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Why Can't a Pastor Be President of a "Christian Nation"? Pentecostal Politics as Religious Mediation

Why has Nevers Mumba, one of Zambia's most famous Pentecostal leaders, been so unsuccessful in his two presidential bids? Previous analyses have blamed Mumba's political woes on a presumed Pentecostal belief that politics is a lesser vocation than the pastorate. In contrast to these interpretations, I argue that Pentecostals in Zambia are very committed to the notion that, at least ideally, their leaders should be pastors, and more specifically that they should be effective mediators of the divine covenant established when Zambia was declared a "Christian nation." The problem with Mumba is, therefore, not that pastors are not supposed to be politicians, but rather that he has failed to convince believers that he is a good mediator. This article opens up new horizons in the study of Pentecostal politics, suggesting that populism in countries with high Pentecostal populations is increasingly defined by the capacity for religious mediation. [Pentecostal Christianity, political theology, populism, Zambia, electoral politics]

On October 28, 2014, just four days after his country celebrated fifty years of independence, Zambian president Michael Sata died in London, where he was seeking medical attention for an undisclosed illness. Under Zambian law, the death of a sitting president requires a special presidential election to take place within ninety days, and one was organized for January 20, 2015. One of the candidates in this election was Nevers Mumba, president of the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD), which had controlled the Zambian government from the end of one-party rule in 1991 until Sata's election in 2011. Despite some analysts' predictions that the MMD might have a chance to return to power after Sata's death (Dionne and Mulikita 2015, 131), Mumba won just 0.9 percent of the vote, a worse outcome by far than any MMD presidential candidate had ever experienced. The 2015 special election was not Mumba's first bid for the Zambian presidency. In 2001 he ran for the office on the ticket of a party he founded, the National Citizens Coalition (NCC). That election went only marginally better for Mumba, who came away with just over 2 percent of the vote.

Mumba's failure to perform well in Zambian elections is surprising. By the time of his first presidential bid, he had already made a name for himself as a Pentecostal pastor. He was Zambia's first televangelist and the founder of the country's first mega-church, Victory Ministries. As in many African countries, Pentecostal adherence in Zambia has increased exponentially over the last twenty-five years, and Mumba's career developed alongside a significant Pentecostal revival. Today, the vast majority (85.48%) of the roughly sixteen million Zambians are Christians, and more than 3.8 million of these fit into the broad category that I refer to as Pentecostal believers (Johnson and Zurlo 2014).¹ This means that roughly 23 percent of Zambians are Pentecostals. In fact, these percentages do not reveal the full extent of Pentecostalism's influence. During the years I studied Pentecostals in Zambia's Copperbelt Province (2006-2014), I found a significant number of people who do not

describe themselves as *ba Pente* (Pentecostals), although they attend Pentecostal gatherings on a regular basis, especially the very popular interdenominational prayer meetings that have become an important feature of the Zambian religious landscape over the past decade. Why is it then that a Pentecostal pastor has not been able to garner more than a very small percentage of the popular vote in two separate bids for the Zambian presidency?

Analysts have typically attributed Mumba's lack of political support among Pentecostals to a perceived belief on the part of the latter that politics is a less worthy calling than the pastorate (Phiri 2003, 412–415). It is true that Pentecostals routinely accuse Mumba of abandoning the pulpit in favor of the podium, so to speak, and in so doing of abrogating his calling as a man of God. As I show, they sometimes use Mumba's own words against him in these charges. In response, Mumba has consistently argued that he has not stopped being a pastor just because he has entered secular politics. Indeed, as he sees it, far from serving as a barrier to political involvement, his status as a pastor uniquely qualifies him for the Zambian presidency. While it is easy to see why the debate between Mumba and the Pentecostal public has been interpreted as evidence that believers regard politics and other so-called earthly concerns as less important than the eternal work of Christian ministry, I argue that something else is going on in this exchange. Rather than serving as evidence that believers do not want pastors to get into politics, a careful examination of the political theology behind the Pentecostal response to Mumba reveals that the reality is just the opposite. By "political theology," I am referring to a distinctly Pentecostal "conceptualization of the ways in which power can and should be distributed, exercised, and legitimated" (Marshall 2014, S352). In the case of Zambia, the defining issue in national political theology is the role of government leaders in representing the country before God, an issue that clearly references Old Testament hierocracy (cf. Brueggemann 2003). Drawing on twenty-two months of fieldwork (starting in 2006) with Pentecostals in Zambia's Copperbelt Province as well as on readings in Pentecostal theology and online discussions of Zambian politics, I show that believers *want* their political leaders to be pastors, and more specifically that they want them to serve as religious intermediaries. The problem with Mumba, then, is not that he is a pastor, but rather that he is not an effective pastor; that is, that he has not given Pentecostal voters evidence that he is capable of carrying out the kind of spiritual mediation that they want from their religious and political leaders.

By examining the peculiar case of Nevers Mumba, my aim is to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of Pentecostal politics, in Zambia specifically and in Africa more generally. While there can be no doubt that Christianity, perhaps especially in its Pentecostal guise, is playing an increasingly important role in political life across the continent (Bompani 2016; Deacon 2015; Obadare 2006), there has been considerable social scientific debate over what this entails. The underlying questions in these discussions are: Does politics or religion serve as a grounding framework in Christian political action? That is, are people compelled by religion because it allows them to make political claims, or do they make certain political claims because they are religious? Neither side of this debate offers an entirely satisfying answer. Analyses that foreground the role of religion in African political thought—for example, those put forward by Stephen Ellis and Gerrie Ter Haar (1998, 2004)—have been accused of reproducing essentialist discourses in which Africans are portrayed as overly spiritual (Green 2006). Meanwhile, discussions that foreground political economy as the driving force behind religious discourse, exemplified by the work of Jean and John Comaroff (1999, 2000) and Jean Comaroff (2009), have been charged with a failure to take believers seriously; in other words, to recognize that religion is not simply a "second-order process of adjustment" to the conditions of late capitalism, but rather "a site of *action*, invested in

and appropriated by believers” (Marshall 2009, 22; see also Englund 2011; Haynes 2012, 2015).

It is not difficult to see that arguments over the relative position of religion and politics, while important insofar as they have demonstrated the strong link between these domains, are ultimately rather unsatisfying. Writing about a similar set of debates in Oceania, Joel Robbins (2013) has highlighted a tendency toward what he calls analytical “scorekeeping,” which measures the value of particular churches against political categories such as democratization. In contrast to this type of analysis, Robbins argues that anthropologists must “open ourselves to the unfamiliar aspects of Christian politics,” while at the same time looking for ways to “evaluate these politics on their own terms” (209). Focusing specifically on Africa, Harri Englund (2011) has likewise called for an analytical move away from politics to what he calls “public culture” as a means of foregrounding how Christian ideas or practices constitute, rather than merely respond to, the parameters of debate. Moving from politics to publics, he argues, allows scholars to move beyond “sterile definitional disputes over the scope of the political and the religious” and toward “an investigation of what actually assumes public significance in the historically specific circumstances of religious and political contestation” (8).

The political career of Nevers Mumba represents a productive space within which to engage “the unfamiliar aspects of Christian politics” by examining the elements of Pentecostal ritual life that have “[assumed] public significance” in Zambia over the last twenty-five years. Building on previous work in which I have shown that Pentecostal religious practices are central to political participation in Zambia (Haynes 2015), in the discussion that follows I explore the implications of this religious–political context for Pentecostal believers’ expectations of national leadership. To be more specific, and drawing on established connections between Pentecostalism and patronage (McCauley 2013), political leadership in Zambia today is strongly identified with religious mediation. As I argue in the conclusion, this emphasis on mediation is increasingly shaping what counts as political populism in Zambia, and most likely in other countries with large Pentecostal populations as well. This claim represents a departure from previous discussions of Pentecostal politics in Africa by treating the religious actions of public figures not only as efforts to win the approval of an increasingly Pentecostalized electorate (Gifford 1998) but also as representative of a new Pentecostal politics that expands the field of political power beyond the state to include both demonic and divine entities (Haynes 2015; Marshall 2009; Meyer 2010).

Nearly all of my fieldwork on the Zambian Copperbelt was spent in a neighborhood that I call Nsofu,² a township with a population of approximately twenty-five thousand people located on the outskirts of the city of Kitwe. While mainline congregations such as the Roman Catholic Church or the United Church of Zambia are prominent features of the Nsofu religious landscape, the township is also home to more than one dozen Pentecostal churches and fellowships, and new Pentecostal groups are springing up all the time. All of these congregations are what could broadly be described as neo-Pentecostal (although, following my informants’ usage, I employ the more general term “Pentecostal” to refer to the people that I also call “believers”), as they eschew the asceticism of earlier forms of Pentecostalism and have instead adopted the principles of the prosperity gospel, a Christian movement that turns on the notion that it is God’s will for all believers to be rich, healthy, and successful.³

The underlying theological structures of the prosperity gospel have shaped the most significant Pentecostal political intervention in Zambia to date, namely the state-sponsored declaration that the country is a “Christian nation” (Cheyeka 2008; Haynes 2015). “The declaration,” as it is often known, was initially made in 1991 by Pentecostal President Frederick Chiluba, whose election marked the advent of multiparty democracy in Zambia.⁴

Five years later, it was enshrined in the preamble to the Zambian Constitution, effectively lending state approval to Chiluba's Pentecostal brand of Christian nationalism (Yong 2010, 9–10). From the outset, the declaration has been an overwhelmingly Pentecostal concern. Mainline churches were not consulted on the decision to make Zambia a Christian nation, and while some missionary-established denominations eventually came to support the declaration, other groups, most notably Catholics (representing some 35 percent of the population [Johnson and Zurlo 2014]), have been vocal in their opinion that it limits the critical capacity of the church and undermines the long history of Christian political opposition in Zambia (Hinfelaar 2011). While the declaration does not enjoy universal support among Zambian Christians, then, it is extremely important to understanding how Pentecostals engage the state (Haynes 2015). Although one might assume that Zambia's unique form of Christian nationalism would work in favor of aspiring politician Nevers Mumba, a closer look at his career reveals that this has not been the case.

A Pastor's Bid for President

Nevers Mumba was among the first generation of Zambian young people to convert to Pentecostalism in the 1980s, and early on was marked as a leader in his cohort.⁵ He got his start in Pentecostal ministry by serving as an interpreter for the German evangelist Reinhard Bonnke, whose "Africa Shall be Saved" crusades played a significant role in the spread of Pentecostalism across the continent. Bonnke took an interest in Mumba, and arranged for him to attend Bible College at Christ for the Nations in Dallas, Texas, from 1982 to 1984. After returning to Zambia, Mumba founded Victory Ministries, which quickly grew into one of the largest churches in Zambia. He set up a Bible school; pioneered the first national evangelistic television program (*Zambia Shall Be Saved!*); and traveled widely, preaching throughout Zambia and overseas. During the 1995 Victory Ministries International Conference in Lusaka, Mumba was given an honorary doctorate from the Full Gospel Christian Theological Seminary in Flint, Michigan, which is why most Zambians refer to him as "Dr. Mumba."

Mumba's prominence as a religious leader quickly led to political influence as well, particularly after Chiluba's election to the Zambian presidency on the MMD party ticket in 1991. After announcing that Zambia would be a Christian nation, Chiluba set about making political changes that would reflect the declaration. These included establishing diplomatic ties with Israel (like many conservative Protestants, Zambia's Pentecostals are Zionists) and making it easier both for people to register new churches and for missionaries to come into Zambia (Phiri 2003, 409). In addition, under Chiluba, a few prominent pastors, including Mumba, were given diplomatic passports, as they were to be "ambassadors of the Christian nation" (Lockhart 2001, 65).

While Mumba and Chiluba were close during the first years of Chiluba's presidency, their relationship cooled after Chiluba began his second term in 1996. There has been speculation that Mumba had designs on a post in Chiluba's government, and when he was not given it, he began to distance himself from the president. Other accounts blame the tension between Mumba and Chiluba on the latter's increasing corruption, which culminated in an attempt to change the constitution to allow Chiluba to run for a third term in office. As Mumba's friend and Bible school classmate Kirby Lockhart recalls, "Nevers found himself in a conundrum. He sincerely wanted to support his Christian brother [Chiluba], but was growing alarmed by the blatant and hypocritical partisanship of the MMD" (75). Mumba's solution to this problem was to form the National Christian Coalition (NCC) in 1997, an organization similar to Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority in the United States,⁶ which included among its goals: "[participating] in local and national elections with a view of infusing the system

with God-fearing people” (quoted in Lockhart 2001, 80). Mumba’s vision for the NCC was to transform Zambian politics—and by extension Zambia—by systematically replacing corrupt politicians with elected officials committed to Christian ethics. One year later, Mumba turned the NCC into a political party, renamed it the National Citizen’s Coalition, and stood as its candidate in the 2001 presidential election. He fared poorly in this race, polling just 2.2 percent of the vote (Rakner and Svåsand 2004, 52). Ultimately, Chiluba did not contest a third term, and his handpicked successor, Levy Mwanawasa, won the election easily for the MMD.

Despite the fact that the 2001 election was dogged by allegations of fraud on the part of the MMD—allegations that Mumba supported (*BBC News* 2002)—in 2003 Mumba dissolved the NCC and joined the ruling party. A few days after doing so, he was appointed Zambia’s vice president under Mwanawasa. Mumba held this post for just sixteen months, at which point he was dismissed for making what Mwanawasa called “embarrassing and careless” remarks during a press conference. Mwanawasa claimed Mumba had suggested that some opposition candidates were receiving funding from the neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo (*BBC News* 2004). In 2008 Mwanawasa died in office after suffering a stroke at an African Union summit in Cairo. The MMD nominated his vice president, Rupiah Banda, to stand in the emergency elections that followed. Banda won, and Mumba found a home in the reconfigured MMD government as Zambia’s High Commissioner to Canada. This diplomatic post was revoked when the MMD was voted out of power and Sata assumed the presidency in 2011. Mumba returned to Zambia to contest the MMD party elections, which he won in a run-off to become the MMD party president. When Sata died in 2014, the MMD was divided over who would represent the party in Zambia’s second emergency presidential election in less than a decade. By the time Mumba finally emerged as the party nominee, the campaign period had all but finished and public confidence in the MMD, historically one of independent Zambia’s three main political parties, was shattered. As noted in the introduction, Mumba received very little support—just 14,609 votes—putting him far behind the candidates from the ruling Patriotic Front and opposition United Party for National Development (UPND) parties.

At the heart of Mumba’s poor performance, at least among Zambia’s Pentecostals, is the question of why he left Christian ministry to enter politics in the first place. Here, an open letter to Mumba, published on the Facebook page of the Zambian newspaper *The Post*, provides a case in point. Writing just after the 2015 elections, the author, who identifies himself as Harrison Jani, accuses Mumba of straying from his divine calling:

What big voice are you waiting for to convince you that you are in a wrong camp, arena or ring? Are you truly convinced that God created you to rule Zambia? I was a faithful follower of your inspiring sermons when you were still presenting *Zambia Shall Be Saved*. In one of your inspiring messages, you declared that you were above politics and that becoming a president would amount to a demotion for you. I agree with you 100 per cent because in the Bible, kings were subordinate to prophets and priests.⁷

At one point in his post, Jani compares Mumba to the disobedient prophet Jonah, whose refusal to go where God sent him nearly resulted in the destruction of the ship on which he had stowed away. Likewise, according to Jani, Mumba’s disobedience was the cause of the problems in the MMD; Mumba had busied himself with politics when he should have been “organising Christian crusades in all provinces of Zambia, Africa, and overseas.”

Jani's open letter to Mumba is by no means a unique response to the latter's political involvement. Many Pentecostals in Zambia, including some of my informants on the Copperbelt, feel that by getting into politics Mumba did indeed suffer a "demotion." As Jani's words indicate, this term is not one they simply pulled from midair. In the early 1990s, in what was apparently a widely viewed interview on ZNBC (then the only television station to which most Zambians had access), Mumba responded to the question of whether he would ever consider a career in politics with the statement that such a switch would be a "demotion," a move to a lesser calling than the one he enjoyed as a Christian evangelist. Mumba later came to regard this position as an incorrect understanding of his vocation, but the idea stuck in the minds of many Pentecostals, who regularly assert that by entering politics Mumba walked away from his true calling. To take an example from my own fieldwork, Bana Blessing,⁸ a believer who frequented Pentecostal meetings across Nsofu, told me during an interview that she felt that by entering state politics, Mumba had left God's work to collude with the devil. This conclusion is not quite as damning as it sounds, although it is nevertheless a strong indictment. In the dualistic framework that characterizes Pentecostal theology, especially in Africa (van Klinken 2013, 526–528; see also Haustein 2011), almost everything that is not obviously embedded in Pentecostal practice is described in terms of the occult. For example, some believers on the Copperbelt told me that Hindus are Satanists. A similar logic informs a story related to me by Bana Sam, which she said had circulated in Pentecostal communities in the years after Mumba first got into politics. In this tale, the devil was searching for a way to bring down the powerful preacher, tempting him with women and money, both of which he refused. The devil then presented him with the possibility of political power, and this was the one thing he could not resist. In these diabolizing descriptions, the Pentecostal view reflects the language of "demotion" by eliding the secular and the satanic.

In response to popular Pentecostal opinion, Mumba has devoted a significant amount of his media presence to addressing the question of why he left ministry to become a politician. Representative here is a series of pieces entitled, "Answers from Nevers Mumba," published on the MMD website in September 2014, just weeks before the death of the president and the ill-fated election that followed. In these pieces, Mumba responded to questions that had been posted on the party's Facebook page, including: "Why did you abandon the church? Politics is dirty and not for you. Was it God who called you into politics?" In reply, Mumba wrote:

I am first a Christian, then a pastor and a politician. I did not substitute my Christian faith for politics. I just accepted an additional responsibility to public service—Politics. The same God who called me to be a minister of the Gospel, called me to influence politics by participation. . . . My life's commitment is to do God's will. A moral and just Zambia is God's will and defines my assignment in government. . . . There is nowhere in the Bible where it says that a religious leader cannot serve as a community or political leader. To the contrary, the Bible suggests that believers in God holding political office can bring prosperity and justice to nations. Scripture says in Proverbs 29:2 that, "When the righteous rule, people rejoice, and when the unrighteousness [sic] rule, people mourn."⁹

Mumba included further evidence on the MMD's website that he is still a pastor in the form of videos of him preaching and statements that he has retained his position as overseer of Victory Ministries, the network of churches he founded.

In the nearly twenty years that Mumba has been involved in Zambian national politics, the dialogue represented in Jani's open letter and Mumba's "Answers" has been rehearsed countless times. What is notable about these exchanges is their lack of variation. Time and again Zambians have asked why Mumba has ceased to be a pastor and become a politician. Time and again Mumba has responded that he has never stopped being a pastor, and that his calling to politics is completely compatible with his calling to the pastorate. In the remainder of this article, I tease out the reasons for this impasse. The first step in this analysis is to identify exactly what Pentecostal believers expect of those who, like Mumba, call themselves pastors.

Mediation, Morality, and the Pentecostal Pastorate

Of the three small Pentecostal congregations that I followed during my doctoral fieldwork, the one I most enjoyed visiting was Freedom Bible Church. This congregation was growing by leaps and bounds when I first arrived in Nsofu, often spilling out the door of the primary school classroom that they rented for worship each Sunday morning. The leader of the church was a dynamic preacher named Pastor Ephraim, who was known throughout Nsofu as a gifted prophet. One Monday morning in March 2008, after I had been in the township for nearly a month, I called on Bana Buleti, a member of Freedom Bible Church. She was a single mother living with her young son in the home of her older brother and sister-in-law. We had arranged ahead of time to travel together to Pastor Ephraim's home, where that morning he was scheduled to be available for "deliverance," the term Pentecostals use for exorcism. As it turned out, Bana Buleti did not want to leave her house (there had recently been a spate of robberies in Nsofu, and she was worried about the television being stolen), so she instead invited me in. Grateful for an opportunity to visit with a new Pentecostal convert, I settled into her brother's comfortable sitting room while Bana Buleti prepared fish for our lunch. Her favorite topic of conversation was Pastor Ephraim, and she explained that although he was very young, he had a special favor from God upon his life. When Pastor Ephraim "stood in the gap" for someone, she proclaimed, using the metaphor that Pentecostals employ for intercessory prayer, God would certainly hear and answer. Bana Buleti's opinion of Pastor Ephraim was in no way unique. The dozens of people who flocked to Freedom Bible Church each Sunday were there largely because they believed that the pastor was a divinely favored figure whose prayers were very likely to be answered.

As 2008 went on, things at Freedom Bible Church remained largely unchanged, until one Sunday, about a year into my fieldwork, I arrived at the classroom where Freedom members met for worship to find that Pastor Ephraim was not in attendance. Rumors about his absence flew through the congregation, and it was not difficult to find out that the elders and junior pastors had asked Pastor Ephraim to step down temporarily after two women had come forward, both claiming to be pregnant by him. During his suspension, Pastor Ephraim was barred not only from the pulpit but also from performing the personalized religious services that were the key to his popularity: prophecy, prayer, and deliverance.

Members of the Freedom Bible Church congregation responded in a variety of ways to the scandal. Some believed Pastor Ephraim's claims that the charges against him were false, and swore to me and to one another that they would not abandon him or their Pentecostal faith simply because of some slanderous accusations. Others acknowledged that it was quite possible that Pastor Ephraim—a young, unmarried man who regularly prayed for single women in private—might have succumbed to temptation. While they agreed that this was a moral failing on the part of their pastor, they also believed that his behavior was excusable, as he was only human (*muntu*). Indeed, some of these believers laid the ultimate responsibility

for Pastor Ephraim's fall on the devil, who was clearly trying to use the situation to destroy Freedom Bible Church. More than one person responded to my questions about the scandal by quoting from Zechariah 13:7 (New International Version): "Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered." This is a verse that Jesus also uses in the New Testament to predict that his disciples would run away when he was arrested.¹⁰ The idea that the devil had decided to target this particular "shepherd" in an attempt to scatter his "sheep" was proof of the former's spiritual power, as it is common knowledge among Pentecostals that Satan only goes after those who are causing him trouble. Both those believers who denied the accusations against Pastor Ephraim and those who excused them were determined to stand by their leader, confident that the trouble would soon blow over and he would return to ministry.

While some congregants remained with the church during the scandal, there were a number of others who left. Some broke their ties with Freedom Bible Church because they felt they could not follow a pastor who did not live by Christian ethical standards. However, as far as I could tell, the majority of those who left the church in the wake of the scandal did so not because of the accusations against Pastor Ephraim, but rather because they were no longer able to access his skills as a religious mediator. In Pastor Ephraim's absence, junior pastors filled in as preachers and offered prayers on behalf of those who requested them. However, they were simply not as gifted as Pastor Ephraim, and in time the crowds dwindled, while those who continued to come on Sunday mornings nodded off during the sermons. Eventually, church leaders decided to reinstate Pastor Ephraim, although the issues that had led to his suspension were never, to my knowledge, resolved. It seemed that the elders felt the church could not afford to lose any more members, and that the best way to prevent this was to restore to his original position the man who was clearly the church's main attraction.

There are two important points to take away from the example of Pastor Ephraim and the scandal that temporarily removed him from the pulpit. First, the main quality that believers are looking for when they attach themselves to a pastor is his capacity to act as a religious mediator. Pastors attract a following on the basis of their perceived closeness to God—the "favor" that Bana Buleti mentioned—and this favor is understood to facilitate their capacity as intercessors as well as prophets and exorcists (Haynes 2013, 2017).

In addition to the strong emphasis that Copperbelt believers place on mediation, the second thing to note about the example of Pastor Ephraim is that, while many believers acknowledged their leader's moral shortcomings, they did not regard these failings as an indication that he had lost his favored position in the eyes of God. I have written elsewhere on another Nsofu pastor, a Congolese man who became embroiled in a scandal after he was reported to the local authorities on accusations of hucksterism (Haynes 2013, 89). The woman who described this situation to me said that she had first suspected that something was amiss when the mediatory work the pastor had performed on her behalf failed to produce results. If, presumably, other members of this ill-fated fellowship had similar experiences, then I argue that what made believers angry in this case was, first and foremost, a failure of mediation, which was only after the fact connected to a moral failure. Taken together, this example and that of Pastor Ephraim suggest that while there are certainly believers who will break a relationship with a pastor over a perceived lack of virtue, there are many others who are less concerned with whether their pastor is acting ethically than they are with his capacity to serve as a religious intermediary, standing "in the gap" between them and God. Keeping this in mind, I now turn attention to how believers' expectations of their pastors shape their understanding of leadership in a Christian nation.

Two Pentecostal Political Paradigms: Leadership and Covenant

Pentecostal theologian Nimi Wariboko (2012) has identified five Pentecostal paradigms of national economic prosperity, of which two—the “leadership” and the “covenant” paradigms—are helpful for the purposes in this article. The key to prosperity in the leadership paradigm is, as the name suggests, the character of the person in charge. In this moralizing framework, the blame for national poverty falls on leaders who are more interested in their own enrichment than they are in the betterment of others. The key to national prosperity is, therefore, for “morally upright Christians to access legitimate power and authority” through “the election of Christian believers into public offices” (48). Christian elected officials will operate with “integrity,” a key word in this discourse, to stem the tide of political corruption through a process of replacement in which bad leaders will in time be outnumbered by good (cf. Marshall 2009).

Wariboko’s description of the leadership paradigm offers Nevers Mumba as a specific example of this approach (Wariboko 2012, 49). It is not difficult to see why. From the beginning of his political career, Mumba’s platform has emphasized the need for better leadership generally, and for leadership that is informed by Christian values specifically. For a long time after the 2015 election, the MMD official homepage included a prominent banner featuring a statement that Mumba first made at the founding of the NCC: “The equitable delivery of goods and services to any people depends on the morality and integrity of its leaders.” Seen from this angle, the perennial question of why Mumba would leave the pastorate to become a politician misses the point entirely. As Mumba argued in his “Answers” piece, not only is it possible for him to be both a pastor and a politician at the same time but his track record in the first of these roles also uniquely qualifies him for success in the second. If what is needed to bring about prosperity in Zambia is elected officials who have moral integrity, who better to take up the mantle of leadership than a pastor?

Mumba is not the only member of the Zambian Pentecostal community who supports the leadership paradigm. Pastor Mwanza, whose family hosted me during my fieldwork, regularly bemoaned the widespread support that people on the Copperbelt gave to the late President Sata when he was running for office in 2008. He felt that citizens of a Christian nation ought to know better than to vote for someone who failed to measure up to Christian ethical standards (among other things, Sata was a known smoker and womanizer). Pastor Mwanza believed that only politicians of integrity could really change the nation. While this example demonstrates that there are some Zambian believers who share Mumba’s commitment to the leadership paradigm, it is obvious from Sata’s election results that the same cannot be said of all Pentecostals. As I have shown, when it comes to the pastorate, most believers are less concerned with the morality of their leaders than they are with their capacity to act as religious mediators. This brings me to the second paradigm identified by Wariboko: the covenant.

The covenant paradigm is informed by biblical texts that carry an explicit contractual structure, for example, 1 Chronicles 7:14 (New International Version), in which God promises, “*If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land*” (emphasis added). This text is particularly relevant to the Zambian case, as it was included in President Chiluba’s 1991 declaration that Zambia was a Christian nation. During his television broadcast, Chiluba cited this well-known verse as “proof that a nation is blessed, whenever it enters into a covenant with God” (quoted in Gifford 1998, 367). He then led the country in a prayer of repentance before proclaiming:

On behalf of the nation, I have now entered into a covenant with the living God. . . . I submit the Government and the entire nation of Zambia to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. I further declare that Zambia is a Christian Nation that will seek to be governed by the righteous principles of the word of God. Righteousness and justice must prevail at all levels of authority, and then we shall see the righteousness of God exalting Zambia. (367–368)

As Chiluba's words make clear, the declaration was originally laid out in terms of the covenant paradigm by preemptively offering the country to God with the understanding that this would result in him "exalting Zambia." As I have shown in greater detail elsewhere (Haynes 2015), this is how most Pentecostals still understand what it means for their country to be a Christian nation. In their eyes, Zambia is "God's nation," as the country has entered into an agreement with God that, among other things, protects them from war and carries the promise of national prosperity (Haynes 2012, 129–131).

The covenantal structure of the declaration has implications for national leadership. Chiluba's statement that he had entered into a divine covenant "on behalf of the nation" cast him in a priestly role, as he stood in the place of Zambia and mediated between the Zambian people and God (Hubert and Mauss 1964, 23). In this sacerdotal paradigm, the most important qualification for the presidency is the capacity for religious mediation. Understood in these terms, it is clear that Zambian Pentecostals are not at all opposed to having a pastor as their president; indeed, it can be assumed that they would prefer an arrangement along these lines. Good pastors are good mediators, after all, and a good pastor would therefore also make a good president, one who is well equipped to "stand in the gap" and uphold the covenant established with the declaration. Chiluba certainly worked hard to emphasize his pastoral qualities, most notably by preaching at evangelistic crusades (Gifford 1998, 370), thereby blurring the boundary between religious and state leadership and effectively turning Zambia into a hierarchy.

In contrast, when Mumba describes himself as a pastor, he does not refer to his capacities as a mediator but rather to this role's guarantee of Christian ethical standards. In the light of the example of Pastor Ephraim, it is no surprise that Mumba's interpretation of the pastorate as marker of integrity has failed to translate into votes. Most Pentecostals are not terribly compelled by the language of morality; to put it bluntly, what they want in a pastor is not so much good morals as good mediation. On this point, the example of Chiluba continues to be instructive. While the Chiluba government was arguably the most corrupt that Zambia has ever seen, Pentecostals do not generally include this fact in their accounts of his time in office. Among believers in Nsofu at least, Chiluba is remembered primarily as the man who brought Zambia into a covenant with God, and for that reason Pentecostal history has been kind to him.

Here, then, is the rub of the unending debate between Nevers Mumba and Zambia's Pentecostals. If Mumba's repeated claims to pastoral authority have largely gone unrecognized, this is because Mumba does not present himself as a religious mediator, which means that, as believers have told him time and again, he has stopped being a pastor. No amount of insistence on Mumba's part has been able to convince them otherwise. The reason that the majority of Zambia's Pentecostals do not support Mumba is therefore not because they regard the pastorate as a lesser calling than the presidency, but rather because they want a president whom they can identify as a pastor because he is an effective mediator. If their voting record is any indication, it appears that they do not find Mumba adequately suited to this task.

Conclusion: New Directions in Pentecostal Populism

In September 2014 I met with Mumba in his Lusaka home to discuss the possibility of making a documentary film about his political career. While this was not a formal interview, he made a remark as I was leaving that has been key to the foregoing analysis. In pondering why so many Pentecostals did not support him, Mumba wondered out loud if this had something to do with the fact that he was a church leader. Believers seemed fine with voting for other Christians, and even other Pentecostals, he mused, so by itself his religious affiliation did not appear to be the issue. Perhaps the problem was that he was not an ordinary believer; instead, he was a pastor. Upon reflection, I have come to the conclusion that Mumba's hunch was right, though not for reasons that I imagine he would anticipate. The problem is not that he is a pastor involved in politics, but rather that since entering politics he has not presented himself as a capable religious mediator. At issue, then, is not the fact that Mumba is a pastor, but that most believers do not think he is a *good* pastor, and thus they do not think he is capable of mediating the covenant made in the declaration.

In conclusion, I briefly explore what the example of Nevers Mumba reveals about Pentecostal politics. In countries like Zambia, where believers make up a significant portion of the population, it comes as no surprise that Pentecostalism is increasingly shaping the national political scene. In Kenya, Pentecostal language has been central to discourses of national repentance and forgiveness after the postelection violence of 2007 (Deacon 2015). In Ghana, Pentecostalism has been identified as a site for new forms of patronage and big man rule, reflective of shifting values and a weakening state (McCauley 2013). Patronage is also a factor in the Zambian case, although political leaders are being asked less often to mediate access to larger networks of wealth and influence in the manner of traditional patrons (Eisenstadt and Roniger 1980) than they are being asked to mediate divine favor. This, in turn, suggests that Pentecostalism is changing the face of populism by focusing political discourse on leaders' capacity to serve as religious intermediaries.

Previous discussions of an emerging Pentecostal populism in Zambia have portrayed the declaration as a blatant bid for believers' votes. In other words, by declaring Zambia a Christian nation, Chiluba was simply "making use of Christianity for the legitimacy it can confer . . . [and] almost coopting Christianity" for his own political ends (Gifford 1998, 370). In contrast, I have shown in this article that the declaration, both as it was originally made and as it has subsequently been articulated, represents a form of popular politics that overlaps considerably with popular religion. This is because, for Pentecostals, religious actions like the declaration are political actions as well. Pentecostal political theology situates state power in a larger contest between divine and diabolical forces (Meyer 2010), which means that religious actions like the declaration have political significance not so much because they attract votes, but because they intervene at the highest levels of supernatural power (Kalu 2008). All of this means that, in contrast to arguments that have questioned the influence of Pentecostalism in Zambian public life (Cheyeka, Hinfelaar, and Udelhoven 2014), the declaration has fundamentally altered the political landscape of the country and reconfigured populism in terms of religious mediation.

The ongoing influence of this particular form of Pentecostal populism in Zambia was made very clear in October 2015 when President Edgar Lungu called a national day of prayer and fasting to address his country's economic crisis. On the designated Sunday, Lungu himself presided over a gathering at the Lusaka showgrounds, kneeling in prayer; thumbing through a leather-bound Bible; and at one point releasing a dove into the crowd, a symbol of the Holy Spirit. "I wish to thank the Almighty God for allowing us to assemble and observe the day of repentance, reconciliation, prayer and fasting," Lungu said, addressing the crowd. "I personally believe," he went on, "that since we humbled ourselves as a people

and have sincerely cried out to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; he has heard our cry, has forgiven our sins and will surely heal our land” (Mushota and Zulu). Lungu’s words are a clear reference to the covenantal text that Chiluba used in the original declaration, and by describing the day of prayer and fasting in these terms, he presented himself as a leader capable of interceding on the nation’s behalf and renewing the covenant between Zambia and God. In the eyes of many Zambians, these efforts were successful. On the national day of prayer, a strange rainbow-colored ring was visible around the sun, and this was taken as an indication that God was pleased with the event.¹¹ The fact that the sign was a rainbow serves to further position the day of prayer in the covenant framework, as in the book of Genesis the rainbow is given as a sign of God’s covenant with Noah.

When it was first announced, not everyone supported Lungu’s day of prayer and fasting, and opposition leaders worked hard to discredit the event before it happened.¹² In light of the above analysis, it is not difficult to see why these efforts were unsuccessful, and at the last minute even Hakainde Hichilema, the leader of Zambia’s main opposition party (the UPND), abandoned his criticisms and went to church.¹³ When it comes to popular opinion in Zambia, rejecting a call to “humble [oneself] and pray” is a political nonstarter, and even those who are critical of Lungu’s Patriotic Front government must support efforts to keep God on the side of the nation. Clearly, Pentecostalism has had a profound effect on Zambian politics, and there is no sign that its impact will diminish in the coming years. As a result, populism in this self-proclaimed Christian nation will increasingly require leaders to intercede on Zambia’s behalf. As time goes on, it is therefore likely that Zambians will require a pastor—a *good* pastor, and not just a pastor who is simply morally good—for their president.

Notes

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1. There are three groups that Johnson and Zurlo (2014) categorize as “Renewalists”; that is, to use the technical language here: classical Pentecostals, charismatics (members of mainline denominations who engage in Pentecostal practices), and neo-Pentecostals.
2. The names of this township, individual informants, and congregations are pseudonyms.
3. For a survey, see Hunt 2000.
4. For discussions of the declaration, see Freston 2004; Gifford 1998; Haynes 2015; Phiri 2003; van Klinken 2013, 2014.
5. Information on Mumba’s biography comes from his short book, *Integrity with Fire* (Mumba 1994), a book written by his friend and bible school classmate Kirby Lockhart (Lockhart 2001), and a recent article by Austin Cheyeka (2014).

6. Indeed, at the press conference at which Mumba introduced the NCC, he said he would target “the moral majority of our population” (quote in Lockhart 2001, 80).
7. *The Post*'s Facebook page, accessed October 26, 2018 <https://www.facebook.com/postzambia/photos/a.1514106635481846.1073741828.1512926715599838/1775671855991988>.
8. The Bemba-language feminine prefix “Bana” is used on the Copperbelt both as an equivalent of “Mrs.” and, as in this case, to denote a teknonym.
9. “MMD: Answers from Nevers Mumba—Part One,” *Lusakavoice.com*, August 10, 2014, www.lusakavoice.com/2014/10/08/mmd-answers-nevers-mumba-part-one
10. The analogy here is obvious and serves as a further index of the mediatory capacity of church leaders, as Christian theology highlights Jesus’s role as a mediator.
11. “Zambia Observes National Day of Prayer and Fasting,” *Lusakatimes.com*, October 18, 2015, www.lusakatimes.com/2015/10/18/zambia-observes-national-day-of-prayer-and-fasting
12. “HH [Hakinde Hichilema] Says He Will Not Attend Event, Event Is Mockery to God,” *Lusakatimes.com*, October 2, 2015, www.lusakatimes.com/2015/10/02/hh-says-he-will-not-attend-prayer-event-event-is-mockery-to-god
13. “UPND U-Turns on Prayers for Elections,” posted on July 22, 2016, *Zambiadailynation.com*, <http://zambiadailynation.com/2015/10/18/upnd-u-turns-on-prayers/>

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