's Guild, and Youths.

⁵⁰ If a woman from the Nkhoma Synod Chigwirizano puts on her uniform in a Livingstonia Synod Women's Guild Committee meeting, she will be penalized because she is wearing the wrong uniform.

The Way Forward

This study has shown that there was a spirit of working together among the early missionaries,⁵¹ with the hope that this would result in the emergence of one denomination. This has to be appreciated and upheld by the current leadership. When they were coming to do missionary work in Malawi, although they came from different professional and religious backgrounds, they saw unity to be important for their success. When Robert Laws, Alexander Hetherwick and William Murray decided to work together and created the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) it was putting into practice what they already had in mind. Their unity was a force to be reckoned with. It was very helpful in the spreading of the gospel across the country.

However, this chapter has also shown that theological issues were perpetually arising both during and after the time of the European missionaries. It has been noted that CCAP theology started facing challenges as early as the time of the first European missionaries. By tracing some unity and disunity, similarities and differences, one can tell there is a task to be done to bring about unity and consistency. It has become quite clear that diversity outweighs unity in the life of CCAP, which means the greater task is to work towards unity. From a theological point of view, we see that some differences are there because of different theological emphases, especially due to the traditions of the mother churches that gave birth to Synods, although the three early missionaries might not have seen this.

⁵¹ Working together did not only look at the amalgamation. It also looked at contextualization of the gospel by translating it into local language.

It is encouraging to note that efforts to unite the church have been there throughout the 100 years of the CCAP's existence.

There is need to have a deep and contextualized theology for the current CCAP as the main task. This might include going back to the drawing board, discovering where things went wrong and then looking at how best the current leadership could act to mend the situation. The following are some of the proposals to achieve unity and reformation in the CCAP. Implementation of these ideas might require restructuring of some kind.

Liturgy is one of the physiognomies of a denomination. Each denomination has to have liturgy for its identity. It is something that church members follow during worship that includes reading and exposition of scriptures; prayer; singing of psalms; hymns; choirs; and celebration of sacraments.⁵² One Catholic Sister said, "Liturgy has the power to change us."⁵³ Liturgical order guides the worship service. Liturgy guided by the Word of God as a ritual serves as a mediator or go between, connecting people to God and God to people as worship takes place. It serves beyond human attributes, prejudices and attitudes which may not be according to the purpose of God.⁵⁴ It is also a touchstone for the things they are remembered during worship. It presents Christians not only with God's Word, but also with God's offer to which we are invited to respond. In CCAP Synods, the Order of Worship is used to guide the

⁵² R.G. Rayburn, "Worship in Church", in Walter Elwell (ed), *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 1300-1303.

⁵³ Sister Catherine Vincie, "Liturgy has the Power to Change Us," *Journal of the Catholic Health Association of the United States*, July-August 2009, 1.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 3.

worship service. In Livingstonia and Blantyre, it is based on the Church of Scotland Common Order, while Nkhoma Synod uses on based on the DRC Order of Service. If we want CCAP to be one, an urgent theological task is the creation of a common liturgy.

In CCAP women are in the majority. If women were given equal opportunities in leadership, the church would do more than it is doing now. Reading Phoebe Chifungo's recent work, readers are well informed that although women play a significant role in the church in CCAP, there is big gap between men and women that does not provide a conducive environment for women to operate as they should.⁵⁵ The example of women's situation in central Malawi can apply to cultural and social settings in Malawi and beyond. Even in the Synods that have allowed ordination of women, there is still more to be done to enable women to participate to the full in church life. The number of women entering the ministry is still very low and there is still belittling of what women can do in church because of some cultural beliefs and traditions.⁵⁶ Synods need to come together to theologize about gender issues that affect the church.

One of the reasons for the amalgamation of the CCAP was to put forces together for evangelization and for prophetic roles. In the current status, as a denomination, CCAP is weak and cannot operate effectively. Ecclesiastically, the autonomy of CCAP Synods in their operation disables the CCAP when it

⁵⁵ Phoebe Chifungo, *Let My People Go!*

⁵⁶ Comments and sentiments that came from Anti-Corruption Bureau Director General and other women at the book launch for Phoebe Chifungo's *Let My People Go!* BICC, Lilongwe, 26 May 2023.

comes to speaking with one voice on issues of national interest and importance, whether religious or political. The society does not take CCAP seriously because of its divided voices. Economically, division suffocates the operation of the General Assembly. Synods make decisions and do all things without the approval of the CCAP General Assembly, rendering it a powerless giant. All resources are concentrated in the Synods while there is nothing at the headquarters in Lilongwe Area 18. There is urgent need for a CCAP central office that is much stronger and more effective than the current General Assembly. Such an office would enable the CCAP not only to have one voice but also to put our limited resources together. The current Synod offices and constituencies could become Presbyteries, as it is done in the Church of Scotland where more than 100 ministers can be under one Presbytery.

This scenario would create a centralized theological resource centre where original and innovative theological ideas can be generated, discussed, written, published and printed.⁵⁷ If a longer time is needed to implement this suggestion, restructuring may start with departments. For example, a CCAP Education Department could have a coordinator at CCAP General Assembly level, with the existing Synod education departments becoming part of it. This approach will, in the long run, deal with border issues. Ministers will be trained together. Ministers will be posted by the CCAP General Assembly Office. Resources will be distributed to Presbyteries more equally than before in line with Objective no. 5.2.10 of the CCAP Constitution, which is about strengthening through provision of

⁵⁷ This is how the Roman Catholic Church is doing its theology. It has one place where its theology is discussed, written and even published.

adequate resources.⁵⁸ Before such steps can be taken, there is need to build a strong theological foundation.

⁵⁸ The Constitution of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian General Assembly.

14. CCAP Ministerial Training

Cogitator W.Y. Mapala

Introduction

From the time of the formation of the General Synod in 1956, the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) has considered ministerial training of its students in one place to be an important unifying force for all of its constituent Synods. It was perceived as ideal because it inculcated the spirit of unity and tolerance among indigenous ministerial students who would be leaders of the Church in a multi-ethnic society. The three Malawian Synods of the CCAP occasionally trained their ministerial students separately. Nevertheless, the idea of having one central place for ministerial training has long been perceived as of paramount importance to the unity of the Church.

Nevertheless, the pursuit of this ideal has been characterised by setbacks, which pose a challenge to the unity of the CCAP. This is the reason why this chapter seeks to explore the politics of exclusivity and inclusivity in ministerial training. It argues that the unity of the CCAP remains an unfulfilled dream because of the power of the politics of inclusivity and exclusivity, which have been embedded in the identities and ethnopolitics of both missionaries and Malawians. From the methodological perspective, the chapter is part of my doctoral thesis and that of the oral interviews conducted after the completion of my doctoral studies. It is qualitative and historical.

The CCAP has five Synods, namely Blantyre, Livingstonia, Nkhoma, Harare and Zambia, which were formerly Presbyteries of the CCAP. The Malawian Synods were upgraded to Synods in 1956, Harare Synod in 1965, and the Synod of

Zambia in 1984. The three Malawian Presbyteries were products of the three Presbyterian missions namely Blantyre Mission, Livingstonia Mission and Dutch Reformed Church Mission (DRCM). In the early stage, as far as geography allowed, these missions cooperated in the training of teacher-evangelists in one place, some of whom became church ministers. For example, the first African evangelists of the DRCM were trained at Khondowe until 1901.¹ Based on this background, the three Synods entertained hopes of training ministerial ministers in one place to foster the unity of the indigenous church that was established in 1924.

However, in 1926, when the Nkhoma Presbytery joined the CCAP, the DRCM proposed two fundamental changes, particularly Articles 3 (c) and 7 of the Terms of Union, which were rooted in ethnopolitics of exclusivity born out of the South African politics influenced by the second Anglo-Boer War. Regarding ministerial training, it was agreed that each presbytery should continue training its indigenous clergy as a temporary measure for a transitional period, but it prolonged until the early 1960s. Minute 5 (c) of the 1926 Synod reads, “The training, licensing, ordination and appointment of Native Ministers, the licences of such Ministers to be operative only within the bounds of the Presbytery.” The other one was on language policy. The addendum of Article 7 suggested reads, “As far as possible the rights of the Natives shall be maintained in the Church Courts.” However, this was challenged in favour

¹ Christoff Martin Pauw, *Mission and Church in Malawi: The History of the Nkhoma of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian 1889 – 1962*, Wellington: Christian Literature Fund, 2016, 113.

of English as an official language for church records.² Despite this, language policy has been politicised in CCAP after 1926. It is characterised by the politics of exclusivity and inclusivity.

A Joint Theological College as a Symbol of Church Unity

In line with the process of harmonization for the CCAP operations, in 1956 the Blantyre and Livingstonia Presbyteries proposed to the Synod to have a joint theological college and suggested that Nkhoma or a nearby site be an appropriate place.³ The Synod accepted the idea and referred it to a Synodical Joint Theological College Committee (JTCC) for further discussion. In 1957, the report for the Joint Theological College Committee reads, “The Synod of Livingstonia would reiterate the desirability of a single Theological College for the CCAP. It would be a symbol of the unity of the Church, and a sign of the independence, enterprise, and responsibility of the CCAP.”⁴ This statement was against the practice adopted in 1926 where each presbytery was to train, licence and ordain its ministers instead of that to be the responsibility of the CCAP as a whole. The proposal was based on the perceived social differences between the missionaries.

To avoid this, it was suggested that the church had to be independent of foreign influence by empowering indigenous members through ministerial training so that they could manage their affairs with limited support from white missionaries as

² CCAP Minutes of the Second Synod meeting held at Blantyre, 13-15 October 1926.

³ Min. 36 CCAP Synod meeting, 25-29 April 1956, SLA, Box 26.

⁴ Joint Theological College Committee, January, 1957.

partners.⁵ However, the challenge was that at Nkhoma, the buildings where a theological college could be housed were still in the hands of the DRCM, which was predominantly white and answerable to the Cape Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa. The DRCM, on behalf of the CCAP, asked the DRC to authorise the use of its mission infrastructures. In response, the DRC approved the request and accepted the responsibility for the accommodation and administration of the school.⁶ However, the acceptance came with three recommendations that became a contested site for ethnopolitics. The recommendations were as follows:

- (i) “That the Articles declaratory of the fundamental principles (of section II of the Constitution of the General Synod of the CCAP) be strictly maintained,
- (ii) that the school remain under the auspices of the DRC until the CCAP can assume full responsibility; and
- (iii) that all tutors conform to the existing practices of the local congregation and community.”

When the Nkhoma Synodical Committee received a response, it also added one recommendation based on ethnopolitics. It proposed “that the language medium will be mainly Chinyanja.”⁷ The second recommendation was intended to maintain the 1926 position so that missionaries should continue controlling the training to suit their agenda while the first and third recommendations were based on the mistrust the DRC and its missionaries had toward what might be entailed in the use of English.

⁵ Letter of W.M. Watson to Phil Petty of 18 August 1957, SLA, Box 49.

⁶ Joint Theological College Committee of 17 May 1957, SLA, Box 49.

⁷ Synodical Committee on Joint Theological College, 17 May 1957.

In a conversation he had with William Watson of the Livingstonia Mission, Attie Labuschagne admitted that the DRCM did not trust English missionaries. He said that they did not trust “Blantyre because of loose discipline” and “Livingstonia because of theology and pro-Africanism.”⁸ The mistrust for the Livingstonia missionaries was that they taught their students to be independent thinkers so that they might challenge colonial white supremacy, as observed by Lamba.⁹ Although the DRCM had a theological suspicion of Livingstonia, no one at Livingstonia, or indeed in the CCAP as a whole, was liberal in the theological sense of the word.¹⁰ This mistrust was based on the apartheid policy in South Africa, which was championed by the DRC and its missionaries in mission fields. This prompted the two Presbyteries of Blantyre and Livingstonia to opt for Lilongwe Township as a preferred site for the new united college.

Contesting the Theological College’s Site along Ethnic Lines

Because of mistrust, both Livingstonia and Blantyre Synods sensed that building or starting a school at Nkhoma would make the DRCM impose their *ways of seeing* and their *structures of action* on students of other Synods, as inferred in points (ii) and (iii), as well as resuscitate the old language conflicts of the 1930s.

⁸ William M. Watson to Charles Watt, 1 July 1957.

⁹ Isaac C. Lamba, “The Cape Dutch Reformed Church Mission in Malawi”, 379.

¹⁰ See Cogitator W. Mapala. "A Historical Study of the Border Dispute between the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods of the Church of Central African Presbyterian (1956-2015)," PhD, University of Kwazulu-Natal, 2016.

Even though it still was within the DRC Nkhoma spheres of influence and at the centre of the country, Lilongwe was perceived to be a neutral place. It was a growing urban settlement with a culturally diverse population drawn from all parts of the country. The idea was to establish the college on neutral ground so that it might be away from the DRCM missionaries' dominance and influence.¹¹

However, the Nkhoma Synod maintained that the college should be at the Nkhoma Synod's headquarters. Both Blantyre and Livingstonia Synods argued that it was suitable "to build a new theological college at or near Lilongwe town. It [was] a big and growing township, with easy communication."¹² To justify their argument, Minute eight of the JTCC reads, "Chitumbuka is spoken quite a bit in Lilongwe, which is useful in training students from the North."¹³ This proposal was against the acceptance of the site suggested by the DRC because the Nkhoma headquarters was located in a rural area where the dominant language spoken was Chichewa, which DRC missionaries would use as a basis to advance their agenda. What aggravated the debate was that missionaries from both sides failed to understand that language is acquired. Any person has the potential to learn a new language.

It is against this backdrop, that the chapter argues that missionaries from both sides of the argument exploited the language difference, maintaining this issue as a site where they would continue politicking based on socio-political differences

¹¹ Min. 1 (F) of the Joint Theological College Committee of 1956, SLA, Box 49.

¹² Min. 3, 4, 8 of the Synodical Committee for Joint Theological College, 1957, SLA, Box 49.

¹³ Ibid.

triggered by the South African War. It should be noted that it was missionaries who crafted the Chewa-Tumbuka dichotomy based on their home socio-political differences, by preying on ethnolinguistic differences. The proposal for Chichewa (Chinyanja) as a medium of instruction was a counterhegemonic strategy against English in line with the South African language policy introduced after the second Anglo-Boer War. Richard Elphick rightly points out that the DRC was “home of the long-established Dutch [Afrikaans] speakers and the most effective guardian of the Dutch language and cultural identity.”¹⁴ It was intended to exclude English influence in public space.

English or Chinyanja: The Old Divisive Discourse

While the site for the Joint Theological College was highly debated, the most contested issue was the medium of instruction. To the DRCM missionaries, the possibility of having a theological school at their headquarters presented an opportunity to accomplish the long-awaited goal of introducing Chinyanja to all students in the country. The primary goal of the making of Chinyanja a medium of instruction was to deter the English influence and to inform their adherents that Chinyanja was equally important as English, as they thought of Afrikaans in South Africa. This strategy was also to defuse the growing demand by Malawians living in the DRCM area of influence to have education offered in English as opposed to the policy adopted by the Nkhoma missionaries.

¹⁴ Richard Elphick, *The Equality of Believers: Protestant Missionaries and the Racial Politics of South Africa*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012, 39.

At a meeting on 17 May 1957, the JTCC resolved that “English would be the medium of instruction, supplemented by explanations and discussions in the vernacular of the students. If there were a two-level course, the balance of English and vernacular would vary. Practical training would be largely in the vernacular of the students.”¹⁵ If English was chosen for its neutrality and intelligibility, as argued by some missionaries, why did they bring in vernacular languages as part of the school curriculum? The best explanation is that the resolution reflects the language politics that dominated the period from 1919 to 1947, in which the dominance of one indigenous language was rejected in favour of diversity and it seems some were not happy with this.

According to the missionaries’ correspondence after this meeting, the DRCM missionaries did not agree with the proposal of making English the medium of instruction. Watson, writing to Phil Petty of Livingstonia Synod, remarked, “As I said to Charles Watt, if the DRC have been daft enough to lay it down as something to be formally accepted in writing that we sign on to all the implications of apartheid, then the only possible thing to do is tell them to go alone.”¹⁶ Then he proposed that the Blantyre and Livingstonia Synods should open their theological college, either in Blantyre’s sphere or Livingstonia’s. It appears that he was against the exclusive approach taken by their colleagues at Nkhoma. He went on to say that “one would love to see a genuine Church of Central Africa, which includes all three countries, all races and all Protestant denominations.”¹⁷

¹⁵ Min. 3. Joint Theological College Committee, 17 May 1957, SLA, Box 49.

¹⁶ William H. Watson’s letter to Phil Petty, 18 August 1957, SLA, Box 49.

¹⁷ William H. Watson’s letter to Charles Watt, 3 October 1957, SLA, Box 46.

Reading Watson's views, one is tempted to say that the decision not to allow other denominations to join the CCAP was still haunting some Scottish missionaries, who shared their sentiments with indigenes from the three missions. He proposed to open a theological college in Southern Rhodesia together with the Methodist and London Mission Society. Then he wrote, "That is to say, what about going on towards a wider union, leaving the D.R.C. to sit on their doorstep."¹⁸ Although his proposal was radical, most indigenous Christians would have preferred to have an inclusive church.

In October 1957, there were indications that the two would start their theological college at Livingstonia.¹⁹ In 1958, the Synods of Blantyre and Livingstonia started to train ministerial students at Livingstonia (Khondowe) at a joint theological college with Rev Charles F. Watt as Principal. This College brought ministerial students from diverse cultural backgrounds based on politics of inclusivity. After seeing the importance of training ministerial students in one place from diverse backgrounds, the three CCAP Synods agreed to revert to the first idea of having all ministerial students from all Synods trained in one place. This was how a Joint Theological College at Nkhoma started in 1962 on an experimental basis.²⁰ Critical to this development was the appointment as College Principal of Rev Stephen Kauta Msiska, who was one of the lecturers at Livingstonia Joint Theological College for Blantyre and Livingstonia Synods. Ross and Fiedler suggest that Msiska, "more than anyone else,

¹⁸ William H. Watson's letter to Phil Petty, 18 August 1957, SLA, Box 49.

¹⁹ William H. Watson's letter to Charles Watt, 3 October 1957, SLA, Box 46.

²⁰ Min. 862 of the CCAP Synod of Livingstonia GAC of 27 July 1974, (Synod office, Mzuzu).

reckoned at a theological level with issues entailed in the transition from expatriate-run mission to indigenous Malawian church.”²¹ His appointment was a paradigm shift and a symbol of African empowerment. This was in line with the aspirations of Africanisation, which unified indigenous politicians and churchmen together. Africanisation meant transferring power to indigenes.

Dismissal of Kauta Msiska: A Political Victim of Mistrust in the CCAP

One setback to the unity of the CCAP through ministerial training occurred in 1974 when Rev Kauta Msiska, the College Principal was unceremoniously removed through ethnically and politically oriented violence linked to the Nkhoma Synod. According to Dr Silas Nyirenda, it was alleged that it all started after Msiska advised a Nkhoma Synod ministerial student not to wear a lapel badge portraying the picture of Dr. Banda while preaching.²² Such a lapel badge was a demonstration of loyalty to Dr. Banda and the MCP. His view, which was a prevailing one at that time in the CCAP, was that Msiska advised students that it was not appropriate for a preacher to wear something on their clothing because it would distract the attention of the audience during preaching. This allegation started soon after the Board for the Joint Theological College under the chairmanship of Rev Jonathan Sangaya, the first General Secretary of the Blantyre Synod met President Banda in 1974 to brief him on the possibility of moving the College to Zomba where the

²¹ Kenneth R. Ross and Klaus Fiedler, *A Malawi Church History 1860 – 2020*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2020, 450.

²² Int. Dr S.M. Nyirenda, a lecturer with Msiska at the Joint Theological College at Nkhoma, 18 November 2015.

Department of Religious Studies had just established within the Faculty of Humanities at Chancellor College of the University of Malawi.²³ The idea was for the College to benefit from the newly established department.²⁴ Dr Banda assured them of his support for the initiative. This development did not please the Nkhoma Synod and some politicians from Central Malawi.²⁵

Msiska received a call that he, together with the CCAP leadership from the three Synods, was wanted at MCP headquarters on 4 March 1974. Upon reaching the headquarters, he was surprised that two ministerial students from the CCAP Nkhoma Synod were part of the delegation without his knowledge in his capacity as College Principal. There they met members of the MCP National Executive Committee under the leadership of Albert Muwalo. They had the meeting that started at 8:00 a.m. and ended at 7:00 p.m. Muwalo made death threats to Kauta Msiska during the meeting. When the case was brought before Dr Banda, he dismissed it without giving reasons.²⁶ He dismissed it after Sangaya and Patrick Chaweya Mzembe, the General Secretary of the Synod of Livingstonia, appealed to partner churches in Scotland and the USA to intervene. The threats made by Muwalo were not empty, because the MCP plotted to kidnap and kill Msiska at Mponela in Dowa District.

²³ Kauta Msiska joined the delegation to meet the State President together with the leadership of the three Malawian CCAP Synods, in his capacity as the College Principal.

²⁴ Isabel Apawo Phiri, "Theological Education in Presbyterian Churches in Africa" in Isabel Apawo Phiri and Dietrich Werner (eds), *Handbook of Theological Education in Africa*, Oxford: Regnum, 2013, 350.

²⁵ Kenneth R. Ross (ed), *Christianity in Malawi: A Source Book*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1996, 69.

²⁶ Min. V of the Executive Committee of the Synod of Livingstonia held at Ekwendeni, 18 March 1974, Synod Office, Mzuzu.

He was only saved by one CID officer who tipped him about the plot.²⁷

What is interesting is that the allegation levelled against Kauta Msiska happened in 1972 yet it was used as evidence to justify his dismissal in 1974 soon after the issue of moving the College to Zomba was discussed. This raises a serious question of whether Msiska's dismissal was triggered by the report of the two ministerial students or other factors. Of course, Willy Zeze says that the "Nkhoma [Synod] finally stated that it lost confidence in Rev Msiska, the Principal and proposed the dismissal of Rev Kauta Msiska. He was immediately dismissed,"²⁸ and was sent to an early retirement. However, less convincing is Zeze's claim that "the Moderamen, seeing that this was a most serious and dangerous matter, agreed with the respective general secretaries of the Synods of Blantyre, Livingstonia and General Synod of the CCAP to move the College to Zomba."²⁹ If the Nkhoma Synod leadership were part of the decision to move the College close to Chancellor College in Zomba, why would they recommend the dismissal of a Principal who held the same view as themselves? Why did the dismissal of Msiska create tension between Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synod?³⁰

The best explanation is that Kauta Msiska was targeted because he was one of the advocates for the move of the College to

²⁷ Int. Marion Kauta, daughter of Rev S.K. Msiska, 12 February 2023.

²⁸ Willy S. Zeze, "Christianity: A State-sponsored Religion in Malawi?" 6. www.iclrs.org/content/events/28/751.pdf [14.6.2016].

²⁹ Ibid, 6; Kenneth R. Ross, *Christianity in Malawi*, 69.

³⁰ Ibid, 6.

Zomba.³¹ This explains why in 1974 the two Scottish-oriented Synods – Blantyre and Livingstonia – decided to train ministerial students at a joint theological college without Nkhoma Synod, as they had done before moving to Nkhoma in 1962. The new college was opened on the site of Kapeni Teachers Training College. While the two Synods – Blantyre and Livingstonia – by jointly training ministerial students in one place promoted inclusivity, their actions fulfilled the aspiration of the leaders who formed the CCAP in 1924, which had its roots in Edinburgh 1910 where concern for common witness to Christ promoted a spirit of unity in diversity.³²

Another reason for suspecting there was an ethnic dimension to the treatment of Msiska is that other CCAP ministers took the same stance concerning political symbols. Killion J. Mgawi, commenting on how some Nkhoma Synod ministers opted to be apolitical during the MCP era, says, “Abusa ena monga a Josophat Mwale adakaniratu za ndale. Adakana ngakhale kugula Khadi (card) ya chipani kapena kulowa mchipani chili chonse ngakhale kugula baji ya Kamuzu” (My translation: Some Nkhoma Synod ministers, such as Josophat Mwale, refused to buy a party membership card of the MCP, nor a lapel badge of Kamuzu Banda, or to join any political party).³³

³¹ Int. Silas M. Nyirenda, 18 November 2015, Mzuzu, and Silas Ncozana through email dated 13 January 2015. See also Fergus Macpherson in Steven Kauta Msiska, *Golden Buttons: Christianity and Traditional Religion among the Tumbuka*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1997, 16.

³² Cogitator W. Mapala, "A Critical Reflection and Malawian Perspective on the Commemoration of the Edinburgh 1910 International Missionary Conference," *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, 41/3 (2015), 71-72.

³³ Killion J. Mgawi, *Mbiri ya CCAP Nkhoma Sinodi Kuyamba Mchaka cha 1962 Mpaka 2012*, Nkhoma: Nkhoma Press, 2012, 19.

Similarly, Pauw reported that some Nkhoma “ministers forbade Christians to wear a badge with Dr Banda’s picture on it in the Church.”³⁴ Yet none was arrested or sent to early retirement. Refusing to buy a membership card, during the MCP era (between 1963 and 1993), was unthinkable. Klaus Fiedler has ably illustrated why the Jehovah’s Witnesses were persecuted in Malawi. He said that the Banda regime persecuted them because they refused to constitute power by buying MCP cards.³⁵ The treatment given to Msiska was influenced by the ethnopolitics of the day, which the church has to avoid for the sake of the common witness to Jesus Christ in a society divided along political and ethnic lines.

1983 Abrupt Closure of Zomba Theological College: Ethnopolitics of Exclusion

In 1977, Zomba Theological College (ZTC) was opened as a unifying force within the CCAP family after the abrupt closure of a joint theological college at Nkhoma Synod’s headquarters because of exclusive politics. ZTC was and is still an ecumenical centre for non-Roman Catholic churches in the country and beyond its borders although its ecumenical character suffered when the Anglican Church pulled out.³⁶

³⁴ Christoff Martin Pauw, *Mission and Church in Malawi*, 372.

³⁵ Klaus Fiedler, “Power at the Receiving End: The Jehovah’s Witnesses’ Experience in One Party Malawi,” in Kenneth R. Ross (ed), *God, People and Power in Malawi: Democratisation in Theological Perspective*, Blantyre: CLAIM, 1996, 153-168.

³⁶ Isabel Apawo Phiri, “Theological Education in Presbyterian Churches in Africa”, 350.

As the joint theological college at Nkhoma was closed because of Dr Banda's ethnopolitics,³⁷ Zomba Theological College was also abruptly closed on the same grounds in 1983. Three important political events contributed to the abrupt closure of the College. The first is regarding the arrest of Orton Chirwa and his family who were northerners and Tonga by ethnicity, including other political detainees from southern and northern Malawi. The second is the arrest of four prominent politicians – Aaron Gadama, Minister for the Central Region, Twaibu Sangala, Minister of Health, Dick Matenje, Secretary General of the MCP, and David Chiwanga a Member of Parliament for Chikwawa District.³⁸ The third is the presence of northern political detainees at Mikuyu, such as Aleke Banda. All these events played a big role in the abrupt closure of Zomba Theological College. In one-party Malawi, Northerners and some Southerners were prime suspects of the Banda regime. They were detained, exiled and even killed based on suspicion.³⁹

Although the four prominent politicians were not from northern Malawi, their arrest at the Roadblock in Zomba and events that happened at Eastern Region Police Headquarters made the MCP security machinery suspect some students of Zomba Theological College. When the four politicians were arrested at the Roadblock on the Zomba-Blantyre road on 17 May 1983, coincidentally, it was the same date when a housemaid for Mr Ngwira

³⁷ Kenneth R. Ross and Klaus Fiedler, *A Malawi Church History*, 447.

³⁸ Jan Kees van Donge, "The Mwanza Trial as a Search for a Usable Malawian Past," in Kings M. Phiri and Kenneth R. Ross (eds), *Democratization in Malawi: A Stocktaking*, Blantyre: CLAIM, 1998, 43.

³⁹ Int. Mama Jere (Mrs Alder Kayira) Mzuzu, 15 March 2022, Fr Mzata, Mzuzu, 25 February 2022 and Rev M.M. Banda, Nkhata Bay, 16 January 2022.

went missing. Ngwira was a ministerial student from the Synod of Livingstonia. He went to report to the police – Eastern Region Police Headquarters – about the missing housemaid. Upon reaching the Headquarters, he accidentally used an entrance where he saw the four detained politicians. One Special Branch Officer asked him whether he had seen something. Based on the politics of the day, he denied having seen something or someone, yet he had seen the four politicians. When he left the Eastern Region Police Headquarters, that Special Branch officer followed him and asked him the same question, but he denied it again while knowing that he had seen the four detained politicians. The next day that officer with another Special Branch officer came to Ngwira's house at ZTC and accompanied him in search of the missing housemaid. Fortunately, they found her. This development ended the Special Branch's suspicion of what Ngwira had told them. However, Ngwira did not have an immediate answer to what the Special Branch was looking for until subsequent events unfolded.⁴⁰ He never shared it with his colleagues for fear of the repercussions that might result.

The suspicion in the minds of the Special Branch officers related to what had happened at the roadblock. It is alleged that three ministerial students from Zomba Theological College (ZTC), as they were coming from their weekly Sunday practical, witnessed the arrest of the four politicians. When the Special Branch officers inquired about men whom they saw on pushbikes, they were told that they were ministerial students from ZTC. The police wanted to make sure that those who witnessed the arrest did not reveal what happened. On 19 May

⁴⁰ Int. W. Ngwira at his residence in Mzuzu, 22 February 2022.

1983, an official announcement was made on national Radio that the four politicians were missing and anyone who would see them was asked to report to the police.⁴¹ This was a strategy to identify who knew of the arrest, particularly those who witnessed the arrest at the roadblock, but no one responded to it.⁴² However, the announcement came as a surprise to ministerial students who saw the four politicians in the hands of the Police. But because of the nature of the politics of the day, they did not want to share with anyone outside their circle. Later, it was announced on the same radio that the four politicians had died in a car accident while running away towards Mozambique. Although these ministerial students wondered how people who were in the custody of the police could run away and die in a car accident, they kept silent. Despite the Special Branch establishing that Ngwira did not know of the arrest and that the news was not shared at the College, they still regarded the ZTC ministerial students as suspects. They kept the College under constant surveillance. It also alleged that they planted informants at the College to monitor what was happening.

Later, it was alleged that another ZTC student, Maxwell Mezuwa Banda, went to see Aleke Banda – a political detainee at Mikuyu Maximum Prison, which he denied.⁴³ He narrated that he went not to see Aleke Banda, but his uncle who was a prison warden at Mikuyu Prison. He said that it was only later rumoured that he went to meet Aleke Banda. Mezuwa Banda suspected that this rumour was spread by Nkhoma Synod

⁴¹ Jan Kees van Donge, “The Mwanza Trial as a Search for a Usable Malawian Past,” 43.

⁴² Int. Ngwira, 22 February 2022, Int. Mpata, Mzuzu, 25 February 2022.

⁴³ Int. Rev H. Matiya Nkhoma and Rev Levi N. Nyondo, former General Secretaries of CCAP Synod of Livingstonia, Mzuzu, 20 February 2022.

ministerial students, particularly Mr Kenneth Kapatuka – an ex-Malawi Young Pioneer (MYP) officer, because they were not happy to discuss issues of social justice in the class, especially related to the arrest of Orton Chirwa and other political detainees.⁴⁴ It is alleged that ministerial students from the CCAP Synod of Livingstonia were showing solidarity with political detainees, including the Chirwas.

While Mezuwa Banda was in Blantyre City to bid farewell to Rev David Mphande who was teaching at Soche Teachers Training College, he received a call through Mphande that he was wanted immediately by ZTC authorities. When he arrived at ZTC, he was told to pack and go together with his fellow ministerial students from the CCAP Synod of Livingstonia. The list included Mezuwa Banda, Alder Kayira, Douglas Manda, Esnart Munthali, David Chiwowoka, Washington Ngwira and Alex Mphande, except for Mpata who was also suspected to be a spy for fellow Northerners.⁴⁵ Later, the name of David Chiwowoka was dropped because of international politics that might have been generated by arresting a Zambian student without credible evidence but based on suspicion. With

⁴⁴ Int. M.M. Banda, Nkhata Bay, 16 January 2022.

⁴⁵ Following the investigation conducted by CCAP Synod of Livingstonia, it was established that Mpata was also the one reporting that fellow Livingstonia students had visited Mikuyu. In an interview with me, Mpata denied having reported his fellow students to MCP but he categorically confirmed that they visited Mikuyu Prison and that some students from Blantyre and Livingstonia were critical of the government in class discussions. Mpata was dismissed by the Synod and later he joined the Anglican Diocese of Northern Malawi. The allegation on Mpata was confirmed by W. Ngwira, H.M. Nkhoma and Mama Jere (Mrs late Rev Alder Kayira) during interviews.

instruction from Dr Banda, they were expelled from the College. They left Zomba under the escort of the Special Branch officers.

The expulsion of the Livingstonia ministerial students from the College led to the abrupt closure of Zomba Theological College. What is intriguing is why the alleged visit to Mikuyu Prison by Mezuwa Banda led to the expulsion of all ministerial students from the CCAP Synod of Livingstonia. If it was based on the allegation of class discussion on social justice, why were ministerial students from Synod of Livingstonia singled out yet class discussions involved students from all CCAP Synods?

This can only be explained by the political context. The expelled students were prohibited to preach or do any church work as church ministers. After one year, they were cleared of any of the alleged wrongdoing. However, the ban on evangelism or ministerial work was sustained. It was only removed after seven years. Then the affected ministerial students were asked to rejoin the Church as church ministers. Kayira was the first to rejoin in 1990 and was followed by Mezuwa Banda in 1991 after he had worked as a secondary teacher and later from 1987 as Secretary General for the Students Christian Organisation of Malawi (SCOM).⁴⁶ Ngwira joined teaching as a secondary school teacher where he remained until his retirement. Mphande and Manda died before the ban was lifted. The politics surrounding the closure of Zomba Theological College betrayed the vision of the leadership of the CCAP in the establishment of a joint theological college, which promotes the inclusivity of people from diverse backgrounds.

⁴⁶ Int. Maxwell Mezuwa Banda, Nkhata Bay, 16 January 2022.

Inclusivity: ZTC as the Unifying Force for the Church

Despite the politics of exclusivity that characterised the CCAP in ministerial formation, Zomba Theological College has remained a symbol of unity in diversity. Since its birth in 1977, it brought the CCAP Synods together. Its ecumenical character became conspicuous when the Anglican Church joined the Presbyterians at ZTC in 1978.⁴⁷ For twenty-eight years, the three Anglican Dioceses were training their ministerial students at ZTC. The Churches of Christ (Gowa) joined in 1990 and the United Methodists in 1992. Besides the Presbyterian, Anglican Church and Churches of Christ, the College has been training ministerial students from the Methodist and Baptist churches. When I was a student at this College, there were students from the five Synods of the CCAP, three dioceses of the Anglican Church, the Methodists, Baptists, and Churches of Christ. We were trained together and lived as brothers and sisters for a period of three or four years. This developed a spirit of togetherness among students. This nature of training united students from diverse ethnic, political, and denominational backgrounds who still identify with ZTC. This ecumenical aspect is critical to the understanding of the place that ZTC occupies in the history of theological training as a symbol of unity in diversity and a breeding ground for catalysts for unity.

As explained above, the dream of the CCAP Synods to have a joint theological college in an urban centre may appear to have died when a Joint Theological College at Nkhoma Mission Station was closed, but it was realized after the establishment of

⁴⁷ James Tengatenga, *The UMCA in Malawi: A History of the Anglican Church*, Zomba: Kachere Series, 2010, 16.

ZTC at the heart of Zomba City. It not only became a centre of ministerial formation for various denominations, but it also became a centre of academic excellence. It has produced a pool of academicians who are teaching in private and public universities, not only in Malawi but also outside Malawi in such countries as the USA, South Africa and Zambia. It has not only produced academicians but also leaders of the church who are key decision-makers in the church and country at large. The current leadership of all Presbyterian synods and Anglican dioceses are products of ZTC. This testifies to the role that ZTC plays in leadership formation for the Christian church and the country.

Despite ZTC having produced a pool of leaders, the question remains as to how they promote its vision of unity as stipulated in its logo: “Until we all reach unity in the faith” as ambassadors of ZTC. I argue that graduates of ZTC need to put their vision into reality when they leave its corridors. The candid truth is that alumni of ZTC should not only be catalysts of democratisation in the country, but they should also be bearers of its flag to the fragmented world and promotion of unity that knows no social boundaries. Failure to realise the vision of ZTC largely contributed to our history where church leaders are interested in maintaining differences that are of no benefit to the future of the church. For example, as a product of ZTC, I saw how holy communion services brought all students together although it was not enough in building our unity. There was a need to go beyond this. Before the Anglicans left ZTC, the oneness in diversity that students enjoyed at the College promoted inclusivity because there were no social boundaries between being Anglican and Presbyterian or being Chewa and Tumbuka to the outsiders who used to call ZTC *sukulu ya*

abusa (school of ministerial formation). They did not qualify it as it is today – *sukulu ya abusa an Anglican* or *ya a CCAP* (Theological College for the Anglican or the CCAP).⁴⁸ Its inclusiveness fulfilled the vision of 1924.

This ecumenical character was nurtured in the establishment of the Chilema Lay Training Centre and Theological Education by Extension in Malawi where denominationalism was discouraged in the promotion of inclusivity. This ecumenical aspect defined the place that ZTC occupies in the history of theological training. It was a breeding ground for ministerial students who would foster ecumenism and nation-building. Our differences should not be a hindrance to our common goal as stated in the ZTC logo. In this regard, this chapter argues that ZTC should remain a symbol of unity in diversity and a breeding ground for catalysts of unity.

In the 2000s, the three Malawian CCAP synods started to open their theological colleges for ministerial formation and universities. While acknowledging this development as in line with the vision of the founders of the church, Phiri observes that “splitting limited resources for theological education has had negative effects.”⁴⁹ In 2011, Jack Thompson in his capacity as Vice Chancellor of the University of Livingstonia also made a similar observation, but he proposed to merge the CCAP Synods’ universities into one university.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ This refers to Leonard Kamungu Theological College.

⁴⁹ Isabel Apawo Phiri, “Theological Education in Presbyterian Churches in Africa,” 350.

⁵⁰ Discussion between Dr Jack Thompson (Acting Principal of Laws Campus, University of Livingstonia) and Dr Mapala in March 2011.

This view was also expressed during the panel discussion during the Research Conference on the CCAP centenary held at Zomba Theological University in April 2023, where church leaders and academicians agreed that it is the best option considering the enormous challenges individual Synod universities are facing. In the view of the panellists, merging the CCAP universities could not only help the Synods to put their resources together but also promote the idea of having one central place for ministerial training, which is of paramount importance to the unity of the church. It brings efficiency in running the university and reduces the financial burden⁵¹ on any one Synod. This is not to say that merging institutions of higher education is a panacea. It too has its challenges and shortfalls because of institutional cultures and identities, which are highly contested.⁵² However, its advantages outweigh the challenges.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that ministerial training was ideal for church unity although it was disturbed by politics of exclusivity. The establishment of joint theological colleges at Livingstonia, Nkhoma, Kapeni and later in Zomba aimed to promote politics of inclusion. This is the character of the CCAP that needs to be maintained and nurtured.

In this regard, the chapter has argued that although the unity of the CCAP appears to be characterised by the politics of exclusivity, there is room for improvement to promote unity in

⁵¹ Ole-Jacob Skodvin, "Mergers in Higher Education – Success or Failure?" *Tertiary Education & Management* 5/1 (1999), 72.

⁵² F.H. Kamsteeg, "Transformation as Social Drama: Stories about Merging at North West University, South Africa," *Anthropology Southern Africa* 34/1-2 (2011), 59.

diversity through ministerial training at one central place for all Synods. The church leaders need to focus their energies on nurturing the vision of oneness envisaged at Livingstonia in 1924 and at Mvera and Edinburgh in 1910. What comes with the politics of inclusivity outweighs what divides members. Therefore, the idea of training ministerial students in one place from diverse backgrounds is critical for bringing unity to a society divided along political and ethnic lines. Such training inculcates the spirit of oneness and tolerance among church leaders who have a key role to play in nation-building and the promotion of peace.

15. CCAP Preaching

Davidson Chifungo

Today in the Malawian context in general and in the CCAP in particular, there has been a proliferation of preachers, prophets, and local pastors. Another issue that is prominent, especially in the CCAP, is that Church leaders, elders, deacons, women leaders, youth leaders and even church members preach on Sunday morning and other gatherings. The question is: without any formal training how do these leaders handle the Word of God? Listening to most of these preachers, one cannot fail to notice and admire their zeal and expressiveness in preaching. They definitely have an inherent ability to animate and use modes of communication that are common in the community and relevant to the society. Their smoothness in delivery is indeed a unique and unsurpassed feature of Malawian church life.

In particular, over the past 100 years the CCAP preachers have developed their own method and style, which has continued to be modified and improved. This chapter therefore seeks to offer a critical analysis of the development of preaching from the early days of the CCAP formation to the present status. We shall examine the strengths and the weaknesses in the process of sermonizing then consider opportunities for the future.

Before going any further, we must set the pace by looking at general definitions of preaching. In describing what true preaching is, Haddon W. Robinson not only acknowledges the place and importance of fervent preaching, he also underscores the most critical constituent of correct preaching. He reckons that, "Preachers should pour out the message with passion and fervour in order to stir souls. Not all passionate pleading from a pulpit, however, possesses divine authority. When preachers speak as heralds, they must cry out 'the Word.' Anything less

cannot legitimately pass for Christian preaching.”¹ Robinson’s words resonate with God’s own declaration in Isaiah 55:10–11 that His Word alone has the power to bring about transformation and productivity in people’s lives. In the oracle, God declares that just as rain comes down from heaven and causes the earth to bud and flourish so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so does His word that comes out of His mouth. It does not return to Him empty but accomplishes what God desires and achieves the purpose for which He sends it. It is neither the lightning nor the thunder that the earth needs, but the rain. It is the message, not the superfluities, that truly matters.

Other scholars have echoed the importance of preaching. For example, Martyn Lloyd-Jones states that, “Preaching is the highest and the greatest and most glorious calling to which anyone can ever be called...The most urgent need in the Christian Church is true Preaching; and as this is the greatest and most urgent need in the church, it is obviously the greatest need of the world also.”² The questions we must ask in our analysis include, what has been the mode of delivery of our sermons in the CCAP?

Missionary Influence

One of the things that the CCAP adopted from its missionary forebears is their mode of preaching. In the early years Malawian ministers even adopted the way Chichewa or Tumbuka

¹ Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980, 20.

² Martyn Lloyd-Jones, cit. Johan Cilliers, *The Living Voice of the Gospel: Revisiting the Basic Principles of Preaching*, Stellenbosch: Sun Press, 2004, 20.

was spoken by the European missionaries, imitating their accent. Preaching as it was done by the Scots in Scotland and the Afrikaners in South Africa, followed a linear thought pattern, using the modes and methods that are familiar in the Western world. The Western mode of communication is mainly abstract, while the African cultural mode of communication is primarily concrete. During the early years of Christianity in Malawi, missionary modes of communication were effective especially in evangelism, establishing churches and attracting church members. However, these modes of communication were not very effective in general discipleship and spiritual growth.

It would have been better if the missionaries had realized earlier that differences exist between the sending Church's cultural communication modes and those of the local Church in the Malawi context. The local African modes of communication are mainly oral and concrete, while the Western approach is more abstract. In the local setting we should learn to compose for the ear and not for the eye. David Bosch states that:

The Gospel must remain good news while becoming up to a certain point a cultural phenomenon. While it takes into account the meaning systems already present in the context, on the one hand it offers the cultures "the knowledge of the divine mystery," while on the other it helps them to bring forth from their own living tradition original expressions of Christian life, celebration and thought. This approach breaks radically with the idea of the faith as "kernel" and the culture as "husk" – which in any case is, to a large extent, an illustration of the Western scientific tradition's distinction between "content" and "form."³

³ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, Maryknoll: New York, Orbis, 1991, 465.

The consciences of the local people must also be reached, otherwise their unchristian practices go underground, and they become believers only in formal profession and not in daily practice. Wilson asks: “How may we compose sermons for the ear? Numerous teachers have been suggesting for many years that this is not just a matter of composing aloud, and using words that sound good to the ear. A different way of thinking is involved. The differences are similar to those between a highly literate culture and a highly oral one. To compose sermons for the ear one needs to understand how an oral culture organizes and internalizes knowledge.”⁴ Both Beller and Wilson confirm the need to compose differently and to preach and teach differently.

Missiologists also later took note of this issue that had been overlooked for a long time. For example, David Bosch argues that: “The Christian faith must be rethought, reformulated and lived anew in each culture, and this must be done right to the cultures’ roots. Such a project is even more needed in light of ways in which the West has raped the cultures of the Third World, inflicting on them what has been termed as anthropological poverty.”⁵ As Bosch has rightly said, this is the issue with which the CCAP must grapple all the time – as it has done throughout history. The point is that the CCAP in its preaching must always remember to go deeper into the people’s cultural roots so that the Church continues to mature.

⁴ Scott Paul Wilson, *The Practice of Preaching*, Nashville: Abingdon, 1995, 48.

⁵ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 542.

Preaching and Spiritual Formation in the CCAP

The CCAP initially took its preaching mode from its founding missionaries and there is need to acknowledge gratefully the foundations that were laid by the missionaries. During the 1950s the missionaries handed over the Church to the indigenuous leaders to take a lead. Since then, the Church has made a lot of progress in preaching the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. This can be seen when we consider the prominent leaders that the CCAP has produced, including key political leaders, leaders in commerce and business, leaders in many different sectors of society. The CCAP has also played a notable role and continues to do so in speaking for the voiceless and protesting against bad governance.

Talking about preaching, there are those that combined their knowledge of scripture from the missionary based perspective and contextualized the messages to touch people's lives and yet there were also those who have sound theology and doctrine but cannot touch the hearts of the local people. As for the lay preachers there are those who were popular yet were not preachers but orators. Wilson explains this phenomenon:

Many of us have visited churches where the preacher, widely judged to be an excellent theologian and a devoted scholar, could not communicate. Sermon ideas were well conceived, shaped by Scripture, and informed by tradition, but few of those present actually understood what was said in terms of their own lives, and the preacher consequently seemed aloof and remote. We have also been to churches where the preacher had the gift of the gab, an ability to animate and hold the attention of the congregation. Listeners had a sense that they were seen and recognized as though each one were being addressed, even though what was said of the Bible

or theology was minimal, and the effect of the sermon seemed over when the sermon was over.⁶

If we are going to talk about Homiletical Theory and Praxis within the preaching context of the CCAP in Malawi 100 years on, we must look at the issues that Wilson has highlighted. Examples of those in our history who made use of both theology and proper Bible interpretation are our heroes.

In the CCAP Nkhoma Synod there have been preachers like the late Shadreck Wame. He was in a class of his own. Analyzing his sermons, one cannot stop wondering how he was able to combine his oratory skills with a true understanding of the Bible.⁷ Others include late Rev W.W. Aaron Wickson Wenzulo Mulenga, late Rev Lafael Jasiel Kamtambe, late Rev Josophat Mwale, late Evangelist Steven Lungu, and late Enock Phiri. These and many more preachers set an example by developing their own local styles of preaching, which proved to be very effective. In the Nkhoma Synod today there are preachers like Rev Yasin Gama, Rev Alexander Kambiri and others who have taken the country by storm. The common feature in both is that they take the context and issues that affect the society seriously and address them from the biblical point of view.

In the CCAP Blantyre Synod we had the life of the late Rev Greyson Mputeni and the late evangelist Thomas Banda who was active during the 1980s and 1990s. Today we have Rev Reynold Mangisa, Rev Lecture Chimpeni, evangelist Linley Mbeta and many more. In the CCAP Livingstonia Synod we

⁶ Scott Paul Wilson, *The Practice of Preaching*, 61-62.

⁷ See Ernst Wendland, *Preaching that Grabs the Heart*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1999.

had the late Rev Dr W.K. Jere, Kolopa Mhone, late Bonke Mhone, Molland Chilongo, F.Y. Dhlazi, the late Rev P.Z. Thole, Rev Y.C. Kaunda, Rev S.C. Chimaliro, and Rev Evangelist A.K. Chilongo. In Harare Synod we remember the work of Evangelist Killion Mwale, Rev Joseph H. Chimutu, Evangelist Adiyeli Nefani Chauya, Rev Potipher Adam Kachaje, Rev Thomson Chipeta, Evangelist A.M. Zamadenga, Evangelist P.K. Kolowa Banda and many more. In the Synod of Zambia, we had Rev Dr Daniel Tembo, Rev Columbus T. Soko, Evangelist E.T. Moyo, Rev Lazalous Mbewe and Rev Meckson Lukhanda.

Although not much research has been done, and not much written about these very important preachers in our CCAP history, people who were interviewed testified that they were very effective. They had and still use their own style of preaching that makes effective use of scripture by adopting a style that is indigenous and effective in the cultural setting. They contextualized the Gospel. These preachers mastered a way to engage the audience, speak into their context, make relevant application, and thus remain relevant to the people of their time. Many preachers today in the CCAP and beyond have taken their style from them. But most of today's preachers have only taken the rhetorical approach and style but not the content of scripture. There is need to research how they made it and became effective. These cultural modes could be used to train today's preachers. In the next paragraph we discuss the challenge of using a good style without content of the Bible.

A Lot of Thunder and Lightning but No Rain

We celebrate the achievements of church growth, evangelism and preaching by those who took the lead in setting examples of true preaching that uses both the text and the context, those

who touched people's lives. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge the bigger problem that has been in existence for a long time now due to the numerical growth of the CCAP. Who really is preaching to the masses of the membership of the CCAP? Is it trained ministers or untrained lay leaders? A survey taken in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod reveals a worst-case scenario. Around the year 2000, at Thumba CCAP at Chamama in Kasungu, there was one mission station and 84 prayers houses. This meant that there was only one minister for the 84 prayers houses. It also meant that when the minister was preaching at one point, there were 84 elders who were preaching at all the other preaching points. While this is a worst-case scenario, similar situations still exist in most of the Synods where one minister is responsible for several preaching points so that other leaders take the lead to preach in most of them at any given time.

The question we must ask is, how much training do these elders have apart from a two-day or three-day induction? A CCAP minister undergoes four or five years of training to become a preacher, yet the much larger number of lay preachers do not have any kind of training. As a result, there is what can be termed a lot of thunder and lightning but no rain. For the crops to grow they need rain, for the fruits to mature they need the rain. They do not need the thunder and the lightning. In the same way for spiritual growth to take place in the CCAP, the Church needs to be exposed to the content of scripture, properly interpreted and applied in context. The message of God is the rain. Whether the content comes with noise, chanting, and animations, or the message comes quietly without the shouting, the church will grow spiritually. There is a very big difference between orators and preachers. The orators entertain and excite the hearers but the preacher brings conviction and helps members to grow in character.

John Mbiti once remarked that the Church in Africa is a mile wide and only an inch deep. There is need to grow the depth of the Church. We celebrate the fact that some 80% of the Malawi population profess to be Christians. There is a similar situation in the other CCAP countries. Yet there is little or no impact in the society. Corruption, gender-based violence, child abuse, drug and alcohol abuse, high divorce rate, dysfunctional families that bring about orphans, street children and other ills of the society would not have been there if 80% of the population were truly disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ. The lack of discipleship in Malawian Christianity can be attributed to a lack of true preaching.

The problem is compounded because the majority of the members in the CCAP live in rural areas, where literature is very scarce and local language Bibles are not readily available. Even if a torn Bible is found, the people do not like reading. Many are illiterate so they depend on the preachers to tell them about the Bible. Unfortunately, the preachers choose what suits them and do not preach the whole counsel of God. Patrick Kalilombe accurately stated the problem:

Those who can read and write are in a position to share, with their less fortunate brothers and sisters, the contents of the Holy Book. But they have also the possibility of withholding parts of the contents and distorting what they report from the Bible. They may choose to share only some selections and leave out others, according as they themselves judge good or opportune. They could very well leave out those parts that they think useless, ambiguous, or dangerous. This is not simply a matter of quantity. It is also a question of interpretation. As indicated, the researcher's experience was that the lay preachers did not always preach the Bible but told stories and fables.

Sometimes they misrepresented the Gospel and other times preached a complete heresy.”⁸

To address the problems outlined in the section above we need to start with an analysis of how CCAP pastors are trained in order to be effective. The first place to stop is at the Theological College.

The Teaching of Preaching Skills in the CCAP Theological Colleges

When I undertook a survey of the four institutions where the CCAP Synods train their pastors, my findings revealed that preaching is not given the priority it deserves, with just a semester here and another there. Surveying Zomba Theological College (now University), the College of Theology at Ekwendeni (now part of the University of Livingstonia), the Theology Faculty at Nkhoma University, the Justo Mwale University in Zambia, it becomes evident that none of them have a specifically trained lecturer whose major is Homiletics. Therefore, any teacher can be assigned to cover the shortfall. Other areas of traditional theology, such as Systematic Theology, Missiology, Old Testament and New Testament, are considered more important.

Yet what is the use of theology if it cannot be communicated to the local masses? Wilson points this out clearly and emphasizes the importance of Homiletical Theology:

Homiletical Theology should be among our best theologies, deserving our keenest attention, calling our best candidates, for it is not only God, it is God speaking to the world, speaking us into creation,

⁸ Patrick A. Kalilombe, *Doing Theology at the Grassroots, Theological Essays from Malawi*, Gweru: Mambo-Kachere, 1999, 198.

speaking us into reconciliation, speaking us into new life over which Christ presides in glory.”⁹

Mostly the institutions assume that the students by way of coincidence will be able to connect their education with preaching. As Wilson writes, “We have assumed that preaching needs minimal foundations in seminary ... Many seminaries do not require as compulsory a course in homiletics and those that do may require only one course out of thirty. As a result, we are encouraged by our educational institution, often inadvertently, to see these former courses as occupying the high ground of theological education. Their connection to the sermon is assumed; but not purposely stated, explored, and tested on a continuing basis in the classroom.”¹⁰ Wilson’s analysis reveals that this is not the problem of the CCAP alone but derives from the traditional Western theology that has shaped the Malawi curriculum. We will need to find solutions to these challenges.

Lay Leadership Training Institutions in the CCAP

The problem of lay leadership training is not new, the early missionaries saw this coming and therefore they established the lay training centres. In the Synod of Livingstonia at Ekwendeni, in the Nkhoma Synod at Chongoni Lay Training Centre and in Blantyre Synod at the Likhubula and Chilema Centres. The purpose for these centres was to bring together lay leaders to receive training. In the early days when the churches were small and numbers were few, this method was working. Today there are thousands of lay leaders and preachers, therefore this methodology cannot work to train all the leaders.

⁹ Scott Paul Wilson, *The Practice of Preaching*, 70.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 75.

Secondly, the curriculum was mainly on administration, discipleship, counselling etc. Not much was done in terms of thorough exegesis, hermeneutics and homiletics. This chapter therefore suggests that these centres should really have a paradigm shift. They must change from bringing people to the centre for training to going out to train trainers. 2 Timothy 2:2 indicates the way they must follow. They could also adopt some of the materials used by Veritas College as well as Nehemiah Bible Institute materials which could be obtained from Theological Education by Extension in Malawi (TEEM).

Towards a CCAP Homiletical Theory, Theology and Praxis: The Next 100 Years

First, given the numerical growth, the social-cultural changes of our society and the phenomenon of untrained lay preachers, what role can the preaching of the Church play in offering new inspiration and new vision to the society in Malawi so as to empower its members to address the challenges from a Christian point of view? Since it is apparent that preaching by word of mouth is the main means by which the majority of the members will ever hear the word of God, a new way of approaching this matter must be found. First of all, the theological institutions should begin to change from the traditional theoretical approach to a more practical one. There should be a deliberate move to move to a more competency-based education. The pastors should not only be trained to pass exams, but to be competent in doing ministry including preaching. Homiletics should be given more time and hours with the four years of training.

John Mbiti stated that:

Culture is a phenomenological concept through which people retain their self-identity, build their views, and symbolically express a shared historical experience, and thereby create a sense of collective cultural identity. It follows that culture is embedded in the life of the society with its variety of aspects such as material culture, painting, drama, philosophy. Therefore, in oral culture, history, traditions, and values of the society are transmitted through word of mouth. There are no written accounts of such cultures, all information is stored in the mind, and is passed from one generation to another.”¹¹

For our preaching to be effective we need to consider the systems that already exist within the society. In order to communicate to the people in modes that they understand, we must allow the indigenous people to teach us the modes of communication, and in turn the leaders must teach them the content of the Bible. While all the institutions that have been mentioned above use the traditional Western-based curriculum, we must begin to take a more contextual approach, using the current curriculum as a springboard. According to Hoppers: “Knowledge is a universal heritage and a universal resource. It is diverse and varied. The acquisition of Western knowledge has been and still is invaluable to all, but on its own, it has been incapable of responding adequately in the face of massive and intensifying disparities, untrammled exploitation of pharmacological and other generic sources”¹² It is up to the current generation of the African leaders and theologians in the CCAP to make the transition.

¹¹ John S. Mbiti, cit. in Isaac Ncube Mazonde and Pradip Thomas (eds), *Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Intellectual property in the Twenty-First Century: Perspectives from Southern Africa*, Dakar: CODESRIA, 2007, 9-10.

¹² Catherine A. Odara Hoppers, *Indigenous Knowledge and the Integration of Knowledge Systems: Towards a Philosophy of Articulation*, Claremont: New Africa Books, 2002, 8.

The Seminaries should take a more intentional approach to focus on addressing the social and cultural issues that the society is facing using the Bible. The results of the survey I conducted are corroborated by the findings of Jurgens Hendriks: “In many African Reformed schools, we found that theology is still done by studying faith’s traditional texts (Systematic Theology and creeds) then applying them to a specific situation and congregation. The problem is that, ultimately, in this way, theology becomes disconnected from daily experiences, questions, and challenges that confront members of a congregation. Consequently, a congregation and its members are unable to deal with change and transition: resulting in a slow spiritual and institutional decline”¹³ Although Hendriks used NetAct, a network of theological institutions, to try to influence the institutions in Malawi, not much has been achieved especially in the area of preaching.

Theological Education by Extension would have been another resource for training lay leaders but unfortunately TEEM diverted its training and started offering Diplomas. While this is a good idea, it should not have been the focus. TEEM’s original mission was to offer simple and practical training to lay leaders. TEEM was supposed to be complementary to the main theological training. Today TEEM trains very few people who would want to advance their theological education and their curriculum is very traditional, with an emphasis on historical and theoretical theology instead of being practical. My recommendation is that TEEM should go back to its original mission and purpose.

¹³ Jurgens H. Hendriks, *Studying Congregations in Africa*, Wellington: Lux Verbi, 2004, 28.

Conclusion and Recommendations

As we celebrate 100 years of the CCAP, we also celebrate the missionaries who first brought the Gospel to plant the churches that became the CCAP. We appreciate the role that our forebears played in receiving the Gospel and running with it. Indeed, the growth of the Church is testimony to the quality of their work. Today's preachers and teachers stand on their shoulders. Looking ahead to the next hundred years, we must now be intentional to meet the needs of the members. We have seen that the majority of the preachers are lay leaders, and that our theory and theology do not adequately address our contemporary social and cultural issues. We have also seen that the only means by which the majority of the members shall hear the word of God is through preaching. We must therefore invest heavily in the teaching of Homiletics. The pastors must be trained through competency-based education which is very practical. They must be given tools and resources so that after graduation, they will be able to go to the congregation and turn the congregation into a lay training centre. The pastor should then become the trainer using transferable materials and curriculums that are available in local languages, capable of transforming people's lives, focusing on all the angles of the triangle.

Veritas College training, now available in the Synods of Livingstonia, Nkhoma and Blantyre, is one of the resources that could be used to train lay leaders to preach the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Veritas College specializes in a non-formal competency-based education that specializes in Integrated Leadership Development. Its focus is on simple but very practical exegesis, secondly after exegesis on helping lay leaders to apply the Bible Message to all spheres of their own lives (hermeneutics) and finally training them to be able to communicate

the message to others through preaching, Bible studies and group discussion (homiletics). Veritas offers a curriculum that can be used in any context and is practiced without any need for library or expensive resources. This ministry trains the pastor as a trainer and in turn the pastor would train 25 or 30 people in his or her church at a time. The programme has four modules. Module 1 deals with the Pauline Literature, Module 2 with Historical Narratives, Module 3 with Exegesis of Hebrew poetry and prophetic books, Module 4 with the Gospels and Revelation. Using this method, it is possible to multiply lay leaders. For example, in Malawi during the 2022-23 financial year, Veritas College trained 4,074 members across the country.

Theological Colleges could adopt this method so that the pastors could have ready-made materials to use once they are in a congregation, they will be competent to train others and turn them into useful instruments in God's hands. The vision for the CCAP would be turning every congregation to be a lay training centre. The leaders would come from different prayer houses. As we do so, we will move into a homiletical theory, theology and praxis that take both the text and context, the Word and the World, the passage and the people, very seriously so as to bring about a greater impact in the Church.

16. CCAP Music

Colby Hetherwick Kumwenda

Introduction

For CCAP members, as for most African Christians, hymn singing is hugely important when it comes to expressing Christian faith and worship. This chapter will demonstrate this by examining the conceptualization of God in selected hymns from *Sumu za Ukebristu*, the hymnbook of the Synod of Livingstonia. This Synod is blessed with a rich theology through music. Its hymns are received spontaneously during worship services and other church gatherings because they are known and sung by almost everybody. These hymns are also sung during times of personal devotion and during significant life experiences of the attendees. Presbyterians generally take these songs with seriousness as Holy Spirit-inspired hymns.¹

This type of unconscious, spontaneous, Spirit-inspired singing expresses the life of the church. This is so because this type of singing aims at building, motivating, comforting, and empowering believers. These popular locally composed Presbyterian hymns offer deep insights into the religious character of most Presbyterians and help to reveal Malawian Presbyterians' concepts about God, humans, and the cosmos.

As with the classical Christian hymns, *Sumu za Ukebristu* are life-giving hymns that are frequently sung. Jack Thompson has argued that most of these hymns sung in the Presbyterian Church in Northern

¹ According to Bengt Sundkler, hymns play crucial roles in the lives of the people. Writing of the Zulu people of South Africa, he points out that hymns provide a platform for identity, history and continuity. They are culturally aligned. See Bengt G.M. Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*, Cambridge: James Clarke, 1948 [2004], 193-94.

Malawi are derived from the Ngoni who had a flair for musical composition.² These hymns provide spiritual nurture as they inspire the faith of most Malawian Presbyterians. Furthermore, they call participants to deepen their religious knowledge and spiritual consciousness. Despite the test of time and distance, the impact of many of these hymns has not lost the theological and spiritual significance as they still carry great power to touch the hearts of 21st century Malawians.

Through singing, Malawian Presbyterians express the Christian message in a simple but profound way that reflects a personal and joyful encounter with God. As Augustine Musopole observes:

The Christian experience in Malawi calls for a theology of song and dance for it is through singing and dancing that theology finds its expression as a life enriching experience and celebration. Western theology follows the dictates of rationalism, but life is more than simply rational expression through propositional thought, and hence, African theology goes beyond rationalism to ontological cognition that includes singing and dancing in knowing who God is for us. Life is to be celebrated for it to be enjoyed meaningfully.³

The hymns examined and analyzed are in the Tumbuka language, a language spoken by the majority within the CCAP Synod of Livingstonia. This chapter investigates the influence that the Tumbuka

cosmology has on the Malawian Presbyterian understanding of God expressed in the hymns. The Tumbuka cosmology draws heavily from an indigenous primal belief system, which informs the appropriation of Christian faith reflected in the hymns.

² T. Jack Thompson, *Ngoni, Xhosa and Scot: Religious and Cultural Interaction in Malawi*, Zomba: Kachere, 2007, 80.

³ Augustine Musopole, *Singing and Dancing for God: A Theological Reflection on Indigenous Hymns in Sumu za Ukristu*, Mzuzu: Luviri Press, 2022, 16.

The Malawian Presbyterian understanding of God appears to reflect an interweaving of Tumbuka traditional and biblical ideas in forging an understanding God.

Theological and Doctrinal Emphases in *Sumu za Ukhristu*

As Livingstonia Mission established itself in the northern part of Malawi during the later nineteenth century, one of the most striking developments was a fusion of traditional music with Christian theology. The primary focus of the resultant hymns is the being or nature of God. To Malawian Presbyterians, God is the sole source of all things that exist. Invoking God as creator of all things, caring parent, immanent friend, loving parent, source of life and refuge, forms a spiritual bedrock for Malawian Presbyterians.

God the Creator

Presbyterians, like other Christian denominations, have a strong understanding of God as Creator of the entire universe and all that is in it. This creative action makes God to be the Other who deserves respect, praise, honour, gratitude and adoration on account of his artwork. Paying allegiance to creators other than the Creator God is an abomination. The creative power of God is made known in and through his creation. This makes God to be the Other (not part of creation). Because of this, he needs to be trusted and worshipped wholeheartedly. Below is a stanza from a Presbyterian hymn (Sumu 15 stanza 1) that expresses such trust and worship:

Tigomezge kwa Chiuta	Let us have trust in God
Wakata charu na wanthu	Creator of the earth and humanity

Wa mahara, wa Nkhongono	The wise God, and Almighty
Wakutemwa na Lusungu	Loving and Merciful

From the song itself, it can be argued that God's artwork in creation is wonderful and beyond human comprehension. The Presbyterian lyric maker or composer has seen the marvellous works of God in creation: "*wa nkhongono, wa kutemwa na lusungu.*" To the Malawian Presbyterian, this creator God is mighty, loving and merciful. All these three attributes are demonstrated in his artwork. Creation out of nothing (*ex nihilo*) is proof of God's creative power and is celebrated in this hymn. The creation of the universe and humanity allow us to understand his mystical power in creation. Building on this understanding, Presbyterians conceive God's creative engagement as a spiritual intervention in their daily spiritual journey. God constantly creates and will continue creating. This trajectory of continued creation makes God to be the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. Finally, as the song suggests, God loves the creation assignment without being pushed or forced. This pedagogy gives God a zone of freedom to create more. There will be no time when God will be caged and forced to create. Christians should just honour and respect the creator and the creation.

God as a Caring Parent

In some Malawian Presbyterian songs God is perceived as not only good but also a caring parent or father. His care is demonstrated by his creation project. His creative activity extends not only to humanity but also the entire universe. God is also depicted as Almighty or *El Shaddai*. Interwoven into a sense of his power are other elements that see God as loving and compassionate, like a caring father or nursing mother. As a caring father or parent, he is always there for backsliders and sinners waiting

for them to turn away from their misdeeds. As a parent, he is always ready to welcome prodigal sons and daughters to the sheepfold, as reflected in the following hymn (Sumu 13 stanza 1), which is translated from English but takes on a distinctive character in Tumbuka:

Maso nkhwinula kuchanya	I lift my eyes to heaven
Movwiri wane ndi njani?	Who is my helper?
Wakufuma kwa Yehova	My help comes from God
Mlengi wa charu na Mtambo ⁴	Creator of earth and Heaven

The above stanza compels, revitalizes and gives assurance to the immediate hearers. It instils strength to wary and undecided Christians to lift their eyes to God in prayer while waiting for the providence from above. As a caring parent, God loves humanity equally. The hymn, to some extent, affirms the power of relying on God for providence, and most significantly, his immanence. Furthermore, the song calls for trust in God as he is constantly taking care of his children through Christ, who takes away the sins of the world. Against this backdrop, it can act as a rededication song rekindling the life of individuals or a community of faith. Above all one feels closer to God as a parent and a creator of everything thereby providing a platform for spiritual intimacy. Both the source of help and the creation analogies reveal God's intentional design of creation out of love. The biblical injunction of love arises from the awareness that he first loved us through the incarnation of Christ Jesus.

⁴ This song has four stanzas. John Hatton (1710 – 1793) is believed to have composed the song, which is derived from Psalm 121. The overarching message of the hymn is trust in the Creator God who keeps watch over humanity in all times and places. As a song of comfort and encouragement, it is usually sung in times of bereavements, calamities and uncertainties in order to draw near to God.

It puts the focus on God's love depicted in his Son who loved the marginalized, the outcasts and the sinners. Like a good shepherd, Jesus fulfills this love when searching for the lost as depicted in the gospels (Luke 15) where the lost sheep is restored to the sheepfold. Drawing on Psalm 121, which looks on God as Keeper or a Protector, the song invites us to understand the nature and being of God so that in times of troubles we will know that the Lord is always there to help us. God is therefore depicted as a helping God more especially to those who seek his face. He is ready to give them a comforting hand. This comfort gives hope to the one asking for help as expressed above.

God as an Immanent Friend

Malawian Presbyterians perceive Jesus as a trustworthy friend in whom they can confide and who also takes the sins of humanity as noted in the hymn (Sumu 65 stanza 1) below:

Mbwezi muweme ndi Yesu	What a friend we have in Jesus
Wakuyeya viheni	All our sins and griefs to bear!
Tingaphara suzgo zose	What a privilege to carry
Kwa Chiuta m'kuromba	Everything to God in prayer
Ise tikujitorera	O what peace we often forfeit;
Vyakuwinya tawene	O what needless pain we bear
Pakureka kuya navyo	All because we do not carry
Kwa Chiuta mkuromba ⁵	Everything to God in prayer.

⁵ This hymn has three stanzas (with a chorus). Historically, it was composed by Charles Crozat Converse (1832 – 1918). The song generally talks about Jesus as a good friend who bears all our sins and griefs. It continues to say that in times of trials and in times of bearing heavy burdens, Jesus is readily available to assist us. This song is a comfort song usually sung in times of difficulties to console those in problems and give them unwavering hope.

A Tumbuka rendition of a hymn originally in English reflects a Malawian way of understanding sin and the willingness of Jesus to lead the way to remove that sin. It is only a friend, and a real friend, who can take the risk to taking the burden of sin. One may interpret the song within the Matthean hermeneutical lenses. The song tries to cement the mutual relationship between the sinner and the saint, burden bearer and burden creator, the shepherd and the sheep, the lost and the seeker of the lost. The willingness of Christ to bear the burden makes the sinner have courage to approach him as a friend. It should be noted that understanding the friendship of Jesus is of paramount importance in the life of an individual. It reveals the immanence of Jesus' friendship that is welcoming towards everyone. The concept of friendship is a familiar one among Malawians because it relates to the high value they placed on the practice of hospitality. It reflects such core ideas as love, concern, apathy, sympathy, empathy, comfort, belonging, sharing, keeping, proximity and trust. Friendship is marked by acts of closeness and help. People are afflicted with many emotional and psychological problems because they don't have intimate friends with whom to share their burdens. They suffer in silence without an iota of help. Some friendships end in distrust, betrayal and loneliness, which can even result in suicides or attempted suicides attempts and imprisonment.

While we are talking of infidelity and betrayal in some patterns of friendships, Jesus paints a different imagery of friendship. He is a friend indeed because he does not disappoint those whom he loves. He demonstrated this act by defying the Jewish tradition and dining with sinners. Quayesi-Amakye writes:

Jesus is truly our faithful friend because he answers our prayers and comforts us in our adversities through the Word of God. He provides for the needs of his friends with food and money,

and he blesses them with children. However, this does not mean a childless individual may not see Jesus as a faithful friend. A childless person can sing the song with the understanding that Jesus faithfully delivers from adversities and problems of life. After all, a meaningful life becomes possible not by how many children one has but by how helpful one has been to others. The loyal friendship of Jesus must impel believers to be faithful and loyal to others. They must always think about other people's interests.⁶

In the perspective of this hymn, friendship is the fulcrum of a sound relationship. It is sustained in times of turmoil and offers hope to the unfriended. Good friendship heals all sorts of uncertainties related to fear, emotions, loneliness and abandonment which may lead to loss of life in some extremes.

God as a Loving Parent

Malawian Presbyterians understand God in terms of his love (agape). He has loved humanity even from the beginning. God's greatest portrayal of love is conceived through his redemption of his people from calamities, snares, troubles and all sorts of adversities. The hymn (Sumu 401 stanza 1) below highlights the love of God in times of hunger or famine:

Mwimbire Yesu, mwa twana	Sing for Jesus, you infants
Wakumulawiskani	He sees you
Mwimbire Kutemwa kwake	Sing for His love
Na lusungu lukuru. ⁷	And great mercy.

⁶ J. Quayesi-Amakye, "God in Ghanaian Pentecostal Songs," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 22 (2013), 141.

⁷ This song has three stanzas (with a chorus). It is similar to a song in ChiTonga (338). The author of the song is anonymous. The overarching theological message of the song hinges on the providence of God who constantly provides our daily Needs. It can be sung at any time of the year more especially when visiting the Nēedy in homes or hospitals.

The song underscores true love that constructs strong and unbroken relationships. Further to this imagination, it demystifies the times of uncertainties, sorrow, despair and all forms of retrogressions. The vicarious significance of love is expressed in various ways. One touching expression of love is realized in Quayesi-Amakye's argument. He writes:

When people are unloved, they become antisocial. Love heals psychologically, emotionally, physically, relationally, and socially. Love makes rich but hatred impoverishes. Love binds but does not disintegrate. To be unloved is to be susceptible to all kinds of dehumanization. To be unloved can open one up to self-pity and self-inflicted pains... Hateful people cause destruction and retard other people's progress and prosperity. This is why the love of God is very important for human well-being.⁸

The love of God is paramount for human existence and co-existence. In Malawian cosmology, you can hardly love someone without giving something. The giving out of the token to someone cements the already existing love that is there between the giver and the receiver. Within the Presbyterian circles, love is manifested in the formation of choir groups. It is also manifested in the guilds and other committees. Most importantly, Malawian Presbyterians do not confine God's love to the salvation of the soul but also relate it to deliverance from the vicissitudes of the current experiential life. This form of deliverance, to some extent, brings assurance of the life hereafter thereby giving hope for a life of victory.

God is a Source of Life

Malawian Presbyterians worship God as all knowing, ever present and able to act. Such ideas manifest in many songs,

⁸ J. Quayesi-Amakye, "God in Ghanaian Pentecostal Songs," 141-2.

especially those on Easter themes. Such songs render assurance to Malawian Presbyterians to treat God as a lover and giver of life. In the hymn (Sumu 49 stanza 1) underneath we see how Malawian Presbyterians connect the resurrection and post-resurrection narratives as a dawn of new life over against the snares of death:

Mwe mwapulika kuti
Yesu wazguka?
Wauka ku wakufwa
Wali na moyo.⁹

Have you heard that
Jesus has risen?
Has risen from the dead
And is living.

Paying attention to the phonology of the hymn, God is depicted as a giver of new life through the raising up of Jesus from the grave. This resurrection to new life in Jesus Christ gives hope to the Presbyterian believers. Even during holy week, Presbyterians are not scared of the dark Friday. They have the assurance that the grave will hold Jesus Christ only for a while. In other words, Jesus is resting in the tomb. In the Presbyterian eye, God's main concern for the creation was that not even a single element in the creation should perish, let alone the Son. This continuity of life is seen in God's nearness to humanity. It also reveals that God is the custodian of life.

Equally important is the social and economic underpinnings of the song, which draw people close to God and his Son Jesus Christ. The raising of Jesus from the grave was not just a mere restorative drama but a real theological business for human

⁹ This hymn has seven stanzas (with a chorus). The author is anonymous. However, the hymn has an African melody. The overarching message of the entire song hinges on the assurance that Jesus has risen from the dead. This song is usually sung during Easter events giving hope to the faithful that Jesus has conquered the grave. Believers live in the same hope that they can also overcome trials, troubles and temptations as their master becomes the forerunner of victory.

livelihood. Christ was raised for everyone's benefit and not only for a selected few. His resurrection is God's providence in order to make the Word flesh again. The major task we have is to give thanks to God for sending Christ as a ransom for many. We are the beneficiaries of his scourge and shame. On a similar line of thought, Musopole suggests that, "As a patriarchal society, the Tumbuka have no problem acknowledging the fatherhood of God as being the source of life. God knows each of his children personally, and in response, the children surrender all what they are to the Father in service."¹⁰

God as a Refuge

Presbyterians have a deep understanding of God as a refuge (fortress). God guards his people from attacks by predators or the devil. Humanity is living in the world full of sins and sinners and there is great need for protection from these vultures. In the hymn (Sumu 150 stanza 1) below, sometimes described as the Synod of Livingstonia anthem, we see how Malawian Presbyterians look to God for provision of protection to humanity:

Chiuta ndi linga lithu	Our God is our refuge
Lakukhora nkhanira, nkhanira	A fortress one
Wali mchanya, kutovwira	He is in Heaven, helping us
Para ise tikuzingiziwa. ¹¹	In times of need

¹⁰ Augustine C. Musopole, *Singing and Dancing for God*, 31.

¹¹ The hymn has four stanzas (with a chorus). The author of the song is Reverend Mawelera Tembo from Njuyu in Mzimba. The song has a military flavour. The overarching message of the entire song depicts God as our refuge in times of troubles. Presbyterians sing this song in times of troubles like funerals and other painful times. The last stanza expresses jubilation that the counsellor is among them to give them comfort. It is derived from Psalm 46.

From the stanza above, God is seen as protector of humanity. He is always there for their safety, fighting on their behalf, protecting them and ensuring their security.¹² It is God's faithful plan that his people live in peace and out of danger. For the sake of creation, God never sleeps nor slumbers. In other expressions, human survival solely depends on the protection and power of God. God seems to be aloof but he is with us day in and day out. He is concerned about our daily walk in the world where the devil has set the traps. Thus, in the song, humans are called to put total trust in God or else the devil will use them for devilish tasks. Any trust in him comes with a blessing. It is not just a matter of singing the melody, but rather, singing with trust and hope as Quayesi-Amakye writes:

He blesses the effort of his people. Industry is integral in God's purpose for human beings. This truth holds for all, Christian or non-Christian. He is impartial in his distribution of blessings. People everywhere can sing to God's providence and care because they are unrestrictive geographically. We are to be thankful to God for his goodness towards us. We must position ourselves to benefit from God's largess of care.¹³

Within the Malawian Presbyterian religiosity, attendees give thanks to God for various reasons. One of the reasons to give thanks to God is that they see a new day, God has protected them from the power of the devil during the past night. As they were in deep sleep, God was awake keeping watch over them from the attack of the evil powers. Most importantly, God has added yet another day to their lives.

¹² Augustine Musopole observes that in the era of secularism, communism, humanism, liberalism, capitalism, the free market and criminality, the church needs to be on the alert because the gospel is under attack. See Augustine Musopole, *Singing and Dancing for God*.

¹³ J. Quayesi-Amakye, "God in Ghanaian Pentecostal Songs," 146-7.

The Presbyterian God and Tumbuka Religiosity

Both Tumbuka traditional religion (TTR) and Malawian Presbyterian theology have well-defined and clear ideas about the being and nature of God.¹⁴ TTR ideas about God such as the healer, sustainer, shepherd, protector, Lord, pastor, and saviour of creation and his people are inherent in both Malawian Presbyterianism and Tumbuka religiosity. Stephen Kauta Msiska wrote:

Throughout the centuries there have been attempts to cut off the religious past as in the time of the second century when the heresiarch Marcion attempted to sever Christianity completely from the Old Testament. When the Christian gospel was first preached, it revolutionized the religious attitudes among the people of Malawi. Everything that was being done in connection with religion was suddenly branded as superstition, paganism, and Satanism by most people who came from the west bringing in the gospel of Jesus Christ, simply because of the two different backgrounds.¹⁵

There is that connecting nexus between Christianity and traditional belief systems according to Msiska and trying to demystify one element means affecting the other cultural belief system. Within the Malawian Presbyterian hymns, there is

¹⁴ See further T. Cullen Young, "The Idea of God in Northern Nyasaland," in Edwin W. Smith (ed), *African Ideas of God*, London: Edinburgh House, 1950; T. Cullen Young, *Notes on the Speech and History of the Tumbuka-Henga Peoples*, Livingstonia: Mission Press, 1923, repr. London: RTS, 1932; T. Cullen Young, *Notes on the History of the Tumbuka-Kamanga Peoples in the Northern Province of Nyasaland*, 2nd ed., London: Frank Cass, 1970 [London: RTS, 1932]; Saulos Nyirenda, "History of the Tumbuka-Henga People," *Bantu Studies* 5 (1931), 1-75; Silas S. Ncozana, *The Spirit Dimension in African Christianity: A Pastoral Study among the Tumbuka People of Northern Malawi*, Zomba: Kachere, 2002, 100ff.

¹⁵ Stephen K. Msiska, *Golden Buttons: Christianity and Traditional Religion among the Tumbuka*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1997, 19.

an employment of both the personal and attributive names of God in expressing the psalmists' concept of God. Hence, such personal names as *Mlengi* (God, the Creator of all things and God who alone is the Great One), *Mdalili* (the Dependable One), *Chiuta* (Creator), and *Mlengi* (Creator) are featured in many hymns. These are not biblical names but traditional ones. The Tumbuka concept of God as *Chiuta*¹⁶ which resonates in Malawian Presbyterian songs not only sees God as a compassionate, merciful, and loving divine parent but also as the *Mdalili*, the dependable one, *M'bwezi* the greatest satisfier and lover of humanity. To the Presbyterian, God's mercy, compassionate, and love outdo a mother's care in that he provides for the poor in their miserable and hopeless estate, surprising them with unexpected miracles of sustenance, help, provision, and deliverance by Christ Jesus.

Similarly, Malawian Presbyterians share the common Tumbuka traditional belief that God provides for his creation. God's providence demonstrates his goodness towards the whole universe. God's goodness is seen in his provision of life, sunshine, rain, water, good health, fertility of people, animals and plants, provision of food, and protection. Hence God is the giver of things, water giver, healer, helper, guard, and source.¹⁷ This belief, common to both traditional religion and Presbyterianism provides Malawians with the motivation to pray to God

¹⁶ Among the Tumbuka, *Chiuta* is one of the divine names of God and is used with reverence. Similarly, the Chewa use *Chauta* as their divine name for God. For more information about the sacredness of the name, see Winston R. Kawale, "Translating 'Lord Jesus' as 'Bwana Yesu,'" in Kenneth R. Ross and Mzee Hermann Yokaniah Mvula (eds), *Theology in Malawi: Prospects for the 2020s*, Zomba: Kachere, 2021, 102.

¹⁷ John Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, Oxford: Heinemann, 1975, 52.

for the supply of their needs, protection, security, and rescue from danger and adversities.

Furthermore, in both the Malawian Presbyterian songs and TTR there is the belief that God rules over the universe. Ideas such as God being the king, governor, ruler, chief, lord, judge, and distributor are prevalent in both. In both cases God's sovereignty implies there is nowhere in the universe which is not under his control. Similarly, there is nothing that can rebel against God. It is strongly believed that God's rulership is wrought in perfect justice that makes him rescue the oppressed and punish the wrongdoer. Consequently, God is perceived as arbiter of the world.¹⁸

In spite of these statements about the connecting nexus between Malawian Presbyterianism and TTR, there are some differences between the two. For instance, in TTR it is the spirits and ancestors who intercede between humanity and the Supreme Being (God). Offerings and libations in form of prayers are administered to them to affect cosmological equilibrium in one's favour. Usually, these spirits act as the go-between connecting *Chiuta* (God) and the immediate siblings who are not the actual recipients of the prayers and offerings. In the Malawian Presbyterian hymns, these spirits are demystified as entities of no use and powerless to help humanity in times of need. Any access to God is not by the spirits, rather humans gain access to God by Jesus Christ who is both Lord and Saviour. On top of that, the means of access to God is by the blood of Christ and not food or animal sacrifices. Jesus, through his vicarious death, is the surrogate victim who makes a sacrifice sufficient for the remission of sins. To the Malawian Presbyterian,

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 52.

then, God is not aloof from humans. He, through Jesus Christ, is our Immanuel and his Son's blood is sufficient to remove all the immanent fears of the believers. Therefore, a reversion to the "gods of the fathers" is sin.¹⁹

In addition to this, the general perception of the traditional worldview is that God has resigned and has left everything in the hands of the demigods, ancestors, and other spirit members to transact the spiritual business. Against this backdrop, sacrifices are made for cleansing and mediatorial intentions. Therefore, God is viewed as distant, accessible only through the mediation of these spiritual entities. On top of that, God's fatherhood or motherhood is perceived in relation to his care for the whole of the inhabited cosmos. Even though this can be the case, God is utterly Other and can be reached only through mediating spiritual forces. However, Malawian Presbyterians invalidate this worldview through their hymns, which portray God not as reserved and distant but as very active and immanent in the affairs of humanity. God's friendship and compassionate love are made known through his vicarious offering of his only Son for the salvation of the world. He is the sole creator of the universe and everything in it. However, this mysterious act of creation out of nothing does not mean all humans are children of God in the sense of intimately knowing God as their Father. They become children and heirs in the Kingdom when they accept Jesus into their lives as their Lord and personal Saviour. Such acceptance guarantees them to enjoy the promised benefits and blessings from above.

¹⁹ Osadolor Imasogie, *Guidelines for Christian Theology in Africa: Theological Perspectives in Africa*, Achimota: ACP Press, 1995, 259.

Moreover, it can be argued that both worldviews have good understandings about God as a God who takes delight in loving his creation. John Mbiti, in studying the beliefs of the pre-Christian Gikuyu of Kenya, concluded that they knew God as a God of love. He wrote:

Two authors record that “before Christian missions had ever been heard of,” the Gikuyu believed that “God was a God of love, but those who disobeyed him he punished by famine, disease, and death.” One informant is reported to have told them that “God loves everyone, but if people are poor, or if a warrior loses his wife and child, then he says God does not love him.” Another writer says God loves or hates according to people’s behaviour.²⁰

The Gikuyu concept of God’s love clearly demonstrates the cultural identity of many Africans. Such a concept would validate that God’s love is absent and powerless when there is evil or suffering on people’s lives. To the contrary though, Africans believe that God keeps watch over his creation. God’s acts of providence and pastoral care are often expressed through proverbs. The Tumbuka say *Chiinta ni katakwe* (“God is like a huge luggage”), *Chiinta wakupereka ufu kuti ise tiphike chakurya* (“God provides flour so that we cook”). God’s unwavering providence, which is believed to be successful always, is likened to his *El Shaddai*. In his *Introduction to African Religion*, Mbiti notes that Africans conceive God as perfectly good towards his people. Sayings like “Rejoice, God never does wrong to people,” “God causes to pour down rain on our fields and the sun to shine,” and “God is good because he has never withdrawn from us the good things he gave us,” all underscore Africans’ unwavering belief in God’s goodness.²¹

²⁰ John S. Mbiti, *Concepts of God in Africa*, London: SPCK, 1970, 33.

²¹ John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 55.

Linked to God's goodness is his compassionate and merciful attributes. Africans do not retreat to subscribe to his special unwavering favours that suddenly become part of them. Thus, when Tumbuka people want to express the overwhelming act of charity received, they would say, "*yewo Yesu, yewo Chiuta wane, vyose ivi ni wezi wa Chiuta!*" ("Thanks heaven, thank you God, it is all by the mercies or grace of you my loving God"). It is also believed that God's mercy and gentleness are revealed to all creation but more especially to humankind. Indeed, these ideas about the mercy and gentleness of God are shared in Malawian Presbyterian hymns. Yet the Presbyterian understanding of the mercy of God goes beyond the material or existential dimension to embrace the spiritual dimensions. Presbyterians view God as love which is epitomized in the vicarious death of Christ. God's love to all humans limited by love itself. In other words, God's love is unconditional. The full-fledged love of God is revealed through the love found in Jesus Christ.

Whereas in TTR God is depicted as transacting his authority through the spirits and ancestors in the daily affairs of humans, Malawian Presbyterian hymns portray Jesus as the divine judge who judges with authority, fairness and justice. Jesus' verdicts are based on his kingship which is closely attached to his being a good shepherd of Israel. In Old Testament tradition, and in the prophetic writings in particular, the language of king was metaphorically used to mean a "shepherd," a word that had the initial understanding of the task of tending for the flock by issuing justice and protection rather than exploitation, oppression, and abuse.²² It is in this spectrum that Jesus aligns himself with

²² Christopher, J.H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004, 122.

the oppressed, the poor and the marginalized by rescuing them from all forms of injustices perpetrated by the unjust judges. The justice of God, according to Quayesi-Amakye, may be delivered on this inhabited earth within the benchmark of both religious worldviews.²³ Nevertheless, in TTR it is understood that God is slow in discharging justice and punishing the wicked. In Malawian Presbyterian hymns, however, we find that what is perceived to be a suspension of God's act of justice does not necessarily suggest God's resignation. Even though justice is delayed here and now, it will be discharged in the life hereafter.

Conclusion

Malawian Presbyterian hymns are full of rich concepts about the supreme and just God. To Malawian Presbyterians, God is the source of all things, the basis of realities, our existence, and life here and now. He is a caring God, a loving parent, compassionate divine being, good friend, saving father, faithful and trustworthy God in all avenues of life. He is not aloof and not far from humans but very close to humankind. He created the universe and keeps on creating. God is the Other and does not entertain unbecoming behaviour. His specific revelation is through his Son, Jesus Christ, and his general revelation is through the creation. Many Presbyterian ideas of God are synthesized with those of the traditional Tumbuka religion. At the same time, there are discontinuities between the traditional Tumbuka understanding and the Christian vision expressed in Presbyterian hymnology. Malawian Presbyterians disclaim the use of traditional intermediary roles of the spirits and ancestral veneration. Instead they look to Jesus Christ as the mediator

²³ J. Quayesi-Amakye, "God in Ghanaian Pentecostal Songs," 150.

who provides them with direct access to God himself. The CCAP is a singing church. It is in its hymns that one can feel the beating pulse that gives life to the church. If we concentrate only on structures and governance, on institutions and infrastructure, we could miss the core reality that the CCAP is a spiritual movement, a revival movement. It is in its hymn singing that we touch the heart of Malawian Presbyterian identity. In the Malawian Presbyterian experience of church life, hymns are taken with utmost seriousness because they express the inner spirituality from which the CCAP draws its authentic life.

17. CCAP Evangelism

Brian Theu

Introduction

Evangelism holds a central and transformative role in the life of the CCAP. Within its hallowed halls and congregational gatherings, the spirit of evangelism is not merely a theological concept but a living, breathing force that propels the CCAP's mission and vision. Evangelism, at its core, represents the heart of Christian faith—an unwavering commitment to spreading the Gospel, sharing the good news of Jesus Christ, and nurturing spiritual growth. In the context of the CCAP, this noble pursuit takes on a distinctive character, deeply rooted in African culture, spirituality, and community. It embodies a wholistic approach, touching not only individuals' spiritual lives but also addressing societal, educational, and developmental needs.

This chapter will delve into the profound significance of evangelism within the CCAP, exploring its historical foundations, contemporary expressions, and the transformative impact it has on congregations and communities across several African nations. I will illuminate the various facets of evangelism as it is practiced, celebrated, and embraced within this dynamic ecclesiastical body, shedding light on the enduring commitment to faith, service, and community upliftment that characterizes the CCAP's approach to evangelism. In this chapter, I will first survey the evangelistic work of the European missionaries from whose work the CCAP originated. Secondly, I will examine contemporary forms of evangelism practiced by the CCAP.

Missionary Models of Evangelism

Missionaries associated with the CCAP developed a variety of evangelism models over the years as part of their mission to spread the Christian faith and connect with diverse communities. The idea of establishing a united African church was a driving force behind these missionaries' efforts to emphasize and incorporate evangelization into all facets of church activities and initiatives. It is worth noting that CCAP missionaries adjusted their evangelism models to align with the specific cultural and social contexts of the regions they served. These models exemplified a comprehensive approach to evangelism, merging spiritual ministry with practical outreach and community engagement.

Integrating Evangelism with Medical and Social Services

Many missionaries associated with the CCAP were involved in medical and social services as a means of evangelism. They provided healthcare, education, and social support to disadvantaged communities while sharing the love of Christ. This model aimed to address both physical and spiritual needs simultaneously. Robin Horton argued that “missionaries who embarked on the process of conversion of Africans to Christianity took the direct and indirect general methodologies which resulted in a multifaceted interplay of diverse impulse and historical circumstances of formulation of one church in Africa.”¹ In Horton’s view, missionaries used distinctive tactics and concepts in general methodologies of converting Africans and planting many churches in Africa for the purpose of introducing one united African church. In the assessment of Esther

¹ Robin Horton, “African Conversion,” *Africa* 41/2 (1971), 93.

Mombo, “the rapid growth of Christianity evidenced in Africa today is the result, to a great extent, of mission and evangelism conceived and implemented during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.”² Mombo argues that evangelistic activities of missionaries from Europe and North America have caused the numerical strength of the church to grow by leaps and bounds in Africa. The CCAP is no exception – the rapid growth in membership and planted churches can be attributed to the work done by Scottish and South African missionaries who mainstreamed evangelism with the educational, medical and industrial services offered at their mission stations. Their work was in line with David Bosch’s concept of evangelism: “the centrality of evangelism is witnessing, verbal proclamation of the gospel of Christ, focusing on the risen Lord, extension of an invitation of people to the church, a response and the involvement of local communities.”³ Missionaries established mission schools, mission hospitals and industrial sites in mission stations out of which the whole communities were evangelized with the idea of reaching many Africans with the gospel to create one united church in Africa. While a holistic approach was taken, evangelism was generally understood as winning people for Christ and gaining members for the growth of the church.

² Esther Mombo, “Mission and Evangelism,” in Kenneth R. Ross, J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu and Todd M. Johnson (eds), *Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 376-85 [376].

³ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991, 66.

Community Engagement Model

CCAP missionaries often emphasized building strong relationships within the communities they served. This model involved actively participating in community events, assisting with local development projects, and establishing trust and credibility within the community before sharing the Christian message. This community engagement version of evangelism included initiatives in education, health and social services which were highly valued by African converts. Africans embraced Christianity not solely for salvation, but also to access various social services such as education, Western medicine, and modernization. African converts, through community involvement, embraced the gospel's teachings, some Western cultural values, the acquisition of social services, a new way of life, resulting in progress and modernization. Thus, the conversion to Christianity represented more than just the adoption of a new religion for Africans; it marked their entry into a realm of education, healthcare, technology, improved farming practices, and the acquisition of valuable knowledge through community engagement facilitated by missionaries. The community engagement model encouraged African parents to urge their children to embrace Christianity, as it offered spiritual, developmental, and physical transformation within African societies. This approach acknowledges that effective evangelism often commences by addressing the practical needs of the people.

Bible-Based Teaching and Discipleship

CCAP missionaries prioritized teaching the Bible and nurturing discipleship among new believers. This model involved in-depth Bible studies, small group discussions, and one-on-one mentoring to help individuals grow in their understanding of

the Christian faith and develop a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. In this context, according to Mombo, “the activities of the missionaries and their early converts led to the establishment of churches, schools, hospitals and other institutions that sought to meet the needs of people in the society.”⁴ Mombo suggests that the establishment of in-depth Bible-based teaching and the introduction of Sunday Schools, Hearer classes and Catechumen classes led to rapid growth of the church. Missionaries emphasized that new converts must attend church classes before attaining full communicant membership. The main purpose of putting African converts through a lengthy and rigorous process of church classes before admitting them to baptism was to produce serious Christians who were deeply grounded in the faith. It was hoped that such true African Christians would widen the evangelistic endeavour and become part of the universal Christian church. Furthermore, missionaries arranged different evangelistic activities and lessons for new converts which could adapt biblical stories and parables into a format that resonated with the local culture, making it easier for people to understand and relate to the message.

Church Planting Model

The church planting model of evangelism is a method of spreading the gospel that involves establishing new churches in areas where there are none. Peter Wagner explains that “the single most effective evangelistic methodology under heaven is planting new churches.”⁵ In Wagner's perspective,

⁴ Esther Mombo, “Mission and Evangelism,” 376.

⁵ Peter C. Wagner, *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest: A Comprehensive Guide*, Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1990.

the church planting model of evangelism is regarded as the most practical and efficient approach, emphasizing the significance and influence of the Holy Spirit in the establishment of new worship centres. Wagner emphasized that when individuals choose to follow Jesus, their commitment must be complemented by integrating them into a local congregation; otherwise, such decisions may remain superficial gestures. Missionaries who established the CCAP frequently initiated the formation of new churches in regions devoid of existing Christian congregations. This method has proven to be an effective means of fulfilling the Great Commission, the mandate to disciple all nations. The church planting model engages missionaries in activities such as organizing worship services, training local leaders, and fostering a sustainable Christian community within the targeted region.

Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding evangelism is a distinctive approach to promoting peace that draws from religious teachings and principles. Joseph L. Allen asserts that, “peacebuilding evangelism is a tool for promoting peace and justice, offering practical guidance for individuals and religious communities seeking to make a positive impact in their societies.”⁶

In the context of Allen's perspectives, peacebuilding evangelism promotes active participation of individuals and religious communities in efforts aimed at peacebuilding through the promotion of justice, reconciliation, and non-violent conflict resolution. This perspective acknowledges the constructive

⁶ Joseph L. Allen, *Peacebuilding Evangelism: A Disciple's Guide to Justice and Reconciliation*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015.

potential of religion and urges religious leaders to play a proactive role in addressing societal conflicts. Peacebuilding evangelism emphasizes the significance of faith-based initiatives in fostering a more peaceful and equitable global society. Interfaith dialogue evangelism is a critical tool for fostering understanding, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence among people of different religious backgrounds.

According to John H. Hayes, “interfaith dialogue evangelism allows individuals and communities to engage in open and respectful conversations about their faiths, beliefs, and practices.”⁷ Hayes believed that engaging in such dialogues can help people debunk misconceptions, diminish prejudice, and establish bridges of empathy and cooperation. Interfaith dialogue is also essential in addressing and resolving conflicts rooted in religious disparities, ultimately contributing to global peace and harmony. The missionaries who founded the CCAP were dedicated to interfaith dialogue and peace-building evangelistic activities, with the aim of nurturing comprehension and promoting peaceful coexistence among converts from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds, as well as with communities comprising diverse and challenging-to-understand individuals. These missionaries prioritized forming connections with individuals of differing beliefs and customs, all the while respectfully sharing the Christian perspective.

⁷ John H. Hayes, *Religions in Conflict: Ideology, Cultural Contact, and Conversion in the Early Colonial Americas*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Contemporary Expression of Evangelism

The contemporary expression of evangelism refers to the additional modern approaches to evangelism which are current and relevant to the present time to spreading the Christian faith within the context of the CCAP. Adapting evangelism to contemporary contexts is vital in order to make Christianity accessible and relatable to people in the present day, ensuring that the message remains relevant and meaningful in the face of changing cultural norms and societal challenges. Contemporary approaches to evangelism within the CCAP must evolve and adjust to the ever-changing cultural and social landscape. These modern evangelistic methods can be customized and amalgamated to align with the distinct requirements and cultural nuances of various communities and individuals. Present-day evangelism increasingly embraces a holistic and relational approach, acknowledging that its effectiveness extends beyond the mere delivery of a message. It encompasses the creation of significant connections and the resolution of people's real-life concerns and inquiries. We now consider several contemporary evangelism models that need to be implemented to foster spiritual development and promote the growth of churches within the CCAP.

Relational Evangelism

Relational evangelism is a term that describes a way of sharing the gospel that is based on building relationships with people and meeting them where they are in their spiritual journey. Wayne McDill explains “that relational evangelism provides

biblical guidance which leads non-believers to Christ.”⁸ In accordance with McDill's viewpoint, by embracing relational evangelism, the CCAP closely adheres to the biblical principles of Gospel sharing. This approach mirrors that of Jesus, who frequently established meaningful connections with individuals before imparting spiritual truths. They are also committed to expanding their outreach to local communities, spreading the love and truth of Christ. The CCAP seeks to spread the gospel of Christ to people from diverse cultures, traditions, and backgrounds while upholding their dignity and individuality. It is not solely focused on preaching the gospel but is equally committed to exemplifying it through acts of service, justice, and compassion. It remains receptive to learning from others and sharing their own faith narratives, while fervently striving to disciple others who, in turn, become disciple-makers. The member Synods collaborate in their outreach efforts, strengthening the bonds within the denomination and collectively conveying the message of salvation more effectively.

Relational evangelism serves as a fundamental pillar of the CCAP's outreach endeavours. This approach not only adheres to biblical principles but also upholds cultural norms, fosters trust, and facilitates holistic ministry. By placing a strong emphasis on cultivating relationships within its Synods and actively engaging with the community, the CCAP can effectively accomplish its mission of spreading the Gospel and nurturing the spiritual well-being of both individuals and communities within its sphere of influence.

⁸ Wayne McDill, *Making Friends for Christ: A Practical Approach to Relational Evangelism*, North Charleston: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013.

Digital Evangelism

In today's ever-changing world, technology has become an integral component of our daily lives. It is imperative for the CCAP to acknowledge the importance of harnessing the potential of digital evangelism in furthering its mission and expanding its audience. Therefore, it is crucial for the Church to explore the realm of digital evangelism, encompassing the use of websites, social media, podcasts, videos, and online communities to enrich spiritual growth and extend outreach efforts. Embracing digital evangelism within the CCAP will enable congregations to transcend geographical limitations, reaching individuals in the farthest corners of the globe. As technology continues to advance, the CCAP can remain at the forefront of innovative ministry practices. By remaining open to emerging digital trends and platforms, the church can effectively establish connections with future generations.

Through online platforms, the church can disseminate sermons, conduct worship services, and share inspirational content with a global audience, thus enabling the church to fulfil its mission to "go and make disciples of all nations." Given that the younger generation is deeply immersed in the digital world, embracing digital evangelism strategies allows the CCAP to engage with youth on their terms and provides a platform for meaningful discussions about faith and spirituality. This approach makes the church more relevant to younger generations, fostering a sense of community and encouraging active participation, prayer requests, and the sharing of testimonies, Bible studies, devotionals, and educational materials. Over time, this empowers individuals to deepen their understanding of the faith and experience spiritual growth at their own pace, aiding them in becoming mature followers of Christ.

Therefore, digital evangelism is not merely an option; it is a necessity if the CCAP is to accomplish its mission. Embracing technology allows the church to expand its outreach, engage with various audiences, and foster spiritual growth among its members. In an ever-changing world, digital evangelism remains a powerful instrument, equipping the CCAP to continue its mission of spreading the Gospel and making a constructive impact on society.

Cultural Engagement Evangelism

This model encourages Christians to engage with contemporary culture, art, and media to find points of connection for sharing the Gospel. According to Mligo, “evangelism in Africa must be based on biblical faith and speaks to African soul or is relevant to Africans, expressed in categories of thought which arise out of the philosophy of African people.”⁹ In relation to Mligo’s views, cultural engagement evangelism tailors its approach to the cultural context, using language, symbols, and practices that resonate with the local population which involves analysing and addressing cultural issues from a Christian perspective. In this line, cultural engagement evangelism is significant within the CCAP as it will recognize the importance of understanding and engaging Christian faith with the cultural context in which the church operates.

In today's rapidly changing world, this approach will ensure that the church remains relevant and relatable to the communities it serves. The CCAP will enable its members to address

⁹ Elia Shabani Mligo, *Rediscovering Jesus in Our Places: Contextual Theology and Its Relevance to Contemporary Africa*, Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2020, 115.

contemporary issues and challenges, making its message more accessible and applicable to people's lives such as health and traditional healing, witchcraft pastoral questions, theodicy and ancestral spirits. In so doing, the CCAP will be well equipped to serve a diverse and multicultural community. Cultural engagement evangelism will allow the church to bridge the gap between different cultures and demographics, making it easier to reach and connect with a broad spectrum of people. Generally, this inclusivity promotes unity and diversity within the congregation, and acknowledges and respects indigenous traditions and customs. By doing so, the church can build trust and credibility within local communities. The CCAP General Assembly will demonstrate a willingness to learn from and appreciate the cultural heritage of its members, fostering a sense of belonging and acceptance.

Through cultural engagement evangelism, the CCAP can actively participate in community life. This involvement goes beyond traditional religious practices and extends to community development, social justice initiatives, and other activities that address the specific needs and concerns of the local population. This approach helps the church become a valuable and respected community partner. By incorporating cultural engagement into its evangelism efforts, the CCAP can work towards achieving lasting and sustainable impact. Instead of relying solely on short-term conversions, this approach aims to establish enduring relationships and to promote spiritual growth within the community, leading to a more profound and lasting influence.

Therefore, cultural engagement evangelism is significant for the CCAP as it enables the church to adapt to the complexities of the modern world, reach a diverse audience, respect local

cultures, communicate effectively, integrate into communities, and work towards long-term spiritual impact. It aligns with the mission of the church to spread the Gospel while respecting and engaging with the cultural dynamics of its congregants.

Invitational Evangelism

Invitational evangelism refers to a specific approach to spreading the Christian faith within the denomination and its broader community. Invitational evangelism centres on inviting friends, family members, and acquaintances to church services, events, or small group gatherings where they can hear the gospel in a welcoming and non-threatening environment. Invitational evangelism within the context of the CCAP places a strong emphasis on the act of extending invitations to individuals, encouraging them to explore Christianity, attend church services, and actively engage in the life of the Christian community. This evangelistic approach will involve the active participation of various entities within the CCAP, including Synods, Presbyteries, congregations, elders, and dedicated individual members. John Pobee suggested that, “spirituality is fundamentally sensitive and focused obedience to the will of God in particular context and situations, nurtured by the word of God.”¹⁰ In alignment with Pobee's perspective, invitational evangelism centres on the practice of extending warm and heartfelt invitations to individuals who may not yet be adherents of the Christian faith or who may have strayed from the church or their faith. In the pursuit of disseminating the Christian

¹⁰ John Pobee, “Worship and Spirituality,” in Kenneth R. Ross, J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu and Todd M. Johnson (eds), *Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017, 340-51 [347].

gospel, this approach entails sharing the teachings of Jesus Christ, inviting people to embrace the Christian faith, and nurturing their spiritual development. This approach can manifest in various ways, including preaching, teaching, engaging in personal conversations, and conducting community outreach.

The primary objective of this evangelism model remains to encourage individuals to actively participate in various church activities, such as worship services, Bible studies, prayer groups, and community events. These activities are strategically designed to facilitate comprehension and acceptance of the Christian faith through open and meaningful dialogue and educational efforts. Mombo observes that “Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa was founded in the context of religious plurality which caused sometimes different Christian traditions to be bitter rivals and at other times at peace with each other.”¹¹ In this context, the concept of invitational evangelism within the CCAP will revolve around the act of extending invitations, cultivating relationships, and sharing the Christian faith in a manner that is both inviting and devoid of coercion. Its importance is underscored by its potential to promote inclusiveness, enhance community involvement, foster spiritual development, facilitate church expansion, and encourage a renewal of faith within the CCAP and the broader community it serves.

Transformative Evangelism

Transformative evangelism holds the potential to revolutionize the spiritual lives of Christians within the CCAP, while simultaneously addressing adverse cultural influences and adapting

¹¹ Esther Mombo, “Mission and Evangelism,” 378–79.

Christianity to the unique cultural context of Central Africa. This approach has the capacity to usher in substantial transformation within the CCAP by reshaping how the church interacts with its members and the broader community.

In this case transformational Christianity interprets the gospel through a cohesive lens focused on the transformation of individuals, relationships, and institutions. Its priority lies not so much in theological or political correctness but in its efficacy in transforming both the believer and the world they inhabit. Elia Shabani Mligo contends that it is imperative for the church to adapt its evangelism strategies in Africa in order to foster genuine African Christian conversions. This enhanced approach to evangelism should empower followers to comprehend the most effective ways to communicate Christianity within the rich tapestry of African cultural contexts. Christianity must address the deepest needs and fears of the African converts. The church must reach out to Africans with the gospel of Jesus Christ and provide spiritual, pastoral and physical care for the people.

The CCAP ought to contextualize evangelism so that Christians can understand Christ in their own local situations and context. Diane Stinton suggests that, “each cultural context has to come up with its own understanding of who Jesus Christ is for them in their given cultural, religious and political reality.”¹² Evangelistic activities must produce Christians who comprehend the need of Christ in their own life’s context and Christianity will not be experienced and regarded as a foreign religion and the religion of the white man. The CCAP has produced many

¹² Diane Stinton, “African Contribution to Christology,” in Laurenti Magesa (ed), *African Theology Comes of Age*, Nairobi: Paulines, 2010, 18.

church members through its evangelistic activities but in some cases their understanding of Christianity and Christ by some of its converts is contrary to the biblical understanding of Christ as only Lord and Saviour. Converts play double standards by adhering to Christian norms while resorting to African traditional culture and religion in times of crisis to deal with problems that they think Christianity cannot address.

Transformative evangelism focuses not just on converting individuals to Christianity but also on nurturing spiritual growth and maturity. Within the CCAP, this approach can lead to a more spiritually vibrant and committed congregation. In this respect, Mary Getui argued that, “it is important to acknowledge that Christianity is an outward-looking and proselytising movement that demands an immediate change in both perception and action as people are converted.”¹³ Getui lucidly explained that Christianity places an expectation on its African converts to forsake their native cultural beliefs and instead to embrace the religious and cultural norms that have been influenced by Western ideologies, often disregarding the intrinsic value of African culture. Consequently, certain adherents have encountered challenges in reconciling Christianity with their cultural and religious heritage, especially when Christianity becomes intertwined with Western culture.

As a result, some converts have come to perceive Christianity merely as a superficial code of conduct, which has led many of them to overlook the profound implications that Christian teachings hold for their daily lives. This dynamic has positioned

¹³ Mary Getui, “Faith and Culture,” in Kenneth R. Ross, J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu and Todd M. Johnson (eds), *Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017, 329-39 [333–34].

converts at the crossroads of Christianity, a foreign religion, and African traditional religion, giving rise to a complex interplay of religious syncretism. Joyce Mlenga termed it as “dual religiosity and defined it as a practice when one does both religions either to supplement or to complement the other.”¹⁴ In regard to Mlenga’s perception, converts practise two separate religions concurrently. Transformative evangelism must integrate Christian doctrines with some useful African cultural values to construct an authentic Christian church. Christians in Africa will then courageously express themselves as Africans and as Christians while not returning to African traditional beliefs in times of crisis.

The contemporary formative evangelistic dimension should encourage its converts to rekindle their understanding of Christianity and Christ in their daily lives and local contexts. In its evangelistic efforts, the CCAP should prioritize the integration, assimilation, and incorporation of African cultural elements into the church. Evangelism within the CCAP context must evolve beyond the missionary oriented approach towards a strategy that promotes both increased membership and financial sustainability. Effective transformative evangelism can lead to an expansion of the church's membership, as people witness the church making a tangible difference in their lives and communities, making them more receptive to its message and mission. This transformation aims to help Christianity better resonate with the beliefs and lifestyles of African converts. Evangelism should work towards cultivating unity within the Synods of the CCAP, bridging doctrinal, cultural, and ethnic

¹⁴ Joyce Mlenga, *Dual Religiosity in Northern Malawi: Ngonde Christians and African Traditional Religion*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2016, 11.

gaps. In this context, transformative evangelism frequently promotes inclusivity and unity among various groups. Within the CCAP, this approach can foster increased harmony and mutual understanding among distinct congregations and demographics. The African church should demonstrate compassionate care for the less fortunate and most vulnerable individuals within both the church and the broader community, refraining from any involvement in promoting violence. The church must actively ensure the rights of these vulnerable individuals are upheld and not infringed upon.

Furthermore, transformative evangelism must cause CCAP adherents to understand and respect global Christian perspectives and insights that will enable them to express their faith in a way that builds up the community. According to David Singh and Bernard Farr, “evangelism must focus on Christian orientation and vision of the community that accords with the basic principles of the gospel.”¹⁵ In accordance with Singh and Farr's perspective, converts should value the inherent dignity of every individual, actively seek the shared moral values within their community that transcend individual interests, safeguard the rights of both individuals and marginalized groups, particularly the vulnerable minorities, uphold the sanctity of the environment as the legacy for both current and forthcoming generations, and foster a sense of global unity that transcends national, racial, economic, and ideological boundaries. The CCAP will have a crucial role in directing its members and the wider community toward a reconnection with their spiritual, physical, economic,

¹⁵ David Singh and Bernard C. Farr, *Christianity and Education Shaping Christian Thinking in Context*, Oxford: Regnum, 2011, 237.

and social needs, ultimately enabling a profound influence on society.

Transformative evangelism underscores the importance of becoming actively involved with the community. The CCAP has the potential to have a significant impact by extending its support to marginalized groups and tackling pressing social challenges like poverty, education, and healthcare. This effort can cultivate a favourable perception of the church in society and promote goodwill. Certainly, transformative evangelism holds the potential to significantly influence the CCAP by promoting spiritual growth, community engagement, inclusivity, and social justice. It enables the church to fulfil its mission in a manner that resonates with and matters to its congregation, all while contributing to its enduring sustainability and expansion.

Conclusion

As we commemorate the centenary of the CCAP, we also pay tribute to the missionaries who originally introduced the Gospel, laid the foundation for the churches that eventually formed the CCAP and engaged in effective evangelistic endeavour. We deeply value the pivotal role our ancestors played in hearing, comprehending, embracing, and actively propagating the gospel. Undoubtedly, the expansion of the Church stands as a testament to their dedicated work and the contributions of both missionaries and African converts.

The centennial celebration of the CCAP's establishment should inspire us to embrace new approaches to evangelism, complementing the strategies employed by our early missionaries. This fresh evangelistic perspective ought to seamlessly connect Christianity with African cultural contexts, thereby positioning Christianity as an indigenous African faith rather

than a foreign missionary religion. As the CCAP progresses, it does so with the hope and heartfelt prayer that its evangelistic efforts will persist in inspiring, transforming, and bringing spiritual renewal to people and communities across the globe. This stands as a testament to the unshakable faith of its members and their steadfast dedication to spreading the love of Christ worldwide.

18. CCAP Reconciliation

Isaac Kachitenji Chibowa

For many years, but especially since the early 2000s, the CCAP Synods of Livingstonia and Nkhoma have not been on good terms with each other due to the border wrangle between them. Each Synod claims that the other Synod has encroached into their area of Jurisdiction.¹ As of now, Livingstonia Synod has planted congregations in the jurisdiction of CCAP Nkhoma Synod and Nkhoma Synod has also planted congregations in the jurisdiction of the CCAP Synod of Livingstonia.² This conduct causes disorder in the CCAP, a denomination that was initially formed to bring unity among Presbyterians in Malawi.

The Genesis of the Border Wrangle

From 1875 until 1889 Livingstonia was the only Mission working in the area we know today as the Northern and Central Regions of Malawi. When Robert Laws of Livingstonia welcomed missionaries from the Dutch Reformed Church Mission (DRCM) in South Africa in 1889, he recommended that they focus their attention on the Central Region. This led them to establish their initial base at Mvera in Dowa District and they gradually extended their influence to surrounding areas. By 1904 both Missions agreed that it would be helpful to demarcate the territory for which they were responsible. Rev W. Murray and A.J. Liebenberg of the DRCM and Rev George Prentice and M.H. Henderson of Livingstonia

¹ Isaac K. Chibowa, "Reconciliation in Light of Pauline Theology: the Case of the Border Wrangle between the Synod of Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian," MA, Mzuzu University, 2017.

² Ibid.

Mission met at the village of Chinkwiri on 29 July 1904.³ They agreed that, “From the highest point, the boundary starts from Chipata Mountain in Zambia/Mchinji and reaching the mouth of Rusa River in Mchinji from which point the boundary is the watershed between Rusa and Bua Rivers and passing Kaphirintiwa across the Rusa on to Kungwinyemba.”⁴ Had this original boundary remained, there would have been no border disputes between the Synod of Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synod.⁵

However, the original boundary changed in 1923 when Livingstonia Mission handed over its Chilanga and Tamanda Missions to the DRCM. This arrangement demonstrated the good relations and mutual confidence between the two Missions but unfortunately it marked the beginning of misunderstandings on the exact boundary between the two Synods. It is important to note that the handover was initiated and organized by the leadership of Livingstonia Mission.⁶ They had requested the DRCM leadership if they could accept to take over the administration of Chilanga and Tamanda two years before the handover took place. After lengthy discussions, the DRCM council agreed to accept the offer of transfer of Chilanga and Tamanda Missions.⁷

³ Ibid.

⁴ Report of the Commission of Inquiry appointed by the CCAP General Assembly standing committee to investigate the border dispute between the Synods of Livingstonia and Nkhoma, 2006.

⁵ Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity: A History of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian as a Federative Denomination (1924-2018)*, Carlisle: Langham, 2019, 134.

⁶ Report of the Commission of Inquiry appointed by the CCAP General Assembly Standing Committee to investigate the border dispute between the Synods of Livingstonia and Nkhoma, 2006.

⁷ Ibid.

The handover exercise was conducted by Revs J.A. Retief, C. Murray and W. F. van de Riet of the DRCM and Dr Laws, Mr C. Stuart and Dr Prentice of Livingstonia.⁸

Munyenembe notes that the handover exercise took place at the same time as Nkhoma Mission was invited to join the CCAP.⁹ The Livingstonia and Blantyre Missions looked at the two initiatives as part of the whole movement to bring Presbyterians in Malawi into closer cooperation and unity. However, the DRCM saw fit to separate the two issues in order to deal with them sequentially. When Livingstonia Mission handed over ownership of the two mission stations, it was now important to re-demarcate the boundary between the two Missions in view of the new situation.¹⁰ However, it was agreed and recorded that the new border between Livingstonia and Nkhoma missions would follow the tribal boundary as represented by the schools occupied by Kasungu and Loudon, thus separating the two missions but also the ethnic groups in the concerned area.¹¹

J.L. Pretorius says that this was the final stage of a movement to assign all the Chewa people to the DRCM and the Ngoni/Tumbuka to Livingstonia.¹² Scholarly research in the area by Felix Chingota shows that after the end of

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity*.

¹⁰ Isaac K. Chibowa, "Reconciliation in Light of Pauline Theology," 13.

¹¹ Report of the Commission of Inquiry appointed by the CCAP General Assembly standing committee to investigate the border dispute between the Synods of Livingstonia and Nkhoma, 2006.

¹² J.L. Pretorius, "An Introduction to the History of the Dutch Reformed Church Mission in Malawi 1889-1914," in Bridglal Pachai (ed), *The Early History of Malawi*, London: Longman, 1972, 365-83 [372].

Chewa/Ngoni wars, the tribal boundary was the Mpasadzi River.¹³ In addition, Chingota claims that there is no other document that has superseded the 1923 document regarding the boundary between the two Synods in as far as the upland boundary is concerned.¹⁴ For the lakeshore boundary there is no document indicating the actual boundary between the two Synods in the Dwangwa-Bua area of Nkhotakota District.¹⁵ The claim on the part of the Synod of Livingstonia is that the boundary has all along been considered to be the Bua River, except for a small strip of land along the lakeshore between Bua and Dwangwa Rivers and that, apart from this strip, the border is the Dwangwa River. On the other hand, Nkhoma Synod is of the view that the boundary is the Dwangwa River all the way to the lake without recognizing the strip of land along the lake as part of Livingstonia territory.¹⁶ On paper, it is only the question of which Synod is responsible for this small strip of land that remains unresolved.

The fact that a relatively small and geographically confined difference in understanding has erupted into a major conflict that has spread to many different areas, suggests that there are more factors at play than detail about the location of the border. Attention needs to be paid to issues of money, politics, language, tribalism and Synod leadership.¹⁷ The interweaving of these

¹³ Felix Chingota (the then Moderator of General Assembly), "Lost Opportunities," text of speech delivered at the Bi-annual Meeting of Synod of Livingstonia, 23-28 September 2006, 4.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Report of the Commission of Inquiry appointed by the CCAP General Assembly standing committee to investigate the border dispute between the Synods of Livingstonia and Nkhoma, 2006.

¹⁶ Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity*.

¹⁷ Isaac K. Chibowa, "Reconciliation in Light of Pauline Theology," 61-66.

various factors has brought great complexity to the border wrangle and made it very difficult to resolve.

Attempts to Resolve the Border Wrangle

After the establishment of the General Synod in 1956, several attempts were made in the succeeding years to resolve the differences concerning the border issue. The first border dispute started when Nkhoma Synod complained of encroachment by the Synod of Livingstonia in the north of Kasungu District.¹⁸ The disputed area was between Dwangwa and Milenje Rivers. Nkhoma Synod believed that the border was Milenje stream and they were surprised to see that the Synod of Livingstonia had established Prayer Houses in the Chewa-speaking areas up to Dwangwa River in Kasungu District.

The Tumbuka-speaking people had come to settle in this area because they were engaged in farming and intermarriages. Consequently, they did not become part of Nkhoma Synod, but opted to start Tumbuka-speaking prayer houses of the Synod of Livingstonia. Representatives of the two Synods met at Chamakala in Kasungu on 3 November 1967 and realized that it would not be feasible to ask the encroaching Synod to dismantle or hand over their congregations. They therefore resolved that the two Synods would work together in the disputed area in a spirit of mutual respect, peace and goodwill.

¹⁸ Report of the Commission of Inquiry appointed by the CCAP General Assembly standing committee to investigate the border dispute between the Synods of Livingstonia and Nkhoma, 2006.

Another flashpoint was the Dwangwa area near the lakeshore. Until 1980 the presence of the CCAP in this area was the Matiki congregation of the Synod of Livingstonia, which was predominantly Tonga-speaking. Employment opportunities at the Dwangwa Sugar Plantation brought increasing numbers of Chichewa-speaking Christians originating from Nkhoma Synod into the area. After initially joining the Matiki congregation, they broke away to form the Majiga prayer house which they sought to bring under the jurisdiction of Nkhoma Synod. The General Synod intervened by deciding that the Majiga prayer house must be handed back to the Synod of Livingstonia. However, when General Synod representatives arrived to conduct the handover ceremony, they discovered that the doors of the prayer house had been sealed by a wooden barricade and they were denied entry. When the General Synod confirmed its decision that the handover should take place, Nkhoma Synod declined to comply and appointed a minister to serve at Majiga. The issue remained unresolved.¹⁹

By 2005 the dispute had escalated and caused such alarm among partner churches that the Church of Scotland and the Presbyterian Church in Ireland invited the General Secretaries of the Synods of Blantyre, Nkhoma and Livingstonia to Edinburgh to discuss the matter.²⁰ The three-day meeting came up with a proposal that a workshop on conflict resolution be conducted in Malawi by John Sturrock, an expert in mediation.²¹ The workshop was held from 12 to 15 March 2006 at Kambiri Lodge in Salima with the three Synods of Livingstonia,

¹⁹ Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity*, 136-37.

²⁰ CCAP Nkhoma Synod, Pastoral Letter to its Faithfuls, "Remaining Faithful to Christ all the Times," 10.

²¹ *Ibid.*

Blantyre and Nkhoma each sending ten delegates.²² The Kambiri Lodge meeting may well be seen as a decisive turning point in the history of the CCAP. It was clarified that the issue at stake was not a question of doctrinal or confessional differences, but rather a question of "misunderstandings" and "mistrust." The meeting looked into ways of overcoming whatever differences, isolation and rivalry had damaged relations in the CCAP family. The workshop at Kambiri Lodge was a process of soul-searching for the participants from all the three Synods. It was a gathering that called for humanity and openness to each other. It was agreed that the Constitution that binds the Synods together should be taken seriously as a guiding tool in the process of forgiveness and reconciliation. To continue with the process, it was agreed to set up a Task Force (Working Committee) to, among other things, formulate a Memorandum of Understanding and draw an Action Plan for the activities of the General Assembly regarding the border dispute.²³

The General Assembly Standing Committee met on 30 March 2006 to receive recommendations of the Task Force established at Kambiri Lodge.²⁴ The General Assembly endorsed the Memorandum of Understanding which was signed by all three Synods of Livingstonia, Blantyre and Nkhoma and the officials of the General Assembly.²⁵ During this meeting, the three Synods subscribed and agreed to a plan of action drawn jointly, to amicably resolve the dispute once and for all and communicate

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Isaac K. Chibowa, "Reconciliation in Light of Pauline Theology," 13.

the same to all stakeholders. The meeting further agreed that the mediation process should start with consultations and investigations and thus appointed a Commission of Inquiry. Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods each nominated three names whilst Blantyre Synod and the General Assembly were to be represented by two members each.²⁶

Professor Kings Phiri was appointed team leader and chairman of the Commission of Inquiry, with Mrs L. Chiotha as Secretary.²⁷ The Commission was tasked to investigate the historical background to the border dispute, assess the existing situation on the ground and produce a report with recommendations on the way forward.²⁸ It carried out extensive consultations but its work was thwarted when the three Livingstonia members unilaterally took the decision to withdraw their participation.²⁹

Meanwhile, a group emerged in Zomba known as "Friends of Livingstonia," which was formed at Zomba Theological College on 2 May 2005. They decided and agreed to write a letter to the Synod of Livingstonia opposing the decision the Synod made as far as the relationship between the Synod of Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synod is concerned.³⁰ They recommended that the decision to recognize only Blantyre Synod's boundary should not be instantly enforced with an aim of seeking other means to

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Report of the Commission of Inquiry appointed by the CCAP General Assembly standing committee to investigate the border dispute between the Synods of Livingstonia and Nkhoma, 2006.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Friends of the Livingstonia Synod – Zomba to the General Secretary of the Synod of Livingstonia, "Relationship between Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synod," 2 May 2005, 2.

resolve the border dispute. Instead of listening to the people's plea, the Synod of Livingstonia formed its own taskforce committee with the mandate of planning and directing the logistics towards establishing congregations in the jurisdiction of Nkhoma Synod. Regardless of resistance from concerned lay members, the Synod of Livingstonia began establishing congregations deep into Nkhoma Synod's jurisdiction.³¹ In this situation, when the General Assembly met at Blantyre Mission in January 2007, it decided that, in view of the unresolved border dispute, it could not elect a Moderator from the Synod of Livingstonia, as per the normal rota. Instead, a committee of former Moderators was tasked to take responsibility for the Moderatorship until an election could be held. This situation continued for six years, during which the General Assembly was in a state of near-paralysis. It was only in 2013 that the Assembly was able to meet and elect a Moderator, Livingstonia minister Very Rev Dr Timothy Nyasulu.

As attempts to promote dialogue between the conflicting Synods had faltered, in 2011 a new initiative was taken by a group calling itself Forum for CCAP Unity. Its chair was Professor Kanyama Phiri, a well-known academician and the then Vice Chancellor of the Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) Rev Dr Takuze Chitsulo of Blantyre Synod was its secretary.³² After a promising start to their work, the Forum was stalled when the General Secretary of the Synod of Livingstonia, Rev Levi Nyondo, announced

³¹ Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity*.

³² Golden Matonga, "Livingstonia Synod Snubs Dialogue Initiative," *The Guardian*, 7-8 December 2011, 1-2.

that his Synod did not recognize the legitimacy of the group as it did not follow Presbyterian procedures.³³

The Effects of the Border Wrangle

Compromise on Church Discipline

Due to the border wrangle between the Synod of Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synod, the two Synods are failing to exercise proper church discipline in relation to their members who have missed the mark. For example, in the Central Region, when a member is given discipline in one of Nkhoma Synod's congregations, he or she can join one of the Synod of Livingstonia congregations nearby where she or he is easily welcomed without being asked for a disjunction certificate as it was the case in the past before the border wrangle.³⁴ It is also the same with the Synod of Livingstonia congregations near Nkhoma Synod congregations. Therefore, the right use of church discipline is undermined for fear of losing members which may also signify losing money. The concern is not necessarily about the spiritual welfare of the members but rather about material benefits from the members. This undermines care for the purity of the church. The approaches of the two Synods are primarily human-centred rather than Christ-centred.³⁵

³³ Archibald Kasakura, "Synods Giving Up on Border Row: Leaders Admit Uniting Nkhoma and Livingstonia not a Stroll in the Park," *Malawi News*, 24-30 December 2011, 1, 3 and 6.

³⁴ Isaac K. Chibowa, "Reconciliation in Light of Pauline Theology," 56.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

Loss of Prophetic Voice

As a result of negative publicity over the border wrangle, the CCAP has lost its prophetic voice in the country. Rev Mezuwa Banda, former Moderator of Livingstonia Synod, observes that the CCAP has completely lost its saltiness in Malawi and beyond. He further says, "Let me be quick to say I regret what we did. Causing disruption to God's Church is a big sin; we need to repent before we die."³⁶ The former Nkhoma Synod General Secretary Rev Dr Kilion Mgawi says that, strictly speaking, the CCAP has lost its flavour in Malawi. In the past, before the border wrangle, the CCAP advised and confronted the Government or politicians with one voice and it was taken seriously.³⁷ But today, what can the CCAP do to the Government if it is failing to reconcile itself? In addition, a former General Secretary of the Synod of Livingstonia recalled, "One day I tried to comment on the need for politicians to be united. However, a certain politician responded by saying, Livingstonia Synod, you are failing to unite with Nkhoma Synod, so do you think you can unite us?"³⁸ Thus, the CCAP has lost its prophetic voice.

Loss of People's Trust

In addition, people have lost trust in the two Synods (Livingstonia and Nkhoma) as they do not trust each other. According to the Deputy General Secretary of the Synod of

³⁶ Int. former Livingstonia Synod Moderator, 30 January 2015, Isaac K. Chibowa, "Reconciliation in Light of Pauline Theology," 81.

³⁷ Int. former Nkhoma Synod General Secretary, 12 February 2015, Isaac K. Chibowa, "Reconciliation in Light of Pauline Theology," 81.

³⁸ Ibid.

Livingstonia, some of his relatives have left the CCAP and joined other churches in Lilongwe since they have lost trust in their Church due to the border wrangle.³⁹ He is however optimistic that the two Synods will reconcile in order to win back the trust of the people. He further states that if we can claim that the CCAP cannot reconcile, then God is dead. It requires Christians who have a vision and fear for the Lord to sit down and resolve the border wrangle amicably. The CCAP Church has lost its prophetic voice in Malawi, says Rev Z.B. Nkhoma of Thupa CCAP. He observed that, "the border wrangle has costed us greatly up to the extent that some of our members have joined Pentecostal Churches."⁴⁰

The Meaning of Reconciliation

Reconciliation (*katallasso, katallage*) is a term closely allied with that of justification. Justification is the acquittal of the sinner from all guilt of sin; reconciliation is the restoration of the justified person to fellowship with God.⁴¹ While the teaching of reconciliation does not play a large role in Paul's thought in terms of space devoted to the doctrine, it nevertheless is an essential and integral doctrine in his patterns of thought.⁴² The very idea of reconciliation suggests estrangement. Reconciliation is necessary between two parties when something has occurred to disrupt fellowship and to cause one or both parties to be hostile to the other as is the case in the CCAP today between the Synod of Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synod.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Int. Rev Z.B. Nkhoma of Thupa CCAP, Nkhoma Synod, 26 January 2015.

⁴¹ George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982, 450.

⁴² Ibid.

Sin has estranged humanity from God. It has broken fellowship and become a barrier.⁴³ It needs little proof that humanity has been estranged from God, that humans are rebellious in heart and mind, and that this rebellion needs to be changed into a willing and glad submission to God.

Reconciliation, in a secular sense, denotes a change in relations between individuals, groups, or nations and pertains to relations in the social or political sphere.⁴⁴ It means a change from anger, hostility, or alienation to love, friendship or intimacy. However, feelings may accompany that particular change, but they are not essential (Matthew 5:23; 1 Corinthians 7:11), as to a change from enmity to friendship.⁴⁵ With regard to the relationship between God and humanity, the use of this and other related terms in the New Testament shows that reconciliation is primarily what God accomplishes as he exercises his grace towards sinful humanity through the death of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:19), where both the verb, "to reconcile," and the noun, "reconciliation," are used.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, theologically, reconciliation can be defined as "the activity whereby the disorders of existence are healed, its imbalances redressed, its alienation bridged over."⁴⁷ As such, it stands at the centre of the Christian faith.

Justification is the divine pronouncement of acquittal upon the sinner; reconciliation is the restoration to the fellowship

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Isaac K. Chibowa, "Reconciliation in Light of Pauline Theology," 86.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Robert Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality and Strategies*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1998, 63-79.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

that results from justification. Justification is the ethical condition of reconciliation, the gift to the sinner of that standing by which alone he can enter into fellowship with God. Once the sinner has been restored to fellowship, certain wonderful results accrue, the first of which is peace with God.⁴⁸ "Therefore, since we are justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1).⁴⁹ The peace that is here indicated is not a subjective experience of peace; it is rather the reverse of the enmity or hostility discussed above. The justified man has been reconciled and therefore has peace with God. God's wrath no longer threatens him; he is accepted in Christ. We have peace with God in that God is now at peace with us; his wrath is removed. Peace here refers not to a state of mind but to a relationship to God and others as well. We are no longer his enemies but the object of his favour. Nevertheless, according to Jonathan Nkhoma, the command to love enemies is a call for a new kind of reciprocity among the new people and in their human relations in general.⁵⁰

A second blessing that accrues from reconciliation with God is reconciliation between people who have been estranged.⁵¹ Since humans have been reconciled to God both objectively and subjectively, the human enmities that had raised barriers between people are done away and those who are reconciled to God are to enjoy peace with one another. The classic passage is Paul's discussion of the relationship between Jew and Gentile

⁴⁸ Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955, 120-26.

⁴⁹ George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 455.

⁵⁰ Jonathan S. Nkhoma, *Significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls and other Essays*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2013, 101.

⁵¹ George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 455.

in Ephesians 2. The Gentiles are at one time alienated from the people of God in the world. They who were once afar off have been brought near in the blood of Christ "for he is our peace who has made us both one and has broken down the dividing walls of hostility that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two making peace and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end" (Ephesians 2:14-16).⁵² The hostility that existed between Jew and Gentile may be taken as typical of all barriers that break fellowship between people.⁵³ Because of reconciliation to God in Christ, those who have been estranged from one another are to be reconciled and every dividing wall of hostility removed because Christ is our peace. Instead of two men, Jew and Gentile, who were separated by hostility there is one new man created in peace because reconciliation to God is in one body through the cross. Therefore, there ought not to be hostility between the Synod of Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synod.⁵⁴ The reconciliation of the hostility between Jew and Greek may be taken as representative of every sort of interpersonal hostility, including that found in the CCAP. In Christ, there is peace.

Biblical Teaching on Divisions in the Church

In 1 Corinthians 1:10-17, Paul strongly exhorts the Corinthian Christians both positively and negatively. He begins by charging them to have a united testimony, then adds his plea for inward harmony in mind and confession about Christ. Between these

⁵² Isaac K. Chibowa, "Reconciliation in Light of Pauline Theology," 92.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

two positive exhortations Paul introduces the solemn purpose: "that there may be no divisions" in the Christian community.⁵⁵ Presumably, all of those quarrelling were Christians and were members of the church as it is the case with the Synod of Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synod. They were divided into at least four factions, each having its own emphasis, following its own leader, and acting in antagonism to the other three. At Corinth the four groups centred around four prominent leaders – Paul, Apollos, Peter and Christ. Paul quickly destroys the validity of such distinctions by insisting that Christians are all one in Christ. "Is Christ divided?" he asks. He shows the foolishness of even raising the question by asking two other questions that imply a negative answer: he, Paul, was not crucified for them, nor were they baptized in his name.⁵⁶ The same could be said also of Apollos and Peter and the same should also be applied to both the Synod of Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synod.

In 1 Corinthians 3:1-9, Paul calls the Corinthians "brothers" before reprimanding them for their spiritual immaturity. Not only had he not preached to them with persuasive words (2:1-5), but here he states he could not even speak to them as to those with spiritual maturity. They were acting immaturely as people controlled by the fleshly prejudices and viewpoints of the unsaved as is the case between the leaders of the CCAP in both the Synod of Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synod.⁵⁷ Part of what he means is shown by his reference in vv4-5 to the party contentions he had discussed in 1:10-17. The "spiritual" must be interpreted differently in 3:1 from its

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

meaning in 2:14-15, where Paul uses it to denote the saved person in contrast to the unsaved. Here he combines it with "worldly" and "infants," so that "spiritual" refers to believers who are spiritually mature Christians.⁵⁸

The word "worldly" (lit. "fleshly") further indicates that these Christians are showing characteristics of spiritual immaturity. "For" prepares for Paul's illustrations of this worldliness – the "jealousy" and "quarrelling" that plague the Christian community.⁵⁹ His questions are stated in a way that expects a positive answer. The Corinthians then and the Synod of Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synod now, if honest with themselves, should admit their failing here. They are living the way the ordinary sinful people live – in selfishness, pride, and envy. Are the CCAP leaders different from them? Implied here is an allusion to their divisions as it is the case in the CCAP today (1:10-17).⁶⁰ Paul's example of himself and Apollos who shared in the ministry at Corinth (Acts 18:1-28), was needed to show the Corinthians that they had a distorted view of the Lord's work. The current position of the CCAP border dispute shows that the leadership has a distorted view of the Lord's work. Whenever they think of God's work in terms of tribal belonging or following a particular rich Christian worker, they are simply acting on the human level and taking sides, just as the world does.⁶¹ In verse 5, Paul now answers the question of how Paul and Apollos should be viewed. They are simply servants, as are

⁵⁸ P. Bayinsana, "Christ as Reconciler in Pauline Theology and in Contemporary Rwanda," *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* 15/1 (1996), 19-28.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Isaac K. Chibowa, "Reconciliation in Light of Pauline Theology," 100.

⁶¹ Ibid.

any other workers. No Christian worker is ever to be idolized as they can become instruments for fragmenting the work of God. In the same way CCAP leaders should not be idolized and become instruments for fragmenting the work of God.⁶²

Paul bluntly states, "I planted the seed," and quickly adds, "Apollos watered it, but God made it grow." In vv7-9, he draws some conclusions from his basic idea. Since they are merely God's servants, they cannot themselves produce any spiritual results. Only God can do that (John 3:5). The servants with their various functions are really one, being united in God's work. Though they are one in the work, they are individually subordinate to God and responsible to him who will reward them according to their faithful labour and this must not be forgotten by the CCAP leadership.⁶³ All is from God, and the church is his work (v9) not ours, therefore, the CCAP leadership should not grab the headship of the Church from Christ and own it as personal property.⁶⁴ Paul tells the Corinthians that God uses people of different talents and temperaments to help him cause the church to grow.

Neither Jew nor Greek

The second result of passing from law to grace through faith in Jesus Christ is that all who believe become one with each other so that there is now "neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation*, Nashville: Abingdon, 1996, 123-29.

nor female," but all are "one in Christ Jesus."⁶⁵ In relation to the border wrangle between the Synod of Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synod, there is neither Tumbuka nor Chewa, there is neither Northern Region nor Central Region, and there is neither the Synod of Livingstonia nor Nkhoma Synod. In this case, it clearly does not mean that differences of nationality, status, and sex cease to exist. A Jew remains a Jew; a Gentile a Gentile; a Tumbuka remains a Tumbuka; and a Chewa remains a Chewa.⁶⁶ Instead, having become one with God as his sons and daughters, Christians now belong to each other in such a way that distinctions that had divided them lose significance.⁶⁷

In Paul's day, there was a deep division between Jew and Greek, not only nationally but also religiously. Gentiles were uncircumcised and therefore not children of Abraham. They did not have the law or the ceremonies; they were not of the covenant. This barrier Paul now claims to have been broken down in Christ (Ephesians 2:11-18).⁶⁸ Today this principle must be extended to deny the significance of all racial barriers in the CCAP and beyond. In Christ, there must be neither black nor white, Caucasian nor Oriental, nor any other such distinction.⁶⁹ In relation to the border wrangle between the Synod of Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synod, there must be neither Tumbuka nor Chewa since Christians now belong to each other. Social status is a second example, "neither slave nor free." Again, this is not meant to deny that in actual fact there are social distinctions

⁶⁵ D.L. Tunner, *Paul and the Ministry of Reconciliation in 2 Cor 5:11-6:2*, Grand Rapids: Baptist Seminary, 2001.

⁶⁶ Isaac K. Chibowa, "Reconciliation in Light of Pauline Theology," 105.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, 192-98.

among people. It is merely meant to affirm that for those who are united to Christ these things do not matter.⁷⁰

On this pattern, the ideal church should be composed of members from all spectra of society: wealthy and poor, educated and uneducated, management and labour, and so on. Therefore, this can put to an end the mentality of both the Synod of Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synod following their educated and well-to-do children working or doing business in Trading Centres and Towns. When Christians treat each other as true brothers and sisters in Christ regardless of their social standing, the power of such distinctions is broken and a basis is laid for social change.⁷¹ There is also the example of sex, for Paul declares that there is neither "male nor female." It is hard to imagine how badly women were treated in antiquity, even in Judaism, and how difficult it is to find any statement about the equality of the sexes, however weak, in any ancient texts except those of Christianity. Paul reverses this. Indeed, in this statement we have one factor in the gradual elevation and honouring of women wherever Christian influence is felt.⁷²

When Paul concludes this breakdown of the distinctions that are superseded by Christianity, he speaks of the fact that all who are in Christ are "one," one unified personality as the living body of Christ.⁷³ In this body all are truly one with one another. In the realm of the new self, there are distinctions of community, but not in such a way as to be barriers to fellowship. To the extent that Christians do permit them to be barriers they

⁷⁰ Isaac K. Chibowa, "Reconciliation in Light of Pauline Theology," 105.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*

are acting out of character.⁷⁴ "Christ is all, and is in all," suggests that Christ is the great principle of unity. In him all differences merge, all distinctions are done away. Loyalty to Christ takes precedence over all earthly ties. Therefore, it is imperative for the Synod of Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synod to follow this teaching and put these biblical values into effect.

Possible Reconciliation in the CCAP

The border wrangle between the Synods of Livingstonia and Nkhoma in the CCAP family has surprised the general public as to why Church leaders of these two Synods fail to humble themselves in order for a lasting solution to be found. The Bible talks about reconciliation between God and humanity as accomplished by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.⁷⁵ The church preaches the same message of reconciliation to people as it presents Christ to the world. Both the Synod of Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synod preach reconciliation as they are part of the universal church and yet they are failing to reconcile between themselves. Why are these Synods unable to reconcile when they are actually the bearers of the message of reconciliation? Is it because these two Synods do not understand the biblical theology of reconciliation or is it that they understand but that they have chosen not to live by it?⁷⁶ Such pertinent questions trouble many people who want to see the unity of the CCAP family being maintained.

⁷⁴ Tokunboh Adeyemo, *African Bible Commentary*, Nairobi: Word Alive Publishers, 2006, 1430.

⁷⁵ Isaac K. Chibowa, "Reconciliation in Light of Pauline Theology," 13.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

The gospel of unity and reconciliation seems to be falling off the Church's spiritual agenda. Some have expressed doubt that the task of uniting the synods can ever be achieved in view of the escalating level of disagreement. Therefore, there is an urgent need for reconciliation.⁷⁷ Reconciliation is a term that speaks to people today apart from the Christian Gospel because experiences of being unreconciled are particularly widespread or at least particularly widely noticed. In a secular sense, it denotes a change in relations between individuals, groups, or nations and pertains to relations in the social or political sphere. In this case, it means a change from anger, hostility, or alienation to love, friendship or intimacy. In other words, it properly denotes a change from enmity to friendship.⁷⁸ With regard to the relationship between God and humanity, the use of this and other related terms in the New Testament shows that reconciliation is primarily what God accomplishes as He exercises his grace towards sinful humanity through the death of Christ.⁷⁹ From a theological point of view, one of the marks of a true church is that of catholicity, meaning that the Church is and should be universal. Practically, this means that the Church should in no way show favouritism to some people or disregard certain groups because of their colour, gender, language, ethnicity, social status, level of education or otherwise. Any Church that does so has started to develop heretical tendencies. Heretical tendencies are not just false

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Tukunboh Adeyemo, *African Bible Commentary*, 1430; Isaac K. Chibowa, "Reconciliation in Light of Pauline Theology," 105.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

positions theologically, but they are also destructive of the life, nature and work of the church.⁸⁰

Robert J. Schreiter suggests that reconciliation is more a spirituality than a strategy. Reconciliation has to be a way of living, has to relate to the profound spiritual issues that reconciliation raises and requires.⁸¹ From the discussion above, we can see how different strategies within Malawi and abroad were employed to resolve the border wrangle between the Synod of Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synod but to no avail. Strategies are valuable, of course, but they cannot be above the scriptures. A lot of resources, energy and time have been used in attempts to resolve the border wrangle between these two Synods yet the solution is readily available in the houses of many CCAP members and ministers. Leaders of the CCAP in Malawi and overseas partners have been flying out of their respective countries in order to seek a solution to the wrangle, forgetting that the Bible is an answer to their problem.

Therefore, to think of reconciliation only as a strategy is to succumb to a kind of technical rationality that will succeed at best partially. Strategies are needed. Concrete experiences of struggling to achieve some measure of reconciliation require decisions and those decisions must have some grounding.⁸² Nevertheless, as Schreiter has demonstrated, reconciliation requires a certain orientation if it is to be successful. Reconciliation is possible between the Synod of Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synod if they can only be guided by biblical principles

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Robert J. Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality and Strategies*, Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 1998.

⁸² Ibid.

or if they can go back to the Word of God. For God is the Reconciler (2Cor 5:17-19) and there is neither Jew nor Greek (Galatians 3:28) as we are all one in Christ (Ephesians 2:11-18). It is therefore high time for the current generation of CCAP leadership to reconsider their stance by creating space for dialogue. Concerned parties should tell only the truth, and they should be able to admit their wrongdoing.⁸³ Above all, let us go back to the Word of God as we celebrate 100 years of the CCAP.

Conclusion

As I am gazing into the future of the CCAP, I am optimistic that genuine reconciliation between Nkhoma and Livingstonia Synods will be possible. If the current generation cannot think of genuine reconciliation today simply because they focus on money, politics and tribalism rather than focusing on the will of God, then God is going to raise a generation of “stones” who will do the needful. Such a generation will have no interest in the two Synods’ intrusions into each other’s territory as its focus will only be on the crucified Jesus Christ.⁸⁴ The heart of Christianity is love but the power of love is in peaceful resolution of conflict which is not easy but very possible. Without proper forgiveness and reconciliation, the one who makes an offering is wasting time and energy.⁸⁵ The implication is that there must have been numerous sacrifices in the past made in error, which were not accepted by God as a result of unresolved disputes like that of Cain (Genesis 5-7). It is also a fact that so many must have gone to the land of no return without proper reconciliation

⁸³ Isaac K. Chibowa, “Reconciliation in Light of Pauline Theology,” 113.

⁸⁴ Robert J. Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation*, 13-23.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

between them and their neighbours. The mind of Jesus is very clear: no reconciliation, no valid sacrifice (Matthew 5:21-26 and 6:14-15). “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First, go and be reconciled to your brother, then come and offer your gift” (Mat 5:23-24 NIV).

19. CCAP Unity

Winston R. Kawale

This chapter offers a critical assessment of the long-running border dispute between Nkhoma Synod and the Synod of Livingstonia, which has been the greatest threat to the unity and integrity of the CCAP in its 100-year history. In particular, it focuses on the decision taken in 2006 to observe no border between Nkhoma and Livingstonia Synods, nor between Livingstonia and Harare Synods. It begins with an account of how the Synods implemented the no-border decision. It then presents the perspectives of different groups within the CCAP which did not support the no-border decision. It moves on to a critical theological reflection on factors that contributed to the no-border decision. Finally, it proposes a way forward for the unity of the CCAP.

The No-Border Decision

A key plank of CCAP unity since its formation in 1924/26 has been the allocation of a defined geographical territory to each Synod. All the Synods respected each other's jurisdiction and there could be no question of any Synod carrying out activities in the territory of another. For the most part, this arrangement worked successfully throughout the 20th century. However, from the 1960s there was an unresolved dispute about exactly where the border lay between Nkhoma and Livingstonia Synods. During the early years of the 21st century, it became apparent that this long-running border wrangle between Nkhoma and Livingstonia Synods was intensifying. A series of meetings took place with the aim of enabling the Synods to resolve the wrangle amicably but to no avail. In 2006, the two Synods decided to remove the border that they had respected since 1926.

The Synod of Livingstonia took the same decision with Harare Synod.¹

Following the no-border decision, Nkhoma Synod established several congregations in areas which were previously reserved for the Synod of Livingstonia. There are now Nkhoma Synod congregations at Nkhomenya, Jenda, Mzimba, Mzuzu City and Karonga. Meanwhile the Synod of Livingstonia has established congregations in areas previously reserved for Nkhoma Synod such as Kasungu Boma, Nkhotakota, Salima, Dedza, Mchinji and Lilongwe City. The Synod of Livingstonia has also established congregations in the Harare Synod areas of Harare and Bulawayo.² For the leadership of the two Synods, the no-border decision was an end of the matter. However, in the CCAP as a whole there is no consensus on the issue. As observed in the next section there were voices of concern about the implications of the decision for the life of the Church, Others have cautioned that the decision could have detrimental effects on the unity of Malawi as a nation and on the capacity of the CCAP to address national affairs when required.³

¹ Cogitator W. Mapala, "A Historical Study of the Border Dispute between the Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods of the Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian (1956-2015)," PhD, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2017, 375.

² Isaac K. Chibowa, "Reconciliation in Light of Pauline Theology: the Case of the Border Wrangle between the Synod of Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synod of the Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian (CCAP)," MTh, Mzuzu University, 2017, 65,74; Cogitator W. Mapala, "A Historical Study of the Border Dispute," 397-98.

³ See Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity: A History of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian as a Federative Denomination (1924-2018)*, Carlisle: Langham, 2019, 150-51.

Voices of Concern

According to Rev Colin Mbawa, the former CCAP Secretary General, the CCAP General Assembly office received a number of petitions expressing concern about the no-border decision from individuals and groups.⁴ The following groups have expressed their opposition to the no-border decision.

Forum for CCAP Unity (FCU)

Rhodian Munyenembe reports that in 2011 some CCAP members established a movement called the Forum for CCAP Unity (FCU). The group was composed of clergy and lay persons, men and women, from Blantyre, Nkhoma and Livingstonia Synods. Professor Kanyama Phiri, a well-known academician and the former Vice Chancellor of the Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) chaired the movement. The Secretary was Rev Dr Takuze Chitsulo, now Vice Chancellor of Zomba Theological University. Their approach to the border issue was to receive responses from CCAP members, both clergy and laity, from all three Synods and submit their findings to the CCAP General Assembly leadership for action. They anticipated that the majority of responses would reject the no-border decision. The group launched the movement in Blantyre in November 2011.⁵ While the Blantyre and Nkhoma Synods appreciated and supported the formation of the group, the Synod of Livingstonia did not recognize the legitimacy of the group.⁶

⁴ Int. Rev Colin Mbawa, former Secretary General of CCAP General Assembly, Lilongwe, 11 November 2016.

⁵ Isaac K. Chibowa, "Reconciliation in Light of Pauline Theology," 60.

⁶ Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity*, 182.

This thwarted the FCU's attempt to open up fresh dialogue between the Synods.

Friends of Livingstonia in Zomba

Munyenyembe reports that there was another group formed in Zomba.⁷ It was composed of lay members of the Synod of Livingstonia. They called themselves, "Friends of Livingstonia." The group sought to promote a harmonious and healthy relationship between the Synod of Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synod. They did not recommend the decision to recognize only Blantyre Synod's boundary. They advocated for a new initiative to identify other means to resolve the border dispute. Instead of listening to the group's plea, the Synod of Livingstonia formed its own taskforce committee with the mandate of planning and directing the logistics towards establishing congregations in the jurisdiction of Nkhoma Synod. They established Livingstonia congregations in such places as Kasungu, Nkhota-kota and Lilongwe, which were under Nkhoma Synod's jurisdiction and far from the disputed border areas.⁸

Concerned Ministers of the Synod of Livingstonia

Some of the Synod of Livingstonia clergy strongly challenged the decision taken by the Synod.⁹ These clergy wrote a letter, dated 26 April 2006, to the Synod's Moderator, expressing their concerns over the opening of congregations inside Nkhoma Synod's area of jurisdiction. Chibowa observes that this served as a clear indication that though the Synod of Livingstonia had gone ahead with its decision of not recognizing boundaries with

⁷ Ibid, 181.

⁸ Isaac K. Chibowa, "Reconciliation in Light of Pauline Theology," 63.

⁹ Ibid.

Nkhoma Synod, not all of its members, whether ordained or lay, were comfortable with the direction being taken.¹⁰ In spite of these protests, the Synod of Livingstonia went ahead to implement their no-border decision.

Petition from the CCAP Students Organization (CCAPSO)

CCAPSO is an organization that brings together CCAP students in Malawi's Universities.¹¹ In 2017, its leadership wrote a letter to the Secretary General of the CCAP General Assembly, headed: "A Call for sober reflections on the 'No boundary resolution' agreed by the Synods through the General Synod Assembly as a last solution to the border conflicts among our Synods."¹² They stated that, "it has been wrongly assumed that the decision to go for no border resolution has pleased all the members. It has been done without deep reflections on the negative implications on the spiritual life of the church."¹³ They went on to criticize the "top-down" decision-making process and expressed fears that the no-border decision would result in regionalism among CCAP students. They expressed concern about the impact of the decision at national level: "When Malawians are divided on political grounds based on regionalism, there will not be a bridging gap and a unifying factor which CCAP always has had in the past. CCAP was the only stem of unity that brought together all Malawians into oneness. Our church has been a beacon of hope for our nation."¹⁴ They observed that, "politicians are no longer

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ The CCAPSO Petition to CCAP General Assembly 2017.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

affected or moved by the prophetic call on issues by the church because they feel the church has lost its salt and its authenticity to comment on social issues because it has demonstrated failure to put its own house in order.”¹⁵

The students were also concerned about the threat posed by the no-border decision to the integrity and viability of the CCAP itself: “By agreeing on the ‘no boundary resolution’ the whole essence of the existence of the General Assembly becomes invalid. The boundaries themselves were the basis upon which the General Assembly was founded and gained its mandate and authority.”¹⁶ The students ended their petition by saying: “We therefore rest our case by calling our beloved Synods to swallow their pride and accept to resolve their differences amicably guided by the Holy Spirit. May God Bless our Church and our Leaders.”¹⁷ There is no record of the Synods or the General Assembly offering any response to the petition.

Factors Contributing to the No-Border Decision: A Critical Theological Reflection

In 2019, Munyenembe offered this sobering assessment: “Many observers ... are of the view that the border issue is not over, but that the two Synods have swept the dirt under the carpet, pretending that their declaration on ‘no more border’ has resolved the problem, when in actual fact it is a recipe for socio-theological pitfalls.”¹⁸ This section aims to consider the underlying contributing factors for the no-border decision, which include issues of language, “following our children,”

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity*, 229.

money, politics, CCAP General Assembly leadership, and the 1923 transfer of Kasungu station. These issues are critically assessed from a biblical and theological perspective.

Language Apartheid

The word “apartheid” means “separateness.” It became a familiar term in South Africa when the Nationalist Government attempted to separate the black and white races. In the CCAP border wrangle in Malawi, there has been an attempt to impose separation based on language. The origins of the border dispute lie in the refusal of the Synod of Livingstonia to allow Chichewa-speaking members of their Majiga prayer house at Dwangwa to have a Chichewa language service.¹⁹ Tonga-speaking members dominated this prayer house of the Synod of Livingstonia. However, there were also Chichewa-speaking members who went there as employees of Dwangwa Sugar Company. These Chewa-speaking members could not understand Chitonga. They asked if the prayer house would introduce a Chichewa service.²⁰ The leadership of Majiga referred the matter to Bandawe Presbytery. While awaiting the Presbytery’s response, a Livingstonia minister at Majiga offended the Chichewa-speakers. He said, “...introducing Chichewa service is equal to introducing Gulewamkulu or Nyau in the church.”²¹ This led to the establishment of a Chichewa-speaking makeshift prayer house, a distance away from Majiga.²² Nkhoma Synod posted a minister to this prayer house to take care of the church

¹⁹ Isaac K. Chibowa, “Reconciliation in Light of Pauline Theology,” 69.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 64.

²¹ *Ibid*, 43. Gulewamkulu or Nyau is a Chewa traditional masked dance.

²² *Ibid*, 43.

members who were worshipping there.²³ Nkhoma Synod should explain why it posted a minister there before any response came from Bandawe Presbytery. Equally, the Synod of Livingstonia has yet to explain the Presbytery's delay in responding to the request.

This matter should have been easily resolved. There were already precedents at St Andrew's in Mzuzu where the congregation introduced a Chichewa service at the Police Prayer House, to provide for Chichewa-speaking members. Similarly, the CCAP congregation in Harare agreed to introduce a Chitumbuka service for Tumbuka-speaking members.²⁴ Similarly, the prayer house at Dwangwa could have made the same provision. It is common in many CCAP congregations, especially in urban contexts, to hold Sunday services in English as well as in vernacular languages. There is no need to make language preference a basis for separation or apartheid. The idea that a congregation must be monolingual is an archaic one, especially today when there are many inter-ethnic marriages and people become fluent in several different languages. There is need for the CCAP to celebrate its rich linguistic diversity as a source of unity and not a reason for separation.

²³ Ibid, 44.

²⁴ Cogitator W. Mapala, "A Historical Study of the Border Dispute," 281.

The 1923 Transfer of Kasungu Station from Livingstonia Mission to the DRCM

Livingstonia Mission established a station at Kasungu in 1897, the time when the Dutch Reformed Church Mission was establishing its work in Dowa and Lilongwe Districts. In 1923, the two Missions reached an agreement to hand over the Kasungu station from Livingstonia to the DRCM. Scholars such as Munyenembe,²⁵ Zgambo,²⁶ and Pauw²⁷ agree that language was the reason for this transfer. They contend that Livingstonia Synod initiated the transfer for purposes of evangelism.²⁸ The Chichewa-speaking areas in North Kasungu would be under the DRCM missionaries who by this time were fluent Chichewa-speakers, while the Tumbuka-speaking areas in North Kasungu would be under the Livingstonia missionaries who by this time were fluent Chitumbuka-speakers. The retirement of George Prentice, the only Chichewa-speaking Livingstonia missionary of that time prompted the decision. With his fluency in Chichewa, Prentice had built up large congregations in Kasungu District. The handover was an amicable arrangement between the two Missions. Livingstonia, overstretched by its responsibility for German Missions in Tanzania after the First World War and looking forward to shortly uniting

²⁵ Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity*, 80.

²⁶ H.F.C. Zgambo, "Conflict within the Church: A Theological Approach to Conflict Resolution with special reference to the Boundary Dispute between Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods in Malawi," MTh, University of Fort Hare, 2011, 7, 53.

²⁷ Christoff Martin Pauw, "Mission and Church in Malawi: The History of the Nkhoma Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian 1889-1962," DTh, University of Stellenbosch, 1980, 97.

²⁸ Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity*, 134-35; Christoff Martin Pauw, "Mission and Church in Malawi," 96.

with the DRCM in the CCAP, did not ask for any compensation whatsoever.²⁹ Mapala, however, argues that language was not the reason for the transfer of Kasungu station. He says that DRCM initiated the idea as an expansion strategy.³⁰ From this perspective, for Synod of Livingstonia, the no-border decision is a kind of retaliation for its loss of Kasungu station to the DRCM in 1923. It is therefore imperative that the Church of Scotland and the Dutch Reformed Church, which were the responsible bodies at the time, should offer a full explanation of the reasons for the transfer of Kasungu station.

“Following Our Children”: Heretical Tendencies

Munyenembe suggests that the no-border decision could indicate heretical tendencies within the CCAP.³¹ “Heresy” is a technical theological term meaning doctrinal error, a position that is incompatible with biblical teaching and the tenets of the gospel of Christ. As Munyenembe writes, “If we take the justification for Nkhoma Synod that it is encroaching into the Synod of Livingstonia’s territory because it is following its ‘Chewa-speaking children,’ then it means that language is more important for Nkhoma Synod than the unity of the church. Synod of Livingstonia also encroach in Nkhoma Synod for same reason of following its ‘Tumbuka-speaking children.’ This would mean that these positions of Nkhoma Synod and Synod of Livingstonia are heretical in the sense that its emphasis on language is interfering with the catholicity of the church.”³²

²⁹ Cogitator W. Mapala, “A Historical Study of the Border Dispute,” 196.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 192.

³¹ Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity*, 151.

³² *Ibid*, 151-152.

There are also Christological issues at stake. Thomas Harvey explains that historically and theologically the most notable heresies have been those that have rendered Christ unable to redeem or humanity irredeemable.³³ John 1:12 states that, “to those who believed in his name he gave them the right to become children of God, children born not of natural descent nor of human decision or a husband’s will but born of God.” Believers are therefore children of God; they cannot be the Synod’s children. It is heresy to call believers Synod’s children. Believers as children have God as their Father, not the Synod. By claiming believers as “our children,” Synods are usurping the divinity of God. This is a serious heresy, and blasphemy. If the Synods do not acknowledge their heretical tendencies as sin, the General Assembly should intervene. Early Church Councils resolved the heretical issues.³⁴ The General Assembly and Partner Churches should come in to help the Synods where they are going astray. The Synods should also be willing to receive guidance and be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Ethnocentrism

The language issue closely relates to ethnocentrism or tribalism. Kinick and Krietner define ethnocentrism as “the belief that one’s native country, culture, language and modes of behaviour are superior to all others ... involving the tendency to reject outsiders.”³⁵ Ethnocentrism can be harmful if carried

³³ Thomas Harvey, “Heresy,” in *Global Dictionary of Theology*, Nottingham: IVP, 2008, 376-79, at 377.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 377.

³⁵ Robert Kreitner and Angelo Kinicki, *Organizational Behaviour*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 2009, 65.

to extremes. It may cause prejudice, automatic rejection of ideas from other cultures and even persecution of other groups.³⁶ Politically, ethnocentrism is very dangerous and can lead to “ethnic cleansing” and “genocide.” The case of Rwanda, a massively Christian country, gives Malawi pause for thought. Mapala has pointed out that the no-border decision between Nkhoma Synod and Synod of Livingstonia demonstrates ethnocentrism since the two Synods are behaving as if they are superior to each other.³⁷ If this attitude is not checked, there is a risk that, eventually, Malawi will find itself facing the Rwanda scenario.

During the 19th century, Malawi was the scene of fierce inter-tribal warfare. The Ngoni who reached the Northern Region of Malawi attacked the Tumbuka and Tonga people.³⁸ The Ngoni who reached Central Malawi fought against the Chewa.³⁹ The Yao attacked the Mang’anja people of the Lower Shire⁴⁰ and the Chewa of central Malawi.⁴¹ This was the situation faced by the missionaries when they arrived in Malawi in 1861. One of their greatest contributions was to end the tribal wars. The experience of Msyamboza of Chibanzi in Dowa illustrates this. Msyamboza went to hunt in Nkhatabay. His chief, Dzoole, sent him to bring with him a *mtsiriko* (charm) to fortify his

³⁶ J.W.V. Zanden, “Ethnocentrism,” in *The Word Book Encyclopedia*, Vol. 6 London: Word Book, 1980, 381.

³⁷ Cogitator W. Mapala, “A Historical Study of the Border Dispute,” 19.

³⁸ Attie Labuschagne, “Messengers of Christ,” Fichardpark: Drufoma, 2003, 85; Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity*, 53.

³⁹ Y.M. Juwayeyi, *Archaeology and Oral Tradition in Malawi*, Cape Town: UCT Press, 2020, 62.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 62.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 210.

village from the Ngoni raiders.⁴² Upon reaching Bandawe, Msyamboza met Chief Leza who told him that the missionaries had powerful medicine, which had made peace between the Tonga and the Ngoni.⁴³ Msyamboza visited Dr Robert Laws, the missionary at Bandawe. Dr Laws told Msyamboza that “school” was the medicine and that he should ask Rev Robert Blake at Kongwe to start school in his village.⁴⁴ Msyamboza took the advice and a school started at Chibanzi. Children from both Chewa and Ngoni villages went to this school. A prayer house was also established and men and women from both Chewa and Ngoni communities attended the service. This marked the end of tribal war between Chewa and Ngoni at Chibanzi. In many parts of Malawi, people tell similar stories.

Building on this experience, which marked its formative period, the CCAP has not tolerated ethnocentrism. Members of the prayer houses and congregations come from different ethnic groups and worship together as one Christian community. The whole service centres on God, not the Synod. These congregations elected elders from any ethnic group. For example, at Lingadzi CCAP of Nkhoma Synod, Mr Crosby Mohamed from Nkhatabay is the Session Clerk.⁴⁵

At Synod level, ministers come from different ethnic groups. Nkhoma Synod, operating in a predominantly Chewa region, has had ministers from other regions and ethnic groups. These include Rev John Marcus Kajawa – a Yao from Zomba,

⁴² Samuel J. Nthara, *Msyamboza*, Nkhoma: DRC Mission Press, 1950, 59.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 54.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 57.

⁴⁵ Int. Mr Mphande, Lilongwe, 12 September 2022.

from the north came Rev Dr Handwell Hara, Rev Timothy Chipeta, Rev D. Mthandi, Rev Sydney Chiumia and Rev Steven Chirwa who became Nkhoma Synod Deputy General Secretary. In Blantyre Synod, there have been ministers from Yao or Ngoni communities. There was also Rev A.A. Chirwa, who came from the north.

In the Synod of Livingstonia, there have been ministers from the Central Region. These included Rev Muula Nkhoma and Rev Simion Banda. At Zomba Theological University (earlier College), no consideration of ethnicity is allowed when it comes to selecting the Vice-Chancellor (earlier Principal).⁴⁶ The General Assembly elects officers through rotation, not ethnic identity.

In view of the above non-ethnocentrism in all branches of the CCAP, why is there tolerance for ethnocentrism when discussing the border issue? To paraphrase Galatians 3:28: “There is neither Yao nor Lomwe, Tumbuka nor Chewa, Tonga nor Ngoni; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Love of Money: Root of all Kinds of Evil

According to Mapala, economic and financial issues have played a role in the way the two Synods negotiated the border dispute.⁴⁷ Chibowa suggests that behind the encroachment into other Synods’ territories, there is a monetary motive, which could be the major one.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ This is based on personal knowledge having been one of the College’s first students in 1977.

⁴⁷ Cogitator W. Mapala, “A Historical Study of the Border Dispute,” 334.

⁴⁸ Isaac K. Chibowa, “Reconciliation in Light of Pauline Theology,” 44.

This might supply the answer to Munyenembe's question: "If there were disagreements along the boundaries ... why not just continue with the encroachment in the disputed areas rather than going all the way to the places that are removed from the disputed areas?"⁴⁹ It appears that both Nkhoma Synod and the Synod of Livingstonia have encroached into each other's area of jurisdiction with a view to financial benefit. They have concentrated their congregations in urban areas instead of concentrating on the disputed areas, as they would have done if the issue were all about the border. Whatever the origins of the border dispute, it is the prospect of financial benefit that has motivated the two Synods to take the no-border decision. It could be timely for the CCAP to reflect on 1 Timothy 6:10, which states that, "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil." John Stott notes that this means that love of money is a major root of all evils such as selfishness, cheating, fraud, perjury, robbery, which will lead to envy, hatred, violence, murder, marriages of convenience, perversion of justice.⁵⁰ On the other hand, Stott asserts that Christianity teaches contentment.⁵¹ If love of money has been the primary motivation behind the no-border decision, there is need to reflect on where this is leading the CCAP.

⁴⁹ Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity*, 147.

⁵⁰ John Stott, *The Message of 1 Timothy and Titus*, Leicester: IVP, 1996, 154.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

Politics as a Factor

Munyenyenbe notes that Malawi has three administrative regions. The territories of the three Synods largely correspond with the three regions.⁵² He observes that some political parties consider the regions as their strongholds and at times, the Synod leadership can associate with a particular party. The politicians tend to manipulate the border wrangle in CCAP to their own political benefit. In this regard, political parties take advantage of the Synods' differences along regional lines to consolidate their power bases.

Another factor that has played into the border dispute is the sense of grievance among northerners about their treatment during the period of the Banda dictatorship (1964-94). It is true, as Mapala recalls, that people from the north suffered detention without trial.⁵³ However, it is also true that people from all parts of the country had similar experiences. They included the Chewa from the Central Region such as Chief Mwase, Hon H.H. Massa and Hon Hardwick Kachaje. They too experienced detention without trial.⁵⁴ The regime also ordered teachers from the north to return to their home districts. Similarly, the regime also returned teachers from the Southern and Central Region to their home districts. It is therefore not justifiable to identify Nkhoma Synod with the one-party regime under the Malawi Congress Party and to regard the no-border decision as a settling of scores inherited from the previous political era.

The 2007 Report of the Law Commission on the Review of the Constitution, referring to the issue of National Language

⁵² Rhodian Munyenyenbe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity*, 149.

⁵³ Cogitator W. Mapala, "A Historical Study of the Border Dispute," 313.

⁵⁴ Int. Mr Davidson Kalumphu, Chibanzi, 31 January 2020.

concluded that Chichewa has no negative connotation and went on to observe, “nor does the Chewa people have negative history ... rather that it was a system of government that existed after independence which was problematic. It would be wrong to associate the Chichewa language (or Chewa people or Nkhoma Synod) with the negative aspects of a system of government.”⁵⁵ Furthermore, the former President apologised to the nation for the atrocities. The current MCP President also apologised. It is more than thirty years since the MCP President apologised. One wonders why the Christians are slow to forgive the MCP. Other sectors of society have reconciled and embraced the democratic era. Why should the CCAP continue to nurse the wounds inflicted during the one-party regime to the extent of allowing old resentments to fracture its unity through the no-border decision?

Lukewarm Leadership

Discussing the role of CCAP leadership on the no-border issue Munyenembe states that “from a legal point of view both the Synod of Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synod are at fault with regards to the constitution of the General Assembly.”⁵⁶ He faults the General Assembly leadership for not using its authority to take punitive measures against the two Synods.⁵⁷ Section 7.1.2 of the CCAP Constitution explicitly gives power to the General Assembly when it comes to the question of borders:

⁵⁵ Malawi Law Commission Report 2007, 16-17.

⁵⁶ Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity*, 147.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 148-149.

The General Assembly shall, in the case of new Synods or Mission work areas, demarcate geographical boundaries of Synods and mission work areas and allocate authority to a particular Synod over the demarcated area. The geographical boundaries shall be set in such a way that all Christians within the bounds of that area will be under the jurisdiction of one Synod and no area or group of people within its bounds shall have the right or option to affiliate themselves with a Synod other than the one granted jurisdiction over that area by the General Synod.⁵⁸

Section 7.1.1 of the Constitution requires each Synod to live in harmony with the Synod with which it shares a common border, respecting the prescribed border.⁵⁹ Section 7.2 further lays down instructions that any Synod constructing a new church or prayer house within three kilometres of the boundary with another Synod is required to consult with the neighbouring Synod. If the two Synods fail to agree, “the matter shall be referred to the General Synod whose decision shall be binding on the parties. Contravention of this provision shall lead to disciplinary action being taken against the offending Synod.”⁶⁰

Section 9.1 of the Constitution leaves no room for doubt about where final authority lies: “The General Assembly is the Supreme Court of the Church. Its decisions are final and binding and are not subject to review by any other Court or body. The General Assembly has jurisdiction over all Synods.”⁶¹

⁵⁸ Constitution of CCAP General Assembly 2000, 133.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 137.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 13.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 16.

The General Assembly has these clear mandates. However, the actions of the General Assembly towards Nkhoma Synod and Synod of Livingstonia left much to be desired. The actions of the Synods have shown that they completely disregard the authority of the CCAP General Assembly. During the years of discussions, the General Assembly made many decisions. Yet, the two Synods of Livingstonia and Nkhoma did things as if there was no leadership. For example, Nkhoma Synod did not comply with the General Assembly decision that they return Majiga Prayer House to the Synod of Livingstonia.⁶² Three Synod of Livingstonia members of the Commission of Enquiry established by the General Assembly simply withdrew from participation in the Enquiry without giving any explanation whatsoever.⁶³ Both Synod of Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synod unilaterally removed the border between the two Synods. The Synod of Livingstonia did the same with Harare Synod.⁶⁴ When the General Assembly designated a new boundary between the Synod of Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synod, no one dared to implement that decision.⁶⁵ In 2007, the General Assembly decided that the Malawian Synods in Zimbabwe and South Africa should pull out and hand over their congregations to churches of the Reformed and Presbyterian tradition, but “nothing has happened to that effect.”⁶⁶

⁶² Cogitator W. Mapala, “A Historical Study of the Border Dispute,” 350; Isaac K. Chibowa, “Reconciliation in Light of Pauline Theology,” 43.

⁶³ Isaac K. Chibowa, “Reconciliation in Light of Pauline Theology,” 46.

⁶⁴ Cogitator W. Mapala, “A Historical Study of the Border Dispute,” 375.

⁶⁵ Isaac K. Chibowa, “Reconciliation in Light of Pauline Theology,” 52.

⁶⁶ Rhodian Munyenyembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity*, 231.

These occurrences completely undermined the authority of the CCAP General Assembly. If there were leaders, why did they not exert their authority by taking disciplinary action against the offending Synod? What type of leadership was there in the CCAP General Assembly? During these years, the leadership was lukewarm. There was *laissez-faire leadership*. The *laissez-faire leadership* model is when decision making is passed on to subordinates who are given complete authority and power to make decisions, establish goals, and work out the problems or hurdles.⁶⁷ The description of the behaviour of the two Synods and the CCAP General Assembly reflects this type of leadership. The Synods behaved in the way they wanted and the CCAP General Assembly leadership did nothing. This indicates a serious lack of Presbyterian discipline. The CCAP General Assembly leadership needs to enforce discipline in the Church by making sure that the two Synods reconcile. There is no room for *laissez-faire leadership*. The CCAP General Assembly leadership should remember that God called them to be His servants and they should fulfil their responsibilities efficiently and effectively.

Passive Role of International Church Partners

There are two groups of Church Partners for the CCAP. The first group comprises churches that sent missionaries to Malawi, the Church of Scotland and the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa.⁶⁸ The relation between the sending church and the mission fields was that of “Mother-Daughter.”⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Gottfried Osei-Mensah, *Wanted: Servant Leaders: Theological Perspectives in Africa*, Achimota: African Christian Press, 1990, 18.

⁶⁸ Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity*, 78.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 189- 90.

The sending churches were “Mothers” because they did everything to sustain their mission fields, the “Daughters” who received everything from the “Mothers.”⁷⁰ With the formation of the CCAP in 1924, and the establishment of the General Synod in 1956 and the General Assembly in 2002, the relationship between the Synods and the sending churches also changed. The Synods were now no longer “Daughters” but “Sister Churches.” This presented a challenge to the partner churches when it came to the border wrangle.

The other group of partner churches were those churches with which the Synods negotiated and signed agreements or partnerships. These partner churches included the Presbyterian Church of Ireland (PCI);⁷¹ Presbyterian Church of Canada;⁷² Presbyterian Church (USA);⁷³ Presbyterian Church of Australia;⁷⁴ Presbyterian Church of the Netherlands;⁷⁵ Presbyterian Church of Taiwan⁷⁶ and other Christian organizations.

During the period of the border wrangle, these “Sister Churches” used to send envoys annually to visit the CCAP Synods whom they supported financially. In each year of the visits, during the discussions, they would ask about the border issue. One time, a Synod officer asked an envoy why they do nothing to bring the Synods together to help resolve the issue. The answer was

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 189.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 194.

⁷² *Ibid*, 197, 204.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 198, 202, 216.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 214-16.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 206, 214.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 212.

that they did not want to interfere in internal CCAP issues, lest they be accused of paternalism.⁷⁷

At the same meeting with the Sister Church envoy, the Synod official asked the envoy if the Sister Churches would borrow from what the international community did to one-party Malawi, i.e. withdrawing their financial support to force Malawi to change its political system. This approach worked, and Malawi was now a democratic country. Similarly, the official asked the envoy if the Sister Churches would do the same, threatening to freeze financial aid until the Synods resolve the border dispute.⁷⁸ The envoy responded at that meeting and later wrote to say that the partner churches would not do so because such action would hurt the poor people who were the beneficiaries of the aid.⁷⁹

The role of the partner churches was passive. They were not willing to assist the Synods on the border issue. Later, the Church of Scotland and the Presbyterian Church in Ireland invited the General Secretaries of Blantyre, Nkhoma and Livingstonia Synods to Edinburgh to discuss the border issue. The discussions resulted in identifying Mr John Sturrock as an expert in mediation.⁸⁰ Sturrock accepted to facilitate a Conflict and Management Skills workshop at Kambiri in Salima.

⁷⁷ A discussion with an envoy from a “Sister Church” at Nkhoma Synod office in June 2007; Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity*, 220.

⁷⁸ Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity*, 178.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity*, 138-39.

In March 2006, the Moderator and General Secretary of the General Assembly and the leaders of the three Synods attended the workshop. The workshop recommended the establishment of a Commission of Enquiry. Unfortunately, the Synod of Livingstonia rejected the Commission's report.⁸¹

The Edinburgh initiative was fine, but it came too late, after the factors outlined above had already influenced the minds of the Synods. If only they had started this initiative much earlier. At that time, they could have immediately called the leadership to discuss the issue.

Towards Lasting Solution to CCAP Unity

Nevertheless, it is not too late to do something. There are still opportunities for Sister Churches to help the CCAP General Assembly resolve the border issue. We propose the following two steps the Sister Churches could take to fulfil their partnership obligations.

The first, as mentioned above, is to clarify the reasons for the 1923 transfer of Kasungu Station from Livingstonia Mission to the Dutch Reformed Church Mission (DRCM). There is need for the mission bodies to clarify as to whether or not the DRCM initiated the transfer with a view to expanding its sphere of influence. If it was not, then it is very difficult for the Livingstonia Mission Board (LMB) to argue that its no-border policy is a legitimate response to events of 1923. There is also need for mission bodies to clarify why the LMB transferred Kasungu

⁸¹ Isaac K. Chibowa, "Reconciliation in Light of Pauline Theology," 47; Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity*, 140.

“without any compensation.”⁸² A full explanation from the two Sister Churches is long overdue.

Secondly, the Sister Churches could play a very significant role by providing spiritual guidance to the CCAP. As demonstrated in this chapter, there is spiritual confusion in the CCAP, with some claiming that the border dispute has been satisfactorily resolved while others remain very disturbed by the prevailing situation. Decades have passed and the CCAP has been unable to reconcile and be at peace with itself. Here is where there is a role for trusted Sister Churches. They could, facilitate a retreat for the CCAP leadership. Such a retreat should be spiritual in nature and review the following issues:

- a. Why has the no-border decision applied to relations between Livingstonia, Nkhoma, and Harare Synods and not Blantyre and Zambia Synods? What is going on between these three Synods?
- b. Why are the Synod of Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synod claiming to have their children in the Central Region or the Northern Region not in the Southern Region of Malawi? Other churches such as the Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Assemblies of God and Seventh-day Adventist Church have geographical sub-divisions but these do not feel any need to claim their children living in other regions. What is different about CCAP children, especially from Nkhoma Synod and Synod of Livingstonia, that the two Synods can be following their children? The proposed retreat could assist the General Assembly to look into these issues with spiritual and sober minds.

⁸² Cogitator W. Mapala, “A Historical Study of the Border Dispute,” 196.

- c. The retreat should review the factors that have contributed to the no-border decision, as outlined above. The above discussion shows that there are very serious biblical and theological issues. There is need to consider these in relation to all the contributing factors. The proposed retreat facilitated by the Partner Churches should review each of them to see how they have affected the CCAP after the no-border decision.

An aim of the retreat could be to come up with a Declaration that would chart the pathway to lasting resolution of the border wrangle through spiritual and ecclesial renewal of the CCAP.

Conclusion

Theologically and critically, this chapter has reflected on how several contributing factors brought about the no-border decision. The Synod of Livingstonia and the Synods of Nkhoma and Harare made this decision in 2006. The two Synods of Nkhoma and Livingstonia have unilaterally implemented the no-border decision without any sanction from the General Assembly and in disregard of the pleas of various CCAP groups that protested against the move to have no borders. Researchers have identified a number of factors that might have influenced the Synods in taking this decision. The discussion on the border issue gave language some prominence but this chapter has argued that there is no need to have only monolingual congregations and that there is no need for language differences to lead to separation. Ethnocentrism is an archaic issue. It finished after the missionaries ended tribal wars and reconciled the tribes.

From the discussion above, in the life of the CCAP, ethnocentrism plays no part. Therefore, ethnocentrism in the no-border discussion is questionable and has no role. Likewise, in light of the biblical teaching that the love of money is the root of all evil, the financial motives behind the no-border decision need to be questioned. The ideology of “following our children” is a blasphemy and heresy. On politics, it has been noted that there are political interests that are all too ready to manipulate differences between the Synods of the CCAP. Dwelling on injuries inflicted by the one-party regime during the last century and nursing grievances within the life of the Church is undermining its message of forgiveness and renewal.

There is also the issue of lukewarm leadership on the part of CCAP General Assembly leadership, which allowed the Synods to take unilateral decisions without any accountability to the higher court. Similarly, the Partner Churches were passive, not willing to help the CCAP to resolve this wrangle. Finally, this chapter proposes a way to address the situation of the CCAP. Sister Churches could facilitate a retreat at which the leadership of the CCAP can undertake spiritual self-examination concerning the impact of the no-border decision. Such a retreat could enable the CCAP leadership to humbly listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit and make a fresh start, ending the wrangle.

20. Conclusion: the CCAP@100

Cogitator W. Mapala and Kenneth R. Ross

Remarkable Achievements

As it marks the centenary of its formation, the Church of Central African Presbyterian has some remarkable achievements to celebrate. From small beginnings in 1924 when two Presbyteries came together to form a Synod, the growth and expansion of the Church have been nothing short of astonishing. Today there are 103 Presbyteries under five Synods, with church members counted in millions. Almost everywhere you go in Malawi, and in many parts of neighbouring countries, you will find a vibrant CCAP congregation. The main church of each congregation forms the centre of an extensive web of prayer houses that take the presence of the CCAP to the heart of thousands of local communities. In many ways, the strength of the CCAP is on the ground where church elders, Women's Guilds, choirs and youth groups offer committed and inspirational leadership. The distinctive worship and preaching of the CCAP are illustrated in Chapter 16 by Colby Kumwenda and Chapter 15 by Davidson Chifungo, respectively. The church's growth has been well beyond what its creators in 1924 could have expected or imagined. It continues to be an effective agent of evangelism, with tens of thousands of baptisms and confirmations each year adding to its membership.

An Indigenous Church

From their arrival during the 1870s, Scottish Presbyterian missionaries, joined in 1889 by their Dutch Reformed Church counterparts from South Africa, sought to create an indigenous church that was founded on the Presbyterian tradition, with a focus on wholistic ministry: spiritual life, education,

health, and community development. This was achieved by establishing the CCAP in 1924 through the union of the Blantyre and Livingstonia Presbyteries and the joining of the Nkhoma Presbytery in 1926. The church grew rapidly, and by the mid-twentieth century, it had established a presence across much of Central Africa, including Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique. Despite facing challenges from colonial governments and competing religious organisations, the CCAP remained committed to spreading the Gospel and providing social services to the African people, such as education, health, and development projects. Over the years, the church has had a significant impact on the spiritual, socio-political, economic and cultural landscape of sub-Saharan Africa. It has served as a beacon of hope to millions of Africans and has played a critical role in political and socioeconomic development, and the preservation of African culture, as well as in spreading the gospel of Christ across the region.

During its 100 years, it has also developed a distinctive form of church life, creating a unique blend of Presbyterian tradition and Malawian culture. This was something recognised as early as 1894 by David Clement Scott, the Head of Blantyre Mission, who was involved in an early attempt to introduce church government in Malawi. As he remarked at the time, “One could wish for no weightier justice than that of native *mlandu*-power Christianized into a Church Court.”¹ Reflecting on Scott’s approach, Andrew Ross observed that, “The traditions of the Kirk Session and that of the chief always acting in conjunction

¹ *Life and Work in British Central Africa*, November 1894. *Mlandu* can be translated as “law case” and refers to the resolution of any dispute that has arisen in the community.

with his headmen and elders, readily blended.”² It is also widely recognised that the CCAP has played an influential role at the national level during different phases of Malawi’s history. For example, the Presbyterian missions and the CCAP played a critical role in the founding of Malawi as a nation and state in the late 1880s and early 1890s, in resisting the imposition of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland during the 1950s, in the transition from one-party system to multi-party democracy in 1992-94 and in defending the Constitutional provision for Presidents to serve for a maximum of two terms in 2002-03.³ It remains a formidable force and a catalyst of change in many aspects of life.

Gender Justice

As the CCAP marks the centenary of its formation in 1924, it is imperative to consider the question of gender justice. Hence Part 2 of this book is devoted to “CCAP Women.” This is one way of recognising that in its origins, and for much of its history, the CCAP was a patriarchal space in which all activities were male-dominated, particularly in the exclusion of women from strategic leadership positions and decision-making

² Andrew C. Ross, *Blantyre Mission and the Making of Modern Malawi*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1996, 202.

³ See Kenneth R. Ross and Klaus Fiedler, *A Malawi Church History 1860-2020*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2020, 226-40, 347-61, 417-18; T. Jack Thompson, “Presbyterians and Politics in Malawi: A Century of Interaction,” *The Round Table* 94:382 (2005), 575-587; Kenneth R. Ross, “Crisis and Identity: Presbyterian Ecclesiology in Southern Malawi 1891-1993,” *Missionalia* 25/3 (1997), 375-91; Kenneth R. Ross, *Presbyterian Theology and Participatory Democracy*, Edinburgh: St Andrew Press, 1993; and Kenneth R. Ross, “‘Worrisome Trends’: The Voice of the Churches in Malawi’s Third Term Debate,” *African Affairs* 103 (2004), 91-107.

roles. This did not promote gender justice and inclusivity where both women and men are seen as partners with a variety of talents required for the growth of the church as it witnesses Jesus Christ in a divided society. One of the achievements of the CCAP that needs to be recognised is that it has sought to address the gender injustice that marked its beginnings. Some achievements ought to be saluted. At the same time, there is no room for complacency as much remains to be done. For example, in Chapter 10 Gertrude Kapuma draws attention to the prevalence of gender-based violence, from which church members are not immune, and calls for the Church to step up its action to expose and resist such abusive behaviour. Liza Lamis defines gender justice as, “the ending of and ... the provision of redress for inequalities between women and men that results in the subordination and oppression of women.”⁴ God called both women and men to work in his church. However, the church’s role has been ambivalent in that she preaches equality for all human beings who are created in the image of God while, on the other hand, too often she excludes women from being partners in God’s work.

Nonetheless, an understated fact about the CCAP is that it is, to a considerable extent, a women’s movement. Throughout its history, and even today, women outnumber men on most church occasions. The exclusion of women from the ranks of the clergy until the very end of the twentieth century might give the impression that women were not at the forefront. The reality on the ground tells a very different story. Women have been at the heart of the life of the Church all along. If their role has been under-recognised in the literature, this book attempts to

⁴ Liza B. Lamis, "Empowering the Church for Gender Justice," *CTC Bulletin* 23/3 (2007), 33.

contribute to restoring proper balance. In Chapter 8 Gilbert Phiri makes a good start on this process by recognising the work of women teachers trained at Blantyre Mission during the middle years of the last century. Hopefully, the coming years will see many more such studies, highlighting the massive contribution women leaders have made to church and society in Malawi.

In Chapter 9, Mwawi Chilongozi examines the process that led to women serving as pastors in the CCAP and taking on leadership roles. While this is a very significant development, Chilongozi points out that, a quarter of a century after the CCAP began to ordain women ministers, their numbers are still relatively low. Drawing on long experience, in Chapter 10 Gertrude Kapuma highlights the range and quality of the work and witness of CCAP Women's Guilds. It would be hard to overestimate how influential the Guild has been in terms of the work of the church on the ground. To round off the section on CCAP women, in Chapter 11 Eunice M'biya and Gift Wasambo Kayira demonstrate how much of a struggle it has been for women to secure greater gender justice in the life of the Church and how much this struggle has been "from below" as many unsung women have played their part. Part 2 of this book seeks to go some way to compensate for an earlier lack of recognition of the enormous contribution of women to the making of the CCAP. Indeed, the CCAP opened the door to the ordination of women to the offices of deacon, elder and church minister in which we have witnessed women being elected to the office of Moderator both in Presbyteries and Synods. This is a milestone in gender justice but the church needs to do more to ensure inclusivity. While there is much to celebrate when it comes to the role of women in the life of

the Church, there is also much more to be done before it can be claimed that gender justice prevails.

Serving Society

The CCAP has also been a major player in the provision of social services throughout Malawi's history. For example, its role in education has been a highly significant aspect of its hundred years of history. In many parts of Malawi, the first school was opened by the CCAP, and it continues to be responsible for a huge network of primary schools as well as some of the most respected secondary schools in the country. The early 21st century has seen the establishment of four CCAP Universities: the University of Livingstonia, Nkhoma University, the University of Blantyre Synod, and Zomba Theological University. Such developments have positioned the CCAP as a leading player in the national effort to fulfil Enabler 5: Human Capital Development of the Malawi Vision 2063.⁵ The Church believes that education is a tool for empowerment, and therefore, it has invested in education to uplift and transform people's lives.

Almost half of the healthcare in Malawi is provided by the Christian churches, with the CCAP playing a leading role. Hospitals and clinics established during the missionary era continue to offer greatly needed services today, with many of them being modernised and expanded. The CCAP was a major player in the efforts to combat the spread of HIV and AIDS during the past thirty years. It has also been involved in community development by initiating projects aimed at providing social and economic empowerment to the people. Moreover, the Church

⁵ See National Planning Commission, *Malawi's Vision: An Inclusively Wealthy and Self-Reliant Nation. Malawi 2063*, Lilongwe: Malawi Government, 2020.

has been successful in cultivating strong relationships with other groups and organizations across Africa, forging alliances that have helped to further strengthen its reach and impact throughout the region. As the Church continues to chart its path forward, it remains committed to expanding its mission of faith-based service and social justice to new communities and populations across Central Africa and beyond.

The Church has also been involved in community development by initiating projects aimed at providing social and economic empowerment to the people. The Church has worked with communities to establish health centres, clinics, and hospitals, which provide quality healthcare services to the people. The Church has embraced the concept of community development, and through its initiatives, it has positively impacted the lives of people in various communities. At the grassroots level, as demonstrated in Chapter 10 by Gertrude Kapuma, CCAP Women's Guilds play a crucial role in ministering to the needs of the most vulnerable members of the community. An equivalent Men's Guild is a growing force, bringing men together in a fellowship of solidarity and service. Overall, the Church's role in education and community development has been instrumental in transforming the lives of the people in the Central African community.

The Church has also taken significant strides in spreading the gospel message by setting up various mission stations in countries such as Zimbabwe, Zambia, Tanzania, Mozambique and South Africa. The Church has also played a major role in promoting social justice and development in the local communities by building schools, hospitals, and homes for the elderly. Chapter 6 by Alexander Malemelo and Chapter 7 by Victor Chilenje demonstrate the contribution that the CCAP has made

to communities in Zimbabwe and Zambia. Additionally, the Church has established strong partnerships with numerous churches and organizations worldwide, which has facilitated the exchange of resources, ideas, and skills for the benefit of the church and the community as a whole. These milestones have contributed significantly to the growth and development of the Church of Central African Presbyterian over the years.

Formidable Challenges

Despite the significant strides that the Church of Central African Presbyterian has made over a century, it has also faced several challenges.

Attainment of Unity

It is no small thing to bring together different streams of Christian witness and to create a united church. This was achieved by the CCAP in 1924 and its significance can never be underestimated. The strength of the union is demonstrated by the fact that, one hundred years later, it is still in place. None of the Presbyteries, later Synods, of the CCAP has ever broken away from the mother Church. Nevertheless, a recurrent theme in this book has been the divisions and tensions that have marked the life of the CCAP. Chapter 3 by Kenneth Ross shows that these were present from the beginning. The union of the three Presbyteries was undermined by the fact that the three Missions, which controlled most of the resources, continued to operate separately. The arrangement for the expatriate missionaries to continue to be answerable to their home churches and not to the CCAP proved to be another divisive force. The everyday life of the local churches continued much as before, with minimal influence from the Synod that was intended to unite them.

When the General Synod was established by the new constitution of 1956 the time was approaching for the Missions to hand over their responsibilities and assets to the CCAP. However, as Nancy Collins observes in Chapter 4, everything was handed over to the local Synods and nothing to the General Synod. This concentration of resources in the hands of the local Synods at the expense of the General Synod was to have far-reaching effects. It meant that the programmatic activity of the CCAP was almost entirely based within the local Synods and the General Synod was left ill-equipped to fulfil its unifying function and struggling to find a meaningful role. It enabled the synods to be used as power-based institutions by their leaders to pursue their agendas that divide the Church at the expense of the historic 1924-earned unity. A serious attempt to address this imbalance was made with the new constitution of 2002, which renamed the General Synod as the General Assembly and clarified its authority as the supreme court of the Church. However, as Felix Chingota argues in Chapter 5, constitutional authority has not been enough to resist the tendency for the church to fragment along the lines of its constituent parts.

It might be concluded that the CCAP has had two flawed constitutions and one failed constitution. The 1924 and 1956 constitutions, while aiming to achieve unity, included too many divisive provisions. The 2002 constitution went a long way to repairing the deficiencies of its predecessors but by this time the DNA of the CCAP was so Synod-centred that it failed to respect the authority of the General Assembly, regardless of how this was enshrined in the constitution. To the credit of the CCAP, in 2002 it produced a constitution that resolved many of the tensions that had bedevilled it throughout the 20th century. However, this constitution, so far, has failed at the level

of implementation because of a lack of political will from the leaders of CCAP synods. Timothy Nyasulu captures this in the blunt assessment he offers in Chapter 13: “The individual Synods are but constituent parts of the one CCAP, under its General Assembly. If currently, Synods operate in isolation and autonomy, they are failing to abide by the CCAP Constitution.”⁶ In this sense, what is at stake is not having a constitution but how to implement it. Charles Fombad points out that a constitution is not a self-implementing instrument because it requires full and effective mechanisms for its enforcement and implementation.⁷ Hence, what is required is constitutional implementation.

What then is constitutional implementation? Fombad defines it as “a process designed and continuous working of a constitution by promoting, enforcing and safeguarding it.”⁸ He also points out that the ultimate objective of a constitution is to “prevent the twin evils of anarchy and tyranny due to governmental arbitrariness and so promote constitutionalism, respect for the rule of law, good governance and democracy.”⁹ The CCAP Synods are known as defenders of the rule of law, governance and democracy as manifested in their pastoral

⁶ Timothy P.K. Nyasulu, “CCAP Theology of Praxis,” Chapter 13 above, 267.

⁷ Charles Manga Fombad, “Designing Institutions and Mechanisms for the Implementation and Enforcement of the Constitution: Changing Perspectives in Africa,” *African Journal of International and Comparative Law* 25/1 (2017), 66-90, at 66.

⁸ Charles M. Fombad, “Problematising the Issue of Constitutional Implementation in Africa,” in Charles Manga Fombad (ed), *The Implementation of Modern African Constitutions: Challenges and Prospects*, Pretoria: Pretoria University Law Press, 2016, 11.

⁹ *Ibid*, 12.

letters issued since 1992. If the synods are seen sending contradictory messages on the subject they are known for, they will begin to lose their integrity and the respect that the Malawian society has for them.¹⁰ The Synods, being signatories to the 2002

constitution of the CCAP General Assembly, have a duty and an obligation to ensure that it is enforced, promoted, protected, and safeguarded by all Synods at all times.

Interestingly, Hastings Okoth-Ogendo has identified “constitutions without constitutionalism” as a fundamental political problem in Africa.¹¹ African nations have been very committed to adopting constitutions, but this has not extended to respect for the constitution in practice. Turning to the case of Malawi, Danwood Chirwa has recently argued that: “Malawi remains a prominent example of a country struggling with the problem of having a progressive constitution with a questionable record of constitutionalism.”¹² Could the same be said of the CCAP? Many of the difficulties and struggles that have been addressed in this book would not have arisen had the CCAP complied

¹⁰ See further Kenneth R. Ross, “A Practical Theology of Power for the New Malawi,” in Kenneth R. Ross (ed), *God, People and Power in Malawi: Democratization in Theological Perspective*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1996, repr. Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2018, 225-67, at 258-67.

¹¹ Hastings W.O. Okoth-Ogendo, “Constitutions without Constitutionalism: Reflections on an African Political Paradox,” in Douglas Greenberg et al (eds), *Constitutionalism and Democracy: Transitions in the Contemporary World*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, 65–82.

¹² Danwood Chirwa, “Democracy without Legitimacy? A Review of *Beyond Impunity: New Directions for Governance in Malawi* (Rondebosch: UCT Press and Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2022), edited by Kenneth R. Ross, Asiyati L. Chiweza and Wapulumuka O. Mulwafu,” *Society of Malawi Journal* 76/1 (2023), 47-49 [47].

with the provisions of its constitution. It appears that there is a prevailing culture that is prone to disregard the Constitution, particularly by inverting the General Assembly and the Synods in terms of where decisive authority lies. “Constitutions without constitutionalism” have undermined good governance in the political sphere. Has the same applied to the life of the CCAP? This should not be the case as explained above. The CCAP Synods are obliged to ensure that the CCAP General Assembly’s decisions are implemented in good order. This action can resolve the problems that the Church has experienced for decades.

These have notoriously been illustrated by the border wrangle and the no-border decisions taken by the Synod of Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synod, without any approval from the General Assembly. As Isaac Chibowa and Winston Kawale show in Chapters 18 and 19, respectively, the border dispute raises a whole raft of troubling theological, ecclesiological and spiritual questions, which are yet to be answered. For example, it has a serious implication for the discipline of the Church, which is the pillar of its integrity and purity. The Church has been negatively affected by breaches in the disciplinary procedure where a member suspended by one CCAP Synod is welcomed by another without following due procedures, which the church members have followed since its inception in 1924. This occurs commonly between the Synod of Livingstonia and the Nkhoma Synod.

Additionally, the Church is confronted with the task of prioritizing the needs of its congregants in areas of economic development, health and education, while also addressing the spiritual needs of its community. This is done where there is a constraint of resources for the smooth implementation of these projects. Each Synod is running its development projects which

are similar in scope and nature, often with financial support from the same church partners. If all these projects were harmonised, the Church could maximise its resources to achieve a better output. For example, each of the three Malawian Synods has a University, each lacking adequate resources (human, financial and material). If all resources were put together by merging the four universities, including Zomba Theological University, the Church would stand to benefit much more than by operating in the manner it is currently doing. This will not be unique to the CCAP because it also happened in South Africa in the post-apartheid era where the emphasis was on inclusivity and maximising the use of available resources.¹³

A further consideration is the role of the CCAP in national life. It is common knowledge that the CCAP has done outstanding work in common witnessing as it did for Malawi to attain independence from British colonial rule in the 1960s, and during the political transition from one-party state to multi-party politics in the 1990s. However, during the 21st century, it is an undeniable fact that each of the CCAP Synods has been involved in partisan politics by siding with a political party of its choice to the extent of betraying its calling to show solidarity with people at the margin of society, which reflects its commitment to a preferential option for the poor. This defeats the purpose of common witnessing and undermines the prophetic role of the Church. In times of crisis, people look for leadership from

¹³ Jonathan D. Jansen, "How Mergers Shape the Institutional Curriculum: Guest Editorial," *South African Journal of Higher Education* 18/1 (2004), 14; M.C. Baloyi and Goonasagree Naidoo, "Higher Education Mergers in South Africa: A Means towards an End," unpublished paper, 2016.

the Church. If the church is silent because it is divided, then it loses its integrity and saltiness. It leaves people in limbo.

Theological Identity and Clarity

Another significant question raised by this book is how far the CCAP can forge a theological identity. Malawi has a dynamic cultural, political and religious environment where many forces jostle for influence. Is the direction of the CCAP determined by external influences or is it able to chart its course based on its core theological identity? A concern that surfaces time and again in this book is that the CCAP often seems to be at the mercy of winds blowing from external sources rather than being able to draw on its theology to take a distinctive position. This means that its authenticity is at stake. Of course, it can be valid at times for the CCAP to change and develop its beliefs and practices. To be a Reformed church is to be ready to be always reforming. However, the question is whether change is driven by the CCAP's deeper discovery of its own identity as it meets changing times, or whether it sits so loosely to its core commitments that it can too easily be manipulated by external forces.

A suggestion that arose at the April 2023 Research Conference on the CCAP centenary was that the General Assembly might set up a theological think-tank to engage with relevant issues on behalf of the CCAP as a whole. Chapter 13 by Timothy Nyasulu sets out a range of issues related to the pastoral practice of the CCAP that call for theological attention. A strong theological unit reporting to the General Assembly could be a significant force for unity. It could provide the institutional equipment to work towards a common position for the CCAP as a whole on the issues of the day. This need not be at the expense of open

debate and healthy diversity but the further the CCAP can go in establishing a shared theological self-understanding, the greater its chances of sustaining viable unity.

Coherent Church Government: Being Presbyterian

Presbyterian church government normally operates through a hierarchy of courts where the lower courts are subordinate to the higher courts. On paper, the highest court in the CCAP is the General Assembly but this book has shown that it has often been deprived of the authority and resources needed to exercise its proper role. This weakness can be traced back to the very foundation of the Church and it might be that the centenary offers an opportunity to address it. The inability of the CCAP to resolve its debilitating border dispute convincingly has exposed this flaw that has dogged the steps of the Church. The 2002 constitution represents a serious attempt to set the government of the Church on a proper Presbyterian basis. As Felix Chingota argues in Chapter 5, it is a “programmatic” Constitution, meaning that it aims to provide remedies for the challenges the CCAP has faced in its history. According to Chingota’s analysis, the current constitution provides the medicine that is needed to heal the sickness of the Church. The problem is that the patient, until now, has been unwilling to drink the medicine. This book has traced the historical reasons that explain how the CCAP arrived in this situation. In doing so it provokes the question of when and how the Church will fully embrace the hierarchy of courts that is the lynchpin of Presbyterian church government.

What is encouraging for the CCAP is that it has succeeded in generating the constitutional basis that is needed. When it comes to sound church government, the remaining challenge to

be addressed is the implementation of the constitution. Different approaches can be imagined. In Chapter 12, Takuze Chitsulo canvases the radical proposal that the Synods might be abolished with most of their responsibilities being handed to the General Assembly. A Church with authority and resources concentrated in its supreme governing body, with a network of Presbyteries covering the country, might be better placed to function as a unifying force – as opposed to the current arrangement where Synods largely identified with Malawi’s regions are vulnerable to manipulation by divisive political forces.¹⁴ Given the current reality where power and resources are concentrated at the Synod level this would be a kind of “shock treatment” – aiming to resolve the governance issues at a stroke by taking one bold move.

Another approach would be more incremental – to initiate a process by which authority and responsibility would be gradually transferred from the Synod level to the General Assembly level. For example, the four current Universities could be consolidated into one institution with different campuses but unified under the General Assembly. The health sector might be another inviting area for a consolidation of all the work of the CCAP under the General Assembly. As indicated above, a Theological Commission of the General Assembly could be empowered to address doctrinal, liturgical and ethical tensions within the CCAP as well as new issues that are arising in our time. Were the Church to be intentional about it, there could be a series of initiatives to give active expression to the role of the General Assembly as the supreme court.

¹⁴ See also Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity: A History of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian as a Federative Denomination (1924-2018)*, Carlisle: Langham, 2019, 245.

Together these might have a cumulative effect and steadily reshape the practice of the Church at the level of governance. An academic book like this can do no more than attempt some analysis and make some suggestions. It is for the Church to determine whether or not its centenary provides a stimulus and an opportunity to take further steps towards the fulfilment of the vision that inspires it.

A Hopeful Future

The future of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian is both promising and challenging. The Church has a rich history and legacy that it can draw upon to continue its mission of spreading the gospel and serving communities across Central Africa. However, the church must also confront several complex issues, such as political instability, poverty, religious fundamentalism, and lack of unity, which threaten to undermine its work. To meet these challenges, the church will need to continue fostering strong leadership, promoting unity and collaboration, and building bridges with other faith communities. Above all, it must remain faithful to its core values of love, compassion, and justice, and continue to reflect the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ in all that it does.

In conclusion, the Church of Central African Presbyterian has come a long way over the past century, and there is much to celebrate as we reflect on its mission, achievements, and milestones. However, this is not the end of the journey. As we look forward to the next century, we are reminded that the world is rapidly changing, and so too are the challenges and opportunities facing the church. The CCAP must continue to adapt and evolve to meet the changing needs of its members and the wider community. This will require a renewed commitment to its core

values of faith, hope, and love, and a willingness to embrace new unity in faith and purpose, technology, community engagement, and innovative strategies that will enable the church to thrive and grow well into the future. While we cannot predict what the next century will bring, all the signs are that the CCAP will continue to play a vital role in the lives of its members and the communities it serves.

It is common when seeking to understand New Testament eschatology to explain that there is a tension between the “already” and the “not yet.” In one sense the kingdom of Christ has already come; in another sense, it is still awaited with expectation. Takuze Chitsulo’s close reading of Ephesians 4.13a in Chapter 12 suggests that the CCAP might be viewed in a similar light as an eschatological reality. It is already present. Indeed it has been present for one hundred years. But it is also marked by an element of “not yet.” It is not yet what its founders dreamed it would be. It is not yet what many of its leaders and members have longed for it to be. It is not yet the fully united church that would serve people and the nation to maximum effect. Even after a hundred years, it is a project that is still in the making. In terms of attaining the longed-for unity of the Church, the challenges that are yet to be met are unlikely to be resolved by the construction of some new formula. As Isaac Chibowa suggests in Chapter 18, it might be more a matter of spirituality than of strategy. The centenary offers an opportunity for the CCAP to draw more deeply on its faith to nurture its internal life and inspire its external witness. This book has celebrated many remarkable achievements across the 100 years for which we can be thankful to God. It has also highlighted tensions that are yet to be resolved and weaknesses that are yet to be addressed. Now it is offered to all who will be part of the eschatological future

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of the CCAP as a gift intended to help them attain the unity to which we are called in Jesus Christ.

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