

RAISING AFRICAN BISHOPS IN THE ANGLICAN CHURCH IN MALAWI 1924-2000

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Abstract

The process of raising African bishops in the Anglican Church in Malawi between 1924 and 2000 was a long one hampered by many setbacks. The basic obstacle was the missionary consideration that the Anglican episcopate was essentially an administrative position which required its incumbent to possess fairly good administrative skills. Since the Malawian clergy were not regarded as possessing such skills, they were excluded from higher positions. There was also a more general and fundamental weakness: the standard of education for the Malawian clergy was very low, which made them unfit to take up senior positions in the church. Yet this was not a weakness of their own making, but rather a legacy of their training background. More critically, there was a deep-seated and widespread view that Africans were naturally less capable than their European counterparts. By much the same token, the UMCA's close association with the colonial state restricted the possibilities of extending the episcopate, itself symbolically identifiable with the colonial power, to Malawians.

1 INTRODUCTION

It is true I do think that the church in Southern Africa has a rather poor record of development of African leadership, but as I have served it for nearly a quarter of a century, I am as much to blame as anyone ... the roots go much further back than the policy of individuals, and I think the

cure must include the whole English concept of administrator-bishop, the size of the diocese and much deeper things. I confess, when I remember that I may have to leave here at 24 hours notice, and that, as the job of a bishop is at present designed, the future choice would lie between an imposed expatriate and an untrained African.¹

In 1965 Donald Arden, then bishop of the Diocese of Malawi, made the above shrewd, insightful and pertinent observation regarding the Anglican episcopate. He spelt out what he saw as the constraints, which in his view tended to affect the missionaries' attempts to extend the episcopate to Africans. In this paper I will examine some of the claims made by Arden, especially the consideration that the episcopate as it operated in the Anglican Church in Malawi was essentially administrative in character. I will also outline other factors that tended to impede the process towards transferring the office of a bishop in the Anglican Church in Malawi from the missionaries to the African clergy. Conversely, I will argue that the impetus that finally led to the extension of the episcopate to the Malawian clergy was to a large degree independent of the missionary initiative.

2 FIRST MAGOMERO MISSION

The Anglican Church in Malawi today is a product of the work of the Universities Mission to Central Africa (UMCA), a missionary body formed in the Church of England in 1859.² The leading members who formed this missionary body had been greatly influenced by the nineteenth-century Oxford Movement Revival.³ Amongst other things, the Oxford Movement in the Church of England stressed the sacramental nature of the episcopal office.⁴ The bishop, so it was argued, manifested the essence of the church.⁵ A bishop personified the church – the church was embodied in the episcopal office, hence the dictum *ubi episcopus, ibi ecclesiae* (no bishop, no church).⁶ This implied the view that the bishop was the “church”. More critically, during the nineteenth century the church's relationship to the state (and vice versa) played an important part in the spread of the gospel as well as the Empire.⁷

In England the Anglican Church was a national church linked to the state in many important respects, more particularly since its bishops played a political role in Parliament and civil life.⁸ Hence the office of a bishop tended to represent the political as well as the religious dimension of the state in England; the bishop was as much a religious as a political figure.⁹ Symbolically, the episcopal office had tremendous state and religious power. Thus an Anglican episcopate characteristically defined by the issue of power had implications for the prospects of extending it to the African clergy in Malawi in the late twentieth century.

The Universities Mission to Central Africa (UMCA), which was formed in 1859¹⁰ to evangelise Central Africa, exemplified these principles and this character.¹¹ From its inception the assumption was that a missionary church could not be established with integrity without the leadership of a bishop, who was viewed as fully exemplifying the church. Hence Charles Frederick Mackenzie had to be consecrated a bishop in 1860 to lead the UMCA missionary party to the Shire Highlands in Central Africa (Malawi). This was designed to demonstrate that the church started with the presence of a bishop.¹² However, the church's connection to the state in England raised a political problem: the bishop going to a territory not governed by Britain suggested intentions of annexation.¹³ Placing the UMCA under the jurisdiction of Bishop Robert Grey of Cape Town rather than under the pastoral oversight of a bishop in England sorted out the problem.¹⁴

The story of the first mission to Magomero in the Shire Highlands of southern Malawi in 1860, the deaths and the difficulties that afflicted the first missionaries, have been recounted several times elsewhere.¹⁵ For the purpose of this paper I will just highlight a few factors that have an immediate bearing on the subject. The presence of a bishop at Magomero was considered necessary for liturgical purposes – for instance, the bishop had to consecrate a burial ground. The reluctance of Bishop Mackenzie to abandon the mission settlement amid enormous difficulties seems to suggest that as a bishop (the church) he could not abandon his flock even when they

were embroiled in intertribal conflicts.¹⁶ This position in no small way contributed to the disaster that followed.¹⁷

On the other hand, as the whole plan of the mission depended on the bishop as leader of the party,¹⁸ a question arises as to how much freedom the other missionaries could have had to criticise or reason with their bishop at Magomero to revise their strategy? Owen Chadwick is right in suggesting that the failure of the mission could be attributed to the fact that, unlike in England where the church related to an established government, there was at Magomero no stable government with which to deal.¹⁹ This immediately raises the issue of power behind the episcopal office in the Anglican Church; the opportunities the office offered as well as the constraints it imposed on the evolution of an African leadership in Malawi.

3 INTRODUCTION OF AN AFRICAN MINISTRY IN ZANZIBAR

The period between 1863, when the UMCA relocated to Zanzibar in Tanzania, and their permanent return to Malawi in 1885 decisively defined the future pattern and character of the African ministry in Malawi. In relation to the European ministry in Zanzibar, the second missionary bishop, George Tozer, advocated a lower form of ministry specifically designed for an African clergy. He argued that the African clergy should be placed in a “subordinate ministry” while “more responsible posts” were entrusted to English missionaries since, in his view, the Africans had only recently emerged from heathenism.²⁰ The rationale behind this inferior form of ministry was that the “uncivilised” status and character of Africans as compared to the “civilised” Europeans made them inferior to the latter. This tended to justify the view that Africans needed much more time before they could be entrusted with real authority.

Putting this view into practice, Tozer reintroduced the medieval minor office of a subdeacon in 1869 for the African clergy.²¹ The office of a subdeacon was designed to deal with the issue of power relations between the missionary and his African subordinate. Tozer’s successors, Edward Steere and Charles Smythies, reinforced this ministry. The introduction of the office of a catechist in 1877 was an important further stage in this direction. John Iliffe (1979) described it thus: “His ministry was new, especially developed for the African

situation, stressing rapid evangelisation among the young. His role involved being a village school teacher teaching religion and the three R's spiced by singing and drill for amusement."²²

By 1878 there were important developments not only regarding minor offices but also in the missionary pattern, the length of training for African clergy and the process regulating it. Elaborating how the ladder of promotion functioned, Tozer's successor Edward Steere asserted in 1878 that

[f]or Ordination a man must show steadiness and capacity. We must know him for some years and let him work as a Reader and Catechist for at least two more. No length of probation could justify want of power or steadiness.²³

Undoubtedly, judging by this pattern, Steere viewed ordination as a rite of passage or a course of initiation. Ordination and ministry was a process involving several stages, from the lowest level of a teacher or catechist, through reader and subdeacon towards the priesthood. The long period of probation was justified by the perceived moral inferiority of the African, a view that pervaded European thinking and outlook. Steere expressed his view of the Africans' moral degradation to Charles Janson, his missionary, in 1881 when he stated that

[t]he races of tropical Africa, [are] amongst the lowest of the human family, [they] need very special self-sacrifice as the instrument of elevation. Amongst their most prominent defects are, the love of capricious self-indulgence, working itself out in idleness, gluttony, drunkardness, and uncleanness, whilst slavery, the worst scourge of these races, helps to make labour distasteful, and, therefore, progress impossible.²⁴

In his work *Orientalism*²⁵ Edward Said described the negative view that Europeans tended to take of the character of the "other", in this case Africans. Attributing to Africans the very opposite of what they considered the best character or behaviour (that of Europeans), the missionaries tended to view Africans as naturally incapable. This tended to justify their perception that Africans needed a long training

before they could be entrusted with authority similar to that held by their white counterparts. Between 1883 and 1893, in the context of this world view, Steere's successor Charles Smythies further consolidated this low form of ministry for the African clergy.²⁶ Thus the African ministry in Malawi was to be defined in terms of this paradigm.

4 THE ANGLICAN CHURCH RE-ESTABLISHED IN MALAWI

In 1885 the UMCA re-established itself, this time on a more temporary basis on Likoma Island in Malawi, from a base in Zanzibar.²⁷ This was largely the work of ex-slaves turned evangelists working alongside the missionaries.²⁸ Thus from 1885 to the early twentieth century, working alongside missionaries, a small band of a dozen African clergy including Yohana Abdallah, Augustine Ambali, Eustace Malisawa and Petro Kilekwa laboured to raise an African church in Malawi.²⁹ From the evidence so far available to this author, the first missionary bishop to raise the issue of an African episcopate was Cathrew Fisher.

5 CATHREW FISHER AND THE AFRICAN MINISTRY

Cathrew Fisher was a bishop in Malawi from 1911 to 1929. By the time he started his work as Bishop of Nyasaland, there were eight African clergy. These priests had been trained specifically for the conditions and circumstances of the late nineteenth rather than the twentieth century.³⁰ Towards the end of his episcopate, Fisher expressed dissatisfaction regarding the quality of his African clergy. He observed that in Synod the Africans were not in a position to participate fully in the discussions.³¹ He further noted that "even in purely African matters it is very difficult for African priests to make their point of view clear to us".³² In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the European denial of the existence of positive attributes in Africans constituted the core of orientalism.³³ Africans were perceived as hopelessly incapable of making any positive contribution to the European-oriented missionary church save in their position as subordinates. This was taken to justify their exclusion from the highest positions of authority on the grounds that Africans needed a

long training before they could be entrusted with authority similar to that of their white counterparts.

Similarly, Fisher noted that Africans voted without grasping the issues at stake.³⁴ Despite the existence of a committee working to improve matters, the bishop went on to say that perhaps time and experience would sort this out.³⁵ This suggests that there was no meaningful interaction between the missionaries and the African clergy. As Weller and Linden noted, “the African clergy were something of a closed community” who “dealt with [cases] affecting one another without reference to their white colleagues and superiors”.³⁶

This state of affairs brought Fisher to the conclusion that “[w]e may not live to see African bishops leading and ruling great bodies of African clergy.”³⁷ Why was this deemed impossible? As Weller and Linden pointed out, “Fisher was very much a bishop of the colonial period” who never really trusted African clergy,³⁸ and as such he could never be expected to promote them to the episcopate. During the colonial period, the office of a bishop in the missionary church was closely associated with the authority to rule – just as the church itself was closely linked to the colonial state. Dominated by colonial attitudes, bishops like Fisher never even envisaged the possibility of appointing a member of a subject race to the episcopal office. Indeed, as Fisher had predicted, he never lived to see African bishops leading the African clergy,³⁹ for he died in a road accident in 1929.

6 THORNE’S STRUGGLES TO RAISE AN AFRICAN LEADERSHIP

After Fisher’s death the UMCA officials in London felt that, despite his gifts as an administrator and his legal skills, as a bishop Fisher had not been close enough to his African flock to give them adequate pastoral oversight.⁴⁰ So Frank Oswald Thorne, then living in Tanzania, was appointed bishop in his place.

Thorne had apparently been appointed Bishop of Nyasaland in 1938 precisely in order to initiate concrete changes towards the promotion of African leadership. By the time Thorne became Bishop of Malawi

there were 24 African priests from whom a bishop could have been appointed, yet even as late as the 1950s Thorne was unable to take the step of elevating an African to the episcopate. What was the problem?

Writing about the 1950s, Adrian Hastings made a perceptive observation regarding the position of the African clergy in the Anglican Church with respect to the episcopate:

It is certainly true that by 1950 not a single Anglican African diocesan bishop had been appointed since the death of Crowther. The new leadership that the churches were fostering through the best of their schools would, in consequence, become in the 1950s a contender for political control. In most places it simply was not strong enough for the latter.⁴¹

Hastings's observation is significant in that it suggests the existence of some shortcomings in the church system. He suggests that despite the fact that the Anglican Church was training African clergy, it did not make room for leadership at the highest level. What factors restricted the appointment of an African bishop in Malawi? One fundamental weakness related to a generally low standard of education and training for the African clergy. On 29 July 1957, in a general academic report to Thorne on the subject of Africans training for the ministry, the warden of St. Andrew's Theological College, Cedric Frank, wrote as follows:

Their academic standards are as low as they possibly can be ... I do not expect any advance in their general standards of intelligence or of their application of their knowledge. I have no doubt that all this was known about them before they were chosen to test their vocation at SAC and therefore I do not think it should now be made to stand in the way of their ultimate ordination to the priesthood provided no other unsatisfactory elements are observed in them later on.⁴²

Frank made a telling comment when he stated that the low level of their education was known long before African trainees went to the college and that consequently this could not be considered an impediment to their ordination. This implies that a low level of education was a generally accepted norm for the training of African clergy. A low standard of education for Africans was taken for granted by the missionaries. Yet, as the anthropologists Jean and John Comaroff asserted, something taken for granted in the realm of hegemony lies silent, almost unspoken, as it is assumed that it is generally known and accepted.⁴³ Provided they are skilfully maintained, recurrent practices, habits and signs cease to be seen as mere forms of control; rather, they are perceived as a legitimate order of existence and consequently become an accepted way of life and experience.⁴⁴ Over the years, by way of asserting various ideological symbols, the UMCA more or less established the view that a low level of education and theological training was the norm for the African clergy.

More significantly, when the Archbishop of York visited Malawi in 1960 he made an observation regarding the low standard of education of the African clergy, which in his view seemed to undermine efforts towards their promotion to higher level of leadership. This is how the *Central Africa* report expressed it:

A higher level of theological training is essential if the Church of the future is to obtain the leaders that she needs. In an emergency it would be difficult to find an African who could be consecrated as a Bishop and carry on. But without exception all our clergy are what the Archbishop of York called "bush" priests – not one of them was even within two years of obtaining his matriculation and none of them would command confidence as a leader from all our Christians.⁴⁵

Yet the Archbishop's comment was also significant in the sense that he had described the African clergy as "bush" priests, suggesting not only their low standard of education but also their inferior quality and social status in the community. The statement did suggest that the low educational standard of the African clergy was a weakness of the

African Church which made it difficult to raise them to a position of leadership. Yet it was a shortcoming over which the African clergy had no control, since for decades it had formed a part of their system of training in Malawi.

Around the 1950s and 1960s Thorne claimed to support the freedom of Malawians, but the latter were sceptical, since he showed no practical support for the Malawian nationalist movement in their fight for political emancipation.⁴⁶ Yet it was in his own church that he failed the test of raising an African priest to a position of leadership. In his autobiography, *Hero of the nation, Chipembere of Malawi*, Masauko Chipembere (a son of the Reverend Habil Chipembere) stated that his father “was dropped each time” the issue of the first Malawian bishop was raised “because he was the father of a radical son!”⁴⁷ Chipembere suggested that his father was not considered for the appointment because he himself was fighting against the British colonial government, which in fact had close ties with the UMCA in Malawi. The implication is that the father was not fit to be a bishop in a church that was a tacit part of the colonial regime which the son was fighting. The Anglican Church and the colonial government enjoyed very close ties, and the episcopal office symbolically represented the colonial power. The matter of an African bishop might have raised the issue: how can an African belonging to a subject race be placed in a position of power that traditionally belongs to a member of the ruling class in the colonial order?

Yet there was another dimension of power associated with missionary leadership and with the episcopate in particular – a requirement or expectation that the prospective incumbent should possess administrative or managerial skills. Writing to Thorne in 1959 about the administrative problems he was facing, UMCA secretary G W Broomfield said:

I have often been saddened by the thought of your struggling with the burden of administration and finance – a kind of work which I think you never wanted, but of course you were responsible: a constant source of worry, when you wanted to give your mind to other things ... I think and I know a lot of people think Nyasaland (Malawi)

now needs – quite desperately – a man who is a first rate administrator ...⁴⁸

Managerial or organisational skills were considered a special qualification for the episcopate. It was on these grounds that Thorne's episcopate had been perceived as a failure. That administrative work pre-empted missionary work is attested by the following episode. Responding to a complaint made in 1959 by G W Broomfield, the UMCA secretary in London, concerning a statement by UMCA missionary Guy Carleton of Nkhotakota, Frank Thorne admitted with regret that "[i]t is of course unfortunately also true, as you say, that white priests do have a great deal of administration that could be done by laymen if we could have them ..."⁴⁹ Traditionally the office of a bishop is much the same as that of an archdeacon in that it involves a great deal of administration. Theological training largely prepared African clergy as pastors and hardly at all as officials with administrative skills.⁵⁰

On the other hand, as Daniel O'Connor asserted, during the zenith of the missionary era, it was assumed that "Africans, even African clergy, were incapable of functioning effectively, except perhaps liturgically and when thoroughly drilled, within European-styled institutions."⁵¹ The position of Africans in the missionary church was defined precisely by a prevalent and almost unquestionable missionary view that the Africans possessed none of the skills normally associated with Europeans. Yet it was a pretext that was used to exclude Africans from leadership positions.

Meanwhile - under pressure to promote African clergy to higher positions in the church – Thorne made hasty appointments in 1960, a year before he resigned. He appointed Chipembere as archdeacon and O Chisa as the first African priest-in-charge in 1961, and made Nathan Mtaya an archdeacon replacing a missionary, H A M Cox.⁵² These appointments came very late in his episcopate and, more critically, they fell short of the appointment of an African bishop. Thorne lived to regret not having done so when he was living in retirement and his successor, Donald Arden, appointed Mtekatoka as his assistant bishop.⁵³

7 NEW BISHOP FOR POST-INDEPENDENT MALAWI

7.1 Donald Arden and the challenges of Africanisation

Donald Seymour Arden was appointed Bishop of Malawi in 1962. He had worked in the Dioceses of Pretoria and Zululand before his appointment to Malawi. He appears to have had a clear perception that one of his priorities was to raise Malawian leadership and in particular to raise a Malawian clergyman to the episcopate. Thorne had failed to achieve this.

As noted at the beginning of this essay, Arden made a very significant observation early in his episcopate about the nature of power in the Anglican episcopate, which in his view tended to be restricted if the episcopate was to be extended to Africans. Amongst other factors, Arden noted “the whole English concept of administrator-bishop” as one of “the roots” of the problem – an issue that went “beyond the policy of individual bishops.”⁵⁴ This had been a general view that tended to influence the choice of candidates for the Anglican episcopate. Arden regretted that this was the way the job of a bishop in the Anglican Church had been designed.⁵⁵ Because of this factor, wrote Arden, if he were to be deported by the Banda government the church would have to choose between two evils: either an imposed white expatriate bishop or an untrained Malawian bishop.⁵⁶

Arden’s analysis was insightful. He rightly attributed the problems of transplanting the Anglican episcopate to its association with the English concept of the administrator-bishop. It implied the view that a bishop needed administrative skills to run the office competently. Conversely, behind this argument lay the view that a person without administrative skills could not effectively function as a bishop and was therefore not very desirable. This implies that the episcopate was closely associated with the power to “govern” or “manage” the church. More importantly, in articulating this view Arden had exposed the weakness of the Anglican episcopate: the fact that its administrative orientation tended to hinder rather than enhance its extension to an African, who naturally did not possess administrative skills.

Traditionally, the UMCA process and system of training African clergy had never made provision for such a requirement in Malawi. On the other hand, the view of the episcopal office as requiring administrative skills tended to be compatible with a traditional view that the person of a bishop fully embodied the church: as the saying went, “no bishop, no church”. Because of all this, the process of raising an African priest to the episcopate in Central and Southern Africa, and in this particular case Malawi, was a long one.

8 SUFFRAGAN BISHOP: AN OFFICE FOR AN AFRICAN BISHOP

Two factors determined the progress towards the election of the first native bishop in Malawi: pressure from England and pressure from inside Malawi. Oliver Green-Wilkinson, the Archbishop of Central Africa, reported at a meeting in 1963 that during a meeting in London with Arden that year, Arden had been somewhat “critical of my having made so public my intention in the matter”.⁵⁷ Green-Wilkinson further stated that “now he [Arden] agreed about this”.⁵⁸ According to Father Sauli, a retired priest from Likoma Island, there was pressure on the missionary-dominated church in Malawi from the Archbishop of Canterbury to promote a Malawian sooner rather than later.⁵⁹ More significantly, in his letter to Green-Wilkinson in 1963 Arden informed him that

[t]he meeting at Nkhotakota of all the clergy of the archdeaconry, Chipembere and a couple others has given me five months to find and have consecrated an African bishop for the area. It would be disastrous to put another European archdeacon there and without one at all (as we are now), the work which is roughly half of the diocese will slowly disintegrate. The suggestions were Mtekateka and Jalasi in that order. I know neither of them well enough to judge.⁶⁰

The action of the Malawian clergy was significant in that it showed their ability to assume responsibility. The Malawian clergy challenged the hitherto widely held European view that only whites could become bishops; thus what had until now remained unquestioned

came into the open and was contested. Yet, despite this pressure, there were indications that the church in Central Africa was not ready to take a bold decision.

Meeting on 18 December 1963, the Commission on the African assistant bishop reported that the appointment of a suffragan bishop was considered “undesirable” by the Provincial Commission.⁶¹ In light of this it had been resolved:

1. To investigate further the historical position of Suffragan bishops and their position in other Provinces of the Anglican Church in Africa ... also ask further historical evidence from a theologian in England to supplement that already received from Canon Chadwick.
2. To ask the Provincial Registrar whether Provincial Synod is competent to give a ruling that a Suffragan bishop is a “Bishop of the Province” in accordance with the definitions of the canons.
3. To consider the method of the appointment of Suffragan bishops, bearing in mind a possible larger membership of the Standing Elective Committee.⁶²

The fact that the legal position of a suffragan bishop was unclear in relation to that of a diocesan bishop suggests that the leaders of the Province were not yet ready to have a suffragan bishop. In relation to the regular office of a diocesan bishop, the office of a suffragan bishop at this stage came to be seen as “irregular”. Hence there arose a problem as to how it could be accommodated. While the researcher has not been able to locate the Commission’s recommendations on this issue, it seems in the end that the office of a suffragan bishop was to entail considerably less power than that of a diocesan bishop.

Indeed, the rules of the Province of Central Africa (commonly called canons) describe a suffragan bishop as having much less executive

power than a diocesan bishop. Working under a diocesan bishop for a period to learn the ropes of power, a bishop may or may not succeed to the office by the process of election when the diocesan bishop retires,⁶³ or he may finally be elected diocesan bishop for the area where he has been serving if that area becomes an autonomous diocese.⁶⁴

In a letter to Arden that year, Thorne was very anxious to know who could be elected as the first African bishop. Responding to one of Arden's letters, Thorne stated that he thought the choice lay "between Jalasi and Chipembere, with the balance slightly on the side of the former, largely on the score of age".⁶⁵

Despite concurring with Thorne's guess, however, Arden was anxious to pre-empt the results. As he put it, "... am anxious not to say anything out loud to avoid a repetition of the Northern Rhodesia logjam".⁶⁶ Though it is not clear what Arden meant by "logjam", it seems he might have meant reaching a deadlock after rounds of voting.

In the interim, the Anglican Diocese of Malawi held its first synod on 23 August 1964 "to make a decision as to who could be the first African assistant bishop".⁶⁷ On the other hand, the Provincial Synod minutes for 1968 record that on 6 December 1964, within 30 minutes, the Elective Committee in Malawi elected Josiah Mtekateka as Suffragan Bishop of Malawi.⁶⁸

Completely unlike his successors, Mtekateka's early background had been shaped to a large degree by working closely with various missionaries on Likoma Island. For years he had grown up working as a personal servant for several missionaries.⁶⁹ His biographer Denis Mpassou noted that at this time Mtekateka displayed a character of authority, wisdom and leadership that seemed to earn him some popularity and fame.⁷⁰ His leadership seemed to be generally accepted by his peers,⁷¹ while his honesty and trustworthiness endeared him to the white missionaries on Likoma Island.⁷²

Thus by 1962 Mtekateka, like Chipembere, had attained a high social standing in the UMCA. For instance, in 1957 both had been sent to UMCA anniversaries in London to represent the UMCA in Tanzania and Malawi respectively. In 1965 he was elected bishop suffragan of both Tanzania and Malawi.⁷³ This suggests his wide popularity as a pastor. Faced with this dilemma, he chose Malawi. According to a long-time theological tutor, Rodney Hunter, "Mtekateka had a natural authority and was good natured but he had little forward vision."⁷⁴

However, Mtekateka's transition from suffragan bishop in 1965 to diocesan bishop in 1971 was not easy. He had to fit into a European-style office whose requirements, which his training had never prepared him for, seemed to be at variance with the traditional African style of pastoral leadership that seemed to come naturally to him. As Arden had argued, the office of an Anglican bishop, as traditionally designed, required its incumbent to possess a certain degree of administrative skill. This was to cause some difficulty for Mtekateka's leadership.

From the time he became suffragan bishop in 1965, Mtekateka had been advised by Arden in various ways and contexts that, because of his lack of administrative skills, he needed a young white priest to help him with the administrative work of a bishop. Subsequently Mtekateka came to terms with the idea. Thus the minutes of the church's decision-making body - the Diocesan Standing Committee, meeting on 11 and 12 December 1966 - noted that the "suffragan bishop, Josiah Mtekateka expressed (his) wish to have a young expatriate priest preferably with experience in Africa as his chaplain, if a suitable man could be found".⁷⁵ Mtekateka had no choice but to come to terms with the fact that since he did not have the necessary administrative skills, he needed someone - preferably a young white chaplain - to support him. Likewise, writing to Green-Wilkinson on 27 February 1968, Arden stated that "in many ways Josiah would make a good diocesan bishop but good administrative help would be essential for him".⁷⁶ In Arden's view, since Mtekateka did not possess administrative skills, he could not run the office of a bishop successfully unless a chaplain with managerial skills could support him. In 1968, given the anticipation that Mtekateka would be elected

diocesan bishop, there was much concern as to how he would cope. In that year, for instance, Green-Wilkinson wrote:

I am sorry about your financial troubles. It is most generous of you to continue as bishop in these circumstances. If you did leave in probably 2 years time we shall miss you and Jane badly indeed. It seems to me essential that in these two years we should find one expatriate priest or layman who would be a wise guide to the African diocesan bishop over finance and administration. I hope it will not be necessary for you to leave us in 1970.⁷⁷

As the period of his election as diocesan bishop drew closer, more concerns were expressed about Mtekateka's lack of administrative skills. For example, the minutes of the Diocesan Standing Committee meeting on 10 and 11 October 1970 noted that "Bishop Josiah's chaplain would be very much concerned with organisational and administrative duties of the new diocese."⁷⁸ The fear was that if Mtekateka did not have someone with administrative skills to help him, he would prove a "failure" as a bishop. It was considered that the solution to Mtekateka's "handicap" was to have another person in his office who would exclusively do administrative work for him. However, Arden looked even beyond the time of Mtekateka. On 14 December 1968, writing to David Lee, he had this to say:

It is most important that when I leave there is a small cadre of first-rate youngish men to provide some intellectual stiffening and experience in pastoral work in areas where most of our African clergy trained in days when there was no Secondary Schooling, find it difficult to cope.⁷⁹

Beyond the period of Mtekateka, Arden looked to the needs of the future – a better-trained clergy capable of shepherding equally better-educated Christians. In this respect Arden was a visionary leader.

9 MTEKATEKA BECOMES A DIOCESAN BISHOP

Finally meeting on Thursday 17 June 1971, the Elective Assembly of the Diocese of Lake Malawi elected Josiah Mtekateka, formerly suffragan bishop, as diocesan bishop by a unanimous vote.⁸⁰ Despite Mtekateka's lack of European administrative skills, he was great in stature and in character, both morally and spiritually. The greatness of Mtekateka was stressed by Arden when he remarked: "a great man and my only worry is where we shall find someone of equal stature to follow".⁸¹

10 TWO "BISHOPS" IN ONE OFFICE? CHALLENGES FACING MTEKATEKA WITH REGARD TO HIS CHAPLAINS – THE LEGACY OF AN ANGLICAN EPISCOPATE

The office of a bishop, structured largely as an administrative organ of the diocese, presented challenges to African bishops and in this case to Mtekateka in Malawi. There is evidence that Mtekateka's chaplain – a white priest, Humphrey Taylor – was in the habit of undermining him. In a bitter correspondence with Arden over the issue of Alford Zimba in 1968, Mtekateka wrote:

I am sorry to say that we judging differently on the case of Zimba. I also sorry to say that we do not want intelligent people who are clever. We wish those who we call them silly ones. On the same time we want educated people ... I hold my peace I do not want talk much, I understand that Fr. Taylor is not happy to work under any African bishop, because he cannot take his counsel at all. If it was you, he could have listen, So I imagine that he will be happy to be near you like there at Zomba ... You may not agree with me, so I hope you will accept your Dictatorship. I say because you do not count that African say the truth.⁸²

In spite of his imperfect literacy in English and his lack of administrative skills, Mtekateka had excellent judgement. He could understand the subtle racist attitudes of missionaries like Taylor. He had come to the conclusion that Taylor as a white priest could not take orders from him and had therefore abandoned him, choosing to go to Zomba in order to be closer to other whites such as Arden. After the departure of Taylor, Mtekateka had to contend with the “manipulative” attitude of Taylor’s successor in the chaplaincy, Jackson Biggers. In one incident, when Mtekateka had been away, it was reported to him that Biggers had been distributing property to some parishes, leaving only a few for the bishop. Mtekateka was able to assess the problem with Biggers: white arrogance. This is how Mtekateka put it:

Azungu ali wodzikonda chifukwa cha ndalama, ndiponso ali wanthu osawerengera akulu akulu wao, nakhala nawo azungu ambiri ndiwadziwa mchitidwe wao. (Whites are arrogant because of their higher financial standing, also *they do not respect those placed above them*. I have stayed with many of them, I know their conduct)⁸³ (my italics).

Mtekateka’s observation about Biggers’s conduct was confirmed by one of his chaplains, Bernard Sharp. Writing to Arden on 16 April 1974, Sharp said:

He [Biggers] manipulates Josiah! But I could never express that to the bishop. May I say in confidence that the presence of Jack Biggers would make it impossible for me to consider returning to Malawi.⁸⁴

The presence of Biggers in the office of the diocesan bishop, Mtekateka, was not conducive to the normal operation of the office. Biggers was taking advantage of Mtekateka’s social standing in certain ways. Biggers’s conduct seems to have made the bishop vulnerable. In the end, however, Mtekateka stood his ground.

Despite his perceived inability to be a competent administrator, as the Anglican episcopate required, Mtekateka displayed great talents

and skills as a pastor.⁸⁵ He was a man whom many people claimed to have found accessible and to have benefited from his wisdom and counsel.⁸⁶ Perhaps, unlike in England, leadership in Africa was traditionally not so much about managing the office, a notion that was almost non-existent, as about being available to people, helping them cope with problems in their daily life.⁸⁷ Leadership entailed “pastoral” considerations rather than the management of people. Mtekateka was able to fulfil the pastoral role more competently.⁸⁸ This illustrates the inherent tension between the requirements of an Anglican episcopacy on the one hand and the African view or need of leadership in African circumstances on the other, which to date has never been resolved in an African church.

11 FROM MTEKATEKA TO HIS SUCCESSORS

11.1 Diocese of Lake Malawi

In 1978, Peter Nyanja became the second bishop of the Diocese of Lake Malawi. He was not elected by the Diocesan Elective Assembly, a committee responsible for choosing a bishop; rather, he was appointed in 1978 after the Elective Assembly had failed to elect a bishop in 1977.⁸⁹ Thus, on the recommendation of his former tutor at St John’s Theological College (Rodney Hunter), Cyprian William Liwewe and others, Bishop Donald Arden appointed Peter Nyanja as successor to Mtekateka.⁹⁰ His manner of appointment was a way of solving the succession problem that had occurred after Mtekateka’s retirement in 1977.

Peter Nyanja, then a young man from Ntchisi, was a teacher whose name was brought to the attention of Arden.⁹¹ Unlike Mtekateka, who was a man of imposing stature and dynamic personality, Nyanja was a smaller man – more introvert, shy-looking, soft-spoken; a quiet, cautious, reserved man. Nyanja recalled that growing up in Ntchisi he had been impressed with dedicated Malawian clergy like Msonthi and

Mbiza and also some missionaries.⁹² This impression had remained with him.

Training as a teacher at St Michael's Teachers' College, a contemporary recalled that at college Nyanja showed all the signs of religious devotion, spending long hours in prayer.⁹³ Nyanja did not teach for long before responding to the call of the church.

Together with Bernard Malango (future bishop and archbishop) and Luwe Yeppe, Nyanja was sent to St Cyprians College in Lindi in Tanzania, where the principal was James Pott.⁹⁴ Nyanja recalled that life was very hard in Tanzania. They had to work in the maize fields to support themselves and at the same work hard in class.⁹⁵ Unfortunately the college could not continue, and plans to send the students to Dar es Salaam did not work out for political reasons.⁹⁶

It is significant that during this time, as had been the case with Mtekateka while he was growing up, Nyanja's leadership among his fellow Malawian students seems to have been generally accepted. In his correspondence with Donald Arden he would always write letters signed on behalf of the other two Anglican students at St Cyprians.⁹⁷

Nyanja, together with Bernard Malango (the future Archbishop of Central Africa), went on to St John's College in Lusaka at a time when it was going through a very difficult period.⁹⁸ The consequences of nationalist politics, coupled with individual problems among the tutors and students during the 1970s,⁹⁹ caused St John's (in some degree like St Andrew's Theological College forty years previously at Likoma) to operate like a closed community. Little trust seemed to prevail in the community. Peter Nyanja appeared to be closer to some staff members than to the other students. In such circumstances, students' allegations about "dictatorial" staff tendencies or "authoritarianism" and staff allegations of "insubordination" on the part of the students abounded.¹⁰⁰ In an environment like that it was easy to accuse another person of being a spy, and Nyanja was once the victim of such an allegation. A degree of suspicion and fear prevailed among the students and staff. As things turned out, the crux of the matter was the issue of "authority"; authority symbolised by cultural artefacts, or the morals or politics behind certain actions or

statements by either a staff member or a student. This environment inevitably influenced perceptions and the model of leadership that prevailed. Correspondence at Malosa, the present headquarters of the Diocese of Upper Shire (formerly Southern Malawi) shows that some of the clergy who trained at St John's College (such as Aidan Misi, Joseph Likoleche, or David Banda) in their dealings with their bishops had a problem with authority, reflecting their training background.

With Nyanja now becoming the second Malawian bishop, Arden had fairly succeeded in promoting Malawian leadership. Like Mtekateka, Nyanja was situated quite far away from Arden, who was based in Malosa – a hundred miles from Lilongwe. Partly because of the distance, Arden was not in a position to exercise very close supervision over Nyanja. The case of Dunstan Ainani was to be very different.

12 DIOCESE OF SOUTHERN MALAWI

Dunstan Daniel Ainani came late into the ministry – at a time when Arden was desperately looking for men to enter the priesthood in the 1960s. With a Muslim and subsequently military background, Ainani had been a catechist for years before joining the ministry.¹⁰¹ Perhaps more than with any other priest, Arden's influence is reflected in Ainani's vocation and ministry.¹⁰² Arden was very conscious of his role in transforming the UMCA into the Anglican Church. Amongst other things, this meant transforming the traditional style and ethos of the spirituality and ministry of the UMCA into a conventional model identifiable with the broader modern Anglican Church. It seems he found in Ainani, among other recommendations, a priest who could emulate him and carry on his vision for the church in Malawi. It should be noted that this was a period when African nationalism on the continent stressed pride in things African as opposed to things Western. "Indigenisation" or "Africanisation" was therefore a top priority not only on the political but on the ecclesiastical agenda. Working very closely with Arden, Ainani spearheaded the indigenisation programme for church music that was based in Chilema.¹⁰³

Much like Arden, Ainani was very evangelical in his style of churchmanship.¹⁰⁴ It is strange that Ainani should have been like this. After all, like all the others, he had been brought up in the old UMCA traditions. His style tended to contrast sharply with that of Josiah Mtekateka, Peter Nyanja and others who had been brought up in the UMCA tradition.¹⁰⁵ Perhaps because of his military background, Ainani was sometimes abrasive and appeared dictatorial to others.¹⁰⁶

Despite his humble education, which on the face of it was a handicap to his rise in the church, Ainani was a prudent priest who seemed to create and make use of available opportunities.¹⁰⁷ To his credit, Arden liked things new and exciting and people with the ability to innovate. Something of an innovator himself, Ainani composed some indigenous hymns, which he popularised in his ministry as a priest.¹⁰⁸ Benson Nathaniel Aipa succeeded Ainani in 1986. Growing up in the Malindi area, a prominent UMCA mission, contemporaries of Aipa observed that he had been strongly influenced by the old prominent African clergy, notably Habil Chipembere and Paul Lundu.¹⁰⁹ For a few years he worked as a teacher before resigning. He had been one of the young men whom Arden sent to St John's College in 1964, at the beginning of his ministry, for a higher level of theological training. Over the years, through overseas exposure and experience, Aipa increasingly came to occupy important positions in the church such as warden of the training centre at Chilema, senior priest (arch-deacon), and Vicar General, a position below that of a bishop.¹¹⁰

The dominant feature of his election in 1986 was the influence of the laity, who spoke very positively about his leadership abilities.¹¹¹ Likewise, the influence of his former college mates at St John's College in Lusaka (some of whom were now bishops in Zambia and Zimbabwe) in the Elective Assembly is said to have played a critical part in his success in the elections.

The saga of raising Malawian bishops remains incomplete without the story of Bernard Malango, the present Bishop of Upper Shire in Malawi and Archbishop of Central Africa. Archbishop Malango hails from Kayoyo in Ntchisi, a prominent mission in the Diocese of Lake Malawi in the Central Region of Malawi.¹¹² After a few years in the government service, Malango had started training with Nyanja and

Luwe Yeppe at St Cyprian's in Lindi, Tanzania.¹¹³ Subsequently he trained at St John's College in Lusaka, where he qualified in 1965.

While working under Arden in the Diocese of Southern Malawi he occupied a number of important positions from 1970 onwards, such as Warden of the training centre at Chilema and Archdeacon of Blantyre, just to name a few.¹¹⁴ His overseas exposure and experience augured well for a church that was in need of an educated, capable priest. He obtained his Master's Degree in Ecumenical Studies at Dublin in 1981 and finally his PhD.¹¹⁵ In 1988, the year of the Lambeth Conference, the Central African bishops meeting for the Lambeth Conference in England elected Malango as Bishop of Northern Zambia. Thus Malango became a "Lambeth bishop".¹¹⁶

Then Malango set to work in Zambia for the next eleven years. When Khotso Walter Makhulu retired as Archbishop of Central Africa in 1999, Malango seemed the obvious choice for the post: not only was he a senior bishop but also one with a longstanding experience of ministry. He continued working as Bishop of Northern Zambia and Archbishop of Central Africa.¹¹⁷ When the Diocese of Upper Shire was created in 2000, Malango seems to have been the obvious choice. He was elected bishop of the diocese while continuing to serve as Archbishop of Central Africa, responsible for the 15 dioceses of Central Africa.¹¹⁸

Since the Anglican Communion was plunged into a crisis following the consecration of Gene Robinson as bishop of Hampshire in the USA in 2003, Malango - together with others such as Peter Akinola of Nigeria - has proved a vigorous defender of the traditional faith against the liberalist tendencies which have made inroads into Western Christianity, in this case, Anglicanism, over the years.¹¹⁹ In a real sense Malango can be called the last link with the missionary era in Central Africa. In many important respects, his position and role is a realisation of the long-cherished dreams of a number of missionaries such as Bishop George Tozer in 1864 or Bishop Cathrew Fisher in 1924 and, more recently, Bishop Donald Arden (1962-1980), that some day the church in Malawi would have an educated leadership, bishops and clergy. With Malango, the Anglican Church in Malawi and Central Africa has come of age, turned full

circle. Certainly, as he prepares to retire in September 2007, he will go down in the annals of Malawi, Central Africa and indeed the Anglican Communion as a bulwark of the faith.

13 CONCLUSION

In this article I have looked at the process of raising African bishops in the Anglican Church in Malawi between 1924 and 2000. This process was a long one hampered by many setbacks. The basic obstacle was the missionary consideration that the Anglican episcopate was essentially an administrative position that required its incumbent to possess fairly good administrative skills. Since the Malawian clergy were regarded as not possessing such skills, they were excluded from the higher positions. There was also a more general and basic weakness: the standard of education for the Malawian clergy was very low and made them unfit to take up senior positions in the church. Yet this was a weakness not of their own making but rather a legacy of their training background.

More critically, there was a deep-seated and widespread view that Africans were naturally less capable than their European counterparts. By much the same token, the UMCA's close association with the colonial state restricted the possibilities of conferring the office of a bishop, itself symbolically identifiable with the colonial power, on a Malawian. On the other hand, it has been highlighted that the pressure towards introducing the episcopate in 1965 emanated from the socio-economic and political forces, that were gripping the country. Despite Arden's progressive ideas, his action in promoting Mtekateka was strongly influenced by pressures in post-independent Malawi quite apart from his own vision.

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