

## **Howard and Eleanor Taylor served in Malawi (in Blantyre and Zomba) from 1965 -1981.**

Much of Scotland lived under the legacy of David Livingstone and the early missionaries to Africa especially to that part which is now called Malawi. This was so in the period we are discussing, The Church of Scotland saw itself as continuing the work of the early missionaries. The early missionaries had founded a body of believers in Malawi and the Church of Scotland felt it important to keep in touch with those believers especially through the CCAP which owed much of its origin to those early pioneers. David Livingstone had believed he should spread Christianity and commerce to parts of Africa. That was his vision and the Church of Scotland believed it should continue with it.

### **The Nature of the Gospel**

The Church of Scotland mission in Malawi had some characteristics which were not characteristics that all other missions had. In contrast to some other missions, it believed the salvation of Christ as well, as the creation of God, embraced body, mind as well as spirit. Therefore at most mission stations there were a Church for the spiritual, a school for the mind and a hospital for the body. Other missions may have had schools and hospitals too, but some of them saw schools and hospitals as a way in for the spiritual gospel rather than aspects of the gospel itself. Unfortunately this difference was not recognized by everybody and the Church of Scotland's characteristics were perceived as 'liberal' whereas the other missions which differed from the Church of Scotland were perceived as 'conservative'. But this was an oversimplification. True liberal theology was hardly known amongst the Africans of the CCAP and, although they didn't necessarily understand the theological differences; they had some grasp of what the Church of Scotland was all about.

### **The Doctrine of the Church.**

The Church of Scotland saw the church as an organisation and body of believers and this was important for the nature of the gospel. Some other missions tended to see the church as relatively unimportant. The Church of Scotland's emphasis meant that the Africans of the CCAP strongly guarded their view of what the church was all about. They didn't really understand such organisations as Scripture Union and the new Student Christian Organisation which considered themselves para-church organisations over which the Church had no formal control. This was particularly evident in the 1970s when the SCOM then was being set up in the south of Malawi. The general secretary that had been proposed for the SCOM then came from a very conservative background. Although he was a member of the CCAP Livingstonia Synod, he sat loose to denominational loyalty and was appointed by an interdenominational group not itself under the authority of any ecclesiastical organisation., This caused a great deal of friction with the local CCAP Church. The missionaries tended to understand this dispute as a 'liberal - conservative' argument but the African Church regarded it more as a doctrinal matter which affected their view of Church - a view which they had inherited from the Church of Scotland.

### **Age Differences in the CCAP.**

One of the most moving experiences of worship in most of the Churches is the active participation in worship of children and young people. However there is a worry that CCAP is losing many young people to the pentecostal denominations Whether or not Blantyre Synod is losing people to the pentecostal churches, it certainly does not lack young people. On the contrary the CCAP Church is well attended by young people. The Synod ministers speak as if they have severe problems, but on listening to them it becomes clear they are the usual problems of growth. The main one seemed to be what has affected expanding Churches everywhere - namely the conflict between the traditional clergy and leadership on the one hand and on the other those who put all the emphasis on God-given spiritual power given to young lay people. So in Blantyre Synod there are those younger members (often called the 'born agains') who seem to believe that the Church hierarchy is spiritually dead, and the older members who are afraid that their old certainties of authority are under threat. There is surely need for spiritual humility on both sides. Certainly many clergy are now realising that young people are always going to be looking for 'spiritual power and they won't be fobbed off with anything less. (The Church of Scotland faces a similar problem with the loss of its youth.) The young in the CCAP too, need to recognise the spiritual riches often hidden behind even a clerical collar.

### **Anxiety about the Church of Scotland.**

There is some fear among Malawians that World Mission may be losing interest in Malawi. If this is partly true now, I doubt whether our World Mission Dept. really is to blame. The root problem here is that the Church of Scotland as a whole is getting increasingly elderly and suffering rapid decline.

Furthermore figures such as David Livingstone are not highly regarded in our multi-cultural secular age. That is the main problem that WM faces as it seeks to motivate the Church in Scotland to be involved in Africa.

### **The Government.**

Coming from the reformed tradition, the church believed that the government was set up by God. The more evangelical missions did not regard the government as all that important. It just provided the framework in which they could do their work. Of course they remained interested in the government but not for any theological purpose that it had. This meant that the CCAP was much more fully involved in politics than were other missions. Of course many of the Africans as well as the expatriates were afraid of the dictatorship under the first African government, and did not wish to speak out for that reason. This atmosphere of fear also affected the other missions as well.

Many missionaries with the CCAP also looked at the institution of African government through rose tinted spectacles and therefore were very reluctant to criticise it - they warned their younger counterparts not to interfere.

Nevertheless these differences of theology did play a part.

There has always been the danger - evident throughout Church history - that when clergy get involved with political power-struggles they become corrupted in the same way as do secular politicians. The situation then is worse than at first because the Church as well as government becomes corrupt and finds itself unable to give the spiritual lead that any nation needs for its survival.

Howard Taylor