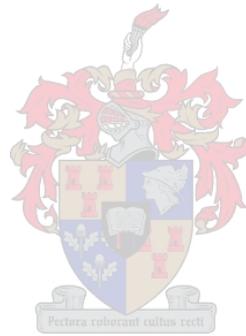


University of Stellenbosch

**THE DEVELOPMENT IN SELF-UNDERSTANDING OF THE CCAP
NKHOMA SYNOD AS CHURCH
DURING THE FIRST FORTY YEARS OF AUTONOMY:
AN ECCLESIOLOGICAL STUDY**



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Dissertation presented for the Degree of Doctor of Theology
At the University of Stellenbosch

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Professor C. Martin Pauw

April 2005

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

Signature:

Date:



ABSTRACT (ENGLISH)

The purpose of this dissertation is to trace the development of Malawi's Nkhoma Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) from a mission church in 1962 to a mature church today. In so doing, it asks, "How has Nkhoma Synod developed its self-understanding of being a church?"

It will study how the congregations and the presbyteries interact with the central synodical administration. It will take representative components and show the major events of their lives, and how these in turn contributed to the development of the synod as a whole.

It will show how the educational programmes of the church made an essential addition to the synod's concept of being a church. This portion of the study reveals that the society of Malawi's Central Region was impacted. The study also shows how a changing political structure drastically impacted upon the educational role of the Synod.

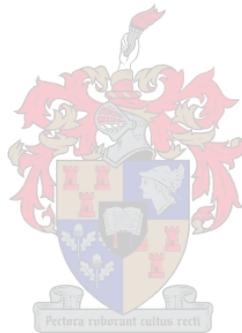
The departments of medicine and relief and development act together to give the necessary attention to the physical needs of Nkhoma Synod's people. The now well-known scourge of AIDS receives an explanation as to how and why it has such a devastating effect upon the life of the Synod. Evangelism, in its various forms, is also described in detail, as it seeks to meet the most profound spiritual needs of humanity. The chapter on missions, focusing as it does upon the war-torn neighbouring country of Mozambique, shows how the Synod is carrying forward the same process that gave it birth at the end of the nineteenth century. The chapter on literature and printing renders an important story. Here we see a people who receive the Bible in their own language, and it shapes the direction that that language takes – much the same way that the Luther Bible shaped German and the King James Bible shaped English.

Begun during the days of the Dutch Reformed Church Mission, these departments expanded, and sometimes contracted, but at all times continued to give their indelible impressions upon the life of the synod. Relations with the government, with other synods of the CCAP, and with other denominations will also offer important insights into the heart of the synod. This study shows how these relations changed over times.

The chapter on personnel matters will show the human dimension of the story. Here there are two principle perspectives – one South African, the other Malawian. The chapter on Nkhoma Synod’s spiritual journey uncovers a fascinating look at a Christian body struggling to come to grips with traditional culture. The chapter on finances and how the DRC involved itself with these matters also gives an important aspect of how a former mission church achieves maturity.

The development of a new constitution and the evolving relationships with sister synods and with other denomination warrant an extensive discussion. These developments do much to show how far the Synod has come from being merely a mission church.

Finally, in the conclusion we shall see how and why a “younger” church stands confidently as a full equal and a partner with an “older” one.



OPSOMMING (AFRIKAANS)

Die doel van hierdie proefskrif is om die ontwikkeling van Malawi se Nkhoma Sinode van die Kerk van Midde-Afrika Presbiterianaans na te vors, vanaf 'n sendingkerk in 1962 tot 'n volwaardige kerk vandag. Die vraag word dus gevra: “Hoe het Nkhoma Sinode sy eie selfkonsep as 'n kerk ontwikkel?”

Die interaksie tussen gemeentes en kerkrade met die sentrale sinodale administrasie word bestudeer. Die studie neem verteenwoordigende komponente en lig belangrike gebeurtenisse in hulle lewens uit, asook hoe sodanige gebeurtenisse bydra tot die ontwikkeling van die Sinode as 'n geheel.

Die studie sal uitlig tot watter mate die opvoedkundige programme van die kerk 'n essensiële bydrae gelewer het tot die Sinode se konsep van kerkwees. Hierdie gedeelte van die studie toon aan dat die samelewing van die sentrale streek in Malawi beïnvloed is. Die studie dui verder aan hoedanig 'n veranderende politieke struktuur 'n drastiese invloed op die opvoedkundige rol van die Sinode gehad het.

Die Mediese-, Noodleniging - en Ontwikkelingsdepartemente het saamgewerk om die nodige aandag aan die fisiese behoeftes van die mense en lidmate van Nkhoma Sinode te gee. Die vernietigende effek van die VIGS-pandemie op die lewe van die Sinode word uitgelig en verduidelik. Evangelisasie in sy verskeie vorme word in detail beskryf, aangesien dit ten doel het om die mees diepgaande geestelike behoeftes van die mensdom aan te spreek. Die hoofstuk oor sendingaksies wat fokus op die naburige oorlog-geteisterde Mosambiek wys uit hoe die Sinode op dieselfde proses voortgebou het, wat sy eie totstandkoming aan die einde van die negentiende eeu tot gevolg gehad het. Die hoofstuk oor gedrukte literatuur skets 'n belangrike verhaal. In hierdie hoofstuk word uitgewys hoedanig die effek op mense is as hulle 'n Bybel in hulle eie taal ontvang, en die sodanige effek daarvan op hulle taal – op dieselfde wyse wat die Lutherse Bybel, Duits, en die King James Bybel, Engels beïnvloed het.

Genoemde departemente van die Sinode wat ontstaan het in die dae Sending van die Nederduits-Gereformeerde Kerk het soms uitgebrei en soms afgeskaal, maar het voortgegaan om ten alle tye 'n onuitwisbare effek op die lewe van die Sinode te hê. Verhoudings met die Regering, ander Sinodes van die Kerk van Midde- Afrika

Presbiteriaans, en ander denominasies bied verdere belangrike insigte aangaande die hart van die Sinode aan. Hierdie studie dui aan hoe sodanige verhoudings met tyd verander het.

Die hoofstuk aangaande personeelsake, vervat die menslikheid van die verhaal van die Sinode. Hier is twee beduidende perspektiewe ter sprake - 'n Suid-Afrikaanse- en 'n Malawiese perspektief. Die hoofstuk oor Nkhoma Sinode se geestelike reis onthul 'n fassinerende blik op 'n Christelike instansie se stryd om hom te versoen met 'n Afrika tradisionele kultuur. Die hoofstuk oor finansies en hoe die Sending van die Nederduits-Gereformeerde Kerk hierby betrokke was beklemtoon hoe voormalige sendingkerke volwassenheid bereik het. Die ontwikkeling van 'n nuwe grondwet en die voortspruitende verhoudings met suster-sinodes en ander denominasies, regverdig 'n omvattende bespreking. Hierdie ontwikkelings dui aan dat die Sinode nie net meer en slegs 'n sendingkerk is nie.

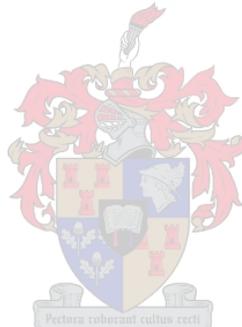
In die finale gevolgtrekking word uitgewys hoe en waarom 'n "jonger"kerk met vertroue as 'n volwaardige en gelyke vennoot teenoor die "ouer" kerk kan staan.



KEY WORD ABBREVIATIONS

AACC	All Africa Conference of Churches
ACRIS	Accao Crista Interdenominacional de Saude
AEAM	Association of Evangelicals in Africa and Madagascar
ARC	African Reformed Church
CCAP	Church of Central Africa Presbyterian
CLAIM	Christian Literature Association In Malawi
CLF	Christian Literature Fund
CMS	Church Missionary Society
DRC	Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa
DRCM	Dutch Reformed Church Missions
FMSC	Finance Mission Sub Committee (DRC)
GAC	General Administrative Committee
GMC	General Mission Committee
IRM	Igreja Reformada em Mozambique
JFC	Joint Financial Committee
MBC	Malawi Broadcasting Corporation
MCP	Malawi Congress Party
MEMA	Modern Evangelistic Methods in Africa
MMSC	Malawi Missions Sub Committee (DRC)
MNIME	Malawi National Initiative for Mission and Evangelism
NBSS	National Bible Society of Scotland
NIFCOTT	Nkhoma Institute For Continued Theological Training
NSTA	Nkhoma Synod Teachers' Association (originally Mkhoma Synod Teachers' Association, or MSTA)
PAC	Public Affairs Committee
PCA	Presbyterian Church in America
PCM	Presbyterian Church in Malawi
PCUSA	Presbyterian Church USA

PEA	Portuguese East Africa
RCA	Reformed Church in America
REC/S	Reformed Ecumenical Council/Synod
RVOG	Radio Voice of the Gospel
SAARC	Southern African Alliance of Reformed Churches
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SCOM	Student Christian Organisation of Malawi
SRN	State Registered Nurse
UMCA	Universities' Mission to Central Africa
VSB	Vrouesendingbond (Women's Missions League)
WARC	World Alliance of Reformed Churches
WCC	World Council of Churches
UDF	United Democratic Front



GLOSSARY

Afiti: Witches

Alangizi: Instructors in Nkhoma Synod's classes on values and conduct for youth.

Angoni: A major ethnic group in Malawi and Mozambique.¹

Chewa: The major ethnic group of the Central Region of Malawi, and therefore of Nkhoma Synod.

Chichewa: The language of the Chewa people, and along with English, the official language of Malawi.

Chigwirizano: The Nkhoma Synod Women's Guild.

Chilangizo: Chewa term for the Synod's classes on values and conduct for youth. This is instructions given at puberty and was introduced into Nkhoma Synod as a counter to the 'pagan' initiation rites, known as *chinamwali* (see Pauw 1980: 201, 332-333).

Chiuta: A term for God (literally "Big Bow"). The term *Chauta* is also used.

Denomination: An organizational structure for a group of churches, usually united by common doctrine and/or polity.

Chigololo: Adultery.

Chipangano Chatsopano: The New Testament.

Congregation: A body of laypeople, elders, and clergy organized and meeting within one specific location; a church.

Kusamala: To provide care.

Mbusa: An ordained clergyman, a pastor.

¹ While they have largely lost their ancestral language, they retain some features of Ngoni culture, especially the patrilineal/patriarchal model for their society. This is in contrast to the matrilineal/matriarchal model used for Chewa society. They came north from South Africa in the first half of the nineteenth century (Pauw 1980: 9-10).

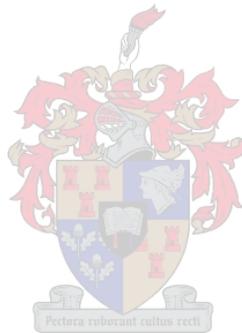
Mdulo: A taboo regulating sexual intercourse between a husband and his wife during the time that she is still breastfeeding.²

Moskonfyt: Grape syrup used in communion.

Presbytery: A grouping of several congregations under the rule of elders in a given geographic area.

Synod: A grouping of several presbyteries under the authority and oversight of appointed or elected leaders.

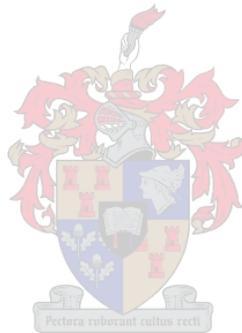
Zolamulira: Nkhoma Synod's book on church order and regulations.



² If they were to indulge, the child might be “cut off”, i.e. die. *Mdulo* literally means a cutting off (*kudula* =to cut, divide, seer). With high infant mortality and the need to always find a cause for every mishap, this became an easy way to explain the death of an infant.

DEDICATION PAGE

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife and partner in missions, Janet. Without her support and encouragement, this project could never have been completed.



**THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SELF-UNDERSTANDING OF THE CCAP
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AUTONOMY: AN ECCLESIOLOGICAL STUDY**

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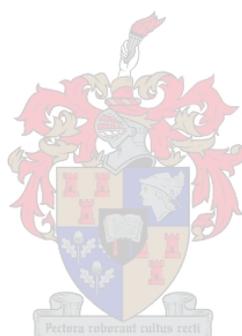
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Chapter One

The Research Procedure

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The rationale for beginning this project was – and is – the firm belief that the church history of Malawi is a major component of that nation’s history, and therefore must not be lost. Nkhoma Synod, Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP), is one of the few entities that have a history reaching beyond the formation of the British protectorate in 1891. It is also one of the nation’s largest church groups. Therefore the preservation of Nkhoma Synod’s history is essential.

This dissertation will provide the production of an important back up source preserving the heritage of the Nkhoma Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, while filling a wide gap in the written record. While there has been a substantial amount written about the early years (of particular importance is Dr. Martin Pauw’s (1980) history of the synod from 1889 to 1962), and then again about recent developments, largely in the past six or eight years, there has been very little resources available for those areas in between. Very little Malawian history of any kind has been written regarding the period 1962-1992, and even less has appeared regarding either political or ecclesiastical developments in the country following the historic 1994 election. Of the historical books appearing on the shelves of Malawian bookshops, many have been produced by a single source - the Kachere Series of the Faculty of Religious Studies and Theology at the University of Malawi. This series focuses on the political changes of 1992-1994, with a very specific orientation. This study endeavours to present a more balanced viewpoint.

No historical study ever gives a complete picture of its subject, which is why books about the Norman Conquest and American Civil War continue to be published. There are topics contained within this dissertation that while important, are only lightly touched upon. Lack of availability of primary sources in English may have caused certain topics to receive less attention than they actually deserve. It is the desire of the researcher that this dissertation will serve as a catalyst to students and graduates of

African institutions (who are often multi-lingual) in the writing of further works, as research and writing tend to inspire further efforts.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTION ADDRESSED

The research question for the dissertation:

“In which way did the Nkhoma Synod develop its self-understanding of being a church since 1962?”

In pursuing this, the following secondary questions have necessarily been explored:

1. Does the development in self-understanding of the Nkhoma Synod entail that it sees itself as a confessional church?
2. What is the character of the church polity of the church?

John Leith has said,

A good starting point is this question: why have the Reformed Christians regarded church polity, or the organized life of the church, of crucial importance? The first answer must be the very deep conviction that God calls the Christian to a life of obedience in and through the polity of the church. The ultimate basis for the organized life of the church is not human wisdom but the will of God. The ministry and the polity of the church is God's gift to the church. On its simplest level this conviction found expression in the belief that God had revealed one pattern of church organization in the Bible. This belief was sometimes espoused by Presbyterians in their advocacy of the divine right of Presbyterianism. The conviction that polity is God's will for the church, however, is not necessarily tied to this particular belief. In a more general way it embodies the conviction that God is concerned about the church's organized life and wills for it to exist in particular ways even though these ways may be diverse and impossible to define precisely. Church organization is never merely functional or a matter of human convenience (Leith 1981: 145).

3. Has the Nkhoma Synod become a Three-Self church, (self-governing, self-propagating, and self-supporting)? Although this should not be used as some kind of litmus test, it can in some cases serve as an indicator of overall denominational health.
4. What is the relationship between the Nkhoma Synod and the Dutch Reformed Church personnel from South Africa?

5. How does the Nkhoma Synod relate to the other synods of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian?
6. How has the Nkhoma Synod developed theologically and spiritually during the years included in this study?
7. What part, if any, has Nkhoma Synod played in the political developments of the country during its first thirty-eight years of independence?

As regards the politics, the Calvinist vision has a two-fold effect - first of all, cutting politics down to size, and then commissioning the politicians with a divine mandate. With its insistence that all of life is subject to the sovereignty of God, Calvinism first destroys the hubris which tends to creep in to all political ideologies and authority structures. It offers the constant reminder that no prevailing political order is absolute. Whatever its achievements may be; it remains provisional and is subject to criticism and reform in light of the criteria supplied by the Word of God. Should the political authorities demand unconditional obedience, the believer will be obliged to point out that the authority of the state is relative and its commands must always be measured in terms of the higher obedience that is due to God. In extreme situations this can mean defiance of political authority (Ross 1993: 3).

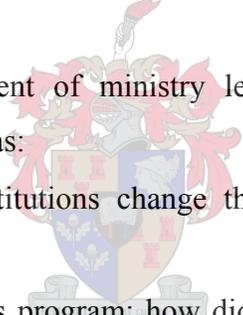
Throughout the progression of this research, the development and the history of the synod have been systematically evaluated, examining the major happenings of the Nkhoma Synod in the time since its transition into an autonomous church in 1962, as documented by the records of the Synod itself as well as those of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa. Attention was directed towards the impact upon the synod of such tumultuous events as the granting of political independence in 1964 (see chapter eleven, “The Challenge of Church-State Relations”); the moving of the capital from Zomba to Lilongwe in the 1970’s (also in chapter eleven); the presence of a regime that was not always sympathetic (also in chapter eleven); and the political trauma of the nineties (also in chapter eleven). Consideration was given to the rise of new religious groups (see chapter thirteen, “Relations with Other Denominations”), along with the accompanying significant demographic shifts (see section 4.3, “Representative Urban Congregations”), in addition to developments, which inevitably caused the leadership of the Synod to make decisions, some of which must have been exceedingly difficult.

In this study, a comprehensive look at the development of the body as a whole, as well as all the constituent parts, such as committees on education (see chapter five,

“Education”), evangelism (see chapter eight, “Evangelism”), missions (see chapter nine, “Mission Beyond Malawi”), etc., have been addressed. Other topics considered include: Women’s Guild (see section 4.4, “Women’s Guild”), laity training (see section 6.4, “Training of the Lay Leaders of the Church”), adult literacy (see section 5.3, “Literacy Programs”), literature (see section 10.2.2, CLAIM, Printing Press, “Literature and Printing”), Bible translation (see section 10.3, “Bible Translation Work”), and relations with the other CCAP synods (see section 12.2, “Relations with Other CCAP Synods”). These are given as examples; they are to be understood as representative of the Synod’s development and activities.

Also during this period there were the leaders involved in studying outside the country, in service training, and in post-graduate studies (see section 3.5.1, “The Ministers of Nkhoma Synod,” and section 6.2, “Education for Pastors”). Here it is suggested that this constitutes a commitment to upgrade the qualifications of the Nkhoma clergy.

These areas of development of ministry led to the formation of questions addressed in this dissertation such as:

- 
- How did these institutions change the way Nkhoma Synod found its leaders?
 - What is its missions program; how did it develop in the years following 1962? What of the hospital, which is located at Nkhoma, has it continued to rely upon South African (and other) personnel³?
 - What has been the relationship between this Synod and other Reformed bodies, especially the Dutch Reformed church in South Africa?
 - What role do expatriates play today?
 - How much progress has been made to make a truly “self-governing, self-supporting, self-propagating” church?

³ There have been in addition, other forms of medical service, such as clinicians, eye specialists, and nurse training. It should be noted that Malawi is a country in which few people have access to decent health care.

1.3 RESEARCH PARAMETERS AND THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE DOMAIN PHENOMENON

This theological study will not emphasize political developments within Malawi, with consideration to recognition regarding the fact that there can be ultimately no complete separation of church and state. As such, this dissertation has strived to remain as apolitical as possible, seeking to avoid political bias and therefore maintain neutrality. The researcher is an American who has no particular preference for any specific Malawian political party.

As a historical study, this work has sought to delve into theological matters as they overlap with history, such as the development of synodical polity and its conformity or lack thereof with the Reformed understanding of being a church. That understanding of being a church says that the church “consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion; and of their children: and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of Salvation” (Westminster Confession of Faith 25:2). As such, it was necessary to provide descriptions regarding the doctrinal issues that arose within the pertinent time frame, presenting all discussions of theology as objectively as possible. The researcher attempted to maintain objectivity by reading a range of Reformed theologians, from Louis Berkhof to Paul Tillich.

The focus of this study is the development of Nkhoma Synod of the CCAP, and therefore discussions regarding other denominations (including international and ecumenical ties) and parachurch groups (including CHAM, CLAIM, SCOM, Bible Society, etc.) will be introduced only insofar as they impact upon the Synod. In this work, the term “synod” includes the congregations and presbyteries that are its components.

1.4 NATURE OF RESEARCH AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The first hypothesis of this dissertation, “The Nkhoma Synod has achieved a prophetic role in Malawian society”, caused the following question to arise: Does the synod act as a corrective to society and address itself to difficult issues, or does it retreat from this role and merely reflect society?

The second hypothesis, “ Nkhoma Synod has come full circle from being a missionary church to a missionizing church”, led to the formation of the question: Does the Synod’s efforts in missions and evangelism equal or exceed the missionary input that it receives? This is not intended to be the universal definition of a ‘missionizing church,’ but rather a measuring rod for detecting a general trend.

The nature of the research has been that of examination and evaluation regarding historical documents relating to the pertinent period, drawing upon primary sources such as Synod and Sinodale Sending *Kommissie* minutes, committee reports, letters, General Synod (Assembly) minutes, the 2001 General Synod Policy and Strategic Plan, the constitution, the partnering agreements, *Zolamulira*, personal interviews, dissertations of other researches, the Internet, and pertinent journals.

It was envisioned that this dissertation would be as much as possible a continuation of C. Martin Pauw’s (1980) earlier work, *The History of the Nkhoma Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian 1889-1962*. It will not duplicate any of Dr. Pauw’s work, but in order to ensure a smooth transition from the earlier work, it will give a very brief synopsis of the state of the Synod and of the country circa 1962.

1.5 RESEARCH PRESUPPOSITIONS

The theological convictions of this researcher reflect an allegiance to the Westminster Confession of Faith, and he considers himself a conservative evangelical. While every effort has been maintained to maintain objectivism (he has read, as stated earlier, such progressive theologians as Paul Tillich), it is conceded that the research has been interpreted from this vantage point as the primary research question has been addressed.

This dissertation is written from the perspective of the personal worldview of the researcher, which is accurately described in the following passage:

God is infinite and personal (Triune), transcendent and immanent, omniscient, sovereign and good (Sire 1988:26).

God created the cosmos *ex nihilo* to operate with a uniformity of natural causes in an open system (Sire 1988:28).

Human beings are created in the image of God and thus possess personality, self-transcendence, intelligence, morality, gregariousness and creativity (Sire 1988:30).

Human beings can know both the world around them and God himself because God has built into them the capacity to do so and because he takes an active role in communicating with them (Sire 1988: 33).

Human beings were created good, but through the Fall the image of God became defaced, though not so ruined as not to be capable of restoration; through the work of Christ God redeemed humanity and began the process of restoring people to goodness, though any given person may choose to reject that redemption (Sire 1988:36),

For each person death is either the gate to life with God and his people or the gate to eternal separation from the only thing that will ultimately fulfil human aspirations (Sire 1988:39).

Ethics is transcendent and is based on the character of God as good (holy and loving) (Sire 1988:40).

History is linear, a meaningful sequence of events leading to the fulfilment of God's purposes for humanity (Sire 1988:41).

1.6 PRELIMINARY STUDIES ALREADY UNDERTAKEN

In 1994-1995 the researcher wrote a 10,000-word essay, "The Church History of Lilongwe", sending Church History students out as "research assistants" to interview pastors, elders, and laypersons regarding the founding of their respective churches. In conducting their research, the students were instructed to ask the following of their interviewees:

- Why was the church begun?
- When was the church founded?
- Who were the founders?
- What problems were encountered in starting the church?
- What were some conflicts experienced by the church, and how have they been resolved? Can you describe the leadership structure of the church (Leadership style, what type of church polity)?

Each student (between thirty and forty of them) then submitted a paper approximately five pages in length, which was then compiled into a single report by the researcher. Some of the information gathered at that time has been relevant to the

proposed study and has been evaluated for that purpose. In about the same period, the researcher personally interviewed several American missionaries regarding the history of American missions in Malawi, and much of the information so gathered was incorporated into the emergent database. The researcher also attended several colloquiums sponsored by the University of Malawi. These were relevant to the topic insofar as they expanded the researcher's understanding of Malawian Christianity.

In addition to the above mentioned research, a study of African Independent Churches (AIC's) within the Lilongwe area was also completed, using similar methods by the researcher. He used African Bible College students to gather information, through both interviews and surveys, and then the researcher compiled it into a 10,000-word essay. The researcher wrote another essay, "Response to Chewa Culture: A Comparison Between the Baptists and Other Denominations". It used the same method of sending out students to conduct interviews using questions given by the researcher, who then compiled the students' reports. It is listed in Religion in Malawi: An Annotated Bibliography, J. C. Chakanza and Kenneth R. Ross, editors, published as part of the "Kachere Series" of the Faculty of Religious Studies and Theology of the University of Malawi.

1.7 RESEARCH PROCEDURE AND METHODOLOGY

The researcher obtained permission from Rev. A. A. Sasu, former General Secretary of the Nkhoma Synod, and Dr. WR Kawale, current General Secretary, to open the archives that are contained in the Synod offices. These have served as the necessary primary sources for the dissertation. The researcher has also attempted to access the National Archives that are located in Zomba, the former national capital. In addition, the researcher has spent time in the Cape Town/Stellenbosch area for the purpose of availing himself of the archives of the NGK's *Sinodale Sending Kommissie* (the material that is pertinent to Nkhoma Synod).

An excellent place to begin any research project involving the development of Nkhoma Synod is the library at the Faculty of Theology at the University of Stellenbosch. Rev. HA Kamnkhwani received the DTh degree from the University of

Stellenbosch in South Africa. His dissertation, which is found in that library, is entitled; “An Evaluation of the Historiography of Nkhoma Synod of the CCAP”

The researcher is monolingual, being restricted to English. Much of the archival material in Malawi is in Chichewa, and most of the archival material in South Africa is in Afrikaans. The researcher hired an African Bible College student to help in translation and in research. He is the son of an Nkhoma pastor who works in the Synod office, has himself been employed in the synod office, and is familiar with their archives. However, the researcher discovered while working through the NGK archives in Cape Town that there are vast amounts of Nkhoma Synod minutes already in English, thus making the Chichewa language problem greatly diminished. The researcher has studied Afrikaans, with the aim of acquiring a reading ability in that language, in order to obtain first hand research among the DRC archives. The researcher also utilized computer translation software for the task of translation from Afrikaans into English.

The researcher has in his possession photocopies of the following primary sources: *Nuusbrief Uit Malawi* (newsletters issued by the Dutch Reformed Church personnel in Nkhoma, starting in 1962). These were found in the library of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Stellenbosch. *Notule van 'n Vergadering van die Spoedeisende Kommissie van die ASK* (minutes of the Dutch Reformed Church missions committee in Cape Town). Also starting in 1962, they were found in the archives of the Dutch Reformed Church in Cape Town, along with English translations of minutes of Nkhoma Synod meetings, from 1962 to 1983. Minutes beyond 1983 were found in the library of Nkhoma Synod (but were much more sparse; the early eighties seem to be a cut-off point for English translation). *Kuunika*, the newsletter of the Nkhoma Synod, published bi-lingually, in English and Chichewa, were also found in the Nkhoma Synod library.

The researcher found his written primary sources at primarily three places: the DRC headquarters in Cape Town, South Africa (where the researcher found DRC records in Afrikaans, very little in English, and a significant amount of Nkhoma Synod minutes in English up to the early eighties), the library at Nkhoma Synod (which largely duplicated what found in Cape Town, although there was some useful additional material), and the Office of the General Assembly in Lilongwe (minutes of meetings of

the CCAP General Assembly). The researcher has donated all of his research materials taken and photocopied in the DRC headquarters in Cape Town to the library at Nkhoma Synod, and he has returned to the Synod library those sources, which he borrowed. All future researchers would do well to consult with the current General Secretary, Dr. WR Kawale, the Principal of NIFCOTT, Dr. Hennie van Deventer, the librarian at Nkhoma Synod, or the General Secretary of the CCAP General Assembly.

The researcher has also been aided by the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) and by the Malawi Council of Churches, both headquartered in Lilongwe. They graciously furnished material about their organisations.

The researcher has learned through experience that using translators and CDs has severe limitations. Others may not feel free to devote extensive time toward the project, and translator CDs as yet lack the sophistication to translate from Afrikaans into comprehensible, idiomatic English.

Retrieval of documents and records by those who have access to them proved to be a special challenge. The meticulous filing system that one finds in the DRC offices in Cape Town, South Africa, has not exactly been duplicated in Malawi. Another problem that a researcher will run into is that Malawian record-keepers may be loose with non-Malawian names. For example, for many years the manager of the Building Department was Mr. Dick van der Wilt. He is referred to in minutes of meetings as “Mr. Dick”.

A trip by the researcher to the National Archives in Zomba, the former national capital, taught that the archival material contained therein is full and complete up until one reaches the year 1964, the year that national independence was achieved. Beyond that point, however, available resources become dramatically sparse.

Up until the early nineteen-eighties, minutes of Synod, Synodical Committee, and Moderamen meeting were diligently translated into English. After that, English-language copies of minutes became very sparse, as already stated. The researcher has made strenuous efforts to fill the void through personal interviews. The field remains wide open to Malawian researchers of the future who can make good use of the existing Chichewa-language records.

Expecting that several strategies of enquiry would actually be utilized, research design and methodology for this study was developed as the research progressed and

evolved. A primary source for data collection and obtaining information was the process of interviewing Synodical leaders. This involved unstructured interviewing with a view to obtain research-relevant information from sources such those are currently serving or have served in the past in positions of leadership in such areas as moderator, women's guild, etc. Although the researcher is familiar with the existing literature, still it was anticipated that in-depth interviewing would take place to produce lived experiences, personal narratives, and personal histories of those who have been involved in the study. Mutual trust between interviewer and interviewee was ensured by the fact that both the researcher and his organisation are known and trusted by the leaders of Nkhoma Synod. The result of this has been to ensure the cooperation of the interviewees, as well as create a milieu, which has aided the quality of the collected data.

Efforts have been made to elicit participant accounts of meaning, experience, and perceptions; these have at times involved identifying the individual and the Synod's beliefs and value systems. Empirical or participatory action was used throughout the course of this research. The research paradigm for this study, therefore, has been principally done by using a qualitative mode of enquiry, with the 'dominant-less-dominant model'. The study is presented within a single, dominant paradigm (qualitative) with one small component of the overall study drawn from the alternative (quantitative) paradigm, as discussed by Creswell (De Vos 1998:360) and described in the surveys presented above (1.6) as past research.

Human behaviours and attitudes, which have been brought to light from the quantitative analysis, have been studied interpretatively. Using this concept of triangulation has worked towards warding off obvious biases that might not have been obvious to the researcher. The historical story of the development of Nkhoma Synod was developed after baseline information had been obtained, studied, and interpreted,

1.8 DISSERTATION OVERVIEW

Chapter 1 The Research Procedure

Chapter One describes the objectives of the project. This is crucial, as it then makes it possible to evaluate whether the objectives were reached. It also describes the procedure by which the research was conducted, as well as the difficulties encountered.

Chapter 2 Preliminary History

The second chapter briefly surveys the history of the CCAP prior from Malawi's earliest Christian roots in 1865, to 1926 when what became Nkhoma Synod joined the two Scottish Presbyterian missions, Livingstonia and Blantyre, which had come together two years earlier to form the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP). Growth continued until the Dutch Reformed Church Mission was dissolved in 1962, creating the autonomous Nkhoma Synod. This gives the necessary background, without which a description of the study period, 1962-2004, would be less understandable.

Chapter 3 Administration and Personnel Issues.

The various major decisions that had to be made, policies that had to be set, and why, are described in chapter three. Such vital issues as financial difficulties, a proposal to move to Lilongwe, stewardship initiatives, and the role of women are included. It also describes the various key personnel, the contributions that they made, and the issues that they faced.

Chapter 4 Congregational Life and Church Officers.

Key issues regarding church officers and how this affects the life of congregations are explored in chapter four. Included here are the calibre of teaching found in "prayer houses", the Women's Guild (*Chigwirizano*), and the pattern of consistent Synodical growth. There is a brief look at "prayer houses" and a focus upon the development of urban congregations of Lilongwe because of the enormous pull they have upon the Synod as a whole.

Chapter 5 Education

Chapter five discusses the various aspects of education – primary, secondary, post-secondary, vocational, education for women, Religious Education (and how this has changed and why this is a problem), and matters relating to teachers. Nkhoma Synod's developing interest and continuing involvement in the field of education will be explained.

Chapter 6 Ministerial and Lay Leadership Training

The challenge of providing an adequate number of competent church leaders, both lay and ordained, is explained by chapter six. It will describe the various methods used in order to produce more trained church personnel, so desperately needed, today as well as in the past. It will be shown how tensions between synods added to the challenge.

Chapter 7 Medical and Relief and Development Departments

Chapter seven discusses this key department, operating in a land where relatively few have access to adequate health care. It will be illustrated why this continues to be one department in which expatriate personnel and resources continue to play a pivotal role. The relatively recent scourge of HIV/AIDS will be seen to present a special added challenge. The development of the Relief and Development Department is a relatively recent but very important addition.

Chapter 8 Evangelism

Chapter eight will show how the Synod pursues the crucial function of evangelism with great alacrity. The Synod has consistently used a multi-faceted approach to evangelism, recognising how vital it is to the Synod's future development. Youth, broadcasting, and outreach to Muslims are all given attention.

Chapter 9 Mission Beyond Malawi

How Nkhoma Synod partners with older South African churches to bring the Gospel the long-troubled land of Mozambique is the subject of chapter nine. It will further show that a Reformed daughter church has been successfully transplanted there.

There is also take a look at Nkhoma Synod's involvement with Chichewa-language churches in South Africa.

Chapter 10 Literature and Printing

Why the printing department has declined in relative importance is explained in chapter ten. It describes the various measures taken to halt the decline. However, it will also be shown that important work continues with such activities as CLAIM, and Bible translation.

Chapter 11 Relations with the Government

Chapter eleven will show relations with the Malawian government in the post-independence era have produced a number of special problems. It will be shown too, that the advent of a new regime provided an opportunity for the Synod to find its prophetic voice. How that voiced is being developed is also discussed.

Chapter 12 Relations with other Synods

Chapter twelve explores how relations unfolded regarding other synods with the CCAP. It will also discuss the impact of a new denominational constitution, intended to draw the various synods of the CCAP closer. It will also describe a formal statement of policies and strategies that was drawn up by the Standing Committee of the General synod (now Assembly). The ramifications of this new approach are many.

Chapter 13 Relations with other Denominations

This chapter takes up the issues created by relations with the DRC, other Reformed churches and bodies, non-Reformed churches, and with ecumenical bodies. It is described how interaction with other bodies can create new, and sometimes unforeseen, challenges. It is recognized that events transpiring in South Africa and outside of Africa have an impact upon Nkhoma synod.

Chapter 14 The Spirituality of the Synod

The major components of the Synod's spirituality - styles of worship, meeting the challenge of continuing traditional belief, and the issue of alleged legalism, are all dealt

with by this chapter. It is explained how this is an essential topic of investigation, as it provided a window into the development of the soul of Nkhoma Synod.

Chapter 15 Final Conclusions

The final chapter brings together all of the information presented with a focus on the interpretation of the data and the conclusions that can be drawn regarding the evolutionary development of the Nkhoma Synod since 1962. The initial research questions, in concert with the accompanying secondary questions will again be visited. They will be examined in light of the conclusions described above as the course of the research developed as described in this dissertation.

The study opens with “Preliminary History” in order to give the reader the necessary background for understanding the period 1962 – 2004. “Administration and Personnel Issues” follow this because this has important bearing on all subsequent chapters. Closely related to this is “Congregational Life and Church Officers”. The next chapter is “Education” because such a prominent part of the Synod’s life deserves to be found early in the dissertation. “Ministerial and Lay Leadership Training” is obviously a closely related field. “Medical and Relief and Development Departments” follow as it does because, next to education, no other area has illustrated the priorities of the Synod. The next two chapters, “Evangelism” and “Mission to Mozambique,” demonstrate that in addition to meeting man’s physical needs, meeting his spiritual needs has also been a key concern of the Synod. “Literature and Printing” occupies the position that it does because this department played a complementary role in evangelism and in missions. The next three chapters, dealing with relations with the government, other synods, and other denominations, show that after addressing the ministry agenda of the Synod, it was recognized that it was part of a greater whole. This called for dialogue with other bodies. It is appropriate that the penultimate chapter is a discussion on the development of the Synod’s spirituality. This will leave the reader with an indelible impression regarding the soul of the Synod.

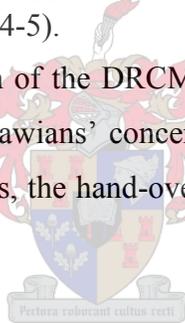
Chapter Two Preliminary History

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The transition from mission to church was not without a degree of awkwardness. As John Baur explains,

In the religious-ecclesial sphere the movement chiefly fought against the lack of trust evident in the slow pace of promotion of the African clergy: against preferential treatment of white church members; against the wholesale rejection of African customs; and against any kind of missionary paternalism, whether authoritarian or benignant. In its strongest form this protest turned into open secession: it was the reason for the formation of the earliest independent churches. The missionaries had a clear vision of a fully Africanized Church from the beginning. However, it was a vision of the future; one began with the lower positions and insisted that nothing should be rushed. The acceleration came in fact with political independence (Baur 1994: 284-5).

In the case of the dissolution of the DRCM in Malawi, it can be shown that the missionaries were aware of the Malawians' concerns. Furthermore, they were to some degree in sympathy with them. Thus, the hand-over of control from mission to synod in this case was a controlled one.



2.2 CHRISTIANITY IS INTRODUCED INTO MALAWI

Christianity came to Malawi on a permanent basis in 1875 when the Free Church of Scotland established a mission later known as Livingstonia Synod. In 1877 an African evangelist from South Africa named William Koyi began work with this mission, focusing upon the warlike Ngoni people⁴ (Hildebrandt 1990: 119).

One year later the Church of Scotland began what was to be known in time as Blantyre Synod. Serious mismanagement resulted in a change of staff in 1881; the new leader was David Clement Scott (1881-98). In addition to putting the mission on a more solid footing, he also built the famous St. Michael's and All-Angels Church.

⁴ The Chewa tribe is by far the largest and most influential of all the tribes in Malawi, making up approximately fifty percent of the population.

The origin of Nkhoma Synod goes back to 1889 when the Dutch Reformed Church missionaries from South Africa started work in the Central province. In due course a church was established with the purpose, inter alia of providing spiritual and social welfare to people. In 1926, Nkhoma Presbytery joined the newly established Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian (CCAP) together with Livingstonia and Blantyre Presbyteries. In 1956 these three Presbyteries became Synods, together constituting the General Synod of the CCAP. Later two more Synods namely those of Harare and Zambia joined the three Malawi Synods so that the CCAP General Assembly today comprises of five Synods. Since 1889 Nkhoma Synod has grown spiritually, numerically and in its ministry in Malawi, the neighbouring nations, and to the world.⁵

Nkhoma Synod was founded in 1889 when missionaries of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa, principally AC Murray and TCB Vlok, arrived in Malawi. The first base of operations was at Mvera, but twenty-three years later (1912) the mission station at Nkhoma became the centre of operations.

The Scottish missionaries, supported by Cecil Rhodes, called for a British protectorate to be set up in this territory, and this was accomplished in 1891. Their motives for doing so were a desire to promote Christianity and commerce, and to save the land from the slave trade and the Portuguese (Shaw 1996: 214).

By 1914 the list of Protestant missions in Malawi included the Universities' Mission to Central Africa (UMCA), the Australian Baptists, the South Africa General Mission and the Seventh Day Adventists. The Roman Catholics established a presence in 1901. Another major group, the Jehovah's Witnesses, quickly earned for themselves a ban by the government (Hildebrandt 1990: 179, 222).

A number of denominations currently in Malawi had their origins in the "Faith Missions" movement. The Zambezi Industrial Mission, founded in 1892, was the source for the Zambezi Evangelical Church, the 1932 Congregation of the Lamb, and the (c. 1953) African Church. The Nyasa Industrial Mission, founded in 1893, gave rise to the Evangelical Church of Malawi and the 1946 African Nyasa Mission. The Africa Evangelical Fellowship, founded in 1900, grew into the Africa Evangelical Church of Malawi (Fiedler 1994: 96).

⁵ 2003 Partnership Agreement, PA.2.1 Background.

In 1928 The African National Church was founded; it was a breakaway from the Livingstonia Mission. It was not earliest, but its name reveals an anti-colonial feeling (Weller and Linden 1984: 186). In 1933 Yesaya Zerenji Mwasi founded the Blackman's Church, which is in Tongaland (Ross 1996:169). There are now a number of "African Independent Churches", such as the African Abraham Church and the Last Church of God (see 13.4.1, "The Challenge of the AICs"). Concerning the creation of these churches, Elizabeth Isichei feels that there is an inherent tendency within Presbyterianism that encourages this.

. . . the creation of new churches came more easily to Protestants. The fissiparous tendency of Presbyterianism, for instance, is reflected in mission history; the same belief in the paramount importance of individual religious conviction underlay independency in Africa (Isichei 1995: 248).

Although it had antecedents in the period before World War Two, the Assemblies of God is generally thought of as having started in Malawi in the late 1940s.⁶ The Southern Baptist Convention entered Malawi in 1959. At that time they sent two American missionary couples. The Baptist Mission in Malawi maintains a significant presence to this day.⁷ The Free Methodist Church began in the 1970s when a Malawian living in Zimbabwe received a vision to return to Malawi and start a Free Methodist work there. After he started it, the parent denomination in the U.S. took over and sent Henry Church to act as its superintendent. Church is now responsible for all of Free Methodism in Southern Africa, and is based in Zimbabwe.⁸

One major event in Malawian history occurred when a Malawian named John Chilembwe led an uprising on January 23, 1915. He had founded the Providence Industrial Mission and had received education at a black American college. After killing three whites, his revolt ended in failure and he was killed attempting to escape to Mozambique (Hildebrandt 1990: 220).

In 1924 the two Scottish Presbyterian missions, Livingstonia and Blantyre, came together to form the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP). It was decided to put "Presbyterian" on the end in case they decided to unite with a non-Presbyterian or

⁶ Interview between researcher and Lazarus Chakwera, Assemblies of God General Superintendent, 1999.

⁷ Interview between researcher and Dr. Sam Upton, Southern Baptist missionary, 1996.

⁸ Interview between researcher and Henry Church, 1996.

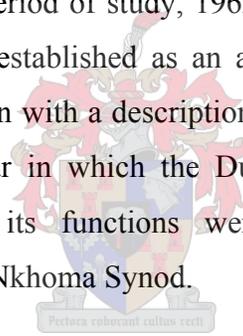
other Reformed body; the name at the end could easily be dropped. It never happened. Shortly afterward, in 1926, Nkhoma Presbytery joined the CCAP.

The Moderator having put the motion, it was carried unanimously and with acclamation; and thereafter the Rev. J.A. Retief, moderator of the Mkhoma⁹ Presbytery, received from the Moderator of the Synod The Right hand of Fellowship in token of the Mkhoma Presbytery's incorporation with the Synod of the Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian.¹⁰

Attending that Second Meeting of Presbytery in 1926 were representatives from the DRC of the Orange Free State: Revs. C.P. Pauw, F. Botha, and DP Laurie.¹¹

In 1956 Nkhoma Presbytery became Nkhoma Synod. It was to remain under the stewardship of the Dutch Reformed Church Mission (DRCM) until 1962, which was two years before the country of Malawi became independent. This was shortly after the synods of Scottish origin, Livingstonia and Blantyre, had achieved autonomy.

At the beginning of this period of study, 1962-2004, Nkhoma Synod, Church of Central Africa Presbyterian was established as an autonomous body. In 1962 it was "Mkhoma Synod". We shall begin with a description of the state of the Synod's affairs, as they existed in 1962, the year in which the Dutch Reformed Church Mission in Nyasaland was dissolved and its functions were handed over to the General Administrative Committee of the Nkhoma Synod.



2.3 ON THE EVE OF AUTONOMY

In April 1956 the CCAP, meeting at Nkhoma, adopted a constitution, and the Synod of the CCAP became the General Synod of the CCAP. The dominance of expatriate missionaries at that stage can be seen by the composition the Synod's officers: the Moderator was Rev JJ Watt, Rev AS Labuschagne was the Vice Moderator, Rev GF Hugo was Senior Clerk and Rev FS Chintali was Junior Clerk. In August 1956 the

⁹ Rev. Dr. Hennie van Deventer, principal of NIFCOTT explains that in 1965, the Synod was still "Mkhoma". A friend of the president (Kamuzu Banda) went to the hospital for treatment. When he got his bill, he crossed out the "M" and replaced it with an "N". He wrote on the bill a note saying that "Nkhoma" was the correct spelling. On the strength of that, the synod changed the spelling of its name. The museum at Nkhoma has this bill and note displayed.

¹⁰ Minutes of the Second Meeting of Synod, Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, 13th to 15th October 1926, page 7.

¹¹ Ibid. page 8.

Presbytery of Nkhoma became the Synod of Nkhoma; Rev Labuschagne was to be its first and last white Moderator. In 1958 Rev JS Mwale became the first Malawian Moderator, and all Moderators since have been Malawian (Labuschagne 2003: 328-330).

As a prelude to ecclesiastical autonomy, in 1957 a Synodical Education Committee was set up by the Nkhoma Synodical Committee, which had agreed to take over responsibility for running all congregational schools. In 1959 the Synod assumed the right to appoint members of other committees, which had been the prerogative of the Mission Council. In 1960 the first Nkhoma Synod member, Rev. Mgawi, went abroad (to Great Britain) for training (Pauw 1980: 374-5).

In 1960 the Nkhoma Synod Teachers' Association (NSTA) was formed. They were to agitate for the acceleration of the dissolution of the Mission and the autonomy of the Synod. Following the achievement of this goal, they were to for years afterward work toward the lessening of DRC presence and influence in Malawi. At the time of the transfer of power in 1962, they decided to reject the Constitution and Deed of Agreement, which had been negotiated between the DRC and the Synod. They maintained that the General Administrative Committee (GAC), which was to govern the Synod, and which involved substantial participation by DRC personnel, was merely the Mission Council under a different name. They produced a misleading report that was published by the Malawi News to the effect that the DRC had tried to impose a constitution upon the Synod against its will. They also threatened a boycott of all church activities unless the teachers' demands were met. Although the Synod rejected their ultimatum, changes in the Constitution were made which reduced the number of DRC personnel and their influence (Pauw 1980: 376-92).

Another veteran South African missionary, AS Labuschagne, had a perspective of the situation that can only be described as conciliatory.

With reference to the letter they wrote to the three missionaries, it puzzled us that good friends could change so suddenly and write such a threatening letter to us. The day when we finally met them in what we called the "Truth and Reconciliation Committee" to hear what the accusations against especially were, the spokesman was Mr. Hartwick Kachaje, a good friend of us all. He laid the charge sheet before each one of us in which our trespasses were stated. We could feel that these men sitting in front of us were not our enemies, but old friends. It was like a well planned play in which the three of us were chosen as persons in

positions of influence, meaning formers, whom they could use as agents to bring about the change so badly needed in the Mission and the Synod. Actually they did not hate us but loved us and honoured us because they considered us to have such great influence that we could help them to bring about the change they prayed for (Labuschagne 2002: 142).

The “Truth and Reconciliation Committee” was jointly chaired by Mr. John Tembo of the Mkhoma Synod Teachers’ Association (MSTA) and Rev Attie Labuschagne. This became known as the Tembo-Labuschagne Commission, and it made proposals that were accepted by the DRCM Mission Council in April 1961. This led one year later to the Mission Council being dissolved and replaced by the General Administrative Committee (GAC) of Nkhoma Synod. The era of autonomy for the Synod had arrived (Labuschagne 2003: 335-338).

In a 1961 speech, the Chairman of the Mission Council cited several shortcomings on the part of the Mission, which hampered the ability of the Synod to exercise full autonomy:

There had been inadequate training of Malawian leaders who could take over responsibilities formerly done by missionaries. There was a paternalistic attitude reflected by the missionaries that precluded participation by Malawians. Along with this, missionaries generally reflected unfortunate and inappropriate social and racial attitudes. The size of the Mission organization had grown to such an extent that it made the hand-over to the Synod more difficult. The profits of the various departments and how they were to be handled created further tension between Mission and Synod. The Synod was to find the financial system of the Mission difficult to perpetuate. In the area of education, long a source for new church members, there was the problem of schools losing their spiritual heritage and becoming essentially secular. This might have been alleviated by the more extensive development of youth work. Finally, the missionaries caused resentment on the part of Malawians by appearing thoroughly dug in and not wishing to leave (Pauw 1980: 396-7).

2.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The understanding of one’s origin and of one’s history is absolutely essential to self-understanding today. To be unaware of how one got to the present state is to consign oneself to a perpetual state of amnesia. The transplanting of Christianity into what is today Malawi required self-sacrifice and great tenacity; the efforts of those responsible for this transplantation must be forever preserved and treasured. The founding of what

was to become Nkhoma Synod by the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa was to set the stage for conditions that are still in existence today. The continued strong ties with South Africa make greater sense when Nkhoma Synod's history is examined. The synods of Scottish origin and Nkhoma Synod are separated by an invisible wall of language, confessional standards, liturgy, theology, and polity. This is a highly imposing wall, but it is not an insurmountable one. These differences will be described more fully in the chapters to follow. Also to follow is the description of more recent efforts to bring the wall of separation down.

The gradual transfer of power and properties from the Mission to the Synod was met by the Malawian leaders with suspicion and resentment. The Nkhoma Synod Teachers' Association may have had reason to suspect the intention of missionaries who mixed with Africans only with hesitancy. Perhaps the transfer might have been done more rapidly. However, it was seen that such DRCM leaders as Labuschagne acted with commendable restraint – more so than did the NSTA. The following chapter will take up the story of the administrative challenges faced by the newly autonomous Synod.



Chapter Three

Administration and Personnel Issues

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter the stage was set for the new situation that was caused by the dissolution of the DRCM and the transfer of properties and authority to Nkhoma Synod. Having examined the origins of the work, it is now possible to read with greater understanding about the often - difficult decisions that now had to be made.

In his book, *Church and Order*, Pieter Coertzen has written:

A church order must arrange the smooth process of affairs in the church community and see that the government of the church functions properly and in accordance with the Scriptural requirements for this (Coertzen 1998: 56).

Therefore this chapter will attempt to answer the question, has Nkhoma Synod succeeded in following the prescription stated above? Has it seen to it that the church functions properly and in accordance with Scriptural requirements?

3.2 ADMINISTRATION ISSUES

The excerpt from the Constitution of the Nkhoma Synod of the CCAP (as amended in September 1972) is presented in order to explain the structure of the Church under study.¹²

In Article III, the relationship of the Nkhoma Synod to the General Synod of the CCAP, it states, “The Nkhoma Synod accepts the Constitution of the CCAP as part of this Constitution.”

In Article V, Rule and Church Discipline, it explains that rule and discipline are to be exercised by the sessions, presbyteries, and the Nkhoma Synod and by the General Synod of the CCAP. Nkhoma Synod is to be the final court of appeals except in matters as it decides.

¹² Taken from “Minutes of the General Synod, held at Chongoni 16th to 17th August 1977”, Appendix VI, pages 18 to 22.

In Article VII, The Session, a session is to consist of a minister and four elders, half the membership constituting a quorum. The session is to have authority over the district appointed to it by the presbytery. The duties of the session are to include: assisting the minister in public worship, to supervise the finances, to approve suitable persons for the offices of eldership and deaconate, to exercise church discipline, to instruct the youth and for the evangelisation of its district, to carry out decisions by Synod and Presbytery, and to fulfil other such duties as assigned “by a superior court.”

Article VIII, the Presbytery, says that presbyteries are constituted by all serving Ordained Ministers who belong to the congregations of the respective presbyteries, plus one elder from each congregation. Each presbytery is to have an Executive committee, consisting of a moderator, clerk of Presbytery, an additional minister, and two elders. A Presbytery is to supervise all congregations, sessions, and ministers within its boundary, ordain and induct ministers, to see that the Word of God is rightly preached and that the Sacraments are rightly administered, to elect elders in new congregations, to supervise church visitation, statistics and finances, and to deal with matters brought by sessions.

Article IX, Nkhoma Synod, states that the Synod is to consist of all Ordained Ministers who belong to the congregations of the Synod, plus an elder from each congregation. It shall meet under the chairmanship of a moderator. There shall be a Moderamen, consisting of the Moderator, Vice-Moderator, General Secretary, and Junior Clerk. There shall be a Synodical Committee consisting of the Moderamen, and one minister and one elder from each presbytery.

In 1961 the General Missions Committee of the DRC Synod in South Africa was authorized to proceed with a draft of a Deed of Agreement. In December 1961 a Joint Committee comprised of DRC and Nkhoma Synod representatives met. There were some points of disagreement, such as use of profits from departments and the need for continuing some of the departments. Nkhoma Synod clearly resisted any restrictions such as a need to consult the DRC on any important decision such as disposal of property. In April 1962 the DRC Mission Council convened for the last time, Nkhoma Synod approved the Deed of Agreement with a few amendments, and a Deed of Transfer was read at which time thirteen DRC missionaries were received into the ministry of the Nkhoma Synod of the CCAP (Pauw 1980: 386-389).

In 1962 the General Administrative Committee (GAC) replaced the Mission Council of the Dutch Reformed Church Mission (DRCM). At the March 1963 GAC meeting it was noted that the incorporation of Nkhoma Synod had been effected. It was further noted that all DRCM properties had been transferred to the Synod.¹³

Shortly before independence, important relationships were further defined: The GAC was to administer all departments of the Synod; all actions of the GAC would be subject to the approval of the Synod. The GAC was to act as a channel through which the Synod and the DRC undertook joint missionary work. The Liaison Officer was to be the link for maintaining good relations between the Synod and the DRC, and he was to work in close cooperation (emphasis theirs) with the General Secretary.¹⁴

In 1979 the decision was made that Synodical Committee members representing the various presbyteries on that Committee be present at all presbytery meetings. Travel expenses were to be paid by Synod, and the General Secretary was to write a letter to the presbyteries explaining the new policy.¹⁵ This is an illustration of how orders frequently come down from on high to the congregations and presbyteries.

In 1979 there was a “Report of the Commission of Inquiry Into the Expenditures of Synod”. The purpose was to reform the procedures by which income was received and expenditures were made. A month later the Office Committee was created with the purpose of supervising the offices of the Synod and finances. In addition, in April 1979, General Secretary YA Chienda was instructed to “start explaining things in the office to Rev. IM Kainja,” the incoming General Secretary.¹⁶ It is to be appreciated that the Synod consistently handed over authority in a decent and orderly manner, but the “Commission of Inquiry” suggests that an inefficient handling of funds created unnecessary difficulties.

¹³ E.26. Minutes of the GAC 15 March 1963. Throughout this dissertation, there are footnotes marked by letters, such as “E”, “S”, “KS”, or “M”. E stands for “Executive Committee,” S stands for “Synod,” KS stands for “Synodical Committee,” and M stands for “Moderamen.” These are minutes of meetings of the various levels of Nkhoma synod government. Some of them were obtained and photocopied by the researcher at the DRC headquarters in Cape Town, South Africa, and then taken to Malawi. Others were found in the library at Nkhoma Synod. The researcher has donated all of his sources copied in Cape Town to the Synod, so that all of the sources bearing the letter designations can now be found in the Nkhoma Synod library.

¹⁴ Revised constitution of the Nkhoma Synod’s General Administration Committee, April, 1964

¹⁵ KS 7639. Synodical Committee, 13 June 1979.

¹⁶ KS 7560, Moderamen, 22 March 1979, See also KS7570, Synodical Committee, 16 April 1979 and KS 7603, Synodical Committee, 23 April 1979.

Reinforcing the image of centralized control, at the 1983 meeting of Synod, there were several items discussed related to the compensation of pastors. Pensions paid to widows of pastors should be the equivalent of full salaries, rather than half. To insure uniformity of salaries, payment of salaries to pastors was the responsibility of Synod itself, rather than the congregations they served.¹⁷ However, the money came from the contributions of the congregations, which were paid into a central fund. Synod decreed that if any congregation defaulted in its responsibility, “this congregation should just be a centre for conducting the Holy Communion”. There was provision made for a pension fund, with pastors beginning their payments into this fund in January 1983.¹⁸ This is different from the Presbyterian system in America, where the local session has complete sovereignty over the “terms of call (compensation)” of a pastor, although the local presbytery may reserve the right of approval.

As in other countries, ministers of Nkhoma Synod may from time be offered the opportunity to receive “refresher courses” and seminars. One was held in 1984; having originally been scheduled for April, it was changed to September. Another seminar for pastors was held in March 1989. Its theme was “Unity” and included Bible studies.¹⁹

The Nkhoma Synod of today has established the following departments, which outline its range of interests:²⁰

- Evangelism
- Education and youth
- Theological and lay training
- Health services
- Relief and development
- Literature
- Support services (building, repairs, carpentry, etc)
- Environment (Forestry Department)

¹⁷ This was a short-lived policy; it was soon discontinued.

¹⁸ S. 1760, S. 1766, S. 1770, and S. 1793, Minutes of the 19th Synod Meeting at Namoni Katengeza CLTC 5 – 12 April 1983.

¹⁹ M. 672, “A Meeting For Pastors Only”, Meeting of the Moderamen, 5 October 1983. See also M. 800, meeting of the Moderamen, 3 April 1984, and “CCAP Leadership Seminar (sic) Tuesday 7th to 10th March 1989.

²⁰ 2003 Partnership Agreement, PA.2.2 “The Challenges”.

- Mission

Every two years there are meetings of the Synod at Chongoni (Namoni Katengeza Church Lay Training Centre) where major decisions are made and policies are set for the entire Synod. The last one, the 29th, was held in October 2003.

3.2.1 The Departments Experience Difficulties in the Early Years

There were early indications of problems within the Synod. This was highlighted by the items up for discussion at the August 1967 GAC meeting, which included such items as: there was no prospect for a profit from the Agricultural Department, as some money was missing and there were weevils in some of the maize; the Carpentry Shop likewise held little promise of a profit; the bookshop, by contrast, showed a large profit, but the report contains the observation, “This profit is put together with doubtful sales”; and in the Transport and Mechanical Department, Mr. Dzuwa was dismissed for stealing money.²¹

Continuing problems are evidenced by the following incidences. In October 1973 the Forestry Committee filed a report with the Moderamen. It stated that the Synod owned extensive property, and if it were not developed for agricultural use, the Government would confiscate it. In addition, given the financial condition of the Synod, revenue from improved agricultural activities was desirable. Synod therefore asked the DRC to provide a qualified manager for this work.²²

At the end of 1973 it was noted with alarm that the cars furnished to “education agency correspondents” had become a major financial burden to the Synod. The plan had been for these correspondents to repay loans for the purchase of these cars over a four-year period. However, experience showed that these persons did not stay long enough to repay the loans, nor did they do necessary maintenance upon the vehicles. The Treasurer, GC Reyneke, asked, “How regular is the bus service to the government assisted schools?”²³ In Malawi, vehicle maintenance is a problem; procurement of spare parts is one reason why.

²¹ E. 1236: Executive Committee meeting 8 August 1967.

²² KS 5316, Moderamen, 9 October 1973.

²³ “Agency Correspondence & Travelling”, Executive of JFC 19 November 1973.

This problem has persisted throughout much of the life of the Synod as an autonomous body. In 1985 the matter of “Motor Loans” became a cause for concern. The typical Nkhoma Synod pastor has a number of “prayer houses” scattered over a wide area under his care. Very often all he has to work with is a bicycle. So funds were obtained for motorbikes, and these were then loaned to pastors by the Synod with the intention that it would be paid back. Things did not work out as was hoped.

(a) Synodical Committee asks the Presbytery Committee investigate and to give their findings to the Presbytery meeting. The Presbytery Committee should do their work boldly, without fear. The final report should be presented to the Synodical Committee. (b) Those who are not ministers should be approached by a solicitor. (c) Ministers working for other organizations should pay back their loans through these organizations.

This was still a problem in 1989. The Synod at that time was still looking to be paid back.

The committee passed a firm resolution that all ministers should pay back their loans. The Committee appointed Rev. C.J. Burger, H.J.C. Masina and the elder Mr. B.M. Magai to draw up an agreement to be signed by all ministers before the end of Synod.²⁴

The Committee decided that it should be implemented as follows:

(a) The(y) should start paying back in the month of May. (b) The(y) should pay back regularly every month. (c) If anyone should fail to comply with this arrangement the Moderamen should send his name to the Presbytery Committee who should suspend him temporarily until he start paying back the loan.²⁵

In 1990, a more traditional and cost-efficient means of transportation was considered by the Moderamen.

The Relief and Development committee notified the Moderamen that money had been received (from Holland) to buy Bicycles for Ministers. The Moderamen decided that the bicycles should be purchased and that Ministers in congregations could then buy them at a reduced price of K100 per bicycle. The money received will only be sufficient to buy 33 bicycles, but a few more can then be bought with the money paid by the Ministers.²⁶

²⁴ SC 823. Synodical Committee, 11-12 April 1989.

²⁵ SC 824. Synodical Committee, 11-12 April 1989.

²⁶ M. 2903. Moderamen, 12 July 1990.

Today the “Motor Loan” funds are exhausted and there are no “Motor Loans”. The Synod is still struggling to recover some money. This is proving difficult, as some of the borrowers are now deceased.²⁷

Another example of a long-term situation was the case of Monkey Bay CCAP. Monkey Bay is at the southern end of Nkhoma Synod’s jurisdiction, on Lake Malawi. A 1977 report to the Nkhoma Synod Building Committee states:

The request from the Malembo Congregation for a plan to be drawn up for a church at monkey Bay was dealt with. The committee was informed that the congregation plan (sic) to make sufficient bricks for a church that will seat (plus or minus) 750 people.

The Builder, Mr. Dick vd. Wilt, is asked to draw up a plan for such a church building and to work out the cost if all bricks were available. The sum of K3640 has been allocated by Synod to assist the congregation to erect a building that will comply to the standards of Monkey Bay as a growing Township.²⁸

Nearly a decade later, in 1986, the following was the situation regarding Monkey Bay CCAP:

No funds have been received to complete the work at Monkey Bay. The Committee asks Rev. van Deventer, in the absence of Rev. Burger, to find out why Mr. Reyneke (who promised K5000) has not yet sent the promised funds yet.²⁹

Today Monkey Bay CCAP is a viable congregation.³⁰ It is located in a strategic area with heavily Muslim population (see section 8.4, “The Challenge of Islam.”)

In 1977 the Synod, upon learning that “smaller” Synod lands had long since been occupied by people, agreed to hand over (not sell) such smaller lands to the Government. The “larger” lands at Mvera, Mlanda, and Dowa were to “be diminished”.³¹ Throughout history, governments have eyed church land, and Malawi is no exception.

The departments were not run with exceptional efficiency in the early years. Inexperience and mismanagement took their toll. The threat of government confiscation of property certainly did not help. Another particular problem was transport. The following sub-section, on a proposed move of Synod offices to Lilongwe, causes one to

²⁷ Interview with CCAP General Secretary YA Chienda.

²⁸ Meeting of the Nkhoma Synod Building Committee held at Nkhoma on 25 April 1977.

²⁹ J. 616. JFC, 23 April 1986.

³⁰ Interview with CCAP General Secretary YA Chienda on 22 October 2004.

³¹ KS 7047. Synodical Committee 19 July 1977.

remember that Nkhoma is situated at the end of a fourteen-kilometre dirt road; thus transport to and from there is all the more challenged.

3.2.2 *The Plan to Move to Lilongwe*

The plan to move the Nkhoma Synod headquarters to Lilongwe and its ultimate rejection illustrates the difficulties encountered by the Synod in making such a decision. Today many observers would consider it to have been a bad call. Given the belief that the government was going to build a paved road to the Nkhoma offices, it was at the time a reasonable decision. The cost of moving would have been great – at a time when the financial strain was already close to overwhelming. Additionally, in the late seventies and early eighties, no doubt many were still not used to thinking of Lilongwe as the centre of the country.

In 1974 the possibility of moving Nkhoma Synod offices to Lilongwe was being discussed (the idea went further back than that). In 1976, the committee charged with looking into this matter repeated the conclusion that the move to Lilongwe should take place. It was felt that Lilongwe was more central to all congregations, it would contribute toward the development of the city, it would lessen the transport difficulties getting to Nkhoma, there would be more ministers on hand to preach in the city congregations, and all people, especially government ministers, would “have a better picture of the work of the Synod.”

Regardless of all of these factors favouring the move, inevitable snags developed. When asked for a loan to fund the move, the DRC pointed out they still owed MK 60,000 for an electricity scheme at Nkhoma. The Synodical Committee then decided to approach the Christian Service Committee. On 8 June 1979, the Building Committee had a discussion with the Lilongwe congregation, and it was decided to tear down the old church and build a new one on the same site. “Because Synod wishes to build the Synod Offices in Lilongwe, Committee instructs the Building committee to again go to Lilongwe and discuss with the congregation about the site for the offices.”³²

³² KS 5663. Synodical Committee, 8 – 9 October 1974;
KS 5902, Synodical Committee, 21 – 23 April 1976.
See also KS 7635, Synodical Committee, 13 June 1979.

In the latter part of 1979 the Synod began to change its mind about removing Synod offices to the capital city. Reasons that were given for this:

- The promised grant for this project (U.S. \$50,000) is by far too little for this project.
- A site for the Office block on our land at Lilongwe CCAP has not yet been determined (it appears that the land is too small).
- In the near future the government will build a new Post Office at Nkhoma, for which we requested that an automatic telephone exchange be installed (this will improve communications).
- It is rumoured that the Government will construct a new road to Nkhoma; therefore travelling from and to Nkhoma will no longer be a problem.
- It will not be wise to have the Treasurer's Office so far from the departments at Nkhoma.
- It will be possible to open just a branch-office of the Treasurer in Lilongwe to facilitate the sales of church stationery and receive dues from congregations.
- Enthusiasm for moving the Synod Offices to Lilongwe has waned.

Therefore Committee respectfully requests the prospective donor to allow the funds to be used for another purpose such as (a pension fund for ministers, housing for retired ministers, building houses to be rented out in Lilongwe).³³

In 1985, the Synod saw what appeared to be an opportunity to buy an office building in Lilongwe.

The Committee heard that the Imperial Hotel in Lilongwe was for sale at a price of K250,000.00 Realising that it is centrally and therefore suitably situated the committee decided to buy the building, but it will do so only after it has been inspected by somebody who knows about building. The Senior clerk is instructed to go and see the owner and inform him about our intentions.³⁴

That deal did not go through. In late 1985, a different building in Lilongwe was under consideration. The Moderamen described the changed situation:

³³ KS 7771. Synodical Committee, 23 – 24 October 1979.

³⁴ M.1302. Moderamen, 23 September 1985.

The thought of buying the Imperial Hotel as Synod Offices, was dropped because another office building was found at the Malawi Property Investment Company near the Cement Industries. The plot is no. 4/165 and the size is 1,097 acres. The price K136,920 and should be paid in sixty instalments of K2282.00 each month over a period of five years. The Committee decided to buy the property and thought of putting down a deposit of K10,000.³⁵

In a 1988 report, General Secretary CL Chimkoka gave the reason why there is no such office building for Nkhoma Synod in Lilongwe today.

As reported previously in 1985 by my predecessor, the Synod had envisaged to build an Office Block in Lilongwe. The project could take us up to k380,000. This plan was dropped out by Synod in 1987 because of the extensive expenses to be incurred. The Synod maintains Nkhoma as a more viable place than the one intended: However, should the plan come up again much more Capital will be required to meet the ever increasing cost of living.³⁶

Looking back with the clarity that only hindsight can deliver, one must make the following observations: it can be seen that the hoped-for Government road was never built; Nkhoma Synod offices were never moved to Lilongwe; and access to Nkhoma remains as difficult today as ever.

It should be noted that whatever the drawbacks, the continued location of Nkhoma Synod headquarters at its present site has its positive side. It is still centrally located to the churches of the Synod as a whole. Telephone and e-mail service is generally good. Visitors to Nkhoma find it to be an enchanting garden spot. Keeping the historical buildings in good repair after a move to Lilongwe would be difficult. Finally, it would be difficult to prove that the advantages of moving to Lilongwe could ever justify the enormous costs that such a move would entail.

3.3 THE FINANCIAL CHALLENGES OF AUTONOMY

Like all organisations, a religious body like Nkhoma Synod has to be able to pay the bills. It was seen in section 3.2.1, “The Departments Experience Difficulties in the Early Years”, that early in the autonomy period, Malawian leaders were all too often

³⁵ M. 1393. Moderamen. 17 December 1985.

³⁶ Report to Federal Council. Church of Central Africa Presbyterian: Nkhoma Synod. The Life and Work of Nkhoma Synod CCAP.

inexperienced at this dimension of organisational life. This proved to be a situation that has continued to plague the Synod, as this section will illustrate. Then too, there was undoubtedly a shortage of qualified personnel to keep the machinery of the various departments running well. Many organisations operating in Malawi face the same difficulties today. More often than not, men who inherited leadership positions from the old DRCM were trained to be clergy, not necessarily business managers and in all too many cases they had to learn to manage through long, hard experience. As is often the case, those gifted with the compassionate relational skills necessary for pastoral work, are not necessarily equipped with the gifts necessary for the complex and often convoluted business matters that faced the growing Nkhoma Synod.

The Synod sought out many avenues of dealing with difficult issues and made significant efforts to resolve financial difficulties using internal resources. Stewardship campaigns were pursued with great vigour and a sense of absolute necessity. No doubt many of the rank-and-file membership wanted to help more, but were unable. The problems of illiteracy, unemployment, and poverty continue to impede the progress of Nkhoma Synod in much the same way that they do other institutions, and the progress of the country as a whole. The cost of independence meant greater financial responsibility, and this had to be learned over time. In many cases painful cutbacks were deemed necessary. The goal to achieve greater self-reliance, while often appearing elusive, was always felt to be ultimately obtainable.

Early in the independence era it was acknowledged by the GAC that the Synod was facing financial difficulties. The instances highlighted below help to illustrate these difficulties. Facts such as what was evidenced in a March 1965 meeting³⁷ where bank overdrafts exceeded £10,000 were revealed along with the knowledge, “there is no money for paying wages for March”. While investigating the situation more closely, the GAC also noted that departments were being mismanaged, further compounding the problem.

While continuing to hope for autonomy, in his 1968 annual report to the DRC, General Secretary Mgawi stated that Nkhoma Synod continued to be dependent upon DRC’s annual grant. The continuing needs from every front, such as the medical

³⁷ E. 646: GAC Minutes of meeting at Nkhoma, 31 March 1965.

department's need of £3,000 in aid, forced the Synod to be unable to consider any sort of expansion.³⁸

Problems continued to mount and at a meeting of the Synodical Mission Sub-Committee (SMSC) held in Cape Town 10-12 August 1971, it was noted that according to the new Deed of Partnership, the GAC ceased to exist. A Financial Commission was to handle the church finances for the Synod, and a Joint Finance Committee representing both churches would handle all other financial matters (see chapter 13.3, "From 'Deed of Agreement' to 'Partnership Agreement'"). It was stated that even if the previous year's Block Grant were repeated, the Synod would face a deficit of MK 39,727. The FMSC approved extra assistance. The SMC approved the Block Grant of R 14,200, plus a grant of R 14,000, of which R 3,603 was for the Lilongwe church building. The balance was to be utilized for the Synod's budget deficit. The MMSC suggested that the chairman of the FMSC, the General Mission Secretary, and the Liaison Officer be appointed as representatives on the JFC. The Synodical Committee of Nkhoma Synod asked that the Liaison Officer should be one of the SMC representatives, so that he could be present in the event that the other two Cape Town members could not attend.

In an effort to explore all avenues of resolution, the April 1972 JFC meeting³⁹ expressed "alarm" over "slackness in payment of dues by congregations". Citing this as a significant reason, many Synod activities were experiencing "failure". It was agreed that the matter had to be discussed at that year's Synod Meeting, while at the same time "the mother church must send advisers on this matter".

At the General Synod meeting of 1977, Nkhoma Synod reported that several of its departments were facing financial constraints.

Activities in other departments also had to be curtailed due to lack of funds, e.g. the Youth Chaplaincy (sic) in Lilongwe, education, Medical Work, travelling grant of Presbytery Committees, etc, (sic) The income of Synod has not declined, nor the generous grants from the Church in S Africa, but the gradual increase in church giving does not keep pace with the sharply rising costs and inflation.

A major improvement has been the link-up with ESCOM power at Nkhoma and the rewiring of most buildings. However, due to an

³⁸ Annual Report of the General Secretary of Nkhoma Synod to the DRC mission office in Cape Town, dated 1968.

³⁹ J. 31: Minutes of First JFC Meeting, 10 & 11 April 1972.

unfortunate mishandling of our application of overseas funds, Nkhoma Synod is now faced with an enormous debt of over K 100,000 in respect of this work, which cannot be cleared through the Christian Service committee, and part of the rewiring could therefore not be completed.⁴⁰

In the “Financial Statement 1980” Treasurer WM Chimutu reported an estimated deficit of more than MK90,000. He further said letters were written asking for a halt to Presbytery meetings and official travel, as there were no funds to pay for them. He adds, “Immediate method of source of income must be found. The present system of fund raising from congregations is not successful.”

The May 1981 meeting of the JFC took up several issues. The General Secretary was instructed to write a letter to the Foreign Missions Secretary in Cape Town and to thank him for the coverage of the Synod’s 1980 deficit.⁴¹ Related to this, the JFC issued several directives: that the month of July 1981 be set aside “for special collection of money towards the deficit,” that all church members and catechumens donate 10 tambala each, that every minister donate K10 each, that the General Secretary write letters to each minister and congregation explaining the Synod’s financial plight, and that an appeal for prayer be made. “Because of the deficits that are carried over every year, the Committee is urged to put into practice the decision of the Synod to sell some of its assets to find cash which can diminish the deficits.”⁴²

In “Report of the Auditors To The Joint Financial Committee Subsequent To The preparation of the Accounts For The year Ended 31 December 1982,” prepared by Graham Carr & Company, Chartered Accountants, reads,

We reiterate our comment made in the auditor’s report of 1982 that the Synod cannot bear another budget deficit. Budget deficits can only be accepted when there is a cash resource which can be used to pay for the deficit. There is no such fund available to the Synod. We therefore say in the strongest terms that the Joint Financial Committee CANNOT permit a budget deficit in 1983. If they do so, they will be responsible for bringing the Synod nearer bankruptcy, and will again enforce higher borrowings from Trust funds. The committee must therefore consider areas of expenditure in the draft budget which can be reduced or removed, and increases in income which will be available to ensure a break-even situation.

⁴⁰ Minutes of the General Synod held at Chongoni 16th to 17th August 1977, page 14.

⁴¹ J. 435, Same meeting.

⁴² J. 447/448, Same meeting, JFC Meeting at Nkhoma, 1-2 May 1981.

We understand from the D.R.C. Mission Secretary that his Mission wish to withhold part of the 1983 block grant in order to assist in refunding the Trust funds deficit. This withholding must be budgeted for as a lower income.

A letter from Graham Carr and Company written to the General Secretary on the matter of borrowing against Trust funds and dated 8 April 1983 uses equally emphatic language. It says in part:

We would stress that Synod need to repay this borrowing at the earliest possible opportunity, since it is at present preventing the moneys from being used for the purposes they were intended. It is our opinion that no additional projects should be planned until this money is refunded, unless external finance is available to fund the expenditure of that project.

The auditor of Nkhoma Synod reported to Cape Town in 1990 that the Synod was in serious financial arrears. A report suggested that a problem lay in the centenary festivals of 1989, when money was spent for items not included in the budget. There were also other accumulated debts, as follows:⁴³

Arrears in ESCOM payments	MK 23,000
City Rates	MK 146,000
Leasehold	MK 24,000
Accumulated arrears of payments to own printing press	MK 84,300
Unsold Centenary Bibles	MK 90,000
Centenary funds used for other projects	MK 62,000
Loan from SMC (since 1975)	MK 60,000
Total	MK 489,300

Figure 3.1

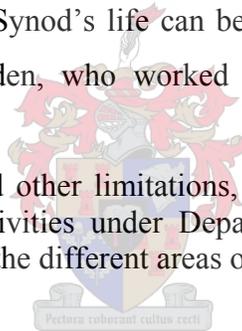
In April 1996 there was a meeting in the home of Rev. Ryk van Velden who lived in Lilongwe and who worked with Nkhoma Synod in various capacities such as youth worker, pastor, and mission committee chairman, that included the Moderamen, DRC personnel, and Rev. Koch from the Missions Office in Cape Town. It formulated some goals to be reached by 2000 that included:

⁴³ Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive of the Sub-Committee for Witness, together with the DRC Family, held on 8 May 1990 in Cape Town.

- Expenditure of the “Block Grant” for the running of the Synod will be reduced to more than one quarter of the amount. The balance will be used to sponsor the theological training and other (training) projects of the Synod. (The aim is not to reduce the basic amount of money to be paid to Nkhoma Synod, but to ensure that the Synod does not depend on the donor money for its basic functions).
- Identify and establish an income-generating project, which can help the Synod to survive financially even when the income from SA may become less.
- The Synod, DRC personnel, and the Mission Secretary from SA will meet annually to monitor the progress on the goals for partnership between Synod and DRC personnel.
- The Training of DRC personnel, who are serving in Nkhoma Synod, will be a joint responsibility of the DRC Personnel Committee and Nkhoma Synod.⁴⁴

Perhaps this phase of the Synod’s life can be summarized. The following brief evaluation comes from van Velden, who worked with Nkhoma Synod through the nineties and until 2003.

Due to poverty and other limitations, Nkhoma Synod centralised all non-congregational activities under Departments with an executive. Synodical Committees for the different areas of ministry did not really (sic) function effectively.⁴⁵



3.4 ATTEMPTS AT IMPROVED STEWARDSHIP

While recognizing the need for guidance and support from the DRC, the Nkhoma Synod nonetheless made significant, and sacrificial attempts to be as self-supporting as possible. Facing debts of almost MK 500,000 (see figure 3.1 above), and in consideration of the amount of giving (see figure 3.2 below), was averaging around R 5 per church member in a given year, conclusions can easily be drawn as to the gravity of the Nkhoma Synods dream of self-sufficiency.

⁴⁴ The minutes of a meeting between the Moderamen, members of the DRC personnel and Rev. JH Koch on 11/4/96 at the house of Rev. R. van Velden. Goals for partnership between Nkhoma Synod and the DRC personnel to be realized by 2000.

⁴⁵ E-mail from Rev. Ryk van Velden to present researcher, 23 July 2004.

Changes were occurring in fundamental operational systems that affected many systems, which can be seen by the examples given below. The GMC in July 1965 noted that matters, which used to need its approval, were now presented for information only. It further noted that Rev. C Burger, in response to Nkhoma Synod's troubled financial condition, was to spend the next two or three years teaching its congregations about giving. The GMC also noted that the Synod felt that it was a matter of honour not to ask for more money from the GMC, apart from European personnel salaries and funds previously promised.⁴⁶

The GAC in April 1968 presented its budget. It featured a deficit of £1,360. The DRC grants would account for more than a quarter of budgeted income. Revs. Burger and Mwale were to continue their stewardship campaign in the congregations.⁴⁷

In April 1970 the GAC saw that the number of missionary teachers and doctors were decreasing, causing a reduction in the DRC grants being funnelled through the Malawian Government. They recommended that the Synod renegotiate the Deed of Agreement, and called for annual block - grants of £20,000.⁴⁸ The GAC at the same time urged ministers to send contributions to the Central Fund.⁴⁹

At the Twelfth Meeting of Nkhoma Synod held 25 July – 2 August 1972, L Moolman (the General Secretary of the DRC Foreign Mission Board) delivered a lengthy address on the subject of finances. He spoke of how in spite of continuing grants from the DRC, the Synod continued to be in dire straits. He noted that giving in the congregations was up, but not contributions from the congregations to Synod. He urged Synod leaders to teach their people about tithing and about the needs.

Throughout the 1970s, the Synod continually expressed a desire to be less dependent upon the DRC,

The first Synod Week, which was held in August, brought in the large amount of K19 000. This is the special collection, which was done in the congregations in order to try to wipe out the shortage on the budget by own efforts . . . instead of begging money again from the Mother (DR

⁴⁶ Minutes of a meeting of the GMC, 20 – 22 July 1965, par. 5 & 6, p. 73.

⁴⁷ G. 1184, GAC meeting of 5-11 April 1968.

⁴⁸ G. 1516: GAC Executive, "Grants From DRC" 3 – April 1970. The grant was not directly from the DRC but was a subsidy from the Government which the DRC then passed on to the Synod.

⁴⁹ G. 1531: "Levies From Congregations".

Church). This collection will now be organized annually . . . (*Nuusbrief Uit Malawi*, January 1976).

At a special meeting of the Synod in October 1976 it was revealed that instead of the expected deficit that year of MK 48,519, due to a shortfall of receipts the deficit would actually be over MK 68,000. It was decreed that from that time on, the minimum pledge offering from a full member or a catechumen would be 20 tambala per month, although the ideal remained one-tenth of one's income.⁵⁰

A letter from "the Bank" in which it insisted that the Synod's overdraft of MK 14,000 be reduced to MK 5,000 caused the JFC Executive to issue several directives in November 1976. All those who owed large debts to the Synod, such as the Bible Society and CLAIM, were to be contacted and told to pay. Congregations in arrears were to send their pastor, treasurer, and chairman of the congregational finance committees to a 14 December meeting, at their own expense. Finally, the Acting General Secretary (Rev. C Human) was to send a letter to the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa and explain the nature of the difficulties.⁵¹ The meeting was held, some congregations sent the prescribed representation; some did not, while still others sent the arrears in lieu of representatives. The proceedings were repeated on 4 January 1977. That same date the JFC Executive met again and concluded, among other things "Nkhoma Synod has its congregations which are cooperating nicely . . . Nkhoma Synod is founded on solid foundations, and the regulations/laws building (binding) Synod together cannot be changed."⁵²

C. Martin Pauw mentions that self-support was always seen by all the Missions involved in the CCAP - and this includes the DRC - as "an essential aspect of autonomy". He quickly adds that this was not to be an absolute. It was foreseen that the Church would need help from both the "Mission" and the "Government" in running educational and medical programmes. It was further anticipated that the Church would divest itself of other departments the administration of which would be a burden to it. When the time for the hand-over came however, the Church was unwilling to do so (Pauw 1980: 317).

⁵⁰ S. 1141, Synod Meeting, 28 October 1976.

⁵¹ JE 222. JFC Executive 30 November 1976.

⁵² JE 226 JFC Executive 4 Jan. 1977.

An August 1966 MMSC meeting in South Africa noted that there was a problem in obtaining statistics from Nkhoma Synod. It expressed the belief that the Synod should be educated in the necessity of such statistics, as it was the only way to measure growth in members and church activities. The MMSC further reported that the task of training about stewardship was continuing. “The church stagnated during the past 75 years by getting into the habit of giving a specific small amount every time. Now members are being trained to give from a spirit of thankfulness, each one according to his ability . . . Ministers and church councils are also being trained on how to handle the funds of the church. Rev. CJ Burger also wrote a booklet on stewardship. During the 6 months he visited 22 congregations in the presbytery of Nkhoma, and 11 of these he visited twice. The Synod now appointed a Malawian minister to assist him.” This same meeting reported on a December 1965 meeting of the Synod that was held to discuss the Synod’s financial need. The congregations had been budgeted to give R 20,000, but only R 8,288 had been received. Although asking the Dutch Reformed Church for assistance was considered, the majority determined that they themselves would handle it, even if it meant accepting a smaller salary (refer to 4.5 for more information regarding this) (at the same time noting their salaries were meagre enough already).⁵³ To get an idea of just how “meagre”, in 1968 the budgeted amount for all Nkhoma Synod ministers’ salaries and allowances (there were 42 ministers in 1966; 55 in 1971) was £ 10,500, or just over £ 200 per minister for the year (figuring on 50 ministers). The General Secretary’s salary and allowances (excluding travelling) that year, 1968, amounted to £ 372.⁵⁴

The 1967 meeting of the MMSC in Cape Town also reported on the outcome of the stewardship campaign. It noted that the contributions of the congregations soared to 500%. In 13 congregations, giving rose from 250% to 500%. The Synod expected the contributions of the congregations to total R 12,000, but a total of R 18,000 was received. At the same time the expected assistance of R 40,000 from Holland for the expansion of the Chongoni Bible School was not approved.⁵⁵

⁵³ Minutes of the meeting of the General Missions Committee, held at the Synodical New Church Centre, Grey’s Pass, Cape Town, 2-4 August 1966. VII. Malawi Mission Sub Committee

⁵⁴ KS. 1210, KS. 984, KS. 924, and KS. 901. From minutes of GAC meeting of 5-11 April 1968.

⁵⁵ Minutes of the meeting of the General Missions Committee, held at the Synodical New Church Centre, Grey’s Pass, Cape Town, 8-10 August 1967. III. Malawi Mission Sub Committee.

The Synodical Mission Committee meeting 4-6 August 1970 meeting also addressed the problem of congregations being behind in paying ministers' salaries. It was suggested to the presbyteries that no congregation be allowed to call a minister until their arrears were paid. Some reasons mentioned for the financial crisis of the Synod:

- The poverty of the church members; average annual income per church member was R 34.
- The income of the departments, such as the printing press, was reduced.
- The income from government subsidies had been reduced because of reduction of personnel.

The meeting further learned that Nkhoma Synod requested that the SMC assist by annually giving a lump sum of R 34,400 and that the SMC would take the government subsidy, which amounted to R 20,000 in 1970. The Synod also requested that a delegation be sent to Malawi "to assess the situation". The MMSC suggested that a delegation be sent as requested, that financial assistance be granted in agreement with the policy of the church becoming independent, that a method of mutual planning be worked out, and that at the next missionary conference in Malawi the financial aspects of the church becoming independent be discussed. After discussions the GMC agreed to the following decisions of the FMSC:

- That a block grant of R 14,000 be granted.
- The delegated be approved, and would consist of Reverends L Moolman, JJ Sieberhagen, and PJJS Els.
- The negotiations were to be done with the MMSC's suggestions as the guide.

The SMC meeting of August 1970 noted that there had been a fund for training of theological students, given by members of the DRC. The fund was exhausted, the theological school was now in great financial need, and the SMC was being asked to assist.⁵⁶

In 1974 the Synodical Committee was continuing to be stressed about the lack of support Synod was receiving from the congregations. An April 1974 meeting threatened delinquent congregations with punishment, while expressing gratitude to the DRC in

⁵⁶ Minutes of the meeting of the General Missions Committee, held at the Synodical New Church Centre, Grey's Pass, Cape Town, 4-6 August 1970.

South Africa for sending AP Viljoen to audit their books. It also expressed thanks to those congregations that remembered their obligations. It also stated that congregations, which had not yet paid the levy for the Kaso Monument (refer to section 10.3), had to do so that year (1974).⁵⁷

The Secretary General's Annual General Report of 1979 mentioned that Presbytery Committees are visiting congregations and reminding them of "their responsibility to the church". Church attendance, it said, remains high, but that the number of those disciplined got higher each year. Sunday schools continued to grow, but the report lamented the shortage of Sunday school teachers. The Women's Guild likewise continued to grow. "Wherever the women's guild movement is strong, church work becomes easier for everyone. Their influence is felt throughout in the congregation that one cannot ignore it."⁵⁸

Synod attempted in 1977 to overcome shortfalls in congregational contributions for dues and "Synod Week" by giving the following instructions to the congregations:

- Congregations that contributed nothing would be summoned to the "appointed sub-committee" on 15 November in Lilongwe to explain.
- They must bring receipt books and money for Synod Week.
- The congregation must be represented by their minister and treasurer.
- Other congregations were ordered to forward any unpaid Synod Week money to Nkhoma immediately.
- The transport expenses of those summoned were to be paid by the congregations.
- All congregations were to preserve their Synod Week receipts for auditors who would come and inspect them.⁵⁹

This was still a problem in 1978. A Synodical Committee meeting laments, "Committee accepted the report with sorrow as things are not as Synod expected. The

⁵⁷ KS 5483. Synodical Committee 3 – 5 April 1974.

⁵⁸ This report was found included among photocopies of Nkhoma Synod Synodical Committee meeting minutes in the archives of the Dutch Reformed Church headquarters in Cape Town in 2000. These were in turn photocopied by the researcher, brought back to Malawi, and can now be found in the archives of Nkhoma Synod, Nkhoma, Malawi. For access to them, contact either the General Secretary of Nkhoma Synod or the Principal of NIFCOTT.

⁵⁹ KS 7155 and 7156. Moderamen, 4 October 1977.

income (from congregations) has gone down very much. A list of congregations to be visited was drawn up.⁶⁰ Teaching about giving was to become a perennial topic at Synod meetings.⁶¹ This is important to know, because it was reported by an Nkhoma Synod minister to this present researcher that the people of the Synod are incapable of tithing because they were not taught to do so by the missionaries back in the pre-1962 era.

In 1979 the church at Mchinji on the Zambian border received a visit from the General Secretary and the Treasurer. They reported with satisfaction that a church that had fallen into disrepair was now being put back into shape, using the labour of school children that cleared surrounding land. The congregation further agreed to clear land for cultivation, donating *kalimalima* (volunteer work, the proceeds from which being given to the church). It was envisioned that coffee, groundnuts, and wheat could be grown.⁶² Something like this has to be a purely Malawian project; were expatriates to get involved, suspicions of exploitation might arise. For people already living marginally, volunteerism is a difficult concept to grasp (Brown 2004: 252).

At the April 1980 Nkhoma Synod Synodical Committee meeting, the General Secretary was instructed to write a letter of appreciation to churches in South Africa “which are subsidizing weak congregations here”.⁶³ This form of aid was in addition to the donations coming from the missions office in Cape Town.

In 1980 the Synod once again set specific amounts to be paid rather than rely upon voluntary offerings.

Committee agrees that we again raise money as last year (Ministers from K10 upwards, elders and deacons from 30t, church members from 20t, and catechumens from 10t)-see S. 1439. This must be done during the months of June, July, and August.⁶⁴

In 2004, church members pay a “monthly pledge” with the minimum being MK 50.00.

⁶⁰ KS 7470. Synodical Committee, 24-26 October 1978.

⁶¹ S. 1839, 20th Meeting of Synod at Namoni Katengeza CLTC, 10 – 16 April 1985.

⁶² KS 7180. Moderamen, 30 November 1979.

⁶³ KS 7889. 15 – 18 April 1980. See J. 361. The JFC “reminds that links must be established between the minister of such a congregation and the helping congregation in South Africa and that a report on the progress must be sent twice per year.”

⁶⁴ KS. 8083. Moderamen 30 May 1980.

Some decisions made by the Synodical Committee meeting of April 1982 illustrate how the Synod was sometimes forced to take draconian measures.⁶⁵ The congregations were exhorted to pay their dues into the Central Fund by July; those that failed to do so would be reminded to comply by visits by members of the Presbytery Committee.⁶⁶ The Committee at the same time decided to raise rents as follows: The carpentry shop's rent was to go from MK 30 per month to MK 120; the Chikuse Trading Store's rent was to go from MK 25 to MK 100 per month; and the Studio was to go from MK 3 to MK 20 per month. The Committee stated, "...if those who rent buildings fail to pay the money charged for rent, at the beginning of the month, then the buildings rented will be closed".⁶⁷ However, two years later, "Delegates to the Synodical Committee should visit the congregations in their respective Presbyteries and collect the arrears and send these to Nkhoma without delay".⁶⁸

Another example of Synodical attempts at self-sufficiency occurred in 1984 when the clerk of Kongwe Presbytery informed the Moderamen that Kongwe congregation had collected MK 1,500 for repairs to the church. "The committee decides to inform the congregation that they should proceed with their efforts in fund raising as the repairs will cost about K12000." Thus it can be seen that in many cases the Synod declined to petition expatriate sources for funding projects.⁶⁹

In 1986 it was decided that the Youth Hostel in Lilongwe had become too expensive to maintain, and so it was planned that it be converted into the "Petro Kachinwe Guest House".

The hand over was done by Revv. (sic) Mphunda Mwale, W Kazembe and Messrs. N Njalam'mawa and Mazani. The committee approves of the handover, but it does not agree that Synod owes Rev. Kazembe K1518.93 because the Youth Hostel Committee never mentioned anything about this debt.

Mr. Mazani (the manager of our local bookshop) will receive all fees of the Guest House and his bookshop should be moved to the

⁶⁵ Minutes of the meeting of the Synodical Committee at Nkhoma from 13 to 15 April 1982.

⁶⁶ SC 101.

⁶⁷ SC 126 and 127.

⁶⁸ M. 1008. Minutes of the meeting of the Moderamen held at Nkhoma on the 30th of January 1985.

⁶⁹ M. 877. Extracts from the minutes of the meeting of the Moderamen held at Nkhoma on the 26th June 1984.

premises of the Guest House and Mr. Mazani himself will also live on the premises.⁷⁰

The guest house scheme proved to be a short-lived one. CCAP General Secretary YA Chienda explains that a private secondary school now stands upon this site.⁷¹

One response to continuing fiscal difficulties was to upgrade the level of competency of personnel responsible for financial affairs.

The Committee was informed about a seminar on financial management to be presented by Graham Carr & Co. The Moderamen support the idea, and suggested that the Treasurer and other people working with money, should attend the seminar.⁷²

In response to the continuing financial difficulties, in 1991 Synod considered means of generating income. It directed that a conference centre should be built in Lilongwe and that a guesthouse be built in Cape Maclear. It stipulated that the Development Committee and the Treasurer should have oversight over these projects. At the same time, Synod directed that the General Secretary should seek funding from foreign sources, but without personally leaving the country. It expressed the belief that he should coordinate with the Planning Committee regarding all future projects. Finally, a plan to plow sixty hectares at Malingunde was shelved for lack of funds.⁷³ Other chapters of this study will highlight the importance of income generation upon every facet of the Synod's life.

The Synod's efforts to achieve self-reliance were extended to its missions programme. At a 1995 meeting of the Moderamen: "It was agreed that all contributions for the mission work in Mozambique, coming from the congregations, ministers and other individuals, should be deposited into the account that had already been opened for this purpose."⁷⁴

Rev. Sande became the Moderator of Nkhoma Synod in October 2003. He explains that today the Synod realizes the need to develop internal means for raising funds, because the expatriate sources will not be there forever. A good example of the Synod's efforts at achieving self-help came in 2004 when General Secretary Kawale had

⁷⁰ M. 1551. Moderamen, 11 July 1986.

⁷¹ Interview with CCAP General Secretary YA Chienda on 22 October 2004.

⁷² M.2820. Moderamen, 8 May 1990.

⁷³ S. 2495 and S. 2517, Minutes of the 23rd Synod Meeting at Namoni Katengeza, 9 – 16 April 1991.

⁷⁴ M. 3966. Meeting of the Moderamen held on 3 April 1995.

a second wedding ceremony with his wife of thirty-five years, and donated the money then raised to NIFCOTT.⁷⁵

This section has shown that whatever else one may believe, it is clear that Nkhoma Synod was not content to live on income from outside sources. It would be difficult to fully understand the problems faced by any stewardship campaign unless one has seen firsthand the poverty of the people.

3.5 MATTERS RELATED TO MALAWIAN PERSONNEL

One problem that has plagued the Synod ever since 1962 has been the scarcity of fully qualified Malawian personnel to run the various departments. Various departments at Nkhoma repeatedly experienced problems that challenged the administrative structure. Early in the autonomy period, Malawian leaders were all too often inexperienced at this dimension of organisational life. Confirmation of this is demonstrated in the General Missions Committee meeting held in Cape Town in August 1962⁷⁶. Disappointment was expressed regarding some of the national personnel who were appointed to work in the office of the treasurer. Due to numerous difficulties, they gave evidence of being unable to adequately cope with the nature of the work for which they were responsible. The GAC began to consider the temporary appointment of expatriates to help with the mentioned work until the national workers could be better trained. As another facet to the solution, about the same time Cape Town approved the motion that opportunities be provided for African ministers and teachers to visit the RSA in order to come into closer contact with the Dutch Reformed Church and to get better qualified to perform their responsibilities.

3.5.1 *The Ministers of Nkhoma Synod*

A major component in this forty-year transition has been the obtaining of higher education by Nkhoma pastors. The process of obtaining funds to study abroad is a continuing one. Finding the necessary financial resources is ongoing challenge. An example of this struggle can be seen in the ordeal experienced by Rev. J Sankhani as

⁷⁵ Interview between present researcher and moderator Rev. Sande on 11 September 2004.

⁷⁶ Minutes of the GMC, Cape Town (CT), 13 – 16 August 1962, p. 6.

discussed at the June 1966 meeting of the Moderamen⁷⁷ regarding the difficulties surrounding his study leave. He had been attached to the Chileka congregation but was away on study leave in Nairobi, Kenya, studying radio script writing. The Moderamen noted with regret that because the congregation had not made their contribution to the General Fund, Rev. Sankhani was not receiving his pay. The Secretary was directed to send a letter of exhortation to that congregation and to remind them of their obligation to Sankhani. The Moderamen also thanked the individuals who gave in order to make his study leave possible, and they noted with satisfaction that Sankhani seemed to be making good progress in his training in Kenya⁷⁸.

Unfortunately this problem was still surfacing twenty years later, as evidenced by the struggles leading to the stoppage of Rev. Garet's⁷⁹ education. After being out of the country for studies, Rev. Garet was forced to return to Malawi in December 1983 when his request for more money for further studies was denied⁸⁰.

In 1967 the General Mission Committee in Cape Town recognized that while membership and the number of catechumens and congregations were growing, the number of ministers was declining. The following statistics tell the story (for more information and an expanded list, refer to 4.6):

	1963	1966
Church members	76,057	86,826
Baptism class members	25,181	29,670
Ordained ministers	48	42
Congregations	54	55
Contributions	R 10,400	R 18,000

Figure 3.2

While it is encouraging that church membership has grown by almost 14%, with this figure one must also recognize the additional strain placed on the clergy to pastor and

⁷⁷ Minutes of the Meeting of the Moderamen, 20 June 1966.

⁷⁸ It should be noted that nearly forty years later Rev. Sankhani is still active in the ministry and has a congregation between Salima and Nkhotakota. He retains his enthusiasm for ministry, for outreach to the Muslim community, and for radio evangelism.

⁷⁹ J. 499, M.625, and M. 932, Minutes of the meeting of the Moderamen held at Lilongwe CCAP on 1 October 1984.

⁸⁰ He later was selected to be the minister engaged in outreach to Muslims at Nkhotakota, but was killed in an auto accident on 27 September 1984 (see 8.3, "The Challenge of Islam").

teach their congregations. While the member to ordained clergy ratio in 1963 was 1585:1, but 1966 this ration had swelled to 2067:1. With an almost 30% increase in the relative ratio, and the diminishing actual numbers of ordained clergy dropping by almost 12.5%, it is obvious that these early days posed a strain on the church. This strain continued, and will be discussed further in chapter four (4.6 Forty years of growth).⁸¹

In addition to the simple numerical difficulties the problem of ministers not being paid was a significant problem as well. At a May 1968 meeting of the Moderamen⁸², it was found that some congregations were in arrears to two or three ministers, and that sometimes more than one congregation owed a minister money. Some reasons given for this were: spiritual deadness of some congregations, other financial debts, such as salaries for teachers in unassisted schools, and incompetence on the part of ministers or disputes with elders that lead elders to withhold funds. While it seemed relatively easy to identify the contributing factors to this dilemma, finding an adequate solution to the problem remained elusive with the meeting of the Moderamen offering no resolution to the problem.

Illustrating the seriousness of this problem is the 1972 case of HJ Chilambula⁸³. He claimed that the Kapiri congregation owed him his salary, and finding no satisfaction in the actions of the synod, he appealed to the civil authorities. At one point he threatened to remove the iron sheets from the roofs of the Church and manse and the “bricks from the walls because of their arrears in salary to him”. The Kapiri congregation asked Synod for a loan in order to pay him off.

⁸¹ *Notule van 'n Vergadering van die Algemene Sendingcommissie, Gehou in die Sinodale-Saal N.G. Kerkentrum, Kaapstad* (Minutes of a Meeting of the General Mission Committee Held at the Church Centre, Cape Town), 8-10 Augustus (August) 1967. Found in the archives of the Dutch Reformed Church in Cape Town. The researcher made photocopies and these can now be found in the archives of Nkhoma Synod, Nkhoma, Malawi. For access one should contact either the General Secretary of Nkhoma Synod or the Principal of NIFCOTT.

⁸² Minutes of a Meeting of the Moderamen, May 6, 1968.

⁸³ KS 5030, Moderamen, 24 October 1972. However at the 12 March 1973 Moderamen meeting, it was determined (see KS. 5105) that, “When the debt was investigated in the books of Kapiri Congregation, it was found that the books were well kept, as well as the payment vouchers, and that these were written by Mr. Chilambula himself at the time he was minister at Kapiri. Addition of the amounts paid to Mr. Chilambula showed that he actually received more than the total salary that he should have received while he was there, and that instead of Kapiri Congregation owing him money, he was owing money to them!” The books were taken by the Labour (Government) Officer for investigation.

While there were certainly difficulties, there were many shining successful examples as well. In 1976 General Secretary Chienda went to the United States for studies at Fuller Theological Seminary. Rev. EE Katsulukuta (who was so heavily involved in translation work) was elected to serve as Acting General Secretary in his absence. That same year Rev. AWW Mlenga left to go to study at Westminster Theological Seminary in the United States after obtaining a scholarship. He asked Synod to provide for his family while he was away, and this was granted. At the same time as these successes, struggles continued for some, such as, Rev. KJ Mgawi and his family who went to study at the University of the North in South Africa, but the donor who made this possible declined to pay MK 501 of the needed funds. The Synodical Committee referred the matter to the JFC. General Secretary Rev. YA Chienda received his degree on 6 May 1978.⁸⁴

The decade of the eighties was to see a number of ministers from Nkhoma Synod further their training. In 1980 Rev. JJ Kamwana went to Kenya for studies. Like so many others, he went without his family.⁸⁵ At the 1981 Meeting of Synod, telegrams of good wishes were received from WE Chikakuda “and his fellow students” at the University of the North in South Africa, and from Rev. MU Siwinda and Rev. Jere in Singapore.⁸⁶ Kamwana completed his Kenya studies and returned to Malawi in 1983. Kamwana later completed both an M.Th. and then a D.Th. at the University of Stellenbosch in South Africa.⁸⁷

The 1982 CCAP General Assembly received a summary of Nkhoma Synod ministers studying abroad. It revealed that the results were not always positive.

Three of our ministers are studying for degrees abroad. Rev. J. Kamwana is in Kenya for a B.D. degree, Rev. D.P. Gareta is at fuller in the U.S.A. for a masters degree and Rev. W. Kazembe has gone this year also for a masters degree at Columbia in U.S.A., Mary Chinkwita is still

⁸⁴ KS 5909, 5935, and 5945. Synodical Committee, 21 – 23 April 1976. see also KS 7230, Synodical Committee, 11-13 April 1978.

⁸⁵ KS 8118. Moderamen, 5 August 1980.

⁸⁶ S. 1484. 18th Meeting of Synod, 6-14th April 1981.

⁸⁷ M. 568 Moderamen, 4th July 1983. As a kind of postscript, Rev. JJ Kamwana was removed from his post as director of Namoni Katengeza Church Lay Training Centre in 1995; this was related to questions raised by an auditor’s report. See SC 318, Meeting of the Synodical Committee, 11 July 1995. Subsequent to his dismissal from Namoni Katengeza CLTC, he became pastor of Mthawila CCAP; during this time he completed his doctorate. He passed away in November 2003 – from an interview with Rev. A. Katani, pastor of Kaninga CCAP, 8 October 2004.

studying in Britain. Nkhoma has at present a few graduate ministers namely Rev. L.J. Kamtambe, Rev. Y.A. Chienda, Rev. H.Y. Hara, Rev. W.E. Chikakuda, Rev. C.L. Chimkoka, Rev. H.A. Kamnkhwani and Rev. J.G.M. Maseko. It is sad to report that two other graduate student ministers namely Messrs. L.M. Chakwera and B. Kapuchi refused to subscribe to our doctrine of Infant Baptism and therefore were disqualified for ordination by our training committee. On account of this disappointing event, the Synod, has decided no longer to send abroad for higher theological training any other persons other than ordained ministers.⁸⁸

In 1986 Rev. JS Mwale, who had already gone on pension, was called back into service and placed at Chongoni. He also at that time printed a book of sermons, a first for Nkhoma Synod, coming as it did from the “pen of one of its own sons”. While Mwale to was coming out of retirement, the Synod forfeited the services of Rev. Gande, who went away for studies from November 1986 until April 1987 in compliance with a request from the Christian Service Committee.⁸⁹

In 1991, two ministers of Nkhoma Synod received recognition for their academic achievements. Rev. HA Kamnkhwani received the DTh degree from the University of Stellenbosch in South Africa on 13 December 1990. His dissertation was entitled; “An Evaluation of the Historiography of Nkhoma Synod of the CCAP” Rev. Chiphiko was approved to go to Great Britain for a year of studies, with a concentration in youth ministry.⁹⁰

One answer to this problem of equipping the clergy with the knowledge and tools they need to pastor their congregations is being met by the existence of such institutions as NIFCOTT, Zomba Theological College, and African Bible College. Many of their graduates are already serving the Synod in various capacities. Much effort is expended to upgrade the theological training at home. This has done much to equip them to take control of administration. Today, the expatriate missionary as authority figure has given way to the one who has come to serve as a specialist, educator, or advisor (see chapter 6, Education for Pastors 6.2).

While there are many examples of those dedicated men who have served in the shaping of the Nkhoma Synod, there are several who have played integral parts in these

⁸⁸ Minutes of the General Synod held at Chongoni, 24 to 27 August 1982, page 20.

⁸⁹ M.1609, Meeting of the Moderamen, 29 September 1986.

⁹⁰ S. 2424 and S. 2450, Minutes of the 23rd Synod Meeting, at Namoni Katengeza, 9 – 16 April 1991.

forty years of development. A.S. Labuschagne referred to Rev. Kirion Mgawi as a “Black Timothy”. Mgawi was the first clerk of the Nkhoma Synod, and following the departure of Gawie Hugo; he became the first Malawian general secretary for Nkhoma. He served as a lecturer at the Theological College at Nkhoma. He also chairman of the Malawi Christian Council, the Evangelical Association of Malawi and of the Malawi Council for the Handicapped. Labuschagne says of him:

Rev. Kirion Mgawi is a gift from God to the Church in Malawi. He did pioneer work in Malawi. In the beginning of the year 2001 he and his wife, Victoria Ntukule, were still full-time in the service of the Lord in the Kasungu congregation (Labuschagne 2002: 95).

In June 2002 Dr. Wallace Chikakuda passed away and was buried in Mozambique. He had served as lecturer at Zomba Theological College and as principal of the Hefsiba Theological College in Vila Ulongwe, Mozambique, working with the Igreja Reformada em Mozambique. As difficult as ministry in Malawi can be, working in post – war Mozambique called for special fortitude.

Rev. Josafat Mwale had a most distinguished career serving Nkhoma Synod. In 1955 he was asked to write an instruction book for church elders. In 1960 he became the synod’s first Malawian moderator and was four times re-elected as moderator and four times as assessor. He served as pastor to five congregations, taught five years at the Joint Theological College at Nkhoma and subsequently for seven years at the Chongoni Bible School. Along the way he endured political pressure from the MCP government for not registering as a voter. In 1981 he retired. In summarizing his career, AS Labuschagne quoted Rev. Johan Steytler:

He was a born teacher and the people could follow his sermons which he always gave without a written text before him, only an open Bible, remembering everything he wanted to say and therefore the hearers always remembered what he said. He always humbly and calmly brought a prophetic word, well aware that it was not his own ideas but a message from the Lord (Labuschagne 2002: 91).

In 2003 the venerable Rev. Mwale passed away. He was still deeply loved and remembered.

His love for the Lord and incredible Bible knowledge - and his whole life - was a living sermon to all who came in contact with him. When he preached, he used to quote Scripture all the time, drawing lines from the Old Testament right through to the NT. He requested long ago to

be buried near Namoni Katengeza (the first ordained CCAP Malawian minister of N. Synod) in the Nkhoma graveyard, because he respected him so much. Rev. Mwale was in a sense a simple man without much formal training, but he always spoke with such convincing authority drawn from his relationship with the Lord and his knowledge of Scripture.⁹¹

In 1998, while Mwale was still living, Jonathan Kamwana had this to say about him:

In a real sense Mwale followed the example the DRC missionaries of reading the Bible. He distinguishes himself as one of the Evangelical Reformed Puritans of today. The Evangelicals emphasise the reading of the Bible, to understand God and His will to sustain the spiritual life of an individual and renew it. Mwale is spiritually strengthened as he reads the Bible daily. It is indeed moving to hear how he expresses his practical knowledge of the Bible in teaching, writing, and preaching. His sermons are versed with texts from Scripture and inspired by an Evangelical zeal. His preaching is full of power. He lives up to what he preaches. (Kamwana 1998:167)

Rev. CL Chimkoka has served Nkhoma Synod as both General Secretary and as Senior Clerk. He has also served as General Secretary of the General Synod (now Assembly) and as General Secretary of the Student Christian Organisation of Malawi (SCOM). He studied at the Nkhoma Theological College from 1972 to 1976. From 1976 to 1981 he studied at the University of the North in South Africa, where he received the Bachelors and Bachelors Honours degrees.⁹² He had just completed a master's degree at the University of Stellenbosch in April 2004 when he passed away in September of that same year.

Yeremiah A. Chienda was ordained in 1961. He became the Pastor at Ntcheu, then Lilongwe. He served as pastor at Kongwe in 1965. After that he went to Britain for training in youth work, and then served a youth minister 1967-68. From 1968 to 1979 he served as General Secretary of Nkhoma Synod and from 1976 to 1984 as the General Secretary of the Bible Society. Between 1984 and 1988 he led African Enterprise in Malawi and again served as the General Secretary of Nkhoma Synod from 1988 to 1993. From 1993 to 1999 he was the pastor at Kongwe CCAP, and has been the Pastor at

⁹¹ An e-mail received by the present researcher from Elsabet Smit, South African missionary at Nkhoma, dated 12 June 2003, in which she informed him of the death of Rev. Mwale on 9 June 2003. This can be found in the notes of the researcher, African Bible College, Lilongwe, Malawi.

⁹² Interview between present researcher and Rev. CL Chimkoka on 9 July 2004. This can be found in the notes of the researcher, African Bible College, Lilongwe, Malawi. The same is true of all "interviews".

Kapita CCAP since 1999. In 2000 he became the General Secretary of the entire CCAP.⁹³

Michael Khombe attended Nkhoma Theological College from 1972 to 1976, and was ordained in 1976. In all, he has served as Pastor at five congregations. In 1978 he became the Deputy Moderator of Nkhoma Synod. Following that, he was the manager of Nkhoma Press for three years. Currently he is the Secretary of the Mission Department.

In visiting such leaders of Nkhoma Synod as Mgawi, Mwale, Chikakuda, Kawale, Chienda, Chimkoka, Sankhani, and Khombe, one is impressed with the competence and great zeal of these who have been charged with shepherding this Synod. Although as a group they are now aging, nevertheless they have, and continue to perform with a dedication that remains steadfastly unabated. One can understand how someone like Rev. AS Labuschagne can speak of them with genuine admiration. One can only hope that the next generation will perform with the same vision and drive.

In his “Annual General Report for 1969” General Secretary YA Chienda reported that while all departments experienced a shortage of staff, nowhere was there a critical point where the work could not continue. The medical staff was augmented by short-term expatriate nurses, and this seemed to be the trend for the future. In the education department, the number of expatriate staff was diminishing, but Malawian staff were now graduating from the University of Malawi.

“This has been the ideal towards which both mother and daughter have been working for more than 80 years and therefore this should be the occasion for great rejoicing.”⁹⁴

While there have been many who have gone far above and beyond the hopes and expectations of the Synod, there have been times where the failure of man has brought its own difficulties into the picture. One such example was seen when in 1974 the Theological Training Committee faced an unpleasant task. One student in his final year at the Nkhoma Theological School completed his studies, then asked the Committee for a postponement of his final examination and licensing, due to family problems. The

⁹³ Interview between present researcher and Rev. YA Chienda 28 June 2004.

⁹⁴ This report was found included among photocopies of Nkhoma Synod Synodical Committee meeting minutes in the archives of the Dutch Reformed Church headquarters in Cape Town in 2000. These were in turn photocopied by the researcher, brought back to Malawi, and can now be found in the archives of Nkhoma Synod, Nkhoma, Malawi. For access to them, contact either the General Secretary of Nkhoma Synod or the Principal of NIFCOTT.

Committee decided to investigate. He informed them that he was divorcing his wife and wanted to marry her younger sister, whom he felt would make a better pastor's wife. He admitted adultery. The Committee informed him that not only could he not be a minister, but that he had to return to his home village. Both his home church and the Nkhoma congregation, which he had served as an elder, were informed about this case.⁹⁵ In this case, the Committee did what it had to do to protect the purity and the witness of the church. In other parts of the world, church discipline has largely fallen into disuse.

In yet another situation, there was a problem regarding the staffing of Zomba Theological School. Rev. Hara had accepted a call to the Mdzobwe congregation, and had left in December 1984. Rev. Kamwana was appointed to replace him as a tutor. The Board did not want to accept him.⁹⁶ The official reason given was that he would leave the country once again to study abroad, and there was no place in Zomba for him to stay.⁹⁷ The Synodical Commission did not want to send someone else, and asked the Board to reconsider. The Moderamen later in 1985 decreed that because Zomba did not accept Kamwana he could then leave to go abroad for studies in 1986, but not in 1987 (see section 11. 3, "Nkhoma Synod and Contention with the Government").⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Minutes of the Theological Training Committee, July 11, 1974. This was found included among photocopies of Nkhoma Synod Synodical Committee meeting minutes in the archives of the Dutch Reformed Church headquarters in Cape Town in 2000. These were in turn photocopied by the researcher, brought back to Malawi, and can now be found in the archives of Nkhoma Synod, Nkhoma, Malawi. For access to them, contact either the General Secretary of Nkhoma Synod or the Principal of NIFCOTT.

⁹⁶ M. 896; M. 928; M. 933; SC. 464 (Special meeting of the Synodical Committee at Lilongwe CCAP on 13 February 1985). In an interview with General Secretary Winston R. Kawale in January 2004, Kamwana had a brother with a high position with the Malawian police service. This caused apprehension on the part of some people at Synod. This source was found included among photocopies of Nkhoma Synod Synodical Committee meeting minutes in the archives of the Dutch Reformed Church headquarters in Cape Town in 2000. These were in turn photocopied by the researcher, brought back to Malawi, and can now be found in the archives of Nkhoma Synod, Nkhoma, Malawi. For access to them, contact either the General Secretary of Nkhoma Synod or the Principal of NIFCOTT.

⁹⁷ M. 1019 and 1020 Meeting of the Moderamen at Lilongwe CCAP on 11 January 1985). This source was found included among photocopies of Nkhoma Synod Synodical Committee meeting minutes in the archives of the Dutch Reformed Church headquarters in Cape Town in 2000. These were in turn photocopied by the researcher, brought back to Malawi, and can now be found in the archives of Nkhoma Synod, Nkhoma, Malawi. For access to them, contact either the General Secretary of Nkhoma Synod or the Principal of NIFCOTT.

⁹⁸ M. 1309. Minutes of the meeting of the Moderamen held at Lilongwe CCAP on 15 October 1985. This source was found included among photocopies of Nkhoma Synod Synodical Committee meeting minutes in the archives of the Dutch Reformed Church headquarters in Cape Town in 2000. These were in turn photocopied by the researcher, brought back to Malawi, and can now be found in the archives of Nkhoma

Changes came as a result of difficulties, human error and also as a result of problems that resulted from positive outcomes of growth and development. Changes also resulted from the changing needs of the church ministers and congregation as a whole and on an individual level. Some of these changes are inserted here to demonstrate the evolution of Nkhoma Synod's progression.

The Synod in 1991 called for a new position to be filled, the "AIDS Desk" (refer to 7.4 for further information). This was to be implemented as soon as funding became available.⁹⁹

Synod further decided in 1991 that ministers should continue getting paid by the congregations and not by the Synod. Ministers could voluntarily retire at age 60, but retirement at age 65 was obligatory.¹⁰⁰ In 1995, Synod found it necessary to take up the matter of allowances for ministers. It was stipulated that if a minister had served for twenty years or had reached the age of fifty, and if he wanted an allowance, he could take up the matter with the Treasurer and General Secretary.¹⁰¹

A May 1992 meeting in Cape Town covered several personnel matters. It was decided that Dr. CM Pauw and Rev. CJ Burger would design a course for "equipping ministers in Malawi". They were to be joined in this effort by Rev. WE Chikakuda and Rev. WR Kawale (a later meeting noted that Burger would not be available until October or November of that year, and the church in Malawi scheduled Presbytery meetings in September). Another matter was the support of Rev. Chikakuda while he pursued doctoral studies at Stellenbosch beginning in October 1990. Whereas formerly Nkhoma ministers got their salaries while studying there, that policy was changed and the Moderamen urgently requested that Cape Town help Chikakuda.¹⁰²

In 1995 a new General Secretary was elected, Rev. AA Sasu since his predecessor had reached retirement age. At the same time, Nkhoma Synod elected as its actuary Rev.

Synod, Nkhoma, Malawi. For access to them, contact either the General Secretary of Nkhoma Synod or the Principal of NIFCOTT.

⁹⁹ S. 2482 and S. 2492, Same Meeting, 1991.

¹⁰⁰ S. 2463 and 2500, Same meeting of Synod, 1991.

¹⁰¹ S 2915, Minutes of the 25th Synod Meeting at Namoni Katengeza, 4 – 11 April 1995.

¹⁰² Minutes of a meeting of the Commission for Missions and Evangelism, 21 May 1992 in the Church Centre, Cape Town.

JGM Maseko.¹⁰³ In 2001 Dr. WR Kawale became the General Secretary, with Sasu as Vice General Secretary (however, this post was rescinded in an extraordinary meeting of Synod).¹⁰⁴

A 1996 meeting of the Moderamen of the Nkhoma Synod together with the Personnel Committee and Rev. JH Koch formulated the following goals to be reached before the year 2000:

- The employment on a wider scale of dedicated and efficient Malawian medical personnel.
- Ongoing spiritual and professional equipment of personnel.
- The equipping and training of Christian personnel for education and for other workers.
- Technical services, which should be done by trained Malawians.
- Courses for ministers and members.
- Financial assistance to Nkhoma Synod earmarked especially for theological- and other training.

At the same time, when the principal of the Malingunde Women's Training School resigned, effective 31 December 1996, the Moderamen decided that a Malawian should be appointed as the new principal.¹⁰⁵

At the 1997 Synod meeting the following “dynamic group of leaders”(the wording of the report) were chosen:

- Moderator: Rev. EN Kamunga
- Vice Moderator: Rev. MZ Khombe
- Senior Clerk: Rev. CL Chimkoka
- Actuary: Rev. JGM Maseko
- Elders: Mr. J Sadyalunda
- Mr. K Phiri¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ S. 3016, S. 3017, S. 3022, and S. 3023, Minutes of the 25th Synod Meeting at Namoni Katengeza, 4 – 11 April 1995.

¹⁰⁴ S. 3554, Minutes of the 28th Synod Meeting at Namoni Katengeza, 15 – 22 October 2001.

¹⁰⁵ Minutes of a meeting of the Executive Committee of the commission for Witness Action (CWA) Held on 3 May 1996.

¹⁰⁶ Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive Commission for Witness and Mission, Held on Monday 2 June 1997 in Stellenbosch, “1. Leadership.”

In the past, pastors were assigned to congregations by the Synod. Then they went to a calling system. Currently there are elements of both. A student graduating from NIFCOTT at Nkhoma gets assigned to his first pastorate. Thereafter he is free to accept a call elsewhere.¹⁰⁷

In a 2003 document entitled *Ministers Serving in Nkhoma Synod* it was reported that there were 112 active ministers. Just over half were over 50 years of age and only 14% were under age 40. In the decade 1964 - 1973, the average age at ordination was 33.6; in the decade 1994-2004 it is 35. One problem that these figures present is that maintenance of the ministerial pension plan will be difficult.¹⁰⁸ It will be difficult because the figures reveal an aging clergy.

This section has looked at the clergy of Nkhoma Synod. As a group they are educated and dedicated to the ministry. They have faced the challenges of ministry in Malawi with tenacity and faithfulness. Along the way, there were a few unfortunate examples, but the Synod can look with pride upon the vast bulk of its ministers.

3.5.2 *The Challenge of Women in a New Role*

The struggle concerning the role of women creates a special problem for many in leadership positions at Nkhoma Synod, and continues to be a problem without an easy resolution in the twenty-first century. The dilemma faced by the Synod deals with the varying viewpoints (often held fervently) by both men and women. Many holding more traditionalist views threaten to leave if ordination for women is approved. On the other hand, women with needed skills and gifts may feel compelled to leave if female ordination is not accepted. Many women have historically agreed with men that church leadership should be exclusively male and while women could conceivably relieve the pressure of finding qualified pastors, there are cultural barriers and long-standing traditions to be overcome.

The debate concerning in Church leadership roles in the Nkhoma Synod, could be dated from September 1966, when a question was raised as to whether women could be ordained. The responses that came from the committee were that only the Committee of the Joint Theological College

¹⁰⁷ Telephone interview between present researcher and Rev. Dr. Hennie van Deventer.

¹⁰⁸ *Ministers Serving in Nkhoma Synod*. C.M. Pauw, 12 March 2003. This was taken from a computer disk that is in the possession of Rev. Dr. Hennie van Deventer.

could discuss the practicability of allowing women into the theological college. As to the ordination of women, the Synod decided that the question must be investigated by the committee, which was also studying the possibility of having women as elders. Since the establishment of the first station of the DRCM in 1889, no woman had received theological education or acquired any leadership position in the church (Phiri 1997: 50).

At the Ninth Meeting of the Synod, held in August 1968, it was firmly declared women were not to be ordained. Women receiving theological training were to only teach other women. Further, the Synod at that time decided that a way and a place for women to be trained had to be found.¹⁰⁹ The Synod meeting of 1985 at Chongoni decided that women would not serve as elders, although it was acknowledged that the idea “had merit”.¹¹⁰

The General Synod meeting of 1990 affirmed a commitment to the use of women in all capacities.

In view of the world’s recognition of women’s role in the Church, the following recommendations were presented:

- For future Synod meeting (sic) each of the five Synods send (sic) women delegates with a view to increase women’s participation.
- The ordination of women be considered at all five synod levels.
- Women’s Desk be established at the General Synod Secretariat on part time basis.

The General Synod accepted the recommendation.¹¹¹

Nkhoma Synod reiterated the ban against women officers and ministers in 1991. “The Synod has said it does not approve women to preach at any time and also to take any leadership positions.”¹¹² In 1995 Synod once again stated this view. “Women should not be elders, deacons, or be ordained. Women should be taught their responsibility in the Church.”¹¹³ Finally, there seemed to come a breakthrough. In its 2001 meeting, Synod stated, “The Synod agreed that this (women becoming deacons and elders) is a good thing, but things should not be done in a hurry.” It then proceeded in a

¹⁰⁹ S. 407, Minutes of the Ninth Meeting of Synod, Held 16 –23 August 1968.

¹¹⁰ Synod Meeting of 10 –16 April 1985 at Namoni Katengeza CLTC.

¹¹¹ 46/90 Minutes of General Synod meeting held at (H.H.I.) Blantyre 26 August – 3 September 1990.

¹¹² S.2604, Minutes of the 23rd Synod Meeting, Namoni Katengeza, 9 – 16 April 1991.

¹¹³ S. 2886, Minutes of the 25th Synod Meeting at Namoni Katengeza, 4 – 11 April 1995.

typically Presbyterian manner by setting up a committee to study the situation and then, following discussions in the congregations and presbyteries, make a report to the 2003 Synod meeting.¹¹⁴ The final result of this committee has effectually changed nothing; as of 2004 the Synod continues to reject women both as ministers and as church officers.¹¹⁵

Rev. AM Kuthyola Mwale of Lingadzi CCAP tells the story that as far back as 1965 a woman named Mary Chimkwita trained for the Nkhoma Synod ministry. However, she moved to London, England. When asked to return to Malawi in 1989 in order to minister, she refused.

In the mid-eighties Ms. Chimkwita was the subject of discussion in several Nkhoma leadership meetings. In a Synodical Committee meeting of 1986:

The Committee was informed that she did not yet return to Malawi but there is a firm expectation that she will come.¹¹⁶

That same month the JFC also discussed Ms. Chimkwita; they were more tentative about her return.

The Committee decides that when miss (sic) Chimkwita returns to Malawi, she should teach at Mlanda. But a substitute should be found in case she does not return.¹¹⁷

The same Ms. Chimkwita is remembered even today. In a 2004 newspaper article, General Secretary WR Kawale was interviewed about Nkhoma Synod and women ministers. It reported:

Nkhoma Synod last year signed a memorandum with other synods to allow eligible women to become minister (sic).

“The qualified ladies will be posted to secondary schools to teach Bible Studies while others will be given other jobs within Nkhoma Synod offices.

We can give them other jobs but not ordain them as ministers. We haven’t decided to ordain lady ministers at this point,” said Kawale in an interview.

He said Nkhoma Synod started training ladies at its Theological College in Zomba some time back in the likes of Mary Chimkwita but had not ordained any (Chimpweya 2004).

¹¹⁴ S. 3395, Minutes of the 28th Synod meeting at Namoni Katengeza, 15 – 22 October 2001.

¹¹⁵ Interview between present researcher and General Secretary Rev. Dr. Winston Kawale, 29 January 2004.

¹¹⁶ SC 572. Synodical Committee, 15-17 April 1986.

¹¹⁷ J. 624. Joint Financial Committee, 22-23 April 1986.

The same informant says that one problem with women entering the ministry is that it is necessary for spouses to receive ministry training, and that this requires four years of study. This informant says that Livingstonia and Blantyre synods have had problems with their women ministers falling into immorality. He further says that while Livingstonia and Blantyre elders are appointed, those of Nkhoma Synod are elected. The problem here is that if somebody's wife gets nominated for office, the husband of another will feel slighted. Another problem is that if a woman elder gets called out at night to minister to someone in an emergency, being escorted by a male elder who is not her husband can create awkwardness. Finally, this informant says that he personally is in favour of women as ministers and church officers.¹¹⁸

The CCAP General Assembly General Secretary Rev. YA Chienda says of this issue that it has long been debated, that no doubt it will be debated again next year, and "My hope is that one day it will pass." He recalled that a resolution sanctioning the ordination of women in Nkhoma Synod was passed in 1953/54. What happened to them? "It died a natural death later on." He went on to explain that the women pastors were not accepted in the male-oriented village churches of Nkhoma Synod. Even today, it is the common practice, even in the urban churches, for men and women to sit separately in church. When asked to verify Rev. Kuthyola's statement about Livingstonia and Blantyre synods having problems with their women ministers falling into immorality, Chienda would only say that CCAP women ministers have not been around for very long.¹¹⁹ With the other synods of the CCAP and other Reformed bodies around the world (including the Mother DRC) now accepting, even encouraging, women as church officers, it seems unlikely that Nkhoma Synod will continue to hold out against for much longer.

3.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter set out to answer the question, have the affairs of the church functioned properly and in accordance with the Scriptural requirements? The answer is

¹¹⁸ Interview between present researcher and Rev. AM Kuthyola Mwale, Pastor of Lingadzi CCAP, 24 June 2004.

¹¹⁹ Interview between present researcher and Rev. YA Chienda 28 June 2004.

“Yes”. The authority of the church structure is respected, there has been no obvious abuse of power, and there have been no serious schisms. The shortcomings experienced by the Synod have had more to do with paucity of resources rather than a breakdown of church order or disregard of constitutional law. Even the troubled area of finances, it was seen that the Synod made valiant attempts to correct the situation itself, rather than to rely exclusively on external donors.

This chapter on Administration and Personnel Issues does much to answer the question: In which way did Nkhoma Synod develop its self-understanding of being a Church since 1962?”

Nowhere in this study is Nkhoma Synod’s transition from mission to national church more apparent than in this chapter, dealing as it does with personnel issues.

In October 2003, this present researcher briefly visited the meeting of the synod at Namoni Katengezi Christian Lay Training Centre. He remembers seeing only two white faces there, those of Hennie Smit and Hennie van Deventer. No doubt the pioneers of 1889, Murray and Vlok, would have rejoiced.

Concerning the first of the seven secondary questions, “Does Nkhoma Synod see itself as a confessional church?” the answer from this chapter is that it is implied. However, a fuller illustration of how it sees itself as a confessional church will come from chapters twelve and thirteen.

Regarding the second secondary question, “What is the character of the church polity?” it will be more fully discussed in chapter four, but already, from sections 3.2 and 3.4, one sees hints of how it is very centralized. Notice how the stewardship drives start at Nkhoma, and then go out to the presbyteries and congregations.

The third secondary question is “Has the Nkhoma Synod become a Three-self church (Self-governing, self-propagating, and self-supporting)?” From reading this chapter and chapter two, one can reply that it has in fact become self-governing. This will be seen more completely in chapter thirteen. So far, we have not dealt with the issue of “self-propagating”. This will be examined in chapters eight and nine. Sections 3.3 and 3.4 demonstrate that the Synod has got a long way to go before it achieves full self-support.

Concerning the fourth secondary question, “What is the relationship between the Nkhoma Synod and the DRC personnel from South Africa?” one must answer from reading chapters two and three that this relationship has been drastically altered. The number of South African personnel has diminished from over 100 in 1962 to about 15 in 2004. The Synod established a Personnel Committee to oversee the activities of such personnel. At one point tensions arose between the committee and the personnel over the decisions that it made. However, it continues to be an amicable relationship.

The fifth secondary question is, “How does the Nkhoma Synod relate to the other synods of the CCAP?” This is the topic of chapter twelve. However, in the discussion of women officers in 3.5.2, we have seen a hint of how inter-synodical relations have a bearing on Nkhoma’s policies.

Regarding the sixth secondary question, “How has the Nkhoma Synod developed theologically and spiritually?” this will be addressed more fully in section 6.1 and especially in chapter fourteen. However, in the look at the ministers of the Synod in 3.5.1, there is the implied message that theological development is progressing.

The seventh and last of the secondary questions is, “What part has the Nkhoma Synod played in the country’s political development?” This question will be handled extensively in chapter eleven. However, we see hints of what is to come in the story of the Nkhoma Synod Teachers’ Association (NSTA).

The research question of this dissertation is “In what way did the Nkhoma Synod develop its self-understanding of being a church since 1962?” While we are yet in an early stage of the study, one can see that very early on the Synod saw itself as a full-fledged church, no longer a mission.

From this point, it is a natural progression to the next chapter. It deals with congregational life and church officers. It takes up such issues as “prayer houses”, urban congregations, *Chigwirizano*, and leadership styles.

Chapter Four

Congregational Life and Church Officers

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will look at some contemporary issues that characterize congregational life within Nkhoma Synod. These will include the teaching at prayer houses, *Chigiwirizano*, the growth of Lilongwe (Nkhoma Synod's only urban centre) churches, leadership styles, and consistent growth.

4.2 THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AT "PRAYER HOUSES"

Most members of Nkhoma Synod congregations worship at local "prayer houses", and may seldom see the minister. Rev. CL Chimkoka believes that the teaching that these members receive is not adequate. The pastoral visits are not enough, and the training of the elders fails to fill the void completely. The training that elders receive at Namoni Katengeza CLTC helps the situation. Here the elders receive instruction on such topics as stewardship and how to nurture the church. An elder may get to go there every two years. The congregation, rather than the individual elder, pays the expenses for receiving this training.¹²⁰

Bentry Mhango was sent by Nkhoma Synod to work with the Mphatso Synod of the Igreja Reformada em Mozambique. The same prayer house system is used by both synods. In 2004 he completed a four-year term, working at a place called Chia. He had five prayer houses to oversee; the furthest was sixty-five kilometres away. The first two years he covered his territory by bicycle. The next two years he had a motorcycle. He agrees with Chimkoka that the teaching at the prayer houses is inadequate; he was unable to spend enough time at any one place. "Most of the time I was not concentrating on any one place", he says. He tells tales of travelling to prayer houses during the rainy season, having to ford swollen rivers and streams, and heaving his bicycle over his head while doing so. Elders and deacons bear the burden of teaching the congregations. They are

¹²⁰ Interview between present researcher and Rev. CL Chimkoka on 9 July 2004.

elected to office, and then given one-day-long training session every three years. They are required to be literate and to own a Bible. Mhango says that he was happy to introduce Veritas College into his work. This organization works through the Namoni Katengeza Christian Lay Training Centre. Pastors are brought in and given a two-week intensive course on how to equip deacons and elders for ministry. Nkhoma Synod's Rev. Davidson Chifungu is now working with Veritas College.¹²¹

Rev. Brian Kamwendo, pastor of Mchenkhula CCAP, reiterates the concerns raised by Bentry Mhango. He says that elders can be inducted with only two hours' instruction.¹²² The present researcher has sat down with both Mhango's and Kamwendo's elders for question-and-answer sessions on the Bible. He has experienced for himself that Bible and theological knowledge in rural areas can be, to say the least, minimal ("Why don't we circumcise like Israel? Why don't we honour Mary like the Catholics?").

It should be noted that materials are made available for teaching elders by Namoni Katengeza. Preachers can obtain weekly sermon outlines from *Mlozo*.

4.3 REPRESENTATIVE URBAN CONGREGATIONS

In the mid-1970s Lilongwe became the new capital of the country. This created a special challenge to Nkhoma Synod, as the city was squarely in within its territory. As we read from its report to General synod in 1977:

Nkhoma Synod reports with pleasure that since the last General Synod five years ago the *communicant membership* has risen from 105786 to 137899. However, the *number of congregations* has only increased by four to 78, because Nkhoma Synod had placed a restriction on the formation of new congregations in 1970 due to the shortage of ministers. The *growth in the Capital City* is an especially difficult matter as new procedures have to be followed in establishing these congregations and building churches and manses, which procedures differ widely from the established way of doing this. This needs advanced planning and enormous capital, much more than Nkhoma synod can normally expect from Mother church in S. Africa. The Dutch Reformed church is especially thanked for the new Church in the Capital City, and together with the Presbyterian Church in Ireland for the two manses built in this

¹²¹ Interview between present researcher and Bentry Mhango on 15 July 2004.

¹²² Interview with Rev. Brian Kamwendo, 9 October 2004.

congregation. In the immediate future at least five new congregations must be established in Lilongwe, each with a church and a manse. This appears to be beyond the financial means of Nkhoma Synod (*italics theirs*).¹²³

Nkhoma Synod's O.L. Joda-Mbewe gives special attention to the importance of the urban churches of Malawi. More specifically, he writes of those urban churches of Lilongwe, and that means Nkhoma Synod.

To enable Reformed Christianity to address the challenges that it faces in urban Malawi, the church must devise approaches for ministry. Some of the strategies are:

To evaluate the present ministry of the CCAP.

To analyse valuable information, such as case studies, sources of multi-disciplinary literature and documentary reports by agencies, e.g. World Health Organisation, the United Nations, World Development Reports, World Vision International survey reports, medical reports of the Government of Malawi, and other reports dealing with the situation of people in squatter settlements. *It would also be advisable to study liberation theology (italics are the researcher's).*

To conduct an empirical survey in the three urban congregations Nkhoma synod (Dzenza, Lilongwe and Msonkhamanja). This approach will assist Reformed Christianity to determine how, in addition to proclaiming the Gospel, the ministry in urban centres seeks to address the needs of the urban poor. This will also provide an opportunity to investigate how the church and the government approach community development where the people, not the church or the government, are at the centre of these programmes.

To train a research team within the communities concerned in research techniques with a view to conducting semi-structured and structured interviews with local leaders of squatter settlements, ordinary slum dwellers, church leaders and non-governmental organizations (NGO's) operating in these areas. In Lilongwe, the commissions of housing and water, and authorities of forestry, should also be interviewed.

To carry out Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) for community development. De Vos (1998:408) suggests: "Participatory action research could be defined as a research process where people involved in the situation that is being studied are enabled...to become actively involved in collective efforts to address and solve their social problems" (Joda-Mbewe 2001: 24-31).

¹²³ Minutes of the General Synod held at Chongoni 16th to 17th August 1977. Appendix II "Life and Work Report of Nkhoma Synod" page 13. This can be found in the library, Nkhoma Synod, Nkhoma, Malawi.

Therefore, this chapter will begin by focusing on the larger urban churches of Nkhoma Synod, all of which are located in the capital, Lilongwe.

Lilongwe CCAP began as a prayer house at Bwalo la Njobvu in 1946. It had become impractical for CCAP members to go all the way out to Dzenza, and the membership was growing. When Lilongwe CCAP began as a separate congregation, it had a membership of around one thousand (Brown 1995: 6).

Msonkhamanja CCAP Church was founded on April 1, 1957 as a prayer house, its mother church being Lilongwe CCAP. In 1959 Nkhoma Synod provided them with a building that was originally a training centre for women, teaching family care skills. With the continued growth of Lilongwe CCAP, Synod decided to split the congregation.

The members living in Falls, Mphetekere, Tsabango and Biwi were instructed to go to the

Msonkhamanja prayer house. The church elders of the prayer house were: Mr. Ndau, Mr. Chikafa, Mr. Msukwa, Mr. BL Agabu, Mr. Kadzamira and Mr. Masina. On October 20, 1969, the prayer house was elevated to the status of a church and was called Falls CCAP Church. The name “Falls” was taken from the name of an Italian who once had an estate in the area. In December 1969 the name was changed to Msonkhamanja and was established as a congregation at that time (Brown 1995: 6).

Lingadzi CCAP church in Lilongwe was dedicated on October 6, 1974. A number of DRC dignitaries were present, including Rev. and Mrs. L. Moolman (the General Secretary of the DRC Foreign Mission Board). Synod read a letter to Rev. L Moolman expressing gratitude for DRC donations for the building of the church and for “other purposes”.¹²⁴

Manses for Lingadzi: We mentioned in the April Newsletter that the Development Committee for the Capital threatened to take back the plots which were allocated (to Nkhoma Synod) if we do not start building two manses immediately¹²⁵.

Manses for Lingadzi congregation: . . . The work on the manses makes good progress . . . the work might be completed by June. (The City Development Board demanded that it be completed by May). The work is being done in faith, as there are not nearly enough funds available yet . . .¹²⁶

¹²⁴ KS 5626 Synodical Committee, 8 – 9 October 1974.

¹²⁵ *Nuusbrief Uit Malawi*, October 1976.

¹²⁶ *Nuusbrief Uit Malawi*, April 1977.

In 1979 the Lingadzi Church Hall was completed. To mark the occasion, the General Secretary of Nkhoma Synod sent photos to J Selfridge, then in South Africa, who then passed them on to DRC Foreign Mission Secretary Rev. L Moolman.¹²⁷

In 1989 an unusual situation developed at Lingadzi CCAP. A need for a English-language catechism class was reported.

The committee received a request from Lingadzi CCAP that a Catechism in English is needed because there are people in their congregation who do not understand Chichewa. The Committee agreed that a Committee be appointed to write a Catechism in English.¹²⁸

The current pastor of Lingadzi CCAP is Rev. A.M. Kuthyola Mwale, who came in 2003. He says that the Church now has 5 prayer houses and 3,400 members.¹²⁹

Another daughter church of Lilongwe CCAP is Masintha, located in Kawale. Established as a congregation in 1980, it was started by a group of Christians who were meeting for Bible study after services at the Lilongwe church. At this time the pastor of the Lilongwe church, Rev. A. Mulenga, began talking to church elders about meeting the spiritual needs of Kawale residents. As a result, the session decided to go ahead with establishing a prayer house in Kawale, and this was achieved in 1975. Originally, the prayer house met in one of the classrooms at Kawale Government Primary School. The room soon proved to be too small for the number attending services there, so the congregation moved to a football field. This was the situation when in the late seventies Rev. SP Chalera came to Lilongwe CCAP. Because of his efforts, along with those of many others, funding was obtained from South Africa and Ireland and a new church building was erected for the Kawale group. In 1983 Masintha CCAP was a full-fledged church. The first pastor at Masintha was Rev. Katundu. He was followed by Rev. A. Chipiko, who later became youth coordinator of Nkhoma Synod. Following him was Rev. AS Chalera (Brown 1994: 20,21).

The list of Nkhoma Synod CCAP churches in Lilongwe includes:

- Chimwala
- Dzenza
- Kaning'a
- Kapita

¹²⁷ Letter from General Secretary Rev. IM Kainja to Rev. J. Selfridge, dated 22 January 1980.

¹²⁸ M. 2541. Moderamen, 10 April 1989. According to Mrs. Grace Banda, Lingadzi Church member and *Chigwirizano* officer, these English catechism classes continue.

¹²⁹ interview between present researcher and Rev. AM Kuthyola Mwale, 24 June 2004. All "Letters" can be found in the library, Nkhoma Synod, Nkhoma, Malawi.

- Kawira
- Lilongwe
- Lingadzi
- Lumbadzi
- Msonkhamanja

4.4 WOMEN'S GUILD (*CHIGWIRIZANO*)

Martin Pauw speaks of the crucial role played by the women of Nkhoma Presbytery beginning in the 1940s.

In due course a Women's Guild (*Chigwirizano*) was formed under the guidance of lady missionaries and the Women's World Day of Prayer introduced. By 1941 it was reported that the women already regarded this day as their own. At that stage a beginning had been made with the training of three Malawian women as special social and religious workers in their own Church. They were called *otumkira* and worked with congregations. The three who were trained in 1942 did some practical work afterwards. Ten years later another group was selected for training, first at Mphunzi and then transferred to Nkhoma. Afterwards they worked under supervision of local Church councils. In 1955 the training of *otumikira* was established at Malingunde.

At the General Missionary Conference of 1949 the following activities were reported in connection with work amongst women: *Chigwirizano* (Women's Guild), training of social workers, Bible Study (*Mlozo*) classes, teaching on how to raise children in a Christian family, training of Christian women to evangelise others, child welfare and ante-natal care and instruction at hospitals and camps during August and September. Articles regularly appeared on such matters in *Mthenga*, the magazine published at Nkhoma (Pauw 1980: 203).

An illustration of *Chigwirizano's* work can be seen in a 1980 request from the *Chigwirizano* Executive Committee to the Synodical Committee. The request was for ministers to remind the ladies to spend their funds by the end of each year towards the work of the synod, although "a small part of it" could be spent in church- or manse-building.¹³⁰

South African personnel could participate in *Chigwirizano*. The 1982 CCAP General Synod received from Nkhoma Synod the following summation:

¹³⁰ KS 8256. Synodical Committee 28-30 October 1980.

More women are joining this guild in all congregations. Miss Anna Marrie (sic) de Klerk is the Secretary of the Women's guild. She visits many groups of the Women's Guild in various congregations.¹³¹

This work was not without its challenges. At the 1983 Synod Meeting, the officers of the guild were instructed to call upon those chapters that were delinquent in their contributions. The Synod reminded them that the responsibility of instructing the wives of deacons and elders was that of ministers exclusively. Finally, "Synod states emphatically that before the committee of the Women Guild take any firm resolutions (sic), it should consult with either the Synodical committee or Synod itself."¹³²

Over the years *Chigwirizano* continued and expanded. At the CCAP General Synod meeting of 1990, Nkhoma Synod was able to report:

This movement continues to grow rapidly and has developed into a strong active and much appreciated church organization. It has proven to be of tremendous value to the Church. It has influenced the lives of thousands of women, uniting and activating them for church work and providing a strong formative power in their lives. Today there are no less than 227 branches of this organization in the 94 congregations of this Synod, with about 30,000 women involved in the various activities and bi-weekly meetings.¹³³

The following development from 1990 illustrates the industriousness of Malawian women. Bear in mind that this came about in the same year that the Synod found itself in a deep fiscal bind (see section 3.3, "The Financial Challenges of Autonomy").

It was reported that certain people in America had donated money to the Women's Guild of Lilongwe CCAP for the buying of a Maize Mill. The women would like to put this maize mill on the premises of Lilongwe CCAP Congregation. Permission was granted, provided that the running of the mill be properly managed. Therefore Rev JGM Maseko and the General Secretary were delegated to meet with the congregation and work out a proper set of rules.¹³⁴

Not only was this operation of the Lilongwe CCAP *Chigwirizano* chapter a success, it was even extended. Money was given by Lilongwe CCAP's chapter of

¹³¹ Minutes of the General Synod held at Chongoni, 24 to 27 August 1982, page 21.

¹³² S. 1783. Nineteenth Meeting of the Nkhoma Synod, 5th to 12th April 1983.

¹³³ Minutes of the CCAP General Synod meeting held at Blantyre from 26 Aug. to 3 Sept. 1990, page 78.

¹³⁴ M. 2924. Moderamen, 4 September 1990.

Chigwirizano to the Kaning'a CCAP chapter of Chigwirizano for the purpose of operating their own maize mill. Both are doing well.¹³⁵

At the CCAP General Synod of 1994, Nkhoma Synod reported 353 branches in 100 congregations. The total number of members at that time stood at 37,748.¹³⁶

The 2001 edition of *Zolamulira*, Nkhoma Synod's book of Church Order, devotes an entire chapter to *Chigwirizano*. It describes how a 1939 report to Nkhoma Presbytery cleared the way for the formation of the organization in 1940. Its purpose is to equip women to be witnesses of Jesus Christ. The women of *Chiwirizano* are to engage in evangelism, to serve as Sunday school teachers, to visit the sick, the elderly, and those who have become slack in church attendance. They are to look after the needs of the pastor. Every woman is to start her teaching with her own family. They must work completely within the context of the Church, and not as individuals. They must be under the authority of the Church. *Zolamulira* calls for a big convention at least once a year, involving the full membership of *Chigwirizano*. This is to start on a Friday and run through Sunday. Every chapter is to elect officers – a chairwoman, a secretary, and a treasurer. These officers must be literate and able to teach. There must also be a representative (*oimilira*) at the presbytery and at the synod levels. *Zolamulira* gives specific instructions regarding badges and uniforms (they are black and white, making the women of *Chigwirizano* very distinctive). A member may be buried with her badge. The chapter ends with a provision for the reinstatement for expelled members who have repented.¹³⁷

Each synod of the CCAP has a women's guild. In Livingstonia Synod it is known as *Umanyano*, and in Blantyre Synod it goes under the name of *Mvano*. A woman must attend a new members' class for nearly a year in the other two synods; in Nkhoma Synod she attends only six class meetings. The women of *Chigwirizano* are to meet fortnightly, except during the months of November and December when many must work in the gardens. This is especially true in the villages. In the towns this practice is diminishing, as many there do not have to go to the gardens. A *Chigwirizano* woman is expected to

¹³⁵ Interview with CCAP General Secretary YA Chienda on 22 October 2004.

¹³⁶ Minutes of the CCAP General Synod held at Chongoni 9th to 13th November 1994, page 34.

¹³⁷ 2001 edition of *Zolamulira*, pages 81 – 85.

reject such traditional practices as placing charms around her babies' necks. In 2001 there was inaugurated in the Nkhoma Synod a branch especially for women in ages 15 – 30 called *Chigwirizano cha Anyamata*. It was begun earlier in the Livingstonia Synod, where it is known as *Baukirano*.¹³⁸

4.5 CHURCH OFFICERS AND CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

H. Jurgens Hendriks has studied the effects of different types of leadership upon African congregations.

Leadership styles may differ in the planning process and it helps to be aware of different styles. Once again, the contextual cultural situation would have a decisive influence on the best style to implement. Some of the more participative styles that foster the empowerment of the laity are:

Received or delegated style: the decision-making body gives people specific tasks. This often is the case with a congregation's programmes or ministries.

Autonomy: group members are given sphere of authority in which to act autonomously. In most African countries, two very good illustrations would be the Women's guild and the youth movements.

Assertiveness: frequent and intensive interaction between persons or bodies. This was quite common in congregations with a Western background. However, in the process of urbanisation and globalisation, one finds that this is of the relationship between the youth and the elders in a church council.

Integration: a teamwork style, where everything is shared and done together. In congregations that function in a mechanistic paradigm or have a very strict authoritarian style, a teamwork style is non-existent. However, it is becoming more popular and has both dangers and potential. When it relies on consensus, decision-making can become very burdensome during avoidance of important issues that need attention. The fear that consensus, team spirit, and co-operation will suffer leads to avoidance. On the other hand, this style has the potential to empower members and to equip and motivate them to take part in the congregational mission and ministries. Involvement and trust lead to commitment, meaningful co-operation, and spiritual growth (Hendriks 2004: 158).

All three Presbyteries of Nkhoma Synod met 1 – 6 August 1966. It coincided with the Year of the Child, leading to discussion regarding the perceived disintegration of

¹³⁸ Interview between present researcher and Mrs. Grace Banda on 20 July 2004. Mrs. Banda has as served as an officer of her local chapter and is the widow of Dr. Fletcher Banda, at one time the headmaster of Kamuzu Academy.

the Malawian family. Three main areas of concern were identified: it was suggested that the more educated children had difficulty showing proper respect to their less educated parents; it also noted that Christian Education was falling into neglect at public schools; and finally, it observed that urban ministry was falling behind while much was continuing in rural areas. It was suggested that the building of urban Christian community centres might contribute towards the correction of the problem.¹³⁹ The issue of developing a Christian community centre will be looked at again in section 8.1, “Outreach to Youth”. It is mentioned at this point because anything to do with impacting Malawian youth has a significant impact upon “congregational life”.

One Nkhoma Synod minister, Osborne L. Joda-Mbewe, has been critical of the role played by the General Secretary in the past.

In the process of a paradigm shift regarding the roles of the laity and clergy, the role of the General Secretary is fast changing to becoming one of co-ordination, thus providing a wider view of mission, offering an important challenge and support, providing connections to resources, and making technical assistance available for launching new ventures.

The role of the General Secretary must change from being autocratic to supportive. The new role should include provision of a stable back-up system, and should be available to congregations whenever the need occurs. Previously, the role of the General Secretary was very powerful, equal to that of the Bishop in other quarters. He had powers to make independent decisions, without referring to any person in the church. This brought about much dissatisfaction amongst fellow ministers, let alone congregations at large (Joda-Mbewe 2002: 296).

Nkhoma Synod General Secretary Rev. Dr. Winston R. Kawale does not agree with Joda-Mbewe’s assessment. Kawale asserts that the General Secretary of Nkhoma Synod, unlike the ones in Livingstonia and Blantyre synods, is merely the executive who carries out the decisions of the Moderamen and of the Synod. He does not even have the power to appoint people to office.¹⁴⁰ Joda-Mbewe also discusses the role of the minister operating at the congregational level.

The ministers in Malawi continue to see themselves as holding authority and high-status roles. They see themselves as a “ministry”. They feel they can do anything that they want without any objection from the laity. One negative practice, which the clergy needs to observe, is the

¹³⁹ *Nuusbrief Uit Malawi*, September 1966.

¹⁴⁰ Rev. Dr. Winston R. Kawale, 2 August 2004.

issue of handover. A situation has developed that ministers do not handover congregational management plans and financial records to the successor when they have accepted a call to a new congregation (Joda-Mbewe 2002: 294).

The implications of Joda-Mbewe's observations impact heavily upon the congregational life of Nkhoma Synod. This has a direct effect upon the office of the elder, and how the rank-and-file members relate to him. This was illustrated in the Twelfth Meeting of Synod, held 25 July to 2 August 1972, which accepted the introduction of the office of deacon in Nkhoma Synod and gave detailed instructions regarding the duties of this office.

In 1980 the Synod was helping five congregations in Machentche Presbytery to pay the salaries of their ministers. It laid down certain guidelines such as: the money was to come from congregations in South Africa; and if the Presbytery wanted any other congregation helped, it had to submit its name to the General Secretary who would put it on a waiting list to receive future help.¹⁴¹

While the Synod acknowledged that ministers are poor and needy, it sought to dispel rumours that ministers were helping themselves to goods. Therefore a 1980 Synodical Committee meeting was charged with setting the guidelines for the distribution of funds from charitable organizations overseas. In doing so, it established three committees: the Synodical Charity Committee, the Presbytery Charity Committee, and the Congregation Charity Committee.¹⁴² Due to the stresses of the intensive poverty and food shortages, many of those participating in relief programs have come under suspicion in all denominations. In recent years, the present researcher observed a nearby pastor (not CCAP) get involved in a food distribution scheme for the poorest and hungriest of his village, only to be falsely accused of hoarding grain (Brown 2004: 215).

The 1982 CCAP General Synod received a report from Nkhoma Synod on the state of its congregational life. Ability to pay ministers was a major concern.

All Congregations support their own ministers. However there are some congregations which cannot support their own ministers in a full year. This has caused great difficult (sic) to some ministers, especially now that the Synod has revised the salary scales of all ministers. Five of

¹⁴¹ KS 8267 Synodical Committee 28 – 30 Oct. 1980.

¹⁴² KS 8277 Ibid.

these smaller congregations are being supported by some Dutch Reformed Church congregations in South Africa to boost up their financial standing for a period of four years. The grant diminishes from the highest in the first year to the lowest in the last year when it is hoped that those congregations will be in a better position to stand on their own.

All congregations continue to hold services. There are many more people who attend these services in many congregations. Most churches are filled to capacity especially with the youth who organise themselves into singing groups. It is a new type of revival which has taken root in our modern society.

In towns services are held more than once. English services are also being conducted for those who can't speak Chichewa. This is mostly notable in the capital city, Lilongwe.¹⁴³

The struggle to pay ministers continues. A 2004 graduate of NIFCOTT, Rev. Brian Kamwendo, pastor of Mchenkhula CCAP, says that while he is supposed to receive MK 15,000 per month, it is actually much lower some months. The problem is especially severe in the months preceding harvest time.¹⁴⁴

The Synod met at Chongoni on 10-16 April 1985 for its bi-annual meeting. Some of the decisions reached concerned changes to the office and role of General Secretary. It was determined that the General Secretary would now be chosen for a period of 6 years and like the Liaison Officer, he would attend all meetings of the Moderamen only in an advisory capacity. There would no longer be an assistant Liaison Officer. The Moderamen further decided that all correspondence would be addressed to the Senior Clerk of the Synod. The Moderamen would represent the Synod at all meetings, at funerals and even at Zomba Theological School – the General Secretary would no longer have that responsibility as the Moderamen were to be considered as the “trustees” of the Synod and of all Synod departments. The Moderamen Committee would consist of a moderator, vice-moderator, Synod clerk, and vice-Synod clerk. They, rather than the General Secretary, would be the paramount authority, and these were to be elected to office by the Synod.¹⁴⁵

The offices of Senior Clerk and General Secretary were spelled out. The Senior clerk was to organise all Synod, Synodical committee, Moderamen, and Financial

¹⁴³ Minutes of the General Synod held at Chongoni, 24 to 27 August 1982, page 19.

¹⁴⁴ Interview with Rev. Brian Kamwendo, 9 October 2004.

¹⁴⁵ S. 1828. Minutes of the 20th Synod Meeting at Namoni Katengeza CLTC, 10 – 16 April 1985.

Committee meetings. Along with the Junior Clerk he was to appoint members for all of these committees. The duties of General Secretary were many, but they included receiving overtures and presenting them to Synod, and seeing that all decisions of Synod were implemented.¹⁴⁶

The Synod meeting of 1985 at Chongoni further decided that unmarried ministers would be allowed to do theological training, but under no circumstances would they be inducted at congregations.¹⁴⁷ It was further decided that all ministers would receive the same salary, whether they were entering service for the first time, or they were nearing retirement, “because all do the same work.”¹⁴⁸ The salaries were raised to MK160 per month effective Jan. 1986.¹⁴⁹

In 1989 Synod reiterated that the proper length of time for the catechumenate was twenty-four months. This had been the rule for many years. It was felt that this was necessary “for members to be well-grounded in church doctrine”.¹⁵⁰ This would have a significant effect upon the life of a particular congregation, especially one that is largely made up of relatively new members.

In 1997 Synod decided that the retirement age for ministers was to be 55. The prescribed number of years of service required for retirement was to be 25. However, many of Nkhoma Synod’s ministers significantly exceed this guideline.¹⁵¹

The wife of the present researcher teaches a course on leadership at African Bible College. A majority of the students at this college are CCAP members, and most of these are Nkhoma Synod members. In October 2002, these students were given the assignment of describing the leadership style that they have observed at their respective churches. One female student wrote the following (bear in mind that English is their second language):

In and every organization, club and even churches there are rules and regulations which are set to be followed (sic). In these organizations leaders are also chosen just to see for the proper running of the organization (sic). There are a lot of leadership styles used by different

¹⁴⁶ S. 1971, “Description of Work of Senior Clerk of Synod and General Secretary”.

¹⁴⁷ S. 1886.

¹⁴⁸ S. 1905.

¹⁴⁹ S. 1925.

¹⁵⁰ S. 2255, minutes of the 22nd Synod Meeting at Namoni Katengeza, 11 – 18 April 1989.

¹⁵¹ S. 3121. Minutes of the Synod Meeting, 8-15 April 1997.

groups such as, autocratic which is called Authoritarian sometimes, Bureaucratic, Permissive and Laissez faire style of leadership (sic). My church practices more of Bureaucratic style of leadership and is also Authoritarian (sic).

The leadership church focuses much on the rules and regulations set up by the Synod (sic). This is seen in many ways some of which is the way they handle church activities (sic). I remember when there were preparations for a wedding of our reverend's daughter (sic). As it is in the rules and regulations of the Nkhoma Synod when a reverend's daughter or son is getting married the church has to contribute a lot of money than the reverend (sic). So, when this was communicated to the church, we were reluctant to give in our money because we thought it was not right and proper to do so. As leaders in the church they tried to convince us about what the Synod had set but still more we were hard (sic). Then the leaders just took some money from the church's account and gave the reverend for his daughter's wedding and later we were told to refund the church (sic). Everybody was willing to give just because we knew that development work and all that needs money would suffer if we were not to give the money. So willingly we gave our money, this is a Bureaucratic system of leadership in which church members were not feared, but rather the leaders acted according to the rules and regulations set by the Synod (sic).¹⁵²

According to Dr. Hennie van Deventer, principal of NIFCOTT, this definitely is not a written rule but rather informal custom. When a pastor's daughter gets married, there will be an "organizing committee", which usually will include church elders. They are charged with the responsibility of raising funds, by whatever means. Dr. van Deventer acknowledged that this custom has become a problem, and he tells his students, who are ministers, to address it and correct it.

Synod decided in 2001 to create the post of Vice General Secretary. The reasons given were that there was a lot of work in the office and the office was closed whenever the General Secretary was away. The Vice General Secretary was to serve for four years, so that he would not leave office at the same time as the General Secretary. Synod decided to keep the General Secretary's term of office at six years, but emphasized its

¹⁵² Report handed in during the 2002-3 school year to Dr. Janet L. Brown as part of the requirements for her course on Leadership at African Bible College. The name of the student was withheld to prevent any awkwardness between her and her home church.

authority to replace him if he “does not perform satisfactorily.”¹⁵³ The decision to create the post of Vice General Secretary was rescinded after six months.

4.6 CONSISTENT GROWTH OVER THE YEARS¹⁵⁴

	1963	1971	1979	1990
Church Members	76,057	98,615	132,545	246,995
Catechumens	25,181	29, 826	26,215	72,772
Ordained Ministers	48	55	94	90 (1988)
Congregations	54	74	82	93 (1988)
Prayer Houses	-*	-	1, 213	1,540
Presbyteries	4	7	10	10
Adults Baptized	-	6,255	7,935	13,898
Children Baptized	-	3,677	10,683	16,408
Elders	-	-	2,292	2,697
Deacons	-	-	2,327	3,642

* “-“ Indicates no information available

At the 2000 General Synod meeting, Nkhoma Synod reported the following statistics: 110 congregations, 13 presbyteries, and 600,000 members.¹⁵⁵ Unofficially, informants report a present membership of over a million to the present researcher.¹⁵⁶

Notice that the number of congregations more than doubled from 1963 to 2000. The number of presbyteries more than tripled. The number of church members grew eightfold. The growth of the number of ministers was less than doubled. This fact in itself has huge ramifications for congregational life and the presbyteries of Nkhoma Synod.

¹⁵³ S. 3393, S. 3438 and S. 3439, Minutes of the 28th Synod Meeting at Namoni Katengeza, 15 – 22 October 2001.

¹⁵⁴ Source: A composite of statistics reported in the minutes of Synod, Synodical Committee, or Moderamen meetings. These can be found in the library, Nkhoma Synod, Nkhoma, Malawi.

¹⁵⁵ Minutes of the 19th General Synod Assembly Held at Blantyre CCAP Mission, from Wednesday 1st to Sunday 5th November 2000. Although this has been published in the Assembly minutes, it has been suggested that this is a grossly inflated figure.

¹⁵⁶ This estimate is also disputed. When asked about the Synod’s membership, General Secretary Winston Kawale conceded that coming up with reliable figures is a problem.

4.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Since the early days of the Nkhoma Synod, challenges have faced the church. Already in the sixties a change could be detected in the Malawian home. It was alleged that children, having gone to school, lacked the traditional respect for parents. As Malawian society moves forward in the areas of education and literacy, it is anticipated that these types of tensions may be expected to increase.

Urban churches face the problem of unemployment and underemployment. Another problem is unsupervised youth. Joda-Mbewe did a thorough job of pointing out the special needs of the urban poor, how the church can reach out to them, and what resources exist in order to bring this about. While this is certainly a significant problem in all of Malawi, it should also be remembered, however, that not all of Lilongwe's people are poor. The church must therefore be equally equipped to reach out to growing needs of the rising professional class.

Although prohibited from assuming leadership positions in the formal structure of the church, women continue to play an essential role, as it is the Malawian mother who sees to it that all the children go to church each week. The role of *Chigwirizano* continues to be significant, an organisation which contributes much to women's sense of community, of belonging – essential to the life of any church.

The evolution of the office of General Secretary bears mention, because he continues to wield considerable power, like the Stated Clerk of American Presbyterianism. While not a dictator, he nevertheless commands great respect and the role of the Moderamen, which includes the General Secretary wields significant power.

The authoritative character of Nkhoma Synod *abusa* (ministers) is also revealing. In some cases, they appear to be similar to traditional village headmen. The present researcher has observed the same behavioural patterns described by Joda-Mbewe. As Outreach Coordinator at African Bible College, he once asked the students of ABC to participate in an international children's outreach program known as AWANA (Approved Workmen Are Not Ashamed)¹⁵⁷. Nkhoma Synod *abusa* who were students at

¹⁵⁷ For more information regarding the AWANA Clubs International, the reader is referred to their informative website: <http://www.AWANA.org>.

the college protested, saying that it was beneath their dignity to play with children, underscoring the concept of separation of the clergy from the layperson. The same researcher has seen pastors from other denominations interact with children with great alacrity. Closely related to this issue is the story of the congregation that was coerced into giving for the minister's daughter's wedding.

On the other hand, one remembers the dedicated pastors who must minister to congregations divided into twenty or thirty "prayer houses". Some must cover far-flung territories on foot or by bicycle, and some of them are not young. Furthermore, they are often called upon to make difficult personal sacrifices, such as not always being able to receive all their salary, or salary delays. It has been suggested that the problem could be alleviated by commissioning elders to be ministers of the Sacraments as well as the Word.

Concerning prayer houses, one concludes that this must remain an area of deepest concern. Many expatriate initiatives (example: "mission trips") restrict themselves to urban areas. Yet the vast majority of Malawi's people live in these villages that must make do with "prayer houses" that are often not equipped with leaders able to meet the multifaceted needs of their congregations. Pastors are spread so thin in trying to minister to multiple groups of people that the needs of the rank in file member suffer neglect.

This chapter does much to answer the second secondary question, "What is the nature of Nkhoma Synod's church polity?" Clearly it is not congregational, elders rule. Equally clearly, it is not Episcopal; there is no bishop. Yet the General Secretary wields much authority. Mention should also be made of the offices of Senior Clerk and Junior Clerk, with their power of appointment to committees. Their job descriptions suggest a top-down ecclesiastical structure. This also has bearing on the third secondary question, "Has Nkhoma Synod become a Three-Self church (see section 1.2)?" The evidence of this chapter suggests that it most certainly is a self-governing church. And so again one feels a sense of completeness in its development, pertinent to the research question, "How has the Synod developed its sense of being a church?"

Whatever the repercussions, the Synod, in the manner of Presbyterians everywhere, remains committed to education. This will be illustrated at length in the following chapter.

Chapter Five

Education

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter having dealt with congregational life and church officers, it now seems a natural progression to move on to the subject of education. The quality of education has a direct bearing upon the leaders of tomorrow. True to its Reformed heritage, Nkhoma Synod continued its educational activities. This chapter will show how it continued to make the connection between education and Gospel witness.

It was not until 1950 that the Church, as distinguished from the Mission, took a major role in education. That year a Malawian was for the first time named as assistant to the Education Secretary. A joint Education Committee was established, and this included Revs. N. Katengeza, S.A. Mvula, and A. Sendera. The transfer of control of education from Mission to Church was completed with the Church's assumption of responsibility for the William Murray Institute in 1960 (Pauw 1980: 180-181).

Besides the assisted and unassisted primary and secondary schools which will shortly be discussed, the institutions owned by Nkhoma Synod in 1962 were: girls' boarding schools at Dzenza and Nkhoma, the Homecraft Centre at Malingunde, "outschools," The School for the Blind at Kasungu, the William Murray Institute, and the Robert Blake School.¹⁵⁸

5.2 SECULARIZATION AND SCHOOLS

Secularisation of education by the new post-independence Government of Malawi and the decline of church control over schools produced early results. David S. Bone explains how intervention on the part of the Malawi Government had religious ramifications. For example, the relationship between education and Islam was affected by new Government policy.

Perhaps the single most significant change affecting the Muslim community arising from Malawi's attainment of independence was in the

¹⁵⁸ From the minutes of the first meeting of the GAC, 1962. This can be found in the records possessed by the library, Nkhoma Synod, Nkhoma, Malawi.

field of education. In its 1961 manifesto the Malawi Congress Party had made the pledge, “The party when in power will pay special attention to those parts of the country like the Muslim areas...where education has been deplorably neglected”. In order to achieve this, when it came to power, the Malawi Government took a strong line against forms of denominationalism that had led to the effective exclusion of Muslims from schools. In the words of Malawi’s President Banda, “As soon as I took over the government I directed there must be no marriage between education and religion.” *In practical terms this meant that though the various Christian churches remained as proprietors of the majority of schools in the country, control of educational policy and control of entry to all schools passed firmly into the hands of the Ministry of Education.* Government further attempted to promote the education of Muslims by providing schools and teachers in predominantly Muslim areas. Speeches by officials of the Government and of the Malawi Congress Party frequently exhorted Muslim parents to send their children to school, stressing the changes that had taken place with independence and reassuring them that they had nothing to fear from Christian pressure on pupils (Bone 2000: 140; italics added by the researcher).

Nevertheless, the new secularising policies of the Government affected more than just the Muslims and their education. The Government could direct religious instruction of church youth by the churches; separation of church and state as understood in other countries was not observed in Malawi. The following is given as an example.

In traditional Chewa culture, there existed an initiation rite for young people called *chinamwali*, the purpose of which was to pass on the values of that people. The instructors for this rite were called the *anamkhunwi*. Nkhoma Synod decided to replace this rite, calling the alternative *chilangizo*. The instructors were renamed the *alangizi*. In 1977 the *Chilangizo* (instruction) handbook was revised. The new edition had to be sent to the Government Censorship Board for approval. Ministers were given orders to burn all copies of the previous edition, and to give adequate training to the *alangizi* (instructors).¹⁵⁹ The problem was that they had published a handbook, which because it dealt in part with sexual issues, contained pictures and words for genitalia. This offended the government censorship board; they considered it to be bordering on pornography. Therefore the original edition was ordered burned and replaced by a less explicit version.

¹⁵⁹ KS 7117. Moderamen, October 4, 1977.

Chilangizo, with the *alangizi* and handbook continue in use today, teaching such things as respect for elders and preparation for marriage.¹⁶⁰

From earliest times, there was close cooperation between government and the Nkhoma Synod regarding education. There developed a system in which there were two types of schools: Assisted schools, in which the Government paid the teachers, and unassisted schools, in which the Synod paid them. Until recent times, however, the Synod played a leading role in both. Writing in 1990, Winston R. Kawale (then Education Secretary for Nkhoma Synod) explains,

When the Government was established in 1891, the mission councils in Malawi formed Education Board in 1904. In 1905 the Board presented an application to the government for a Grant-in aid. Fortunately, the Government approved a Grant-in aid of £1,000 to be distributed to all mission councils evenly. Nkhoma Synod received £200. Following the Government's establishment of the Department of Education, Nkhoma Synod received £700 as a Grant-in Aid for her School. This financial assistance continued especially after the opening of Secondary Schools and when all the teachers were being paid by the Government. When the government transferred the teachers from Unified Teaching Service to Civil Service in 1977, the churches were asked to remain as proprietors of the schools they established. The churches had to see to it that the religious character of their schools were maintained through their participation in the appointment of Headmasters and representation on the school committees. The schools where the Government assisted by paying teachers' salaries and providing school material were to be known as "Assisted schools". At the same time, the churches as Agencies were permitted to open new schools but they were to be responsible for everything including teachers' salaries. Such schools were to be known as "Unassisted Schools". By 1990 Nkhoma synod had 400 assisted Schools and 110 Unassisted Schools (Kawale 1990: 13).

In its report to the 1990 CCAP General Synod, Nkhoma Synod said this about the status of education in its jurisdiction:

Synod is at present the proprietor of 325 Government assisted Schoos (sic) 111 Government un assisted (sic) Schools, 2 Boys, Secondary Schools (sic), 1 Girls, Secondary School, 2 School for the Blind and 8 Malawi College Distant education Centres (sic). Sometimes we are in

¹⁶⁰ Interview between the present researcher and General Secretary Rev. Dr. Winston R. Kawale on 29 January 2004.

difficulty in being not able to pay the teachers in Government un assisted schools due to lack of funds.¹⁶¹

The year 1994 was to be a crucial one for the Synod's educational programme. That year, a new government came to power. The process of secularisation accelerated. The following is presented to show the results of this process.

At the 1994 CCAP General Synod meeting, Nkhoma Synod reported similar numbers: 325 Government Assisted Schools, 185 government Unassisted Schools, 2 boys' Secondary Schools, 2 girls' Secondary Schools, of which one, at Mvera, was a private Secondary School. There was in addition a school for the blind and eight Malawi College of Education Distant Education Centres.

Meanwhile the problem of funds for paying teachers (sic) salaries has been solved because the Government has taken the responsibility of paying all the teachers their salaries including schools which are under the Synod.¹⁶²

Six years later, in the 2000 report to General Synod, Nkhoma Synod listed the following under "Institutions/Organisations":¹⁶³

- Nkhoma Synod has the following institutions and organizations:
- Namoni Katengeza lay (sic) Training Centre
- Malingunde Womens Training Centre
- Orphanage in Mchinji
- Chilanga School for the Blind
- Nkhoma Printing Press

The 2000 report did not bother to report schools "under its influence" (see 5.6, "Secondary Schools," and 5.8 "Education and Fiscal Issues"). In the new era, the Synod no longer enumerates "Assisted" and "Unassisted" schools. The Government has asserted its authority in the national educational system. The post-1994 government and its educational programme has made its impact.

¹⁶¹ Minutes of CCAP General Synod meeting held at Blantyre from 26 Aug. to 3 Sept. 1990, page 79. All minutes of CCAP General Synod meetings may be obtained from the Office of the CCAP General Secretary, Lilongwe, Malawi.

¹⁶² Minutes of the CCAP General Synod held at Chongoni 9th to 13th November 1994, page 34

¹⁶³ Minutes of the General Synod assembly held at Blantyre CCAP Mission from Wed. 1 to Sunday 5 November 2000, pages 36-37.

5.3 LITERACY PROGRAMS

Mr. Lou Pretorius in 1966-67 established an adult literacy program which within a year had trained 6500 adults in 400 village schools. When the government took over the educational system, adults were no longer permitted to attend school. This was a cause for concern for the Synod, because adults attending catechumen classes had to be literate. This is why in the past the Synod had encouraged adults to attend school.¹⁶⁴

The Synod did not always see the Government as a competitor in educational matters. Illiteracy has always hampered the work of the Synod. The synod meeting of 1968 took up the issue of what to do with new converts who were unable to read. It gave two suggestions: the local congregations should teach them to read or find someone who could; or else ask the government to start an adult literacy program in their area.¹⁶⁵

Closely related to this issue was the matter of educating catechumen class members. Illiteracy continues to be a problem that nags the country and the church. Many well-intentioned short-term personnel from the West have difficulty understanding how the high rate of illiteracy affects the life of the church in Malawi, and may furnish sizeable amounts of English-language materials. An example of the continuing necessity of addressing this issue occurred when Synod in 1972 requested of its pastors and teachers of catechumen classes that they see that all catechumens who were illiterate be taught how to read, similar to the action taken in 1968.¹⁶⁶ This has been seen as an area in which church and state can cooperate for the greater good of the country. The 1990 CCAP General Synod acknowledged the contribution of the Malawi Government in the area of adult literacy.

The Church is grateful that the government is currently running adult literacy Schools countrywide. The Church should encourage Christians to go to these schools.¹⁶⁷

After Nkhoma Synod established its Relief and Development Department in 1990, its work in adult literacy came under that department's administration (see section 7.6). At the 1994 CCAP General Synod meeting, Nkhoma Synod reported on the work

¹⁶⁴ Nuusbrieff Uit Malawi, Dec. 1967, p4.

¹⁶⁵ S. 461, Minutes of the Ninth Synod Meeting at Nkhoma 16 –23 August 1968.

¹⁶⁶ S. 856, Minutes of the 12th Synod Meeting at Namoni Katengeza CLTC 25 July – 2 August 1972.

¹⁶⁷ Minutes of the CCAP General Synod meeting held at Blantyre from 26 Aug. to 3 Sept. 1990.

of its new Relief and Development Department; part of this department's work was labelled "Functional Literacy." The Synod reported that,

This section is utilising resource person from Government at present Mr. Makanga (sic). It has 25 manufacturing Adult literacy Education Centres where over 600 students are learning. Seminars are organised to train the Instructors and Committees for those schools. Relief and Development only provides transport, learning and training materials.¹⁶⁸

Therefore, the symbiotic relationship between church and state in the area of adult literacy is continuing and acknowledged. Other organisations besides church and state, however, have in recent years become heavily involved in promoting adult literacy.

Today much work in adult literacy is being done by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). One such agency is the Food Resource Bank. In section 7.4, "The Relief and Development Department", this organisation names Nkhoma Synod as a partner. Food Resource Bank operates in five districts in Central Malawi, Nkhoma Synod's jurisdiction. They report having 128 literacy workers and 3,991 learners in adult literacy. Literacy Training Centres received materials from Adult Literacy Offices in three districts. Adult literacy classes involved 800 people – 758 women and only 42 men.¹⁶⁹

Another NGO doing literacy work in Malawi is a British organisation, Christian Aid. It reports that,

Christian Aid's work in the region covers seven countries – Angola, Lesotho, *Malawi*, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe, and includes a southern Africa regional programme. It supports 72 partner organisations, among them local community groups, non-governmental organisations and church-related development bodies. These promote sustainable agriculture, provide safe drinking water, *teach adult literacy*, support soil and water conservation projects and develop small business training initiatives. The impact of local programmes is increased by regional organisations operating across national boundaries (italics are the researcher's) (Christian Aid 2004).

Another organization is Feed the Minds. It is working with Nkhoma Synod through the Malawi Council of Churches (MCC).

¹⁶⁸ Minutes of the CCAP General Synod meeting held at Chongoni 9th to 13 November 1994.

The MCC aims to improve inter-church communication by establishing a Communications Department. This will seek ways to improve communication so that the churches receive and disseminate information with a view to being relevantly engaged in issues of human development (Feed the Minds 2004).

Thus we have seen how after independence the Synod lost much of its traditional role in education. However, it continues to play an important part in the war against illiteracy. It is a war in which church and state – along with the NGOs – act as allies.

5.4 EDUCATION FOR WOMEN

This section illustrates how various sources; the Synod, Government, NGOs, the “Partners” of South Africa (see chapter thirteen) and others, come together to achieve a particular goal. In this case, the goal is expanded educational opportunities for women.

At the meeting of the GMSC in Cape Town 22-24 June 1969 it was noted that important work was being done at the Home Domestic Schools at Lilongwe and Malingunde. It was stated that this work was becoming increasingly popular among housewives, and appreciation was expressed for the work of Miss M. Strydom who returned to South Africa in poor health after many years of service.

At the meeting of the GMSC in Cape Town 22-24 June 1969, there was a discussion about starting a secondary school for girls at Mlanda. There was no such school in the area. The vice-minister of education enquired of Nkhoma Synod whether it would take this responsibility; as there were already some buildings in place that only needed restoring. The MMSC in Cape Town decided to request more information, but the Mission Financial Sub-Committee decided that it was unable to provide the requested R 1,032.

The Synod in 1985 announced the projected opening of Mlanda Girls’ Secondary School as being the 1985/86 session,¹⁷⁰ which actually opened for classes on 16 November 1987. It had been 19 years earlier, in 1968 that Nkhoma Synod first conceived of the project. In 1975 the Joint Financial Committee budgeted MK 20,736 for the proposed school, but in 1977 the Synod reduced this amount to MK 5,000 due to

¹⁷⁰ S. 1835, S. 1977, and S. 1978, minutes of the 20th Meeting at Namoni Katengeza CLTC, 10 – 16 April 1985.

financial constraints. At a December 1978 Synodical meeting it was decided to assess congregations, teachers and ministers in order to raise the needed money. Renovations, using local personnel and with no expatriate participation, were begun in May 1980. Setbacks in the project were experienced. In October 1980 some materials were stolen, and then about 10 days later more materials were lost due to rain damage. Then, the Ministry of Education refused to endorse the opening of the schools because of the poor condition of the buildings. In 1983 Rev. WR Kawale conceived the idea of involving chiefs, headmen, church elders, and Malawi Congress Party (MCP) local leaders in the project. That year construction began using local labour; it was arranged that on given days, two villages would donate labour towards the school. In 1984 inspectors from the Ministry of Education expressed to Kawale satisfaction over the progress being made. Mr. JD Msosa, then Education Secretary General for the Christian Council of Malawi presented a request to the Ministry of Education that the school be allowed to open. The first headmaster, Mr. GM Retief, arrived in July 1987. He had served as headmaster of the Robert Blake Secondary School for Boys for 17 years. The Nkhoma Synod officially opened the school at a ceremony on 16 January 1988, and on 15 January 1991 the Ministry of education gave grant-aided status to the school (Kawale 1998: 1-6).

In connection with the opening of this school, a number of organizations contributed. First, the Nkhoma Synod donated MK 60,000, and this was used to purchase school materials and building supplies. From South Africa the Narollah Trust donated MK30,000 for a new hostel, plus MK 10,000 for a kitchen and another MK 10,000 for teaching materials. From Zimbabwe the Beit Trust donated MK 30,000 for a home economics block. From the Christian Service Committee came MK 40,000 for the water supply.

The school received more donations when it opened its doors. On 20 April 1988 the Schimmel Pennick Campbell Education Trust in Harare donated K 9,500 for building materials and other equipment such as sewing machines. On 29 April 1988 Dr. Martin Dent from the University of Keile (sic) in the United Kingdom donated K 2000 for the establishment of a Bursary Fund for the needy students. On 20 February 1987 Old Mutual donated K 17000 for the renovations of a Library. The school also received K 34,000 from Schimmel Penninick (sic) Campbell Education Trust on 28 June 1985 for renovation of the Library. On 17 October 1991 Beit Trust donated several textbooks. On 18 January 1993

the E.Z.E. from Germany donated K 179,000 for the security fence (K 62,000) for water filtration plant (K 50,000), for concrete water reservoir (K 60,000) and for power line to the water pump (K 60,000). On 7 June 1993 the Ambassador of the United States of America donated K 28,000 for teachers houses. On 14 December 1989 Beit Trust donated K50,000 for science block and on 26 May the Schimmel Penninick (sic) Campbell foundation donated twenty thousand US dollars for science (sic) laboratory. The Ducth (sic) Reformed Church Mission (DRCM) donated a computer on 21 February 1994. In July 1998 Africa venture (sic) donated K 47,000 for a hostel (Kawale 1998: 6).

The construction and opening of this particular school, Mlanda Girls' Secondary School, has been highlighted in order to illustrate the delays and difficulties that projects of this sort often face in Malawi. The Synod made further decisions in the area of education in 1991. It expressed a desire to open a girls' secondary school at Chintembwe, "as soon as funds are available."¹⁷¹

In 1990 Nkhoma Secretary Rev. Winston R. Kawale (now the General Secretary) gave the following summation on "Women Education".

Nkhoma Synod has also been involved in the women education (sic). During the early years, the wives of the teachers joined their husbands at the College and received some training. In the same way, the wives of the students studying to become evangelists or pastors, received special training at their school which was known as Yoswa. Later a school for girls planning to get married was opened at Malingunde. A School at Lilongwe, catered for the married women.

At all these schools the women studied bible Knowledge, Hygiene, domestic Science, Child Care or Welfare, Nutrition, Christian Leadership and Elementary school subjects for those who had no formal education.

Unfortunately during the 1970s the Malingunde and Lilongwe schools closed and due to the move of the Theological college to Zomba Yoswa School closed too. However, the Malingunde School is to be re-opened soon. Renovation work is underway and Miss Anna Marie de Klerk has been appointed the Headmistress.

The curriculum will have to be revised to suit the present women needs (sic) and the school will be called Malingunde Womens Training School (Kawale 1990: 9).

¹⁷¹ S. 2471, Minutes of the Synod Meeting at Namoni Katengeza, 1991.

In 1991 Miss Anna Marie de Klerk along with her Malawian colleague Ednes Kagundu was made responsible for the Malingunde Women's Training School. By 1999 it had trained 12 groups of 20 women each in six-month courses.¹⁷²

At the beginning of 2000 Mr. Lester Chikoya became the headmaster of Malingunde Women's Training School. He took over upon the resignation of Ms. Anna Marie de Klerk.¹⁷³ He resigned in 2003.

And so one can see cooperation among several agencies. Nkhoma Synod has had to learn how to cooperate with others in order to achieve goals in such areas as education for women, and education in general.

5.5 VOCATIONAL TRAINING

When that inter-agency cooperation is lacking, for whatever reason, some programmes and institutions of Nkhoma Synod can suffer. Such has been the case in the area of vocational training which has long been a concern of Nkhoma Synod. The existence in 1962 of Malingunde Homecraft Centre and the School for the Blind at Kasungu has already been mentioned.

As in the case of other areas, vocational training needs contributions from outside sources. At the 1977 General Synod meeting, Nkhoma Synod reported the following regarding its vocational training:

Regretably (sic), the Lilongwe Homecraft Centre was closed for nearly 2 years due to lack of staff, and the Malingunde Homecraft Centre is presently closed due to lack of funds.¹⁷⁴

The Synod in 1979 reported that it was still searching for a donor for the Malingunde Homecraft Centre. There was, however, a Lilongwe Homecraft Centre operating with 17 students.

In late 1984 there was an expression of determination to go ahead with the establishment of a "Domestic School" at Namoni Katengeza (Chongoni).

The money which is kept by Christian Council should be made available so that we can start with the building of this School although the

¹⁷² Nuusbrieff Uit Malawi December 1991, also Nuusbrieff November 1999.

¹⁷³ From a letter from General Secretary AA Sasu to Mission Secretary, Commission for Witness, Rev. JH Koch.

¹⁷⁴ Minutes of the General Synod held at Chongoni 16th to 17th August 1977, page 14.

funds may be totally inadequate. The General Secretary should also get hold of all the agreements and conditions concerning this school so that we may know what to do.¹⁷⁵

Sometimes ambitions run ahead of possibilities. The Domestic School at Namoni Katengeza “never materialized”, says today’s CCAP General Secretary YA Chienda.¹⁷⁶

An April 1985 meeting of the Moderamen illustrates how the Synod has seen education, agriculture and literature as working hand-in-hand, rather than entirely independently. This meeting decreed the starting of agricultural work at both Malingunde and Dzenza, where Synod secondary schools are located, and that the office of education secretary be established, with his office at Malingunde. At the same time the treasurer was to apply for a license for a bookshop as soon as a suitable building was found, and directed the General Secretary to coordinate with the government regarding the opening of Mlanda Girls’ Secondary School.¹⁷⁷

Slightly later in 1985 the decision was made to close down the Homecraft Centre at Lilongwe. It was to be relocated, however, at Malingunde.

Having noticed that the school building and other buildings at Malingunde have been repaired, The Committee decided that the Homecraft Centre at Lilongwe should be moved to Malingunde as soon as all buildings are repaired. The Committee asks Revv. (sic) Kham’nkhwani and Burger to write a report about all the things needed to open the centre at Malingunde. This report will be presented to the Moderamen for discussion and the recommendations will be presented to the Synodical Committee in October.

The committee did this because it realized that the buildings at Malingunde were deteriorating because they were not used. They also thought that the buildings of the present Homecraft Centre at Lilongwe could be used for other purposes.¹⁷⁸

In 2004, the buildings that once housed the Lilongwe Homecraft Centre are indeed being used “for other purposes”. They have been renovated in order to accommodate the new conference centre, and is adjacent to the Lilongwe CCAP.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁵ M. 988, Moderamen, 21 December 1984.

¹⁷⁶ Interview with CCAP General Secretary YA Chienda on 22 October 2004.

¹⁷⁷ M. 1088, M. 1089, M. 1091, and M. 1093, Meeting of the Moderamen, 29 April 1985.

¹⁷⁸ M. 1217, Moderamen, 12 July 1985.

¹⁷⁹ Interview with CCAP General Secretary YA Chienda.

In 1989 the headmaster of Chilanga School for the Blind, RJ Bemeani, wrote a summary of that institution's history; it was published in *Kuunika*. Nkhoma's first Education Secretary, Mr. JL Pretorius, and a blind Malawian, Mr. Wilson Mshane, started Chilanga in 1952. The following year the Provincial Commissioner for the Centre, Keppel Compton, donated £3,000 for the construction of several buildings. When in 1963 the school was promoted to "senior school," no more pupils were sent to Magwero in Zambia for higher primary education, as before. In 1966 nine pupils sat for standard eight examinations for the first time; five passed. In 1967, for the first time a girl, Mercy Muonjeza, was selected for secondary school. She became a teacher. In 1971 seven pupils sat for examinations and all passed. Out of these a girl, Rabecca Manjawira, became a teacher at the Kamuzu Vocational and Rehabilitation Centre at Magomero. She went to Britain for a two-year diploma course, and returned to the Centre. Beginning in 1982, at the request of Nkhoma Synod, The Christoffel Blinden Mission (CBM) began to financially assist the school. CBM 's contributions built eight new hostels with a capacity for eighty students, a kitchen and dining hall, and an electric water pump. There were pipes running to the hostels and to the teachers' houses. Other supporters included the Malawian Government, Nkhoma Synod, the Lions Club of Lilongwe, members of the DRC in South Africa, and "an individual from West Germany who sends us used clothes."¹⁸⁰



Writing in 1990, Education Secretary Rev. (now Dr.) Winston R. Kawale summarized the vocational training of Nkhoma Synod up to that point.

In this field Nkhoma Synod was involved in the field of local industry which included among others the following: Basket- and cane work, brickmaking, Tile making, Carpentry, pottery General machanics (sic) & Plumbing, bricklaying, Plastering, roofing, painting and Agriculture.

The Nkhoma Mission Schools became known for their emphasis on agriculture and brick and tile making. At a certain stage young people were also trained in bootmaking and shoe repairs, soap and oil production, tailoring, etc. Basket making, weaving, plating and inlaid work continues to-day in a number of villages, near the Mission stations.

¹⁸⁰ Bemeani, RJ, "Chilanga School for the Blind Brief History", appearing in *Kuunika*, July/ August 1989, pages 13-14.

Some of the most magnificent buildings at Nkhoma, Kongwe, and Mvera were built by people who received every bit of their training while they were building. The bricks and tiles were made by hand on the site. Some of the Industrialists have become legends so to speak in their own life time. Mr. Joshua Mwale, was highly skilled in ivory inlaid work, he managed a carpentry shop where scores of trainee carpenters in the past learned this skill under his watchful eye.

The most important lesson which emerged from the history of non-formal education in Nkhoma Synod is the great heights of efficiency and skilfulness which were reached by some for, which no recognition was given in the form of a certificate or diploma. Mr. R.T. Sambani so ably managed the Printing Department for many years and knew printing process. Mr. Chikuse became an expert in roof construction. Mr. Joseph Chitedze at the garage could repair anything in a vehicle or a water pump and was also an expert welder. Mr. Gersom Chipwaira typed the manuscript of the whole Chichewa Bible translation (Kawale 1990:7).

Much of the work described by Kawale has been taken over by the Relief and Development Department. This was established by the Synod in 1990 (see section 7.5).

Nkhoma Synod in 1991 reminded the Education Committee that all employees working in Synod departments, such as garage, print shop, etc., should be sufficiently trained. It stipulated that whenever there was work that required special qualifications, a person, or persons should be selected and sent out to receive the needed training.¹⁸¹

In a continuing effort to keep up with advances in technology, Nkhoma Synod endeavoured in 2003 to establish a computer school known as the Nkhoma Synod Computer School.¹⁸² It has been previously shown, that in its 2000 report to the CCAP General Synod, Malingunde Women's Training Centre and Chilanga School for the Blind were listed as institutions owned and operated by the Synod. Thus, in the area of vocational training, one can see a multi-faceted approach that has continued throughout the period of autonomy. Vocational training is also part of the document known as the "CCAP Policy and Strategic Plan 2000-2010".

There is a growth in need and demand for vocational education. Skills and knowledge to enable young people and adults make a living as wage earners or by self-employment as a means of alleviating poverty and building independence. The Church sees that it has a role to play in this area through training programmes, which enhance the

¹⁸¹ S. 2481 and S. 2498, Minutes of Synod Meeting at Namoni Katengeza, 1991.

¹⁸² M. 5820, Meeting of the Moderamen, 5 September 2003.

quality of vocational education and take an innovative approach to the range of skills and learning opportunities available to trainees.

5.6 TEACHER TRAINING

It has been previously shown how Government intervention affected such diverse areas as education for Muslim children, *chilangizo*, and the status of “assisted” and “unassisted” schools. Perhaps nowhere in the field of education has the activity of Government been so deeply felt as in the area of teacher training. This affects, for instance, the selection of teachers and candidates for training.

Early in the post-independence era, 1965, the South African personnel of Nkhoma expressed concern over the direction of education in the country. They observed that there was a fundamental change in the “spiritual state of the teachers”. The role of the teacher in the past had always included that of evangelist, which had been considered an integral part of the educational process. However, as early as 1965 the secularisation of Malawian schools was having an observable impact. *Nuusbrief Uit Malawi* ascribed this alarming shift to the fact that the Mission, which had been disbanded in 1962, had always in the past selected candidates for teacher training, but now this was being done by the Government.¹⁸³

That government intervention was needed at this time can hardly be debated. Nkhoma Synod was having difficulty meeting all of the challenges of its education department. The Education Committee reported in 1966 that there was a widespread shortage of teachers. It also reported, that in all districts new classrooms and local people, following the provision of corrugated iron sheets by District Councils, built teachers’ houses.

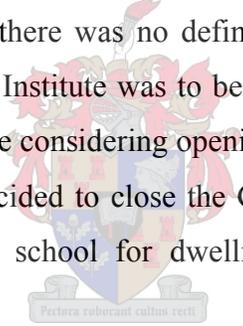
In the Annual Report of 1966 the William Murray Teaching College reported sixty-two second year and eighty-nine first year students. Although the National college system was expected to come into operation soon, it was intended that existing teacher training colleges would continue. At the same time in-service training for selected qualified teachers was to begin January 1968. Early in 1968 the GAC learned that the

¹⁸³ *Nuusbrief Uit Malawi*, December 1965.

Government had put in writing its intention to close the William Murray Institute. However, it could not give a date, nor say what would happen to the buildings.¹⁸⁴

The challenges of the education department continued. In the 1967 Annual Education Report for Primary Schools, there was reported a shortage of teachers and a number of dilapidated buildings. The Synod appropriated £100 for repairs. Self-help projects resulted in the building of several new classrooms. There was for the first time a meeting of all Education Secretaries of the Christian Council.

The October 1967 GAC meeting heard that the William Murray Institute was to be closed in a few years' time and replaced by a Government National Training College in Lilongwe. The Committee instructed the General Secretary to enquire of the Education Secretary General of the Christian Council regarding this decision. It also issued an order for investigations as to what was to happen to the buildings and the workers.¹⁸⁵ The following month the committee heard back from the Education Secretary General. At that point there was no definite decision from the government, only talk that the William Murray Institute was to be closed at the end of 1971. At the same time it was said that they were considering opening up a day secondary school in its place. The same month it was decided to close the Girls' Boarding School at Nkhoma and to use the buildings of that school for dwelling houses for the demonstration schoolteachers.¹⁸⁶



In its 1967 report, the William Murray Teacher Training College announced that the Demonstration School would be taken over by the Principal of the College effective January 1, 1968. He also was to take over all the duties of the District Education Officer. The school was to be called the "William Murray Demonstration School". Lack of transport and condition of the buildings were concerns cited by the report.

The Synod in 1972 decided that new schools should not be opened, and if any were, they would be the responsibility of the local communities. If, however, the number of school children increased, then there must be an increase in the number of teachers, and that this should be included in the budget.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁴ E. 1361, GAC Executive meeting, 22 January 1968.

¹⁸⁵ E.1299: GAC Executive Meeting 20 October 1967.

¹⁸⁶ E. 1320: Executive Meeting 12 November 1967.

¹⁸⁷ S.907, 12th Synod Meeting at Namoni Katengeza CLTC 25 July – 2 August 1972.

The William Murray Teachers Training College was shut down in 1979. A secondary school was established in its place in October of that year. Among the reasons cited was the need for more secondary schools and the establishment of National Teacher Training Colleges (see section 5.7, “Secondary Schools”).¹⁸⁸

Church and state were not the only participants in education in Malawi. Expatriate organisations have long played an important part. Although the Synod continued to rely upon outside assistance, it never gave up its right to set the terms for receiving it. In 1983 the Presbyterian Church of Ireland sent people to Malawi who expressed interest in teaching at Nkhoma Synod schools. It was intended by the Moderamen that should such teachers do so, they were to follow the same arrangements as those from the DRC. In early 1984 the Presbyterian Church of Ireland sent a letter to Nkhoma Synod requesting that it receive Irish teachers.¹⁸⁹

During the mid-1980s there was an opening for Nkhoma Synod ministers to teach in secondary schools. One stipulation was that any minister interested in doing so should first notify the Moderamen before personally contacting the Ministry of Education.¹⁹⁰ One specific minister who in 1985 was given permission to apply to the Ministry of Education was Rev. Malipenga.¹⁹¹

The Christian Council of Malawi got involved in teacher training, coming to the assistance of Nkhoma Synod. A 1990 situation illustrates this.

Permission was granted Rev. (CD) Njete could go for a teacher training course. The General Secretary should contact Mr. Msosa the Education Secretary of the Christian Council to lend assistance in finding the opportunity for training by which Rev. Njete could become qualified as a teacher. Should such an opportunity be found, however, Rev. Njete would have to care for his own family, seeing that the Synod had no funds available for such a purpose.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁸ Min. 18/79. Minutes of the 6th Meeting of the Board of Governors held at William Murray Teacher Training College, 10 August 1979. This is found among the minutes of other Nkhoma Synod governing bodies, and may be obtained at the library, Nkhoma Synod, Nkhoma, Malawi.

¹⁸⁹ M. 675, Meeting of the Moderamen, 5 October 1983.

¹⁹⁰ M. 1229 “Ministers Teaching in Secondary Schools.” Minutes of the meeting of the Moderamen, 12 July 1985.

¹⁹¹ M. “Rev. Malipenga to Teach at Secondary School.” Minutes of the meeting of the Moderamen, 4 September 1985.

¹⁹² M. 2814. Moderamen 18 April 1990.

In 1996 (two years into the new post-Kamuzu Banda era of government), DRC personnel in Malawi, with the Moderamen of Nkhoma Synod, held a meeting and made plans for several areas, including education and teacher training. The goals that they formulated were to be achieved by the year 2000.

These plans included:

- At least one project per year would be planned to train and equip teachers in their duties in spiritual instruction.
- At least two youth workers would be utilised for ‘professional and pastoral service in schools.’
- The headmistress of Malingunde Women’s Training School was to be a Malawian.¹⁹³

To what extent have these goals been achieved? There was progress towards the goals, although some of them were not achieved within the period or not achieved at all or only partially achieved.

Teachers were equipped through Foundation for Christ-Centred Education from SA. This course lasted about one month and was conducted at least two times at Chongoni.¹⁹⁴

The following is from a summary produced by Malawians regarding the effects on education following the end of the Kamuzu Banda regime.

When the Banda regime came to power in 1964, it set nationalisation of primary education as one of its priorities. This created a new demand for more teachers. In meeting this demand, there were created two levels of teacher training, T3 based on 2 years of secondary education and T2 based on “O” level education. Inspectors went out from the Ministry of Education and visited the classrooms. Almost all teachers in this era had two years’ training. Teacher morale was high and they served as role models for the community. Discipline was maintained in the classroom. Teaching was teacher oriented, but the teaching process was effective. On the down side, students were not encouraged to think analytically, and girls especially were not encouraged to continue with their education. When the new regime came to power in 1994, education was redirected. Free primary education was mandated, and primary enrolment went from 1.9 million to 3.2 million. The government introduced the Malawi Integrated In-service Teacher Education

¹⁹³ “The minutes of a meeting between the Moderamen, members of the DRC personnel and Rev. JH Koch on 11/4/96 at the house of Rev. R. van Velden. 5. Goals for partnership between Nkhoma Synod and the DRC personnel to be realized by 2000. Education”.

¹⁹⁴ E-mail from Rev. Dr. Ryk van Velden to the present researcher, 30 July 2004. This can be found in the notes of the researcher, African Bible College, Malawi.

Programme (MIITEP). Teachers are grouped into cohorts and each cohort goes to the teacher training colleges during holidays. They are supposed to be helped by headmasters, mentor teachers and Primary Education Advisors (PEA). Teacher Development Centres (TDC) are spread across the country to add field support. The Malawi School Support Systems Programme (MSSSP) funded by Britain's Department For International Development (DFID) implements this approach. Community school committees were established to install discipline. School uniforms were abolished. The government achieved its goal of making primary education more accessible. However the PEAs now seldom visit, and teacher performance has suffered. Absenteeism among both students and teachers has become a problem. Teachers are spending too little time in their teaching duties; many have to supplement their incomes with secondary jobs. Among the students, while 22.67% passed their "O" levels in 1997, on 13.67% did so in 1999. A February 2001 evaluation in Mangochi, Balaka and Blantyre revealed that most students had poor English and math skills (Kamangua & Kasambara 2001).

At the time of this dissertation, there are six teacher-training colleges currently operating in Malawi. The universities at Zomba and Mzuzu and African Bible College also produce teachers.

The possibility of a Teachers' Training College for Nkhoma Synod remains alive. In 1992 the Education Committee was asked to study the feasibility of such an undertaking.

The issue was referred to the Education Committee of the Synod for an appraisal of the possibilities. Their recommendations should be offered to the Moderamen for further action.¹⁹⁵

Nkhoma Synod wants to start a university, and the first degree that it will offer will be one in education. Even after that, it is felt that it will still need a Teachers' Training College to serve the needs of primary schools.¹⁹⁶

5.7 SECONDARY SCHOOLS

The 1967 Annual Report of the Robert Blake School sounded a note of alarm. It said that while finances remained good, there were disciplinary problems that made the expulsion of some older students necessary. In the Cambridge School Certificate examination, 12 out of 59 failed; in the Junior Certificate examination, 21 out of 56

¹⁹⁵ SC. 1113. Synodical Committee, 22-21 October, 1992.

¹⁹⁶ Interview with CCAP General Secretary YA Chienda on 22 October 2004.

failed. In the previous section we saw how as early as 1965, the South African personnel expressed concern over the “spiritual state of the (government-selected) teachers”. Therefore, the Robert Blake Report of 1967 suggests developing problems among both student body and faculty.

Along with deficiencies among faculty and the students, the physical condition of the schools could also present problems. Throughout this era, there were numerous changes in the configuration of schools. At one time there existed an “Nkhoma Night School”, but this was converted in the mid-1970s to the Nkhoma Malawi Correspondence College Centre.” In January 1978 Principal EH Kawaye informed the Nkhoma Synod Education Secretary that at that point the Nkhoma MCC Centre had 96 boys and girls in Forms I and II. He included a request for dorms, electricity, water pipes, and housing for a teacher.¹⁹⁷

Whatever the deficiencies in the students, the teachers, and the physical properties, there could still be posted positive results. For example, in October of 1979 the secondary school which replaced the William Murray Teachers College (see section 5.6, “Teacher Training”) started with 54 Form I students. In the second term 60 Form II students were added, making a total of 114. Most of the teaching staff at the old teachers’ college got reassigned to other schools and colleges. At the Robert Blake Secondary School there were 16 teachers, 74 out of 87 students passed their MCE, 89 out of 91 got their Junior Certificates, and 37 went on to the University of Malawi.

Fifteen years after the Kamuzu Banda government with its secular agenda for schools came to power; Nkhoma Synod was still a force in the field of education. At the end of 1979 Nkhoma Synod had 98 unassisted schools with 6,905 pupils and 123 teachers. There were 236 assisted schools with 37,859 pupils and 1,004 teachers. Youth work was continuing at Lilongwe Girls Secondary School, Likuni Girls Secondary School, Likuni Boys Secondary School, Mitundu Secondary School, and Bwaila Secondary School. The Synod was still searching for a youth minister to work in the congregations.

¹⁹⁷ From a letter dated 28 January 1978 from principal EH Kawaye to the Nkhoma Synod Education Secretary.

In 1980, there was received an offer for help with teachers from abroad. “Organisations in America and Holland” offered to send teachers for Nkhoma Synod secondary schools. The Moderamen responded positively to the offer, but stipulated that the sending bodies must supply their salaries and all of their needs.¹⁹⁸ Secondary school teachers from abroad carry the advantages of not needing to be paid, plus they come trained; there is no cost to the Synod. However, the negative aspect is that they are unfamiliar with the language and the customs. There has not been over the years a flood of foreign teachers.

In 1982, Nkhoma Synod submitted the following report to the CCAP General Synod:

The Synod (Nkhoma) has two Secondary Schools, one is Robert Blake School at Kongwe and another is William Murray Secondary School at Nkhoma. The latter was Teacher’s Training College which phased out at the end of the 1979 academic year. Both are progressing very well under the Headship of Mr. G.M. Retief at Kongwe and Mr. F.E. Phiri at William Murray.¹⁹⁹

Through the 1980’s, the Synod was challenged to maintain a viable education programme. In 1983 the Synod received a report from its Education Committee that listed a number of problems:

1. Laxness of the school committees in some schools.
2. Bad conduct of some of the teachers
3. Smallness of teachers’ houses.
4. Shortage of teachers.
5. Insufficient funds voted for the Education Department.
6. Smallness of classrooms and schools.²⁰⁰

In 1984 the Synod was still in control of Robert Blake Secondary School at Kongwe and William Murray Secondary School at Nkhoma, both being boys’ schools. The Synod anticipated that in 1985 they would open up the girls’ secondary school at Mlanda. The Synodical Mission Commission in Cape Town was requested to provide the principal as well as one or two teachers. The Synod stated that they would like South

¹⁹⁸ KS. 8092. Moderamen 16 June 1980.

¹⁹⁹ Minutes of the General Synod held at Chongoni, 24 to 27 August 1982, page 21.

²⁰⁰ S. 1801. Minutes of the 19th Meeting of Nkhoma Synod, 5th to 12th April 1983.

Africans to be in charge of the school. The Synod expressed a sense of loss when the Education Secretary for the Synod, Rev. JGM Maseko, was appointed as head of projects for the Christian Council of Malawi. Rev. (now Dr.) Winston R. Kawale was shortly to prove to be a worthy successor.

The symbiotic relationship between various agencies besides the Synod continues, even in the new dispensation of secularisation. For example, in a 1995 letter from Nkhoma Synod Education Secretary HY Hara to the Mission Secretary of the DRC in Cape Town, a number of personnel needs were listed, intended to be filled by South Africans:

Robert Blake Secondary School needed teachers for English, geography, and mathematics. Mvera Private Secondary School needed a married couple –the man to teach geography or math, and the woman to teach domestic science and be a matron. Mlanda Girls' Secondary School needed a lady teacher to teach domestic science. William Murray Secondary School required two teachers: one for biology and mathematics, and one for physical science and Bible knowledge.²⁰¹

As recently as 1999 Nkhoma Synod's South African personnel noted that there were 710 schools (including 76 secondary schools) "under its influence", with five being "national Secondary Schools" and the rest "Community Secondary Schools". *Nuusbrief Uit Malawi* (Newsletter From Malawi) noted, "the system does not always work so well." The Church by then had three private high schools: a girls' school at Mvera, a boys' school at Nkhoma (William Murray) and a day school at Msonkhamanja in Lilongwe. In addition, there was Robert Blake for boys and a girls' school at Mlanda. In 1998 William Murray became a private school (see 5.9, "Education and Fiscal Issues").²⁰²

Education and community self-help projects go hand-in-hand in Malawi. The congregation at Mziza CCAP recently were heavily involved in developing a secondary school. Along the way they asked the Commission for Witness for MK200,000 to complete the project.²⁰³

²⁰¹ Letter dated 26 April 1995.

²⁰² *Nuusbrief Uit Malawi*, August 1999.

²⁰³ From a letter from General Secretary Rev. Dr. WR Kawale to CM Pauw, Secretary for the Commission for Witness, 8 February 2002.

In 2002 the Synod considered the building of two new private secondary schools, one in Lilongwe, and the other at Kasungu.²⁰⁴ The same year, an “Nkhoma Synod University” was proposed.²⁰⁵

The decade of the nineties proved to be a pivotal one for Nkhoma Synod’s Education Department. The government relieved them of much of their former responsibility. However, neither Nkhoma Synod nor the CCAP has abdicated their commitment to education; it has simply begun to focus on a small number of church-owned private schools. This development parallels the experience of denominations elsewhere in the world.

5.8 THE CHALLENGE OF MULTI-FAITH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Nowhere is the Malawi government’s drive for secularisation seen more dramatically than in the area of religious education. While several generations of Malawians were confronted with the claims of Christianity through the vehicle of education, the contemporary scene is vastly altered.

At the beginning of the period under study, 1962 to 2004, religious education was still quite under the control of Nkhoma Synod. At the 1967 Annual Education Report for Primary Schools, religious education was emphasized, and a new syllabus for religious instruction was due to be out by year’s end.

The continuing shortage of teachers that affected all aspects of education left its mark on religious education. The 1972 Synod meeting expressed concern that there were no teachers of religious studies in the schools. It was therefore determined that this matter would be discussed further at the next Synod meeting.²⁰⁶

In 1985 ministers were permitted to teach religious education in secondary schools operated by the Synod. The Moderamen had the authority to select such ministers, and they were to serve as co-ministers at the congregations where the schools were located.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁴ M. 5411, Meeting of the Moderamen, 8 May 2002.

²⁰⁵ M. 5482, Meeting of the Moderamen, 6 August 2002.

²⁰⁶ S. 995, Same meeting, 25 July – 2 August 1972.

²⁰⁷ S. 1977. Minutes of the meeting of Synod held at Namoni Katengeza Church Lay Training Centre from the 10th to the 16th of April 1985.

Ten years after independence, the Synod was still very much involved in religious instruction in public schools. In 1974 The Synod's Education Secretary, Mr. DK Store complained to the Education Secretary General of the Christian Council about the Roman Catholic generated religious education syllabus ("many lessons do not give the Bible Story from the Bible").²⁰⁸

Twenty years after independence, the Synod saw Government as its ally in the field of religious education. At its 1983 meeting, the Synod declared that the Ministry of Education was responsible for allowing Bible knowledge to be taught in public schools. Synod further asked pastors to look after the spiritual needs of their school-age children, and if they had time, to talk to headmasters about teaching the Bible in these public schools.²⁰⁹

Entering decade of the nineties, a changing picture regarding religious education began to emerge. In 1990 the General Synod's Educational Committee presented a report that featured nine concerns:

1. The General Synod "pleads" with the Ministry of Education and culture to stop introducing the new religious Education syllabus in Primary Schools.
2. It sought permission from the Government to develop a Christian Education curriculum in schools.
3. That General synod consider opening a teacher's training college with an emphasis upon teaching Christian education.
4. That Primary Schools be visited by chaplains, youth workers, and pastors.
5. That General Synod teach teachers and ministers on "the proprietorship of church schools."
6. That there be a discreet teaching about AIDS in the schools, bearing traditional culture in mind.
7. The constituent Synods should "cater" for development projects and for teachers in their education budgets.
8. That General Synod should encourage parachurch organisations such as SCOM and Scripture Union to be involved in the schools.

²⁰⁸ KS 5477 Synodical Committee 3 – 5 April 1974, "Syllabus for Bible Knowledge in Primary Schools"

²⁰⁹ S. 1729, Minutes of the 19th Synod Meeting at Namoni Katengeza CLTC, 5 – 12 April 1983.

9. That General Synod should promote Christian values in secondary schools.²¹⁰

The coming of the UDF government in 1994 forever changed the character of Religious Education in Malawi's public schools. Before that year, RE was a course in Bible knowledge, and the Bible was used as a textbook. Since that time, says Nkhoma Synod's Rev. Michael Khombe, it has "been diluted" into a course on "simple knowledge' of various faiths.²¹¹

The "Teachers' Guide for Standard 5" published in 1996 by the Malawi institute of Education is very revealing. Among its contributors are UNICEF and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). It gives equal treatment to Malawian Traditional Religion, Christianity, and Islam. Essential elements of Christian training such as the Resurrection have been left out all together. On page 152 (the end of the curriculum), in describing Peter's speech in Acts 2, it says, "But God raised this Jesus." In listing religious holidays, Christmas is mentioned, but not Easter. Jesus is a prophet and a teacher, but so is Muhammad. At no point is Jesus declared to be the "Son of God". The curriculum includes eight "Topics":

1. Names of God
2. Happiness
3. A happy Christmas and *Eid-li-fitri*
4. Bravery and courage
5. Fire
6. Teachers and teaching
7. Writings of the Bible and the Hadith
8. Worshipping together

The Teacher is furnished with suggested activities with each Topic. Under the first, students are to recite names of Allah using rosaries, and to compose a prayer thanking Allah for making his names known. Under Topic six they are instructed to recite "There is no God but Allah (and) Muhammad is Allah's Messenger." The "Five Pillars" of Islam are briefly but thoroughly explained. Of course, Muslim pupils must engage in discussion about the contents of the Bible. Also included are the traditional

²¹⁰ 46/90 Minutes of General Synod Meeting held at (H.H.I.) Blantyre 26 August – 3 September 1990.

²¹¹ Interview between present researcher and Rev. Michael Khombe, 28 June 2004.

Malawian myths, such as the creation myth. Overall, the aim seems to be the teaching of ethics and morality. The story of Jesus on the cross is to be followed by a discussion of school bullying (Chingota 1996: 1-157).

Malawi was declared a “Secular State” by Parliament in 2001, says Nkhoma Synod’s Rev. M. Khombe, chairman of the Synod’s Missions Committee. This, he says, has not affected missions and evangelism.²¹² It has nevertheless, affected religious education.

The agricultural college at Bunda is part of the University of Malawi system. In 2003 a concerned Moderamen Committee learned of the creation of a “CCAP Students’ Organization” there. They directed that Mr. Veitch and Rev. Kachipapa go to Bunda and investigate. Nkhoma Synod seldom welcomes those things, which they themselves did not inaugurate, perhaps with some justification.²¹³ In this case, Bunda students were baptising each other, and in the name of Jesus only, rather than the familiar “Father, Son, and Holy Ghost”.²¹⁴

Groups like SCOM and the Roman Catholics, says Rev. M. Khombe, can work with schools after school hours, but headmasters will not allow teachers to share faith. Consequently, the CCAP has established in Lilongwe a secondary school. The Muslims let it be known that they were planning to build a mosque at Nkhoma, so the public school there was converted into a private one. Other denominations are also building private schools, in response to the government’s determined policy of secularisation.²¹⁵

In October-November 2000, the Standing Committee of the General Synod met to plan a new constitution to replace the one that had been in effect since 1956. It has also outlined approaches to various problems facing the CCAP and the nation. This was called a Ten-Year Strategic Plan. From that CCAP Ten-Year Strategic Plan of 2000-2010 regarding education:

Some of the Synods own schools that are “CCAP” schools in name only, as the teachers are paid and trained by the government and teach a national curriculum. CCAP

²¹² Interview between present researcher and Rev. Michael Khombe 28 June 2004.

²¹³ M. 5740, Meeting of the Moderamen, 14 May 2003.

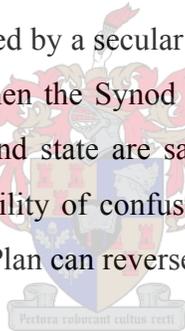
²¹⁴ Interview between present researcher and Rev. Michael Khombe, Chairman of the mission committee, and Rev. JL Nkhoma, Chairman of the Evangelism Committee, 28 June 2004.

²¹⁵ Interview between present researcher and Rev. Michael Khombe 28 June 2004.

influence is limited. In some synods school chaplaincy work continues, and there is a “CCAP Student Organization”. However, the schools’ physical condition is deplored and the 2000 Strategic Plan questions the morale and competency of the teachers. Furthermore, the government’s stated intention of handing some schools back to the churches has created an “ownership uncertainty” which has led to further deterioration of schools. The report goes on to say that the phasing out of boarding schools has caused some girls to turn to prostitution to pay for housing, and that cheating on exams is a problem.

The Strategic Plan calls for a reclamation of the schools on the part of the CCAP, and for their massive refurbishing. The resources for achieving this are to come from “overseas donors”. The “ownership uncertainty” is an issue that needs to be addressed. Finally, the Strategic Plan calls for chaplain to give emphasis to primary as well as secondary and tertiary education.²¹⁶

Religious Education developed by a secular government is very different from the Religious Education that existed when the Synod had more direct control in the public schools. In a case where church and state are saying different things in the realm of spiritual matters, there is the possibility of confusion among the students. Perhaps the chaplains called for in the Strategic Plan can reverse some of the effects of this trend.



5.9 EDUCATION AND FISCAL ISSUES

During the 1960’s, throughout the trend towards the secularisation of schools, money was always a key factor. Nkhoma Synod’s South African personnel described this situation in 1966.

During the past number of years the position of the schools in Nkhoma Synod changed drastically. About 10 years ago we still had more than 800 unassisted schools, compared to the just more than 100 government schools. By the end of 1965, however, the year closed down with us having only 227 unassisted schools, while the government assisted schools counted 168. That means the number of unassisted schools diminished with about 400%, and the government schools increased with 75% . . . different reasons for this changed situation. The government

²¹⁶ From the 2000 General Synod Standing Committee Strategic Plan, pages 31- 33.

opened a good number of assisted schools in areas which previously could be served only by unassisted schools.

The main reason, however, is finances. Ten years ago the Mission Board budgeted R 24 000 for unassisted schools. This year the GAC could only budget R 2000. From the side of the congregations not much can be expected in this regard, because only 5 of 55 congregations could pay the required Synodical contributions for the Central Fund.²¹⁷

The GAC noted in 1967 that a mission teacher still had not been provided for the Mvera Correspondence College Centre. They asked the DRC in Cape Town to correct this.²¹⁸ Mvera is a very isolated location, perhaps an hour's drive from Lilongwe; finding a person that was both qualified and willing would be no small task.

Sufficient resources have seldom matched the priority that Nkhoma Synod has given to education. The loss of a single large donor can wreak havoc with Synod's educational goals. In 1983 the Moderamen learned that the Christian Service Committee was to cut its financial aid to Nkhoma Synod Schools. However, at the same time they learned that the DRC in South Africa had donated MK 4,997.50 to help in repairing the Dzenza School.²¹⁹

That was not the only source of assistance. Aid was to come from various corners.

The Committee was glad to hear that some of our schools assisted by World Vision International in the Mchinji area, have now been selected to become Government Assisted Schools. The committee thanks World Vision for such work.²²⁰

Nkhoma Synod continued the tradition of being heavily involved in education. However, this dimension of the life and work of the Synod continued to be plagued by financial woes. Similar to the 1966 *Nuusbrief Uit Malawi* report, in 1990 Winston R. Kawale, then Education Secretary for Nkhoma Synod, gave the following assessment.

The main problem facing Nkhoma synod in running the schools has been on finances. Although the mission council gave a grant for schoolwork, the money offered was not enough. There was need to obtain funds elsewhere. In 1890 the American Supporters Band was founded. Dr. A.C. Murray sent fifty names of schools to be assisted by the Band.

²¹⁷ *Nuusbrief Uit Malawi*, June 1966.

²¹⁸ G. 948: GAC Executive Meeting 28 April – 4 May 1967.

²¹⁹ M. 538 and M. 545, the Moderamen Meeting of 2 May 1983.

²²⁰ M. 869. Moderamen, 26 June 1984.

These schools received annual contribution of £5.00 each. Rev. Liebenburg promoted the assistance by his visits to the United States of America. When he died, the assistance ceased.

When the government was established in 1891, the mission councils in Malawi formed Education Board in 1904. In 1905 the Board presented an application to the government for Grant-in aid, Fortunately, the Government approved a Grant-in-aid of £1,000 to be distributed to all mission councils evenly. Nkhoma Synod received £200. Following the Government's establishment of the Department of Education, Nkhoma Synod received £700 as a Grant-in aid for her School. This financial assistance continued especially after the opening of Secondary Schools and when the Government was paying all the teachers. When the Government transferred the teachers from Unified Teaching Service to Civil Service in 1977, the churches were asked to remain as proprietors of the schools they established. The churches had to see to it that the religious character of their schools was maintained through their participation in the appointment of Headmasters and representation on the school committees. The schools where the Government assisted by paying teachers' salaries and providing school material were to be known as "Assisted Schools". At the same time, the churches as Agencies were permitted to open new schools but they were to be responsible for everything including teacher's salaries. Such schools were to be known as "Unassisted Schools". By 1990 Nkhoma Synod had 400 assisted Schools and 110 Unassisted Schools.

Although the Synod gives a grant to the Unassisted Schools only, the Synod has been able to secure some financial assistance for the Assistance schools from some organizations such as the Christian Service Committee of Malawi and the World Vision International. These organizations have provided financial support and materials to both Assisted and Unassisted Schools. Some generous people from South Africa have also donated money towards the wages of the teachers in Unassisted Schools (Kawale 1990:13).

In 1991 Synod directed that congregations communicate with the "(Zomba Theological) College" that they wanted their pastors to be taught how to teach. Then, letters from the congregations should be sent to the government informing them of the pastors' teaching qualifications.²²¹

And so in an era of official government policy to secularise education, the Synod continues to play a role. In 2004 Nkhoma Synod operates three "private primary schools": at Mponela, Lilongwe, and at Dedza. It operates several private secondary

²²¹ S. 2467, Minutes of the 23rd Synod meeting held at Namoni Katengeza, 9 – 16 April 1991.

schools: William Murray for boys, Mvera for girls, and in Lilongwe, Msonkhamanja, which is co-educational. William Murray and Mlanda are boarding schools. In addition, it operates two secondary “government-granted (not private)” schools: Robert Blake for boys, and Mlanda for girls. There is also Mziza Secondary School. The Synod wants to establish more. It also wants to establish an Nkhoma University, and is currently looking for a chancellor. They feel they can make use of currently existing facilities; NIFCOTT could become the school of theology, and the Nkhoma nursing school could also be used (see 5.7, “Secondary Schools”).²²²

5.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The field of education has much to do with answering secondary question number six, “How has the Nkhoma Synod developed theologically and spiritually?” The spiritual state of its school-age children has an enormous impact upon the overall spirituality of the Synod.

Already in 1966 it was reported that whereas the (South African) Mission Board was decreasing its contributions to educations within Nkhoma Synod’s jurisdiction, as there were by then fewer church schools, and more government schools. Another issue going back at least to the sixties has been a shortage of teachers. The transition of the William Blake Teachers’ College to a secondary school was a major development. The issue of illiterate catechumens had to be dealt with. An individual can only memorize so much, and in any case memorizing is very different from learning to think analytically. The saga of Mlanda Girls’ Secondary School is an excellent illustration of the difficulties encountered in the effort to advance education in Malawi. Shortages of funding and materials, and theft are problems that defy easy solution. The Synod’s calling upon the (government) Ministry of Education to assume its responsibility in teaching religion in public schools in 1983 stands in stark contrast to the multi-faith religious education curriculum of today. The treatment of Christianity as one entrée on a menu of religions is no doubt of deep concern to the leaders and the parents of Nkhoma Synod.

²²² Interview between present researcher and General Secretary Rev. Dr. Winston R. Kawale, 29 January 2004.

The partnership between Nkhoma Synod's Relief and Development Department and various NGOs in adult literacy programmes is an important development (see section 7.5). Just as the Government of Malawi has caused the Synod's role in public education to diminish, the role in literacy programmes is a reasonable alternative.

Universal free public education has benefited a number of societies. An educated population is more competitive economically and is better equipped to support democratic political institutions. It tends to be a great leveller of society, as children of rich and poor sit in the same classroom and are taught by the same teacher. With free public education, a child need not be denied education because the parents are poor. Church schools cannot guarantee equal access by all. However, secular, public schools are poor transmitters of societal values, and the Western slide into relativism and excessive individualism is a testimony to this effect.

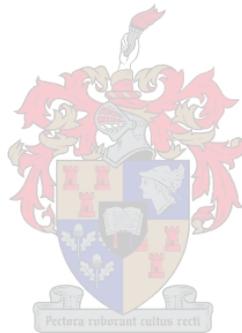
Moreover, in Malawi, where the government has very little tax revenue and is largely dependent upon expatriate donors just as many churches and other institutions are, funding is a continuing problem. The secular government perennially struggles to pay teachers and other members of the civil service. Low pay and impact of HIV/AIDS (see section 7.4) combine to perpetuate a shortage of teachers in public schools. The present researcher has personally witnessed the dilapidated condition of many public schools.

While its role in education has diminished because of the Government takeover of that function, Nkhoma Synod remains committed to the principle of education. This is a time-honoured Presbyterian tradition. There is the Reformed tradition that "All truth is God's truth. Scotland, the Netherlands, and the United States, heavily influenced by Reformed faith, have all experienced a rise in affluence because of this principle.

Private church schools are being developed to counter the secularising tendencies of the Malawian public school system. Today it is only here that the levelling influences of a secular government cannot intrude. Funding for the Synod's private schools will perhaps be an issue to which it must give deep attention in the future.

The challenge to Nkhoma Synod now is to create effective youth ministries running parallel to the public education. Chapter 8, which deals with evangelism, highlights the importance that the Synod gives to this field.

Having looked at the general state of education in the Central Region of Malawi, which is Nkhoma Synod's jurisdiction, the more specific areas of ministerial and church lay leader training will now be examined.



Chapter Six

Ministerial and Lay Leadership Training

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Primary and secondary education gives a basic preparation for life. Having examined the broader educational system designed for the general population; this chapter will now focus on the more specific field of theological education. One major reason why Presbyterianism has had such an impact worldwide is because of a high educational standard for its clergy. Today the ministers of Nkhoma Synod are carrying that tradition forward in their country.

It will be seen in this chapter that the field of training of pastors, elders, and deacons has been a continuing, major focus of Nkhoma Synod. The challenges of funding and changing needs makes this a key part of the development of Nkhoma Synod and its self-understanding of being a church.

6.2 EDUCATION FOR PASTORS

Theological education for Nkhoma Synod began as early as 1898, when a school for teacher-evangelists began at Mvera and in 1913 a separate school for evangelists was opened at the same place. In 1926 the theological training school was opened for the first time. In 1947 a new building, Nyamuka-Wala, was opened there. In 1950 the school received its first full-time tutor, Rev. JW Minaar. In 1963 there was begun a Joint Theological Seminary, used by all of the CCAP, at Nkhoma. The principal was Rev. CJF Watt (Pauw 1980: 308-311).

At the Nkhoma Theological School, the 1966 tally of students was as follows:²²³

- Third year students: 12 (7 from Nkhoma Synod).
- There were no second year students, due to lack of housing.
- There were 10 first year students.

²²³ Minutes of a Meeting of the General Missions Committee, held in the Dutch Reformed Church Centre, Cape Town, 8-10 August 1967. "101. Theological School, Nkhoma."

The Synod believed in 1970 that the Theological College should be located in Lilongwe rather than in Zomba, saying that travel expenses would be lower, and it was not certain that the University would be placed in Zomba. As it turned out, both the University of Malawi and the Theological College ended up in Zomba.²²⁴ Because the University was located in Zomba, so too was the Theological College.

In 1971 Nkhoma Synod took the following strongly formulated decision in order to maintain the church's doctrine in the training of its ministers:

- The Synod asked its representatives on the Board to see to it that nothing would be taught which was in conflict with the church's doctrine. An eye would be kept on the lectures and notes.
- The minutes of the Board was to be sent to all the ministers.
- The College would have to be very explicit about the curriculum and prescribed books.
- It would be expected from the lecturers to declare in writing that they would not teach anything, which is contrary to the constitution of the school.²²⁵

At the April 1973 meeting of the JFC, it was informed of the General Synod's approval of the moving of the Theological College to Zomba. The cost of this move was to be covered by funds raised by a special Centenary Fund Committee, by contributions from the four synods "in proportion to their communicant Christian membership", and from "a special grant from the DRC as previously requested."²²⁶ The DRC later that year granted R 12,000 for that purpose. At the April 1977 meeting of the Joint Financial Committee it was stated that,

In view of the decision of the Synod, the D.R.C. is requested to again consider our former request for aid in this project. The Joint Theological Board has not yet gone into the details as to the raising of the required funds and the exact amount to be raised by each Synod. In view of the uncertainty about funds, and the fact that the fund-raising campaign has not yet commenced, the Joint Theological Board is urgently advised that Nkhoma Synod cannot commit itself to the move to Zomba this year.²²⁷

²²⁴ S.630. Minutes of the Synod Meeting 28 August - 4 September 1970.

²²⁵ Minutes of a meeting of the Synodical Mission Sub Committee (SMSC) held on 10 – 12 August 1971. The background of this declaration was a dispute over the presence of Rev. B. Gannaway, lecturer. Nkhoma Synod wanted him removed, feeling his teaching contradicted accepted doctrine.

²²⁶ J.65: JFC 9 – 10 April 1973, p. 2.

²²⁷ J. 209 JFC 28 – 29 April 1977 "Moving Theological College to Zomba".

In a letter dated 21 July 1974, the General Secretary of Blantyre Synod informed Nkhoma and Salisbury synods of Blantyre's intention to withdraw from the Joint Theological College and start one of their own in Blantyre. They furthermore invited Livingstonia to join them in Blantyre, and it was reported that Livingstonia had accepted the invitation. Blantyre had already appointed a principal for their breakaway college, Rev. B Gannaway.²²⁸

At the 1977 General Synod meeting Nkhoma Synod was able to report the following,

Since the last General Synod a number of ministers and theological students have been sent to the University of the North in South Africa, the first for a B.A. in theology, but this course has now become a four years B. Theol. Course. This is done through a Training fund provided by the Dutch Reformed Church. It is hoped to have 3 or 4 students there at a time. The General Secretary Y.A. Chienda is doing a special course in church Growth/Church Administration at the Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, U.S.A. and is expected to return by July 1978.²²⁹

In May 1978 the Theological College in Zomba opened its doors; it was to be known as CCAP Theological College. The hope at that point was that Anglican students would also attend. Although there were no teachers for students' wives, College tutors were teaching them some courses. The Malawian tutors were paid from the Appeal Fund. A student travel expense, and "their final removal from the College", was to be paid by their respective Synods.²³⁰

The Nkhoma Synod unanimously approved of the re-uniting of the Theological School at Zomba at its meeting in April, but was doubtful about the decision that it should start this year already, as no start was made yet concerning fund-raising. (Of the R600 000 which is needed, only R36 000 is already available). The other Synods, however, strongly felt that because of the circumstances (the unhappy event of the breaking up of the Joint Theological School), it is important to prove to the world (and especially to the intended donors) that the re-uniting at Zomba is a matter of importance to us. If there is proof of our willingness to go ahead purposefully, the funds will become available more readily- especially from abroad.

²²⁸ KS 5585 Moderamen, 1 August 1974.

²²⁹ Minutes of the General Synod held at Chongoni 16th to 17th August 1977. Appendix II "Life and Work Report of Nkhoma Synod" pages 13 –14.

²³⁰ KS 7164. Moderamen, 4 October 1977.

Donations will now be requested from over the whole world . . . and also from businesses in Malawi. It is a major task which has to be done in a short time. If phase 1 will be tackled this year (a classroom for the freshmen), then next year it will have to be phase 2, and the year thereafter a next phase, so that in four years' time there will be a complete Theological School with students in all four study years.²³¹

During 1979, 12 students completed their theological training at Nkhoma: nine went to congregations in Malawi, two to Rhodesia, and one went to continue studies with UNISA. The College at Nkhoma continued with 11 students, expected to complete their course in July 1981, and with 3 tutors. At Zomba College they had 14 students, 5 third years and 8 first years, with Reverends Retief and Odendaal serving as tutors.²³²

In 1980 the DRC informed Nkhoma Synod that due to lack of funds, the Synod would not be permitted to send new students to the University of the North the following year (1981). It was decided to discuss the matter with delegates from the DRC coming to a meeting of the JFC²³³

Guidelines were issued in 1980 concerning application for grants. All applications were to go through the Synod Office. Overseas churches offering grants included:

- The Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa
- The Presbyterian Church in Ireland
- The United Presbyterian Church in the USA
- The Church of Scotland

It was pointed out that these churches did not accept requests from individuals.²³⁴

In 1981 finding donors for the Theological School at Zomba and for individual students became a concern. At a meeting of a special committee including General Secretary I.M. Kainja, set up for this purpose, it was decided to look up the names of previous donors, then give their names to the General Secretary so that he could write them letters of appeal. If and when a donor agreed to give to this cause, his letter of intent was to be given to the General Secretary so that he could have them printed by the

²³¹ *Nuusbrief Uit Malawi*, October, 1977

²³² Minutes of the 6th Meeting of the Board of Governors held at William Murray Teacher Training College, 10 August 1979.

²³³ KS 7865, Moderamen, March 10, 1980.

²³⁴ KS 8240. Synodical Committee, 28-30 Oct. 1980

Synod's Press. At the same time the appeal for money was to be published in *Kuunika*.²³⁵

In 1982 the CCAP General Synod received a report on the Zomba Theological College. It stated that lecturers from Chancellor College, University of Malawi, were assisting in teaching. The University was now giving recognition of Zomba Theological College's Diploma. It noted that the Anglicans were now participating in the College, and that "Tutors in the College and Ministers in the Parishes should guard against copying of any strange teaching and practice". The report also called upon student wives to cease employment in order to be available to attend the wives' school.²³⁶

In 1983 the Nineteenth Meeting of the Synod took up the issue of allowances for students at the theological college in Zomba. It directed that such students receive the same sort of allowance as Nkhoma Synod students studying outside of the country. At the same time Synod agreed that a Bible college should be opened at Nkhoma, and that some of its students would be selected to go to the Zomba Theological College. A committee was appointed to study the possibilities of building the necessary new facilities.²³⁷

The Igreja Reformada em Mozambique in 1983 asked for permission to send students who met the requirements and who had the funds to the Zomba Theological College through Nkhoma Synod. The Moderamen granted this request.²³⁸ Today, there is the Hefsiba Bible College, located in Vila Ulongwe, Mozambique. It was in January 1993 that Rev. Pieter Botha received the vision to build a Bible School in Mozambique. On 16 June 1995 Hefsiba Theological School was officially opened. On 25 November 1997 the first group of five students graduated. (Labuschagne 2002: 122-123).

Early in 1984 the Moderamen regretfully noted the temporary closing of the Zomba Theological College due to lack of funds. They voted to pass the information on

²³⁵ Minutes of the Committee Instructed To find donors To Sponsor The Theological School At Zomba (KS. 8236 and KS. 8340) held At The Home Of The Home Craft Centre In Lilongwe On 23 April 1981.

²³⁶ Minutes of the General Synod held at Chongoni, 24 to 27 August 1982, pages 6 and 7. The Pastor of Mchenkhula CCAP, Rev. Brian Kamwendo, in an interview on 9 October 2004, reported that lack of education among pastors' wives is a problem; few have an MSCE (Malawi School Certificate of Education – proof of having completed secondary education).

²³⁷ S. 1778 and s. 1780, the Nineteenth Meeting of the Synod at Namoni Katengeza CLTC, 5 – 12 April 1983.

²³⁸ M. 603, Meeting of the Moderamen, 4 July 1983.

to the Training Committee.²³⁹ Shortly afterwards, the Moderamen received from the DRC a list of recommended theological institutions to which the Synod might send its students for further studies.²⁴⁰

- London School of Theology, London
- Westminster Theological Seminary, Pennsylvania, USA
- Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Massachusetts, USA
- Fuller Theological Seminary, California, USA
- Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Illinois, USA
- Concordia Theological Seminary, Missouri, USA
- Calvin Theological Seminary, Michigan, USA
- Union Theological Seminary, Virginia, USA

The Bible School started at Nkhoma on 21 January 1985 with Rev. WE Chikakuda as principal. Eight students from Nkhoma, and one from the Igreja Reformada em Mozambique (Mphatso Synod) subscribed. The contents of the course included Old and New Testament, the doctrine and regulations of Nkhoma Synod, Stewardship, Evangelism, Youth Work, Ethics, Bookkeeping, English, Music, and elementary Greek and Hebrew. The principal, who had graduated from the University of the North, made use of the Malawian and European personnel at Nkhoma as part time lecturers. The students came from all walks of life.

One suggestion early in this period came from the JFC. It stated that it was too expensive to maintain both the Zomba Theological College and one at Nkhoma, suggesting that there should only be funds allocated to Nkhoma, but not to Zomba.²⁴¹

The Synodical Committee in 1986 decided to upgrade the Bible School at Nkhoma to be a full and equal theological school, again named the “Theological School of Nkhoma”. Thus there were then no students or lecturers at Zomba. There had been a dispute between Nkhoma Synod and the administration of the Zomba College over the refusal to accept Kamwana as lecturer.²⁴² Nkhoma synod was having trouble meeting its

²³⁹ M. 747, Meeting of the Moderamen, 6 February 1984.

²⁴⁰ M. 788, Meeting of the Moderamen, 7 March 1984.

²⁴¹ J.643. Minutes of the Meeting of the JFC, 22 and 23 April 1986.

²⁴² *Nuusbrief Uit Malawi*, September 1985

financial obligations to the joint venture, and they continued to feel uneasy about joining with the Anglicans. The personnel at the Nkhoma College were Rev. WE Chikakuda (principal), Rev. HJ van Deventer, and Dr. HAJ Kruger. The moderator, Rev. LJ Kamtambe, was called as lecturer in place of Rev. JJ Kamwana who was on study leave at the University of Stellenbosch. The Synod at that time still owed Zomba more than MK 13,000. This was not a permanent arrangement; in 1988 the Theological College in Nkhoma closed, and Nkhoma students were once again sent to Zomba.²⁴³

In 1986 an American couple, Rev. Dr. and Mrs. John W. Chinchin, approached The Synod. They planned to build an “African Bible College” in Malawi and wanted to discuss with the Synod the possibility of the Synod sending students there for theological training. The proposed institution would confer bachelor degrees in Biblical studies. The Moderamen directed that Rev. Kantambe and Rev. HA Kamnkhwani write a report on this college and to present it to the 1987 Synod Meeting.²⁴⁴ The report that eventually came from this was sufficiently positive so that *abusa* (ministers) were sent to African Bible College for training.

In 1987 Synod directed that all applicants for the theological college must undergo a medical exam. Synod’s explanation: “to see if they have some complications that might hinder their performance”.²⁴⁵ It is against the law to require AIDS testing, but an institution can require testing for other things, such as TB.

African Bible College opened for classes in October 1991. Several Nkhoma pastors were among the student body. They did not last long, stating the following reasons:

- The courses are not worthy to take for four years.
- The standard of the subjects is low.
- Their teaching is doubtful.
- They are not sure if other colleges recognize the college.²⁴⁶

²⁴³ *Nuusbrief Uit Malawi*, March 1990.

²⁴⁴ M. 1676, Meeting of the Moderamen, December 1986.

²⁴⁵ S. 2211, Minutes of the 21st Synod Meeting at Namoni Katengeza, 7 – 15 April 1987.

²⁴⁶ M. 3418, Meeting of the Moderamen, 25 March 1993.

Not only did these pastors leave, but they also told the Moderamen that they refused to go back. They reiterated that they felt the quality of the teaching was low and the degree was not recognized.²⁴⁷

In 1989 Synod decided to make provisions for its ministers to receive degrees via “correspondence courses”. It stipulated that such ministers should inform Synod, that they be given study leave in order to prepare for exams, and that “all arrangements should be done with assistance from his congregation.”²⁴⁸

In 1990 the Synod’s arrears in payments to the Zomba Theological School totalled MK 28,800. The Synod requested of the SMC that it give them this amount as an advance from the Grant of the next year, so that the debts could be paid before the meeting of the General Synod. It would enable the Nkhoma Synod to take part in those meetings in full standing, and also to be able to take part in discussions concerning problems encountered by the Theological School. The decision of Cape Town at that time was to approve the advance of MK 28,800, but the Synod’s continued involvement with the Theological School was to be discussed with the Synod.

Synod in 1991 made the requirement that all applicants from Nkhoma Synod to the Theological College must be between the ages of 25 and 40. It further directed that the Theological Committee enforce this rule.²⁴⁹

In 1990 Dr. Kawale, now the General Secretary, wrote a brief summary of CCAP theological education in up to that point.

There was a close relationship between school and evangelism. The training of teachers, evangelists and pastors was seen as an on going process in which the church sought to provide her needs . . .

Following the establishment of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) formed by the Synods of Blantyre, Livingstonia, and Nkhoma, a Joint Theological College opened at Nkhoma in 1962. Students from the three Synods were being trained together. Unfortunately the College closed in 1973 and each Synod trained the ministers separately.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁷ M. 3428, Meeting of the Moderamen, 30 March 1993.

²⁴⁸ S. 2303, Minutes of the 22nd Synod Meeting at Namoni Katengeza, 11 – 18 April 1989.

²⁴⁹ S. 2593, Minutes of the 23 Synod Meeting Held at Namoni Katengeza, 9 – 16 April 1991.

²⁵⁰ Kawale, WR. 1990. “Nkhoma Synod Hundred Years of Education”, page 8. Printed by the Nkhoma Synod Press.

The General Synod's Moderator, JGM Maseko, at 1987 General Synod meeting expressed concern about the direction of theological training.

One thing we should remember is that it was the wish of the General Synod to have one Theological College which will train its ministers. The main purpose of this idea was to try to bring together all the CCAP Ministers. Our fathers thought that if all the ministers were trained at one College the differences and divisions would be minimized. The question is, has this College achieved anything of this kind? Yes very little I wonder if it has achieved enough. Why are the gaps between the Synods becoming wider than before? I think you will agree with me when I say – the disease (sic) of the church is that it can start a thing to day (sic), but tomorrow it leaves it in suspense without achieving its objectives and goals. What has happened with that college? Oneness is shaky. It is not consolidated as we thought. In order (sic) to have our objectives achieved we have to come back to square one where by each Synod had its own College. We know that there is a great demand of ministers in our respective Synods, and that the only way to overcome this problem is to establish our small colleges which will train more ministers than Zomba college. That is fine, but is this not going to widen the gaps and divisions once again, our crush (sic) programme at Zomba Theological College whereby all trainees will learn together? Can we not set aside a period of two years to train those elderly students at Zomba Theological College by making use of our tutors? We have always experienced shortfall on the budget of Zomba Theological Colleges (sic), and we are opening small colleges, how come? We have been unable to recruit tutors for Zomba College, and yet the best of our ministers are teaching in these small colleges, how come?²⁵¹

However the Nkhoma Theological College continued with students being sent both to this College and to Zomba. In 1988 Nkhoma Theological College closed and the students joined the Zomba Theological College allowing the 1990 General Synod to report that a unified training of theology students had been achieved.

All ministers are now being trained at Zomba Theological College. The (General) Synod also sends ladies involved in women's guild work to Zomba for theological studies.²⁵²

By 1990 Nkhoma Synod had 93 ordained ministers. Some of them had gone to the Universities in South Africa, Kenya, Britain, and the USA for graduate and postgraduate studies (Kawale 1990: 8).

²⁵¹ General Synod, Meeting from 5-10 August 1987 at Ekwendeni CCAP At the same time, General Synod noted that this was the tenth anniversary of the Zomba Theological College and that year it graduated 10 - 5 Anglicans and 5 CCAP students.

²⁵² Minutes of General Synod meeting held at (H.H.I) Blantyre 26 August - 3 September 1990.

In its 1993 meeting the Synod hammered out details for the new Nkhoma Institute For Continued Theological Training (NIFCOTT). The purpose of the school would be to give its ministers post-Zomba as well as continuing training. Rev. Dr. Hennie van Deventer would be the principal^{253, 254}.

It was felt that Nkhoma students were not getting enough instruction about Nkhoma Synod polity at Zomba, since it served several synods or denominations.²⁵⁵ Therefore, in 1994 another change was made regarding the training of new Nkhoma Synod ministers. Another year of training at Nkhoma was added, following completion of Zomba Theological College. This requirement applies now to graduates of African Bible College as well.

The College was blessed with the first graduation Ceremony held on the 23-6-94 evening after legitimation of the final year students by the Training committee that afternoon.

The College was opened in August, 1993 with two students – Mr. I.J. Ng'onamo and Mr. C.C.S. Chenjerani Banda. While the staff comprised of Rev. Dr. H.J. Van Deventer as Principal and full time Tutor with the company of Rev. Dr. H.Y. Hara, M.Z. Khombe, W.D.M. Gande, K.J. Mgawi and Rev. J.H. Chimutu as part time tutors. Rev. A.J.M. Mnthambala joined in January 1994 as full time lecturer and assistant to the Principal.

The Institution is known by the name “Nkhoma Institute For Continued Theological Training” in short N.I.F.C.O.T.T. It is intended to cater for Nkhoma Synod graduates from Zomba Theological College with Practical Emphasis; for one academic year.²⁵⁶

An example of the CCAP's effort to provide continuing training for ministers was the “CCAP Ministers' Leadership Seminar” (sic) that was held in 1989.²⁵⁷ Some topics included:

- The Dogmatic Unity of the Church
- Roman Catholic Protestant Stance

²⁵³ At the time of the writing of this dissertation, Dr. van Deventer continues his role as principal of NIFCOTT.

²⁵⁴ S. 2636, Minutes of the 24th Synod Meeting at Namoni Katengeza, 13 – 20 April 1993.

²⁵⁵ Interview between present researcher and General Secretary Rev. Dr. Winston R. Kawale, 29 January 2004.

²⁵⁶ *Kuunika*. Vol. 77 No.2 July/Sept. 1994. p. 9.

²⁵⁷ “CCAP Ministers Leadership Seminar (sic) Tuesday 7th to 10th March 1989 at Namoni Katengeza Lay Training Centre.” Printed in Malawi The Hetherwick Press Limited, Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Blantyre, Malawi

- Dogmatics
- Dogmatic Theology and Other Disciplines
- Karl Barth's Dogmatics
- The Dogmatic Unity
- Bible Study Led by Rev. Rasmussen
- How to Deal With Disunity in the Church
- Disunity in the Church Through Attachment to Human Leaders
- Christ's Prayer for the Unity of His Church

The 1994 CCAP General Synod received a report from Rev. Dr. Joseph Kang of Zomba Theological College. Tension from political change was overcome with Christian maturity. Sixty students had graduated in the last four years. The first graduates in Chancellor College's B.A. in Theology programme had graduated, and these included five former ZTC students. The library had recently completed an extension. In order to accommodate an expanded student body, wives and children of first year students were not allowed to live on campus. Life at the College included a Students' Union and a Wives' School. A "Mature Programme" had seen its first graduates. The Reformed Mission League of the Netherlands had contributed more than half the funds for the programme in addition to bursaries for students.²⁵⁸

Nkhoma Synod reported to the 1994 CCAP General Synod that two ministers had graduated from ZTC. In addition, Rev. WE Chikakuda had been posted as a lecturer at ZTC, while Rev. AJM Mnthambala had been posted to NIFCOTT. Four ministers were undergoing further studies.²⁵⁹

The Synod in 1995 received a request from African Bible College to be reconsidered for use as an educational facility for pastors. The Moderamen responded by saying that all wishing to become Nkhoma Synod pastors must follow the same regulations. They further stated that the teachers at NIFCOTT and at Zomba Theological College were to assess the quality of the teaching at ABC and then determine how much more studies pastoral candidates needed following graduation.²⁶⁰ At the time of this

²⁵⁸ Minutes of the CCAP General Synod held at Chongoni 9th to 13th November 1994, pages 38 – 44.

²⁵⁹ Minutes of the CCAP General Synod held at Chongoni 9th to 13th November 1994, page 32.

²⁶⁰ M. 4029, Meeting of the Moderamen, 26 June 1995.

writing, a graduate of African Bible College must complete a nine-month course at Nkhoma before ordination; the same requirement applies to Zomba graduates as well.

Sometimes the education of a pastor includes something more than just theology. His training may at times include very “practical” topics.

For the first time in history of Nkhoma Synod a Management Seminar was organised by NIFCOTT. The workshop was held at NIFCOTT’s College Campus from 5th to 9th February, 1996. And was conducted by a Consultant from Blantyre Mr. Mlumbe who is manager (Foreign Exchange) of the National Bank of Malawi (sic).

Lectures in Developmental Economics and Financial Management was the main topic of the Seminar.

The participants were drawn from Nkhoma Press, Nkhoma Hospital, William Murray Secondary School, M.C.D.E., Relief and Development, Education, the Officials of Nkhoma Synod, and all the Students from NIFCOTT (Nkhoma Institute for Continued Theological Training.)²⁶¹

The following case is presented as an illustration of something many theological students experience. Many struggle to find funding for their studies. An awkward situation developed regarding the study leave of Rev. OL Joda-Mbewe, an Nkhoma Synod minister. The DRC in Cape Town provided funds for him to reside in Stellenbosch and pursue an MTh degree. He then arrived with his wife and seven children, some of who were grown, and proved to be reluctant to leave and return to Malawi. In late 1985 the Moderamen approved his going to Stellenbosch, South Africa, for graduate studies.

Rev. Mbewe should go for further studies in South Africa in Jan. 1986. Therefor (sic) he should go to Nkhoma before the end of December to arrange for his trip to South Africa. Synod will not pay for his house at Lumbadzi as this house will not be occupied by him any more.²⁶²

In 1989 he was the subject of discussion once again by the Moderamen. First in March 1989, there was the question regarding funds for continued study.

The Committee decided to enquire whether any funds are available for Rev. Mbewe to continue with his studies in South Africa.²⁶³

²⁶¹ *Kuunika* Jan./April 1996.

²⁶² M. 1344, Moderamen, 23rd December 1985.

²⁶³ M. 2501. Moderamen, 1 March 1989.

Later the same month he was the subject of another discussion by the Moderamen.

Rev. Joda-Mbewe asks that he should be allowed to go for further studies next year. Therefore he should not (be) posted to a congregation but should be allowed to wait at a place appointed by Synod until the time of his departure. The Committee decided that he should go to the congregation where he was posted by Synod. He shall be informed about this at the Synod meeting in April.²⁶⁴

He is mentioned several times in the minutes of the meetings of the Synodical Committee for Witness and Mission between 19 November 1998 and 17 March 2000. He, as well as Nkhoma, were informed that there were no funds available for him and his family to stay any further in Stellenbosch. More than one deadline for his return to Malawi was set, one being the end of March 2000. This present researcher encountered this individual and his wife in Stellenbosch in June 2000. He appealed to the present researcher to write letters to the United States for raising funds so that he and his family could stay in Stellenbosch. The researcher was unable to comply. The present researcher met Rev. Joda-Mbewe again in the spring of 2003. He walked into the researcher's office at African Bible College in Malawi and said that he was residing at the manse at Lingadzi CCAP church in Lilongwe, awaiting assignment.²⁶⁵

Concerning Nkhoma Synod *abusa* receiving training outside the country, usually the Synod only sends those who received their first level of training in Malawi. Then they become the Synod's responsibility; an individual cannot simply enter a foreign programme without the Synod's approval.²⁶⁶

At the meeting of the CCAP General Synod in 2000, there came a report on Zomba Theological College from the principal, Rev. Dr. DS Mwanandi. The College had survived financial difficulties, and had grown in number of students, staff, and programmes since 1994. It had since 1997 trained at both the licentiate and diploma level, anticipating the first BD graduates in October 1998. It was able to report expansion of physical facilities. Yet there was a shortage of student housing, especially

²⁶⁴ M. 2526. Moderamen, 30 March 1989.

²⁶⁵ He has, subsequent to his return to Malawi in 2003, turned down two postings to congregations offered to him by Nkhoma Synod.

²⁶⁶ Interview between the present researcher and Rev. YA Chienda 28 June 2004.

for married students. Finally, there was concern over finances. It was acknowledged that support for the College came more from overseas donors than from churches at home, and it was foreseen that this might diminish.²⁶⁷

In the 2001 report known as the CCAP Ten-Year Strategic Plan, the work of Zomba Theological College was applauded.

The CCAP can be justifiably proud of Zomba Theological School which not only unites the 5 Synods but also celebrates ecumenical co-operation with Anglicans and Churches of Christ. ZTC has made wonderful interventions in establishing the Wives' School and entering into agreement with Chancellor College to allow some students to advance into a degree programme. The recent decision by 2 Synods (Livingstonia and Blantyre) to proceed with the ordination of women further enhances the ability of the college to prepare ministers for the whole church.

This report concluded by saying that the Internet should be used for enhancing theological training.²⁶⁸

In 2001 Nkhoma Synod ruefully observed that the procedures for accepting new students at Zomba Theological College were being ignored. It responded to this situation by laying down further stipulations. No one should be accepted unless they were actual applicants to the College. They need a letter of recommendation from their home congregation. Again, they must be between the ages of 25 and 40. Selections should not be made on the basis of an applicant knowing someone in a pivotal position, and finally, "when short listing, the General Secretary and lecturers from NIFCOTT should be present".²⁶⁹

The current procedure is for students to graduate from Zomba in October, and then attend NIFCOTT for nine months, from November to July. There is grave concern at Nkhoma about the shortage of ministers, even more so because a significant number of them have reached or will shortly reach retirement age. The plan for 2004 is to send six students to study at Zomba for three years, but simultaneously send ten students to study at Nkhoma for two years. Both groups would then be sent to the congregations upon

²⁶⁷ Minutes of the 19th General Synod meeting in Blantyre 1-5 November 2000, pages 26-29.

²⁶⁸ CCAP Ten Year Strategic Plan and Policy, 2000 – 2010.

²⁶⁹ S. 3453, Minutes of the 28th Synod Meeting at Namoni Katengeza, 15 – 22 October 2001.

completion of their respective schools. To accomplish this plan they are attempting to raise more money from the congregations.²⁷⁰

“NIFCOTT is doing a very good job,” says CCAP General Assembly General Secretary Rev. YA Chienda. He speaks with satisfaction regarding the new two-year “crash program”, and points out that Livingstonia and Blantyre synods are doing the same thing.²⁷¹

Even senior ministers continue with their education. In 2000, there were two Nkhoma students going to South Africa to pursue a Post Graduate Diploma (PGD). Meanwhile, Revs. Sasu, Msangaambe, and Mwale were receiving large bursaries from the Mission Office, Commission for Witness for their studies at Stellenbosch.²⁷² Senior ministers may not limit their training to purely theological studies. In 2003 Nkhoma Synod General Secretary WR Kawale asked the Committee for Witness in the Western Cape to foot the bill for his course of study at the Malawi Institute for Management (MIM). Subjects for the 20-day training course included Effective Delegation, effective Time Management, and Communicating Effectively. The cost was MK 104,900 if he stayed on campus or MK 45,350 if he commuted.²⁷³

In 2002 The Committee for Witness issued “Guidelines (for) Theological Training Program(s). This constituted a new policy for admission of students, including recommendations for each candidate as well as motivation as to why each particular candidate should be accepted. There was to be a written guarantee that each candidate would serve in the church that sent him upon completion of studies. At least part of the expenses was to be raised from other sources.²⁷⁴

²⁷⁰ Interview between present researcher and General Secretary Rev. Dr. Winston R. Kawale, 29 January 2004.

²⁷¹ Interview between present researcher and Rev. YA Chienda 28 June 2004.

²⁷² Letter to Revs Sasu and van Deventer from CM Pauw, Secretary for the Commission for Witness in the Western Cape.

²⁷³ Letter to CM Pauw, Secretary, Commission for Witness, from General Secretary WR Kawale, dated 10 January 2003.

²⁷⁴ “Guidelines for Applying for Prospective Candidates to be Accepted into Theological Training Program Sponsored by the Commission for Witness (CFW) in the Western Cape. Attached to letter sent by CM Pauw to the General Secretary of the Nkhoma synod and dated 15 November 2002.

In 2004 three students graduated from NIFCOTT. One had attended Zomba Theological College, another had graduated from African Bible College, and the third was a product of Theological Education by Extension in Malawi.²⁷⁵

6.3 THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION BY EXTENSION

The subject of alternative methods of theological education surfaced in 1980. Nkhoma Synod decided against the idea of allowing students to take courses through TEEM (Theological Education by Extension in Malawi) followed by two years' study at Zomba. The Synod preferred continuing with a 4-year course at Zomba, preceded by a pre-theological course at the former Nkhoma Theological College. This course would include the Authority of the Bible, Bible knowledge, Catechism and doctrines, evangelism, communication, and sects.²⁷⁶

A search on the Internet will reveal that a number of churches in Malawi besides Nkhoma Synod are using TEE. But what exactly is it?

Theological Education by Extension began in 1963 at the Evangelical Presbyterian Seminary of Guatemala, South America. Teachers at this seminary were struggling with the question of how a single seminary could prepare ministers for a diverse range of ministry needs. They embarked on an experimental programme based on the belief that the seminary would need to go to the student rather than the student coming to the seminary. This enabled the context of the student to be taken into consideration and used as a part of his/her training.

Many of the prospective seminary students were already running parishes and involved in various areas of ministry. Now, instead of abandoning ministry work and uprooting themselves and their families to attend a residential seminary, they remained at home...remaining economically active and involved in their ministry. Instead of attending lectures they studied course material (especially written for education by extension) supplied to them by the seminary and they met regularly in groups with a tutor to discuss the academic work and how it related to the praxis; the actual practice of ministry among God's people. Thus TEE is not merely correspondence or distance education; it is supported by a tutorial structure which enables the study to become contextualised.

The idea developed of decentralising the training of ministers. The concept spread initially to the Caribbean (Honduras and West Indies) and

²⁷⁵ Interview with Rev. Brian Kamwendo, Pastor of Mchenkhula CCAP, 9 October 2004.

²⁷⁶ KS 8286B. Synodical Committee, 28–30 October 1980

Latin America (Columbia, Bolivia and Brazil). It then spread to North America, Asia, Europe, Australia and Africa. Today, TEE programmes are found in the United Kingdom, Canada, Mexico, Philippines, Madagascar, Mauritius, Pakistan, India, Australia, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Kenya, Zaire, Zambia, *Malawi*, Botswana, and Southern Africa (italics are the researcher's) (TEE 2004).

In 1980 Nkhoma Synod expressed interest in alternative methods of pastoral training, but expressed reluctance concerning TEEM.

We are not against other Synods starting with a correspondence course through TEEM (Theological Education by Extension in Malawi), followed by a 2 years' residential course in Zomba, as we have been assured that the two courses are integrated. But as for ourselves, we want the 4 years' residential course.²⁷⁷

The same report by the Synodical Committee, however, left the door open to an eventual acceptance of TEEM by Nkhoma Synod.

When the work of TEEM has been more firmly established, we may reconsider starting the theological studies through TEEM, but at present we shall not work through them.²⁷⁸

In 1982 the CCAP General Synod received a report on TEEM students. This report resulted in the General Synod's agreement to accept TEEM students who make application to the Zomba Theological College.

General Synod agrees that the recommendation from the Theological Board be confirmed, that the prospective candidates who have successfully completed TEEM Diploma Course with good grades be allowed to undertake a residential course of 2 years at the Theological College for the ordained Ministry. These TEEM students should apply for the Theological Training through the normal channels, i.e. Congregation, Presbytery, Synod.²⁷⁹

The meeting of the CCAP General Synod in 1994 heard a report from TEEM Director AG Kapenda. He recapitulated the aims formulated by the churches in 1978. These included Bible training for lay leaders, theological training for lay leaders, assisting in the training for ordination candidates, and continuing upgrading of pastor education. He observed that the last two aims had not been fully met. There had been attempted a "Christian Communication Programme," under a Mr. Hodgins of Ireland and

²⁷⁷ KS 8286B. Synodical Committee, 28-30 October 1980

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Minutes of the General Synod held at Chongoni, 24 to 27 August 1982, page 7.

a Mr. Malongo. Both left, and the programme ended. TEEM then moved its offices from Chilema to Zomba Theological College, as of 1993. “We are at the college but not of the college and we don’t know how to describe the relationship.” He then reported that most donors had withdrawn since 1990 and they faced a bad financial situation. The number of students has been increasing since 1991, and now stood at 225, including 24 Diploma of Theology students, 6 of which were women. “Lastly, we would like to appeal to the General Synod to think seriously about TEEM if we need the programme to continue in Malawi.”²⁸⁰

The University of Malawi’s Department of Theology and Religious Studies began a publication called *Religion in Malawi*. Its April 1997 edition carried the following notice:

Theological Education by Extension in Malawi (TEEM)
Diploma – Programme

As from December 1997, TEEM will be offering a diploma in theology programme by correspondence. TEEM has recently become a member of the Diploma Board (Zomba Theological College, Kachebere Seminary, St. Peter’s Seminary, Zomba, Likhubula Bible Institute, Blantyre, Baptist Seminary, Lilongwe), and the diploma will be equally validated by the University of Malawi. Students who complete the course (15 papers) well, can enter the BA (Theol) programme of the University in Malawi in the 3rd year. The minimum time is four years, the maximum time is six years. Correspondence teaching will start in December, so far 31 applications have been received. Students can register and start any time. For information and applications write to: The Director, TEEM, P/Bag 25, Zomba; Tel. 522 758.²⁸¹

In the 2001 report known as the CCAP Ten-Year Strategic Plan 2000 -2010, the issue of education by extension was discussed. It noted that it had not continued to flourish.

TEE (Theological Education by Extension) does not seem to be taking the lead in lay education that it once did. If this is the case, then steps need to be taken to strengthen this activity.

The major problem with the current setup is that it is expensive and is not able to supply the Synods with as many trained clergy as are

²⁸⁰ Minutes of the CCAP General Synod held at Chongoni 9th to 13th November 1994, pages 46-47.

²⁸¹ *Religion in Malawi*, No. 7, April 1997, page 40.

required. In addition, the CCAP offers little theological training for its laity. This is perhaps the greatest challenge facing the Church.²⁸²

The same report also suggested that TEE could be enhanced through the use of the Internet.²⁸³

At the 2000 General Synod meeting, Nkhoma Synod mentioned a continuing use of TEEM. "All churches organize evangelism; there is also TEEM targeting pastors and church elders."²⁸⁴

Distance learning programmes have been used effectively in a number of places; otherwise something begun in 1963 would no longer exist. However, they require a great deal of personal discipline when one has a family and full-time employment. It is not free education, and in a land such as Malawi, it presents potential students with the same problem of collecting financial resources that more conventional programmes do.

6.4 TRAINING OF THE LAY LEADERS OF THE CHURCH

Chongoni was purchased from a white farmer in 1962, a Mr. du Toit.²⁸⁵ Today it is referred to by that name, Chongoni, and by the name of Namoni Katengeza Church Lay Training Centre (named after Nkhoma's first ordained Malawian). When it opened officially on 1 July 1962, there were about 1,000 "prayer houses", and 35 congregations. At the prayer houses there was an average of 90 to 100 members and catechumens. In 1999 there were 1,700 "prayer houses" averaging 200 to 250 members and catechumens. As AS Labuschagne summarizes it:

There the unpaid elders were the missionaries. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they drew others to Jesus Christ through their teaching, life and work. The large number of members in the catechumen classes was proof that the congregation of believers was growing (Labuschagne 2002:111).

In another book, Rev. Labuschagne explains that John Tembo, in 1962 the Chairman of the Mkhoma (later Nkhoma) Synod Teachers' Association and Finance Minister on Kamuzu Banda's cabinet, had wanted the beautiful Chongoni property for

²⁸² 2001 CCAP General Synod Ten-Year Strategic Plan, page 30.

²⁸³ 2001 CCAP General Synod Ten-Year Strategic Plan, page 31.

²⁸⁴ Minutes of the 19th General Synod Assembly Held at Blantyre CCAP Mission, from Wednesday 1st to Sunday 5th November 2000, page 36.

²⁸⁵ Minutes of the first meeting of the GAC, Held at Nkhoma from 12 to 16 June 1962, page 2.

himself. At one point he organised a rally on the border of the property and delivered a harangue. The MSTA continued to oppose the work that went on at this centre. As Labuschagne puts it,

Naturally there was strong reaction from members of Mkhoma Synod Teachers' association (MSTA). When I sent a friendly invitation to one of the teachers to attend such a course, he sent me a long slanderous reply. The letter was not sealed, and when I lifted the flap I saw the words, "Go to Hell, you Boer!" But despite the intimidation on the part of MSTA, a large group of teachers turned up, and we had a rewarding study of the Epistle of James (Labuschagne 2003:308).

In the report to the Synod from the Church Lay Training Centre at Chongoni for 1966, it was noted that morale remained high. However, it also cited several problem areas: evangelists and teachers lacked support, there was a shortage of desks and seats, some congregations failed to send people for training, and they noted problems with attendance.

Synod decided in 1972 that it should have its own leadership-training teacher, rather than rely upon an outside source. Synod further noted that the Christian Service Committee would pay for such a teacher, and therefore to pass up the opportunity would be most inadvisable.²⁸⁶ The JFC requested that this be discussed by the Synod.²⁸⁷

At the 1977 meeting of General Synod, Nkhoma Synod, regarding the training of lay leaders, was able to report that,

The Church Lay Training Centre at Chongoni is doing very well, now with nearly all building work completed. The Centre is open to all recognised denominations. Courses have been held for Sunday School and catechumen Class teachers, Session clerks and treasurers of congregations, hymn precentors, church elders, leaders of *Chigwirizano* women's guild, women *alangizi* (9 instructors), teachers for unassisted schools – these groups drew a total of 744 participants in 1976. The Nkhoma Synod meeting was held at Chongoni, and also the following conferences, retreats, or meetings: Christian council, Baptist mission, New Life for All, Scripture Union, church Growth Seminar, P.H.A.M., student nurses from Lilongwe Likuni and Nkhoma, etc. One-day or weekend courses on evangelisation and stewardship were conducted by the staff in

²⁸⁶ S. 949, 12th Meeting of the Synod, at Nkhoma, 25 July – 2 August 1972.

²⁸⁷ JE.83: Executive of JFC minutes, 9 June 1972.

20 congregations in 1976. The Bible Correspondence Course connected with the CLTC is continuing steadily.²⁸⁸

In 1981 it was proposed that satellite “church lay training centres” be established.

Synod approves that such sub-lay training centres be opened in some congregations on Presbytery level, namely on former mission stations such as Mchinji, Malingunde and others. For the present a committee must be appointed to advise on how this can be done. Such centres should also be developed to raise funds for such evangelization and training through land development.²⁸⁹

CCAP General Secretary YA Chienda explains that instead, tutors from Chongoni were “encouraged” to go out to the congregations. “This has been happening up to now.”²⁹⁰

In May 1982 a proposal was made to establish a Bible school at Namoni Katengeza (Chongoni). It would feature a one-year course that included Bible knowledge, catechism, evangelism, writing, public speaking, English, and bookkeeping. Only those receiving a diploma from the proposed school would be eligible to go on to the Theological School at Zomba. It was anticipated that most of its graduates would remain laymen. The DRC was asked for funds and to supply a minister to be the principal of the proposed school. Later in the year the Moderamen rendered the decision that while this school was necessary, it should be placed at Nkhoma, and the DRC was asked to call Rev. CJ Burger to come and start it.²⁹¹ On 23 February there was a meeting of the “Pre-Zomba Committee”. It discussed details such as location of the school, who should be allowed to participate, what courses would be taught, finances, and where to find teachers.²⁹²

At the 1982 CCAP General Synod, a report was received from Nkhoma Synod concerning the work at the Centre:

This (Namoni Katengeza Church Lay Training Centre) is the new name for Chongoni Church Lay Training Centre. The Synod gave this new name to Chongoni at the last Synod meeting.

²⁸⁸ Minutes of the General Synod held at Chongoni 16th to 17th August 1977. Appendix II “Life and Work Report of Nkhoma Synod” page 14.

²⁸⁹ S. 1503. 18th Meeting of Synod, 6-14 April 1981.

²⁹⁰ Interview with General Secretary YA Chienda, 22 October 2004.

²⁹¹ M. 322. Minutes of a meeting of the Moderamen, 25 May 1982 (see also M.410).

²⁹² Minutes of the Pre-Zomba Committee Meeting”, 23 February 1983.

The head of the Centre is Rev. A.S. Chisanu who is now the Warden. The title of the name Principal has been declared absolute (sic) by the Synod.

Many groups of people from congregations such as elders, deacons, catechists, teachers of both Sunday and Day Schools, and Christian organisations such as New Life for All, Christian Council of Malawi, Christian Service Committee, hold their meetings at this centre. Other church groups hold their meeting there too.

The Chongoni Staff, in close co-operation with the life ministry Staff, sometimes go out to do team work to teach and educate the leaders and/or Christians in various congregations.²⁹³

In 1984 the head of the Centre at Chongoni was Rev. M.Z. Chinkhadze, formerly a lecturer at the Theological College at Nkhoma. Beginning in June 1984 he was assisted by veteran Irish missionary Rev. J. Selfridge.

The Synodical Commission (SC 3-5 April 1984) took note of the following:

- Many tracts could be distributed by way of the Centre to congregations and hospitals.
- Revival meetings were held in congregations.
- Different courses could again be presented at Chongoni.
- Other organizations such as World Vision also made use of the facilities for their own meetings.

At the same time the Synod planned to establish a domestic science centre at Chongoni with the aid from the World Council of Churches.

The Haggai Institute in Singapore won the approval of the Synod. This is a kind of in-service training seminar for ministers and church lay leaders, somewhat similar to the kind of seminars periodically offered at Chongoni (Namoni Katengeza church Lay Training Centre). The Moderamen in 1985 noted its approval of its constitution, and observed that some Nkhoma Synod ministers had attended it, with good results.²⁹⁴

Training, it was discovered, need not be confined to in-residence programmes. In 1985, the go-ahead was given to a Bible study correspondence course.

Synod agrees that this is a very good thing. Therefore Synod instructs Namon Katengeza C.L.T.C. to start these courses again. A

²⁹³ Minutes of the CCAP General Synod held at Chongoni, 24 to 27 August 1982, page 20.

²⁹⁴ M. 1055, Meeting of the Moderamen, 3 April 1985.

committee should be set up to investigate the possibility of implementing these courses.²⁹⁵

This programme has over time proven to be a successful one. This Bible Correspondence Course continues today.²⁹⁶

At the 1990 General Synod meeting, Nkhoma Synod reported that many, including elders, deacons, catechists, and Sunday school teacher were still receiving training at Chongoni (Namon Katengezi Church Lay Training Centre). It also reported that a number of other organisations were using the facility, such as the Christian Council of Malawi, World Vision International, the Christian Service Committee, CLAIM, SCOM, Life Ministries, Scripture Union, and other denominations.²⁹⁷

In 1994 Nkhoma Synod reported to the General Synod that in addition to its normal uses, the United Nations was using the Church Lay Training Centre to train Mozambican refugees as teachers in preparation for their return to their homeland after the war. The Centre was also being used in Developmental and Youth projects that involved training in raising pigs and chickens and tending gardens.²⁹⁸

Nkhoma Synod reported the continuation of this facility to the General Synod in 2000.²⁹⁹ It continues to be the site for a number of functions, such each Synod meeting, and the last one being held in October 2003.³⁰⁰

In a country and in a denomination that has so much trouble training an adequate number of ordained ministers, the elders of the churches and prayer houses gain extra significance. This makes their training even more imperative. Nkhoma Synod did well to establish the Namoni Katengeza Church Lay Training Centre as early as it did.

6.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Chongoni (Namoni Katengeza Church Lay Training Centre) was up and running and perceived to be a success by the mid - 1960's. It was shown that there was a

²⁹⁵ S. 1976. Synod Meeting held at Namoni Katengeza 10-16 April 1985.

²⁹⁶ Interview with CCAP General Secretary YA Chienda on 22 October 2004.

²⁹⁷ Minutes of the General Synod meeting held at Blantyre 26 Aug. to 3 Sept. 1990, page 77.

²⁹⁸ Minutes of the CCAP General Synod held at Chongoni 9th to 13th November 1994, page 32.

²⁹⁹ Minutes of the 19th General Synod Assembly held at Blantyre CCAP Mission, from Wed. 1st to Sunday 5th November, 2000, page 36

³⁰⁰ Personal observation by the present researcher.

complaint that some congregations were not utilizing it by sending church members to be trained. While a legitimate cause for concern, one can easily see a reason for the problem - lack of money. If a church struggles to support its pastor, how can it find the resources to send people to Chongoni - some of whom would have to be compensated for leaving work?

The University of the North in South Africa was a resource of theological training for some time, but it ran into the same problem. The Synod was totally dependent upon South African funding, and these sources had their limits. Grants became available from certain countries, such as the US, Scotland, Ireland, and the Netherlands. These, too, are limited - there are always more applicants than available scholarships.

Both Zomba Theological College and the Bible College at Nkhoma have struggled to remain open, mostly because of financial constraints. Since its creation in the mid-nineties, NIFCOTT at Nkhoma has enjoyed a more stable existence. An evaluation of TEEM (Theological Education by Extension in Malawi) was explored in order to fill the gap.

An educated clergy has demonstrated how the Synod has given confidence to claim greater autonomy from the DRC. Furthermore, an educated clergy has always been a hallmark of Presbyterianism. It is because of this tradition that Presbyterian ministers have had significant impact upon society.

It will be shown in chapter eleven, the chapter dealing with relations with the government, that Nkhoma Synod was asked by the government to produce a Chichewa – language version of the Malawian constitution. In Malawi as elsewhere, Presbyterians seek to honour their Lord by developing their minds as well as their spirits. To fail to honour this tradition would be a betrayal of it.

The existence of NIFCOTT serves to answer the question, “Does Nkhoma Synod see itself as a confessional church?” If the ministerial student is not made aware of his confessional heritage at Zomba, NIFCOTT will see that he is.

NIFCOTT will also train the ministerial candidate regarding the polity of Nkhoma Synod. This answers the question, “What is the character of the church’s polity?”

NICOTT also answers the question, “What is the relationship between the Synod and the Dutch Reformed Church personnel?” Rev. Dr. Hennie van Deventer remains the principal of NIFCOTT; the tie to South Africa continues through that channel.

Zomba Theological College serves to answer the next question, “How does Nkhoma Synod relate to the other synods of the CCAP?” This is where the ministers of the future all join together at that place for training. Zomba strengthens the inter-synodical bond.

The next question, “How has the Synod developed theologically and spiritually?” was addressed in the arena of theological training forming a church’s theological character. One may conclude that because of the great care and attention given by Nkhoma Synod to theological training, this dimension of the Synod’s life has not been left to chance.

The final secondary question, “What part has Nkhoma Synod played in the political development of the country?”, will be developed in chapter eleven demonstrating how Nkhoma Synod has developed a significant voice in Malawi’s political affairs. Perhaps part of the reason for this is Zomba Theological College’s close proximity to the University of Malawi as universities have historically been a breeding ground for political contention.

How has Nkhoma Synod developed its self-understanding of being a church? A big part of the answer lies with its educated clergy, and this is a legacy of the Reformed tradition. An educated clergy sets the standard and acts as a role model for the laity of the church. For this reason, Presbyterian and Reformed churches have tended to produce a disproportionate share of professional people.

Having looked at; administration and polity, congregational life and officers, education and the training of church officers, it is now time to look at the medical department. This is because this is a dimension of the Synod’s history that had a very early start. Closely related to this topic will be the story of the much newer Relief and Development Department.

Chapter Seven

The Medical and Relief and Development Departments

7.1 INTRODUCTION

These two departments are combined into one chapter because the nature of their work is so closely related; both deal with the physical needs of people. What follows is a general discussion of the history and the contribution of the medical department and subsequently more specific topics are addressed. We will see that the HIV/AIDS pandemic, while coming relatively late in the history of the Synod and of the country, has had such a devastating effect that it must be discussed, and not just in passing. The shortage of nurses, the mass emigration of existing ones, and lack of Malawian physicians will also be examined. The newly developed Nkhoma Synod Relief and Development Department, partnering with external agencies, will be seen to add a new and valuable dimension to the life and work of the Synod. We preface this chapter with the following evaluation from Rev. Ryk van Velden:

Looking at Nkhoma Synod from this perspective, it is remarkable to notice that while you find a very strong vertical, pietistic and personal ethics (moralistic) trend in the preaching, Nkhoma Synod in practice was always involved in a holistic ministry. Apart from the medical and educational projects, the Synod used to give attention to agriculture in the past. In later years the Synod broaden its holistic approach and understanding of its function by establishing the Department for Relief and Development; the Synodical Committee for orphan care and the Department for the Environment. Although the Department is struggling, I am not aware of many churches which have a special Department/Synodical Commission only for the environment!³⁰¹

7.2 THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE MEDICAL DEPARTMENT TO MALAWIAN SOCIETY

In 1959 the Mission Council appointed a committee to advise the Council on the best way to integrate medical work into Church, society, and Government. Included were Mr. G. Nkhoma and Rev. K. Kalumo. In 1960 the Council decided to ask Synod to appoint the Malawian member

³⁰¹ E-mail from Rev. Ryk van Velden to present researcher, 23 July 2004.

of the medical committee; from that time, all expansion plans were to be considered by a Liaison or Joint committee of both Council and Synod. When the Mission was dissolved in 1962, the medical department was placed under Synod control, with a medical department under the authority of the Synod's General Administrative Committee (Pauw 1980: 189-90).

The 1966 Medical Report listed:

Nkhoma Hospital, 171 beds; Mvera Hospital, 48 beds, Mlanda Hospital, 48 beds, and Malingunde Hospital, 50 beds. It stated that, "In the past year we saw an unusual number of children suffering from measles and whooping cough in most of our hospitals" . . . At Mphunzi many children died of measles mainly because of lack of penicillin at that time.

The Medical Report for 1967 revealed that the Nkhoma Hospital completed a new surgical unit. The first operation in this new unit was performed in June 1967. The President, Dr. Kamuzu Banda, visited in November and praised Nkhoma Hospital.

On Monday 27 Nov. 1967 the new surgical extension of Nkhoma Hospital was officially opened by the President of Malawi, Dr. Banda.

. . . In his speech he said: "I am also a Christian, and I received my first formal school training in the mission school at Kasungu".³⁰²

At the meeting of the GMSC in Cape Town 22-24 June 1969 it was stated that at Nkhoma Synod's four hospitals and clinics there were 69,476 outpatients, 9,711 hospitalised patients, and 56 nurses in training. For the first time a qualified Malawian nurse was appointed, after five years of training in Scotland.

In his "Annual General Report for 1969," Secretary General YA Chienda reported the medical department consisted of Nkhoma Hospital (185 beds), Mlanda Hospital (48 beds), Mvera Hospital (48 beds), and Malingunde Hospital (50 beds). "The attendance at the various dispensaries has been good except at Mphunzi." His report also mentions "the poor state of most of the buildings". The number of patients was increasing (in-patients increased from 9,711 in 1968 to 11,539 in 1969) but at Malingunde a ward was closed. The hospital facilities needed to be improved, but there was a lack of funds.

In 1973 Dr. Blignaut and Rev. C. Martin Pauw were ordered to leave Malawi by the Malawian government because Blignaut operated on an injured dog at Nkhoma

³⁰² *Nuusbrief Uit Malawi*, March 1968.

Hospital. An offended Malawian reported this to Government authorities, resulting in the deportation.

The 1973 deportation of Dr. CJ Blignaut was a blow to the medical department. Added to this was the resignation of Dr. Swart. However, the DRC office in Cape Town persuaded him to rescind his resignation. He was appointed as Superintendent of the Hospital, after Dr. P. Pretorius had briefly served as acting superintendent.³⁰³

A November 1974 meeting of the Moderamen happily reported that this removal of Blignaut had been reversed. They gave credit for this reversal to the President.

Committee is glad to hear that H.E. the Life President Ngwazi Kamuzu Banda has allowed Dr. Blignaut to return to work in Malawi. Committee also notes that Dr. Blignaut will come after he has written his examinations in March next year. Committee expresses extreme gratitude towards H.E. the President for his allowing Dr. Blignaut to return.³⁰⁴

At the August 1977 meeting of the General Synod, Nkhoma Synod gave the following report concerning its medical department.

The medical work is continuing satisfactorily, but some time back there had been much difficulty in obtaining sufficient expatriate staff. An extensive renovation of Nkhoma Hospital with funds received through the CSC will start this year. Shortage of funds for the running expenses has become a major problem. The medical superintendent is Dr. CJ Blignaut, and the very able Hospital Secretary/ hospital Administrator is Mr. AK Kuleza.³⁰⁵

South Africa was not the only benefactor for Nkhoma's Medical Department. In 1977 the electrification of the Nkhoma hospital buildings was made possible by a large grant ("up to DM810.000") by the *Evangelische Zentralstelle fur Entwicklungshilfe* (EZE) of West Germany. The grant stipulated specific controls over the spending of money, and it was anticipated to be a two-year project.³⁰⁶

The General Secretary's Annual General Report to Cape Town praised the medical work for 1980. The medical staff increased by six, thus there was no shortage of

³⁰³ KS 5174. Minutes of Synodical Meeting 4-6 April 1973.

³⁰⁴ KS 5688. Minutes of the Meeting of the Moderamen 25 November 1974.

³⁰⁵ Minutes of the General Synod held at Chongoni 16th to 17th August 1977, page 14.

³⁰⁶ From a letter from Treasurer GC Reyneke to the Moderator and members of the Synodical Committee, dated 15 November 1977.

doctors in 1979. They got a hospital chaplain for the first time when Rev. M.U. Siwinda joined the staff in December 1979. The Christoffel Blinden Mission in West Germany continued to give a monthly grant of MK600, and Sonnevand in Holland donated MK6400 for blankets and mattresses for the TB wards. This organization had the previous year given the money for an X-ray machine. Besides the Nkhoma hospital, there were the “out station” hospitals of Malingunde, Mvera, Malanda, and Malembo.

As in the past, the medical department was not confined to the Nkhoma Hospital.

Mphunzi Hospital: There is a small clinic on the old Mphunzi mission station. As part of the Land Development Programme of the government, which is financed by the World Bank, a new larger clinic will now be built at the foot of the spectacular Mphunzi Mountain.³⁰⁷

In 1982, Nkhoma Synod submitted a report on its medical work to the CCAP General Synod:

The work at Nkhoma Synod is continuing satisfactorily. There are at present five doctors and many qualified nurses. These doctors visit clinics at various places in turns. Dr. C.J. Blignaut is the medical Superintendent. This is the only field which has the most expatriate (sic) missionary staff. Plans are underway to recruit (sic) some Malawian young men that they may be sent abroad to study medicine. The Synod has now allocated two ministers, namely Rev. L.J. Kamtamba and Rev. Siwinda to be hospital Chaplains in Lilongwe and Nkhoma respectively.³⁰⁸

Concerning the medical mission work, a report by Dr. Chris Blignaut included the following:

The medical work started in 1915, the first medical doctor arrived in 1930, and nurse training began in 1958. At the time of this report – 1984 – the government subsidized 80% of the hospital’s expenditures. The balance was covered by donations, patient fees and an amount from the Synod for the Nurses’ hostel, although this amount was actually also paid by the Women’s Guild of the DRC in South Africa. The hospital had 203 beds, 27,000 outpatients, and 6,000 in-patients per year. There were 5 mobile units and 8 clinics run by the hospital. The clinics reported treating 67,561 outpatients and 4,639 in-patients. There was much being done in eye work. In 1930 Dr. R.L. Retief started removing cataracts. In 1975 Dr. C. Blignaut returned to Malawi as a fully qualified ophthalmologist. In 1978 the Christoffel Blinden Mission in Germany began showing interest in the work, and in 1981 began rendering financial

³⁰⁷ *Nuusbrief Uit Malawi*, April 1980.

³⁰⁸ Minutes of the General Synod held at Chongoni, 24 to 27 August 1982, page 21.

assistance. Because of this Dr. Blignaut was able to be involved in full-time eye work over the whole of Malawi. From funds from this organization, a ward with 18 beds, a theatre for eye surgery, and eye clinic and a microscope were all acquired. In 1983 they also donated a 4x4 vehicle (including funds for maintenance of this vehicle), as well as a workshop at Nkhoma where lenses were being fitted into frames. Rev. Siwinda, hospital chaplain, was involved in the spreading of Christian literature and in morning devotions in all wards and departments.³⁰⁹

Operating under conditions of scarcity, an organisation may face difficult choices. An example is the choice the Synod faced in 1984: a medical technologist, or teachers?

The committee was informed that Synod should sacrifice three teachers' posts in return for a medical technologist who will be attached to Nkhoma Hospital. The committee does not agree, as Synod would need all 12 teaching posts when all three secondary schools are in operation.³¹⁰

However, just three weeks later, the same committee reversed itself.

Because the services of this man are greatly needed at the hospital, the committee agrees that he should come for a period of one year. This resolution replaces (M. 792).³¹¹

The clinic at Malembo ran into an unexpected and awkward problem in 1985. A letter was received from the District Commissioner in Mangochi informing the Synod of a potential land dispute. The following account illustrates how important it is to maintain good relations with traditional authority.

The land on which the (new) hospital at Malembo is built appears not to belong to Synod. The committee instructs the Moderator to go there to meet with the local chief. He should go without delay before serious problems arise.³¹²

There never was a "hospital" at Malembo, but rather a clinic. Alternative property was provided, and the clinic is still operating there.³¹³

In 1990 the Nkhoma Synod gave the following report of its medical department to the CCAP General Synod:

The work at Nkhoma Hospital is continuing satisfactorily. There are at present five doctors and many qualified nurses. These doctors visit other small hospitals and Clinics at various places in turn. Dr. C.J.

³⁰⁹ *SSK Begroting Vir Die Bookjaar 1984/85*. Page 159. 127.3 *Die Hospitaal: Nkhoma*. Photocopied from the DRC archives in Cape Town, July or August 2000. This photocopy is now at the Nkhoma Library.

³¹⁰ M. 792. Moderamen, 3 April 1984.

³¹¹ M. 816 Moderamen 17 April 1984.

³¹² M. 1329. Moderamen, 30 November 1985.

³¹³ Interview with CCAP General Secretary YA Chienda on 22 October 2004.

Blignaut is the Medical Superintendent. At Mvera, Mlanda and Malingunde there are small hospitals, and at Malembo and Chinthembwe small maternities. At Dzenza, Mphunzi and Chogodi there are out patient dispensaries. All these health Centres are administered from Nkhoma and are visited once a month by one of Doctors (sic). During 1988 a total of 127,000 new out patients were seen all these Units (sic), 8,500 we admitted and 2,900 deliveries were recorded.³¹⁴

In 1994 Nkhoma Synod submitted a report to the CCAP General Synod meeting. With Dr. CJ Blignaut as the Medical Superintendent, there were five doctors and “many qualified Nurses”. There were several Health Centres: Mvera, Malingunde, and Mlanda (which were small hospitals), maternity clinics at Malembo and Chinthembwe, and dispensaries at Dzenza, Mphunzi and Chigodi. These all got visits from the doctors once a month. In 1993 there were 110,928 outpatients, 9,641 who were admitted, and 4,357 deliveries.³¹⁵

Dr. Johan Eloff took over the eye work from Dr. Christoff Blignaut early in 1997; Dr. Blignaut retired on pension in 1996.³¹⁶

Dr. Blignaut announced with sadness that he was leaving. He said that his real home was not South Africa, but Malawi. He came to Malawi in 1940, and got married at Nkhoma soon afterwards. He was involved in the eye work for many, many years. However, due to his growing age, and the advancement in new technology, he felt that it was fair to make place for the younger generation. He apologized for any wrong he might have done to other people, and then extended his good wishes to the Synod.³¹⁷

African Bible College opened a clinic in 1999. It has a full time American doctor, but on Wednesday’s doctors from Nkhoma Hospital (who formerly went to Lingadzi CCAP) see Nkhoma Hospital patients from the local Lilongwe area utilizing the ABC clinic facilities. Another Lilongwe facility is located at Chimwala CCAP. This was begun

³¹⁴ Minutes of the CCAP General Synod meeting held at Blantyre from 26 Aug. to 3 Sept. 1990, page 79.

³¹⁵ Minutes of the CCAP General Synod meeting held at Chongoni 9th to 13th November 1994, pages 34 – 35.

³¹⁶ Minutes of a Meeting of the Enlarged Exec. Committee of the Church Mission Action, Friday, 6 Sept. 1996.

³¹⁷ S. 3075. Minutes of the Synod Meeting at Chongoni 8-15 April 1997. Synod’s summary was not entirely accurate. Blignaut came as a school boy with his parents in 1940. He returned to Malawi as a physician in the late 1950s and married circa 1960.

by a Korean lady. She has been running it all on her own, in the face of difficulties from the minister in charge.³¹⁸

Over the years, many children have been born; many lives have been saved through the work of Nkhoma Synod's Medical Department. Additionally, the eye department has given a much-needed specialised service; many owe their sight to this work.

Today Nkhoma Synod maintains ten health centres throughout the Southern Region of Malawi. It has a Medical Board that investigates the possibility of establishing new locations.³¹⁹

The PCUSA gives the following description of the present state of the Nkhoma Hospital:

Nkhoma Hospital in Nkhoma, Malawi is a large and vital institution providing a wide variety of medical services to its community. Working with a staff of 135 people and an inpatient capacity of 220 beds, Nkhoma Hospital has five separate buildings for patient care: paediatrics, maternity, general medical surgery, ophthalmology and a 24-bed TB unit. In addition, Nkhoma serves as a referral centre for an extensive satellite system of smaller hospitals and clinics.

. . . Over 1,500 new patients are seen annually in the eye clinic. Nkhoma Hospital also manufactures its own glasses and eye drops. The eye service is extended to six other mission hospitals in Malawi by means of annual weeklong visits for examination and surgery.

The nutrition program at Nkhoma has three brick houses, similar to village mud huts, plus a kitchen and training room and a demonstration garden. They are proud of a new mud stove which allows three pots to cook over one fire. Children are usually referred from the hospital and stay two to three weeks with their mothers. The mothers go home with the knowledge of a balanced nutritional diet, new skills in food preparation and seeds for gardens. They can return every Monday for food supplements. Only traditional food is used.

Public health workers on bicycles and motorbikes follow up TB cases in the villages. They are often able to identify the early stages of other illnesses and assist in getting the patients to the hospital. They also work on water supply and sanitation. The prenatal clinic sees about 260 weekly. Family planning is being taught to village people and they then in

³¹⁸ Telephone interview with receptionist Luke Kazonda 20 October 2004.

³¹⁹ Interview between present researcher and General Secretary Rev. Dr. Winston R. Kawale, 29 January 2004.

turn give the information through to their fellow villagers. The hospital also has a static and four mobile Family Planning Clinics (PCUSA 2004).

CM Pauw in 2002 described how Frank Dimmock, a PCUSA missionary and Health Coordinator for the CCAP, wanted to “revisit” the administrative system at Nkhoma Hospital”, and perhaps write a new kind of constitution”. Pauw observed that Dimmock had done the same thing at Mulanje and Livingstonia CCAP hospitals and that it had produced good results.³²⁰ Nkhoma Synod accepted Dimmock’s offer. He has been working closely with Dr. Reynier Ter Haar in producing the new constitution.³²¹ The implication here is that all three facilities had administrative problems, but were corrected.

The Medical Department of Nkhoma Synod has rendered invaluable service to the people of the Central Region of Malawi for decades. It has earned the respect of people outside of the Synod.

7.3 MALAWIAN NURSES, MALAWIAN DOCTORS

Medical personnel are essential to the operation of Nkhoma Synod’s Medical Department, particularly Malawian ones. Few would argue that expatriate medical personnel lack the depth of cultural understanding that Malawian staff would have.

In 1983, the Moderamen decided that it would be good to have a course to train registered nurses. However, it deferred to the hospital committee, which would have to determine the feasibility.³²² The Moderamen in 1987 gave its consent to nurses at the Nkhoma Hospital going to South Africa for advanced studies. It ordered the Hospital Committee to study the feasibility of this happening.³²³

In 1996 Dr. Nico van Velden sent an urgent appeal to Rev. Koch, Secretary of the missions office in Cape Town. The reason for the urgency was that the nursing school at Nkhoma Hospital, along with the other nursing schools associated the Christian Hospital Association of Malawi (CHAM), was about to lose its funding from Concern International. Attempts at finding other donors had not yet succeeded. In writing to

³²⁰ Letter from CM Pauw to the General Secretary of Nkhoma Synod, 7 June 2002.

³²¹ Telephone interview with Mrs. Frank Dimmock on 17 September 2004.

³²² M. 546, The meeting of the Moderamen, 2 May 1983.

³²³ M. 2023, Meeting of the Moderamen, 27 October 1987.

Koch, van Velden said that he knew that the Missions Office had no funds to give, but that perhaps they could put Nkhoma Hospital in touch with those that did. He then submitted a budget that a shortfall of MK 667,660.³²⁴

There is such a shortage of nurses in Malawi today that health care has drastically suffered. A 2004 New York Times article illustrates the problem.

At Lilongwe Central, an 830-bed hospital, there are supposed to be 532 nurses. Only 183 are left. That is about half as many as there were just six years ago. And only 30 of those are registered nurses, the highly skilled cadre that is most sought abroad (Dugger 2004).

At Lilongwe Central Hospital, often a nurse is responsible for fifty patients. The article goes on to say that two thirds of Malawi's nursing positions are vacant, and that since 2000 more registered nurses have left Malawi than the 336 that are left now. The problem is emigration. A registered nurse in Malawi earns US \$1,900 a year; starting salary in Britain's National Health Service is US \$31,000 a year – and working conditions are far better. Besides Britain, Malawian nurses are immigrating to Canada, the US, Australia and New Zealand. Malawi and other African nations are starting to complain that poor nations are subsidising the rich ones who receive these nurses.

At Nkhoma Hospital, there is also a felt shortage of nurses. However, the training of nurses continues at Nkhoma.³²⁵ The PCUSA, a partner of Nkhoma Synod, gives a fuller description of this nurse training.

Nkhoma hospital also serves as training institution. A nurses school at the hospital trains general nurses and midwives. Over 60 students are currently in training. We hope to expand to post graduate training in the near future (PCUSA 2004).

Malawian doctors, while rare, have existed. There is the story of Jeremiah Mgawi. He was fortunate to find a sponsor for his medical studies in 1984.

We have received a letter from the secretary of PHAM that the organization called MEMISA in Holland has agreed to help Jeremiah Mgawi with an amount of 5000 Dutch Florins (K2100). The money will be sent to the Synod Office at Nkhoma as soon as it is received by PHAM.³²⁶

³²⁴ Letter from Dr. Nico van Velden to Rev. Kobus Koch and dated 15 August 1996.

³²⁵ Interview between present researcher and Nkhoma Hospital's Dr. Herman Frima on 14 July 2004.

³²⁶ M. 964. Moderamen 25 October 1984.

More than a decade later, he had completed his medical studies. Along with a colleague, he offered his services to the hospital at Nkhoma Synod.

Two doctors applied for work at Nkhoma Hospital, namely Dr. Mgawi and Dr. Chaziya. The committee affirmed that both were actually needed at the Hospital, but due to a lack of accommodation, it was suggested that Dr. Mgawi be given priority. As soon as other accommodation would become available, however, Dr. Chaziya should also be taken.³²⁷

The Synod insisted that “accommodation be found for both of them.”³²⁸

Dr. Mgawi, according to one Nkhoma Synod minister, fell into alcoholism and drug addiction. He also beat his wife. He was restored to service, only to lapse into his former behaviour. This caused a final dismissal.³²⁹

Rev. CL Chimkoka adds to the story by saying that Mgawi was actually known to operate while inebriated. When he left Nkhoma, he set up a private practice in Malawi for a brief time, then returned to South Africa. It was there that he died in his sleep from a drug overdose. The other Malawian doctor, Chaziya, left Nkhoma after two years. He was unhappy because he did not receive the same housing and car allowance as white doctors. Malawi trains nurses, but no medical doctors.³³⁰

In 1996 a joint meeting between the Moderamen and the DRC personnel formulated the following plan regarding Malawian medical personnel, to be reached by 2000:

Dedicated Christian Malawian doctor(s) with integrity will work at Nkhoma Hospital with the possibility that one may become the superintendent in due course. (Remark: In order to find doctors the Synod must develop an attractive salary packet for Malawian doctors).

The majority of doctors, sisters, and other medical staff will be Malawians. The remaining DRC health personnel will render professional service to Nkhoma hospital for example in areas of specialty.

³²⁷ M. 3970, Moderamen, 4 March 1995.

³²⁸ ³²⁸ S. 2976 Minutes of the 25th Meeting of the Synod Held at Namoni Katengeza CLTC 4 – 11 April 1995.

³²⁹ Interview between present researcher and Rev. AM Kuthyola Mwale, Pastor of Lingadzi CCAP, 24 June 2004.

³³⁰ Interview between present researcher and Rev. CL Chimkoka on 9 July 2004.

Meaningful and continuous equipment (professional and spiritual) of health personnel (DRC and Malawian) for their ministry as Christians in the health services will take place through seminars, visitation, counselling, and practical work with the help of DRC health personnel. (The possibilities to allow able, Spirit filled health personnel (DRC and Malawian) to do spiritual work/counselling even during working hours will be investigated.³³¹

As of mid – 2004, these goals have yet to be realised.

In 2001 the possibility of a Malawian doctor again presented itself. A Dr. Henry Phiri expressed interest in working for Nkhoma Synod's Medical Department. In June of that year, Nkhoma Hospital's Dr. Reynier Ter Haar informed CM Pauw, Secretary for Foreign Partnerships and Missions, Commission for Witness in the Western Cape, "due to the urgent need for Malawian Doctors, we can accept this application".³³² It did not produce a long-term result. Like Chaziya, Phiri's stay at Nkhoma was short.³³³

7.4 THE CHALLENGE OF HIV/AIDS

In the midst of the continuing difficulties of experienced by the challenges of financial hardship, lack of trained leaders, etc, the mid 1980's revealed a new and even more sinister problem of HIV/AIDS³³⁴.

The PCUSA report on the work of Nkhoma Hospital affirms that AIDS has become a problem in Malawi. Inevitably, this affects the life of Nkhoma Synod.

Like other hospitals in Malawi, Nkhoma is seeing an increasing number of AIDS patients. The AIDS epidemic is affecting the work force and productive part of the population. It results in loss of skilled labour and many orphans that need to be looked after by the extended families (PCUSA 2004).

³³¹ ³³¹ "The minutes of a meeting between the Moderamen, members of the DRC personnel and Rev. JH Koch on 11/4/96 at the house of Rev. R. van Velden. 5. Goals for partnership between Nkhoma Synod and the DRC personnel to be realized by 2000. Health Services.

³³² Letter from Dr. Ter Har to CM Pauw, dated June 11, 2001.

³³³ Telephone interview between present researcher and Rev. Dr. Hennie van Deventer and his wife on 22 July 2004.

³³⁴ Forster (Forster 1998: 537-545) reports findings from the National AIDS Control Programme Annual Reports confirming that AIDS was first confirmed in Malawi in 1985; by 1991 figures of thirty per cent seropositivity were being recorded, and one year later AIDS had become the leading cause of Adult death in Malawi.

The church as a whole was slow to address the problem, because of its association with sinful activity. Its initial response was to view the pandemic of HIV/AIDS as an issue outside of the role of the church, often taking a position of condemnation towards those suffering from this plight. As it became more and more apparent that AIDS was affecting the entire population, including the congregations of the CCAP, church leaders began looking for ways to attend to it. Recognizing their failure to address the issue adequately, the Nkhoma Synod developed the Chongoni Document as a charge to themselves and a declaration of their recognition of the position of the church regarding the issue of HIV/AIDS:

Chongoni Declaration Of Nkhoma Synod

We,

Ministers of Nkhoma Synod CCAP,

Gathered Here at Namoni Katengeza Church Lay Training

Centre from 10 to 11 May 2000;

Noting with great concern the devastating effect

Of HIV infection and AIDS in Malawi,

Do hereby DECLARE that we as a Church

Confess and repent before

The Almighty God

That we have not obeyed His Word,

And that we have not been fully involved

In addressing the HIV/AIDS crisis,

And that we ask for God's forgiveness,

And that from now onwards,

We will take

A preventative, care and support stand.

Taking this significant stand on the issue of HIV/AIDS in 2000, indicates the sensitivity of the Nkhoma Synod to role and opportunity of the church to act in a proactive way towards those in their midst suffering from this disease. *Missionalia Magazine* identified the opportunity facing the church that had been recognized by the Nkhoma Synod a full four years earlier,

This creates both a challenge and an opportunity for churches to make a unique contribution. Churches, more than any other institution in the country, are in a position to influence community attitudes, provide education about AIDS, diminish prejudice, provide care and nursing (Nicholson 1994: 228).

The Nkhoma Synod developed the AIDS desk as a multidisciplinary team devoted to addressing the multifaceted issue of HIV/AIDS. In a similar way to the that described by MAP International, and discussed in their booklet aptly titled, ‘Choosing Hope’:

Traditionally, the Church has avoided talking about these issues. The AIDS epidemic has come upon the world primarily because we have left God’s plan for sexuality. The Church ... must teach people about God’s view of sexuality, which includes: the roles of husband and wife, man and woman; attitudes and relationships that we should have towards one another; the relationship of men to women and women to men; sexuality as a reflection of Christ and the Church.

Similarly, the Church must discuss sexual issues with youth and parents. This includes talking to youth about body changes, sexual temptation, and healthy sexual experiences within marriage (MAP 1996:5 *counselling*).

The Nkhoma Synod recognized the church’s responsibility to teach their people, from the early youth to the adults what God’s principles are concerning its responsibility regarding these issues. Synod decreed in 1991 that a hospital be opened at Namoni Katengeza. Although not completely stagnant, this scheme has not yet been realized, due to the all-too-common “lack of funds” – and personnel.³³⁵ It also mandated that one of the committees of Synod would be the Hospital/AIDS Committee.³³⁶ The AIDS commission, headed by Rev. Zulu³³⁷ oversees the HIV/AIDS education for the Nkhoma Synod in a comprehensive way, addressing not only the role of clergy and pastoral duties, but also issues surrounding gender relations, orphans, youth along with the medical and social implications caused by the disease. Synod affirmed the freedom of an individual

³³⁵ Interview between present researcher and General Secretary Rev. Dr. Winston R. Kawale, 29 January 2004.

³³⁶ S. 2461 and S. 2532, Minutes of the 23rd Synod Meeting at Namoni Katengeza, 9 – 16 April 1991.

³³⁷ Interview between present researcher and Rev. A.M. Kuthyola Mwale, Pastor of Lingadzi CCAP., on 24 June 2004.

to take a test for HIV/AIDS before marriage stating that if one had doubts about one's partner, then the marriage should not take place; testing should be by mutual consent.³³⁸

Both NIFCOTT and Zomba Theological College participate in NetACT, or Network for African Congregational Theology (see 13.2 for a more detailed description of NetACT). Although not its central aim, this organization seeks to equip its member institutions with the training and skills necessary to heighten churches' sensitivity and receptivity to the multifaceted ramifications surrounding the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Both of these institutions³³⁹ have been given the specialized "*HIV/AIDS Awareness: Breaking the Silence*" training developed by Rev. Christo Greyling, which has in turn then been integrated into the curriculum at their colleges. In addition, Lewis Mwanamqekha from Zomba Theological College has received additional facilitators training for application to those outside of the colleges academic circles, including churches and other bodies within or associated with the Nkhoma Synod.

In addition to recognizing the need for the pastoral and spiritual involvement with HIV/AIDS, Nkhoma Hospital has been proactive in assisting with the concrete physical needs of those suffering from the disease. The hospital at Nkhoma today is a 220-bed facility that stays about 80% full all of the time using donated equipment that is admittedly "a bit out-dated". The out-patient department (OPD) sees about 80 patients per day. It has four doctors: only one of which is South African, another is American, and then there is a Dutch husband-wife medical team. It is self-supporting apart from projects; among expatriate donors are DFID (British) and Friends of Nkhoma (Dutch) with the Malawian Government subsidizes an immunisation programme. It is estimated that about half of the patients are HIV/AIDS – infected.³⁴⁰

CCAP General Secretary YA Chienda says that the HIV/AIDS phenomenon has affected the work of the CCAP "very much". He was the Nkhoma Synod General Secretary when AIDS was first identified. He asked a doctor at the Nkhoma hospital if any AIDS patients were Nkhoma Synod members. He describes feeling shocked when he learned from the doctor that three-quarters of them were. The shock continued as he

³³⁸ S. 2936, Minutes of the 25th synod meeting at Namoni Katengeza, 4 – 11 April 1995.

³³⁹ African Bible College, as a member NetACT institution has also participated in these programs.

³⁴⁰ Interview between present researcher and Dr. Marco Linden, 23 June 2004.

saw that Nkhoma Synod leaders and ministers were among the patients. “This was terrible to me,” he says. He reached a point where he was conducting a funeral nearly every day. He says of that experience, “I never before buried the dead while a minister like that”.³⁴¹

The impact of HIV/AIDS has affected nearly every aspect of the Nkhoma Synod, with no promise of relief in the anticipated days to come. Funds that could be used to support a diversity of ministries are instead being funnelled into caring for the sick and dying. While the Nkhoma Synod has moved forward with a proactive response to this plight, it is certain that this will be a continuing challenge for the Synod in the foreseeable future.

7.5 FISCAL CONSTRAINTS AND OUTSIDE DONORS

This section will illustrate how the Medical Department of Nkhoma Synod became the recipient of an international humanitarian effort. Working against the background of the scarce resources of the people was the willingness of medical personnel to come and work, and donor organisations to contribute.

In April of 1964 it was noted that the medical Department would be an increasing burden to the GAC in 1964. The reasons stated was that the shortage of expatriate staff would generate fewer grants from the government, and the necessity of hiring Malawian personnel who would only work if paid according to government salary scales.³⁴²

The GAC in 1968 expressed concern over the shortage of doctors. The Committee made it clear that they looked to the DRC to rectify the situation.

Seeing the great numbers of people who stream to our hospitals for help, especially so at Nkhoma, we all realise that more doctors are really needed, and urgently. The General Secretary must write to the D.R.C. about our great need.³⁴³

In 1971 the GAC expressed a similar concern. This time it was about an acute shortage of nurses (see section 7.3, “Malawian Nurses, Malawian Doctors.”)

The chief concern is for the shortage of sisters and nurses. We must therefore entreat the Lord to call workers to this work, because there

³⁴¹ Interview between present researcher and Rev. YA Chienda 28 June 2004.

³⁴² G.397 – Minutes of the Third Meeting of the GAC, 10 - 18 April 1964.

³⁴³ G. 1160, 5-11 April 1968

is a very real danger that if such staff are not found, the training of nurses will be stopped which is a terrible thing.³⁴⁴

In 1977 there was a proposal for a doctor for Mvera hospital. Dr. Blignaut vetoed the idea, citing financial constraints. After all, he explained, there were Government hospitals at Dowa and Salima with doctors – 16 and 28 miles (“quite near”) from Mvera respectively, on good roads, with bus service. In addition, the Dowa doctor visited Mvera weekly or perhaps twice a month.³⁴⁵

In addition, in 1977 Dr. Blignaut reminded the Synod that they had pledged the revenues from Synod Week to the work of the hospital. They responded that when it came in from the congregations, the hospital would get it. Moderamen instructed the hospital to raise its fees “because of lack of funds”. At the same time,

Committee is very grateful to hear that the Mother Church has helped us to get grants from Holland for the Eye Clinic. Committee instructs the General Secretary to write a letter of thanks, and asking them to continue finding similar grants elsewhere.³⁴⁶

The international nature of the medical assistance that Nkhoma Synod received can be seen in the aid that came in during the seventies and the eighties. In a letter dated 15 November 1977, Treasurer G.C. Reyneke informed Synod about progress in the modernization of Nkhoma Hospital. He said that West Germany’s *Evangelische Zentralstelle Für Entwicklungshilfe* had donated DM 810,000 or about MK 300,000, subject to certain controls. The money could be used only for purposes set forth by the Christian Service Committee. Other controls detailed how the books would be audited.³⁴⁷

In 1983 The Christoffel Blinden Mission asked permission to send a specialist who would make and repair eyeglasses at Nkhoma Hospital. This was accepted.³⁴⁸

The Moderamen noted in 1985 that there was an opportunity for members of Nkhoma Synod to go to the Medical University of South Africa (MEDUNSA) for

³⁴⁴ G. 1676. GAC 1-7 April 1971

³⁴⁵ KS 7013.Synodical Committee, 1, 1977.

³⁴⁶ KS 7160, 7161, and 7162. Moderamen, October 4, 1977.

³⁴⁷ Appendix to the Report of the Moderamen, Dec. 5, 1977.

³⁴⁸ M. 600, Meeting of the Moderamen, July 4, 1983.

medical studies. They instructed the Education Secretary to take the necessary steps to see that this happened. Applicants already existed.³⁴⁹

The Committee decided that those who applied to be trained at the Medical School at MEDUNSA, should go. The Senior Clerk of Synod should find out about the possibility of this. But the candidates who will be considered will be those who have applied already like messrs Samuel Kainja and Robert Chirwa.³⁵⁰

These two particular individuals never left for South Africa.³⁵¹ A decade later however, two South African-trained Malawian doctors did arrive at Nkhoma Hospital, although they did not give extended service (see section 7.3, “Malawian Nurses, Malawian Doctors”).

The same meeting gratefully acknowledged the donation of MK 10,013.17 from donors in Holland for the Chilanga School for the Blind.

Sometimes the international aid that was received was not quite enough. In June 1990 at an emergency meeting of the Synod, prompted by a financial crisis, it was decided to suspend the position of chaplain to the hospitals of Lilongwe. Later in the year, Lilongwe CCAP offered to support Rev. Katundu so that he could continue the work of hospital visitation. The Moderamen gratefully accepted this offer.³⁵²

In 1991 Nkhoma hospital found itself in financial difficulties because the Malawian government decreased its subsidies to private hospitals. That year it found itself with a deficit of about R 60,000. The Private Hospitals Association in Malawi (PHAM) sent a representation to the government. The Malawian Government has enough problems. To alleviate the crisis, donations amounting to R 35,000 were sent from South Africa.³⁵³

One of the goals which was formulated in April 1996 at a meeting in Malawi when the Moderamen, the Personnel Committee and Rev. JH Koch met together, was the

³⁴⁹ M. 1189, Meeting of the Moderamen, June 26, 1985.

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ Interview with CCAP General Secretary YA Chienda on 22 October 2004.

³⁵² S. 2420 (Minutes of the Emergency Meeting of the Nkhoma Synod Held on 5th June 1990 at Lilongwe CCAP) and M. 2935. (Meeting of the Moderamen, 22 October 1990)

³⁵³ Minutes of a meeting of the Executive (“*Uitvoerende*”) Committee of the Subcommittee for (Missions and Evangelism) that met on 30 April 1991 in the Church Centre in Cape Town, 9.1.6: Hospital at Nkhoma: Financial Need. This was photocopied in the DRC headquarters in Cape Town, and a photo copy now exists in the library of Nkhoma Synod, Nkhoma, Malawi.

employment of two dedicated Christian Malawian doctors who would take the place of two vacancies for personnel of the DRC. It was recognized that in order to find such personnel, the Nkhoma Synod would have to offer attractive salaries like other mission hospitals of Malawi were doing. Narollah Trust in South Africa considered donating MK 80,000 annually to meet this need. It was agreed with Nkhoma Synod that these funds would be used for medical work at the hospital. It was agreed that the hospital should upgrade the salaries of the two doctors from the funds which being generated by treating private patients.³⁵⁴

The Executive Commission For Witness and Mission held a joint meeting with the Moderamen of Nkhoma Synod in early 1997 where several decisions, largely related to the “Goals for Partnership” were reached. It was decided that recruiting of Malawian doctors should be a priority and funds would have to be found for accomplishing this. This matter was referred to the responsible commission of the Synod, who had to determine a realistic salary package. The services of a Christian worker were required for the hospital with the aim of training the hospital personnel to be equipped to do spiritual work amongst the patients. The ideal person should preferably be a woman with a medical background.³⁵⁵

The donations from various sources continue to arrive. A May 2003 Moderamen meeting noted the arrival of two new ambulances for the hospital. In light of this, the Moderamen directed that the Synod office and the hospital should exchange one vehicle, so that the Synod would have a car to use.³⁵⁶ Vehicles for Nkhoma Synod, or the lack thereof, are only part of the problem as the road to Nkhoma continued to be unpaved and often in disrepair.

Nkhoma Synod appoints a member to the Board of Directors of CHAM (Christian Hospital Association of Malawi). At the time of this writing, that person is the General

³⁵⁴ The minutes of a meeting between the Moderamen, members of the DRC personnel and Rev. JH Koch on 11/4/96 at the house of Rev. R. van Velden.

³⁵⁵ Minutes of a meeting of the Executive Commission for Witness and Mission, together with the Moderamen of the CCAP, Nkhoma Synod, Held on 18 Feb. 1997.

³⁵⁶ M. 5740, Meeting of the Moderamen, 14 May 2003.

Secretary, Rev. Dr. Winston Kawale. This organization coordinates health services and solicits funds from the government and from donors.³⁵⁷

The CCAP General Synod Standing Committee included in its “Ten-Year Strategic Plan 2000-2010” a section regarding health care, noting that almost all synods operated hospitals and clinics, and the funding came from the government, from overseas donors, and from patient fees, rather than from synodical resources. It went on to acknowledge that a crisis in health care was caused by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, as 75% of patients were HIV-infected. This created the need for the training of more nurses and other health care workers and volunteers. The report spoke of the role of pastors.

Ministers and other church leaders should be given opportunities to train in the pastoral care of AIDS patients both in the home and in hospital. It is important that the Church takes on a strong and focused pastoral role in the care of AIDS patients and their families. Counselling and spiritual support for both patients and families is a valuable complement to the work of the health professionals in the Church.

The Strategic Plan report admitted that overseas donors would be needed for expansion of health care and training facilities. The section on health ended by saying all pastors should regard themselves as chaplains of the hospitals within their jurisdiction.³⁵⁸

It has been shown in this section that an international effort was needed to keep the Nkhoma Synod Medical Department operational. This international effort took the form of both financial support and personnel. However, Nkhoma Synod makes a real contribution in that it can provide nurses and chaplains that understand the patients’ needs better than can expatriates. The training and retention of Malawian medical personnel remains an elusive goal.

7.6 THE RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

At the CCAP General Synod meeting of 1990, Nkhoma Synod announced the inauguration of a major new work. It concerned the area of development.

Another decision that was taken at 1989 Synod meeting was the formation of (the) Relief and Development Committee starting from congregation, Presbytery up to Synod level. These committees will be

³⁵⁷ Interview between the present researcher and General Secretary rev. Dr. Winston R. Kawale, 29 January 2004.

³⁵⁸ 2000 General Synod Standing Committee Ten-Year Strategic Plan, pages 33 –34.

responsible for seeing areas that need development in their respective constituencies. This will range from individual church members non church members (sic), families and villages as to how they can be helped to introduce and initiate development in undeveloped areas within their own lives so that a change for good can be experienced in their economic and spiritual lives.³⁵⁹

Beginning in September 1990 there was forged a partnership between the Nkhoma Synod Relief and Development Department (NR&D) and the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC). A component of this partnership has been the Women In Development programme that involved health, income generation, and agriculture. This programme used 23 community development facilitators working with 100 community groups in five districts, and with almost 6,000 individuals or households. The WID programme expanded from impacting 2545 families in 1998 to 5733 families in 1999/2000. This expansion was the result of the decision to work in the lakeshore area, which was afflicted by drought. The results of this work were so positive that communities requested further development through WIDs; this tended to have the result of reducing food insecurity. NR&D also initiated an Adult Literacy programme (see section 5.3) and a Diaconal Development programme that trained “diaconal committees” working in local congregations. NR&D collaborated with Malawi government local officials in such areas as literacy, forestry, agriculture, and health. Under yet another programme was known as Partners for Christian Development (PCD). This involved an exchange with North American farmers and business people (CRWRC Web Page: accessed 4 August 2004).

The 1994 CCAP General Synod received a report from Nkhoma Synod concerning its new Relief and Development Department, directed by Rev. WDM Gande. This department was divided into several different areas. One was Women In Development, which had trained 8 women to be Community Development Facilitators. Their aim was to assist communities to achieve self-reliance by providing seeds, chickens, and training in needlecraft work. There was also an agriculture section that was to deal with village, teaching them “Forestry, Nurseries, intercropping of maize and soya beans; dry planting of vegetables and cross breeding of goats for nutritional milk to small

³⁵⁹ Minutes of the CCAP General Synod meeting held at Blantyre from 26 Aug. to 3 Sept. 1990, page 78.

holder farmers.” Another section, labelled “Income Generating Activity”, operated at Mchenkhula, Thyolakhosi, Mchenga and Chilobwe. Among its activities was assisting people in starting small businesses.³⁶⁰

In addition, in 1994, a delegation from the Relief and Development Department flew to Kenya for a conference.

On March 21-25 (1994) the staff of the Relief and Development Department attended a training conference in Kenya. The theme of the conference was ‘Building and Strengthening Capacity.’ This theme was developed at the individual, community, and organizational levels. The focus was on increasing capacity in agriculture, micro-enterprise, and literacy. A technical manual on these topics is being prepared. Drafts of the manual were discussed in Kenya.³⁶¹

An organization known as Food Resource Bank issued a report on its work in Malawi early in 2004. It described a programme known as Nkhoma Lakeshore Expansion Area Project (LEAP). It identified the Nkhoma Synod Relief and Development Department (NR&D) as its “local partner”. Among the “Implementing Partners” were the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC), the Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA), the Reformed Church of America (RCA), the United Church of Christ-Wider Church Ministries (UCC), and the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR). There were three districts in which FRB funding got involved – Nkhotakota, Salima, and Mangochi. It involved 15 Community Development Facilitators, 75 groups, and 3,927 active participants. It reported that NR&D worked with the National Library Service to improve the Rural Lending Library Centres. An income generation programme sought to train people to save money. It included “household and small business management, start-up loans for small businesses, and tracking income and savings from the small businesses” (McAuley 2004).

7.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Few people in Malawi have access to real medical care. The resources of the Malawian Government are very thin. Nkhoma Synod has demonstrated an ongoing

³⁶⁰ Minutes of CCAP General Synod meeting held at Chongoni 9th to 13th November 1994.

³⁶¹ *Kuunika*, July/Sept. 1994, page 8

commitment to the meeting of the medical needs of the people. In order for this to happen, there continues to be a need for close cooperation between Nkhoma Synod and expatriate organisations.

In 1964 and in 1991, the decline in government subsidies caused financial distress for the hospital department. The drop in expatriate personnel caused the 1964 crisis. The one in 1991 was alleviated by South African donations.

In 1969 the first qualified Malawian nurses entered service. In 1985, the Synod saw an opportunity to send medical students to MEDUNSA in South Africa. The report of the flight of nurses from service in Malawi makes one aware of a serious, if unseen, crisis. Only if one has been a patient in a Malawian hospital, or if one is involved in the health profession, is one aware of this situation. The reception of two Malawian doctors, and their quick loss, was a tragedy for Nkhoma Synod's medical department. Lives are lost because of the shortage of medical personnel. The shortage, in turn, is aggravated by inability to pay them better. In 1996, the Narollah Trust offered funding to make more Malawian doctors for Nkhoma Hospital possible. It has yet to happen.

One pervasive fact of life in Malawi is that few people have access to meaningful health care. In chapter fourteen, which deals with the spirituality of the people of the Synod, it will be shown that there is an ongoing struggle against what has been described as "witchcraft". People in Malawi often resort to "African doctors" with some churches in Malawi doing nothing to discourage this practice. This present researcher has personally seen the charms that Christian mothers will place around the necks and wrists of their children. For many people even today, death is never caused by natural causes, but is always the result of magic. It does little good to tell people to stop going to "traditional" doctors if an acceptable alternative cannot be offered. Nkhoma Synod, in the tradition of Presbyterians elsewhere, has tried to minister with the provision of modern medicine. This chapter suggests, however, that available resources are never equal to the need.

In 2000 the Synod issued the Chongoni Declaration, declaring a commitment to an appropriate, Christian response to AIDS. The AIDS situation affects every dimension of life in Malawi, including the life of the Synod. Ministers, who are already stretched far too thin, must spend their limited time and resources visiting the sick, the orphans,

and conducting the funerals for AIDS victims. A concurrent tragedy must be realized by the fact that many of those in whom precious resources have been invested in them for their training; are the very ones dying of the disease.

The scourge of AIDS has become the focus of health-care providers in Africa in the last twenty years. Estimates of those infected with HIV/AIDS range as high as one-third of the population. New drugs (ARVs, or Anti Retro Virals) are becoming available. However, these are proving to be of unlimited use, because of their expense, and because people often fail to take them in the prescribed dosages³⁶².

Nkhoma Synod participates with organizations such as NetACT to advance the opportunities for training and awareness of pastors and church leaders in the fight against AIDS. These leaders in turn are trained to train others and help break the cycle of denial and alienation suffered by those infected or affected by the disease.

The establishment of the Nkhoma Synod Relief and Development Department was an important event in the life of the Synod. While many needs arise in many areas, the Synod working through a host of partners, or NGOs, can show that it can still meet the material as well as spiritual needs of its people. This too, is essential to how Nkhoma Synod developed its self-understanding of being a church. It sees itself living in community, giving attention to all areas of need, not just a hierarchy of religion professionals leading in worship on Sundays.

Having looked at the Synod's two departments which seek to meet the physical needs of its people, the next two chapters will look more deeply into describing the thrust at their spiritual needs; with the focus of chapter eight evangelism, and chapter nine dealing with missions, principally to Mozambique.

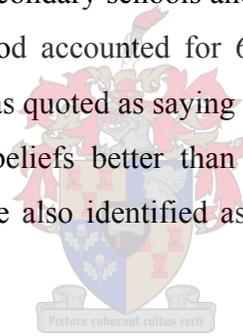
³⁶² Dr. Perry Jansen, an HIV/AIDS specialist with "Partners in Hope" fears the development of ARV – resistant AIDS from medications not being taken or monitored properly.

Chapter Eight

Evangelism

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Along with the Medical Department, the function of evangelism has always been a key focus of Nkhoma Synod. In the 1960s, the spiritual climate of the country, in the view of South African personnel, contained both opportunity and challenge. Although it seemed to them that the political climate was favourable to their cause, it was feared that this could change quickly. They identified Islam as a source of challenge; at that time, seventeen percent of Malawians were Muslim, while twenty-three percent identified themselves as Christians. Roman Catholicism posed another challenge; they had at that time in the Central Region nine secondary schools and colleges compared to only two for the Synod. Children of the Synod accounted for 61 percent of the students at these Catholic schools. Martin Pauw was quoted as saying that Catholic children seemed better taught and could express their beliefs better than could the children of the Synod. Communism and modernism were also identified as serious threats to the work of the Church.³⁶³



8.2 OUTREACH TO YOUTH

8.2.1 *Nkhoma Synod's Multi – Faceted Approach to Youth Work*

Nkhoma Synod clearly has a profound commitment to meeting the spiritual needs of youth. This can be seen in the creation of such posts as congregational, presbytery, and synodical youth directors, and in such activities as youth camps.

Already in 1962 The Synod had two youth movements, the Boys' Brigade and the Girls' Life Brigade. However, the Banda government was determined to supplant all youth groups in the country with its own Young Pioneers. This governmental policy was consistent with its educational aims (see section 5.2, "Secularisation and Schools"). In spite of the political pressure brought to bear on it, the Synod remained equally

³⁶³ *Nuusbrief Uit Malawi*, June 1967.

determined to continue its youth organizations, and asked the General Synod to appoint a commission to go and speak to Prime Minister Kamuzu Banda (see section 11.3, “Nkhoma Synod and Contention with the Government”).³⁶⁴

In 1967 the General Secretary presented his Annual General Report to the Chairman of the General Mission Committee of the DRC in Cape Town. In one section he reported that the Young Pioneers were doing a wonderful job of helping to develop Malawi.

Later in the report, under Youth Work in General,” he reported that Malawi’s youth were under pressure from two fronts: conflict with less educated parents, and non-Christian expatriate teachers. There were at that time three full-time youth workers in the Synod. Many youth were being reached through “S.C.O. weekend camps”. At Malingunde there was an ideal site for a camp, “but at the moment there is no money to develop it”. The youth workers were reaching 600-800 boys and girls per week. Two areas that needed attention were the working youth, and those that failed to make it to secondary school, but were unemployed.³⁶⁵

In 1972 the three persons dedicated to youth work were: Rev. AE Mndala, Rev. MH Daneel, and Mrs. M. Mwansambo. However, Mndala departed for studies in Zambia. As short-handed as they were, these youth ministers still had a Synodical-level Youth Committee to which they reported.³⁶⁶

In 1973 the Synodical Committee noted with satisfaction that the number of youth “under our care” had increased to 900. This translated into increased numbers seeking admission into catechumen class. A revised Sunday school manual had been published, “The Children’s Bible” was soon to be published, and the work of the Students’ Christian Organisation (now SCOM) was progressing well.³⁶⁷

Nkhoma Synod gave a report on its youth work to the CCAP General Synod in 1977 that was all of one sentence. “Youth work, especially in and around Lilongwe, has

³⁶⁴ Nuusbrieff Uit Malawi, September 1964

³⁶⁵ Annual General Report For 1967, found in archives of DRC Cape Town, behind “Minutes of Moderamen 6th may, 1968.” Photocopies in Nkhoma Library.

³⁶⁶ KS 5019. Minutes of a meeting of the Moderamen, 12 September 1972.

³⁶⁷ KS 5135. Minutes of a meeting of the Synodical Committee, 4-6 April 1973.

been seriously hampered by lack of staff, but the position will improve in 1977.” The report made no attempt to explain how.³⁶⁸

Related to youth work was the recognition of strains developing in families within Malawian society. A report submitted to the 1982 General Synod listed the following:

- Young people want rich partners and parents often encourage them in this.
- Some young people have too many partners before marriage and find that these partners come round even after a marriage has taken place causing many problems.
- Young people often marry too early without knowing enough about each other.
- There is often too much emphasis on looks and not enough on personality and character.
- There is lack of adequate training for young people prior to marriage in some parts of the country.
- When a marriage has no children the husband looks for another partner.
- Recent urbanization is a problem breaking down family ties.
- A partner in marriage who is successful often looks down upon a spouse who is uneducated.
- Boys especially are unwilling to look at the whole range of responsibilities involved in marriage and act too hastily.
- There is a lot of premarital sex and this can contribute to sexual licence later in marriage.
- Christians who marry outside their locality, or who marry non-Christians are often unprepared in the difficulties they will encounter.
- Non-Christian partners are often admitted into the church without proper instructions and this weakens discipline.
- Drinking of alcohol leads to many marital breakdowns.³⁶⁹

The same report made several recommendations. The drinking of alcohol was to be discouraged. A booklet containing tips on marriage was to be prepared (The report acknowledged that Nkhoma Synod already had its *Chirangizo* booklet). Attention to

³⁶⁸ Minutes of the General Synod held at Chongoni 16th to 17th August 1977.

³⁶⁹ Minutes of the General Synod held at Chongoni, 24 to 27 August 1982, page 5.

marriage counselling was to be given at Zomba Theological College. Finally, more research into the problem was mandated.³⁷⁰

At the 1982 CCAP General Synod, Nkhoma Synod submitted a report on its youth work:

The Synod has called Rev. L.L.K. Chafumuka to start Youth fellowships in all our congregations. Some have begun them but others are still yet to begin. It is hoped that before the next Synod meeting, every congregation will have started a Youth Fellowship.

Two youth workers are stationed in Lilongwe to do Youth Work around the secondary schools of Lilongwe town. One is a Lady, Miss A. Kirsten, another is Rev. Kazembe who has recently gone for further studies in America.³⁷¹

In 1983 it was decided that Rev. van Deventer should be engaged in training ministers on how to do youth work. He was not to try to visit each individual congregation in the Synod, but rather to train ministers 'so that they can do the work in their congregations.'³⁷²

The progress of youth work was of concern in 1985. In the General Secretary's report to Cape Town for 1985, in the section on outreach to youth, it was noted that early in the history of the Synod schools were established with evangelisation of children being a major goal. However, with the onset of the era of independence, the government took over the responsibility of schools and teacher training (see section 5.2, "Secularisation and Schools"), the result of which evangelisation in schools diminished. It was recognized that Sunday schools and catechism classes were therefore more essential. It was further noted that whereas in the DRC most catechumen pupils were baptized, such was not the case in Nkhoma Synod. More young adults than children were being baptized there. During 1984 about 10,000 young adults were baptized in the 88 congregations of the Synod, or more than 100 per congregation. "That is also why Nkhoma Synod is being regarded as one of the fastest growing churches in the world," said the General Secretary in his Annual Report. Concern was felt, however, for the quality of the training received in Sunday schools and catechumen classes. Teachers often lacked basic teaching aids. The Boys Brigade and the Girls Brigade ceased to exist

³⁷⁰ Minutes of the General Synod held at Chongoni, 24 to 27 August 1982, pages 5 and 6.

³⁷¹ Minutes of the General Synod held at Chongoni, 24 to 27 August 1982, page 20.

³⁷² M. 620 Minutes of the meeting of the Moderamen, 15 August 1983.

following independence, and the successor “youth organization” failed to meet expectations. It was further recognized that the Students’ Christian Organization in Malawi (SCOM) was proving to be better at reaching young church members of secondary school and college age than were local Nkhoma Synod congregations. It was noted that Rev. W. Kazembe, Rev. HJ van Deventer and Miss EJ Kirsten had worked over a period of years to reach this age group within the Central Region. Finally, the General Secretary’s report said that Christian camps were seen to be the most effective means for reaching the youth, but the costs involved made it unaffordable to most.

In its report to the 1990 General Synod meeting, Nkhoma Synod reported the following regarding evangelistic outreach to youth:

This is divided into two sections. The first section is done by a full time ministers (sic). He is working with the youth from Sunday school level up to primary School level. Through his work every congregation is encouraged to have a youth committee on the congregation level then on the Presbytery and Synod level. He is also engaged in initiating projects for school leavers and dropouts. Already there are farming, fishery poultry, and building projects taking place on the Synod level. Every year conferences are held for the youth on this level.

The second section is the work done among the youth in post (perhaps post secondary?) institutions around the City of Lilongwe. This is also done by a full time ministers (sic) based in Lilongwe. It has proved that services of such a minister are very much needed by the youth as they experience a lot of problems at this stage.³⁷³

At the 1994 CCAP General Synod, Nkhoma Synod reported on its work with youth. There was no full time minister for the congregational and primary school levels, but each presbytery appointed one minister to do this work. There was a full time minister for post primary youth, Rev. AM Chipshiko. His work included youth retreats, mostly at Malinunde Youth Camp. Other ministers appointed by the presbyteries were assisting him.³⁷⁴

Nkhoma Synod has a Youth Department and a Youth Director, Rev. Kachibaba; his colleague is Mr. Veitch. Additionally, there are youth committees at the congregational and presbytery level. Their activities include Bible studies, dramas,

³⁷³ Minutes of the General Synod meeting held at Blantyre 26 Aug. to 3 Sept. 1990.

³⁷⁴ Minutes of the CCAP General Synod held at Chongoni 9th to 13th November 1994, page 33.

camps, charitable work, and “school-leavers’ camps”. This last one aims to prepare youth who have not had much schooling for the problems that they will face in life.³⁷⁵

In the year 1983 Nkhoma Synod was informed by the General Synod that it wanted a youth program that encompassed all the CCAP. Youth workers from all the constituent synods would work together.³⁷⁶ One can see this policy being implemented by recent actions of the CCAP General Synod (now Assembly). The CCAP General Assembly Standing Committee Ten-Year Policy and Strategic Plan 2000-2010 addressed the issue of youth feeling estranged from the life of the Church. It said

The challenge for young people growing up at the height of the AIDS pandemic cannot be over emphasised. It is essential that the Church has a vision for the way forward which ministers to young people spiritually and helps to steer them strongly and compassionately through the immense dangers ahead.³⁷⁷

The Strategic Plan called for improved Youth Centres, and for better training for Synod Youth directors and Presbytery Youth Directors, as well as more resources being made available them. It called for an expanded role for youth in the life of the Church. It also stipulated that youth be sent to General Synod (now “Assembly”) as ruling elders or at least as observers.³⁷⁸

One can understand why Nkhoma Synod places such a high priority upon outreach to the youth of Malawi. One reason is that the country’s population is young; a continuing high birth rate ensures that this will be the case for some time to come. Another reason is the secularising tendencies of the government, particularly in the field of education (see section 5.8, “The Challenge of Multi-Faith Education”)

8.2.2 *Youth Work and the Para church Organisations*

Today, throughout the world, specialised ministries commonly called “parachurches” abound. This section will illustrate that some have found their way to Malawi.

³⁷⁵ Interview between present researcher and Rev. Michael Khombe and Rev. JL Nkhoma 28 June 2004.

³⁷⁶ M. 716, Meeting of the Moderamen, 16 December 1983.

³⁷⁷ CCAP General Synod Ten-Year Policy and Strategic Plan 2000–2010: 7 youth Work in CCAP, page 33.

³⁷⁸ General Synod Standing Committee Ten-Year Strategic Plan 2000-2010, pages 34 – 35.

An American representative from Young Life came to Malawi in 1985 to commence youth work. The Moderamen directed that this person stay with Rev. Kazembe. The present researcher finds this interesting, as Young Life is sympathetic to Charismatic gifts and its founder, Loren Cunningham, has written a book, read by the present researcher entitled, *Why Not Women?* It advocates the opening of all church offices to women. Nkhoma Synod has consistently distanced itself from these two doctrinal positions.³⁷⁹

Rev. CL Chimkoka served as General Secretary of SCOM from 1982 to 1985; it was in this capacity that he attended a conference in Great Britain in 1983. SCOM was initiated by teachers at Robert Blake Secondary School. It was intended to focus on students at both the secondary and tertiary levels. After Chimkoka's term, the leaders were all laymen; through this a certain amount of charismatic influence came into SCOM.³⁸⁰

Meanwhile, a number of para church organisations are reaching out to the youth of Malawi. The Student Christian Organization of Malawi (SCOM) is a good example. Its ministry has heavily influenced many of the students at African Bible College. AWANA (Approved Workmen Are Not Ashamed) is a nondenominational program for youth, now used by many churches. When the present researcher attempted to start an AWANA program at a nearby Nkhoma Synod church, the bureaucracy of that church proved to be an insurmountable obstacle. ABC students have successfully implanted this program at local Baptist and Assemblies of God churches.

Nkhoma Synod Missions Committee Chairman Rev. Michael Khombe, like Rev. Chimkoka, feels that there is a certain tension between the Synod and para church organisations. "Teachings conflict," he says. However, he and his committee do cooperate with the Evangelical Association of Malawi.³⁸¹

In November 1994 Ryk van Velden mentioned to Cape Town that Scripture Union in Malawi was interested in an inter-denominational Youth Team for Malawi. At the same time, seeing that the (Malawi) government took over all primary schools of the

³⁷⁹ M. 1126 Meeting of the Moderamen, 13 May 1985.

³⁸⁰ Interview between present researcher and Rev. CL Chimkoka on 9 July 2004.

³⁸¹ Interview between present researcher and Rev. Michael Khombe and Evangelism Committee chairman Rev. JL Nkhoma 28 June 2004.

church in Malawi, Rev. Kainja asked Cape Town to help with courses aimed at spiritual equipping of primary school teachers. Ex-missionaries were mentioned as a possibility.³⁸²

Cooperation with inter-denominational groups and parachurches for youth work carries with it an advantage, but also at least a potential disadvantage. The advantage is that these ministries can furnish highly skilled specialists. The potential disadvantage is that they may detract from loyalty to one's denomination. Exposure to fellow participants from other traditions may lead to doctrinal confusion, to which Rev. Khombe alluded.

8.2.3 *Youth Work and the South Africa Connection*

The "South Africa Connection" in regard to youth work is given for two reasons. First, in the past, much youth work was in fact done by South African personnel, both short- and long-term. Secondly, in all likelihood, South African personnel will do further youth work, and it is felt that reading this section may provide useful insights. A big part of the life of Nkhoma Synod's life is its DRC of South Africa legacy. This legacy is seen in many ways, including youth work.

A June 1969 meeting in Cape Town noted that Rev. KJ Mgawi, at one time the General Secretary, was at that time serving as the full-time youth minister of the secondary schools and chairman of the youth committee of the Synod. He was being assisted in this work by Rev. BH Groenwald, Miss B. van der Merwe, and Rev. Martin Pauw (part-time). A youth camp was erected at Malingunde.

In 1983, Rev. Hennie van Deventer began the task of training ministers to do youth work. It was not intended that he visit each congregation, but that ministers would go to him for their training.³⁸³

In 1992 a Youth Team was sent from South Africa to Nkhoma Synod. It first took an orientation course at Huguenot College, then another in Malawi. A Malawian team joined it. The Executive Committee in Cape Town sent with it a candidate-minister, who was placed in the service of Nkhoma synod for one year.

³⁸² Minutes of a meeting of the Outreach Committee: Missions and Evangelism on 22 November 1994 at the house of JH Koch, Durbanville.

³⁸³ M. 620, Meeting of the Moderamen, 15 August 1983.

In September 1992, Youth Committee Chairman EH Kamanga sent a handwritten evaluation to DRC Mission Secretary JD Thom in Cape Town.

I am happy to report to you that I am in receipt of your letter reference no. AF/2/66 dated 12th August 1992.

The letter was on 28/9/92 tabled to the committee which accepted the apology your Executive expressed to us. Please find herein a report from our committee as requested.

Concerning that the South African team came to Nkhoma Synod as a result of an invitation; to this fact, the Youth Committee has noted with great disapproval, and as such the CCAP does not accept the ownership for the projects.

For the future plans, please refer to the recommendations in our report.

Thank you very much for your cooperation throughout this period of visit.³⁸⁴

The report to which Kamanga's letter referred contained the commendation that the Jesus Film was shown with great effectiveness and that the South African young people forged friendships with their Malawian counterparts. However, the report was scathing in its list of cultural violations committed by the South African team. This included a speaker preaching with his hands in his pockets. Their "love affairs" - the men and women related to one another in a way that greatly offended the Malawians ("Their behaviour (relationship) does not match with what they preach"). "They don't show any respect towards the church's traditions, customs and culture of the Malawian Society and those in authority." The South Africans said things that were insulting, i.e. "The members of the church seem to be dead." The Malawians wanted training in skills such as carpentry, and the South African youth disappointed them in this respect. The report closed with a list of recommendations, such as future groups coming from the DRC only, and youth workers being trained at the Presbytery level before the youth themselves. The report also did not want future teams from South Africa to include an equal number of boys and girls ("as this embarrasses our traditional values here in Malawi"). Finally, the report asked the South Africans for more money for the Youth Department.

³⁸⁴ Letter from Youth Committee Chairman EH Kamanga to Mission Secretary JD Thom and dated 28 September 1992.

Cape Town suggested that the Synod send three people to Huguenot College for training, and then they along with three young people from South Africa would be sent back to Nkhoma for follow-up work.³⁸⁵

“Mission trips” are very popular today, both in the evangelical churches of America, and in South Africa. They often feature enthusiastic young people. However, it was demonstrated that they could be culturally insensitive. A long-term veteran of the South African personnel at Nkhoma mentioned to the present researcher that groups from the Western Cape have been known to bring wine with them; permissible back home, but it horrified both the Malawians and Nkhoma’s South African personnel.³⁸⁶

8.3 RADIO MINISTRY

The pioneers of Nkhoma Synod, Murray and Vlok, could not in 1889 have foreseen the impact of radio ministry. This section describes how for a number of years this avenue of evangelism was used by the Synod.

Rev. Attie Labuschagne explains that he got the idea for “Modern Evangelisation Means in Africa” (MEMA) one day in 1958 while listening to the Lutheran Hour using a cheap “saucepan” radio at Dzenza, Malawi. In April 1959 the DRCM Mission Council gave its stamp of approval. The following year it voted £1,000 for the building of the MEMA Centre at Lilongwe. It also approved the purchase of a MEMA Mobile Unit. In 1961 Labuschagne moved to Lilongwe with a view to producing MEMA programmes to be aired over Radio Voice of the Gospel in Addis Adebba, Ethiopia. In the mid-sixties the MEMA and radio programmes (begun in 1963) were proving to be such a success that the contract with Radio Voice of the Gospel was renewed from two to four years. The right was obtained from the Malawi Broadcast Corporation to broadcast one hour on Sundays and five minutes each day for a religious program. The missionary Rev. PR Smit undertook a Bible Correspondence Course that cooperated with these programmes. The radio ministry (which actually was under the sponsorship of the Christian Council of Malawi) ran into financial problems however; other churches failed to pay their financial

³⁸⁵ Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive commission of the Committee for Mission and Evangelism Held on 4 August 1992 in Cape Town.

³⁸⁶ Conversation in 2004 between the present researcher and Mrs. Ingrid van Deventer, wife of NIFCOTT principal Rev. Dr. Hennie van Deventer.

obligations. As a result the Nkhoma Synod incurred a debt of R 3,759 (Labuschagne 2003: 297-301).

The MEMA report for 1966 reported that the studio had been operating for three years. It had produced daily half radio programmes for Radio Voice for the Gospel, but that this was to end in 1967. At the same time it anticipated gaining more air-time for its programmes on Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC).³⁸⁷

In June 1967 the GAC heard that MEMA Studios were producing no programmes because MBC had discontinued the use of programmes produced by the Gospel Broadcasting Committee of the Christian Council. However, negotiations between the Christian Council and MBC continued.³⁸⁸

The MEMA Department reported that in 1967 from April to July almost all of its programmes on MBC were halted. MBC had acquired a new director, Mr. John Perry of Rhodesia, who insisted on concentrating on programmes produced by MBC rather than by outside sources. MBC entered into negotiations with the Catholic Church and with the Christian Council. The result was that MBC broadcast three hours of religious broadcasting from these two groups per week.³⁸⁹

When an arrangement with Radio Voice Of the Gospel of the Lutheran Church, Addis Ababa was cancelled, MEMA began broadcasting over the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC). At first MEMA understood that it was to get four-and-a-half hours' time per week over MBC; it was distressed to learn that this was reduced. MBC said that there would be a total of three hours' of religious broadcasting per week, to be shared equally by the Protestants and the Catholics. However, it was noted that the Catholics did not have program production facilities of their own; MEMA learned that this left them with the possibility of having two hours and twenty minutes per week on MBC (Labuschagne 2003: 297-301).

It was noted in a July 1969 meeting in Cape Town that MEMA still had 2 hours and 10 minutes for Christian radio on Radio Malawi. A donation of R 5,120 was

³⁸⁷ Minutes of Meeting of GAC Executive held at Nkhoma, on 31 March 1967, page 8, "Report of MEMA Committee 1966."

³⁸⁸ E. 1181: Executive Committee meeting 6 June 1967.

³⁸⁹ Minutes of the GAC Executive Meeting held on 13 March 1968, "Annual Report MEMA Department 1967".

received from Holland for development and expansion of the MEMA buildings and equipment.³⁹⁰

In his “Annual General Report for 1969” to the DRC in Cape Town, General Secretary YA Chienda reported that regarding MEMA, “General Director of MBC Mr. John Perry praised the programmes for being really well prepared.” MEMA’s work also involved cinema, a film library, and filmstrips.

In April of 1971 the GAC declared that MEMA Studio was not being compensated enough by the Christian Council. They stated their intention at that time to loan their studio to the MBC.³⁹¹ Another issue was the appropriation of MK376 for the work of an Indian evangelist, expected to arrive later in the year (see the following section, “The Challenge of Islam”).

The Joint Financial Committee noted in its October 1971 meeting that the Baptists had agreed to take over MEMA. No equipment was to be removed or sold.³⁹² A month later the deal with the Baptists fell through, as the Christian Council decided to hand over this work to the MBC, while retaining a measure of control. The January 1972 JFC meeting outlined the terms of the MBC take-over. They were to continue to pay the MEMA staff at the Nkhoma pay scale until April 1972, at which time MBC would set pay scales.³⁹³

In the mid-seventies Ethiopia’s Haile Selassie was overthrown and that country was a Marxist state for a number of years. Radio Voice of the Gospel in March 1977 became Radio voice of the Revolution. MEMA became the Religious Department of Radio Botswana, operating from Gaborone. In 1966 Labuschagne moved to Pretoria, South Africa, working with the Christian Literature Fund of which MEMA had become branch. In 1968 the South African Broadcasting Corporation began its external Chewa service, and Labuschagne was involved with this, specifically a programme called “*Tisanthule za m’Baibulo.*” In 1983 Labuschagne retired and handed over this work to

³⁹⁰ Minutes of a meeting of the GMSC held in the Church Centre, Cape Town, 22-24 July 1969, “44 .MEMA (par. 24)”.

³⁹¹ G. 1704: GAC Executive, “Handing Over MEMA to the MBC”, 1 – 7 April 1971. In June of that year the Christian Council stipulated that the Mema studios were to be handed to another church, not the M.B.C. Negotiations were initiated with the Baptist Mission.

³⁹² JE 24: 19 October 1971.

³⁹³ JE 71: JFC 24 January 1971.

Rev. Wallace Chikakuda, who had gained experience in radio at the Lilongwe MEMA studio, and who had produced religious programmes for the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC). His work with *Tisanthule za m’Baibulo* ended in 1998 when the SABC discontinued this programme (Labuschagne 2003: 368-373).

Into the decade of the eighties, the Synod continued to demonstrate the priority that it had given to evangelism. At the Nineteenth Meeting of Synod, in 1983, there was a report from Rev. Sankhani regarding the radio ministry. It was suggested by him that pastors be separated for the work of preaching on the radio, and that he himself would do the training.³⁹⁴ In 1985 Synod noted that the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) was adding to the number of hours dedicated to religious programming. Synod’s explanation for this development was “because it was seen as being necessary for spiritual growth of listeners”.³⁹⁵

Synod in April 1995 took the step of establishing a committee to investigate the possibility of once again using the MEMA broadcasting studios.³⁹⁶ Today the old MEMA studio in Lilongwe is being rented from Nkhoma Synod by MBC and is next door to Lilongwe CCAP church.

Nkhoma Synod is currently considering starting a radio station, either in Lilongwe or at Nkhoma.³⁹⁷ CCAP General Secretary YA Chienda reveals that the old MEMA studio sitting next to Lilongwe CCAP may be taken over from MBC and converted to the Nkhoma Synod radio station, complete with radio tower. A committee is currently looking into it. He points out that the equipment inside the facility is now twenty years old, and may need to be refurbished.³⁹⁸

Nkhoma synod has now mentioned to its partners with the Commission for Witness in the Western Cape, South Africa, of its interest in the revival of broadcasting.

Thank you very much for bringing out this issue of religious broadcasting. At the last year’s Synod, a decision was made that Nkhoma Synod should start religious broadcasting by establishing a broadcasting

³⁹⁴ S. 1775, The Nineteenth Meeting of the Synod, Held at Namoni Katengeza CLTC, 5 – 12 April 1983.

³⁹⁵ S. 1931, minutes of 20th Synod Meeting at Namoni Katengeza, 10 – 16 April 1985.

³⁹⁶ S. 2832 and 2888, Minutes of the 25th Synod Meeting at Namoni Katengeza, 4 – 11 April 1995.

³⁹⁷ Interview between present researcher and General Secretary Rev. Dr. Winston R. Kawale, 29 January 2004.

³⁹⁸ Interview between present researcher and Rev. YA Chienda 28 June 2004.

studio. Many people are asking if we can reclaim the MEMA studio at Lilongwe.

I will be contacting Mr. Van Wyk to see if we can start a studio station. There are now many radio stations in Malawi and we hope that the Government can allow us to have one.³⁹⁹

Late in 2002 CM Pauw contacted the General Secretary and among other things discussed radio ministry. He observed that African Bible College had a transmitter in Lilongwe, and that Trans World Radio was “putting up transmitters all over Malawi”. He suggested that working with them was the answer regarding getting back into broadcasting.⁴⁰⁰

Malawi now has TV broadcasting, and its religious programming is very prominent. Nkhoma Synod plays no part in this TV religious programming.⁴⁰¹

The venerable Rev. Sankhani (who came out of retirement and now pastors in a remote area between Salima and Nkhotakota) has disclosed to this present researcher in personal conversations that he still dreams of starting a radio station aimed at the Muslim community around Salima.

Trans World Radio is very active in presenting Christian programming in Malawi; it has offices in Lilongwe. One very recent work is “Project Samuel”, being produced in South Africa for TWR Malawi.⁴⁰²

There has been an association between Rev. Sankhani and Trans World Radio. The Moderamen in 1989 made the decision to “second” him to TWR.

The committee agrees that a minister should be made available to help T.W.R. with the religious broadcasting. The committee agrees that Rev. Sankhani be seconded to T.W.R. as part time worker. He should also attend the meeting of T.W.R., which will take place this year.⁴⁰³

One can go to a remote village in Malawi and see in someone’s hut a simple battery-operated radio. Evangelisation by radio continues to be essential, and one can well understand Nkhoma Synod’s continuing interest in it.

³⁹⁹ Letter from General Secretary WR Kawale to Missions Secretary, committee for Witness CM Pauw, 15 July 2002.

⁴⁰⁰ Letter from CM Pauw to the General Secretary of Nkhoma Synod, 9 December 2002.

⁴⁰¹ Interview between present researcher and Rev. Michael Khombe and Rev. JL Nkhoma 28 June 2004.

⁴⁰² From a letter by Laurie Vogt to TWR Malawi dated 2 February 2004.

⁴⁰³ M. 2522 Moderamen, 1 March 1989.

8.4 THE CHALLENGE OF ISLAM

Malawi offers an opportunity for one to observe the co-existence of two major world religions. This section will describe the efforts of Nkhoma Synod to reach out to the Muslim community, while there exists the necessity to stay within certain limits. For ten years, the country had a Muslim head of state.

In his “Annual General Report for 1969” to the DRC in Cape Town General Secretary YA Chienda reported that the new congregation at Nkhotakota (an Islamic stronghold) was growing and this included Yao converts from Islam. Regarding work among the Indians, there was a need for an Indian evangelist and for financial support for this work.

The same meeting studied the topic of mission work among Asians. The spiritual need of this group had been keenly felt for a long time. Some of the missionaries had already on their own started work among them. Nkhoma synod now asked the SMC to budget for a worker for Asian evangelism. They further asked that one of the South African ministers already there be given this assignment. The salary would be equal to that of a native minister. At that time there was an Asian minister available, Mr. GC John. He was a member of the Methodist church and came from India. The FMSC approved, and recommended it to the SMC⁴⁰⁴

That same Synodical Commission said that John would be appointed as an evangelist, not as a minister, “until the time Synod may decide to accept him as a minister”. It also stated that a residence permit for John had been obtained from “H.E. the President.” It further stipulated that the Psalter of the Reformed Church, containing the Heidelberg Catechism, the Netherlands Confession, the Canons of Dordt, and the constitutions of the CCAP and the Nkhoma Synod be sent to John so that “he can become acquainted with the doctrinal basis of the Nkhoma Synod.” Synod was at that time asked to make regulations for the acceptance of ministers from other denominations.⁴⁰⁵

We have seen that during the period under study, 1962 - 2004, Nkhoma was never exclusively focused upon it, but was engaged in evangelistic work to the Moslems and in Mozambique. A July 1972 *Nuusbrief Uit Malawi* article serves as another example of the

⁴⁰⁴ Meeting of the Synodical Mission Sub Committee held in Cape Town 10 – 12 August 1971.

⁴⁰⁵ KS. 3391. Synodical Committee, 5 – 7 April, 1972.

progress that has been experienced. Here the Malawian evangelist to Moslems in Nkhotakota, Rev. J. Kajawa, reported that from starting in 1969 with 213 parishioners, 60 candidates for baptism, and 75 Sunday school children, three years later, in 1972, they had increased to 360 parishioners, 70 candidates for baptism, and 120 Sunday school children.

In 1973 the DRC in South Africa dispatched Rev. Dr. JM Cronje, Mission Secretary of the General Synod of the DRC to Malawi. The purpose was to explain the DRC's commitment to do evangelistic work among Communists in Africa. After making a presentation to the Synodical Committee, the Committee decided to explain the work to the Synod itself. The same meeting learned that their missionary to the Asians found it difficult to live on his salary, "due to his Indian way life". A request for a salary of MK100 per month was forwarded to Cape Town, which was furnishing his pay.⁴⁰⁶

The evangelist to the Asian community, Rev. John, became disturbed that the local mosque was able to use loudspeakers to call members of that faith to prayers five times a day. He went to the local police commissioner and got permission to mount a pair of very large speakers on the roof of his house. Using them he played short messages and Christian songs to his predominantly Moslem neighbourhood. He reported that he received no complaints, but rather Asian women appreciated the opportunity to listen within the safety of their homes.⁴⁰⁷ Rev. John left the service of the Synod in 1978. He received demission on July 16, 1978 at the Lilongwe congregation, and departed on July 27. The Synod gave him a gift in appreciation for his work.⁴⁰⁸

In a November 1975 meeting of the JFC, it was learned that there was only MK 1,834 in the Mission to Muslims Fund. It was decided to complete the church and manse at Nkhotakota, but it was determined that it would not be possible to provide the minister there with a vehicle. It was noted that the Kongwe congregation had completed a similar house at Dowa.⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁶ KS 5195 and 5199. Minutes of Synodical Committee, 4-6 April 1973.

⁴⁰⁷ *Nuusbrief Uit Malawi*, January 1977.

⁴⁰⁸ KS 7347. Moderamen 13 July 1978. By 2003 he was back in Malawi, and currently serves as hospital chaplain in Lilongwe.

⁴⁰⁹ J.163. JFC 13 November 1975

A bit of a milestone was observed on 14 March 1976 when The Synod's first Indian convert, a Mr. Bawdekar, a resident of England on contract with the Malawian government, was baptized at the English service of Lingadzi CCAP in Lilongwe. Though from a Hindu background, he had a Christian wife. The Synod praised Rev. GC John for this event.⁴¹⁰

In the field of missions and evangelism, the 1979 report regretted that no minister for outreach to the Asian community of Malawi had been found. In evangelisation of (non-Asian) Muslims, things were somewhat brighter. The report cited 62 Muslim converts in Nkhotakota, and 30 each in Salima and Malowa. It said that a Muslim chief had approached them and begged for a "revival meeting at his head-quarters". There was a Mission to Muslims Committee. One task they set for themselves in 1979 was to distribute Bibles to new converts from Islam. It was decided to sell the Bibles to them at the subsidized price of 75 tambala apiece "so that he will treasure it and know that it is his own".⁴¹¹

In its report to the 1982 CCAP General Synod, Nkhoma Synod gave the following report on its outreach to Muslims:

At the present moment the Synod has suspended her preponderance (sic) in mission in Mozambique. But mission work among the Muslims is in progress. Rev. John, an Indian Christian who once worked among the Asians in Lilongwe, left the country in 1979 and no replacement has been made as yet. There is, however, a great deal of work being done at Nkhotakota, Salima, Chitundu and Malembo among the Muslems (sic). The number of Muslem (sic) converts has increased at Nkhotakota.⁴¹²

In December 1983 a Dr. Haafkens⁴¹³ visited Malawi on behalf of "The Islam Project in Africa". Synod was asked to assign Rev. Gareta, upon his return from the U.S., to help with this work. However, it was not a specifically Presbyterian work, and the Moderamen noted that Gareta would be busy doing his ministry at Nkhotakota. They concluded that before he got involved in interdenominational work, this would have to

⁴¹⁰ KS. 5880, Moderamen, 5 March 1976.

⁴¹¹ KS 7796. Synodical Committee, 30 November 1979. The present researcher has learned from experience that Bibles handed out completely free often get turned into cigarette paper.

⁴¹² Minutes of the General Synod held at Chongoni, 24 to 27 August 1982, pages 20 and 21.

⁴¹³ Haafkens was connected to PROCMURA, Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa.

come through the Christian Council of Malawi.⁴¹⁴ The following year, 1985, the Moderamen stated that, “. . . when the Synod wants to send someone to do training in evangelism among the Muslims, the Christian Council should be informed.”⁴¹⁵ This attitude toward interdenominational efforts later got modified. From June 22-27 1987, the Christian Council of Malawi held an interdenominational seminar on Muslim evangelisation. It asked Nkhoma to send three representatives.⁴¹⁶

In 1984 the Synod reported to the GMC in Cape Town that “About 40% of the population of Malawi are still heathen. From this percentage about 20% is Muslim. Especially in the congregations of Nkhotakota, Salima and Chitundu, special effort is made to bring the Good News to those of the Muslim faith.” Rev. Gareta, who was sent to Nairobi and to the USA to get training in ministry to Muslims, returned and was placed at Nkhotakota. He also was assigned to train ministers in outreach to Muslims. It will be remembered that Rev. Gareta died in an automobile accident shortly after assuming his evangelistic role (see chapter 3.5.1, “The Ministers of Nkhoma Synod”).⁴¹⁷ After Rev. John left the outreach ministry to Muslims in Lilongwe, no suitable person was found to replace him.

David S. Bone explains that during the 1980s there was a significant Islamic revival. It manifested itself in the form of greater Islamic efforts at education, the opening of an Islamic health clinic, and greater production of Islamic literature (Bone 2000:145-146).

On specific attempts by churches and church related groups to respond to developments within in Islam the following can be said. With regard to the Area Committee of the Islam in Africa project it is perhaps surprising that during the years of Islamic revival in Malawi it was less active than before. In 1980 and 1981 the Committee presented no report on its work to the Christian Council of Malawi. In 1981 it organised no courses at all, the reason given being that the Area Advisor was abroad on further studies. By 1982 the Area Committee had, in effect, ceased to function and was deemed by the Christian Council of Malawi to be in need of re-activating. The desire that the Area Committee in Malawi should be more active was expressed at the General Council of the Islam in Africa Project in May 1983.

⁴¹⁴ M746, Meeting of the Moderamen, 6 February 1984.

⁴¹⁵ M. 1187, Meeting of the Moderamen, 26 June 1985.

⁴¹⁶ M. 1829, Meeting of the Moderamen, 30 April 1987.

⁴¹⁷ M. 932, Minutes of the meeting of the Moderamen held at Lilongwe CCAP on 1 October 1984.

In January 1984 the Area Advisor returned to Malawi having by this time completed, with Islam in Africa project sponsorship, a Masters degree in Missiology with a specialization in Islam. In August of that year he organised a national conference but the following month he was killed in a road accident (this was Rev. Gareta). His untimely death dealt that Area committee a severe setback from which, by 1986, it had not really recovered (Bone 2000:149-150).

In 1989 the Synod searched for an Indian minister who would work specifically with the Indian community of Lilongwe. It was proposed that such a minister would be attached to Lilongwe CCAP.

The Committee instructed the General Secretary to write to the Reformed church in Africa (Indian Church) asking them whether they could find us a minister.⁴¹⁸

This request went unanswered. There has never been an Indian minister for Lilongwe CCAP.⁴¹⁹

In 1990 the Synod was still feeling an urgent need to do outreach to the Muslims. The General Secretary was directed to write a letter to the Christian Council asking about opportunities for training in this field.⁴²⁰ A month later, March 1990, it was reported that a suitable person had been found in South Africa, and it was agreed that he should come.⁴²¹

The Christian Council of Malawi recruited Rev. Kajawa, who had recently retired, in 1990 to work with Muslims for a period of three years.⁴²² In its report to the General Synod in 1990, Nkhoma Synod reported the following regarding its outreach to Muslims:

Mission work among the Moslems is still going on at Nkhotakota and Chitundu congregations respectively. The number of Moslem convert (sic) at these places is increasing every year. Besides that it is pleasing to report that it the 1989 Synod meeting (sic) the Synod decided to form Mission Committee (sic) right from Congregation, Presbytery and Synod level. We praise the Lord that through this decision the Synod has now come to a point for the first time of sending a missionary to a foreign country which is Mozambique.⁴²³

⁴¹⁸ M. 2529, Moderamen, 30 March 1989.

⁴¹⁹ Interview with CCAP General Secretary YA Chienda on 22 October 2004.

⁴²⁰ M. 2756, Moderamen, 14 February 1990

⁴²¹ M. 2782, Moderamen, 6 March 1990.

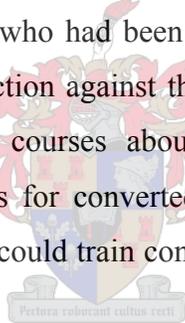
⁴²² M. 2858, Moderamen, 8 May 1990

⁴²³ Minutes of General Synod meeting held at Blantyre from 26 Aug. to 3 Sept. 1990.

At the 1994 CCAP General Synod meeting, Nkhoma Synod reported that evangelisation among Muslims was continuing at Chitundu and Nkhotakota. It reported further that the work was being extended to Malowa and Mtchakhatha. “The number of converts is encouragingly rising.”⁴²⁴

Muslim evangelism continued to be a priority. In 1995 Synod thanked Rev. GA Kachaje and JM Kajawa for translating a booklet designed to help newly converted Muslims.⁴²⁵

In 1999 Nkhoma Synod produced the “Nkhoma Synod CCAP Policy for Christian-Muslim Relations and the Evangelisation of Our Neighbours”. It was approved by the Synod Meeting of 18-25 October 1999 at Namoni Katengeza Church Lay Training Centre. Among its aims were to promote respect and love for Muslims without denying differences between the two religions. It also called for the good general care of Muslims who had converted to Christianity. Congregations were encouraged to establish funds for the support of converts from Islam who had been rejected by their families. Churches were asked to pray for God’s protection against the advance of Islam. Christians were encouraged to take seminars and courses about Islam. It further called for the development of discipleship courses for converted Muslims. It further called for the establishment of training teams that could train congregations in Muslim evangelism and discipleship.⁴²⁶



The CCAP General Assembly Policy and Strategic Plan 2000-2010 sounds a cautious note regarding the denomination’s approach to Muslims.

... the CCAP will continue to promote dialogue and understanding among the various faith communities.

However the challenge posed by the Muslim religion must not be underrated. Thus we must tread the dialogue path with great care to avoid being captured by Islam subconsciously.

One strategy of the Muslims is for their boys to marry our Christian girls and allow our girls to continue with Christianity but the children of the marriage will join Islam. We constantly see the manifestation of this strategy during Kirk Session for cases whereby most

⁴²⁴ Minutes of the CCAP General Synod held at Chongoni 9th to 13th November 1994, page 33.

⁴²⁵ 25th Meeting of the Synod held at Namoni Katengeza CLTC 4-11 April 1995.

⁴²⁶ “Nkhoma Synod CCAP Policy for Christian-Muslim relations and the Evangelisation of Our Neighbours.”

of our girls who come with pregnancy cases mention Muslim boys as being responsible for the pregnancy. We need an intensified sensitisation campaign of our young girls in this area.

Our faith must also appeal to the needs of a human body on this earth. And if we continue simply telling our faithfuls that they are not of this world and their kingdom is coming without appealing to their human needs we will lose the battle with the Muslims. This is why our mission is to serve humanity holistically i.e. the body and soul together. Hence we need to improve education and health infrastructure and intensity development projects and other economic activities of the people so that there should be nothing attractive to the human being in the Muslim faith compared to the Christian ones.

There is also need for the Christians to have deeper understanding of the scripture for them to have an informed and correct perception of some of the beliefs of the Muslim faith.⁴²⁷

Today along the shores of Lake Malawi there are CCAP congregations made up entirely of converts from Islam. This is the result of Nkhoma Synod's outreach to them. They do not take off their shoes or follow other Islamic traditions, but rather the standard Nkhoma Synod liturgy. When asked how this came about, the researcher's informant said that Nkhoma Synod evangelists used a person-by-person approach rather than mass evangelism, and it has worked.⁴²⁸

In 2003 Rev. Michael Khombe, formerly Pastor of Kaning'a CCAP, became chairman of the Nkhoma Synod Missions Committee. In addition to work in Mozambique (see chapter nine), his committee oversees outreach to Muslims. For this, he says that the committee gets funds from South Africa and from word and Deed, a U.S. foundation. He claims that "great numbers" are converting from Islam to Christianity. They work in four areas, all near Lake Malawi: Salima, Nkhotakota, Chipoka, and Monkey Bay. He points out that when a Muslim young person converts to Christianity, his family ties are severed. For this reason Rev. Khombe's group must try to provide them with food and accommodation to school fees. He attributes his committee's success to the fact that when Christians go into a village, they feed everyone without

⁴²⁷ CCAP General Assembly Policy and Strategic Plan 2000-2010, page 27.

⁴²⁸ Interview between present researcher and Rev. AM Kuthyola Mwale, Pastor of Lingadzi CCAP in Lilongwe and Missions Committee member, on 24 June 2004.

discrimination, while Muslims will feed only Muslims or those converting to Islam. This makes a favourable impression for Christianity.⁴²⁹

CCAP General Assembly General Secretary YA Chienda laments that Muslims are now using tactics not used before. These include giving scholarships, making schools available for free, and providing material needs. He points out that they have oil money available to them that make these things possible.⁴³⁰

While there is the need to tread carefully, outreach to Muslims must not be neglected. It requires specific training; distributing *Khasu* tracts (see the following section) is inadequate. Muslim youth can ask some very tough questions. On the other hand, Muslim communities have been astonishingly open to such things as viewing the Campus Crusade “Jesus Film”.⁴³¹

8.5 OTHER EVANGELISTIC ACTIVITIES

Nkhoma Synod has demonstrated a willingness to use various means to reach out to people. In so doing, it is continuing the vision of Murray, Vlok, and other early pioneers.

8.5.1 *Revivals and Tracts*

In his “Annual General Report for 1969” General Secretary YA Chienda reported that evangelisation was continuing in spite of Rev. AS Chisanu’s calling to be principal of the Chongoni Lay Training Centre. Evangelist Shadreck Moloka from Dorothea Mission in South Africa helped with revival meetings.

A 1979 report to Cape Town said that nearly every congregation had held revival and open-air meetings. It specifically pointed out that many had been trained in the use of a particular evangelistic tract, *Khasu* (hoe).⁴³²

Veteran missionary Rev. Attie Labuschagne explains his involvement with *Khasu*.

⁴²⁹ Interview between the present researcher and Rev. Michael Khombe 28 June 2004.

⁴³⁰ Interview between present researcher and Rev. YA Chienda 28 June 2004.

⁴³¹ Comments based upon the present researcher’s personal experience.

⁴³² This tract is the English-language version of the “Four Spiritual Laws” developed by Campus Crusade for Christ, which in Malawi goes under the name of Life Ministry. This is still being distributed as of this writing (2002).

Campus Crusade opened an office in Lilongwe where churches could get literature about personal work and evangelisation. We translated the Four Spiritual Laws of Campus (sic) into Chichewa, adapting it in a way that Malawians would understand it. We called the book *Khasu* meaning a pickaxe or hoe which was used to break new ground (Labuschagne 2003: 415).

In its report to the 1990 General Synod, Nkhoma Synod stated that there were many revival meetings at the congregational level, some were being held at the presbytery level, and that in 1990 for the first time there would be a revival at the Synod level. The report went on to say that it had been decided in 1989 that there would be evangelism committees at all three levels; congregation, presbytery, and synod.⁴³³

Among the church-going community of Malawi, revivals are a common experience. Hand-in-hand with this activity is the distribution of tracts. The procurement of tracts in Chichewa and in sufficient amounts can sometimes be a challenge.

8.5.2 *Expatriate Contributions*

The Billy Graham Crusade (an American organisation) donated \$3,322 in 1984 to the Synod for the purpose of buying cinema equipment. It gave the stipulations that the Synod itself must buy the equipment and that the equipment must remain in the hands of the Synod. The General Secretary was directed to write a letter of thanks to the donors.⁴³⁴ The same Billy Graham organization held a large convention on world evangelisation in Amsterdam in 1986. Several Nkhoma Synod pastors were invited to attend.⁴³⁵

The Reformed Mission League (of the Netherlands) offered money in the field of development. It was decided to use it on relief and development among the refugees from Mozambique (of which there were a lot at this time).⁴³⁶

In 1991 a group from South Africa proposed to come and teach “Evangelism Explosion” at Chongoni. Various churches in Malawi, as well as the students of African Bible College are still using this program sporadically.⁴³⁷

⁴³³ Minutes of the General Synod meeting held at Blantyre 26 Aug. to 3 Sept. 1990, page 77.

⁴³⁴ M. 883, M40, Meeting of the Moderamen, 26 June 1984.

⁴³⁵ M. 1449. Meeting of the Moderamen, 11 April 1986.

⁴³⁶ M 2832, 8 May 1990.

⁴³⁷ M 3066, 2 May, 1991.

At the November 1999 meeting of the Executive Committee of the Synodical Commission for Witness and Mission, it was noted that two young South Africans, Dries van Jaarsveld and Willem van der Merwe, were going to team up with personnel from Nkhoma Synod for evangelistic purposes. They were to emphasize one's "relationship to God and responsibility toward the environment".

In today's Malawi there continues to be a sizeable expatriate missionary community. It consists of both long- and short-term personnel. Nkhoma Synod works effectively with a number of them.

8.5.3 *A Continuing Commitment to Evangelism*

In a 1972 meeting, the Synodical Committee observed that more congregations were making use of the New Life For All evangelistic program. This met with the Committee's approval. At the same time they instructed the Evangelism Secretary not to visit all congregations annually, but only the ones that specifically requested assistance. This was because of the need to cut back on expenses.⁴³⁸

In 1977 Nkhoma Synod attempted to create the post of chaplain at Kamuzu Barracks (Malawian Army) in Lilongwe. The minister to be called to this post was to have been Rev. AE Mndala. However, the necessary permission was not granted. Mndala continued where he was, and "Lilongwe Presbytery is notified not to form a new congregation at Kamuzu Barracks."⁴³⁹ Today, more than a quarter-century later, the soldiers of the Malawian Army are among the highest at risk for AIDS. This suggests that they could have used an evangelistic thrust.

In 2001 Synod turned its attention to the training of evangelists at Chongoni. It was stipulated that the prospective trainer should be a pastor. Members of other denominations were not to be allowed to use the Chongoni facilities for evangelist training.⁴⁴⁰ Reading Chapter Twelve, dealing with relations with other denominations, will help to explain why.

In its Ten-Year Policy and Strategic Plan 2000-2010, the CCAP General Synod took up the issue of evangelism. It actually covered several issues related to this topic.

⁴³⁸ KS. 4017. Synodical Committee, 5 – 7 April 1972

⁴³⁹ KS 7033. Synodical Committee, 1 June 1977. See also KS 7173, Moderamen, 5 December 1977.

⁴⁴⁰ S. 3446, Minutes of the 28th Synod Meeting at Namoni Katengeza, 15 – 22 October 2001.

- Evangelism campaigns need to provide for counselling and follow-up.
- In all Congregations the need for spiritual renewal should be addressed.
- The CCAP needs to help its members understand how to react to evangelical campaigns which challenge fundamental Reformed doctrine.
- The Church needs to be aware that there is little sense in ‘fishing’ for new members when our existing members are lacking training and opportunities for service.
- Partners could be approached to help fund a general CCAP conference on Evangelism inviting theologians from the WCC and the AACC to bring a wider perspective.⁴⁴¹

The Strategic Plan concluded this section by saying that it needed to re-examine and modify if necessary such basic doctrines as infant baptism, being born again, and the work of the Holy Spirit (see section 13.5.2, “The Challenge of the Charismatics”).

Nkhoma Synod has recognized that evangelism is its life-blood; it does simply rely upon biological growth. Statistics show high numbers of adult conversions and baptisms (see section 4.6, “Forty Years of Growth”). This is made possible, as the laity get included in the evangelisation process.

8.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

How has Nkhoma Synod developed its sense of being a church? Much of the answer to that question lies in this chapter, and in the one to follow.

The third of the seven “secondary questions” which this study resolved to answer was, “Has the Nkhoma Synod become a Three-Self Church” insofar as it is self-propagating?” The answer to this is a definite “Yes”. The involvement of outside organizations is undeniable. Nevertheless, the impressive gains in membership of the Nkhoma churches can be explained in terms of its untiring evangelistic efforts, one with or without outside help, and a high birth rate.

Early in its history, the DRCM, and later, Nkhoma Synod, penetrated Malawian society through its youth. The vehicle through which this was accomplished was education. Later, the Synod had organizations specifically for youth, the Boys’ Brigade

⁴⁴¹ CCAP 2001 Ten-Year Strategic Plan, page 28.

and the Girls' Life Brigade. Then, early in the independence era, it was recognized that the trend in education was secularisation and the steady replacement of church schools by government ones. In chapter five, the one on education, the concerns regarding school children were discussed. Simultaneous with this trend was the pressure from the government to disband the Boys' and Girls' Brigade in favour of the Malawi Congress Party's Young Pioneers.

The synod answered these challenges by emphasizing Sunday school and catechism classes. It also investigated ways of enveloping specialists in youth ministry. To this end, it received assistance from various agencies in South Africa and the United States.

It was seen that in addition to internal Synod outreaches to its youth, there are external-parachurch-outreaches. Such groups as SCOM (Student Christian organization of Malawi), the Navigators, Life Ministries (Campus Crusade for Christ), and Scripture Union are just some of these external outreaches. The youth of Malawi are, in the eyes of a Western researcher, astonishingly open to Christian evangelism. Whenever this present researcher has gone into villages to show the Campus Crusade Jesus Film, his audiences were predominantly young people.

The Synod in its decisions and statements of priorities gives every indication that its commitment to youth evangelism continues. It was seen that the explosive growth of orphanages offered yet more opportunity in this area.

The Synod was, in the sixties and seventies, heavily involved in radio ministry, principally through MEMA. A number of Nkhoma Synod people got involved in broadcasting and in the production of programmes. That facet of Nkhoma Synod's evangelism declined. Such things as the Marxist takeover in Ethiopia proved to be a powerful blow to it. Yet we now see a strong drive to revive it. There is the interest in taking the studios next to Lilongwe CCAP, currently rented by MBC, and turning it into a radio station. While religious radio stations and programming proliferate in today's Malawi, one can understand Nkhoma Synod's earnest desire to make use of this crucial medium.

Depending upon which resource one reads, up to one-fifth of the population of Malawi is Muslim. Nkhoma has never relented in its efforts to reach the Muslims with the Christian message, but it has always been a delicate issue.

First of all, the Malawian middle class is largely Muslim; they are the shop – keepers and business managers. They therefore have a level of affluence not enjoyed by many Malawian Christians, and this has proven to be a barrier to evangelisation.

Secondly, the second president of Malawi – in power from 1994 to 2004, was a Muslim. During his term of office, relations with Libya was normalized, and President Mohamar Khadaffi was a visitor to this country. The relationship between the president and Nkhoma Synod is discussed more fully in chapter eleven.

Islam in Malawi is experiencing a resurgence. The economic power of certain Muslim countries is being used to buy influence in Malawi. One sees this in signs over businesses, i.e., “The Kuwaiti Tailor Shop”. There is now the “Lilongwe Islamic Study Centre”. On the other hand, Christian denominations and parachurch organizations are allowed to proceed with their evangelism activities unhindered, as long as they say nothing openly negative about Islam.

The involvement in other areas such chaplains to the Malawian Army, and Evangelism Explosion, suggests that Nkhoma Synod attempts to have a well – rounded evangelism program, rather than one limited to a specific target group. This may serve to explain its steady growth.

The story of missions beyond Malawi’s borders will now be examined. The work of home evangelism and the work of missions go hand-in-hand.

Chapter Nine

Mission Beyond Malawi

9.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, dealing with evangelism, it was shown that Nkhoma Synod exerts great effort in spreading the Gospel to the people of its home region. In this chapter, their efforts at extending the effort across the border into neighbouring Mozambique will be highlighted. Missions logically follow evangelism on the home front, this is demonstrated by Nkhoma Synod as it continues to work hand-in-hand with its old ally, the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa. It will be shown how Nkhoma synod, because of its finite resources, has focused upon Mphatso Synod, which is linguistically and culturally closely tied to Nkhoma Synod. The long, protracted struggle against different antagonistic Mozambican governments, which needed to be dealt with before work could proceed freely, will be examined with the results demonstrating how their persistence finally paid off.

9.2 THE DRC AND NKHOMA SYNOD'S OUTREACH TO MOZAMBIQUE

In his book *Mission and Church in Malawi*, CM Pauw explains how the DRC worked from 1909 to 1922 in the Angonia region of Mozambique, only to be shut down at the end of that period by the Portuguese colonial government. Decades later, in the 1950s, Nkhoma Synod itself decided to work with Mozambicans living in Zimbabwe, seeing that it was unable to work in Mozambique itself. From 1958 until 1967, it worked with Joint Committee of Reformed Missions and Churches in Central Africa. In 1967 this was replaced by a Council of Reformed Churches in Central Africa (Pauw 1980:102-9; 322).

The 1967 MMSC report included the report that the Nkhoma Synod realized the importance of mission work in Portuguese East Africa (PEA). But because of all the challenges within its own area, e.g. the Muslim community “and the vast number of heathen”, it could not meet the challenge of starting work in the PEA. In co-operation with the MMSC it was decided that the church in the Transvaal was to be approached to

consider doing missionary work in the PEA, seeing that it previously was part of the mission field of the Transvaal church. A letter was received from Malawi in which the personnel did not approve of the decision of the MMSC; because it was a matter of great urgency, and because it would involve that a Deed of Agreement would have to be compiled with the regional Synods of the Transvaal “Mother Church”. The meeting decided in favour of a joint mission endeavour of the Synod in the Cape and the Nkhoma Synod in the PEA, assuming that this endeavour would eventually become the responsibility of the CCAP.⁴⁴²

In 1968, Nkhoma Synod decided to undertake mission work itself; included in this would be the Indians of Malawi, most of who were Muslim. One of the Nkhoma Synod ministers, JM Kajawa, who had a good knowledge of Islam, offered his services.⁴⁴³

This was to be in addition to the mission work in Portuguese East Africa. It was decided to appoint an Nkhoma Synod minister to this work, as soon as the Portuguese government granted permission.⁴⁴⁴

In his “Annual General Report for 1969” General Secretary YA Chienda reported that it had been decided to establish a congregation in PEA near Mlanda in Malawi, though the Portuguese government still had not given its approval. A minister would be assigned to look after it, and he would stay in Mlanda.

At the July 1969 meeting of the GMSC in Cape Town, the matter of assigning personnel for the evangelisation of Portuguese East Africa (Mozambique) was taken up. Before the commission, which was appointed by the GMC to negotiate with the Portuguese Government in co-operation with the Nkhoma Synod, could do the assignment, the Reformed Council of Churches requested that that the church in the Cape should not act on its own, but that other churches like the CCAP Salisbury and the Shona Church (the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe, or RCZ), would be included. A meeting of the representatives of the churches involved was then held, and the following decisions were made:

⁴⁴² Minutes of the Meeting of the General Missions Committee, Meeting in Cape Town 8-10 August 1967 – page 34, “Synodical Mission work in Portuguese East Africa”.

⁴⁴³ KS. 1185, Minutes of meeting of Synodical Committee, 2-4 April 1968.

⁴⁴⁴ S.66; S.314; S.317; S. 387; KS. 1186; KS. 1301; KS. 1330.

- That the Christians in Mozambique would be organized, in view of eventually founding their own church in Mozambique.
- That the Christians in Mozambique, as citizens of Mozambique, would do the necessary negotiations with the government of the PEA, and not organizations from outside.
- That the interest of the PEA Christians in South Africa will be aroused for doing missionary work in Mozambique.
- That an *ad hoc* Commission would be appointed to get the approval of the parties involved, and act further as necessary.⁴⁴⁵

An ad-hoc commission was appointed to attend to the matter. A board of congregations was formed in PEA, awaiting their negotiations with the PEA government, in order to get permission for doing missionary work, and permission to recruit missionaries and funds from South Africa. A minister from Nkhoma Synod, Rev. L. Kamtambe, offered his services for working in Mozambique, should the opportunity arise. The CCAP Synod of Salisbury offered to send an evangelist there as their contribution.⁴⁴⁶

The General Mission Secretary informed the GMC that a Board of Elders was founded in Mozambique. This Board first contacted the lesser headmen, and then the Head Chief in connection with their assignment, and then they were supposed to discuss matters with the Administrator. Due to fear, they did not do the above-mentioned, but rather requested Nkhoma Synod to provide a local minister who can introduce them to the Administrator.

The Mozambique Committee of the Nkhoma Synod, however, did not agree with this request, and decided to request the following from the ad hoc commission:

- To regard the task of the elders as completed.
- To continue getting permission to send missionaries.

The Board of Elders then requested the Federal Council of the DRC churches to provide ministers and to take responsibility for their salaries. After earnest discussions the following was decided:

⁴⁴⁵ Minutes of a meeting of the General Missions Committee, Church Centre, Cape Town, 22-24 July 1969. “31. Portuguese East Africa”.

⁴⁴⁶ Minutes of the same meeting of the General Missions Committee, Church Centre, Cape Town, 22-24 July 1969.

- The GMC approve that the DRC negotiate with the government of PEA
- The GMC approves the appointment of a South African missionary in the north of this country.
- The *ad hoc* commission for missionary work in the PEA would be consulted on this matter.
- The Financial Mission Sub-Committee and the Malawi Mission Sub-Committee, together with W.J. van der Merwe, was charged with the responsibility of taking the matter further.⁴⁴⁷

At a meeting of the Synodical Mission Committee held 4-6 August 1970 in Cape Town, it was learned that the ad hoc commission that handled the matter of mission work in PEA had contacted the Portuguese consul in Pretoria, but had not yet received a response. In the meantime, the Synodical Committee of Nkhoma Synod decided to investigate the possibility of forming a congregation in Mozambique, which could be served by an ordained minister who would stay at Mlanda in Malawi. The MMSC requested the Synodical Commission to be careful lest it hamper the negotiations of the ad hoc commission. The General Mission Secretary informed the meeting that the secretary of the Federal Board of the Dutch Reformed Churches had sent the information that the Governor General of Mozambique answered that the Portuguese minister of Colonies in Mozambique did not approve the request of the ad hoc commission to do missionary work in Mozambique.

- The August 1971 SMSC meeting learned that the Governor General of Mozambique was still saying that the minister of colonies refused permission for the DRC to officially do work in that country. The matter was in the hands of the Council of Reformed Churches, with no progress being made. Meanwhile, work was continuing from Malawi unofficially.

Nkhoma Synod noted a change in conditions in Mozambique in 1972. It observed that there was then freedom of worship and that members were building prayer houses and assembling in them, “without fear from the government”.⁴⁴⁸

In 1973, a Central Coordinating Committee for all the work in PEA was established. It was observed that various DRC Synods were working in the country, from

⁴⁴⁷ Minutes of a Meeting of the GMSC held 22-24 June 1969 in Cape Town.

⁴⁴⁸ Twelfth Meeting of Synod, 25 July – 2 August 1972, Appendix 8.

Angonia to Lorenzo Marques. The Synods that were represented by this committee included:

- The DRC of the Cape Province
- The DRC of Northern Transvaal
- The DRC of Natal
- The DRC of Orange Free State
- CCAP Nkhoma Synod
- CCAP Salisbury Synod
- DRC in Africa – Northern Transvaal
- DRC in Africa – Southern Transvaal
- ARC in Rhodesia

The Mission Secretary of the General Synod in Cape Town was named as the coordinating person.

During the early and mid-seventies the Nkhoma Synod attempted to revive Reformed Christianity in neighbouring Mozambique. A promising work had begun early in the twentieth century, only to be suppressed when in 1922 all Dutch Reformed Church missionaries were ordered to leave the country. C. Martin Pauw explains the political factors that caused this. The Portuguese remembered that the DRC missionaries were operating in territory that once belonged to them, and a 1918 letter written by South Africa's General Smuts further alienated them (Pauw 1980: 106-107).

In 1954 The Presbytery of Nkhoma decided to find an evangelist to work among the 50,000 people from Mozambique living within the jurisdiction of the Salisbury congregation of the CCAP. Rev. MS Daneel found such an evangelist, Genesis Nowa. By 1956 Daneel could report that Nowa's work was bearing fruit. Then, in 1974, Rev. Pieter Botha and Rev. NA Katundu were called to serve the Mzewe and Mawi congregations in Mozambique (Labuschagne 2002: 118-119).

The Synodical Committee heard from the Mozambique Committee that Rev. Katundu's salary was in arrears and Mozambique Committee asked Synodical Committee to make up the difference. It also said that as from 1 October 1974 Nkhoma Synod should pay his full salary, as Mozambique church members were preparing to call their own ministers. It also requested a second missionary, and then wanted Nkhoma Synod to

build two manses. The Synodical Committee, Nkhoma Synod, responded to all this by saying that while they would not pay Katundu's salary (ministers' salaries in arrears continued to plague the Synod), they agreed to a block grant to Mozambique. They pointed out that Rev. PB Botha was posted as a second missionary and would stay at Mlanda. They said they would investigate ways to raise funds for two manses.⁴⁴⁹

The work of evangelism and church planting in the mid-1970s had both hazards and rewards. The following report from South African personnel gives a graphic picture of the situation at that time.

On the 3rd of June it was exactly one year after the first congregation of the DR Church was founded in Mozambique. . . . Msanja. Thereafter two other congregations were founded, namely Mawi and Mzewe.

During the past year Rev. Neftali Katundu and evangelist Gabriel Ngozo, together with elders, deacons and other church members, worked closely together under often difficult circumstances for the expansion of His kingdom. Thousands of miles were travelled by motorcycle and bicycle, knowing that at any moment a landmine can be hit. One weekend conference at Mpatso had to be cancelled hurriedly, because terrorists attacked that region during that week and took 70 of our people captive! . . . still we can look back with thankfulness, and look ahead with courage and a feeling of expectation.

Rev. Katundu writes that Msanja congregation suffered most from terrorist activities. . . . But some people still walk long distances in order to attend worship meetings, in spite of the unrest and suffering. It was touching to see how these people were determined to build a house for the Lord, and the small pole-and-mud church could be officially opened in April. The few Christians who were left over at Mphatso, also built a small clay church. In the Mzewe area the Christians are collecting funds from amongst themselves for building a small brick church. This is also the area where evangelist Ngozo works. Since he started to work there earlier this year, 14 people were converted.⁴⁵⁰

Martin Pauw describes the progress of the outreach to Mozambique the following way:

Nkhoma synod was to keep up contact with the Mozambique Church all through the 1960s and, finally, in 1973 the Igreja Reformada em Mozambique was to be formed, initially with three congregations, later five, and with a total membership of over three thousand communicants.

⁴⁴⁹ KS 5630. Synodical Committee, 8-9 October 1974.

⁴⁵⁰ *Nuusbrief Uit Malawi*, October 1974.

A sad sequel to this history is that two years later Nkhoma synod felt compelled by circumstances to break off all ties with the Church in Mozambique leaving it entirely to itself, with not even a single minister to pastor the Church (Pauw 1980: 321-2).

In 1975, the Mozambican government stopped all Malawian ministers from crossing the border, thus ending this initiative from Nkhoma Synod. Nevertheless, on 29 January 1977 the Reformed Church in Mozambique, Mphatso Synod, was formed.

While Rev Pieter Botha was in South Africa he was continually in contact with the so-called “Committee of Ten”. This committee consisted of ten elders representing ten congregations. Rev Botha regarded himself as the “minister in exile” of the Church in Mozambique. He supplied the committee with the necessary information on how to form an Independent Church in Mozambique. In 1977, the “Igreja Reformada em Mozambique” [IRM], was constituted in a small church building in the bush, by the “Committee of Ten” together with a few leaders and church members. The IRM was registered and, after the peace agreement was signed in 1992, the IRM was free to work as one of the churches in Mozambique (Labuschagne 2002: 119).

The Synod’s interest in the work in Mozambique continued. In January 1981 Revs. DE Chikakuda and Kasambani were ordained in Lusaka for the purpose of working in Mozambique. Rev. WE Chikakuda was to begin service as tutor at the Theological College at Rikatla near Maputo.⁴⁵¹

In 1982, the Reformed Church in Tete Province, Mozambique, sent the Revs. Fanuel Kasamba and David Chikakuda to work in Milange, Zambezia Province. On one Sunday in 1983, 800 were baptized (Hendriks 2004:105-109).

In 1989, Nkhoma Synod found a way to establish a permanent work in Mozambique. This was done at a time when the Synod was itself in serious financial straits (see section 3.3, “The Financial Challenges of Autonomy”).

With great joy the Committee received a letter from the Narollah Trust in Stellenbosch informing them that they will provide funds to send a Malawian Missionary to Mozambique. The Committee agreed that this matter should be discussed by synodical Committee. Meantime notices to this effect should be sent to all congregations informing the ministers that we are awaiting the response of those who may feel that they are called to this work.⁴⁵²

⁴⁵¹ KS. 8385, Moderamen, 13 January 1981.

⁴⁵² M. 2555. Moderamen, 10 April 1989.

A specific individual was not long in coming forward. Exactly one year later, his name was revealed.

Rev. L.K.R. Matanda was called as the Synod's missionary to Mozambique.⁴⁵³

At the same, a formal agreement was reached between Malawi's Nkhoma Synod and Mozambique's Mphatso Synod.

The deed of Agreement was scrutinized and then it was accepted without alterations. It was decided that the Missionary's term of service will be three years.⁴⁵⁴

The Mphatso Synod (Mozambique) in 1991 requested that Rev. Matanda be moved from Beira to Milange, as they could not find accommodations for him in Beira.⁴⁵⁵ The Malingunde congregation sent a letter to the Synod stating that there was much work to be done among the refugees there. They requested that Rev. Matanda make two visits per month, staying five days each visit.⁴⁵⁶

The neighbouring country of Mozambique experienced war for over thirty years, from 1960 to 1992. This created a large refugee presence in Malawi. Some of these refugees became Christians because of contact with members of Nkhoma Synod churches. Continuing to pursue missions within Mozambique, in 1995, the Synod considered the writing of a formal agreement between Mphatso Synod of the Igreja Reformada em Mozambique (IRM) and Nkhoma Synod. They also considered sending missionaries and evangelists into Angonia Province, where refugees returned from Malingunde refugee camp were now living. It was noted that Rev. Matanda needed assistance with his work in Milanje. Further, Rev. Dr. van Velden and Rev. Maenje were selected to serve on a committee for missions to Mozambique.⁴⁵⁷

At the 1994 CCAP General Synod meeting, Nkhoma Synod reported that it had commenced work in Mozambique in 1991; its first missionary was Rev. R Matanda who reported people converting and even showing interest in receiving theological training.⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵³ SC. 892. Synodical Committee, 17-19 April 1990.

⁴⁵⁴ SC. 903. Synodical Committee, 17-19 April 1990.

⁴⁵⁵ M. 3012, 11 December 1990 at Lilongwe CCAP.

⁴⁵⁶ M. 3019, 8 April 1991 at Namoni Katengeza CLTC.

⁴⁵⁷ M. 3957, Meeting of the Moderamen, 15 February 1995.

⁴⁵⁸ Minutes of the CCAP General Synod held at Chongoni 9th to 13th November 1994, page 34 – 35.

In 1995, Nkhoma Synod reiterated its commitment to missions. “The Synod has agreed that it is necessary to send missionaries to other countries.”⁴⁵⁹ In 1996 Rev. Dr. Wallace Chikakuda accepted a call to work with the Mphatso Synod in Mozambique.⁴⁶⁰

On 7 December 1998, Nkhoma Synod commissioned two new missionaries for the work in Mozambique: Mr. Nkhwazi and Mrs. Chifungu. The congregations at Lilongwe and Kafita accepted the responsibility for supporting these missionaries – at a time when Kafita did not have its own pastor.⁴⁶¹

The work in Mozambique was anything but static. The church there, once established, continued to expand, as AS Labushagne explains.

In the year 2001 when the Mphatso synod met, it was decided that a third synod should be formed. There were many small congregations in the large Zambezia Province and a third synod was formed by dividing the Mphatso Synod into two separate synods (Labuschagne 2002:131).

In 2001 a leadership conflict arose within the Mphatso Synod that caused the removal of Dr. Wallace Chikakuda, who had been serving as the principal of Hefsiba Bible College in Vila Ulongwe, Angonia Province, Mozambique. At the same time, he was serving as General Secretary of the Mphatso Synod and as pastor of the congregation in Vila Ulongwe. People began to feel that he had taken on too much responsibility and was unable to adequately function in all three posts. Both students at the Bible school and members of the church started to complain while Chikakuda refused to relinquish any of his duties. A dispute then arose over a relative of Chikakuda who was serving as a minister in the same synod who was suspended from the ministry by the synod due to misconduct. Chikakuda reinstated his relative without, as some felt, going through proper channels causing widespread dissent. In the end, Chikakuda was relieved of all three posts, and he sat in his house in Vila Ulongwe for several months before moving back to Malawi.⁴⁶²

CM Pauw, Secretary for Foreign Partnerships and Missions, the Commission for Witness in the Western Cape, expressed concern to Nkhoma Synod General Secretary AA Sasu and stated the hope that “a suitable place to work” could be found for

⁴⁵⁹ S. 2932, Minutes of the 25th Synod Meeting, 4 – 11 April 1995.

⁴⁶⁰ M. 4133, Meeting of the Moderamen, 28 June 1996.

⁴⁶¹ *Nuusbrief Uit Malawi*, April 1998.

⁴⁶² Telephone interview between present researcher and Rev. Dr. Hennie van Deventer on 22 July 2004.

Chikakuda at Zomba Theological College. At the same time, Pauw reported that he had heard that Mphatso had decided to transfer him to another congregation.⁴⁶³ Shortly after assuming his duties at Zomba, Dr. Chikakuda passed away after a battle with cancer.⁴⁶⁴

Rev. Dr. Ryk van Velden worked hard to establish the Mission Department of the Nkhoma Synod in 1998⁴⁶⁵. He continued to direct this work until his departure for South Africa in 2003.⁴⁶⁶

The work of the DRC has now expanded to the Commission for Witness – the Reformed churches of the Western Cape in South Africa. Their work includes more than just church planting. In 2002, famine relief became a big issue in large parts of southern Africa.

Almost three weeks ago the first reports started coming in from both Nkhoma in Malawi and Vila Ulongwe (Angonia District) in Mozambique and later also from Niassa province in northern Mozambique, concerning the crisis and the emergency measures being taken both at Nkhoma and at Vila Ulongwe to try and alleviate the situation. At Vila local funds were utilized to buy rice (cheaper than maize!) and people were invited to come and work and receive payment in rice. The result was overwhelming. The first day 19 people turned up, then 130, then 350, 600, 1000 and finally 3100. By this time, matters were quite out of hand and all funds were depleted.

People were desperate, digging up roots and banana shoots, (thus destroying future fruit yields) and even boiling sawdust for food. Reports of deaths from hunger and even some from poisoning as a result of eating poisonous roots were coming in daily.

Appeals were sent out for help to procure food and at Nkhoma as well as at Vila Ulongwe and at Chiconono in the Niassa province distribution networks were set up.

Two weeks ago our office here sent out an urgent appeal to all our congregations in the Western Cape for support and the response has been

⁴⁶³ E-mail from CM Pauw to AA Sasu dated 29 August 2001.

⁴⁶⁴ The present researcher has made numerous trips into Angonia Province, Mozambique, beginning in February 1998. The most recent trip was in October 2003. These trips involve taking African Bible College students and giving them the experience of showing the Campus Crusade Jesus film in villages. He has had the pleasure of working with the late Rev. Wallace Chikakuda and Mr. Bentry Mhango (In August 2004 Mhango left this field, as his three-year contract as an evangelist with the Synod expired), both of Nkhoma Synod.

⁴⁶⁵ Letter dated 19 January 1998 from Nkhoma Synod General Secretary AA Sasu to JH Koch, Mission Secretary, DRC Mission in Western Cape, Grey's Pass, Cape Town.

⁴⁶⁶ "2. Personnel Who Have Resigned." E-mail from CM Pauw to the General Secretary of Nkhoma Synod, dated 9 December 2002.

rather overwhelming, if not humbling. Within ten days R230 000 has already come in, with much more promised. Most of this money has already been made available through various channels to our partners as and where it was requested. We are distributing it more or less equally between Nkhoma and Mozambique.

Food has been obtained from Tete as well as from Maputo and transported by road by a transport company which was willing to do it at running costs. Last week 14 tons of rice were dispatched to Vila and another 14 tons to Chiconono. At Nkhoma 22 tons of maize were off loaded earlier this week. This came by road from Tanzania and could also be paid for with funds from SA.

At the same time we are aware of many individuals and groups here who have sent money directly to recipients in Malawi and in Mozambique. We also know and are grateful that various overseas agents have promised to help and this will go a long way-in fact much further than our weakened Rand can-to alleviate the situation. The fact that we are able to make funds available within days of receiving appeals, at least made it possible for our sisters and brothers to act quickly with emergency measures.⁴⁶⁷

At about the same time CM Pauw acknowledged the offer of the Netherlands Reformed Congregations (NRC) to send aid during the crisis. He mentioned that South Africa's weak currency could only go so far, and that aid from the Netherlands would go farther.⁴⁶⁸

As of this writing, July 2004, Rev. Michael Khombe, former pastor of Kaning'a CCAP in Malawi, serves as chairman of the Department. The Missions Department oversees the missions activity of the Synod, across the border in Mozambique. It also coordinates the activities of the Neighbours Committee, which is an outreach to Muslims.

Rev. Khombe explained how Kaning'a has partnered with a presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) to build the church located at Chia, Angonia Province, Mozambique (Igreja Reformada em Mozambique). Specifically, they have built a large manse there, and in addition have supported students from African Bible College making short-term mission trips to the site. South African congregations are building the Church at Mitondo, while two Nkhoma Synod congregations in Lilongwe, Bawila CCAP and Lilongwe CCAP, are building the one at Vila Mwalazi. There is a

⁴⁶⁷ "Copy of email sent on 8 March 2002 to a number of partners and co-workers" by CM Pauw.

⁴⁶⁸ Letter from CM Pauw to "Colleague van Heteren" of the Netherlands Reformed Congregations (NRC) dated 11 March 2002.

new work at a place called Sangano. While they now get full cooperation from the Mozambican Government, finding the necessary resources for this work continues to be their greatest challenge. In an effort to keep the importance of missions in the forefront, there is an official, “Mission Sunday” in all the Nkhoma Synod churches.⁴⁶⁹

9.3 THE SOUTH AFRICAN EXTENSION

While attention has been focused upon Mozambique, there are Chichewa-language churches outside of Malawi and Mozambique – even in South Africa. Nkhoma Synod was active in the establishment of NatalSpruit CCAP in Johannesburg. Nkhoma Synod personnel and this church exchanged visits.⁴⁷⁰

Nkhoma Synod then requested that the Commission for Witness take over.

We write to inform your church that Malawi nationals, working in South Africa have requested Nkhoma Synod to assist with the organizational training and planting of a Malawi languages church in South Africa.

Nkhoma synod has accepted to organize the initial stages of establishing the congregation. We however, want to surrender the new church under the care of the Dutch Reformed churches family (sic) in South Africa. We ask in this regard, that discussions must be arranged later this year or next where an agreement can be reached for this purpose. Nkhoma synod is open to any advice from the DRC towards a proper handover of the church to any of the Synod and Presbytery of the DRC family. We wait to hear from you as soon as possible with the proposals of the meeting and venue suggested. Greetings in Christ.⁴⁷¹

It developed that this was not the only Malawian church-planting operation in Johannesburg, South Africa. The Commission for Witness learned in an after-the-fact manner of several church plants done by more than one CCAP synod. In response to this, it issued the following diplomatic letter to the CCAP General Office in Lilongwe.

Our Committee for Witness has heard that three congregations, respectively linked to three CCAP Synods have been established during the past year or so in Johannesburg. We also understand that these congregations were more recently visited by officials of the CCAP

⁴⁶⁹ Interview between present researcher and Rev. Michael Khombe 28 June 2004.

⁴⁷⁰ Letter from Donald Phiri and Charles Fanisako Suluma to General Secretary AA Sasu, dated 31 January 1999. Sasu sent a response welcoming the continuation of this relationship in a letter dated 30 March 1999.

⁴⁷¹ From a letter from General Secretary AA Sasu to Mission Secretary JH Koch, Commission for Witness, 2 May 2000.

General Synod. We are very sorry indeed that we did not know about this visit. We would have loved to receive you and to host you as our visiting partners.

In terms of our partnership there has for a long time been an understanding and tradition to mutually minister to each other's members living in the other country. For that reason the DRC has, for instance, never established a separate congregation for its members living or working in Malawi. Having heard of the new development in Johannesburg, we would greatly appreciate information about the situation and if possible some clarification as to the considerations which led to a decision to follow this course.

At the same time we do believe that it could be beneficial both to our partnership as well as to our unity as members of the body of Christ, if ways could be found to jointly look at the needs experienced by Malawian sisters and brothers living in South Africa. Thus, more effective ways of ministering to them in these needs could perhaps be found. We also feel it would be good to discuss ways in which they could be brought into deeper communion with other fellow believers in this country. For that reason we wonder whether perhaps it might be good to have something like a round table discussion over the entire matter. We hope you can also advise us about this.⁴⁷²

It remains to be seen how the matter is going to be resolved. Recently (2004), it was proposed that one minister representing all the synods of the CCAP be sent to minister to these Johannesburg congregations. He would serve for three years. The three CCAP synods that are involved –Livingstonia, Nkhoma, and Blantyre – would rotate the duty of providing such a minister.⁴⁷³

9.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

There has been a fruitful partnership between The DRC and Nkhoma Synod for the purpose of building the church in Mozambique. In a “partnership” between an “older” and a “younger” church, certain issues and questions arise.

The present researcher has personally witnessed the ease with which DRC and Nkhoma Synod missionaries work in Vila Ulongwe, Mozambique. There, the Nkhoma personnel were clearly equals and not “cheap labour”.

⁴⁷² Letter from CM Pauw, Secretary, Committee for Witness, to the Senior Clerk, CCAP General Synod Office, Lilongwe, dated 11 November 2002.

⁴⁷³ Interview with CCAP General Secretary YA Chienda on 22 October 2004.

The following stories may serve to illustrate why Malawians are better equipped to evangelise Mozambique than are the Azungu (Westerners). Several years ago, the present researcher took his wife and six ABC students to a village in Mozambique to show the Campus Crusade Jesus Film over a weekend. When they woke up the morning after their arrival, a woman student explained that during the night an invisible witch had sat on her chest. Another student said that although she saw no witch, she heard “weird noises”. When the researcher and his wife asked why witches had not bothered them, the answer was, “Because you don’t believe in them.” On a more recent trip to show the same film, the researcher went to the village of Bentry Mhango, ABC graduate and Nkhoma synod missionary”. The first night, members of the *Gule Wamkulu* (secret men’s society and practitioners of traditional religion) sang outside the researcher’s window all night. Yet, most of Mhango’s converts are former members of this society. Coming from Western culture, the *azungu* are at a disadvantage because they do not know to deal as effectively with *afiti* (witches) and the *Gule Wamkulu*.

Malawi is a small country wedged between three larger countries: Zambia to the West, Tanzania to the Northeast, and Mozambique to the East. Zambia is much like Malawi in that it is a Commonwealth country (i.e. former British colony), English is an official language there, and there is a well-established Protestant presence there. A number of denominations have existed there for decades, and it has a number of theological schools such as the Justo Mwale Theological College in Lusaka. It has little or no need for a missionary thrust from Nkhoma Synod.

Such is not the case in Mozambique, however. The history of Mozambique is a particularly bitter one, rather like its sister nation, Angola. Although a Portuguese colony for over four hundred years, until a war of independence broke out in 1960, Roman Catholicism was never firmly implanted in that country. The war of independence ended in 1975, only to be immediately followed by an equally devastating civil war that lasted until 1992. Until recent decades, as we have read, Protestant attempts at church-planting were consistently thwarted by the colonial government.

In 1972, Nkhoma Synod was able to record a dramatic shift in the situation, and now it happily cooperates with an indigenous church, the Igreja Reformada em Mozambique (IRM). Most of its immediate contact is with the Mphatso Synod,

operating in Angonia District, Province of Tete. Its provincial capital, Vila Ulongwe, has an IRM Bible college, named Hefsiba. Nkhoma Synod in the late nineties furnished Hefsiba with Dr. Wallace Chikakuda, who served as principal. His departure from Mozambique under a cloud in 2001 and subsequent death was a sad end to an illustrious career.

At this place, personnel from Nkhoma Synod, Mphatso Synod, and the DRC work closely together. They travel freely across the border post at Dedza and use the Lilongwe International Airport to fly to South Africa.

Nkhoma Synod is unable to give a great deal of material support to the IRM, but it can furnish personnel. The people of Angonia Province, as its name implies, are largely of Ngoni descent, and their language is Chichewa, the same as that of Nkhoma Synod. Nkhoma Synod can pursue mission work without sending its people to language school (However, if they want to teach at Hefsiba Bible School in Vila Ulongwe, they must learn Portuguese). The political and economic pictures have stabilized in Mozambique. The IRM is growing. The road ahead appears to be clear for Nkhoma Synod to continue a significant missions program in this place.

One of the two hypotheses to be tested in this study is “Nkhoma has come full circle from being a mission church to being a missionizing church”. It is difficult to neatly separate its work with the Igreja Reformada em Mozambique from its work in South Africa. Putting these quite diverse operations together, it would be rather difficult not to admit that Nkhoma Synod has indeed become a “missionizing church”.

Therefore, another way in which Nkhoma Synod developed its self-understanding of being a church is by coming full circle from being a mission church to being a missionary – sending church. It has become truly “Self-propagating”. Missions to Mozambique has also strengthened the tie between Nkhoma Synod and the “Commission for Witness” Reformed churches of the Western Cape, South Africa. This has bearing on the question of Nkhoma Synod’s relationship with DRC personnel. Furthermore, no doubt this mission’s thrust has had a direct bearing on the question of the theological and spiritual formation of the Synod.

It is now time to examine another branch of Nkhoma Synod’s total outreach programmes, that of literature and printing. There is a natural tie between

evangelism/missions on one hand and the work of Christian literature on the other. The two have long been virtually inseparable.



Chapter Ten

Literature and Printing

10.1 INTRODUCTION

Having looked at missions and evangelism, it is now time to review another form of fulfilling the church's mandate to spread the Word – through the publishing and distribution of Christian literature. This dimension of the Synod's life can also be looked upon as an extension of the educational role, which was extensively examined in chapter five.

This chapter will explain how the printing department, made a very important contribution to the church's evangelistic and educational roles, then declined as a result of: aging equipment, lack of trained personnel, and competition from other religious bodies with printing presses or copying equipment. The story of *Kuunika* illustrates the challenges a denomination can face in the area of literature. It will explain too, how the literature and printing facets continue to serve the work of the Synod. It will reveal how key Synod personnel continue to play key roles in Bible translation, production, and distribution. Many church members do not have Bibles of any kind, due to inability to buy them.⁴⁷⁴

One big problem is illiteracy. English may be an official language of the country, but generally, only those who have been through secondary school are proficient in it, and that constitutes only a small percentage of the overall population. Well intentioned outside sources may ship English-language material, not knowing how limited the potential readership is.

Another consideration is the present, and growing, existence of other sources of Christian literature, some of which specialize in the particular needs of Malawi.

⁴⁷⁴ One of the things the present researcher and his ABC students do whenever they go into villages is bring Bibles. They leave it to the local pastor and elders to decide how to distribute them, but the money comes from donors in the U.S. and the ABC personnel do not charge for them. They have seen village ladies break out in spontaneous dance in celebration of having just received free Bibles. However, experience has shown that giving out free Bibles is not a good idea; many may be converted into cigarette paper.

Scripture Union is one outstanding example. Through such things as songbook production, they are having a big impact.

10.2 AN OVERVIEW OF LITERATURE AND PRINTING IN THE LIFE OF THE SYNOD

10.2.1 The Continuance of the Department in Spite of Obstacles

Having looked at other forms of outreach in the previous two chapters, another format will now be examined, the medium of Christian literature. In this chapter, the rise and decline of some aspects of this dimension of Nkhoma Synod's life will be demonstrated. At the same time, relevant and ongoing work will be examined.

As early as 1897 booklets were being printed, first from Livingstonia, Blantyre, and South Africa, and then from 1907 in Mvera. In 1917, Nkhoma became the centre for printing. "Over the years it showed regular profit and could continue to expand in size and production," says C. Martin Pauw. The work continued to grow until in 1952 a Bookshop and Publishing Department apart from the Printing Department was established. The Press printed all books except the Bible. In 1929 its stock and equipment was valued at £3,000 and it employed 70 people. Fifteen years later, its stock and equipment had doubled to £6,000, and it was located in a 5,000-foot building. Over the years, this department increased the titles it produced, and was out-producing other missions and presses in most of Central Africa (Pauw 1980: 205-207).

This picture was acknowledged to have changed four years after the GAC replaced the DRCM. The 1966 Publications Department report stated, ". . . it is noted with pity (sic) that none of the Staff has ever been proposed to go for training in distribution of books." It noted that the Literature Secretary, Rev. C Human, was preoccupied with other matters, consequently new publications and training of writers was delayed. The synod agreed therefore to hand over its bookshop and other distribution channels to Christian Literature Association in Malawi (CLAIM), while keeping its press (Petro Van Wyk Press) and the publication rights of previous publications. It also reserved the right to publish new books. Facing a "huge deficit", the magazine *Kuunika* was changed to a newspaper format.

In its Annual report for 1967, the Publications Department reported a decline in sales, and suggested a training course for all booksellers in congregations. It further revealed that for the third or fourth year in a row, the Literature Secretary, Rev. C Human, was too busy to read or to publish new manuscripts. Almost all of the publications for that year were reprints. Rev. Human did manage, however, a revision of the *Nyimbo* hymnbook. This resulted in increased output for the Petro Van Wyk Press.

In 1971, the Christian Literature Fund (CLF) again granted R 2,400 to Nkhoma Synod for Christian literature. It was for *Kuunika*, tracts, Sunday School material, and the magazine “*Write*,” which is a guide for authors.⁴⁷⁵

The Christian Literature Fund (CLF) is a Christian organisation that works to spread the gospel to the world by means of affordable Christian literature. Every year CLF prints and distributes more than five million tracts and Christian books in 27 languages. These publications are distributed free of charge to people in factories, hospitals, and prisons. The CLF comprises three divisions:

1. CLF Printers, the largest commercial printer in South Africa’s Free State Province.
2. CLF Publishers, which publishes Christian books.
3. CLF Fund, which focuses on fund raising for the provision of Christian literature.⁴⁷⁶

At the August 1977 General Synod meeting, Nkhoma Synod gave the following report regarding the literature and printing department:

Nkhoma Press has been without a Printing Manager for nearly four years, and the lack of skilled staff has made it impossible to promote one of the staff to that position (the Press has only semi-skilled staff of low academic level). The financial difficulties of CLAIM has hit the Nkhoma Press very hard, as no printing orders for new books or reprints have been forthcoming since the middle of 1976, and the Press is virtually at a standstill.⁴⁷⁷

The printing press in 1979 reported having printed 172,127 books, 502,549 “stationery” distributed in Malawi, 32,006 stationery distributed in Zambia, and 152, 292

⁴⁷⁵ Minutes of a Meeting of the Synodical Mission Sub Committee (SMSC) held on 10–12 August 1971.

⁴⁷⁶ The Web site for The Cyber Store. <http://www.the.cyberstore.net/Stores/CLF>. “CyberStore is an initiative of the Central Business Incorporated of Bloemfontein. 2002-2004” Accessed 28 September 2004.

⁴⁷⁷ Minutes of the General Synod held at Chongoni 16th to 17th August 1977, page 14.

tracts. Income from sale of books was MK 35,053.70 and expenditures amounted to MK 25,791.89.

In October 1982, the Synodical Committee asked the Synod to appoint a Literature Committee to be responsible for the Synod's publications.⁴⁷⁸ At the same time the General Synod requested that Nkhoma send their "*Katekisma*," *Malongosoledwe* (liturgical forms) and *Zolamulira* (rules and regulations), all Synod publications, so that the appointed committee could work on the rules for unity of the different Synods. The purpose is that General Synod would have only one "*Katekisma*" (Catechism Book).⁴⁷⁹

In the auditors' report to the JFC at the end of 1982, they commended the manager of the press for making a profit. However, the full report was not entirely positive. They noted that CLAIM was its biggest debtor (R 15,000) and that the manager should exert pressure on them and other customers to clear its debts. Also, a big shipment of paper from South Africa was an expense that reduced the DRC block grant, and some thought had to be made as to how this debt would be paid.

In his 1982 report to the DRC, General Secretary Rev. H.A. Kamnkhwani stated that the press, managed by I.S. Zintambira, was "running smoothly", but that a shortage of paper caused a decline in business. He expressed thanks for the CLF grant that subsidized *Kuunika*.

Members of the Moderamen received copies of Martin Pauw's book, *Mission and Church in Malawi*. "It would have been a good thing if every minister could have one of these books." The price was set at MK 6.00.⁴⁸⁰

At one point in the early 1980s, Nkhoma Synod started sending copies of minutes of its Moderamen and JFC meetings to the Faculty of Theology, the University of Pretoria, South Africa. Dr. JM Cronje acknowledged the sending of these minutes, but he felt compelled to say,

It . . . seems that some of the minutes are of more confidential nature and not suitable for a public library. It therefore kindly requests that its address be taken off the mailing list.

It is however very much interested in any material published by the Synod of Nkhoma (and of the General Synod of the CCAP), such as the

⁴⁷⁸ SC 171. 19-21 Meeting of the Synodical Committee, October 1982.

⁴⁷⁹ SC 215 and Gen. Synod 1982 Min. 20.

⁴⁸⁰ M. 614, Meeting of the Moderamen, 4 July 1983.

agenda of the Synod, its minutes, newsletters, etc. It would be much obliged if you would please forward all such material, which could be kept in the Library for future reference.⁴⁸¹

General Secretary Rev. HA Kamnkhwani acknowledged the receipt of Cronje's letter, and said that they would comply with the request to remove the University of Pretortia Library from their mailing list. He added,

Nkhoma Synod does not at present publish English newsletters or magazines apart from translation of News Brief Uit Malawi (sic).⁴⁸²

An emergency meeting of held on 5 June 1990, the Synod requested that Cape Town send a new printer to raise the standard of the Printing Press. This would involve Cape Town's sponsoring of a new post. The office in Cape Town decided to investigate the matter and to act accordingly. Several years later, in 1995, a meeting of the Moderamen noted that

It was noted with joy that somebody had offered to come and assess the problems experienced by our Press, as well as to advise us as to how the work at the Press may be improved in the future.⁴⁸³

The same emergency meeting of the Synod on 5 June 1990 terminated the accounts clerk of the printing press and the editor of *Kuunika*. Rev. van Deventer and Mr. Katsala were appointed to manage the press until a new manager could be found.⁴⁸⁴

In 1993, the venerable Rev. Mgawi asked for a place in Nkhoma to build a bookshop. His request was granted, and the Treasurer was asked to find a suitable spot.⁴⁸⁵ It will be remembered that Mgawi was Chairman of the General Administration Committee in 1962. It would have been difficult to turn down a request from such a distinguished person.

In 1996, there was a meeting between the Moderamen and the DRC personnel. This meeting touched upon a number of areas. They formulated the following goals regarding literature and printing to be reached by 2000:

⁴⁸¹ Letter from Dr. JM Cronje to the General Secretary of Nkhoma Synod, dated 24 January 1983.

⁴⁸² Letter from General Secretary Rev. HA Kamnkhwani to Dr. JM Cronje, Institute for Missiological Research, dated 1 February 1983.

⁴⁸³ M. 4000, Meeting of the Moderamen held on 2/5/95.

⁴⁸⁴ S. 2420, (Emergency Meeting of the Nkhoma Synod held on 5 June 1990 at Lilongwe CCAP), and M. 2921, (Meeting held on 12 July 1990 at Nkhoma).

⁴⁸⁵ M 3394, 15 January 1993.

- The management of the Press, Building, and Works and Transport Departments will be in the hands of Malawians. (The selection, training and practical work of the new heads of departments will be completed).
- The Press will function effectively due to the instalment of new machines, the proper training of a manager and technical staff, and good administration.
- At least two new publications for use in the church will appear annually.⁴⁸⁶

As of mid-2004, these goals have yet to be reached.

The DRC in South Africa was keeping an eye on the literature department in 1997.

Christian Literature for the training and equipping of believers is increasingly becoming a need. There is especially need for:

- Improving the quality of the church newspaper.
- Guidelines on preaching for the elders, who take responsibility for 95% of the preaching on Sundays.
- Guidance on healthy family life, marriage counselling, and rearing children.
- New guidelines for the Christian initiation (*Chilangizo*).
- Important and sensitive issues like the work of evil spirits, black magic, the influence of witchdoctors and the ministry of believers in society.
- The training of authors and translators also needs attention.⁴⁸⁷

The report also observed about the press.

The Press has already been upgraded well. Debts, which had built up over a long period of time, together with inefficient management, hampered the press. Professional personnel from the CLF will visit the Press shortly to discuss matters like management, training and purchasing of paper and equipment.⁴⁸⁸

At a November 1997 meeting of the Enlarged Executive Committee of the Church Committee for Witness and Action – Ministry of Missions, it was shown, “Mr. G. Lötz,

⁴⁸⁶ The minutes of a meeting between the Moderamen, members of the DRC personnel and Rev. JH Koch on 11/4/96 at the house of Rev. R. van Velden. “5. Goals for partnership between Nkhoma Synod and the DRC personnel to be realized by 2000. Technical Services.”

⁴⁸⁷ Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive Commission for Witness and Mission, Held on Monday 2 June 1997 in Stellenbosch, “2. Christian Literature”. Copies can be found both in DRC archive in Cape Town and the Nkhoma Synod library.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid. “3. The Printing Press”.

manager of the CLF in Bloemfontein, visited Nkhoma Press on invitation by the Nkhoma Moderamen”. This, no doubt, was the “professional personnel”. His report listed a number of problems. These included obsolete equipment (and difficulty finding spare parts), lack of competent personnel, and inefficient use of space, unscientific methods for cost estimates, and an inadequate production control system. His recommendations included replacement of the old equipment with computerised and new lithographic equipment, training of employees in their use, and having the printing department become a commercial printer for the entire community. He further recommended that Nkhoma Synod’s printing department work with CLF Bloemfontein in order to implement these changes.⁴⁸⁹

In the autumn of 1997, a representative from Cape Town, Rev. JJ Botha on behalf of CLF, presented the following report concerning a writing workshop in Malawi:

One of the goals of CLF is to present writing courses for new authors. It is important that, in order to write effective Christian Literature, training should be done in the context of Africa . . . from their own background and in their own language.

I presented such a course during the week of 1-5 Sept. 1997 . . . at Chongoni. There were 26 people present of whom 95% were ministers of the church . . . also ministers’ wives and capable elders from the congregations.

The workshop made a thorough evaluation of what is already available in Chichewa. For some of the people present it was an eye-opener to become aware again of what is already available. Thereafter they became aware of the needs for certain material, and on what topics new literature is needed . . .

Seeing that it was a first attempt, we concentrated mainly on the most necessary tracts and articles for *Kuunika*

The pattern we followed, was to present theoretic lessons on planning, the goal, way of writing, approach and form desired for our literature . . . those present had the opportunity to write on their own topics . . .

The choice of topics was very interesting, because from that one could derive that they live in close connection with the problems of their societies, and that they would like to supply answers to those problems. Especially the ladies addressed the ethical and social problems, e.g. tracts on the relationships between young people of different sexes, including

⁴⁸⁹ Report by G. Lotz to Nkhoma Synod dated August 1997.

warnings and helpful advice, the use of condoms and the issue of AIDS. The ministers chose mostly theological topics.

After the writing of these topics, all 26 attempts were discussed in detail. Improvements were suggested and the manuscripts were completed. Proper attention was given to the headings as well, so that the tracts could reach their goals.

- . . . The manuscripts will be printed at the upgraded Nkhoma Press.
- . . . Apart from the practical experience in writing itself, the meeting did proper planning on their church newspaper, *Kuunika*.
- The matter of translating existing manuscripts from English and Afrikaans into Chichewa was also discussed . . .
- The use of Christian literature in a young church is of the utmost importance for the spiritual development of that community.
- In future follow-up work will have to be done on these workshops

. . .⁴⁹⁰

Cape Town in a March 1998 meeting noted that Rev. AA Sasu, General Secretary of the CCAP, requested a donation of R 20 000 for paper for the printing press. An agreement between the CLF and Nkhoma Synod on the management of the press was accepted, with the result that the donation can be recommended. The CLF mentioned that they are willing to contribute R10 000. Dr. CJ Blignaut, retired from Nkhoma, also contributed R10 000.⁴⁹¹ The CLF drafted an agreement, which was discussed with the Moderamen of the Nkhoma Synod on 26 October 1998.

The Executive Committee of the Synodical Commission for Witness and Mission noted in June 1999 that Simon du Plooy was going to Nkhoma to work with the printing operation. It was decided to send Annalise Vorster to assist him. It was further noted that full use was to be made of a program called the Coral Draw program.⁴⁹²

At the 2000 CCAP General Synod meeting, Nkhoma Synod reported on a writer's workshop. There three titles were worked on:

⁴⁹⁰ "Report on the Presentation of a Writing Workshop in Malawi", dated Oct. 1997.

⁴⁹¹ Minutes of a Meeting of the Exec. Committee of the Commission for Witness and Ministry of Mission, Held on 20 March 1998.

⁴⁹² Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Synodical Commission for Witness and Mission.

- *Pemphero ndi kusala*
- *Mayi iwe wakhumatiranji*
- *Zenizeeni ndi ziti*⁴⁹³

Nkhoma still operates a printing press, albeit with difficulty. It produces stationery, hymnbooks, and other literature (but no Bibles) for 117 congregations. Nkhoma has plans on the boards for the creation of a publishing house, separate from the printing press. It could still use the press, but also farm out jobs to other printers. The Synod is currently negotiating with the DRC to finance this scheme.⁴⁹⁴

The printing press at Nkhoma also produces *Mlozo*, a daily devotional guide. Yet, another product from the printing press is the monthly guide for the *Chilangizo* (Women's Guild) known as *Mau a Mwezi*.⁴⁹⁵

It can be seen that this dimension of Nkhoma Synod's life carries on with tenacity. It still functions, but not at the level of an earlier age described by Martin Pauw. Other denominations have printing operations as well, some of which are flourishing. The Assemblies of God have one in Blantyre, Baptist Publications are in Lilongwe, but Nkhoma Synod's press is in an isolated pocket.

10.2.2 Nkhoma Synod's Relationship with CLAIM

The Publications Department in its Annual Report for 1967 anticipated the inauguration of the Christian Literature Association In Malawi (CLAIM) in early 1968. *Kuunika* was changed back from newspaper to magazine format.

In 1968, Nkhoma Synod's bookshop, along with others, established CLAIM, and this joint venture was called MABUKU – CLAIM. At the same time it was decided to discontinue the book van (a major component in their attempt to reach out to the congregations), but to continue to operate the book boxes in those congregations.⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹³ Minutes of the 19th General synod meeting held in Blantyre 1 – 5 November 2000, page 37.

⁴⁹⁴ Interview between present researcher and General Secretary Rev. Dr. Winston R. Kawale, 29 January 2004.

⁴⁹⁵ Interview between present researcher and Rev. C.L. Chimkoka on 9 July 2004.

⁴⁹⁶ E. 1396: GAC Executive meeting, 13 March 1968.

CLAIM, explains Rev. CL Chimkoka, was started to meet a specific need related to Christian education. It was specifically designed to go to the congregations.⁴⁹⁷

In addition, in 1968 Mr. Johan Pretorius took up the post of Literature Secretary and Editorial Training Officer of CLAIM. It was understood that a Malawian would eventually fill this second post and effort was to be made to find one who was qualified. Rev. Human was to continue doing some work in literature.⁴⁹⁸

In 1971 CLAIM (then headed by Mr. Johan Pretorius) petitioned the MMSC for financial assistance in building a bookshop at Nkhoma. The MMSC responded that it had already undertaken the extra financial responsibility help the Synod with its financial problems.⁴⁹⁹

In October 1981, the Synod Committee made some decisions regarding CLAIM:

- All useful books, like “*Maleredwe*” Catechism, Sunday and other, should be returned to Nkhoma Synod.
- The profits ought to be divided according to shares. If we did not receive our share, Nkhoma Synod would reconsider its membership of CLAIM.⁵⁰⁰
- The manager of CLAIM asked why this was being done. The Moderamen then agreed that the previous decision, regarding shares, should be changed.⁵⁰¹

In January 1982, the Moderamen decided that the time had come for the Synod to start its own bookshop – an operation separate from CLAIM. The General Secretary was instructed to direct CLAIM to hand over its bookshop at Nkhoma and apply to the government for the necessary licence.⁵⁰²

The CCAP General Synod meeting held in 2000 in Blantyre received a report from CLAIM. It acknowledged that CLAIM had gone through a challenging period, but that now there was reason for optimism. It had just received a book container as a gift from Book Aid in Ireland. It had organised a residential training workshop for its directors at Nantipwiri Pastoral Centre. CLAIM was now active in publishing and

⁴⁹⁷ Interview between present researcher and Rev. CL Chimkoka on 9 July 2004.

⁴⁹⁸ G. 1219. GAC, 5 – 11 April 1968.

⁴⁹⁹ Minutes of a Meeting of the Synodical Mission Sub Committee (SMSC) held on 10 – 12 August 1971.

⁵⁰⁰ SC 56. Meeting of the Synodical Committee 20 –21 October 1981.

⁵⁰¹ M. 233. Meeting of the Moderamen, 8 December 1981.

⁵⁰² M. 324 Meeting of the Moderamen, 5 January 1982.

distributing textbooks and library books following the liberalizing policy of the Government. They had just filled the positions of publications and sales manager, both of which had been vacant for a long time. Finally, they were actively revising the hymnbook *Nyimbo za Mulungu*.⁵⁰³

At this time of this writing, Nkhoma Synod still appoints a member of the Board of Directors of CLAIM.⁵⁰⁴ In 2001, the Commission for Witness (on behalf of the DRC in Western Cape) asked for a clarification regarding the relationship between Nkhoma Synod and CLAIM. It was felt that achieving the goal of “establishing an effective Christian Literature Ministry in Malawi” and avoiding duplication of effort made this clarification necessary.⁵⁰⁵

It will be remembered that in the early days, CLAIM attempted to operate a book van; this was discarded. In time CLAIM’s “book boxes” in the congregations were long ago discarded, due to the difficulty of collecting money⁵⁰⁶

A look at the bibliography at the end of this dissertation will reveal that CLAIM has evolved into a serious publisher in Malawi. Very likely, any writer produced by Nkhoma Synod would have to deal with CLAIM. Perhaps it will outlive the printing department at Nkhoma.

10.3 BIBLE TRANSLATION WORK

CM Pauw has written that, “Perhaps the greatest literary work of this Mission was its share in providing the country with a translation of the Bible in, as it was then called, *Union Nyanja*”. The first meeting of a joint translation committee composed of several missions met in 1900. Rev WH Murray, with others, was made responsible, and in 1907, the National Bible Society of Scotland (NBSS) produced a New Testament. After that, WH Murray actually had to resign as head of the mission in order to have more time for translation work. During the First World War, a key linguist named Rev Napier was killed in action, thus slowing down translation work. However, by the end of 1919, the Old Testament was

⁵⁰³ Minutes of the 19th General Synod meeting held in Blantyre 1-5 November 2000, appendix no. 2, pages 23-25.

⁵⁰⁴ Interview between present researcher and General Secretary Rev. Dr. Winston R. Kawale, 29 January 2004.

⁵⁰⁵ Letter to Nkhoma Synod from CM Pauw, 16 February 2001.

⁵⁰⁶ Interview between present researcher and General Secretary Rev. Dr. Winston R. Kawale, 29 January 2004.

ready and revisions to both Testaments had been made. At the end of 1922 the first edition, fifteen and a half thousand copies were printed. In December 1931 a new edition that included paragraph headings, textual references and corrections to errors appeared. When in 1932 The Nyasaland Government made changes in the *Nyanja* orthography, yet a new edition was required. This came out a few days before Murray's seventieth birthday in 1936 (Pauw 1980: 211-220).

In describing the significance of this Bible translation work, Pauw has quoted Katsulukuta and Pretorius who wrote in *The Translation of the Bible into Chichewa*,

The influence of the *Chinyanja* Bible spread beyond the Church. It brought into being a standardized language which broke through tribal barriers and made the different tribes conscious that they were one. The standardized *Nyanja* gave birth to a vigorous literature and became one of the most important national languages of Central and Southern Africa, spoken and understood in five countries (Pauw 1980: 220).

In 1967, it was decided that there was a need for a simplified-language version of the Chichewa Bible. It was not intended to be a replacement for the version then in use. Father Kalilombe of the Roman Catholic Church and Rev. J. Steytler were to collaborate as part of a two-year trial basis.⁵⁰⁷ The new translation was intended to focus upon the young people of Malawi who were finding the edition from the 1920s difficult. "Language is living; it has to change", explains Rev. CL Chimkoka.⁵⁰⁸

Late in 1968, Rev. JDH Steytler reported on the progress he was making on Bible translation. Up to that point, he had succeeded in finishing all of the general epistles (James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1 – 3 John, and Judas) as well as ten chapters of the gospel of John and five chapters of the gospel of Mark. The next phase would involve checking the translation by a proofreading commission of Bible and language experts and then by a larger commission.⁵⁰⁹

From 24 to 27 August 1971 the proofreading commission of the new Chichewa Bible translation met at Nkhoma. The translators were Rev. Katsulukuta and Rev. Steytler of Nkhoma Synod and Rev. Tenthani of the Roman Catholic Church. At that point, the Gospel of John was nearly completed. The epistles of Peter had already been published, having been printed at Nkhoma, and the plan was to print the gospel of John in

⁵⁰⁷ *Nuusbrief Uit Malawi*, September 1967.

⁵⁰⁸ Interview between present researcher and Rev. CL Chimkoka on 9 July 2004.

⁵⁰⁹ *Nuusbrief Uit Malawi*, December 1968.

large print and with illustrations for the benefit of those who had only recently learned to read.⁵¹⁰

In late 1973 the Moderamen heard that there would soon be another shortage of Bibles in Malawi, there had already been one recently. “Committee instructs the General secretary to write a letter of complaint (regarding the Bible shortage) to the overseas headquarters of the Bible Society.”⁵¹¹

In 1971, Nkhoma Synod decided to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the translation of the Bible into Chichewa by Dr. WH Murray. On Kaso Mountain, where Murray did his translation work, a monument would be erected, The Kaso Bible Monument. Each congregation would contribute a stone of 12” by 24” with the name of the congregation on it, and the stones would be built into the monument. It was expected that the cost would be R2000, and would be contributed by the congregations as an act of thanksgiving to the Lord and the translator for the blessing of having the Bible in their own language.⁵¹²

The year 1973 was observed as the Year of the Bible, as it marked the fiftieth year since the Bible was translated into Chichewa. A Bible conference was held for the occasion, at Kaso Mountain, about two miles west of Mvera mission station. Not surprisingly, the theme of the conference was “The Word of God”. Guest speakers from Blantyre, Salisbury and Lusaka joined the ones from Nkhoma. Mr. Kumbweza, government Minister of the Central Province, represented Dr. Banda at the meetings. He said amongst other things that missionaries who come here to proclaim the Word, and do not meddle with politics, would always be welcome. On Sunday 28 October, 2645 people gathered at the “church”. Rev. Mgawi, the moderator of Nkhoma Synod, spoke on the Bible as a well of life-giving water. Hereafter the crowd went to the monument, which was then unveiled by “Dr. Pauline (Versfeld Murray)”.⁵¹³ In 1974, the Government of Malawi declared the Kaso Bible Translation Monument to be a national

⁵¹⁰ *Nuusbrief Uit Malawi*, October 1971.

⁵¹¹ KS 5393. Minutes of a Meeting of the Moderamen, November 5, 1973.

⁵¹² Minutes of a Meeting of the Synodical Mission Sub Committee (SMSC) held on 10 – 12 August 1971.

⁵¹³ *Nuusbrief Uit Malawi*, January 1974. As the daughter of WH Murray, and as one who served in Malawi herself, it was appropriate for her to do the unveiling.

monument, and in response, the Nkhoma Synod stated that its position was that the monument's upkeep was the responsibility of the government (Kam'nkhwani 1981:105).

The Synod in 1985 noted with pleasure that work was underway at the Bible Society of Malawi on a translation of the Old Testament in modern Chichewa; the book of Psalms had already been published. It also appealed for members of the Synod to get involved in the writing of evangelistic tracts.⁵¹⁴

The Synod had printed a large number of Centenary Bibles. Many went unsold, adding to the financial dilemma. As of December 1989 Bibles worth MK 83,000 remained unsold. The Treasurer and the General Secretary were given the task of selling them.⁵¹⁵ However, there was a specific reason why some went unsold. The cover bore the pictures of some active-duty ministers, and some found this offensive.⁵¹⁶

The Centenary Bible case went beyond the borders of Nkhoma Synod, which attempted to put a positive spin on it. In its report to the 1990 General Synod, Nkhoma Synod gave a brief summary of the Centenary Bible episode:

Special Centenary Chichewa Bibles were printed in three different bindings and were liked and bought by many people.⁵¹⁷

In 2002 the International Bible Society – Africa based in Nairobi, Kenya produced *Chipango Chatsopano* (The New Testament) *Mu Chichewa Cha Lero* (In Today's Chichewa), a work that was begun in 1995. Veteran Nkhoma Synod minister and CCAP General Secretary YA Chienda is Chairman of the Board of the International Bible Society in Malawi and thus very much a part of this important work. They are now working on the Old Testament. The work involves the use of two teams, a translation team, and a review team. Rev. Michael Khombe is heading the review team. He says that his Hebrew is not good, but they are not translating directly from Hebrew. The idea is to use the 1923 version and from it produce a contemporary Chewa version that is aimed at Malawian young people. Lester Chikoya is Coordinator for the project.⁵¹⁸

⁵¹⁴ S.1877 and S. 1973, minutes of the 20th synod Meeting at Namoni Katengeza, 10 – 16 April 1985.

⁵¹⁵ J. 768, 15 March 1990.

⁵¹⁶ Telephone interview with Rev. Dr. Hennie van Deventer, 28 June 2004.

⁵¹⁷ Minutes of the General Synod meeting held at Blantyre from 26 Aug. to 3 Sept. 1990, page 79.

⁵¹⁸ Interviews between the present researcher and Revs. Y.A. Chienda and Michael Khombe, 28 June 2004.

10.4 THE DIFFICULTIES OF *KUUNIKA*

The story of *Kuunika* roughly parallels that of Nkhoma Synod's literature and printing department in general. As in the case of other Synod departments, it has had draw upon outside expertise to continue to function, and then with difficulty.

Kuunika is the magazine of Nkhoma Synod, giving news and devotional material. It was in existence at the time of the DRCM dissolution in 1962; with its roots going all the way back to 1909. In 1958, it merged with the Zambian publication *Muuni*. Following this, there was a drop in subscriptions that required a £1,000 per year grant from the General Missionary Conference to keep it going. For most of that time, it has been published almost entirely in Chichewa. The Synod had a *Kuunika* Committee made up of both South Africans and Malawians. In the sixties, the publication continued to experience financial difficulty (Pauw 1980: 209-211).

In 1971, the subject of revival of *Kuunika* was taken up. Debts owed to *Kuunika* by congregations were to be recovered. Effort was to be made by the editor and by ministers to instruct reporters within churches. There was to be greater variety in content. At the same time the idea of an English-language Synod newsletter was approved, provided that it did not cost the Synod anything. This idea was never implemented, it later being decided to incorporate English-language pages into *Kuunika*.⁵¹⁹ The use of English in *Kuunika* has seldom been extensive, perhaps reflecting the preferences of its target group.

Nkhoma Synod in its Synod meeting of 28 August – 4 September 1971 still wrestled with the problem of an insolvent *Kuunika*. In addition to appointing a commission of inquiry into the problems of *Kuunika*, it set aside “a Sunday in March on which the offerings will be to subsidize *Kuunika*. If the collections are not enough, the congregation must add on to it from its funds until it totals £4.” Synod approved, at the Twelfth Meeting of Synod, held 25 July – 2 August 1972, a suggestion from the *Kuunika* Committee to assess MK16 from each congregation, “This is compulsory for all congregations”. In return, each congregation would receive 40 copies of *Kuunika*; each church member who paid a subscription of 40 tambala per annum would receive a copy.

⁵¹⁹ KS. 3141 and 3154: Synodical Committee 30 – 31 March 1971.

It was agreed that, “A special collection for *Kuunika* on the appointed day shall continue.”⁵²⁰

In 1982 the Synodical Committee received the following list of problems regarding *Kuunika*.

- The *Kuunika* gets late to the congregations due to the fact that the Press has too much work to do.
- The Bus taking the mail from Nkhoma very often does not run and so the mail does not go out in time.
- Many congregations do not send the subscription for *Kuunika*.
- Very often the Chichewa and the grammar is not correct and understandable. This has the result that people loose interest in the paper.

At the Nineteenth Meeting of the Nkhoma Synod held 5 to 12 April 1983, *Kuunika* was again the topic. It was directed that all congregations should have their subscription fees paid up by the end of October 1983. Failure to do so would be cause for the Editor to hand in names of delinquent congregations to the clerk of Presbytery who would then “deal with the matter.”⁵²¹ The same 1983 synod meeting agreed to the suggestion made by the Synodical Committee that a Literature Committee should be set up.⁵²² The Nineteenth Meeting also received the thanks of Rev. YA Chienda for their support of the Bible Society. CLAIM reported the opening of bookshops at three new locations: Dwanga, Thyolo, and Thekelani.⁵²³

In 1985, the Committee of *Kuunika* asked the Moderamen to ask CLF for a grant of MK 8,000. They also asked for a travelling expense for the editor rather than him having to submit a report for each trip. The existing system was retained.⁵²⁴

The Financial Committee noted with regret in 1992 that the cost of printing *Kuunika* had risen dramatically. The committee suggested that the Moderator and Clerk of Synod contact some companies and ask them to advertise in *Kuunika*, and then ask

⁵²⁰ J.76: JFC 9 –10 April 1973, p. 3

⁵²¹ S. 1795, Nineteenth Meeting of the Nkhoma Synod, Namoni Katengeza 5 –12 April 1983, “*Kuunika* Report”

⁵²² S. 1726, Minutes of the 19th Synod Meeting Held at Namoni Katengeza CLTC, 5 – 12 April 1983

⁵²³ S. 1775, Meeting of the Synod held at Namon Katengeza, 5 – 12 April 1983.

⁵²⁴ M1420, Meeting of the Moderamen, 17 December 1985.

them for donations.⁵²⁵ A few months later, there was a change in the administration regarding *Kuunika*.

The committee decided that *Kuunika* should be incorporated with the Print (Department), where it should still be produced in order to be sold.⁵²⁶

CCAP General Secretary YA Chienda says that a South African consultant was brought in, who did not recommend continuation of the periodical. Chienda further says that it has long lacked “a proper editor”.⁵²⁷

Kuunika has been “in and out”, says Rev. Michael Khombe. *Kuunika*, he said, is still being published, albeit only sporadically.⁵²⁸

10.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In many parts of the world, the production and distribution of Christian literature is itself an essential ministry. The literature department and the press at Nkhoma Synod made many notable contributions in the period beginning in 1962. Because of its tradition of advancing education, involvement in literature distribution was a natural form of evangelism and teaching for the Synod.

However, this particular department of the Synod has demonstrated some glaring weaknesses; there were poor managerial decisions. One example of this problem was the continued insolvency of *Kuunika*, and the determination to keep it afloat. A commercial enterprise would have abandoned the project long ago. It proved to be a problem lasting years, and year after year defying resolution, requiring subsidy from South Africa, at a time when other projects were crying for aid. One may be tempted to ask, was that the best stewardship of scarce resources?

Another example of managerial shortsightedness and miscalculation was the production in 1988-89 of “Centenary Bibles” that had pictures on the cover of several active-duty ministers, which many found in poor taste. Understandably, one might ask what was the message they were trying to send.

⁵²⁵ FC 18, Minutes of the Financial Committee held in the Memorial Hall at Nkhoma, 19 June 1992.

⁵²⁶ SC 1109, Synodical Committee 20-21 October 1992.

⁵²⁷ Interview between present researcher and Rev. YA Chienda 28 June 2004.

⁵²⁸ Interview between present researcher and Rev. Michael Khombe 28 June 2004.

One finds disturbing the power of Synod to compel (or to attempt to compel) congregations to purchase so many copies of *Kuunika*. This in itself raises a huge church polity issue. A Western researcher sees in this a monumental digression from the Reformed tradition. The issue that is involved here is actually much bigger than merely the salvaging of a denominational publication known as *Kuunika*. If the Synod, acting as the Synod, can dictate actions and enforce compliance upon its various congregations, in what sense is the integrity of the Presbyterian system preserved? This, in turn, relates back to the secondary question, “What is the nature of the polity of Nkhoma Synod?”

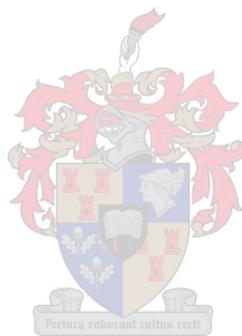
One notes with interest that in 1982 the General Synod, representing Livingstonia and Blantyre synods as well as Nkhoma, directed the standardization of the Catechism Book. The fact that the Synod still relies heavily upon catechism books says “Yes” to the question, “Does Nkhoma Synod see itself as a confessional church?” This drive toward standardization actually began earlier, and will be discussed more fully in chapter twelve, which deals with relations with other synods and denominations. This relates back to the secondary question, “What is the nature of the relationship between Nkhoma synod and the other synods”, illustrating another way in which Nkhoma Synod developed a self-understanding as a church: a turning away from the DRC in the direction of the CCAP mainstream.

It was pointed out that the location of Nkhoma Synod’s printing press is a problem. The Baptist Convention of Malawi has its Baptist Publications in Lilongwe, the capital of the nation. The Assemblies of God has a printing operation in Limbe-Blantyre, the largest city in the nation. Nkhoma’s press, however, is at the end of a fourteen – kilometre dirt road that is nearly inaccessible in the rainy season.

In spite of the problems faced by this department of the synod, it is one worth preserving. The youth of Malawi in particular are subject to many non-Christian influences, and much of the available Christian literature is not in the Reformed tradition. There is, for example, a Christian bookshop in “City Centre” near the British Council and the National Library Service in Lilongwe that specialises in imported “Health-and-Wealth” literature.

The next chapter deals with the secondary question, “What part did Nkhoma Synod play in the political development of the country?” It is noteworthy that the

printing press at Nkhoma remained steadfastly apolitical. At no time was it used for political purposes – either pro- or anti-government. We shall see that in more recent times, the Nkhoma printing press has published sometimes controversial, “Pastoral Letters.” However, these have not been intended to dictate how the people of Nkhoma Synod voted. Indeed, they have been most careful to avoid mentioning any political party by name. Instead, we shall see how these letters helped Nkhoma Synod to find a prophetic voice in a new climate of democracy and freedom of speech.



Chapter Eleven

The Challenge of Church-State Relations

11.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is divided into two parts, one showing the Synod's willing cooperation during an era of single-party government, the other showing its willing to confront when the political structure is changed. In so doing it will demonstrate the complexities of church-state relations.

This chapter also will show how the life of Nkhoma Synod has been since 1962 within the context of monumental political changes. These changes have had a profound impact upon every area of life in Malawi. In these years Malawi went from being an authoritarian one, party state to being a multi, party democracy, at least in theory. The previous chapter being about literature and printing, it should be noted that in other places and in other times, authoritarian governments have prohibited the existence of printing presses that they did not control. In allowing Nkhoma Synod to keep its printing facility, the government of Malawi, to a limited degree, showed respect for the Church.

This chapter will show that ultimately total separation of church and state is impossible. It will be seen how the Synod went through a process of realizing what its role must be viz a viz the government as an important part of today's Malawian society.

11.2 NKHOMA SYNOD AND COOPERATION WITH THE GOVERNMENT

Martin Pauw explains the perception that Nkhoma Synod was deliberately apolitical or even pro-MCP through much of its history.

The concept of a State Church is of course entirely strange to Reformed theology and contrary to the essence and confession of a Church based on Calvinistic principles, and therefore it was felt the Nkhoma synod should not interfere in the technical aspects of politics. Moreover the DCRM missionaries, while residing in the country as guests, being neither settlers nor citizens, did not feel at liberty to "interfere" in the state machinery, but chose rather to remain neutral towards the Governments of countries where they work (Pauw 1980: 369-70).

In 1963 H. Kamuzu Banda was the prime minister of pre-independence Malawi. The GAC sent a delegation to Dr. HK Banda and minister JZU Tembo to discuss and

explain the following matters: the policy of the Regional Synod of Nkhoma (RSM) and its relationship with the government; the work of the synod, especially the medical work; the Bible School and the training of laymen at Chongoni; and also the future of the personnel from South Africa. A memorandum was drafted regarding these issues, and discussed with the prime minister.

The Right Honourable, the first Prime Minister of Malawi, the Life President of Malawi Congress Party, the founder of Malawi Nation and the Minister of Natural Resources and Surveys: on behalf of Nkhoma synod, sir, we wish to express our thanks for the honour and opportunity that we are accorded to present this memorandum to you . . . Since 1962 the D.R.C.M. has been fully dissolved in Nyasaland, and all responsibilities which were previously held by the Mission Council, and all property have been transferred to Nkhoma Synod. All mission personnel became members of the CCAP and are under full control of the Nkhoma Synod. The Nkhoma Synod will still need and welcome fraternal workers from South Africa who wish to serve the Church in this country, on condition that such workers shall respect the national aspirations of the Malawi people, and will comply with the regulations laid down by the Government for such expatriate workers . . . the Nkhoma Synod of the CCAP fully recognizes the national and political aspirations of the people of Malawi. The Nkhoma Synod fully accepts your genuine leadership and remembers with gratitude the peaceful way in which you brought the people of Malawi from colonial rule to the status of self-government and independence. The Nkhoma synod would like to assure you that the church shall do everything in its power to support the constitutionally elected Government.⁵²⁹

It was in 1963 that the GAC issued specific guidelines regarding personal behaviour and political matters. Heads of Synod departments were to refrain from criticizing the Government or “any Malawi official”, and to remind their employees not to do so. Departmental heads furthermore were to “closely study the Code of Discipline of the Malawi Congress Party”. Local political leaders were to communicate with department heads regarding “complaints of a political nature” concerning employees. Complaints about workers or “outside persons” were to be reported to the local Malawi officials. Heads of departments were advised not to make jokes about politics or the Government. “Expatriate workers from South Africa are to be extremely careful about what they say or do.” Finally, Synod was to be asked to give similar instructions to

⁵²⁹G.222. Minutes of meeting of GAC, 21 to 24 May 1963.

ministers.⁵³⁰ The same meeting called for the training of Africans with a view of filling executive posts, in three categories: purely administrative, technical or skilled, and “stand-by’s” (those who can take over in case of resignation, illness, etc.).

One incident soon after independence may serve to illustrate the climate of the times. The Synod was forced to dismiss the head of the carpentry shop and a carpenter because when the Prime Minister Ngwazi (“*Ngawzi* means “hero”) came to Kamphata ten miles away, a local holiday was proclaimed so everyone could greet the *Ngwazi*; and instead of presenting themselves for the greeting, they went elsewhere and imbibed in strong drink. This got them into trouble with local Malawi Congress Party operatives, and the Synod was forced to dismiss the two men (“for their own safety”) upon the instructions of the Party.⁵³¹

The following report by the South African personnel gives another graphic illustration of the climate of the times. In 1965, workers at Nkhoma Synod were dismissed because of financial constraints, and some managers were fired due to mismanagement and dishonesty. Unfortunately, some of those affected had political connections, which brought repercussions upon the Synod.

They sent the Nyau (heathen dancers . . .) to Nkhoma to frighten the people. They concentrated on the hospital and especially on one of the very loyal Malawian members of personnel . . . stoned his house...damaged property on the yard of the hospital. . . . also harassed Rev. Mgawi. The latter phoned the provincial chairman of the Party . . . who sent the police . . .

The same week the provincial leader organised a meeting at Nkhoma . . . All the leaders of the local branch of the Party were dismissed, and this time nearly all the newly elected members were church members . . .⁵³²

In an August 1966 meeting of the GMC in Cape Town, the relationship between Church and State in Malawi was one item of discussion. The GMC stated:

Notice is being taken gratefully of the good and sympathetic attitude of the Prime Minister and his government towards the church and its work. As proof hereof, the Church was requested to organize a one-hour program for the Republic Day Festival . . . The Malawi Mission Sub

⁵³⁰ E.202 - GAC, Meeting of the Executive, 24 June 1963.

⁵³¹ E. 568. Minutes of a Special Meeting of the Executive, 13 October 1964.

⁵³² *Nuusbrief Uit Malawi*, June 1965.

Committee or MMSC (previously Nyasaland Mission Sub Committee or NMSC) decided that, with the Moderator as advisor, a letter of thanksgiving should be written to the Prime Minister to express gratitude for their positive attitude towards the church and its work, and for the part given to the church in the program of the Festival . . . 6 July 1966, and to assure the Prime Minister of the Church's intercession for wisdom and guidance in the fulfilling of his task . . .⁵³³

In his 1968 annual report to the DRC in Cape Town, General Secretary Rev. Mgawi reported that there was political tranquillity throughout the land, although some "rebels" attempted to cross over from Mozambique; their attempt was unsuccessful, and three were killed. The report heaped high praise upon the government's "Young Pioneers," and said that there were no longer any conflicts with other youth movements. They did extensive training in agriculture, and,

"They are also helpful to the citizens of the Malawi to explain to them about the policies of the government."⁵³⁴

"The Synod should thank the government because of abolishing bad system of putting on short dresses and drinking beer of teachers."⁵³⁵

The Assistant Secretary General of Nkhoma Synod was directed to send the following telegram to the National Convention of the Malawi Congress Party, 16 September 1968:

On behalf of the Nkhoma Synod CCAP we wish you good and fruitful meeting. May God bless and keep the Malawi Government and the *Ngwazi*. Our prayer is the word of St. Paul in Titus 3:1-2, "That all must surrender to the authorities. They must be obedient, be prepared to do any good work. They must not be rude to any person, they must not fight, they must be peaceful and meek to all people."⁵³⁶

In subsequent years, similar telegrams were sent upon the occasion of MCP National Conventions.⁵³⁷

⁵³³ Minutes of a Meeting of the GMC, Cape Town, 2 – 4 August 1966. V11 Report Malawi Mission Sub-Commission, par. 2, p. 80.

⁵³⁴ General Secretary's Report to DRC mission office. Filed in 1968, it described the period May 1966 to April 1967. It should be noted that the Malawian Army destroyed the Young Pioneers in the brief but violent "Operation *Bwezani*" of December 1993, near the end of the Banda regime. The immediate cause was the refusal of the Young Pioneers to turn in their weapons, and a brief scuffle in Mzuzu resulted in the death of Army personnel. The present researcher was an eyewitness of Operation *Bwezani*.

⁵³⁵ S.506. Minutes for the Ninth Synod Meeting 16-23 August 1968.

⁵³⁶ KS. 1361, Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee held on 23 July 1968. It should be remembered that for the first thirty years of independence, 1964-94, the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) was the only legal political party in the country.

⁵³⁷ S. 561, Minutes of Meeting of Synod, 28 August - 4 September 1970

In his “Annual General Report for 1969” General Secretary YA Chienda reported that all was politically calm, and that they were grateful to the Government of South Africa for the money to build the new capital in the centre of the country. Regarding the Young Pioneers, he states, “It is through this Movement that the country as a whole is developing.”

The Synod and the government created a symbiotic relationship. The Moderamen discussed in July 1970, the request from His Excellency the President to the Christian Service Committee for church-recruited personnel for government posts, such as secondary school teachers, doctors, agriculturalists, and engineers. The Moderamen decided to make the DRC Cape Town and Pretoria aware of this.⁵³⁸

A pair of incidents from the seventies will serve to illustrate the church-state climate of the times. In 1976, His Excellency the President visited the Central Region and some persons presented him with a gift on behalf of Nkhoma Synod, a table made at the Carpentry Shop at Nkhoma. Mr. Joswa Mwale presented this gift to the Synod, and the Synod dispatched two representatives to thank him personally.⁵³⁹ In early 1977, the Acting General Secretary sent a letter to H.E. the Life President of Malawi, thanking him for participating in the dedication of the church at Chamwabvi. The President sent a reply:

To me, Christianity is not just a matter of going to church every Sunday, closing eyes in prayers. It is much more than that. At Chamwabvi, I prefer Christianity to be practiced in real life, rather than to be preached and professed but not practiced in real life . . . Please convey to the Synod my sincere thanks for its kind letters and prayers for me.”

The Synod responded to this by saying:

Therefore Nkhoma Synod, being solidly behind the President and the government, wishes him a long life and will continue praying for him as is being done.⁵⁴⁰

In early 1980 the General Secretary of the Nkhoma Synod sent a report addressed to the Chairman of the Synodical Mission Committee in Cape Town entitled “Annual General Report 1979.” The first topic covered was “Political Life of the Country”.

⁵³⁸ KS 2056, Minutes of Meeting of Moderamen, 20 July 1970.

⁵³⁹ KS5944. “Gift To His Excellency the President Dr. H. Kamuzu Banda, Synodical committee, 21-23 April 1976.

⁵⁴⁰ KS 6094. Moderamen 15 January 1977.

The political life of the country has, during 1979, maintained the progress which had started with the attainment of Independence in 1964. The policy of dialogue and friendliness with neighbouring countries has been maintained. The Life President Ngwazi Dr. H. Kamuzu Banda has time and again reiterated (sic) that he is prepared to talk to anyone, friend or enemy because he does not believe in isolating others or denouncing them. Peace and calm in the country has increased considerably. We, as a church, are pleased and praise God that freedom of worship was maintained. The President continues to encourage the people to worship God in the way they believe is right without any interference (sic). He himself attends Worship Services whenever time allows him to do so especially on important days like Martyrs Day and Independence Day. He even appeals to his ministers and people to follow his example and that everyone should worship in the way he feels is right.⁵⁴¹

In a prime example of government involvement in internal church affairs, early in 1980 the Synodical Committee was pleased to report that the Government Censorship Board had approved the revision of *Chilangizo* (“Instruction”). The Secretary General was instructed to write a letter of thanks to the Chairman of the Censorship Board.⁵⁴²

The Moderamen in 1981 expressed concern that running errands for the Party was costing the Synod money. In an item entitled “Money Spent on Journeys for the Malawi Congress Party:”

Committee was informed that the lorry of the Building Department has travelled 1084 miles for such journeys, the cost of fuel alone being K1126.25. Committee refers the matter to the Joint Financial Committee.⁵⁴³

The General Secretaries (sic) report of 1981 describes the Synod’s relations with the government:

I praise the Lord Mr. Moderator for the good co-operation, which is between the Government and the Synod. During the time that we have been in Office we have had chances of visiting Government Officials and exchange of letters. Through these visits and correspondence, we have had chances of receiving advices and instructions from government officials on many issues. This co-operation with Government has confirmed that the government, which we have, is a democratic Government indeed. Because of this, Mr. Moderator let us continue to remember in our prayers our Life President Ngwazi Dr. H. Kamuzu

⁵⁴¹ Nkhoma Synod CCAP “Annual General Report 1979”.

⁵⁴² KS 7859, Moderamen, 8 February 1980.

⁵⁴³ KS. 8344. Moderamen, 9 March 1981.

Banda, his ministers and all those who assist him in the running of the Government.⁵⁴⁴

In its report to the CCAP General Synod meeting of 1990, Nkhoma Synod reported the following regarding a visit from the Life President:

The Climax of this Centenary Celebration was reached on Sunday 27th August 1989 by the coming of His Excellency the Life President Ngwazi Dr. H. Kamuzu Banda to attend the Church service at Nkhoma Mission. During the service he read the Scriptures in Chichewa. At the end of the service he was presented with a beautiful special bound Chichewa Bible. Then the afternoon (sic) he addressed a mass rally at Nkhoma Mission.⁵⁴⁵

In 1994, the Synod received a visit from a representative from the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, Rev. Dr. HS Wilson. During this visit, the Synod's role in the political situation was discussed. The Synod at this time reiterated its apolitical stance.⁵⁴⁶

Nkhoma Synod got involved in governmental affairs in another way. They were asked by the government to produce a Chichewa-language version of the Malawian Constitution, a task that they readily accepted.⁵⁴⁷

In 1994 it was learned that the government wished to make several sites of historical significance to Nkhoma Synod museums. The Moderamen readily agreed to this . . . since they will still be property of the Synod.”⁵⁴⁸ While the Malawian government has a Department of Antiquities, it has been the observation of this researcher that because of lack of funds, historical sites tend to have fallen into disrepair.

In 1996, the State President, Bakili Muluzi, donated MK 20,000 in honour of centenary celebrations at Kongwe, Livilezi, Malembo, and Nkhoma CCAP.⁵⁴⁹ Muluzi was a Muslim; the following section will touch upon some of the implications of this fact. In late May 2004, Bingu wa Mutharika became the third President of the Republic; it remains to be seen what direction church-state relations will take during his tenure.

⁵⁴⁴ Annual General Report to the Chairman of the Synodical Mission Committee (SMC) from the General Secretary of Nkhoma Synod. This can be found in the archives of Nkhoma Synod.

⁵⁴⁵ Minutes of the CCAP General Synod meeting held at Blantyre from 26 Aug. to 3 Sept. 1990, page 79.

⁵⁴⁶ M. 3679, Meeting of the Moderamen, 28 January 1994.

⁵⁴⁷ M. 3847, Meeting of the Moderamen, 18 October 1994.

⁵⁴⁸ M. 3808, Meeting of the Moderamen, 26 July 1994.

⁵⁴⁹ M. 4136, Meeting of Moderamen, 28 June 1996. See also M. 3794 (5 August 1994), M. 3849 (18 October 1994) M. 4075, and M. 4154 (13 August 1996).

11.3 NKHOMA SYNOD AND CONTENTION WITH THE GOVERNMENT

The following incident serves as an illustration of the kind of draconian action that the Malawian government could take, causing much distress to the Synod. Dr. JK Louw and Mr. A. Dreckmeyr were ordered to leave the country within 3 days as from 7 May 1970. Later it was learned that the order to leave was suspended pending the government's investigation into the matter. The minutes of the meeting of the Moderamen of 15 May stated that they did not know the reason for the deportation order. Related to this was the closing down of the Kongwe Secondary School by the government "for an indefinite period". Congregations were asked to pray about this. On 23 July 1970, Rev. DC Kamphinda (vice-moderator), YA Chienda, and Rev. C. Human met with three senior officials of the Ministry of Education about Kongwe. The Ministry wanted Mr. Retief to be named as headmaster. However, Retief was not interested in the position, so the Synod had to decline the request. The Ministry stated that it was anxious to reopen the school, and would now refer the matter to the President's Office.⁵⁵⁰

The Ministry of Education decided on the removal of three teachers: the Malawi Young Pioneer instructor, the headmaster, and Mr. Dreckmeyr, who were wanted by the Moderamen to help at Nkhoma Hospital. The Ministry also decided to investigate the activities of Nkhoma Synod African Teachers Association (NSATA). The Ministry further decided to appoint special auditors, as the school's financial affairs were in disarray.⁵⁵¹

The President's Office rendered its decision. Mr. Retief would indeed assume the duties of headmaster at Kongwe, ten students were suspended, NSATA was banned, and a list of acceptable and unacceptable teachers was furnished. It was decided to re-open in August 1970 long enough for J.C. examinations, and then start the new school year in October as usual. Following this, CA Loots was posted to the William Murray Teachers' Training College (WMTTC), JK Louw was posted to Malingunde, and Rev. MH Daneel

⁵⁵⁰ KS. 2001, Minutes of Meeting of Moderamen, 15 May 1970; KS 2016, 3 June 1970; and KS 2069 at Blantyre, in the Headquarters of the Ministry of Education, 23 July 1970.

⁵⁵¹ KS. 2070 Minutes of Meeting of Moderamen, 30 July 1970.

was posted to Lilongwe, continuing his work there as Youth Chaplain.⁵⁵² When the government banned NSATA, the Synod took the step of removing all reference to NSATA from *Zolamulira* (The Synod's book of rules).⁵⁵³

Dr. CJ Blignaut and Rev. CM Pauw were ordered by the Government of Malawi to leave the country; the date of their departure was to be 17 February 1973. The cause was someone brought an injured dog into the Nkhoma Hospital and it was treated. Someone else found this offensive and complained to local authorities, leading to a deportation order.⁵⁵⁴

In his 1973 Annual General Report to Cape Town, Secretary General YA Chienda described how he requested and was granted an interview with His Excellency the President in order to plead for the reversal of the deportation order. Later the Synod was told that the government would not reconsider. Elsewhere in his report, Chienda gave a glowing account of the peace enjoyed by the nation, and the good relations that existed between Malawi and South Africa.

The deportation of expatriate personnel, however, was not the only problems faced by the Synod. Sometimes the synod had to answer other charges, as the following illustrates. Committee was informed that the Moderator, Rev. KJ Mgawi, and General Secretary, Rev. YA Chienda, were summoned by His Excellency the President on 21 February 1974, through the Minister for the Northern Region; they were summoned together with the Principal of the theological college, Rev. S. Kauta Msiska. Other persons summoned were the minister for the Central Region and two staff members of the University of Malawi.

At the meeting, the minister for the Northern Region explained that Rev. Kauta had given him two letters reporting (accusing) two ministers of the Nkhoma synod (Steytler and Burger) and accusing Nkhoma Synod of refusing the moving of the Theological College to Zomba. The representatives of Nkhoma synod rejected the accusations, and further protested against these matters being taken to the government

⁵⁵² KS 2082 and 2083, Minutes of Meeting of Moderamen in Blantyre, 6 August 1970. Technically, this was not a deportation order but a cancellation of their Permanent Residence Permits. They were declared prohibited immigrants (PI)"- CM Pauw.

⁵⁵³ S. 601, Minutes of Synod Meeting, 28 August – 4 September 1970.

⁵⁵⁴ Minutes of a Meeting of the Moderamen 12 March 1973, and personal interview between present researcher and Rev. Hennie van Deventer of Nkhoma.

instead of to the theological board of General Synod. His Excellency the President told the meeting that if Nkhoma Synod refuses to move to the University in Zomba, he fully understands them as he himself had seen the difficulties in establishing a Theological College in an American University. The matter was therefore referred back.

The Moderamen, seeing that this is a most serious and dangerous matter for the Church, resolved to call on the respective secretaries to urgently arrange an emergency meeting, held jointly, of the Theological Board and Standing Committee of General Synod, and instructs our representatives to state:

- That Nkhoma synod agreed long ago that the Theological College be moved to Zomba . . .
- That Nkhoma Synod has also already started raising the required funds for building at Zomba . . .
- That Nkhoma Synod has lost all confidence in the Principal of the Theological College because of his actions.⁵⁵⁵

The above appeared in the minutes of a meeting of the Moderamen. It was marked “strictly confidential”. Problems with the political machinery persisted, as can be seen from the following.

Committee was informed that the Moderator (Rev. KJ Mgawi) and the General Secretary (Rev. YA Chienda) were suddenly summoned to appear at the headquarters of the Malawi Congress Party in the Office of the Hon. Mr. Muwalo, on 4 March 1974. The Moderators and General Secretaries of Blantyre and Livingstonia Synods were also summoned, as well as Rev. Kauta (principal of the Theological College) and two students, and the Regional Ministers of the three regions of Malawi, as well as other dignitaries.

The matter for which they were summoned was that Rev. Kauta as principal of the Theological College prohibited two students to wear the lapel-badge depicting His Excellency the President, and because of this the two students had also been called to this meeting. On investigation, it was found that Rev. Kauta had indeed committed a very serious offence, and that he was guilty; he acknowledged his mistake. Therefore it was agreed that he was unfit to continue in his office at the Theological College, and he was

⁵⁵⁵ KS. 5446. Moderamen, 22 February 1974 “Following is Strictly Confidential”.

told to lay down his post and return to his home (in the Northern Region). Accordingly he left Nkhoma on 6 March 1974.⁵⁵⁶

This incident led to the closing of the Joint Theological College at Nkhoma. One of the accusing students was Rev. Kamwana, who was later to serve as a lecturer at Nkhoma, Synod Clerk, and as a member of the board of directors for Zomba Theological College. However, Blantyre and Livingstonia synods vetoed his becoming a lecturer at the Zomba College (see section 3.5.1, “The Ministers of Nkhoma Synod”).⁵⁵⁷ While from a Western viewpoint, wearing of presidential lapel pins may seem petty, during this era, shop owners had to keep a portrait of the president in plain view (a practice often followed to this very day), and there were the Young Pioneers to enforce this.

In 1974 His Excellency, President Banda of Malawi granted permission for Dr. Blignaut to return (Pauw returned not long after for a visit). Blignaut stated his intention to return after writing examinations in March of the following year, 1975.⁵⁵⁸

In 1975, the Malawian government deported another South African, Nkhoma Synod’s Rev. Christie Burger. The deportation of Rev. Burger was a direct result of the deportation of another missionary from South Africa, Rev. Pieter Botha. Before Mozambique received independence from Portugal, the Roman Catholic Church in Mozambique put much pressure on the Portuguese government to prohibit any Protestant work in Mozambique. After Mozambique gained independence, there was a time of relative peace before the civil war started and during that time Rev. Botha started to do missionary work in Mozambique. There were already a number of Mozambican Christians across the border of Malawi, so Botha moved to Dedza, and started working in Mozambique. Botha went into Mozambique with a truckload of maize (during this time there was a famine in Mozambique, which the Mozambican government denied), and he came across an NGO fact-finding mission. They enquired of him whether there was famine in Mozambique, which he confirmed. The Mozambique civil servants who accompanied the NGO’s reported this incident to the Frelimo government who then lodged an official complaint to the Malawi government, resulting in Botha’s deportation.

⁵⁵⁶ KS 5454. Moderamen, 18 March 1974.

⁵⁵⁷ Interview between present researcher and General Secretary Rev. Dr. Winston R. Kawale, 29 January 2004.

⁵⁵⁸ KS 5688. Synodical Committee, 8 – 9 October 1974.

The Malawi government then enquired about who was the direct superior of Botha, and finding it to be his Liaison Officer, Rev. Christie Burger, who was then deported Burger as well.⁵⁵⁹

CCAP General Secretary YA Chienda gives his perspective regarding this incident. Nkhoma Synod sent a Malawian minister to do work in Mozambique and later, Botha went to provide assistance to the Malawian. Botha had the means to obtain and distribute maize, and so he did which in turn aroused the jealousy of the Malawian. Malawi's president, His Excellency President Banda, received an anonymous letter to the effect, "Are you aware there's this South African doing this?" The prior operation-on-the-dog incident did not help matters, and so Burger, the Liaison officer was deported. Botha refused to apologise. He later learned Portuguese, made a career out of helping the Church there, and eventually, died there. Chienda was able to intervene and appeal to His Excellency President Banda, and was thus responsible for Burger's return in 1983. Chienda explains that Nkhoma Synod, although it would have liked to, was unable to prevent Burger's deportation in the first place. The government of His Excellency President Banda was, after all, an authoritarian regime.⁵⁶⁰ Veteran missionary C. Martin Pauw has indicated "There is a totally different version as to why complaints were made against Botha."⁵⁶¹

Although out of the country at the time, Rev. Attie Labuschagne is able to give this personal account:

One morning, at the beginning of March 1975, a phone call came from Malawi. An Anxious Annamarie de Klerk simply said, 'Oom Christie has been asked to leave the country within 24 hours. Please contact the Mission Office.'

Rev Christie was in no way at fault, . . . but because he was the liaison officer between the DR Church in SA and the Nkhoma Synod, the Malawian Government took it for granted that he was responsible for the activities of all the missionaries of the DR Church. It had been so in the past before the Synod had taken on the responsibility of the mission. After that missionaries were under the jurisdiction of the Nkhoma Synod (Labuschagne 2003: 398).

⁵⁵⁹ From a response e-mailed from Nkhoma Synod missionary Elsabet Smit, in response to the question, "Why was Burger deported?"

⁵⁶⁰ Interview between present researcher and Rev. YA Chienda 28 June 2004.

⁵⁶¹ Note from Pauw to researcher, 2 December 2004.

During this period, the world attention turned to Africa, especially the disastrous famine in Ethiopia. This inspired the “Live Aid” concerts that were intended to raise funds for hunger relief. Increasingly, the Banda regime was being seen as repressive. Being part of the government, as the following reveals, was no guarantee of immunity from brutality.

Charges of Banda-era political murders and cover-up have been published. The following is an excerpt from a book edited by Kings Phiri and Kenneth Ross and published by the Christian Literature Association in Malawi (CLAIM):

At the outset, it is useful to outline the facts which are not in dispute in this case. On 17 May 1983, four prominent politicians - Dick Natenje, Secretary-General of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP); Aaron Gadama, Minister for the Central Region; Twaibu Sangala, Minister of Health and David Chiwanga, MP for Chikwawa District - were arrested at roadblocks in Zomba. After being first taken to the Eastern Region Police headquarters in Zomba, they spent the night in Mikuyu prison near Lake Chirwa in Zomba District. They were taken to Blantyre on the following day where they were brought first to the MCP sub-head office in Chichiri and later to a Special Branch Centre at John Abbegg - a milling firm in Blantyre's sister city, Limbe. During the night they were taken, hooded and handcuffed, to Mwanza and thence to the Thambani road, which leads south from Mwanza along the Mozambican border. There the politicians were battered to death (Ross and Phiri 1998: 22-23).⁵⁶²

An incident in the mid-eighties is illustrative of the nature of the relationship between the government and the Synod. Although a Church, the Synod did not enjoy exemption from taxes. In 1984, the Malawian government informed the Moderamen that the Synod owed MK 5,854.39 in taxes on the land owned by the Synod. The Committee instructed the General Secretary and the Treasurer to inform the government that most of the land in question was being cultivated by local people. At the same time, these officers were instructed by the Moderamen to consider the reduction of land owned by the Synod and to consider new boundaries.⁵⁶³

The Roman Catholic Bishops' Pastoral Letter (February 1992) brought about the national referendum that decided that Malawi was to become a multi-party democracy. That letter said in part:

⁵⁶² According to the authors, the killing was ordered by the then Inspector-General of Police, Mac J. Kamwana, (brother of Nkhoma Synod's Rev. Kamwana).

⁵⁶³ M. 796. Minutes of the Moderamen Meeting on 5 April 1984.

We urgently call each of you to respond to this state of affairs and work towards a change of climate. Participation in the life of the country is not only a right; it is also a duty that each Christian should be proud to assume and exercise responsibly. People in positions of authority, in government and administration, have a particular duty to work for the restoration of a climate of trust and openness. However participation will remain a fiction without the existence of adequate channels of expression and action: an independent press, open forums of discussion, free association of citizens for social and political purposes, and the like . . . (Ross 1996: 212).

The Synod's initial response to the wind of political change sweeping across the country was rather negative. When they received a letter from Zomba Theological College advising them that the faculty had signed the Catholic Bishops' Pastoral Letter, they said first of all, they did not know the contents of the letter. Secondly, they did not agree with what they had heard about it on the radio. Finally, they recalled Dr. Kamukhuni and all Nkhoma students who were at the College.⁵⁶⁴

The question arises, why did this Roman Catholic Bishops' Pastoral Letter come about at this particular time, in 1992? "Human rights violations came to a peak (at this time)," explains Rev. CL Chimkoka. He goes on to say that, "the killing of four cabinet ministers (the 1983 incident) fuelled it". Why was the letter written by the Roman Catholics, and not by Presbyterians? Chimkoka points out that he was present at the formation of the Southern African Alliance of Reformed Churches (SAARC), in 1988, as its first General Secretary. Such celebrities as Allen Boesak participated in its activities, when the SAARC protested against apartheid to the South African government. Following the Bishops' Pastoral Letter of 1992, it got involved in the process that brought about political change in Malawi, and it was during these days that His Excellency President Banda (and his lieutenants) created the Presidential Council for Dialogue (PCD) to counter the Public Affairs Committee (PAC). The reason the Roman Catholics produced the Pastoral Letter and not the Presbyterians, concludes Chimkoka, has to do with church polity as Roman Catholic bishops can act on their own authority quicker than can a body of Presbyterians. Finally, when asked, "why does Nkhoma

⁵⁶⁴ M. 3294, Meeting of the Moderamen, 19 March 1992. The pro-multi-party stance of the Christian Council of Malawi was initially supported by representatives of Nkhoma Synod. When the Synod rescinded its support, the CCM suspended the membership of the Synod.

Synod feel free to issue its own pastoral letters and make political statements now? Chimkoka explained, “It is because there is freedom of speech now”.⁵⁶⁵

A May 1992 meeting in Cape Town had to consider was the case of Dr. Ryk van Velden because of a letter he had written to the General Synod of the CCAP earlier in 1992 that had political implications. Van Velden had written the letter to support the Catholic Bishops’ Letter and urged the CCAP to join the movement. The Moderamen judged this to be unacceptable (as they did in the case of the unfortunate Rev. Maseko, see Chapter Twelve) and it was decided, following a meeting with Rev. JH Koch and JD Thom (both have served as Foreign Missions Secretary of the DRC), that van Velden be granted study leave until August 1992.⁵⁶⁶ It was stated at the time that this was for van Velden’s protection; it was feared that the Young Pioneers might prove dangerous him.⁵⁶⁷

The government of His Excellency Kamuzu Banda bowed to international pressure and agreed to a referendum that would decide whether Malawi would have a multi-party political structure. Nkhoma Synod backed away from its earlier resistance to change. “The Synod is in agreement with the forthcoming referendum which will take place on June 14, 1993.”⁵⁶⁸

During this transitional period, the Nkhoma Synod found itself wishing to be apolitical, yet unable to ignore political tensions. It issued the following press release regarding the 1993 referendum that mandated a multi-party system:

During the past year much debate has taken place in our country concerning various political issues. Notably the referendum debate, which has been on the merits and demerits of a one party system as opposed to the multiparty system, has been the main topic of discussion.

Nkhoma Synod is aware of the fact that many members of its church are supporters of one side or the other on the referendum question. The Synod believes that genuine Christians can support either side of the referendum without violating the genuine ideals and principles of Christianity. The Synod is also aware of the fact that such members come from all the different regions of the country.

⁵⁶⁵ Interview between the present researcher and Rev. CL Chimkoka on 9 July 2004.

⁵⁶⁶ M.3354, Meeting of the Moderamen, September 28, 1992. “Koch was Chairman at that time and later succeeded Thom.” – CM Pauw, 12 September 2004

⁵⁶⁷ Interview between present researcher and the General Secretary, Rev. Dr. Winston R. Kawale, 29 January 2004.

⁵⁶⁸ S. 2685 Minutes of the 24th Synod Meeting at Namoni Katengeza, 13 – 20 April 1993.

Other churches or church representatives have issued various statements during the past year on the current political debate in the country. Nkhoma Synod has however remained silent and non-partisan on the issue. This should not be misinterpreted to mean that the Synod is against the calling of the referendum on one party or multiparty system of national politics. Rather the Synod has chosen to let its members make their important decisions on the referendum free of partisan interference from the church.⁵⁶⁹

Individuals closely associated with Nkhoma Synod could still play a part in the political transition.

The committee noted, with gratitude to God, that Rev. KJ Mgawi was selected to serve on the committee monitoring the whole process leading to the referendum. We as Synod should pray for him.⁵⁷⁰

By the end of 1994, the South African personnel could express apprehension at the new course of events. *Nuusbrief Uit Malawi* (Newsletter From Malawi) observed that all was peaceful and the poor well cared under the old regime, but the new had brought an increase in crime, vigilante justice, and devaluation of the currency. It did go on to say, however, that the new, Muslim, president seemed willing to cooperate with the churches.⁵⁷¹

In 1995, Synod directed the establishment of a “Church and Society Office”. Its stated purpose was to “look at the political changes and also the welfare of the people in the country”,⁵⁷² a project which got off to a shaky start. In 2003 Nkhoma Synod approached the Blantyre Synod for their assistance in establishing this “Church and Society Office”, and in 2004, it still has not been established⁵⁷³. The Synod has, however, appointed someone to head up the office, and when it is established, it will be responsible for acting as social, economic, and political advisor to Nkhoma Synod.⁵⁷⁴

In addition, in 1995, the Governor for the Central Region, Mr. Moris Kachimbwinda, allegedly made derogatory and inaccurate statements about Nkhoma Synod. The Moderamen attempted to meet him in his office, but he did not make himself

⁵⁶⁹ *Nuusbrief Uit Malawi*, June 1993.

⁵⁷⁰ M. 3397, At Namoni Katengeza CLTC, 15 January 1993.

⁵⁷¹ *Nuusbrief Uit Malawi*, December 1994.

⁵⁷² S. 2882, Minutes of the 25th Synod Meeting at Namoni Katengeza, 4 – 11 April 1995.

⁵⁷³ M. 5752, Meeting of the Moderamen, 14 May 2003.

⁵⁷⁴ Interview between present researcher and the General Secretary, Rev. Dr. Winston R. Kawale, 29 January 2004.

available. Synod directed that a letter of protest be written to the regional office of the ruling United Democratic Front (UDF) party⁵⁷⁵, and in addition it was also decided to use the newspapers as a means of denying the allegations made against the Synod.⁵⁷⁶

By 1998, Nkhoma Synod had found its prophetic voice, demonstrating that the Roman Catholics were not the only ones who could issue a “Pastoral Letter”. The 1998 Nkhoma Synod Pastoral Letter starts by citing the positive effects of the UDF government: there was now a democratic government; freedom of speech; and freedom of religion. Then it listed the problem areas: including bribery and corruption; increased tribalism; increase in poverty and hunger; and the “prices of commodities are skyrocketing”. It recommended that Nkhoma Synod members vote in the 1999 general elections in a manner consistent with their faith while condemning the buying of votes. The last part gave a vision of what society should look like.⁵⁷⁷

The Nkhoma (Pastoral) letter, published in July (1998), and signed by 90 ministers of Nkhoma Synod, looked forward to next year’s elections in Malawi, and urged Christians to vote for “the party that will be in accordance with our Christian faith, not in opposition to it”.

This was interpreted by some Malawian newspapers as an invitation to Christians to campaign against the UDF.

Malawi is a predominantly Christian country with a leader and incumbent President, who is a Muslim; and to encourage support for the Malawi Congress Party (ENI 1998).⁵⁷⁸

Until May 2004, Malawi had a Muslim president and for the most part, this raised few difficulties. However, the government can and does intercept E-mail. In the late nineties a pair of YWAM missionaries were expelled when they sent an E-mail to the U.S. asking for prayer as they evangelised Muslims. The Immigration Service, in spite of the fact that the Malawi High Court had ruled in their favour, deported them. In 1999, a CCAP pastor issued what got interpreted as a pastoral letter calling on Christians to vote for Christian candidates; in reprisal, operatives of the ruling party burnt a CCAP church.

⁵⁷⁵ S. 2918, Synod Meeting of 1995.

⁵⁷⁶ M. 3952, Meeting of the Moderamen, March 2, 1995.

⁵⁷⁷ “The Christian Responsibility in a Democratic Country, Pastoral Letter From Ministers of Nkhoma Synod.” Signed at Namoni Katengeza Church Lay Training Centre on 15 July 1998. a copy was loaned to the researcher by Mrs. Grace Banda, widow of Dr. Fletcher Banda and employee at ABC Clinic in Lilongwe.

⁵⁷⁸ “Malawi Update Issue 27 September 1998” containing the superscription, “The following account is based on an Ecumenical News International report of 14th August, which we gratefully acknowledge.”

His Excellency President Muluzi was the main speaker when in 1996 the Assemblies of God opened its theological college in Lilongwe; he went up to the microphone shouting “Halleluiah!” In 1995, African Bible College experienced no difficulty in obtaining a broadcasting license for its Christian radio station, but received the warning not to say anything negative about another religion. For the most part, religious freedom is a reality in Malawi.

Nevertheless, not all is peaceful; emotions sometimes get out of hand. On July 6, 2001, members of the Young Democrats, an arm of the ruling United Democratic Front party, beat Rev. Kalebe, representing Nkhoma Synod at an Independence Day celebration. Synod directed that the Church and Society office write a letter of protest to His Excellency President Muluzi.⁵⁷⁹

Dr. Jurgens Hendriks of the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa, has given his summary the Synod’s approach to politics.

Some years ago in Malawi, the Nkhoma Synod of the CCAP was not prepared to join other churches of the Christian Council of Malawi in issuing a statement about democracy in Malawi. Many considered that this was because of a close liaison with the then President, Dr HK Banda, who was from the same region. The Synod’s membership of the Council was even suspended for a time. It was only when the new President, a Muslim, came into power that the CCAP Nkhoma Synod started to realize its prophetic responsibility and spoke out against injustice and other issues. (Hendriks 2004:95).

In 2003, an explosive issue in Malawian politics was whether His Excellency President Bakili Muluzi would stand for a third term, in contradiction to the country’s constitution. There was a meeting between the president and representatives of Nkhoma Synod. He stated at that time that it had never been his desire to stand for a third term, only that the people of Malawi had urged it. He further stated that the party and not himself had selected his party’s candidate for the 2004 presidential election.⁵⁸⁰

The CCAP General Synod Standing Committee 2000 Ten Year Strategic Plan addressed the issue of Church-state relations. It called upon the Church to identify with and to protect the poor and the powerless in the name of justice.

⁵⁷⁹ S. 3434, Minutes of the 28th Synod Meeting at Namoni Katengeza, 15 – 22 October 2001.

⁵⁸⁰ M. 5759, Meeting of the Moderamen, 12 May 2003.

Presently as seen above the various Synods rightly or wrongly are perceived to be inclining towards different political parties particularly the party that is strongest in their jurisdiction. This is a great failure by the church and needs to seriously endeavour to remove this stigma and maintain the aforesaid full arms length relationship. In recent years we have also seen top church leaders being given seemingly innocent gifts by the Government, Politicians or parties in the form of brand-new vehicles and other gifts. Such gifts innocent though they may appear can easily lead the church leader into compromising the aforesaid objective of the church as it is not easy for a human being to speak out against the ills of the giver of that gift. The best therefore is to avoid such gifts in the interest of the integrity of the church. Hence no church leader should accept a gift from Government, Politician of political party without the sanction of the church through its various church courts for transparency purpose.

The Strategic Plan also called upon the church to be “objective” in its dealings with the government and to support the government when its programmes enhance the welfare of humanity, but to confront the government when its programmes diminish the welfare of humanity.⁵⁸¹

The CCAP General Assembly General Secretary, Rev. Dr. YA Chienda, feels that the CCAP deserves credit for two political victories in 2003. Its intervention prevented the impeachment of several High Court judges, and it forced the president to back down from seeking a third term. He went on to say that Nkhoma Synod issued two pastoral letters in 2004, one right before the presidential election, and one right after. These letters expressed dissatisfaction with certain actions of the government. However, Chienda also described recent violence in Mzuzu (outside Nkhoma Synod’s jurisdiction) in which a Livingstonia mbusa was beaten, allegedly by Young Democrats, operatives of the ruling UDF Party.⁵⁸²

11.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The last of the seven “secondary questions” which this study was to answer was, “What part, if any, has Nkhoma Synod played in the political developments of the

⁵⁸¹ CCAP 2000 General Synod Standing Committee Ten-Year Strategic Plan, pages 39 – 40.

⁵⁸² Interview between the present researcher and CCAP General Assembly General Secretary Rev. YA Chienda.

country?” Nkhoma Synod today is indeed playing a role, and it has been shown that this role was undertaken rather belatedly.

One remembers the role that churches, particularly Reformed churches, have played throughout history in opposing repressive governments. In the 1600’s, British Presbyterians stood up to King Charles I; in the 1700’s, American Presbyterians stood up to George III; Presbyterians in the northern United States opposed slavery in the 1800’s; and marched in support of the Civil Rights Movement in the twentieth century. Outside the Reformed tradition, one also remembers; the Barmen Declaration and the Confessing Church Movement of Germany that dared to criticize Hitler; and the Roman Catholic Church of Poland (which produced Pope John Paul II) served as a rallying point for the Polish people during decades of Communism. However, running parallel to that tradition is the tendency of the church in many lands to either remain neutral or to actively collaborate with totalitarian regimes: the church in the pre-Civil War American South found ways to justify slavery; the pope in the years between the two world wars had words of praise for Benito Mussolini; most German churches got in step with Hitler and the Nazis; liberation theology developed in Latin America because the Roman Catholic church in that region took no overt action against injustice; and in recent years the Southern Baptist Convention in the United States and the DRC in South Africa have issued apologies for political stances taken in former times. The church is always caught in the tension between two Biblical commands: “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29 NIV), and “Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established.” (Romans 13:1 NIV).

It should be pointed that during the years of His Excellency President Kamuzu Banda, it was not at all clear that it was a “repressive” government. Most of the people supported it during most of this period. The president with the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) had led the nation to independence from Britain with His Excellency President Banda being seen more in the role of a benign father figure.

Moreover, nowhere in Africa, including the Republic of South Africa was there a strong tradition of multi-party democracy with free open elections. Here one thinks of Nkrumah of Ghana, Amin and Obote in Uganda, Kenyatta in Kenya, Mobutu in the Congo, Emperor Bokassa of the Central African Empire, Mugabe in Zimbabwe, and of

course, apartheid in South Africa. Compared to these, President Banda, who claimed to be a Christian, seemed rather mild. Moreover, nowhere on the continent was there a church leading anything like a liberation movement. The enemy appeared to be colonialism, not indigenous national leaders.

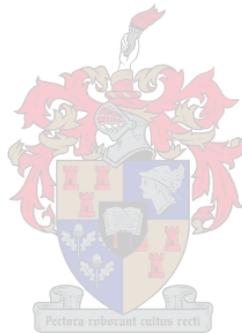
In any case, resistance was not an option. Foreign missionaries were easily deported, even those representing denominations that were funnelling much aid into the country. It has been demonstrated that homegrown leaders, like the hapless principal of the theological college in seventies, could easily be dismissed, even for spurious reasons. The *Ngwazi* was in a position to inflict harsh penalties, and he could bestow favours. Democracy took centuries to develop in the West; it is perhaps unreasonable to suppose that it can be quickly and easily transplanted in the soil of Africa.

It remains to be seen how durable the democratic multi-party system of Malawi is. For now, though, it features true opposition parties, freedom of the press, and churches that voice their opinions and concerns through such organs as the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) and the Christian Council of Malawi. Moreover, the Nkhoma Synod of today exhibits an entirely new attitude. It confronts, challenges, and registers protests. Whereas in the past, Synod officials were called on the carpet and made to explain things to the government of the *Ngwazi*, one now sees the current president explaining things to the Synod, as in the case of the “Third Term” controversy. Most of all, it is important that Nkhoma Synod continue to be seen as apolitical, and not identified too closely with any particular political party.

One of the two hypotheses to be tested in this study was, “Nkhoma Synod has achieved a prophetic role in Malawian society”. It is true, and what made this possible was the intervention of others. The world community recoiled at the excesses of the latter Banda years and forced it to accept multi-party politics, which, in turn, forced the old regime out. Although Nkhoma Synod did very little if anything to bring the change about, it nevertheless acted upon it when it was safe to do so, with several Nkhoma Synod “Pastoral Letters” issued since the installation of the new political structure. In addition, the Synod acting through the General Assembly and through other alliances such as the Malawi Council of Churches participates in criticism of the Government when it is deemed necessary. Therefore, another way in which Nkhoma Synod has

developed its self-understanding of being a church is in the prophetic voice (one that can register protests against injustice) that it has acquired in its relations with the Malawian government.

Having looked at the political scene as it relates to the civil government, the next two chapters will look at another political scene. Chapter twelve deals with Nkhoma Synod's relations with its sister synods within the CCAP, and chapter thirteen, equally important, describes its dealings with denominations and bodies that are outside of the CCAP fold which will demonstrate that Nkhoma's relationships with these ecclesiastical bodies parallel the development of its relations with government.



Chapter Twelve

Relations with Other CCAP Synods

12.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter demonstrated how political activities are inescapable; in one-way or another, the government must be encountered. This chapter will show how that within ecclesiastical structures, similar realities, which may be described as political, also exist. The inescapable fact is that Nkhoma Synod is different from its sister synods in some observable ways. It accepts graduates from the evangelical African Bible College as ministers. It has yet to accept women as ministers or as church officers. These distinctives are suggestive of the difficulty with which Nkhoma Synod blends and merges with its sisters.

Furthermore it shall be shown how the General Synod (Assembly), always there as a part of Nkhoma Synod's life since 1926 when it joined the CCAP, has taken on a new fortified meaning. The motives behind the creation of a new constitution, and how it has impacted upon the Synod's life will be examined and the Policy and Strategic Plan 2000 – 2010 will be described, in order to give insight into the priorities and aspirations of Nkhoma Synod and the CCAP. The Dwanga border dispute will be seen as an example of a wound that refuses to heal, demonstrating how regional and linguistic divisions can cause difficulty in achieving genuine church unity.

The other four synods of the CCAP are:

1. Livingstonia
2. Blantyre
3. Zambia
4. Harare

12.2 RELATIONS WITHIN THE CCAP

12.2.1 The Synods Acting Together

In his summary of the period between 1926 and 1962, Martin Pauw says,

The CCAP was formed out of three Presbyteries. Yet these three presbyteries were independent to such an extent that the Synod could even be said to have been more of a Federated Church than a United Church, each Presbytery retaining its own constitution, liturgy and standing orders. Training of ministers, licensing and ordination were done separately by each, “the licenses of such Ministers to be operative only within the bounds of the Presbytery”. Although the Synod was “the supreme Court of the United Church”, its functions only included “matters pertaining to the general welfare of the Church, for example public worship; Christian life and conduct; such cases, whether of discipline or otherwise, as may be brought before it by way of appeal; the promulgation of rules and regulations for the government of the Church; the control of such monies as have been entrusted to the Synod by the respective Presbyteries”. The Synod had no legislative powers and could not obtain such unless the conditions of the “Barrier Act” had been met (Pauw 1980: 339).

In 1956, The CCAP adopted a constitution, and the Nkhoma Presbytery (in those days, “Mkhoma”) became Nkhoma Synod.

The draft constitution as amended was then put to the vote, and there voted: for 130; against 0. The Constitution was therefore passed Nom-Con.

The Moderator pointed out that was a great decision the Church had reached. The Synod rose in prayer and the Moderator led in a prayer of thanksgiving. It was unanimously agreed to add the following words to the adopted Constitution, “This Constitution on receiving in the Synod approval $\frac{3}{4}$ majority vote shall come into effect immediately.”⁵⁸³

At the beginning of the period under study, 1962-2004, congregations in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) were under the jurisdiction of Nkhoma Synod. This relationship ended in 1965 when the Rhodesian (Zimbabwean) congregations formed a separate Synod.⁵⁸⁴

In his “Annual General Report for 1969” General Secretary YA Chienda gave an upbeat report regarding Nkhoma’s relationships with other synods. He noted that while there had been a troubling controversy with Blantyre Synod, causing Blantyre to threaten to withdraw from the CCAP Theological College, this matter had been cleared up at the Board meeting held at Chilema on 6 May 1970.

The Synodical Committee of Nkhoma Synod held an interview with the Moderator and the General Secretary of the Salisbury Synod (now Harare Synod) in

⁵⁸³ Minute No. 33 of 1956 CCAP Constitution

⁵⁸⁴ Minutes of the General Synod held at Chongoni 16 to 17 August 1977, Appendix VI, The Constitution of the Nkhoma Synod CCAP, Article II. This can be found in the library at Nkhoma.

1971. The purpose of this interview was to discuss the mutual calling of ministers from one synod to another; this was prompted by Salisbury's acute shortage of ministers. Members of Synod were appointed to draw up a draft agreement and then report to the Moderamen and to the Salisbury Synod. The finalized, formal agreement was completed in late 1973.⁵⁸⁵

In 1980, there was a further expression of solidarity between Nkhoma and Salisbury (Harare) synods.

Committee heard the letter from Salisbury Synod suggesting the following:

1. That all the funds requested from the mother church in S. Africa must be sent to Nkhoma Synod, that is: Nkhoma Synod should apply for funds on behalf of both Synods.
2. Candidates for Theological Training must be screened and selected by Nkhoma Synod, but if Salisbury Synod has a candidate, his name will be sent to Nkhoma Synod if he has passed the entrance examination.
3. All candidates will, on the completion of their studies, be available for calling in any of the two Synods.

The Moderamen recommends that the full Synodical Committee should accept this request.⁵⁸⁶

One important issue that came up was that of the pensions of Nkhoma Synod ministers serving in Zimbabwe. The churches of the Salisbury (Harare) synod were reminded to make their contributions.

The General Secretary must again write to the Salisbury Synod asking them to send the annual pension contributions for our ministers who are serving there, so that when they return to Malawi they will be receiving their pensions there.⁵⁸⁷

At a 1972 Synodical Committee meeting, the Theological Board noted that Chapter II, Article I ("Brief Statement of Faith") was not being followed by the entire denomination. Therefore, the Committee declared that it was necessary for the unity of the CCAP that all synods interpret Article I in the same sense as Articles 3, 4, and 5 of the Larger Catechism of the 1648 Westminster Confession of Faith. The Committee also

⁵⁸⁵ KS 3170. Minutes of Meeting of Synodical Committee 30 –31 March 1971. Also see KS 5416, Minutes of the Moderamen, 19 November 1973.

⁵⁸⁶ KS. 8070. Moderamen, 30 May 1980.

⁵⁸⁷ KS. 8378. Moderamen. 9 March 1981.

found that it was necessary for the Order of Worship, Catechism, and various “rules and regulations” be revised and standardized for the use of all four synods.⁵⁸⁸

A number of years later, at the 1987 General Synod, the CCAP Moderator, Rev. JGM Maseko said,

The second thing General Synod wants to achieve is closer unity of the CCAP by trying to introduce one order of service and also one Catechism for the whole Church. Although the Catechism will take us along way before we come to a final compromise, the exercise is worth while. But I think the first thing to start with is the order of Service, which is very practical rather than Catechism which is doctrinal on which I know there will be some reluctance as they had in the Pres. Church of East Africa in Nairobi whereby a book of common order of service was written, but the church was using it only at times. I don't think this will happen in our church of CCAP We are all aware of the strongest argument some of us church leaders make, we say we are not after uniformity of things but unity in Christ. That is quite true, but still there are certain things which can bind us together.⁵⁸⁹

In 1976 Blantyre Synod sent a letter to Nkhoma Synod stating that they intended to send representatives to various places in Africa to study different church activities, such as Sunday school, catechism class, etc., and they wanted to some people to study at Nkhoma. Nkhoma responded by questioning what specific things did they want to study. That same year, however, Nkhoma did send delegates to the centenary celebration of Blantyre Synod. They also expressed “joy” when Livingstonia Synod marked its centennial the previous year.⁵⁹⁰

In 1980 the Moderamen heard a proposal that involved cooperation with a “sister synod” in neighbouring Zambia,

Committee was told that (Rev. JGM Maseko) has been invited by the Reformed Church in Zambia to conduct a Church Music Workshop at Chipata Congregation from 25th to 28th September and at Mlhangwe Congregation from 2nd to 5th October. Committee allows him to go and help our sister synod.⁵⁹¹

⁵⁸⁸ KS 4018, Synodical Committee, 5-7 April 1972.

⁵⁸⁹ General Synod meeting minutes, Appendix 1, Meeting From 5-10 August 1987 at Ekwendeni CCAP.

⁵⁹⁰ KS 6017. Synodical Committee 12 – 14 October 1976.

⁵⁹¹ KS 8101. Moderamen 16 June 1980.

In 1982 the CCAP General Synod decreed that a new CCAP synod should be formed in Zambia. The report submitted to the General Synod that year listed the following problems:

- Exchange of currency
- Work permits for Malawian personnel
- The question of caring for indigenous Ministers there⁵⁹²

However, the same report to the General Synod listed some positive aspects. These included:

1. The division of CCAP group in Zambia has now settled down.
2. Training indigenous ministers at Zomba Theological College and plans are there to train more on an emergency course at Livingstonia. Extension of work has grown now that there is possibility to form two new Presbyteries.⁵⁹³

In addition, at the 1982 CCAP General Synod, Nkhoma Synod gave a report on its ministers. They were dispersed as follows:

The Synod has now 75 Malawian ministers sixty of whom are committed to the Lord's work in congregations and the rest to special Synod posts and other Christian bodies. A good number is serving the Lord in the Synod of Harare (italics are those of the researcher).⁵⁹⁴

A question arose in 1983 concerning the boundary between Nkhoma and Blantyre synods. It was settled without undue controversy.

Synod decides that the boundary between Nkhoma and Blantyre Synods should remain as it is. The Mlanda congregation should do its work according to the rules laid down by Nkhoma Synod.⁵⁹⁵

As further indication of the good relations between Nkhoma and Blantyre synods, Rev. Chinkhadze received an invitation to speak at a Blantyre Synod conference. The Moderamen gave their approval.

The committee agrees that Rev. Chinkhadze should go to Blantyre Synod as speaker during their conference. We should pray for him.⁵⁹⁶

⁵⁹² Minutes of the General Synod held at Chongoni, 24 to 27 August 1982, page 4.

⁵⁹³ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁴ Minutes of the General Synod held at Chongoni, 24 to 27 August 1982, page 19.

⁵⁹⁵ S. 1691. Minutes of the Nineteenth meeting of the Nkhoma Synod held at Namoni Katengeza CLTC from 5 to 12 April 1983.

⁵⁹⁶ M. 637. Minutes of the Moderamen at Nkhoma on 15 August 1983.

The CCAP General Synod of 1987 took up the issue of “CCAP Greater Unity”. It stated that, “the Standing Committee should study the Constitution with the aim of reviewing the Rules and Regulations of the Constitution.” It further mandated an Office for the General Synod, to be run by the Senior Clerk. It was agreed to establish a General Synod programme to involve women and youth. It also provided for the transfer of a minister from one Synod to another, while stating that the General Synod lacked the authority to bring about transfers itself. The Standing Committee “Rejected the idea that General Synod has advisory powers only and resolved that the issue of powers of the General Synod and Synods should be referred to a committee on the study of the constitution”.⁵⁹⁷

At the next CCAP General Synod meeting, held in Blantyre in 1990, the General Synod simply states that, “After review of the 1987 minutes of the General Synod, the committee noted that issues agreed upon were meant to build a unity.” It went on to say that “the General Synod resolved that the constitution of the CCAP General Synod be an expression of Unity among the CCAP Synods.”⁵⁹⁸

At the 1994 CCAP General Synod, the coordinator of the Southern Africa Alliance of Reformed Churches, SD Chiphangwi, sent greetings. This was to mark the seventieth anniversary of the CCAP.

When, at times, you were tempted to give up and say, “the unity of the CCAP is impossible,” God encouraged you to give it a second, third and more chances which have made possible these festive celebrations this year.⁵⁹⁹

The CCAP constitution of 2002 gives principles by which the unification of the five synods should proceed. This new constitution is discussed in detail in the following section, 12.2, setting up committees that formulate proposals. Its ultimate goal is “total unity”. There remain significant differences, such as: Blantyre and Livingstonia have elders who serve for life; while Nkhoma’s elders serve three-year terms; Nkhoma continues to reject women ministers and officers. “The CCAP is still a confederation, not

⁵⁹⁷ Minutes of the General Synod Held at Ekwendeni 5 – 10 August 1987, “30. CCAP Greater Unity”, pages 34 – 35.

⁵⁹⁸ 46/90 Ad Hoc Committee Reports, CCAP General Synod Held at (H.H.I.) Blantyre 26 August – 3 September 1990, page 68.

⁵⁹⁹ Minutes of the General Synod held at Chongoni 9 to 13 November 1994. Appendix I southern Alliance of Reformed Churches. This can be found in the library at Nkhoma.

an organic unity,” says Nkhoma Synod General Secretary Winston R. Kawale.⁶⁰⁰ This statement suggests that Nkhoma Synod is not ready to surrender all distinctives and sovereignty in the name of unity.

“We are more inclined to be a synod of the CCAP than a synod of the DRC,” said Kawale, meaning that the Synod is moving toward closer ties to the General Assembly of the CCAP. However, “there is no way we can detach ourselves from the DRC, as The Partnership Agreement recognizes the DRC as a special tie, in spite of opening up to other churches. For example, in some of the villages, there are older people who say, ‘We are Dutch.’”⁶⁰¹

12.2.2 The Boundary Dispute with Livingstonia Synod

In July of 1968, a boundary dispute between Nkhoma and Livingstonia synods led to a formal agreement in writing. It read as follows:

After a very long discussion, it was found that it was very difficult to agree on a common boundary because:

- a. Both Synods Livingstonia and Nkhoma have established many prayer houses, and these are all mixed, each had more than twenty prayer houses.
- b. There is no straight stream or river between the two rivers, Milenje and Dwanga, which could be used as a boundary.

Because of this, it was agreed that the following recommendations be referred to the respective Synods.

That the two Synods should stick to the decision agreed upon at the meeting held at Chamakala on the 2nd December Section (b) which reads as follows: “Meanwhile the two Synods shall work together in the area between the two disputed boundaries in a spirit of mutual respect, peace, and goodwill.”

The Nkhoma Synod should not cross the Milanje stream, and the Livingstonia Synod should not cross the Dwanga River; they should all work in the area between the two rivers.

No prayer house or out post should be built or started near a place where there is already one working from either side.

When a member of one Synod would like to transfer to another synod, there ought to be a mutual agreement between the ministers and

⁶⁰⁰ Interview with Dr. Kawale, 29 January 2004.

⁶⁰¹ Interview with Dr. Kawale, 29 January 2004.

disjunction certificate ought to be used, no minister shall receive members of either side without a disjunction certificate.

All church collection shall be used by a synod whose minister is in-charge of the particular prayer house or out-post.

In order to avoid clashes, it was recommended that all ministers sent to work at this area should always be instructed to work at this area with a spirit of good relationship.⁶⁰²

In late 1979, the Synod still found itself trying to settle the recurring boundary dispute with Livingstonia Synod, this time involving the boundary of Nkhotakota congregation at Dwanga. Believing that Livingstonia had agreed to allow mutual operations in that area, Nkhoma expressed displeasure (to put it mildly) when a Blantyre minister and his elders disrupted the operations of an Nkhoma prayer house. “We inform the General Synod and Livingstonia Synod that we shall now resume our church plans in that area.”⁶⁰³

At a November 1980 meeting of the General Synod, the border dispute between Nkhoma and Livingstonia synods was apparently resolved, only to flare up again later. “Livingstonia said they had a prayer house at Liwaladzi since 1921, and that the original border was the Bua River right up to Mchinji, and alleged that Nkhoma only became active in the lower Dwanga because of the recent development projects initiated by the Government.” For its part, “Nkhoma stated that the boundary from the days of Dr. Prentice was the Dwanga River, and that when Kasungu Mission was transferred to Nkhoma by Livingstonia in 1923, that then became the boundary between the two Synods. The Standing Committee of the General Synod resolved the issue by stating that Nkhoma Synod must not cross the Dwanga River, Livingstonia Synod must not cross the Bua River, and that neither should build a church or prayer house near that of the other. Both sides appeared to accept the resolution.”⁶⁰⁴

The “Dwanga Boundary Dispute” continued. At the 1987 General Synod meeting it was stated that,

General synod decided to give mandate to the Standing committee to call both (Nkhoma/Livingstonia) Synods representatives and discuss the

⁶⁰² Special Synod held at Lilongwe on 27/11/68. “Addendum No. 5, Agreement Between Representatives of Nkhoma and Livingstonia Synods at Chamakala on 11/7/68.”

⁶⁰³ KS 7772, Synodical Committee, 23 – 24 October 1979.

⁶⁰⁴ CCAP General Synod, Minutes and Agreement, 7 November 1980.

issue at Dwanga dispute site. If possible the old members who were present at the first Dwanga meeting from both sides be invited. (For this the overtures from Nkhoma and Livingstonia on this were pended for the Standing committee consideration).⁶⁰⁵

Again in 1990, the General Synod addressed the issue of the dispute between these two synods.

The General Synod received a report from the (General Overtures) Committee and after a lengthy discussion the assembly asked if Nkhoma Synod consider of handling over the Church building at a controversial place (sic) to Livingstonia Synod. Nkhoma Synod therefore under-took to discuss the matter and report back to the standing Committee of the General Synod.⁶⁰⁶

In 1994, Livingstonia Synod in frustration withdrew from active participation in the General Synod because of the continuing border dispute issue. However, it reported at the 2000 General Synod meeting that it was ready to come back in. The report to the General Synod added, “However, it is concerned about the border dispute in Dwanga, Dwambazi and Mpasazi”.⁶⁰⁷

The boundary between Nkhoma and Livingstonia synods continued to be a point of contention. In 1995, Nkhoma Synod expressed a desire for this issue to be resolved, yet this problem continues to exist⁶⁰⁸. In an interview with the present researcher, Nkhoma General Secretary Rev. Dr. Winston Kawale placed part of the blame upon a difference in culture. He explained that while Nkhoma’s people are Chewa and speak Chichewa, the people of Livingstonia Synod are predominantly Tumbuka, and speak Chitumbuka. This prevents a church that straddles the line from having just one service. He pointed out that there exists a school, one room of which speaks Chichewa while the other speaks Chitumbuka.⁶⁰⁹

CCAP General Secretary YA Chienda sheds even more light upon the issue, describing it as primarily a land dispute. At the dividing line between Nkhoma and Livingstonia, there is available land for cultivation. Tumbuka-speakers come from the North to farm. They want to go to a Tumbuka-language Livingstonia CCAP church. At

⁶⁰⁵ Minutes of the General Synod held at Ekwendeni 5 – 10 August 1987.

⁶⁰⁶ 42/90 Minutes of General Synod held at (H.H.I.) Blantyre 26 August – 3 September 1990.

⁶⁰⁷ Minutes of the 19th meeting of the CCAP General Synod held in Blantyre 1-5 November 2000, Appendix No. 5, page 38.

⁶⁰⁸ S. 2855, Minutes of the 25th Synod Meeting at Namoni Katengeza, 4 – 11 April 1995.

⁶⁰⁹ Interview between the present researcher and general Secretary Kawale on 29 January 2004.

the same time, Chewa-speakers come from the south for the same reason. Not surprisingly, they want a Chewa-language Nkhoma CCAP Church. The presence of these two competing groups in the same territory trying to farm the same land at the same time is what has caused the conflict between the two CCAP synods. Chienda further explains that a similar rift between Nkhoma and Blantyre synods has not developed because they speak the same language, Chewa, and because at their boundary there is no empty land for two rival farm groups to compete over.⁶¹⁰

The difficulty between Nkhoma Synod and Livingstonia Synod began in 1924 when Kasungu was transferred from Livingstonia to Nkhoma, explains Rev. CL Chimkoka. He quickly points out that there are no similar problems with Blantyre, Zambia, or Harare synods. Chimkoka reports that the border dispute with Livingstonia Synod has been sent down from Nkhoma Synod to the presbyteries along the line of demarcation for resolution.⁶¹¹

12.3 RECENT CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

12.3.1 *The CCAP Policy and Strategic Plan 2000-2010*

At the CCAP General Synod held in 2000 in Blantyre, a report from the Standing Committee contained the following comment on denominational unity

Synods echoed similar comments that each Synod hanged too much on its missionary historical background. Ethnic fragmentation and geo-political linings were also noted to frustrate any efforts towards closer cooperation.

It was again highlighted that General Synod was functioning as an advisory body with no position on any matters affecting the Church. As such CCAP would not speak with one voice when there was need. Some Synod representative described the General Synod as “very ineffective”.⁶¹²

Also at the CCAP General Synod held in 2000, an ad Hoc Committee report recommended the approval of the “policy and constitution documents” and then be sent

⁶¹⁰ Interview between present researcher and Rev. YA Chienda 28 June 2004.

⁶¹¹ Interview between present researcher and Rev. CL Chimkoka on 9 July 2004.

⁶¹² Minutes of the CCAP 19th General Synod held in Blantyre 1-5 November 2000, “The Senior Clerk’s Report on the Work of the Standing Committee, page 46.”

to the Synods as an overture. It further recommended, “an extra-ordinary General Assembly be held in May 2002.”⁶¹³

In 2001, the CCAP General Assembly approved the document or report known as the Policy and Strategic Plan 2000 – 2010, emphasizing the necessity of replacing the 1956 constitution. This was needed because of a lack among the various synods of unity in polity and doctrine. It also identified various areas of concern and broadly proposed plans for dealing with them as a unified denomination.

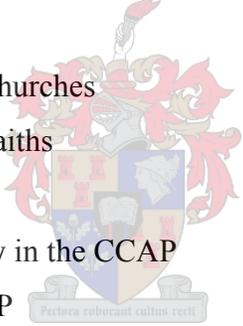
It was organized into the following outline:

1. Historical Background
2. Vision
3. Mission Statement
4. Fundamental Principles of Faith and values
5. Basic principles of Faith
6. Objectives
7. Some Basic and Fundamental of Faith
 - a. Fundamental Principles of Faith
 - b. Rule in the Church
 - c. Presbyterian system of Worship and Freedom of conscience.
 - d. Membership
 - e. Altar Call
 - f. Sacraments
 - g. Discipline
 - h. General Synod governance
 - i. Mission Works
 - j. Calling system for Ministers
 - k. Ordination of Women to Church Office
 - l. Organization Structure of the General Assembly Secretariat
8. Strategic Issues
 - a. Unity



⁶¹³ Minutes of the CCAP 19th General Synod held in Blantyre 1-5 November 2000, Appendix 4, pages 29-30.

- i) Differences in the Origin
 - ii) Differences in Some fundamental Rules & procedures
 - iii) The 1956 General Synod Constitution
 - iv) Perceived Lack of Benefit from General Synod
 - v) Personality Clashes
 - vi) Perceived Political Inclinations
 - vii) Lack of Recognition of Ministers from Other Synods
 - viii) Mission Work
 - ix) The Dwanga Dispute
 - x) Conclusions
- b. Financial sustainability of the General Assembly
 - c. The HIV/AIDS Crisis
 - d. Emphasise a Christian Approach to HIV/AIDS Prevention and Care
 - e. The CCAP and Other Churches
 - f. The CCAP and Other Faiths
 - g. Issues and Strategies
 - i) Congregational Ministry in the CCAP
 - ii) Evangelism in the CCAP
 - iii) Theological Training in the CCAP
 - iv) Education in the CCAP
 - v) Health Care in the CCAP
 - vi) (There is no Number Six)
 - vii) Youth Work in the CCAP
 - viii) Women's Work
 - ix) Family Values
 - x) The Church and Government



The contents of this document are given in outline form only at this point. Throughout this study, reference is made to it.

12.3.2 *The New Constitution*

The latest CCAP Constitution went into effect in 2002. One change that it brought about was the changing of the name of the General Synod to “General Assembly”.

Article One spells out the name of the denomination and who may use that name and under what circumstances. Article Two decrees that “Church,” “CCAP,” and “General Assembly” shall mean the same thing. Article Three lays down such basic principles as what confessions are to be honoured⁶¹⁴, that Jesus is head of the Church, and what form of church government shall be in effect. Article Four contains basic statements of faith, giving in detail the 1924 statement of faith mentioned in Article Three. Article Five is an extended mission statement, stipulating that “youth are to be involved at all levels of the Church.” It further states that the Church is to be willing to cooperate with other agencies in order to meet the physical, moral, spiritual, and educational needs of people.

Article Six describes the courts of the Church. Each synod is to make its own constitution, rules, and regulations, with reference to the General Assembly. Each Synod sets its own terms for working with partnering churches and fraternal workers. Each synod is free to establish ecclesiastical relations with other churches “under consultation with the General Assembly”.

Article Seven mandates that all the Synods shall be uniform in liturgy, order of worship, and *Zolamulira* (rules and regulations). All synods are instructed to live in harmony with those synods that share a common border – there are to be no boundary disputes. There are to be areas of mandatory uniformity. This article also sets the conditions for pulpit exchanges. The General Synod of 1990 prescribed “freedom of movement among CCAP ministers”.

The General Synod resolved that ministers within the CCAP be given freedom to apply in any of the five synods for a vacancy to serve and their benefits to be discussed by the Synods concerned.⁶¹⁵

⁶¹⁴ It specifies the Nicene Creed, the Apostles’ Creed, the Westminster Confession, The Westminster Larger Catechism, the Westminster Shorter Catechism, the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canon of Dordt, the Church Confession of Faith of 1924.

⁶¹⁵ 46/90 Minutes of the General Synod meeting at (H.H.I) Blantyre 26 August – 3 September 1990.

Article Eight deals with the General Assembly Trustees, outlining their responsibilities and powers. The Trustees are to include the Moderator, Vice Moderator, General Secretary, Vice General Secretary, and the Treasurer.

Article Nine specifies the duties and powers of the General Assembly, as well as those of the General Secretary. It is to be the supreme court of the CCAP, with both original and appellate authority, binding upon all the constituent synods. There is to be a General Secretary and two deputy general secretaries. It names “Specialised Desks” such as Youth Work, Women’s Work, and Development Work.

Article Ten outlines the work of the General Assembly Standing Committee. Between meetings of the General Assembly, it acts as the executive of the General Assembly, implementing the decisions of the General Assembly. The Standing Committee shall consist of the Moderator, Vice Moderator, General Secretary, and deputy General Secretaries “who shall be counted as commissioners from their synods.”

Article Eleven sets the conditions for being a church officer – minister, elder, deacon, evangelist, and specialist functions. It also gives the rules regarding the sacraments. Interestingly, it mandates ordination of women, and that all offices are to be open to them, but does not compel a particular synod, such as Nkhoma, to ordain them if it does not wish to do so. It sets the requirements for church membership.

Article Twelve is a brief (one paragraph) “Basic Order and Rules”. It says that the General Assembly is to give very general rules, and that the synods are to fill in the details.

Article Thirteen has as its topic “Mission Work.” It defines and establishes the rules for evangelism and discipleship. Mission work can be carried out by the General Assembly, by any court of the Church, or by any member “in accordance with the rules hereunder.” It sets the terms under which a new synod can be organised.

Article Fourteen has to do with discipline. It gives in detail how a member or specific category of church officer is to be disciplined. Discipline can take the form of admonition, rebuke, and suspension from the privileges of membership, deposition, or excommunication. It also provides for the restoration of someone who has been disciplined.

Article Fifteen gives the conditions under which complaints against church officers or church courts may be brought. It also provides for appeals of decisions. No decision of the General assembly can be appealed.

Article Sixteen (“Power to Make Regulations”) is a brief one-sentence statement that says the General Assembly has the power to make any rule in order to put any part of the constitution into effect.

Finally, Article Seventeen, “Amendments,” gives the conditions under which changes to the book of confessions can be made. It also sets the conditions under which changes and amendments to the constitution and book of order can be made.

The above document undoubtedly represents years of hard labour and thought, yet it appears to be a balancing act. In the midst of language suggesting centralisation, there are some exception clauses, the case of women officers being a notable example. Is the goal of achieving unification and standardization being reached? Veteran PCUSA missionary Nancy Dimmock is under the impression that it is coming about very slowly, that intentions and reality are perhaps not yet being fully synchronised.⁶¹⁶

“The (new) constitution is working,” contends CCAP General Assembly General Secretary Rev. YA Chienda. “Rome was not built in a day.” Little by little, he says, things are moving towards the goal of greater unity.⁶¹⁷

Rev. CL Chimkoka affirms the opinion of Chienda. He insists that the new constitution is bringing about greater unity, particularly in the area of pastoral training. It also permits the CCAP to speak with one voice regarding political and social concerns. He further believes that the 2001 “Policy and Strategic Plan 2000-2010” is being followed, again particularly in the area of the Zomba Theological College, and also in standardization of liturgy. Finally, Chimkoka points out that the new constitution is a “federal constitution, not a unity constitution.”⁶¹⁸

⁶¹⁶ Conversation between present researcher and Nancy Dimmock 25 June 2004.

⁶¹⁷ Interview between present researcher and Rev. Y.A. Chienda 28 June 2004.

⁶¹⁸ Interview between present researcher and Rev. CL Chimkoka on 9 July 2004.

12.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

There has been a smooth transition from the previous chapter to this one, with an easily traceable parallel between relations with the government and inter-synodical relations. Both have called for skilful negotiation.

At least as early as 1972 there is on record a drive to bring about a standardization of the Catechism, Order of Worship, and some form of constitution. This was more fully realized in 2003. This is especially welcome as one considers the long-standing boundary dispute with Blantyre Synod, as well as the Synod's difficulty with participating in a "joint" theological college. It was demonstrated how while moving in conjunction with the rest of the CCAP, it simultaneously carried on a boundary dispute with a sister synod. The inability of the two synods to put it to rest is discomfoting.

However, the far-sightedness and thoughtful goals of the Policy and Strategic Plan 2000-2010 more than compensate for whatever misgivings arise from the boundary dispute. The Plan shows an enlightened attempt to move forward with vigour and renew society.

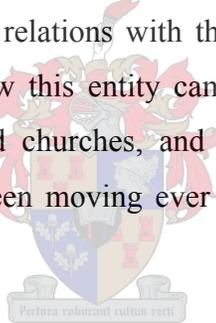
The fifth of the seven "secondary questions" that this study undertook to answer was, "How does the Nkhoma Synod relate to the other synods of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian?" How it relates to the other synods is the secondary question most directly addressed by the chapter. It has been shown how there is a movement to standardize the order of worship, catechism, and book of church order for all the synods of the CCAP. The latest version of the denominational constitution seeks heightened unification. In developing its self-understanding of being a church, Nkhoma Synod increasingly sees itself as a component of the CCAP and less as a "daughter" of the DRC, inter-synodical tensions and continued contributions from South Africa notwithstanding.

Its self-understanding of being a church would also have to include words such as "Reformed", and "evangelical". It continues to reject ordination for women and sends students to African Bible College. Both of these distinguish it from its sister synods of the CCAP. It rejects the term "born-again" but calls upon individuals to experience personal salvation. Although it has in recent years joined with other denominations in order to achieve certain political goals, it would be more comfortable with organizing a Billy Graham Crusade than with organizing a political rally.

This is a pivotal chapter in that it directly addresses several of the secondary questions. The CCAP (and “CCAP” always includes “Nkhoma Synod”) in its current documents clearly identifies itself as a “confessional Church”. It is clear that at least the intention is to be “self-governing, self-propagating, and self-supporting” (see section 1.2), though the last one may be elusive. In addressing several social concerns, it reveals theological development in a certain direction. Therefore, the answer to the research question, “How has Nkhoma Synod developed its understanding of being a church since 1962?” can emphatically be seen here. It sees itself as a key, yet still semi-autonomous component of a larger whole, that whole being the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian.

The Constitution is still in the process of making all of its articles fully operative in the quest for greater unity and standardization. One can see, however, that the trend is toward more, rather than less, united action and polity.

The next chapter continues to delve into the process of inter-Church relationships. It shall look at the current state of relations with the DRC, the other Churches of the “Commission For Witness (and how this entity came about),” other Reformed bodies beyond African soil, non-Reformed churches, and ecumenical bodies. As the story unfolds, Nkhoma Synod shall be seen moving ever further away from its origins as a DRC mission.



Chapter Thirteen

Relations with Other Denominations

13.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter talked about church government within a particular denomination – the CCAP. This chapter expands upon that theme, and shows how Nkhoma Synod moves and acts as a sovereign entity towards the larger Church in the world. It sets the terms by which it participates with that larger Church, how it receives and gives assistance, and it decides with which components of that larger Church it enters into relations. It is able to see greater compatibility with some bodies than with others.

This chapter begins with describing the relationship with its “parent church,” the DRC, and the changes necessitated by the unification of Reformed churches in South Africa’s Western Cape, and then moves on to the wider world of Reformed churches. It shows how the Synod meets the challenges of the existence of very different traditions within its geographical jurisdiction. Finally the chapter shows the importance of participation with interdenominational, ecumenical bodies.

13.2 RELATIONS WITH OTHER REFORMED BODIES

In 1962 the Deed of Agreement had to be approved by the DRC in Cape Town. Among the changes made was to change the term “missionaries” to “personnel”.⁶¹⁹ This is important; if the church has truly reached maturity, why does it need “missionaries?” When the General Administration Committee (GAC) met for the first time in June 1962, all the heads of the departments (medical, bookshop and literature, transport, water and electrical, building, carpentry, and MEMA) were South Africans. Two years later, there were Malawian department heads – for publications, carpentry, and transport. In 1962 the Chairman of the GAC, Rev. KJ Mgawi, was Malawian, but the Vice-Chairman, Rev. GF Hugo, was South African. The dissolution of the Dutch Reformed Church Mission (DRCM) would take time to be fully implemented.

⁶¹⁹ Minutes of the Emergency Commission of the General Mission Commission (GMC), Cape Town, 20 March 1962.

In the course of the sixties, the Synod began to feel itself a part of a wider family of churches. The Meeting of Nkhoma Synod held 16 – 23 August 1968 meeting sanctioned joining the Reformed Ecumenical Synod.

“The Synod is willing to join this Board (body) because this Board (body) has the same teaching and faith as we have in the reformed church. (Book of Order of Service of Nkhoma Synod Part IV.) The Secretary sent a telegram to the Synod Meeting which is now being held in Netherlands to inform the delegates of the meeting our decision.” The “Rules and Standing Orders of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod’ states a five-fold purpose for its existence:

1. To advise one another regarding questions and problems of import pertaining to the spiritual welfare and the Scriptural Government of the churches.
2. To confer together, as far as advisability or necessity may require, regarding missionary work of the churches at home and abroad.
3. To strive to attain a common course of action with respect to common problems; likewise to issue joint resolutions regarding movements, practices or dangers, when joint statements are deemed necessary.
4. To give united testimony to our common Reformed faith in the midst of a world living in error and groping in darkness, particularly to the many churches which have so lamentably departed from the truth of God’s Holy Word, and which are in dire need of a return to the faith of the fathers.
5. To express our precious unity in Christ and our oneness as Reformed Churches, though scattered over the earth.⁶²⁰

The “Nature and Extent of Authority” was also addressed by the same document.

Although it is undoubtedly true and an accepted principle that ecclesiastical decisions and deliverances which are indisputably in full agreement with the Word of God are authoritative, and that it is consequently not necessary to attribute judicial authority (*kerkrechtelijk gezag*) to all decisions of the Ecumenical Synods, yet it shall be understood that the decisions and deliverances of the Ecumenical Synod shall be considered advisory in character, and shall be considered binding for the respective churches only after their national synods (or assemblies) have adopted such decisions and deliverances as their own. However, the churches are under obligation to take such decisions and deliverances

⁶²⁰KS 1178, Synodical Commission minutes, 2-4 April 1968, Section III, Purpose.

under serious consideration so that there may be, as much as possible, unity in attitude and action.⁶²¹

13.2.1 The Reformed Ecumenical Synod

The Executive Committee of Nkhoma Synod, meeting on 19 September 1968, learned “with pleasure” that the Synod had been accepted as member of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod.⁶²²

A 1972 Synodical Committee meeting reported that the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in America and the Reformed churches in New Zealand were expressing concern over the theological directions being taken by the DRC in the Netherlands. Some concerns included its joining the World Council of Churches, allowing women into the ministry, deviation from Reformed accounts of creation, and its interpretation of the authority of the Bible.⁶²³ It ought to be noted that Nkhoma Synod tends to take a dim view of progressive theology and would in many ways feel compatible with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (a conservative breakaway group formed in 1936).

In 1981 Dr. P. Schrottenboer, General Secretary of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, visited Nkhoma Synod to explain that discussions were taking place regarding RES members' association with the World Council of Churches. Nkhoma Synod stated unequivocally that they were not members of the WCC, “But we will take part in this discussion as a member of the family of Reformed churches in Central Africa”.⁶²⁴ The REC and Nkhoma Synod continue to cooperate today.

The Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) held a conference on African churches and development February 15-18, 1994. The conference was held at Namoni Katengeza Church Lay Training Centre at Chongoni, with Nkhoma Synod as the host church. Some 40 participants from eight African countries attended, including Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Mozambique, and Malawi. The theme was “The African Experience in Development”. The General Secretary of Nkhoma Synod, Rev.

⁶²¹ Ibid., Section V.

⁶²² KS 1335, Minutes of the Executive Committee held on 23 July 1968.

⁶²³ KS 4066. Synodical Committee, 5-7 April 1972.

⁶²⁴ M. 124, Moderamen, 1 September 1981.

I.M. Kainja opened the conference. Richard an Houten (sic), the General Secretary of the REC was also present at the meeting.⁶²⁵

Summarising the relationships with Presbyterian churches from abroad, Rev. CL Chimkoka says that while ties are strengthening with the PCUSA, and the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan, the tie with the Presbyterian Church of Ireland is the “predominant” one. Additionally, the Church of Scotland is sending nurses to the hospital at Nkhoma, while the Reformed Mission League of the Netherlands is assisting with Zomba Theological College. Chimkoka points with pride to the fact that Nkhoma Synod continues to be active in the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, where he sits on the Executive as an advisor.⁶²⁶

13.2.2 The Council of Reformed Churches in Central Africa

At its 15 June 1968 meeting, the Moderamen informed General Synod that the Liaison Committee between the African Reformed Church in Zambia, the Dutch Reformed Church Mission in Zambia, The African Reformed Church in Rhodesia, The Dutch Reformed Church in Rhodesia, the Nkhoma Synod of the CCAP, and the DRCM in Malawi, which was formed in 1957, was dissolved in July 1967. In its place was formed the Council of Reformed Churches in Central Africa. It was composed of the ARC in Zambia, the ARC in Rhodesia, and Nkhoma Synod. The Salisbury Synod of the CCAP had been invited to join.

In 1985, Nkhoma Synod demonstrated that it wanted to be an active participant of this body. It entreated its ministers to take part in a meeting of the Council of Reformed Churches to be held in Malawi. “The committee confirmed that the meeting of the council should be held here in Malawi and, if possible, many ministers should attend this meeting.”⁶²⁷ Nkhoma Synod’s link to this organisation continues.

13.2.3 World Alliance of Reformed Churches/southern Africa alliance of Churches

At the meeting of the Synodical Committee of Nkhoma Synod held on 30 October 1969, it was learned that there had been a merger of the World Alliance of Reformed

⁶²⁵ *Kuunika* July/Sept. 1994, page 8.

⁶²⁶ Interview between present researcher and Rev. CL Chimkoka on 9 July 2004.

⁶²⁷ SC 556, Synodical Committee, 29 to 31 October, 1985.

Churches and the International Congregational Council. The Committee received this information from a letter from the Senior Clerk of General Synod, which was a member of the WARC (World Alliance of Reformed Churches).⁶²⁸

The World Alliance of Reformed Churches claims that it provides links to more than 75 million Christians in more than 100 churches globally. Its stated aims are to promote dialogue, unity, and reconciliation between and among its constituent bodies, and to promote understanding and to remove barriers between its member churches and those outside the Reformed fold. It further seeks to “interpret and reinterpret the Reformed tradition, to work for peace, economic and social justice, human rights and the integrity of the environment, to promote fully inclusive community, and to further dialogue with other Christian communions and other religions” (CRCWC 2003).

There is a regional branch of the WARC. The 1990 CCAP General Synod held in Blantyre received greetings from Rev. Dr. SD Chiphangwi, representing the Southern Africa Alliance of Reformed Churches (SAARC).

He called for more involvement and participation of the CCAP in WARC programmes on social and economic issues. He expressed thanks for issues that were raised by the former Senior Clerk of the General Synod.⁶²⁹

The CCAP General Synod of 1994 heard another address from the SAARC’s Rev. Dr. SD Chiphangwi. He extended congratulations to the nation of Malawi for their peaceful transition to democracy. He said, “The Southern Africa Alliance of Reformed Churches is happy that, through the World alliance of Reformed churches, it was able to accompany the people of Malawi in a small way in their quest for freedom and human dignity over the past two years. He went on to say “that SAARC greatly values its relationship with the CCAP. We have cherished your assistance and invaluable support over the past five years and we look forward to stronger ties between the CCAP, and SAARC in future.”⁶³⁰

The CCAP General Synod meeting of 2000 held in Blantyre heard a speech by Rev. Majaha Nhliziyo of the SAARC. At this time it consisted of 19 member churches

⁶²⁸ KS 1807, Minutes of Synodical Committee, 28 –30 October 1969.

⁶²⁹ Minutes of the General Synod held at Blantyre, 26 Aug. to 5 Sept. 1990, page 61.

⁶³⁰ Minutes of the CCAP General Synod held at Chongoni 9th to 13th November 1994, page 24.

and 6.5 million members. He read a series of resolutions to be considered and endorsed by the General Synod. Areas of concern included: spreading the Good News of Jesus; healing of divisions; redressing past wrongs; critical engagement with state structures and civil society; economic justice; responsible stewardship and redemption of the environment; and “wholeness for individuals and communities affected by AIDS; violated by sexual and other forms of abuse; displaced by war, political repression and dispossession of their land; or disempowerment by the uneven access to modern technology.”⁶³¹

13.2.4 The Presbyterian Church of Canada

The DRC in South Africa was not the only source of financial assistance for Nkhoma Synod. A December 1980 meeting of the Moderamen acknowledged a gift of Canadian \$2,500 from Board of World Mission of the Presbyterian Church of Canada, “to be utilised at our discretion”.⁶³²

At the 1982 CCAP General Synod, Nkhoma Synod acknowledged the contribution of Canadian Presbyterians.

The United Presbyterian Church in Canada is thanked for donating a Mini Bus to this Centre. It helps in the work of Evangelism as well as in transporting members to and from the Centre.⁶³³

At the 1990 CCAP General Synod held in Blantyre, Miss C. Henderson from the Presbyterian Church in Canada brought greetings. “She expressed joy for the continued relationship between the CCAP and P.C.C. She brought special greetings from Rev. Dr. R. Talbot-Africa Secretary of P.C.C. and wished the General Synod God’s continued blessings.”⁶³⁴

13.2.5 American Presbyterian Churches

From the 1986 Annual Report of the General Secretary:

. . . peace and stability in the country, which caused the Synod to continue peacefully with its work . . . the women’s organization more

⁶³¹ Minutes of the 19th General Synod held at Blantyre CCAP Mission, 1-5 November 2000, Appendix no. 1 (A) page 22.

⁶³² KS 8321, Moderamen, 17 December 1980.

⁶³³ Minutes of the General Synod held at Chongoni, 24 to 27 August 1982, page 20.

⁶³⁴ Minutes of the General Synod held at Blantyre, 26 Aug. to 5 Sept. 1990, page 61.

involved in the work in the congregations. There was a growing relationship with churches within the country in economic areas. Even across the borders of the country encouraging conversations were held, like e.g. with the Presbyterian Church of the USA. The Synod is, however, very cautious in regard to churches whose doctrine “are no longer Reformed in faith and practice, but have adopted some liberal theological teachings. The Synod will guard against such churches, their influences and ideologies.” “Our Mother Church, the DRC in Cape Town, has been our right hand and support . . .”⁶³⁵

In 1991 the Moderamen noted a request from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in America. This is a small denomination that broke away from the United Presbyterian Church USA in the late 1930s.

The Orthodox Presbyterian Church in America expressed their desire to have the names of all our ministers, so that their people could correspond with them. It was approved that the names be sent.⁶³⁶

The CCAP General Synod in 1994 held at Chongoni received greetings from Rev. Dr. J. Kang, representing the Presbyterian Church in the USA.

Dr. Kang said he and his family were feeling at home since their arrival in the country in December 1990. He also disclosed that the Presbyterian Church launched a programme called Year with Africa, which was extended to 1995. He said he believed that the success of the programme would depend upon the support of the Malawian Church. Dr. Kang further told the General Synod Meeting that the Korean Congregations were found in the U.S.A thereby influencing the American society. He finally expressed the hope that Malawian church would also influence (sic) the American Society.⁶³⁷

The Moderamen reported in the minutes of a 1994 meeting⁶³⁸ that on 1 September of that year they would receive a delegation of “four pastors” from the Presbyterian Church of America. They further noted one of them would be a woman⁶³⁹.

⁶³⁵ “ The 1986 Annual Report of the General Secretary of Nkhoma Synod to the General Missions Committee of the DRC in Cape Town.

⁶³⁶ M. 3098. Moderamen, 20 June 1991.

⁶³⁷ Minutes of the CCAP General Synod held at Chongoni 9th to 13th November 1994, page 5.

⁶³⁸ M. 3770, Meeting of the Moderamen, 30 May 1994.

⁶³⁹ They probably meant the PC(USA) rather than the Presbyterian Church in America. No doubt this misunderstanding was quickly cleared up; the PCA (like the Orthodox Presbyterian Church) is a very conservative breakaway denomination from the much larger and generally more liberal PC(USA). The PCA makes no provision for women officers. While the PCA is only a fraction of the size of the PC(USA), its missionary force is much larger, it is spread out across the world, and currently it has no official presence in Malawi.

At the 2000 CCAP General Synod held at Blantyre, Presbyterian Church in the USA representative Rev. Debbie Chase gave a word of exhortation.

Rev. Debbie Chase lamented over what she termed as prohibitive policies partner churches pursued where the art of listening and willingness to learn were lacking on the side of partners. She observed the patience, obedience and willingness to learn are major catalysts toward oneness. We were all created in God's image, so we need to respect one another, she added.⁶⁴⁰

Another daughter church of Lilongwe CCAP is Lingadzi CCAP. During 2001 – 2002 it was assisted by Rev. Gene Straatmeyer, a minister of the PC(USA), and is currently served by Rev. Otis Smith.⁶⁴¹ The PC(USA) also contributes to Zomba Theological College, and contributes personnel such as Frank Dimmock, a coordinator of medical services.⁶⁴²

In 2001, a particular congregation in the U.S., identified as “Broadway Presbyterian Church”, approached the Synod. It stated a desire to establish a relationship with the Synod. The Moderamen directed that “the Church in America should send its constitution to be analysed by the Synod”. The implication here is that the Synod may not understand that in America today there are a number of denominations with “Presbyterian” in their names, ranging from theologically very conservative to very liberal. If a particular congregation has any kind of missions thrust, in all likelihood it is from one of the more conservative ones.⁶⁴³

13.2.6 The Reformed Mission League

In 1987, the Synod was invited to become affiliated with the Reformed Mission League of the Netherlands (RML). The Moderamen set a discussion with this body, and included the Presbyterian Church of Ireland in the discussion.⁶⁴⁴

⁶⁴⁰ Minutes of the C.C.A.P General Synod held at Blantyre 1st to 5th November 2000, page 17.

⁶⁴¹ Rev. Gene Straatmeyer, a minister of the PC(USA) and whose home is in Alaska. During the 1960's, Straatmeyer was part of the civil rights struggle in the southern United States. By working with black churches in the American South, he took a stand against the racial segregation of that era.

⁶⁴² Personal interview between the present researcher and Rev. Straatmeyer, 7 January 2002. In 2004, Lingadzi CCAP is being served by Rev. Otis Smith.

⁶⁴³ M. 5177, Meeting of the Moderamen, 16 January 2001.

⁶⁴⁴ M. 2063 and M. 2064, meeting of the Moderamen, 1 January 1988.

In 1990 the Reformed Mission League extended an offer for assistance in development. It was accepted. The Reformed Mission League's offer of financial assistance in the field of development and other related fields, was accepted. It will mainly be spent on relief and development among the refugees from Mozambique.⁶⁴⁵ In more recent years, the RML has involved itself in such things as famine relief in Malawi and in Mozambique (see section 9.2)

13.2.7 The Presbyterian Church in Ireland

At the 1990 General Synod in Blantyre Rev. D. Nesbitt brought greetings from the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. "He then presented a gift to the General Synod which he brought from the Presbyterian Church in Ireland which commemorated their 150th anniversary."⁶⁴⁶

Rev. McMullan from the Presbyterian Church of Ireland sent a letter to the Synod in 2000 informing that for three consecutive years, 2000, 2001, and 2002, the Irish church would increase its contribution from £4,000 to £5,000 per year. Additionally, NIFCOTT would receive £1,000 per year from them.⁶⁴⁷

13.2.8 The Presbyterian Church in Taiwan

Presbyterians in Taiwan began to play a significant role. On April 25, 1996, visitors from that country arrived and were greeted at the airport by every member of the Moderamen.⁶⁴⁸ Later that year the Taiwanese promised to send a delegation that included experts in construction and fish farming.⁶⁴⁹ In 1998, the Taiwanese donated roofing material for Dzenza Church.⁶⁵⁰ In 2003, the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan aided in the purchase of eight hectares of land.⁶⁵¹

⁶⁴⁵ M. 2832, Moderamen, 8 May 1990.

⁶⁴⁶ Minutes of the General Synod held at Blantyre, 26 Aug. to 5 Sept. 1990, page 61.

⁶⁴⁷ M. 5088, Meeting of the Moderamen, 31 May 2000.

⁶⁴⁸ M. 4119, Meeting of the Moderamen, 15 April 1996.

⁶⁴⁹ M. 4147, Meeting of Moderamen, 11 September 1996.

⁶⁵⁰ M. 4485, Meeting of Moderamen, 4 August 1998.

⁶⁵¹ M. 5738, Meeting of Moderamen, 14 May 2003.

13.2.9 *The Network for African congregational Theology (NetACT)*

Through NIFCOTT and Rev. Dr. Hennie van Deventer, Nkhoma Synod collaborates with NetACT, a consortium of educational institutions in Africa that are within the Reformed tradition. It has a variety of interests, but it identifies AIDS as a chief concern (see 7.2, “The Challenge of HIV/AIDS”).

NetACT is the Network for African Congregational Theology, a network of theological institutions in the Presbyterian and Reformed tradition in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Congregational Theology is theology as practiced in the Christian Congregation as the body of Christ, discerning the will of God in the process of interpreting the Scriptures and its own specific context, empowering the Congregation to address its multiple problems, challenges and sufferings, in Sub-Saharan Africa manifest in the pandemic of HIV/AIDS, abuse of power, corruption and economic injustice (among others).

Introduction

In February 2000 in Nairobi, Kenya, a network was formed between the Faculty of Theology of the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa, and sister theological institutions in Southern Africa. The University of Stellenbosch acts as the central resource centre from where the whole network is administered and coordinated. Initiated by the HIV-AIDS pandemic, poverty and the widespread corruption experienced everywhere, a holistic approach was opted for. We will start describing the general objectives of the project before focussing on the main thrust and most important spearhead of the endeavour: how to address HIV-AIDS in local rural and urban communities in Africa. In April 2001 the Mission, Values and Vision of NetACT were formulated and a detailed strategic planning exercise was held by all the participating institutions in Lusaka, Zambia. In August 2002 in Lilongwe, Malawi the constitution and the HIV / AIDS curriculum and project were finalised.

- The project's ultimate aim is to develop leadership to empower suffering people in Africa to take responsibility for their future.
- The most urgent problem that we are addressing is the HIV-AIDS pandemic. Not a single household, congregation and community in Southern Africa is unaffected by this tragedy.
- Our basic hypothesis is that a holistic approach is needed to address the root causes of the pandemic.
- Our strategy is to develop a network that will link the necessary people, institutions and resources that can address the problems effectively.

- The key human resource to make a difference on the ground is congregational leadership (especially pastors) and the leadership of the Women's Guild.
- The key infrastructure resources are the theological institutions and congregations.
- A key assumption of our venture is that Africa and its people are deeply religious and that no solution to its problems will be sustainable without a religious dimension to it. We believe the church holds the most important key to the solution of the problem because it can provide a new set of values for a post-colonial and post-independence Africa.
- The logic of this hypothesis is simply the fact that the church, with all its flaws and inadequacies, is nonetheless the most reliable, influential and effective non-governmental organization (NGO) in Africa. The Christian church is growing and it reaches the people. We need to help it to develop its leadership skills and intellectual resources (NetACT 2002).

13.3 FROM “DEED OF AGREEMENT” TO “PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT”

In April 1962, the Mission Council convened for the last time. Following its final session, Nkhoma Synod convened, and in June of that year the General Administrative Committee of the Synod assumed the tasks of the Mission Council. The 1962 Deed of Agreement covered the relationship between the DRC and the Synod, including cases of discipline, transfer, administration, control and use of property and financial assets formerly held by the DRC, and the representation of the DRC on the GAC. On 1 July 1962 all properties, stocks, and assets were taken over by the Synod (Pauw 1980: 388-91).

The Deed of Agreement of 1962 has been amended several times. The 1971 version abolished the General Administration Committee (GAC) and established the Joint Financial Committee (JFC). It was to be comprised of three DRC members, the Moderamen, the Treasurer, and three Nkhoma Synod members. All government grants in regard to salaries for DRC personnel were to be at the disposal of the JFC. The JFC had responsibility for building maintenance and was entitled to rent houses and residences. It had full responsibility for all rates, taxes, insurance, and other expenses related to properties as well as full responsibility for meeting all business liabilities. All profits from the departments were to be for the benefit of the JFC, who was to prepare an

annual budget, with a progress report was to be sent to the DRC annually. There was to be a Finance Committee to oversee those things for which Nkhoma Synod had sole responsibility. The General Secretary was to “act as correspondent with the DRC and the Nkhoma Synod”. The duties of the Liaison Officer, supplied by the DRC, were spelled out. The Personnel Committee regulated affairs pertaining to DRC personnel and their children.⁶⁵²

Then, in 1992 the Deed of Agreement was replaced by the Deed of Partnership. The previous Deed had been in effect since 1971. Due to the decision of the Synod of Nkhoma in 1991 to do away with the post of Liaison Officer, a new Deed of Agreement had to be drafted between it and the DRC in South Africa – more specifically, the Synod of the Western Cape. This required discussions between the two synods.⁶⁵³ The changes made were as follows:

- It was a “Deed of Partnership,” implying a final moving away from the “Mother – Daughter” relationship.
- The Joint Financial Committee (JFC) was abolished. In its place was established a “Partnership Committee”.

The new Partnership Committee would only deal with matters concerning personnel, further theological training, and finances in connection with the Grant. This meant that only the spending of the annual Grant would be discussed in the meetings of the Partnership Committee. It would be handled by way of a budget and financial, and audited, reports. The new Deed of Partnership was approved and signed in May 1992.⁶⁵⁴ At that time, there was no JFC, and there was no Liaison Officer. There was now a Partnership Committee, “a forum for dialogue between the Nkhoma Synod and the sister Church of the DRC in SA in order to reach consensus in matters concerning personnel, further training and finance”. Composition of this Partnership Committee was similar to the JFC: there would be three DRC representatives, and from Nkhoma Synod, the Moderamen, the General Secretary and the Treasurer. The Personnel Committee now included the Moderator and the General Secretary. Government grants “will be for the

⁶⁵² Deed of Agreement (1971) Between the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa and the Nkhoma Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian in Malawi.

⁶⁵³ M. 3084, Meeting of the Moderamen, 20 June 1991.

⁶⁵⁴ Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Commission for Mission and Evangelism Held on 21 May 1992.

disposal of the Nkhoma Synod”. Control and responsibility for property went to Nkhoma Synod. The Partnership Committee “will make no changes in the approved administrative system, the keeping proper accounts and records, financial arrangements and control without the approval of the Nkhoma Synod and the DRC.”⁶⁵⁵

In 2003 a “Partnership Agreement” replaced the Deed of Partnership. It recognized Nkhoma and the “partners” as full equals, and gave specific stipulations as to what each “partner” was to do. Nkhoma said that it wanted to receive prayer requests from South Africa, to be in a position to assist, and to send personnel abroad. Nkhoma was to send evaluations on the work done by South African personnel back to the sending partner. The 2003 “Partnership Agreement” which replaced the 1992 Deed of Partnership featured a number of pivotal changes. Unlike the previous Deed of Agreement and Deed of Partnership, the 2003 document was between the Nkhoma Synod and the “Commission for Witness in South Africa,” representing the “Family of Dutch Reformed Churches in the Western and Southern Cape.” This latter group included:

- The Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa (Western-Southern Cape Synod)
- The Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) Cape Synod
- The Reformed Church in Africa (RCA) Sunthosham Congregation

This Partnership Agreement defines its terms - partnership, partner, and personnel. The purpose of partnership is “to find effective ways for various partners to share resources” Partner includes “. . . any organisation which Nkhoma synod will decide to enter into an agreement.” Personnel is defined as “persons who are contracted by Partner Churches and seconded to Nkhoma Synod”

We recognise our close relationship as churches that sprang from one and the same branch of Reformed churches which are spread out all over the world. We, therefore, recognise the existence of ties of unity between us that in many ways are uniquely and historically closer than ties with other churches. We recognise that the process of reunification which is currently under way in South Africa brings to realisation the dream of one re-united (Dutch) Reformed Church in Southern and even Central Africa and that, while recognising that Nkhoma Synod is at the same time part and parcel of the CCAP, this process of re-unification will draw us all

⁶⁵⁵ Deed of Partnership 1992 Between the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa and the Nkhoma Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian in Malawi.

closer together in some way or other. We therefore also see this new Partnership Agreement as an expression of this unity as well as a way to further and promote the broader re-unification process.⁶⁵⁶

The meat of the Agreement is found in PA 8, “Partners’ Obligations”. Nkhoma Synod is to set terms of service for personnel sent from the Commission for Witness in South Africa. It is to send requests for personnel and for funding for “various projects”. It is to send reports and evaluations to the partners, and is to demonstrate accountability for the funds it receives. The PA does not envision Nkhoma Synod receiving monies for ordinary operations, but rather just for “projects (PA 8.1.3 and 8.1.4)”. The Commission for Witness in South Africa shall “send all the monies to Nkhoma Synod (PA 8.2.4)” and in general provide for all the expenses involved with personnel staying in Malawi.

An International Office was created, representing all partner churches, and managed by AnnaMarie de Klerk, who reports to the General Secretary of Nkhoma Synod. The Partnership Agreement was signed between Nkhoma Synod, the Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa, the RCA, and the DRC in South Africa. In April 2004 this Partnership Agreement was to be signed by the Presbyterian churches of Ireland,⁶⁵⁷ Scotland, Taiwan, and by the PC(USA).⁶⁵⁸

The forging of the new Partnership Agreement required some back-and-forth give-and-take. When Nkhoma Synod sent a draft version to the Commission for Witness in South Africa, the latter expressed a particular hope.

In this sharing in a common calling and mission, our relationship as true partners will mean that it is of paramount importance that we should make sure that we move away from a “we/you” paradigm to a “we/we” or “us/us” paradigm.⁶⁵⁹

This response seemed to feel that the Partnership Agreement was too one-sided and that the giving was all going one way. Further in the same document it reads,

In pursuit of our common calling and mission we would therefore desire to see a greater degree of reciprocity and of mutual sharing and

⁶⁵⁶ 2003 Partnership Agreement, PA.5.4 “Specific Definitions”.

⁶⁵⁷ The connection with the Presbyterian Church in Ireland is not new. In 1987, Rev. Andrew Gibson attended the General Synod meeting at Ekwendeni and extended his denomination’s greetings. Minutes of the General Synod held at Ekwendeni 5 – 10 August 1987.

⁶⁵⁸ Interview between present researcher and General Secretary Rev. Dr. Winston R. Kawale, 29 January 2004.

⁶⁵⁹ “Response By The Committee for Witness To the proposed Partnership Agreement submitted By CCAP Nkhoma Synod,” page 5. It came attached to a letter from CM Pauw dated 21 February 2003.

support between Nkhoma Synod and its Partners. Almost all the emphasis in the present document seems to be on the Partner Churches providing workers and money. Mutuality seems to be expressed by praying for each other's needs (PA 7.1,7.2) and visiting one another. Are there not more areas of mutuality?⁶⁶⁰

The CCAP General Assembly General Secretary, YA Chienda, explained to the present researcher what made the Partnership Agreement with the Commission for Witness necessary in the first place. In 1994, a new political era dawned in South Africa. An outcome of this has been a realigning and amalgamation of several Reformed bodies in that country. Nkhoma Synod's traditional ally, the DRC, was part of this new configuration, thus it made sense to create a Partnership Agreement that included all the bodies with which the DRC was reuniting.⁶⁶¹

13.4 RELATIONS WITH NON-REFORMED CHURCHES

At the meeting of the Nkhoma Synod of 16 – 23 August 1968 several issues regarding this topic were discussed. One was the condition under which members of the UMCA (Anglican) could be accepted by an Nkhoma Synod congregation (“But we must still co-operate with CMS as usual”)⁶⁶², while at the same time the Synod decided against joining the Evangelical Association. One reason given was that “there are already some groups which are members of this association whom we fear, e.g. Assemblies of God”.

At the same August 1968 Nkhoma Synod meeting there was a discussion regarding the Catholics. “The Synod does not agree with Roman Catholic Church because the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church are against the Word of God.”⁶⁶³

The possibility of union between the CCAP and other denominations was under consideration in 1970, but the Nkhoma Synod had little interest in this matter. “As for

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid., page 6.

⁶⁶¹ Interview between present researcher and CCAP General Assembly General Secretary YA Chienda, 28 June 2004.

⁶⁶² The UMCA and the CMS represented different branches of Anglicanism. The UMCA, or Universities' Mission to Central Africa, was part of the Anglo-Catholic or “high” Church movement. The CMS or Church Missionary Society represented the Evangelical, or “low” Church movement. The Nkhoma Synod would share with the CMS an emphasis upon personal conversion and preaching, as opposed to the UMCA emphasis upon sacraments and liturgy. A good resource for understanding this distinction would be Dowley, Tim, 1995, *Introduction to the History of Christianity*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, pages 565-566.

⁶⁶³ Minutes of the Ninth Meeting of Nkhoma Synod, 16 – 23 August 1968: S.478, S.479, S.485 and S. 487.

now Nkhoma Synod will continue sending mere observers to the Church Union Committee . . .” It particularly rejected the idea of any joining together with the Anglicans, who were seen as moving closer to Catholicism. In any case, the proposed union never took place.⁶⁶⁴

In 1972, Synod was asked to send a delegation to a church union meeting in Limbe to explain why they could not participate in the proposed union. They declined to do so. The same meeting turned down an invitation by the Anglican bishop to use the Anglican lay training centre (this is located near Zomba; it is called “Chilema”). They pointed out that they had their own, at Chongoni.

The Anglicans became a full partner at the Joint Theological College. They had a representative on the theological Board and a tutor, Canon Rodney Hunter. In 1979, it was noted “Anglicans students have been attending in the past, but now they may officially have 15 students in 4 years just as Nkhoma, Blantyre and Livingstonia Synods. In that year, in 1979, it was noted that the participation by other churches could cause the constitution of the college to be amended; any proposed amendments would have to be submitted to the Synods.⁶⁶⁵

When people who were members of non-Reformed churches wished to join Nkhoma Synod, questions had to be answered regarding the requirements for their admission and new policies had to be set. At the Synodical Meeting of 4-6 April 1973, the question arose as to what to do with people seeking transfer of membership from the Zambezi Evangelical Church. It was noted that since this Church did not have a uniform policy regarding baptism, they must attend catechumen class for one year “and then be baptised if circumstances require this, or not be baptised if they had previously been baptised by a recognised person”.⁶⁶⁶

In 1981 Synod received and accepted the following report on Baptists, and the accompanying recommendation:

- They believe in the TRIUNE God just like us.
- They do not teach those who seek baptism in the Catechumen’s Class, they just baptize directly.

⁶⁶⁴ S. 631, Minutes of Nkhoma Synod Meeting 28 August – 4 September 1970.

⁶⁶⁵ KS 7773. Synodical Committee, 23 – 24 October 1979.

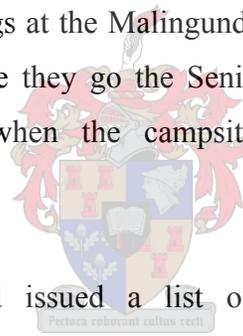
⁶⁶⁶ KS 5126. Synodical Committee, 4 – 6 April 1973.

- They believe in baptism by immersion, and do not baptize children.
- Their ministers are found in two ways:
- Elected by the congregation and being installed forthwith;
- Applying for training, which may lead to a three years' course.
- Synod does not see its way open for establishing closer relationships with a Church which differs so much with our doctrines.⁶⁶⁷

At the 1983 Meeting of Nkhoma Synod It was discussed what to do with people from “the United Church of Zambia” who were applying for membership in Nkhoma Synod congregations. It was decided that they would be accepted as members following a one-year catechumenate and acceptance of the creeds and teachings of the CCAP.⁶⁶⁸

Cooperation, however, could be extended to groups even as different as the Seventh Day Adventists. This 1986 decision demonstrates:

The Moderamen received a letter from the Seventh Day Adventists asking permission to hold Youth Meetings at the Malingunde Youth Camp in August this year. The committee agreed, but before they go the Senior Clerk should arrange with Rev. Kazembe about the payment when the campsite is used by the Seventh Day Adventists.⁶⁶⁹



In 1991 Nkhoma Synod issued a list of fourteen denominations that it “recognized:”

1. The Dutch Reformed Church (and also the African Reformed Church in Rhodesia and the Reformed Church in Zambia).
2. The Church of Central Africa in Zimbabwe.
3. The South African General Mission (Africa Evangelical Fellowship and Africa Evangelical Church).
4. The Zambezi Mission (Zambezi Evangelical Church).
5. The Nyasa Evangelical Church (Evangelical Church of Malawi).
6. The Presbyterian Church of South Africa.
7. The Bantu Presbyterian Church.

⁶⁶⁷ S. 1570 18th Meeting of Synod, 6th –14th April 1981.

⁶⁶⁸ S. 1804 Minutes of the Nineteenth Meeting of Nkhoma Synod Held at Namoni Katengeza CLTC 5-12 April 1983.

⁶⁶⁹ M. 1534. Moderamen, 20th June 1986.

8. The Presbyterian Church of East Africa.
9. The Methodist Church.
10. Congregational churches.
11. The Paris Evangelical Church Mission.
12. La Suisse Romande.
13. The Berlin Mission.
14. The Moravian Mission.

“But the Anglican and Baptist churches are not recognized.”⁶⁷⁰ The Methodists are not a major group in Malawi.

13.4.1 The Challenge of the AIC's

Because of its creedal heritage, Nkhoma Synod is conscious of the differences between it and the “African Independent Churches”. Its ability to enter into cooperative ventures is thus restricted.

One of the “African Independent Churches (AICs)” in Malawi is the Last Church of God. It has a reputation for being tolerant of smoking, drinking, and polygamy. In 1978 Nkhoma Synod received a letter from them asking if they could use Nkhoma’s printing press to print their hymn book. The Synodical Committee instructed the Secretary General to write them a letter informing them that they cannot use Nkhoma’s printing press because they are a “sect”.⁶⁷¹

At the April 1983 Synod meeting, there was a discussion on the topic, “The Reasons Why Our Church Members Leave the Church and Join Sects”. Concerning church members, reasons included insufficient knowledge of the Bible, unwillingness to accept discipline, desire to be church officers, and a desire to join a church that has looser rules. Concerning churches, many elders were not visiting people after having fallen into sin, and failure to teach the catechism adequately. The prescription for the problem included showing more love to backsliders, church leaders watching their own conduct

⁶⁷⁰ S. 2591, Minutes of the 23rd Synod Meeting at Namoni Katengeza, 9 – 16 April 1991.

⁶⁷¹ KS 7439. Synodical Committee, 24 –26 October 1978.

and setting an example, more focus on the teaching of the catechism, and finally, those who prepare *Mlozo* (“Daily Readings”) were to take up the subject of “sects.”⁶⁷²

In 1995, the present researcher did a study of AICs⁶⁷³. The following is a partial list which came from that study, drawing heavily upon JC Chakanza’s 1983 An Annotated List of Independent Churches. Because of the proliferation of these churches, a complete list of Malawian AICs would be very difficult.

- *African Methodist Episcopal Church.*
Founded in Malawi in 1924 by Hannock Msokera Phiri.
- *Chikondano.*
Founded in 1958 by an American missionary of the Assemblies of God, Rev. ME. Udd.
- *Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion.*
Introduced into Malawi in 1923 by Genesis Mbedza and John Wesley Dingiswayo.
- *Church in the Home Mission.*
Introduced by J.P. Banda in 1971 at Chihwembwe village, Nsanje District.
- *Church of Christ (E. Severe).*
Established in 1949 at Wendewende village by ES Severe, formerly a teacher for the churches of Christ.
- *Church of Disciples.*
Probably introduced into Malawi from the USA via South Africa, in the 1960s.
- *Church of Jesus Christ (Apostolic) Inc.*
Introduced into Malawi from the USA via South Africa in December 1978.
- *(The) Company of the Truth.*
Founded in 1941 by Efraim Chibambo, a former teacher at Ekwendi Mission School.
- *Emmanuel Churches of Christ.*
Most of the members were formerly members of ES Severe’s Church of Christ.

⁶⁷² S. 1680. Minutes of the 19th Meeting of the Nkhoma Synod held at Namoni Katengezi from 5 to 12 April 1983.

⁶⁷³ Research that went into this paper was conducted between October 1994 and February 1995 by some of the researcher’s students (Brown 1995:1-11). A paper from this research was presented at a colloquium of the Department of Theology and Religious Studies, the University of Malawi.

- *(The) Emmanuel Gospel Mission.*
Introduced into Malawi from the USA
- *Independent Assemblies of God.*
Formed in 1964 in Blantyre as a union of ME Udd's Chikondano Church, Lyton Kalambule's African Gospel Church, and two other groups. In spite of the union, some congregations still use the name *Chikondano* and African Full Gospel Church.
- *Independent Baptist Convention.*
Founded in 1978 by Dr. Daniel Malikebu.
- *Kawale Zion Church.*
This was the name of a particular congregation in the Kawale district of Lilongwe, found by the researcher's research assistants in 1995. They believe that spirits can communicate with the living, and disapprove of the use of modern medicine.
- *Last Church of God.*
Headquarters is in Nkhata Bay.
- *Living Gospel Mission.*
Founded in 1978 in Blantyre as a non-denominational organization by Rev. Govati Msulila.
- *Saviya Church.*
Founded in the late 1960s by G. Saviya, a Roman Catholic headmaster of a primary school.
- *Sent of the Holy Ghost Church.*
Founded in 1935 by Biston Maloya and TA Kadewere.
- *Seventh Day Baptist (Charles Domingo).*
Domingo founded the Seventh Day Baptists of Malawi in 1910.
- *Seventh Day Baptists (Joshua Chateka).*
Chateka was a former assistant to American Seventh Day Baptist missionary Walter B. Cockerill.
- *Seventh Day Baptists (Alexander Makwinja).*
Formed in 1925 by Makwinja, formerly chief assistant to Cockerill.
- *Seventh Day Baptist (Allan Kan'oma).*
Founded in 1937 by Kan'oma when money raised for a motorcar was used for a different purpose.
- *Seventh Day Baptist (Timothy Kalumbwe).*
Also founded in 1937.
- *Watch Tower Native Controlled and Jehovah's Witnesses.*
Founded in 1934.

Asked about AICs, The CCAP General Assembly's General Secretary, YA Chienda, said that he did not think that they were a threat. He specifically discussed the Abraham African Church⁶⁷⁴, known for its toleration of polygamy and consumption of alcoholic beverages. "Some of our weaker members went there," he said. He pointed out that the leader of this group is a good personal friend of his, who believes in being "born again." Chienda observes that, "The Lord is doing something there". This friend also is head of the Lilongwe ministerial association and is chairman of the Evangelical Association of Malawi.⁶⁷⁵

It is helpful to think of the independent churches as Africa's Anabaptists. Profusion of variety, the eccentricity of their wilder manifestations, and a spirituality and radical Bible-centeredness are essential to them at their best" (Dowley 1995: 653).

Nkhoma Synod is linked to the World Alliance of Reformed Churches through the General Synod (Assembly). An ecumenical body that seeks dialogue with other faiths, the WARC had this to say about its encounter with AIC's.

Representatives of the Nairobi-based organisation of African Instituted Churches – an institution created in 1978 to express the needs and concerns of nationalist, prophet-healing, and/or Pentecostal churches founded by African-and the World alliance of Reformed churches met for the first time in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1998. Their aim was to learn more about each other and to identify matters of common concern that could serve as points for future dialogues. These were: unity, in response to ethnic, denominational, and political divisions; gospel and culture; the empowerment of women. They agreed on holding a series of three dialogues under the general theme "Christianity in the African Context" (McAuley 2003).

13.4.2 The Challenge of the Charismatics

The CCAP General Assembly Policy and Strategic Plan 2000-2010 recognize that there are other Christian churches beyond the Reformed circle. It acknowledges two specific developments that merit attention.

⁶⁷⁴ The present researcher had an experience with a member of this Abraham African Church. He and his wife visited a woman who had just given birth to quadruplets. They were living in a hut in a village. She said that she was a member of this church. When asked what this church was like, she responded, "It's just like the CCAP, only it allows polygamy and drinking". Her surviving babies (some had died) had rows of cuts on their abdomens, a manifestation of traditional belief.

⁶⁷⁵ Interview between present researcher and CCAP General Assembly General Secretary YA Chienda, 28 June 2004.

There are two world - wide trends that need to be recognised. First, there is a move towards independence among many Christians who do not want to accept the discipline or doctrine of any national or international body. The spread of independent churches in Africa is massive and shows no signs of abating. Secondly, there is the tremendous growth of ‘Pentecostal’ and ‘Charismatic’ fellowships. Some of the Pentecostal groups are members of national and international councils, whilst many ‘Charismatics’ resist any outside control or supervision. A general approach to such a variety of independent churches is difficult.⁶⁷⁶

A group known as the Presbyterian Church in Malawi (PCM) broke away from the Blantyre Synod in 1998. General Synod made note of this in its 2001 “Strategic Plan”:

Recently there was a minor split in the CCAP when a few clergy and some members founded the Presbyterian Church of Malawi. While this schism, fortunately, was not large or severe, it nonetheless points to real weaknesses in our Church. People want more freedom in worship, more accountability among the leaders at all levels of the Church and more opportunity for spiritual growth.⁶⁷⁷

When the PCM was formed in 1998, it was done so with an atmosphere of animosity. It started when some members of Blantyre Synod felt themselves unable to accept their synod’s discipline.

Born-again youths of the Blantyre Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) have formed a Presbyterian Church of Malawi (PCM) after failing to strike a balance with the Synod leadership.

The Born-again who belonged to Limbe CCAP had earlier been asked to apologise to the Church for singing choruses and leading in faith healing on Youth Sunday, early this year. They did not, and were later excommunicated, said PCM national co-ordinator, Gilton Chakhaza.

Chakhaza confirmed that the birth of PCM follows the collapse of round-table discussions between the 10 born-again and a Synod committee on dialogue. There was no compromise. He recalled that the dialogue had come a long way: “In 1996 we (born-again) and the committee on dialogue proposed to the Church that a Christian was one who was born again who could conduct healing prayers and exclamations, but the Church rejected this proposal and disbanded the committee.”

The crux of the issue was that the Church accused the youthful born-again of introducing anti-doctrine values including speaking in tongues, singing choruses, and faith healing. Deputy General Secretary of

⁶⁷⁶ CCAP General Assembly Policy and Strategic Plan 2000-2010, page 25.

⁶⁷⁷ CCAP General Assembly Policy and Strategic Plan 2000-2010, page 28.

Blantyre Synod, Greyson Mputeni said they had not been informed of the formation of PCM, but they had no problem because that is what freedom of worship is all about.

By design or mere coincidence, three Synod ministers resigned and immediately joined the youth-founded Presbyterian Church of Malawi. They resigned after failing to apologise to the Synod for not following the Church principles, according to Rev. Mputeni. The three ministers, Rev. M.H. Ngaiyaye, presbytery clerk at Chiradzulu CCAP, Rev. OS Maliya, Moderator of Blantyre City Presbytery, and Rev. H. Zyambo, Deputy Moderator for Zomba CCAP, were described by one Synod official as sympathetic to the born-again.

The three are said to have written the Synod leaders in 1996 accusing the leadership of exercising regionalism, jealousy and ignorance. They could not apologise and administrators ordered that they be suspended for three years which was a tall order to the ministers who opted to resign. Rev. Mputeni said the ministers' violation of Church principles had nothing to do with the issue of the born-again. However, he said the Church could not stop them because everybody was answerable to God for whatever deeds (ENI 1998)

The PCM has a congregation in Lilongwe, meeting at the Kamuzu College of Nursing. This present researcher attended a service in 2002, which was a decidedly Pentecostal experience. The reason for the separation was the inability of the Blantyre Synod to accommodate this form of worship. An Nkhoma Synod minister informed the researcher that Nkhoma Synod has not lost any members to the PCM. He says that the reason for this is that while the preaching in Blantyre Synod is very formal and does not address issues such as sin, preaching in Nkhoma Synod is deeper and speaks to life issues. This informant went on to say that he himself "speaks in tongues". By this he means that he preaches and prays in the power of the Holy Spirit, although the congregation hears Chichewa or English.⁶⁷⁸

The present researcher felt a need to verify the minister's assertion that Nkhoma Synod is not losing members to the PCM⁶⁷⁹. For that reason he revisited the PCM congregation at the Kamuzu College of Nursing. This time he spoke with an elder. The

⁶⁷⁸ Interview between present researcher and Rev. AM Kuthyola Mwale, Pastor of Lingadzi CCAP, 24 June 2004.

⁶⁷⁹ The present researcher noticed two other interesting points. The congregation seemed to have moderated its Pentecostal style of worship since the first visit. Secondly, it was made clear that women serve as elders and deacons. This group was not included under "Reformed bodies" because they repudiate infant baptism, and the researcher is unable to see anything that ties them to the Presbyterian and Reformed stream.

elder estimated that while the members came from a diverse background, perhaps fifty per cent came from the CCAP. He also said that about 150 people met at the nursing college on Sundays. This was about the same size as what the researcher found in 2002. However, the elder went on to say that the PCM had ten branches scattered around the Lilongwe area, with the one meeting at the nursing college being the main one.⁶⁸⁰

When asked about the challenge being posed by the PCM and other charismatic groups, the General Synod's General Secretary, YA Chienda, said that his prayer was that the CCAP would be more open to the Holy Spirit. He went on to say, "We have thrown out the baby with the bath water", and then further said, "We can learn from the Pentecostals." During the interview with this present researcher, he pointedly brandished a book that he was reading, written by charismatic author Charles H Kraft.⁶⁸¹

Rev. Michael Khombe, Chairman of Nkhoma Synod's Missions Committee, sees a "strained relationship" between Nkhoma Synod and the Student Christian Organization of Malawi (SCOM) because of the charismatic issue. While Nkhoma Synod started this organization with heavy participation, over the years other denominations brought their perspectives into it, and a charismatic element was included.⁶⁸² The present researcher has seen this for himself at SCOM meetings.

The CCAP General Assembly 2001 Policy and Strategic Plan 2000-2010 takes up the issue of the charismatic movement. It acknowledges the existence of a dilemma.

The charismatic movement has demonstrated a desire among many Christians to have more experiential worship and to express their faith in non-traditional ways- i.e., hand-clapping, hand-raising, singing praise choruses and dance, plus the opportunity for faith testimonies and healing prayers. The youth of the CCAP have demonstrated a desire for more opportunities for informal worship. The recent controversies over the 'born again' movement illustrates this fact. The CCAP historically has heeded St. Paul's warning that in the Church all things must be done 'decently and in order'. However, we also recognise that worship is of the heart as well as the mind and people must be free to praise God in a variety of ways. The question then becomes: how do we maintain the

⁶⁸⁰ Interview between present researcher and Mr. John Mphonda, PCM elder, and teacher at the College of Health Sciences.

⁶⁸¹ Interview between present researcher and CCAP General Assembly General Secretary YA Chienda, 28 June 2004.

⁶⁸² Interview between present researcher and Rev. Michael Khombe 28 June 2004.

identity, integrity and dignity of Reformed worship whilst allowing people greater freedom of expression within the service of divine worship?⁶⁸³

Nkhoma Synod as has already been mentioned, has a tie with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches through the General Synod (Assembly). The WARC reported on its dialogue with Pentecostal churches.

After a meeting in Mattersey, England, in 1995, to explore the interest in and the feasibility of developing an ongoing dialogue at the international level, representatives of the World Alliance of Reformed churches and members of different Pentecostal churches met successively in Torre Pelice, Italy 1996, Chicago, USA (1997), Kappel-am-Albis, Switzerland (1998) and in Seoul, Korea (1999). The Torre Pelice session dealt with spirituality and the challenges of today. Participants identified two important areas of common ground: the central role played by the Bible in both Christian families and the importance of the Holy Spirit in proclamation and praxis. The topic of the following session was the role and place of the Holy Spirit in the church. There was much debate on the key issue of charismata. The Kappel session reflected on the Holy Spirit and mission in eschatological perspective, and the Seoul session dealt with the Holy Spirit, charisma and the kingdom of God. The fifth and final session of this dialogue was held in Sao Paulo, Brazil in May, 2000. It undertook an overall evaluation of the work accomplished and produced a final report, Word and Spirit, church and World based upon the first five years of discussion. The final report of the Pentecostal –Reformed dialogue was submitted to all WARC member churches for study and action in October 2001 (CRWRC 2003).



13.5 RELATIONS WITH ECUMENICAL BODIES

In its June 1970 meeting, Nkhoma Synod decided to become a full member of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa and Madagascar (AEAM). This was after having sent observers to their meetings for a couple of years. The Synod at the same time rejected the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC). In its view, the former was “Biblical” and “evangelical”, while the latter concerned itself with social and political affairs.

However, the CCAP had appointed Rev. AS Labuschagne and Rev. Jonathan Sangaya, as moderator and deputy chairman of the General Synod, to represent the

⁶⁸³ CCAP General Assembly 2001 Policy and Strategic Plan 2000-2010.

CCAP at the AACC's first meeting. It was held in Kampala, Uganda, on 20 April 1963. Labuschagne said about this organisation,

The purpose of the AACC was to promote co-ordination, co-operation and unity among the churches in Africa and to assist in the social, economic and political growth in the new Africa. Rev. (Beyers) Naude maintained that if the DR Church had sent a strong representation to this conference, it could have helped Africa, together with the other churches, to realise this aim (Labuschagne 2003: 311).

The Twelfth Meeting of Synod held 25 July – 2 August 1972 approved the Synod's becoming a full member of the Evangelical Association. It made its decision based upon advice from its observers to the Association's meetings.⁶⁸⁴ It also decided that becoming a member of the Bible Society was a good thing, and that letters of explanation should be sent to the congregations so that they would understand the benefits of this action being taken.⁶⁸⁵

In 1974, several Synod members attended an All Africa Conference of Churches conference in Lusaka, Zambia. Rev. KJ Mgawi attended as a delegate of the Christian Council, and Rev. YA Chienda went as a delegated observer of Nkhoma Synod. JJ Mbuka, editor of *Kuunika*, and Mr. W. Kazembe, youth delegate of the Christian Council, also went. As was seen earlier, this in no way constituted approval of that body.⁶⁸⁶

In 1974, Rev. YA Chienda was elected chairman of the Evangelical Association of Malawi.⁶⁸⁷ This suggests that the leadership of Nkhoma Synod had earned a place of respect among other church bodies. This new respect was explained in the following report in the newsletter from the South African personnel. When appointed as General Secretary of the Christian Council of Malawi, Rev. G Kachaje said, "I paid a tribute to the DR Church."

These strange words were spoken by Rev. Gibiel Kachaje in April last year when he was appointed as the General Secretary of the Christian Council of Malawi. In order to understand these words, the background has to be kept in mind. The members and leadership of Nkhoma Synod have a somewhat backward position compared to the other English-

⁶⁸⁴ S. 915, Synod Meeting at Namoni Katengeza.

⁶⁸⁵ S. 917, same Synod Meeting, Namoni Katengeza.

⁶⁸⁶ KS 5561. Moderamen, 7 June 1974.

⁶⁸⁷ KS 5636. Synodical Committee, 8 – 9 October 1974.

orientated Churches here as far as their level of education is concerned. Our mission concentrated on the evangelical side, while some of the other missions concentrated maybe too much on civilizing and the educative aspects in their mission work – to the disadvantage of evangelism . . . Maybe we neglected the mentioned civilizing and educative aspects, and only started to give attention to it at a later stage. The result was that the ministers and other leaders in Nkhoma Synod felt inferior for many years. Usually they were overlooked when people get appointed in posts where much English had to be spoken or written. (The older DR missionaries took great pains to study Chichewa, and were all fluent in Chichewa. They did all their teaching in Chichewa, which was then, on the other hand, not contributing to the Malawians’ progress in English.)

And now, at last, a minister of Nkhoma Synod, and a product of the DR Church Mission, was appointed as Gen. Sec. of the Christian Council of which all the Protestant Churches are members – about the highest post in the church in Malawi. Through that, Rev. Kachaje said that . . . he took away the “disgrace” that was on the name of the DR Church.⁶⁸⁸

The Synod has been characteristically cautious about joining larger bodies, both foreign and domestic. In 1987, the Synod was invited to become a member of the Council for Social Welfare Service in Malawi. The General Secretary was directed by the Moderamen to investigate and then submit a report to the Synod.⁶⁸⁹ In 1992 this organisation established CONGOMA (Council of Non-government Organisations in Malawi), and it lists Nkhoma Synod as a member (Congoma 2004).

Council for Nongovernmental Organisations in Malawi (CONGOMA) is a membership umbrella body for NGOs in Malawi. It has a membership of 175 comprises of National, International and Emerging NGOs. It was established in 1992 as an offshoot of the council for Social Welfare Services in Malawi with the mission to enhance and maximize the potential and actual impacts that NGOs can and do have upon development in Malawi through mutual support between NGOs.

Nkhoma Synod is a member of the Malawi Council of Churches. Presently, there are nineteen members of this body, including Livingstonia and Blantyre synods, CCAP.

The Malawi Council of Churches is not a Church, but a Council, an association, a fellowship of Churches engaged in the advancement of God’s mission of transforming

⁶⁸⁸ *Nuusbrief Uit Malawi*, January 1976.

⁶⁸⁹ M. 2048, Meeting of the Moderamen, 24 November 1987.

humanity after the image of Christ; of promoting holistic human development; and of fostering communities-in-communion of peace, justice and love.⁶⁹⁰

In 1992, the Nkhoma Synod learned that it had been suspended from the Christian Council of Malawi (Malawi Council of Churches). This was in response to a letter written by Rev. Maseko to the Daily Times newspaper. As Nkhoma's representative on the Christian Council, he had signed the affirmation of the 1992 Bishop's Pastoral Letter produced by the Council. He was forcefully criticized for this at Nkhoma. He wrote a recantation, asking that his name be removed from the Christian Council's document, and this got published in the paper. This angered the Council, and caused them to suspend Nkhoma Synod. In further retaliation, the Council decided to prevent Rev. AJM Mnthambala from going to study at the University of Nigeria.⁶⁹¹ This situation was not quickly remedied; with the reinstatement of Nkhoma synod still a topic at the Synod meeting of 1995.⁶⁹²

During this turbulent era, the Public Affairs Committee (an association of denominations united for political and social action) was organized. For several years Nkhoma Synod stayed out, but was admitted in 2003.

Public Affairs Committee (PAC) is a Malawian religious based, interfaith organisation working in the field of democracy and governance. It is made up of the Episcopal conference of Malawi (Catholic church), Muslim Association of Malawi and the main Protestant denominations through the Malawi Council of Churches.⁶⁹³ In addition to belonging to PAC, Nkhoma Synod has been reinstated to the Christian Council of Malawi (Malawi Council of Churches).⁶⁹⁴

⁶⁹⁰ From a brochure obtained by the researcher at the Malawi Council of Churches headquarters in Lilongwe. The term "Church Council of Malawi" is used because that is how the body is identified in the minutes of meetings of the Synod, Synodical Committee, or Moderamen. According to CCAP General Secretary YA Chienda, in an interview on 22 October 2004, this body changed its name because it "came under the influence" of the World Council of Churches, and the WCC did not like the word "Christian".

⁶⁹¹ S. 2618, Minutes of Emergency Meeting, Nkhoma Synod, 8 December 1992.

⁶⁹² S. 2849, Minutes of the 25th Synod Meeting at Namoni Katengeza, 4 – 11 April 1995.

⁶⁹³ From a brochure obtained from Programme Officer George S. Dambula at PAC headquarters. Both PAC and the Malawi Council of Churches have the same physical address: "Embassy Zone, Capital City, Opposite Zowe House".

⁶⁹⁴ Interview between the present researcher and General Secretary Rev. Dr. Winston R. Kawale, 29 January 2004.

Regarding the World Council of Churches, Rev. C.L. Chimkoka says that there is some degree of hesitancy on the part of Nkhoma Synod. This is because of its political activism, and because DRC missionaries going back a number of years tried to discourage any participation with it.⁶⁹⁵

13.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The first of seven “secondary questions” that this study intended to answer was, “Does the self-understanding of the Nkhoma Synod entail that it sees itself as a confessional church?” The answer to this question is a clear “Yes”, and this principle clearly governs its relations with other bodies. It has demonstrated that it easily enters into dialogue and works with other bodies that it feels are compatible with the Heidelberg, Westminster, and other Reformed confessions. It has at the same time shown itself to be reluctant at best to work with those that seem to be at odds with its confessional tradition.

The fourth secondary question is “What is the relationship between Nkhoma Synod and the Dutch Reformed Church personnel?” The DRC presence has been shown to have drastically diminished; yet, those who remain fill a needed and appreciated function, making it unlikely to wither away completely. Perhaps in the years ahead members of other “Commission for Witness” Western Cape churches will make an appearance.

Nkhoma Synod in 1968 accepted “with pleasure” the opportunity to join the Reformed Ecumenical Synod (apparently “Ecumenical” did not for them at that time convey a negative meaning). It was seen that in 1970 the Synod became a full member of the more theologically conservative Association of Evangelicals in Africa and Madagascar while rejecting the more progressive and ecumenical All Africa Council of Churches. This did not, however, prevent them from sending a delegation to the AACC in 1974.

The 1978 rejection of the Last Church of God’s request to use the printing press, and the list of “recognized” churches says much about how Nkhoma Synod sees itself.

⁶⁹⁵ Interview between present researcher and Rev. CL Chimkoka on 9 July 2004.

Just as it is true that it consistently rejects ecumenicalism, it just as consistently rejects all things Pentecostal and charismatic. In a similar way, by calling the Last Church of God a “sect” to its face, it reveals its attitude of disapproval towards African Independent Churches (AICs). The response to be AICs and the charismatics can only be described as antagonistic; in some cases they are described as “sects. Perhaps the same kind of relationship exists between the CCAP and the AICs and charismatics.

Nkhoma Synod seems to value the continuation of traditional Reformed doctrinal positions and eschews more innovative or progressive theological developments. However, this did not prevent them from receiving personnel from the “Mainline Protestant” PC(USA) – i.e., Frank Dimmock and Gene Straatmeyer. It is through ties such as this that humanitarian aid, which is always needed in this part of the world, flows. It forges ties with Western Reformed bodies both directly, and through the General Assembly. The ties of the larger CCAP with certain ecumenical bodies may cause problems in the future for Nkhoma Synod. Through the period under study, the Synod has consistently rejected the World Council of Churches (WCC) and similar organizations.

The suspension from the Christian Council of Malawi in 1992 was a problem because it is through this body that some funding is channelled. However, the more recent involvement of the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan shows that if need be, alternative sources of aid can be obtained.

The next, and penultimate, chapter deals with the spirituality of Nkhoma Synod. It seems appropriate to save this discussion for last, as it strikes at the centre of Nkhoma Synod’s soul. The theological, ecclesiastical, and political ties that have been forged with other bodies are an important part of the picture, but chapter fourteen will show where Nkhoma Synod’s heart truly is.

Chapter Fourteen

The Spirituality of the Synod

14.1 INTRODUCTION

What is spirituality? Jonathan Kamwana defines it thusly:

Accordingly, spirituality is a personal participation in the Christian understanding and institution, interpreted and presented in its confession and ministry regarding redemption from sin and sanctification of life, enabled in and through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. The subjective side of spirituality is linked to the personality of the individual or a group of individuals joined in worship, practising prayer, sharing repentance and active in good works, forgiving one another, reading Scriptures and living what is take to be a holy life. It can be said Christian Spirituality makes a person to be known as a “friend of God.” It is a follower of Jesus Christ who developed an intimacy with God through faithful prayer, walking close with God. It is the sanctification of an individual Christian by the true God, given to His command, “Be holy, for the God who called you, is holy” (I Peter 1:16). According to Scriptures, holy living is only possible when an individual believer is being led by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus Christ. (Kamwana 1998: 1-2)

While the previous three chapters have described political alignments; this chapter will now deal with the spiritual alignments of Nkhoma Synod, focussing on the portrayal of the rich worship that is there. It then will talk about the traditional beliefs, from which the Synod’s people were converted, with attention to the Synod’s countermeasures against traditional belief and practice. It will also talk about another challenge, that of legalism, which is the attempt to reduce the meaning of the faith to a set of external rules. It will be shown that its Book of Order, *Zolamulira*, while a useful tool, can lead to abuse.

14.2 THE CONFESSIONAL HERITAGE OF NKHOMA SYNOD

According to Article IV of the Constitution of Nkhoma Synod (“The Creed”), it accepts and adheres to the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dordt.

The Heidelberg Catechism is divided into three parts, Human Misery, Deliverance, and Gratitude. It contains 129 questions and responses.

The Synod of Dort in 1618-1619 approved the Heidelberg Catechism, and it soon became the most ecumenical of the Reformed catechisms and confessions. The catechism has been translated into many European, Asian, and African languages, and is the most widely used and most warmly praised catechism of the Reformation period (Pratt 2003: 2143).

The Belgic Confession consists of 37 Articles. It opens with Article 1: The Only God, and ends with Article 37, The Last Judgment.

One of the oldest of the doctrinal standards particularly of the Dutch Reformed tradition, is the Confession of Faith, popularly known as the Belgic confession, following the seventeenth-century Latin designation “Confessio Belgica”. “Belgica” referred to the whole of the Netherlands, both north and south, which today is divided into the Netherlands and Belgium. The confession’s chief author was Guido de Bres, a preacher of the Reformed churches of the Netherlands, who died a martyr to the faith in the year 1567 (Pratt 2003: 2155).

The Canons of Dort have five main points. The first is “Divine Election and Reprobation”. The second main point is “Christ’s Death and human Redemption Through It”. The third and fourth main points are, “Human corruption, conversion to God, and the Way it Occurs”. The fifth main point is, “The Perseverance of the Saints”.

The Synod of Dort was held in order to settle a serious controversy in the Dutch churches initiated by the rise of Arminianism. Jacob Arminius, a theological professor at Leiden University, questioned the teaching of Calvin and his followers on a number of important points. After Arminius’ death, his own followers presented their views on five of these points in the Remonstrance of 1610. In this document or in later more explicit writings, the Arminians taught election on foreseen faith, universal atonement, partial depravity, resistible grace, and the possibility of a lapse from grace. In the Canons the Synod of Dort rejected these views and set forth the Reformed doctrine on these points, namely, unconditional election, limited atonement, total depravity, irresistible grace, and the perseverance of the saints (Pratt 2003: 2163).

Article IV of the Nkhoma Synod Constitution also accepts “the Articles Declaratory of the Fundamental Principles as contained in Articles 1 to 7 of the (1956) Constitution of the CCAP”. This, in turn, starts by declaring that, “The Church of Central Africa Presbyterian is part of the Holy Catholic or Universal Church”. It goes on to name Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed as being received by the CCAP. In addition, it accepts the “Brief Statement of the Faith” as adopted by the CCAP in 1924.

The Brief Statement of the Faith is a series of questions to be asked of ministers at their ordination. Among the items to be affirmed in this is “Do you believe and accept the Word of God as spoken by Him in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the supreme rule of faith and practice?”

The Constitution of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian now includes a Book of Confessions:

The confessions of faith upon which the church is founded and built are contained in the following books of confessions:

- 3.2.1 The Nicene Creed
- 3.2.2 The Apostles Creed
- 3.2.3 The Westminster Confession of Faith
- 3.2.4 The Larger Catechism
- 3.2.5 The Shorter Catechism
- 3.2.6 The Confession of Netherlands
- 3.2.7 The Heidelberg Catechism
- 3.2.8 The Belgic Confession
- 3.2.9 The Canon of Dordt
- 3.2.10 The Church’s Confession of Faith of 1924

14.3 WORSHIP



The hymnbook used for worship at Nkhoma Synod services is entitled *Nyimbo Za Mulungu*. It is used in both city churches such as Lingadzi CCAP, and it is used in prayer houses in the bush. The order of worship remains much the same, although some variations may include a children’s sermon or drama on special occasions. There is both an English version and a Chichewa version.

This hymnbook has quite a long history. The old Consolidated Board of Federated Missions of Nyasaland appointed a committee in 1910 to oversee the production of a hymnbook in the vernacular, which it produced in January 1916, with a revised Chichewa edition appearing in February 1954. The preface states that “A more truly African hymnbook is an urgent need”. A set of translated hymns from Chitumbuka from Sumu za Ukristu appears in this edition. The next edition of the Chichewa edition appeared in March 1968. It acknowledged that ownership of the hymnal was now in the

hands of CLAIM. The original owner, the Fellowship of Christian Churches in Malawi, had ceased to exist.

The English edition appeared in June 1975. Its preface reveals that 70 new hymns are contained in it. It mentions that in Chichewa there may be an additional syllable or meter to each line; this has in some cases necessitated a change of tunes.

In late 1997, the Music Committee of the Nkhoma Synod sent out to Cape Town an urgent request that the Christian music in and around the church services should be investigated. The styles of the music of the youth especially should be investigated. Rev. Francois Swart was requested to visit Malawi to have a fact-finding tour and discussions with the music leaders of Nkhoma Synod and to draw up a plan of action together with them. With the use of guitars and keyboards are becoming more common, and the question was raised how these instruments could be applied and assimilated in a responsible way within the Africa context to serve as Christian music.⁶⁹⁶

Following his fact-finding tour of Malawi, Swart filed a report, entitled “Why a Music Project in Malawi?” In it, he noted that for many youth the only organized church activity for them is the choir. Such is the creativity of Malawians; these choirs reflect African, American, and European influences. The use of music in worship is all the more important because of the illiteracy of the people. Swart concluded his report with a five-year plan for establishment of music workshops for the youth.⁶⁹⁷

Nkhoma Synod has a Music Committee and its chairman is Rev. JG Maseko, with Rev. Michael Khombe serving as the secretary. Khombe says that the use of drums, keyboards, and electric guitars are now being welcomed. He says that it was the white missionaries that originally discouraged the use of drums, pointing out that things have changed a great deal in the last twenty years. He would like to see music competitions between churches. “We have to learn to incorporate new things,” he says. However, he goes on to say, as any good Presbyterian minister must, “things must be done decently

⁶⁹⁶ Minutes of a Meeting of the Enlarged Executive Commission of the Church for Witness and Action – Ministry of Missions – Held on 7 Nov. 1997.

⁶⁹⁷ From a report dated 19 – 29 Sept. Swart’s report was incorporated into the minutes of the meeting of the Enlarged Executive Commission of the Church for Witness and Action – Ministry of Missions – Held on 7 Nov. 1997.

and in order”. He feels that steps must be taken to insure control, so that “things don’t get out of hand.”⁶⁹⁸

Although he is not a musician, Rev. Katani, pastor of Kaning’a CCAP in Lilongwe, is working on a doctorate in music at the University of Stellenbosch in South Africa. Rev. CL Chimkoka says that Katani is opening the church to new forms of music for the youth.⁶⁹⁹

The 2001 General Synod report known as the Ten-Year Strategic Plan took up issues dealing with worship within all CCAP churches in General.

Anyone visiting CCAP Churches is overwhelmed by the size and enthusiasm of many CCAP congregations. Most congregations have two or more services and support prayer houses to enable other Christians to take part in worship closer to their homes.

Again, most Congregations have large Sunday Schools, often numbering in the hundreds, large youth fellowships and a variety of choirs the women’s guild is strong in most congregations and there are attempts in many churches to encourage mid-week prayers and regular visitation and outreach to the sick, afflicted or bereaved.

On closer examination, however, one sees other trends as well. There is often little theological understanding among the members; youth feel alienated from the decision making process: Sunday School children have no materials and receive almost no systematic training in Bible or theology; and, despite hundreds of people in worship services, the weekly offering is often very small indeed.

It is also notable that in many CCAP congregations, people simply wander into church at any time during the service. There are justifiable reasons for this because of weather conditions and the long distances people travel. However, many Christians feel that it is merely important to ‘attend prayers’ and are not overly worried about the content or challenge of the divine service. It is an indication that it is the ‘work’ of getting to church that is important, not the faith that needs to be challenged, fed and nurtured.⁷⁰⁰

This part of the Ten-year Plan concludes by saying that the laity must be developed and more involved than it is now.

⁶⁹⁸ Interview between present researcher and Rev. Michael Khombe and Rev. JL Nkhoma 28 June 2004.

⁶⁹⁹ Interview between present researcher and Rev. CL Chimkoka on 9 July 2004.

⁷⁰⁰ CCAP General Synod Ten-Year Strategic Plan 2000-2010, pages 27 - 28

14.4 THE CHALLENGE OF TRADITIONAL BELIEF

14.4.1 *Some Principles of Traditional Belief*

JWM van Breugel says that *Chiuta* as the name for God is to be preferred over *Mulungu* (van Breugel 2001: 32). *Chiuta* means “Big Bow” and it symbolizes the rainbow, and thus by extension God’s concern for humanity as expressed by the giving of rain (Chisale 2002: 12). He does not directly punish sin, but uses the spirits of the dead to maintain moral order (van Breugel 2001: 41). The ancestral spirits (*mizimu*) are generally benevolent.⁷⁰¹ They are guardians of the customs, so the best way to keep them happy is to be faithful to the traditions (van Breugel 2001: 73-81). People, who kept the rules in life, or *mizimu*, are rewarded; they are called to become ancestors who live in the sacred groves (Chisale 2002: 54).

However, there are the *afiti* (witches), and one needs protection from them (van Breugel 2001: 111-113). The “true” witches⁷⁰² are the *mfiti yenyeni*, who wander at night and seek to kill people in order to eat their flesh (van Breugel 2001: 213).

For the Chewa, the belief in mysterious hidden forces that cause misfortune creates a climate of fear. Even today, accusations of witchcraft may prevent people from caring for a sick person or attending a burial. Fear of being accused of witchcraft pushes the individual to follow an elaborate code of behaviour in which politeness and meekness are particularly emphasised, and aggressive reactions, frank speech, and ambitions in daily dealings are strongly discouraged (Chisale 2002: 104).

Rain sacrifices (of animals) occur at three main places: Bunda, Tsang’oma, and at Chinkhuti; in addition, there are village rain sacrifices. These are thought to be propitiation to *Chiuta* who will then send rain (van Breugel 2001: 48-68).

Before the Chewa approach God, they must be sure they are in conformity with his laws, which are guarded by the ancestral spirits. In the villages, there is a prescribed ceremony, and each member of the community has his or her part. The women brew beer, the shrine officials make repairs to the shrine, and the entire village gathers for the ceremony. They are supposed to remove all forms of evil from amongst them, confess to

⁷⁰¹ Here one should distinguish between ancestral spirits (*mizimu ya makolo*), other spirits called *mizimu*, and evil spirits (*ziwanda*).

⁷⁰² To be distinguished from *ng’anga* and *sing’anga* (spirit mediums, soothsayers, and traditional healers).

one another, and drink beer in a code of behaviour prescribed by the ancestors (Chisale 2002: 22).

Matthew Schoffeleers has given a picture of the preparation of beer. He wrote a description of a ceremony that he witnessed in 1967.

The first stage of beer brewing is always the making of the malt. To this end a quantity of the grain is soaked in water and allowed to sprout. After some days the water is removed and the sprouts are allowed to dry. Later on they are pounded, and the malt is added to the beer on the third day. There may be a period of two or three weeks between the soaking of the grain and the actual brewing. The preparation of malt and beer is entrusted to a group of young girls under the direction of a woman who is past procreation and preferably a widow. The two parties seem to provide us with another instance of the theme of the senior wife and junior wives.

Usually, the sacrificial substance consists of flour, beer, and cloth. First, the cloth is laid in the shrine, then the white flour is poured out in the form of a cone and on top of this pounded charcoal is strewn to symbolize the rain clouds. The official, while doing this, intones his invocations to God and the royal spirits, and those outside by soft handclapping and repeating the main invocation: "Imva, Mphambe!" (Hear, Thou, Mphambe!) a small pot which is sunk in the earth is filled with beer and some more is poured out around it (Schoffeleers 1997: 52-53).

Isabel Phiri identifies Msinja, about 63 kilometres south of Lilongwe, as "the centre of Chewa religion". This was the home of *Makewana*, a "spirit wife", and "mother of all the people" (Phiri 1996: 15). The *Nyau* are a secret men's society in which, during the dances, they become wild animals that incarnate the spirits of the dead, or *mizimu*. It is thought necessary to become a part of this society for a man to be regarded as an adult (van Breugel 2001: 126-132).

Beer has a special place in traditional life. There is the Chewa proverb, "*mowa ndi chimera* (beer is ferment). The drinking of beer together symbolizes brotherhood (Chisale 2002: 93).

Mdulo is defined as

. . . the supernatural sanction enforcing the two main duties of husband and wife, namely: the obligation to avoid adultery (*chigolo*) and the obligation to favour procreation and to care for their children (*kusamala*). In a negative form *mdulo* presents the basic law governing family morality (van Breugel 2001: 170).

The traditional Chewa view of morality is that anything that perpetuates the traditions of the ancestor is what is right, even if it is apparently immoral. What the ancestors did could not have been wrong (van Breugel 2001: 260).

The following 1978 report from South African personnel illustrates the continuing pull of traditional belief.

Simbazako (“Tell-your-stories”) is the name of a witch doctor who operates at present in the north-west of Lilongwe, and draws people from all over the country. Because of his influence, there is backsliding in many of our congregations, especially in the congregations of Mpando, Mang’ a, Kambiya, Chiwe, Chimwang’ombe and Nambuma. Hundreds of church members have already been disciplined by the church because they went to him. The situation degenerates further, seeing that headmen of villages force the inhabitants to visit *Simbazako*, otherwise they are being ousted from the community, their huts destroyed, or their land taken from them.⁷⁰³

14.4.2 *The Nkhoma Response to the Traditions*

In his 1968 Annual Report to the DRC mission office in Cape Town, General Secretary Mgawi described the plight in which Malawian youth found themselves, caught as they were between traditional and Westernising influences. He explained that students in secondary schools were expected to take on Western ways, and many converted to Christianity. Once back home for holidays, however, they were subjected to parental pressure to revert to traditional customs. “This situation is the cause of change of times, in Malawi, and it can’t be stopped”.⁷⁰⁴

In May 1978 the Moderamen noted, “Many Christians are going to witchdoctors because they are forced by people of authority”. The ministers at the Refresher Course at Chongoni asked the Moderamen to do something about it, and they promised to “take immediate action”.⁷⁰⁵

The Moderamen is continuing doing something about this matter. Meanwhile Congregations should not refrain from safeguarding the purity of the Church by way of Church Discipline in accordance with the Word

⁷⁰³ *Nuusbrief Uit Malawi*, July 1978.

⁷⁰⁴ The 1968 Annual Report of the General Secretary of Nkhoma Synod to the DRC mission office in Cape Town.

⁷⁰⁵ KS 7321 “About Witchcraft”. Moderamen, 27 June 1978.

of God and the Laws of Nkhoma Synod. Therefore cases of discipline must be dealt with in accordance with Synod's laws concerning witchcraft.⁷⁰⁶

An April 1983 meeting of the Synod gives insight into the pressing issues of the day. Dancing at marriage ceremonies was prohibited. Members were instructed not to brew beer upon orders of a chief for those who clear land for “*Nyau*” (traditional, occultic, involves spirit possession) dancing, nor could they earn money by hoeing for the purpose of hiring such dancers. The placing of flowers upon a grave was permissible, as long as the purpose was not to chase away evil spirits.⁷⁰⁷

Participation in witchcraft had proven to be a temptation to many. What Synod saw aggravated the situation as “different congregations have been treating such cases of discipline differently”. In 1978, Synod instructed congregations to handle members who went to witchdoctors according to *Zolamulira* (“instructions”).⁷⁰⁸ Here, it is of interest that Synod expressed concern over a lack of uniformity in how it was being handled at the level of the particular congregations. What is not readily apparent in this response is a pastoral concern.

The “General Secretaries (sic) Report 1981” by IM Kainja touched many pertinent issues. He opened the report by naming the “enemies”, such as polygamy, drunkenness, and witch-doctors, while giving assurance that “the spiritual life of the Church is growing.”

The Synod recognized there was a need to instruct the young people about the Holy Spirit. In April 1995, The Synod directed that a section on the Holy Spirit be included in *Tiyeni Tikambire* (booklet for group Bible Studies). The same meeting denounced the drinking of *mchape*⁷⁰⁹ and smoking.

Noticing that many Christians and catechumens had been going to drink the herbal concoction prepared by the herbalist at Liwonde, and realizing that many had done this before the church had spoken out against it, the Synod urged that all congregations be informed that this practice was unacceptable; that it was heathen; that it was in fact nothing less than

⁷⁰⁶ KS 7366 “Witchcraft.” Moderamen, 13 July 1978.

⁷⁰⁷ S.1670, S.1674, S.1675, S. 1677, S.1679, S. 1680, S.1688, S. 1738, S1742, S. 1758, S. 1777. Minutes of 19th meeting of Nkhoma Synod, 5 to 12 April 1983.

⁷⁰⁸ KS 7469. Synodical Committee, 24-26 October 1978.

⁷⁰⁹ Perhaps a good translation would be “magic potion”. Some healers have claimed that their *mchape* could cure AIDS.

the superstitious worship of ancestral spirits. (Deut. 18:9; 13:1-3; Isaiah 8:19; Ezek 14:1). It was also a sign of the end times (2 Tim. 3:1-9). If members of our congregations would still continue this practice, after having been warned, they should still be put under discipline, seeing that this medicine was a superstition, which would not help them in any way.⁷¹⁰

Spiritual warfare is a reality in Malawi.

- A commission of enquiry will be appointed to investigate the matter and advise the Synodical Committee as to how congregations should handle people possessed by spirits.
- The Synod does not allow its members who are possessed (Christians or Catechumens) to seek help from diviners.
- While awaiting the report of the commission of enquiry, the Synod advises congregations to follow the biblical principle of testing the spirits (1 John 4:1).
- In the case where a person is deliberately meddling with the spirits, he/she should be warned and rebuked.
- Where the person is under the influence of spirits that bring about insanity, he/she should immediately be sent to a hospital, lest an accident might happen, or the person might get hurt, or his/her own possessions, or that of other people, might be damaged.
- If the minister and church elders find that the sick person has been possessed by demons, intending to disturb his/her spiritual life, the Synod refers them to the Scripture passage indicating that this kind could only be healed through prayer (Mark 9: 25-29).⁷¹¹

The next item of business at the same meeting was the appearance of a satanic church⁷¹², especially in Lilongwe and Blantyre; Ministers were given instructions on how to deal with that.

The pastor of Lingadzi CCAP in Lilongwe says that the main causes of church disciplinary cases involve adultery, “eloping”, drunkenness, and “witchcraft”. He maintains that he believes that people can change into hyenas and bats, and can show up naked in strange places, with elongated noses and enlarged buttocks. By magic, he says, one can go to America today. He knows of one specific case in which an Englishman went to London with the use of magic. When this informant was pastor of a CCAP

⁷¹⁰ S 2877 and S 2977, Meeting of Synod held on 4 – 11 April 1995.

⁷¹¹ S. 3110, Synod Meeting at Chongoni, 8 – 15 April 1997.

⁷¹² Students of African Bible College have pointed out to the present researcher the building identified as the “satanic church”. It appeared to be a Masonic lodge, judging by the symbols on the gates.

congregation in Mchinji near the Zambian border, an unemployed Mchinji man living in Zambia used magic to get back home. By magic, people can eat fire and knives.⁷¹³

Regarding witchcraft, “The church has taken its stand,” declares CCAP General Assembly General Secretary Rev. YA Chienda. However, he proceeded to tell the story of a minister who went to his session and told them about an *mfiti* causing his house to shake in the night. Later it was learned that the minister had himself consulted an *mfiti* previously. Chienda said that the *mbusa* was not disciplined. Nevertheless, he says, ”You cannot condemn witchcraft if a minister is doing it (meaning condemnation of it would be ineffective and unheeded if people know that a minister is doing it)”⁷¹⁴

14.5 CHURCH REGULATORY ISSUES

The Christian Council of Malawi proclaimed 28 June 1970, to be Temperance Sunday. All ministers were instructed to preach that day on the “bad effects of intoxicating liquor, tobacco, etc”.⁷¹⁵ Apparently, Nkhoma Synod is not alone in its zeal for regulating behaviour.

Almost from its origin, the Synod has been consistent regarding the use of wine at Holy Communion. The Synod stated in 1970 that because the Bible does not specify how “the fruit of the vine” was prepared, congregations should “only see to it that the drink at Holy Communion be real ‘fruit of the vine’ (Matt. 26:29) and that it must be sweet not sour” (fermented), like the *moskonfyt* obtainable at the Bookshop at Nkhoma.⁷¹⁶ It should be understood that *moskonfyt* is non-alcoholic grape syrup, not wine.

A number of spiritual and church discipline matters are addressed at every Synod meeting. In 1970, some of these were regarding burial rights: “Christians who are under discipline, together with their children, must be buried in a Christian way, but when they are under discipline for an indefinite period they must be buried as heathens;” a member of a “Hearer’s Class” could be buried as a Christian if he had been attending class faithfully. It also addressed the proper interactions between Christians and sects such as

⁷¹³ Interview between researcher and Rev. AM Kuthyola, Pastor of Lingadzi CCAP, 24 June 2004.

⁷¹⁴ Interview between present researcher and Rev. YA Chienda 28 June 2004.

⁷¹⁵ KS 2000, Moderamen, 4 May 1970.

⁷¹⁶ S. 574, Minutes of Synod Meeting, 28 August 4 September 1970. CM Pauw explains that “Sour” is associated with “Fermented”.

The Abraham Church, which allows smoking, drinking, and polygamy: “we must not sing hymns with them at funerals”. Regarding baptism, children whose grandparents were Christian but whose parents were non-Christians could not be baptized. Concerning marriage between a Christian and a non-Christian, the rule was:

If a Christian fails to convert his marriage partner to Christianity and shows real repentance, he may be restored to the use of the sacraments three years after the date of his first appearing before the Church session.

There were no guidelines offered as to what constitutes “shows real repentance”. Synod also ruled that in the case in which a woman is elected as a leader of *Chigwirizano* (women’s guild) or female *mlangizi* and whose husband is a pagan, such election could only be allowed if the congregation agrees that the household is stable. Regarding polygamists, “A polygamist must not be allowed to be baptized or even be taken up in the Catechism Class”.⁷¹⁷ The practice of polygamy remains a common one in Malawi, and this continues to be an important issue.

Before 1972, Nkhoma Synod would not baptize children between ages 4 and 17. The Twelfth Meeting of the Synod changed the rule so that it conformed to the practice of the DRC in South Africa. A child could then be baptized “in the arms” up to age 7. A child over 8 could receive baptism standing before the congregation, answering questions, and with his parents standing with him.

The Synodical Committee in 1974 acknowledged a “conference on liquor” (but no mention as to who organized it). The committee expressed gratitude that Nkhoma Synod was described in the report on the conference as standing firm on the faith that the Bible “is our foundation” and that “Christians should not at all touch intoxicating liquor”.⁷¹⁸

Congregational life was affected in an important way when in 1985 the Synod repeated a stern condemnation of consumption of alcoholic beverages. The consumption of alcohol had been prohibited from an early stage. It mandated that such behaviour be denounced in revival meetings, and it advised “elders and deacons to keep an eye on Christians so that they should not become drunkards . . . ”⁷¹⁹

⁷¹⁷ Minutes of a Meeting of Synod, 28 August – 4 September 1970.

⁷¹⁸ KS 5470. Synodical Committee 3-5 April 1974.

⁷¹⁹ S. 1857, Minutes of the 20th Synod Meeting at Namon Katengeza, 10-16 April 1985.

In April 1979 there was scheduled a “Charismatic Spiritual Conference”, and the Synod was requested to send delegates. The response read in part:

Because the conference is arranged outside the Evangelical Association of Malawi and with the purpose of discussing baptism with the Holy Spirit and healing, doctrines about which we differ greatly from the Pentecostal groups, we cannot send our delegates even though a suitable date might be found.⁷²⁰

At an October 1981 meeting of the Synodical Committee, several matters concerning discipline arose, leaving an indelible mark upon congregational life. One matter was the funeral of a “fallen Christian”. The minutes read, “It should remain as previously stated (see S. 1251), namely that a fallen Christian would not have the right to ask a (Christian) burial. He should be treated as heathen.”⁷²¹ The Committee also decided that an unmarried deacon should not remain in office. Regarding whether or not a woman whose husband was a polygamist could serve as chairwoman of the Women’s Guild, this matter was referred to the Synod. The Committee overturned the ruling of Malembo Presbytery, which withheld the sacraments from a church member for not paying taxes, saying that this should be referred to Synod.⁷²²

In October 1982, it came down to the Synodical Committee from General Synod that intoxicating drinks were not to be served at Christian weddings. Church choirs were by this meeting prohibited from singing at funerals.⁷²³

In 1991, Synod issued a rather draconian pronouncement: anyone who is found joining or organizing a “fellowship” is to be excommunicated.⁷²⁴ Four years later, Synod moderated this stand. It distinguished between good fellowships and bad fellowships, and encouraged congregations to identify the good ones and to direct their youth toward them. Individuals who were found to be involved in bad fellowships were to be

⁷²⁰ KS 7554. Moderamen, 15 March 1979.

⁷²¹ According to Mrs. Grace Banda, widow of Dr. Fletcher Banda, one-time Chairman of Kamuzu Academy, a “fallen (or backslidden) Christian” is one who has stopped attending church. It can also mean one who has consumed alcohol or has committed polygamy or marital infidelity. The present researcher included this paragraph because he found it so remarkable; church discipline of this nature is virtually unknown in his country (USA).

⁷²² SC. 60, 61, 62 and 72. Minutes of a Meeting of the Synodical Committee, 20 – 21 October 1981.

⁷²³ Synodical Committee meeting 19 –21 October 1982. One such student who went south for studies and did not serve as the Synod wished is currently (2002) the General Superintendent of the Assemblies of God in Malawi.

⁷²⁴ S. 2543, Minutes of the 23rd Synod Meeting, at Namoni Katengeza, 9 –16 April 1991.

counselled, and if they persisted in their error, they were to be disciplined (this included the possibility of excommunication).⁷²⁵ According to Sam Kawale, ABC graduate and son of the current General Secretary, these fellowships were Bible studies and prayer groups. Some met together overnight. They were originally judged to be objectionable because they were initiated by lay people and without the permission and supervision of church officers and pastors.⁷²⁶

The late Hilary Mijoga did a study on legalistic tendencies within the Nkhoma Synod. Starting with the hypothesis that the Synod is known for strictness and discipline, he describes its *Zolamulira* (book of church rules), and talks about how it originally was intended to bring about good church order, but has now acquired salvific significance. Running an empirical investigation, he found that to the question, “Why do people observe church laws?” 43% answered, “Because they lead to salvation.” When asked what happened when missionaries were running the churches, 74% said that laws were strictly enforced. When asked what happens now that local clergy are in charge, 57% said that laws are strictly enforced. To the question why did the Synod institute *Zolamulira*, 22% said “To bring salvation to its members.” When asked how does *Zolamulira* help members, 28% said, “They lead to salvation” while another 28%, said they help develop a sense of belonging. To the question, what do you gain from following *Zolamulira*, 27% said, “I am morally upright”. Mijoga claims that when asked of their opinion of the Synod, seventy-three percent said that it was legalistic. He gives a summation of responses, which include: there is emphasis on punishment; there is fear/threat of the law; members are not free to speak out; and there is more emphasis on laws than on the Word of God. Mijoga claims that contemporary clergy are carrying forward tendencies set in place by the missionaries of former years. He concludes that this legalistic streak produces several results, including: a sense of fear among members; a sense that the Synod is “the only true apostolic church”; a tendency to disparage ecumenism; and to take a fundamentalist approach to the Bible (Mijoga 2002: 32-39). Unfortunately, Mijoga does not go into great detail about what he means by a “fundamentalist approach to the Bible.”

⁷²⁵ S. 2887, Minutes of the 25th Synod Meeting, at Namoni Katengeza, 4 – 11 April 1995.

⁷²⁶ Personal Interview with Sam Kawale on 31 December 2003.

Years earlier, Nkhoma Synod's C. Martin Pauw, now retired, addressed the same issue.

Legalism and a legalistic attitude (and by way of reaction sometimes a complete swing over to libertinism) is also very real problem in the church in Africa. Roland Allen is probably right when he says at least part of the blame for this lies on the missionaries, who in their zeal to maintain a high standard of Christian morality, made the mistake of laying down the definition of that morality as a law which must not be departed from. However it must not be forgotten that this legalism also finds a strong precedent in the manner in which in traditional African societies, laws, customs and taboos were enforced and the way offenders were dealt with (Pauw 1974: 141).

Pauw immediately goes on to explain how the early missionaries prescribed specific periods of time for which disciplinary measures were to last. Later it was decided to give elders more freedom to deal with discipline infractions on a case-by-case basis. He also mentions the importance of confession, both corporate and private, as a form of pastoral care.

H Jurgens Hendriks gives his insights regarding the reasons for legalism in African Christianity,

In terms of a traditional worldview, rural congregations tend not to be very accommodating. Although they belong to the larger community, as Christians they see themselves as being different. A legalistic approach towards traditional culture and what may or may not be done, is often evident. Christians identify themselves as distinct from traditionalists. In the Xhosa culture, they speak of the *ababomvu* versus the *amaqzoboka* ("red people" vs "school people"). The *Herero* women of Namibia wear a particular type of uniform to distinguish them. In countries such as Kenya, Malawi and South Africa, one finds "Christian" versions of, or alternative ceremonies for, initiation and / or circumcision (Hendriks 2004: 123).

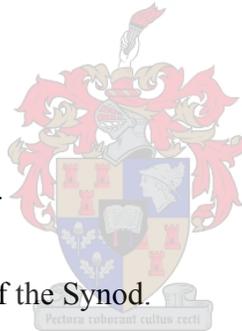
The charge that Nkhoma Synod has legalistic tendencies is true, laments CCAP General Assembly General Secretary Rev. YA Chienda. He is particularly critical of the use of *Zolamulira* to discourage teaching about the Holy Spirit, having set time for prayers (because some will only pray at those times), and to "defend weaknesses". He feels that it is a "disadvantage" to be reliant upon it, that it encourages hypocrisy. On the

other hand, he points out that its original aim was good, and that he himself frequently refers to it.⁷²⁷

14.6 ZOLAMULIRA

A look at the 2002 edition of Nkhoma Synod's *Zolamulira* is rather revealing. It is divided into 25 chapters, as follows:

1. Legal procedures of the Church.
2. Classes (as in catechism class).
3. Baptism of children.
4. Care of Children.
5. Counselling of Children.
6. Regulations for Sunday school.
7. Regulations for schoolteachers.
8. Regulations for ministers.
9. Regulations for elders.
10. Presbytery meetings.
11. General Synod (Assembly).
12. (Nkhoma) Synod.
13. The missions programme of the Synod.
14. Theological training.
15. Revivals and Evangelism.
16. Offerings.
17. Distinguishing between members and non-members.
18. Women's Guild.
19. Chongoni Church Lay Training Centre (elsewhere identified as Namoni Katengezi Church Lay Training Centre).
20. Marriage.
21. Publications of the Synod- Mlozo and *Kuunika*.
22. Discipline.
23. Regulations regarding travel.
24. Regulations for worship.



⁷²⁷ Interview between present researcher and Rev. YA Chienda 28 June 2004.

25. Regulations for funerals.

Zolamulira is roughly equivalent to the Book of Order used by a Presbyterian denomination in the USA. It is a 122-page document, in fine print. An example of the detail into which it goes can be found on page 66, Z. 289. This gives precise specifications regarding the official seal of the Synod to be placed upon letterheads.

How easy is it to amend *Zolamulira*? There is a *Zolamulira* Committee, which oversees changes. The first edition was produced in 1970, the second in 1986, the third in 1993, and the one in current use came out in 2001. The Synod must give its approval to all changes, but it usually accepts the work of the Committee. *Zolamulira* is essentially precedent law; it is based on decisions of the past.⁷²⁸

14.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The sixth of the seven “secondary questions” to be answered was, “How has the Nkhoma Synod developed theologically and spiritually during the years included in this study?” In this dimension of the life of the Synod, perhaps little has substantially changed since 1962. It has steadfastly rejected syncretism, the pressure to merge traditional belief with Christianity. The struggle against traditional belief continues, and the Synod seeks to regulate specific behaviours such as the consumption of alcohol. Throughout its history, the Synod has repeated a stern condemnation of consumption of alcoholic beverages. The consumption of alcohol had been prohibited from an early stage. It mandated that such behaviour be denounced in revival meetings, and it advised “elders and deacons to keep an eye on Christians so that they should not become drunkards . . . ”⁷²⁹

The reason for these ongoing struggles is that the constituency of the synod remains relatively unchanged. Malawian worldview has remained largely unscathed by contact with the West and with expatriate missionaries.

One particular incident may serve as a revealing illustration of worldview in the villages. The following incident actually took place in Mozambique, but among Chichewa – speaking people, living identical lifestyles as Chichewa speaking people in

⁷²⁸ Interview between present researcher and Rev. CL Chimkoka on 9 July 2004.

⁷²⁹ S. 1857, Minutes of the 20th Synod Meeting at Namon Katengeza, 10-16 April 1985.

the nearby jurisdiction of Nkhoma Synod. The researcher went with his wife, adopted Malawian infant son, and six ABC students to a location where most people were nominally Roman Catholic. Women and children were wearing charms about their necks and wrists in order to ward off evil and curses. When presented with a Gospel witness, some chose to pray, “to receive Christ”. However, they remained reluctant to remove the charms until it was pointed out to them that the researcher’s infant son thrived without them. At that point, many did in fact remove their charms. In some missiological circles, this may be termed a “power encounter”. To illustrate the importance of “power encounters”, Timothy Warner has said,

The point is, Satan will use any avenue he can to prevent missionaries (or any Christian workers) from carrying on their ministries. And when the local people see that the missionaries do not know how to handle an encounter which they clearly perceive to be demonic, the cause of the gospel is hindered, to say the least. In the minds of the people, when the missionary fails to win in a power encounter, the power of the demon is assumed to be greater than the power of the Christ the missionary serves. A successful meeting of such a challenge, however, is powerful witness to the gospel (Warner 1991: 95).

The ministers of Nkhoma Synod are educated men have to a large degree adopted a Western worldview. This is the worldview of the missionaries, who were their mentors and models. This Western worldview in turn sees a universe of impersonal, natural causes and scientific laws interacting with one another, i.e., Grandfather died because a blood clot hit his aorta. However, the ministers must minister to a people who remain in largely traditional societies and who continue to have many vestiges of traditional belief without Western mechanistic worldview. Spirits and spiritual power remain influential, i.e., Grandfather died because someone paid the “witchdoctor” to put a curse on him. For this reason, in a village setting, people live in a two-tiered system. They go to the CCAP prayer house to learn Christian morality and forgiveness of sins, but when Uncle Zadziko gets spirit-possessed, they often feel they have no alternative but to resort to traditional healers.

This chapter has served to demonstrate the attempts of the Synod to use church discipline to dissuade church members from resorting to such familiar remedies. It is obvious that this complex situation will remain a challenge, probably requiring

generations for the process to be completed; such was the case in medieval Europe as well.

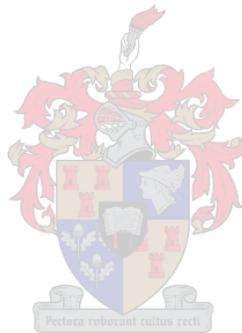
Another major issue is the enforcement of church rules – those addressing polygamy, consumption of alcoholic beverages, tobacco, etc. Because of this, Nkhoma Synod is sometimes accused of “legalism”. Nevertheless, all religions have their list of prohibited behaviours. Even in the so-called “Mainline Protestant” churches, or in Reform Judaism, which have jettisoned many traditional rules and prohibitions, this principle remains true.

It has been shown how the Nkhoma Synod legislates detailed rules over who may be baptized, married, or buried by the church; prescribing specific penalties for such infractions as the drinking of alcoholic beverages, in response to questions posed to them and which had to be dealt with. People in largely traditional societies where illiteracy remains common understand authority, order, and structure. They most likely will not understand or appreciate post-Enlightenment German philosophy.

One should be cautious about accepting Mijoga’s description of Nkhoma Synod as “legalistic”. Most churches will feel the need for safeguards against permissiveness. “Holiness” is a common thread running throughout Christianity. Regarding his charge that Nkhoma’s rules lead some members to conclude that strict rule-keeping is necessary for salvation, perhaps further studies should be done to verify this. Many church members will feel a certain security in the enforcement of ecclesiastical standards. It makes them feel that they are being protected from the corruption that permeates so much of society.

In developing its self-understanding of being a church, Nkhoma Synod takes a consistent, determined stand against polygamy, alcohol, tobacco, Charismatic gifts, and practices related to traditional beliefs. In so doing, the Synod distinguishes itself from Pentecostal, Charismatic, and African Independent Church (AIC) groups, seeking to be consistent with the confessional standards to which it gives allegiance. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, it is still distancing itself from the progressive theology of other Reformed bodies. It can be described as being evangelical, calling on people to repent and place their faith in Jesus Christ, clinging to a traditional form of orthodox

Protestantism that it inherited from its DRC founders. It remains to be seen how long this theological and spiritual line will be held.



Chapter Fifteen

Final Conclusions

15.1 INTRODUCTION

The present researcher sees himself as both an outsider” and as an “insider’ regarding Nkhoma Synod. He is an outsider in the sense that he is not a member of Nkhoma Synod, CCAP. However, he feels that he is an “insider” in another sense because he is a long-term resident of Lilongwe, Malawi, in the heart of the Synod’s jurisdiction. He cherishes his friendships with both Nkhoma Synod and DRC executives. He has learned that to do justice to this study, it requires a combination of reading of primary and secondary sources, interviews, and personal observation.

In order to understand Nkhoma Synod, one must understand the context in which it lives. Barely six generations have passed since David Livingstone first gazed upon Lake Malawi. Most inhabitants of the two large cities, Blantyre and Lilongwe, consider their ancestral village to be “home”. Colonialism did not adequately plant democratic political institutions. Living in Malawi, one often hears of the “Donor Community”⁷³⁰. All of the political, educational, and religious institutions are donor-driven: the national university does not open for class until a donor has been acquired; the civil service has been known to go on strike and demonstrate in the streets because the government could not make the payroll; public school teachers go for months without pay; corruption, inflation and unemployment take a heavy toll upon the life of the country. In 1993, the Malawi Kwacha to U.S. dollar exchange rate was about four to one. Ten years later, it was over one hundred to one⁷³¹.

Public education in Malawi faces a number of challenges. Personal observation and years of teaching in Malawi have confirmed this to the present researcher. Teachers are without books, and many buildings are dilapidated. Freshmen arrive at African Bible College unprepared to do college-level work; school children are taught to memorize, not

⁷³⁰ Most Malawians living today have never known any other system than living in a donor receiving country.

⁷³¹ The MK:USD exchange rate, at the time of the writing of this dissertation was 110:1

analyse. In a culture in which adult males get fed first, the children are often hungry, a situation which may not necessarily lead to ‘malnutrition’, but ‘under’ nutrition, leading to less than optimal growth and development outcomes.

The worldview of the Malawian is vastly different from that of the Westerner. The latter sees a world brimming with opportunity for the energetic and ambitious; the former sees a world of chronic scarcity. The difference in worldview can be quickly grasped by comparing the folklore of Africa and America. In American folklore there are superheroes such as Pecos Bill, Paul Bunyan, and John Henry (who was black), fictitious figures who made an impact upon their society by independently striking out on their own and working very hard. In the typical African folk story, all the animals of the forest gather for a banquet. The monkey causes great consternation by greedily gobbling up more than his rightful share of food. The plot of the story revolves around the other animals conspiring to foil the monkey. In the end, the monkey is put in his place and harmony is restored to the forest. This illustration serves to demonstrate how American culture values individualism and opportunity while African culture emphasizes interdependence and sharing. While neither is inherently bad, it is obvious that they do lead to significantly differing outcomes⁷³². In class, the present researcher gets asked, “Do you think that your country is giving us enough foreign aid?” rather than, “What can we Malawians do to build our country?” This suggests that Malawians are content to take a passive role: “What can be done for us?” This tendency carries itself into church development.

The research question for this dissertation is, “In which way did the Nkhoma Synod develop its self-understanding of being a church since 1962?” The research hypotheses are, “The Nkhoma Synod has achieved a prophetic role in Malawian society”, and “Nkhoma Synod has come full circle from being a mission church to being a missionizing church (defined as having a mission effort that exceeds the missionary input that it receives). In dealing with these, seven secondary questions were identified. Based

⁷³² In more than a decade of teaching at African Bible College, the present researcher has seldom heard a student ask, “What can we Africans do to develop Africa?” A more common question is, “Do you think that your country is giving us enough foreign aid?” If one sees the world as a reservoir of wealth to be tapped, then it makes sense to spend a major portion of one’s time looking for a patron or donor.

upon the data and documentation demonstrated in this dissertation, these secondary questions will now be addressed.

15.2 REVIEW OF THE QUESTIONS

15.2.1 Question one: Does the self-understanding of the Nkhoma Synod entail that it sees itself as a confessional church?

Here it is necessary to define “confessional church”. A confessional church will have a lengthy statement of doctrine and belief that is intended to govern what constitutes orthodoxy and orthopraxy. The Constitution of Nkhoma Synod (as amended in September 1972) contains Article IV, The Creed (see section 14.2). In the present CCAP Constitution, the ancient creeds of the Church and Reformed creeds are affirmed in its section 3, the Book of Confessions.

In recent years several “Mainline Protestant” denominations in the West have either ignored or actively distanced themselves from their confessional standards, in order to pursue theological directions more in line with a post-modern worldview. At the same time many newer, more evangelical denominations deliberately eschew a confession, believing that to do so detracts from direct guidance from the Bible. In addition, they often see historic creeds and confessions as irrelevant to the contemporary scene.

How important is it to be a confessional church? Failure to have an agreed upon, time-tested creed or confession opens a group up to subjectivism and pragmatism; “What verse fifteen means to me is what it means.” Confessions act as a bulwark for preserving commonly understood objective truth and for protecting against personality cults (“Christianity is whatever Reverend Bob says it is”). The present researcher has seen for himself what happens in a church that lacks this confessional tradition.

To what extent is Nkhoma Synod a confessional church? We have seen under “Relations with Other Synods and Denominations” how they used the confessional standards of the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Westminster Confession, and the Canons of Dordt to determine which organizations to join and which to reject. The CCAP Constitution has a Chapter Four, Summary Of The Fundamental Principles Of Faith Of The Church. This is in the same tradition as the early Brief

Statement of the Faith, which was a series of “Questions to be Addressed to Native Ministers at their Ordination.”⁷³³ Uniting with some groups (such as the World Council of Churches) was seen to be inconsistent with their confessional, creedal heritage and constitutional mandate. In one instance, they even turned down badly needed money from a Canadian body because it was uncertain where they stood doctrinally. We have seen them gladly join the Reformed Ecumenical Council because they were seen as being like-minded. We shall shortly discuss how their being a confessional church has determined the state of their spirituality. To Nkhoma Synod then, the word “Reformed” still means something. The present researcher has come to this conclusion by reading page after page of meeting minutes in which concern was expressed about how “Reformed” something under consideration was.

Being “Reformed” has identifiable implications. Alister E. McGrath explains.

With the Reformation, the formative centres of Christian thought and life gradually shifted from the monasteries to the marketplace, as the great cities of Europe became the cradle and crucible of new modes of Christian thinking and acting. Mirrored in this shift are the political, social, economic and ecclesiastical changes which lie at the heart of the formation of modern western culture. The mainstream Reformation rejected the monastic impulse to withdraw from the world-but primarily on the basis of *theological*, not *social*, considerations (McGrath 1993: 221).

Following the Reformed tradition of refusing to withdraw from the world, Nkhoma Synod has been involved in medical practice and education as well as Gospel proclamation. This involvement began with the DRCM missionaries. The present researcher has concluded that Nkhoma Synod has maintained this commitment to minister to all needs by observing firsthand their schools and hospitals and by reading the primary sources that mandate this.

15.2.2 Question Two: What is the character of its polity?

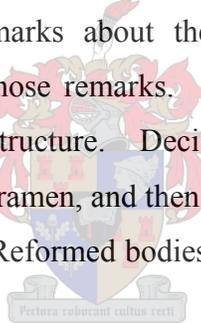
In other words, how is Nkhoma synod governed, and how consistent is that with Reformed tradition? To answer this, we must understand what that tradition is. While Presbyterians and Reformed churches are ruled by elders and hence not congregational, it

⁷³³ From Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian. Presbytery of Blantyre, Printed at the Mission Press, Blantyre, Nyasaland, 1932.

has always been an essentially bottom-to-top structure in the West. The people in the pews elect elders to represent them, in what is called the “church session”. In section 3.2, we examined the various levels of the “courts (governing bodies)” of the CCAP, and how they relate to one another. Sessions and presbyteries may pass “overtures” up to the General Assembly; much the same way, bills are introduced in Congress or Parliament. It is a model for representative democracy.

An extensive discussion of the polity of the Nkhoma Synod can be found in Chapter Three, “Administration and Personnel Issues.” It was here that the courts of the church, the session, the presbytery, and the Synod, are defined, in ascending order. The Synod is to have a Moderamen, consisting of the Moderator, Vice-Moderator, General Secretary, and Junior Clerk. There is also to be a Synodical Committee, consisting of the Moderamen plus one minister and one elder from each presbytery.

See also Chapter 4.5, “Church Officers and Congregational Life.” Here we took a look at Joda-Mbewe’s critical remarks about the offices of minister and General Secretary, and some responses to those remarks. It has been observed that Nkhoma Synod is a top-bottom authority structure. Decisions are made by the Synod, the Synodical Committee, and the Moderamen, and then handed down to the presbyteries and then to the congregations. In other Reformed bodies, initiatives most frequently begin at the level of the local session.



Closely related to this is the discussion on “The New (CCAP) Constitution” found in Chapter 12.3.2. From this, the reader will gain insight regarding the Church Order of the CCAP.

The U.S. government is patterned after Presbyterian polity because Presbyterians were largely responsible for the writing of the U.S. Constitution. The U.S. government has a series of “checks and balances”, in which power is divided among three branches, the legislative, the judicial, and the executive. No single branch should have too much power vested in it because of human sinfulness. This principle was applied to both governmental and ecclesiastical structures. For this reason, except in the case of the Reformed Church of Hungary, Presbyterianism has traditionally opposed rule by bishops.

The polity of the Nkhoma Synod, however, appears to be a modification of Reformed tradition. It often appears to be more of a top-to-bottom structure. There are

good reasons for this; the rank-and-file membership is largely illiterate. Representative democracy is still today only imperfectly understood in Malawi. The opportunities for corruption exist.

The Synod sends “directives” down to the congregations in a way that would never happen in the Presbyterian Church (USA). In one instance, when “Synod week” failed to produce the hoped-for income, the Synod “directed” the congregations to have Synod Week all over again. In the minutes of Synod meetings, there are few references to overtures that originated in local sessions or presbyteries. Along with the “Moderator”, most Presbyterian bodies will have a “Stated Clerk”. In the Nkhoma Synod, there is the Moderator and then there is the “General Secretary”.

How does this compare with the other synods of the CCAP? It was pointed out in section 4.5 that General Secretary Winston R. Kawale asserts that his office has less authority than his counterparts in other CCAP synods have. We saw in section 4.5 Joda-Mbewe’s criticism of the role of Nkhoma Synod’s General Secretary, comparing him to a “bishop”. This is a bit unfair, as the General Secretary is an elected office; bishops are appointed by higher bishops. However, one sees much authority vested in the Moderamen, of which the General Secretary is a member.

. In the CCAP the mbusa often resembles a village headman, and commands the respect due to one. The present researcher has observed the behaviour of Nkhoma Synod reverends enrolled at his college, and has listened to the reports of his students on this issue, and has blended these with the primary sources that he has read while doing his research. On the other hand, this study has shown that Nkhoma Synod has produced a large number of selfless ministers. They have voluntarily taken on a hard life for the cause of the Lord’s service.

15.2.3 Question Three: Has the Nkhoma Synod become a Three-Self church?

A three-self-church is one that is self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating. The basic idea was that eventually there would be established an indigenous church that needed no money, leadership, or personnel from the parent church.

To a large degree, Nkhoma Synod has achieved this. The one area in which there is a mixed record is in the area of finances. In the areas of governing itself and evangelisation, it has become quite effective.

The financial problem originates with the man and woman sitting in the pew. The present researcher has sat in services, even preached in them, and has observed what comes back in the basket at the end of the offering time. He has read the despair that is expressed in synodical reports regarding this topic. Time and again in this study, it has been demonstrated that both Nkhoma and DRC clergy have engaged in stewardship campaigns, imploring the people to give. Sometimes the Synod resorted to imposing set amounts upon congregations, which has generally met with mixed results at best. Not only does the Synod budget suffer, but work at the congregational level languishes as well. Ministers, like their colleagues in the public schools and the civil service, go for extended periods of time without being paid, and this has been reported by ministers to the present researcher. Ministries are discontinued, and necessary repairs to buildings are not made. More often than not, due to the extreme poverty in the nation, Presbyterians in Malawi often exist at the subsistence level. Parents lose babies because they could not afford to go to the clinic, miles away. HIV/AIDS remains a continuing threat to the church and its future due to the dramatic and multifaceted consequences of this disease. It is difficult to build up a surplus when culture requires open-handedness when a relative is in need. Because of these economic and cultural realities, it will be difficult for the Nkhoma Synod, along with other African churches, to achieve self-reliance, perhaps for generations to come.

It is the position of this present researcher that inability to be fully self-supporting does not preclude being self-governing or self-propagating. This is because he has seen what the people and the ministers have been able to do in spite of financial constraints. What Nkhoma Synod has demonstrated is that a church can still be seen as a viable, mature church even in the face of large infusions of external aid. Perhaps the concept of the “Three-Self Church” has become less meaningful today.

A Malawian Roman Catholic writer, Patrick Kalilombe, seems to feel that the donors themselves are intentionally perpetuating the situation (2002: 2-17).

External aid is always a double-edged sword: it can help the needy out of their predicament only to entrap them in their poverty and powerlessness perpetually. This is clear in the context of the present system of globalisation. Donors may be tempted to use their donation as a means of controlling the recipients. Usually, there are conditions attached to the aid; first, the donors designate the projects or programmes they are prepared to fund, they also retain the right to monitor their use, so that they can stop assisting at any time. This empowers the donors to direct and control the projects. If they wanted the beneficiaries to be self-sufficient, they would not encourage programmes that entrench dependence.

Nkhoma Synod continues to give a high priority to evangelism. Through interviews, reading the minutes of meetings, and through personal interaction with Nkhoma Synod people, the present researcher is unable to escape this conclusion. Indeed, it is easy to understand that that no one can reach a Malawian with the Gospel the way that another Malawian can. The Synod between 1962 and 2002 posted growth that is totally unthinkable in the West. In 1963 it had 76,000 members; in 2003 it has grown more than five fold. At about the same time the Presbyterian Church USA dropped more than 40% of its membership, from 4.2 million down to 2.4 million. Nkhoma Synod accomplished this largely on its own, with only a relative handful of ordained ministers. The Synod has a serious outreach to Muslims (in spite of the fact that the country had a Muslim president for ten years) and a missionary presence in neighbouring Mozambique. Again, the bleak financial picture hampers these important ministries; but nonetheless, they continue.

This leads to consideration of Hypothesis Two: that Nkhoma synod has come full-circle from being a mission church to being a missionizing church. Here the answer must be, continued expatriate missionary presence notwithstanding, an unqualified “Yes”. Chapter nine revealed a vigorous, continuing missions thrust to Mozambique and even involvement with Chichewa -language congregations in South Africa. The effectiveness of its missionaries, who do not require as much language school and time to get acclimated, cannot be measured in monetary terms. In addition to reading the records of meetings regarding missions, the present researcher has interacted with Nkhoma Synod people concerned with this endeavour, and has personally visited their site at Chia in Mozambique several times.

The question arises, “Does Nkhoma Synod regard the Johannesburg extension as a mission thrust or as a matter of ecclesiastical expansionism?” Whichever is the case, we have seen how CCAP General Secretary YA Chienda has suggested (or is aware of) a proposal to rotate a presiding minister from the Malawi synods for these congregations (see section 9.3, “The South African Extension”)

15.2.4 Question Four: What is the relationship between the Synod and the Dutch Reformed Church personnel from South Africa?

The study has revealed that the Synod continues to have a welcoming attitude toward South African missionaries, even expressing the wish that more would come. It was demonstrated how they regretted that the trend seems to be going in the way of short-term rather than long-term missionaries. This trend is not confined to South Africa, but can be seen in American missions as well. The Synod’s regret is understandable; there is no substitute for the man or woman who has dedicated his or her life to learning a language and a culture so that he or she may transmit the Gospel of Jesus Christ to that culture. In any case, the 2003 Partnership Agreement emphatically affirmed the special relationship between these two denominations.

It would difficult to overemphasize the significance of that 2003 Partnership Agreement (see section 13.3, “From ‘Deed of Agreement’ to ‘Partnership Agreement.’”) Among its important points was the fact that it now included other South African churches, reflecting a reunion of denominations in that country. It also spelled out the obligations, viz: Nkhoma Synod was to demonstrate accountability for all monies received and send evaluations of personnel sent from South Africa, while the South African partners (Commission for Witness) were to pay for all of the expenses for the personnel they sent. It was shown that the South African partners wanted to broaden the nature of the “partnership” to something more than just “we give, you receive, and you set the terms by which we do so.” Nevertheless, significant movement is seen when one compares the current arrangement to the 1962 Deed of Agreement, which featured annual reports to Cape Town from the General Secretary, and a South African “Liaison Officer.”

In reading the successive ‘agreements’ and interviewing both Nkhoma Synod and DRC executives, the present researcher has learned that real movement has been achieved through the latest agreement document. The “Mother Church-Daughter Church” mentality has been dispelled, and this, in turn, is an important step in the development of Nkhoma Synod in its self-understanding of being a church.

Dr. Hennie van Deventer serves today as the principal of Nkhoma Institute for Continuing Theological Training (NIFCOTT). He and his wife have now been in Malawi for over twenty years. Hennie Smit and his wife Elsabet are also twenty-year veterans of Nkhoma Synod. Until quite recently, Rev. Dr. Ryk van Velden was a long-term missionary, operating chiefly in the capital city of Lilongwe. Although officially retired, Dr. Martin Pauw continues to make trips to Malawi, serving as Missions Secretary of the Commission for Witness in the Western Cape. The fact that these people have remained so long demonstrates unfeigned love for and commitment to the Synod. These men and women follow in the legacy of many dedicated DRC missionaries, beginning with Revs Murray and Vlok. Time and again, the Synod has expressed gratitude for the contributions of the DRC personnel. The present researcher has talked extensively with South African personnel in Malawi, has attended Bible studies with them, has had them in his home, and has read English translations of their *Nuusbrief Uit Malawi*. He knows of their dedication.

The traffic is not one-way. Malawian clergy and students are regular sights at the University of Stellenbosch. The present researcher has spoken with them as well, during visits to Stellenbosch. The relationship between the two churches will likely remain cordial and supportive.

15.2.5 Question Five: How does the Nkhoma Synod relate to the other synods of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian?

Recounting the difference in background between Nkhoma and the others should preface the answer. Scots missionaries, it will be remembered, founded Livingstonia (Free Church of Scotland) and Blantyre (Established Church of Scotland). Their spiritual homeland is English speaking Scotland, not Afrikaans speaking South Africa. These

synods reflect the influence of the progressive theology noted in today's Mainstream Protestantism more than is the case with Nkhoma.

One outcome of this is the role of women. Women are now being ordained in the Livingstonia and Blantyre synods; they are not in Nkhoma. This will potentially lead to awkwardness in inter-synodical relations, as demonstrated by the note of disapproval from the University of Malawi's Isabel Phiri. It remains to be seen how long the Nkhoma synod will resist pressure to change its policy regarding ordination of women. The present researcher, in his reading and in his speaking to appropriate authorities of the Synod, has concluded that to some extent they are rather ambivalent on this topic. The DRC in South Africa, like so many Reformed bodies around the world, has opened its doors to the ordination of women.

Another problem area occurs at Zomba Theological College. The other two synods seem to work happily with the Anglicans. In the study, it has been shown how Nkhoma maintains a certain reserve towards them, seeing them as being quasi-Catholic (although they did not hesitate to work with Catholics in Bible translation).

Between the Nkhoma Synod and the others there are differences in liturgy and canon law, for example there are different lengths in each for the catechuminate. Ministers from one synod cannot easily transfer to another. Nevertheless, they share a common history and common purpose; a General Synod unites them. Issues that are tearing denominations apart in the West (i.e. homosexuality) are non-issues here. No doubt, what they have in common will continue to outweigh whatever differences exist between them. The 2002 constitution emphasizes a common commitment to greater unity. In interviews with Nkhoma Synod and CCAP executives, the present researcher has sensed this commitment.

The creation of the 2002 constitution was indeed a major landmark event for Nkhoma Synod and for the whole CCAP (see section 12.3.2, "The New Constitution"). It was seen that while each synod is free to establish ecclesiastical relations with other churches, all the synods are to be uniform in liturgy, order of worship, and *Zolamulira* (rules and regulations). It spelt out the powers and responsibilities of the Trustees, as well as those of the General Assembly. The important Standing Committee has its duties outlined explicitly. It sets the conditions for being a church officer; it mandates

ordination for women without compelling Nkhoma Synod to do so. Article Twelve says that the General Assembly is to give general rules, with further details furnished by the synods. Perhaps of particular significance is Article Seventeen which determines the process by which amendments can be made to the constitution and to the book of order. Again, the emphasis, and purpose, of the new constitution is to establish greater unity amongst the synods of the CCAP.

The present researcher, in reading both the old and new constitutions, and in interviews with Nkhoma Synod executives, has come to the conclusion that a true milestone has been reached in the government of Nkhoma Synod and of the CCAP as a whole. The outlook for genuine unity appears promising. However, synodical distinctions will probably remain.

15.2.6 Question Six: How has the Nkhoma Synod developed theologically and spiritually during the years included in this study (1962 – 2004)?

Again, some background information is required. According to the official statistics, Malawi is overwhelmingly Christian. A smaller percentage, perhaps less than twenty percent, are Muslim. On the surface, African Traditional Religion (ATR) has experienced a drastic decline over the last one hundred years.

Nevertheless, beneath the surface a different picture emerges. The study has revealed that the practice of witchcraft continues to be widespread. In Malawi, there is the often-repeated proverb, “Christianity in Africa is like a river that is two miles wide and two inches deep.” People commonly believe in the *mfiti* – someone who can turn into a hyena and then back into a human⁷³⁴.

The study has shown that the Nkhoma Synod takes no such placid view, rejecting polygamists even as catechumens (here it should be noted that though they are often found in the same cultural group, ATR and polygamy are actually separate issues). Many cases of church discipline were found involving members who had regressed into pre-Christian practices. Specific activities are denounced from Nkhoma pulpits, such as the practice of mothers placing charms upon their infant children to protect them from curses.

⁷³⁴ Different churches respond to traditional belief and practice in different ways. A Southern Baptist career missionary once told the present researcher (through a student acting as research assistant) that their policy is to preach the truth without denouncing these practices directly.

Nkhoma Synod has reacted negatively to the Charismatic Movement. Those in this movement are commonly referred to in Malawi as the “born-again”. While in other parts of the world, the term “born again” simply refers to any evangelical believer and thus has a broader application; here in Malawi it is reserved for Charismatics. Nkhoma Synod along with the rest of the CCAP has made it clear that it has no sympathy for this stream of Christianity. In the future, this is likely to cause Nkhoma problems in two ways. First, some members will likely leave to join Charismatic churches. Secondly, the Student Christian Organisation of Malawi (SCOM) heavily influences the young people. This organization has a definitely Charismatic tint to it, which was not the case in the beginning. In any case, those that stay in the CCAP will likely agitate for change in the years to come. In addition to reading Nkhoma Synod sources regarding the Charismatic issue, the present researcher is in constant touch with students from Nkhoma churches, and he concludes that there is a bit of a “generation gap” involved here.

One result of the anti-Charismatic feeling that dominates the CCAP is the launch of a breakaway group that calls itself the Presbyterian Church of Malawi (PCM). A congregation of this new denomination meets at the Kamuzu School of Nursing in Lilongwe⁷³⁵. In his research, the present researcher has investigated this development, and it is described in section 13.4.2, “The Challenge of the Charismatics.” He has concluded that the CCAP should not simply shrug off its existence.

Nkhoma Synod has in the same way rejected the Ecumenical movement, which is seen today in the World Council of Churches and other organizations (see section 13.5, “Relations With Ecumenical Bodies”). The Synod has shown in the study that it happily cooperates with Reformed bodies that are theologically conservative. The present researcher concludes that this is consistent with their confessional tradition (see section 14.2, “The Confessional Heritage of Nkhoma Synod”).

There is in the study section 4.5, “Church Officers and Congregational Life,” section 14.5, “Church Regulatory Issues,” and section 14.6, “*Zolamulira*.” These sections dealt with the questions of over-regulation and legalism. One can understand that a semi-literate villager, however, has needs that may be met by just that sort of “legalism”. Of

⁷³⁵ The present researcher attended a worship service there once; it proved to be a very different experience from the normal Nkhoma Synod worship.

course, as time goes on, and Malawian society changes, those needs will change. Nkhoma Synod must be prepared to receive the children of the villager; they will likely have a very different set of needs. The present researcher has read and has observed that the next generation tends to be more educated than the previous one, leading to a potential generational conflict. He concludes that the Synod must be ready to meet needs that involve more than “do’s and don’ts” sermons. These children will face complex ethical questions.

15.2.7 Question Seven: What part, if any, has Nkhoma Synod played in the political developments of the country since independence?

The British colonial administration may have restricted entry of religious groups into their territory, but in today’s Republic of Malawi, there is freedom of religion. This freedom of religion, however, is not without qualification.

During the first thirty years of independence, Malawi was a one-party state. Toward the end, it was becoming heavier handed. In the study, it has been shown how church and synod officials were dismissed, and missionaries deported, often for seemingly spurious reasons. During this era, the Nkhoma Synod generally took care not to incur the wrath of the state.

Until very recently Malawi has had a Muslim president. The government’s position is, preach whatever you like, but do not preach against anybody else’s religion. Even outreach to Muslims continues, but in a very unobtrusive way.

Historically, Reformed and Presbyterian churches have been at the forefront of rebelling against what they saw as tyrannical governments. In the seventeenth century Scottish minister and Westminster divine Samuel Rutherford wrote a book entitled *Lex Rex* (Law is King) and stated that the people have a right to use force to replace a government with another one that better reflects their will. An outcome of this was Charles I losing his head at the hands of irate Calvinists. It happened again in the next century when America rebelled against Britain and gained its independence. At the time, a member of the British Parliament was heard to mutter something about “that Presbyterian revolt in the colonies”. The Presbyterian contribution to the writing of the American constitution has already been mentioned. It goes without saying, however, that

a Malawian in the twenty-first century is something very different from a seventeenth century Englishman or an eighteenth century American. The people of Malawi are gentle and calm; this can be seen in the lack of violence that has characterized other African nations. The Synod's full participation in the Public affairs Committee, though a recent development, and its reinstatement into the Christian Council suggests to the present researcher a new spirit *vis-à-vis* the government.

Thus, the present researcher concludes that the answer to the first hypothesis, "Nkhoma Synod has become a prophetic church" is "Yes". He has seen how one South African minister was obliged to leave the country temporarily for making a political statement publicly. Nkhoma Synod has only recently confronted political authority the way the prophet Nathan confronted King David. It now does so, however, with boldness. A pastoral letter issued in connection with the 2004 presidential election criticised it as not being free and fair. The researcher has read the English version. The Synod exerts influence in at least three ways.

First of all, when it preaches the Gospel, this inevitably has an impact on national affairs. Governments much more restrictive than Malawi's have been brought down by this.

Secondly, ministers can denounce injustice and abuse of power from the pulpit and call on members to take specific action. One remembers the "Pastoral Letters" issued by Nkhoma Synod in recent years. We have seen how one minister called on his congregation to vote for godly candidates and this resulted in a church burning, but the present government usually does not post spies to monitor what is said in church.

Thirdly, the Nkhoma Synod is still engaged in education, though this dimension is somewhat diminished today. The researcher, however, is aware from interviews that the Synod has big plans on the boards for greater involvement in education. An educated membership must inevitably have an impact upon national affairs.

If, then the answers to the questions asked in the two hypotheses are both "Yes" – Nkhoma Synod has developed into a prophetic church as well as a missionizing one, what then is it? How does it gain its "self-understanding of being a church?"

First of all, what is a church? According to Leonardo Boff (1986:11):

The church comes into being as church when people become aware of the call to salvation in Jesus Christ, come together in community profess the same faith, celebrate the same eschatological liberation, and seek to live the discipleship of Jesus Christ. We can speak of church in the proper sense only when there is question of this ecclesial consciousness. Hence the crucial importance of explicit Christian motivation. We are united and we pursue our social objectives of liberation because we react to the call of Christ, and the call of other communities that transmit his call to us and that have preceded us in the living experience of this same community faith. We can speak of a church community, therefore, only when a given community has this explicit religious and Christian character. Otherwise it will be some other kind of community, however it may actualize the same values as the church pursues. For an authentic, contemplative Christian, this other community indeed verifies the essential definition of church in its ontic reality. But the presence of the ontic ecclesial reality is not enough. In order formally to be church, the consciousness of this reality must be there, the profession of explicit faith in Jesus Christ who died and was raised again.

Then there is the Reformed definition of a church, going back to John Calvin. According to this tradition, a true church is one in which the Word is preached, the Sacraments are rightly administered, and discipline is maintained (Calvin 1060: 1023).

In the Nkhoma Synod, there is a clear witness to its Lord, and an understanding of itself as a body united in a particular set of doctrine. It has a consciousness of itself as being a united body of disciples that today is largely unknown in the United States, where often faith is just one compartment among several. The researcher has concluded that faith permeates the entire existence of the Malawian Christian.

Secondly, what are some characteristics of a Reformed church?

Reformation pastoral theology emphasized the office of the minister (at the same time, however, it rejected clericalism and proclaimed the doctrine of “the priesthood of the believer”). There was a shift in accents. The new stress on justification by faith switched the emphasis to the proclamation of the Word.

Likewise, the role of the clergy was toned down because of the new accent this renewal movement placed on the general priesthood of the believers. This was particularly true of the Lutheran tradition (Thurneysen 1957,261 [1962, 294-95]). Calvin and Bucer allowed for democratisation through a differentiation of the various church offices: lay leaders could be appointed as elders or deacons. The basic pastoral model was utilized in the division of Geneva into quarters, with elders in charge of home visitation and church discipline, and with deacons dealing with the social needs. Church discipline was especially important, as the jurisdiction was

shared by the church and the government (Plomp 1969). The church, through its diaconate, carried a heavy responsibility for the care of the poor, as well as of the sick and the needy. Calvin linked his tripartitioning with the threefold work of Christ: prophet (minister of the Word), priest (deacon), and king (elder). In addition, he mentioned in fourth place the office of the doctor (teacher of the church or professor of theology). This view on the offices within the church was adopted by the Dutch churches, where women were initially allowed to serve as deacons (Heitink 1999: 95).

The researcher has concluded that using both Boff's and Heitink's descriptions of a church are appropriate for describing Nkhoma Synod. The Nkhoma congregation, and the Synod itself, are consciously communities according to Boff's definition. At the same time, the Synod follows Calvin's model for church offices, as explained by Heitink.

This study has shown to the researcher how discipline is rigorously applied within Nkhoma Synod. Regarding the plurality of offices, the office of elder takes on an enhanced importance in Malawi, where there are so few ordained ministers. Thus, while in some ways the polity of Nkhoma Synod resembles the Episcopalian system with congregations receiving "directives," the researcher nevertheless concludes that there is a certain "democratisation" that occurs because of the necessary reliance upon lay elders.

And then thirdly, what are some characteristics of an African church?

Because of the social structure of African life, it is easy to understand God's plan for the local church. In Africa, a person's extended family and tribal community are the most important realities in his or her life. It is God's plan that the local church should become the most important community in the life of a Christian. It is the group of people who belong to each other as spiritual brothers and sisters, regardless of tribal or social connections, because they each belong to Christ as their Lord and Saviour. As the community of God's holy people, the members of the local church have a responsibility to care for one another. They also have the great privilege and responsibility to pray for themselves and for the world, and to live by the power of the Holy Spirit. By doing this, God will cause his will to be done on earth through their prayers and his glory to be seen in the world through their good works. No other community in the world has such a privilege or responsibility (O'Donovan 1996: 173-174).

Then there is the music. The present researcher has preached in Nkhoma Synod services in which he was obliged to introduce six or seven different choirs. All music from all groups was exclusively indigenous. One popular song in the churches of Nkhoma Synod is "*Bayete Nkhosi*" (Salute the King). It contains the lyrics, "You are

crowned King of Africa.” In its worship, the researcher has found that Nkhoma Synod is joyfully African.

In the course of doing research, the study uncovered a number of “challenges’ that now face Nkhoma Synod. These, in turn, have an enormous relevance to the research question, “How has Nkhoma Synod developed its self-understanding of being a church since 1962?”

The first was discussed in section 3.3, “The Financial Challenges of Autonomy”. Quite simply, the researcher has found that the Synod is unable to support itself without significant outside help. This is particularly true of certain departments, such as the Medical and Relief and Development Departments. This is not peculiar to Nkhoma Synod, but it is a problem that must eventually be corrected. The problem is not that the Western Christians are growing unwilling to help. The problem is that Western Christianity is itself receding. For example, one of the CCAP’s “partners” is the PCUSA. Since the 1960s, this denomination has lost nearly half of its membership. This is a well-publicized fact, available from many sources, such as the Internet. Other Western bodies have experienced similar, if not quite as drastic, declines. Therefore, the researcher feels that it is essential that Nkhoma Synod develops other strategies for survival besides receiving aid from donors.

The next “challenge” was discussed in section 3.5.2, “The Challenge of Women in a New Role”. Even the highest denominational executives in Nkhoma Synod and the CCAP are expressing sympathy –to the researcher- for the cause of women as church officers and ministers, and some are becoming quite vocal about it. Very likely, the urban congregations of Lilongwe will accept this concept much faster than will the village members. Village people hold on to traditions until forced to change. A majority of the people still live in those villages, although the educated, influential people tend to live in town. The question then becomes: How to reconcile both components?

In section 5.8 we dealt with the “Challenge of Multi-Faith Religious Education”. This is part of a wider problem, the secularisation of public schools. The recession of Christianity in the West has already been noted; generations subjected to secular education are a likely major cause. Throughout much of its history, Nkhoma Synod has

extended its influence through the educational process. The question then becomes: How can Nkhoma Synod develop youth programmes that will offset this secularising trend?

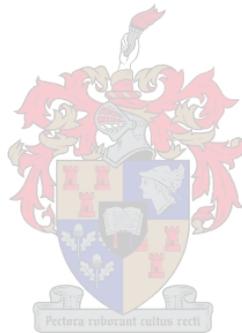
“The Challenge of HIV/AIDS” was the topic of section 7.4. The researcher has determined that this is a continuing crisis for several reasons. It chokes off economic growth, which perpetuates poverty, which prevents Nkhoma Synod from achieving greater financial independence. It cuts into church growth because church members, their children, and potential converts are dead. Ministers must spend their time conducting funerals and have much less time for other activities. Here the Church faces two questions. The first is, ‘How can the Church promote Biblical standards of behaviour that will minimise the devastating effects of AIDS?’ The second question is, “How does the Church respond as Christ’s representative, to those effected and affected by AIDS?”

“The Challenge of the AICs (section 13.5.1)” and “The Challenge of the Charismatics (section 13.5.2)” should probably be combined for the sake of discussion. The researcher has seen that these groups continue to attract people, particularly among the young; he has seen that youth and young adults are less likely to stay with the church of their parents if that church is seen as too rigid. The question for Nkhoma Synod then becomes; “How to balance needed flexibility and yet retain our essential identity?”

Finally, there was section 4.4, “The Challenge of Traditional Belief”. This is not restricted to village “prayer houses”. It has been shown how Lingadzi CCAP in Lilongwe, the church known for its makeup of professional people, has had to discipline members for engaging in traditional practices, according to an interview between the pastor and the researcher. In the West, many Christians have trouble dealing with realities that do not lend themselves to empirical study. Perhaps here the question then becomes: “How do we as a Church deal with the issue of traditional belief and practice without making the mistakes of the West?”

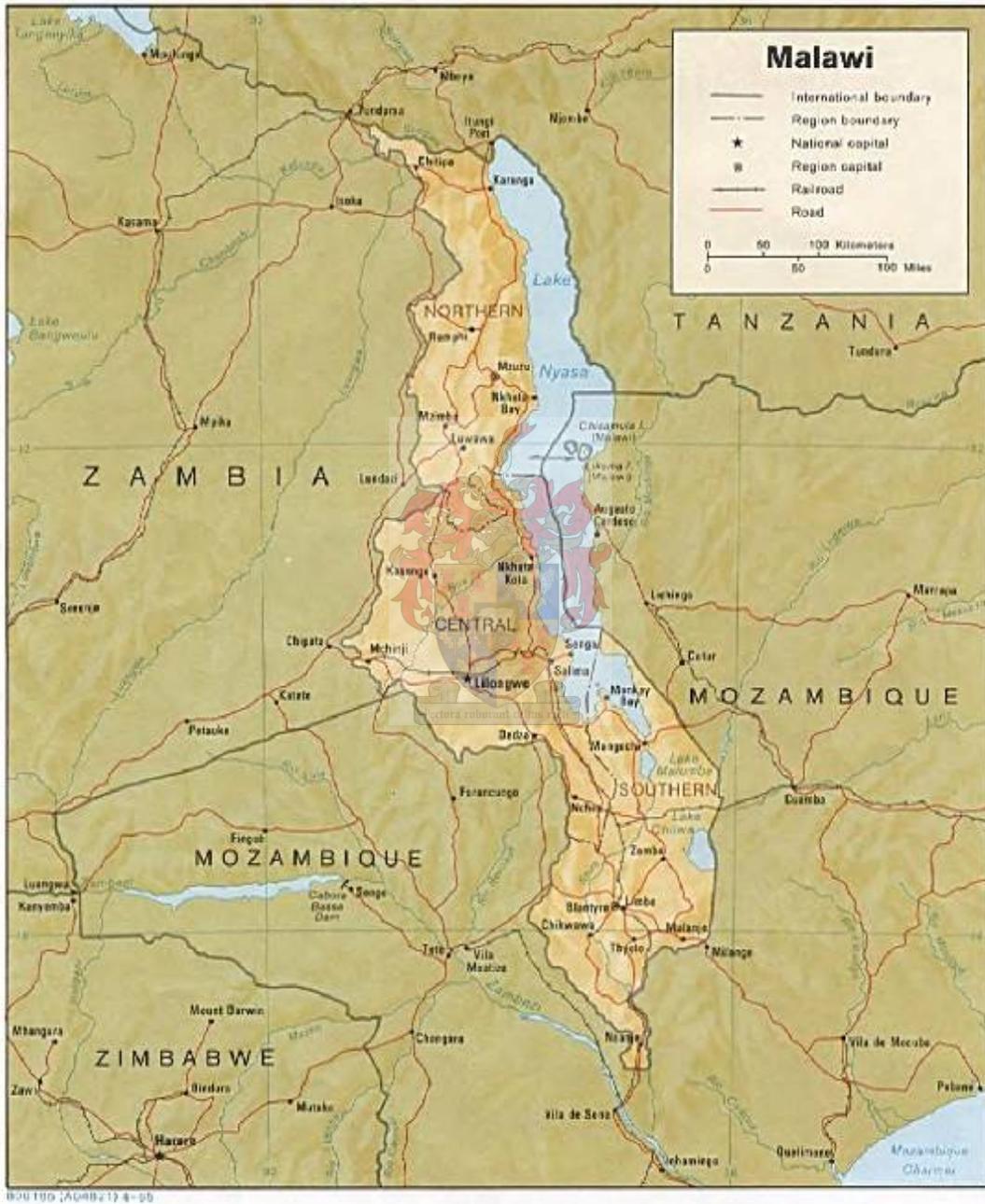
In section 4.6 (“Forty Years of Growth”), a growth rate that would be seen as phenomenal in the West was shown. Using that parameter, Nkhoma Synod is a resounding success. Its clergy is continuing to upgrade their level of education. Lay leader training continues. Nkhoma Synod has developed an awareness of being the Body of Christ, a community of believers who worship Jesus and which proclaims the Gospel message.

In the final analysis, the researcher, based upon his study, concludes that Nkhoma Synod is consciously Reformed, with its emphasis on the Word, Sacraments, and Discipline. It sees itself as an integral part of the broader Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, and indeed the worldwide Reformed community, without forsaking its traditional alliance with DRC family of churches in South Africa.



Appendix

A MAP OF MALAWI



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