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The State, Religion, and Violence in Colonial and Postcolonial Malawi

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Abstract: In the histories of both colonial and postcolonial Malawi, there have been cases of religious-related violence, both in its physical and non-physical forms. Such cases have led to the deaths of the "perpetrators" of violence and 'innocent' believers, destruction of property, prison detentions, and even the forced removal of citizens from the country. This paper analyzes two case studies, one in which private citizens perpetrated the violence, led by a preacher called John Chilembwe, of the Providence Industrial Mission (PIM), challenging British colonial authorities during the second decade of the twentieth century. In the second case, the focus is on the independent Malawi government, which used violence against members of the Jehovah's Witness (JW) religious sect from the early 1960s to the early 1990s, owing to the Witnesses' disassociation from the demands of the secular state. Using data primarily drawn from various archives and other published studies, this paper argues that the use of 'religious-based violence' is not just a domain 'reserved' for those experiencing oppression, exclusion, and marginalization. Rather, authoritarian governments, like the one that emerged in postcolonial Malawi and other parts of Africa, also resorted to using 'religious-based violence' to serve as a tool for eliminating 'non-conforming' religious sects and organizations. In doing so, this paper contributes to the various fields of scholarship, including the relationship between religion and violence in modern Africa and the dynamics and operations of the state in both colonial and postcolonial Africa.

Keywords: Nyasaland/Malawi; John Chilembwe; Providence Industrial Mission; Jehovah's Witnesses; religious-based violence

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1. Introduction and Contextualization

Historically, there has usually been a close 'relationship' between religion and violence. According to Wolfgang Huber (2011), our understanding and conceptualization of 'violence' should not just be applied to its 'physical aspects'. Rather, 'violence' also entails the 'structural restrictions' that stop people from freely developing their true potential and accessing services and opportunities at their disposal. Violence also comes in the form of psychological torture as well as in the use of 'unacceptable' forms of language.[1] Huber goes on to posit that there are three main propositions on the relationship between violence and religion, as follows: first, that 'religion leads to violence'. This is about the monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, which are stated to be inherently violent because of the 'protectionism' that comes with beliefs in these religions. These religions do not tolerate dissent both within and outside the religion. Second, 'religion leads to nonviolence', where the argument is that all religions have an element encouraging the 'overcoming' of violence, to preserve the sanctity and integrity of human life. This includes the monotheistic religions mentioned above, Hinduism, and Buddhism. This is despite members of these religions having used violence at some point. Third, 'religion and violence are linked to each other in a contingent manner'. Here, the relationship between violence and religion is not always planned, but they are more likely to occur together. (Ibid., 4–7). In the study of 'religious-based violence' in modern Africa, one can turn to the works of

Mohammed Usman (2013), John O. Voll (2015), J. Peter Pham (2016), Ziya Meral (2018), and Abiodun Alao (2022), among others.[2]

This paper traces the 'physical and non-physical aspects' of the relationship between violence and religion in colonial and postcolonial Malawi.[3] The primary sources used in this paper have been sourced from various archives, including the British National Archives (TNA), the Malawi National Archives (MNA), the Center for Research Libraries (CRL), and online records of media houses. The primary sources from the TNA mainly pertained to minutes of meetings by government officials, as well as intra- and inter-ministerial memoranda. The MNA supplied a valuable pamphlet on resolutions made at the Malawi Congress Party's (MCP) annual conventions. The CRL was a source for newspaper articles that were not in circulation online. For the online newspapers, this paper also utilizes articles supplied by *The New York Times.* Once collected, the data were critically and thematically analyzed to fit into this paper's two main sections. The first section focuses on the colonial period, whereas the second section focuses on the postcolonial period. For the colonial period, this paper focuses on the so-called "Chilembwe Uprising" of early 1915, led by Reverend John Chilembwe of the Providence Industrial Mission (PIM). The Chilembwe Uprising in part intended to 'overthrow' the colonial state as well as to seek access to social and economic opportunities within the colonial setting. During the postcolonial period, the violence emanated from the authoritarian Malawi government, led by Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda (Dr. Banda, hereafter) of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP). His government 'persecuted' members of the Jehovah's Witness (JW) religious sect, accusing them of not conforming to the demands of the postcolonial state. The sect was 'outlawed', its members were imprisoned, others had their property confiscated by the party (MCP) and government officials and others were forced to escape into exile in the neighboring countries of Zambia and Mozambique. In doing so, this paper contends that 'religious-based violence' in the modern era cannot just be studied from the perspective of private citizens and religious groups rising against established states, due to experiences of economic, social, and political exclusion and marginalization by the state.[4] Religious-based violence can also not just be limited to the fighting between competing religious groups.[5] Rather, there are also cases where the state uses 'tools' at its disposal to cause different forms of 'religious-based' violence, to suppress groups and individuals that challenge or are deemed to be a threat to state authority.[6] Thus, individuals, religious groups, and the state are all 'equally' capable and 'guilty' of committing acts of 'religious-based violence'. The sections below will illustrate these issues in detail, emphasizing the argument that in modern Malawi, there have been cases of religious-based violence perpetrated by private individuals against the state. There have also been cases of religious-based violence emanating from the state against private citizens.

2. The Chilembwe Uprising of 1915: The Religious Aspects of Challenging the Colonial State

One of the most studied cases of resistance[7] against British colonial rule and European settler intrusion into Malawi is that of the so-called Chilembwe Uprising of January 1915. The uprising belonged to the phase of "primary resistance", under the sub-branch of "post-pacification revolts". Such revolts broke out as the colonized Africans felt the 'pinch' of the exploitation, oppression, and violence they experienced under European colonization.[8] John Chilembwe was born in the Shire Highlands district of Chiradzulu in 1871 and attended schools run by Church of Scotland missionaries. In 1892, he came into contact with an English missionary, Joseph Booth,[9] a member of the Zambezi Industrial Mission (ZIM). Booth converted Chilembwe to Christianity in 1893, the year Chilembwe received his baptism. Chilembwe also served as Booth's interpreter in Malawi. It was also Booth who organized for Chilembwe to go for further theological training in the USA, at the Virginia Theological Seminary (Lynchburg, Virginia), in 1897. Chilembwe remained in the USA until 1900. It was while in the USA that Chilembwe both witnessed and experienced various forms of racism. He was also exposed to ideas of 'radical' African American groups,

especially in the big cities. This included influence from the Negro Baptist society to which he was an affiliate.[10] Upon his return to Malawi, Chilembwe established his church and named it the Providence Industrial Mission (PIM) in his home district of Chiradzulu. He did so with the help of African American missionaries (affiliated with the African American National Baptist Convention), namely, Rev. L.N. Cheek and Miss Emma B. DeLany, who served at PIM from 1901 to 1906 (Ibid., pp. 133–42.).

As had been the case in most parts of British colonial Africa, the colonized people had grievances against both the colonial state and the activities of European settlers. These ranged from cases of land alienation, forced taxes, forced labor, lack of economic opportunities, and loss of political power.[11] These issues also applied to the Nyasaland Protectorate (now Malawi), where on Saturday, 23 January 1915, Chilembwe organized hundreds of mainly Yao and Lomwe foot soldiers, who went on a rampage, in what later came to be called "The Chilembwe Uprising". On that day, the 'soldiers' first attacked the settler-owned Livingstone-Bruce Estates. Among other 'atrocities', they beheaded the farm manager, William Jervis Livingstone, in the presence of Livingstone's spouse and baby son. They also killed two other European settlers. Livingstone's freshly severed head was then taken to PIM the following morning where it was shown to the congregants during Sunday service. Thereafter, Chilembwe sent some of the 'soldiers' to attack the government weapons store at Mandala in Blantyre. Further incidents of the uprising in districts like Zomba, Ntcheu, and Mulanje were thwarted by state security forces and the Nyasaland Volunteer Reserve (NVR), made up of European settler entrepreneurs. When the members of the Nyasaland Police and the NVR pursued Chilembwe, he, alongside his brother, Morris, attempted to escape into the neighboring Portuguese East Africa (now Mozambique). They were both shot dead in what is now called Phalombe district. Morris' head was reportedly completely severed. John Chilembwe was buried in an unmarked grave at the district headquarters of Mulanje district, which also borders Mozambique.[12]

There are numerous studies on the major causes, developments, and outcomes of the Chilembwe Uprising. This includes works by George Shepperson (1958), Bridglal Pachai (1973), Joey Power (2010), and John McCracken (2012), among others. These studies have tackled the African discontent with forced labor practices, forced taxation measures, land alienation, lack of access to economic opportunities, and the mobilization and participation of Africans from Nyasaland in the First World War, assisting the King's African Rifles (KAR), as being the major driving forces behind the uprising.[13] Chilembwe himself was also a landowner and entrepreneur in the Shire Highlands. Hence, it has been argued elsewhere that he and other leading African businessmen were frustrated by the lack of economic opportunities in the colonial setup.[14] The purpose of this paper is to emphasize the notion that the uprising was also a case of 'religious-based violence' emanating from the grievances of the Africans in Nyasaland. Early indications on the government side were that the uprising was significantly rooted in religious-based grievances. Among other things, it was noted that doctrines associated with "Ethiopianism"[15] had been behind the attacks on European settlers and colonial government structures and institutions. Second was the fact that Chilembwe's church at the Bruce Estates, close to PIM, was also destroyed. Furthermore, the fact that the leaders of the uprising were exposed to forms of Western education, in Christian mission schools, also enlightened them to the oppression of the colonial authorities.[16] Chilembwe also complained of being 'disrespected and unaccepted' by the European-led mission stations, especially the Church of Scotland, headed by Dr. Alexander Heatherwick.[17]

In the aftermath of the uprising, the colonial government took drastic measures, including applying lethal force to deter future uprisings and 're-establish' state authority. By early February 1915, for instance, hundreds of Africans in Nyasaland had been arrested, including the other alleged 'ring leaders', namely, John Gray Kufa, Duncan Njilima, Wilson Foster, and Hugh Mataka. Other African 'accomplices' were also 'hurriedly' taken to court, where they were charged and sentenced to death by hanging. A reported thirty-six people were hanged under such circumstances. Tens of other Africans were also executed by

NVR 'troops' without giving the Africans a chance to be tried in court. Those executed through the rushed court process included the brutal hanging of the village headman Makwangwala, whose village was close to the government headquarters at Zomba. He was hurriedly charged, convicted, and hanged in full public view. Chilembwe's church at PIM was also destroyed by using a 'dynamite', by two British officers in the Public Works Department, namely, Messrs. Firr and Holmden.[18] The European settler-run newspaper, *The Nyasaland Times*, also ran full-page-length lists of Chilembwe's alleged accomplices who had to be captured and handed over to government authorities. The lists included traditional leaders, local business persons, and members of Chilembwe's church at PIM.[19]

Following those early efforts to quell the uprising, including the killing of Chilembwe and his accomplices, on 28 April 1915, Governor George Smith of Nyasaland appointed a Commission of Inquiry (COI) to look into the major causes of the uprising. Judge R.W. Lyall Grant, of the Nyasaland High Court, chaired the commission. Other members included Messrs. A.M.D. Turnbull, J.C. Casson, A.B.G. Glossop, Claude Metcalfe, and J.E. Jones (the secretary). Among others, the commission was tasked to investigate the following issues: the origin, causes, and objects of the native (African) rising as instigated by John Chilembwe; the grievances that the Africans had against European settlers; the lack of government initiatives to obtain information on how Africans felt about the colonial government; and the effects of Christian mission teaching—religious, educational, or industrial—on African minds and character. When the commission submitted its report on 14 January 1916, the major indication was that the uprising and the violence that ensued had significant religious connotations. It was noted that Chilembwe was influenced by a missionary called Joseph Booth, who preached the message of "Africa for Africans". It was also Booth who arranged for Chilembwe's trip to train in the United States at a 'Negro' Baptist Seminary. Chilembwe's intentions of establishing an African-led state in Nyasaland were only accelerated by the outbreak of World War I and the involvement of Nyasaland Africans in various parts of British colonial Africa. Furthermore, Chilembwe was 'angered' that the Bruce Estates which 'claimed' thousands of acres of land in areas near or claimed by the PIM also refused Chilembwe's efforts to build churches and schools for Africans, some of whom were employed by the Bruce Estates, at its Magomero headquarters. It was for those reasons, that William Jervis Livingstone, the manager of the Bruce Estates, was beheaded by Chilembwe's men at the beginning of the uprising. Livingstone had been responsible for destroying some of Chilembwe's churches on lands claimed by both the PIM and the Bruce Estates. The commission recommended that the Nyasaland government should ban the circulation of 'inflammatory' religious literature, including that coming from the Watch Tower Movement (Jehovah's Witnesses) and other sects associated with the Ethiopianism movement, due to the dangerous political doctrines that they encouraged, including the literature they were sending to Chilembwe. It also called on the government to adopt strict measures to register religious sects, by scrutinizing those that promoted African unrest. The government was also urged to exercise control over the operations of African-led churches, including suppressing those that disseminated 'unsettling or seditious political doctrines'. Furthermore, and perhaps more surprising, in the Nyasaland context, was the commission's recommendation that the government also had to regulate the establishment of what it called "Mohammedan mosques and schools", as up until that time, there had not been significant unrest initiated by the Muslim community.[20] The findings and recommendations of the commission thus not only confirmed but also set in motion a long period of suspicion between the colonial government and the church, both Africa-led and European mission stations for the duration of the colonial period in Nyasaland.[21] Such 'suspicions', as will be discussed in the next section, continued in the postcolonial period and involved some of the religious sects that already had problems working in the colonial setup. Furthermore, a critical analysis of the Chilembwe uprising indicates that while Chilembwe and his followers had 'genuine' grievances, both socio-economic and religious-based, there was no 'justification' for their actions to murder the European settlers. This had the unfortunate impact of causing further bloodshed among the Africans. On the other hand, the colonial

state, seeking to showcase and reaffirm its authority, also over-reacted by killing tens of Africans, many of whom had a remote connection with the African uprising.

3. Eliminating "False Prophets" in Postcolonial Malawi: The State's Operations against the Jehovah's Witnesses

During Malawi's fight for independence in the late 1950s, led by the leading nationalist party, the Nyasaland African Congress (NAC), and later the Malawi Congress Party (MCP),[22] there were reported cases of suspicion between the leading nationalists and the church, especially the European-led (Western-led) mission stations. Matthew Schoffeleers (1999) has posited that while some of the missionaries were 'sympathetic' to the calls for independence, many of them were suspicious of the authoritarian tendencies that began to emerge in the MCP. The missionaries feared that once in power, the new government would take over their schools and hospitals. Other missionaries were also against the notion that Dr. Banda was being paraded as some form of a 'messianic' figure. Dr. Banda also openly called out the missionaries accusing them of not representing the interests of the Africans. Dr. Banda and the MCP were also suspicious of another African-led political party, the Christian Democratic Party (CDP), led by John Chester Katsonga, a Catholic. The MCP accused Roman Catholic bishops of being behind the CDP's formation to challenge the MCP, whose leaders were predominantly Presbyterian, while others still conformed to 'traditional' African religions. The bishops' intrusion was locally described as "Vatican imperialism."[23] Katsonga later apologized to Dr. Banda for having been 'used' by the Catholic bishops in the country, led by Archbishop Theunissen, to destabilize the operations of the MCP.[24] When Malawi attained independence, Dr. Banda was also referred to as "Malawi's Moses", as an honor bestowed upon him for leading Malawians out of the 'yoke' of British colonial rule.[25] The tensions between Dr. Banda and some religious sects during the late colonial period thus prepared the ground for the 'uneasiness' between the state and the church, both African-led and Western-led.

One of the religious sects that experienced forms of 'state-initiated' and 'state-sponsored' violence was the Jehovah's Witness (JW) religious sect. The JW sect in Malawi traces its origins to the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society (WT), headquartered in Brooklyn, New York. Its doctrine is based on the belief that Lucifer or Satan had sinned against God and that he (Lucifer) now rules the earth. Lucifer is in control of commercial, political, and religious instruments. Furthermore, all governments are said to be under Lucifer's control, which they (JWs) did not want to be part of, as they (JWs) are not part of this world (John 17:16). It would only be the Witnesses who will be ready to receive Jesus Christ upon His return to earth to re-establish His kingdom.[26] It was mainly due to such beliefs and their denunciation of all forms of political authority, that the WT movement was always viewed with suspicion in colonial Africa, including in the British-ruled Nyasaland Protectorate (now Malawi). There, the WT movement began operating under the leadership of two clergymen, namely, Joseph Booth (John Chilembwe's mentor, as discussed above) and Elliot Kamwana (from Malawi, and Booth's disciple). Booth and Kamwana met in South Africa at the beginning of the 20th century. Kamwana returned to Malawi in 1908 to lead the WT movement. Among other things, Kamwana spoke against the payment of the hut tax and its connection to the imposition of forced labor on Africans. Kamwana, who also belonged to the "The Ethiopian Movement", or "Ethiopianism", also preached that the world would come to an end in October 1914, when Jesus Christ would return, and that all the Europeans in Malawi would then be compelled to leave the country. That would be the end of all forms of oppression and forced taxation. Sensing that such calls would be a source of violence, the colonial state imprisoned Kamwana in 1909. It deported him to the island of Mauritius, following conditions set in the British Central Africa Order-in-Council, 1902.[27] He remained in Mauritius until the end of 1914 and only returned to Malawi upon the 'expiry' of the threat of his prophecy.[28] He was directed to stay in the remote border district of Mlanje (now Mulanje), where government authorities surveilled his activities.[29] Following a brief stay in Malawi, and his alleged involvement in the disturbances of the Chilembwe Uprising,

as discussed above, Kamwana was deported to Mauritius for the second time in December 1916. At that time, he was deported alongside two other Africans, named Yohani Achirwa and pastor W. Mwenda (both from the WT movement). The government accused them of distributing 'seditious materials' in the protectorate.[30] Kamwana was a 'crowd-puller', as apart from his attacks on the colonial state, his preaching and dramatic open-air baptisms also helped to draw African masses to various places of worship.[31] Kamwana resided in Mauritius until 1937, when he was allowed to return to Malawi, having been given clemency following the installation of King George VI in the United Kingdom. Upon his return, he disassociated himself from the WT movement and established a religious organization called the Watchman Healing Mission. This mission rejected using Western medicine; instead, Kamwana's followers sought spiritual healing.[32]

While such acts of both physical and non-physical violence deterred followers of the WT in Malawi during the colonial period, the movement did not "die a natural death". There were efforts to revive the movement during the Inter-War Period (1919–1939), including cases where the WT sent missionaries to Malawi. However, many of such missionaries, including the missionary William Johnston, from Scotland, were unable to rekindle the movement's early success in Malawi. The movement 'resurfaced' as JW toward the end of British colonial rule from the early 1950s onward. It followed the work of two American WT missionaries, namely, N.H. Knorr and M.G. Henschel. They were sent to work in Malawi in early 1948.[33] By 1967, three years after Malawi attained independence, there were a reported 18,000 JWs in the country.[34] However, JWs in Malawi soon emerged to be 'bitter enemies' of the country's authoritarian government under Dr. Banda and the MCP, as JWs refused to support the MCP. Even before Malawi attained independence in July 1964, MCP members had already begun campaigns to persecute the JWs, referring to the JWs as "false prophets."[35] Government intelligence reports of the pre-independence period contain evidence of the violent attacks on the Witnesses, including denying them access to their gardens and tobacco markets. Postal officers were also given orders to withhold mail from members of the sect.[36] In some parts of the country, these violent attacks also targeted members and churches of the PIM for their opposition to the MCP.[37] From January to March 1964, MCP cadres unleashed a wave of violence against the Witnesses, destroying 1081 homes and more than 100 Kingdom Halls (churches) across the country. They also destroyed hundreds of acres where the Witnesses had cultivated maize (corn), millet, cassava, beans, and cotton. The violence saw many Witnesses hospitalized, their women raped, and eight of them dead.[38]

Two years after independence, in 1966, the republican constitution was amended, which made the MCP to become the only legally recognized political party.[39] It meant that all Malawians were required to be the party's card-carrying members. Such demands went against the doctrines of the JW sect, which as described above, barred its members from taking part in political activities, joining political groups, or working with any form of government. In Malawi, JW leaders prohibited their members from buying the party membership cards and wearing badges that had the picture of Dr. Banda, which 'irked' the government and party leaders. JWs in Malawi were also accused of refusing to pay taxes. Dr. Banda argued that this was contrary to the teachings of Jesus Christ (Mark 12:17), whom he quoted as saying 'Give unto Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give to God what belongs to God."[40] At the MCP annual convention of 1967 (September 10–18), held in Mzuzu, in northern Malawi, the delegates declared the JWs as an outlawed sect along the following lines: "We the delegates and representatives of all the people of Malawi in congress assembled, recommend strongly that the Jehovah's Witness denomination be declared illegal in this country as the attitude of its adherents is not only inimical to the progress of this country but also so negative in every way that it endangers the stability of peace and calm which is essential for the smooth running of our state."[41] Earlier that year, Dr. Banda delivered remarks to the nation, where he made the following accusations on the JWs: that they (JWs) provoked MCP supporters, especially members of the Malawi Young Pioneers (MYP) and the Malawi Youth League (MYL); that the JWs were refusing

to pay taxes; that the JWs were also stopping other non-Witnesses from paying taxes, including abusing members of the MYP, MYL, and MCP officials who were enforcing taxation measures; that the Witnesses were also stopping MCP members from renewing or buying party membership cards; and that the Witnesses were also conducting door-to-door evangelization, including visiting homes of other Christians to 'convert' them to the denomination. Dr. Banda thus called on the police to arrest the perpetrators of such cases of provocation and even sanctioned they should be beaten up by the members of the MYP and the MYL.[42]

The 1967 MCP annual convention both confirmed and 'triggered' further acts of violence against the JWs. Many of them were detained and tortured and had their property confiscated, and others went into forced exile. Pro-government lynch mobs, including members of the MYP and the MYL,[43] were also used to torture and murder JWs. As of January 1976, there were a reported 5000 JWs in the detention centers at Dzaleka, Kanjedza, and Malaku.[44] Expatriate leaders of the JW sect in Malawi were also hurriedly forced to leave the country once the sect was outlawed.[45] MCP leaders took turns to rebuke and ridicule JWs during public party rallies. There was also a government directive, as of 1972, that all civil servants who were 'members' of the JW sect should be dismissed from their government jobs.[46] Traditional leaders, locally known as "chiefs", were also given powers to expel JWs from their areas of jurisdiction, as was the case with Chief Mabulabo of Mzimba District, who reportedly expelled 22 JWs in October 1972, on the accusation that the JWs were derailing development efforts in the country.[47] Of those that went into exile in Zambia, it was reported that by November 1972, there were about 12,500 Malawian JWs seeking refuge, many of whom were housed at Sinda Misale refugee camp.[48] Other reports indicated that Zambia was home to about 13,000 JW refugees from Malawi, whereas Mozambique welcomed about 12,500 Malawian religious refugees.[49] In Zambia, the JWs from Malawi were also harassed by members of the then-ruling United National Independence Party (UNIP), as they (JWs), were accused of refusing to salute the Zambian flag and stand when the national anthem was played.[50] Elsewhere in the southern African region, in Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia), South Africa, and Mozambique (then newly independent), JWs were also persecuted for their refusal to serve in the military and to pledge allegiance to the government.[51] President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania also banned the JWs in 1968, as the Witnesses challenged his political and socio-economic ideologies, anchored under the so-called *Ujamaa*.[52]

These cases of 'religious-based violence' against the JWs continued throughout Dr. Banda's reign, with thousands of JWs detained in various centers in the country. The detainees, who were often not accorded a chance to be tried in court, were held under "The Preservation of Public Security Ordinance" of November 1964.[53] The 'awkward' scenario was that Dr. Banda was a 'practicing' Christian and a 'church elder' in the Church of Scotland. He established those ties during his long stay in the United Kingdom from 1937–1953.[54] Dr. Banda was also fond of making public statements that Malawians enjoyed freedom of belief and worship under his administration.[55] It was not until the political changes of the early 1990s, which led to the downfall of the Banda regime, that the JWs were allowed to freely practice their religion in Malawi.[56] On 15 November 1993, the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania was legally registered in Malawi, granting JWs legal recognition to practice their religion in the country.[57] This followed the Malawi government's lifting of the ban that prohibited JWs to worship in Malawi in August 1993.[58] Under the current multiparty democracy political dispensation, the country's citizens are now allowed to join religious organizations of their choice without government interference.[59] When one critically analyzes the experiences of the JW sect in postcolonial Malawi, one could argue that although they faced various forms of 'persecution', as discussed in this section, the sect's leaders could have minimized or even avoided the suffering by 'adapting' their teachings and operations to the demands of the state. While they might not have 'joined' the MCP, the accusations that they refused to pay taxes are at most 'inexcusable'. That also explains why even when the Witnesses were deported

from Malawi, they also faced 'persecution' because they did not obey government and party authorities.

4. Conclusions

This paper has contributed to various scholarly debates, including that of the relationship between religion and violence in modern Africa and the dynamics and operations of the state in both colonial and postcolonial Africa. It has done so using case studies from the southern African country of Malawi. It has used case studies covering both the colonial and postcolonial periods, where religion has been at the center of some of the country's major conflicts. On the former, the focus has been on the Chilembwe Uprising of January 1915, which has been argued was a case of 'religious-based violence', organized by private citizens, led by John Chilembwe of the PIM, against the colonial state and European settlers. On the latter, the discussion has centered on the Jehovah's Witnesses sect, including the persecution that its members faced during the regime of Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda. This paper has argued that elements of 'religious-based violence' have historically occurred in both physical and non-physical forms. Furthermore, unlike in other prior studies, the Malawian examples show us that 'religious-based violence' occurs in multiple and often complex circumstances and not 'exclusively' as a result of experiences of 'state-driven' social, economic, and political exclusion and marginalization. There is 'religious-based violence' that is 'perpetrated' by private citizens against other private citizens and the state, as in the Chilembwe Uprising. There is also 'religious-based violence' that can emanate from the state using violent and oppressive measures against its citizens, as in the case of the persecuted Jehovah's Witnesses. In these cases, this paper has argued that private citizens, interested groups, and the state, are all 'equally' capable and 'guilty' of perpetrating elements of 'religious-based violence.'

In today's Malawi, John Chilembwe is celebrated as a national hero, and the Malawi government declared January 15 a national holiday in his honor. Chilembwe's facial image is also used on several of the country's bank notes. On the other hand, the Jehovah's Witnesses, who 'equally' fought against authoritarian governments, both colonial and postcolonial, have not been accorded any such recognition. This could be explained from the perspective that the JW sect was seen to be in 'opposition' to the movement and political party (the MCP) that won independence from British colonial rule and hence deemed to be 'unpatriotic' in some quarters. However, as indicated earlier, the JW sect now 'freely' operates as any other Christian denomination, without government restrictions and fears of being persecuted.

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Notes

1 Wolfgang Huber (2011): pp. 1–2.

2 See Mohammed Usman (2013): pp. 41–51; John O. Voll (2015): pp. 1182–202; J. Peter Pham (2016): pp. 1–18; Ziya Meral (2018); Abiodun Alao (2022).

3 The country now called Malawi is a former British Protectorate (1891–1964) in southern Africa. From 1891–1897, the name of the protectorate was British Central Africa (BCA); from 1897–1907, the name was British Central Africa Protectorate (BCAP); and from 1907–1964, the name was the Nyasaland Protectorate. During those seven decades, there were 13 British governors. Immediately after independence in July 1964, the country degenerated into a dictatorship under the government of Dr. Hastings

Kamuzu Banda, who ruled the country from 1964–1994, the period covered in this paper. See John McCracken (2012); Paul Chiudza Banda (2020).

4 In their recent study of causes of 'religious-based violence' in sub-Saharan Africa (using cases from Nigeria, Mali, and the Central African Republic), Ludovic Lado argued that the major sources of violence involving both Christians and Muslims emanated from complex cases of social, economic, and political exclusion and marginalization by the state. See Ludovic Lado (2014): pp. 1–8; Jon Abbink also makes the same claims and argues further that the grievances that marginalized citizens have against the state are then combined with religious ideologies. See Jon Abbink (2020): pp. 194–97.

5 Jon Abbink (2020) presents a case study of the clash between Muslims and Christians in Jos City in Plateau State, Nigeria. See Jon Abbink (2020): pp. 211–13; Abiodun Alao also discusses violence between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria, as Christians organized themselves to stop Boko Haram. See Abiodun Alao (2022), pp. 77–79; Palwasha Kakar and Melissa Nozell, have also discussed religious-based violence involving competing Islamic sects and their militias in "post-Muammar Gadaffi" Libya. See Kakar and Nozell (2016): pp. 59–84.

6 For instance, the reported atrocities by the Chinese government against Xinjiang's Muslims. See Human Rights Watch (2018): pp. 1–125.

7 In African colonial history, scholars often demarcate three major phases, as follows: primary resistance (which took place before World War I); secondary resistance (which took place during the Inter-War Period); and modern mass nationalism (after World War II and led to the independence of African states). See, for instance, Michael Tidy (1981), p. 14.

8 Michael Tidy (1981), p. 14; Caroline Elkins has argued that 'violence' was 'endemic to the structures and systems of British colonial rule. Violence was a means through which the empire maintained sovereign claims to overseas territories. See Caroline Elkins (2022), pp. 13–15.

9 In 1896, Joseph Booth published a book titled *Africa for Africans*. In it, he supported the return of Africans in the diaspora to Africa but also condemned European colonial rule in Africa. See George Shepperson (1958), pp. 109–12.

10 George Shepperson (1958), pp. 36–69, 79–81, 91–94, and 112–18.

11 See this work: A. Isaacman and J. Vansina, "African initiatives and resistance in Central Africa, 1880–1914", in Adu Boahen (1985), pp. 167–93.

12 Paul Chiudza Banda, "Malawi: The Role of 'Paramilitary' Groups in Political Surveillance", in Ryan Shaffer (2023), pp. 393–97; David T. Stuart-Mogg (2023): pp. 83–93.

13 George Shepperson (1958), pp. 187–320; Bridglal Pachai (1973), pp. 214–24; Joey Power (2010), pp. 13–28; John McCracken (2012), pp. 127–46.

14 Paul Chiudza Banda (2020), pp. 80–82.

15 The term "Ethiopianism" or "Ethiopian Movement", was used to refer to "independent" African churches during the colonial period. Many began to operate in the last three decades of the 19th century. It later adopted notions of self-advancement and calls for nationalism or political independence. See George Shepperson (1953): pp. 9–18; Sylvia M. Jacobs, "Malawi: A Historical Study of Religion, Political Leadership, and State Power", in Rolin G. Mainuddin (2002), pp. 52–56.

16 "The Chilembwe Trouble: All Quiet", *The Nyasaland Times*, 4 February 1915. Source: Center for Research Libraries (CRL), microfilm collection; "The Chilembwe Trouble: The Debate in the Council", *The Nyasaland Times*, 18 March 1915. Source: CRL.

17 David T. Stuart-Mogg (2023): pp. 83–93; Note that the Church of Scotland Mission, also known as "The Blantyre Mission", also had ethnic-based and boundary-related conflicts with other Presbyterian churches in the country during the colonial period, namely, the Livingstonia Mission (LM) and the Dutch Reformed Church Mission (DRCM). See Dorothy Tembo (2024): pp. 262–76.

18 "The Chilembwe Trouble: All Quiet", *The Nyasaland Times*, 4 February 1915. Source: CRL; "The Chilembwe Affair", *Nyasaland Times*, 11 February 1915. Source: CRL; Paul Chiudza Banda (2020), pp. 395–97. ; On the application of the death penalty in British colonial Africa, including in Nyasaland, see Stacey Hynd (2008): pp. 403–18.

19 "Notice: List of Natives Still Wanted", *The Nyasaland Times*, 4 March 1915. Source: CRL.

20 The British National Archives, Kew, hereafter, TNA CO 525/61: "Commission of Inquiry", 8 May 1915; "Nyasaland Native Rising Commission", *The Nyasaland Times*, 10 February 1916. Source: CRL; William Jervis Livingstone reportedly burnt down three of Chilembwe's churches. See David T. Stuart-Mogg (1997): pp. 49–52; Note that in 1902, soldiers from Nyasaland and other British territories (belonging to the Kings African Rifles) were dispatched to British-ruled Somaliland to defeat an Islam-influenced and secessionist uprising led by the Mad Mullah (Muhammad Abdullah Hassan). See Paul Chiudza Banda (2020), pp. 34–40.

21 In February 1916, for example, the Nyasaland Executive Council (Exco) passed a resolution to strictly monitor and limit the operations and limit the spheres of influence of Christian missions and schools (both Western-led and African-led missions) as well as the so-called "Mohammedan mosques". It also included banning the circulation of the so-called "Ethiopianism literature". See TNA CO 626/2: "Minutes of the Exco meeting", held at Zomba, 18 February 1916.

22 Note: The NAC was established in 1944. It was outlawed during the State of Emergency of March 1959–April 1960. In its place emerged the MCP, under the leadership of Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda. See Paul Chiudza Banda and Kayira (2012): pp. 1–19.

[23] Matthew Schoffeleers (1999), pp. 17–38; "Beware of False Prophets", *Malawi News*, 1 February 1962. Source: CRL; "Ngwazi warns politically-minded missionaries", *Malawi News*, 28 June 1963. Source: CRL.

[24] "Katsonga apologizes to Kamuzu: Stevens and Archbishop helped party", *Malawi News*, 1 March 1962. Source: CRL. The archbishop donated £200 to the CDP, which the party used to purchase a Land Rover. Note that Mr. Stevens was General Manager of the Malawi Railways; In the pre-independence period, Dr. Banda threatened such businessmen with deportation. See Nyasaland Protectorate (1963), p. 1010.

[25] Dr. Banda's speech, 10th Republic Anniversary Celebrations, at Kamuzu Stadium, 6 July 1976. Source: CRL.

[26] J. R. Hooker (1965): p. 91; M. James Penton (1979): pp. 55–61.

[27] See Nyasaland Protectorate (1914), pp. 1–9.

[28] Paul Chiudza Banda (2020), pp. 47–48; "The British Central Africa Order-in-Council, 1902", in *The British Central Africa Gazette*, 31 October 1902. See Sections 25–27; Note that Joseph Booth was deported from Nyasaland in August 1899 for his advocacy against British colonial rule. By November 1899, he had negotiated his way back into the protectorate. See Pedro Pinto (2005): pp. 64–65.

[29] TNA CO 525/68: Governor George Smith to Secretary of State (SoS) for the Colonies, 26 August 1916.

[30] TNA CO 525/72: Governor George Smith to SoS for the Colonies, 15 January 1915.

[31] Jehovah's Witnesses Yearbook for 1999: "Malawi". Available online: https://www.jw.org/en/library/books/1999-Yearbook-of-Jehovahs-Witnesses/ (accessed on 14 March 2024).

[32] J. C. Chakanza (2001), pp. 14–27; John McCracken (2012), pp. 123–24.

[33] See note 31.

[34] The Minority Rights Group, "Jehovah's Witnesses in Africa", Report no.29 (1985): p. 4.

[35] The concept of "false prophets" was used to ridicule the JWs in Malawi, accusing the sect's members of not wanting the MCP to lead Malawi to independence. See "Beware of False Prophets", *Malawi News*, 1 February 1962. Source: CRL; Philip Short (1974), p. 171.

[36] TNA FCO 141/14205: "Nyasaland Monthly Intelligence Report, August 1962."; TNA DO 183/136: "Nyasaland Intelligence Committee Report (NICR), June 1963", Part II, Section F.; TNA DO 183/136: "NICR, November 1963", Part II, Section E.; TNA DO 183/136: "NICR, October 1963", Part II, Section E.; TNA DO 183/137: "NICR, May 1964", Part II, Section E.

[37] TNA DO 183/136: "NICR, December 1963", Part II, Section B. Note: The violent attacks on PIM members took place in Dedza district. Four PIM members were 'arrested' for failure to produce party (MCP) cards; six members were injured and taken to Lilongwe Hospital; and an elderly man died of his injuries.

[38] "Shocking Religious Persecution in Malawi", Pamphlet. Source: Hastings Kamuzu Banda Archive (HKBA, hereafter), Indiana University Library.

[39] The Constitution of the Republic of Malawi, Chapter I, Section IV: "Malawi a One-Party State."

[40] "Jehovah's Witnesses or Mboni, are ignorant fools", *Malawi News*, 28 February 1964, Source: CRL; "Shocking Religious Persecution in Malawi", Pamphlet. Source: HKBA.

[41] Malawi National Archives, hereafter, MNA 2835: MCP Annual Convention Resolutions, 1965–1975 (Blantyre, Malawi: Dept. of Information, 1975), pp. 3–5.

[42] Dr. Banda's Broadcast to the Nation, 23 April 1967. Source: CRL; Klaus Fiedler has written elsewhere about cases where men, women, and their children were stripped naked and sexually abused by members of the MYP and MYL. See Klaus Fiedler, "Power at the Receiving End: The Jehovah's Witnesses' Experience in One Party Malawi", in Kenneth R. Ross (1996), pp. 167–68.

[43] Note that the LMW was affiliated to the MCP as the party's youth branch. On the other hand, the MYP, as established in 1963, was set up to be a 'developmental' organ for Malawi's youth. When Malawi gained independence, the MYP's paramilitary branch was used to spy on real and perceived enemies of the regime. See TNA FCO 141/14186: "The Malawi Youth Movement is formally launched", Nyasaland Government Press Release, no. 606/63, 11 August 1963; "MYP is under the MCP: Kamuzu reorganizes MYPs", *Malawi News*, 6 December 1963. Source: CRL; *Malawi Government Gazette Supplement*, "The Young Pioneers Act, 1965". 19 March 1965; TNA FCO 45/1034: "Malawi Young Pioneers", 22 September 1971.

[44] The Minority Rights Group, "Jehovah's Witnesses in Africa", Report no.29 (1985): pp. 4–5; Government of Malawi, "History and Hope in Malawi: Repression, Suffering, and Human Rights under Dr. Kamuzu Banda, 1964–1994", (March 2005), pp. 15–16 and 40–42; "Malawi is said to detain 30,000 Jehovah's Sect", *The New York Times*, 10 December 1975. Available online: https://www.nytimes.com/1975/12/10/archives/malawi-is-said-to-detain-30000-in-jehovah-sect.html (accessed on 13 March 2024).

[45] "Jehovah's Witnesses Face Trials in Malawi", *The New York Times*, 9 November 1967. Available online: https://www.nytimes.com/1967/11/09/archives/jehovahs-witnesses-face-trials-in-malawi.html (accessed on 13 March 2024).

[46] TNA FCO 45/1227: "Handling of Civil Servants: Ex-Members of Jehovah's Witnesses", G.A. Jafu, Secretary to the President and Cabinet (SPC), to All Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Departments. Ref. no.: 49/01/26/111/26.

[47] TNA FCO 45/1227: "Blantyre, Radio—10:30 GMT, 2 October 1972; The language that the JWs derailed political and economic development efforts in the country was also used at the MCP annual convention of September 1972. See MNA 2,385: MCP Annual Convention Resolutions, 1965–1975 (1975), pp. 15–17.

[48] TNA FCO 45/1227: "Zambian High Commissioner", Martin Reid, British High Commission (BHC), Malawi, to A.B. Moore, FCO, London, 22 November 1972; Dr. Banda accused 'rich' JWs in Malawi, Western diplomats in Malawi, and other funding agencies in the USA, Britain, and South Africa of ferrying the Witnesses from Malawi to Sinda Misale in Zambia. He denied the notion that the JWs were being persecuted in Malawi. See Dr. Banda's speech, at State House, Zomba, 1 January 1973. Source: CRL.

[49] TNA FCO 45/1227: "The Present Mood in Malawi", BHC to FCO, November 8, 1972; "UN Group to Give $40,000 for Refugees from Malawi", *The New York Times*, 24 October 1972. Available online: https://www.nytimes.com/1972/10/24/archives/un-group-to-give-40000-for-refugees-from-malawi.html (accessed on 13 March 2024).

[50] "Jehovah's Witnesses Fate in Zambia", *Malawi News*, 18 March 1969. Source: CRL; TNA FCO 45/1649: "Jehovah's Witnesses", D.P. Small (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), to Mrs. G. Hackett (Home Office), 3 September 1974. Ref. no. CSY 1/3.

[51] "Sect is Persecuted in Southern Africa", *The New York Times*, 28 December 1975. Available online: https://www.nytimes.com/1975/12/28/archives/sect-is-persecuted-in-southern-africa.html (accessed on 13 March 2024); Klaus Fiedler in Ross (1996), pp. 161–64.

[52] Sholto Cross, "Independent Churches and Independent States: Jehovah's Witnesses in East and Central Africa", in Edward Fashole-Luke et al. (1978), pp. 310–15; Note that the ideology of "Ujamaa", was based on elements of African forms of socialism, which Nyerere introduced in postcolonial Tanzania. See Julius Nyerere (1987): pp. 4–11.

[53] TNA FCO 106/2853: Amnesty International Report: "Malawi: Human Rights Violations 25 Years after Independence", September 1989; TNA FCO 106/2238: Amnesty International Report: "Malawi: Imprisonment of Political Opponents", November 1986; Africa Watch, "Where Silence Rules: The Suppression of Dissent in Malawi", (October 1990), pp. 63–67.

[54] "Shocking Religious Persecution in Malawi", Pamphlet. Source: HKBA; On Dr. Banda's life in exile, see Joey Power (2019): 1–24.

[55] "All churches free and welcome in Malawi", *Malawi News*, 15 December 1970. Source: CRL; "Churches are free to operate in Malawi, says Ngwazi", *Malawi News*, 31 August 1973. Source: CRL.

[56] As was the case in most parts of sub-Saharan Africa, the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s increased the likelihood that authoritarian governments would collapse. The pressure for political change emanated from both domestic and international forces. In Malawi, a national referendum was held in June 1993, which returned the country to multiparty democracy. In the general elections of May 1994, Bakili Muluzi of the United Democratic Front (UDF) defeated Dr. Banda. He ruled the country from 1994–2004. See Paul Chiudza Banda (2020), pp. 242–59.

[57] "Good News from Malawi", Pamphlet. HKBA.

[58] See notes 31 above.

[59] Constitution of the Republic of Malawi, 1994, Chapter IV: "Human Rights"—Section 33: Religion and Belief; US Department of State, "Malawi 2022 International Religious Freedom Report", (2022), pp. 1–5. Available online: https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-report-on-international-religious-freedom/malawi (accessed on 21 March 2024).

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