

Zambia, a 'Christian nation' in Post Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) Era, 2011-2016

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Abstract

The declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation in 1991 has become a field of research because of its many faces, the interpretations it has accrued which generate debate and things it has spawned; numerous Pentecostal churches and political parties with the 'Christian' name tag. What is more, it has given birth to organizations such as 'Christian Nation Coalition', 'Christian Nation Foundation' and most significant, a national chapel (House of Prayer for All Nations Tabernacle) yet to be constructed in the capital city next to State house where the declaration occurred. In this article I extend my research on the Christian nation rhetoric beyond Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) era, by examining its status during the Patriotic Front rule from 2011 to 2016, before the August 11, 2016 general elections. In 2011 the party of the president who declared Zambia a Christian nation lost power to a new party of Mr. Michael Chilufya Sata, a staunch Catholic, who, after his demise, was succeeded by Edgar Chagwa Lungu of unknown religious or denominational affiliation. I argue in the article that while Sata hardly used the Christian nation rhetoric, Lungu made the most of it during his campaign thereby revitalizing the Christian nation fervor and prompting some Pentecostal big men and women to rally around him. My stark conclusion is that: Lungu perceptively reconfigured the Christian nation rhetoric for political mileage. His main opponent in the 2016 presidential race was rumored to be a Satanist – a most dreaded being among Christians, especially Pentecostals in Zambia.

Key Words: Michael Sata, Edgar Lungu, Christian nation, Patriotic Front, Pentecostals, Pentecostal big men, Movement for Multiparty Democracy, Levy Mwanawasa, Rupiah Banda, and Frederick Chiluba

Introduction

The declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation remains a topical issue; it is not sterile yet. Just as one is led backward in time in search of its origins, so one may follow its subsequent developments. Consequently, the declaration has interested a number of researchers within and outside Zambia because, to borrow Paul Freston's characterization, "Zambia is a laboratory for studying some typical tendencies in a certain kind of evangelical politics in action in highly favorable circumstances" (Freston, 2001: 154). This article is an outgrowth of my earlier works on the declaration in which I have addressed it as part of the bigger project of the Pentecostalisation of the Zambian citizenry and the politics of the nation.

My intention in this particular article is to shed light on the post MMD era, 2011-2016, by providing an understanding of how the Patriotic Front (PF) that took power off the MMD in 2011 election interacted with the declaration and how the two PF heads of state related with Pentecostal big men to whom the declaration had come to symbolize some form of theocracy. There is a very strong personal and subjective aspect to my essay, as there is, perhaps, for all those who have engaged the declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation. In my case, I am influenced by the social teaching of the Catholic Church to which I belong. I agree with Paul Gifford, an authority on African Christianity, the view that Christianity in Africa has to make social justice a priority. Christian nation rhetoric enslaves and there are examples of this now and in the past on the continent. I give some attention to this scenario in the next section of the article.

Christian Nation Rhetoric

The starting point for this article can be no other than a retracing of the declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation and contextualizing ‘Christian nation’ rhetoric. How Zambia became a ‘Christian nation’ is not nearly as important as what Zambia became. As a result of the State House covenant, the Zambian people became God’s immediate subjects and constituted a unique nation in the world –“a nation in which both population and government, including the President, is under full submission to the Lord Jesus Christ. A country that God could use to influence the world in a mighty way” (Schoots, 1995). However, impression should not have been and should not be created that Zambia is the first country to have been proclaimed ‘Christian nation’ in Africa, because, Liberia declared its Christian status from its creation as a settlement of former slaves, although, according to Jenkins (2011: 188), the religion was used to justify the gross corruption of the nation’s political elite, and the oppression of the native country people. In post-William Tolbert’s rule when Samuel Doe ruled Liberia (1986-1990), Christianity was equally abused for selfish ends. In his book on Samuel Doe, Gifford (1993: 145) argued that Liberian Christianity, became a veritable tool of domination, dehumanization and inequality because:

Liberia’s evangelical Christianity served to divert attention from the social system which so dehumanized Liberians. This Christianity left Doe totally unchallenged in his greed, criminal negligence and mismanagement. It ignored injustice, paid no attention to abuses, and undermined any commitment to transform society. Moreover, it openly denounced as a perversion any form of Christianity that tried to address Liberia’s iniquitous social system (Gifford, 1993: 145). In 1991, in Southern Africa, the second Republican President of Zambia, Mr. Frederick Chiluba declared Zambia a Christian nation and made it part of the Constitution in 1996. Hitherto, because of the complex religious make up of Zambia, the first President of Zambia, Kenneth Kaunda (1964-1991), son of a Presbyterian, had been cautious about speaking of Zambia explicitly as a Christian society. He often repeated that Zambia was home to different religions and he would not declare one of them as a state religion.

One conclusion about Chiluba’s declaration is that it was a ploy to persuade Zambians to be obedient to the self-proclaimed messiah, Chiluba himself, in line with the thirteenth chapter of Paul’s letter to the Romans (Cheyeka, 2014b). In Chiluba’s design, the Church nation instituted at State House was meant to rid the nation of corruption and prosper the country (Cheyeka, 2002) and to that effect, Vice President then, Brigadier General Miyanda urged citizens to “have a Christian orientation in all fields, at all levels” (Jenkins, 2011: 187). The proposed ‘orientation’ also meant submission to the Christian state, which, according to Jenkins (2011: 187) had the potential to easily turn into willful refusal to acknowledge the flaws of the regime, and to connive at official corruption. When Pentecostal big men kept a resounding silence over Chiluba’s corrupt practices, Pastor Nevers Mumba decided to break that silence in 1997 by berating lack of morality and integrity in politics and went on to form a political party to challenge the Chiluba’s regime which had become palpably corrupt. Mumba’s claim that he aimed at bringing morality and integrity to politics did not and has not gone unchallenged. Freston (2001) called it a ploy to succeed Chilubain 2001, by which year he would have served his two terms. This was after efforts to earn co-option into government by issuing statements and writing in private newspapers about corruption in the country failed (Cheyeka, 2014a). It is now common knowledge in Zambia that despite championing democracy through the MMD and removing Kenneth Kaunda and his one party participatory democracy, Chiluba did not necessarily share the concern for democracy, constitutionalism, and Christian ethics. This became clearly manifest when he became one of the first presidents to open a new era of “Third Term” democracy in Africa. I will immediately turn to the end of the MMD era only briefly though, to set the scene for the entry of the PF.

The end of the MMD era

The untimely death of President Levy Mwanawasa on 19 August 2008 left the MMD saddled by an unpopular man, Rupiah Bwezani Banda (Cheeseman & Hinfelaar, 2009). Although he narrowly won the 2008 election, he was defeated by Sata in 2011. Following the developmental projects of Sata that almost bankrupted the country, ordinary Zambians asked: ‘what did the MMD do in the 20 years it was in power?’ Andrew Sardanis made a damning summary of Chiluba’s reign in the following statement: “One can only conclude that the Chiluba administration from 1991 to 2001 was a wasted decade. ...” (Sardanis, 2014: 147). This Zambianist view should not blithely be dismissed. Zambians immensely experienced the negative effects of privatization, obscene corruption, and decay of infrastructure in the two decades of the MMD.

As a Thatcherite (as he claimed), Chiluba liberalized the economy, privatized state owned companies and actually killed the middle class, and sold local councils' houses to sitting tenants. He is therefore credited for having re-introduced Capitalism in the country and providing homes to some citizens. His policies and actions also unleashed a spirit of entrepreneurship in the citizens.

Unfortunately, Chiluba ended up being tried in courts of Law for plundering of Zambian resources. See, e.g., Jan Kees van Donge, (2009: 69-90) and Scott D. Taylor, (2006, 281-301) for what Chiluba still stands accused of having done even in his death. That should be adequate on Chiluba. I turn to the man who took over power from the party, Sata. I jump the period of Mr. Levy Patrick Mwanawasa (2001 -2008) and Mr. Rupiah Bwezani Banda (2008-2011) because the two did not dovetail with the Christian nation rhetoric. Admittedly, Sata did not have much use of Christian nation rhetoric either, but I say something about him so as to contrast him with his successor of the same party, Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu.

Michael Chilufya Sata

Sata who died on 28 October 2014 had a well-known background especially among major town folks. He had earned himself the nick-name of 'Cobra' because of vicious reactions to criticism – even constructive ones. He became most popular when he was District Governor of Lusaka. Born on 6 July 1937, he joined the United National Independence Party (UNIP) shortly after independence and rose to become District Governor of Lusaka from 1985 to 1988. His administration of a major World Bank-funded housing scheme initially bolstered his reputation as a practical, problem-solving politician (Larmer and Fraser, 2007: 624). Generally, he is described as a brutal political demagogue rare in Zambian politics. Something has been written about him by a Charles Mwewa in a book entitled, *The Legacy of President Michael Sata of Zambia: Allergic to Corruption*. In addition, a Phd thesis has been produced about Sata by Sishuwa Sishuwa at Oxford University in England. During Sata's first anniversary memorial mass at St. Ignatius Catholic Parish in Lusaka, Dr. Guy Scott who had been his vice president announced that he would in January 2016 launch a book in honor of the late President Michael Sata entitled *In Black and White*.

For this article I start Sata's political story in 2001 during the MMD convention when Chiluba's third term bid failed because of "The nation-wide 'Green Ribbon' campaign, spearheaded by the activist Oasis Forum of a loose alliance of all major Christian church bodies, the women's movement and the Law Association of Zambia, which proved incontrovertibly that the Zambian people would not countenance another five years of Chiluba" (Gould, 2010: 129). In this triumph of the peoples' will, the rebellion of 11 cabinet ministers including his own Vice President, Gen. Christon Tembo has tended to be understated and obscured in publications on Chiluba's third term temptation. I would argue that, the rebellion split the MMD to never fully recover to date.

I go back to 2001 MMD convention to highlight the incident that forced Sata to start the PF. At this convention, Chiluba sidelined Sata, identified and hand-picked ex-Vice President, lawyer Levy Mwanawasa, as his heir apparent. Analyses of Chiluba's action have tended to crystallise into what Gould (2010: 129) made of Chiluba's action, in the following words:

It was a surprising and unconventional move that Chiluba lived to regret. After several years of barely concealed abuse of public assets, Chiluba needed desperately to ensure that his successor would protect him against accusations of financial impropriety. His choice of Mwanawasa demonstrated a serious failure of character assessment on Chiluba's part. Apparently he believed that Mwanawasa, estranged from MMD inner circles and who, it was rumored, had never fully recovered from a head injury in the early 1990s, would be easy to control. As it turned out, he was mistaken. Sata was unpredictable (Gould, 2010: 129) – could it be the reason for Chiluba's course of action? Whatever the case, from 2001, Sata built the PF into a significant political force on the Copperbelt and in parts of northern Zambia, partly by taking wholesale control of MMD branch structures in these areas (Larmer and Fraser, 2007: 624-625). Research, according to Larmer and Fraser (2007: 624-625) suggests that support for Sata was built on the significant network of mineworkers (both retired and still employed) and the local structures of the Mineworkers' Union of Zambia (MUZ), reinforced in some cases by the preaching of local Catholic priests, a highly influential constituency in mostly Catholic Bemba-speaking areas. Worth noting is the fact that, after losing the 2001, 2006 and 2008 elections, Sata, 'man of action', finally became victorious on 29 September 2011 by defeating Rupiah Banda. I therefore turn to how Sata, as President of Zambia interfaced with the Christian nation rhetoric during his time in office as president.

Sata and Christian nation

The first thing to draw attention to is that Sata stood by his bishops' position on the declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation; that "a nation is not Christian by declaration but by deeds." He also acknowledged the fact that while Christianity is the main religion in Zambia but the rights of those practicing other religions should be respected. During his campaigns for the presidential seat, he never made the declaration a campaign issue.

Even when he was asked if he would allow homosexuality in Zambia, he pointed to the Constitution rather than to the Christian nation factor, which alarmed some Pentecostals who accused him of planning to permit homosexuality if he became president. Clearly, the Christian nation rhetoric did not help Sata win the election, what actually made him do so was largely his populist stance (Larmer and Fraser, 2007). One characteristic of Sata is that he could work a crowd better than any contemporary Zambian politician. Indeed his "defining trademark was gravelly, populist rant, never far from the gutter, that revels in hyperbole and political taunt" (Gould, 2010: 130). Furthermore, Gould (2010: 129) asserted that, it was hard to link him to any clear ideological platform, but he was known as a fixer and a hard worker. After winning the election, Sata received 26 Pentecostal pastors of different Pentecostal churches at State House on 31 November 2011. Led by Pastor Moses Chiluba of Healing Word Ministries International, the pastors told him that as Church leaders, they believed that God raises His anointed in various seasons and assured the President that they would continue to pray to God for guide and give him wisdom in his leadership. The remarks of the pastors are rooted in the Bantu speaking people of Southern Africa religious thought which plays a key role in political life because the spirit world is commonly considered the ultimate source of power (Ellis and Ter Haar, 2004).

The pastors also expressed regret at some derogatory statements that came from some sections of the clergy within the Pentecostal movement against President Sata when he was opposition leader. The clergy men further stated that certain pastors who had wanted political recognition from the MMD regime went out of the way to utter embarrassing remarks against President Sata. In response, Sata advised the pastors to forget about the past and make a new beginning. He further added that with the involvement of the Church, governance becomes much easier as the Church is closer to the grassroots (Lusakatimes, 2011). To be acknowledged is the fact that Sata had friends among Pentecostals, chief among them, Bishop Peter Ndhlovu of Bible Gospel Church in Africa (BIGOCA) and Bishop Simon Chihana, President of the International Fellowship for Christian Churches. Sata's own Church bishops were cautious about visiting him at state house because the public perceptions were that the Catholic Church had supported him and his political party in the 2011 election. These perceptions were reinforced by Fr. Frank Bwalya's open campaign for Sata. While it is true that from 2008 to 2011 some Catholic priests of Bemba speaking background challenged Banda's leadership which they branded as corrupt (Cheyeka, 2012), these priests and their bishops such as Bishop Noel O'Regan of Ndola diocese and late Bishop Paul Duffy of Mongu diocese were simply pointing out what every Zambian saw as the truth in the nation. In any case, Catholic bishops visited Sata on 9 November 2011 before the Pentecostal entourage. At this meeting, he suggested to the bishops that his government would assist their priests by employing them as teachers in schools after undergoing pedagogical training (Cheyeka, 2012).

There was hardly any tension between the Catholic bishops and the State when Sata was President. One possible reason for this is based on the rumour that Archbishop Telesphore Mpundu, Zambia Episcopal Conference (ZEC) president was Sata's brother-in-law because one of his younger sisters, Petronella Mpundu was one time married to Sata. This rumor turned out to be true going by what transpired after the death of Sata when Petronella sued Christine Kaseba (official wife of Sata at the time he died) and one of Sata's children, Mulenga from another marriage, for having neglected to include her children (Mukupa and Salome) as beneficiaries of late Sata's estate and also for not disclosing the total worth of the assets left behind by Sata. On 19 March 2016, Kaseba requested the Lusaka High Court to allow for the settling of the matter outside court (Nation Reporter, 2016). Worth noting is the fact that, when he was alive, Sata did not hesitate to reprimand via mobile phone any Catholic priest who directly or indirectly criticized his government in a sermon for he was well informed by his intelligence and he had some priests under his radar. A Rwandan priest was deported on unclear charges of being anti-government. Fr. Viateur Banyangandora of a parish in Lundazi, Eastern Province was arrested on 30 July 2012 and deported to Rwanda two days later. The deportation was later revoked. What led to the deportation was that in a homily, Fr. Banyangandora castigated the government of Sata over its poor handling of a marketing standoff between cotton growers and cotton ginners in Eastern province.

The Ministry of Home Affairs was quoted in the print and electronic media as having given this reason: “Father Banyangandora’s conduct was found to be a danger to peace and good order in Zambia.” From Sata, I turn my attention to Lungu who succeeded him in a by-election of January 2015. I aim to illustrate how he dovetailed with the Christian nation rhetoric.

Edgar Chagwa Lungu and Christian nation

Sata ruled for three years plagued by ill-health. After his death on 28 October 2011, Lungu became President after winning the January 20, 2015 election. He is not a Catholic.

He was generally perceived as a drunkard without affiliation to any particular church. He intelligently made the most of the declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation in the pre-amble of the constitution at campaign rallies to the delight of Pentecostals though we cannot claim or even conjecture that they all voted for him. Nevertheless, he garnered enough votes to win the election. The general thinking in the Pentecostal fraternity, argues Elias Munshya (henceforth referred to as Munshya wa Munshya, his blog name and arguably disseminating a Pentecostal political theology in Zambia), is that, Pentecostals lost their clout after the infamous fall of Frederick Chiluba –after that, subsequent presidents largely ignored Pentecostals (Munshya, 2015). I want to illustrate how Lungu reconfigured the link with Pentecostals. First of all, the mere reference to the declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation signaled to the Pentecostals that they were going to have an appropriate presidential candidate. To illustrate the point, I give one example of Pastor Dan Pule, president of the Christian Democratic Party who told a gathering that if he had one vote to cast, he would cast it for President Lungu [on August 11 2016] because Lungu had backed up the declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation by declaring the national day of prayers and having started the building of a national tabernacle of all Nations Church (Adamu, 2015). In his political discourse, Lungu very pointedly, like Chiluba, referred to 2 Chronicles 7:14, “if my people, who are called by name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land”, in some of his statements when he met groups of Christians.

During a PF campaign rally in Kabwe, in January 2015, Bishop Edward Chomba, said to be an excommunicated prelate of an Orthodox church, jumped onto the podium and campaigned for Lungu, warning Zambians not to vote for Mr. Hakainde Hichilema of the United Party for National Development (UPND), whom he accused of being a Satanist. He cautioned Zambians as follows: “*Akamulilaabana* – He (Hichilema) will eat your children.” Despite the condemnation, he suffered from both PF officials and followers of Hichilema, Chomba was later to take centre-stage during the day of fasting, prayer, and reconciliation on 18 October 2015. Lungu later appointed him as Permanent Secretary. The point is that Lungu’s rhetoric connected with Pentecostals in the country including Catholics of the Charismatic Renewal Groups. There was adequate evidence of this on the occasion of fasting, prayer, and reconciliation. The solar halo witnessed on this day sent participants into ecstasy of praising God for having answered their prayers because the halo to them was a sign that rains would come. Earlier on the occasion, Chomba had opened the “penitential rite” with the Catholic Church’s song based on the prodigal son in the Christian bible. The response was utterly thunderous.

Lungu had called for national prayer at a critical time when the economy was performing poorly and weather forecasts indicated inadequate or no rain. The biggest dam in the country supplying most hydro power to the country was record time low. Not surprising, Pentecostal Pastor Nevers Mumba, President of the MMD applauded him in these words:

PF has realized that prayer plays a major role in the governance of the country. When we talked about the new hope MMD’s foundation anchored on Godliness and morality, many people said a lot of negative things about the MMD. But look, not too long ago today, President Edgar Lungu has realized that leadership is God given and we have to turn to God for wisdom and strength. Zambia shall be saved soon, if people realize the need for a God fearing leader whose principles and way of governance would reflect God’s desire for humankind (Nation Reporter, 2015).

In his applause of Lungu’s call for national prayers, Munshyawa Munshya wholeheartedly welcomed the event, but nonetheless reminded Pentecostals of their obligation to promote and ensure good governance in the country. He wrote the following: There is a general consensus among Pentecostal believers that Zambians need to pray because President Lungu has decided correctly to call for a day of prayer. ... Pentecostals only lost their clout after the infamous fall of Frederick Chiluba. Subsequent presidents have largely ignored Pentecostals.

However, after President Lungu's call for prayer and fasting slated for Sunday October 18, 2015, it is not surprising that Pentecostals were among the first churches to support the prayers. Some are even believing that after October 18, 2015, the local currency will gain in value against the American dollar and the nation will "be blessed"(Munshya, 2015).

More spiritual nourishment was under way for Pentecostals because on 25 May 2015, Kenneth Kaunda stimulated and enthused them when he pronounced blessings of peace, prosperity and stability upon the nation, Presidency and the people of Zambia after Lungu bestowed on him the highest honor in Zambia – the Grand Commander of the Eagle of Zambia, First Division accompanied with Golden Jubilee medal in recognition of Kaunda's immense contribution he rendered to Zambia's political struggle. Below is Kaunda's statement excellently framed in Pentecostal genre?

I, Kenneth David Kaunda, First President, and Founding Father of the Republic of Zambia wish to express my hearty gratitude to God Almighty, the President and the people of Zambia for honoring me as the founding father of this nation. I hereby pronounce today a blessing of peace, prosperity, and stability upon our nation of Zambia, the Presidency and the people of Zambia. I bless and therefore release the nation, its people, and the Presidency from every negative force made against this nation. I submit the souls now living and prosperity and also its Presidency to the salvation and Lordship of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Father. I further declare that Zambia shall forever enjoy tranquility and shall remain a united and peaceful people under the Motto: One Zambia, One Nation. The Lord blesses Zambia and keep Zambia. God bless you all.

Two Sundays after, on June 7, 2016, to be precise, Bishop Joe Imakando of Bread of Life Church International preached about Kaunda's statement. In a sermon he entitled 'New Beginnings for Zambia' or 'Zambia Blessed', Imakando used Genesis 27: 1-4 and 18-29 to convince his congregants that Kaunda's words were prophetic and people should remain expectant. Imakando preached as follows:

The story of Isaac blessing Jacob will assist us to understand the significance of the blessing – the significance of what transpired at State House. ... If this thing [Kaunda's blessings] is not spiritual. If this thing is just a hoax, think twice. So, I want to share with you the blessing of Isaac and then apply it to Kaunda's blessing so that you understand what transpired at State House and how it affects you and how it affects this nation and how it will affect generations to come (Imakando, 2016).

So indeed, Imakando explained the scripture eloquently and systematically by applying it to Kaunda's blessings. With the availability of a big screen and projector, the congregants were able to see clearly the blessings of Kaunda. Imakando picked out and explained four blessings of Kaunda, the 'Old Man' [as old as Isaac] as he referred to him: 1). Blessings of Prosperity, 2). Blessing of Stability, 3). Blessing of peace, and 4). Blessing of Unity.

I am inhibited by space to present the sermon in some detail, I therefore opt to state Imakando's conclusion of the sermon which went as follows:

Zambia is blessed with peace, stability, prosperity, unity and Zambia has been freed from all negative forces. Zambia is blessed. So expect a shift in Zambia. Expect change in Zambia. Whatever you are seeing now will come to an end. There is a blessing that has been pronounced on us. We are a blessed nation. So, from today say, 'I am blessed' and 'Zambia has been blessed'. Everything about us is blessed. What we are waiting for is now the manifestation of this blessing which has already been pronounced. ... Don't dare leave Zambia for greener pastures –you are wasting your time. Blessings are here. Nations shall come to Zambia, Zambia is blessed. I want you to stand on your feet and we are going to sing the national anthem of Zambia because it has the blessings. I thought you people are excited [Prompting the congregation to rise, cheer and spontaneously to break into singing the national anthem]. Listen, Zambia is bigger than Lungu [President of Zambia] –it is bigger than any president we are going to have. It is not about people but about the nation of Zambia. As we sing, listen to the words in the national anthem. The words are prophetic.

Did Imakando unintentionally "market" Lungu in this sermon? Generally, as Haynes (2015: 10) asserts, "Pentecostal lay people take messages of their pastors to heart." Whatever the case, for motivation Pentecostal preachers and Pentecostals at large, Kaunda's statement raised euphoric praise and appraisal – Zambia was destined for higher achievement as a one Zambia, one nation.

Imakando's simple and positive messages of hope and faith always strike chords in his congregation as well as those who follow him on television for whom there is little reason to be hopeful or positive. Undoubtedly, the country needed peace and reconciliation because of tribal hatred promoted by one particular private newspaper.

On 28 May 2015, Munshyawa Munshya, posted a letter addressed to Kaunda headed: '*Ntambalukuta*, Please Pray for Us: An Open Letter to Kenneth Kaunda.' Unlike Imakando who used the Old Testament to explain Kaunda's blessing(s), Munshya, analysed it from the African Traditional Religion's view in this manner.

Many received your May 25 speech with a lot of joy and gladness. For those of us who hold African traditions dearly, we interpreted your speech as a way to bless your children. We took it as a way to bless your grandchildren and speak well of their future. Literally, at 91, *Ntambalukuta* you belong to the top 1.1% of our population. God has been good to you. For some evangelicals, your speech was also intercessory. You stood in the gap for Zambia to release "its people and the presidency from every negative forces made against Zambia." You also submitted "souls now living and those that will be born later to the salvation and Lordship of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Father."

Lungu, who bestowed on Kaunda that honour, which resulted into blessing of the nation, was merely completing Sata's term of office in line with the national constitution. One thing Sata bequeathed to Lungu was attending religious functions.

Politicians at religious functions

From November 2015 to the time, I was finalizing this article in 2016, Lungu and his major political opponent politicians started attending Church services more frequently. Paul Gifford (1996) had scrutinized this practice, citing Arap Moi of Kenya, Methiew Kérékou of Benin, Jerry Rawlings of Ghana and others as having made the most of religious functions to appeal for public sympathy to the extent that some of them even became born-again Christians. In short, religious functions provide space for marketing of political parties and the persona of the leader. The fact is that churches command huge followers who constitute the electorate – whether they actually vote or not is another matter. In the end, the truism is that, "the manipulation of religion has always led politicians to co-opt the church" (Kalu, 2008: 221). Furthermore, Many presidents have declared themselves to be born again; so have myriads of politicians who seek the powerful prayers and group intercessions of the Pentecostal and charismatic leaders and sodalities. There is a conscious use of charismatic mass appeal to build potential voters for godly candidates (Kalu, 2008: 221).

I am not all too sure if Lungu was a godly candidate or not, but the opposition had noticed that he was gaining popularity among some Pentecostal churches and therefore, the imperative to surpass or equal that popularity. Geoffrey Bwalya Mwamba, a Bemba royalty by descent, did everything possible to popularize the opposition leader, Hakainde Hichilema to the Bemba speaking Catholics. Whatever the case, it became routine for political leaders to "campaign" in churches, prompting Independent Churches Organisation of Zambia (ICOZ) Executive Director, Bishop David Masupato issue a statement aimed at stopping the habit of politicians campaigning in churches. Masupa was quoted as having said that:

Politicians should go and meet the people in the communities and not in the churches. It is saddening that politicians have lost respect for the house of God and turned it into campaign grounds where they can say anything they wish to further their partisan interests. I would like to urge politicians to respect the church because it is a sacred place; if they want to campaign they should do it in communities and not in churches. It is wrong for politicians to stand boldly on church podiums and talk ill of other people to gain political mileage. I appeal to my fellow clergy, please let's not entertain these politicians who think that they could stand in the church, and say anything they want; campaigns should not be done in church. The role of the church is to ensure checks and balances and not to promote partisan interests by allowing politicians to campaign in churches (Daily Nation Reporter, 2015).

We have to be careful with how we interpret Masupa's counsel. I would premise my reason for doing so on the fact that Masupa's church was not privileged to receive politicians. Probably his church lacked the numbers and structure befitting a top politician's visit. The most important point to make, in any case, is that we do not know what happens when politicians meet the clergy. Do "brown envelopes"¹ change hands?

¹ This refers to envelopes which are normally brown in colour containing money to hand out to supporters of a political candidate. It is actually vote buying on the part of the candidate handing out brown envelopes.

The fact is that these churches' leaders "may be concerned with spiritual development and moral issues, but they are still people with human need and desires. It is surely rational for them in the circumstances in which Africa currently finds itself to seek to augment their personal well-being when possible; sometimes this involves using their professional positions for personal gain"(Haynes, 1996: 237). Masupawill forever deny it, but he is rumored to have founded ICOZ with financial and moral support from Chiluba in return for third term support. Revisiting this rumor in 2016, one Pentecostal Holiness pastor told me this:

I was in Chongwe when Masupa called for a meeting of Pentecostal churches' leaders to sell the idea of backing Chiluba's attempt for a third term. We were to be paraded before the national television if we agreed. I was by then secretary in Pentecostal Holiness. The meeting lasted four hours. Masup assured us of receiving funding from government to build our own churches if Chiluba's term of office was extended. Unfortunately, for Masupa all of us subscribed to EFZ and we refused to be hoodwinked into something unconstitutional. That man chewed Chiluba's money (Ba Busa, Personal Interview, April10, 2016).

Not dissimilar to Masupa's sentiments, 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. Quoting Canon Law 285 and Catechism of the Catholic Church 2442, the Bishops wrote: We appeal particularly to our own Catholic priests to remain non-partisan. The Church Law is very clear on this (cf. Canon Law 285 and Catechism of the Catholic Church # 2442). It is morally wrong for our own Catholic priest to use the pulpit to campaign for, or de-campaign any political party or parties. In as much as we welcome Catholic politicians to celebrate Mass with us, they must not give [be given] any platform to speak during liturgical celebrations (ZEC, 2016: 11).

Neither politicians nor priests, pastors and others heeded the above directives, and interestingly, after Lungu's meeting with Pope Francis in Rome on 5 February 2016, his rival, Hichilema also met Archbishop Telesphore George Mpundu of the Archdiocese of Lusaka on 3 March 2016. Bishop John Mambo of the Church of God and owner of Chikondi Foundation and avid supporter of Hichilema also invited members of the clergy from ICOZ to a breakfast prayer meeting at Hichilema' shome. For some reason Masupa did not attend this function. During this breakfast prayer meeting, Hichilema told the members of the clergy the following:

What I hear on radio stations and unfortunately, what I hear in churches about this fellow called HH [Hakainde Hichilema] is something else. My church, the SDA, which is a Christian church, there is no [Free] Mason there; there is no Satanist. Last year, Bishop Chomba said I was a Mason, but I don't even know what a Mason is. I know the temple he [Chomba] worships in and I was surprised that the man of God can tell lies. ... I think it is important to explain to men and women of God [here present] to give them facts so that they can go away and bear facts (Nation Reporter, 2016).

There was no mistaking of the last statement of Hichilema; he was telling the members of the clergy: "Go ye to the Christian nation and tell the people that Hichilema is not a Satanist, but a Christian in the SDA church." The bottom line for this plea was for the clergy to campaign for Hichilema. The loud-mouthed Bishop John Mambo who comments on anything in the country argued: "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'" (Nation Reporter, 2016).A caveat is in order for a proper understanding of Mambo's gushes. To be sure, he has not been one of those who has shared in the "Hallowed Privileges" of Lungu's 15 months of rule. With hindsight, in fact, Mambo was also critical of Sata's rule and described his government as "not a listening government." Adrian Hastings tutored African bishops about qualities they require to cultivate in order to be peace makers and defenders of the poor. Hastings (1995: 37) argued that:

Nothing is more dangerous than church leaders to take on political responsibilities. They need political maturity at least as much as anyone else does if they are to act as emergency doctors for political ills. It may be wrong to refuse such a challenge, perhaps impossible. However, few bishops have much claim to a mature political culture, and that is hardly a matter of blame.

In public discourse in Zambia, there is reference to members of the clergy of all sorts of churches who are on pay rolls of politicians – both opposition and in power. It is to this end that Bishop Chomba could be appointed Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Energy and Water Resources despite his disparaging utterances about

Hichilema. It was unexpected, because after his outlandish discrediting of Hichilema, the PF, through the Acting President, Dr. Guy Scott at that time, volunteered the following apology:

Allow me to wholeheartedly and unqualified offer the apology of the PF leadership to Hakainde Hichilema and anybody else who by implication was accused of eating babies and drinking blood and so on and so forth by a certain bogus bishop who forced himself on stage, he didn't even tell us who he was (Lusakatimes, 2014).

There is need to repeat the point that, in the light of this apology it is utterly difficult to believe that Chomba could be rewarded with a job. The public laughed about it and described Chomba's calculated action in his own ethnic language's proverb of *Sebanawikute* –as long as you have eaten and become satisfied, never mind the shame you experienced because of the manner in which you obtained the food.

EFZ - State alliance

Something ought to be said about Church-state relationship in Zambia in the light of emerging alliance of EFZ and the state. A historic context is in order first of all. To note, Kaunda, son of a Presbyterian, related largely with CCZ and ZEC. One case in point is when he appointed Rev. Jackson Mwape of CCZ and Archbishop Elias Mutale of ZEC to sit on the Chona Commission of Inquiry which recommended a one party participatory democracy for Zambia. Knowing or otherwise, Kaunda had taken it that Protestants were represented by CCZ. During the second liberation of Zambia in 1991, EFZ awoke and became visible because a Pentecostal was standing for the highest position in the land. Here I dip into a highly suggestive argument by Jenkins (2011: 186) 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." Therefore, in the aftermath of Lungu's victory a variety of Pentecostals "fought" for control of what had been won. Clearly, the appointment of Bishop Chomba as Permanent Secretary was as a result of him having discredited Hichilema as a free mason and therefore a Satanist as Zambians believe.

Research has established that, to many Zambians, Satanism is real (Udelhoven, 2015 & Hachintu, 2013) and free masons are Satanists (Hachintu, 2013). To Pentecostal Christians, there can be no doubting of Satanists in Zambia. Many images of Zambian Satanism are based on the Book of Revelation (especially chapter thirteen) of the Bible. The devil is thrown from heaven onto Earth where he resides on the sand of the sea; from here, he is misleading and deceiving the earth with his demonic power (Udelhoven, 2015). In Zambia, many testimonies of delivered Satanists give "eyewitness accounts" about this world under the ocean, seen as the physical residence of the devil, where he produces counterfeit money, magical computers, flashy vehicles and enticing cosmetics, all fabricated with human body parts for which the devil and his Satanists need constant supplies of human sacrifices and blood (Udelhoven, 2015: 313). In her ethnographic fieldwork on the Copperbelt in a township she calls Nsofu, Naomi Haynes (2015) found out that there was serious debate in the Pentecostal fraternity about who should preside over the Christian nation of Zambia. In all, Pentecostals in Nsofu feared the prospect of a Satanist becoming Head of State. Adriaan van Klinken (2013) cited by Haynes (2015: 16) reported from his fieldwork in Zambia that:

For the defenders of the declaration, Christianity is central to Zambia's national identity. Everyone who questions this form of religious nationalism, and everything considered a threat to Zambia's Christian character, is directly associated with the Devil, who in these end times is believed to be particularly concerned with attacking Zambia as a Christian nation. Therefore, in the 2016 election the worry that Hichilema, a supposed Satanist would take over the Christian nation made some Pentecostal leaders to make warning pronouncements to their congregants. A case in point is Bishop Elias Ng'wane of BIGOCA, Kitwe District, who told his congregants the following: "Zambians should reject all forms of Satanism and instead continue to identify themselves with God-fearing leaders who will continue to lead the country in line with true Christian values" (Correspondent, 2016). I utilize Paul Freston's (2014) insightful argument to underline the point that Pentecostal groups in Zambia may actually be in the forefront of formulating political ideologies for presidents or presidential candidates who are ambiguous about where they want to take the country. The point is that:

Pentecostalism is frequently attracted to the dream of converting the ruler, or of electing one of its own members as president, seeing this as the height of its political aspirations and as panacea for the problems of the country. There is little understanding of politics as a system; instead, there is the recurrent "messianic" hope in an "evangelical" or "born-again" president, and a belief in the possibility of the "people of God" exercising power in an unambiguously positive way (Freston, 2014: 3).

Without sidetracking from the main concern of this article, Freston makes us question why Pastor Nevers Mumba, a Pentecostal born-again evangelist turned politician loses elections. Consequently, I formulate two arguments to explain why some Pentecostals have been supportive of Lungu and not Mumba or for that matter Pule of the Christian Democratic Party. The first one is that they are receiving 'brown envelopes' and eating' with Lungu who has access to monetary resources and can afford to distribute it in 'brown envelopes'. Not many Pentecostals would entertain the curse of poverty. And identifying oneself with one lacking enough money to distribute around, though moral and ethical Pentecostal presidential candidate, would not do to prosper oneself. The second reason is that the declaration must be preserved, and Lungu has kept the momentum of reminding Zambians that Zambia is a Christian nation. Understood by believers to be an elected president committed to the declaration, Lungu would therefore receive support. It explains why Pentecostals from BIGOCA led by Bishop Peter Ndhlovu started having prayer meetings at State house, because the President had advised Zambians not to be ashamed of being Christians and that it was important for the presidency to find time to congregate and worship God (Nation Reporter, 2015)

Lungu's and other politicians' attempts to get Church leaders behind them was clearly exemplified by Mumba's invitation to the clergy to campaign for him in 2016. He accused clergymen [and women] or the Church in general of having let him down in the past by failing to support him when it was normal for him to get support from Church leaders. "I want the support of the Church so that we take MMD back into government," he pleaded (Correspondent, 2015). What surprised me as I tried to make sense of what was going on was the appearance of an organization called Christians for Lungu. I turn to this organization to explain its aim and in doing so work out what lies beneath its formulation.

Christians for Lungu (C4L) campaign

On 9 April 2016, Lungu participated in 'Christians for Lungu Mobilisation Conference' at the Mulungushi International Conference Centre in Lusaka. It was for the first time that this organization was heard about in Zambia. In her inauguration speech, the chairperson of the organization, Dr. Liya Mutale said that:

Leadership is ordained by God and we must respect it. As Christians for Lungu, we are going to help mobilize 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. Most urgent on our agenda is to strengthen the PF so that it can win the elections (Nation Reporter, 2016).

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 on the political arena and curb abuse of State power. He further argued that unless the country harnessed the skilled professional Christian resource which has for a long time largely taken a backstage, the delivery of political and economic responsibilities would remain difficult (Nation Reporter, 2016). Lungu's lines read as if Pastor Nevers Mumba had written them for that is exactly his political theology. In fact, the C4L sounded like a surrogate party to PF because what Dr. Mutale had come up with was something similar to what Mumba attempted to do in 1997 when he formed the National Christian Coalition (NCC), which he called a proposition organization and not an opposition party. However, when his fellow born-again, Brigadier General Miyanda insisted that NCC was a political party, Mumba gave in and changed the name of his proxy party to National Citizens Coalition and participated in the 2001 election. Mutale's case is somewhat different from Mumba's in the sense that the President of the ruling party, which was going to be supported, welcomed the organization and there was no open dissent within the party.

I go back to my earlier point that C4L was a hurriedly formulated group of born-again Christians who had been mobilized by PF to counter Bishop Mambo's mobilized ICOZ pastors and others who had gone to show solidarity for Hichilema of the UPND. Still this line of interpretation does not go far enough in providing a satisfactory answer. In the final analysis, Mumba's action of 1997 serves as a prism through which we can make sense of C4L. The incontestable is that since then, not a single political pastor (Mumba, now of the MMD or Pule of the Christian Party) has united the Pentecostal movement and Charismatics into a political force in Zambia.

I move to the National House of Prayer to illustrate Pentecostal agenda when given the latitude to Pentecostalise society of a Christian nation.

National House of Prayer

Freston (2001: 160) had remarked that the declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation did not introduce new substantive laws or establish any church in Zambia. Remarkably, two things resulted from the national day of prayer, fasting and reconciliation of 18 October 2016, namely; declaration of 18 October as day of national prayer – unilateral and without any regard for legality and second, that a national house of prayer to be called ‘House of Prayer for All Nations Tabernacle’ be built in Lusaka and which foundation stone was subsequently laid on 25 October 2015. Who came up with the idea? Pentecostal big men, no doubt. The project is a stark reminder of choices that political leaders make in Africa and not surprising the plan to build a house of prayer burst-out into public debate, and in polemical postings in social media.

For analysis of what was going on, there is need to dip into history for we shall be reminded that, in the 1980s, according to Jenkins (2011), Felix Houphouët-Boigny of Ivory Coast (now Côte d’Ivoire) built an astonishing basilica church of Our Lady of Peace in his home town of Yamoussoukro and claimed to be the world’s largest Catholic Church, larger than St. Peter’s in Rome at a cost of \$ 300 million. As Jenkins (2011: 187) aptly remarked, “such grandiloquent ambitions seem as inappropriate to economic realities as to be mildly comic, but they do raise serious questions about the religious nature of southern states.”

The building of the house of prayer, explained Bishop Joshua Banda (Chairperson of the Advisory Board, Fundraising and Technical Committee), had roots in the declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation and was a concretization of the declaration (Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC) main news bulletin at 19:00 hours GMT, 31 January 2016). Earlier on 23 January 2016, there had been a fund-raising dinner for the House of Prayer at Government Complex. The President’s speech was unquestionably written by a Pentecostal because the Old Testament motif ran through it. For example, he compared the project to build the National House of prayer to Solomon’s project of building God a house [the Temple].

Lung further told the gathering: “Our generation can, therefore, not be ashamed to emulate King David and his son Solomon to build God a house of prayer!” He 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)

Additionally, Lung said that many church leaders had reminded Christians in the country that Dr. Livingstone [Scottish Christian explorer who opened up Zambia to missionary activities] had on May 1, 1873 at Chitambo village in Zambia made the following prayer before he died:

Lord from the land upon which my knees rest, raise a mighty Christian nation, a nation that will become a beacon of light and hope to the continent of Africa, a nation that will take the gospel to the ends of the earth” (Kachingwe, 2016). He concluded by stating that considering what God’s purpose is for Zambia, the construction of the National House of Prayer to honor God is the right thing to do (Kachingwe, 2016).

On December 3, 2015, the Cabinet announced that the President had appointed 12 members of the Advisory Board, Fundraising, and Technical Committee to spearhead the construction of the national House of Prayer at a cost of 5 million US dollars. Among the appointees was Fr. Charles Chilinda, a Catholic priest of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) who had been active at the occasion of prayer, fasting, and reconciliation on 18 October 2015. He had been reported in the media as representing ZEC on the committee, which prompted Archbishop Mpundu, the ZEC president to respond as follows:

Please kindly be advised that Fr. Chilinda SJ is not a member of the Catholic Bishops Conference known as Zambia Episcopal Conference (ZEC). Therefore he cannot represent ZEC, an association he does not belong to. ... On this government church board, Fr. Chilinda SJ is representing only himself, not ZEC or the Society of Jesus or St Ignatius Parish (Nkonde, 2015). Mpundu’s remarks attracted derisive comments from Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals alike. Vice president of an opposition political party known as Zambia Direct Democracy Movement (ZDDM), Mr. Charles Kafumbo, a Pentecostal, argued against Bishop Mpundu as follows: ZDDM is wondering the agenda of our brothers, the Catholic bishops, especially His Grace Archbishop Mpundu, who are opposing the construction of the national Tabernacle and harassing Fr. Chilinda for accepting to sit on the Government Church Board. ... Really, it is not normal for the biggest faith to deny its membership representation on the board.

These attacks are very misplaced and misconceived. Archbishop Mpundu and his clique have a hidden agenda on this matter. Please let us leave Fr. Chilinda alone (Nation Reporter, 2015). EFZ Executive Director, Pukuta Mwanza, defended the building of the House of Prayer in a lengthy article in the *Daily Nation* of Wednesday 4, 2015. He was addressing the attacks from some media houses, members of the public and the opposition party, UPND.

Archbishop Mpundu was earlier reported to have described the construction of the house of prayer as a joke. In an interview with Friday Nkonde of *the Post* newspaper, Mpundu said that the national church that was going to be constructed by the state was to be a white elephant. He 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 the Hindus, the Muslims, the non-believers are excluded (Nkonde, 2015).

The position of the Catholic Church's hierarchy in Zambia was clear from Mpundu's statements and Rev. Suzanne Matala of the CCZ expressed similar but ambiguous sentiments:

CCZ is not against the construction of the Tabernacle National House of Prayer that the government is constructing in Woodlands in Lusaka. Government needs to clarify a lot of things concerning the construction of the house of prayer. Who will be in charge and how will it be maintained? Our members are asking questions such as, we already have churches we all go to and if we have a big function as a country, we already have churches to us. (Munyinda, 2015).

The critics of the National House of Prayer known as National Prayer House in West Africa had no idea of what was at play as far as Pentecostals were concerned. I try to explain what was going on by referring to Kalu's (2002) work.

Towards an understanding of EFZ-Lungu alliance

I have said that Pentecostals were attracted to Lungu's Christian nation rhetoric at the onset and during his campaign for the presidency, but Pentecostal popularity came to a climax when he called for a national day of prayer, fasting, and reconciliation. In my quest to make sense of what was going on, I employ MunshyawaMunshya, Pentecostal political theologian's insights as well as those of one of Africa's iconic Pentecostal scholar, the late Professor OgbuKalu as well as other scholars whose research on Zambian Pentecostalism would illuminate my ideas.

Munshya warned Pentecostals prior to the national day of prayer, fasting, and reconciliation 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. Their theology must be informed by equality and the respect for human rights. 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 shout slogans. It is not enough to quote 2 Chronicles 7: 14, Zambians Pentecostals must walk the talk and live their devotions (Munshya, 2015).

Munshya was hoping for a development of a Pentecostal theology of politics in Zambia. In the light of Lungu's use of Christian nation rhetoric, he warned Pentecostals not to forget what happened to Chiluba (Munshya, 2015). He nonetheless affirmed that Pentecostals are men and women of spiritual war –they bring down strongholds of vices such as poverty, prostitution, or gambling. But he cautioned his fellow Pentecostals not only to rely on prayer, but political action as well (Munshya, 2015)

Munshya is a lone Pentecostal theologian's voice cautioning fellow Pentecostals to be above partisan politics and to imbibe a political theology that does not exclude praxis. Laudable as that may be, publishing articles in a newspaper from time to time and posting ideas on his blog website may not assist to stem out literalism, unless perhaps, this is only the beginning. It is to Kalu I turn in order for me to bring clarity to what was happening in Zambia.

In his book *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction*, Kalu (2008: 208-223), discusses 'Pentecostal Political Theology and Practices' under five themes, namely; Invention of Culture and Politics, Embedding Hope in the Public Space, Building a Beloved Community, Intercession as Political Praxis, and Recovering Adam's Chair.

All these themes run through the political Pentecostal discourse in Zambia, mainly because Zambian Pentecostalism is modelled on the Nigerian Pentecostalism. From observation and listening to Pentecostal preachers 'Building a Beloved Community' is a pre-eminent motif in Zambia. There is a belief that affairs of the earth can be changed through prayers and that "political dissent and action can be pursued on one's knees, not only by carrying placards; in fact, the "worn knee" approach is considered more effective and salutary because it seeks the will of God on earth and gives the battle to the Lord" (Kalu, 2008: 218).

I have mentioned that the construction of a House of Prayer is underway in Zambia. Under Kalu's themes, this is clearly 'Intercession as Political Praxis'. In this House of Prayer, Pentecostal and Charismatic Christians will intercede for the nation and political leaders to affirm the rule of the saints as essential for the recovery of the nation (Kalu, 2008: 219). To use the current popular term in Zambia, it will be in the house of prayer that Pentecostals and Charismatics will "stand in the gap". Finally, the theme of 'Recovering Adam's Chair' played out very well in 2016 in Zambia. The idea underlying this theme is that priests should encourage brethren to access top political posts and to act as Modercai did in the book of Esther (Kalu, 2008: 221). Instead of this call coming from those Pentecostals supporting Lungu, it was Lungu himself making the invitation during the inauguration conference of C4L. To be sure, his lines were written by the C4L.

Conclusion

In my first publication (Cheyeka, 1998) on Zambia as a Christian nation, I used the hypothesis of the threat of Islam in Africa proposed by Gifford (1996) to explain Chiluba's declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation in 1991. In this article I have argued that the trigger issue that has galvanized religio-political activities of Pentecostals around President Lungu is a mix of *ukulyanabo* (to partake of the political spoils in form of money in "brown envelopes"), *Sebanawikute* (the means justify the end) and the prospect of a Satanist taking over the Christian nation as president. *Ukulyanabo* and *Sebanawikute* fit Jean- François Bayart's thesis of politics of the belly. First of all, in Africa as a whole and in Zambia specifically, 'to eat' according to Bayart (2010) is a matter of life and death. It is predominantly *Sebanawikute*. "The expression 'politics of the belly' must be understood in the totality of its meaning. It refers not just to the 'belly' but also to 'politics'. This 'African way of politics' furthermore suggests an ethic which is more complicated than that of lucre" (Bayart, 2010: 242). So, what would have happened to the Christians for Lungu and other Pentecostals supporting Lungu had Hichilema won the presidential election on August 11, 2016? Would they have still remained with Lungu? Taking a cue from an earlier remark by Freston (2001), that Zambia is laboratory for studying some typical tendencies in a certain kind of evangelical politics in action, I make an addition to the effect that, Zambia is also a laboratory in which we engage with a new phenomenon of churches losing the moral high ground, the moral voice, getting contaminated by partisan politics and discrediting the Christ who died for social justice.

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