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RELIGION AND POLITICAL PARTIES IN ZAMBIA

Austin Cheyeka

Known as Northern Rhodesia, before independence in 1964, Zambia is located in Southern Africa. The scramble for Africa and the partition of the continent in European territories led to the colonisation of the country in 1890 when Frank Lochner of the British South Africa Company (BSACo) signed what became known as the Lochner Treaty with Chief Mulena Lubosi Lewanika of the Lozi people in Zambia’s present-day Western Province. The Treaty gave the BSACo mineral rights over North-Eastern Rhodesia and Western Rhodesia. With the merger of the two regions, in 1911, the territory was renamed Northern Rhodesia. In 1923, the company handed over the administration of Northern Rhodesia to the British colonial government. In 1924, it became a British protectorate. Later, in 1953, the colony became part of the Central African Federation of Northern Rhodesia itself, Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and Nyasaland (Malawi). The federal decade (1953–1963) accelerated the tempo of African opposition to British rule through African political parties supported by a number of Anglo-Saxon Christian missionaries and the masses in rural and urban areas.

On 24 October 1964, Northern Rhodesia became an independent nation-state and was renamed Zambia. Since then, the country has undergone three republics. The period of the independence constitution which had a competitive multiparty system from 24 October 1964 to 13 December 1972 is referred to as the First Republic; the period of the one-party system from 13 December 1972 to 17 December 1990 is referred to as the Second Republic; and the constitutional amendment which restored the multiparty system on 17 December 1990 introduced the Third Republic. The analytical framework is thus the three republics. The early colonial era (1890–1923) is not dealt with in this chapter as there were no political parties during that period.

The chapter shows how missionaries of the Christian religion supported Africans in opposing the Federation and the struggle for self-rule. It also sheds light on post-colonial Zambia in terms of the relationship between religion and political parties in the first, second and third republics. In concluding, the chapter highlights the point that while, generally, the clergy in the mainline churches are divided over politics, Pentecostal ‘big men’ and women are not so divided and have supported politicians claiming to be born again.

Before focusing on the chief concern of the chapter, a picture of the religious demography is in order.
Zambia is predominantly a Christian country, but there are other religions: Islam, Hinduism, Baha'i Faith, Sikhism, Judaism, African traditional religion, and others. My source here is the US Department of State Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labour 2016 Report on International Religious Freedom of 15 August 2017. The picture from the report appears as follows:

The introduction of Christianity in Zambia, the focus of this chapter, was largely as a result of the life and death of the Scottish missionary and explorer, David Livingstone, which stimulated the arrival of different missionary groups from the south, north and the east between 1875 and 1905 and later (Macpherson, 1977: 7). But Christianity was not the first foreign religion to arrive in Zambia. It was Islam instead, but as Haynes (1996) observed, Muslims’ concern was largely trade rather than converting locals to Islam. At every Christian mission station, Catholic and Protestant alike, there was a school to disenchant the African’s (referred to as native) mind. Interestingly, it is the modern academic education in form of rudiments of the 3Rs and some more advanced schooling, which empowered the African to contest colonial rule through political parties. As Hastings (1995: 42) argued, from 1920s to the 1950s, the principal secular contribution of the churches to black Africa was probably the training for democracy of a tiny elite.

The Christian institution, which had an enormous influence on the growth of African protest in Northern Rhodesia, and indeed throughout Southern Africa was Livingstone in Malawi, built in memory of David Livingstone by the Free Church of Scotland in 1894 (Roberts, 1967). During the tenure of Dr Robert Laws, as the Institute’s director, students were encouraged to debate all sorts of current problems enabling them to gain very broad perspective on race relations both in Africa and in the United States (Roberts, 1967: 196). Subsequently, graduates from Livingstone provided the major intellectual stimulus behind the formation of African welfare associations (Cook, 1975: 99) which served as forerunners to nationalist political parties.

Christianity is the officially government-endorsed religion by virtue of the declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation on 29 December 1991 by the second republican president, Frederick Chiluba, who also ensured that the declaration became part of the republican constitution in 1996. The Christian churches are represented by Church ‘mother bodies’ as they are often referred to: the Zambia Conference of Catholic Bishops (ZCCB), the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia (EFZ), the Council of Churches in Zambia (CCZ) and the Independent Churches Organisation of Zambia (ICOZ).

As a liberal democracy, as Zambia claims to be, ideally everyone has the right to vote, to form political parties and interest groups, to publicise one’s political views, to engage in political campaigns, to stand and contest for political office and to take part in government. But in 1991, the ‘Islamic Party’ was not registered as an opposition political party because of the name ‘Islamic’. However, four Zambians (three Hindus and one Muslim) of Indian origin were elected Members of Parliament on the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) platform in 1991.

### Table 22.1 Religious affiliations in Zambia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country’s population (July 2016 estimate)</th>
<th>15.5million</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>95.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
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Hindus and Muslims are numerically small, they are not politically inconsequential. They have supported political parties of their choice in ways that many Zambians are unaware of.

**Religion and political parties in colonial Zambia**

This part of the chapter sheds light on the relationship between religion and political parties in colonial and post-colonial times up to 1991. The term religion is often used in the material sense – referring to institutions and officials. This chapter focuses on Christian clergy’s involvement in politics rather than rehearsing the Church–state relationship motif. The chapter employs the basic definition of ‘party’ by Sartori (1976: 64) that it is ‘any political group that presents at elections, and is capable of placing through elections, candidates for public office’.

Christian missionaries opposed colonial rule at both individual and institutional levels. The Federation issue became the ultimate test of the integrity of European church leaders (Carmody, 2006: 2). As Taylor and Lehmann put it, colonial rule and the Federation ‘provided a chance for them to prove whether they were prepared to make common cause with the disenfranchised African majority in defense of their interests or whether they would take their stand with the rest of their own’ (Taylor and Lehmann, 1961: 153).

Overall, the reaction of many church leaders to the Federation was somewhat divided (Weller and Linden, 1984; Haynes, 1996). Few would have been entirely supportive of it but a minority possibly saw it as a step towards eventual self-rule. Thus, churches failed to come out clearly against the Federation (Carmody, 2006). My concern is not so much with the churches’ position on the Federation, but how particular clergy, obviously with some backing of their churches, supported nationalist political parties. As Kaunda put it to Carmody in a personal interview: ‘The weakness of the churches in supporting nationalism as a whole was taken care of by what individual priests did’ (Carmody, 2006: 6). Kaunda here referred to the support he had received from people like Fr. Paddy Walsh, S.J., and others within the Catholic Church as well as a number of clergymen from other churches like Colin Morris and Merfyn Temple. Kaunda particularly commended the Catholic Church’s initiative in having a newspaper like The Leader, which published articles that enabled people like Kaunda and Nkumbula and many others like them to articulate their perspectives during colonial rule (Carmody, 2008: 3).

In his opposition to the colour-bar in the country and the Federation, Rev. Colin Morris of the Methodist church on the Copperbelt even contemplated forming a political party to serve as a platform to contest racial discrimination and the Federation. Morris took the lead in Protestant Christianity in opposing the Federation. When the opposition was at its peak, he asked: ‘What does the Church do when a government constantly ignores her entreaties?’ (Morris, 1961a: 94). Consequently, Morris, Reverends Fred Sillet, Henry Makulu and Merfyn Temple came to the conclusion that the only alternative left was to organise Christians into a political party which would stand for the principles which the Federal Government was constantly rejecting. However, this scheme for a ‘Church Party’ foundered on a number of theological obstacles in spite of the encouragement Morris received from Dr George Macleod, the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland when he visited Northern Rhodesia in 1957 (Morris, 1961a: 94).

Overall, historians and academics are unanimous on the fact that Christian missionaries laid a firm foundation for the development of political parties in what is Zambia today, the forerunners of which were African Welfare Societies organised and presided over by mission-educated young men. In addition,

Most of Northern Rhodesia’s nationalist leaders got their first test of democracy and their first experience of its methods in Leaders Meetings and Church Councils. Their
political skills and efficiency in running party organisations are owed to the missionary to a degree that they would care to acknowledge. 
(Morris, 1964: 17)

The first welfare society was formed in 1912 at Mwenzo in North-Eastern Zambia at a mission station of the Scottish Livingstonia. According to Hall (1965: 143), the association was the idea of four of the most educated Africans in the area: Donald Siwale, a Boma clerk, David Kaunda, Hezekiya Kawosa and Peter Sinkala. They discussed it with J.A. Chisholm, who was in charge of the mission hospital; he warned them that they were ‘seeking trouble for themselves by entering into politics’ but did not discourage them. The objective of the welfare society was to bring African views to the attention of the government. Due to the First World War, Mwenzo was evacuated. It was revived in 1923 but lapsed again in 1927 (Hall, 1965: 143). In 1929, 31 welfare associations were formed in several towns along the railway line. These were rather more purposeful and served as the first step towards the creation of African political parties (Hall, 1965: 124).

In 1941, Roy Welensky, the spokesperson of the white miners and railwaymen, formed his Labour Party, the first real political organisation Northern Rhodesia had ever known (Hall, 1965: 122). The formal struggle for independence began seven years later with the formation of the Northern Rhodesia African National Congress (NRANC), a coalition of welfare societies in 1948 under the leadership of Godwin Mbikusita Lewanika (Rotberg, 1965). In 1951 the party changed its name to African National Congress (ANC) under the leadership of Harry Mwanga Nkumbula. A faction within ANC formed the Zambia African National Congress (ZANC) in 1958, which was banned in 1959 but morphed into the United National Independence Party (UNIP) under Mainza Chona as the interim president. In 1960, Kenneth David Kaunda was handed the leadership of UNIP after his release from jail. One novel innovation in the Northern Rhodesia’s political life, according to Morris (1962), was the involvement of clergymen and ministers in party politics. Their activities were not confined to silent membership of a political party: they held offices, made political speeches and did all the things expected of politicians. They became ‘political priests’ (Morris, 1962: 51).

**Political priests in colonial days**

Rev. Merfyn Temple, a Methodist missionary, was the Chairman of the Multiracial Constitution party and became member of UNIP (Morris, 1962: 51). When Alexander Scott formed a political party known as Constitution Party, imbued with liberal principles, in 1957 in Lusaka aimed at improving race relations in the territory, he was backed by Rev. Temple and Rev. Fred Sillet, who according to Morris (1961b: 118–119), became the forerunner to the ‘political priests’, raising a storm of controversy throughout the territory. To be sure, Morris too was a member of Scott’s party. On 29 October 1960, liberals from all races gathered in Kitwe to form the Northern Rhodesia Liberal Party. Sir John Moffat was elected president and Morris and Alfred Gondwe vice-presidents (Morris, 1961b: 119). In November, the same year, Morris resigned his pastoral charge in the Free Church in Chingola on the Copperbelt. He represented the party in the Constitutional Talks in February 1961 at Lancaster (Morris, 1961b: 119).

**Christianity and political parties in post-colonial Zambia**

On the eve of independence, there were four political parties (the Federal Liberal Party, the United National Independence Party, the African National Congress and the United Federal Party). At present, there are two dominant major ones; the ruling Patriotic Front (PF) and the
opposition, United Party for National Development (UPND). The point, however, is that, on 24 October 1964 UNIP won national independence for Zambia; Kenneth Kaunda became the first president of the new republic. Earlier, in 1963, the Jesuits of the Catholic Church even arranged for Kaunda to receive his first honorary doctorate in 1963, at Fordham University in New York (Carmody, 2006). After attainment of self-rule, missionaries who had remained in the country played a huge role in building the new country, and Kaunda recognised their efforts by appointing them to undertake certain responsibilities in the new nation. For example, Rev. Colin Morris was made first president of the ‘national church’, the United Church of Zambia (UCZ) which he had conceptualised and made immense contribution to its formation, Rev. Fergus Macpherson became the first Dean of Students Affairs at the new University of Zambia in 1966. Churches cooperated in the building of the new nation, especially in the area of education and health. Generally, as Hastings (1995: 43) had put it:

There was an anxiety on the part of the church’s leadership to give the state the benefit of almost every possible doubt … In most cases the church leaders were aware of a considerable weakness in their own position. If white, they could very easily be branded as interfering neo-colonialists; if black, their education and experience was generally far less than that of the political leadership.

One event, in 1963, prior to independence is important to mention. Kaunda had to deal with one of his worst fears, namely, religious cleavage driven by an independent church called Lumpa which opposed European mission churches, the colonial administration and African political parties. Many years after the Lumpa uprising, the Prophetic, Alice Lenshina, denied any involvement with the ‘political’ disturbances and blamed some of her young men for the bloodshed because they had used the movement for their political ends (Hinfelaar, 1991). Fears of schism and cleavage in the new nation prompted Kaunda to blend the ideologies of secular humanism with Christian humanism of the Middle Ages in Europe into a brand he termed Zambian Humanism, whose central ideas evolved in dialogue with several European missionaries and clergy, most notably Reverends Colin Morris, James Oglethorpe, John Papworth and G.A. Krapf. All are acknowledged in Kaunda’s principal work of humanism (Gordon, 2012: 160). Particularly noteworthy was the appointment of Rev. Oglethorpe as one of the advisers to Kaunda (Mbikusita-Lewanika, 1994). Kaunda also came up with the national motto of *One Zambia, One Nation* and in 1972 he outlawed multiparty politics. In the 1970s, Christian clergy welcomed one-party rule, but did not want to be treated as a praying or spiritual unit of the party and its government. But, Kaunda was a shrewd tactician who used religious rhetoric and open display of emotions in the pursuit of the most hard-headed of political objectives. Further, his regular six-monthly supper with church leaders gave them a chance to approach him directly but the *quid pro quo* was that they would never speak out publicly in criticism (Hastings, 1979: 188) against Kaunda’s policies.

By 1990, the Kaunda-dominated UNIP had become something of a by-word for poverty, mismanagement, institutionalised sycophancy and megalomania to the extent that during the political ferment of the 1990s precipitated by the collapse of the Soviet Union and Communism, churches felt they had no choice but to encourage the re-introduction of multiparty politics. In the second republic, Archbishop Emmanuel Milingo, Bishop Dennis de Jong, Fr. Umberto Davoli, all of the Catholic Church and others had claimed the heritage of political priests. Generally, Catholic priests set the tone of the relationship between a political party and religious leaders and activists. Kaunda’s rule came under serious scrutiny between 1975 and 1990. In 1975, liberal abortion laws were introduced. The Catholic Church engaged
government on the policy. The government later declared abortion on non-medical grounds illegal (Lungu, 1986). Furthermore, the government’s attempt to introduce ‘scientific socialism’, remove religious education from the school curriculum and turn church halls into classrooms further alarmed all church leaders who expressed fear that atheism would become the norm in Zambia (Lungu, 1986). Kaunda abandoned the idea.

The rest of the chapter is organised around two hypotheses. The first, by Jenkins, that ‘When a church helps establish a new government, religious leaders often expect some kind of recognition of their authority, perhaps even a share in government’ (Jenkins, 2011: 186) and the second by Mohseni and Wilcox (2015), that ‘when religious groups form or support a political party, they may lose ability to critique the party programme’. This is exactly what makes Zambia, in the words of Freston (2001: 154), a laboratory for studying some typical tendencies in a certain kind of evangelical politics in action in highly favourable circumstances. In the rest of the chapter, I ‘test’ Jenkins’ and Mohseni’s and Wilcox’s hypotheses. My focus is the period between 1991 and 2018.

**Priests and political rewards, 1991–2018**

Although Hastings (1995: 40) argued that democracy in the state can hardly convincingly be advocated by a church (referring to the Catholic Church), which refuses to practice anything comparable within its own life, the Catholic Church made a distinctive contribution to the reintroduction of multiparty democracy (Cheyeka, 1999; Gifford, 1998). In 2001, church leaders headed by the late Cardinal Merdado Mazombwe collaborated with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and opposition political leaders in what was known as ‘the Oasis Forum’ to stop Chiluba from changing the republican constitution to allow him to stand as president for a third term. In the transition from a one-party to multiparty system, the church leaders served three specific functions. The clergy and Church media critiqued one-party rule and its socio-political and economic policies that were detrimental to the wellbeing of Zambians. Second, church leaders acted as the midwife of democracy by promoting peaceful discussion among the different political parties, which led to the constitutional changes mandating multiparty elections in 1991. Third, they formed the Zambia Elections Monitoring Committee to monitor the elections which were acknowledged by both international and local observers as free and fair.

In surveying the period between 1991 and 2018, attention is given to some Pentecostal pastors who, quite clearly, expected religion to serve their political ends, and public policy to promote the dominant religion because of the declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation in 1991. Although Chiluba was a born-again Christian, he did not come to political power on a ‘Christian’ ticket in 1991. Rather, he was the candidate of the heterogeneous opposition coalition, which included the academic elites, businessmen and union members (Riedl, 2010: 44). His party, the MMD, had a number of other Pentecostals such as Revs. Danny Pule, Stan Kristafor, Peter Chintala, Kaunda Lemba, to mention a few. Pastor Nevers Mumba argued for the declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation, which President Chiluba did on 29 December 1991, and almost reflexively, Pentecostal pastors demanded positions in government and to be nominated as Members of Parliament. They also demanded that religious education be replaced with ‘Bible Knowledge’, churches be given land to build on, building of mosques to be halted, and the creation of the Ministry of Christian Affairs (Freston, 2001: 161–162). Overall, Chiluba did not meet the aspirations of Pentecostals but he appointed some of them who had won parliamentary seats as ministers and handed diplomatic passports to prominent pastors as they were to be ‘ambassadors of the Christian nation’ (Lockhart, 2001: 65).
The end of the MMD era and the reappearance of Pentecostal pastors

Presidents Levy Mwanawasa, Mr Rupiah Banda and Mr Michael Sata, who came after Chiluba, were not enthusiasts of the declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation and Pentecostals kept a low profile during the tenures of these leaders. To be noted, however, is the fact that among Sata’s friends were Bishop Peter Ndhlovu of Bible Gospel Church in Africa (BIGOCA) and Bishop Simon Chihana, President of the International Fellowship for Christian Churches. His successor, Edgar Chagwa Lungu, made the most of the declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation at campaign rallies to the delight of Pentecostals but they did not make him win the 2015 and 2016 elections. What is certain is that Lungu reconfigured the declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation after the end of the MMD era and in so doing enthused some Pentecostal pastors to get closer to him when he became president after winning the 20 January 2015 presidential by-election following the death of Sata on 28 October 2014. Bishop Ndhlovu began to serve as chaplain at Lungu’s residence, the State House.

Edgar Chagwa Lungu, Christian nation, Pentecostal pastors and politics

The Christian rhetoric in Lungu’s campaigns was evident. If the general thinking in the Pentecostal fraternity, as Elias Munshya (henceforth referred to as Munshya wa Munshya, his blogger name) argues, is that Pentecostals lost their clout after the infamous fall of Chiluba and after that, subsequent presidents largely ignored them (Munshya wa Munshya, 2015b), Lungu restored that clout. During a PF campaign rally in Kabwe in January 2015, a bishop named Edward Chomba jumped onto the podium and campaigned for Lungu, warning Zambians not to vote for Hakainde Hichilema of the UPND, whom he accused of being a Satanist who could eat their children. Chomba was later to take centre-stage during the inaugural day of the Day of Prayer, Fasting and Reconciliation on 18 October 2015, which I will address later in the chapter. Later Chomba was appointed Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Water Development, Sanitation and Environmental Protection. However, high-profile Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal clergy did not go to political rallies, but politicians went to their churches and campaigned there in subtle styles.

Politicians’ appearances at religious functions

From November 2015 to August 2016, President Lungu and his major political opponents started attending church services of both mainline and Zambian instituted Pentecostal/Charismatic churches more frequently. This ‘manipulation of religion’ according to Ogbu Kalu (2008: 221) has ‘always led politicians to co-opt the church’. More importantly, it has been noted in Africa, that many presidents have declared themselves to be born-again, so have myriads of politicians who seek the prayers and group intercessions of the Pentecostal and charismatic leaders and sodalities – a conscious use of charismatic mass appeal to build potential voters for godly candidates (Kalu, 2008: 221).

On 8 December 2015, the Independent Churches Organisation of Zambia (ICOZ) Executive Director, Bishop David Masupa, issued a statement aimed at discouraging his fellow clergymen from hosting politicians in churches. He was quoted as having said the following: ‘Politicians should go and meet the people in the communities and not in the churches … It is wrong for politicians to stand boldly on church podiums and talk ill of other people to gain political mileage’ (Daily Nation, 2015).
Masupa, who raised the concern, founded ICOZ with financial and moral support from Chiluba in return for a third term support. The Catholic Bishops in their Pastoral Letter of 23 January 2016, entitled ‘Let There Be Peace Among Us’, cautioned their priests to desist from engaging in partisan politics and not to permit politicians to campaign in churches. But Catholic priests, like other clergy, continued to welcome politicians and accorded them opportunities to address congregants.

Most interestingly, after Lungu’s meeting with Pope Francis in Rome on 5 February 2016, his political rival, Hichilema, also met Archbishop Telesphore George Mpundu of the Catholic Archdiocese of Lusaka on 3 March 2016. In addition, retired Bishop John Mambo of the Church of God brought members of the clergy from ICOZ to a breakfast prayer meeting at Hichilema’s home. Surprisingly, Masupa was not there. During this breakfast prayer meeting, Hichilema told the members of the clergy that he was not a Satanist (Daily Nation, 2016a) and Bishop Mambo made the following statement: ‘Zambians need to make right choices on the 11th of August. Right choices bring success and abundance; wrong choices will bring problems. Experiments have killed Zambia. The Bible says, where there is no vision people perish’ (Daily Nation, 2016a). Pentecostals had awoken and become visible in the political space since 1991. Indeed, some of them positioned themselves to get something good from politics between 2015 and 2018.

**Lungu and Pentecostal ‘big men’ and women alliance**

In discussing the alliance between Lungu and Pentecostal clergy, the chapter shows how the latter were rewarded. Some general statements for clarification’s sake are important. First of all, being an atheist, homosexual or Satanist is one of the biggest liabilities that a presidential candidate can have in Zambia. What seems to count is for a presidential candidate to share the religious beliefs of the majority of Zambians, and being seen as a religious or spiritual person is generally an asset for candidates. What has to be empirically proven is whether the qualities above and making ‘the declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation’ a refrain in political campaign translate into winning an election. Similar to Bishop Chomba’s support for Lungu, Dr Liya Mutale went further to organise what she called ‘Christians for Lungu Mobilisation Conference’, whose acronym is C4L.

**Christians for Lungu (C4L) campaign**

On 9 April 2016, Lungu participated in the ‘Christians for Lungu Mobilisation Conference’ at the Mulungushi International Conference Centre in Lusaka. In her speech, the chairperson of the C4L, Mutale, said the following:

> Leadership is ordained by God and we must respect it. As Christians for Lungu, we are going to help mobilise for the PF so that President Lungu should be re-elected in the August general elections because leadership is ordained by God. We want to contribute to the growth of the PF because we recognize the strides the ruling party and President Lungu have made to the transformation to the country’s economy. (Daily Nation, 2016b)

In response, Lungu said that he had made a clarion call to Christians to join politics so that they could help bring love and unity in the political arena and curb abuse of state power. He argued that unless the country harnessed the skilled professional Christian resource which had for a long time largely taken a backseat, the delivery of political and economic responsibilities would
remain difficult (Daily Nation, 2016a). Liya Mutale herself was rewarded with a job as Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Tourism and Arts. Other rewards bequeathed to the Pentecostal fraternity by Lungu in the name of Zambia’s Christian nationhood are discussed.

**National Day of Prayer, Fasting, Repentance and Reconciliation**

The declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation did not introduce new substantive laws or establish any church in Zambia (Freston, 2001: 160), but during Lungu’s rule, new developments directly linked to the declaration began to emerge. The proclamation of the National Day of Prayer, Fasting, Repentance and Reconciliation was foremost. Scheduled for 18 October 2015, it subsequently became an annual national holiday. Munshya wa Munshya warned his fellow Pentecostals before the inaugural holiday that:

> After we have said ‘amen’ on Sunday, there is need for all Zambians to continue holding President Lungu accountable to democratic tenets. Pentecostals should not repeat the same mistakes made during the tenure of Frederick Chiluba. A Pentecostal political theology must be based on hard work and a commitment to the rule of law … A Pentecostal political theology must be based on clear commitment to the fight against corruption in both government and the private sector … It is not enough to quote 2 Chronicles 7: 14.

(Munshya wa Munshya, 2015a)

In agreement with Munshya’s caution, Bishop George Mbulo of Capital Impact Ministries (2015) wrote the following:

> we should not expect that things will just change by merely our concert of national prayer, but it’s our conferring with the Almighty God over national challenges that should guide us in how we should now put our capacities to the task, with hard work and holding our national leaders in check on key national policies and programs … We need to trust the Lord’s help towards a more focused and honest management of the national resources at our disposal. Such necessary dialogue and action, at the national level, should not recede with the silence that may follow after we say ‘AMEN!’ It’s significant that we desist, as ‘Pentecostals’ in all various strands of it, from messing up by losing a true prophetic stance of speaking out honestly, guided by God’s wisdom and divinely endowed understanding. The fundamental trap we should avoid is to lose our noble sacerdotal mandate through selfish and warped appetite for gauging our influence by merely being associated with those in national power positions.

Pentecostal political theology is not yet on the horizon in Zambia. ‘Big men’ of this Christianity seem to have no ability to critique the ruling party’s failures and there is a good deal of evidence to support this assertion to prove Jenkins’ (2011) and Mobseni’s and Wilcox’s (2015) hypotheses already cited. In addition to endorsing Christians for Lungu and proclaiming the day of prayer, repentance and reconciliation, there was the laying of the foundation stone of the National House of Prayer.

**National House of Prayer**

The foundation stone of a national ‘House of Prayer for All Nations Tabernacle’ in Lusaka at the cost US$5 million with seating capacity for 6,000 people was done on 25 October 2015. To the Catholic bishops and some mainline Protestant churches, the project was a
grandiloquent ambition inappropriate to the grim economic realities of the country. The Catholic Archbishop Mpundu described it as a joke. In an interview with Friday Nkonde of The Post newspaper, he argued that the national church was going to be a white elephant and went on to say: ‘This is a secular society, not a theocracy … Here is a government coming up and trying to build something interdenominational. What about those who are not Christians? … So Hindus, Muslims, the non-believers are excluded’ (Nkonde, 2015).

The building of the House of Prayer, argued the Pentecostal Bishop Joshua Banda (Chairperson of the Advisory Board, Fundraising and Technical Committee), was a concretisation of the declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation. Earlier, on 23 January 2016, during a fundraising dinner for the House of Prayer, President Lungu compared it to King Solomon’s project of building of the Temple and went on to say:

I wish to humbly submit that my personal desire to align Zambia to God was not borne of my own human desire, but was inspired by the divine leading of the Holy Spirit … I know without doubt that God has always been interested in our well-being as a nation and that He has a purpose and a plan to prosper Zambia.

(Kachingwe, 2016)

The president later appointed 12 members of the Advisory Board, Fundraising and Technical Committee to spearhead the construction of the national House of Prayer. Among the appointees was Fr. Charles Chilinda, a Catholic priest of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) who had been active at the prayer, fasting and reconciliation on 18 October 2015. Archbishop Mpundu, the ZCCB president, clarified that Fr. Chilinda was a Jesuit priest and not a member of ZCCB and that he was, therefore, only representing himself, not ZCCB or the Society of Jesus or St Ignatius Parish (Nkonde, 2015). Mpundu’s remarks attracted derisive comments from Pentecostals too numerous to cite.

Rev. Suzanne Matale of the CCZ expressed similar sentiments to Archbishop Mpundu’s, such as the following: ‘CCZ is not against the construction of the Tabernacle National House of Prayer. Government needs to clarify a lot of things concerning the House of Prayer. Who will be in charge and how will it be maintained?’ (Munyinda, 2015). Finally, Lungu created a ministry of National Guidance and Religious Affairs.

**Ministry of National Guidance and Religious Affairs**

On 29 August 2016, Lungu mused about creating a Ministry of Religion at a reception service for a newly elected United Church of Zambia (UCZ) Synod Bishop, Rev. Bishop Sydney Sichilima at St Andrews congregation in Lusaka (Daily Nation, 2016). He was not quite sure what to call it. On 28 August 2016, the Ministry of National Guidance and Religious Affairs (MNGRA) was created by President Lungu and subsequently ratified by parliament on 27 October 2016. The two overarching aims of the ministry were to spearhead and coordinate the promotion of national values and principles as outlined in the republican constitution as well as to actualise the declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation. A Pentecostal pastor, Rev. Mrs. Godfridah Sumaili was nominated as Member of Parliament and appointed minister in charge of the MNGRA.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has demonstrated that from colonial times to the present, the Christian clergy have been part of Zambian politics, either as allies or foes of political parties. Issues in the relationship
between political parties and Christianity have been colonialism, one-party dictatorship and the failure of the declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation to develop institutions of democracy and develop the country. Currently, Zambian politicians seem to be under the illusion that Pentecostal preachers have the ability to influence and mobilise masses during elections. There is no evidence to support this. What is less disputable, however, is the assertion that when African heads of state face deepening political crises and increasing criticism from mainline church leaders and political opponents are gaining frightening popularity, they have turned to Pentecostals for religious and moral legitimation—which some Pentecostal leaders have been eager to provide (see, for example, Freston, 2001). Overall, it seems that Pentecostal preachers in Zambia have exhibited tendencies that encourage both democratic engagement and patrimonial authoritarianism (Gordon, 2012). In the end, submission to a ‘Christian state’ by Pentecostal ‘big men’ and women has turned into a wilful refusal to acknowledge serious failures of the current regime.

References


