



# Revisiting the relevant History of Livingstonia Mission and its Subsequent Synod Developments in reformed church perspective

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## Abstract

This study will revisit the relevant history of the Livingstonia Mission and its subsequent Synod developments in Malawi beginning from the early years to present day in 2022. The history of the Livingstonia Mission was written in a European Missionary perspective, there was therefore need to revisit the relevant data in African reformed perspective. Mission history, with reference to the study of Christianity in Africa requires this new approach to mission historiography, “a more honest and more critical review of the theoretical and socio-theological assumptions out of which the African church as it is today, in its fragmented state, has been formed” (Maluleke, 1989:103). The study used a descriptive and interdisciplinary methodology approaches to understand research work. The aim of the study was to investigate, scrutinize and chronologically revisit and analyse the relevant history of the Livingstonia Mission and the subsequent Synod beginning from the early years of its *Missio- Dei* establishment in the reformed church perspective.

**Keywords:** Livingstonia Mission, Church of Scotland, Missions, *Missio Dei*, Calvinism, Presbyterian, hierarchical, reformed church polity.

## Introduction

The study will chronologically revisit the relevant history of Livingstonia Mission from the Church of Scotland, the establishment of the Livingstonia Mission and subsequent synod and the evaluation and analysis of relevant developments in the Livingstonia Synod in Malawi. The history of the CCAP Livingstonia Mission can be a certain type of memory that evokes liberative power, not mere knowledge of the past, but one that is of commitment (Duncan, 2004:1f). Historical records show that many parts of Europe experienced a spiritual revival known as the Evangelical Movement which emphasized preaching and prayer in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century (Ross & Fiedler, 2020:27). The movement brought many young people to experience personal faith in Jesus Christ. The spiritual reformation shaped young men and women in the Highlands in Scotland which had far reaching consequences for missionary work (Ross, 2019:253).

The Evangelical Revival Movement experience conditioned mission-minded Scots such as David Livingstone to prepare for long period missionary endeavours (Ross & Fiedler, 2020:27). Therefore, the aim of the study is to investigate the original roots of the Livingstonia Mission from the Church of Scotland, the establishment of the Livingstonia Mission and its subsequent Synod,



ecumenical unity and relevant developments for the Livingstonia Mission, evaluation and analysis of relevant developments in the Livingstonia Mission in Malawi in the reformed church perspective.

## **The original roots of Livingstonia Mission from the Church of Scotland**

### **Calvinism in the Church of Scotland**

The original roots of the history of the Livingstonia Mission comes from the Church of Scotland, a product of the 16th century Reformation, which was built on Calvinistic theology and reformation (Mapala, 2016:62). Calvinism was created explicitly by John Calvin (1536:39) in his writings, with emphasis on the Sovereignty and Holiness of God, predestination, atonement, the church and many more doctrines further elaborated in the latter part of 16<sup>th</sup> Century. Calvinistic theology was summarized in the Canons of the Council of Dort 1618/19 in what are commonly known as the “Five points of Calvinism” namely: total depravity of man, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace and perseverance of the saints (Calvin, 1536:111). The Reformed Confessions were drawn up after the Council of Dot 1618/19, to express Calvinistic doctrines which include the Nicene Creed, the Apostles Creed, the Westminster Confession of Faith, Heidelberg Catechism, the Larger Catechism, the Shorter Catechism, although they set them in the much wider context of God's Sovereignty, and His Kingdom rule through Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church. Everything belongs to God. God governs in Christ over the entire cosmos (Calvin in Smit, 2013:133f). The Kingdom of God includes all forms of authority and governance: the differences in the government of different institutions are all under the authority of Christ given to Him in heaven and on earth (Smit, 2013: 135f, Matthew 28:18, Zgambo, 2018:89f).

Originating in Geneva and France, Calvinism gradually spread to counter and reform Roman Catholicism along the Rhine Valley to Germany and Holland, along the Danube River Valley to Hungary and Transylvania and across the Alps into France, shaping and forming the Calvinistic Reformation as it took place in various countries. From France and from Holland, Calvinism soon spread to England and then to Scotland (Zgambo, 2018:89f). Walls (in Ross, 2019:253) argue that the early Scottish engagement in overseas mission was influenced by the experience of evangelism in the Gaelic speaking Highlands in Scotland. The evangelistic reformation was an experience pursued with energy from 1709 by the Society in Scotland for Promoting Christian Knowledge (PCK). Its strategy had a strong educational basis and it opened 229 schools in the Highlands and Islands in the course of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. Along with this initiative went the evangelical preaching and the translation of the Bible and other key Christian texts into Gaelic language. The result was a revival movement in the Highlands during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century that had far reaching effects. The revival experience conditioned mission-minded Scots to be prepared for a long period of ‘sowing’ before looking for the ‘time of harvest’ (Ross, 2019:253).

### **Schisms in the Church of Scotland**

Consequently, within the period of 114 years, the Church of Scotland had three major schisms (Mapala, 2016:62). The first schism happened in 1733 when some left the Church to form another church. However, after sometime, most of the ministers returned back. In 1761 another group of church ministers broke away from the Church of Scotland, and later in 1847 formed the United Presbyterian Church (UPC) of which Dr Robert Laws was a member until 1900 (Mapala, 2016:62). Subsequently, the critical schism occurred in 1843, which is technically called the Disruption, in which almost half of the members walked out of the Church of Scotland as a means of protest against intolerable and unbearable government interference into ecclesiastical matters. This



group formed the Free Church of Scotland (FCS) in 1843 from which the Livingstonia Mission's roots came.

However, the schisms were politically motivated rather than being theological in orientation (Mapala, 2016:62). The crucial part of this schism was that three quarters of church ministers left the Church. The members who remained in the Church renamed it the "Established Church of Scotland" (ECS) because it was following the established principle. In 1900, the Free Church of Scotland (FCS) amalgamated with the "United Presbyterian Church" to form the United Free Church of Scotland (UFCS), which, later in 1929, the church re-joined with the Established Church of Scotland (ECS) to form the "Church of Scotland" as it stands to this day (Mapala, 2016:63).

### **Dr. David Livingstone and Missions**

David Livingstone was born and brought up at a small town called "Blantyre" in Scotland in 1813; his family originally came from a rural area in the Highlands in industrial Lanarkshire (Ross & Fiedler, 2020:23). Having come to faith in Christ as a young man through the influence of the Evangelical Revival, he trained as a medical doctor and enlisted with the London Missionary Society (LMS). Prevented from serving in China, then regarded as the pre-eminent mission field, he went to South Africa (Ross & Fiedler, 2020:23). He soon adopted the pro-African approach to *Missio-Dei*, Missions or missionary enterprise which had marked out the early involvement of the London Missionary Society (LMS). This chimed with the determination to eradicate slavery that had imbibed from the Evangelical Revival leaders such as William Wilberforce the leader of the movement to abolish the slave trade, and Thomas Buxton (Ross & Fiedler, 2020:23-24). Through their influence Livingstone had come to Africa convinced that the introduction of Christianity and commerce held the key to the elimination of the inhuman slave trade. He came as a seasoned missionary with almost 20 years of African experience behind him. Livingstone was a deeply convinced Christian with a vision for the future of the country that included the growth of an indigenous church (Ross & Fiedler, 2020:23-24).

During his early years in Africa Livingstone learned the Sichuana language which honed his skills as a linguist and gave him a lasting appreciation of the richness and subtlety of the Bantu languages (Ross & Fiedler, 2020:24). Initially based at Kuruman in the Transvaal where Robert and Mary Moffatt had established a famous mission station, his thoughts were soon occupied by the unexplored territory to the north. Having married the Moffatt's daughter Mary, in 1845 he set up home in Kolobeng, not far from Gaborone in Botswana. From here Livingstone made contact with the Makololo, a Zulu splinter group who had settled on the Upper Zambezi due to the Mfecane (Ross & Fiedler, 2020:24). Both in the trans-African trek which took him and his Makololo companions to Luanda on the west coast (and back) and in his final journeys searching for the source of the Nile in Tanzania and Zambia, Livingstone spent many months entirely in African company. Andrew C. Ross (2010:736) on David Livingstone's biographer writes: "It is striking that Livingstone's relationships with fellow Europeans were often stormy while his friendships with Africans were marked by a remarkable degree of affection and loyalty."

This gave him closeness to African community life, and an appreciation of its qualities which would become rarer in the later colonial era in Africa and reinforced the ant-racism which he had developed in his early days in South Africa (Ross & Fiedler, 2020:24). Livingstone related to Africans with sympathy and fellow-feeling which were distinct at the time and set a tone that would be influential in Malawi for generations to come. Above all, his approach to missionary work was marked by confidence in integrity and strength of African life and culture, not least when it came to the reception of the Christian faith (Ross & Fiedler, 2020:25). His early missionary experience amongst the Tswana led him to the conviction that they were not bereft of knowledge of God, a



concept of the afterlife and a moral conscience. Livingstone also became deeply interested in traditional African methods of healing (Ross & Fiedler, 2020:25).

Mapala (2016:44) holds that the history of Christianity in Malawi, Zambia, Tanzania and elsewhere in Africa cannot be complete without making reference to David Livingstone, the great Scottish explorer. Before 1861, James Stewart, as a theological student at the University of Edinburgh, is quoted by W.P. Livingstone as having urged the Free Church of Scotland to send missionaries to the Lake region. James Stewart said: "We are willing to go out and begin a mission somewhere in the countries opened by Dr Livingstone. We ask you to send us."

Later, Dr David Livingstone, while in company with Stewart to Africa, is quoted in W.P. Livingstone as having stated, "I am glad you have come, come up and see the country for yourself" (McCracken, 1977:54, 57ff). Upon his arrival in Malawi, however, Stewart was not impressed with what he found and decided not to continue with his ambition to start a mission (McCracken, 1977:54, 57).

Consequently, Bishop Charles Mackenzie and some companions from Oxford, Cambridge, Durham, and Dublin University, followed Livingstone to establish the Universities Mission to Central Africa (UMCA), the Anglican Church at Magomero in Chiradzulu, Malawi in 1861. Upon arrival, they soon experienced tragic losses of the leader, Bishop Mackenzie and others who died due to the inhospitable conditions posed by malaria. The rest of the missionaries left the area and headed for a safer place namely the island of Zanzibar. However, David Livingstone, as not only the first symbol of British power, but also a pathfinder for the British missionaries to this part of Africa continued with missionary endeavours (Pike, 1968:70).

After becoming famous for his exploratory journeys in Africa, Livingstone persuaded the British Government to sponsor an expedition that would aim to introduce "commerce, civilization, and Christianity to the Zambezi region. Livingstone's guiding concept was to use the great rivers and lakes of Southern Africa to develop trade and introduce modern infrastructure (Ross & Fiedler, 2020:26). This he believed could unlock the potential of Southern Africa to prosper in the global economy and break the stranglehold of the slave trade. His consular appointment from the British Government led to him being criticized for having apparently abandoned his missionary vocation.

However, in his mind he was always a missionary, personally devout and ever ready to speak of his faith, making ready the path for Christianity to reach the interior of Africa (Ross & Fiedler, 2020:27). Livingstone once wrote: "God had an only Son, and he was a missionary and a physician. A poor, poor imitation of Him I am. Or wish to be ....In this service I hope to live, in it I wish to die" (Ross & Fiedler, 2020:27).

Later in 1862, Dr James Stewart accompanied Dr David Livingstone in search of the place in Central Africa where the Free Church of Scotland could commence with mission work along the Lake Malawi region. In 1879, the Universities Mission to Central Africa (UMCA-the Anglican Church) returned to work among the Yao at Malindi and Mponda in Mangochi in the Southern Region of Malawi. Later, they established their headquarters at Likoma at Lake Malawi in the Northern Region (Sundkler & Steed, 2000: 469-70).

### **Rev. Dr James Stewart and Missions**

Rev. Dr James Stewart was the person who initiated missionary work that developed into the establishment of the Livingstonia Mission (McCracken, 1977:54-57). He originally came from Scotland and settled at Lovedale Mission in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. It was the Free



Church of Scotland (FCS) which established the Livingstonia Mission under the influence of James Stewart, the Principal of Lovedale Institution in South Africa (Ross & Fiedler, 2020:38-39). It all began at the funeral of David Livingstone in 1873, the great Scottish explorer; Stewart's previous ambition was reinvigorated. After attending the funeral of Livingstone in Westminster Abbey, Rev. Dr Stewart felt strongly that launching a mission in Central Africa in memory of Livingstone was imperative and on April 18, 1874, the indelible impression fired up his enthusiasm.

Financial backing was offered mainly by some Glasgow-based industrialists and businessmen who provided a committed support base for Livingstone during its early decades, to the extent that they formed the effective governing body with the Free Church Foreign Mission Committee invariably ratifying their decisions (Ross & Fiedler, 2020:38-39). Just as the Universities Mission to Central Africa (UMCA) later called Anglican traces its origin from the speech made by David Livingstone. The Livingstonia Mission also traced its origin from the speech made by James Stewart to the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland (FCS) in 1874, after the burial of the great Scottish explorer Dr Livingstone at Westminster Abbey. James Stewart was deeply moved by the death of Livingstone. He then asked the General Assembly of Free Church of Scotland to reconsider sending missionaries to Malawi's lake region (McCracken, 1977:54-57).

Livingstonia Mission, from the onset, unlike any other mission, demonstrated that it was geared to fulfil Livingstone's vision and aspiration. Livingstone's vision was to introduce commerce to replace the horrible trade in human beings in slavery, civilisation and Christianity, what often is called the Three Cs: Commerce, Civilization and Christianity (Ross & Fiedler, 2020:25-27). The first crew of the Livingstonia Mission comprised well trained personnel ranging from the clergy, medical doctors, a carpenter, engineer and blacksmith, agriculturalists, marine, and businessmen. The Livingstonia Central African Company, which was later called the "African Lakes Company", was to champion commerce while the Mission was for civilization and Christianity (Pachai, 1973:88f).

According to Sundkler and Steed (2000:467-80, 795ff), the life, work and death of David Livingstone in 1873 inspired at least three Missionaries to begin their work in Malawi namely: the Church of Scotland, the Free Church of Scotland and the Universities Mission to Central Africa (UMCA), later called the Anglican Church from England. The Livingstonia Mission also traced its origin from the speech made by Dr James Stewart to the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland (FCS) in 1874, after the burial of the great Scottish explorer Dr Livingstone at Westminster Abbey. James Stewart was deeply moved by the death of Livingstone.

However, Stewart was greatly motivated by both the permanent withdrawal of the Universities Mission to Central Africa (UMCA) in 1863 from the area David Livingstone dedicated his life to, and the lack of interest shown at home by fellow Scots to pursue David Livingstone's dream. Stewart felt the Universities Mission to Central Africa (UMCA)'s withdrawal was a betrayal of the efforts of the patriotic Scot who served the people of God outside Europe.

He appealed to the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland (FCS) to support the noble cause. Rev Dr James Stewart passionately concluded his speech with the following words:

I would humbly suggest, as the truest memorial of Livingstone, the establishment by this church, or several churches together of an institution at once industrial and educational, to teach the truths of the gospel and the arts of civilized life to the natives of the country. Moreover, it shall be placed in a carefully selected and commanding spot in Central Africa, where from its position and capabilities it might grow into a town, and afterwards into a city, and become a great Centre of commerce, civilization and Christianity, and this I would



## call Livingstonia (Selfridge, 1976:19-20).**The establishment of the Livingstonia Mission and subsequent Synod**

### **Rev. Dr Robert Laws and Missions**

A young ordained medical doctor read the report of Stewart's speech in the newspaper and exclaimed, "There is the very thing I have been preparing for all my life!" When Rev. Dr Stewart met him later he thought, "There is the man for us!" His name was Rev. Dr Robert Laws, who was to spend over fifty years in Africa (Selfridge, 1976:20). By 21 May 1875, a pioneering party under the leadership of Edward D. Young, a Warrant Officer in the Royal Navy, veteran sailor, with experience of travelling with David Livingstone, left for Africa (Ross & Fiedler, 2020:38). Other members were Rev. Dr Robert Laws, a medical officer, John McFadyen, Allan Simpson, (engineers), George Johnston, (a carpenter) and William Baker, (a seaman) (McCracken, 1977:47-64). Henry Henderson who was sent by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland to find a suitable site for establishing a mission station also accompanied them (Selfridge, 1976:20).

On arrival in Cape Town, the party was joined by four men who originated in the Malawi area and had been previously freed by David Livingstone and Bishop Mackenzie in 1861 namely Lorenzo Johnston, Thomas Bokwito, Samuel Sambani and Frederick Zarakuti. By this time they had been educated at Lovedale Mission and were able to serve the fledgling mission as advisers, interpreters and managers (Ross & Fiedler, 2020:39). Other Africans were recruited by the Mission to assist with their journeys from the coast such as Joseph Bismarck, the son of an African planter from Quelimane, who later became an influential farmer and church leader in the Blantyre area. The party entered Malawi on a small steamer called the *Ilala*, named after the village in Zambia where David Livingstone had died. In the Lower Shire, they met the Makololo, Livingstone's old friends, who promised that they would send their children to the mission school (Ross & Fiedler, 2020:39). After some difficult travelling up the Zambezi River and over land, they reached the Shire River in Malawi, the country of their destination, and on 12 October 1875, they sailed onto Lake Malawi itself. Young called for the Old Hundredth (Psalm) to be sung in praise to the Lord their God. They eventually came to drop anchor at Cape Maclear: "Livingstonia is begun," wrote Laws, though at present a piece of canvas stretched between two trees is all that stands for the future city of that name" (McCracken, 2000:66).

### **Livingstonia Mission to the Yaoland**

On 12th October 1875, the Livingstonia Mission landed at its final destination in the area belonging to Chief Mponda, a Yao chief, which Dr Livingstone named as Cape Maclear after his friend Dr Maclear. Besides being a magnet for immigrants, the Livingstonia Mission also began to make its first tentative contacts with the Yao, Mang'anja, Ngoni and Chewa people who were living nearby. When they arrived at the Lake, they were joined by people like Albert Namalambe and James Brown Mvula who later played significant roles in the early development of the Livingstonia Mission (Ross & Fiedler, 2020:39).

In the following year, the Mission opened the first school. Despite the Livingstonia Mission starting mission activities in this area, the Yao chiefs, who were predominantly Muslims, did not allow their children to attend classes because they were suspicious that their children could be converted to Christianity. Instead, it was the redeemed slaves of the Mang'anja and the Makololo, former porters of Livingstone, who began attending classes. At that time Cape Maclear had been lightly populated, but the presence of the mission attracted growing numbers of people, rising to 590



after five years (Ross & Fiedler, 2020:40). The medium of instruction opted for by the missionaries possibly was Chinyanja, alongside English because the teachers were English speakers. Mr. E.D. Young stayed for a short time as a leader for the Mission. Then he was succeeded by James Stewart in 1876. At end of 1877, Stewart resigned as the leader for the Livingstonia Mission, and handed over the leadership to Dr. Laws at Cape Maclear in Mangochi (Shepherd, 1971:19-20).

The second group of missionaries led by Dr James Stewart of Lovedale arrived in 1876. This included four Xhosa Africans from the Eastern Cape namely: Shadrach Mngunana, Isaac Williams Wauchope, Mapasa Ntintili and William Koyi, all Lovedale graduates with a significant role to play in Livingstonia's early years (Shepperd, 1971:20). This allowed the mission to get fully into gear, working on the four tasks they had assigned themselves: evangelistic, educational, medical and industrial (which included agriculture). The medical work of Dr Laws quickly created a big impression. He was soon performing surgical operations with the use of chloroform, which caused much amazement Ross & Fiedler, 2020:41).

Laws enjoyed working partnership with his wife Margaret who did much of the work on the first translation of the New Testament into Chinyanja, which Dr Laws published in 1884 (Ross & Fiedler, 2020:41). The industrial side of the work got well underway, but things were slower with the educational dimension with regard to issues discipline. Shadrach Mngunana, one of the Lovedale missionaries did good work as a teacher which sadly ended with his death in 1877. The work continued, however, by 1881 there were 59 boys and 39 girls in the school. The most difficult aspect of the work was the evangelistic side. At first, there was no response to the gospel, until 1881 for the first baptism to take place. The baptismal candidate was Albert Namalambe, originally a slave who had been brought from the Lower Shire by the Makololo. He later became an inspiring teacher and was for many years head of station at Cape Maclear (Ross & Fiedler, 2020:41-42).

Poor health, deaths of missionaries such as Mngunana and William Black, a Scottish doctor and political difficulties caused Stewart and Laws to question whether Cape Maclear was the best base for their missionary work. The Cape was surrounded by the waters of the Lake and on the landward side the Yao communities were radically turning to Islam and were heavily involved in violence and slave trade (Ross & Fiedler, 2020:41-42).

However, Stewart returned to Lovedale in Eastern Cape, South Africa at the end of 1877, Laws was placed in charge of the Livingstonia Mission, a position he held until his retirement fifty years later in 1927 (Ross & Fiedler, 2020:42). It was Laws who in 1880 decided that the Livingstonia Mission should transfer its headquarters to Bandawe, a lakeshore centre near Nkhata Bay. With Yuraya Since 1878, the Livingstonia Mission had developed outposts at Bandawe and at Kaning'ina (where the city of Mzuzu later developed) and thus became aware of the potential for missionary work in Northern Malawi, Zambia, Tanzania, South Africa and elsewhere (Ross & Fiedler, 2020:42).

Consequently, Cape Maclear Mission Station was left in the hands of the first convert, Albert Namalambe, a Makololo by ethnicity. Namalambe was in charge of Cape Maclear Station until it was later handed over to the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) missionaries. It was Dr. Laws who became instrumental for the growth of the Mission, and to the formation and development of the CCAP. Dr. Laws remained the leader of the Livingstonia Mission until 1926 when he was forced to retire because of old age (Ross & Fiedler, 2020:42).



However, ninety years after its handover, the Nkhoma Synod still considered Cape Maclear to be a co-owned place with the Synod of Livingstonia, despite the fact that Cape Maclear was within the bounds of the Nkhoma Synod. One occasion the General Synod resolved to build the great historic monument around the Missionary graves at Cape Maclear with the responsibility shared among the four synods of the CCAP. The Dutch Reformed Church Mission (DRCM) later surrendered it to the General Assembly of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP). One occasion the General Synod resolved to build the great historic monument around the Missionary graves at Cape Maclear with the responsibility shared among the four synods of the CCAP. Unfortunately, Cape Maclear Mission Station historic place has been abandoned for a long time now. Unfortunately, Cape Maclear Mission Station historic place has been abandoned for a long time now.

### **Livingstonia Mission to Tongaland**

In search for a new place, the Livingstonia missionaries came into contact with many ethnic groups in Kasungu and other districts in the Northern Malawi as early as 1877. This led to the establishment of stations such as Kaning'ina, close to the Moyale Barracks in Mzuzu City and Bandawe Mission in 1878. Kaning'ina station bordered the Tonga areas of Lakeshore and the M'mbelwa Ngoni areas especially under Chiputula Nhlane, although it was later abandoned (Sundkler & Steed, 2000:472f)..

However, the evangelization mission to Tongaland proved successful. There was an overwhelming response from the lakeside Tonga which resulted in opening many congregations. The earlier "Christian village" evangelization approach at Bandawe had been abandoned, but was later replaced by evangelization of establishing schools in the Tonga villages (Sundkler & Steed, 2000:472f). The Tonga schools enrolled more than 1, 000 students in 1880s. Missionaries moved again from Bandawe to Kondowe in 1884, and Rev. Dr Robert Laws named the new mission site "Livingstonia." The hold of the traditional Tonga religion was very strong and the first converts did not appear until 1889. The chief who governed in Tonga land was Chief Mankhambira (Sundkler & Steed, 2000:472f). He was opposed to the establishment of churches in his area but when the Ngoni who had come from Mzimba invaded the land, Chief Mankhambira asked for military help from the missionaries, "an effective medicine" to defeat the Ngoni and to acquire new economic outlets: in return he would allow Christian churches in the Atonga land. The Atonga then welcomed the mission's employment on a "wages basis", and the opening of new vistas. It is generally accepted that the Tonga were spared extermination at the hands of the Ngoni by the arrival of the Livingstonia Mission and especially by Rev. Dr Robert Laws's personal influence on the Ngoni Chief Mbelwa of Mzimba (Sundkler & Steed, 2000:472f). **Livingstonia Mission to the Ngoniland**

Rev. Dr. Laws made his first visit to the Ngoni very early in September 1876. He first spoke to a village headman, but he never conceded to grant him an audience to meet Chief Mbelwa. Three months later the Mission sent William Koyi, the Xhosa evangelist from Lovedale, who managed to meet with the real paramount ruler Mbelwa. Here was an African leader from the Eastern Cape of Ngoni background, speaking the language of the Ngoni Chief. William Koyi moved warily, and did not even begin emphasizing the impending arrival of the white missionaries, but suggested that the king might need a school for the children (Sundkler & Steed, 2000:473-74f). A fortnight later Koyi returned to Chief Mbelwa, accompanied by Rev. Alexander Riddle who showed him the Bible and explained: "It was this that made our nation rich and powerful". The school was opened and Koyi was placed in charge of the school. The children liked their teacher and Chief Mbelwa



appreciated the advantage of having schools and missionaries in his kingdom, but only on condition that the Ngoni's would have a monopoly (Sundkler & Steed, 2000:473-74f).

In 1890, there were only 53 communicants in the whole mission, including the Cape Maclear outpost and Ngoniland. The outstanding pioneer missionaries in northern Malawi were Rev. Dr Laws; head of "Livingstonia Mission" and one of the great strategists of the centre who led the Mission for fifty years, his fellow Scottish partner was Rev. Dr. W A Elmslie, missionary to the Ngoni and the dynamic Donald Fraser who influenced both the Tonga and the Ngoni. Frequent mission expansions were also soon made among the Ngoni in Mzimba, Chewa in Kasungu, Tumbuka in Loudon and Ekwendeni. The Livingstonia Presbytery met for the first time annual general conference in 1889, marking the first step the church was taking towards self-sufficiency (Thompson, 1975:7f).

### **The Livingstonia Presbytery**

The Livingstonia Mission propagated Christianity and civilisation through evangelisation, education and industrial training. The Missionaries overcame language barrier through translation of English documents into the vernacular Tonga and Tumbuka. It is this arrangement that led to its success in its mission enterprise. According to Alexander Hetherwick, the subject of starting missionary work in the Lake Nyasa region was introduced to the both General Assemblies of the Established Church Scotland (ECS) and Free Church Scotland (FCS). Unlike the Established Church Scotland (ECS), the Free Church Scotland, which was missionary-minded, responded quickly to Stewart's call by forming a mission named after the Scottish explorer Livingstone (Munyenyembe, 2016:20f).

This Livingstonia Mission came to the Lake Nyasa (Malawi) region to start the work Livingstone wanted his countrymen to do after the withdrawal of the Universities Mission to Central Africa (UMCA). The name of the mission was linked to Dr Livingstone for symbolic purposes. This is one of the reasons for Chitambo area, where Livingstone's heart and intestines were buried, was reserved for the Livingstonia Mission during the comity agreement in Zambia, to retain Livingstonia's legacy and vision of the Three Cs, namely: Commerce, Civilization and Christianity (Ross & Fiedler, 2020:26-27).

In 1878, the following are some of the congregations opened by the Livingstonia Presbytery: Kaning'ina 1878 and Bandawe in 1878. Kaning'ina was under the leadership of Alexander Riddell. Kaning'ina station was located the south of the Matete River in City of Mzuzu. It was estimated at a distance of six to seven hours walking to Chiputula Nhlane village built between Mzuzu and Ekwendeni, and about 14 hours walking to Bandawe. Kaning'ina was later abandoned because of the raids the Ngoni and the Tonga waged on each other, and that the weather was hotter than Bandawe (Ross & Fiedler, 2020:37, 43-44).

Dr Laws and his wife transferred to Bandawe in 1881 as the head of the Mission, Bandawe became the new headquarters for the Livingstonia Mission, Njuyu in 1882 among the Ngoni of M'mbelwa, Ekwendeni in 1889, Ncherenje opened in 1883, Ncherenje was close to Mwenibanda village at Kapoka, Livingstonia in 1894 (Ross & Fiedler, 2020:48-51). It was situated to the east of Chitipa District headquarters, to serve the Lambya, Sukwa, Ndale, Nyiha, Nyika and Tumbuka people and Karonga Station was opened among the Nkhonde, Karonga Mission Station for the Nakyusa and Henga-Tumbuka people in 1885, in order to prevent the Roman Catholic missionaries from encroaching into the area. The Livingstonia Mission opened congregations at Hora in 1902, Loudon in 1902 (Ross & Fiedler, 2020:37-46, 50-51). The Livingstonia Mission opened congregations at Tamanda 1894, later handed over to Dutch Reformed Church in 1926,



Kasungu 1897 handed over to Dutch Reformed Church in 1923, Livulezi Station in 1887 handed over to Dutch Reformed Church in 1896 among the Ngoni of Chief Chikuse, in Ntcheu District in the Central Region bordering with Blantyre Mission in the Southern Region, as the South Livingstonia Presbytery while Kasungu District northward was referred to as the North Livingstonia Presbytery. In Zambia, the Livingstonia Mission opened congregations at Mwenzo in 1894, Chitheba, Chitambo in 1894, Lubwa in 1904, and Chisefu (Ross & Fiedler, 2020:37-46, 50-51).

In 1899, a Presbytery for the Presbyterian Church of Central Africa was formed by the Livingstonia Mission; it was also called 'Livingstonia Presbytery'. This presbytery was qualified as "North Livingstonia Presbytery" to distinguish it from the "South Livingstonia Presbytery", which comprised its southern stations including those recently opened and occupied by the Dutch Reformed Church missionaries, though in 1903 it retained its name as "Livingstonia Presbytery" (Sundkler & Steed, 2000:471ff).

### **The opening of the Overton Institute**

The result of the exceptional educational response from Tonga, Tumbuka and Ngoni, the Overton Institution was opened in the Livingstonia Mission in 1894. This school ensured "the continued pre-eminence of northern Nyasaland in the field of education." Overton Institute had an unashamedly British syllabus with 3 years of English language and literature, British and European history, philosophy, psychology, mathematics, ethics and sociology; students from this institution made prominence as African intellectuals in Southern Africa (Weller & Linden, 1984:114ff).

In 1906, the number of pupils had increased overwhelmingly from 107 to over 3 000 pupils (Pachai, 1973:21). According to Velsen (in Sundkler & Steed, 2000:472), Tongaland along the shores of Lake Malawi in Nkhata Bay was the scene of extraordinary educational enthusiasm, influencing a whole generation to accept modernization and development. Initial results in terms of church baptism and statistics were not impressive, though. McCracken (1977:75ff) contends that their education prepared them for the time when Africans would run their own affairs in the church and state as political leaders. This Protestant Livingstonia Mission sent their best men to Bemba in Zambia. In 1895, John Afwenge Mphonongo Banda, Chewa evangelist (father of Dr Hastings Banda, the first President of Malawi) began work at Mwenzo.

Having stayed there for many years during the First World War, he carried virtually all responsibility for mission work there. A decade later, a Tonga evangelist, David Kaunda (the father of Dr Kenneth Kaunda, the first President of Zambia), followed, building up the Chinsali station and guiding its rapid expansion. The Livingstonia Mission also sent African agents to other missions in the region: the South African General Mission (SAGM), the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), and the London Missionary Society (LMS, Weller & Linden, 1984:114ff).

According to the World Atlas of Christian Missions (1911:95), Southern Tanzania also received its share, with six teachers going to Moravian Rungwe and another six to the Berlin Lutherans at Ilembula. The "seeds" sown at the Overtoun Institution were blown all over East and Central Africa. In 1910, the Livingstonia Mission, with 12 ordained missionaries and 1,260 un-ordained African preachers, teachers and Bible women, had a Christian community of 13,000. The Livingstonia Mission remained the sole representative, if not agent of "Pax Britannica" (Sundkler & Steed, 2000:471f).

### **Ecumenical unity and relevant developments for the Livingstonia Mission**



Rev. David Clement Scott had suggested to Rev. Dr Robert Laws that there should be one ecumenically united church for British Central Africa and by early 1890s; the two Scottish Missionaries were beginning to explore the possibility of a United Presbyterian Church (UPC). In 1903, the Blantyre Presbytery again approached Livingstonia Presbytery with the same suggestion of church unity and proposed that the Creed, Constitution and Canons could be based on those of the Presbyterian Church in India (Weller & Linden, 1984:114ff).

The discussions on name, constitution, aims and objectives of the ecumenical unity of the Blantyre and Livingstonia Presbyteries continued in 1904. In the following years, further discussions were held before the United Missionary Conference at Mvera Mission in Nkhoma Presbytery. In 1914, the two “mother” churches in Scotland were to give permission and plans were made for the union of Livingstonia and Blantyre Presbyteries, but because of the outbreak of the First World War, all advances for unity were postponed since most of the Ministers were busy with Army chaplaincy duties.

### **The formation of the General Synod**

When the Great war ended in 1918, the Missionary Conference was re-arranged for 1924 and it was decided that the new church would come into being then. The Conference met in September 1924 at Livingstonia and formally constituted the Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian (CCAP) General Synod and Rev. Dr Robert Laws was elected as its first Moderator. The General Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) became the highest federation of the ecclesiastical court, although by that time the church had not yet received its autonomy from the Church of Scotland (Weller & Linden, 1984:114ff). They agreed that each Synod would remain unique and autonomous in its organization, decision-making and missionary enterprise in line with the practices and traditions of the “mother” church. This made the position of the General Synod in the CCAP questioned bringing bitter disputes on issues of authority, autonomy of synods and boundary between Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synods in the following decades.

However, in 1962, the three Synods of Blantyre, Livingstonia and Nkhoma decided to create a United Theological College for the training of the church ministers at Nkhoma Mission as a suitable central location. They named it Nyamuka Wala (Rise and Shine) with Rev. Stephen Kauta Msiska as the Principal in 1960s-1970s. In 1974, the United Nkhoma Theological College was closed for political reasons. It regrouped in 1978 and reopened in a new purpose-built premise in Zomba (Fauchelle, 1983:324f). Therefore, the General Assembly had become an ecumenical champion and uniting federation of the Presbyterian Churches in Central Africa (Munyenyembe, 2016:6, 20).

### **The Livingstonia Mission and its subsequent synod developments**

The Livingstonia Mission and its subsequent Synod developed by strong and visionary leadership from both Scotland and Malawi. Some of the relevant Livingstonia Mission and its subsequent Synod developments included the following:

#### **Outstanding leadership from Scotland**

The Livingstonia Mission developed by strong and visionary leadership for *Missio-Dei* from Scotland. The first crew for the development of the Livingstonia Mission and subsequent synod comprised of the following: Lieutenant E.D. Young, the leader of the expedition, George Johnston, the carpenter, Allan Simpson, the blacksmith, John Macfadyen, the engineer, Alexander Riddle, the agriculturalist, William Baker, the seaman, Robert Laws, the only clergy whom the Free Church Scotland (FCS) lent from the United Presbyterian Church(UPC), and Henry Henderson,



a member of the Established Church Scotland(ECS), whose primary task was to find a place where the Established Church Scotland (ECS) could start mission work in Malawi (Weller & Linden, 1984:114ff). Therefore, the Livingstonia Mission was established by effective and forward-looking leadership from Scotland for socio-economic development in line with the principles of the Scriptures and reformed church polity.

### **Outstanding leadership from Africa**

The Livingstonia Mission championed the development of leadership from within Africa for the future of the church and African society in line with the socio-political developments of the time (Ross & Fiedler, 2020:45-49). The first people to join the mission station were William Koyi, Albert Namalambe baptized in 1881 and James Brown Mvula baptized in 1882 at Cape Maclear respectively. Among other children who came to the early schools in the Bandawe area became leaders within the Livingstonia Mission included Yuraya Chatonda Chirwa, Edward Boti Manda, outstanding teacher and minister, David Kaunda, opened Lubwa congregation in Zambia and Yesaya Zerenji Mwasi became an influential church minister and social activist (Ross & Fiedler, 2020:45-49).

In 1890, Mawelera Tembo became the first Ngoni to be baptized, became a significant Christian leader and hymn writer. The Livingstonia Mission produced many outstanding, well-educated leaders who made their mark in Malawi and beyond such as the trade unionist Clements Kadalie in South Africa, the civil servant Ernest Alexander Muwamba, the politician and first President of the Nyasaland African Congress Levi Mumba and the critical thinker and church leader Charles Domingo (Ross & Fiedler, 2020:45-49). These men's outstanding competence in English, high level of education and determination equipped them to take leading roles in shaping the future of the country (Ross & Fiedler, 2020:45-49).

The Women's Guild called *Umanyano*, *Chikondi cha Wanakazi* or *Chovwirani cha Wanakazi* was first organized at Bandawe in 1939 (Mlenga, 2009:6-18). There had been groups in Karonga, Livingstonia, Ekwendeni, Bandawe, Loudon, and Chasefu. In 1940, Miss Alice Boyce submitted a report on the operations of the groups to the Livingstonia Presbytery. The Moderator, then Rev. Dr. W. Y. Turner received the report wholeheartedly and recommended that it should be adopted. The Livingstonia Presbytery meeting of 1941 decided that the *Umanyano*, be organised in all congregations of the presbytery. In 1956, Rev. Patrick Chaweya Mzembe became the first African Senior Clerk (now General Secretary) who served until 1978 (Ross & Fiedler, 2020:276). In 1978, Rev. Wedson Chibambo was appointed as the Livingstonia Synod's second General Secretary, followed by the recent past younger generation Moderators and General Secretaries such as Rev. Mazunda, Rev. Matiya Nkhoma, Rev. Chivwati Gondwe, Rev. William Manda, Rev. Henry Mvula, Rev. W. Mwale, and Rev. Timothy Nyasulu, Rev. Levi Nyondo, Rev. J. P.V. Mwale, Rev. William Tembo and many more church ministers.

### **The development of the vibrant Synod of Livingstonia**

In 1956, the Livingstonia Presbytery attained the status of Synod, it was known as the CCAP Synod of Livingstonia (Zeze, 2014:175ff). Over the century, the vibrant Livingstonia Synod proudly established 28 Presbyteries which include Bandawe, Champira, Chitipa, Dwangwa, Ekwendeni, Engalaweni, Euthini, Henga, Johannesburg, Jombo, Karonga, Lilongwe, Livingstonia, Loudon, Luwerezi, Milala, Misuku, Mapazi, Mzalangwe, Mzuzu, Ngerenge, Njuyu, Nkhata Bay, Rumphu and Wenya. In 2022, the Livingstonia Synod comprises over 180 congregations, 1000 prayer houses with 300,000 members in Central and Northern regions of Malawi, Tanzania and South Africa. The Synod has managed to build numerous primary and secondary schools, mission



hospitals, Technical Colleges, the University of Livingstonia, the Voice of Livingstonia Radio, the vibrant Departments of Youth, Education, Development, Lay Training Centre, Health, Early Childhood Development, Church and Society, Mission and Evangelism, Men's and Women's Guild Ministries. The Livingstonia Synod Offices are located in Mzuzu, Malawi. The current Moderator is Rev. Isaac M. Malongo and the General Secretary is Rev. William Tembo.

### **The analysis and evaluation of the relevant developments in the Livingstonia Mission in reformed church perspective**

In light of the discussion above, this study holds that the Church of Scotland from the very beginning based itself on the principles of Scriptures, Calvinistic tradition, and the Evangelical Revival Movement which emphasized preaching and prayer in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century (Ross & Fiedler, 2020:27). The subject of starting missionary work in the Lake Nyasa region was introduced to the both General Assemblies of the Established Church Scotland (ECS) and Free Church Scotland (FCS). Unlike the Established Church Scotland (ECS), the Free Church Scotland, which was missionary-minded, responded quickly to Stewart's call by forming a mission named after the Scottish explorer Livingstone (Munyenembe, 2016:20f). The Livingstonia Mission propagated Christianity and civilisation through evangelisation, education and industrial training through the establishment of the Overton Institute of Education and the Kondowe Mission Hospital. It is this arrangement that led to its successful history in its *Missio Dei* or mission enterprise. The research study will now evaluate and analyse relevant developments in the Livingstonia Mission in Malawi in the reformed church perspective. The following are some of research findings:

#### **Calvinism from the Church of Scotland**

The study established that the roots of Calvinism in the Livingstonia Mission came from the Church of Scotland, a product of the 16th century reformation built on Calvinistic theology and reformation (Mapala, 2016:62). Calvinism was made explicitly by John Calvin (1536:39) in his writings, with emphasis on the Sovereignty and Holiness of God, predestination, atonement, the church and many more doctrines further elaborated in the latter part of 16<sup>th</sup> Century. Calvinistic theology was summarized in the Canons of the Council of Dort 1618/19 in what are commonly known as the "Five points of Calvinism" namely: total depravity of man, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace and perseverance of the saints (Calvin, 1536:111). The Livingstonia Mission and other sister synods of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) ascribe to the Reformed Confessions drawn up after the historic Calvinistic formulations and doctrines such as the Nicene Creed, the Apostles Creed, the Westminster Confession of Faith, Heidelberg Catechism, the Larger Catechism, the Shorter Catechism and the Church's Confession of Faith of 1924, although they set them in the much wider context of God's Sovereignty, and His Kingdom rule through Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church (Zgambo, 2018:89f).

#### **Rev. Dr. James Stewart and the Livingstonia Mission**

The study established that Rev. Dr James Stewart was the person who initiated missionary work that developed into the establishment of the Livingstonia Mission. He originally came from Scotland and settled at Lovedale Mission in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. It was the Free Church of Scotland (FCS) which established the Livingstonia Mission under the influence of James Stewart, the Principal of Lovedale Institution in South Africa (McCracken, 1977:224). It all began at the funeral of the David Livingstone, the great Scottish explorer; Stewart's previous ambition was reinvigorated. After attending the funeral of Livingstone in Westminster Abbey, Rev.



Dr Stewart felt strongly that launching a mission in Central Africa in memory of Livingstone was imperative and on April 18, 1874, the indelible impression fired up his enthusiasm (McCracken, 1977:224).

### **Highly hierarchical and clerical system of church government**

The study established that the Livingstonia Mission developed a highly clerical and centralized system of church government. The church polity for the Livingstonia Mission was characterized by tendencies of “hierarchy” and “clericalism”. Ecclesiastical power in the church was expressed in the establishment of the all-white “Mission Council” influenced by the mother church in Scotland, the “first governing assembly”. The powerful ecclesiastical “Mission Council” was responsible to the Home Committee in Scotland. McCracken (1977:224) holds: “It is one of the ironies of Livingstonia Mission that a Presbyterian Free Church Mission should be organized on highly centralized autocratic lines. The Free Church of Scotland was a decentralized body with semi-autonomous parishes controlled by a minister supported and to some degree supervised, by a committee of lay elders.”

However, the Livingstonia Synod harboured strong tendencies toward hierarchy and clericalism, providing ministers with exclusive authority similar to the administration of the archbishop or bishop in prelacy church government. The matter of parity among minister, elder and deacon did not receive any consideration. Thompson (1995:178) quotes the remarks made by Rev. W. A. Elmslie in Livingstonia Synod who noted sharply about his African colleague: “He is an assistant to me, working under my supervision. He has no congregation of his own. He lives on the station with me and takes his work according to my guiding.”

The Livingstonia Synod Missionaries coming from the Liberal Free Church failed to practise the Reformed church polity and order of the sending “mother body” at home. Furthermore, Thompson (1995:178) and McCracken (1977:290) quote Donald Fraser who again sharply emphasized: “Our native pastors are not equal to European ministers.”

In the process, they felt out of their comfort zone to carry out the ministry of divide-and- rule even among the ethnic Tonga, Tumbuka and Nkhonde in the Northern Region in 1875. In the Reformed/Presbyterian church polity, the approach of government for operation of the church or presbytery is done through radical and leading judicatory, in which teaching and ruling presbyters or elders have committed to them the ministry of watching and caring for the whole flock of God (Hall & Hall, 1994:76).

### **The Livingstonia Mission and socio-economic development**

There had been a strong partnership in socio-economic development between the Livingstonia Mission and the Malawi Government. Consequently, the Livingstonia Mission runs various enterprises in education, health, and food security and relief development in all districts of Northern Malawi. The establishment of churches, schools and hospitals in rural areas has also greatly contributed to the growth of trading centres and industrialization in Malawi. In reformed church perspective, the Kingdom of God includes all forms of authority and governance: the differences in the government of different institutions are all under the authority of Christ given to Him in heaven and on earth (Smit, 2013: 135f, Matthew 28:18). Christ’s Sovereign authority encompasses the office, gift or *charismata* as service, the church and the state (Clowney, 1995:202). Everything belongs to God. God governs in Christ over the entire cosmos (Smit, 2013:133f). Therefore, the Livingstonia Mission had been characterised by a strong partnership



with the Malawi Government in socio-economic development in line with the principles of the Scriptures and reformed church polity.

### **Ecumenical unity and formation of the General Synod**

The study established that the Livingstonia and Blantyre Mission Presbyteries formed the General Synod in 1924, namely, the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) under one church body, as its highest decision-making assembly (Mapala, 2016:63). In 1926, the Nkhoma Mission of the Dutch Reformed Church from South Africa joined the General Synod. In 1929, both Livingstonia and Blantyre Missions governing bodies under European Missionaries amalgamated to form one umbrella, the Church of Scotland (Munyenyembe, 2016:20f). In the Church of Scotland, the Presbytery was confirmed as the basic juridical unit of teaching and ruling elders in the church government. Church-Ministers sometimes called teaching elders were considered as first, among equals and ruling elders as gifted superintendents in the governance of the church. They became members of the Presbytery and Synod by both their ordination and induction, through administration of Christ's sacraments, His Word and illumination of Spirit as maintained in the Scottish Presbyterian ecclesiology (Pachai, 1973:88).

### **Summary and conclusion**

The study chronologically revisited the original roots of the relevant history of Livingstonia Mission from the Church of Scotland, the establishment of the Livingstonia Mission and its subsequent synod, the evaluation and analysis of relevant developments in the Livingstonia Mission in Malawi in the reformed church perspective. The study established that historical records show that many parts of Europe experienced a spiritual revival known as the Evangelical movement which emphasized preaching and prayer in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The movement brought many young people to experience personal faith in Jesus Christ. The spiritual reformation shaped young men and women in the Highlands in Scotland which had far reaching consequences for missionary work. The Evangelical revival experience of conditioned mission-minded Scots like David Livingstone to be prepared for a long period of sowing seeds of the gospel before looking for the time of harvest (Ross, 2019:253).

The study established that the Livingstonia Mission and other sister synods of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) ascribe to the Reformed Confessions drawn up after the historic Calvinistic formulations and doctrines such as the Nicene Creed, the Apostles Creed, the Westminster Confession of Faith, Heidelberg Catechism, the Larger Catechism, the Shorter Catechism and the Church's Confession of Faith of 1924, although they set them in the much wider context of God's Sovereignty, and His Kingdom rule through Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church (Zgambo, 2018:89f). In conclusion, this study holds that the Church of Scotland from the very beginning of Livingstonia Mission based its enterprise on contemporary principles of Evangelistic Revival with emphasis on Dr. David Livingstone's vision of three-Cs: "Christianity, Civilization and Commerce". Therefore, this is an approach how the relevant history of the Livingstonia Mission and its subsequent Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) could be chronologically revisited beginning from the early years to the present in 2022 in reformed church perspective.

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