

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The study examines the role of the Church in national politics from 1950 to 1991. As ready mention in the Abstract, the 'Church' in this study refers to various Christian denominations including the Catholic Church, which is the largest, Anglican, several Protestant Churches and Pentecostal Churches. These Churches are represented under the three mother bodies: the Christian Council of Zambia (CCZ) which houses all the main line protestant Churches, the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia (EFZ) for all Pentecostal Churches in Zambia, and the Zambia Episcopal Conference (ZEC) representing all the religious orders under the Catholic Church. Other churches are the Seventh Day Adventist and the Jehovah's Witnesses. All these Churches are referred to as one ecumenical body the 'Church'. Whereas the word 'politics' refers to the governing bodies in the history of Zambia that used their power in public life to influence decisions which affected the country; the colonial government, United Independence Party's Government and its Central Committee leadership and Parliament.

The study is an attempt to trace how the role of the Church changed in response to the major national political, economical and social issues for the sake of its own existence and in the interests of the voiceless in society. The study has examined moments when the Church strongly intervened in the political events, taking the role of a strong political pressure group in the absence of legal opposition political parties and the political apathy among the majority Zambians. At the same time, the Church is seen as a strong force of influence when it speaks out as one united Church and weak when its voice is divided.

From time immemorial, the Church in Zambia has played a vital role in the political life of the people it serves. The Church's involvement in the politics of Zambia can be traced from colonial times when missionaries witnessed exploitations and injustices of colonialism on the Africans.

Ipendburg recorded that the Church in colonial times embarked on offering some education with the intention of using it as the means of dislodging colonial rule. The outstanding missionary body with this aim was the Free Church of Scotland that aimed at producing an educated elite group with critical minds. Therefore, Lubwa Mission of the Presbyterian (Church of Scotland), managed to produce very critical young men.¹ The first President of the Republic of Zambia acknowledged this fact when he said no matter how little the education was it helped us to organise ourselves politically.²

In fact, the first Welfare Associations in Northern Rhodesia in the early 1920s started at Mwenzo and Lubwa Missions. It was out of the refresher courses for in-service teachers that these mission stations provided twice yearly which brought teachers together from distant places. As a result it was easy for them to form the Welfare Associations which later developed into political parties.³ The missionaries did not stop their former students from forming these Associations; instead they encouraged them to do so even hold meetings on the mission grounds. Therefore, there is no doubt that the Church contributed to the political awareness among Africans through its efforts in trying to educate Africans.

Apart from proving social services, missionaries organised themselves and acted as a pressure group against the colonial government. For example, in 1922 the Church through Bishop May of the Anglican Church who was based in

Livingstone, backed up by the General Mission Conference, managed to fight the injustices over the 10 000 square miles of land near Chipata that was grabbed from the people by the British South African Company (BSACo) through the North Charterland and Exploration Company (NCEC). After a series of negotiations, Bishop May succeeded in getting the local people to stay on their land.⁴ In addition, through the Bledishoe Commission of 1938, the Church strongly voted against amalgamation between Northern Rhodesia and Southern Rhodesia. The Church expressed fear that the problems of the South African native colour bar would spill over into Southern Rhodesia and cross into Northern Rhodesia and extend injustices of discrimination between races to Northern Rhodesia.⁵

As the Church continued to stand firm as the voice of Africans, it was reprimanded by political officers. For example, in 1943, the Church was reprimanded by the government for involving itself in highly controversial matters affecting native affairs which were not within the scope of missionary work. In answer to this, the Secretary of the United Missions wrote that the Church should always try to represent the needs, claim the rights of African workers directly to the mining companies and that the scope of missionary activities could not be limited in such a way as to exclude them from political questions. The Secretary further made it clear that even if the Church has been supported financially by the Select Trust Group, money could not buy the Church's silence in such matters.⁶

Another missionary who stood out as an opponent of colonial rule was Colin Morris of the Free Church of Scotland who came to Chingola in 1956 to do pastoral work among miners. He taught the Africans the proper way to fight for

their rights, with love, understanding, tolerance and patience. Morris, in fact, acted as the conveyor belt between Africans and Europeans. He told the Europeans why nationalist leaders' attitude like that of Kenneth Kaunda opposed colonial rule because they wanted to win political rights for their people.⁷ At the same time, he represented the wishes of the Africans on Monkton Commission of inquiry when he was the president of the Church of Central Africa in Rhodesia (UCCAR).⁸

However, these arguments have been strongly opposed by Tiberondwa who saw missionaries as having been agents of colonialism. He saw the Church and schools in colonial Africa as allies of the colonial forces based in Europe. However, he also acknowledged that in independent and progressive Africa, the Church and the school became allies of progressive forces in the continued struggle to liberate our countries.⁹

In post independence Zambia, the Church continued to be the voice of the voiceless, the voice of the poor. It took the role of a pressure group to check on the activities of the government and their impact on the poor. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to bring to light the involvement of the Church in the politics of Zambia from 1950 to 1991 and to examine what role it played in the political democratisation of the nation.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The significance of the role played by the Church in political dispensation of Zambia in the first three decades of political independence has not been clearly stated or demonstrated by most of the scholars who have written on this subject. What has been written on is the cause of its involvement in politics without

looking at the methods the Church used to bring about political change in Zambia. Little emphasis has been placed on its role as a political educator from 1950 to 1991 for the simple reason that the Church has been seen as an instrument in the provision of social and spiritual services by many people.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study are:

1. To determine the political role of the Church before independence and in the First Republic.
2. To discuss the reaction of the Church to political, economic and social changes in the Second Republic.
3. To examine the role played by the Church under the One-Party State and in the re-introduction of multi-party politics.

RATIONALE

The study will contribute to the general political history of Zambia. It will also add to the history on the role of the Church in the political democratisation process in Zambia for in many ways the Church has been seen simply as an instrument for the provision of education, health, spiritual and moral services to the people.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Davies examined the Hebrew concept of God as Lord, King and Ruler, as the one who sits upon a throne. God fashioned a people (Israel) as his own people. He raised up kings for them and later sent the messiah who again is described as the king of kings and Lord of Lords, the ruler of kings upon the earth. The messiah was to give freedom to the captives and oppressed, to have all the subjects to him and reign as one having supreme authority. To this, Davies argued that if politics

is what God is doing, then equally politics is what people must do in response to God.¹⁰ He further argued that history has shown God to be the God of responsibilities who ensures peace and justice to His people.¹¹ Davies declared that 'right politics is religion' basing this statement on Jeremiah 22: 13-16 which lists the short-comings of the ruling class and of the king. He said that politics are no distraction from religion but the medium by which both love of neighbour and justice are made effective.¹² Davies alluded to the fact that Jesus died at the hands of the political authorities who executed Him on the false, political charges of seeking to be a new king of the Jews.

In relation to the research topic, Davies' study stands as an answer to the question why the Church cannot separate itself from politics. Davies's study will help in giving analysis and interpretations to some of the Church's stance on politics.

Davies also wrote that Christians living in countries where there is poverty, exploitation and suffering of the poor are bound to be involved in politics for there is not any other way to alter the situation except by joining in violent revolutions. His argument was that though Christian Churches' main task was the preservation of their faith and life against inroads from the political, scientific and cultural forces shaping the world they have the duty to fight evil.¹³ He saw Christianity to be within social and political spheres of life. For this reason he argued that Christians have become involved in the vital problems of the contemporary world. He cited the Church in Brazil whose many priests underwent a change of direction in their thinking and conduct; abandoning the old moral standpoint of saving one's own soul and discovered that the political function was an essential component of social life. He wrote that for every action, there is a force that makes one to abandon the status quo. He noted that Jesus

provided no ground for Christians to deny their political responsibility. Jesus Himself was 'apolitical' that is, He was not a member of a political party and did not give any solid teaching on the separation of politics and religion.¹⁴ Davies's work is very important for he defined the role of the Church and state, and brought out biblical evidence as to why a Christian cannot react violently in the face of opposition.

In Malawi, J. McGracken, demonstrated how the Free Church of Scotland worked very hard to prepare a small group of nationalists for political independence. This small group reflected some missionaries' attitude towards colonial rule and African affairs. The political activities that came in 1920 were intimately connected with the impact of Livingstonia Mission during the previous thirty years.¹⁵ In West Africa, in Ghana, R. Thomas in his book, *The Churches and Ghana Society 1918 – 1955*, made mention of the Presbyterian Church in 1921 which fought for fair treatment of Christians in Labadi, and Akropong districts. The Presbyterian Synod reported to the District Officers that their Christians were receiving unfair treatment in local communities. Later clarifications were made on Christianity and political development concerning right of self government and racial equality in government.¹⁶ These two works are important in that they further highlight the political role of the Church even in early times.

Tiberondwa viewed missionary teachers and their education as having been instrumental in destroying indigenous African values thus paving the way for complete colonisation. He made startling revelation of the collaboration between European imperial trading companies and colonialists on the one hand, and the missionaries on the other, in entrenching political, economic and cultural imperialism in Uganda, using education and Christianity as tools. His argument is

well supported with evidence drawn from letters, diaries and annual reports of missionaries as well as colonial administrators. Tiberondwa wrote from his rich experience of casual observation and systematic study of missionary activities. He combined the role of eyewitness on one hand, and objective interpreter on the other.¹⁷ In relation to the study, Tiberondwa's work reflects the character of the Church in that some members of the Church do not take part in political activities.

Scholl presented an analytical rather than a critical assessment of Pope John Paul II's profound knowledge of the Catholic's philosophy and theology and their application to the complex realities of the world. He critically analysed the roots of Christian involvement in politics, starting from Christ to our own time. He discussed the modern political phenomenon; what a political person is, or does, and his /her Christian notions of the least and the poor. He writes from the Roman Catholic perspective and most of his sources are papal documents, Catholic philosophy and theology. Scholl's work brought out the Catholic Church's stance on Church and politics in general. Though his study is based on political and religious growth in Latin American societies, the issues discussed can be applied to Zambia in many cases.¹⁸

Bigo traced the political dimensions and demands of the Christian faith and showed that such 'apolitical' Christianity cannot be shaped without confronting Marxist thought. He viewed Church and politics in a philosophical perspective. He argued that Church and politics cannot be treated as one, their roles are different. He emphasized that Christ gave his Church no proper mission in the political, economic or social order, and that the purpose which Christ sets before the Church is a religious one. It is this religious mission which serves the human community according to the divine one.¹⁹

Bigo's work is vital because it gives another perspective on the Church and politics, and why some Christians stand aloof when it comes to politics. His work gives us an idea as to why some Churches have not taken an active role in politics. He states that Church and state have different roles to play.

Colin Morris brought out the issue that ordinary people suffer at the hands of politicians, without strong reaction because they lacked the knowledge of how to go about it and at times lacked the awareness that they are being exploited. Morris noted this and started educating the masses to fight against injustices done to them by the political leadership.²⁰ There is need to identify such moments before and after independence too, when the Church had to use the pulpit in order to carry out the sensitization of the masses.

Carmody examined the relationship between the Church and the nationalist movement in Northern Rhodesia; and some of the consequences of the federation. He also noted that the large majority of white missionaries in the 1950s were passive, 'apolitical' and took the stance of none involvement in politics. He made note of the fact that missionaries expected retaliation to come from Africans after independence for they did not support nationalists during the Federation.²¹

Carmody's study is vital to the study of Church and politics in both Federal and post independence Zambia as an introduction. It also helps in assessing the position of Churches' activities after independence. It gives meaning to why Churches were very cautious in getting involved in the fight against injustices made by post independence political leadership against the poor until the 1980s. He also critically analysed the political and religious growth in both ordinary Zambians, colonialists and the European community of this period.

Komakoma provided a chronological detailed account on how the Churches have been the voice of the poor from 1953 to 2001. He examined the Pastoral Letters and statement of the three mother bodies of the Churches in Zambia: the Zambia Episcopal Conference (ZEC); the Christian Council of Zambia (CCZ); and the Evangelical Fellowship (EFZ) in one volume. He compiled these letters to give the ordinary Christians best kept secrets of the Churches in order to enable them acquire a solid basis of social action for which all Christians are called.²² He presented the socio-political history of Zambia in four phases: colonial period, First Republic, Second Republic, and the Third Republic. He demonstrated the social realities of those phases by matching them with the Churches' response.

Komakoma's work is very important to the study for the detailed account of how Churches have been actively involved in politics throughout the history of Zambia, from the colonial time to date, showing that Churches have never been aloof to the realities affecting the welfare of the human person in all spheres of life as opposed to, why Churches are active in politics now?²³

Hess discussed the origins of African political leaders' tendency of clinging to power, and the ruled accepting the injustices and exploitation of the rulers with no effort to change the situation. He had traced this from pre-colonial conservative political systems. He argued that African (Bantu) authority is based on descent, the office of power is hereditary within the family and the possible candidates are made by a group of elders representing the people. He stated that modern democracy was very new to most societies in Africa.²⁴ Hence, there was no proper training and smooth transition of power from colonial government to African leadership. This gave us a political leadership without experience of how to rule.

Hess' study is very useful to this study for it stands as a guide to why the first President of Zambia was in power for more than 20 years, making it difficult for any change of government. His work gives us the idea why the people of Zambia accepted to be ruled for such a long time without strong opposition.

Cheyeka discussed the excitement that came with the attainment of independence in 1964. The excitement of President Kaunda to have a united nation which brought about the creation of the United Church of Zambia in 1965, the philosophy of humanism in 1967, and a Ministry of Development Planning and National Guidance in 1969. He noted that the philosophy of Humanism was fused in the education system to foster a moral and material discipline of the Zambian people especially those in political leadership. He further argued that it was the formation of the philosophy of Humanism that led to the formation of the one party humanist state with its tendency towards tyranny and absolutism in the Second Republic.²⁵ The Churches welcomed the philosophy of Humanism and fused it in the Religious Education syllabi. At the same time, the Church took part in the formation of one political party. This work is very important to this study because it shows the Church has not always given sound advice to the government. Cheyeka's work has contributed a lot to the study of the Church and Politics from 1964 to 1991.

Sakala examined the major political events and Churches' involvement in independent Zambia's politics. He noted the expectations among the people of Zambia at independence in 1964 against the economic position and political experience of the political leaders elected into power and their holding on to power at any cost.²⁶ He argued that these led to the formation of one party state.

Sakala acknowledged that Churches accepted the philosophy of Humanism and one party state system in order to get rid of tribal partisan politics in Zambia. In fact, he was one of the Church leaders that collaborated with political leadership for the formation of one party state system. He also demonstrated how Churches worked together in abolishing scientific socialism from the education system in Zambia by the introduction of multipartism in Zambia. Further, he stated that Churches in Zambia have been actively involved throughout the political stages of growth in Zambia. Sakala did not examine the political maturity of the ordinary Zambians which is of importance in exercising political freedom in presidential and general elections. However, his work is cardinal to the research topic for its information on the divisions within the United National Independence Party (UNIP) and on the causes of those divisions and what role the Church played at the time.

Rakner and Svasand analytically assessed the development of multiparty democracy in Zambia. They argued that Zambia's electoral process has faced a lot of practical administration problems; guiding rules for elections; preparation for elections; campaigning; polling, tabulation of results and procedures for solving electoral disputes, are not adequately organised.²⁷ They argued that usually the election process is not free and fair, in that the incumbent government enjoys certain advantages over challengers in terms of media exposure, access to institutional resources and right to call elections at any time.²⁸ They also noted that an uneven playing field is not always caused by state actors but results from unequal access to resources for individual candidates and parties.

This study showed the low standards in Zambia's electoral process which did not match with democratic growth since independence. The ruling party of the time

and the electorates had allowed the situation to perpetuate, meaning advantaging the ruling party and continued lack of will power to change the system by the electorates. In relation to the Churches' participation in politics, these are some of the problems that forced some of the clergy to leave the pulpit to educate or sensitise the electorates to properly use their political rights.

METHODOLOGY

In the course of this research I gathered both primary and secondary data. The Special Collections of the University of Zambia Library was the first resource centre for data. There are published and unpublished secondary resources which were consulted. Data collection from primary sources was mainly done at the National Archives of Zambia (NAZ), the Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ), the National Assembly Library and the three Church mother bodies, that is Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia (EFZ), Christian Council of Zambia (CCZ) and Zambia Episcopal Conference (ZEC). I equally looked for information from the White Fathers Archives at Faith and Encounter in Zambia (FENZA). Oral data was collected through semi-structured interview. I also referred to the notes of the 2006 interviews I had with the first Republican President of Zambia, Dr. Kenneth Kaunda and others. The interview data was examined and compared to the archival and secondary data. This helped in making qualitative analysis.

ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

The Study is divided into five chapters: chapter one is just the introductions and background to the study. Chapter two opens up the discussion on the role of the white led Church in the political independence of Zambia from 1950 to 1964. This gives a progression of influence of the Church in politics from the colonial

into post independence period. It also shows the progression of the Church's involvement in national development, supplementing government efforts with its own resources and funds from abroad.

The third chapter of the study discusses the role of the church in the First republic that ran from 1964 to 1972 when the country was governed through multi-party politics, and when the opposition political parties provided checks and balances to the ruling party UNIP. In this period the government used the power of the Church to influence society in the introduction of the philosophy of Humanism that gave it a Christian face. The chapter ends with the discussion of the Amendment of the Termination of Pregnancy Bill of 1972 over which the voice of the Church was divided among its different denominations. The Church failed to have its strong influence to prevent the Bill from being amended by parliament. This made the church compromised the Biblical principles according to some Church leaders, especially in the Catholic Church.

The fourth chapter examines the Second Republic from 1973 to 1991. It starts with the historical background to the introduction of the one-party political system. This brings out the fact beyond doubt that the one-party state was imposed on the people of Zambia. The government being aware of the power of the Church in influencing society involved the clergy in the Chona Commission. Though most of the recommendations made in the Chona Constitution Commission's Report were rejected, the Church welcomed the formation of the one-party state as a way of ending the political violence of that time.

The chapter goes on to analyse the position of the Church in the declined economy from 1975 to 1991 establishing the fact that the Church slowly moved to

the position of opposition in the absence of a legal opposition political party especially when in 1979 an attempt was made to introduce Scientific Socialism that denies the existence of God. The Church-State relations deteriorated to the breaking point when the government and the party announced the intention of using Church halls as classrooms for formal education. The Church put up a spirited fight as one united Church against a non-theological principle.

This chapter also examines the neutral stance taken by the Church between the two warring parties, the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD) and United National Independence Party (UNIP), to bring about reconciliation and peaceful transition from the one-party state to multiparty politics. With the Church's influence Kaunda and his UNIP left power with dignity.

The fifth and last chapter gives the general conclusion that summarises adequately the debates in the preceding three main chapters. The chapter ends with the bibliography.

Endnotes

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- ² Interview, David Kenneth Kaunda, Kabulonga, Lusaka, Zambia, 17th November, 2006.
- ³ Ipendburg, *The Presbyterian Mission and Eastern Bemba*, p. 31.
- ⁴ NAZ/A3/3/6 LOC 6045. 1922 Missionary Conference M5 p. 76.
- ⁵ J. V. Taylor, and D. Lehamann, *Christians of the Copperbelt: The Growth of the Church in Northern Rhodesia* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1961), p. 160.
- ⁶ Taylor, and Lehamann, *Christians of the Copperbelt: The Growth of the Church in Northern Rhodesia*, p. 161.
- ⁷ Taylor, and Lehamann, *Christians of the Copperbelt: The Growth of the Church in Northern Rhodesia*, p. 157.
- ⁸ Colin Morris, *Black Government? A Discussion between Kenneth Kaunda and Colin*, (Lusaka: United Society for Christian Literature, 1960), p. 35.
- ⁹ A.K. Tiberondwa, *Missionary Teachers as Agents of Colonialism: A Study of their Activities in Uganda, 1877- 1925* (Lusaka: Kenneth Kaunda Foundation, 1978), p. 131.
- ¹⁰ J.G. Davies, *Christian Politics and Violent Revolution* (New York: Orbis Book, 1976), p. 12.
- ¹¹ Davies, *Christian Politics and Violent Revolution*, p. 12.
- ¹² J.A.T. Robinson, as cited in Davies, *Christian Politics and Violent Revolution*, p. 12.
- ¹³ J. G. Davies, *Christian Politics and Violent Revolution* (New York: Orbis Books, 1976), p. 1.
- ¹⁴ Davies, *Christian Politics and Violent Revolution*, p. 25.
- ¹⁵ J. McGracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi 1875 – 1940* (London: Cambridge University, 1977), p. 257.
- ¹⁶ R. Thomas, *The Churches and Ghana Society 1918 – 1955* (Leiden: Bull, 1963), p. 181
- ¹⁷ Tiberondwa, *Missionary Teacher as Agent of Colonialism: A study of their Activities in Uganda*, p. Viii.
- ¹⁸ J. V. Scholl, *The Church, the State and Society in the Thought of John Paul II* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1982), p. 161.
- ¹⁹ Pierre Bigo, *The Church and the Third World Revolution* (New York: Orbis Book, 1974), p. 137.
- ²⁰ C. Morris, *The Hour after Midnight: A missionary's Political struggle in Northern Rhodesia* (London: Longmans, 1961), p. 157.
- ²¹ Carmody, 'Perspectives on religious and Nationalism in Zambia', p.8.
- ²² Joe Komakoma (ed.), *The Social Teachings of the Catholic Bishops and Other Christian Leaders in Zambia: Major Pastoral Letters and Statements 1953 – 2001*. (Ndola: Mission Press, 2003), p. 2.
- ²³ Komakoma, *The Social Teachings of the Catholic Bishops and Other Christian Leaders in Zambia*: p. 2.
- ²⁴ Mahlon M. Hess, 'Political System and African Church polity' in William A. Smalley (ed.), *Readings in Missionary Anthropology* (Tarrytown: Practical Anthropology, Inc, 1967), p. 191.
- ²⁵ A. Cheyeka, 'The Role of Zambian Humanism in the Development of Plural Religious Education in Zambia, 1972 to 1990.' *The University of Zambia Institute for Social Research: African social Research* 52, (Lusaka: University of Zambia Press, 2006), p. 22.
- ²⁶ F. D. Sakala, 'From Independence to Multiparty Democracy in Zambia: Personal View from inside the church' in H. Assefa, and G. Wachira(eds.), *Peacemaking and Democratisation in Africa: Theoretical Perspective and Church Initiatives*, (Kampala: East Africa Educational Publishers Ltd, 1996), p. 117.
- ²⁷ L. Rakner, and L. Svasand, 'The Quality of Electoral Processes: Zambian Elections 1991 – 2001' *The University of Zambia Institute of Economic and Social Research: African Social Research*, 45/46, (Lusaka: University of Zambia Press, 2000/2001), p. 5.

²⁸ Rakner, and Svasand, 'The Quality of Electoral Processes: Zambian Elections 1991 – 2001', p. 11.