

# **Religion and Development in Zambia: The Role of the Roman Catholic Church in the Political Development of Zambia: 1890-1964**

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## **Abstract**

Studies on the public role of religion in Zambia have largely concentrated on the history of Christianity in the third republic when political expressions of religious beliefs became more apparent. Christianity was firmly embedded in the Zambian society at independence and its mission-educated leaders fully understood the importance of the consent and blessings of the churches (Ter Haar 1992) This article explores the role of the Roman Catholic Church in Zambia's political independence (1890 to 1964). This is because the impression that Christian missionaries (henceforth simply referred to as missionaries) in Africa supported colonial rule is pervasive and historians as well as students of mission history seem to have taken it for granted that missionaries were agents of colonialism. Using a qualitative document review approach that thematically analyzes the relevant data, the article shows that the Catholic Church, which from the 1990s to the present has been championing human rights and democracy in Africa, is not exempted from this 'charge'. As Haynes (1996:53) pointed out, 'mainstream Christian bodies were initially opposed to, then skeptical and finally won round to the idea of African independence'.

The article positions the Roman Catholic Church in the political affairs of Zambia amid its apolitical claims. The article advances the argument that the Church contributed to Zambia's political development (here taken to mean the emergence of national sovereignty) directly and indirectly through the provision of education, health and pastoral services and the publication of pastoral letters though not to say it never erred. The

article further points out the lost opportunities for the Church and draws lessons for 21<sup>st</sup> century Zambia.

**Keywords:** Religion, Development, political development, independence, missionary work

## **Introduction**

It has been widely acknowledged that religion can influence and enhance development. In this regard, the concern with religion and development is not new and restricted to the twenty first century scholarship. Development is a multi-dimensional concept and will refer to the improvement of the full human life in every aspect, in the context of the community (Sakala & Chanda 1999:5). This is not just an economic term, but it encompasses the whole person in an integral and sustainable manner. Development also has different dimensions and the focus in this article is the political dimension of development in Zambia from 1890 to 1964.

In the colonial era, the Roman Catholic Church was largely influenced by the principle of being apolitical. As O’loghlen notes, the apolitical stand the church had should be understood in the light of not being involved in partisan politics as in the period of violence when the United National Independence Party (UNIP) and African National Congress (ANC) clashed, the importance of being equally accessible to all people was very emphasized (2002). It was this realisation, which made the church to be involved in the political life of the people.

Politics is here taken to mean what it meant to the ancient Greeks - ‘public affairs’ (Mwaura in Magesa and Zablun 2003:54). Thus political development will relate to the emergence of national sovereignty and the attainment of political independence from British colonial rule. Since the inception of missionary works in Zambia, the Roman Catholic Church contributed to Zambia’s independence amid claims that it was apolitical. Komakoma (2003:33) records that:

... recall the strong prohibition included in Can.139, with regard to

the participation of the clergy in the political affairs of any country. Par.4 of this canon strictly forbids all members of the Catholic clergy to assume official functions in the Legislative body....

This stance of the church to be above politics has often given the impression that the Catholic missionaries and the Church as a whole never had any role in the political development of the country. Some missionaries however went against this law for the sake of human dignity and played a role in Zambia's nationalist politics.

Using document review, this article traces the contribution of the Roman Catholic Church in Zambia's nationalist politics from 1980 to 1964 when Zambia gained its independence. It is related to other studies on religion and its public role (Hinfelaar 2009; Cheyeka 2009; Phiri 2009; Hinfelaar 2003; Phiri 1992). Its uniqueness hinges on going back in time. This is because as Gerrie TerHaar acknowledges, studies on the public role of religion in Zambia have largely concentrated on the history of Christianity in the third republic when political expressions of religious beliefs became more apparent. But Christianity was firmly embedded in the Zambian society at the time of independence and its mission - educated leaders fully understood the importance of the consent and blessings of the churches.

The article utilized Paulo Freire's theory of conscientisation and dialogue whose thesis is that social change should come from the masses and not isolated individuals to explain the formation of political groups which led to the dislodge of colonial rule.

Conscientisation is a change of mentality involving an accurate, realistic awareness of one's locus in nature and society; the capacity to analyze critically its causes and consequences, comparing it with other situations and possibilities; and action of a logical sort aimed at transformation. Psychologically it entails an awareness of one's dignity (Freire 1974).

One inevitable result of conscientisation is political participation and the formation of interest groups such as community organisations and labour unions. This theory explains the formation of political groups in colonial Zambia by people who were educated at the mission schools. This is because

Conscientisation leads to people organizing themselves to take action so as to change their social realities, points out Freire (1973), in this case political independence.

Thus Freire's literacy method whose key concepts are conscientization and dialogue has contributed to the understanding of the processes of education and social change as Freire's analysis of education and social change centres on his contention that education cannot be neutral (Freire 1974). By this, It can either be domesticating or liberating.

### **A Brief Political History of Zambia**

The occupation of Northern Rhodesia by the British was a direct result of David Livingstone's explorations in the territory. Following his death in 1873, eighteen missionary societies had by 1945 entered and established themselves in the area (Snelson 1974:10). A few more Protestant mission churches such as the Lutheran Church of Central Africa, Apostolic Faith Mission and Pentecostal Assemblies of God arrived afterwards in the 1950s and 1960s (Henkel 1989:39, 40).

The eventual colonial occupation of Northern Rhodesia is often attributed to John Cecil Rhodes whose ambitions resulted in the occupation of Barotseland.

In 1890, Francois Coillard of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS) had succeeded Frederick Stanley Arnot of the Plymouth Brethren, the first European to settle in Northern Rhodesia, and with their coming, Zambia was colonised when the Lochner Treaty was signed between Lewanika, King of the Lozi and the British South African Company (BSA Co) which gave exclusive rights to the BSA Co (Rotberg 1972). In 1890, the territory of Northern Rhodesia came under the control of the BSA Co whose administration lasted until 1924 when it handed over the territory to the British Colonial Office. Murphy (2003) describes the BSA Co state's administrative structure (by 1924) as follows:

The Territory Administrator at the capital and District Commissioners, Native Commissioners and Assistant Native Commissioners at district centres or towns and local centres or areas. There were also (District) Magistrates and Assistant Magistrates to

take care of legal and other matters in the territory.

Upon taking over the administration of the territory, the BSA Co introduced a foreign and different pattern of government. The country was divided into North - Eastern and North - Western Rhodesia in 1895 for administrative purposes. In 1911, the two artificial parts were merged to be called Northern Rhodesia under the British Administrator, Sir Lawrence Wallace. In 1924, the British Crown as agreed upon with the BSA Co, assumed the administration of the country in order to make it a protectorate, the first Governor being Sir Herbert James Stanley on 1st April 1924.

Unlike the BSA Co state, the British colonial state administration was more elaborate. Under the British Colonial Office in London was the Governor of Northern Rhodesia, who was assisted by the Secretary of State at the capital. There were Provincial Commissioners at Provincial headquarters and District Commissioners, District Officers and Assistant District Officers at district and sub - district centres. There was a High Court Judge assisted by other judges, Magistrates and Assistant Magistrates at lower levels to provide judicial services, and a Legislative Council (Legco) with European settler representatives and European representatives for Africans to ensure some checks and balances.

Additionally, there were Native Authorities built around chiefs through which the colonial state administered the people. Northern Rhodesia was thus administered through indirect rule whereby chiefs assumed subordinate roles in the colonial period. As such, there was a creation of western educated auxiliary elite and recourse to chiefs and other so called traditional authorities to help administer the colony (Chipungu 1992).

As a way of financing the administration of the territory, measures such as native taxation were introduced. However, taxation caused the greatest resentment and hardship as it forced Africans to work for cash (Weller and Linden 1984:192). It was this taxation, which the missionaries were later to speak against in the General Missionary Conferences.

Colonial rule was characterised by the domination of political, social, economic and all other spheres of life by British nationals from the metropole and European officials had a privileged position. This was based on the fact that the colonial rulers had the civilising mission of the Africans who were seen [as being] backward or uncivilised (Meebelo 1971; Boahen 1987).

This also explains why Africans were not given political and civil rights as society was divided into the rulers and subjects.

Colonial rule in Zambia was successfully established owing to many factors, among them the fact that the weaker ethnic groups sought protection from the Europeans, points out Larmer (2003) and in the process, the Europeans colonised them. Meebelo (1971) for instance, traces the beginning of colonial rule in Zambia to the desire of the weaker ethnic groups for protection against stronger ethnic groups. The Christian missionaries also had their share of the establishment of colonial rule. In any case, Africans were not passive in the colonial enterprise.

In 1953, Northern Rhodesia became part of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland by an Order in Council and Sir Roy Welensky, a Rhodesian politician, was very instrumental in the creation of the federation. The federation lasted for ten years with Zambia becoming independent in 1964 after its collapse. It is in this context that the Roman Catholic Church carried out its missionary work and directly and indirectly contributed to the political development of Zambia though not without shortcomings.

### **Advent of Roman Catholic Missionary Work in Zambia**

The work of the Roman Catholic missionaries in Zambia traces its beginning to the work of David Livingstone, who was the first missionary to come to Zambia. He never established a mission station in Zambia until he died in Serenje. He influenced the coming of missionaries to Zambia through his publications on the travels he made, the speeches he made, his death, and the special call he made to the Christian World to continue the work he had began (Rotberg 1965:4-6).

David Livingstone had his own weaknesses as a missionary as evidenced in the letter, which he wrote to Professor Sedgewick of Cambridge University. The letter shows his intentions that the world should never know about his political and economic motives. These were his 'ulterior objects'. Livingstone described his desires to Professor Sedgewick and said:

That you may have a clear idea of my objects I may state that they have something more in them than meets the eye. They are not merely exploratory, for I go with the intention of benefiting both the

African and my own countrymen. I take a practical mining geologist from the school of mines to tell us of the mineral resources of the country. Then an economic botanist to give a full report of the vegetable productions-the fibrous, gummy and medicinal substances together with the dyestuffs-everything which may be useful in commerce. An artist to give scenery. A naval officer to tell of the capacity of the river communications and a moral agent to lay a Christian foundation for anything that may follow. All this has for its ostensible object the development of African trade and the promotion of (African) civilization, but what I tell to none but such as you in whom I have confidence is this, I hope it may result in an English colony in the healthy highlands in Central Africa – (I have told it only to the Duke of Argyll). I believe that the highlands are healthy – the wild vine flourishes there. Europeans with a speedy transit to the coast would collect and transmit the produce to the sea. With this short statement you may perceive our ulterior objects. I want you to have an idea of them (Fletcher 1974:312-313).

David Livingstone in any case planted the seeds of mission Christianity as many other missionary societies came to Zambia after his death. It can still be argued that Christianity was also a form of colonisation as it often condemned the Indigenous religious beliefs. Tiberondwa (1978:xv) charges that missionaries actively participated in the political, economic and cultural exploitation of the African people and effectively paved the way for the initial occupation and formal colonisation.

Catholic Christianity was first introduced by the White Fathers (WF) in the north and east, and by Jesuits (SJ) in the south and centre [central] Zambia (Coyne, 1974). Other mission orders are the Franciscan Friars Minor Conventuals (OFMconv) and Friars Minor Capuchins (OFMcap) and other sister congregations.

The White Fathers and Jesuits entered Zambia in the missionary pioneering stage (1891, 1905), while the Franciscan Friars Minor Conventuals and Franciscan Friars Minor Capuchins came in the stage of missionary expansion (both in 1931). The missionary congregations of sisters who came to Zambia before 1940 were the White Sisters (1902), Dominican Sisters (1925), Holy Cross Sisters (1936) and between 1945 and 1959, eight

(8) other congregations of sisters came to Zambia after 1960 (Hinfelaar, 2004). This entails that the Catholic Church in Zambia planted the seeds of Catholicism as orders unlike the Protestants who came as missionary societies.

### **The Coming of the Catholic Missionaries to Zambia**

The White Fathers were the first Catholic congregation to work in Zambia, and arrived in 1891. Hinfelaar (2004:21) records that:

These are also called Missionaries of Africa and had been founded by the French Cardinal, Charles Martil Lavigerie whose father was a liberal and anti-clerical senior Civil servant who had not approved of his son becoming a priest. Lavigerie worked in the Roman Curia in Vatican and had two doctorates and a professorship of Church history at Sorbone University in Paris. After realising that there was something wrong with the restrictive and centralising tendencies of the administration in the Vatican who forced all Christians to follow the Latin rite of Christian worship, he became a champion of inculturation. This was done by fighting for the right of churches to worship in their own languages. He needed an association of men, flexible and decentralised enough to move into Africa when he was assigned the task of opening up Africa for the Catholic Church in Algiers. And so in July 1868, he founded a society, which he called 'Missionaries of Our Lady of Africa.' The society recruited secular priests and lay brothers so as to open schools, model farms, orphanages, medical centres and homes for the elderly in Africa.

The arrival of the White Fathers was largely negotiated with local rulers and thus they founded the first European settlement in Bembaland under the direction of Bishop Joseph Dupont popularly called *Moto moto* (Hinfelaar 2004). This was after abandoning Mambwe Mwela, a place, which they had found deserted by the African Lakes Company and later used as their first station. The African Lakes Company was initially called Livingstonia Central Africa Company and commonly known as African Lakes Corporation and it was largely founded by the interests supporting the Livingstonia



Mission with the aim of following up missionary work with legitimate trade and opening up a route from the Indian Ocean to Lake Tanganyika.

From Mambwe Mwela, the White Fathers were allowed by Chief Makasa Mwilwa, Mukukawa Mipini to come into Lubemba at Kayambi. It is from here that the White Fathers expanded their work in Zambia. The Jesuit missionaries who also came to Zambia to spread Catholicism followed the White Fathers. The Jesuits came to Zambia at the beginning of the twentieth century (1905) and the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) was founded in 1530, more than three hundred years before the White Fathers were formed.

The society was founded by a St Ignatius of Loyola who as a young man had served at the royal court and was trained to be a professional soldier. However, while defending a castle at Pamplong, he was wounded severely in both legs and read the lives of the saints in his depression and boredom. After a long retreat, he made a vow to denounce any worldly honour, but instead serve Jesus Christ. He therefore entered university and attracted some of his fellow students to follow the same ideals and later travelled to Rome to the Pope, obtained permission to found a new religious congregation and called it the Society of Jesus, popularly called the Jesuits. They adopted the new scientific discoveries of the time and worked in Catholic universities training young people in preparing for God's work. Due to the success of their spirituality, structures and apostolic methods, many missionary societies including the White Fathers were modeled on the example of the Jesuits (Hinfelaar 2004:57).

Some years before 1879, the Jesuits had been entrusted with the responsibility for what was known as the Zambezi mission, which stretched from the Limpopo River northwards to Congo. In 1902, Monsignor Sykes, the superior of the Zambezi mission contacted Major Robert Codrington the BSA Co official at Kalomo and requested a site for a mission (Murphy 2003:144; Hinfelaar 2004). After forwarding the request to the London office of the BSA Co, the Jesuits were granted ten thousand acres of land in Chief Monze's area.

Thereafter, two French Jesuits, Fr. Joseph Moreau and Jules Torrend arrived at Chikuni in 1905 and Fr. Torrend soon left Chikuni to set up Kasisi

mission, which through his influence soon became the centre of the Jesuit missionary endeavour in the area. It is from these beginnings that the Jesuits established mission stations in Zambia and planted the seeds of Catholicism.

The coming of the White Fathers and Jesuit missionaries marked the end of the missionary pioneering stage and this gave way to the missionary expansion period, which saw the coming of the Franciscans. The Franciscan Friars belonged to an order, which was far much older than the missionary society of the White Fathers and even that of the Jesuits.

The Franciscan society had been founded by St Francis, an Italian from Assisi in 1209. When young, he left all his possessions and assumed a life of poverty. Other young men then followed him and a new order called Friars Minor, humble brothers was founded. They had three major divisions with one for men, the Friars, one for women, the nuns, called poor Clares and one for lay people, the lay tertiaries who were called the third order. In their long history, the Friars divided themselves into three (3) distinct and independent branches and these are Friars Minor, Friars Minor Conventuals, and Friars Minor Capuchins (Hinfelaar 2004:126-127).

The Friars minor conventuals were the first Franciscans to come to Zambia in the 1930s and were often dressed in grey habits, thereby at times called grey Friars. They recited the Divine office together in choir, in Conventuals hence called the Conventuals (Hinfelaar 2004:126-127).

Friar minor capuchins also came to spread the Catholic faith in Zambia in the 1930s and settled in and around Livingstone. The name Capuchin came from the Italian word *Scappuccini*, hermits. They wore a brown habit, girded with a cord, a long pointed hood and sandals and followed a literal observance of the rule of St Francis (O'Shea 1975:268). The arrival of these congregations formed the foundation of missionary work in Zambia. Many other congregations came to Zambia to spread the gospel.

## **The Role of the Roman Catholic Church in the Political Development of Zambia**

The role of religion in colonial Zambia was somewhat complex because while being used as a tool of colonialism, it was also instrumental in dislodging colonial rule. As in the case of Malawi, Hastings (1994:428) observed that the Blantyre missionaries had done a great deal to bring the establishment of British rule over the Shire highlands, but when the rule came, there were several things about it which they did not like.

With few exceptions, missionaries in colonial Africa accepted a colonial take over as both inevitable and desirable, but they wanted it in large part precisely to protect Africans from the Arab slave traders, Boers, Portuguese, and Cecil Rhodes. They perceived their role as that of guiding the African society for its own good rather than for the good of Europe, hence caught up in the political web of colonial politics. However, this perception may entail that the missionaries had their own agenda too.

The Roman Catholic Church contributed to Zambia's political independence through their missionary work. Like other mission churches, the establishment of mission stations characterized it. The Catholic missionaries had the propagation of their faith as one of their priorities. A mission station was therefore a common feature of missionary work and the majority of mission stations consisted of a church, school and a hospital or a small medical centre. The Catholic missionaries had mission stations planted all over the country both in rural and urban areas, which were about 62 by 1960 (Henkel 1987). What role did the church play towards Zambia's independence?

The Catholic Church provided education. From the first arrival of the Catholic Church in Zambia as represented by the White Fathers in 1891 and later the Jesuits in 1905 followed by other missionary congregations, the Church provided education to the people. At almost every mission station, which the Church founded, and like the Protestant missionary societies, a school was established.

Initially these were village schools and they later transformed into primary, secondary and tertiary schools (Snelson 1974). The people were also offered skills training where they learnt carpentry, brick making, hygiene, agricultural practices and many other skills, which changed the

quality of the life of the people and gave the local people the crucial practical skills needed for continued construction of more churches, schools and other mission projects (Simuchimba 2005).

Carmody notes that the Jesuits, for instance, at Chikuni provided higher education at a time when such facilities were severely restricted and this was very political (Carmody 1992:xix). Indirectly, as people got educated and converted, they were better placed to fight the ills of colonial rule. Through education the people were empowered and provided with what they most required in the struggle. Education thus proved to be a little more of a double-edged sword for the colonial administration.

The schools became places where the aspirations for independence were established and nurtured, as well as promoting colonial structures. They also encouraged critical thinking enabling students to contest the status quo 'it was the mission centres that became the birth places of post-war African nationalism' (Phiri 1992:14-36). This was despite the prime focus of education being on rural areas and the schools usually offering a rudimentary education in basic reading, Bible study and practical subjects.

Beyond this, it was felt the local population would have little use for higher education as it could lead to isolation from their communities (Snelson 1974). This was a concealed political role, which the Church in colonial Zambia played as it did not set out to offer such an education because the main aim of missionary education was conversion (Snelson 1974:269; Mwanakatwe 1974:11; Carmody 1992; Gadsden 1992: 99).

The Church also provided health care to the people, Hannercart (1992) remarks that long before clinics and hospitals were built, before trained doctors and nurses arrived on the scene, many people found relief for their aches and pains by going to the missionaries. People were treated when ill, and in times of epidemics, the missionaries gave out vaccinations.

This too was a tool of conversion and the church saw the provision of affordable healthcare as vital to a population that could not afford private medical treatment and this was motivated by the concern driven by Biblical principles of care for the incapacitated. Examples include the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke, 10:25-37, then Jesus' encouragement in Matthew, 25:36 'I was sick and you looked after me,' and many others. While the provision of health care weakened the indigenous medicinal knowledge, the service ensured the wellbeing of the people.

The Catholic Church further participated in the General Missionary Conferences and therefore played the 'spokesperson role' for the masses. The General Missionary Conferences had been organized as early as 1914 in a bid to bring together all missionaries in the country to the discussion as Christian co-workers (Weller & Linden 1984). The representatives were drawn from the Protestant and Catholic bodies as well as government officials and other guests.

The issues discussed in the conferences included among others watching over the interests of the Africans (1914), objection to the native reserves and native taxation (1922) and many others (Snelson 1974). These conferences went on from 1914 to 1944. Though the Roman Catholic missionaries last attended the 1931 General Missionary Conference because of theological reasons, they had played a role in safeguarding the interests of the Africans.

However, the Church lost an opportunity for ecumenical efforts towards the wellbeing of its people. The departure of the Catholic missionaries from the General Missionary Conferences was in the end to contribute to the spoiling of what had been a good record of standing for justice collectively (Weller & Linden 1984). This partly explains why nationalists felt more at home in Churches which openly fought colonial rule such as the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC). The AMEC became a spiritual home of Northern Rhodesian nationalism and Kenneth Kaunda joined it for a time (The Times Letter, 4<sup>th</sup> August, 1950).

The Church further published Pastoral Letters, which had an influence in overturning colonial rule. Of particular interest are the Pastoral Letters of 1953, 1958 and 1964, which were instrumental in the struggle against colonial rule directly and indirectly. The 1953 Pastoral Letter's main emphasis was to guide the clergy in matters of colonial politics and thus pointed out that the church had to be above politics.

The colonial power was also reminded to respect the rights of the people and allow them to fully take part in decisions that would affect them (Komakoma 2003). As well as stressing the need that Africans had to access opportunities in education, health and employment, the Church through its Pastoral Letter accentuated that sound racial relations had to be based on fundamental recognition of human dignity of the people. These Pastoral Letters contributed to liberation because it recognized the voice of the

African in the political affairs of the country (Komakoma 2003:31).

The Bishops wanted the Africans to have the political right of being able to make decisions that concerned their land and this would lead to political development. The Church through the 1953 Pastoral Letter showed the concern the Church had in the political situation of the country (Komakoma 2003:31). It was felt that the federation would only worsen the conditions of the Africans. This explains why the Bishops expressed their concern with a deep sense of affection for the Africans, knowing well that the political situation was not favourable to the Africans.

Other than this, the Church through Pastoral Letters stressed the social rights of the Africans. Article one of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights declares that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights (Human Rights Commission 2008:7). In the 1953 Pastoral Letter, the Bishops pointed out that man had special dignity and it was therefore important to recognise this fact irrespective of colour and race. All men, irrespective of race, are God's beloved creatures, made in His own image, called to become God's children through sanctifying grace, bound to one another by the same destiny of eternal life in heaven (Komakoma 2003:37).

In stressing this value of man, the Bishops called upon Africans and Europeans to respect the rights of every man according to the teachings of Saint Paul. In this way therefore, the rights of the Africans were fought for, and with these came the realization that the Africans needed to govern themselves.

Furthermore, the church as represented by the Bishops through the 1953 Pastoral Letter did not agree with the policy that would debar the Africans from evolving gradually towards full participation in the political, economic, industrial and cultural life of the Africans (federation). The Church may be seen to have worked in isolation on this matter as the General Missionary Conference (now succeeded by Christian Council) was also fighting against the imposition of the federation though in a divided manner (Weller & Linden 1984:196).

The Roman Catholic Church did not accept that the Africans should be stopped from reaching the same standards of education and living conditions. Africans as human beings had the fundamental right to all these and therefore, nothing was to be allowed to stand in their way of progress.

The Second Vatican Council teaches that the protection of rights of the person is, a necessary condition for citizens, individually and collectively, to play an active part in public life and administration (St Paul Communications 2003:14).

The 1958 Pastoral Letter, which was addressed to the Catholics of all races, is also a way in which the Catholic Church contributed to the political welfare of the people. The stress in this letter was on the need for unity and the Bishops pointed out that as a church, they have the right and duty to speak out on societal issues, as they are the guardians of the moral order in the society. The Bishops expressed the Church's desire to see Northern Rhodesia develop into a happy and prosperous nation (Komakoma 2003). This also confirms the fact that the early Catholic missionaries spoke on behalf of the Africans and tackled the many challenges, which the Africans faced. However, one might have expected an ecumenical voice as the winds of unity swept through the country through nationalism.

The Catholic missionaries' stress in 1958 Pastoral Letter on justice was also crucial in the fight for decolonisation. The Bishops stressed that every man had a duty to exercise the virtues of justice. Virtues of justice meant the need to respect and grant the rights of others. Indeed, as Gifford (1988:86) notes, the Catholic Church... has become aware of its role and consciously changed sides in a historic 'option for the poor' or commitment to the total welfare of the voiceless and oppressed. This is shown in the manner the Church through the bishops spoke on behalf of the oppressed who in this case were the Africans.

The contribution to Zambia's fight against colonial rule the Church made through this Pastoral Letter should be seen in the light of the effect it had on the Europeans, the government of the day. The Europeans were reminded of the need to respect and grant the rights of others, in this case, the Africans. The Colonial powers might not have taken this seriously, but time came when the situation could not allow them to go governing Northern Rhodesia and thus, through leaving the political office to the Africans, the Europeans respected the rights of the Africans. This shows that the message of the Church was not only directed to the Africans, but to the Europeans as well.

## **Individual Missionary Contribution to Zambia's Political Development**

The Church also supported nationalist politics as individuals and as a group. Individuals include Bishop Rene' Pailloux (MAfr) who among other things showed a keen interest in opinions of the African leaders. He also gathered a group of educated young men and women and encouraged them to aspire to the responsibilities of a future independent nation. In this, he urged them to play important roles in the trade unions and political movements of the Copperbelt (Hinfelaar 2004:181).

Patrick Walsh SJ was involved in the creation of inter - racial dialogue between the Catholic members and the colonial administration. He thus founded the United Northern Rhodesia Association which was an inter-racial club cutting across denomination (Hinfelaar 2004:181). A suitable clubhouse was acquired from the Rhodesia Selection Trust in the new low-density area of Kabulonga. This became a moderate success and Fr. Walsh managed to introduce some members of the nascent African Congress, like Harry Nkumbula, Kenneth Kaunda, Arthur and Sikota Wina to liberal-minded Europeans (Murphy 2003:350).

Fr. Walsh also influenced the Bishops to publish a newspaper. 'The Leader' which started in 1961 and it offered a voice to the Africans especially when mistreated. Apart from this, the newspaper had articles on nationalist leaders and policies. Fr. Walsh became a family friend of the Kaunda family. It was through him that the Jesuits honoured Kaunda with an honorary doctorate. In May 1963, he and Kaunda travelled to the United States of America where Kaunda as President of UNIP and Minister of Local Government and Social Welfare, was awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Laws by the Jesuit Fordham University in New York (Hinfelaar 2004).

Fr. Jean-Jacques Corbeil and Fr. Van Rijthoven MAfr protected the Africans who were running away from the colonial authorities in their bid to flush out freedom fighters and offered them food. This was when Chinsali district became much politicised as the young men; members of the newly formed UNIP arrived from urban areas and encouraged the people to work against the federation and demand political independence. The missionaries decided to remain understanding and to get involved in the affairs of the Africans (Hinfelaar 2004:177).



Francis Mazzieri Conv Franciscan insisted on racial harmony, peace and mutual love and was happy to see independence come. President Kenneth Kaunda decorated Francis Mazzieri with the first division of the Order for Distinguished Service (ODS) in the area of Religious Education and the social field as well. Kaunda expressed appreciation and admiration for the Catholic Church and its representatives especially for their good support during the phase of acquiring independence (Frs. Cummings and Musonda 2003).

Though these and other Catholic missionaries and the Church stand out as having contributed to Zambia's independence, the Church will live to carry the blame for the role played by Bishop Joseph DuPont in the consolidation of colonial rule in Northern Rhodesia. Bishop Joseph DuPont marked the full-scale establishment of the White Fathers in Bemba land in 1898, and attempted to become Chief Mwamba due to his strong belief that control over the Bemba would give his Church many advantages.

Unfortunately, DuPont's attempts to become Chief Mwamba greatly facilitated the consolidation of British rule in North-eastern Rhodesia (Joseph DuPont, 15th March 1902). Hinfelaar (2003) points out that at the consecration ceremony of Bishop Elias Mutale in 1973, the royal drummers of Chief Makasa were summoned while the White Fathers handed him the relics of Bishop *Moto Moto*. Mutale proudly announced himself as successor of *Moto Moto*. The Church crossed its political boundary even after independence, as it is only to be a mirror of society.

When compared with other mainline churches in Zambia, the Roman Catholic Church were more involved in the political life of Northern Rhodesia. For instance, the Dutch Reformed Church supported racial segregation. Henkel (1989:60) notes that the ideology of Apartheid was applied even to their missionary work, justifying it theologically and refusing social contact with Africans whom they excluded from their homes.

The Christian Missions to Many Lands (CMML) and Seventh Day Adventists (SDA) preached the message of neutrality hence gave the impression that they were supporting colonialism. Missionaries also got involved in non-religious activities. Odinga (1967:66) cites how P.D. Snelson gave an account of the missionary involvement in non – religious activities:

There was another context in which some of the societies become politically involved. Cecil Rhodes encouraged the societies to cross the Limpopo River and proceed into the two territories, which bore his name on the grounds that the missionaries contributed to the maintenance of law and order. 'Missionaries', he once remarked, 'are better than policemen, and cheaper.' The work of evangelism could go forward only in peaceful conditions and the views of the missionaries, therefore, coincided with those of the Administration concerning the desirability of establishing and maintaining law and order .... Where a society was closely identified in the public mind with the Administration, the missionaries were to be held responsible for repressive legislation or the imposition of taxes...An extreme example in Zambia is where the early missionaries of the London Missionary Societies found themselves fulfilling the roles of civil administrators and justices. In almost every sense of the term, they constituted the government of the area. They heard cases and imposed punishment, flogging those whose offences such as adultery or theft, were deemed to be serious.

### **Challenges of Catholic Missionary Work in Colonial Zambia**

The Roman Catholic Church encountered problems in playing its role in the public sphere. The most notable was that of being closely associated with colonial rule. This was because the earlier missionaries had been known to have paved way for Zambia's colonisation especially David Livingstone and Francois Coillard. Rotberg (1965) records that Francois Coillard belonged to the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS) and he was very influential in persuading King Lewanika to request the protection of Queen Victoria of England and later to accept a treaty giving Rhodes' BSA Co virtually a free land in what became North-Western Rhodesia.

With the Lochner Treaty, which was concluded in June 1890, the Lozi were promised protection and subsidies and in return, the BSA Co had exclusive rights of settlement, mineral exploitation and ultimately control of the whole region. The treaty erroneously provided the basis for claims to the rich Copperbelt and within six months, Lewanika and his *Kuta* were regret-

ting and regarded Coillard, a missionary, a traitor.

In 1924, the British Crown as agreed upon with the BSA Co, assumed the administration of the country, the first Governor being Sir Herbert James Stanley on 1st April. In addition, the Catholic missionaries also shared the same background with some colonial officials. As such, they were often seen together, visiting each other and shared light moments together and it was natural for people to see the Catholic missionaries as supporting colonial rule.

The way the missionaries had conducted themselves in other colonised states further led to the close association between Catholic missionary work and colonial rule in Zambia. Like other people of their time, missionaries shared the naivety of their contemporaries, and affirmed the values of liberal democracy and Western culture. Consequently, they lived in an uneasy tension with colonialism, having different goals.

Most missionaries supported colonialism even as they fought against its abuses. They recognized its achievements. For example, in Central Africa missionaries encouraged British control, believing it gave protection against the slave trade by Arabs, Portuguese, and others (Oliver 1952). One missionary wrote, 'Gone is the slave trade and intertribal wars. A new era of civilization has dawned for Africa'. Such missionary support for colonial developments therefore explains why even in Zambia, Catholic missionary faced the challenge of seeming closely related to colonial rule.

## **Lessons for Today**

It is undisputable that the work of the Roman Catholic Church was without errors in colonial Zambia. For this, widespread debate exists on whether the missionaries genuinely helped Africans fight for independence. It is still questionable whether Zambia as a country is independent in the real sense of the word. Zambia today is faced with new challenges away from the concerns of the colonial period even in the political arena. Other concerns like poverty, unequal distribution of wealth, limited access to education, health and employment opportunities, gender based violence, HIV and AIDS, corruption, alcohol abuse and many others have become a prominent feature of the Zambian society. The Church therefore has a new challenge and role to play. The argument is that the Church should play its public role because

The true gospel has to be responsive to the needs of the people.

From the inception of missionary work in Zambia, development was at the centre of the Christianisation process. Byrne (1983) shows that the church emphasised on integral development when he stated that:

... we try to help them discover that they have a great power to make progress... Development should help people acquire attitudes of self - determination, self- reliance, dignity, achievement, unity and community building.

Therefore, the Church should continue to work towards the whole rounded development of the people. This is because it has a better position in as far as development is concerned. This is because among other attributes, the people trust the Church. However, this is not to say that the Church should take advantage of this trust by using the resources it can accumulate for its own personal use.

Again the Church should not get into extremes, as some preachers of prosperity gospel in the country have done by taking an exploitative dimension of development. Most people in Zambia live in poverty and thus they lack basic needs like shelter, education, health and water. This poverty creates in many people a desire to move out of their situations hence being vulnerable to any efforts that promise relief and fall prey for instance to some forms of prosperity gospel.

Most preachers of prosperity gospel preach a 'gospel that promises prosperity to those who accept it as a reward, which is often measured by physical wealth (Saracco 2007). This takes away the abilities of people to work hard and this is more problematic in an age that is encouraging people to find sustainable ways of living.

The Church is often better placed to address some of the challenges Zambia faces today in the areas of education and health because from the beginning and to date, the church has been effective in reaching the most destitute. The Church can advocate for change by mobilising people to demand change. However, this role should be played with caution, lest the Church gets entangled in party politics at the expense of being a mirror of society. The Church should continually provide checks and balances on the government so as to promote social and economic justice in the nation. Most importantly, sustainable development should be at the core of the Church's

involvement in the nation's development.

## Conclusion

The article has demonstrated how the Roman Catholic Church got involved in the political affairs of colonial Zambia. The article adopted a 'developmental' perspective in mission history, which appreciates the role the missionaries played in economic, social, political, and religious change in Zambia and Africa as a whole and departed from a kind of scholarship on mission history which is often anchored on harsh criticism of missionary work.

Despite the many mistakes the missionaries committed in their work, there exist something that is worth appreciating. Furthermore, the article has shown that while studies on the public role of religion in Zambia have largely concentrated on the history of Christianity in the third republic, Christianity has always had a political role since inception. The Church in colonial Zambia was very much involved in the political life of the people and therefore, acted as a mirror of society.

While recognizing the active roles in nationalistic politics played by individuals like Fr. Patrick Walsh, Bishop Rene' Pailloux, Fr. Jean-Jacques Corbeil and Fr. Van Rijthoven, Fr. Francis Mazzieri and many others, the Church provided social services which awakened nationalist feelings and the fight for dignity and sovereignty though more still has to be done to liberate the society. Therefore, the Catholic Church while claiming to be apolitical was directly and indirectly involved in the political transformation, which took place in Zambia from colonial to post-colonial Zambia.

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