

THE HISTORY OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC
CHURCH IN MALAWI (1964 - 1992) WITH
REFERENCE TO THE ISSUE OF SOCIAL INJUSTICE.
A STUDY OF CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- A.M.E.C.E.A.- Association of the Members of the Episcopal
Conferences of Central and Eastern Africa
- C.C.M.- Christian Council of Malawi
- C.D.P- Christian Democratic Party
- C.I.J.D.P- Catholic Institute for the Development of
justice and Peace
- C.S.A.- Catholic Secretariat Archives
- C.S.C.- Christian Service Committee
- E .C .M -- Episcopal Conference of Malawi
- G. A. Z. M- Government Archives, Zomba, Malawi
- M.C.P.- Malawi Congress Party
- S. E. C. A. M.- Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa
and Madagascar

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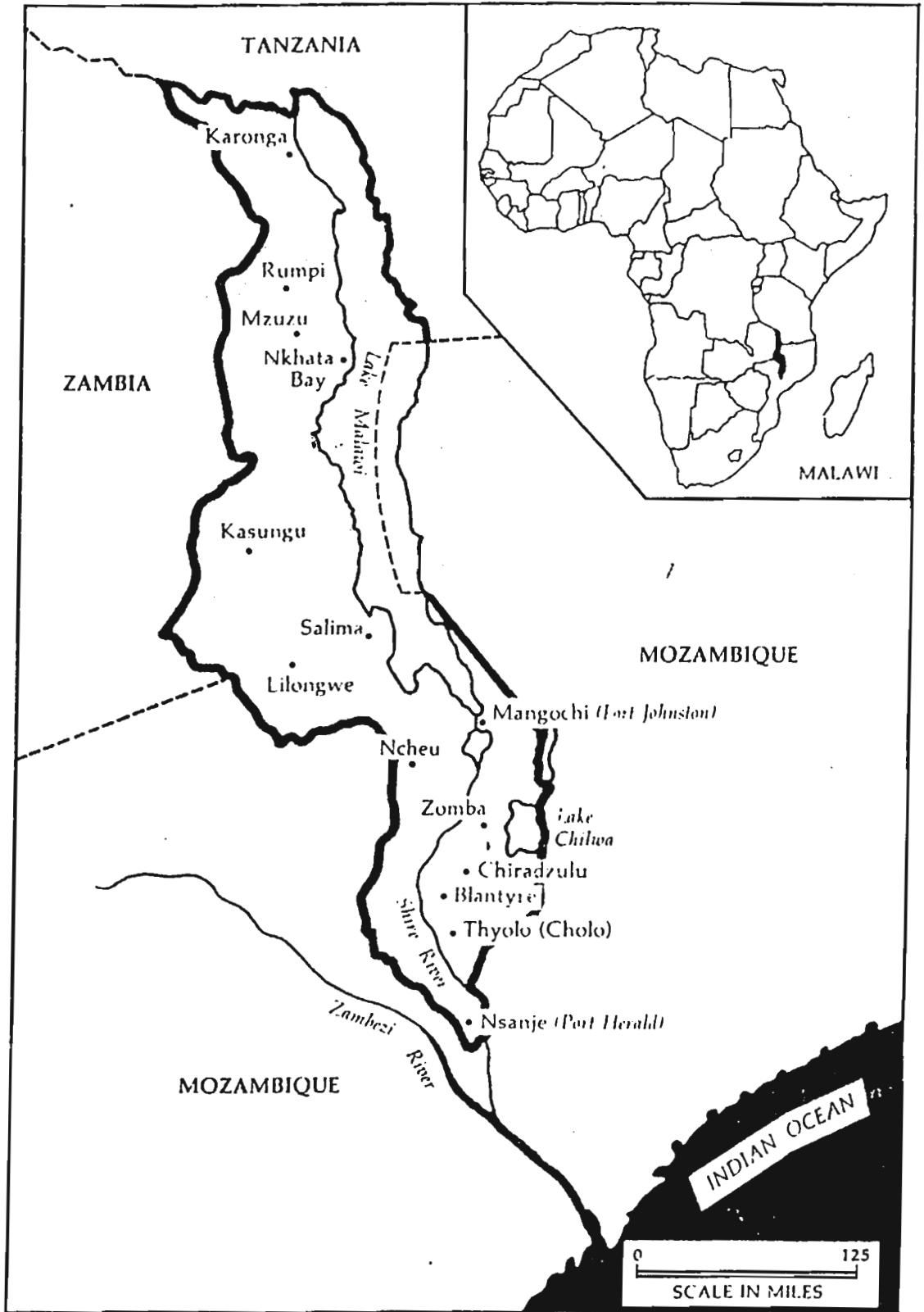
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LIVING OUR FAITH

Pastoral Letter of the
Catholic Bishops of Malawi



Lent 1992



MALAWI

PREFACE

Malawi has a land area of 36,324 square miles, excluding the lake area which is a dominant feature of that country. It is bordered in the east and south by Mozambique. To the north is Tanzania. To the west is Zambia. This land is inhabited by at least fourteen tribal groups. These have in one way or another descended from the earlier inhabitants.

It is orally held that the first people known to have settled in this area where the pygmoid, short-statured kind. These were either eliminated or assimilated or displaced by the second group, the Proto-Bantu who had been moving from the north to the south during the iron age.

The third group of settlers arrived between the thirteenth and sixteenth century. They belonged to the Maravi kingdom. They dispersed from the Katanga Province, near modern day Zaire. They established themselves under three senior chiefs, Kalonga, Lundu and Undi. The author has descended matrilineally from the latter group. These three dominant groups came to constitute the Chewa tribes in Malawi.

Between Dwangwa and Songwe rivers settled almost five hundred years ago, the Lambya, Tumbuka, Nkhonde, and Tonga tribes. The fifth and last group comprised of two smaller ones. They came during the mid-nineteenth century from South Africa. They were of Nguni descent. They were led and ruled by Zwangendaba. These settled in the northern and some central parts of the country, while others in some parts of the south.

0.0 Introduction

On Sunday, 8th March, 1992, the seven Roman Catholic Bishops of Malawi issued a Lenten Pastoral Letter, entitled, "Living our Faith". The letter was read out in all catholic churches of Malawi. It was critical of the rule of the Malawi's Congress Party government of Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda.¹ It condemned and protested in no uncertain terms the glaring social evils and injustices which were associated with that rule.² Public response to the Pastoral letter was almost instant and overwhelming. There was widespread jubilation, and the mood of the people was one of unexpected relief. Demonstrations, initially organised by Catholic students of Chancellor college, Zomba in support of the army, spread to the other constituent colleges of the university.³ More significantly, it called for political change. In sharp contrast, the government responded by banning the letter, declaring its possession illegal, threatening those in possession with prosecution.⁴ The Bishops themselves, were subjected to an ordeal of a marathon interrogation by the security police of the regime, and subsequently put under

¹ B.J. Mijoga, "Living our Faith: Pastoral letter from the Catholic Bishops of Malawi to be read in every Catholic Church on 8th March 1992: An Example of First Public Declaration of the Hidden Transcript" (unpublished article) p. 2.

² *Ibid.*, p.2.

³ Venter, D., *Malawi Towards Multi-Party Democracy: The next Domino ? Africa Institute of South Africa, Pretoria, African Studies Association of the United Kingdom Biennial Conference, Sept 8-10, 1992, p.15*

⁴ Mijoga, "Living our faith", p.3.

house arrest.⁵ At a later stage, it also transpired that a plot to kill the Bishops by the Malawi Congress Party officials had been hatched.⁶ However, almost as if to highlight the urgency of the situation there were mounting calls on the government from within and outside the government for socio-political change, an action hitherto unfathomed.⁷ Once again, modern Malawi was on the threshold of a new era. Indeed since then, the history of that country has taken a new direction. This study is therefore, partly an attempt to respond to that letter or event. Why did the Bishops' action provoke such a sharp and conflicting response from both the government and the people? Why did the government in particular, react with such violence?

The sharp reaction could only have meant that the Bishops' action was novel or unprecedented. Certainly, it was their first public criticism of the Malawi Congress Party regime to be issued in that country since independence in 1964. The fact that the government acted in a violent manner highlights the significance of the Bishops' action. This study tries to specifically address the issue: why did it take the Catholic Bishops almost three decades, from 1964 to 1992, before they could respond to the issues of social injustices and evils in such an unequivocal manner? Conversely, this essay seeks to inquire into the factors or issues that might have hampered the Roman Catholic Church's social witness in Malawi, in the period between 1964 and 1992. It is a study of church-state relationship with reference to the issues of social injustice and political oppression during the reign of Dr Banda.

While this study seeks to address the question: why did the Roman

⁵ D. Venter, "Malawi Towards Multi-Party Democracy: The Next Domino?", p.15.

⁶ *Malawi Democrat* 24\9\92 , p.1

⁷ Venter, *Malawi Towards Multi-Party Democracy*, pp.21-2.

Catholic Church not condemn socio-political injustice in the period between 1964 and 1992, conversely in chapter four, it also attempts to address the issue: how did the Bishops' Lenten Pastoral Letter come about? What was going on in the country or the Church in the period running up to March 1992? Or what factors contributed to the process whereby the Bishops decided to issue the Pastoral Letter?

0.1 Sources

In undertaking this study, we shall rely upon three categories of sources: oral (interviews), primary and secondary. In this regard it ought to be noted from the out-set that inspite of the fact Malawi is today politically open, especially since the political change initiated in 1993, the legacy of political fear, suspicion or insecurity left by the previous regime is still very much alive in some respects. Unfortunately, this has to some extent affected the present study. In this regard some of our sources have requested the writer that they remain anonymous, especially with respect to some areas regarded as " politically sensitive." I have therefore honoured their requests. Similarly, while appreciating the generosity of some institutions accorded to the writer to conduct research, there has unfortunately been restrictions on the accessibility of certain classified information. This has in some cases entailed that during the course of the study the writer has had to " read-in-between the lines " some sources available to him. Since our study touches upon contemporary history, the greater part of which period the author has lived through so far, there are certain instances whereby he has been compelled to refer to his own experiences. Accordingly, this has been indicated as such.

0.2 Methodology

This study draws heavily both from primary and secondary source. It

forms the basis of our study. In pursuing this study, a very brief general historical background of the Roman Catholic Church prior to coming to Malawi has been sketched. Similarly, an attempt has been made to set the missionary work of the Roman Catholic Church in the context of British colonial history, particularly from the last two decades of the nineteenth century up to the closing years of this century. Emphasis has been laid on the contrasting features of the Catholic and Protestant Missionary bodies and also their interaction vis a vis the colonial government. The issue is: how did those shape in particular the direction of the mission of the Roman Catholic Church in Malawi? What impact did the historical context in colonial Nyasaland have on the Roman Catholic Church in post-independent Malawi?

In chapter two, covering the period particularly between 1964 and 1979, will try to argue that the Bishops' inability to speak out against social or political injustice in the post-independent Malawi was primarily or initially due to their quest for survival in a political situation which they possibly perceived to be hostile. Their action to support the weak Christian Democratic Party versus the strong based Malawi Congress Party, was in this respect an attempt to reposition itself in the new order where it did not have a strong constituency. However, the Church's reaction to the government's violent response moulded its attitude and ultimately determined its relationship with the new order at least until towards mid-seventies. Being in this position, it will further be argued, that the Church succumbed to the pressure for legitimation, which it offered as also the only means by which it sought to reconcile itself with the new state.

In chapter three, a period between 1970 and 1979, ^{how? See above} will seek to show, firstly, how the churches were further drawn into the political ambit of the government especially through the latter's semi-official structures, and that affected their mission. Secondly, this chapter will also try to show how the two factors, namely, the conservativeness of the Malawian hierarchy

and of Rome affected the Church's mission in the society.

Chapter four, covers a period between 1980 and 1992. Firstly, it focuses on the context that gave rise or enhanced the movement towards socio-political change in Malawi. In particular, it will seek to portray how the impact of the Church's relationship with the other churches particularly in Africa influenced its socio-political outlook on the society that finally led to the Bishops' decision to issue the Lenten Pastoral Letter on 8th March, 1992. Secondly, since this is the end of our study, an attempt will be made to draw conclusions from our findings in the preceding chapters. Thirdly, and lastly, a synoptic analysis of the significance of the Lenten Pastoral Letter, pre-independent Pastoral and Zambian will be tried.

Finally, there are two things to note about our present study. Since our subject matter is " the Church, " it ought to be noted here that the term is meant to specifically apply to the hierarchy in Malawi, the Bishops. While it does not in any way want to deny or disparage the contribution of the lay people in Malawi towards social change, this study insists that the Bishops or upper clergy as decision makers or holders of power remain the crucial element in any event affecting the life of the Church. The influence of the Bishops in any life of the Church still remain absolutely crucial to the life of the Church. The fact that the Bishops became the special target of the Banda government in the wake of the Pastoral Letter confirms this.

Lastly, this study uses the names, Malawi and Nyasaland interchangeably. The reader has to note that the two names refer to the same nation or land. During the British colonial era, the name Nyasaland alternated with the British Central Africa. However, as already noted above in certain respects this study uses both names.

→ NO, British Central Africa was not until 1907. From 1907 - to ^{6 July} 1963 the land was referred to as Nyasaland.

After attaining self government in 1963¹¹ when the Malawi Congress Party ^{became independent} ~~was~~ majority ~~with in parliament~~
The name was changed to Malawi

In 1891 Malawi became a British Protectorate. The name of Malawi in 1907 Malawi

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 A Brief Historical Background of the Catholic Church in Malawi: Late 18th and 19th Century

The Roman Catholic Church in Malawi today traces its source of origin to the social upheaval that was gripping Western Europe and the church during the late eighteenth and nineteenth century. Its subsequent history in Malawi therefore either, directly or indirectly is associated with these. A brief study of their relation to the origin of the church is therefore, necessary.

Towards the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Roman Catholic Church, like the Protestant Churches in Europe were going through yet another socio-political upheaval. Amongst other things, the ideas or tendencies of the Enlightenment, the period that emphasised rationalism as the basis or guide of human explanation, had led to the emergence of revolutions in Europe. Amongst these was the French Revolution.

That phenomenon was to affect all the churches, but more severely the Roman Catholic Church. Similarly, even though the Revolution manifested itself with varying intensity in various places, it was particularly in France where it made its worst blow on the Roman Catholic Church.⁸ The activities of Napoleon Bonaparte had the calculated effect of reducing the Catholic Church to a subordinate structure of the state. The crux of the struggle between the two parties was the temporal power of the papacy (church). In pursuit of his imperial, grandiose ambitions, Napoleon subjected the church to humiliation and persecution. He hurried one Pope, Pius

⁸ Latourette, K.S., *A History of Christianity*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1953), p.1009.

(1717-99).⁹ Similarly, more seriously, in an attempt to control the church, Napoleon's policies and activities were such that had the effect of causing dissensions in its ranks. Similarly, Napoleon's expropriation of church lands, suppression of monasteries, not only robbed the church of its most needed resources but also its manpower, respectively.¹⁰ Likewise, Napoleon's direct interference in the crucial structures of the church, such as the body responsible for mission, the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, weakened the church's ability to engage in mission.¹¹ Religious toleration imposed in France and other states, coupled with the intransigent or reactionary response of the Papacy towards the current modernist trend had the effect of putting the Catholic church in a "sectarian" position.¹² On the other hand, the church's unwillingness to come to terms with some of the challenges of the period further marginalised it in the society. In short, as Neill sums up, the Revolution weakened the church to such a degree that it seemed impossible to recover from this serious debility. This weakness was reflected everywhere in the life of the church.¹³ Through internal hardship, the French Revolution paralysed the church to the core, making it impossible to either choose or send out missionaries.

Yet there was another side of the picture. Under the surface, there were forces of renewal simmering. These stemmed from the very forces that seemed to destroy the church. One of the factors related to the centralising forces within the church, centred

⁹ Neill, S., *A History of Christian Missions*, (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1973), p.397.

¹⁰ Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, pp.1009 & 1012.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.1012.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 1010 & 1097.

¹³ Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, p.397.

chiefly on the Papacy. The logic of persecution of the Papacy roused sympathy for that institution. The forces of hostility directed against the Papacy, ironically had the effect to raise the pontificate particularly of Pius IX, (1846-1878) and Leo XIII, (1878-1903) to such a degree that it had never enjoyed in its recent history.¹⁴

More directly, related to these tendencies, arose a movement that sought to resuscitate or re-organise the monastic life. Similarly of significance, the Popes began to take individual initiatives in missions. A step in that direction was the reconstitution of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith in 1822. The re-organisation of that structure was important. It meant that unlike in the past, where missionary work had been almost the preserve of the secular rulers, now it became the responsibility of the whole church.¹⁵ More directly, this led to the revival or creation of the missionary orders of which the White Fathers which came to Malawi were one.¹⁶

In general, then, the picture of the universal catholic church in the last half of the 19th century is therefore, firstly that of a closely knit organisation under the papacy, conservatively fighting to reassert and defend its traditional position in the hostile world. Secondly, it is of a doctrinally entrenched and authoritative, aggressive, yet triumphant and centrally organised church poised to 'conquer' the enemy in the world.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.398.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.399.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 433.

1.1 The White Fathers and their first attempt to set up a mission 1899

As noted above, among the orders that came to Malawi in the wake of catholic revival in the 19th century were the White Fathers of cardinal Charles Martial Lavigerie. Lavigerie was both a fervent French patriot as well as a staunch ecclesiastic diplomat. "It seemed to him that the extension of French influence could go forward together with in an area which so far was outside the sphere of any of the European powers."¹⁷ In character, Lavigerie reflected almost every spirit and aspect of the nineteenth century catholicism. Both by precept and practice reinforced these into his disciples. He founded the order in 1868 ¹⁸ with the explicit objective of winning african souls for Christ and Rome.¹⁹ Once from the very outset "the White Fathers like other missionary societies of the nineteenth century were theologically ultramontane."²⁰ Their missionary work had a denominational bias. It was to be executed vis a vis Protestantism. That very aspect would remarkably influence the course of missionary character in central Africa. To that cause the indomitable Lavigerie devoted all his energies. To him no territory was inaccessible to his White Fathers.

There is however, another important characteristic to this mission. The Catholic missionary movement was born in the context of the colonial expansion. The nineteenth century was an era of imperial advancement. Africa was particularly caught up in the scramble

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.431.

¹⁸ Hasting, A., *Church in Africa 1450-1950*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p.1450-1950), p.254.

¹⁹ Moorhouse, G., *The Missionaries* (London: The Chaucer Press Ltd, 1973), p. 208.

²⁰ Hastings, *A History of African Christianity 1450-1950*, p. 254.

amongst the European powers. The White Fathers of Cardinal Lavigerie shared in this outlook. He once declared:

"In his Providence, God has chosen France to make Algeria the cradle of a great christian nation; a nation like unto herself, her sister and child.....Such I repeat is our destiny and God expects us to fulfil, our country is watching us to see whether we show ourselves worthy of it....nay, more, the eyes of the whole church are fixed upon us....." ²¹

In this way the White Fathers set out to develop a mission characterised by rivalry and disputes with the Protestant missions. In brief, that was the character of the church which set itself set to take on the Protestant territory of the then Nyasaland and claim it for the Roman Catholicism at the turn of the last century.

1.2 Mponda's Mission

The first catholic attempt to set up a mission in the Nyasa region was in the year 1889. From the start this venture was very closely associated with the Portuguese imperial ambitions.

Through political manoeuvres and ecclesiastical diplomacy, the Portuguese succeeded in getting the Vatican to agree on sending a mission that would effectively place Nyasa Region under the Portuguese sphere of influence.²² That mission had the express objective: "to offset British designs in the area around the Lake Nyasa."²³ Portuguese ambitions to upstage the British colonial

²¹ Moorhouse, *The Missionaries*, p. 211.

²² Linden, I and J., *Catholics, Peasants and Chewa Resistance in Nyasaland 1889-1939*, (London: Heinemann, 1974), p. 16.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

interests became the primary motivation behind the cause.²⁴ Accordingly, a team of five missionaries set out from Algiers for Nyasa .The official mandate given to the mission stipulated: to bring civilisation to the tribes through the Catholic faith, end slavery and teach christian morality.²⁵

Like the first attempt made by the Universities Mission to Central Africa almost two decades previously, the Portuguese attempts to establish a mission in the Nyasa region was doomed to failure. Since its objective was too closely bound with the Portuguese imperial interests right from the start at chief Mponda's village the mission was caught up in the imperial wrangle between the British, on one hand, and the Portuguese, on the other.²⁶ Besides the feeling of loneliness, personal indifference and apathy shown to their religion [mission] by the chief, the Fathers had to contend with other forces. The on-going political and military feud between the chief and the neighbouring tribes made the missionaries life even less secure. As it were, the long suffering and uncertain period of the Fathers ended finally by the signing of the treaty between the British and the Portuguese on 20th August, 1890.²⁷

The unfortunate saga of the missionaries identifying with the cause of the imperial power highlights the dilemma of at least most missionary work in during the last century. However, what is unique in this case is that the after effect of this episode were to loom in the background of the catholic church quite for some time in Malawi. In that respect that aspect would not inconsiderably affect the catholic church relationship with the British authorities and

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.26-28.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

the Protestant missionaries subsequently. In the meantime it was to the Protestant missions to whom Nyasaland was left to influence at least for some decades to come.

1.3 The Protestant Influence 1889 - 1900

The period between the catholics' withdrawal and their return in 1901, continued to see the steady influence of the Protestant churches in Nyasaland. The Scottish Presbyterians who came to Malawi consisted of two missions, the Established church of Scotland settled in the Shire Highlands, Blantyre, in 1875 and the Free church of Scotland, who settled in the northern province of the Protectorate in 1881.²⁸ The Anglo-Catholic missionary wing of the Church of England, had established themselves at Likoma Island in 1886.²⁹ Shortly before 1891 they were joined by the Dutch Reformed Mission of South Africa and settled in the central province of Malawi.³⁰ There were also other smaller Protestant churches, notably, the Zambezi Industrial Mission of the American pastor, Joseph Booth; the Providence Industrial Mission of The Reverend John Chilembwe, who had been influenced by the former. There was also the Watch Tower movement of Mr Elliot Kamwana.³¹ However, one group whose influence came to endure from the early

Why was this thesis accepted??

²⁸ J. Weller and J. Linden, *Mainstream Christianity To 1980 in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe*, (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1984), pp. 40, 43.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

³¹ see B. Pachai, *The State and the Churches in Malawi During Early Protectorate Rule*, (Blantyre: Hetherwick Press, 1995), p. 15.

This thesis has several factual errors. The Free Church of Scotland was the first to come to Malawi before the established church of Scotland in 1875. They settled @ Cape Maclear. A year later the Church of Scotland settled in Blantyre in 1876. The FCS then moved from Cape Maclear in the south to Bardawe in the north then finally settled at Khondowe (Livingstonia) in 1894. But

period was the Scottish Presbyterians.

Historically, both groups shared a lot in common. During the nineteenth century particularly mainstream christianity in Scotland and England had been influenced by two contemporary factors, namely: the Evangelical Revival and the Industrial Revolution. By character the former tended to emphasise the inward religious experience accompanied by signs of moral and social change. Religion, it was stressed had to touch the moral, social and spiritual aspects of the whole person. In other words, spiritual and material dimensions were conceived to be an integral aspect of the religious experience. However, for some reason, British Evangelicalism tended to differ at least in some aspects from the Scottish.

While English Evangelicalism tended to be politically conservative, Scottish Evangelicalism appeared to be politically more radical or liberal. On the other hand, while the Evangelical Church in Scotland insisted on the right to order its own affairs, independent of the state interference, and at the same time cherished the state's supportive role of the church in society, the established church in England was the proponent for the status quo. In fact " the Church of England stood for the established order of things. " ³² Similarly, theologically, Evangelical revival in Scotland took a more activist character, with others insisting that the basis of theology was not in external or defined theories, rather in life of believers and christian community.³³

Scottish Evangelicalism stressed the need to bring about fundamental transformation in the whole life of a person. In this

³² A. Woods, *British Christianity*.

³³ A.R. Vidler, *The Church in Age of Revolution*, (London and Beechle: Williams Clowes and Sons Ltd, 1961), p. 62.

respect, Evangelicalism in Scotland was more practical than theoretical in orientation.

Source { The stress that the Evangelicalism tended to place on material progress seemed to correlate with important aspects of the Industrial Revolution, notably the importance attached to thriftiness and material prosperity. Both the Industrial Revolution and the Evangelical Revival took seriously the need to bring about social transformation in the life of the individual.

On another aspect, since Evangelicalism was associated with the notions of progress or advancement British or Scottish christianity became closely associated with the idea of progress. British christianity came to be seen as the embodiment of the Victorian culture.

Source { When they came to Malawi, the Scottish Missions sought to put into practice that view of Christianity. They established in the northern and southern Malawi as was the case with Lovedale in South Africa, a mission that laid emphasis on industry and vocational pursuit. Ideals of socio-political advancement were promoted and encouraged in their curriculum at Livingstonia.³⁴ The missionaries in their schools also tended to deliberately encourage debates on the contemporary issues that affected the socio-political life of the African people. In this way, they were laying the first seeds of socio-political consciousness amongst the Africans under their influence. Indeed by 1940s, the missionaries were directly instrumental in initiating the formation of the Native Associations, the forerunner of the mass political movement. Indeed, later on in the fifties and sixties they were to go almost on a fully-fledged battle against the political authorities which made

³⁴ K. N. Mufuka, *Missions and Politics in Malawi*, (Kingstone and Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1977), p. 72).

them look like an official opposition of the government.³⁵

Nevertheless, the context of British colonial relationship with various religious societies or churches in the colonies, including Nyasaland had been set forth in 1854. In her proclamation, Queen Victoria, declared that no person within the British territories would be discriminated against or molested in terms of their race or creed. The proclamation went further to disclaim the right of the Imperial government to impose its convictions on its subjects. Religious toleration and equality was affirmed.³⁶

The spirit or character of the administration was to have an important impact in the relations between the British Administration and the various denominations in the Protectorate in the subsequent years.

1.4 The White Fathers - Second Approach 1901

Unlike the previous attempt to establish a mission whose primary objective was explicitly politically inspired, the second permanent catholic entry into Nyasaland sprang from ecclesiastical animosity. While on leave to France, Bishop Dupont intimated to Bishop Guilleme the possibility of starting a mission to oppose the Protestant influence in the area.³⁷

³⁵ B. Pachai, *The State and the Churches in Malawi During Early Protectorate Rule*, (Blantyre: Hetherwick Press Limited, 1995), pp.4-5.

³⁶ S. Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, (Great Britain: Hazell and Viney Limited, 1964), p. 323).

³⁷ I. and J. Linden, *Catholics, Peasants and Chewa Resistance in Nyasaland 1889-1939*, (London: Heinemann, 1974), p.44).

However at this stage the White Fathers regarded Nyasaland merely as a link with the more important stations in the north, Tanganyika and Uganda.³⁸

Accordingly, in 1897, Bishop Dupont became the Vicar Apostolic of the vast Nyasa vicariate, stretching from Tanganyika border in the north to where the Shire joins the Ruo in the south, and from Lake Bangweulu in the west to Mozambique in the East.

The catholic missionaries permanently arrived in Nyasaland in 1901.³⁹ Their arrival provoked different reactions from the small population of white settlers. Within the Protestant circles, the attitude was one of open animosity. The article published in the "Times" of July did not leave the Catholic missionaries with any doubt as to their position in the eyes of the Protestants: "Why disturb our peace? Is Africa not large enough that the Romans must try to snatch this little corner from the Protestants?"⁴⁰ However, a single episode epitomizes this attitude. At a tea party hosted by the Scottish presbyterian missionaries of Blantyre at which Catholic missionaries were guests, the former suggested to the latter to leave Blantyre and instead occupy the semi-arid region of the lower Shire.⁴¹ By implication the Presbyterians were suggesting that the Catholic

³⁸ *Ibid*, .p.43.

³⁹ J. Weller and J. Linden, *Mainstream Christianity To 1980 in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe*, (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1984), p. 101.

⁴⁰ R. Vezeau, *The Apostolic Vicariate of Nyasa, Origins and First Developments 1889-1935* (Rome: Historical Department, Archives, Missionari d' Africa C. P. 9078), p. 53.

⁴¹ I. Linden, *Catholics, Peasants and Chewa Resistance in Nyasaland 1889-1939*, (London: Heinemann, 1974), p. 46.

missionaries had no right to claim to settle any part of the protectorate, least of all, the Shire Highlands which the presbyterians regarded exclusively as their enclave.

In sharp contrast to the presbyterian hostile response, the initial settlement of the Catholic missionaries in Nyasaland depended very much on the hospitality of the small but influential circle of lay Catholics in Government circles.⁴² They put up counter propaganda in the Press in favour of the missionaries and more significantly, they set to support them morally and materially.⁴³ Perhaps reflective of the British policy of religious toleration, the authorities were supportive of the Catholic missionaries even at this stage. The governor, Mr Sharpe gave the missionaries authorization to settle themselves.⁴⁴ However, it would appear that the negative reception encountered by the Catholics at this stage, would considerably influence their attitude to, and ultimately relations with the protestants and indirectly with the Government for a longer period, yet to come.

Thus from the outset the Catholics took an openly hostile attitude to Protestants (Presbyterians), and at the same time displayed an ambivalent attitude to the authorities. Since the Government in Nyasaland was protestant, they tended to view it with suspicion. " If the protestant Government was not for them

⁴² R. Vezeau, *The Vicariate of Nyasa, Origins and First Developments 1889-1939*, (Rome: Historical Department, Archives, Missionari d'Africa C.P. 9078), p.53.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

then it be secretly against them." ⁴⁵

Besides, the Catholic missionaries must have been aware of the extreme antagonism being orchestrated by the extreme wings of the Protestant churches as well as the main missionary societies. There was anti-catholic literature circulating in the Protectorate which roused hostility against the priests. For instance, the vernacular, "*Mthenga wa ku Nyasaland*," by the Federated Protestant Missions was abusive of the Roman Catholic Church, so was the Watch Tower Bible and Tract society literature.⁴⁶

In these circumstances, because of what they sensed as hostility on the part of the Protestants, the Catholics turned to the Government for support. In other words, being aware of the challenge posed by the Protestants, the Catholics had no alternative but to adopt a policy of survival. That in effect meant openly and actively courting friendly relationship with the Government. In this respect the missionaries saw co-operation with the state as the only option which could help them fight against their arch rivals. On the other hand, in the light of the running battle with which the Government had been engaged with the Presbyterians over the position of africans in the Protectorate,⁴⁷ the Government was bound to regard the Catholics as its ally in its rivalry with the Scottish missions. Hence when the Catholics sought support from the Government, the latter reciprocated.

⁴⁵ I. Linden, *Catholics, Peasants and Chewa Resistance in Nyasaland 1889-1939*, (London: Heinemann, 1979), p. 90.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

⁴⁷ see Pachai, *The State and the Churches in Malawi During Early Protectorate Rule*, pp. 2-5.

1.5 Rivalry and Disputes: White fathers in Central Nyasa

With moral and material support of some leading lay Catholics in Government circles, the catholic missionaries were able to embark on the assault of central Malawi. The Montfort Fathers established their first post and school at Nzama on 2nd February 1902, west of central Angoni land.⁴⁸ At this stage there were also possibilities that in the near future they would established others at Lunzu and Nguludi. By 1902, the White Fathers were ready to consider extending their influence from Bembaland (Zambia) into central region of Angoniland. With Guyard as the leader, they began an assault of the protestant enclave. Thus began a network of missions extending into central Malawi, Dowa, Chiwamba and future site of Mua. Meanwhile on his return to Bembaland, Guilleme chose Kachebere on the Bua river. These first developments were reinforced by the arrival of three more missionaries from Algiers.⁴⁹ The following year, saw further re-enforcement of a personnel by the arrival of seven more missionaries.⁵⁰

The sudden influx of Catholic missionaries into the previously Dutch Reformed enclave raised protest from the latter who saw it as a Popish Plot.⁵¹ Not only had the Scottish missionaries in the Shire Highlands been more than pleased to see the Catholics leave for the north, the Dutch Reformed were not even in the least prepared to contend with their presence amongst them. Immediately after Mua mission was established, a reformed minister, Du Plessis petitioned the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in

⁴⁸ R. Vezeau, *The Apostolic Vicariate of Nyasaland*, p.54.

⁴⁹ I. Linden, *Catholics, Peasants and Chewa Resistance in Nyasaland 1889-1939*, pp. 50-51.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.* p.49.

saw the former hiding their hands behind their backs for fear of being compelled to touch the hand of a Catholic priest." ⁵⁴

The Presbyterians' attitude to the Catholic missionaries contrasted sharply with that of the authorities. On the same occasion, Fr Guilleme paid a courtesy call to the Government official. Reportedly, the latter remarked that they (Government) had been waiting for them for a long time.⁵⁵ In spite of the opposition, Catholic Missionaries intensified their efforts to gain as much ground as was possible. One of the consequences of the rivalry between the two missions was that since the Protestants had moved West of Lilongwe, the Catholics lost Chiwamba and at the same time established Likuni Mission on the Lilongwe and Likuni rivers.

The rivalry between the Dutch and Catholic missions was less intense in nature than that which ensued between two the Catholic orders: Montforts and White Fathers, as it was to affect the progress of their missionary work not inconsiderably.⁵⁶ The rivalry centred around canonical spheres of influence.⁵⁷ While the White Fathers claimed the right of influence extending to the Shire region, the Montforts held that the Shire rightfully fell in the ambit of their influence.⁵⁸ The White Fathers claim had partly been implemented by hastily buying and establishing a

⁵⁴ R. Vezeau, *The Apostolic Vicariate of Nyasa*, p. 64.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* p. 63-64.

⁵⁶ I. Linden, *Catholics, Peasants and Chewa Resistance*, pp. 50-51.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

London:

"From a political point of view too, we cannot but think it unwise to permit the White Fathers who have wrought mischief elsewhere to settle in Nyasaland. For your information I enclose an extract from last month's "Church's Missionary Gleaner" that will show you how these same 'White Fathers' were a source of trouble and danger in Uganda".⁵²

However, several political factors prevailing at that time made it unlikely that the Dutch Reformed bid for monopoly of central Nyasaland would be heeded. The Governor's report to the secretary reflected the government official attitude with respect to different missionary bodies and vice versa:

"I should be sorry to say that any mission in the Protectorate are a cause of trouble to Government officials, but it is certainly a fact that the White Fathers are working in more complete harmony with district of this Protectorate than the members of any mission in it. They confine themselves entirely to their mission operations and have been so far noticeable for their refusal to enter into any questions with natives which in any way touch on administrative or judicial work. This cannot be said of all other Mission Societies in British Central Africa."⁵³

The intensity of hostility particularly between the two missions in the Central Province tended to develop rather into pathetic proportions. It is reported that on one occasion at Mvera, near Dowa, on his visit to the Dutch Reformed ministers, "Fr Guilleme

⁵² *Ibid.*, p.51.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

station at Nguludi.⁵⁹ After a long winded wrangle, the matter was resolved by the Society for the Propagation of the Faith in favour of the Montforts on 3rd December 1903.⁶⁰ The region South of Rivelezi river was declared an Apostolic Prefecture under the jurisdiction of the Company of Mary.⁶¹ The newly built mission of Nguludi was returned to the montforts in June 1904. Besides, the Montforts had Nzama and Mua.⁶²

Having established themselves in the central region, the Montfort Fathers turned to the Shire Highlands. Seemingly, in an attempt to avoid the mistake done by their colleagues in 1901, they did not confront the Scottish enclave directly. Instead they proceeded with caution, circumventing Blantyre. Meanwhile Nguludi mission had been established in 1903.⁶³ The year 1904 saw the arrival of other five sisters, who were augmented by other five in the following year.⁶⁴ In 1906, another station, Neno was established, west of Blantyre while in 1908, Utale, north of Blantyre was erected.⁶⁵

In the interim, there appeared another Vicar Apostolic on the scene. Louis Auneau, French by birth, came to Nyasaland with a

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.50.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*, p.51.

⁶³ J. Weller and J. Linden, *Mainstream Christianity*, p.101.

⁶⁴ I. Linden, *Catholics, Peasants and Chewa Resistance*, p.70.

⁶⁵ J. Weller and J. Linden, *Mainstream Christianity*, p.101.

Canadian and Algerian experience.⁶⁶ In Nyasaland he came to acquire the reputation of a land buyer.⁶⁷ On assumption of duty, he had considered on of his appointments as the loosening of the Scots stronghold of the Shire Highlands.⁶⁸ In 1912, set up Nankhunda mission near Zomba.⁶⁹ In spite of other obstacles the stiff resistance he met from the Scottish, Auneau finally managed to found a mission a kilometre away from the Scottish mission of Blantyre in 1913.⁶⁹ This naked aggression provoked a protest from the Scottish missionaries. That year the Nyasa Vicariate was constituted.⁷⁰

Meanwhile, in 1927, Catholic missionaries had begun an ambitious programme to upgrade their educational standards.⁷² This was partly because they did not want their students to go to other mission schools which had been offering better education.⁷³ In the Northern Province, the Catholics had been erecting their schools near the existing ones.⁷⁴

However, by 1936, the quarrel between the Catholic and Protestant

⁶⁶ I. Linden, *Catholics, Peasants and Chewa resistance*, p.72.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.73.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ J. Weller and J. Linden, *Mainstream Christianity*, p.101.

⁷¹ I. Linden, *Catholics, Peasants and Chewa Resistance*, p.73.

⁷² K. N. Mufuka, *Missions and Politics in Malawi*, p.36.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

missions was being executed with such earnestness that the Native Authorities, the chiefs were also by now involved.⁷⁵ It was because of this explosive situation that the governor had to address the Heads of Missions.⁷⁶ The rivalry between the Catholics and the Protestants, especially the Presbyterians formed a pattern and a trend of missionary endeavour. It was to continue until the beginning of the Second World War.⁷⁷

To conclude, the initial success of the White Fathers missionary work in Central Africa depended to some extent on their ability to adapt method and policy to the existing situation but also to innovate for the benefit of their work. In Nyasaland, even though the White Fathers sought to live by the spirit of one of their cardinal policy: adaptation to local culture they thought it wise not to pursue it wholesale.⁷⁸ In matters of spirituality, they followed the Ignatian style, with high demands of obedience and poverty within community life.⁷⁹ From the very early period, they adopted the school system from their Protestant rivals and innovated the institution of the catechists.⁸⁰ Pastorally, the White Fathers imposed a strict regime on their stations. Instructions received from Dupont were copied by hand and circulated to all stations.⁸¹ These instructions related to pastoral issues, eg. sacraments baptism, relations between

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ I. Linden, *Catholics, Peasants and Chewa Resistance*, p.51.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ R. Vezeau, *The Apostolic Vicariate of Nyasa*, p.95.

⁸¹ I. Linden, *Catholics, Peasants and Chewa Resistance*, p.52.

missionaries and local chiefs or government officials. A visitor went on regular rounds keeping a stern eye on the internal running of the stations, reporting on either regularities or irregularities of the stations.⁸²

1.6 Growth and Development up to 1920s (Under the Episcopate of Guilleme)

The role and influence of the Catechists and Schools

During the early years, the growth and development of the Church's innovative utilisation of the institution of the catechists and school. The catechists were the lay base support team for the missionaries in education and evangelisation. However, in an attempt to out-do their rivals, the catholic missionaries were not slow to adopt from them the system of the school as crucial aspect of the apostolate.⁸³ Accordingly, in their mission work, they put into place an extensive network of schools.⁸⁴ In the schools, the catechists came to occupy a unique role as both an evangelist as well as preacher.⁸⁵ Occupying this two role, they came to wield tremendous influence and power especially in the villages.⁸⁶ As teachers they were in the forefront of the battle against the protestants presenting

⁸² *Ibid.*, p.52.

⁸³ R. Vezeau, *The Apostolic Vicariate of Nyasa*, p.95.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.79-81.

⁸⁶ J. Weller and J. Linden, *Mainstream Christianity*, pp. 105-106.

polemical moral arguments in favour of Roman Catholicism.⁸⁷ As evangelists, they acted as indispensable native agents negotiating skilfully with local chiefs in their attempt to extend the church's influence in the far flung villages.⁸⁸ However, it was the schools which provided the chief means of evangelisation as such became a point of contention between the two rival missions. The cruciality of this institution in evangelisation as viewed by the Catholics has been aptly portrayed by Weller and Linden:

"In Malawi, as in no other part of the British central Africa, the Catholics conceived their work as an attack on the Protestants and, as schools were the means of attracting converts, it was over the schools that the bitterest battles were fought".⁸⁹

Through schools supervised mainly by catechists, the Catholics were able to penetrate even the far flung Protestant's enclaves, and establish themselves comfortably to the extent that as early as 1910 Catholics could boast of more adherents than the other main missionary societies.⁹⁰

To sum up, the role of the catechists with respect to their apostolate in both secular and sacred was invaluable. They undertook the bulk of missionaries load, ranging from pastoral

⁸⁷ I. Linden, *Catholics, Peasants and Chewa Resistance*, Chapter 4.

⁸⁸ J. Weller and J. Linden, *Mainstream Christianity*, p.105.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.108-109.

⁹⁰ K. N. Mufuka, *Missions and Politics in Malawi*, p.38.

work to sacraments and discipline as marriages and baptism.⁹¹ Their efforts were augmented by the often untiring efforts, sacrificially, regular and systematic visits of the Fathers.⁹² Later on the catechists were to provide the foundation of the emergence of the indigenous clergy. They were indeed the foundation and pillar upon which the church was to stand for generations to come.

1.7 Missionary Policy with Respect to Colonial Government. Its impact on the Missionary work

After World War I, the Catholic Church clearly defined its policy with respect to its relationship with the colonial government:

"(Missionaries were) to serve loyally the cause of government in whose country we live; to remind christians and even pagans under our influence of the legitimacy and necessity of taxation and to press them to pay their taxes on time. To show by deeds more than words that the catholic missionary is primarily dedicated to the cure of souls, that he is always and everywhere respectful of lawfully constituted authority and ready to give all, his dedication and zealous co-operation."⁹³

The Church's official policy to the missionaries amounted into exalting the latter into taking a servile stance towards the

⁹¹ J. Weller and J. Linden, *Mainstream Christianity*, p.106.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p.102.

⁹³ I. Linden, *Catholic, Peasants and Chewa Resistance*, p.89.

Government, almost regardless of how that could affect its relations with the Africans. This is surprising since the church considered its mission primarily as serving the Africans. How could it reconcile its service of Africans and Government, especially when it seemed that the interests of both parties conflicted.⁹⁴ Ostensibly, its missionary objective had to be subject to what it seemed a nobler cause: service of Government.

Linden states that the pro-government policy did not merely arise from the consideration of local context but was a general policy * of the church since the 17th century.⁹⁴ Even though that might have been the case, during the early years of the last century, the situation in that territory seemed to have been such that the church believed taking a strong pro-government stance as the only option which could enable its mission to take off the ground. Its relation to the government had to be weighed against the consideration of its mission especially in light of the inimical situation the church was facing during this particular period.

However, behind this attitude, surely there must have been a basic missionary concern. Favourable relations, at least with the government would ascertain the well being of its mission in the Protectorate. As would be shown time and again below, the church authorities were only too aware of the dividends this policy would yield on short and long term basis.

⁹⁴

Ibid., p.89.

1.8 The Contrasting Impact of Catholic and Protestant Educational Policy on the African Socio-Political Consciousness 1900-1915

Perhaps in no aspect other than education was the conservative policy of the Catholic Missionaries carried out more conspicuously and consistently. Comparatively, almost from the beginning they embarked upon an educational programme that was characterised by low standards. This related especially to their attitude towards the teaching of English. ⁹⁵ English, regarded as the key to advancement in the colonial society was not very much encouraged.⁹⁶ In contrast to their Presbyterian rivals who strongly encouraged progressive ideas, Catholics frowned upon such attitudes. The catechists themselves who acted both as teachers and religious instructors had very little education themselves. Their character has been aptly described by Vezeau as docile and devoid of any spirit of contention.⁹⁷ Besides having to carry a heavy load of pastoral care, the catechists had to carry the burden of running the increasing number of schools.

Irrespective of the fact that as French missionaries they were naturally handicapped by English, it remained the policy of the Catholic Missionaries not to prioritise English in their schools or indeed to give Africans more education than was thought to be necessary especially before 1927.⁹⁸ Indeed, there was an occasion when the missionaries were even hostile to any tendencies that they detected towards what they perceived as ambitious desires in

⁹⁵ K. N. Mufuka, *Missions and Politics in Malawi*, p.36.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ R. Vezeau, *The Apostolic Vicariate of Nyasa*, p.83.

⁹⁸ K.N. Mufuka, *Missions and Politics in Malawi*, p.113.

African students. An episode in 1911 illustrates this. Upon realising that some boys wanted to learn English rather ~~that~~ than train as catechists, the officials took some drastic steps. They not only sent the culprits back to their homes but also reorganised the school where such sentiments had been expressed but also replaced their staff with the lowly educated conservative ones.⁹⁹ As a result of these unfortunate developments, and the extent that this behaviour could have raised discontent amongst some of their members is shown by the fact that, in an attempt to beat the system, some of them such as Mr Edward Michongwe had to leave the Catholic school in Malawi to attend another Catholic school in Southern Rhodesia where better education albeit under the same religious faith was being offered.¹⁰⁰

Similarly, the paternalistic character of Catholic missionaries with respect to education seemed to correlate also with their attitude to the training of Africans to the priesthood. While the African candidates were expected to go through similar standard of theological training as their counterparts in Europe, the duration of their training took a longer duration (fourteen years in case of Chitsulo) because it was held that Africans needed longer period to reach the level of the European priest.¹⁰¹ In the parish the African priest was made to be more dependent and subservient on his superior white priest.¹⁰² Their attitude towards the priesthood differed little towards the religious

⁹⁹ K. N. Mufuka, *Missions and Politics*, p. 107.

¹⁰⁰ J. Weller and J. Linden, *Mainstream Christianity*, pp. 109-110.

¹⁰¹ I. and J. Linden, *Catholics, Peasants and Chewa Resistance*, pp. 178-180.

¹⁰² I. Linden, *Catholics, Peasants and Chewa Resistance in Nyasaland*, pp. 174 -179.

order of the African women.¹⁰³

As already noted above, the Catholic missionaries were notorious for their conservative attitude towards civil authority more than the other missionary societies. This attitude was very much as a result of their view of biblical authority or its interpretation.¹⁰⁴ They impressed upon Africans under their care the duty to obey the authorities, in both church and state.¹⁰⁵ On the other hand their Presbyterian rivals encouraged habits of criticality. For example, the Presbyterians were the first not to be scared to proclaim that "Africa is for Africans in 1895."¹⁰⁶ Similarly, one of the missionaries could tell chief M'mbelwa in 1878 that it was the Bible that made "our nation powerful."¹⁰⁷ In other words the missionary was actually expressing in a crude form that the Bible was the source of revolutionary ideas.

However, between Catholics and Protestants the whole issue of authority ultimately related to the different view of the authority of the scriptures vis avis the authority of the church.

Fundamentally, this concerned the issue of the church's understanding of itself with respect to Biblical authority and in relation to society. During the Reformation, the Reformed church had insisted that the Bible formed the basis of its mission in society. In this context free interpretation of the Bible became one of the chief cornerstones of Reformed christianity. This had important implications for its understanding and approach to the

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p.174.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.87-88.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.87-90.

¹⁰⁶ J. Weller and J. Linden, *Mainstream Christianity*, p.184.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

society. On the other hand, the Roman Catholic Church's insistence that the Bible could only be appropriately interpreted by rightful authority tended to hold the possibility of free interpretation of the Bible. In this sense, the Catholic approach tended to impede the revolutionary interpretation of scripture. Obviously, the divergent approach to Biblical authority between the Catholics and Presbyterians and its application to the socio-political issues of the day similarly to produce contrasting responses.

The Scottish Presbyterian church that had come to Nyasaland had developed a more independent approach to socio-political issues. During the nineteenth century, the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa which originated from Holland had been considerably influenced by the religio-political Calvinistic philosophy of Kuyper.¹⁰⁸ That teaching advocated a very close cooperation between church and state.¹⁰⁹ According to that view, while the state had to protect christian religion, the church had to lay the foundation upon which the state had to govern the nation.¹¹⁰ In this way church and state became closely integrated. Thus unlike the Dutch Reformed in South Africa which was a state church, the Presbyterian Church in Nyasaland was free from state interference. Its independence may have been as a result of the tradition of independence or autonomy which the Scottish pioneer ministers may have introduced.

However, the fundamental difference of approach to the critical

¹⁰⁸ G. Abraham, *The Catholic Church and Apartheid, The response of the Catholic Church in South Africa to the first decade of the National Party rule 1948-1957*, (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1989), pp.1-2.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

socio-political issues in the society sprung from their different perspectives or premises of Biblical Tradition.

While the Roman Catholic Church taught and pressed upon their flock that the hierarchy [magisterium] was the visible repository of the heavenly authority, a view that had been entrenched by the nineteenth century Catholicism, the Protestants taught rather that the Bible constituted the ultimate authority on earth. It seemed to follow then that, since magisterial authority resided in the church, the hierarchy had the authority to interpret the Bible for the faithful. On the other hand, stressing that the Bible was the immanent authority, having relevance to the issues of 'bread and butter,' the Protestants were inculcating in their converts habits or attitudes that appeared to be critical towards their socio-economic and political circumstance of the day. In this respect, while the Catholics were raising up a laity who were politically pliant, utterly dependant on authority of the church, the Presbyterians ^{were} bringing up a laity who were becoming socially or politically conscious. While the Catholics were shaping a laity that was generally not politically or socially oriented, the Protestants were moulding a laity that was not reticent to take on the issues of the hour. In and around 1900 these divergent perceptions were surfacing up on the socio-political landscape of Nyasaland. Perhaps no better incident has demonstrated that aspect during the colonial order than the Chilembwe incident of 1915.

1.9 The Significance of the John Chilembwe Nationalist Uprising 1915

John Chilembwe, born of Yao and Mang'anja parent in Chiradzulo district,¹¹¹ in Southern Malawi, stood out as an example of an

¹¹¹ G.S. Mwase, *Strike A Blow and Die*, Harvard University Press, 1967, p.12

African who sought to make the colonial government aware of the grievances of social evils, such as forced labour and taxation in 1915.¹¹² In January, 1915, John Chilembwe and his followers of the Providence Industrial Mission went around the Chiradzulo district and Shire Highlands - they (massacred) some white planters and traders. In the event, the Catholic Mission of Nguludi became a special target of the attack. Apparently, the action seemed to have been a climax of some long-held grievances against the colonialist Government and the planters.

massacre means to kill so many peopl. This most overblown uprising just killed three (3) Europeans!

Though the violent means through which he intended to attain that objective cannot be applauded, nevertheless, the extremity of his action only highlighted the seriousness of the matter. His role may not lightly be dismissed as merely another example of an apocalyptic African, as Linden and others seem to suggest.¹¹³ Put squarely into his historical context, he compares favourably well with South African millenarist figures, such as Nehemiah Tile of the Thembu Church.

According to Linden, prior to 1915, Chilembwe's relationship with his Catholic neighbours at Nguludi Mission, was fairly cordial¹¹⁴. The sudden deterioration of relationship with his Catholic neighbours¹¹⁵, is possibly not insignificant to the possible role that the Catholic Church could have played in the incident.¹¹⁶ However, what is of immediate concern here, is particularly the impact that the conservative policy of the

¹¹² B. Pachai, *The History of the Nation*, (London: Longman, 1973), pp.204-219.

¹¹³ I. Linden, *Catholics, Peasants and Chewa Resistance*, Chapter 4.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.91.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.91-98.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.94.

Catholic church had on the Africans with respect to that particular episode.

The Chilembwe Nationalist Uprising was about the violation of human rights which the former sought to highlight through the rebellion. For instance, in a letter written to the Press in September, 1914, John Chilembwe protested against what he saw as government's abuse of the African people who were being recruited to a war, of which was none of their concern. Chilembwe tried to make the colonial government aware of the seriousness of their grievances. However, more importantly, in this respect, it is how that event serves to demonstrate the conflicting lines of approach to authority and socio-political issues in society between the politically conservative Catholics and liberal Protestants (Presbyterians), at this stage and in the aftermath.

The inquiry set by the government in the aftermath of the uprising found that while the Presbyterians were jointly involved in rising against the government, the Catholics were conspicuous for their non-involvement.¹¹⁷ In the eyes of the authorities, this confirmed their view that it was the Roman Catholic Church that taught the African people the right doctrine and attitude towards the authorities.¹¹⁸ The Catholic Missionaries themselves spoke highly of themselves and their methods or approach to religion with respect to the African people.¹¹⁹ Likewise, while the government extolled the Catholic Missionaries for their 'understanding of the African mind' they vilified and castigated the Protestants in particular the

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.100.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.100-101.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Scottish Presbyterians.¹²⁰

Nevertheless, the aftermath of the incident saw more positive development with respect to the relationship between the Government and Catholic Missionaries. Not only were the Catholics rewarded for losing their Church building in the course of the incident, both the government and the planters deliberately began to encourage the expansion of the Catholic Church.¹²¹

More importantly, the aftermath of the incident saw a further dramatic shift in the relations between these two churches. Relations between the Catholics and Presbyterians continued to drift apart, as was the case between the latter and the government.¹²² Significantly, Catholic-State relations improved favourably.¹²³ The government began to see the Catholic Church as its ally especially in its rivalry with the Presbyterians.¹²⁴ What role did the Catholic missionaries play in the uprising?

The fact that the Catholic church was substantially rewarded by the government does suggest that its role could not have been insignificant. It is known that the missionaries knew of the impending disaster through their catechist. In turn they were able to alert the civil authorities who were able to act on that information. Surely, in this case it does strongly suggest that the role that the Catholic missionaries may have played with

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.102.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

¹²² B.Pachai, *The State and the Churches in Malawi During Early Protectorate Rule*, p. 18.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.9-11.

respect to the demise of the Chilembwe mission could not have been too insignificant. Similarly, the fact that the Catholic and Scottish missionaries disputed over who had the right to build over the old ruins of Chilembwe's church,¹²⁵ with the former prevailing over the latter suggests this possibility. This is not however, to suggest that the Catholic missionaries instigated the uprising. Rather, the Catholic involvement should be seen as one of that church's on going attempt to struggle for a place within a territory of which it was not entirely so sure of its own position. To survive the Catholic missionaries had to play the role of a private watch-dog of the colonial government. In an attempt to get the government on their side they could go all the way to manipulate certain situations which were to the disadvantage of their rivals but to their own advantage especially in their relationship with the colonial government in Nyasaland.

The possible role that the missionaries could have played may be better appreciated in the light of the context of the twentieth century Protestant -Catholic rivalry especially with respect to religious influence in society. While to us today the conduct of Catholic missionaries may leave much to be desired, during the colonial era the missionaries' action could in no way have been perceived as sinister. All missionaries had their own private agenda.

The Chilembwe incident turned out to be the turning point in the relations, between the churches and the government. While the Catholics increasingly took a pro-government stance, the Presbyterians became more critical towards the government than the Catholics. On the other hand, the latter's close relations

¹²⁵

B. Pachai, *The State and the Churches in Malawi During Early Protectorate Rule*, p. 13.

with the government tended to draw them further away from the close interest of the African people. By 1920s, the Catholics were seemingly acting like the governments' private eyes, the conduct upon which some government officials could frown.¹²⁶ In 1923, the Montfort Fathers were the first ones to alert the officials of the anti-governments activities of the Watch Tower society.¹²⁷ One of their numbers strictly dispatched a confidential report to the authorities.¹²⁸ That attitude accorded well with their attitude towards the government to: "serve loyally the cause of the government." Thus by late 1920s, the Catholic Church was closely aligning itself to the government, seemingly ceasing to look upon itself as an alien element within the Protectorate.

1.10 Further Consolidation and Advance 1920s - late 1940s

Meanwhile, in the 1920s, the Catholic Church entered another phase of its missionary expansion. Monsignor Hinsley, the Papal representative had visited the Roman Catholic Church and had personally made recommendations to effect the general improvement of the Catholic education in the protectorate.¹²⁹ He had personally encouraged them to take steps towards the improvement of their standards lest later on they could be accused of

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.14.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.13-14.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ J. Weller and J. Linden, *Mainstream Christianity*, pp. 109-110.

deliberately holding up the Africans.¹³⁰ Accordingly, the missionaries responded by taking drastic steps in an attempt to redress the situation. A programme was put in place to encourage the learning of English.¹³¹ English language then assumed an importance place in their education system. Thus from the 1930s, throughout the 1940s and 1950s, the missionaries began to initiate reforms which were in line with the educational programme of the Colonial Government.¹³² Some of the renowned secondary schools built around this time such as Blantyre and Zomba came to occupy an important place in the socio-economic and political life of the nation.¹³³ Similarly, developments in the secular education paralleled the one in the religious sphere and in particular, seminary education. In the 1920s attempts were being made to re-organise the training of the indigenous clergy.¹³⁴ Promising results had been forth-coming. A small number of Africans had been passing through the minor seminary in the 1920s at Mua and Mtakataka for Kipalapala in Tanzania.¹³⁵ Notably, amongst these was the one, Fr Cornelius Chitsulo, who was ordained priest in 1937 and consequently made Bishop in 1965.¹³⁶

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p.111.

¹³⁴ R. Vezeau, *The Apostolic Vicariate of Nyasa*, pp.117-118.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.135.

¹³⁶ J. Weller and J. Linden, *Mainstream Christianity*, p.106.

Thus by the 1940s, the gap between the Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches with respect to their attitude and approach to the socio-political issues in society was more conspicuous than ever before.¹³⁷ While the Protestants, particularly the Presbyterians, were in the leading role of the political struggle of the African people, contrastingly, the Roman Catholic Church, increasingly distinguished themselves as the pillar of the colonial government.

1.10.1 The Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland 1950-1960.

In 1953, the long contemplated Federation of Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland came into being.¹³⁸ These territories were amalgamated into an economic and political unit by the British government, based in Salisbury, Rhodesia. For decades, the majority of people in Malawi as was the case in the other two territories had objected to the union. The role of the Catholic and Protestant Churches in the fight against Federation contrasted remarkably. In contrast to the Presbyterians and others, the Catholic Church seemed to have taken a very low profile in the political struggle of the African people. While the Newspapers of this period prominently features the resistance stories of the Protestant churches, especially the Presbyterian, there seem to be almost absolute silence on the side of the Catholic Church with respect to the struggle. Rather, it seems the Catholic Church became more involved with the Government on the purely religious level. In a Letter written by the Colonial Secretary, the Bishops had requested the Government to make certain alterations to the national civic religious observances

¹³⁷ cf B. Pachai, *The State and the Churches in Malawi During the Early Protectorate Rule*, pp.15-18 and J. Weller and J. Linden, *Mainstream Christianity*, pp.110-111.

¹³⁸ B. Pachai, *Malawi, The History of the Nation*, (Longman, London: 1973), p.263.

to which the Government declined.¹³⁹ The relationship between the two parties tended to become even more reciprocal. On 10th, August, 1958, one of the officials wife, Lady Dalhousie laid a foundation stone of Zomba Cathedral.¹⁴⁰

As opposed to the Catholics, the Protestants were in the lead against the Federal union. Its association with the struggle of the African people went to such an extent that in resentment to what they believed was the politicisation of the church some of its white members had stopped attending church services.¹⁴¹ The Presbyterian Church had almost become a base from which the nationalist movement launched its struggle against the Federation. Indeed most of the leading members of the movement were themselves prominent members of that church.

With the assumption of the Party leadership by Dr. Banda in 1958, opposition to the Federation reached to the climax.

Through his dynamic oratory, he inspired the masses into political defiance such that the country became virtually ungovernable. The Malawi Congress Party had began transformong into a powerful, popular mass movement. At the height of the national disturbances on 3rd, March, 1959, the Colonial Government imposed a State of Emergence. Some of the leading leaders including Dr. Banda were arrested.¹⁴²

However, amidst the continued and mounting opposition to the Federation, Dr. Banda and the other leaders were released on 1st,

¹³⁹ *Nyasaland Times*, Tues, 23rd August 1958, GAZM.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *Nyasaland Times*, June 16, 1959, GAZM.

¹⁴² B, Pachai, *The History of the Nation*, (London: Longman, 1973), p. 254.

April, 1960.¹⁴³ Their release marked the beginning of yet another chapter in the History of Malawi in the sixties.

1.11 Conclusion

We have noted that the Roman Catholic Church came out of the Revolution in both a weakened and strengthened state. It has also been established that the late arrival of the Catholic missionaries to the mission field which was Protestant-dominated and British ruled, tended to increase their sense of insecurity. Their insecurity impelled them to seek support, which the government was willing to provide. However, in contrast to their rivals, the Presbyterians, the conservative political policy that they pursued had the effect of producing a laity that was politically pliant. The Chilembwe Nationalist Uprising in 1915 demonstrated just that. The increasing cooperation between the Roman Catholic Church and the government made the Roman Catholic Church not able to take a position that was openly critical towards the government, especially with respect to the socio-political issues that affected the life of the majority of the people. On the other hand, while the Presbyterians' close identification with the aspirations of the African people drew them closer to the African people, the Catholics closer relationship with the government tended to draw them away from the core of the African struggle. This trend was to affect the mission of the Roman Catholic Church adversely on the eve of independence.

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J.L., *Lwanda, Kamuzu Banda of Malawi: A Study in Promise, Power and Paralysis*, (Glasgow: Dudu Nsomba Publications, 1993), p.43.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 Malawi on the Eve of Independence 1960- to what??

Nyasaland, otherwise officially known as the British Central Africa Protectorate during the colonial era, attained self rule from the British on 6th July, 1964.¹⁴⁴ It adopted the name Malawi, derived from the one 'Maravi' meaning 'flames of fire' or 'the coming of dawn of the day.'¹⁴⁵ The 1961 elections gave the Malawi Congress Party of Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda a majority vote.¹⁴⁶ Accordingly, the M.C.P. formed a majority government, with Dr Banda as its first Prime Minister.¹⁴⁷

The dawn of the new era ushered in a new sense of optimism for the nation.¹⁴⁸ The Malawi Congress Party seemed to symbolise and embody that hope.¹⁴⁹ It claimed to represent the aspirations of the majority of the people such that it looked like a beacon of hope for the future of Malawi.¹⁵⁰

Dr Banda, who had been overseas for at least four decades had been called to Malawi by the young leadership of the movement. *as*

¹⁴⁴ P. Short, *Banda*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1974, p. 170

¹⁴⁵ Pachai (ed), *The Early History of Malawi*, (London: Longman, 1971), p.91.

¹⁴⁶ D.T Williams, *Malawi: The Politics of Despair*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1978,), p.195.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

Were Otton Chirwa, Masauko Chipembere,
Kayana Chiume, Sundaia Chirwa, Mukeka
Mkambawire etc not educated enough??

the latter saw themselves as not mature enough to command the respect of the much older stalwarts of the movement nor educated enough to command the respect of the Colonial Government. His mature age and education were seen as necessary qualities that would equip him to provide strong leadership that could provide a unified front against the Federation. In order to enable him to achieve that, so they believed Banda's image had to be boosted. The leaders of the movement felt they needed a sort of a political 'messiah,' as one of them Mr Henry Chipembere put it:

" What was needed was a kind of saviour: although it is wrong to be led by a single man placed in a powerfull position, still human race needs a kind of hero to be hero-worshipped if a political struggle is to succeed... (Banda) must not be frightened if he was heralded as the political messiah. Publicity of this sort could be used with advantage; it would cause great excitement and should precipitate almost a revolution in political thought. " ¹⁵¹

In this respect when Banda arrived in 1958 at Chileka Airport, Blantyre, he must have been aware of the esteem by which he was held. To the majority of Malawians, Dr Banda was a sort of a political 'messiah'¹⁵² called by providence to lead the nation into the future. This portrait had partly been created by the Party in order to mobilise the mass movement around a figure whom

¹⁵¹ Lwanda, *Kamuzu Banda of Malawi*, pp.32-33.

¹⁵² J.L. Lwanda, *Kamuzu Banda of Malawi: A Study in Promise, Power and Paralysis*, (Glasgow: Dudu Nsomba Publications, 1993) p.1 and F.L. Moyo in K. Ross and M. Nzunda (Eds), *Church, Law and Political Transition in Malawi 1992-4*, (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1995) and also published by the University of Malawi, Religious and Theological Studies Department, Kachere Series No. 1), pp.124-125.

they perceived was the only one who could unify the nation.¹⁵³ In this respect, the mystique of Dr Banda and a personality cult began emerging in which he was perceived as the hero of the nation.¹⁵⁴

The agenda facing the nation was 'building the nation'.¹⁵⁵ To that cause party functionaries declared their allegiance. Nationalism, expressed in intense patriotic sentiments characterised the intense political atmosphere of the sixties.¹⁵⁶ Zealous political functionaries exhorted the masses to sacrifice for the political cause of the party. To that effect, seemingly nobody was exempted. Any attempts or actions that appeared to be contrary to the spirit or climate of the day could be denounced as treachery. The consequences of such actions, to say the least, could be fatal.¹⁵⁷ To a large degree, the emergence of the political status quo at independence had been an immediate product of the missionary churches, in particular the Presbyterians.¹⁵⁸ The Presbyterian Missions had been the very cradle of nationalism. The very close association between the nationalist movement and the Presbyterian Church has been depicted by Beetham who observed that religious rallies could be

¹⁵³ Anonymous priest of the Congregation of the White Fathers, interview conducted in Liliongwe on the 6th Dec 1995.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ J.K. Lwanda, *Kamuzu Banda of Malawi*, pp.20; 40-48.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ F.L. Moyo in K. Ross and M. Nzunda, *Church, Law and Political Transition in Malawi*, p.123.

almost indistinguishable from political rallies.¹⁵⁹ Politics and religion seemed to marry well. ✓

Malawi attained her Independence yet within another context. The Second Vatican council, called by Pope John XXIII, had begun sitting in 1962, two years prior to the year when Malawi gained her Independence. It was due to end in 1965. As Africa entered a new political era of political liberation, similarly the Vatican council ushered in a new era, initially characterised by a sense of new optimism and confidence especially to the Roman Catholic Church in Africa.¹⁶⁰ This fact would affect the mission of the Catholic Church too in Malawi.

However, in order to comprehend a broader perspective of the dynamics of the Church-State relations on the eve of independence, it is necessary that a brief historical background of the Church's position vis-avis the Malawi Congress Party at independence be sketched.

2.1 The Roman Catholic Church and the New Order:1960-1962

2.1.1 Mission Uncertain. The Strategy to survive.

In and around the sixties, Malawi was going through another period of political transition. It was emerging from a period of colonial Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland en route to self rule. As we have already noted above, during the Federation the Presbyterian Missions in concert with the nationalist movement

¹⁵⁹ T.Beetham, *Christianity and New Africa*, (London: Pall Mall Press, 1967), p.138.

¹⁶⁰ A. Hastings, *African Catholicism, Essays in Discovery*, (London: SCM Press, 1989) p.133.

had put up a fully fledged battle against the amalgamation to the extent that by the late 1950s, that Church had almost indistinctly identified itself with the aspirations of the majority of the people. Thus while both the Presbyterians and Catholics had legitimated the status quo, it was however the latter, whose very close and an unequivocal support of the colonial government that had made it appear as if it was not disposed to the emerging order. While the Catholics had been noticeable for their lack of comment on political matters¹⁶¹ that affected the majority of the people, or their tendency not to encourage them to speak for themselves, the Presbyterians had taken a stand which had distinguished them as the emerging champions of the emerging order. Unlike the Presbyterians, the Catholics non-active involvement in the political affairs at this crucial time made them appear as if they were not very much in support of the emerging order. In other words, the Catholics strong association with the previous regime had made them look as if they were opposed to the emerging new order and its leaders in the wake of independence. Somehow, this assertion would seem to be confirmed six years prior to Independence.

2.2 An argument and Analysis of the Political Situation on the Eve of Independence with Respect to the Roman Catholic Church

We argue here that, the passing away of the old era, on which the Roman Catholic Church had strongly leaned and the emergence of the new one had crucial implications for the mission of the Catholic church in the rising order. The departure of the colonial order left the Catholic Church with no socio-political base upon which to lean and re-position itself in the new era.

¹⁶¹ cf A. Hastings, *The Church in Africa*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p.433.

While their traditional rivals, the Presbyterians, increasingly relied upon the Malawi Congress Party, the Catholics found themselves in the cold. While Presbyterians had a strong base in the Congress Party, the Catholics had none. In these circumstances, the future of the Catholic Church in the new Presbyterian-dominated order looked more uncertain than ever before.

Respectively, the crucial issue facing the Catholic Church on the eve of independence was: what role could it play in the new order, especially in light of the fact that for decades, that Church had closely associated itself with a regime that repressed the rights of the majority of the African majority? What role could the Church play in an order for which it had not been seen to be strongly fighting for? This issue raises another: since the new order was dominated by a Political party that was effectively under the influence of their traditional antagonists, the Presbyterians, how equipped were the Catholics to carry out their mission in that order? In this respect, we note that the Catholic Church was immediately faced with the issue of adjustment and subsequently, its future role in the new order.

In an attempt to meet these challenges, the Church turned to support the Christian Democratic Party, led by a prominent lay Catholic, Mr Chester Katsonga. In spite of the fact that the Party could not have been directly formed by the Church itself, as Chakanza argues,¹⁶² the strong support that the Church gave the Party to rival the more popular majority M.C.P suggests that the Church was the principal motivation factor behind the existence of that party. Certainly the Church's support for the

¹⁶² Chakanza, "The Pro-democracy Movement in Malawi: The Catholic Church's Contribution, 1960-1992" in K. Ross and M. Nzunda, *Church, Law and Political Transition in Malawi 1992-94*, p.63.

C.D.P does highlight the Church's suspicion of the order which was already and effectively under the aegis of their Presbyterian rivals. Ostensibly, the Church's mistrust or suspicion of the new order was also because of what it perceived were communist inclinations of some of the new political leaders.¹⁶³ That particularly prevailed in that Church. In this context, the Catholic Church in Malawi were at the time apprehensive of the ideological inclinations of Dr Banda. These sentiments were sometimes openly expressed¹⁶⁴. As a result the Roman Church authorities looked at new political leadership with misgivings. Yet, the new political leaders seemed also scared of the centralised international character of the Roman Catholic Church. As we shall see, these sentiments were being expressed in the various speeches especially made by the President or other Party officials. In this respect, it sounds simplistic to attribute the formation of that party merely to the threat apparently posed by communism to the society in Malawi.

The coming into being of the Christian Democratic Party in 1960,¹⁶⁵ was opportune for the Catholic Church. It came at a time when the Catholic Church needed a constituency to fill a gap within its socio-political dimension. Not only was the C.D.P ideal to offer such support. Being a Catholic aligned party, it was intended to ensure a strong base upon which to reposition itself, hence strengthen its position in the new era. In other words, the Catholics Church's support for the C.D.P was out of necessity. By backing the C.D.P against the M.C.P the church intended to have a secure future in a context in which it was

¹⁶³ Anonymous, interview with a White Father Priest on the 6th December, 1995 in Lilongwe, Malawi.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ See J. C. Chakanza, " *The Pro-democratic Movement in Malawi*," p.60.

less certain. It was the only way through which it could survive what it perceived as a threatening environment. In this respect we note that the position of uncertainty that the Church found itself in 1960 was in some respect similar to that which it was placed in 1901.

Nevertheless, the church's support for the C.D.P as an alternative to the majority M.C.P was to have far reaching consequences for the church-state relations in the new era. Almost immediately the Malawi Congress Party reacted violently. The house of the founder, Mr Katsonga was burned. More significantly, the Malawi Congress Party of Dr Banda launched a scathing attack on the whole catholic establishment.¹⁶⁶ In the editorial of the Malawi News of June 1960, the editor charged:

"To hell with the Vatican Papal Empire. If the Roman Catholic has not learnt any lesson from the religious wars in Europe and their expulsions from many countries of the world, they will be taught a lesson that they will never forget in this country of Malawi. They should remember that the African people of this country who are the members of the Catholic church are Malawian nationalists first and if they have any allegiance at all to the Pope, that comes after they have performed their duty to their country. We are pleased by one thing and that is that the Archbishop has not got the support."¹⁶⁷

A few aspects of this attack are worthy noting. Firstly, the nature of the attack is broad. It is directed against the entire

¹⁶⁶ Nyasaland Times Tues, 6th, Dec, 1960, tray 1960-63, Government Archives, Zomba, Malawi.

¹⁶⁷ J.C. Chakanza, "The Pro-democracy Movement in Malawi," p.60.

ecumenical catholic church [empire], with the Pope as its Head. More immediately, it targets the Archbishop and the local church in Malawi, while isolating the former from the latter. Significantly it raises the issue of christian loyalty in an autocratic state. Where does one's loyalty lie? God or the National state? For the M.C.P, allegiance to one's nation took precedence over religion. Logically, where there is conflict between the two, it is the former that must prevail.

It is obvious at this juncture that to all intents and purposes the M.C.P meant to monopolise the allegiance of the Malawian people to itself. By taking on the whole church, the M.C.P seem to have recognised the threat, real or imaginary that international Catholicism posed to its style of leadership. On the other hand, by trying to drive a wedge between the Archbishop and the rest of his flock, the M. C.P sought to undermine the church even at the expense of nationalism.

However, on another level, the conflict between Church and State especially from the perspective of the M.C.P does reflect nineteenth century suspicions and prejudices.¹⁶⁸ By digging into the past of the Catholic church the M.C.P sought to whip up the emotions of the majority Presbyterians into its cause against their traditional rivals. However, the Church's action does also underline one important aspect, its character. On the eve of independence, the Catholic Church in Malawi perhaps as was the case with the rest of the continent was in all appearance the Church that belonged to the old order. In spite of the emerging indigenous clergy, the entire hierarchy of seven bishops and a

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cf G. Abrahams, *The Catholic Church and Apartheid*.

greater number of clergy were of foreign origin.¹⁶⁹ Even though it was the nineteenth century, its doctrine and ethos was very much a legacy of the old order, the Leonine period. The church was the magisterium which taught the Faith which had to be believed by the faithful for their salvation. The church still believed it had the moral responsibility to put forward such religious principles upon which a just order could be built. In this respect its action to support the C.D.P. might reflect its inability to come to terms with the new order. The Bishops could certainly have been aware that in a highly charged political atmosphere the Catholics would have been marginalised by being branded 'the enemy of the people'. Within those circumstances, perhaps it could not have appeared to them that it was to the advantage of their rivals to portray them as unpatriotic to the new order and therefore risk public ostracism or the wrath of the masses. This is what appeared to have happened. The Church's action was deliberately construed by the M.C.P as 'betrayal' and the church branded as the 'enemy' of the people who were against their political aspirations.

By trying to question the church's commitment to the new era, the M.C.P had dealt the church a moral blow. Not only was the Church's image tarnished amongst the ranks of its faithful, nor the least, the nation at large, its credibility and mission was in serious jeopardy in the new order. This is precisely explained by the sense of urgency that the church sought to respond to the matter. It was apparently because the Church saw that its mission was in political jeopardy,¹⁷⁰ that it sought to clarify its position:

¹⁶⁹ According to a list of names from the Newsletter, *The Catholic Church of Malawi*, vol.9, 1973 p.2.

¹⁷⁰ cf J. Weller and J. Linden, "Mainstream Christianity," p.111.

"Following the instructions of Our Holy Father the Pope, We the Bishops of Nyasaland have not, do not and will not oppose the legitimate aspirations of the people of Africa; having so much at heart that this country of Nyasaland and its people be free, enlightened prosperous and great, We fully encourage and support their legitimate desires for independence.

However, We do not enter into the mere field of politics. The Catholic Church should not be identified with any political party or type of government but is willing to cooperate with any, provided it adheres to the principles of charity and justice."¹⁷¹

The Bishops goes on to assert that they saw it as their duty not only to enunciate the principles of justice and safeguard human rights and their violation. Defensively they denounced the assertion that they had formed the party.¹⁷²

The tone and texture of the pastoral letter reflects the strain with which the church sought to put across its position in light of the crisis that had emerged as result of its action. The seriousness of the situation which it provoked was highlighted further by the fact that hardly six months passed before the church once again felt obliged to issue another pastoral letter in an attempt to further clarify the same issue.

"The events of recent months have provoked a certain amount of confusion in the minds of the faithful, confusion which

¹⁷¹ Chakanza, "The Pro-democracy Movement in Malawi," p. 61.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

is harmful not only to the souls of the individuals but also to the steady and harmonious march of the Community towards freedom and happiness.

We the Ordinaries of Nyasaland, think it is our duty to put before you certain principles to enlighten and guide you in the building up of a happy community ; desiring nothing better than this country and its people should be free, enlightened, prosperous, great and happy.....Such is the spirit in which this letter is written." ¹⁷³

Then the letter proceeds by putting forward its vision of the new society:

- a/Civil society must acknowledge as Founder and Father and must obey and reverence his power and authority;
- b/Justice and reason itself forbid the state to be godless or to adopt a course of action which would be godless;
- c/The state has the duty to care for religion but cannot legislate on it.It has no right over the religious convictions of its subjects;
- d/The church must strictly admonish rulers to be mindful of their duty, to govern without injustice or severity, to rule their people kindly or paternally;
- e/Subjects to be obedient to lawful authority as to the ministers of God, binding the to their rulers not merely by obedience but also by reverence and affection.¹⁷⁴ Certainly, the tone and the matter of the second pastoral letter suggests that the Bishops intended to assure both its faithful and the nation that the church meant well. This pastoral letter is notable for one important aspect: it set forth a conciliatory tone. In this way , this pastoral letter shows the Bishops' willingness to reach at

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 64.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

least a *modus vivendi* with the new system.

However, perhaps more importantly, as reflected in the same document, it is at this point that they begin to adopt a subservient attitude towards the authorities: ¹⁷⁵

How can the church's apparent shift of its position towards passive subservience be explained? While it may not altogether be unrealistic to view that attitude as reflective of the nationalistic sentiments which were sweeping the nation at this stage, it seems more likely that the church's position was more influenced by the recent events. During the interviews conducted it was repeatedly pointed out to me that initially in the aftermath of the C.D.P. debacle saw the Church almost withdrawing from active participation in public life. The effect of the Church's action in supporting that party had a paralysing effect on its ministry in the new era. Its admonition to the nation couched in submissive terms does show that the Church was under obligation to mollify the new rulers as a way through which it could accommodate itself to the new era.

However, it is also important to note that despite the Church's tendency towards political subservience the Bishops were able to put forward boldly what they perceived as the right balance of power relationship between them and political authorities.¹⁷⁶ In the same document the Bishops went on:

"The state has the duty to care for religion but cannot legislate on it. It has no right to legislate on it. It has no right over the religious convictions of its subjects. The church must strictly admonish the rulers to be mindful

¹⁷⁵ See (e) above.

¹⁷⁶ See (c) above.

of their duty to govern without injustice or severity , to rule their people kindly and paternally."¹⁷⁷ ✓

Even though ostensibly the church had refused to cooperate with the new rulers except on the condition that the latter observe human rights, it became clear that the government of the M.C.P was not prepared to be prescribed to by the church. In the article that was published in the Malawi News of 13th April, 1961, one of the high ranking officials of the party asserted that the new leaders were not in favour of a theocratic state as envisaged by the Catholic Church.¹⁷⁸ ✓

The apparent hardening of attitudes on the part of both, the church and state, suggests that the two parties had almost conflicting views of their role in society. While the Roman Catholic Church believed that it had the right to be the moral watch dog of the state, the latter did not believe that hard and fast moral christian principles were contingent upon its governance in the new era. In fact the government did not believe that it needed the church to act as its guide in the new dispensation. This should have been a matter of concern at least for the Presbyterian Church since it clearly showed that the new rulers whom it held were christians were clearly showing signs that they were not prepared to be guided christian morality. In fact the leaders especially of the Presbyterian Church should have called for an explanation. Unfortunately, there is no record so far to suggest that the Church took up that matter. What does X

¹⁷⁷ See Chakanza, "The Pro-Democracy Movement in Malawi", in Nzunda, M. S. et.al., *Church, Law and Politics Transition in Malawi, 1992-1994*. Kachere Books No.1, (Gweru: Mambo Press in association with University of Malawi, Religious and Theological Studies Department, 1995).

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.66.

that imply in terms of this study? It suggests two things: either the Church was incapable of grasping the political implication behind such comment or it was paralysed to take on the M.C.P. even at this early stage.

However, the Roman Catholic Church's insistence on what it perceived as its moral responsibility to guide the nation suggests its unwillingness to leave the centre stage of politics even after it had been dealt a blow by the M.C.P. In fact it shows the Church's desire to re-establish its lost influence in the new society.

In spite of showing signs of moral courage, under the surface, the Catholic was still reeling from the moral and political blow that it had suffered from the M.C.P. to an extent that its reaction to Dr Banda's rule in Malawi particularly between mid-1964 and 1970s would to some considerable extent be determined by that factor. In other words, the Church's determination to patch up relationship with the new rulers became the underlying instinct behind the church's response to the political trends in the new order. In the new dispensation the church sought to prove its loyalty and cooperation. In that way it could both mollify the new rulers and then restore its image. More importantly, reconciliation with the new rulers would give it a comfortable place within the new state. At what cost ?

In the period immediately before independence, the Catholic Church displayed considerable acquiescent or submissive character in its dealing with the government. On 1st July 1964, when the Bishops set to prepare an address to be delivered on Independence Day, they obliged to submit it to the authorities so

as "to avoid political implications".¹⁷⁹ The cautious and submissive approach of the Bishops shows their unwillingness or unpreparedness to antagonise the rulers who ostensibly were too sensitive to any tendencies that seemed critical to their rule especially in light of the recent conflict between church and state had confirmed. However, it is also probably correct to view that attitude as partly reflective of certain current political developments. At this particular stage in the history of the nation, there appeared to emerge certain signs which pointed to the dictatorial tendencies of the M.C.P rule. It was becoming more apparent that the Malawi Congress Party government was unprepared to countenance any opposition from any quarter. As early as 1963 Dr Banda had declared that "We don't say what do you want, what is it? It is what Kamuzu says that goes out there."¹⁸⁰ One of the rules that was adopted in 1963 virtually removed the peoples right or freedom to contribute in a free debate on any aspect of the political life of the country by making that act as an offence against the President or the party.¹⁸¹ The Bishops' attitude can perhaps be understood well in light of the governments' repressive or restraining laws that it had imposed especially those relating to the transmission of public information.¹⁸² It is certainly possible that the ruling could either directly or indirectly have a restraining impact on the way the Church (Bishops) conducted their affairs and related to the authorities. Unfortunately, it is this cautious and submissive approach that the Church took towards the state at this stage that seemed to have created a precedence upon which

179 *Minutes on community development,, Catholic Secretariat, Lilongwe, Malawi, (1st April, 1964, item No. 6, p.2)*

180 D.T. Williams, "Malawi Politics of Despair," p.205.

181 *Ibid.*

182 *Ibid.*

the state had to capitalise on, in its public relations not only with the Church but also other organisations. For example, it became the "unwritten law" for any important organisation such as the church to exercise "personal discretion", put it bluntly, "personal censorship" before they could release any address of national significance.¹⁸³ Thus later on, it became almost the "unwritten law" of the church and others to see that they exercised that caution.¹⁸⁴ Even the Catholic Church magazine "Moni" had to learn early to censor itself.¹⁸⁵

However, it also appears that, as much as it may have been due to the political pressure, seemingly, the Church itself was equally responsible for allowing itself to be dictated upon by the government. It is certainly indicative of the guilt that the church could have borne for its apparent non-cooperation with that regime on the eve of independence, that in an attempt to reach a rapprochement with that order, it had to oblige itself to be subservient to it. The Bishops felt that they had to prove their loyalty to the new rulers so as to find a niche in the new political settlement. This assertion is explained in terms of the Bishops attitude to the new rulers at this early stage. On 1st April, 1964, in response to the government's request on whether it could contact Catholic students studying overseas without prior consultation with the hierarchy, the Church declared that "it is a declared policy of the Bishops to

¹⁸³ Ncozana, S, interview conducted on 23rd November, 1993, at St. Michaels, Blantyre Malawi.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ J.K. Lwanda, "Kamuzu Banda of Malawi," p.68.

help the country without self interest".¹⁸⁶ The logical development of this character manifestly degenerated into pathetic proportions. Seemingly, the Bishops were not only willing but were too keen to fall under the government's sphere of influence. In the related episode to the above, the church even approached the government "to be informed of the government's plans and to what extent the government would allow the church in the plans".¹⁸⁷

Surely, by putting such a proposition to the authorities, the Church had provided "terms" or "conditions" upon which its relationship with the State relations would be conducted or governed in the new order. In fact, by virtue of that proposition the church had provided the government with terms on which the latter would conduct its relations with the Church. In that way, the Church had virtually stamped upon that government its seal of legitimacy. Definitively the Church's conduct implied that it was no longer the master of its own destiny in the new order but instead it would be at the mercy of the new rulers perhaps more so, than had been the case during the colonial era.

2.3 Independence 1964 - 1968: From Political Accommodation to Cooptation

With the dawn of political independence, the churches saw their new role primarily as that of an advisor to the new rulers.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ *Minutes on Community Development*, item No. 6 p. 3, Catholic Secretariat, LiLongwe, Malawi).

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ K. Ross, "Not Catalyst But Ferment: The Distinctive Contribution of the Churches to Political Reform in Malawi 1992-93, in K. Ross and M. Nzunda (eds.), *Church, Law and*

They saw their responsibility as to provide moral support or advice to the political leaders. Why? As already stated above, the churches held that position because they believed and somehow took it for granted that since the majority of the present politicians were themselves very prominent members of the Protestant Churches[Presbyterian],¹⁸⁹ there was therefore little apprehension as to their political or moral integrity.¹⁹⁰ It was generally held that since the new leaders had very strong connections at least with the main-line churches there was no reason why the churches had to act in a role that would be critical to the government.¹⁹¹ That position was very much strengthened by the general perception that Dr Banda was a sound religious leader. Moreover, some of Banda's aides were making much of his position in the church as an elder.¹⁹² In this way from the beginning the church fell prey to Dr Banda's political spell. His position in the church had smouldering effect on the church that was supposed to speak out when the situation demanded. On the other hand, the religious character that the independence celebrations were given with the Catholics fully participating¹⁹³ tended to reinforce the perception that the new political order was being built on the pillars of the Christian faith. That aspect tended to dispel any reservations whatsoever

Transition in Malawi 1992-94, p.38).

¹⁸⁹ The Reverend S. Ncozana, General Secretary of the Blantyre Synod, Blantyre, Interview conducted on 23rd November, 1993, in Blantyre, p.1

¹⁹⁰ F.L Moyo, "Church and Politics: The case of Livingstonia Synod," p.123.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² J.l. Lwanda, *Kamuzu Banda of Malawi*, p. 73].

¹⁹³ See Minutes on Community Development, Item.....)

that the churches might have entertained in the first place.¹⁹⁴ In some respects, the national outlook at independence gave the strong impression that the new nation was thoroughly christian. In the ostensibly religious climate, seemingly, it did not occur to the leaders of the church to at least question the certitude of their assumptions. They appeared to take it for granted that since the leaders professed some allegiance to religion, Malawi was on its way to an theocratic order. Yet, even at this eleventh hour there were some tendencies emerging under the surface that seem to have been at variance with the assumptions that the church leaders harboured. This aspect surfaced in the very statement that the leaders of the Protestant and Catholic churches issued on Independence Day, part of which read:

"All were needed in the building of the plan for the building. Everyone had a part to play. Singleness of purpose and unity of effort were the prior essentials for the fulfilment of their objective. Much was at stake then as there is today. The leaders of the churches of Malawi join together in urging everyone to adopt the same spirit of unity and cooperation and that same devotion today so that a society in Malawi may be built under God - a society in which all are needed in which all have a place and to quote from the speech by the late D.M. Chisiza: 'in which dignity of the human individual and the sanctity of his personality shall be recognised to be the sacred fountain of democratic principles; in which basic human rights shall be guaranteed. That will ensure religious, political, social and economic justice to every citizen'."¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ Same interview, Ncozana.

¹⁹⁵ Joint message from the Churches of Malawi on the Attainment of Independent Sovereignty, July, 1964, Catholic

By drawing a parallel analogy of the ancient history of ancient Israel and Malawi on Independence, the church leaders sought to portray and highlight the necessity of political inclusiveness and the observance of human rights in the new order. The cautious note demonstrates the extent to which the leaders must have been aware of the threat that the new government seemed to have posed to the rights of the people. However, the rather strained manner in which they sought to express their sentiments further reflects the repressive or strenuous atmosphere in which the churches were now operating. This again could not have been unrelated to the impact of some crucial political episodes that had already begun to chart the political course which the nation was taking.

The swift movement of political developments within the new state were somehow taking place at such a pace that it seemed the churches were not capable of keeping pace with them and as such could not respond to them pro-actively.¹⁹⁶

In September 1964, merely three months after attaining independence, Dr Banda expelled five of the original founders of the nationalist movement who had initially invited and handed leadership over to him.¹⁹⁷ The ministers had fallen off with Dr Banda on the issue of the style of leadership and policy of the new state.¹⁹⁸ The former had criticised the Prime Minister for his dictatorial style in leadership and also on some aspects

Secretariat, Lilongwe, Malawi. Signed.

¹⁹⁶ S. Ncozana, interview conducted in Blantyre, Malawi on the 23rd November, 1993.

¹⁹⁷ D.T. Williams, *Malawi Politics of Despair*, pp. 224-228.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

pertaining to internal and external policy.¹⁹⁹ The incident that came to be known as the "cabinet crisis" appeared to have pushed the nation almost on the precipice political disaster with widespread factions supporting one or another rebel ministers in either open or underground rebellion against Dr Banda.²⁰⁰ Despite the fact that the latter prevailed causing his enemies to flee into exile in neighbouring countries and abroad,²⁰¹ the episode signified an important a milestone with respect to the issue of freedom of open political debate or expression in Malawi during the Dr Banda era. Lwanda has spelt out the short and long term political implications of that incident on the political life of the country, "it not only removed any lingering opposition from Banda's government, but also ensured that the next generation of potential leaders of Malawi, both intellectual and technocrat were consigned to exile."²⁰² However, this incident plus the ensuing further political events were to constrain the climate of political expression further. This would certainly affect the way the Church would operate its mission in Malawi.

Within these context the government began to put into place drastic and arbitrary legislation designed to curtail or eliminate political opposition. It became punishable by death to be found or suspected of harbouring or consorting or sustaining the rebel.²⁰³ During the same period, Dr Banda literally sanctioned the ill-treatment of his rebel enemies: " These people

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² J.L. Lwanda, *Kamuzu Banda of Malawi*, p. 42.

²⁰³ William, *Malawi Politics of Despair*, Chapter 6.

are wild animals. They must be destroyed."²⁰⁴ The words could have been taken for a green light to embark on the persecution of the perceived enemies of the state. One, Mr Massa, M.P for Dowa, had his eyes scooped out for insisting that the rebel ministers be given a fair trial. Another M.P., Mr Matupi Mkandawire was tortured and killed for having refused to condemn the rebel ministers.²⁰⁵ Political assassinations were, however, not confined to opponents within the country. Cross-border raids into the neighbouring states were conducted by the security agents where many perceived opponents were murdered. For instance, after Bwanausi was killed in a car accident in Zambia, Banda was reportedly "very pleased" and publicly declared that "his opponents would die one by one".²⁰⁶

How did the Church respond to such challenges? According to the General Secretary of the Blantyre Synod, Presbyterian Church, The Very Reverend Silas Ncozana, in the midst of political repression the churches were not directly aware of the inner political developments within the party or the constituent assembly.²⁰⁷ Since they were not in a position to know of the policies that were being made, the Church was not in a strong position to condemn or protest against such actions. In other words, since they did not have reasonable grounds in terms of policy or legislation it would have been presumptuous on their part to speak against political acts of which their sanction was not clear.²⁰⁸ Similarly, according to another source within the Roman Catholic Church, in spite of the fact the Church might have been

²⁰⁴ J.L. Lwanda, *Kamuzu Banda of Malawi*, p.49.

²⁰⁵ Lwanda, *Kamuzu Banda of Malawi*, p.105.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁷ Ncozana, same interview.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

well aware that some of its members were participating in the violation of human rights such as beating the Witnesses for the sake of a card (an incident in Ntcheu 1975), the Church itself like the society at large held the President in such high esteem that such an action was not directly attributed to him but rather to his misguided lieutenants. Moreover, it was held that after all a young nation like Malawi needed such a powerful President like Dr Banda who would unify the country.²⁰⁹

enter from this - were introduced by Kamwana around 1908

During this period begun also a wave of anti-Jehovah's Witnesses campaign. That religious sect had been operating in the country since 1920s.²¹⁰ Though they had been critical of the colonial government, nevertheless, those authorities had more or less tolerated them and therefore co-existed with them. Their survival under the new regime looked less certain. The government of the Malawi Congress Party was not only much less prepared to deal with a body that tended to be highly critical to its rule but was more intransigent in handling such an element. In this respect, the Witnesses found themselves contending with a formidable foe. The persecution of the Jehovah's Witnesses was triggered by one of the most iniquitous systems of the ruling Malawi Congress Party - compulsory demand to buy a party card. Throughout the Banda's rule, possession of a party card had become a prerequisite for entry into a shop, a hospital and other important public places.²¹¹ In many other cases demands were even made on mothers carrying a baby to buy a party card for them or to buy a card for the expected baby.²¹² Such conduct was justified on the ground

²⁰⁹ Anonymous, interview conducted in Lilongwe, Malawi on the 6th December, 1995.

²¹⁰ "Where Silence Rules: The Suppression of Dissent in Malawi", in *Africa Watch*, 1990, p.64.

²¹¹ Personal reminiscences.

²¹² *Ibid.*

that it was the only way by which they sought to express their gratitude to the President.²¹³ The non-compromising stance of the Witnesses with respect to this issue brought them into direct conflict with the party officials. For the Witnesses, the issue went beyond mere possession of a party card. It ran into the crucial issue of religious allegiance or authority but also had soteriological ramifications.²¹⁴ Their cooperation with the party officials on this issue could imply their allegiance or association to an authority that was inherently evil, since doctrinally the Witnesses regarded themselves as above party association or allegiance. Though operating in the world the were ^{*} not of this world.²¹⁵ Rather they were strangers en route to the new Jerusalem to be inaugurated at the end of the time.²¹⁶ While for the majority of the main-line churches possession of the party card might not have carried with it such religious significance, for the Witnesses, the implications were crucial. Their cooperation with the government could have meant association with evil. Effectively that could have meant cutting themselves off from the salvation of the New Jerusalem. In fact, in their view such an act bordered on apostasy, as such anathema.

How did the churches perceive or respond to such developments? The Church's traditional attitude to the issue ^{of} to the Jehovah's Witnesses influenced their reaction to the persecution of the latter. According to one source within the Roman Catholic Church, the persecutions of the Jehovah's Witnesses could not have attracted much sympathy apparently because of rather

²¹³ *Ibid.*

²¹⁴ Interview with Mr Chimsalazo, Pretoria
22nd April, 1993.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

strange manner with which they lived their faith. Since, it was held that they were unorthodox, it followed that their plight could be justified.²¹⁷

The issue of the Jehovah Witnesses in connection with the buying of the buying of the party card is significant in the modern history of modern Malawi. It impinges on the broader issue of the meaning of "freedom of worship." What constitutes freedom of worship? Does it merely involve the church's right to freely order its church services without engaging itself in the contemporary socio-political issues? Or does it also entail the church's right to interact with socio-political issues facing the society both?

The churches in Malawi were operating in the atmosphere ^h were the government of the day proclaimed that freedom of worship was guaranteed to all the churches.²¹⁸ For the government, freedom of worship, seemingly, meant the Church's freedom to conduct worship that excluded reference to the critical political or social issues that the Church and Society was certainly. To that effect, time and again, the government of Dr Banda reminded the churches that they were welcome to operate in the country so long as they were not involved in the politics of the country.²¹⁹ Similarly, in their public addresses, party officials asked the churches to be grateful to the government for the freedom of worship that prevailed in the country. However, time and again, the churches themselves proclaimed that freedom of worship existed in Malawi and went to the great lengths to assure the

²¹⁷ Anonymous interview conducted in, Lilongwe on the 6th December, 1995.

²¹⁸ F.L. Moyo, "Church and Politics," p.126

²¹⁹ Personal reminiscences of J.L. Lwanda, *Kamuzu Banda of Malawi*, p.176.

leaders that they were thankful for it.²²⁰ It ought to be noted that the churches proclaimed freedom of worship in the context where it did not have the freedom to speak out on any major issues that concerned its mission. The fact that church leadership joined the political chorus proclaiming freedom of worship when it was aware that it could not speak freely on some of the pertinent issues of the day undermined its ability to speak out strongly especially in the deepest moment of socio-political crisis.

Meanwhile, during the period between 1964 and 1968, several important developments had taken place in the legislature that were to drag the Banda regime further into political absolutism, consequently politically restrain Malawians.

In November, 1965, Dr Banda, effectively granted the para-military Malawi Young Pioneers sweeping powers to harass or even brutalise those suspected or known to be disloyal to the regime.²²¹ The immediate result of such actions was the intensified renewal of the persecution of the Jehovah Witnesses. The same year security laws were put in place which sanctioned death penalty for dissenters or those colluding with them. As Venter has concluded in all intents and purposes by 1966 Malawi had become a *de jure* one-party state.²²²

²²⁰ F.L. Moyo, " Church and Politics, " p.126.

²²¹ Williams, *Malawi: The Politics of despair*, p.227.

²²² *Malawi towards Multi-Party Democracy: The Next Domino?* (Africa Institute of South Africa, Pretoria Sept 8-10, 1992).

2.4 The Second Vatican Council 1962-1965

As already noted above, the Catholic Church in Malawi was in the sixties also operating within the background of the Vatican II. Adrian Hastings has noted both the positive effect during its initial early years as well as conservative effect in the subsequent period seemed to have had on the church particularly in Africa.²²³ The first aspect was epitomised by no less a figure than His Holiness, Pope Paul VI, when on arrival at Entebbe Airport in August, 1969, he announced to the church: " You may, must have an African christianity."²²⁴ Certainly, that spirit was set to influence the course of mission fundamentally, not least in Malawi. In that country it was perhaps in the area of liturgy and ecumenism that the change was most characteristic.

In the issue of the church's Newsletter of 3rd June, 1972, concern was expressed from the pastoral workers that the church's involvement in these areas absorb us to the extent of neglecting the " more spiritual aspects, theological encounters where deeper unity lies."²²⁵ Even though the Vatican had encouraged the church's participation in the life of the society, the church's pre-occupation in liturgical and ecumenical issues had the effect to relegate its social role further to the back seat. According to the Roman Catholic priest and lecturer of Chancellor college, Zomba, Malawi, the post-conciliar church in Malawi was more involved in liturgical and ecumenical matters than socio-

²²³ Hastings, *Africa Catholicism, Essays in Discovery*, (London, SCM Press, 1989, 130f).

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.131.

²²⁵ *Catholic Newsletter*, (Lilongwe, Malawi, p.2).

political issues.²²⁶ This observation has been confirmed by the writer during research. The period particularly from 1963 until 1975, the Roman Catholic Church in Malawi was transforming itself. During this period, it is observed that there is more cooperation on its part with the Protestant churches especially in the area of social welfare programmes through the Christian Service Committee, an ecumenical body representing these main-line churches. The document " Pastoral Service " at the Catholic Secretariat in Lilongwe is dominated by liturgical matters.²²⁷ Similarly, the church newsletters of this period are dominated with such issues. This seems to indicate that though the influence of the Vatican was positive with respect to liturgical and ecumenical matters, on the other hand, the pre-occupation of the Catholic Church in Malawi with these issues tended to have a holding effect on its socio-political consciousness.

However, the Church's obsession was not entirely confined to that aspect. The Roman Catholic Church in Malawi as perhaps was indeed the case with Africa during this period had entered a second phase of missionary development. The emphasis of mission during this time was rather expansion and consolidation.²²⁸ While the Protestant Churches seemed to have reached the end of the road, the Catholic Church was steadily deploying its resources more intensely and extensively.²²⁹

The Catholic Church in Malawi was further consolidating the

²²⁶ Chakanza J., interview conducted in Chancellor College, Zomba, Malawi on the November 1993.

²²⁷ See especially pp.161-190.

²²⁸ A. Hastings, *A History of African Christianity 1950-75*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p.108).

²²⁹ *Ibid.*

infrastructure it had been laying in the thirties and forties. More foreign resources was pouring in the country to strengthen these developments. According to The Right Reverend Felix Mkhori of Chikwawa Diocese, the church saw this task as the extension of its socio-political task in the society ridden with material poverty.²³⁰ It was a socio-political critique to the apparent government indifference to alleviate the inherent social evils that were rearing their ugly head in the society.²³¹

There was also, however, another factor, Rome. In 1968, Pope Paul VI, advised the Malawian hierarchy : "not to return evil for evil, or revile for revile, not to curse but to bless."²³² The holding influence of the Roman See with respect to the church's socio-political awareness vis avis the issues of socio-political injustice cannot be underestimated, especially, as we shall see, in the case of Bishop Kalilombe.

2.4 From Legitimation towards Cooption 1968-1969

2.4.1 Religious Legitimation and political paralysis

In January, 1968, Father James Chiona received his appointment to become the first Malawian born Archbishop of Blantyre to replace

²³⁰ Chikwawa, interview conducted in Malawi on the 15th January, 1996.

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³² *Catholic Church of Malawi Newsletter*, issue No.7., p.2 (Catholic Secretariat of Malawi, LiLongwe, Malawi).

the Dutch born J.B. Theunissen.²³³ The newly appointed Archbishop was born in 1924, at Bandawe village, in Chiradzulo, southern Malawi.²³⁴ For eleven years he had received training and had a good command in latin. By the time of his appointment, he had been priest for fourteen years.²³⁵ There was also another aspect about the new leader. He was the first Malawian Archbishop in the new era.

In a significant sense the episcopate of Archbishop Chiona opened an important chapter in the history of the Catholic Church in Malawi. Seemingly, right from the very beginning he was prepared to bring about a new understanding of the church's role in the new Malawi. During the time of his predecessor, the Catholic Church had appeared to be rather uncertain of its position with respect to the interim Government. In that way the church seemed to attract suspicion or misunderstanding from the authorities. However, very early in the episcopate of Chiona, significant signs began to emerge which were pointing in the definite direction that the new Archbishop was about to steer the church.

Almost immediately after receiving his appointment, Archbishop Chiona paid a courtesy call to the President where he pledged to undertake to do all in his power to strengthen and maintain the good understanding between church and state.²³⁶ On the very day of his consecration the Archbishop asserted: " the Catholic church has a proud reputation of cooperation with your person and

²³³ "Silver Jubilee, Archbishop Chiona, 1968-1993" in *Moni Magazine* (Limbe: Publicity Sub-Committee of the Blantyre Deanery, Limbe).

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

²³⁵ *Ibid.*

²³⁶ The Catholic Church of Malawi Newsletter, No.7; "A Great Day for the Country," p.3.

date ??

the government."More significantly, the President's response was telling:

"I assure your lordship you will find me, the government, party cooperative with your priests and your community. Already I am very proud and happy with the cooperation that exists between church and state in Malawi. This is important. Politics is one aspect of our life, so too are economics and religion. There can be no peace without a strong and stable government. This is why is important that we who are leaders must work together. Conflict between us will do us no good."²³⁷

The cautionary note at the end of the President's speech is more telling or rather ominous. It must have been intended to send out a loud and clear message to the newly to the successor of Archbishop Theunissen: 'no room existed in the new order for the church to challenge or let alone oppose the government on policy issues.' For the government, the church had to concentrate only the spiritual life. So long the church concentrated merely on the spiritual dimension, leaving the government to look after the socio-political affairs, the government was contented to leave the Church operate freely. Conversely, if the church stepped the thin line of religion and politics, towards the latter, conflict with the state was bound to occur. By putting forward this injunction the government of Dr Banda was effectively banishing the church into " spiritual ghetto. " Moreover, by sounding such a note of caution on the occasion of Chiona's consecration, Banda meant to warn the former not to pursue the confrontationist approach his predecessor had taken. In fact the authorities's attitude in this respect shows their intention to marginalise the church role in the new society. In fact the governments offer of political stability as the condition upon which the church had

²³⁷

Ibid.

to oblige itself to the new government was effectively a way of muzzling the church with respect to its socio-political role in society. Seemingly, the government was conscious of the probable influence that the Catholic Church wielded in its constituency. How? On the same occasion the President had publicly expressed his gratitude particularly to Archbishop Theunissen, and Rome for having recommended the appointment of Chiona as his successor rather than another expatriate.²³⁸ Catholic Secretariat, Lilongwe, Malawi. The rationale behind such sentiments was possibly that the government would find it easier, politically, to control a Malawian national than an expatriate, as was to be the case with Bishop Kalilombe four years later. There is however, an indication that by February, 1968, Banda (and his government) had reconciled himself with the Catholic Church. In his speech on the eve of the national day, Martyrs' Day, while he urged Malawians to go their respective places of worship, he declared that though he was not a Roman Catholic, he would attend a service of worship at the Roman Catholic cathedral on the following Sunday.²³⁹

Nevertheless, seemingly, reconciliation between the state and (Archbishop Chiona) the Catholic Church had gone to such a degree that the latter had come to appear as though it were its chief mouthpiece. In August, 1969, Archbishop Chiona made a speech in his cathedral that reflects not only his quiescent attitude to the political authorities of the day but also is a veiled political commentary on the developments of the period. The thrust of the speech went as follows:

²³⁸, The Catholic Church of Malawi Newsletter
Vol.2, No.3, p.6. September, 1968.

²³⁹ The Catholic Church of Malawi Newsletter,
(No.4, February 1968), p.5.

" It is a holy and religious task to build the nation. From this whole task nobody is exempted and any excuse or neglect is a betrayal of the mandate given by Almighty God. To those who bear the brunt of this work we owe our great debt of gratitude and loyalty. They will not always be understood like the prophets ^{of} old received their share of suffering but their great consolation was to have fulfilled the mandate of Yahweh, as his loyal servants."²⁴⁰

Undoubtedly, the Archbishops statement went a long way to justify or legitimise the order by buttressing it with religious or moral sanction. To the Archbishop, the political leaders and the new order in Malawi were almost synonymous with the religio-political order and leadership in ancient Israel. In his view, the two compared favourably well.

The submissive political character of Archbishop Chiona may also be reflective of the political developments of the period. In other words, the attitude of Archbishop Chiona may not be dissociated from the repressive political situation of the period. Politically, Malawi was going through further social upheaval. Once again there were two issues facing the nation, the persecution of the Jehovah Witnesses and the growing political repression. Both could have affected the Church's attitude to the government. Thus from 1966 down to 1975 another wave of anti-Witnesses campaign had assumed with brutal character.²⁴¹

Hastings has also drawn our attention to the silence of the churches to the persecution of the Jehovah Witnesses,²⁴² and over the closure of the social welfare organisation, the Christian

²⁴⁰ *Moni Magazine*, Zomba, No.58, Aug, 1969.

²⁴¹ See 'Where Silence Rules' pp. 65-67.

²⁴² Hastings, A, *A History of A African Christianity 1950-75*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 196

Service of Malawi²⁴³ by the government during this period. The apparent unwavering character of the Jehovah Witnesses not to cooperate with such political aspects of the new 2order such as buying of the party card, saluting the national flag or paying taxes, was raising the question of political commitment or loyalty to the government. More significantly, it was drawing persecution from the authorities. Archbishop Chiona's critical reference to those who seem to renege on their national responsibility as " traitors " is both an attack on their conduct but also a strong legitimation of the regime. Further, the fact that Archbishop Chiona saw submissive cooperation with the government as " holy and religious " does in fact demonstrate the depth to which the church had fallen into the main-stream political ideology of the Malawi Congress Party. Indeed, on a deeper level, that attitude reflects the degree to which the church was itself beginning to lose its spiritual independence in the context of mounting political repression. This observation is certainly not far fetched in light of the political paralysis that had begun to set in the nation at large.²⁴⁴

Meanwhile, the period between 1969 and 1970s saw significant political developments, particularly in the sphere of legislature and judiciary.²⁴⁵ Constitutional powers enacted in 1966 had empowered the President virtually to appoint or nominate freely more than half of the house of Assembly.²⁴⁶ Meanwhile, laws were put in place which further restricted the limited freedom of flow

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.195.

²⁴⁴ see J.L. Lwanda, *Kamuzu Banda of Malawi*, p.45.

²⁴⁵ D.T Williams, *Malawi, Politics of Despair*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1978), pp.246-257.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

of information. An abrogation of that law could earn a Malawian reporter, detention, while his foreign counterpart, deportation. Ibid. In attempt to have extensive control over his political enemies, Dr Banda was at this time transforming the British-styled judiciary into the traditional Malawi model.²⁴⁷ By character, the latter was effectively designed to subject his enemies to his political or mercy.²⁴⁸

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have noted that the church's reaction to the new order on the eve of independence had a far-reaching effect. Its inability to judge the political situation in 1960 correctly, similarly, to react appropriately, effectively undermined its prophetic right to speak out in an independent or more authoritative manner in the new dispensation. The church's support for the C.D.P, the rival to the majority M.C.P back-fired. It played into the hands of their rivals, the radicle elements in the Malawi Congress Party, who were intent on exploiting the situation to their own political advantage but unfortunately to the disadvantage of the church. Since the action of the church with respect to the C.D.P. touched upon the fundamental issue of its mission in the new era: its credibility or reputation seemed to be in question. In an attempt to rectify that situation the church was obliged to adopt a new attitude and approach to the new order. Specifically, that entailed taking a reconciliatory and an appeasing approach towards the leaders of the new era, hoping that in so doing it would re-establish itself in that era. Essentially, the approach that it adopted at this stage was to determine its relationship with the emerging government of Dr Banda.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

However, during the late sixties and through-out the seventies, amidst mounting political repression, repressive legislation, the pressure to legitimise the status quo through participation in some aspects of the civil life, the church found itself unable to speak out against the social evils attendant in the society. The fact that the church had closely aligned itself to the state made it unable to speak out in a strong and concerted manner to challenge the government on the issues of social injustice.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 From Cooption to Assimilation 1970-1979

3.1 Towards the silencing of the Church: Quasi- formalisation of church-state relationship

The attempts by the Banda government to strengthen its political hold on the church could at times take on more subtle character. In 1970, the government of Dr Banda put into place a structure or a "Working Party." As an umbrella body representing both the Protestant and the Roman Catholic church its duty was defined as: " to eliminate any friction or suspicion that may have been between the government and the churches in development."²⁴⁹ Even though the existence of such a structure was ostensibly geared towards the coordination of social welfare programmes amongst the churches and the government, seemingly, the motivation was political: to direct the church into a course that was in harmony with the policy of the government.²⁵⁰ It was designed to provide a forum for the churches which would appropriately deal with such issues as could likely to enhance its public influence. According to the same source, through that organ the government was able to put political pressure either directly or indirectly on the churches' leadership. According to the same source, the presence of political officials at meetings

²⁴⁹ Address by Hon Aleke Banda, Minister of Finance entitled: "Churches in Development," seminar held in Blantyre, Malawi, 12-15 January, 1970, National Library, Lilongwe, Malawi), p.1.

²⁵⁰ The Reverend Ncozana, interview conducted at St Michaels, Blantyre, Malawi on the 23rd November, 1993.

ensured that the line that the churches took in its social programme was that which was in harmony with the overall policy or ethos of the government. It is only recently that the Christian Council of Malawi has admitted that through its participation in that organ the churches found their role increasingly as distributing aid and supporting the government.²⁵¹ In other words, by getting the churches to participate in such a structure the government sought to undermine the spiritual or political independence of the church by reducing the churches almost to a department within the government which could carry out aspects of the government's policy. The Government's insistence that the Church work particularly hard on the spiritual rather than the material aspects could have been made so as to undermine the church's right of independence in the society, to engage in critical areas of life such as, politics or justice. Possibly, it is to that effect that on the occasion of the presentation of the Bishop elect of Zomba, the President could urge the Bishops to : "work particularly hard on the spiritual development of the country without which the material made no sense."²⁵² This raises the issue were the churches conscious of the implications of its relationship with the government? Certainly the churches were aware of the political pressure that was being exerted on it. The Reverend Father Patrick O' Malley, at one time a Catholic School teacher in Malawi, is reported to have said that priests and

²⁵¹ J.L. Lwanda, *Kamuzu Banda of Malawi*, p.142.

²⁵² *The Catholic Church of Malawi Newsletter*, Catholic Secretariat, Lilongwe, Malawi, November 1, No. 14., p.5 (cf F.L. Moyo, " Church and Politics: The Case of Livingstonia Synod., in M.S. Nzunda and K.R. Ross (eds.), *Church, Law and Political Transition in Malawi 1992-94*, (Gweru: Mambo Press 1995 in association with University of Malawi, Religious and Theological Studies Department), Kachere Series No. 1., p. 126.

ministers were made to participate fully in political functions designed to legitimise the government.²⁵³ In this way, the Church's participation in Banda's repressive regime confirmed "the 'culture of silence' by not addressing the real issues that affected the people publicly or even privately unless it was willing to pay the price-threat, torture and even possible martyrdom."²⁵⁴

3.2 The Impact of Patronage System

3.2.1 Coercion and Legitimation

In an attempt to further entrench its moral as well as political authority in society the government extended political participation to some of the high profile leadership of the mainline churches. At least by 1970s the government was appointing senior leaders of the historic churches into positions of leadership in para-statal or non-governmental organisations, inter alia, Malawi Broadcasting Corporation, Electricity Supply Commission of Malawi, the Censorship Board of Malawi.²⁵⁵ Appointment to those positions was on a termly basis.²⁵⁶ It was

²⁵³ J.L. Lwanda, *Kamuzu Banda of Malawi, A Study in Promise, Power and Political Paralysis*, (Glasgow: Dudu Nsomba Publications, 1993), p.13.

²⁵⁴ F.L. Moyo, "Church and Politics: The Case of Livingstonia Synod," in *Church, Law and Political Transition in Malawi*, p.126.

²⁵⁵ The Reverend S. Ncozana, Interview conducted at St. Micheals, Blantyre, Malawi on the 23rd November, 1993.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

the sole prerogative of the Head of State.²⁵⁷ The appointment went along with it a good package of remunerations including a chauffeur driven vehicle.²⁵⁸ To the majority of the church leaders whose churches were not in a position to offer them such attractive offers it could have been something. The writer's own Bishop held the chairmanship of the Censorship Board more than once in the period between 1980-1989.²⁵⁹ What effect did this system have on the socio-political face of the churches?

In January, 1987, Bishop Nathaniel Aipa was being enthroned as the Diocesan Bishop, in the Cathedral of St. Paul's, Blantyre. The President was the guest of honour. In his first 'charge, address, Bishop Aipa spent almost three quarters of an hour literally admonishing the clergy on the importance of maintaining the 'four corner stones 'of loyalty, obedience, discipline, unity in society. To understand the significance and implications of Bishop Aipa's speech, it is important to bring to the attention of the reader that the corner stones were the crucial instruments with which the Malawi Congress Party government had skilfully employed to maintain itself in power. Through pervasive and intense political propaganda in the media, schools, public rallies, the officials pressed upon the people the necessity of maintaining order and rallying around the Head of State.²⁶⁰ The effect of this indoctrination was to create a close society which was intensely loyal to the Head of state and government.²⁶¹ A politically close society in which loyalty to the person of the President became a cardinal code of conduct would

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁸ Personal reminiscences.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁰ See J.L. Lwanda, *Kamuzu Banda of Malawi.*, p.48 and 84.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

have been in no position to criticise the President or the authorities for the social evils that were glaring at every level of the society. A 'breach' of one of them could cost one's life.²⁶² Bishop Aipa's speech was significant. Since it was generally held that he was 'in good terms' with the Head of State and the party during this period, he was obliged to impress upon his clergy to uphold the codes of the M. C. P. so as to bind them closer to the party. That could have been one way of showing his obedience or loyalty to the President. Ostensibly, Bishop Aipa's conduct shows the degree to which the church was acting like the extended platform, or 'sounding board' of the Malawi Congress Party. He was playing within a religious environment an ideological or political role that many party officials were fulfilling in their constituencies. This conduct may also be understood in light of the material benefits that accrued to the position that people like Bishop Aipa took. During one of the interviews, the writer was informed by one of the highly placed persons in the Catholic Church that whenever the Head of state visited a particular church for worship, it was not uncommon for him to present a 'cash donation' to the church.²⁶³ This attitude was not exceptional to the Anglican Diocese of Southern Malawi. It affected at least all the other mainline churches.²⁶⁴ We have also to some extent noticed this conduct in relation to the Catholic Church in 1969. In these circumstances, the government was deliberately creating and encouraging the spirit of dependence on the churches. Certainly, the effect of this on the churches by mid 1970s was negative especially with respect to its out-look on the issues that affected the social and political aspects of Malawians. Kenneth Ross states that being aware of the power of religion in sustenance of its power

²⁶² Personal reminiscences

²⁶³ Interview with anonymous, Mangochi, Malawi, 6 Jan 1996.

²⁶⁴ cf F.L. Moyo, "Church and Politics," p.126-7.

the government pressed the church for it. The latter complied. It was however, only in 1993, that the church acknowledged that its close identification with the status quo made it incapable of addressing crucial issues that the society was facing.²⁶⁵ Being in a position of virtual subordination and subjugation to the government, the churches were seemingly incapable not only of analysing the context in which they were operating, hence were unable to perceive the signs of the times, but were also powerless to be prophetic as their colleague Bishop Kalilombe.

3.3 The Second Vatican Council Revisited

As already noted, Adrian Hastings observed that one of the rather enduring tendencies in the aftermath of the Vatican council were its positive and conservative aspects particularly towards African Catholicism. According to that writer, amongst other aspects, the latter manifested itself particularly in the increasing control of the national local or regional hierarchies[churches] during the seventies.²⁶⁶ In an attempt to arrest what it perceived as the radical tendencies of some theologians or ecclesiastics, whether ^A african or foreign-born, X the office of the personal representative of the Pope, the pro-nuncio, the Vatican had begun to exercise tighter control on crucial issues that touched on the mission of the church in the sovereign states, especially around the seventies in Africa.²⁶⁷ To some degree, this conservative spirit was also to affect the

²⁶⁵ Newell, "A Moment of Truth", p.250.

²⁶⁶ Hastings, *African Catholicism*, p.133 also Hastings, *A History of African Christianity*, p.247.

²⁶⁷ A. Hastings: *African Catholicism. Essays in Discovery*, (London: SCM, 1989), p.133.

Catholic church in Malawi in and around that period.

On 21st July, 1972, the last foreign-born Bishop of Lilongwe Diocese, Central Malawi, Joseph Fady resigned from his see to give way to a Malawian national.²⁶⁸ During the early days of Dr Banda's rule, Bishop Fady, unlike his colleagues, had personally shown sympathy for the President. While the majority of his brother Bishops had openly voiced out some misgivings about what they perceived as communistic inclinations of Dr Banda and others, he had: " watched with keen interest the take over of the government and kept respect to the new national leader, Kamuzu to his last day. Then he felt likewise obliged to hand over leadership to a Malawian Bishop."²⁶⁹ Bishop Fady, was therefore a darling of the Banda government. Perhaps because of this aspect , the government could have special interest in the see of Lilongwe. It certainly would have been in the interest of the government to follow any further developments with respect to that see.

Bishop Patrick Kalilombe was appointed to succeed Joseph Fady.²⁷⁰ Perhaps reflective of the positive spirit that had earlier on characterised the Vatican era, the episcopate of Bishop Kalilombe initially opened with a sense of optimism and foresightedness.

One of the most significant aspects of his episcopate was the inauguration of the ' mini-synod ' of Lilongwe Diocese. Meeting between 1973 and 1975 under the theme: " We all, are the Church,

²⁶⁸ *Malawi News Zomba*, Government Archives, Zomba, Malawi, (vol 16, No.1008, July 21, 1972), p.1.

²⁶⁹ *Malawi News* vol.16 No.1008, Friday, July 21, 1972, GAZM.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, no.1019, Tues 29 Aug, 1972, pg.1.

" (translation from Chichewa) " *Mpingo Ndife Tonse.* " *Mavu adamvana kuti aning'e pamimba.*²⁷¹ It went further to outline its role in society as the ' salt, ' ' light ' and the leaven of the world. The Synod went on to relate the relevance of baptism to the christian vocation in society:

" By virtue of their unity with Christ through baptism all christians have the responsibility to bring about the kingdom of God. They do that by cleansing people and by transforming their whole life. "²⁷²

More significantly, the synod sought specifically to relate that principle to the area of social justice.

" Christians realise that the objective of true christianity is to raise the life of one's neighbour. Christians cares that: justice is established in business and trade; in wage structures; nepotism is avoided. In short, obstacles towards the establishment of the kingdom of God. We should transform evil to bring about the kingdom of God" ²⁷³

Crucial to this theology is the view that the church's role in society entails transformation. The church is viewed as the transformative agency of evil in all its manifestation in the society. In this respect, the Diocese of Lilongwe is seen as the

²⁷¹ Printed by Likuni Press and Publishing House, Box 133, Lilongwe, Malawi: ' Resolutions of the Diocese of Lilongwe, 24th Nov 1973- 24th Aug) the Synod outlined its objective as: to bring salvation to this country, p.8.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, p.8.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.38.

bearer of light towards that end. Since it bears the light it has to radiate its light to illuminate the whole country by bringing that light of justice to bear on some evil aspects of the society. It is significant that Bishop Kalilombe's synod had indeed touched upon crucial socio-political injustices or evils beginning to rear their heads in the society. According to Lwanda, the 1970s were particularly characterised by two aspects of social evils, economic exploitation and sexual immorality especially within the party. Bribery and nepotism was becoming a common place in the society. It affected the upper stratum of the party. Similarly, senior male party officials were so notoriously involved in sexual immorality with their female numbers that the President had to condemn the evil at a public function.²⁷⁴

Though Bishop Kalilombe's Synod had not forthrightly condemned social injustice per se, it had nevertheless, brought into the open critical issues which the Catholic and the Protestant Churches were supposed to be addressing in Malawi. Yes indeed, as Lwanda has asserted, it was a critical commentary on the socio-political situation of the M.C.P government.²⁷⁵ It was however, more than a political commentary.

Bishop Kalilombe did not reign to see his ideas translated in mortar and bricks. His episcopacy that seemed to edge on the Latin American Liberation theology came to an end apparently with not with the too reluctant concurrence of the church authorities.²⁷⁶ The circumstances surrounding the dramatic end of Bishop Kalilombe's episcopacy and his leaving of the country in 1975 seem to have always been shrouded in official secrecy. Other

²⁷⁴ Lwanda, *Kamuzu Banda of Malawi*, pp 129-135)

²⁷⁵ J. L. Lwanda, *Kamuzu Banda of Malawi* p. 176.

²⁷⁶ Lwanda, *Kamuzu Banda of Malawi*, p.76.

than what has been made available in secondary sources, there seem to be no further information.²⁷⁷

Nevertheless, the short-lived and rather dramatic episcopacy of Bishop Kalilombe was significant for the Catholic Church in Malawi. It highlighted the growing perception that the M.C.P government was not in the least, prepared to be challenged on some negative aspects of its rule. On the other hand, the fact that the Bishop had to leave his see with the apparent cooperation of the church authorities does cast a dark shadow on their commitment to the socio-political issues of the day. In this respect, the Kalilombe episode does confirm our view that the churches were in a state of political paralysis. Their close association with the regime hampered them to take a strong stand against the political challenges that the country was facing during this period. It must be observed that while the episcopate of Kalilombe had begun to do just that, the rest of the church remained silent, unable to comment on the crucial national issues. Retrospectively, Bishop Kalilombe was one and half decades ahead of the entire Catholic church in Malawi. Some of the issues that he had raised in 1975, were to be voiced out more vigorously by his brother Bishops only seventeen years later, in 1992.

Generally, we therefore, observe that, had it not been perhaps for the effect of seemingly a combination of conspiratory ecclesiastical and political forces of the period, the character of the church or for that matter, the history of the nation could have taken a new turn right in the seventies. What Adrian Hastings generally observed about the Catholic Church in Africa at this stage, was particularly true of the church in Malawi: "in

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The current sources are generally silent on this issue. Further research on this issue could yield useful results.

comparison with the Catholic Church of the 1960s, that of the late 1970s and 1980s had become a church of silence."²⁷⁸

Can the conservative tendency of the Catholic Church in Malawi be sufficiently explained merely in terms of its close relation with the status quo in Malawi? Not entirely. There was another factor.

3.4 The Malawi Traditional/ Cultural Factor

In post-independent Malawi, there was another important aspect which considerably bore on the church's attitude and conduct towards the socio-political question: the conservative culture or tradition of the Malawian society. While during the fifties the bulk of the leadership of the church consisted almost entirely of white foreign-born priests, who tended to be more radical than their Malawian counterparts, in and around late sixties, the Catholic Church had begun at least harvesting its real fruits. We have noted that the first Malawian Bishop was ordained in 1965 and the first Archbishop only in 1968. This group of indigenous clergy were generally conservative in outlook. In spite of the fact that by late sixties a number of Malawian clergy were coming up the church ladder during that period, leadership still remained largely in the hands of expatriate priests. However, even the small number of Malawian clergy who were taking up their positions alongside their counterparts were generally conservative. To understand the effect that this factor might have had on the church's social face we need to try to comprehend the dynamics of Malawian culture or tradition.

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A.Hastings, *African Catholicism, Essays in Discovery*, (SCM Press, London, 1989), p.133.

The Malawian clergy who were coming up were thoroughly traditional in outlook. They were first and foremost village people. Archbishop Chiona himself, like the others came from one of the rural villages of Chiradzulo district. Along with others, he shared in the traditional culture which was at its core politically conservative.

Perhaps like any other African culture, integral to Malawian culture, is the tenet of respect for elders of the society. The elder enjoys this respect either from the position of power or seniority in age. A person in that position commands some considerable influence or power over his subordinates. In Malawian tradition and culture a chief is *de jure* a law unto himself. What the chief says effectively becomes a law. His or Her relationship with the subordinates is eventually determined and regulated on that premise. Implicitly, respect for the elder entails unquestioning or uncritical attitude to the one in authority. This notion is best conveyed by a traditional wise saying: *Wamkulu salakwa*; literally, meaning : (An elder does not err. It follows that no matter what mistake or wrong an elderly person may commit, the one in a position of subordination can neither challenge nor openly criticise it. The most that a subordinate living under the oppressive regime can do is, either to put up with the situation or leave. Church leadership in Malawi, more particularly in the Catholic church, whose extensive and strong base whose constituency was drawn from the rural villages* were in the late sixties very much part of this social fabric or ethos. They shared in this world view and expressed it in their socio-political life. The relationship between Dr Banda, his government and the churches, as was with the rest of the nation, was considerably shaped, or influenced by this factor. It was considerably conducted on these terms. In his political style, Dr Banda adopted certain antics that cast him in the role of the ancient Maravi Kalonga chieftaincy. He was the " Ngwazi, "

hero," who carried a flying whisk.²⁷⁹ At the height of political repression, abuse of human rights, between 60s and 70s, the Malawian clergy found themselves, powerless, unable even to mute criticism of the excesses of the regime.²⁸⁰ During the writer's inquiry into this aspect, it was repeatedly brought to his attention of the conservative and restraining effect of the Malawian culture or tradition in stifling the clergys' ability to speak out collectively and loudly on the social evils that were besieging our beloved nation.²⁸¹ For instance, when the writer asked some sources in the Congregation of the White Fathers, as to why the Bishops had not spoken out against the government when the latter was persecuting the Jehovah's Witnesses for refusing to buy a party card, or some aspect of unjust policy, such as detention without trial, it was repeatedly stated that the Bishops were thoroughly Malawians who held those in authority in high esteem. They could not criticise the party leaders because such conduct would be construed as impolite or as discourtesy, and therefore inappropriate.²⁸² John Loyd Lwanda has also observed the significant part that the Malawian factor played in enabling Banda to prevail.²⁸³ Similarly, the apparent Bishops' inability to take a strong stance in support of the critical position such as the one that had been taken by Bishop Kalilombe is reflective of this character. Had the Bishops not been of that outlook, certainly, they could have not only supported the efforts of Bishop Kalilombe, but could also have taken a clear and bold stand against the persistent violations of human rights long

²⁷⁹ J. L. Lwanda, *Kamuzu Banda of Malawi*, p.114

²⁸⁰ Newell, "A Moment of Truth, p.250.

²⁸¹ Interview with anonymous White Father, 6th Lilongwe, December, 1995

²⁸² Anonymous I, interview conducted in Lilongwe, on the 6th December, 1995.

²⁸³ *Kamuzu Banda of Malawi*, p.29.

before 1992.

Because of their cultural respect and attitude to authority, plus the close relationship with the government, during the peak period of persecution of the Witnesses the Bishops were helpless. They were unable to take a strong stand against the abuses of human rights. On the other hand, their tendency to respect the person of the Head of state took the semi-character of idolisation. On many public church or party functions at which the clergy were in attendance it became a standard and established ritual for the religious officials to lavishly praise and thank the President for the freedom of worship and the wonderful great things that he had accomplished.²⁸⁴

In conclusion, we note that the Banda government attempts to further control the church through quasi-official means was an important stage in trying to silence church leadership. Through common participation in state power the clergy came to operate more or less like party officials. Their manner or extent of involvement could have marred their mission by undermining the moral basis for their ministry in the society. Through the 'Joint Working Party', a forum where some of the government and high-ranking officials of the Church met, the government was in a position to influence its policy within the corridors of powers of the church. In many cases the Church leaders were not in the least critical of the role they played within the official ambit of the government. They tended to believe that they were doing a noble service to the government.

The system of patronage, extended to the Church in the sixties and seventies further increased the government's hold over the

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Personal reminiscences, cf. F. Moyo in Nzunda, M & Ross. K., *Church Law and Political Transition 1992-1994*.

Church. Through lucrative sinecures offered to some of the leadership of the Church enjoyed in return for the semi-official services, the government was able to establish its hegemony over some aspects of the Church's sphere of influence.

However, the conservative political outlook of the Church also arose from within itself. By character that institution was generally conservative. In the Malawi of the sixties and of the seventies, that tendency seemed to marry well with the political sentiments of the prevailing status quo. The governments insistence that the Church divorce itself from the realm of politics seemed to have roused little or no opposition from the government. The departure of an independent minded Bishop Kalilombe from the scene does highlight this aspect. The largely political conservativeness of the Vatican coupled with that of the local Church had in this respect a holding effect on the Church's social witness in Malawi.

However, the Church's conservative appearance seemed also to have been intrinsically ingrained in the traditional character of the leadership of the Church. That aspect lay at the heart of the Malawi society.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 Political intransigence Vs the Ferment of the Gospel in Malawi 1980-1992

The Catholic Church in Malawi like any other national church in Africa or the world, has always been characterised by the links it enjoys with the rest of the other Catholic Churches in the world. In 1958, the seven Bishops of Malawi were constituted as the Episcopal Conference of Malawi, a hierarchy, under the resident Archbishop of Blantyre. By virtue of that constitution, the church in Malawi enjoys a certain degree of autonomy, exercised within the canonical framework of Rome. Through the office of the nuncio based in Lusaka, Zambia, the Catholic Church is directly and officially linked to the central authority in Rome, and ultimately with the rest of the church in the world. Similarly, more closely, the Catholic Church in Malawi enjoys other associations with the other Catholic Churches on the continent. It is a member of the regional body of the Association of Members of the Episcopal Conferences of Eastern Africa, in short, A.M.E.C.E.A. Likewise, the Bishops in Malawi belong to the Symposium of the Episcopal Conferences of Eastern Africa and Madagascar, S.E.C.A.M.

Is the
Roman
Catholic
or a
church
in
Malawi

During the eighties and nineties the contact between the Roman Catholic Church in Malawi and its regional neighbours was becoming increasingly close. It was becoming more closely drawn into the affairs of the church in the region. There were some reasons for this development. Firstly, there was at this period seemingly the opening up of the political climate in Malawi. While during and almost the entire period of the sixties and seventies the government had been preoccupied with the threat of

dissent from within and to some extent from the Malawian exiles in the neighbouring states, the period around the eighties and nineties seemed to pose no major threat that the government could be worried with. The substantial number of those active in exile had either been eliminated through cross-border assassinations, silenced or were too weak to present any major challenge to the regime. In this respect political situation inside the country seemed to be stable. This political trend tended to manifest itself in the rather more relaxed manner in which the authorities dealt with the procedures pertaining to migration.²⁸⁵ It is in this context that the church in Malawi was also becoming more outward-looking. As the political atmosphere appeared to "loosen up", so the church also became more outward-looking. In 1979, this was particularly illustrated by the fact that perhaps for the first time in its history, the Catholic church in Malawi was allowed to host the A.M.E.C.E.A conference, a body that discussed socio-political matters that could be politically sensitive especially to dictatorial and autocratic regimes like that of the Banda government.²⁸⁶ At that conference the President himself was the guest speaker.²⁸⁷ The confidence of the government especially in relation to its relationship with the church was better expressed by the President himself when on that occasion he declared:

"In some countries, church and state; religion and government seem to be or tend to be if not open enemies at least antagonists. Thank God this is not the case here. no! Church and state, those of us who try to know, are not even competitors. There are partners in looking after the children of God on

²⁸⁵ Personal reminiscences.

²⁸⁶ *The Catholic Church of Malawi Newsletter*, Vol.1, p.3.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

earth."²⁸⁸

The increasing contact between the Catholic Church in Malawi and its regional neighbours was to have a significant bearing on its mission in Malawi. It would transform its whole attitude and ultimately its relationship with the government. How ? Through these ties the Roman Catholic Church in Malawi would enter into the main theological current of the church, and consequently would be made more aware of the socio-political issues that were besieging not only Malawi but also the neighbouring countries. This trend was as much the consequence of the subsequent impact of the Second Vatican Council as was the socio-political situation in the African states. Certainly, it has to be acknowledged that the Vatican Council had considerably re-oriented the church theologically. Particularly through its various teachings concerning the church's social role the council had virtually ushered the church into the new era. However, while the influence of that Council may have influenced the Church in other parts of the world much earlier on, seemingly, in Africa and at least in Malawi, it caught up much later.

4.1 The Political Landscape in the 1980s and 1990s

Through-out the eighties and for the most part of the nineties, yet again, Malawi was going through another transition. This upheaval related to many aspects and levels of its public life including socio-cultural, political or religious. One of the more cataclysmic changes occurred in the latter category. During that period, political events in Malawi were assuming an ominous

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Speech made on the inauguration of A.M.E.C.E.A Plenary conference at Zomba Catholic Secondary School Assembly, 7th Aug. 1979, Zomba, Malawi, Catholic Secondary School, p.3-5.

character for the Banda regime. Gradually, it became increasingly apparent that power was gradually shifting from the centre to the right. Mr John Tembo, a long-serving, loyal right hand minister and the "family" had been rising to power at least since 1974.²⁸⁹ In spite of the fact that Mr Tembo had lost the support of important organisations such as the International Monetary Fund in his capacity as the governor of the Reserve Bank of Malawi, it was held that Mr Tembo and his niece, Banda's consort, were increasingly becoming the real powers around the throne of Dr Banda. Accordingly, this period was being associated with the brutal aspects of the policies of the Banda's government,²⁹⁰ akin to those that had been related to and characterised the previous era of the most feared former minister in the office of the President and Cabinet, Mr Albert Muwalo Nqumayo. In an attempt to consolidate his position, Mr Tembo had created the regime which was famous for its brutal repression through the system dubbed strategic detention. Through the supreme apparatus of repression, the Security and Police Mobile Forces the population seemed to be at the mercy of his regime.²⁹¹ Similarly, the rise of Mr Tembo and his niece, Cecilia Kadzamira went along with extensive patronage, bribery, compulsory extortion of money or food items in the villages, ostensibly given as donations to the President. The extent to which the last abuse had become too iniquitous and loathsome was one of the reasons why the Bishops had to condemn it albeit only in 1992.

It was within this context that between 21-28 January, 1980 pastoral workers personnel from the various departments of the

²⁸⁹ Lwanda, *Kamuzu Banda of Malawi*, p.39-41.

²⁹⁰ cf Moyo, "Church and Politics: The Case of Livingstonia Synod," p.126.

²⁹¹ Lwanda, *Kamuzu Banda of Malawi*, p.167.

Church met at Msamba Catholic Centre, Lilongwe, central Malawi.²⁹² The subject under discussion was " Human Promotion." Meeting under that theme the church attempted to do a through analysis and critique of the current position of the church in society in light of the socio-political changes. Importantly, it attempted to assess its traditional role and approach to Human Promotion. Old models of missiology came under intensive scrutiny and found were insufficient to deal with the socio-economic and political problems that the society was facing. The traditional concept of mission based on the Church as the magisterium was no longer held to be an adequate one. Rather, the participants insisted that the Second Vatican Council conception of the church as the ' whole people of God ' collectively engaged in mission was held to be the most appropriate one to deal with the current socio-political problems facing the society today. Human promotion entailed service to mankind in wholeness. Further, the symposium identified barriers, such as social injustice and famine as obstacles to Human Promotion. Similarly significant, quoting Pope Paul VI *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, it reminded the church the duty to proclaim the liberation of millions of human beings, many of whom are her own children'²⁹³ Contrasting the traditional 'sectarian' approach which saw mission almost exclusively as 'winning the soul,' with social alleviation as its appendage, it asserted Human Promotion as a process fostering liberation from all forms of slavery and domination. In order to attain that goal, so the Symposium affirmed, people must be made aware of their social, economical and political context by the church. The church has the duty to socially conscientise the socially marginalised and identify with them in order that their dignity

²⁹² "Role of Christian Leadership in concern for Human Promotion in a community" in *Church Development Seminar for Pastoral workers*, 11th Sept. 1990.

²⁹³ *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, p.20.

and humanity may be restored. One of the active participants in that consultation was The Reverend Father Job Makirika. He was the chairperson of the National desk of the Lay Apostolate at the Catholic Secretariat in Lilongwe. In his paper, he had challenged the participants to observe the ' signs of the times ' and to go out to equip all people involved in catechisis especially with a view to transform the old model of mission as 'charity, or ambulance service." Fr Makirika emphasised the crucial role that the religious animators had in conscientising the laity so that they become agents of social transformation.

For the Catholic Church in Malawi, an event of that kind was unprecedented. The closest that the church had come to that position was five years previously, during the mini-synod of Lilongwe Diocese of 1975. Similarly, the fact that the conference quoted the Pope Paul VI's encyclical, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, the document that Bishops were to quote in their Pastoral Letter of 1992, emphasise the closeness of the latter to the movement of the social gospel within the Catholic Church in Malawi. In this respect that gathering was an important contribution towards the stage of the emergence of the Pastoral Letter of 1992.

In the interim, political developments in Malawi continued taking on significant turns. On Christmas' eve, 1981, one of the former cabinet ministers who had been expelled during the 1964' cabinet crisis', and his wife were abducted near the Zambian border by the security agents of the Malawi government.²⁹⁴ Brought back to Malawi they were arrested on the charge that they had been entering the country with the intention of overthrowing the government. They were tried, found guilty and sentenced to death. However amidst international cry, the sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. Notwithstanding, Mr Chirwa, died in prison in

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New Africa, Cover story of Malawi, Feb. 1993, p.8.

controversial circumstances, on 19th October, 1992.²⁹⁵

The episode of the Chirwas is politically important in Malawi. Ostensibly, the heavy handed manner in which the government handled it plus the circumstances surrounding his death revealed the extent to which the government was prepared to silence who appeared as its threat. In a sense the people seemed to have awakened to face the reality of the political monster that they had termed. Even though no open public protest was staged against what looked to be the travesty of justice and violation of human rights, there appeared in some quarters, signs of disenchantment with the regime. The writer, then a theological student, recalls the college being ordered to close by the government after it had been learnt that during the course of the trial of the accused, some students from the same region as Mr Chirwa had been making some remarks that showed their open support for him. In what way did the church respond? The Presbyterian Church insisted on its old policy of 'quiet diplomacy' with the government as an alternative to confrontation. However, as it had happened on other similar occasion they found their approach playing in the hands of Dr Banda. The visit of the Moderator of the Church of Scotland, Reverend Dr Doig to plead for mercy on behalf of the Chirwas was interpreted as one of support for Dr Banda's government.

However, things were not static in the Catholic Church. Issues of social justice were increasingly coming to the fore of its agenda in the regional centres of the continent. Between the 29th June and 5th July, 1982, S.E.C.A.M held a conference.²⁹⁶ At the end of

²⁹⁵ *New Africa*, 1993, cover story entitled: 'The shame of Malawi,' p.8.

²⁹⁶ *S.E.C.A.M Newsletter*, dated 11th Sept. 1981.

the gathering a passionate call was made for all the Bishops of the region to condemn injustice in all its forms. It went on to call the Bishops to identify themselves with the suffering in their countries. More significantly, it provided guidelines through which situations where political intolerance existed could be dealt with. However, the writer has not come across any record so far that suggest that the challenge was taken up by the Roman Catholic hierarchy of Malawi. Despite the apparent loosening up of the church in Malawi, seemingly, there was still very much deep-sitted political conservativeness on the part of the hierarchy. When one of the participants of the above meeting asked the Malawian Bishops whether he could translate the resource material into English, the Bishops declined because they deemed the material as 'seditious.'

Meanwhile, both church and state officials continued to laud the prevailing relationship between them as 'harmonious and cordial.' However, irrespective of the rosy picture portrayed of the nature of their relationship, underneath the surface, the reality seemed to suggest the opposite trend. There were some indications, albeit implicitly expressed, that all was not absolutely well. Seemingly, the authorities could have detected some indications on the part of the church which made them apprehensive. At an ordination ceremony at Bembeke, in 1983, the Minister, Mr Edward Bwanali called for stronger church-state relationship and went on to caution the church: " We should all remember that the people we deal with are the same people. Therefore, there should be no antagonism aimed at winning the hearts of the people."²⁹⁷ At this juncture we pose to ask:
What particular developments in the church had raised the concern of the authorities? There is one plausible explanation.

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Catholic Church of Malawi Newsletter,
vol.2, no.7 p.4 *Catholic Secondary,*
Lilongwe, Malawi.

The Catholic Church in Malawi had been gaining confidence of its stance in the affairs of the nation to the extent that it was becoming covertly critical of the status quo. It is strongly held that it was in 1980s when Archbishop Chiona of Blantyre spoke on a religious function where he made veiled critical remarks against the compulsory and indiscriminate enforcement of the buying of the Malawi Congress Party card.²⁹⁸ Nevertheless, according to Bishop Mkhori of Chikwawa Diocese, it was in 1983 that Archbishop Chiona in no uncertain terms criticised the Party officials, at Mwanza Catholic church for misleading people by preaching that there was no hunger in the country at the very peak of the drought that hit some parts of central and southern Africa in the eighties. According to the same source, Archbishop Chiona challenged to take those officials to the hungry of his home village parish so that they could see them. It is reported that the Archbishop was subsequently detained, interrogated but was not charged.

The fact that Archbishop Chiona (church) was now finding his voice about some of the worst aspects of the regime suggests that he was beginning to gain prophetic confidence in his ministry. However, this development must have reflected similar changes which were taking place in the wider society. It is notable that during this time literature covertly critical to the government especially from poets like Jack Mapanje and other artists, such as Du Chisiza, Allan Namoko started surfacing. In other words, Archbishop Chiona's action may be seen as a trend of the wider picture emerging in the society. For instance, there emerged a critical but lonely voice in the Presbyterian Church. One of the ministers of the Blantyre Synod[Church of Scotland], Reverend Peter Kaleso pointed out that: " it is the role of the christians

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Bishop Mkhori, interview conducted in
Chikwawa on the January 1996.

to right the wrongs." ²⁹⁹ However, it is indicative of the political conservativeness or indifference that seemed to have characterised that church that the minister was transferred to a rural parish with the cooperation of the of the church X hierarchy. ³⁰⁰ So what we are saying is that to some degree the tendency towards political openness is reflective of the general climate of the day. Somehow, it seem to coincide with the general political disease that was besetting the nation.

This uncertainty appeared to exacerbate with the unfolding ^{may} political events impacting on the population. In March, 1983, X three cabinet ministers and a member of parliament, respectively, namely, Messrs Aaron Gadama, Dick Matenje, David Chiwanga, Twaibu X Sangala were according to the official report found dead in a car accident in the out-skirts of the small town of Mwanza in the Southern Province of Malawi. According to Lwanda, that group of ministers was considered as the only reformist element left within the Malawi Congress Party and as such a beacon of hope in the system. ³⁰¹ The death and the surrounding circumstances raised public concern. Their death removed any glimmer of hope that may have existed for peaceful democratic reform of the oppressive political system in Malawi.

Sangala was a minister while Chiwanga was an MP

The fact that the government issued orders that forbade the families of the deceased not to view, not alone to give them a religious burial tended to strengthen the suspicions of the circumstances of their death. How did the Catholic Church react? According to Archbishop Chiona of Blantyre, the Bishops showed their disapproval of the incident by not attending the banquet

²⁹⁹ Lwanda, *Kamuzu Banda of Malawi*, p.176.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p.141.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.109.

annually hosted by the President at his palace.³⁰² Probably for the Bishops the gesture might have been intended to send a clear message to the authorities. However, there seem to be almost no evidence to suggest that the message intended, effected change on the part of the authorities. The gesture seemed to have gone down unrecorded in the annals of the country probably because of its insignificance. However, of more significance was the action performed by the Bishop of Chikwawa, Felix Mkhori. According to the latter, upon hearing the government's injunction, the Bishop not only did he refuse to comply but also preached a sermon that was ostensibly critical towards the authorities.³⁰³

The 'Mwanza incident' as it came to be known, partly demonstrated the hardening of attitudes on the part of the authorities towards those it perceived were its threats. It certainly could not have occurred to them to consider that the consequences of such actions were in the long run inimical to the very rule they were trying to promote. As already noted above, the ascendancy of Mr John Tembo was closely being associated with the oppressive rule, political uncertainty and fear of which the latter was quick to take advantage of. Lwanda has pointed out that it was partly because of this state of affairs that the Bishops found their voice in 1992.³⁰⁴

In 1984, the Episcopal Conference of Malawi met to review and

³⁰². Archbishop Chiona, interview conducted at the Catholic Institute on the 15th December 1993.

³⁰³ Bishop Mkhori, interview conducted in Chikwawa on the January 1996.

³⁰⁴. Lwanda, *Kamuzu Banda of Malawi*, p.100.

prioritise its goals since its inception in 1958.³⁰⁵ Even though the sketchy minutes do not shed any sufficient light on the agenda, so as to allow us view what really was under spotlight, nevertheless, the fact that the Bishops met to reassess or evaluate its position certainly underscores the Church's effort to grapple with the challenges which it was facing and reposition itself accordingly in the political climate of the day.

Meanwhile, the Catholic hierarchy was getting more involved in the discussions that were taking place in the Catholic regional centres. On 30th April, 1986, the A.M.E.C.E.A, met at Moshi in Tanzania.³⁰⁶ The Bishops of East and Central Africa discussed how the socio-economical and political context were affecting the social witness of the church in Africa. Various problems, such as restriction of political freedom through legislation, the widening gap between the poor and rich through the political systems that exploited the poor for the benefit of the politically powerful were highlighted. More importantly, the conference issued a passionate and vigorous call to the Bishops:

" Faithful to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, we commit the Catholic Church in East Africa to the liberation of our people. Let us all, therefore, with all men of goodwill give ourselves completely to eliminating injustices, ignorance, poverty, hunger and disease. "³⁰⁷

The Bishops went on to declare that they were issuing that call bearing in mind Jesus mission: "to the poor, he proclaimed the good news of salvation, to prisoners, freedom, and those in

³⁰⁵ *National Pastoral Directives: E.C.M 1982-1988, no.42, Catholic Secondary, Lilongwe Malawi).*

³⁰⁶ *S.E.C.A.M Newsletter, vol. vi, April, 1986.*

³⁰⁷ *Ibid., p.3.*

sorrow, joy."³⁰⁸

In spite of the fact that there seemed to have been no direct evidence to suggest that the challenge was taken up immediately, things were beginning to take another direction. According to one of the highly placed source within the hierarchy, it is particularly at this moment that mounting pressure begun to bear on the Bishops to speak out.³⁰⁹ This trend came from several sources, more especially catholic laity who were in the upper strata of the civil society. This group was urging the Bishops to take a strong stand against the social evils that was besieging the nation. Moreover, they were urging the Bishops to take a cue from their counterparts in Zimbabwe who had spoken out in (1990). Likewise, the Religious Association of expatriates, both men and women [ARIMA, and AMRIM, respectively] working in Malawi, were following the same course. Some of their members were in the Bishops Conference and were able to directly bear their influence on the Bishops. Indeed, this group was quite influential. It was the same group that had been rather critical towards the emerging Banda government earlier on in the sixties. Some of their numbers had been deported then for criticising some of the negative aspects of the Banda regime. This group of the Malawian clergy were once again in the ascendancy in the eighties and nineties. Though their influence cannot be said to be overriding, but nevertheless, was significant. They were still controlling many important aspects of the church's ministry such as hospitals, schools where they were in direct contact with the problems that the country was going through. While the Malawian born-clergy advocated a 'diplomatic solution' to the social question, the expatriates urged for a more radical approach. In this respect then, we note that the Catholic Church was facing

³⁰⁸. *Ibid.*, p.4.

³⁰⁹ Anonymous II, Same interview.

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See page
112
footnote
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internal pressure in its own ranks but also from its association with the other Catholic Churches of the region. The influence from the latter aspect was especially important since it promised moral support. It is at this juncture, however, and mainly through the pressure from the expatriates that the Bishops' Conference agreed that they had to produce a statement that could address the problem that the nation was facing. However, according to the same source, at this stage, the hierarchy came to the conclusion that since by this time it had been certainly known that the Holy Father would be visiting Malawi for the centenary anniversary of the arrival of the first Catholic missionaries at Mponda, it would not be prudent that the church take a confrontation approach that would provoke the government into taking a similar position which would therefore jeopardise His visit. Rather, so it was generally held or assumed that the Pope could use his personal influence to bring about change amongst the politicians. In other words, it was generally hoped that during his visit, the Pope could either publicly or privately address this issue.

In the interim, the momentum of the gospel ferment was taking in new dimension. In April, 1988, the Diocesan Religious Education animators met at Msamba Catholic centre under the theme: "Evangelisation and proclamation of Good News." In his key opening address, Bishop Mathias Chimole of Lilongwe Diocese, challenged the participants to examine their posture in the church especially in light of the its commitment to bear witness so that : " It may be perceived as the sacrament of salvation for the continent. "³¹⁰ One of the active participants, The Reverend Father Job Makirika raised the issue as to how best the Catholic church could engage in its educational apostolate within a social changing context of 1980s. With respect to the

³¹⁰ Newsletter, *The E.C.M.*, 1988, vol.8, no.2
p.1.

teachers, he urged them that their role was: " to impart a living faith at school... so as to instil a lost sense of God in man\woman and restore it."³¹¹ He stressed that this new approach was better than the traditional ' parrot ' or question-answer model. He became very critical towards leadership in the church that was reticent to encouraging the evolution of social awareness. He urged for the ' re-creation ' of the church so that it would be in a position to take social responsibility and human liberation seriously.³¹²

This consultation was significant for its attempt to revise the church's traditional approach in the light of the changing context in which it was operating. The Bishop's involvement and contribution, is similarly significant. That a senior leader in the church was taking a prominent part in a meeting of that nature, underlines the degree to which the social face of the Catholic Church had begun transforming. In other words, in trying to assess its traditional model in light of the socio-political challenges it was facing, the church was seeking to be relevant to its mission. This aspect indicates a certain maturity on the part of the church, especially with respect to the way it had begun to view its mission in society. Underlying the whole current was the church's desire to take seriously its mission to transform the society.

4.2 The Impact of the Papal Visit on the Social Mission of the Church in Malawi, May 1989

Finally, the long awaited visit of the Pope came. In May, 1989,

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.4.

³¹² *Ibid.*, p.2.

Pope John II, arrived in Malawi. The Holy Father had come to mark the centenary of the first Catholic missionaries mission to Mpondas in 1889. As we have already noted, the visit of the Pope had occurred at an auspicious moment in the history of the country. His visit had raised hopes for political reform or change. It was strongly and widely held that may be during His visit, the Holy Father would encourage the political leaders to initiate reforms.

The theme of the Pope's visit was: "Repent, believe and live." During the rallies and public addresses that theme found expression in many aspects. Even though his addresses centred on that theme, nevertheless, it was also expounded to include other aspects, such as reconciliation and evangelisation as aspects of the kingdom of God. Emphasising that it was the church's function to convey, bring justice and reconciliation in the society, the Holy Father fell short of specifically pointing out or condemning the evils inherent in the political system of the Banda government. Despite covert critical tendencies, the hallmark of all his speeches, the Pope stopped short of categorically knocking down the system, the wish expressed by the radical elements within the church. However, the closest that the Pope came to that position was when he addressed the Bishops. In that address, the Pope outlined the role of the church in the society as follows:

"The condemnation of evils is also part of that ministry of evangelisation in the social field which is an aspect of the church's prophetic role. But it should be clear that the proclamation is always more important than condemnation, and the latter can not ignore the former, which gives it higher solidity and the force of higher motivation. 'As you rightly pointed out in your letter to Catholics in preparation for my visit, the Kingdom of God means working for justice,

peace and reconciliation in this world, as well as proclaiming their realisation in the next.' Then the Pope concludes with words of encouragement: ' May my visit to Malawi strengthen your faith and increase your trust in the Lord. The words of Christ to the first disciples are also addressed to you: Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom (Lk 12:32). And again: 'In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world " (Jn 16).

The last words of the Holy Father sounded premonitious. His encouragement to His brethren had all the marks of fore-telling the rough time that would lie ahead. The Pope might have been in no illusion as to what the Bishops could face if they were to boldly proclaim the challenges of the gospel in the context of the Malawian situation in nineties. More importantly, even though, the Pope did not realise some of the expectations of some radical elements within the church, nevertheless, to some extent His visit confirmed them. His visit came at an hour that the church needed some moral support. It is widely held that during his audience with the Bishops, the Holy father had urged them to take a stand on the social issues that the nation was facing³¹³. Similarly, despite the fact that there was dissatisfaction in some church quarters that the Pope had not been firm enough, and that the political authorities had deliberately interpreted his visit to mean the legitimation of the Banda regime. Nevertheless, His visit strengthened the advance movement of the forces towards political reform. " In spite of the general uneasiness as regards any public confrontation with the

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Newell, 'A Moment of Truth '? The Church and Political Change in Malawi, 1992 in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 33, 2 (1995), pp.243-262.

government, the situation had begun to change within the Catholic Church since the Pope's visit in 1989."³¹⁴

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Meanwhile, during this period the country was going through some cataclysmic changes. Within the context of increasing repression there began to emerge covert and open critical tendencies towards the regime. As already noted above, this development had arisen partly as a result of some of the unpopular policies particularly associated with Mr Tembo. Apparently, with the connivance of Mr Tembo, in September, 1989, the President ordered that all teachers whose home of origin was the Northern Province of Malawi leave the Central and Southern Provinces of Malawi and go to their region of origin.³¹⁵ The President had alleged that they had been involved deliberately in retarding the educational progress of the students in the Central and Northern ^{Southern} Regions.³¹⁶ The expulsion of considerable number of mathematics and science teachers caused some dislocation with respect to the educational standards in those regions but also on the families. It was a moral issue. It affected many families who had married across regional boundaries. They were in a dilemma as to what they could do in such circumstances. Generally, the impact and effect of the ruling on the majority of the population was politically negative and substantially raised the tempers to the extent that some of the church leaders almost spoke out.³¹⁷ Indeed, during the same year, some students from the University's Chancellor College were expelled for openly protesting against the imposition of the quarter system designed to curtail the

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.246.

³¹⁵ Lwanda, *Kamuzu Banda of Malawi*, p.128.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*

³¹⁷ Newell, "A Moment of Truth, p. 246.

entry of students from the Northern region into the University.³¹⁸ The open dissent by the students was significant in the sense that it was the first one of its nature at time when such an action could still be perceived as a taboo.

An issue need to be raised at this stage: why did the Banda regime chose the northerners as a special target of discrimination? It is not easy to come up with concrete grounds. However, a few issues may shed some light on this aspect.. Firstly, Dr Banda, a Chewa from the Central Region, Kasungu was a tribalist at heart. Lwanda has drawn our attention to his attempts to the ancient Maravi Kingdom at the expense of other tribes not least, the northern tribes.³¹⁹ Since the people from the north had an early advantage of missionary education, their social position was much stronger in the country as such they tended to constitute a threat to Banda's efforts of promoting his tribe. Their persecution can therefore be explained in terms of Banda's attempts at emasculating them of their social position in the society.

However, the emergence of the critical tendencies was not confined to a group of students apparently with their own agenda. Nor was it confined to the Catholic church. It also manifested itself in various forms in other Protestant churches. We have already referred to Reverend Peter Kaleso of the Presbyterian Blantyre Synod. Similarly, in May, 1990, the writer was a participant at a consultation on Church and Development which was held at the Presbyterian centre, Likhubula House, in Mulanje, southern Malawi. It was organised by the ecumenical umbrella body of the Protestant churches, the Christian Council of Malawi. The theme of the conference was: 'The Church and Human Development in

³¹⁸ Lwanda, *Kamuzu Banda of Malawi*, p.193.

³¹⁹ Lwanda, *Kamuzu Banda of Malawi* pp. 9-10 cf Africa Watch Report, pp. 55-61.

Malawi today. 'The gathering tried to assess critically the relationship between the Church with various aspects of the society, namely, health, education, culture, government just to name a few. Even though most issues received a fair amount of treatment, it was however, discussions on the relationship between church and state in Malawi that dominated the conference. The participants were too critical and vocal of what they perceived was the Church's too close association with the government of Malawi. In particular, concern was expressed over the way the churches had virtually allowed themselves to be used as a tool to silence the peoples' voice for human rights. The M. C. P's most detested system of compulsory ownership of party card also came under fire. In conclusion, the participants adopted radical resolutions. They urged the churches to do a reappraisal of their role with respect to the government, so as to be efficient and accountable to its divine mandate in the society. This indicates that by late eighties the spirit of criticality was sweeping through almost the whole cross-section of the society. Even though it largely reflects the political malaise that was besetting the nation, for the Catholic Church that spirit was especially heightened by what was actually taking place from within and without itself.³²⁰

Meanwhile, from 11th to the 19th, August, 1990, a symposium for the Catholic Institute for the Development of Justice and Peace was held at the Bigard Memorial Seminary, in Enugu, Nigeria.³²¹ The agenda of the conference was the preparation of the commemoration of the centenary of the epoch-making Encyclical, *Rerum Novarum* of Pope Leo XIII. That symposium covered a wide-ranging issues relating to social, economics and politics. However, the conference focused on the

³²⁰ Personal reminiscences.

³²¹ *National Pastoral Directives, E.C.M.*

church's role to bring the church[laity] to an awareness of the issues pertaining to social injustice. Nevertheless, that meeting put forward the following suggestions:

1. The Catholic church in African states, including, Malawi, should find ways to organise the celebration of the centenary of the *Rerum Novarum* as an initial awareness of social justice.

2. Encourage and mobilise forums on the social teachings of the church on the Parish and Diocesan level that will lead to the establishment of Peace Commissions.

Of great significance to the church in Malawi, one of the principal facilitators, Fr. Adele suggested that: " The hierarchy of Malawi should voice out on the justice issues in the form of the Pastoral Letter or reflect on the present situation of the society at this time when there is " no" confrontation between church and state."³²²

Obviously, the significance of the conference lay in the fact that the Catholic churches in Africa were directly challenged to speak up. It is not surprising, therefore, that the same year the Zambian Catholic Bishops produced their Pastoral statement on ' Politics, Economics and Justice.' For the Catholic Church in Malawi, the conference had even more direct influence or relevance. By urging the leadership to speak up irrespective of the harmonious relationship that prevailed between church and state, the symposium had directly inspired the leadership of the Church int action. Seemingly, it was a challenge that possibly the Catholic Church could not ignore.

Most likely as a follow-up to the symposium held earlier on in the month, a consultation of church personnel was to be held in Malawi with a view to the preparation for the commemoration of

³²². *Ibid.*, p.3.



the centenary of the *Rerum Novarum* on 28th August.³²³ However, it is perhaps symptomatic of the conservative elements in the leadership of the church that even at this stage the Bishop responsible for that department could refuse to have the resource books imported, because in his view the material was 'subversive.'³²⁴ However, it was only after Fr Makirika had received the approval of the government censor, that the Bishop also authorised its importation.³²⁵ Similarly, the attempt for Fr. Makirika to get the lay people involved in the proposed workshop met with resistance from his immediate superior in the department. The latter reprimanded Fr. Makirika that lay people should not be admitted in the commission for justice and peace since the issues discussed there were politically radical. Nevertheless, the Bishop conceded that Fr. Makirika's views only reflected those teachings of the encyclicals. However, it has to be noted at this stage that in the midst of what seemed to be uncertainties on the part of Church authorities as to the wisdom of holding a workshop of such political sensitivity within the country, Fr. Makirika was prepared to explore the possibility of Lumko Catholic Centre as an alternative venue for the conference.³²⁶

Nevertheless, it is within this context that Fr. Makirika called a consultation on the 28th, September, 1990 at the Catholic Secretariat in Lilongwe. At that meeting Fr. Makirika emphasised the need for action to implement the ideas for the Catholic Institute for Justice and the Development of Peace. He also reported that he had won the cooperation of the Episcopal Conference of Malawi (the Bishops). Meanwhile, since it

³²³ *National Pastoral Directives*, p.2.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*

³²⁵ *Ibid.*

³²⁶ *Ibid.*

was learnt at this stage that the White Fathers were also discussing similar issues, it was then agreed that for the sake of coordination the two groups work together.

The importance of this meeting with respect to the forward movement of the Church's efforts to be prophetic in Malawi is highlighted by the fact that it passed a resolution which effectively was to lead to the implementation of the call from the symposium held during the previous month in Nigeria. The symposium sought:

'to conscientise church leadership on their role on the issues of justice and peace through a workshop.'³²⁷ It was proposed that either Bishop Patrick Kalilombe or Fr. Tony Byrne of Zambia be invited as possible facilitators. It ought to be noted that from this stage until the following year in July, workshops were taking place orienting catechists, priests and others on the implication of the church's social teaching to the socio-political order.

The culmination of this movement found expression in the in the constitution of the National Commission for Human Promotion and Justice, on 24th January, 1991.³²⁸ The Bishops put forward five objects:

1. To help E.C.M. set up programmes aimed at reaching people to fully utilise their faculties and reasons for development.
2. To help people to emulate the achievements and success of others for self development, so that they can achieve the same and hopefully reduce jealousy.
3. To help the E.C.M. to set up institutions which will hasten the development of the underprivileged so that they can have access to equal social opportunities.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.1.

³²⁸ *Pastoral Directives*

4. To advise the E.C.M on the proper action to be taken in case of violation of human rights.
5. A consultative body to the E.C.M on matters pertaining to Human Promotion and justice.

The constitution of that organ was a significant step in the process towards the church's attempt to address the issue of social justice because it effectively put into place a structure that was meant to channel the efforts of the church in one direction. Embodying the Church's social vision, the structure reflects the church's efforts to meet the challenges of the hour comprehensively rather than partially. In this respect, the creation of that body was crucial to the church's attempt to realise its mission in Malawi.

Similarly, of significance with respect to the immediate origins of the Pastoral Letter at this stage was the consultation of the Association of Theological Institutions in Southern and Central Africa which was held at St Peters Seminary in Zomba, Malawi in September, 1991. Besides clergy from the Protestant Churches, the meeting was attended by many influential Catholics and others working closely with the church in Malawi. In his inaugural address, the chairman, the former Bishop of Liongwe, Patrick Kalilombe, stressed the need to acquire sufficient grasp of the political situation of 'our nation today' so that they could assist their congregations: "to find an appropriate political system which guarantees freedom, dignity, participation and co-responsibility."³²⁹ Bishop Kalilombe further argued that what was needed in the Church was a kind of leadership that was 'prophetic, disinterested and yet courageous enough to be able to speak for justice, freedom and dignity, even if it has to share

³²⁹

Newell, "A Moment of Truth"? p.247.

in the suffering of its people because of its ministry.³³⁰ This message plus the final call made on the clergy to study economics and politics and to expect to exercise a prophetic function in deed, lifestyle to promote social justice³³¹ could have considerably influenced the attitude of the participants to their social role in the church.

In the interim, from 16th to 27th September, 1991, Fr. Makirika had attended the A.M.E.C.E.A. conference on justice at the Pastoral Centre of the Archdiocese of Nairobi, St. Balikuddembe. The conference urged the member churches to speak out on justice during the moment of crisis.

Meanwhile, on 11th, October, 1991, the Catholic Bishops in Malawi released a statement to all Catholics informing them that the formation of the desk of Human Promotion was meant to enable the church to fulfil its task, so as to realise the kingdom of God particularly in two aspects; spiritual as well as temporal. In this document, the Bishops also noted that justice was an integral aspect of the proclamation of the Gospel and was a means through which human liberation could be attained. However, while acknowledging the appreciation that the government made with respect to their social and spiritual contribution to the country, the Bishops refused to be restricted to those areas, they went further to declare that it was similarly part of their task to make the people socially aware of the implications of the church's social teaching on the contemporary socio-political context. In conclusion, the Bishops appealed to all pastoral workers to work together with them so as to achieve a coordinated strategy through which they could eradicate all obstacles towards the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*

³³¹ *Ibid.*

The Bishops' statement is important for a number of aspects. They strongly acknowledged the centrality of the principle of justice as a key to the attainment of emancipation, and that liberation can be achieved through the Church's effort in educating people about their rights in terms of the Gospel. Similarly, the sense of urgency through which things begun to move in Malawi and the courageous manner by which the Bishops put forward their new position reflects sentiments similar to those which had been conveyed at the recent symposium held in Enugu, Nigeria. In this respect and more importantly, the Bishops' statement is also unique for its refusal to confine itself to the traditional role of supporting the government in its political programme. The fact that the Bishops declined to continue to align themselves to the ideological propaganda of the government reflects on their part a sense of maturity.

Things moved quickly especially from the time the Bishops issued their statement. In December, 1991, the Bishops met in the Plenary. The agenda for discussion was the crisis or the problems that the church met in their educational institutions especially with respect to the government. Amidst the discussions, one of the Bishops suggested that they issue a Pastoral Letter through which they should raise some of these problems that the church was facing. It was, however, agreed that the idea should form the agenda for at the beginning of the following year.

When the Bishops met again in January, 1992, the idea of the Pastoral Letter was the agenda. In the discussions it was agreed that the Bishops raise their concerns in the form of the Pastoral Letter which should be released during the Lenten season. A committee of three people was appointed to draft the Pastoral Letter and to report in due course to the Bishops. During the next meeting the Bishops duly approved the draft. Accordingly, the Pastoral Letter entitled: 'Living Our Faith' was read out on the morning of Sunday, 8th, March, 1992 in most of the Catholic

Churches in Malawi.

4.3 The Significance of the Bishops' Pastoral letter in Contemporary Context

What significance does the Bishop's Pastoral Letter of 1992 hold in the political history of Malawi?

The significance of the Bishop's Pastoral Letter can be determined in terms of the following: the extent to which the letter was able to rouse support from the people and its immediate and long term impact on the Malawian political scene. (See Appendix p 136) Similarly, since that Pastoral Letter stands in historical relationship with the pre-independent ones, it is necessary that it be studied with a reference to them. Likewise, the fact that the Bishop's Letter immediately followed the one that the Zambian Bishops issued, it is important that the Bishop's Pastoral Letter be assessed with reference to the latter.

The strength of the Bishops' Pastoral Letter lay in the fact that it managed to undermine the moral and political authority of the government of Dr Banda. It dealt with three major areas of Malawi's public life, social, economic and political.

Firstly, in their socio-economic critique, the Bishops ^{deplored} the low wage structure system which had condemned the people effectively to pauperisation to the extent that their status as human beings had been degraded. Economic discrimination against the people from the north is also deplored. In particular, the exploitation of the poor by the rich, bribery and nepotism in high places.³³² On the basis of common humanity, the Bishops appealed to " all

³³²

See Appendix pp. 191-198.

the faithfull to celebrate our common birth and destiny in mutual respect, acceptance, justice and love."³³³

Secondly, the Bishops highlighted the problems relating to the educational system in Malawi, such as, indiscipline, shortage of teachers and materials, falling standards in schools, discriminatory policy in the selection system, particularly affecting the less privileged and the students whose home of origin is the northern region.³³⁴ Respectively, they called upon the government to redress the situation.

Thirdly, basing their critique on the principle of the sanctity of human life, the Bishops appealed to the authorities to redress the problems affecting the Department of Health, among others, lack of medical personnel, lack of their commitment to their work, overcrowding of patients in hospitals. Two areas recieved most critical condemnation; the practice of giving medical care on the basis of one's social position rather than rights and the practice of stealing and selling medicines.³³⁵

Fourthly, taking their premise of critique the Pauline text on unity in diversity (Eph.4), the Bishops deplored the dictatorial character of the Malawian political system which marginalised the people's participation in public life by ensuring their domination by the powerful. In a similar vein, the Bishops deplored forced donations and the barring of people from receiving social services unless they were in possession of a Malawi Congress Party card.³³⁶ In the same respect, the Bishops called for full and meaningful participation in public or political life.

³³³ *Ibid.*

³³⁴ *Ibid.*

³³⁵ *Ibid.*

³³⁶ *Ibid.*

Further, disclaiming the assumed right of the state to monopoly of political Knowledge, suppression of freedom of expression and association, the Bishops exhorted the authorities to initiate reforms in these areas.

Finally, justifying their critique on the inaugural statement of Jesus: " The spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the afflicted..." (Lk 4), the Bishops highlighted the critical problems of the judicial system in Malawi. To mention a few, they observed arbitrary detention laws, denial or unaccess to legal representation for the accused.³³⁷ Respectively, the Bishops called for an independent judicial syystem where all would be equal before the Law. ³³⁸ The significance of all this lay in the fact that for the first time the Bishop's were able to articulate in bold and uncertain terms what they believed was their responsibility. It is precisely because:

" it undermined for the first time the increasingly inaccurate propaganda that had been showered upon the population -they had come to accept the exaggerated claims of the M.C.P, along with the general state of affairs, as the way things were in Malawi. The document read out on 8th May, 1992, transformed this by offering the possibility that change was necessary and morally imperative, and that this could be said in public. The action of the Bishops gave birth to a new political culture in Malawi which had about it a romantic quality precisely because it was novel and at the same time, quite

³³⁷ *Ibid.*

³³⁸ *Ibid.*

unexpected."³³⁹

Because the Pastoral Letter raised the issues that struck a chord in the minds of the majority of the people and was expressed in a manner that was plain and yet commanding, it managed to draw the attention of the majority people to those issues. It was precisely because of this aspect that in turn the Letter provoked a violent reaction from the authorities.³⁴⁰ Perhaps, more significantly, it was the consequences of the Pastoral Letter that have left an indelible mark on the national scene. The appeal that the Bishops made received almost instant response. Not only did the embattled Bishops find widespread support in their constituency, clergy from the other churches both from inside and outside the country threw their weight behind the Bishop's action. More significantly and dramatically, a movement for political change came into being in Malawi. The United Democratic Front, hitherto an underground political pressure group came into the open. They declared themselves as a pressure group that would campaign for political change. Together with the Churches, the Muslim Association of Malawi and other organisation they formed a committee to initiate political dialogue with the government. Similarly significant, strong support also emerged from the religious organisations and others within the continent and overseas. The process that ensued finally led to the collapse of the old order, giving way to the new one in 1993. It actually translated faith into action as it dwelt on relevant issues for which people have been longing to articulate. It is precisely because of the prophetic nature of its ministry and authority, that it has been compared favourably with the epoch-

³³⁹ Newell, J, "A Moment of Truth"? The Church and Political Change in Malawi, 1992, p.259.

³⁴⁰ See Prologue.

making Nationalist Uprising of 1915.³⁴¹

The Lenten Pastoral Letter is also unique for the premises upon which it sought to base its authority. The Letter is undergirded by the social teaching of the church, notably the *Evangelii Nuntiandi* of Pope Paul VI. In justifying the position that it had undertaken, it quoted that document:

"The church is certainly not willing to restrict her action to the religious field and dissociate herself from humanity's temporal problems"³⁴²

The reference made to that document raises an important point of our study. The fact that this document has been referred to twice in the period under discussion suggests that there is a direct link between the Pastoral Letter and the document.

Unlike the pre-independent Pastoral Letters, the Bishops' Lenten Pastoral Letter was also significant because "it helped to subvert the President's 'spiritual' authority within the country."³⁴³ The significance of that aspect lay in the fact that religiously, they undermined Banda's claims to spiritual authority as the Elder of the Church of Scotland.³⁴⁴

In the final analysis, the Pastoral Letter fundamentally

³⁴¹ *The Malawi Democrat* no.10, Aug 28- Sept 10, 1992.

³⁴² *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, p.34.

³⁴³ J. Newell, 'A Moment of Truth'? The Church and Political Change in Malawi, 1992, in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 33, 2 (1995) p. 249

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

destroyed the myth that the government was above criticism. It articulated the long-held concerns, fears and problems of the majority of the people which otherwise they would not have done. In this way, it liberated them, It restored their humanity.³⁴⁵

It surpassed other Letters for its authority and incisiveness on the social and political issues that the country was facing. In fact it was a charter of socio-political liberation.

5.0 Conclusions

not full sentence
To wind up our study, some observations. We have tried to trace briefly, the history of the Catholic Church in Malawi at least from the time of its inception in 1901 to the modern period. One of the most characteristic and enduring features has been its unique relationship with the Colonial authorities of the Protectorate. It has been shown that the late arrival of the Catholic missionaries to the British territory of Nyasaland and their encounter of the hostilities from the Protestant missions put them in an insecure position. In an attempt to survive rivalry and antagonism, the missionaries were obliged to turn to the authorities for support. In the context of conflict especially between the Scottish missionaries and the Government, the Catholic missionaries benefitted morally by being used as an ally of the latter. Increasingly, the Catholic missionaries identified themselves with the status quo. In contrast to their rivals, the Presbyterians, the traditional conservative policy of the Catholic Church was dramatically demonstrated by the

³⁴⁵

See B. Mijoga, Living Our Faith: Pastoral Letter From The Catholic Bishops of Malawi.

Nationalist Uprising of 1915. The aftermath saw the development of two trends, the increasing close association between the Catholic Church and the Colonial authorities, on one hand, and the drifting apart of relationship between the former group and the Presbyterian Church. This trend had another significant dimension. Seemingly, unlike the Presbyterians, the close association of the Catholic Church with the authorities drew them away from the concerns of the African people at a time when the Protestants were fighting for their rights. The course that the two churches took seemed politically incompatible.

In this respect, we also observed that the passage of the old and the emergence of the new order almost immediately caused the problem of adjustment to the Catholic Church. In the new order the Church needed a power base, a constituency upon which to reposition itself. Being unable to read the 'signs' of times, the Church supported an unpopular and weak Christian Democratic Party. The hostile reaction of the Malawi Congress Party, in particular its misrepresentation of the Church's position as not favourable to the new order, virtually paralysed the Church. In the circumstances the Church was open to political manipulation of the emerging state. On the other hand, being conscious of the political blunder that they had committed, they took a play-it-safe attitude. Once again the traditional conservative spirit started to re-surface. Increasingly, the Church began to take a subservient attitude towards the authorities.³⁴⁶ The episode of Bishop Kalilombe highlighted the subservient character of the Church. The Church was in no position to lend support to forces that sought to transform the repressive system. In the new order, an environment was created in which the Church became comfortably established, secure, enjoying the status or sharing in the

³⁴⁶ See p. 55.

symbols of power and affluence.³⁴⁷ That arrangement existed for mutual benefit. However, the arrangement appeared to be more to the political advantage of the State than the Church. Religious legitimation frequently offered to the state sustained the government in power, thus delaying its days of reckoning. On the other hand, the Church's continuous support of the status quo undermined its moral or spiritual character by taking the political shape of a secular government. Was the Church aware of these dynamics of power? We have noted that the churches were not completely oblivious to this. Some of the church leaders such as Bishop Kalilombe or Reverend Kaleso were beginning to stand up, but found no encouragement or support from their colleagues. Fear of reprisals from the government inhibited the majority of the clergy to come out of 'spiritual exile'. Meanwhile, they carried on as if all was well. The Church of the 70s was in this respect much less vocal than that of the 1960s. The former was too weak or weakened to take on the leviathan regime of Dr. Banda because memories of the 1960 episode were still fresh. In fact, what we are asserting is that the government acknowledged the Church's crucial role by providing for and caring for its leaders. However, the arrangement was more to the political advantage of the state than the church. In other words, in the new dispensation the church took on a political out-look of the regime. Gradually, the church became like the mouth-piece of the ruling Malawi Congress Party.³⁴⁸ Significantly, the repressive impact of the government on the church was shown by the church's adoption of a subservient approach. Thus in trying to rectify or reverse the damage done to its position in the new order, church leadership resorted to the policy of appeasement. This approach played in the hands of the authorities. Increasingly, they demanded political legitimation to which the latter reciprocated.

³⁴⁷ See p.57.

³⁴⁸ See p.69 above.

Amidst other factors, inter alia, coercion, deterrent oppressive measures, the church's participation in the government political life undermined its ability to take an independent line against social and political abuses in the society. Thus having been assimilated within the political system, it not only lost its spiritual or moral independence but also more importantly, it lost the ability to stand up for the people on the issues of the hour.

In all this, we conclude that the failure of the Church either to condemn or protest more unequivocally against the social evils in Malawi was initially as a result of its failure to make the right judgement on the eve of independence (1960). The inappropriate decision to support a party that was in opposition to the majority Malawi Congress party and the hostile response from the Malawi Congress, initially undermined, subsequently marginalised its position in post-independent Malawi. On the other hand, realising the extent of the damage its action had caused with respect to its role in society, increasingly, the Church took a position that effectively bound itself to the Banda government. Within the context of increasing repressive law and legitimation, church leadership was paralysed, unable to rise above the constraining socio-political culture of the Banda regime. Settled within that political atmosphere the church failed to grasp the dynamics of the critical problems facing the nation and the way to address them. Its relationship with the Government handicapped it. It was unable to act more independently of the government, since it was so closely aligned to the latter.

However, how do we account for the emergence of the Pastoral Letter in 1992? In chapter four, we have traced the factors, the immediate context that led to the emergence of the Pastoral Letter. In particular, we observed that the trend towards the origin of the Pastoral Letter were both external and internal. The loss of public confidence and esteem of the government was

accompanied by the gain in moral or spiritual independence of church leadership in Malawi. This was manifested in many aspects of the church's life, inter alia, the emergence of a vocal or radical movement within the church. Significantly, the visit of the Pope strengthened these tendencies. More immediately, the radical tendencies of people such as Fr. Makirika had an important impact upon this process. It was as a result of people like him that the fire for social justice was kept burning. In the church's archive in Lilongwe, Fr. Makirika's name frequently comes up in relation to all this subject. However, as Fr. Chakanza asserts,³⁴⁹ the movement towards the social gospel had ultimately its origin in the church's social teaching, notably, *Rerum Novarum* and the Second Vatican Council. To some extent, Fr Chakanza is right. However, according to our observations, we have firmly established the relationship between what was happening in the country and in the regional centres of the Catholic Church. From those quarters, there came pressure that came to bear directly or indirectly on the church. The radical character of the churches in the neighbouring regional centres was exemplified in Malawi in the ministry a Diocesan priest, Fr Job Makirika. He was the link between the church (Bishops) in Malawi and the Catholic Church in other regional centres of the continent. Being constantly in front, he and others were able not only to light up but also to sustain the light of the social teaching of the church. Similarly, important was the emergence of the critical tendencies that were developing within the church that time. As early as the eighties the government had begun to realise that it was losing the confidence of the people.³⁵⁰ This aspect was especially important. It effectively explains the enthusiasm that the people of Malawi received the Pastoral Letter in 1992. What we are trying to emphasise is that the Bishops'

³⁴⁹ See interview No. 3. Appendix.

³⁵⁰ See above Chapter 3.

decision to issue the Pastoral Letter was born within a context that was ripe for political change. It was part of the process of a whole conglomerate of factors some of which have to be followed up.

The release of the Pastoral Letter provoked a dramatic, violent response from the Government. Almost instantly, the government declared the Letter seditious.³⁵¹ Further, it ordered all those in its possession to hand it over to the police. The Bishops were put under house arrest, while they deported one of their number, Monsignor Roche. More seriously, in a hastily convened meeting, the executive committee of the ruling Party insulted the Bishops and threatened to kill them.³⁵²

Meanwhile, the country itself seemed set on fire. The University students of Chancellor College and the Polytechnic took to the streets to demonstrate their support of the Bishops.³⁵³ For the first time people began to engage in dialogue about the implication of the Bishops' Letter.³⁵⁴ Some people still in anticipation that the Bishops could repeat their action were seen going to attend Catholic services in the subsequent Sundays.³⁵⁵ However, support for the Bishops also arose from other quarters. The Protestant Churches, the Muslim Association of Malawi and other organisations joined hands calling on the Government to

³⁵¹ Lwanda, *Kamuzu Banda of Malawi: A study in Promise, Power and Paralysis*, pp.195-198.

³⁵² *Malawi Democrat*, 24\9\92, p.1.

³⁵³ Lwanda, *Kamuzu Banda of Malawi, A study in Promise, Power and Paralysis*, p.196.

³⁵⁴ Personal reminiscences.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

initiate dialogue on the national issue. Similarly significant, the hitherto underground political pressure group, the United Democratic Front, declared itself an open political pressure group seeking to campaign for multi-party democracy in Malawi.³⁵⁶ Similarly, the hitherto splinter political groups in the neighbouring countries of Zambia and Tanzania united to present a common front to the Banda regime. Likewise, the Bishops received strong support from the christian community and others in Africa and Overseas.³⁵⁷ Within these events, Malawi had already entered the new era. The Catholic Church which had faltered, then humiliated on the eve of independence, consequently retreating into the political background, now carried the torch of liberation. What an irony ! Indeed, the History of Malawi is full of irony. Certainly, this was one of them.

³⁵⁶ Lwanda, *Kamuzu Banda of Malawi*, p.197.

³⁵⁷ Personal reminiscences; See also Appendix - Pastoral Letter.

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this is a newspaper*

APPENDIX

Oral Sources 1993-1996

A

Transcript of the
Interviews conducted in Malawi
between 1993 and 1996.

Submitted along with the dissertation of the degree of
Master of Arts at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg,
15 January, 1997.

by

Henry Hastings Mbaya

Transcriptions of oral historical narratives compiled chronologically.

Interview with Mr B. B. Chimsalazo, 20/4/92

Interview with Archbishop James Chiona, 5/11/93

Interview with Fr. J. C. Chakanza, 18/11/93

Interview with the Very Reverend Silas Ncozana, 29/11/93

Interview with anonymous White Father and some members of the White Father's congregation, 6/12/95

Interview with Bishop Felix Mkhori, 15/01/96

Interview with anonymous (Catholic leader) Mangochi, 1/1/96

TRANSCRIPT

of

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED

with

MR B. B. CHISALAZO^M

on

20th APRIL, 1992

at

3.00 p.m.

at HIS HOUSE

in PRETORIA

by

Mr H. MBAYA

UNIVERSITY OF NATAL, PIETERMARITZBURG

Interview with Mr B.B Chimsalazo, Pretonia, 20th April, 1992.

Time: 3.00 p.m.

- H. M: I am most grateful that you have given me this time. The Jehovah's Witnesses today are a banned organisation in Malawi. Since you yourself are one of them how do you feel? Who do you think caused the upset with the authorities who banned them? I mean, why did they not get on well with the government?
- B.B.C: You must know that, unlike you Anglicans or Catholics, we don't believe as you do. You yourself is training to be a priest. DO you know the Bible? Do you know what it say about earthly rulers or kingdoms? The Witnesses believe in God's Kingdom, God's rule which is separate. We don't believe that we should be part of the earthly Kingdom. That is dangerous.
- H.M.: So is that the reason why you/they refused to buy the Malawi Congress Party Card?
- B.B.C: The issue was not the card. If I may ask you, who gave them authority to impose a card on everybody? My son, you must understand that all authorities on earth, or kingdoms, receive their authority from some powers above us. You must understand, you must learn that nothing

happens here on earth without a cause. Everything has a heavenly source. The M.C.P. Like all governments are under the reign of a ruling power in heaven. That power controls all the motives of leaders. Remember, Hitler. He said he was a Christian, but how many innocent people did he kill? The Jehovah's Witnesses believe there are people who are elect. These people must not pollute themselves with the kingdoms or states which are under the devil. Tell me, why is it that Banda or Hitler - both of them calling themselves Christians, killed many people?

H.M.: Are you saying that if the Jehovah's Witnesses buy a party card then they become part of the M.C.P.?

B.B.C: Exactly. Haven't you heard the saying: 'birds of the same feathers flock together?' If you are for the M.C.P. you are the devil. The Jehovah's Witnesses believe that if you associate themselves with the kingdom of the world - they separate themselves off from the Kingdom of God. If you are for God you will associate yourself with God. There are no two ways about it.

How can you belong to the devil and God? Doesn't Jesus say you cannot serve two masters. As Watch Towers we could not buy a card which had on it an image or symbol of the earthly ruler. Have you ever seen God having an image? Even Jesus is not God - as you claim. This is dangerous, my son. You must know the Bible.

H.M.: If Banda were to unban the Jehovah's witnesses will they

not buy cards?

B.B.C.: The Jehovah's Witnesses do not go according to man's rules traditions, but the scriptures; the Word of God.

H.M.: Thank you papa. I have learnt something which will help me understand your religion better now.

B.B.C.: I don't want you to get lost. Follow the right way. Know your Bible.

H M Thanks so much.

TRANSCRIPT

of

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED

with

ARCHBISHOP JAMES CHIONA

of the

CATHOLIC CHURCH, CATHOLIC INSTITUTE

on

5th NOVEMBER, 1993

at

900a.m.

at HIS OFFICE

MR H. MBAYA

UNIVERSITY OF NATAL, PIETERMARITZBURG

An interview conducted with Archbishop James Chiona of the Catholic Church at the Catholic Institute, Blantyre, Malawi 5th November 1993.

Time: 9.00-9.40 a.m.

H.M: My Lord Bishop, I am an Anglican priest currently working in South Africa. I have come to you to learn about the Church. I need your wisdom. It is because I know that elders have wisdom that I, as a young man, seek to know more from you.

My Lord, last year, we, I must say, the nation was taken aback by the Letter that you issued. Was the action that you took a long standing one? What I mean to say is, for how long had you thought of doing that?

J.C.: We as Bishops had for a long time, considered to speak out. The decision to speak was not made a few months before the letter. For as far back as the 1980s. Yes, some of us had been in trouble for telling the authorities things they didn't want to hear.

H.M: What things, for example, my Lord Bishop?

J.C.: There were many things that we had noticed were going wrong. They saw them but did not want to be told. If you tell a person there comes a lion and he does not want to listen, what happens? The lion

will kill him. We, the Bishops and others knew that the people were not happy- the way things were going. We could not keep quiet any longer. We decided to speak because we believed it was right to speak the truth.

H.M.: Why did it take such a long time to speak out in such strong terms?

J.C.: We had always spoken. May be you were not yet born or too young to know. In 1960, we spoke out against bad things which we saw in the new leaders. They thought we were rude. We spoke out then because we didn't want wrong things to continue.

H.M.: When other things were happening - I mean bad ones, of course. I heard about in 1966 and 1975, people, I mean the Jehovah's Witnesses, were being harassed beaten up because either they refused to buy a card or salute a flag. Did you condemn those actions?

J.C.: We don't believe that the Bible or God says we must not respect our leaders. St Paul instructs us to obey them. What is wrong with paying tax? What did Jesus say? 'When you quarrel with politicians you are inviting trouble for yourself.' I am not of course saying that we must say yes, yes, to all that they do. We must respect them but also tell them the truth. The Jehovah's

Witnesses were a banned organisation because they believed God told them not to listen to the new government.

H.M.: My Lord Bishop I come out here more wiser. May be I must join the Roman Catholic church, since you have convinced me.

J.C.: Why not? After all you came from us. Come. This is your home. (he smiles).

H.M.: (responds with laughter). Thanks so much my Lord Archbishop. Please pray for me.

J.C.: I will. I would like also to thank you for your patience with me.

H.M.: Thanks, a great many thanks, Father.

TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED

with

FR. J. C. CHAKANZA

on

18th NOVEMBER, 1993

at

9.30 a.m.

at HIS OFFICE

at CHANCELLOR COLLEGE,

ZOMBA, MALAWI

by

MR H. MBAYA

UNIVERSITY OF NATAL. PIETERMARITZBURG

An informal interview with Fr. J.C. Chakanza; Chancellor College,
Zomba, Malawi, 18th November, 1993.

Time: 9.30 - 9.45 a.m

H.M.: My name is Henry. I am a student and also a priest. I would like you to assist me to understand why it is that the Catholic church spoke out so strongly last year.

J.C.: It is not simply correct to say the church spoke out in 1992 - as if it had always been asleep. In 1960, the Bishops led by Archbishop Theunissen spoke strongly against what they saw were the dangers emerging in modern Malawi. They issued the Pastoral Letter called 'How to build a happy nation' Ever since, the Bishops have contacted the government either directly or through the office of the nuncio in Lusaka, Zambia. Archbishop Chiona used to make certain statements in the 1980s. On one occasion he rebuked the party leaders for harassing women with children or babies for the sake of a party card.

H.M.: Yes. Archbishop Chiona was appointed - if I am not mistaken in 1968 - we haven't heard that there was any public statement released since then. Why? What happened?

J.C.: You must remember that the Roman Catholic Church was considerably influenced by the Vatican council sitting between 1962-1965. That

council re-orientated the church's direction of mission. Like other parts of the continent, you see the Roman Catholic Church in Malawi after the Second Vatican being so involved in liturgical and ecumenical affairs.

H.M.: Does it mean, therefore, that its social or prophetic mission was subverted?

J.C.: Not at all. You see the church acts in its own time, schedule. The period after the Second Vatican council was the time for the church to take stock of its mission. In Africa and Malawi, the social position of the church was consolidated in the latter years of the Vatican. You will see that the social change began to emerge in Africa in the 1980s when many countries were having authoritarian and dictatorial leadership. What you see in the 1990s was precisely the result of the impact of the social teaching on the church's life. If you read the Pastoral Letter, you will notice that it was influenced by various papal encyclicals such as Pope Leo's 'Rerum Novarum', and others.

H.M.: Thanks so much Father. I am grateful for this time that I was able to chat with you.

J.C.: You are welcome

TRANSCRIPT

of

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED

with

THE VERY REVEREND SILAS NCOZANA,
GENERAL SECRETARY OF BLANTYRE SYNOD,
CHURCH OF CENTRAL AFRICA PRESBYTERIAN,
ST MICHAEL'S

on

29th NOVEMBER, 1993

at

2.00 p.m.

by

MR H. MBAYA

UNIVERSITY OF NATAL, PIETERMARITZBURG

157

An interview with the Very Reverend Silas Ncozana, General Secretary Blantyre Synod, Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, St Michael's 29th November, 1993. Time: 2.00 - 2.40 p.m

H.M.: Thanks for allowing me to see you. I am grateful that in your busy schedule you made room for me to see you. I am an Anglican priest, but also a student of Church History. I would like to learn from you as a leader of the church about certain aspects of the life of the church prior to 1992, last year when the Bishops released the Pastoral Letter.

S. N .: You are welcome.

H.M.: Why has it taken so long before the church could speak out strongly?

S.N.: You have to remember or learn that the church and state had always looked like brother and sister. Even before Independence, it was the church that fought against the colonial rule. At independence, it became almost normal for the church and state to cooperate. After 1964, the government tried to involve the church closely in its programmes. The church had no problems with that because it trusted the government. Moreover, it was the church which had literally given birth to the government in Malawi.

H.M.: That is an interesting point Rev. Ncozana. In your opinion, why did the government think it necessary to involve the church in its programmes.

S.N.: If the church brought about the emergence of the new order, why should the government not have invited the church to participate in its life? When the church leaders took part in some of the government's programmes they did not immediately see the dangers. It seemed an innocent exercise. It is only today when we realise that the government's attempt to get us involved in its political life was in the long run harmful to our vision of the society. But we all learn from mistakes. What was happening in the 70s and 80s, when we were involved in a semi-official capacity cannot make us feel guilty. Instead, as we have publicly declared - we made a mistake. We should not have allowed ourselves to be used by the government like that. In the past, at least in the 1960s, we were under the impression that our leaders would respect the rule of law - but alas - we realised it was too late. But then, as I said, things were happening so fast that we seemed to have no time to catch up. One would hear so and so has happened without really following up these things.

H.M.: Would you say that the church was too afraid to confront the state for its failures?

S.N.: Yes, to some extent. We kept quiet because we were scared of reprisals if we said something not right. Indeed, from the earliest period, we had to exercise our discretion of what to say and not what to say. We had to measure our words lest we

could offend the government. That was one of our weaknesses.

Interview with the Very Reverend Silas Ncozana,
General Secretary of Blantyre Synod, Blantyre, St Michaels 29th
November, 1993. Time: 2.00-2.40 p.m.(continuing)

S.N.:

The Roman Catholic Bishops were right. There comes a period when the church must stand up. In fact, the time was long overdue. For a long time we had cooperated with the church. At first we believed our political leaders to be christians, but their actions have been contrary to the gospel.

H.M.: Why do you think the Roman Catholic Bishops chose this time to speak up?

S. N .: We had come to the stage in this country when things were deteriorating. Since the 1980s, things were not steady in this country - prices have risen very high. The life of the people was going down.

H.M.: But why did you as church leaders speak up in the past?

S.N.: You must know that the church is part of society. During the early days we all had faith in our political leaders because they showed their religious characters. The Ngwazi (President) was an elder, so were many of the political leaders. We as a church made a mistake because we trusted our leaders too much.

H . M . : : When things started changing for the worse, I mean political oppression, right back in the 1960s, you remember, the cabinet crisis, the persecution of the Jehovah's Witnesses, why did you as leaders come out against such actions?

S.N.: As I say during that period, we did not believe that the government could have gone to those lengths. Remember the churches were even involved in making legislation. We were not aware of the developments that were taking place in parliament. Yes, we would hear about atrocities, but those we heard spoke about the beatings of the Jehovah's Witnesses, etc. It was difficult for the church to act on the basis of rumour. We knew that things were not right - but we could only confront the government if we had evidence in our hands.

H.M.: You have been a member, I presume, of some para-statal organisation such as M.B.C. etc. How have you reconciled your role as a minister and government?

S.N.: It is difficult. When you are appointed by the President, you don't have much choice. When the government came into power, they came with a slogan 'building the nation'. By that they meant uplifting the life of ordinary people. It also meant getting involved in state affairs. However, we realised that because we were associated with the government, it was difficult just to abandon that. Building the nation was a noble thing - but the government misused it. We as leaders became like spectators when things were getting bad later

on. We should not have done that.

H.M.: In 1983, the senior ministers, like Mr Gadama and others, were reported to have died. Why did you not speak up?

S.N.: You know yourself, how dangerous it was. Who could have pointed a finger at the authorities? Yes, the church failed. All of us. We even missed the opportunity to ask the government to institute an inquiry. We left things far too long. Because we had much trust in our leaders as Christians, we tended to over-look their mistakes as a result they went down the road. We too lost our sight, our mission.

H.M.: Mr Chirwa and family were abducted from the Zambian border and later on charged for overthrowing the government. What action did you take to relieve their plight?

S.N.: That issue, as you know was sensitive. On our part we had tried through our sister church in Scotland. The Rev. Doig came but nothing very much was achieved - hence they were kept in prison and eventually Mr Chirwa died.

H.M.: The Pastoral Letter by Catholic Bishops was a turning point in our history. What position will the Presbyterian Church now take with regard to politics?

S.N.: We shall see that we remain socially and politically aware. We hope we, as a church, will

not repeat the same mistakes. We must try to be faithful to the Gospel of Christ.

H.M.: Thanks so much Rev. Ncozana for your time.

S.N.: You are welcome.

TRANSCRIPT

of

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED

with

ANONYMOUS WHITE FATHER

and

SOME MEMBERS OF THE WHITE FATHER'S CONGREGATION

on

6th DECEMBER. 1995

at

4.00 p.m.

at

LILONGWE, MALAWI

by

Mr. H. MBAYA

UNIVERSITY OF NATAL, PIETERMARITZBURG

Interview with anonymous white Father, Lilongwe,
Malawi. Interview with a member of the white
Father's congregation, 6th December, 1995.
Lilongwe, Malawi.
Time: 4.00-4.45 p.m.

H.M.: Thanks Father for granting me this
opportunity. I am an Anglican Priest
and student at the University of
Natal. My interest in studies lies in
the history of the Roman Catholic
Church in Malawi. The interviewees
wanted to remain anonymous.

In 1992 we saw a repeat of the conflict of the
1960s between the Catholic Church and Malawi
government. Why did the church suddenly react like
that? Why did it condemn the government in 1992?
Why not in 1964 when Banda expelled his ministers?
Why not in 1966, 1975, 1977 when the M.C.P were
beating up the Jehovah's Witnesses for not buying
the party card?

W. F.: The Catholic church had always opposed ungodly,
irreligious practices. In 1960, the church took a
position because it believed. Yes it saw that the
Malawi Congress Party stood for dictatorship.
That is why the Archbishop and the Bishops had to
stand up. We meant well.
But after independence in 1964, the church was
quite close to the government. You are right. We

did not want to appear as if we didn't want the new government. We supported it because it was a legitimate government.

H.M.: Don't you think that your cooperation (the church) with the state after independence made it impossible to speak up against the Government?

W.F.: Yes and no. As I said we were supportive of the government because it was a majority government. The people had elected them into power. It was rightful to do so. It does not mean that we supported everything they did.

H.M.: What did you support and what did you condemn?

W. F.: You know as a Malawian - there is a saying in your language translated "the elder does not err". Dr Banda in the 1960s and 1970s was the best that the country had. There were coups in Africa because of unstable government. Banda gave Malawi a stable government. Everybody, remember in 1960, everybody had respect for the President. He was regarded as a hero who had come to liberate his people. Some believed he was a genuine christian. We respected him because he had the authority to be obeyed. Look, he unified all the tribes of Malawi. Malawians respected him and no one could condemn him, since in your culture to do so is impolite. They should have taken action.

H.M.: Over the years the issue of party card has come to dominate our life causing suffering to many people. How has the church viewed the issue?

W.F.: In 1980 if I am not mistaken Archbishop Chiona condemned the excesses of that practice. Yes, he protested in a sermon somewhere in the southern region.

H.M.: In 1983, the four cabinet ministers were reported to be dead in a car accident. Did the church send sympathy or condolence messages to the families? How did the church feel about it?

W.F.: We know Bishop Mkhori of Chikwawa disobeyed the government's order not to bury Mr Chiwanga. He gave him a catholic burial because he was catholic. He even condemned the incident.

H.M.: The Bishops wrote the Pastoral Letter in 1992. What is the current position of the church with regard to politics?

W.F.: The Catholic church is not a political party. It will even condemn the next government if they will lose track of their responsibility.

H.M.: Thanks a lot Father for the time we spent together.

W.F.: Thank you. All the best.

TRANSCRIPT

of

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED

with

BISHOP FELIX MKHORI

of

CHIKWAWA DIOCESE

on

15TH JANUARY, 1996

at

11.30a.m.

at

BISHOP'S RESIDENCE, CHIKWAWA

by

MR H. MBAYA

UNIVERSITY OF NATAL, PIETERMARITZBURG

Interview with Bishop Felix Mkhori of Chikwawa Diocese, 15th January 1996, Bishop's Residence, Chikwawa.

Time: 11.30 a.m. - 12.00 p.m

H.M.: I am privileged to have the opportunity to see you Bishop. My name is Henry. I am a student and priest in South Africa. I am here with you because I want to learn from you about the Catholic church in Malawi. I am interested especially about the way the church seeks to relate its teachings about the social and political problems in our society. In 1992, the Bishops, yourself and your brothers spoke out strongly against the social and political problems. Why did you consider to do that? What really made you to take such a strong position?

F.M.: The church in Malawi, especially Catholics and may be others too had always spoken. Our leaders, Archbishop Theunissen had spoken in the past.

H.M.: For example - what about in 1964, when some cabinet ministers were expelled or 1966 at the peak of political repression. Do you especially recall the Jehovah's Witnesses being hounded?

F.M.: You must understand that it is not the duty of the church to do politics. The church has the duty to preach the word of God season in and season out. During the time that you mention, the Catholic church was not concentrating on politics. We always had channels to make ourselves heard. Our

nuncios in Lusaka was always in touch with the government. The President had always invited us to see him if we wanted to.

You must understand that during that time the church also had other pressing matters. We were building ourselves up. Social concern was also our priority. We had to take care of our schools and hospitals.

We had to support the government in helping to raise the standard of life of our people. We may not have been making statements but we were even quietly criticising the government in its failure to care for the poor and sick by rendering social service. We were political. We were doing service to the society.

H.M.: Bishop, do you recall any occasions when you as bishops, may have condemned the government privately on issues such as compulsory possession of a party card?

F.M.: I can't remember a specific occasion. However, I remember that in the eighties when the M.C.P. were very arrogant - when the issue of a party card became a passport to acquire necessities of life - the Archbishop (Chiona) made a statement in his sermon condemning that. Yes, it was not long after he had challenged the party to prove to him that there was no famine in Malawi. Yes, that it was the time he had visited Mwanza Church. He rebuked the party officials who were saying that there was no famine.

H.M.: You talk about famine in 1980s. In 1983, some cabinet ministers were reported dead by the

officials. Did the church follow that up? Were you concerned?

F.M.: The government knew that what had happened was open to suspicion. It had even instructed families not to give religious burial to those people. When we heard, here in Chikwawa, that Mr Chiwanga had died, we were shocked. I, myself preached and said Mass at his funeral. There were many people. In my sermon I expressed regret about the way the deceased had died.

H.M.: Did you not get arrested or harassed by the security agents?

F.M.: No, I sensed their presence at the funeral but I ignored them.

H.M.: When are the bishops releasing another Pastoral Letter?

F.M.: We don't want to enter into politics for it's sake. When we spoke in 1992 we did that because it was the right time. We will certainly speak out when the time comes.

H.M.: Thanks Bishop for your kindness and patience.

F.M.: You are always welcome. Please work hard and write the truth.

H.M.: Thank you so much for your time.

TRANSCRIPT of
INTERVIEW CONDUCTED with
ANONYMOUS on

1st JANUARY, 1996

at

12.00 p.m.

at HIS OFFICE

MANGOCHI

by

Mr H. MBAYA

UNIVERSITY OF NATAL, PIETERMARITZBURG

Interview with anonymous, Mangochi, 1st January, 1996. Time: 12.00-12 p.m.

HM: I am very privileged to have this opportunity to see you. I am an Anglican priest and student, currently in South Africa. I come to you to learn about the history of the Roman Catholic Church. Recently, the Church has been on the political map. I believe it is because of the Pastoral Letter that the Bishops wrote. Why in your opinion do you think that the Bishops only thought of doing so in 1992? What happened in 1992? Why did it not speak in that manner in the years after independence, when so many things were going wrong, like the atrocities committed against the Jehovah witnesses.

AN: No. The Church has never slept. You have to understand that the Church operates not in its own manner, at its own pace. You ask why did it not speak out in the period after independence. The Church in Malawi during the sixties was a different church. It had always been concerned about what was happening in the country. The situation during the sixties was different to our situation today. Then Malawi as a nation was going through an important phase in its life. It was a highly sensitive period. Just a single comment on the political life of the nation would raise a furore. In 1960, Archbishop Theunissen tried to offer religious support to the Christian Democratic Party of Mr Chester Katsonga because it was perceived then that the direction things were going was not right. It was hoped that the C. D. P. could have brought Christian influence to bear on the life of the country. But you see, what happened. There was a big noise, propaganda that Archbishop Theunissen had formed a Party. It was because they did have their own agenda. In 1992, the position the Church took in 1960 was

vindicated. It was not easy. Banda was the messiah of the people. His word was final, a law. Then, it was also generally held that a small nation like Malawi needed a charismatic leader. He was the only sensible man who could unify the many tribes of Malawi. He had the support from the people, particularly in the early years.

HM: But what happened? What went wrong?

AN: I don't know what happened for him to become an oppressor. Do you have any idea yourself?

HM: No. But what did you leaders think of things like the cabinet crisis? Did the Church think of taking any action, say to intervene?

AN: I have already said that the situation then was so different to the one today. It was unsafe during the sixties for the Church to criticise Banda and his colleagues. You must understand that Banda started as a good leader but things began to change. Suddenly we began to notice the negative side of our leader. The cabinet crisis was followed by mass detentions. It was a nightmare for us. Banda had changed. There was absolutely nothing that the Church could have done. It was just too risky. You would have risked your life, because his men, that Youth League would torture or even to kill you. The Church was of the opinion that the best way to sort out problems as Banda himself was fond of saying was diplomacy.

HM: So you took the position that talking to him was more sensible. Were you afraid to embarrass him in public had you publicly protested.

AN: Not really. It was not just thought necessary to take that position.

HM: Why not?

AN: I have already said that politically the situation was not just conducive. We could have done that and expect the results. Either, he could have come strongly and smash the Church or just make our life so difficult. We were not ready to encounter the wrath of Banda.

HM: But did private diplomacy work? Certain things seemed to work.

AN: There were occasions when through our Pro-nuncio we could make our concerns known to the President.

HM: What matters?

AN: The issue of the Government wanting to take full control of Schools or hospitals.

HM: You mention that you used to contact him through the office of the Pro-nuncio. Did you think it not right to approach him directly? Were you scared to confront him?

AN: Not quite but the Church leaders did not want to risk bad relations with him. You ought to know that Malawian leaders in the Church did not want to displease Banda. He was the chief. Who can quarrel with the chief? Who can insult the chief? Banda was the chief.

HM: In your opinion why did things begin to change? At what stage?

AN: The Bishops had been thinking about the situation for some time. I recall as early as the eighties when things started getting worse politically with the M.C.P. We had been thinking about doing something about the situation. We

wanted to take a stand. However, by late eighties when it had been known that the Holy Father would be coming at some stage in the future, we thought it was not wise then to confront the government, because we thought the government would react in a way that could later on jeopardise His visit . There were some amongst us who were encouraging the Bishops to take a more radical approach. But when we heard about the visit of the Holy Father, we thought it wise to consider the implications. We believed that maybe his coming could somehow bring some influence to bear on the political life of the country. We thought that as a religious figure the political leaders would respect him or perhaps he could address this issue with them.

HM: So when the Pope came in 1989, did he fulfil your expectations?

AN: I think His visit was good for the Church in our country. However, it was unfortunate that the M.C.P. treated the visit as political in their favour. The manner by which the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation publicised the visit it gave the impression that it was merely a state function that proved the legitimacy of Dr Banda's rule.

HM: So do you think the visit was more to the advantage of Banda than the Church?

AN: Not really. It was a good pastoral visit. I believe the Pope's visit achieved a lot but it did not address the burning political issues that the country was facing.

HM: So what did the leaders do? What happened in the Church after the visit?

AN: We had been encouraged by His visit. We knew that we had a tremendous job lying ahead of us.

HM: Was it at this moment when you decided to issue the

Pastoral Letter?

AN: Yes. Some of us encouraged the Bishops to take up the issue directly. In 1991, we met in plenary session. I think it was in November or December, I can not recall exactly when. In that meeting, I suggested that we issue a statement which could raise the socio-moral and political issues. Some of the Bishops were not in favour of the idea then. However, when we met in January the following year the idea found support. We then elected the committee of three to draft. I was one of them. We reported back to the Bishops later in February. A decision was made then that we issue the Letter during the Lenten period. On 8th March all the priests were instructed to stay in their Parishes and read the Letter.

HM: Who do you think the Letter annoyed the authorities so much?

AN: One mistake the Bishops made was to receive a cash donation of K 500 each a few days before they released the Pastoral Letter when they went to present Bishop Ziyaye of Dedza Diocese.

HM: Was it a common practice for the Bishops to receive such donations from the President?

AN: It was not only for Catholics. When the President visited a church for worship, he used to leave behind some cash donation.

HM: Thanks so much for your time. I really enjoyed it. I appreciate

AN: You are very welcome.

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AN: It was not only for Catholics. When the President visited

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HM: Thanks so much for your time. I really enjoyed it. I appreciate.

AN: Your are very welcome.

BISHOPS' PASTORAL LETTER MARCH 1992.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

As we commence this time of the Lord's favour, we, your bishops, greet you in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Introduction

As a community journeying in faith and hope we recognise and accept the Lord's invitation proclaimed again in this time of Lent. On Ash Wednesday we receive ashes with the prayer. "Repent and believe the Good news". This prayer introduces the period of Lent when we shall enter once more into the saving mysteries of the lord's death and resurrection.

Christ began his public ministry by proclaiming: Repent and believe the Gospel (Mk 1.15) In this proclamation he states the programme of His ministry; to call all human kind in through His life, death and resurrection to conversion and witness. People in every age and culture are called to this conversion and to respond in commitment and faith.

In this conviction we, your leaders in the faith, come to share with you what this faith invites us as a church in the Malawi today. We place this exhortation under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the patronage of Mary, Queen of Malawi and of Africa.

1. THE DIGNITY AND UNITY OF HUMANKIND

Man and woman, created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1.26), carry in themselves the breath of divine life. Each created person is in communion with God. Human life is inviolable since it is from God and all human beings are one, springing as they do from a single father, Adam, and a single mother, Eve, "the mother of all those who live "(Gen 3.20).

The unity and dignity of the human race have been definitely

sealed in Christ the Son of God who died for all, to unite everyone in one Body. Rejoicing in this truth we proclaim the dignity of every person, the right of each one to freedom and respect. This oneness of the human race also implies equality and the same basic rights for all. These must be solemnly respected and inculcated in every culture, every constitution and every social system.

2. THE CHURCH AND SOCIETY

Because the church exists in this world it must communicate its understanding of the meaning of human life and of society. As Pope Paul VI says: "the Church is certainly not willing to restrict her action only to the religious field and disassociate herself from man's temporal problems (The Evangelisation of peoples, No 34).

In this context we joyfully acclaim the progress which has taken place in our country, thanks in greater part to the climate of peace and stability which we enjoy. We would however, fail in our role as religious leaders if we kept silent on areas of concern.

3. THE ASPIRATION OF GREATER EQUALITY AND UNITY.

In our society we are aware of a growing gap between the rich and the poor with regard to expectations, living standards and development. Many people still live in circumstances which are hardly compatible with their dignity as sons and daughters of God. Their life is a struggle for survival. At the same time a minority enjoys the fruits of development and can afford to live in luxury and wealth. We appeal for a more just and equal distribution of the nations wealth. Though many basic goods and materials are available; they are beyond the means of many of our people. One of the reasons for this is the deplorable was structure which exists. For many, the wages they receive are

grossly inadequate, e.g. employees in some estates, some domestic workers, brick makers etc. and this leads to anger, frustration and hopelessness. Another example of glaring injustice is the price paid to producers, especially subsistence farmers, for some of their crops. We wish to state that every person has a right to a just reward for work done, a wage which will ensure a dignified living for his or her family. Not only has the worker a right to be paid justly by his employer, but he also has a duty honestly and responsibly to do the work for which he is employed. We would like to remind all Christian workers that their first duty on receiving their earnings is to look to the adequate support of their family. All too often workers spend their salaries for selfish purposes. Bribery and nepotism are growing in political, economic and social life. This causes violence and harm to the spirit of our people. Honesty, righteousness, respect, equal opportunity for all; these must be the qualities which guide our nation as it grows and develops into the future. One of the cornerstones of the nation is unity. This reflects the will of our Creator that we live in mutual respect and oneness. Tribalism, apartheid (whether economic or social), regionalism and divisions are contrary to the call and truth of humankind. We call all the faithful to celebrate our common birth and destiny in mutual respect, acceptance, justice and love.

4. THE RIGHT TO AN ADEQUATE EDUCATION

A society which values its future affords the highest priority to providing education for all its young people. As it is commonly put: "Young people are the future of the nation". A sound education will aim at the following: creating an environment favourable to the physical, emotional, intellectual, relational and spiritual development of pupils. developing in each student a respect for others and a recognition of civic responsibilities. promoting the creative potential of students. The unique and diverse talents of every individual are recognised and

encouraged, instilling an appreciation of the students cultural heritage, i.e. linguistic, musical, artistic legacy inherited from the past. providing the student with appropriate skills which will equip them U make a living in the actual circumstances of our country.

5. PROBLEMS OF OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM.

At the outset we wish to record how greatly we esteem and applaud the efforts which have been made by the government to provide education all levels. The work of the Churches in this field has also contributed greatly to the advancement of our people. Nevertheless we fell it necessary I draw attention to some of the problems which beset our education institutions at present:

Literacy is one of the principle causes of poverty an d lack of development. It cannot be said that we have succeeded in promoting the creative potential of our citizens while there remains a large scale problem of illiteracy in our society. It must be recognised that this is a problem which cannot be solved by state initiatives alone. Since a great responsibility lies with the parents, we urge them to recognise their duty by sending their children to school.

b. Falling standards, overcrowding and shortage of teachers and Materials.

It is more widely recognised that standards of education are not only not rising, but are actually falling. Clearly there can be little hope of creating an environment favourable to the emotional, intellectual and spiritual development of pupils when schools are grossly overcrowded and suffer from a serious lack of teachers. While the present acute shortage has been made much worse by the policy of requiring all teachers to remain in their regions, final solutions to these problems will also demand generous increases in the resources made available to education. This will have very practical implications for the way in which

our national priorities are established and the budget distributed.

c. Unequal access to education.

The criteria used in selection of pupils for secondary schools and third level institutions should be known to all and be seen to operate fairly. Nor should they work to the disadvantage of particular individuals or groups. Access to education should not depend on whom the candidate knows nor how much money he possesses.

d. Discipline

We believe that discipline is a major problem in secondary schools. It will not be solved by threats of punishment. There is a need to examine the underlying reasons for this state of affairs. Among them:

failure of parents to exercise their responsibility to children as they grow older.

ii lack of co-operation between parents and school authorities.

iii frustration due to poor or uncertain job opportunities.

vi manipulation of the selection process to include undeserving students, lack of support from higher authorities when action has been taken or needs to be taken by the school.

6. CHURCH-STATE PARTNERSHIP IN EDUCATION.

Improvements will come about in the educational system only if there is mutual trust and genuine partnership between the different interested groups in society, i.e. parents, teachers, the Church and the State. In particular, we recognise the importance of Church-State participation in this area. On the one hand, the Church has a responsibility to support in every way the educational goals of the government. On the other hand the government has a duty to respect the right and legitimate aspirations of the churches. Only through such a mutual recognition of rights and responsibilities will a grateful partnership between Church and State be released in practice.

7. ADEQUATE HEALTH SERVICES FOR ALL.

Equality among citizens and the demands of justice call for policies which aim to provide adequate health care for all without distinction. The following principles have always guided us in this vital area of concern:

Life is sacred. It is a gift from God to be valued from the moment of conception until death.

Human beings can never be reduced to the status of objects. We recognise that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit.

Every person is of equal dignity. The value of life is not to be measured by ones age, possessions or position in society.

8. DIFFICULTIES EXPERIENCED IN OUR HEALTH SERVICES.

We wish to pay tribute to the achievements of the government of Malawi in extending health services with the aim of providing the best possible care for all. Particularly worthy of mention has been the establishment of an excellent system of primary health care. The notable contribution of the churches through their extensive network of hospitals and health centres is deserving of special praise.

At the same time we are aware of the severe difficulties which the health services are experiencing at present:

a) Overcrowding and Lack of Personnel.

Without doubt the most serious problem is the acute shortage of health centres to cater for the population. One cannot claim to uphold the principle of sanctity of life if provision has not been made for even minimal health care for every person. This is a priority which a society cannot ignore if it wishes to be a caring and compassionate community. It must be recognised that if this problem is to be tackled, it will demand the allocation of more resources from the State.

b) The Vocation of Caring for the Sick.

Caring for the sick is a calling from God of a special dignity and importance. It can never be seen as just another job

or another way of earning ones living. While we greatly value the generous dedication to service of many of those who work in the medical field, we cannot ignore that the quality of medical care is often seriously inadequate, e.g. patients being unattended to for long periods of time; the lack of commitment on the part of some personnel; the failure to recognise each patient as ones brother or sister in need, etc. We therefore invite all health workers to serve every patient without exception and with true dedication.

c. Inequality in Medical Treatment.

Absolute equality of access to health care for all citizens is difficult to achieve. However this is an ideal which must always be striven for. The guiding principle determining whether a patient will receive priority treatment ought not to be his apparent usefulness or his position in society. Rather every person, whether rich or poor, educated or not, blood relative or not, has equal right to receive health care. The practice of stealing and reselling medicines seriously threatens this right.

9. THE TRAGEDY OF AIDS.

It is heartening to note the extensive health education programmes currently in operation in the state. One cannot fail to stress the importance of preventive measures particularly in respect of contagious diseases

The current epidemic of AIDS is a case in point. All recognise that in the present circumstances where no cure for AIDS is available, prevention in the form of health education is the only way of combating this problem. We want to encourage the efforts undertaken in that direction and hope they can still be intensified: true facts about the disease should be made public more readily; information made available to all; personnel and resources freed for the treatment and counselling of the victims and their families. However preventive methods must respect God's

law and enhance the dignity to human person. It is most regrettable that little attention is paid to the fact that faithfulness to the Gospel's teaching on conjugal fidelity is the single most effective method of preventing the spread of this tragic illness. We strongly object to the dissemination of the view that the use of condoms is the remedy against this epidemic.

Besides the immorality involved in the indiscriminate distribution and use of condoms, we must be aware how much they contribute to the spreading of false sense of security and encouraging a promiscuity which can only aggravate the existing problem. We appeal to Christian parents to protect and counsel their children against such practices and guide them to a true Christian understanding of sexuality.

10. PARTICIPATION OF ALL IN PUBLIC LIFE.

In their writings to the Christians, both the apostles Peter and Paul note how the Holy Spirit grants the members of the Christian community gifts of all sorts for the benefit of the community. "On each one of us God's favour has been bestowed in whatever way Christ has allotted it... To some his gift was that they should be apostles, to some prophets; to some evangelists; to some pastors and teachers..." Whatever the gift, the purpose is one: "to knit God's holy people together for the work of service to build up the Body of Christ" (Eph 4, 7-16' cf I Per 4, 10-11)

African society has traditionally recognised that what is true of the church is also true of any society; its strength resides in recognising the gifts of all and in allowing these gifts to flourish and be used for the building up of the community. "Mutu umodzi susenza dangan. No one person can claim to have a monopoly of truth and wisdom. No individual - or group of individual - or group of individuals - can pretend to have all

the resources needed to guarantee the progress of a nation. "Mtsinje wopanda miyala susunga madzin. The contribution of the most humble members is often necessary for the good running to a group. "Wopusa anaomba n'goma wochenjera navina.

11. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSOCIATION

Moreover human persons are honoured - and this honour is due to them - whenever they are allowed to search freely for the truth to voice their opinions and be heard to engage in creative service of the community in all liberty within the associations of their choice. Nobody should ever have to suffer reprisals for honestly expressing and living up to their convictions: intellectual, religious, or political.

We can only regret that this is not always the case in our country. We can be grateful that freedom of worship is respected; the same freedom does not exist when it comes to translating faith into daily life. Academic freedom is seriously restricted; exposing injustices can be considered a betrayal; revealing some evils of our society is seen as slandering the country; monopoly of mass media and censorship prevent the expression of dissenting views; some people have paid dearly for their political opinions; access to public places like markets, hospitals, bus depots, etc., is frequently denied to those who cannot produce a party card; forced donations have become a way of life.

This is most regrettable. It creates an atmosphere of resentment among the citizens. It breeds a climate of mistrust and fear. This fear of harassment and mutual suspicion generates a society in which the talents of many lie unused and in which there is little room for initiative.

12. FOSTERING PARTICIPATION.

We urgently call each one of you to respond to this state of affairs and work towards a change of climate. Participation in

the life of the country is not only a right; it is a duty that each Christian should be proud to assume and exercise responsibly. People in positions of authority, in government and administration, have a particular duty to work for the restoration of the climate of trust and openness. However participation will remain a fiction without the existence of adequate channels of expression and action: an independent press, open forum of discussion, free association of citizens for social and political purposes, and the like.

13. "THE TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE."

A first step in the restoration of the climate of confidence may be taken by recognising the true state of the nation. "The truth will set you free" (Jn 8,32). These words of Christ do not have an exclusively religious meaning. They also express a deep human reality. For too long we have refused to see that besides the praiseworthy achievements of the last decades, our country still suffers from many evils: economic and social progress does not trickle down to the mass of the people; much still remains to be achieved to make adequate education and health services available to all; the AIDS problem presents an incredible challenge; recurrent unfavourable climatic conditions often account for poor crops and subsequently misery for the people...

People will not be scandalised to hear these things; they know them. They will only be grateful that their true needs are recognised and that efforts are made to answer them. Feeding them with slogans and half truths - or untruths! - only increases their cynicism and their mistrust of government representatives. It gives rise to a culture of rumour mongering. Real progress can only be attained when the true problems and real needs are identified and all resources are channelled towards solving them.

Let us add here that people in positions of responsibility have an obligation to know the actual conditions in which their people live and to work tirelessly for their betterment. They

should be willing to allow their efforts to be judged by the people they serve. Accountability is a quality of good government. People are entitled to know how their representatives fulfil their duties. No disrespect is shown when citizens ask questions in matters which concern them,

14. A SYSTEM OF JUSTICE WHICH WORKS FAIRLY.

We would like to draw our attention to another area of life in our society. We cannot ignore or turn a blind eye to our peoples experience of unfairness and injustice, for example those who, losing their land without fair compensation, are deprived of their livelihood, or those of our brothers and sisters who are imprisoned without knowing when their cases will be heard.

In a just society, a citizen must have easy access to an independent and impartial court of justice whenever his rights are threatened or violated. In particular, before a penalty is imposed, it is in the interest of justice and human dignity that the accused be informed in good time of the charge against him and be granted opportunity for fair trial, and where necessary, the possibility of legal counsel. We call upon all and particularly those responsible for the administration of justice to ensure not only that procedures are respected but also that impartial judgement is rendered to the accused person. This will only be possible if the administration of justice is independent of external influences, political or other. Our bond of brotherhood and sisterhood in the one body of Christ and our solidarity as a people should, in love, compel us to hunger for the justice and righteousness of the Lord in our society. In this context we recall the words of Jesus at the beginning of his ministry: "The spirit of the Lord is on me, for he has anointed me to bring the Good news to the afflicted. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord" (Luke 4, 18-19). This appeal for fair

treatment should also be heard within the Church. We want to recall the importance of adhering to procedures which have been instituted to promote justice and protect the rights of the faithful. Our Church communities do need well established and competent forums for hearing various cases, complaints, and grievances of their members. Those of us who have to pronounce judgement on persons and situations are to view the exercise of their authority as a service of truth for the common good as well as for the well being of the individual. In particular, we exhort the people of God to respect the right of defence of those accused of having committed offenses.

CONCLUSION

15. "LOVE TENDERLY, ACT JUSTLY, WALK HUMBLY WITH YOUR GOD" (Micah 6.8)

The issues raised in this letter will obviously require an ongoing and more in depth reflection. It is the Church's mission to preach the Gospel which effects the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation, be it hunger, ignorance, blindness, despair, paralysing fear etc. Like Jesus the advocate of the poor and oppressed, the believing community is invited, at times obliged in justice to show in action a preferential love for the economically disadvantaged, the voiceless who live in situations of hopelessness.

The human rights and duties identified in this pastoral letter for our reflection are only some of the issues that our God invites us to consider seriously. In our response to God, we humbly recognise that though a gifted and blessed people, we are not a perfect community. If some of our personal weaknesses, biases and ambitions are not purified by the word of God and just laws, they can very easily destroy peace and harmony in our societies and communities. We hope that our message will deepen in all of us the experience of

conversion and the desire for truth and light and the light of Christ. This will prepare us for the worthy celebration of Easter, the feast of the risen Lord in whom we see ourselves as a risen people with dignity restored.

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Bishop F Mkhori
Bishop M A Chimole
Bishop A Assolari
Bishop A Chamgwera
Bishop G M Chisendera
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³⁵⁸ The writer is heavily indebted to John Lloyd Lwanda for the Pastoral Letter in the Appendix extracted from his book, *Kamuzu Banda of Malawi, A Study in Promise, Power and Political Paralysis*, (Glasgow: Dudu Nsomba Publications, 1993)